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Watchfulness: The Parable of the Ten Virgins. A Cantata for Treble and Contralto Voices by W. A. Barrett; Henry Hiles

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ballad, which depends for expressive effect more upon the singer than the song. Ambitious music would not in the least have suited so bucolic a theme, and this Mr. Pinsuti had, of course, discernment enough to see.

Love that hath us in the net,
Can he pass, and we forget?

The two verses beginning thus—from the same poem as the words of the song preceding—were entrusted to Mr. J. L. Hatton, who has done well with them, considering their somewhat jerky character. This is another *allegretto* in F major, and in simple style. But Mr. Hatton rarely composes even an unaffected song without showing the hand of a master, and several points in the present little work at once arrest attention on that account. After the author of "To Anthea" follows Mr. Robert Jackson with the well-known "Death of the Old Year"—

Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing.

In our opinion Mr. Jackson has by no means done justice to the pathetic beauty of his theme. His music is a plainly harmonised melody in C minor, with a chorus in C major of no special character, and made like a Psalm tune to accompany the varying expression of many verses. This lyric has yet to be set. We have next the editor himself, who comes with a part-song, *grave*, in F minor, to the stirring yet majestic lines, beginning—

Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet:
Above her shook the starry lights:
She heard the torrents meet.

Mr. Cusins's well-developed composition may not be accused of commonplace; indeed, the first and more serious portion shows rather a determined effort to be distinctive, which in a great measure succeeds. The utterance of the music is bold and sonorous, like that of the verse, whilst an occasional ruggedness of harmony makes the association still more complete. A change to triple time (*andante*), and the tonic major on the words, "May perpetual youth keep dry their light from tears," affords a charming contrast, and altogether this part-song must be accounted a good thing. Mr. Cusins further undertook the setting of some rather unlyrical verses from "Audley Court"—

Oh! who would fight and march and counter-march,
Be shot for sixpence in a battle-field?

We are inclined to doubt the propriety of selecting these verses at all, but as the Editor gallantly took them himself there is not much cause for complaint, and it must be owned that his dealings with them are not unsuccessful. Nobody could have made the verses entirely acceptable as a song with music. Very different must have been the experience of Mr. Otto Goldschmidt with the delightful lines beginning—

Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, sleep and dream of me:
Sleep, Ellen, folded in thy sister's arm,
And sleeping, haply dream her arm is mine.

At any rate the result is very happy. An elegant and flowing melody in 6-8 time (G major), with a not less elegant accompaniment, gives just expression to the feeling of the text; and the entire song, though simple in construction, bears unmistakable signs of taste and skill. In "The Golden Year"—

We sleep and wake and sleep, but all things move;
The Sun flies forward to his brother Sun—

Mr. Henry Leslie affords another proof of his competence as a writer of concerted vocal music. It contains an episode in unison and harmony, "to be declaimed something like recitative, and in very free *tempo*," which certainly has a striking effect, and points to a new resource in the vocal treatment of freely constructed verse. But the whole composition is vigorously wrought out, and interesting. To Herr Scharwenka was allotted the verses from the story of the "Sleeping Beauty," beginning—

And on her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went
In that new world which is the old.

The composer has set them, *moderata assai*, in E major, with freedom but without any extravagance of style. Although the accompaniment is throughout elaborate and somewhat difficult, the principal melody is quite simple, and only in a passionate episodic theme in C major does Herr Scharwenka give the rein to his glowing fancy. We

like the song very much, as one of the best musical illustrations of Tennyson now before the public. The next number is Mr. Arthur Sullivan's "St. Agnes' Eve"—a song already well known, and upon which, therefore, it is now needless to dilate. Mr. Sullivan is also the composer of the number following, in which the bucolic love-story of "Edward Gray"—

Sweet Emma Moreland of yonder town,
Met me walking on yonder way—

receives sympathetic and appropriate treatment. The composer knows well how to be expressive, and at the same time perfectly natural and unaffected. He is so here. "Edward Gray" is a simple ditty—a true ballad, but it does not contain an unmeaning or matter-of-course phrase, and if it were published in a separate form, popularity would doubtless be its fate. Sir Julius Benedict's "Farewell"—

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
Thy tribute wave deliver:
No more by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever—

belongs to the most masterly things in the volume; the melody in E flat, 6-4, having well-marked characteristics, while both the "figures" and the harmonies of the accompaniment are distinguished by freedom and boldness. The verses from the story of King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid follow—

Her arms across her breast she laid;
She was more fair than words can say—

and these have fallen into the congenial hands of Mr. Joseph Barnby, by whom they have been set very gracefully. Equally meritorious of its kind is Mr. John Hullah's music to "Come not when I am dead." Indeed our English composers appear in most of these little works to singular advantage, as though association with the greatest living English poet put them on their mettle.

Next month we shall complete our notice of this beautiful and attractive volume, which, there can be little doubt, will pass from many a hand to many another hand as a seasonable token of Christmas remembrance.

Original Compositions for the Pianoforte. By Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE publishers of this handsome folio, and of its companion in octavo, issued some time since a complete edition of Mendelssohn's pianoforte works in four volumes, which, no doubt, will ever remain a favourite copy with amateurs. But it was desirable, in the interest of economy, to produce if possible the same works in one book, and this task has been very successfully accomplished. Looking at the mass of matter to be dealt with, the most obvious difficulty lay in compressing it into a handy volume. By dint, however, of a careful selection of paper combining lightness with quality, the obstacle has been overcome, and every bar of Mendelssohn's published music for the household instrument is now brought within one cover. The edition will be a boon to amateurs generally on this account, but it is otherwise acceptable as a beautiful specimen of music engraving and printing. The eye rests on each page with pleasure, not merely because of the legibility of the text, but also because every character is perfectly formed and the whole tastefully displayed. It may be worth while to add, lest the point escape attention, that the edition contains both the Concertos (with their orchestral passages compressed into pianoforte score) and the entire eight books of the "Lieder ohne Worte."

Watchfulness: The Parable of the Ten Virgins. A Cantata for Treble and Contralto Voices. The words compiled from the Holy Scriptures by W. A. Barrett, Mus. Bac. The music by Henry Hiles, Mus. Doc., Oxon. [Forsyth Brothers.]

PENDING the composition of a new Oratorio, sacred Cantatas are springing up with a rapidity which convinces us that we have writers in our midst fully capable of supporting the dignity of musical art in this country, and that they only await that encouragement so freely awarded to the composers of other nations to take their true place in the world of art. Dr. Hiles's latest contribution to our fast-increasing stock of such pieces is unpretentious in character, but so well written throughout as to ensure its acceptance

with musical as well as unmusical hearers. After a brief instrumental introduction, the Cantata opens with a soprano solo, followed by a chorus. This solo, commencing on the final crotchet of the bar, which is bound to the first crotchet of the next bar, is agreeable enough musically; but the syncopation compels such a false accent to the words that we cannot reconcile ourselves to the phrase. A short soprano recitative precedes an important chorus, which contains two movements contrasted in character, and includes some well considered and effective points. The Scena for contralto, "While the Bridegroom tarried," is vocal and full of interest; but the solo with chorus which follows is somewhat laboured, and scarcely tones with the rest of the Cantata. The Trio, "They that be wise shall shine as the firmament," is an exceedingly graceful and melodious specimen of part-writing, and may probably make its way out of the work for which it was written. After a recitative the graceful chorus "The Virgins that be her fellows shall bear her company" follows with much effect. Perhaps the best-written piece in the work is the succeeding chorus in A minor, "Lord, Lord, open to us," the choral response to which, in F major, "Not every one that saith to me 'Lord! Lord!'" is exceedingly dramatic and in true sympathy with the words, some good imitative passages occurring towards the latter portion of the chorus. The Cantata ends with a repetition of the opening phrase, slightly altered, in chorus. There is no monotony in key nor in style throughout this work, but there is a monotony in rhythm which we cannot but think must be felt in performance; for—with the exception of the brief chorus in A minor, and the equally brief Trio—every piece is in 4-4 time. We perceive that the Cantata is scored for the orchestra; and should be glad to hear it with that instrumental colouring which no doubt carries out the composer's original intention, for in parts the pianoforte accompaniment sounds thin. No work written for an orchestra can be fairly judged by a pianoforte reduction of the score; and every writer, therefore, who instruments his composition should, as Dr. Hiles does, state the fact upon his title-page. As the work is by no means difficult of execution, we especially commend it to the attention of the many metropolitan and provincial choirs in search of novelty. A Cantata of moderate length, and demanding no exceptional solo or choral power, should be a boon to concert-givers who are desirous of performing entire works, and yet not ambitious enough to battle with the intricacies of full Oratorios.

Christmas Album. Twenty-four Pieces for the Pianoforte. Composed by P. Tchaikowsky. [Neumeyer and Co.]

WORKS especially dedicated to the festive season of the year must not be kept waiting for a notice; and although the Album now before us comes too late to be recommended as a Christmas present, we may urge it upon the attention of parents and guardians as a most appropriate New Year's Gift. No doubt Schumann has set the fashion of writing quaint little pianoforte pieces with equally quaint titles; and perhaps in the present day this fashion—like most others—is almost worn to death; but when we get fanciful sketches as good as we find scattered throughout this volume they may be certain of a cordial welcome. We say "scattered throughout" the book, because all are not equally entitled to praise; but amongst the two dozen pieces none are bad, and many are really excellent. Of course it is difficult, indeed impossible, to realise musically such titles as "The young Lord," "Mamma," "The New Doll," or "Grandmother's Story"; but this objection may be urged as much against Schumann's "Kinderscenen" as against the "Christmas Album"; and we cannot afford to ignore good music, even of such simple construction. Our especial favourites in this collection are the "March of the Toy Soldiers," "Dolly is ill" (an appropriately pathetic piece in G minor, in which the moanings of the much loved invalid are admirably suggested), "Happy Dream" (a really charming "song without words"), "The Swallow's chirping," and "The Hurdy-Gurdy." All those we have mentioned are of course peculiarly fitted for illustration; but there are very many not lending themselves as well to musical treatment, which may be equally acceptable to the young performer.

The Child's Book of Praise. A Manual of Devotion, in Simple Verse, by C. F. Hernaman. With accompanying Tunes, edited by C. A. Barry. [J. T. Hayes, Joseph Masters and Co., and Novello, Ewer and Co.]

"ONE of the last undertakings of the late lamented Dr. J. B. Dykes," says the editor of this work, in his preface, "was that of preparing a musical edition of 'The Child's Book of Praise,' by C. F. Hernaman, the text of which, with a preface by the Rev. Jas. Skinner, had already been published in 1873." Unfortunately the death of Dr. Dykes happened when he had completed but five tunes for the book, and received one or two others from friends; but his plan of soliciting musical contributions from others to add to his own compositions was carried on by Mr. Barry, and the result is a work which reflects the utmost credit upon those who have so zealously laboured in the cause. The five tunes by Dr. Dykes are not only excellent, musically speaking, but deeply sympathetic with the words to which they are allied, No. 8, "Easter," especially being noticeable for its simple eloquence and appropriateness to the season for which it is written. The other contributors are Dr. G. B. Arnold, W. A. Barrett, Mus. Bac., Henry Gadsby, Dr. E. G. Monk, Professor Sir Herbert Oakeley, Mus. Doc., Rev. A. B. Orr, Sir F. A. Gore Ouseley, C. Hubert H. Parry, Ebenezer Prout, Dr. Stainer, C. E. Stephens, Professor Sir R. P. Stewart, Mus. Doc., C. Villiers Stanford, and the editor, who although having furnished a large number—indeed the largest number—of tunes, has modestly reserved the smaller hymns for himself. It would be invidious where all are so good to select any particular compositions for praise; but we may say generally that the many eminent artists who have assisted in the work have worthily sustained their reputation; and that either in children's services, at school or in the home circle, this little Manual of Devotion will be found most valuable.

The Girl to her Bird. Words by Hamilton Aidè. Music by A. G. Thomas. [Stanley Lucas, Weber and Co.]

MR. THOMAS is a stranger to us; but his song is the work of an artist. We are always frightened of vocal pieces in which any reference is made to a bird; for what may be described as the conventional "twiddle" on the pianoforte is almost certain to occur whenever an opportunity offers, and very often when it does not. The composer of this artless little ballad has, however, very properly given a musical setting rather to the feeling than to the words of the poetry; and the result is a charming little duet for voice and pianoforte, which we cordially commend to the attention of vocalists in search of novelty. We are particularly pleased with the treatment of the phrase "O let me fly," the long-held G for the voice, on the dominant harmony of C, dropping through the seventh to the key-note, expressing the words most sympathetically. Mr. Thomas might, we think, with tolerable certainty, calculate upon an equal amount of success in some more important work.

A Swing-Song, for the Pianoforte. By Eugene Woycke. [Paterson and Son.]

SWING-SONGS, like all pieces in which the rhythmic character so materially assists the composer in his work, are multiplying fast. Marches, Gavottes, Mazurkas, Bourrées, &c., flood the market; and their authors, therefore, must not be surprised if we begin to judge such compositions not so much by their adherence to the orthodox type as to their abstract musical merits. Whether, then, we can obtain the "swinging" effect in the piece before us by obeying the composer's direction to mark every half-bar powerfully is scarcely so important a consideration as whether he has written a good composition; and, viewing it in this light, we cannot accord it any very high praise. The subject is not particularly striking, and the enharmonic change after the second double bar seems somewhat forced. Nevertheless, we think the piece would please, especially if its title be proclaimed, before performance, to all the listeners.

The Psalmist. A Collection of Tunes, Chants, and Anthems for Public Worship, and for Domestic and Family Use. [Haddon and Co., and Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS book appeared many years ago in a less compendious form. We have from time to time noticed in these