Musical Times

Review

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Falmouth. Words by Henley. Music, for double choir, by R. T. Woodman.

[Novello & Co., Ltd.]

This is a work which should claim consideration from choral Societies that aim at suiting their programmes to the spirit of the day, while avoiding the jingoistic touch. Henley's lines,—a sea-warrior's thoughts of his Devon home—run bravely, and the music breathes the open air. It is breezy without bluster, and would make a popular appeal, for its melodies have a folk-song ring about them and a living rhythm. The use of double choir, often with further sub-division of parts, calls for a choir of considerable dimensions, and there are harmonic progressions that are not all plain-sailing. Yet it is not difficult choral music. Its melodies will commend it, and its effectiveness will repay study. The work can be sung unaccompanied, or pianoforte accompaniment can be employed.

BOOK RECEIVED.

Studies in Organ Tone. By the Rev. Noel A. Bonavia-Hunt. Price 5s. net. Pp. 205 + xv. (London: The Waterside Music Publishing Co.)

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

DEAR SIR,—In your last number (September) you print a long communication from Mr. E. P. Lennox Atkins as to a rough and ready rule for beginners in factory tuning which I gave at the close of a lecture on the 'Scientific Basis of Tuning,' which the Pianoforte Tuners' Association coaxed me into delivering before them as a public 'send-off.' (May I, in passing, disclaim the honour of belonging to Cambridge with which Mr. Atkins has endowed me?) This rule was drawn up by the late Mr. Alexander J. Ellis, F.R.S., and myself, as likely to be of practical use. I had felt the want of such an approximation in my own factory days, and this rule seems to me to answer its purpose admirably. The errors are not great, and of course they neutralise each other; for this, to anyone who has not the requisite mathematics, I can refer to the unquestioned authority of Mr. Ellis, whose translation of Helmholtz, with his own copious additions, still remains the standard work. Examinations of admirable specimens of tuning in equal temperament by Messrs. Broadwood and my own firm are given in detail in Ellis's 'Helmholtz,' and our rule sprang out of those examinations, and is published in the book in connection with them.

When a lad begins tuning he is told, without any explanation, to tune along a certain series of intervals, keeping all his intervals flat (C, G, D, A, E, B, &c.); this series being a series of fifths. But he is also told, he must not go beyond the two F's which have middle C between them : and therefore his scries has a rough alternation between downward fourths and upward fifths. (Twice the alternation has to be broken, by taking a second downward fourth, to keep within the tuning octave F to F.) Now first of all I think the boy should be told, and practically shown, why his intervals are to be flat (because 12 fifths are too long to make seven octaves); and secondly, that tuning a downward fourth flat is precisely the same as tuning that same note flat when in the form of an upward fifth. I assure you, Mr. Editor, that I have learned, to my surprise, that many practical tuners in my large audience at the Y.M.C.A. had not grasped the second point, and that scarcely anyone present knew of the first point. They are commonplaces to Mr. Atkins and to me, but they are not taught to the lads learning tuning.

What does the boy do, when he is given his tuning series, and is told to tune each new note flat? Of course he tunes them all *equally* flat, although from any given note an upward fifth in equal temperament must be twice as fast as a downward fourth. Therefore the boy never gets a decent set of bearings. He corrects himself by his trial chords, and after two or three years learns by rule of thumb to get his chords about equally in tune. But a close scientific examination of his tuning-scale will show that this result is gained by give-and-take, by the cancelling-out of many errors.

All this I, as a practical tuner, showed and proved to Mr. Ellis. Our problem was therefore to give a rule which should start a boy on the right road. As his ear grows finer he can later on neglect the ladder by which he has climbed, and can advance (as I hope I have myself advanced) to improving his averaged scale into a scale in which each successive fifth will beat faster by a certain ratio than the fifth below it, which is of course the case in true equal temperament. The ratio of increase in beats is intricate to non-mathematical persons, as it cannot be represented by successive additions (say, each fifth to beat so many times more per second than the one below), nor by successive multiplications (say, each fifth to beat at such a fraction more, as for instance, $\frac{1}{12}$ th more than the one below): but logarithmically it is simple, and ends in the result that at the interval of an octave the beats are doubled.

Now in the tuning octave F to F the *average* number of beats in the seven equal-temperament fifths from C up to G, D up to A, E up to B, &c., is closely approximate to one a second, say, ten in ten seconds; wherefore when tuning those fifths as downward fourths we recommend this average discordance for a beginner. He can soon learn the pace of ten beats in ten seconds, and will not be far from the real truth if he observes it. But the *average* number of beats in the fifths of the lower part of the octave, which are these four—G to D, G \ddagger to D \ddagger , A to E, B to F \ddagger , is not much more than half the above—namely, closely approximate to six in ten seconds. So we get a clear rule : tune all your downward fourths ten beats in ten seconds flat, and all your upward fifths six beats in ten seconds flat, between F and F. The lower F is obtained from B? (A \ddagger) downwards, and its true octave gives the upper F.

This is how my own factory boys are started, and it is open to them to make the slight modifications which must be felt rather than counted, but which are necessary to produce a delicately accurate equal temperament. The result is in figures in the pages of Helmholtz, and I may justly be proud of it, I think, in competition with so rightly famous a house as Broadwood's.

I do not know Mr. Atkins's Equal Temperament Committee, but they certainly do not seem to be aiming, as I am aiming, at something practical, for everyday work. After all, as you Mr. Editor, above all men know, excellent unaccompanied singing, or the harmony of horns, or anything that gives us *just intonation*, is alone capable of fully satisfying the soul of a musician. Equal temperament is an indispensable makeshift, and we must always remember that it is but a glimmer to the full splendour of the beauty of just intonation. When that rare delight is now and then achieved, if only for a chord or two, tears fill our eyes at the perception of a beauty so exquisite that the ancient prophets deemed it worthy to be the chief ornament of Heaven.—I am, yours truly,

H. KEATLEY MOORE.

Albion House, New Oxford Street, W.C. September 17, 1914.

ENGLISH v. GERMAN FINGERING.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—Apart from the necessity for being patriotic, the present seems an opportune time to point out the absurdity of having in England two notations for pianoforte fingering, and of using foreign editions printed and issued abroad when just as good can be obtained in England, edited by English men, with English fingering. Publishers, or many of them, would be heartily glad to

Publishers, or many of them, would be heartily glad to have only the one fingering notation to deal with. The contradiction is keenly felt by teachers, especially in view of the fact that string players all over the world use only X, I, 2, 3, 4.

September 16, 1914.

H. C. TONKING.