

Review

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Reviews.

Humpty Dumpty. A short cantata for children. By H. Walford Davies.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

Composers, from Bach downwards, have shown the humorous side of their nature, and who would decry Beethoven because of his 'unbuttoned' moods. Dr. Walford Davies, hitherto regarded as a serious composer, has followed a good example in his latest published work 'Humpty Dumpty.' Having a mind to write something for children, Dr. Davies could not have done better than select an old nursery rhyme, and to wed his muse to that of 'Lewis Carroll.' His 'short cantata'—which, though it is entirely free from dumps, has plenty of Humpty Dumptiness in the music—consists of a Prelude, four short settings of the old nursery rhyme, and part of the famous scene between Alice and Humpty Dumpty from 'Alice through the looking-glass.' The dedication to 'those who chance to sing it' is followed by the *dramatis personæ* thus described:

Musical notation for the beginning of 'Humpty Dumpty'. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody starts with a forte (f) dynamic. The first line is labeled 'HUMPTY DUMPTY.' and the second line is labeled 'ALICE.'

also four other soloists and a chorus (large or small).

To the Prelude—'during which groups of children may enter'—succeed four musical versions of the Humpty Dumpty ditty, each setting being preceded by a recitative, *e.g.*:

(*Recit. Solo*) Have you settings to perform of this noble song?

(*Chorus*) We have.

Whereupon the soloist recitatively replies:

Musical notation for the recitative response. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The melody starts with a forte (f) dynamic. The lyrics are: 'Sing them then, and let them not be too'.

Musical notation for the 'a piacere' section. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The melody starts with a piano (p) dynamic and is marked 'a piacere.' and 'long.' The lyrics are: 'long.'

Here the joke is obvious, and the soloist immediately sings:

Musical notation for the 'Presto. Solo 1.' section. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The melody starts with a piano (p) dynamic and is marked 'Presto. Solo 1. (Melody only.)'. The lyrics are: 'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, &c.'

The composer has shown remarkable ingenuity in the variety he has imparted to four settings (solo and chorus) of the same words; for while the vocal part is perfectly easy—

and, we may add, delightfully tuneful—he has done wonders with the pianoforte accompaniment by the wealth of realistic and humorous touches. 'The dialogue of Humpty Dumpty and Alice' is admirably done, all sorts of devices, many of them as droll as the words themselves, being introduced in order to accentuate the text with graphic music. The work is brought to a 'Couldn't' conclusion with 'Humpty Dumpty's song,' for solo and chorus, in which the wall-perched hero 'falls backwards with a crash out of sight' to four very extraordinary looking chords of an exceeding Humpty Dumptyish nature—these crashing chaotic chords 'are to be played (*sfff*) simultaneously, by placing both hands and elbows violently on to the keyboard as Humpty Dumpty falls. Other noises may be made also, and the chorus may utter a long *Oh*, under the breath.'

We have only been able to briefly indicate the nature and scope of a cleverly constructed cantata that is brimful of wholesome humour, and, as may be assumed in regard to any music that comes from Dr. Walford Davies's pen, one that is artistic from the first bar to the last. We may add that the cantata is published in both the staff and tonic sol-fa notations.

Henry Du Mont (1610-1684). Etude historique et critique.
Par Henri Quittard, avec une Préface par Jules Combarieu.

[Paris: Société du Mercure de France.]

Lulli, our author remarks, always enjoyed public favour more than Du Mont, so that later on the former was regarded as the sole musician of the reign of Louis XIV. But M. Quittard regards both as important in the history of the 17th century; while the preference shown to Lulli, he explains, was owing to 'cette innovation séduisante du théâtre Lyrique,' and 'la pompe des ballets.' To appreciate the art-work of any composer it is necessary to understand what was taking place in the musical world in his day. Du Mont was born about the year 1610—in other words about the period in which the Florentine reformers were sowing the seeds of modern opera—in which the polyphonic motets and madrigals of the 16th century were giving place to the aria and the church cantata, and in which the *continuo* came into vogue. It is customary to regard the men who met at the houses of Bardi and Corsi as the creators of *la nuova musica*, but M. Quittard considers that the change was a gradual one. Florence, he admits, created the language of the lyrical drama, but even had the Florentine coterie not existed, the 'classical polyphonic style would none the less have undergone a natural and logical evolution, of which the result could only be what history shows as everywhere realized during the early years of the 17th century. For in France our musicians, without having heard even mention of recitative compositions, had arrived in a different way to an almost identical result.' These and other statements certainly place the reader in, as it were, the right atmosphere in order to understand the part played by Du Mont in the musical world.

The biography of the composer is very interesting and instructive, but space will not allow us to dwell on it. A very brief *résumé* of what Du Mont accomplished is all that can be attempted here. We hope, however, to be able to show that M. Quittard's thoughtful book, and one evincing thorough knowledge of his subject, is a valuable contribution, not only to the history of Du Mont but to that of French sacred music of the 17th century. The Italian, Ludovico Viadana, has often been styled the inventor of the *continuo*, but the most that can be said for him is that he brought it into prominent use. It was known, too, in France before Du Mont, who was a native of Maestricht, came to Paris, but he it was who first published (in France) motets 'avec la Basse continué,' in his *Cantica* of 1652. In these, we are told, the composer by 'preserving in simpler form the polyphonic spirit of the old masters, contributed largely towards the establishment of the new *genre*.' The finest number in this collection is the motet 'a 4,' 'Ave gemma virginum.' In a chapter on the *Motets Récitatifs* mention is made of a certain M. Bouzignac, a predecessor, who appears to have worked on similar lines, and apparently before Carissimi. Then the Masses and Grands Motets are discussed at length. But, as descriptions of music, however thorough

and, as in the present instance, good, are not quite illuminating. M. Quittard gives a *Supplément Musical*, containing specimens which add greatly to the understanding of an interesting and valuable book, one which not only shows the historical importance of Du Mont, but the skill and emotional power of his music.

Musical genius and religion. By Robert Turnbull.
[S. Wellwood.]

Mr. Turnbull, the esteemed music critic of the *Glasgow Herald*, has written an extremely able and interesting little book on a difficult subject. He says that he does not propose to discuss 'the relation of Religion to Art in general,' his concern being with 'Art that deals specifically with Religion.' Even this narrowing of the issue leaves it open to contentious criticism. 'In music,' asks our author, 'does a man's personal relation to religion affect his treatment of sacred themes?' This may be answered by another question, 'What is a man's personal relation to religion?' If it be true, as Mr. Turnbull says, that 'the greatest religious music seems always to have behind it the ecstasy of the religious man,' we are enabled to point without hesitation to really religious composers. All, or nearly all, musicians will be prepared to give the first place to John Sebastian Bach—'a deeply religious man and a mighty genius' is this 'musicians' musician,' of whom 'Mendelssohn happily said that Bach's music transforms into a temple every room in which it is played.' Apart from a chronological sequence it is no wonder, therefore, that after the introduction Bach has the place of honour in Mr. Turnbull's book.

The succeeding chapters treat of Handel and his 'Messiah,' Haydn and his 'Creation,' Mozart and his 'Requiem,' Beethoven and his 'Messe Solennelle,' Mendelssohn and his 'Elijah,' and Wagner and his music-dramas (two chapters). These master-musicians and their masterpieces form the subject-matter of a little volume that should interest many readers, for it is most ably, lucidly and thoughtfully written, and thus it becomes a valuable contribution to musical literature.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

Modern Organ Accompaniment. By A. Madeley Richardson, M.A., Mus. D. Pp. xii. + 202; 9s. net. (Longmans, Green & Co.)

Madrigal Singing. A few remarks on the study of madrigal music, with an explanation of the modes and a note on their relation to polyphony. By Ch. Kennedy Scott, hon. conductor Oriana Madrigal Society. Pp. 68; 2s. 6d. (Breitkopf & Haertel.)

The Story of the Ring. A short analysis of the plot of Wagner's 'Ring of the Nibelung.' By S. H. Hamer. Pp. 53; 1s. 6d. net. (Cassell & Co., Ltd.)

PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

Novelty in a three-fold form gave distinction to the concert on April 17 at Queen's Hall. The chief of these novelties was a Violin concerto in B minor (Op. 36), composed by M. Tivadar Nachèz, who played the solo part. The work, constructed on orthodox lines, is, as may be assumed, admirably written to display the varied capabilities of the instrument. It is a melodious, brilliant and extremely effective composition to which the composer-violinist did full justice, and he received the reward of hearty applause at its close.

Mr. John B. McEwen is one of those younger men among British composers who seem to find fond delight in gloomy subjects, judging from his selection of the 'Coronach' as the subject of his 'Symphonic Elegy.' As to the 'Coronach' itself, Mr. F. Gilbert Webb, the programme-analyst, says: 'For the benefit of those whose knowledge of Gaelic is limited, it may be stated that the word "Coronach" was the name given in ancient days by the Celts of Scotland to the dirge sung at the funeral rites of chieftains or notable personages.' Mr. McEwen, as becometh a true Scot, has faithfully reflected the solemnities of the 'Coronach' in his music, which is cast in a sombre mould and stamped with the hall-mark of sincerity. The last of the novelties comprised two songs, composed by Mr. Hubert Bath, and sung by Mr. R. Kennerley Rumford. The first, entitled 'Longing,' a setting of Matthew Arnold's 'Come to me

in my dreams,' hardly gave so much satisfaction as the second, a spirited setting of Fiona Macleod's 'The Viking's war-song,' which had to be repeated.

Not the least attractive feature of the evening's music was the glorious voice of Madame Clara Butt, who by her singing of 'Mon cœur s'ouvre,' from Saint-Saëns's 'Samson et Dalila,' created so much enthusiasm that she sang 'Caro mio ben' as an encore. The concert, ably conducted by Dr. Cowen, opened with Sullivan's 'Tempest' overture, and closed with Tchaikovsky's brilliant Suite in G, No. 3.

MUSICIANS' COMPANY CONCERT.

It was a happy thought of the Worshipful Company of Musicians to give a concert in the Egyptian Hall of the Mansion House, on St. George's Day, in aid of the Lord Mayor's Cripples' Fund. The chief magistrate of the City of London has taken a very warm interest in the poor crippled children of the metropolis, and nothing could be more appropriate than that the art of music should be invoked to swell the contributions to so deserving an object, and that the music-making should take place at the official residence of the Lord Mayor (Sir William P. Treloar), and be honoured by his presence. It must have been very gratifying to his Lordship to see such a large audience, who by their presence showed a practical interest in the benevolent object he has so much at heart.

The afternoon's music opened chorally with 'My bonny lass' (Morley) and 'Prithee, why so pale?' (Stainer), being followed later in the programme by 'On a day, alack a day' (W. H. Cummings), 'Bold Turpin' (J. F. Bridge), 'Since first I saw your face' (Ford), and 'The waits' (Saville). These madrigals and part-songs were admirably sung by the choir of St. Peter's Church, Eaton Square, assisted by members of the Musicians' Company who also belong to the Madrigal Society.

The soloists were headed by Madame Albani, who sang 'L'amerò' (Mozart) and Tosti's 'Good-bye' with that artistic finish which is always associated with her name. Madame Clara Butt charmed the audience by her renderings of 'Believe me if all those endearing young charms' (Landon Ronald), and Mr. Santley created a furore by his fine vocalization in Paer's 'Agitata da smania funesta' and (as an encore) Hatton's glorious song, gloriously sung, 'To Anthea.' Other vocalists, whose services proved most acceptable, were Miss Oswyn Hackett-Jones, Miss Phyllis Lett, Mr. Lloyd Chandos and Mr. Kennerley Rumford, while the instrumental soloists, who contributed not a little to the success of the concert, were Miss Llewela Davies (pianoforte), Mr. W. A. Woltmann (violin) and Mr. J. Schofield (violoncello).

Of the two novelties presented, the most important was a Phantasie in A for violin, violoncello and pianoforte, composed by request by Mr. A. von Ahn Carse expressly for the occasion. This proved to be a most melodious and dainty creation, breathing the spirit of natural music, graceful in expression and full of charm. We shall look forward to a second hearing of this well-written work. The other novelty was a song (soliloquy) 'To be, or not to be,' composer unknown, which Sir Frederick Bridge discovered in the Pepys collection at Magdalene College, Cambridge. The setting is for a bass voice (it was sung by Mr. Graham Smart) with an accompaniment for the lute and viola da gamba, and was composed either during Shakespeare's life or within some fifty years of his death. The conductors of the concert were Sir Frederick Bridge, Dr. W. H. Cummings and Dr. G. F. Huntley, and the accompanists, Mr. Stanley Hawley, Mr. S. Liddle and Dr. Markham Lee; the last-named, with Messrs. Woltmann and Schofield, also took part in Mr. von Ahn Carse's Phantasie. The programme-book, edited by Mr. T. L. Southgate, Junior Warden of the Company, was most tastefully got up and profusely illustrated; it was worthy of the occasion, and contained a touching poem entitled 'London Cripples,' by Miss Florence Gertrude Attenborough ('Chrystabel'). The entire expenses of the concert were generously defrayed by Mr. Samuel Ernest Palmer, a member of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, and the Lord Mayor was able to announce that the net proceeds of the concert amounted to the satisfactory sum of £350, a result upon which the Company and all who took part in the concert are to be warmly congratulated.