

Review

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REVIEWS.

Masters of English Music. By Charles Willeby.
[London: Osgood, McIlvaine and Co.]

MR. CHARLES WILLEBY has already claimed the attention of the musical world by a short but painstaking memoir of Chopin. He now comes before us as editor of a series entitled "Masters of Contemporary Music," to which he contributes the opening volume. According to the scheme it is proposed to devote the succeeding volumes "to the musicians of each country, and, so far as practicable, to obtain all biographical data from the composers themselves," a plan which Mr. Willeby informs us has been exclusively followed in the present case. The volume is very nicely got up, well printed, with a broad margin, and is illustrated with portraits and *fac-similes*. There, unfortunately, praise must end. The book is so thoroughly unsatisfactory in tone and in execution that it is our painful but imperative duty to make an example of it, with the assistance of Mr. Willeby himself. It is utterly unrepresentative of cultivated musical opinion in this country, and it is as well that foreigners should understand this clearly.

It will, we think, be freely conceded that for the adequate discharge of a task of this description the qualifications of independence, sympathy, and intelligence are of vital importance. And it will be further conceded that in an editor the possession of accurate knowledge and a fluent and accurate style is also desirable. At any rate, he should be able to write grammatically and coherently and with some regard for orthography. We propose, therefore, to apply these tests to Mr. Willeby, and our readers shall judge for themselves. As instances of his method of dealing with the vernacular we may mention such forms as "omnivorous" [*sic*], "supremity," "enshelvement," "unvocalness." When he deviates into foreign tongues the results are even more disastrous. He talks of "savoir faire," and rarely misses a chance of misspelling a proper name. Thus we get "Reinicke" three times and "Merrimé" five times; Bizet's Christian name was Georges, not George; Giuglini, Renan, Saint-Saëns, and not Giuliani, Rénan, and Saint-Saën, are the right forms. "Guillem de Cabestanh" is perverted into "Guillem de Castenbah," while Mr. Willeby is apparently a prey to the hallucination that Cipriani and Potter were two distinct persons. Mr. Willeby, we may also observe, apparently uses the word "robustiousness" seriously instead of robustness. Let us now proceed to illustrate the literary quality of his work. "One would never be justified," he remarks on page 96, "in saying of the composer of the 'Golden Legend' that he wilfully condescended to indulge in such a process as 'doing the big bow-wow,' yet so much has been forced to rely upon his musical artianship, that in comparison to the spontaneity of such a work as the 'Legend,' much of the music of 'Ivanhoe' seems out of joint." On another page he observes: "The day may come when even Brahms will awake to the fact that Germany is no longer the hub of the musical universe, and himself its 'bearings.'" Here, in good sooth, and in more senses than one, is the "literary bicyclist" of Sir Charles Bowen! *Apropos* of the human element in opera he writes: "Latency is no unfamiliar feature of it, and by musicians who have afterwards proved themselves to possess it in the highest degree, it has not been found for the seeking." Mr. Cowen's "vocal knack is quite happy," while Dr. Hubert Parry's "Prometheus" is defined as "a series of kaleidoscopic effects which are more valuable as an earnest of the sober residue bound to remain than of themselves."

Mr. Willeby's inaccuracy in detail and his slipshod style might, however, be freely condoned if he showed any critical acumen or grasp of his subject. Here again there is no lack of material to form an estimate of Mr. Willeby's capacity. For example, he tells us—at least, so we understand him—that there is no beauty in Shelley's "Prometheus." Then, again, we learn that "in his almighty horror of the commonplace in music, Dr. Parry is almost *bourgeois*." Perhaps the most remarkable statement in the book is that in connection with Sir Arthur Sullivan's conducting: "He may at times lack breadth in

his renderings, but that, at all events, is an error on the right side." This will certainly be news to most of our readers. We should like, in pursuance of our method, to quote examples of Mr. Willeby's impartiality and independence, were it not that they have baffled our most careful scrutiny. His sketch of Sir Arthur Sullivan is one long fulsome serenade on the trumpet. He tells us that his hero wrote "pot-boilers," but in every bar of every "pot-boiler" that he wrote there is "invariably the stamp of true genius." Everything is perfect, or, if it is not, it is declared to be the fault of the subject. *Apropos* of his conducting, there is one passage so pre-eminently silly that we cannot refrain from quoting it *in extenso*: "If popularity with the orchestra were the sole criterion, he would without doubt be the English conductor *par excellence*, for when Arthur Sullivan calls a rehearsal, be it theatre or concert-room, the missing instruments are few indeed." Mr. Willeby's ideas of orchestral discipline are enough to make Costa turn in his grave. And what could be in worse taste than the obvious inuendo contained in the next passage? "Some people theorise that the chief essentials of a good conductor are that he play a variety of instruments, and have a memory like the well nigh proverbial cab horse. But they forget that many military bandmasters are possessed of both acquirements, and are not necessarily good conductors." The sketch of Dr. Mackenzie is almost entirely biographical, and therefore, in the main, unobjectionable, though not free from inaccuracies; that on Mr. Cowen is disfigured by the laborious chronicling of many tedious trivialities. Mr. Willeby religiously records Mr. Cowen's views on the Italian climate, and his description of Italian bread, gondolas, stalactite formations, &c., all of which are, doubtless, correct; but for the life of us we cannot see the need for them in a work of this description. Finally, we have two very short, perfunctory, and, in places, decidedly vulgar, chapters on Dr. Parry and Dr. Stanford, inserted, so far as we can see, for the sole object of enabling Mr. Willeby to indulge in a number of overt and covert sneers at Brahms. In the case of Dr. Parry there is no mention whatsoever of what is generally agreed to be his finest work, while the attitude of the writer towards Dr. Stanford may be gathered from the remark that "he has written more dull music than any of his fellows." Here we may take leave of Mr. Willeby. No sympathy need be expressed for those whom he has endeavoured to belittle; rather do we feel sorry for the victim of his indiscriminate eulogy. Above all, we sympathise in advance with those gentlemen who, as contributors to the series, will be subjected to the editorial supervision of a writer so uncritical, so inaccurate, and so destitute of the saving grace of style.

Examples in Strict Counterpoint, Old and New. Dr. Gordon Saunders. Novello's Primers, No. 41.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

EVERYBODY is ready to repeat the saying "example is better than precept," but few know how to apply it wisely and well. When a student is engaged on Counterpoint, especially when preparing for an examination, he *must* work out a large amount of original counterpoint if he hopes to obtain the smallest amount of facility. On the other hand, he would, without doubt, produce much better results if, before beginning to write his own specimens, he were to play over carefully, or copy out, good examples of other writers' counterpoint. It is on this ground that the utility of Dr. Gordon Saunders's book is based. He has collected together over 370 specimens of counterpoint of every species, and ranging in construction from two parts to eight parts, all fully worked out so as to make admirable models for the student. But the book is rendered still more valuable by the learned remarks on the special progressions or the particular characteristics of each example. If properly used, this Primer ought to pull many a struggling youngster through the dreaded counterpoint papers of our institutions and universities. The examples are selected from such standard works as Albrechtsberger, Cherubini, Fétis, Fux, Kirnberger, and others, while Dr. Pearce, Dr. Bonavia Hunt, and also the author have contributed good examples where needed. Of course the author himself is the largest contributor of such additional specimens, and we can only say that he has proved himself

highly skilful, and deeply imbued with that valuable "spirit of polyphony" which is, alas, becoming rarer every day. Many ultra-modernists affect to despise counterpoint as being antiquated, if not actually obsolete; but it is generally found that this opinion emanates from men who could not write a respectable specimen of counterpoint if their very life depended upon it. Then again, counterpoint will always be despised by that numerous class of persons who have never succeeded in hearing more than the two *outside parts* of polyphonic music. To such persons the delicate expression and the varying force of *inner parts* is of no more interest than the rubble which is pitched into the inside of a thick wall. Many modern composers think they can get on very well without a real grasp of the laws of counterpoint. So they can, no doubt; but they must be prepared for the avenging hand of the future, which will assuredly gather into the garner only those compositions which are founded on the immutable laws of the "true and beautiful," and will rudely cast aside the worthless mass of literature which has been turned out to suit the daily altering standard of the "pretty and pleasant." Who can estimate the influence on the art of music which counterpoint has had when manipulated by a Bach, a Mozart, a Mendelssohn? Those who are best capable of judging will perceive in the archaic simplicity and intolerant legislation of counterpoint those primitive and profound principles out of which we know modern music has evolved, and which we feel must always be the true core and living centre of the music of the future, evolve as it may. To the study of these first principles Dr. Gordon Saunders has made a most theoretically valuable and practically useful contribution. A few very trifling slips have occurred in the printing. The last note on p. 219 should be C; the printer has divided the second *accolade* on p. 227, and also on p. 235, in both cases suggesting four-parts instead of eight. Also, between bars four and five of p. 235 there are octaves between the tenor of the first choir and treble of the second. A few other less important slips have, no doubt, already been discovered by the author. Before bringing this review to a close we should like to suggest to young students, organists especially, the great value of Dr. Gordon Saunders's work as a means of learning to read at sight from open score and mixed clefs. It is well known to old examiners that many men are annually plucked at examinations not because they are ignorant of counterpoint, but because they have first to work out the inner parts of their examples in the treble clef, and afterwards transcribe them into the alto and tenor clefs. Not only does this operation cost a lot of time *which is very precious*, but it opens the door to no end of mistakes in the hurried transcription, mistakes which propagate luxuriantly after the examiner has been heard to say with solemn voice, "Papers, please, gentlemen!" Any student who, beginning on the first page of this book, determined to play every example carefully through until he reached the other end, would not only catch that spirit of pure polyphony which becomes in course of time an *instinct* which guides the pen, but he would also be able to dive into the vast enjoyable literature of vocal part-writing, which is closed against those who cannot read freely from open score and "proper" clefs.

Octavo Edition of Trios, &c., for Female Voices. Nos. 267-273. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

HERE are seven more pieces, mostly of a trifling nature, suitable for the ladies' classes and choirs which have sprung up in such large numbers during the past few years. The first, "Whenever life some joy does bring," by Marie J. A. Wurm, has English and German words, is almost as simple as a hymn tune, and more diatonic than many modern hymn tunes. Consequently it is within the means of elementary singing classes. The next two numbers are also by Miss Wurm. "Under the greenwood tree" is of course a setting of Shakespeare's lines from "As you like it," and is equally unpretending and tuneful. "Good night" is more ambitious and contains some effective florid passages with a touch or two of tone-painting; but the piece is not difficult, and it is certainly piquant and generally pleasing. Different in character to any of the foregoing is "Hohenlinden," by Florence H. Marshall, a setting of lines, for choral recitation, by Campbell. The voices are in unison with an agitated accompaniment until a dozen bars before the close, when they divide into four

parts, the final cadence bringing an effective little piece to an impressive close. No. 271, "My true love hath my heart," by W. A. C. Cruickshank, is a light, tripping, and pretty part-song, with an *ad lib.* accompaniment. The unisonal close, *pianissimo*, is effective. Another dainty little piece is "Roger and Maggie," by C. Mühlfeld, the words taken from the German. It is in three parts, and is simplicity itself. The last for the present is "Little thoughts that grow," by Charles Harford Lloyd, very elegantly written and melodious, with a bright and charming accompaniment.

Six Pieces for the Violoncello. By G. Libotton.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

ALL these pieces show the hand of a skilful and experienced violoncellist. No. 1 is a clever study in D major, entitled "Etude Caprice"; it forms a kind of *moto perpetuo*, interrupted for a moment by a cantabile phrase, *piu lento*. No. 2 is a flowing and graceful Rêverie. The pianoforte accompaniment deserves notice; composers are apt, sometimes, to take the word "accompaniment" in a very limited sense; but here it is to a great extent evolved from the thematic material, and therefore interesting. No. 3 is an effective and not difficult transcription of a well-known "Caprice Hongrois." The lively principal theme, and its calm and well-contrasted middle section, are effectively presented by the solo instrument. No. 4 is a transcription of Chopin's lovely Nocturne in D flat (Op. 27, No. 2). It suits the violoncello so well that no one unacquainted with the fact would suspect that it was an arrangement. The same may be said of No. 5, which is Tchaikowsky's charming "Chant sans Paroles" for pianoforte. No. 6 is a setting of Schubert's "Du bist die Ruh'," a melody as pure as it is beautiful.

Sonata, for Pianoforte and Violin. By Arthur Hinton.

Sonate, No. 1, in D, für Pianoforte und Violine. Composit von W. H. Speer. Op. 4.

Romance, for Violin and Pianoforte. By J. S. R. Kirtland. [Brietkopf and Härtel.]

MR. HINTON'S Sonata is evidently the work of an earnest and ambitious musician; but so anxious is he to avoid the beaten track that his chromatic notes and modulations are certainly in excess of what one could reasonably desire. Of the three movements, the middle one, *Andante e mesto*, is the most satisfactory. Mr. Speer's Pianoforte and Violin Sonata presents several points of interest: the thematic material is attractive, and there is some good *concertante* writing. Moreover, the composer keeps within bounds, and his music may be easily followed. The connection between the principal themes of the first and last movements will not escape the notice of the careful listener. The Romance by Mr. Kirtland is graceful, but in a thoroughly Chopinesque vein.

Sérénade Espagnol. For Violin. By Gilbert R. Betjemann. [Robert Cocks and Co.]

WHAT may be termed drawing-room pieces for violin and pianoforte are now published in vast numbers, but they are mostly written in a style that may be described as elegant commonplace. Mr. Betjemann's composition is rather removed from the ordinary groove, and should therefore be welcome. The principal theme is expressive, and the accompaniment, with its semiquaver triplet at the commencement of each bar, suggests alike the twang of the guitar and the click of the castanets. There is an alternative section of a more agitated though less distinctive nature, after which the original theme returns, duly embellished, and a charming sketch comes to a *pianissimo* close.

Six Tenor Songs. By Frederick Corder.
[Forsyth Brothers.]

IN this album of lyrics tenor vocalists who are weary of ordinary sentimental ballads will find something of a higher class, but within the means of fairly well trained amateurs. Of course, inequalities are apparent, the shifting tonality in No. 2, "I ask of thee," giving the sense of labour and unquiet; while No. 1, "Mountain Song," No. 3, "Bright are the tiny billows," and No. 6, "Sing to me," are charmingly fresh and spontaneous. The accompaniment in all of the songs adds greatly to the effect.