

Review

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Philippi. A Sacred Cantata, or Church Oratorio. The words selected from the Scriptures by the Rev. J. Powell Metcalfe, M.A. The music composed by Francis Edward Gladstone, Mus. Doc., Cantab. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE words of this Cantata—recording the acts of SS. Paul and Silas in Macedonia—are exceedingly well selected for musical illustration, and the composition, avowedly designed for a “Church Oratorio,” will no doubt incite other composers to increase the list of such important contributions to our store of sacred works, especially when they can unite their talents with so zealous and conscientious an ally as Mr. Metcalfe. The purely religious style of Dr. Gladstone is admirably suited for the subject he has chosen; for although throughout the Cantata he has most sympathetically coloured the incidents of the narrative, in no part has he been betrayed into an ultra dramatic setting of the events which would in the slightest degree unfit the work for the sacred locality which should be its natural home. The unaccompanied Chorus which forms the Prologue, “How beautiful upon the mountains,” is an excellent example of pure and melodious four-part writing; and amongst the other choral movements, we must select for especial praise the Chorus of Disciples, “Why do the heathen,” the Chorus of Freed Prisoners, “We will rejoice,” and the final Chorus, “Now unto God.” The duet, “Thou, O Lord,” and the unaccompanied quintet, “Rejoice in the Lord,” must also be mentioned in terms of high admiration. The solos, too, breathe the spirit of true devotion, the soprano air, “O the depth,” perhaps taking higher rank than the others in a popular sense; although there is not even a Recitative which does not prove that the composer has really had his heart in the work. No doubt the Cantata would be additionally effective with the full orchestral accompaniments; but we are glad to find that a special organ part may be procured separately, which should certainly be used in the absence of a band. The growth of the “Church Oratorio” is a significant sign of the time; and sympathising as we do with the plan and design of such compositions, we heartily welcome so excellent a specimen as the one now under notice.

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun. Anthem for Four Voices. Composed by Sir John Goss. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

QUITE apart from its intrinsic merits, this Anthem will, without doubt, excite much interest amongst the very many ardent admirers of the genius of the late Organist of St. Paul's. It was left in an unfinished state at the death of the composer, and the difficult operation of completing it has been undertaken by Dr. Arthur Sullivan, whose few remarks by way of preface we append:—

“This Anthem was left by the late Sir John Goss completed down to the fifty-seventh bar. Numerous sketches altered and modified testify to the difficulty he seemed to encounter in continuing from that point. As none of them were satisfactory to him, I have not made use of them, but have continued and finished the Anthem in the endeavour to preserve the characteristics of his writing.”

To hear the first ten bars is quite sufficient to set aside all doubt as to who the composer is. We recognise an old and well-tried friend in one of his good moods. The general style of the writing, the broad, dignified and thoroughly vocal subjects, the knowledge of choral resource, all point to the composer of “Stand up and bless the Lord” and other anthems of even a more elevated stamp.

Dr. Sullivan's share is by no means unimportant. The part which immediately follows the fifty-seventh bar, to the words “And Israel shall dwell in safety, and the heavens shall drop down dew,” is entirely new, is exactly what was required in the way of contrast to what had gone before, and must be reckoned as an important feature. Shortly after this the resumption of the opening theme takes place, and from this point to the end Dr. Sullivan has carefully made use of ideas which occur early in the Anthem, and has contrived to imitate Sir John Goss's individuality of style with much success; at the same time, it must be admitted that he does not entirely hide his own personality, and we may add that we are very glad of it.

Novello's Music Primers. Edited by Dr. Stainer.

The Violoncello. By Jules De Swert.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE demand for able and popular Instruction-books for stringed instruments has so increased within the last few years that we may confidently predict for this latest addition to “Novello's Primers” an extensive sale. The violoncello is rapidly becoming a favourite amongst those cultivated amateurs who devote themselves more to the performance of classical chamber music than to that of orchestral works; and the use of this instrument in the domestic circle is likely to be still further increased when the first and second violins in quartets become more entrusted to the ladies of a family. It is impossible to imagine a tutor more sympathetic with the requirements of students, both of the instrument which it teaches, and of music itself, than the one before us; for not only are the important matters of bowing and holding the violoncello clearly explained (the latter by an excellent illustration), but the work commences with a short exposition of notes, clefs, and time. The exercises throughout show that the author has fully studied his subject, those upon double stops—in practising which the pupil is wisely recommended to play very slowly, in order to ensure purity of tone—and upon harmonics being especially well considered. We should certainly not recommend the study of the violoncello without the aid of a master; but should any enthusiastic amateur resolve to dispense with such assistance, we are certain that he can have no more reliable guide than the work under notice.

La Rédemption. Trilogie Sacrée. Paroles et Musique de Charles Gounod.

Die Erlösung. Geistliche Trilogie. Verfasst und Componirt von Charles Gounod. Die Deutsche Übersetzung von Josef Weyl.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THESE Octavo Editions of Gounod's popular oratorio—the one with French and the other with German words—will be warmly welcomed in the countries for which they are especially designed; but apart from this demand, which no doubt has led to so prompt a supply, there will be much interest in England, where the work was first heard, to see the original words united with the notes of the many pieces which have now become familiar in their translated form. A careful perusal of the French text shows that the composer in compiling his own libretto has evidently felt the music in every word; and bearing this in mind, much credit must be given to him for adhering so closely to the Scriptural text. The German version is excellent in every respect. It is easy enough to give a German rendering of the words, but to convey the spirit of each sentence when allied with music requires sympathy as well as knowledge, and this important requisite Herr Weyl undoubtedly evidences throughout his translation. The publication of the editions under notice sufficiently proves that the interest of the work is by no means confined to England; and, as we are informed that the copyright for Italy has been sold to Lucca, of Milan, for whom an Italian version will be prepared forthwith, it will be seen that the work is advancing on its travels throughout the musical world with a rapidity quite unprecedented. As in the editions with English words, the pianoforte accompaniment is by Mr. Berthold Tours.

Studi Critico-Musicali di Francis Hueffer. Tradotti dall' originale Inglese da Alberto Visetti.

[Milano: Ulrico Hoepli.]

THERE can be no doubt of the increasing interest shown of recent years by cultivated Italian *dilettanti*, and finding an echo in Italian journals devoted to the art—witness among others the newly-founded and admirably-conducted *Archivio Musicale* of Naples—in the modern development of music, as represented outside the limits of their country. In these circumstances the present issue of an Italian edition of Mr. Hueffer's “Musical Studies”—upon the prominent merits of which we fully commented at the time of their publication in 1880—while furnishing confirmatory evidence in the direction indicated, appears to be peculiarly opportune. Mr. Hueffer has a good deal to say that is new and