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Bible Stories. Musically Illustrated in Six Sonatas for the Harpsichord. No. 1, David and Goliath; No. 2, Saul and David by Johann Kuhnau; J. S. Shedlock

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the learned Bishop of St. David's, a great proof of the remarkable skill of the bards, since Cambrensis was of Welsh and Flemish descent and hated the Irish people.

A most interesting and charming selection of ancient Irish songs was effectively sung by the Misses Mabel Berrey, Florence Shee, Lucy Etheridge, Harriet Rose-Byrne, and Messrs. Walter Mackway and William Webster. Madame Fortescue played the harp, and the lecturer and Mrs. Adelaide Needham presided at the pianoforte.

## REVIEWS.

*Bible Stories.* Musically illustrated in six Sonatas for the Harpsichord. By Johann Kuhnau. No. 1, David and Goliath; No. 2, Saul and David. Edited by J. S. Shedlock. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

KUHNAU, John Sebastian Bach's predecessor at St. Thomas's, Leipzig, published the "Biblical Sonatas" in that city in 1700. He was then, though only thirty-three, at the zenith of his fame. Considering that Kuhnau was the greatest German composer of music for the clavier before Bach, it is strange that no complete edition of his works has yet been issued. A few selected pieces have found their way into modern collections, but that is all, and the Bible Sonatas, so often mentioned in biographical articles and histories of music have, until now, remained available only to those who had access to the original edition, copies of which are so scarce that even the British Museum does not possess one. The thanks of music-lovers all the world over are therefore due to the editor and publishers of what we hope will prove to be only a first instalment of this most interesting set of Sonatas. They have placed within easy reach of everyone music that forms an important link in the chain of musical progress, and which no student of that progress can afford to ignore. Quite apart from the consideration that these pieces were written when Bach and Handel were only fifteen years of age, the fact that they are the earliest examples that have come down to us of Programme music, *in which the true function of the art is kept in view*, gives them an altogether unique position in instrumental music. There were battle pieces, bird pieces, and feeble attempts to imitate storms before Kuhnau's time, as every musician knows; but here for the first time we have a serious attempt to illustrate dramatic incidents by means of instrumental music that aims at expressing, not the incidents themselves (which, of course, would be impossible), but their characteristics and emotional causes and results. Thus, in the first Sonata, the composer himself thus describes his intentions: "1. The stamping and defying of Goliath. 2. The terror of the Israelites and their prayer to God at sight of the terrible enemy. 3. The courage of David, his desire to humble the pride of the giant, and his childlike trust in God. 4. The contest of words between David and Goliath and the combat itself in which Goliath is wounded in the forehead by a stone, so that he falls to the ground and is slain. 5. The flight of the Philistines. 6. The exultation of the Israelites over their victory. 7. The praise of David sung by the women in alternate choirs; and, finally, 8, the general joy expressing itself in hearty dancing and leaping." The second Sonata is more subjective. The various movements deal with "1. The sadness and madness of King Saul. 2. The refreshing song (*sic*) of David's harp. 3. The tranquil and contented mind of Saul." All these things are expressed with a mastery and decision of touch, a directness and felicity of phrase, and a dignity and purity of style that command instant admiration; but, beyond this, the music is throughout full of charm for the ear. "Realistic" effects are almost entirely absent, and "meaning" is never obtained at the sacrifice of musical beauty. Of the two Sonatas (they are published together) the first has more variety and would probably appeal to a wider circle of hearers than the second, which is deeper, and more likely to interest musicians. The former may also be recommended to organists as eminently suited to their instrument—the more so that, in the original edition, a hint to this effect is given by the composer himself.

*Calisthenics for the Pianoforte.* By E. Silas. [Edwin Ashdown.]

THE title of this collection is somewhat alarming and suggests distraction of neighbours and destruction of the household instrument. In a brief preface the author says: "There is no dearth of good exercises for the pianoforte, but for the most part they all more or less repeat each other. In the following pages I have tried to leave the ordinary track, and many of the passages will be found of unusual difficulty, written in the belief that when a player can master these, passages of ordinary difficulty will appear comparatively easy." Executants therefore who rejoice in technical feats may be attracted to this collection. Inasmuch, however, as in twenty-one out of the twenty-seven exercises the left hand faithfully follows in similar motion the *arpeggios* played by the right, the difficulties treated of cannot be said to be very comprehensive.

*Cantilène. Legende Espagnole.* For Violoncello, with Pianoforte Accompaniment. By Arthur Hervey. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE first of these pieces belongs to the class of music which charms by its unaffected and spontaneous expression and which appeals to the cultured musician by its refinement and finished craftsmanship. The "Cantilène" presents no difficulties to the average violoncellist, and will doubtless enhance the enjoyment of many evenings at home at this season.

The "Legende" is more ambitious in design and character, but it demands no special executive abilities. In pieces bearing this title one looks for the suggestion of the mysterious, and, in this instance, for the courteousness which we are told existed before "Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away." These requirements are found in Mr. Hervey's music, which thus possesses much that is attractive. In both pieces the unconventional nature of the harmonic progressions in the final cadences will prove interesting to musicians.

*Three Romances for Pianoforte.* Op. 33. By Herbert S. Oakeley. [Schott and Co.]

THE first of these romances is headed "The course of true love never did run smooth," a quotation which some amateurs may think appropriately illustrated by the piece being written in six sharps. It starts in a calm and expressive manner, and although it gets into difficulties on the second page and does not get out of them for a considerable space it ends tranquilly, and leaves a satisfactory impression. No. 2 informs the player that "In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love," and the music, if expressively played, will induce the listener to think that it is good that a man's thoughts should so stray. The piece, which may be described as a song without words, is developed at some length and is the most important of the three compositions. With No. 3 we are introduced to "The time of roses," which effectively concludes a melodious and musician-like series.

*Nocturne and Pavane, from "Romeo and Juliet."* For Pianoforte solo. By Edward German.

*Pastorale, from "Romeo and Juliet."* For Violin and Pianoforte. By Edward German. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

CULTURED pianists who have seen the version of Shakespeare's immortal love story now being performed at the Lyceum Theatre will without doubt welcome the arrangements for their instrument of the charming "Nocturne" which, it will be remembered, ushers in the third act, and the graceful "Pavane," which is danced with courtly gestures in the brilliant ball-room scene. Although the spell of the delicate orchestration is of course lost in the keyboard version, the spirit of the music remains, and a sympathetic executant cannot fail to experience and give pleasure as he or she converts the silent notes into sweetest sounds. There is but little difficulty in doing this, for the music is easy to read and calls more upon the heart than the head for its due interpretation. The suave character of the opening pages of the Nocturne is effectively interrupted by the triplets introduced in the bass as the