

Review

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THE annual report of the Belfast Philharmonic Society shows that, both artistically and financially, its progress is in the highest degree satisfactory. The Concerts of the past season—including that in which the third part of Schumann's "Faust" was given for the first time in Belfast—have been thoroughly successful; in a great measure owing to the unremitting zeal and labours of the Conductor, Herr Beyschlag, and the assiduity and punctual attendance of all the executants. The services of Mr. John Shillington, the honorary Organist, are also mentioned in warm terms of praise.

THE Wolverhampton Triennial Festival, in aid of the funds of the Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire General Hospital, and the Wolverhampton Eye Infirmary, will take place on the 16th and 17th inst. We have only to supplement our former notice of the general arrangements of the meeting by announcing that the principal vocalists will be Madame Valleria, Mrs. Hutchinson, Miss Hilda Wilson, Mr. E. Lloyd, Mr. Piercy, Mr. Watkin Mills, Mr. Robert Grice, and Mr. Santley; leader of the band and solo violin, Mr. Carrodus; Conductor, Dr. Swinnerton Heap, F.C.O.; and Organist, Mr. J. Roper, F.C.O.

MR. SYDNEY SHAW appeals to the lovers of sacred music for support in the expenses of producing his new Oratorio "Gethsemane," at St. James's Hall, towards the end of October. The work was to have been performed in Leipzig (the composer being a certificated student of the Conservatoire in that city), under the direction of Dr. Reinecke; but circumstances prevented it, and it will now be given, under distinguished patronage, for the first time, before an English public. We sincerely wish the young composer every success.

A COMPETITION of Choral Societies for a prize of £100 took place on the 23rd ult., at the Liverpool Exhibition, in the presence of a very large audience, who manifested much interest in the contests. Four societies competed: The Liverpool Cambrian, the Burslem Tonic Sol-fa, the Manchester Philharmonic, and the Nottingham Philharmonic. The adjudicators, Mr. Henry Leslie, Dr. Joseph Parry, and Mr. Walter Burnett, awarded the prize to the Nottingham Choir, and placed the other competitors as follows:—Burslem, second; Liverpool, third; Manchester, fourth.

A CYCLE of six Historical Harpsichord and Pianoforte Recitals to be given by Herr Bonawitz on Saturday afternoons, commencing October 30, at the Portman Rooms, Baker Street, promises to be of the highest interest. The programmes include specimens of the composers of all times and nations, and are admirably arranged. It is Herr Bonawitz's intention to give the same series in America, in the Spring of next year. Each Recital will occupy about one hour and forty minutes.

MR. S. MIDGLEY forwards us programmes of Chamber Concerts given by him at Bradford from September 23, 1874, to April 20, 1886, all of which contain the best specimens of the highest classical music. Such earnest appeals to the artistic taste of the local public reflect the utmost credit upon Mr. Midgley; and we sincerely wish him success in the future, especially as we find that there is scarcely one of his programmes which does not include the name of an English composer.

AN Organ Recital was given in St. Anne's Church, Wandsworth, on the evening of the Dedication Festival, July 26, by the Organist and Choirmaster, Mr. Frederick W. Doe. The programme included Toccata and Fugue in D minor (Bach), Andante in E minor and Grand Offertoire in D major (Bach), Sonata, No. 2, and "I waited for the Lord" (Mendelssohn), March in E flat (Wély), and "Hallelujah" (Handel). The offertories were devoted to the Organ Restoration Fund.

On the 12th ult. the choir and a member of the congregation of St. Chad's, Haggerston, presented Mr. Chas. O. M. Philips (on his resigning his post as Organist and Choirmaster) with a testimonial consisting of an ebony *bâton*, handsomely mounted in silver, and an illuminated address on vellum.

THE orchestra engaged for Leeds is that of the London Philharmonic Society, with some additions, and consists almost exclusively of English artists.

AMONG the attractions of Malvern this season are Classical Chamber Concerts, given every Saturday afternoon in the Assembly Hall connected with the Pleasure Gardens. The performers are members of the band attached to the same place; Herr Hartung, a pupil of Spohr, holding the first violin.

MR. W. G. WOOD has been giving a series of Organ Recitals at the Congregational Church, Southwold, with much success during the past month. His programmes have comprised selections from Handel, Bach, Mendelssohn, Greene, Smart, and compositions of his own.

MR. SINCLAIR DUNN has been engaged for the principal tenor and Miss Susetta Fenn for the principal mezzo-soprano parts in the new comic Opera "The Fairy Ring," by Herr J. Liebig and Mr. Oswald Brand, to be produced at the Grand Theatre on October 4.

THE announcement of the death of the Abbé Liszt was received in Edinburgh musical circles on the 2nd ult. with the most profound regret. In the afternoon, at the Organ Recital given in the International Exhibition, Mr. William Harrison played "The Dead March" from "Saul."

MR. ARTHUR O'LEARY has been appointed Professor of the Pianoforte in the Crystal Palace School of Science and Art.

WE are requested to state that Mr. Arthur Fagge has been appointed Conductor of the Chelsea Musical Society, in place of Mr. H. J. Ollive, resigned.

A MONTHLY journal of Catholic Church music has been started in Baltimore by the Choirmaster of the Cathedral there.

REVIEWS.

Ole Bull. A Memoir. By Sara C. Bull.
[T. Fisher Unwin.]

THIS chatty and genial volume, written by Ole Bull's widow, though scarcely helping us to determine the exact rank in which he stood as a musician, nevertheless presents a vivid portrait of a highly gifted and attractive figure. His *bonhomie*, his fervid patriotism, his repeated efforts to further the cause of culture in Norway, and improve the denationalised musical taste of his fellow countrymen are illustrated again and again in these pages, and extort the admiration of the reader. The first named trait is exemplified in the following truly charming anecdote told by Ole Bull himself to a Brooklyn friend:—"I was announced to play at Hartford, Connecticut. Arriving late in the afternoon I hurried to a barber's shop. While I was getting shaved, the boot-black, a coloured boy, rattled off some lively tunes on a fiddle. When I praised him he seemed pleased, saying, 'Yes, Mister; I can beat any man in Hartford.' Noticing how he worked and stretched to gain the high notes, I asked him if there were no other means of obtaining them. He gave me a look as much as to say, 'What do you know about a fiddle, anyhow?' adding that there was no other way. I took his fiddle, and illustrated my suggestion by playing harmonics. The boy stood with open-mouthed wonder, and I, returning the instrument, left the shop. On reaching the street above, I could not refrain from looking down through the window. There he sat scratching his head, and then the violin, the very picture of perplexity, trying to solve the mystery of harmonics. I sent him a ticket to my concert. After it was over I saw that negro boy standing in the aisle, battling with himself whether to come forward or not. I beckoned him, and with plaintive voice he said: 'Mister, can't you come down to the shop to-morrow to get shaved, and show me those tricks? I feel powerful bad!' I promised him I would, and I kept my word." This was sheer goodness of heart, but the same *bonhomie* had its dangers in tempting him to sink artistic considerations in the desire to please. Thus we learn that at a Concert in New York, in 1877, after the tenth recall, he played "We won't go home till morning." Imagine Joachim doing such a thing! And yet Joachim had a high opinion of Ole Bull, as may be gathered from his having said to Björnstjerne Björnson, "Faults in Ole Bull's playing are more noticeable as he advances in age; but no artist in our time has possessed Ole Bull's poetic

power: no one has ever surpassed his playing of the Adagio. I think all his cultivated auditors will say the same" (p. 321). As might naturally be expected, not the least interesting parts of the book are those which treat of his relations with the great artists of the century. The anecdotes of Liszt have a double interest at the present time, and those of Malibran only enhance the high opinion which posterity has been led to form of her witchery and talent. Ole Bull's life was full of romantic episodes, and on more than one occasion his great personal strength alone saved him from imminent danger. Another feature brought prominently before us in this memoir was his fondness for indulging his tastes as a collector, whether it was an Arabian horse, an old Spanish master, or a rare violin that caught his fancy. His own "violin notes," including descriptions of his own violins, which forms an appendix, are exceedingly interesting reading, the gem of the whole treatise being, however, a most admirable and graphic account of Paganini's appearance at his last Parisian Concert in the year 1832. Eminently attractive though this memoir undoubtedly is, the musician will find it sadly wanting in precise technical information. We seldom find any definite mention of what Ole Bull played, and the criticisms, chiefly American, of his performances are of a rhapsodic and extravagant nature. It would seem as though his *répertoire* was a small one, and mainly confined to his own compositions or those of Paganini. No mention of the Beethoven or Mendelssohn violin concertos occurs throughout the whole work. We learn that he entertained an inordinately high opinion of Spanish music, but was also an enthusiastic admirer of Mozart. If the perusal of this memoir is hardly calculated to dispel the charges so often launched against Ole Bull of charlatany and *ad captandum* performance, it should be borne in mind that its anecdotic and unscientific character may be largely responsible for this impression. Here and there we encounter testimony such as that of Joachim quoted above, of Edward Grieg, of Liszt, or, in a different department, of Helmholtz (see p. 260-1), which render it hard for us to accept as a just or generous estimate the exceedingly harsh criticism passed upon him in Mr. Brown's recently published "Dictionary of Musicians," and which runs as follows:—"Bull enjoyed a great notoriety in his day, and was regarded by many as a performer of extraordinary attainments. His talents were excessively lauded for a time by careless or incompetent writers, but he was regarded by well-informed musicians as little better than a charlatan. His technical skill on the violin was great, and if it had been used in a legitimate manner might have secured for him a high place amongst instrumental performers. As it is, he is only remembered by the vulgar for his astonishing tricks and daring and original methods of advertising. His works possess no value, and are rarely performed." In spite of this sweeping condemnation, we can cordially recommend this memoir as the brightest and liveliest of the light musical books published this year. We should notice, in conclusion, that the author is guilty of occasional slips. For instance, with what amount of accuracy can it be asserted, as a motive for Ole Bull's desire to visit Paris in 1830, that he wanted to hear Berlioz? Berlioz, if we mistake not, had still considerable difficulty at that date in finding a hearing for himself.

The Crown of Roses. Cantata for Female Voices. Written by Edward Oxenford. Composed by J. Allanson Benson. [Wood and Co.]

THE argument of this Cantata is thus stated: "In several parts of Switzerland a very pretty custom obtains. On a certain day in the early summer the peasant maidens assemble, and proceed to the mountains in search of the Edelweiss, and she who is so fortunate as first to come across this coveted flower is, upon again reaching her village, crowned with roses by her fellow-searchers, and proclaimed Queen of the Village for the ensuing year. In addition to the honour thus conferred, the finding of the first plant of Edelweiss is popularly supposed to carry with it a spell of good fortune." There can be no doubt that a simple subject like this requires an equally simple musical setting; but the most quiet and unpretentious composition may be treated so artistically as to engage the earnest attention of all musical auditors, and yet never to travel

beyond the comprehension of ordinary drawing-room amateurs. This we do not see in Mr. Benson's Cantata. It is melodious, well adapted to the words, and in no part taxes severely the powers either of the vocalist or the pianist; but the phrases are somewhat trite, the harmonies tame, and in many places the writing is faulty. As examples of these we may cite the doubling of the dissonant note, proceeding in octaves with the bass to its resolution (page 5, bar 4); the progression of the bass in consecutive perfect fifths with the voice part (page 43, bar 12), and several other points which want of space prevents us from mentioning. Many of the choral pieces, however, are extremely effective, and the duet "Oh it is sweet o'er the heights" may be cited as a good specimen of the composer's feeling for light dramatic music.

Four Two-part Songs. With pianoforte accompaniment. Composed by Charles Vincent, Mus. Doc., Oxon. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE melodiousness and simplicity of these two-part songs will doubtless recommend them to unambitious amateurs, and especially to schools, where the necessity of singing a second should be strongly impressed upon the pupils. No. 1, "Bright Summer" (words by Leigh Hunt), has a bright, flowing theme, the voices singing together almost throughout; No. 2, "Thoughts of Home o'er the deep" (words by Mrs. Hemans), includes some occasional short solos; No. 3, "The Sailor's Lullaby" (words by S. Cobb), is a placid melody, harmonised for the two voices, with but few breaks, and in happy sympathy with the words, the song (in 6-4 rhythm) being accompanied with continuous quavers; and No. 4, "A Holiday" (words by Victor Bede), is distinguished from the rest by the constant separation of the two voices—the second singing responsive phrases to the first—and the introduction of solo parts, with a change of key. Although extremely unpretentious, all the songs may be made effective by equally unpretentious singing.

Douze Pièces pour Piano. Par G. Flaxland. [Edwin Ashdown.]

IN spite of much eccentricity, both in the construction and harmonic progressions of these pieces, there is very decided indication of talent, which we should like to see exercised on some compositions of more solid and tangible form. As in literature, those who begin with thoughtful and important works may often, in their holiday moments, throw off with success some light and unpretentious sketches; but those who commence with these, too often end there. It is a severe test of a composer's power to publish twelve small works of this character in one volume, for with such titles as stand at the head of each in this collection we are led to expect more than we get. No. 1, "Berceuse," for instance, merely suggests a "Slumber Song" from its monotony; No. 3, "Pantomime," but faintly realises the character intended by the composer; and No. 4, "Souvenance," is wearisome in its patchiness. The best movements are the dance tunes, all of which are attractive. "Flûte e Violoncelle" and "Cloches et Horloge" have, however, much merit; and in the short "Bluette" we have both smooth and effective writing. Some of the harmonies show that the composer is a little uncertain in the notation of his chords; as, for example, in the third line of the "Gavotte," which would be somewhat difficult to figure, especially where the B flat changes to A sharp on the same bass note.

The Crucifixion and the Resurrection. An Oratorio. By J. Clarke-Whitfield. [Weekes and Co.]

THE compositions of Dr. Clarke-Whitfield are now rarely heard, even in our Cathedrals, for reasons not difficult to explain. He was an able musician, but he lived during what is sometimes termed the dark age of English Church music, when the glorious line of composers, with Purcell at their head, had become extinct, and the modern revival, which is now bearing such rich fruit, had not commenced. The present work was composed for the Festival of the Three Choirs at Hereford, where Clarke-Whitfield was organist, and it was performed in 1822 and again in 1825. This, however, is the first time that it has been published in octavo form, and the hope is expressed that, now it is accessible, Choral Societies will deem it worthy