

Review

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Songs. Composed by L. Van Beethoven. Vol. I. The English version by the Rev. Dr. Troutbeck.
[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

No more effectual protest against the meretricious vocal works of the day can be devised than the publication, in a cheap form, of this volume of songs. We should, of course, not think of enlarging upon the exceptional beauties of such compositions as "Adelaide," "A Song of Penitence," "A Song of May," "Mignon's song," "Hope," and many others contained in the book before us were we only appealing to musicians; but amateurs—even those who profess a real love for the art—a rule, know but little of the rich legacy bequeathed to them by the great writers; and we are certain, therefore, that they will thank us for directing their attention to the songs of one who, like Shakespeare, has written "for all time." We may also say that the English version is not only an excellent translation, but truly sympathetic with the music.

I cried unto God. A Sacred Cantata. By John William Jackson. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE words of this brief Cantata are taken from the seventy-seventh and the hundredth Psalms, Bible version. It consists of nine numbers, of which the final fugue is the most important. In this the composer displays some fairly good musicianship; but, speaking generally, his writing is rather feeble and colourless. The music flows on smoothly enough and gives no offence, though it is expressive of nothing in particular. Mr. Jackson is not to blame for this, as individuality is a gift, and those who have it not can only make up for its want by industry and learning. This Cantata is dedicated to the Macclesfield Philharmonic Society; by whom it will be performed on the 19th inst.

FOREIGN NOTES.

THE Bayreuth Festival performances, as has now been definitely decided upon, will be resumed in 1888, when, in addition to "Parsifal" and "Tristan und Isolde," that most charming, and likewise most truly popular production of Wagner's genius, "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg," is to be included in the model representations of the master's music dramas. The necessary guarantee fund has, it is said, already been subscribed for, among the contributors being several French admirers of the reformer's works. Thus, the perpetuation of an altogether unique undertaking would seem to be financially assured for the present, while the difficulties attendant upon an annual re-assembling in the small Bavarian town of the *élite* of German executive artists, together with the special preparations necessary for the mounting of so elaborate a work as "Die Meistersinger," sufficiently account for the decision on the part of the committee of the "Festspiele" to postpone their resumption over next year. It is stated, that notwithstanding the greatly increased expenses, the recent Bayreuth performances have yielded a clear profit of some 15,000 marks; a result signifying an increase on the average attendance at the Festspielhaus which is largely owing to the steadily growing appreciation of Wagner's works on the part of music-lovers of all nationalities, and especially of France. We have referred before now to the propaganda for Wagner which is being actively, though of late not very noisily, carried on in the French capital, and, notwithstanding the numerous opponents, on "patriotic" grounds, to the movement, there are many signs that the works of the German master will find, ere long, a home on the French stage, and will be at least as much appreciated in this, their proper sphere, as they already are in the concert-rooms of that country. Whether M. Lamoureux, the zealous exponent, in concert-form, of Wagner's music in Paris will be the first to lead the way in the above direction appears as yet uncertain, his scheme of producing "Lohengrin" and "Die Walküre" during the coming winter at the Eden Theatre having, it is rumoured, been abandoned for the present. In the poet-composer's native country, on the other hand, his music-dramas continue to be by far the most attractive in the *répertoires* of operatic stages. Even the gigantic "Nibelungen" Tetralogy forms no exception to this experience, the recent twice repeated performance of which at the Dresden Hof-Theater, before crowded audiences, created the utmost enthusiasm. At the Berlin Opera, the con-

cluding part of the same work, "Götterdämmerung," is to be produced during the present season, "Siegfried" having been brought out here last year, while the performance of the entire Tetralogy—already repeatedly accomplished by the majority of the leading lyrical establishments of the fatherland—still awaits its realisation on the foremost operatic stage of its capital.

Richard Wagner's widow, Frau Cosima, has presented a set of jewellery to Frau Materna and a valuable goblet to Herr Winkelmann, in recognition of the services rendered by these artists at the recent Bayreuth performances, and for which they had accepted no pecuniary remuneration.

The Berlin Opera re-opened its doors on August 26, with a performance of Wagner's "Lohengrin." Heinrich Hofmann's new operatic work "Donna Diana," to be brought out during this month, will be the first novelty of the season.

Some interesting details are stated in German papers relative to the origin of the Spanish National Hymn, the composer of which, it appears, is no other than Frederick the Great, the warrior-king of Prussia. It was after a gala reception at Berlin, so the story goes, that the versatile monarch, in a jocular way, presented to the Spanish ambassador a manuscript composition of his own—a military march. The diplomatist, feeling flattered, and desirous of pleasing his majesty in return, at once forwarded the document to Madrid, where it was engraved, and shortly after executed by all the military bands. Here the complimentary part of the transaction ended; not so, however, the historical record of the royal composition, which became rapidly popular with the Castilians, and under the name of "Marcha Real" remains the representative National Hymn of Spain to this day. Some two decades ago, indeed, Marshal Serrano opened a competition for the composition of a *marcha nacional*. Five hundred musicians sent in their manuscripts, but not one of them was found worthy of being awarded the prize, and thus the musical talents of the royal amateur of Prussia remain conspicuously *en evidence* in the southern peninsula.

While on the subject of national hymns, we may quote the following interesting narrative, quoted in the *Pall Mall Gazette* from the *Strassburger Post*, anent the origin of the music wedded to verses representative of that newly resuscitated nation of whom we have heard so much lately—the Bulgarians:—"In the summer of 1876," says the journal in question, "during the exciting interval for the Balkan people between the Servian-Turkish and the Turkish-Russian wars, a German musician was employed at Adrianople in teaching a dozen Turkish recruits to play the horn. The place of instruction was the court of a half-ruined mosque in the valley between the Tundscha and Maritza. The heat was fearful; the Turkish recruits made such hideous sounds with their instruments that the German master was in despair, and declared that the Turks must be the most unmusical people in the world. He patiently repeated his lessons day after day, but his scholars made hardly any perceptible progress. In the intervals of his lessons he used to indulge himself with playing his own favourite melody—one much in vogue in Southern Germany—

Dein Wohl, mein Liebchen, trink ich in goldenem Wein,
Könn't'ich, ach, könn't'ich, bei dir, du Holde, sein.

His musical longings to be near his fair one were heard and enjoyed by the Christian natives. He soon noticed that all the young Bulgarian lads were whistling and singing the German melody in the fields and lanes. The words, of course, they could neither catch nor understand. But the tune exactly fitted the metre of the new political and national song, 'Dschumna Maritza'; and by some unknown person, or by a popular impulse, it was appropriated and acclimatised to the Slav verses."

The name of the composer of this German song is not mentioned in the above narrative, neither can we find the lines quoted in our copious collection of German Volkslieder. Perhaps one of our readers can furnish some information on this subject. The song in point probably is of comparatively modern production. The question is interesting enough in itself, and will become more so if, as it is to be hoped, the Bulgarians will be able to maintain and consolidate their separate national existence. Numerous pens have been employed from time to time in search of the true