

CHURCH MUSIC.

Various difficulties prevented our musical forces from presenting any large work since Christmas, but it was understood that special efforts would be made to render the performance of Easter music worthy of the reputation which our choir has obtained.

On Good Friday, as in former years, Mr. Ford arranged the "Story of the Passion," taken on this occasion from the Gospel of St. Matthew, for choir and congregation, on the model of the primitive oratorios when *chorales* were interspersed to be sung by all present.

The prelude was a striking piece of "programme-music" of modern type, in which the leading features of the narrative were depicted, and in which the Choir entered with a "plain-song," well contrasted with the elaborate accompaniment of the organ. This prelude was much enjoyed, and will need further hearing in order that it may be still more fully appreciated. Mr. Ford's other composition was a setting of the well-known words, "When I survey the wondrous Cross," as a solo for soprano, admirably rendered by Mrs. Carter.

Mr. Lindsay sang the tenor solo, "Our Blest Redeemer," from Farmer's Cantata, "Christ and His Soldiers," very smoothly and expressively. A chorus from the same work, "Ride on, Ride on, in Majesty," was given by the choir, and was sung with good attack and attention to shading throughout.

Perhaps the best effort of the evening was Miss Hea's rendering of the aria, "He was Despised and Rejected," from "The Messiah." Miss Hea gave every word of the text in a manner which brought all its pathos home to her hearers. Mr. Ford's accompaniment also added much to the solemn effect of the sacred words of the solo.

The Quartette, "God so loved the World," from Stainer's "Crucifixion," although a beautiful piece of writing, was hardly so successfully sung as some of the other numbers. The voices were not balanced evenly enough to blend perfectly. The hymns, with which the service was interspersed, were sung with fairly good effect, although the choir has not yet succeeded in obtaining that broad, sustained tone, so necessary for effectual choral singing. The service concluded with the hymn "Hail, Thou once despised Jesus," which was sung by choir and congregation with a heartiness not often heard. The last verse was in unison with free organ accompaniment. Although perhaps not so attractive from a musical standpoint as the service given last Good Friday, when Stainer's "Crucifixion" was sung, this service was quite as impressive and perhaps had even more dignity in its simplicity.

Mr. Ford furnishes us with the following notes upon the Easter music: At morning service Morley's Te Deum and Vincent's Anthem, "As it began to Dawn," were the chief attractions. For the evening service were reserved Lohr's Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis and Stainer's Anthem, "Awake thou that sleepest." It would have been difficult to have selected a better Te Deum. The composer's thorough knowledge of the "King of Instruments" well fitted

him for such a production. Throughout the organ has a more than usually interesting part, but the voices are never allowed to sink into insignificance.

"As it began to dawn" was given at an Easter service two years ago. The repetition of such a work, however, is not a matter for apology. A thorough appreciation of the text from beginning to end is judiciously preserved, and a skilful musician has exercised his art with the most gratifying results.

The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, though not particularly elaborate, served as a becoming contrast. Their simplicity of construction, well ordered diatonic harmonies and altogether devotional character making them very acceptable.

Stainer's powerful anthem, with its vigorous outbursts of vocal harmony and stirring accompaniment, contrasted with sustained and unaccompanied passages, was the most trying work of the day. Though occasionally signs of weakness and want of decision were noticeable, the choir acquitted itself very creditably. There was a freshness about the morning service agreeably surprising. Not for a long time have we been privileged to have such correct intonation. What we would like would be to hear the music interpreted with more freedom and artistic comprehension. As it is, there is too much laborious effort and individuality manifested. It might be possible to lay down one or two rules for the achievement of this object, but I'm afraid too much space has been taken up already.

Regular and punctual attendance at the practices, it is hoped, has not become a thing of the past. Above everything is unanimity of purpose.

Special thanks are due Miss Alice Hea and Miss Louise Skinner for their valuable services on Good Friday and Easter.

S. M. G. A.

Brightness and hilarity, counterbalanced by the relation of stubborn historical facts, continue to mark the meetings for debates of our senior members. So evenly were the merits and demerits of Bonaparte and Wellington brought out by speakers on either side, the hero of Waterloo gained only a majority of one vote.

At a subsequent gathering "The Government and Social Life of Athens and Sparta" was the subject of debate. The angular points of Spartan rule were so adroitly kept in the shade by Miss Macgregor (the leader of the side for Sparta), Miss Mabel Hanington and others, that the listener, for the nonce, was led to imagine that education under the laws of Lycurgus (!) would be rather a desirable state of things. Nevertheless, the "Eye of Greece" lost none of its ancient lustre as its claims were being urged by Miss Mabel Fairweather, the opener of the debate, as was proved by its receiving an overwhelming majority of votes at the close.

The subject for the next evening is: "Which is the most useful and affords the most lasting pleasure—Music or Painting?" Miss May Ward will introduce the claims of music, and Miss Lilian Markham those of painting.

J. R. B.