

Review

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The Banner of Saint George. Ballad for Chorus and Orchestra. The words written by Shapcott Wensley. The music composed by Edward Elgar.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS ballad, written with a view to the Jubilee Celebrations, relates the deed of fame of *St. George*—Patron Saint of England. Mr. Elgar has approached his work in a similar spirit to that which dictated the style of his setting of "Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf." There is the same facility of melodic invention, keen perception of the dramatic elements in the libretto, and picturesque modes of expression. There is genuine pathos in the opening chorus of lamentations, to which admirable contrast is provided by the strains which announce the appearance of the princess and relate her words of hope. These are set in unison for the sopranos, who thus are provided with many grateful and charming passages. The music grows more dramatic as *St. George* approaches and the subsequent scenes are worked up in stirring fashion. *St. George* speaks by the tenors and basses, also in unison, and in musical phrases as bold as his words. Excitement increases with the appearance of the dragon, and the climax is reached by the victory of the knight. The choral parts in this descriptive number are cleverly designed to secure the required effects by the simplest means, and although the music demands precision and emphasis in delivery, it will present no difficulty to a fairly cultured choir. The epilogue is set in march form, and is of a remarkably broad and dignified character. The first subject is a theme that once heard is not easily forgotten, and its companions are no less excellent and appropriate; the movement in its entirety concludes the work in a most effective manner.

A Practical Treatise on the Art of Phrasing. By Gordon Saunders. [A. Hammond and Co.]

CORRECT phrasing in music is so important, and there are comparatively so few books on the subject, that the appearance of Dr. Saunders's work will doubtless be welcomed by many earnest-minded musicians. The book, as its title implies, has manifestly been written to supply the wants of the average amateur, and not only comprises instruction on the principles of phrasing intelligently, but also embraces fingering and the proper performance of embellishments. The explanations, as far as they go, are terse and clear; but it is to be regretted that, except in a few instances, no indication is given of the source from whence the 350 musical examples are derived. This is especially an oversight in the portion devoted to embellishments, for no little of the individuality of style of the great masters is contained in their use of certain ornamental forms, and their proper performance is frequently dependent on a knowledge of the composer in whose writings they occur. Fortunately, however, in this particular, the student has Mr. Dannreuther's monumental work on "Musical Ornamentation." In Part II., on "Fingering," the author adopts what he incorrectly terms the "English" system, with the + for the thumb, and which he maintains is a better method than indication by the first five numerals. However this may be, it is distressing to be told that "some foreign publishing firms are re-issuing musical works with English fingering." In the good cause of unanimity such firms should be written to, and Dr. Saunders may be referred to THE MUSICAL TIMES for 1890, page 78.

The Magician. An original humorous children's Operetta. The libretto written by Louis B. Tisdale. The music composed by A. L. Vingoe. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE story of this pleasing little operetta is a very simple one, and is chiefly concerned with a practical joke played by some village children upon a magician, who in revenge mesmerises them, but finally invites them to his entertainment at the local town hall. The libretto, which contains nine principal parts and five smaller ones, includes some brightly written dialogue and humorous lyrics. The last-named have been set in an appropriately melodious manner, and several of the vocal numbers would provide instructive practice in rhythm. The pianoforte accompaniment might be made very effective by a tasteful pianist, and if, as suggested, the characters adopted Watteau dresses, some very picturesque tableaux would be presented.

Famous Violinists and Fine Violins. By Dr. T. L. Phipson. [Chatto and Windus.]

THE author of this book is one of that numerous class of distinguished amateurs who may be termed musical doctors of medicine. In this instance, seeing that the author asked for a violin at the age of six, and early showed remarkable aptitude for music, and that his father was a worshipper at the shrine of St. Cecilia, it is somewhat surprising that the child was not brought up for the musical profession; but although another walk in life was decided upon, Master Phipson seems to have had good music teachers, and, judging from what he says, to have developed into an esteemed violinist and expert of the value of old violins. The book is written in a pleasant chatty style, and although most of the serious matter is to be found more exhaustively treated in Grove's "Dictionary of Music" and in Mr. Hart's work on the violin, Dr. Phipson's volume contains much that will prove attractive to amateurs, notably that which refers to "The secret of Paganini," which Dr. Phipson claims to have discovered. The skill pertaining to the novelist is shown in the manner in which the reader is led to read many pages before the "secret" is revealed, and which ultimately is found to be of a two-fold nature, being attributed to Paganini always writing "solo music in the keys best suited to the violin" and to the manner of his producing harmonics. The latter, the author says, "were played on the bridge, *Sul ponticello*;" he indicates them in the score by the word 'armonioso,' and he has unintentionally let out the secret in his wonderful piece, 'La Stregghe' (The Witches), but nobody seemed hitherto to have discovered it. He had acquired a wonderful dexterity in this respect, and these harmonic tones can be played even a little distance from the bridge. By long practice a *stroke of the bow* can be acquired that will produce the harmonics of the notes stopped by the fingers. It is not, in this case, the finger, but the bow that rests lightly on the strings, to produce the harmonic effect. It is often more surprising than agreeable. In this way he played the passages in double harmonics in all his pieces where they are indicated, and the curious echo effects in the Rondo de la Clochette and the Carnaval de Venise."

Notable Welsh Musicians of to-day. By Frederic Griffith [Francis Goodwen.]

"GALLANT little Wales" makes a brave show in this daintily bound volume of living musicians of Welsh nationality. The book is divided into four sections, which are severally devoted to biographical notices of composers, vocalists, instrumentalists, and conductors—portraits of each person mentioned accompanying the letterpress. These notices comprise nine composers, forty-three singers, eighteen instrumentalists, and fourteen conductors; the second division containing by far the largest number of well-known artists. In an excellent preface an earnest protest is made against the unsatisfactory state of musical knowledge in the Principality, and it is declared that "in the most active musical centres in the Principality the great classical masterpieces are practically unknown; in fact, classical music is seldom performed at all; the art, as art, is almost totally unstudied." The cause is boldly attributed to the inartistic nature of the Eisteddfod, which it is declared "must change its course of action." "Why," it is reasonably asked, "do we not have competitions for sight reading? That would, at any rate, stamp the victors as being better musicians than their opponents." It is very satisfactory to find Mr. Griffith writing so plainly to his countrymen, for he has gained a position in the musical world which is calculated to give force to his words and help to convince those upon whom the responsibility rests that "a more whole-hearted and less circumscribed devotion to music will bring to the people of Wales its own reward."

Wagner's Heroes. Wagner's Heroines. By Constance Maud. [Edward Arnold.]

"THESE stories are for little people, and are not written for Wagnerites or any other learned persons." So run the opening lines of the preface to the first of these volumes. Perusal of them, however, shows that grown-up "little people" may read them with advantage, and that they may