

Mr. Thomas Beecham and Elgar's Symphony

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*The Friar's Mere.* Ballad for baritone solo, male chorus and orchestra. English words by Elizabeth M. Lockwood. By Max Laistner (Op. 11).

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

'The Friar's Mere,' translated from Ludwig Laistner's 'Geisterpredigt,' tells a grim story, the true inwardness of which is not revealed at a glance. A shepherd whose mind is void of superstitious fears, coming to a lake supposed to be haunted by a ghostly friar, mockingly challenges the latter to come forth by daylight. To his horror the summons is answered; a host of evil powers are let loose, amid which the friar appears before him. Christian prayers are in vain, and the shepherd's soul flies from his body, presumably into the power of the friar. The musical setting is vividly descriptive and dramatic. Its texture is modern, and many of the harmonies are in keeping with the subject. The difficulties do not, however, extend to the choral parts, which for the greater part move together. The baritone solo gives good opportunities for declamatory singing.

*Night Fancies, Impromptu.* By B. J. Dale.

*Ballades* (Op. 59). By M. Esposito.

*Four Sketches.* By John B. McEwen.

*Seven Preludes.* By Felix Swinstead.

[G. Ricordi & Co.]

Mr. B. J. Dale's impromptu, 'Night Fancies,' is a highly poetic and interesting piece, musically and technically rather intricate, but fascinating and rich in harmonic beauty. Great things may be expected of this gifted young composer when he has attained greater artistic maturity.

The three ballades by Dr. Esposito are very suggestive of Brahms in style, but they contain throughout good, genuine, and at times really beautiful music. The pianoforte writing is broad and sonorous, and the composer avoids superficial effects.

Mr. McEwen's sketches are the work of a serious artist, who in going his own somewhat gloomy way, avoids the commonplace. The Prelude and Elegy contain several harmonically interesting progressions, while the *Quasi Menuetto*, in 5-8 time, seems rather laboured. The last of the four pieces, though very strange, is a clever Humoresque.

If only by reason of their many original touches, both musical and technical, the seven Preludes by Mr. Felix Swinstead will doubtless prove a welcome addition to those already published in the Avison edition. The seventh Prelude in particular, with its passionate melody and interesting *arpeggio* accompaniment, is very charming.

*In the North land.* Part-song for mixed voices. By Cliffe Forrester.

*The three ships.* For mixed-voice chorus and orchestra. By Colin Taylor.

*Bacchanalian Chorus.* For men's voices. By J. W. Elliott.

*Duncan Gray.* *Gather ye rosebuds.* Part-songs for male voices. By A. Madeley Richardson.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Mr. Forrester's 'In the North land' runs a smooth and simple course from beginning to end. The parenthetical phrases that lengthen a line now and then are effective, and prevent squareness of form. As there is repetition and no difficulty or elaboration, the part-song is one that can be learned quickly. The words are by Mrs. Forrester.

In the case of Mr. Taylor's 'The three ships,' the inscription 'composed for the Eton College Musical Society, Christmas, 1909,' is an indication of the character as well as the purpose of the work. Mr. Taylor has invented a tune that exactly fits the situation, and he applies it to every verse of the poem with the substitution of major for minor mode in the last. In the vocal scoring unison is the rule and part-writing the exception. There is, however, no lack of variety in the ingenious accompaniment.

Mr. Elliott's setting of the Bacchanalian Chorus from Sheridan's 'Duenna' is full of spirit, and there is moreover a suggestive rolling movement in the voice parts. There are passages in which the subject-matter is passed from mouth to mouth in the most convivial manner. The needful support is supplied by a firmly moving accompaniment, and the whole is worked up into a hilarious climax.

'Duncan Gray' is a bright, accompanied trio for two tenors and a bass, with a 'refrain' for male chorus that might equally well be sung by the soloists, as the number of parts never exceeds three. The music thoroughly matches the words, which are by Burns, and describe in five verses a little drama of Highland wooing. To a southern ear some mystery seems attached to the lines:

Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,  
Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',  
Spak o' lowpin ower a linn;

and

Now they're crouse and canty baith.

It is not always poems of Continental origin that need an English translation.

'Gather ye rosebuds' is a straightforward, simple setting of Herrick's lines, in which neither time nor tune will offer any difficulty. The highest part is written for alto voice.

#### BOOKS RECEIVED.

*Catalogue of manuscript music in the British Museum.* Vol. iii.; Instrumental music, treatises, &c. By Augustus Hughes-Hughes. Pp. xxiv. + 543; 21s. (Printed by order of the trustees.)

*John Sebastian Bach.* The story of the great development of a great personality. By C. Hubert H. Parry. Illustrated. Pp. xii. + 584; 12s. 6d. net. (G. P. Putnam's Sons.)

*The organ and its masters.* By Henry C. Lahee. Pp. vi. + 345; 6s. net. (Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd.)

*Modern composers of Europe.* By Arthur Elson. Pp. viii. + 291; 6s. net. (Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd.)

*Antonio Stradivari: his life and work (1644-1737).* By W. Henry Hill, Arthur F. Hill, F.S.A., and Alfred E. Hill; with an introductory note by Lady Huggins. Illustrated. Pp. xvi. + 319; 7s. 6d. net. (Macmillan & Co., Ltd.)

*Proceedings of the Musical Association.* Thirty-fifth session: 1908-1909. Pp. xxiv. + 206; 21s. net. (Novello & Co., Ltd.)

*The development of chamber music.* By Richard H. Walthew. Pp. 48; 6d. net. (Boosey & Co.)

*I will sing a new song.* By L. T. Meade. Pp. viii. + 296; 6s. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

## Correspondence.

### MR. THOMAS BEECHAM AND ELGAR'S SYMPHONY.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—At a concert given on October 28 in the Victoria Hall, Hanley, the Beecham Orchestra appeared for the first time in this neighbourhood. For some months prior to the concert—which was under the auspices of the North Staffordshire District Choral Society—Sir Edward Elgar's Symphony had been largely advertised. Perhaps nowhere else in the British Isles is the name of Elgar regarded with such affection as in North Staffordshire, for it was in Hanley, at a North Staffordshire triennial festival, that his cantata 'King Olaf' was first produced. The same Society responsible for the performance of the Symphony, produced 'Gerontius,' 'The Apostles,' 'The Kingdom,' almost immediately after their first performances, and by so doing kept alive an intense interest in the development of Elgar's career. This interest was quickened by the announcement of a performance of the new Symphony by an Orchestra which in a short time had made a great reputation. To the dismay of those who knew the work, Mr. Beecham, in conducting, chose to give his version of the Symphony in preference to the composer's.

The first movement was cut down one half: part of the 'exposition' and the whole of the 'development' were cut out, and some minutes were sacrificed in the succeeding movements. Those who know the Symphony will be astonished to hear that the actual time occupied in its performance was only thirty-eight minutes! It was an insult to the composer and also those responsible for the concert. This is surely not the use to which so exceedingly fine an orchestra should be put, to say nothing of the misuse of the genius with which nature has endowed Mr. Thomas Beecham.

HAVERGAL BRIAN.

Stoke-upon-Trent.