

JOHN BLOW.

(Vol. II.)

THIS second instalment of harpsichord pieces by Dr. Blow contains no complete example of a Suite, and the only instance of close connection between successive pieces is that of the "Prelude" and "Courant," pp. 7 and 8. The greater number are taken from a MS. in the Library of Christ Church, Oxford, and another MS. in the same Library contains the interesting "Ground" in G minor. For permission to insert these, the Editor's thanks are due to the College authorities, without whose sanction the pieces cannot be reprinted. The first piece, to which the name "Fugue" may not unfairly be applied, is of considerable interest to the student. The order of the entries is unusual, and the four voices of the opening are only occasionally present in the later portion, where a new "point" diverts the attention from the original theme. The Prelude which follows (p. 3) throws light upon the keyboard technique of the day, when a scale of more than five notes was generally played by alternating the middle and the fourth fingers. The notation of the fingering, which is found only in the MS. in the British Museum, corresponds to what is now called "Continental" fingering, the figures 1 to 5 being employed, though the order is inverted for the left hand; the tiresome system now known as "English" fingering, with a cross for the thumb, was introduced into England long after Blow's time.

In the "Ground in C faut" (p. 19) are other instances of fingering from the Christ Church MS. The last piece in the volume, "The Hay's a Ground," shows the harmonic regularity of the form more clearly and more conventionally than do the other two specimens, and the formidable difficulties of its closing sections suggest that it was written for performers whose fingers were more thoroughly trained than their intellects.

As in the first volume of Blow's pieces, it is necessary to explain the translation of one of the most frequent ornaments, represented in the MSS. by a diagonal line before the note, and here by the appoggiatura-sign, of a small note preceding a larger one. Not very long after Blow's date, in Bach and Handel particularly, this was almost always taken after the fashion explained later by Türk; the apparent value of the small note means nothing, but its length in performance depends on the length of the note to which it is prefixed. It occupies half the length of the main note, unless that main note is dotted, when the auxiliary takes up two-thirds of the length. To apply this in practice all through these early compositions is perhaps inadvisable, though as a general rule this interpretation gives the best results. The Editor is responsible for all marks of expression and indications of speed.