

Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 24, No. 488 (Oct. 1, 1883), p. 554

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3357209>

Accessed: 23-01-2016 17:31 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

CHORAL Societies will be interested in knowing that Rossini's Oratorio "Moses in Egypt" can now be performed without the payment of any fee, Messrs. Novello, Ewer and Co. having acquired the rights of Sir Michael Costa in the arrangement of the work made by him for production by the Sacred Harmonic Society.

MR. A. C. MACKENZIE'S Orchestral Ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci," which was so successfully performed by the Philharmonic Society last season, will, we understand, be included in the first Concert of Mr. Theodore Thomas's orchestra in the coming season in New York.

MADAME CHRISTINE NILSSON left London at noon on the 21st ult. for Liverpool, *en route* to New York.

REVIEWS.

A Study of Ch. Gounod's Sacred Trilogy "The Redemption." By Joseph Goddard. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

A SHORT time after the production of M. Gounod's work at Birmingham Mr. Goddard published a small pamphlet entitled "Reflections upon Ch. Gounod's Sacred Trilogy 'The Redemption,'" to which we drew attention in THE MUSICAL TIMES for December, 1882. The author—who has sufficiently proved his fitness for the task by some thoughtful works upon the art which obtained highly favourable notice a few years ago—has now made a more elaborate study of M. Gounod's composition, and issues the result of his meditations in a considerably amplified form, and with musical illustrations which materially aid the reader in following the minute analysis here offered. Now that "The Redemption" has made its way to the sympathies of the musical public of many countries besides our own, it seems almost superfluous to point out upon paper those beauties which we have all so deeply felt; but as we can usually appreciate more fully the salient points of an artistic creation when accompanied by an intellectual and sympathetic guide, we feel assured that an attentive perusal of Mr. Goddard's book will not only immeasurably add to the pleasure of listening to the work upon which it treats, but will even reveal effects which may have before escaped notice. Respecting the Introduction to the work, descriptive of Chaos, after deprecating the idea of making comparisons with Haydn in his "Creation," Mr. Goddard truly says:—

"We believe the fine harmonic changes—the grand waves of sound—which M. Gounod marshals before us in this short prelude form a tone-picture such as has not hitherto been painted by composer. Though fraught with dissonance, it is well within the sphere of ordered sound—is as free from noise as the softest melody. Though devoid of theme or special rhythmic design, it may still, in its progressive unfolding of effect, be said to possess a certain subtle form. Though without charm of melody or of concord, it is rich in new primal beauty; and though made up of effect peculiarly abstract, it contains deep meaning. Taken from a new standpoint of musical development it displays new effects—effects drawn from the confines of the known world of sound."

The sparing employment of "song" throughout the work Mr. Goddard looks upon as a "development of that tendency to directness of expression, to that close relation of effect and the emotions and ideas it attends, which has always been strengthening throughout the development of modern music, and which has become particularly conspicuous in great composers of the present day." As M. Gounod makes recitative so important a feature, we cannot refrain from quoting our author's opinion of its effect both upon the listener and the executant:—

"In M. Gounod's simple tones and original harmonic successions are these qualities—intensity of expression, fulness of effect, with brevity, force, grandeur, and chastity. By the resource of change of harmony to a prevailing or slightly moving note the voice part breathes expression and grandeur without undue motion; thus it preserves peculiar calmness and elevation, however moving or exciting may be the import of its message. The fact that the qualities of calmness and elevation attach to this music, through its very form, has a result which, though subsidiary in M. Gounod's main structural purpose—ex-

pression by harmonic change—is still important, taking into consideration the sacred nature of the art-circumstances: it invokes, it *compels the higher spirit of the singer.*"

With this we perfectly agree, and shall be glad if our author's acute observations upon the subject prove the means of drawing attention more closely to the natural eloquence of these settings of the text. Mr. Goddard criticises very closely the music which depicts the incidents of the Crucifixion, and especially dwells upon the touching musical phrases "He, though His eyes are dim with more than mortal anguish" and "Pardon their sin," which are accompanied by the melody typical of the Redeemer. "The Reproaches," "The Holy Women at the Sepulchre," "Jesus appearing to the Apostles," and, indeed, all the scenes are most carefully and impartially considered, and we much regret that our space prevents the quotation of many of the author's excellent remarks; but the following criticism upon the design of the great chorus "Unfold, ye portals everlasting" must have a place:—

"Two generally different modes appear to be available for the treatment of this passage. One is to treat it largely from a moral point of view—to regard its imagery as the expression of religious enthusiasm—and, whilst allowing this imagery to impart to the music certain characteristic features, to render the composition mainly the outpouring of varied and deep religious emotions. The other is to treat it in a purely poetic spirit—to clothe with music the poetic forms—and thus render the composition expressive of a positive though large situation. In the one case the attitude of the composer is devotional; in the other it is akin to that of Milton, as expressed in the lines:—

Into the heaven of heavens I have presumed,
An earthly guest, and drawn empyréal air,
* * *

Notwithstanding M. Gounod's strong proclivity toward the more devotional side of the sacred style, he is in the present instance governed by his equally strong dramatic instinct. The chorus 'Unfold, ye portals everlasting' is a definite though supernatural picture. The composer's attitude, in its peculiar mingling of poetic daring and religious earnestness, resembles that of Milton to which we have referred. Musically this chorus is distinguished by simplicity and breadth of form, boldness of harmonic progression, massiveness of effect. Its intention, as we have already conveyed, is scenic and dramatic. It would unfold the 'pure Empyréan' echoing seraphic service of praise; picture the immortal phalanxes lost in the 'unapproached light.' As the last note of the chorus is singing the melody typical of Christ breaks forth in a character of triumph."

In our observations upon Mr. Goddard's early sketch of this Study, published in December last, we expressed our regret that he had not alluded to the text of "The Redemption," which certainly the composer considered almost as important as the music itself. This is remedied in the present essay; for, although the author truly says that it would be out of place to treat at length of the literary basis of the work, he continues thus:—

"We may, however, refer to one feature among several it contains which render it highly favourable for association with musical effect; this is a certain directness in the bearing of the imagery—a certain *point* in the sacred musing, not always visible in sacred poetry selected for musical illustration."

After giving the words of the Reproaches and the Beatitudes, he says:—

"These are not simply phrases having religious association, of high emotional temper and pure poetic vein; they are also an essential portion of the moral thread of the great sacred drama; their application is clear. The English version of these passages is not less forcible than the original French. M. Gounod has taken not only his subject from the Bible, but also the imagery of his expression, and Mr. Troutbeck, with judgment that cannot be too highly commended, has reproduced this imagery largely in the actual language of the English Bible."

In view of the many performances of M. Gounod's work announced during the coming season Mr. Goddard's Study is well timed, and will no doubt secure a large number of readers.