

## REVIEWS

the best way of approach. The short appreciations of individual Aragonese sovereigns are excellent, especially the character sketch of James the Conqueror, while the least satisfactory section of the book is the one dealing with the Catalans in Greece. There is also an inconsistency in the spelling of proper names in this chapter. But these are very minor points, and it is difficult to overestimate the usefulness of a volume which is the only modern short history of Aragon and Catalonia in English.

D.J.A.

LA MUSIQUE AU MOYEN AGE, par Theodore Gérold. (Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 73. Pp. 443; frs. 40.)

Despite its modest format, a most important work. M. Gérold begins with the plainsong of the first centuries of the Christian era, discusses its origins, its nature, and its evolution in theory and in practice through the liturgical dramas, *chansons de geste*, pastorals, etc., and the polyphony of the fourteenth century. France is the country primarily concerned, but the author finds room to deal with Italy, England, Spain, Germany. There is a special chapter on instrumental music, and the instruments themselves are exhaustively treated in another. Methods of medieval instruction are discussed, and, of course, the meaning of the notation.

It is in the last point that one feels a lacuna. The author is not primarily concerned with plainsong, but his views concerning plainsong notation necessarily determine much of his treatment of the later music, and one would be grateful for a fuller argument for those views. 'If the authority of the medieval texts were definitively established' says M. Gérold, 'the rendering of the gregorian melodies as advocated and practised by the Benedictines would be seriously *battue en brèche*'; but though the reader is referred to Wagner's *Neumenkunde* for 'numerous texts of the 11th and 14th centuries,' and some authorities are mentioned in the text, M. Gérold's mensuralist thesis is not wholly convincing. But it is undoubtedly plausible; indeed, one might almost feel inclined, after reading such a text as that of the *anonyme anglais*: 'In antiquis libris habebant puncta equivocata nimis, qui simplicia materialia fuerunt equalia, sed solo intellectu operabantur dicendo; intelligo istam longam, intelligo istam brevem,' to relapse into a comfortable agnosticism. M. Gérold's thesis should, however, at least provoke the upholders of the Solesmes system to marshal their evidence with greater vigour.

There are shrewd remarks in the direction of de-bunking the idealizing tendency one sometimes encounters; for example: *les mélismes des versets sont parfois d'une longueur*

## BLACKFRIARS

*exceptionnelle; comme pour ceux des graduels, il faut y voir jusqu'à un certain point une concession à la vanité des chanteurs désireux de faire preuve de virtuosité.*

The author has performed a feat of condensation; authorities medieval and modern are constantly cited; a bibliography is moreover contained in the foreword. The book will be extremely valuable, not only to the student of plainsong, but still more to anyone interested in the secular poetry and music of the middle ages.

L.S.G.V.

## THE GRAIL

The performance of *Everyman* by the members of the Grail at the Albert Hall was a very interesting experiment in religious propaganda and a very interesting attempt at something new in religious art, but whether on either count it was entirely satisfactory is not so certain. The grouping and colouring was generally effective, the singing magnificent in itself, though the free flow of the plainchant melodies was hampered by a conductor, and an organist whose stridency was both painful and unnecessary where there was such a weight of beautifully produced voices which one longed to hear unaccompanied.

As a performance, it was not quite drama, nor ballet, nor mime. The equation of liturgical music with expressive group movement was perhaps most successful in the *Attende Domine*, with its slow advances and prostrations. The *Media Vita* required more than a long crocodile of girls in lovely colours walking slowly round the arena and repeating gestures coincident with the words—reaching up for *Sancte Deus* and sweeping down for *juste irasceris*, and so on. And the *In Paradisum* lost much through the repeated quivering above their heads of the two palms carried by each white-robed angel, a gesture dreadfully reminiscent, as was borne in on me later, of a Micky Mouse effect. In both these episodes the effect was more that of massed drill than anything else.

The *Everyman* part of the performance was in many ways beautiful and undeniably impressive if one had a knowledge of Catholic doctrine, liturgical music and the text of the play, but to one lacking these qualifications it is not quite easy to see what it could do to arouse or teach. The strong dramatic quality of *Everyman* was not very evident under the system of group parts and group speaking. Six *Everymans*, all young persons in pink, were rather distracting, with their six Good Deeds in lovely white and six *Knowledges* in tall green dunce's hats. The dance of Death, black and skeleton like and many