

Wagner; "Fidelio," Beethoven; "Der Freischütz," Weber; "Huguenots" and "Prophet," Meyerbeer; "Don Giovanni," "Marriage of Figaro" and "Magic Flute," Mozart; "La Juive," Halevy; "William Tell" and "Il Barbiere Di Siviglia," Rossini; "Rigoletto," Verdi; "Faust," Gounod; "Masaniello," Auber; "Merry Wives of Windsor," Nicolai; "La Dame Blanche," Bouldieu; "Hans Heiling," Marschner; and "A Night in Granada," Kreutzer. In a programme such as this it seems a pity to have included such operas as "Don Giovanni," "Il Barbiere" and "Rigoletto," which are better when sung in Italian, the language for which they were written, and are besides so hackneyed as to present little attraction to educated musicians. There are English operas which mark an era in music, such as Mr. A. C. Mackenzie's "Colomba," Dr. Stanford's "Canterbury Pilgrims," Mr. Goring Thomas' "Esmeralda," etc.: these should be heard in America, and would be more satisfactory in German than Italian Opera can be owing to the greater affinity in the language and train of thought of the two countries. The production of "Hans Heiling" is a praiseworthy feature in the programme. The composer, H. Marschner, of whose music little is known outside Germany, was a contemporary of Weber, between whom and himself great friendship existed. In 1823 Marschner was appointed joint Capellmeister with Weber and Maracchi, of the German and Italian Opera at Dresden. Weber had hoped to obtain this appointment for a friend of his own, but did not allow the disappointment to mar his relations with his *confrère*, whom he assisted in the production of his operas as long as he lived. In 1829 Marschner's opera, "The Vampire," was performed in London at the Lyceum, and ran for sixty nights. In 1831 he was appointed Court Capellmeister at Hanover, where he produced "Hans Heiling," the libretto of which had been offered to Mendelssohn but declined by him. Herr A. Mackzewski, in an article on Marschner, says:—"As a dramatic composer of the romantic school Marschner ranks next to Weber and Spohr. . . . Marschner's favourite subjects were ghosts and demons, whose uncanny revels he delineated with extraordinary power." Coming between Weber and Wagner he was overshadowed by both, and as his chief aim in all his writings was popularity, his music has not stood the test of time. The opera in question is his best work and, though not great, has cleverness, much charm, and some clever orchestration. It still takes a high place in Germany, and its production at the Metropolitan shows a wise determination to make that opera house attractive to musicians as well as to those who are only drawn by hackneyed works. The most important operas on the list are of course those of Wagner. In the present day his position as a great composer is questioned by none but fossil musicians, although many leading critics take exception to his later compositions in which his theories are carried out to their logical conclusion. The only opera of this debatable epoch announced for performance is "Die Walküre," the second of the great Tetralogy of the Nibelungenlied, and its production will be eagerly welcomed by musicians as an earnest of the performance of the entire work at some future time.

In connection with this subject special interest attaches to the recent performance at the Albert Hall, London, of Wagner's last music drama, "Parsifal," which on account of its sacred character cannot be put on the stage in England as an opera. When performed in Wagner's own theatre at Bayreuth it produced a deeply solemn effect, and was received by the audience in much the same spirit as the Passion Play at Ober Ammergau. It would, however, be unseemly to place it in an ordinary operatic repertoire, as the spirit and even observances of Christian worship form an important part of its action. For this and other reasons Wagner never in his life-time would allow it to be performed anywhere but at Bayreuth, and it is highly creditable to the enterprise and musical enthusiasm of Mr. Joseph Barnby that a work requiring such vast vocal and instrumental resources should have been presented to an English audience. Divested of stage accessories, it was listened to as an Oratorio, and produced a great impression on a large and interested assembly. The soloists were Fraulein Malten, Herr Gudehus, Herr Scaria, and Herr Schuegraf, of whom the first three were the original creators of their respective parts at Bayreuth, and whose singing on this occasion is highly praised. This latter fact will be interesting to those who heard the very indifferent performance of Herr Scaria in Wagner's music at the festival given by Theodore Thomas with his orchestra in Montreal last summer.

Not long since a festival was held at Eisenach on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of J. S. Bach, who was born in that town. The interesting event was celebrated by two concerts, at one of which Bach's Mass in B Minor was performed, the orchestra being constituted exactly as in the time of the composer—that is, with several instruments included in it which are now considered obsolete. These are—the *corno di caccia*, the *oboe d'amore*, and a high trumpet differing from that now in use. The *corno di caccia*, or hunting-horn, is the precursor of the French horn. Unfortunately on this occasion the player was ill, and his place supplied by an ordinary horn. The *oboe d'amore* is a transposing instrument standing in A, and has a hollow, globular bell instead of a conical one, giving it a more veiled and pathetic tone than the "acid-sweet" sound of the ordinary oboe. The trumpet used was manufactured under the direction of the player, Herr Kosleck, of Berlin, and is an exact copy of one three hundred years old which he found in a shop at Heidelberg. It has a high compass, extending to E flat in alt., and has a different *timbre* from the modern trumpet. Bach wrote much for this high instrument, and since it has fallen into disuse parts written for it have been given to the clarinet, producing an entirely different effect. Herr Kosleck, who is a very fine performer, has been already invited to visit England next spring, when this same Mass will be produced, and his re-discovered instrument will be gladly welcomed by musicians as helping to realize the exact effect intended by the great master.

MESSRS. SUCKLING AND SONS send "Festival March," by Anton Gunther, "Nina Valse," by T. Herbert Chestnut, "The May Queen," by Arthur E. Fisher, and "La Brunette," by J. Davenport Kerrison—all for the piano. The first piece is an admirable composition of inspiring music, wellaccentuated, and is sure to become popular, especially as it is not difficult. The "Nina Valse" are also very pretty, though the composer has, involuntarily, no doubt, distinctly plagiarized the song "It is a Dream" in the opening movement. "The May Queen" and "Brunette" are both polkas—the former very catchy and original, the latter more pretentious, but with many attractive features.—*Com.*

BOOK NOTICES.

FLOWER-SONG SERIES. By Susie B. Skelding. New York: White, Stokes, and Allen. BABY'S KINGDOM. Designed and Illustrated by Annie Cox. Boston: Lee and Shepard.

The "Flower-Song Series" includes four satin-bound and silk-fringed booklets each of which is a triumph of artistic taste and lithographic skill. The first, "Hearts-ease," has four different shades of pansies, on as many full pages, and bound in handsome covers containing enlarged prints of the same flower. Another is entitled "A Handful of Blossoms," and consists of lovely pictures of apple blossoms, white clover and violets, morning glories, and poppies and wheat, the whole also handsomely bound. A third is a gilt-encased series of maple leaves, golden rod, harebells, and sweet peas, and named "Maple Leaves and Golden Rod." The last includes chaste bouquets of wood-fringes, pansies, columbine, and daisies and ferns. Each picture is accompanied by an appropriate poetical motto, and longer poetical selections occupy the inter-leaves. A more charming series has not appeared this holiday season.

"Baby's Kingdom" is a unique and beautiful production. As the title tells us, it is a volume in which may be chronicled, as memories for grown-up days, the mother's story of the events, happenings, and incidents attending the progress of that important domestic personage "The Baby." It is a magnificent gift-book, in the production of which neither pains nor expense appear to have been spared. Illuminated mottoes decorate the various pages where blanks are left for the date of baby's birth, a list of gifts, date of christening, name, for a lock of hair, for his picture, for the date upon which his first tooth appears, and for the thousand-and-one incidents connected with the appearance and career of the diminutive tyrant. "Baby's Kingdom" is bound in gold, with gilt edges.

HALF A CENTURY OF ENGLISH HISTORY. Pictorially Presented in a series of Cartoons from the Collection of Mr. Punch. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Seeing that the first cartoon is dated 1846 and the last 1857, one is inclined to complain of the "shortage," especially as the one hundred and fifty pictorial satires given are so excellent. Not that they are perfect by any means: it was to be expected that in reducing them much of the sharpness of outline would be lost; but the pencils of Doyle, Leech, Tenniel, and others are plainly traceable throughout. It is remarkable, however, that not a single cartoon relating to the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, or the Franco-German War appears, and there is an hiatus from 1853 to 1857. Moreover, some of the subjects seem to have undergone change in course of reproduction—notably "The Political Topsy" and, if memory serves, "The Fight at St. Stephen's Academy" and "Columbia's Fix." Apart from these slight drawbacks, however, the book is admirably conceived, very valuable, and most amusing. It ought to command a good sale in Canada, and would form a most appropriate gift-book to students of English history.

SELECTED PROSE WRITINGS OF JOHN MILTON. New York: D. Appleton and Company.

This pretty little volume includes the "Areopagitica" and "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates" entire, as well as the letter "On Education," and extracts from "The Reason of Church Government," from the tracts on the Smeectymnuus controversy, from the "Eikonoklastes," and from other writings. The introduction, by Mr. Ernest Myers, adds considerably to the value of the book, which forms one of the charming "Parchment Library Series." Messrs. Appleton have laid the reading world under a great obligation by this reproduction, for, great as Milton's reputation is, there is some danger of his prose writings being forgotten in the daily flood of literature that is poured over the world. Most truly does Mr. Myers say, "Small indeed is the residue of prose from any pen that can be fully enjoyed two centuries, or even one, after it is written."

THE MENTOR. By Alfred Ayres. New York: Funk and Wagnalls.

The author explains that this is "a little book for the guidance of such men and boys as would appear to advantage in the society of persons of the better sort." It is characterized by much common sense, and Mr. Ayres carefully distinguishes between the so-called "politeness" which consists merely of a graceful exterior and the true courtesy which comes from the heart. The book is much less dogmatic in tone than the average manual of etiquette, and will no doubt be found of as much assistance as can be expected from this class of work.

WILLIAM AND MARY. A Tale of the Siege of Louisburg. By David Hickey. Toronto: William Briggs.

ALDERSYDE. A Border Story of Seventy Years Ago. By Annie S. Swan. With Six Original Illustrations. Toronto: William Briggs.

JOCK HALLIDAY. A Grassmarket Hero. By Robina F. Hardy. Toronto: William Briggs.

The author of the first story, who makes no pretence to experience or ability as a novelist, succeeds nevertheless in infusing considerable interest into his account of the Louisburg incident of 1745. Although the site of the once redoubtable fortress is now only marked by mounds of rubbish, the spot has, in the words of Mr. Hickey, "still a strange charm." He has attempted to tell his story with historical accuracy, but distinctly seizes the opportunity to "preach" in his book, and though he succeeds in "pointing a moral" in relating the adventures of "William and Mary," it is a matter of opinion whether he by that means "adorns a tale."—"Aldersyde" is a thoroughly interesting and very well written Scotch border tale of seventy years ago. The author without moralizing contrives to impart a considerable amount of sensible information.—The story of an Edinburgh Grassmarket Hero, "Jock Halliday," is also well told, and has been written "with an object" apparently outside of commercial success. The last two books have gone into their sixth and seventh editions respectfully—a striking testimony to their merits.