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THE

MUSICAL WORLD.

VOL. XXXI.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY MYERS AND CO.,

22, TAVISTOCK STREET,

COVENT GARDEN.

1853.

The Musical World.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY MORNING.

Terms of Subscription, per Annum, 16s. | Half-year, 8s. | Three Months, 4s. | (Stamped Copies 1s. per Quarter extra.
Payable in advance, to be forwarded by Money Order, to the Publishers, Myers & Co., 22, Tavistock-st., Covent Garden

No. 16.—VOL XXXI.

SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 1853.

Price Fourpence.
Stamped Fivepence.

MACFARREN'S LENORA.

As this cantata is to be produced at the next concert of the Harmonic Union, the 25th inst., the following analysis of its plan will be found interesting:—

The popularity of Burger's Ballad of "Lenore" is so universal, that even so well informed a writer as Mr. Washington Irving refers to its wild narrative as a national German legend. It is familiarised in England by the very free imitation—scarcely a translation—under the name of "William and Helen," of Sir Walter Scott; by the more strict rendering of Mr. Taylor, of Norwich; by a version of Mr. Albert Smith; and by other more or less faithful interpretations. It has been made the subject of two operas by German composers, and it has been more than once set to music, in its original ballad form, for a single voice. The present treatment of it, as a work for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra, is now undertaken for the first time; for which purpose the text is taken entirely from the original ballad, which, with the omission of but very few lines, is set entire. The English version of Mr. John Oxenford is written for the music, and has the rare merit of agreeing rhythmically, without exception, syllable for syllable, with the German text, so that not a note has been changed to accommodate it.

The moral of the poem presents earthly passion resisting sacred solace, and yielding to the influence of evil, but finally redeemed by the promises of divine mercy. These three principles of passion, prayer, and perdition—earthliness, godliness, and temptation—are respectively embodied in the music assigned to the contralto, the soprano, and the bass voices; while the chorus has either to relate the connecting narrative, or to impersonate such agencies as are necessary to its development.

The instrumental introduction is intended to depict Lenora's "troubled dreams," filled with the thoughts to which her waking words give utterance—"Art faithless, Wilhelm? Art thou dead? How long wilt thou delay?"—and which colour her feelings throughout the conduct of the story.

The following chorus relates how the army returned home, after the treaty between Frederick the Great and Maria Theresa, which closed the seven years' war; every one to receive a joyful welcome from his best beloved. In this, the only passage throughout the poem in which, either in thought or action, Lenora is not concerned, the music is designed to convey a wholly different feeling from that which, in different phases, should characterise the rest of the composition.

The procession continues, and Lenora rushes frantically from rank to rank, vainly seeking some tidings of her absent lover. Her single grief, enhanced by the universal joy, she throws herself upon the ground in despair, and her mother runs to support her, calling on the mercy of heaven for protection.

The long duet of Lenora and her mother shows her impatient of the will of Heaven, repulsing the consolations of her parent, who calls on her to seek in prayer, and to acknowledge in the bounty of Providence, repose from her anguish. Once, with the sophistry of the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, the mother proposes the probable faithlessness of Wilhelm, and the divine retribution of his perjury, as an encouragement, if not a solace, to Lenora; but she, unlike the indignant Juliet, succumbs under the aspersion of her lover, and, calling upon death as her only relief—throwing her whole soul into the one fervent exclamation, that heaven or perdition is with him or where he is not, resigns herself to the most extravagant excesses of despair.

The next Recitative relates how she continued her impious

ravings, until the coming of night spread the stillness of peace upon the world.

The instrumental Notturmo is designed to convey this general calm, through which the one deep grief of Lenora, and her passionate appeals to her mother, have an impression of sadness, even upon the silence and its beauty: the stars have seen her sorrow, and they weep for it,—the sleepers have sympathised with her sufferings, and they are conscious of them in their dreams.

It is the purpose of the poem to conceal the supernatural character of Wilhelm until the catastrophe. The object in the music is to invest him with so much of the world in his aspect and his expression, as for Lenora to believe him "her own gallant rider," and yet to present him to the audience, who regard him not, through the medium of her passionate excitement, as a being of another world. Such is the intention of the Serenade.

In the duet of Lenora and Wilhelm, she at first resists, but finally yields, without reserve, to the spell of the tempter; so predisposed is her heart to receive its influence. By degrees, the real nature of the phantom is less and less disguised as she becomes more and more blind to the truth of her situation.

The Ride embodies that wildly imaginative portion of the poem that describes the flight of Lenora and the phantom. A chill, as of foreboding, strikes the heart of Lenora when she springs behind her lover on his steed. A sense of the horrors of her situation seizes her instinctively; and this gradually accumulates, until it surpasses her power to bear it, as they, by degrees, manifest themselves in reality. There is no pause in the thought-speed of their career, excepting when they overtake a burial procession chaunting the death-wail. Wilhelm summons the mourners to quit the bier and follow to his bridal, and they join in the flight. They next pass the place of execution, where the ghosts of the criminals are dancing in ghastly revel around the rack upon which they suffered their last tortures. These also the phantom rider orders to follow him, that they may dance at his wedding feast. Throughout their whole course he pretends to assure his mortal companion, who becomes, from time to time, more distrustful, passing, by degrees, from apprehension to fear and horror at his words, until the old anguish that she felt, when she believed him dead, renews itself with exquisite aggravation. During this scene, the character of Wilhelm becomes gradually unveiled to her; but, from the first, he addresses the supernatural beings, whom he invites to join them, without reserve or disguise. Finally, the hundred leagues are passed, the goal is reached, and the horrors of the entire progress are accumulated in a terrible jubilee.

The following Recitative tells how the earthly trappings of the horseman fall from him, and discover him to be the personation of death—the skeleton with the hour-glass and the sickle—and Lenora is his victim.

The Spirit Chorus that concludes this work, is the renewal of the heavenly influence which still holds out to the fallen soul of the heart-broken Lenora, the hope of mercy.