

Review

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Home, sweet Home. Transcription for the Pianoforte, by Aloys Hennes. [Enoch and Sons.]

WE should be very glad if composers would more accurately describe their works upon the title-pages. Thalberg does not term his Fantasia upon "Home, sweet home" a "Transcription;" and why then should Aloys Hennes so name a "Rêverie" or "Meditation" upon the same theme, more especially when the subject is not once given in its simple unadorned beauty? As an air with variations the piece should find a ready acceptance; for, although possessing no claim to originality of treatment, the passages are graceful and refined, lie easily under the hands, and are sufficiently sympathetic with the character of the melody to fall pleasantly on the ear. The fingering too will be found an assistance to amateurs, who, although not much advanced, may rest assured that they will encounter no formidable difficulties.

Gavotte in E minor, for the Pianoforte, by E. Silas. [Ashdown and Parry.]

JUDGING from this specimen, Mr. Silas seems to possess a very decided talent for the composition of the old dance-music; and although in the present day we are inundated with similar pieces, a Gavotte such as the one before us must be always welcome. It is something to say that the opening theme strikes us as being extremely original, and that the subject, in the tonic major, is not only refreshing by contrast, but very melodious and characteristic. The majority of the modern Gavottes, Bourrées, Sarabandes, &c., are so thoroughly conventional that Mr. Silas has a right to congratulate himself upon producing a composition which does not rely wholly upon its antique form as a recommendation.

Caprice à la Gavotte, pour le Pianoforte, par C. J. Duchemin. [B. Williams.]

THE admirers of the old dance-tunes, upon which some of our best composers have exercised their talents, are not likely to complain that the supply falls short of the demand. Reviewers, however, who are constantly called upon for their judgment upon these works, kindly as they may feel disposed, have a hard task before them; for where the family likeness is so strong it becomes somewhat perplexing to seize on any special characteristics upon which to comment. The composition before us is no exception to this rule. The form and spirit of the Gavotte have been well caught by the composer, the second subject, in the subdominant, being more tuneful even than the principal theme; but it would puzzle us to say that any point deserves more than the ordinary praise due to satisfactory workmanship. Being essentially a Gavotte—and a very simple and unpretending one too—we see no reason why it should be termed a "Caprice à la Gavotte."

Polonaise, for the Pianoforte, composed by Edward Hecht. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE composer of this Polonaise has already shown not only that he is an accomplished musician, but that he has thoroughly mastered the scholastic drudgery necessary to be passed through before aspiring to the position of a composer. But when the end has been attained, we care not for any display of the means by which it has been arrived at; and yet that the "Polonaise" form has been used in the composition before us as a peg upon which to exhibit specimens of the author's theoretical knowledge no unprejudiced person can doubt. We say this with less hesitation because we have awarded well-deserved praise to many of this composer's works, every one of which indicates a very decided creative talent, and we should be sorry indeed if he were to desert the path he has so successfully chosen. Advanced pianists will find some excellent practice in the "Polonaise," which has a well-marked principal theme; but a want of what musicians term "repose" will be felt both by player and listener which can scarcely be compensated for by the artistic workmanship displayed throughout the piece.

Four Album Leaves, for the Pianoforte, composed by R. F. Dale. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THESE four pianoforte sketches, although unequal in merit, show a commendable desire to escape from mere commonplace; but in attempting to be original the composer occasionally becomes merely eccentric. No. 1 we care less about than its companions; but No. 2, in spite of the wide skips, which would tax the powers of an amateur to play correctly, has much merit. No. 3, an Andante, in F minor, is cleverly written and melodious; but surely the manner in which the two hands occasionally jostle each other can scarcely be said to add to the beauty of the passages. In No. 4 we have a good specimen of Mr. Dale's power of writing freely for both hands, the passages being less laboured than many in the preceding numbers. These "Album Leaves" seem to prove that something more than graceful trifles may be expected from their author.

Sweet and Low. Song. Words by Alfred Tennyson, D.C.L.

I arise from dreams of thee. Song. Words by Percy B. Shelley.

A New Year's Burden. Song. Words by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Music composed by Florence A. Marshall.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

NONE but those whose business it is to make themselves acquainted with the various so-called "new" songs which are continually issuing from the press can have the least idea of the quantity of commonplace inanity and twaddle which in these effusions is mostly offered to the public. The general recipe for the manufacture of a new song is somewhat as follows: take a commonplace phrase of eight bars—if after the style of Balfe, so much the better; follow it by a second phrase, also of eight bars, modulating into the dominant; return to the original key, with an allusion to the sub-dominant, and conclude with another eight-bar phrase; accompany with well-worn arpeggios, and season to taste with Italian phrases, "con espressione," &c. It is no exaggeration to say that a large proportion of new songs are constructed on this model; our readers will therefore not be surprised that many which are sent to this journal for review are never noticed at all.

It is with the more pleasure that from time to time the reviewer is rewarded by the discovery of a few gems in the middle of the heaps of rubbish which it is his duty to peruse. Now and then he finds songs which do contain something fresh in their ideas, and which are written with true musical feeling. Such are the three songs now under notice, which we may say at once strike us as being very far above the average. We do not know whether the composer is an amateur; but if she be, she displays an amount of skill which very few amateurs possess. Excepting one passage of accompaniment in "I arise from dreams of thee," of which we shall speak presently, we find only highly finished workmanship, while the melodies throughout are graceful, pleasing, and for the most part free from reminiscences.

"Sweet and Low" contains the only exception to this remark. The rise from the third to the sixth of the scale (in the third and fourth bars of the melody) is identical with that in Mr. Barnby's setting of the same words; the harmony is also similar; but the resemblance is only for two notes, and is in all probability accidental. The whole song is very charming; the rocking figure of accompaniment in the left hand is well sustained, and the modulations are well managed. We especially like the changes of harmony on the word "sleep" (page 4, line 2) and the effect of the augmented common chord in the last bar of page 3, line 3.

"I arise from dreams of thee" pleases us as a whole even more than the song just noticed. We think it a pity that the composer has (in Italian fashion) given only one note to the first two syllables of the words; this, however, singers can easily alter. The middle portion (*agitato*) of this song is particularly good. There is one passage in

the accompaniment (as mentioned above) that is clumsy and needs reconsideration:—



We would also ask whether in the last line of the last page, at the first bar, the lower G of the second minim in the bass is not a misprint for A? We mention these matters not captiously, but because the song is so very good as to deserve making as perfect as possible.

"A New Year's Burden," while perhaps the most original of the three songs, is, to our thinking, hardly so attractive as the other two. This, however, is simply a question of individual taste; and it is by no means impossible that some singers may prefer it to its two companions. In any case, it is excellent music. If these three songs are to be taken as fair specimens of what Mrs. Marshall can do, we shall be happy to meet with some more music from the same pen.

[E. J. Whateley writes to say that her tune in the "Christian Hymnal," with which we found fault in our number of last February, was an unauthorised and inaccurate arrangement, for which the editor was alone responsible. We gladly transfer our blame to the right quarter.—Ed. MUSICAL TIMES.]

FOREIGN NOTES.

THERE is but little of general interest to be recorded in these columns during this stagnant season of the year, when operatic establishments abroad are closed for the usual long vacation, and concert undertakings generally are more or less influenced by the elevated state of the thermometer in the choice of, and the artistic interest attaching to, their respective performances. There is no vacation, however, for the exigencies of modern journalism, and, notwithstanding the present scanty supply of special topics for the purpose of comment and criticism, the musical press tenaciously holds to the famous device of Galileo: "E pur si muove." Nor is this fact without its decided advantages. The period of comparative inactivity in matters musical offers a fit opportunity for instructive retrospective views upon the work accomplished in the course of the past campaign, while at the same time space is allotted to valuable contributions bearing upon the art for which during the height of the season no room could be found. Thus in the number of foreign journals received during the past month we find an unusual proportion of well-digested essays of the class referred to, which almost makes us wish to see the present "barren season" more protracted still, and which quite compensates for the mass of ephemeral criticism which a more active period necessarily carries in its sway. We shall not fail, when opportunity occurs, to communicate a translation of these articles to our readers.

Referring once more to the performances in connection with the recent meeting of the Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Verein at Hanover, mention should be made of the representation, extending over four successive evenings, of Goethe's "Faust," with the incidental music by Lassen, a work which in its complete form had only once before been performed some time ago at Weimar. In view of the costly and ostentatious representations at Bayreuth last year of "Der Ring des Nibelungen," which likewise occupied four days, the tardy justice thus rendered to one of the greatest masterpieces of all ages becomes the more conspicuous. The German press is unanimous in its praise of the very artistic and liberal manner in which the drama was placed on the stage, presenting as it does, especially in its second part, a series of difficulties which would seem to be almost insurmountable. In estimating

the importance of this event the fact should also be taken into consideration that from a financial point of view a representation of this kind must always remain a failure.

Franz Liszt, who has long since retired from the sphere of active *virtuosi*, has greatly added to the long list of his enthusiastic admirers by his exceptional appearance at the pianoforte, both on the occasion of the above meeting at Hanover and latterly also at Jena. The fascination which this unique artist exercised of old upon his audience seems to have increased rather than diminished, if we are to judge by the reports published in some of the German papers.

According to the *Signale* the members of the *personnel* of the opera at Graz are setting a good example. It appears that the receipts of this institution have of late shown a considerable falling off, in consequence of which the vocal artists engaged have unanimously decided to forego the payment of 30 per cent of their respective salaries in order to assist the proprietors in tiding over their present difficulties. The members of the orchestra are said to be as yet somewhat reluctant in adopting a similar course.

Mdlle. Biba, a charming young Hungarian singer, made her *début* towards the close of the season at the Royal Opera at Berlin, when, in the character of *Aennchen*, in "Der Freischütz," she created so favourable an impression that her services were at once secured for the coming season. The young artist is likely to become a great favourite with the Berlin public.

A German Operatic Company, under the direction of Herr Ferenczy, is just now engaged upon a *tournee* through Sweden and Norway. The company numbers forty-seven executive members, among which may be named Madame Sadler-Grün, known to London audiences through her co-operation at the recent Wagner concerts. To judge by the enthusiastic reception which the performance of "Der Freischütz" and other operas met with at Bergen, the venture is likely to prove a success both from an artistic and pecuniary point of view.

Preparations on a large scale are being made at the Munich Court Theatre for the performance in 1878 of the entire "Ring des Nibelungen." The first and second part of the Tetralogy have already been several times given at the Bavarian capital, and the contemplated representation of the complete work during next year will be preceded by the separate productions of "Siegfried" and "Götterdämmerung." Herr Wagner, after his recent stay at Ems for the purpose of recruiting his health, intends spending some weeks in Switzerland, where, says the *Neue Berliner Musik-Zeitung*, he will find the isolation necessary for the continuance of the work upon which he has been for some time engaged.

We read in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* that Herr Chandon, the German bass singer, has been engaged for next season at Her Majesty's Theatre, with a view to his co-operation in the intended representation of several of Herr Wagner's opera-dramas.

A new opera from the pen of Flotow is expected shortly to make its appearance on the German stage. It is entitled "Die Musikanten," the authors of the libretto being MM. Genée and Zell.

During the past season fifty-two different operatic works were represented at the Court Theatre of Vienna. Among these Richard Wagner takes the lead with six operas and thirty-seven performances; very close upon the latter follows Meyerbeer, with likewise six operas and thirty-four representations; next ranks Verdi, with five operas and twenty-nine representations. Mozart obtained a hearing on only eleven occasions, Weber only on four.

The Vienna *Fremdenblatt* has recently published an interesting list of the many excellent vocal artists who have emanated from the school of the Viennese professor Madame Marchesi. Among these we notice the names of Gabrielle Krauss (the Paris *prima donna*) Madame Ilma di Murska, Mdles. d'Angeri and Smeroschi, Mdle. Etelka Gerster, and many others less familiar to the English public. Besides these executive artists, Madame Marchesi has educated a number of ladies who perpetuate her system by teaching, both in Vienna and elsewhere.