

Review

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All' Ombra de' Palmizi. Bozzetto orientale per orchestra. Di Vincislao Fumi. [Florence: G. G. Guidi, 1881.]

WE have more than once drawn attention in these columns to the series of cheap and handy editions of works by old and modern Italian composers issued by the enterprising Florence firm, and including in their number, *inter alia*, those rare and interesting early music-dramas, viz., the "Euridice" both of Jacopo Peri and Giulio Caccini (two settings of the same poem by Rinuccini), in the reproduction of which Signor Guidi has rendered a special service to all students of art-history. Vincislao Fumi's oriental sketch, "All' Ombra de' Palmizi," forms the latest addition to this collection, a work which met with a very good reception on the occasion of its first performance by the Società Orchestrale Fiorentina, the composer having already previously become favourably known by his orchestral fantasia entitled "Il Sogno di Gretchen," and other pieces. The present composition, although not exhibiting any very novel or striking feature, is a pleasant and melodious movement, scarcely suggestive, however, of the oriental character to which it lays claim, unless this should be looked for in the frequent and effective introduction of passages for the harp. It is, moreover, well scored for an orchestra of moderate dimensions, and as such recommends itself for performance in the concert-room, where it cannot fail to be appreciated. The almost microscopically small print of these score-editions might, we should think, have been avoided at a trifling increase in the cost, but cannot now, for the sake of uniformity, be remedied in the future volumes to be added to this otherwise most excellent series.

The Human Voice and Connected Parts. A practical book for Orators, Clergymen, Vocalists, and others. By Dr. J. Farrar, L.R.C.P., Edin., &c. [Marshall, Japp, and Co.]

THE larger portion of this book appeals perhaps more to the reviewing department of a medical, than a musical, journal; but there is very much to interest all who study not only to train the voice, but to keep it in perfect order when it is trained; for when, even by following the rules laid down, disease cannot be warded off, we are here told the proper course to follow, and the very best remedies to apply. In his preface the author says: "To public speakers, vocalists, &c., much pains have been taken to make the book a kind of medical guide, or companion—a sort of vocal *vade mecum*, to which reference may be made for information relating to the minor troubles, and some of the graver diseases to which the vocal organs are liable, as well as the treatment of the more common ailments." No doubt there are many works of the same kind; but we are bound to say that we have never met with one where the descriptions of the whole vocal apparatus are treated in so popular a manner. The chapter devoted to the explanation of the voices and their compass contains some very good hints as to the management of the various parts concerned in vocalisation: "Over-fatigue of the muscles of the larynx," we are told, "as by excessive and prolonged talking, public speaking, singing, shouting, &c., is a common cause of voice weakness. It is not so much the *exercise* of the muscles, as the length of time they are *continuously* under it, that produces the mischief. The strength of a horse becomes best developed, not by putting the animal to a work of one unvarying strain, but to up-hill and down hill labour—that is, by great exertion relieved by complete rest. And the muscles of the larynx obey the same laws that govern any other muscle, wherever situated. Over-use, moreover, produces a congested condition of the lining membrane of the vocal apparatus, a state of matters which generally requires the application of special means for its removal, in addition to complete rest of the larynx." Few persons are, we believe, aware how very important it is for the preservation of the health that exercise of the respiratory organs should be constantly practised; and Dr. Farrar tells us that by well-directed singing exercise, or by blowing upon some wind instrument, the "vital capacity" may not only be kept up to the average, but may be actually increased. And respecting this "blowing upon wind instruments," we have so many erroneous ideas that we cannot resist quoting from the book of Dr. Burg (an extract from which is given in the volume before us), a French physician, who

is a most ardent advocate for this kind of exercise: "Many philanthropists, on seeing our young military musicians wield enormous wind instruments, have sorrowed over the few years the poor fellows would have to live. Well, they are mistaken. All the men whose business it is to try the wind instruments made at the various factories, before sending them off for sale, are, without exception, free from pulmonary affections. I have known many who on entering upon this calling were very delicate, and who, nevertheless, though their duty obliged them to blow for hours together, enjoyed perfect health after a certain time. 'I am myself,' he continues, 'an instance of this. My mother died of consumption; eight children of hers fell victims to the same disease, and only three of us survive, and we all three play wind instruments.' Amongst the subjects treated of in Dr. Farrar's volume, the subject of tight-lacing receives a fair share of attention; and as this is a very important matter to those who aspire to become vocalists, we recommend it to their serious attention. Assuredly the two illustrations in this book—one representing the natural figure, and the other the artificial one, produced by the pernicious habit alluded to—needs no further comment to ensure conviction in the mind of any reasoning being. We may add that the work contains thirty-nine illustrations, all of which are executed with the utmost accuracy, and that in every respect no pains have been spared to realise the author's desire that it should be made "a really practical and serviceable book."

How faithful are thy branches (The Hemlock Tree). Song. Words by Longfellow. Music by R. O'Leary Vinning. [Stanley Lucas, Weber and Co.]

THE composer of this song adheres to her plan of helping to form a new market, rather than of writing for a market already formed. True it is that very many specimens are now to be found of the genuine artistic workmanship which distinguishes all her vocal works, but they are the exception rather than the rule; and we are glad therefore to welcome any song which may be accepted as a protest against the "prettiness" of the day. The refined and sympathetic setting of Longfellow's words assigned to the vocalist is so materially aided by the pianoforte part that the two must become inseparable in performance; and we therefore counsel all young ladies who are trained to consider the accompanist as a servile slave, instead of an artistic companion, to avoid attempting a composition which we assure them will demand qualities which they have not yet cultivated. Amongst the many striking points in this song we may particularly mention the treatment of the phrase commencing "The meadow brook," where the semiquavers appear for the first time in the accompaniment; and must especially commend the manner in which the temptation is resisted of imitating the nightingale when the name of a bird so fatally suggestive to immature composers first occurs. In the opening bar of the symphony it would be better, we think, that the quaver should precede the two crotchet rests, and also that the grouping of the notes should decisively indicate a broken bar in 3-4 time; we have known even experienced vocalists puzzled where the quantity, rather than the rhythm, is presented to the eye.

Cross and Crown. Sacred Song. With Pianoforte Accompaniment (Organ or Harmonium *ad lib.*). Words by Edward Oxenford. Composed by A. C. Mackenzie. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

WE so constantly receive songs termed "sacred" merely from the character of the words, that it is a pleasure to meet with one where the religious feeling of the text is sympathetically reflected in the music. Mr. Mackenzie is rapidly earning his fame in secular works, which have received recognition abroad as well as at home; and, if we may judge from the composition before us, we confidently predict that in the setting of sacred text—a much severer test, by the way—he will materially add to his reputation. "Cross and Crown" is a well-considered song throughout; and, although extremely effective, does not appear written for effect. The triplet accompaniment, against the even notes in the voice part, commencing with the words "For though thy cross a burden be," gives much eloquence to the phrase; and the lengthening of

the final line, which expresses the leading feeling of the song, with the appropriate variations of harmony, may also be warmly commended. The organ or harmonium accompaniment will materially aid the effect of the composition; and as the latter instrument is now to be found in many drawing-rooms, we predict for this latest song of one of the most promising composers of the day a large sale and correspondingly wide appreciation.

My Darling's Home. A Mother's Story. Song. Written and composed by Michael Watson.

[Marriott and Williams.]

THE many "darlings" who bring light and love into the homes of English mothers are always pleased to read in the healthy domestic literature of the time those records of childish days indelibly associated with the parental abode—the little world in which, almost unconsciously, they are trained for the larger world outside. But if by chance, they should hear this "Mother's Story," they will find that in music it has become the custom to glorify rather the death than the life of children, and may rest assured that when they hear of a boy with "curls of gold," they will, as in the song before us, assuredly find that he will be "laid low," to an appropriately deep note, and "rest with the angels," surrounded by chords in arpeggio. This is scarcely a method of attracting young people towards vocal music, and we should be sorry to believe that even their elders would like to sing such morbidly pathetic lucubrations in the presence of those whom they love. Yet there must be a market for these songs; and we can only presume that as those artists paint empty cots and empty chairs who cannot paint full ones, so do many vocalists select songs which speak directly to the feelings of an audience without the aid either of music or poetry. Compositions of this kind will, therefore, doubtless continue to be published; but they appeal not to the notice of an artistic journal.

FOREIGN NOTES.

WE have received the annual official Report of the progress of choral singing in the municipal schools of Turin, the only town in Italy, it appears, where vocal teaching occupies a recognised and organised position in elementary classes. Under the zealous and experienced guidance of Signor Giulio Roberti most satisfactory results have, within the space of a few years, been achieved in this direction, as was shown by a special public performance given on the 19th ult. at the Vittorio Emanuele Theatre of Turin. Our correspondent describes the interesting festivity in the following words: "On Sunday (June 19) the pit of the Vittorio Theatre was filled with school-children of both sexes to the number of 2,200, while the remainder of the building, consisting of two spacious galleries, was occupied by their friends and relatives; the Sindaco, with the other members of the municipal council, being seated on the stage, together with the invited guests. It was a pretty sight to see the eager young faces watching the wand of the conductor, Cav. G. Roberti, evidently enjoying their 'first appearance in public,' and singing with might and main. Kücken's song 'The young recruit' appeared to be a great favourite with them, and, having to repeat it, they did so with great gusto; but on the part of the audience the palm was given to the last number in the programme, a choral piece entitled 'Il canto del giovane ginnastico,' by G. Roberti, accompanied by the civic band. All the children present, it should be added, had written out their own vocal parts from the dictation of their respective teachers. The proceedings closed with an appropriate speech of the Sindaco, which was received with great applause, and will, I hope, be remembered, for it is high time that singing should be popularised among the youth of this country." We, on our part, congratulate Signor Roberti upon the success with which his untiring efforts in the direction of reform of this and other branches of music-culture in Turin have so far been attended, and which—as we gather from an article contained in a leading music journal recently forwarded to us from Germany—are also meeting with due recognition outside the boundaries of his native Italy.

Arrigo Boito's "Mefistofele" was recently again produced at the theatre La Scala of Milan, where some thirteen years ago the work had made a complete *fiasco*. Since that time the opera has been revised and abridged by the composer, and in this form is making the round of Europe. No wonder, then, that the Milanese are now, as we are told, enraptured with it, and that the *maestro* met with a most enthusiastic reception on the occasion referred to. The same composer's new opera, "Nerone," is to be performed, likewise at La Scala, during the Carnival season next year.

A series of historical concerts, in connection with the Music Exhibition now being held at Milan, was contemplated by the Conservatorio of that town; but, although the programmes had already been published, the interesting scheme had to be abandoned, in consequence of the Municipal Council refusing to grant the necessary funds.

The new opera, "Stella," by Auteri-Manzocchi, the production of which in Florence was noticed in our last number, has achieved a great success at Milan.

The annual meeting of the Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Verein took place between the 9th and 12th ult., at Magdeburg. We append (in the usual column) the programmes of the Concerts given in connection with the event which are chiefly interesting as consisting, for the greater part, of compositions by the younger generation of musicians, not, as will be seen, of Germany alone. Franz Liszt took part in the proceedings.

The Berlin "Nibelungen" performances concluded with the fourth representation of the entire tetralogy, on May 29, amidst unabated enthusiasm on the part of a crowded audience, the poet-composer being again present on this occasion. There can be no doubt that the introduction into the capital, albeit through private enterprise, of Wagner's gigantic work has made a distinct mark upon Berlin musical life, the effects of which cannot fail to influence the future *répertoire* of the Royal Opera with regard to the recognition of the reformer's latest music dramas. At the latter establishment permission was granted to Herr Angelo Neumann to give a performance with his company of "Lohengrin," which took place on the 2nd ult. In connection with the Berlin performances of the tetralogy an amusing pamphlet has been published at the office of "Kladderadatsch," from the pen of Alex. Moszkowski, in which those well-known typical personages, "Schulze und Müller," convey their Philistine impressions of "Der Ring des Nibelungen" to their numerous acquaintance.

The State subvention granted by the French Chambers for the year 1882 amounts to 800,000 francs for the Grand-Opéra and 300,000 francs for the Opéra-Comique. The total receipts of the Grand-Opéra during last year were over 4,000,000 francs, which, however, failed to cover expenses. Under M. Vaucorbeil's (the present director) *régime* four operatic works have so far been added to the *répertoire* of the latter establishment, viz., "Aïda" (233,000 francs), "Comte Ory" (23,000 francs), "La Corrigane" (73,000 francs), and "Le Tribut de Zamora" (270,000 francs). The sums appended to each of these works represent the expenditure incurred in their mounting, and may in part explain the existing deficit, although, it should be added, in the result of the past year M. Halanzier, the former director, is still jointly responsible with his successor.

There is every probability of the Théâtre Lyrique being revived in the coming winter, under the auspices of M. Lamoureux, the former *chef d'orchestre* at the Grand-Opéra. The Lyrique will be entitled to a subvention of 250,000 francs, and will, it is supposed, devote itself in part to the bringing out of new operatic works by living French composers, of which there is an abundance in readiness.

A petition, signed by M. Camille Saint-Saëns and other influential musicians of Paris, has been presented to the French Government, advocating the introduction of obligatory musical instruction in the elementary schools of France.

Festive musical performances in honour of Franz Liszt were held on May 25 at Antwerp, under the direction of Pierre Benoit, and on May 29 at Bruxelles, under that of F. Servais. The programme on each occasion consisted almost exclusively of compositions by the honoured