

Review

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taken of the anthem. He objected to its being spoken of and looked upon as a sort of "sop" thrown to the choir as a bribe. He supposed the Bishop thought that the object of an anthem was the glorification of the choir—an opinion which was much to be regretted. Church music should not be looked upon as ordinary music. When we offered music to God, it was not to excite criticism or discussion, for, beyond all doubt, its object was totally different. The Church Orchestral Society would be the means of providing orchestral music readily and cheaply in our churches, and he hoped that in the future they would be able to say that it had tended to raise the level of church music and added to the beauty and devotion of the services. If heartily supported, he was sure that the Society would be a success, for he felt certain that there was before it a great future.

Sir John Stainer has accepted the post of President of the Society for the ensuing year. The Secretary is the Hon. Richard Strutt, 70, Eccleston Square, to whom application should be made for membership and other particulars.

Ladies and gentlemen, *bond fide* members of the Church of England, are eligible for election as honorary or performing members.

THE MODERN MUSIC POEM.

PRECEDING A Concert given on the 17th ult. by Mr. Isidore de Lara, held by kind permission of Sir Joseph and Lady Mackenna, at 67, Lancaster Gate, M. Paul Milliet, editor of *Le Monde Artiste*, discoursed upon "The theories and errors of the modern music poem." That at least was the attractive title of his paper, which, however, dealt very little with the announced theories and errors, but chiefly with the methods of Wagner and the supposed ignorance of modern critics. In the opinion of the lecturer, any method of composition is only of service to him by whom it is invented, and those who are gifted should speak in the form that their genius dictates; composers, in fact, should avoid systems as they would fly from the plague. The musical poem, the lecturer said, had given rise to numberless theories. There was scarcely a composer or a poet but who would dictate how poetry and music should be united, but there were scarcely two who would agree. Wagner, by the power of his genius, was able to hide the weak places of his system, but it was not so with his imitators. To them Wagner's method was as much a hindrance and a snare as a giant's armour would be to a dwarf. Wagner maintained that the legend was a more suitable subject for musical treatment than the events of history; but Meyerbeer, in "Les Huguenots," had given as powerful a musical expression of the passions of *Raoul, Marcel, and Valentine* as Wagner had of the emotions of *Wotan, Fricka, and Brünnhilde*. Gluck effected a revolution in dramatic music. He said that the true function of music was to assist the poem, to strengthen the expression and the interest of the situations, and he had left the receipt which he had followed in the composition of "Alceste" and "Orfeo"—viz., preserve the truth in the declamation and the recitative, and do not hinder the action by superfluous ornamentations. But the observance of these axioms would not produce a masterpiece, because it was the *man* and not his *method* that made the greatness of a work. Methods were peculiar to the geniuses who invented them. Every artist worthy of the name evolved his own theories and systems, which were dependent on his mental peculiarities and the race from which he had sprung. Moreover, artists modified their deepest opinions according to circumstances. Of the many erroneous ideas to which the modern music poem had given birth there were none more striking than those which affected the treatment of melody. Composers strove to follow Gluck in making melody subservient to the text, and to imitate Wagner in surrounding it with harmonic complexities until reason was lost in wild fantasy. Melody, however, found a shelter from scientific complications in England. English composers preserved their sensitiveness to the simple beauty of melody. They put therein neither science nor system, but their heart. It was an old way, but there was never yet a better to stir the emotion of the listener. Why, then, was

so much heard of methods of composition? Why did not the critics show that a system of procedure was but the means by which the genius showed its taste? Why did they not show the disastrous consequences which resulted from a composer fettering himself with a system foreign to his genius? Why did not critics do their duty in this matter? Because they were ignorant. Of fifty writers who arrogated to themselves the right to discuss art, there were only ten who had the aptitude and the indispensable knowledge to do so. And what was worse, every one of the fifty thought himself included in the ten.

REVIEWS.

Original Compositions for the Organ. Nos. 198—210.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE appetite for new organ music may be said to grow by what it feeds upon, and it is difficult to keep pace with the stream of new publications that reach us every month. The first of the present series is a brief Offertoire in B flat, by Edward Cutler, an earnest and accomplished art-worker, though not a professional musician. The piece is an Allegro in 6-8 measure, with an alternative section or Trio in F, somewhat more sedate in character, but still cheerful. Though not difficult, the Offertoire contains a fair amount of work for the pedals. The next two numbers consist of a Meditation in A flat and a Postlude in C minor, by E. Duncan. The first is a placid but by no means ineffective Moderato written in the Legato style throughout; and the other, though more vigorous, is equally dignified and organ-like in manner. The unexpected burst into the tonic major key eight bars before the close is very effective. Nos. 201 and 202 are pieces by Albert Renaud. The first contains a Communion and a Prière, and the second a Fantasia Pastorale. Extreme simplicity characterises the first two sketches, and if the third is a little more elaborate, and certainly very piquant and delicate, it cannot be described as difficult, or beyond the means of fairly well practised amateurs. The next issue consists of a Prelude and Fugue in D minor, by E. Silas (Op. 120), the first portion of the work being vigorous and agitated, and the second somewhat mournful and elegiac. Both movements display much musicianly feeling, though the fugue subject is not elaborately developed. No. 204 contains a Reverie and Intermezzo, by B. Luard Selby, forming one extended piece in A flat and D flat, very sentimental and savouring rather of the modern French style of organ music, but certainly not to be condemned on that account. The next six numbers contain in all a dozen pieces, by J. Rheinberger. This esteemed German composer's admirably written and extremely effective music for the organ is not yet so widely known in this country as it deserves, but it is gradually forcing its way, and the present series of twelve sketches (Op. 174) will help, for while they are well worth the attention of accomplished executants, they do not abound in unnecessary difficulties, nor are they so lengthy as to prove wearisome to ordinary listeners. They are in various styles, from grave to gay, if the latter term may be legitimately employed in connection with organ music.

Ballet d'Autrefois (Old-World Ballet). *Petite Scène à deux personnages.* Poème de Georges Boyer. Musique de Benjamin Godard. [Joseph Williams.]

M. BENJAMIN GODARD, the talented French composer, has written much, and if in some of his works there are signs of hasty workmanship, he has produced others of real merit. This *Petite Scène* is a *genre* piece containing some delightfully fresh, picturesque music; the consecutives in the pastoral section in D flat are of quaint effect. One of the personages is a young lord (tenor voice), who first compliments a dancer, and then describes the ballet which he has just seen, and in which she (the second personage) has taken part; while he describes, she mimics the principal performers in it. All that this "Scène" wants is a good singer, a clever dancer, and a refined accompanist.