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St. Francis of Assisi

(Little Flowers)

ORATORIO

In

A PROLOGUE AND TWO PARTS

Poem by

GABRIEL NIGOND

English version by Claude Aveling

Composed

FOR SOLI AND CHORUSES OF MEN, WOMEN AND
CHILDREN, WITH ORCHESTRA

By

GABRIEL PIERNÉ

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This Requiem Mass, composed by a great artist—a man who is a bulwark of the nobility in Italian music—overflows with melody, although its writer is by instinct incapable of a commonplace phrase. Everything in this work breathes spontaneous emotion, and although the form of the Latin Mass for the Dead is retained, the hue of strong subjectivity colors each section. The characteristic trait of this subjectivity is lyricism—lyricism of the purest, most ideal kind. But should there be any who doubt whether the sweetest sensuous euphony be proper to the expression of transcendent emotions, let them listen to the “Agnus Dei” of this mass, with its simple, yet so beautifully fastidious harmonies and its mysteriously romantic violin solo. It is true, that the sensuous euphony in which the choruses and the orchestration of the entire work are steeped, effects, so to say, a humanization of the solemn requiem mass; but when brought face to face with death, man should be least ashamed of his humanity. By way of contrast to other grand requiems Sgambati raises his song on the hither side of the grave, whereas others have attempted to catch tones sounding beyond from the realms of eternity.

From its contents it might be inferred that it is written for church use only. As a matter of fact it is rather intended for concert performances.