ELGAR

ERNEST NEWMAN

THE MUSIC OF THE MASTERS

EDITED BY WAKELING DRY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

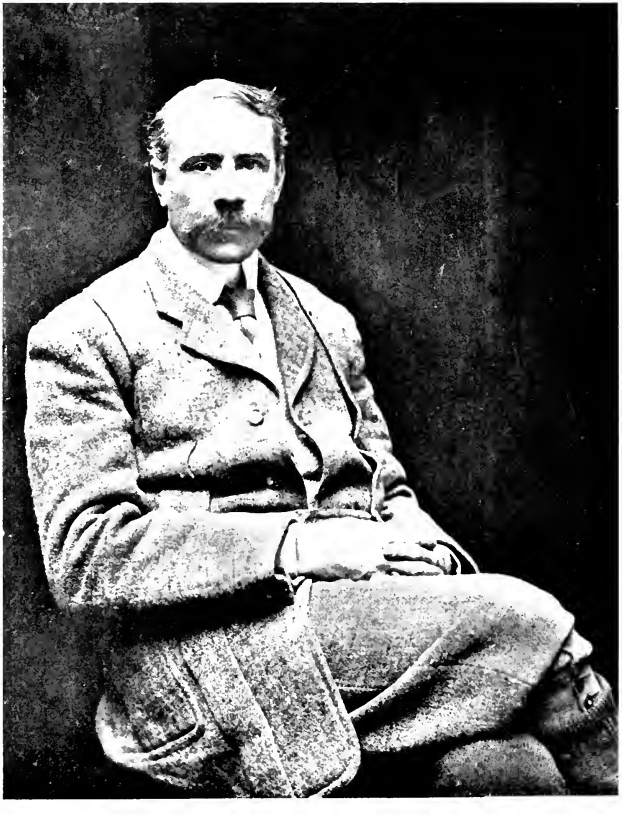
MUSICAL STUDIES

WAGNER

A MUSICAL MOTLEY

STRAUSS

THE BODLEY HEAD



SIR EDWARD ELGAR

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THE MUSIC OF THE MASTERS

ELGAR

BY ERNEST NEWMAN

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CONTENTS

I have to thank Messrs. Novello & Co. Ltd., and Messrs. Boosey & Co., for courteously lending me several of Elgar's full scores for the purpose of this book.

E. N.

THE
MUSIC OF THE MASTERS

CHAPTER I

EARLY WORKS: OP. 1 TO OP. 24

THE great bulk of Elgar's early work is slight in quality until we come to the cantata *The Black Knight* (Op. 25). Of the first twenty-four opus numbers, two alone are of prime significance in the record of his music—the *Serenade for Strings* (Op. 20), and the *Froissart* overture (Op. 19). The former will be considered later on in the present chapter; the latter, as the beginning of the series of large instrumental works that includes the *Enigma Variations* and the *Cockaigne* and *In the South* overtures, will find its natural place in Chapter V.

The remaining works of the early period, as will be seen by a glance at the list of Elgar's works given at the end of this

volume, are experiments in various smaller forms—songs, pieces for piano and violin, part songs, slight pieces for small orchestra, &c.

Elgar was in his early days a violinist, which accounts for so much of his youthful work being written for the violin. Op. 1 is a *Romance* for violin and orchestra (or piano), melodious and refined, and already exhibiting, in its seventh bar, a type of phrase that has run through his work from first to last.

Op. 2 is a short motet, *Ave Verum*, for soprani, chorus and organ. The expression is sincere if not very profound; the deepest note of feeling is struck in the concluding bars.

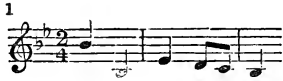
Op. 3 is a duo for violin and piano, inscribed to "The Misses Gedge," and based on the theme made by the G,E,D,G,E of the ladies' name. It is a pleasant and fluent little piece, exhibiting considerable ingenuity in its dealing with the problem of always keeping these five notes to the front. This is well done both in the first and final sections (in C major) and in the middle section (in C minor); the theme crops up in all kinds of places—piano and violin, treble and bass—and in all kinds of

rhythms. The only objection to the principle in which the little piece is written is that one finds oneself involuntarily spelling *all* the notes, to see if any other words are lurking under the musical surface.

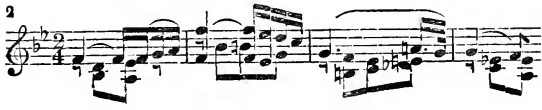
Op. 7, *Sevillaña* ("*Scène Espagnole*") for orchestra, is popular in its phraseology and its ideas, and only here and there in it can we catch a glimpse of the later Elgar.

Op. 10 consists of three short pieces: (1) *Mazurka*, (2) *Sérénade Mauresque*, (3) *Contrasts: The Gavotte, A.D. 1700 and 1900.* The *Mazurka* is pleasing, but sounds no distinctive note; the first section is the best, the remainder being somewhat negative in cast. The *Sérénade Mauresque* reproduces sufficiently well on the whole the grace and the languor we are accustomed to associate with the south and east of the world. In this respect the first and last sections are more successful than the middle one, where the music has hardly any suggestion of the oriental. The *Contrasts* is a thoroughly delightful little piece of work, more particularly the *Gavotte* of 1700. Elgar has rarely written anything with more perfect old-world charm than this; the musician, too, will recognise some ingenuity of device in the handling of it.

The *Sursum Corda* (adagio solenne) is scored for strings, brass, and organ, the wood-wind division of the orchestra being dispensed with. Structurally it is composed of three sections—(1) a solemn opening, followed by a broad melody rising to a climax of intensity; (2) a middle section in quicker *tempo* and more agitated mood; and (3) a return to the devotional elevation of No. 1. Here and there in the music one perceives a foreshadowing, however slight, of *Gerontius*. The first section begins and ends with a phrase—



that suggests a theme in Tannhauser's Pilgrimage, to the words "And thousands he forgave that day." The main melody of the work—



is expressive and deeply felt.

Op. 12 is the famous *Salut d'Amour* that has probably spread Elgar's name further

than any of his other compositions. The horny-handed proletarian who never enters a concert-room has it sung or played to him every day by his little daughter; it is in the répertoire of every restaurant band; it assails us in every form of combination known to the ingenuity of the arranger—piano, violin and piano, two violins and piano, flute and piano, clarinet and piano, oboe and piano, mandoline and piano, two mandolines and piano, two mandolines and guitar (which must be appalling), and half-a-dozen other styles: it has even been published as a song with two distinct sets of words. The little piece, however, is not really half so bad as its popularity would suggest. Its vein of sentiment is pretty obvious, but it is not the obviousness of the ordinary musical hireling; and if we can forgive the early Wagner the Bank-Holiday-'Arry vulgarity of part of the *Rienzi* overture, we can surely forgive Elgar the bib-and-pinafore psychology of the *Salut d'Amour*.

The *Chanson de Nuit* and *Chanson de Matin* (Op. 15), originally written for violin and piano, have also been popular enough to be issued in various arrangements. The *Chanson de Matin* is sprightly and charming;

the *Chanson de Nuit* is of a higher order, a night-piece of genuine feeling and rich colour.

Op. 17, for violin and piano, is entitled *La Capricieuse;* it answers moderately well to that title, but is in Elgar's weaker *salon* manner.

The little *Minuet* (Op. 21) is of exquisite quality. It was originally arranged for a small orchestra (strings, flute, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon, two horns and timpani), or, as an alternative, for strings alone; but it makes an effective and charming piano piece. It is one of the daintiest minuets ever penned.

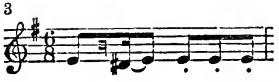
Op. 22 is "Six very easy melodious exercises in the first position for violin," of pleasant and innocuous sentiment.

Op. 23, the *Spanish Serenade*, is a part-song with orchestral accompaniment, set to the verses "Stars of the summer night," from Longfellow's "Spanish Student." The writing is pleasant and effective, and with a strong effort of the imagination the atmosphere may easily be taken to be Spanish.

Op. 24 consists of five *Études Caracteristiques* for violin—inventive and very interesting.

The most important of all Elgar's early work, with the exception of the *Froissart* overture, is the *String Serenade* (Op. 20). This is in three movements. The first (*allegro piacevole*) opens with a little figure in the violas—

3

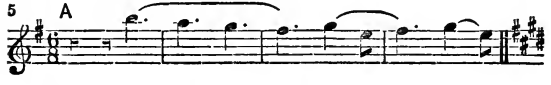


that is put to plenty of use, both in this and in the last movement. The main theme is heard at the third bar—

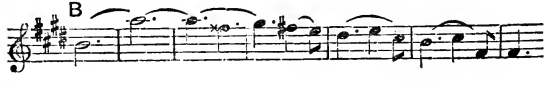
4

The middle portion of the movement is based on two phrases which are here shown in connection—

5 A



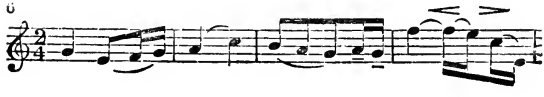
B



(No. 5A is first heard in the major, not in the minor, as in this quotaton; and it is handled for a few bars before No. 5B enters.

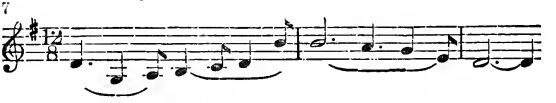
This form of the phrases is selected partly because it shows them in combination, and partly because they reappear in the same way in the finale.) The little figure No. 3 serves to re-introduce the first theme (No. 4), which, treated on much the same lines as before, ends the movement. It is all very delicate and attractive in feeling and felicitous in treatment; it has much ease and variety of phrasing, and each fragment of the material is made to play its part in the total effect in a very happy way. Neither here nor in the other sections of the *Serenade*, moreover, do we find the composer falling into those mannerisms of vocabulary and rhythm that so often enable us to mark a tune of his as being typically Elgarian.

The gem of the piece is the little larghetto that forms the second movement—a pure song-without-words. A brief prelude, in which a fine effect is made by the successive appearances of the same phrase in one part after another, leads to the main subject—a long and flexible melody sung by the first violins—



Upon its completion a few bars of contrasting matter are employed; then No. 6 is repeated with great fulness and richness of colour, an effect obtained by the broad spacing-out of the melody in octaves and the thickening of the harmony. The prelude to the movement comes in at the end, making a noble peroration. The whole thing is extremely beautiful. The main melody is one of the finest and most sustained that ever came from Elgar's pen; the expression is very tense and penetrating, and the underlying emotion really comes from the depths of the musical nature.

The last movement is an allegretto in 12–8 time, mainly based on the following phrase—



but not reaching the same level of interest or distinction as the two other movements. The *Serenade* is happily rounded off by a return to the figure No. 3, followed by Nos. 5A and 5B. Altogether the work, though apparently so slight in texture, is striking and original.

CHAPTER II

CANTATAS

Op. 25. The Black Knight.
Op. 30. King Olaf.
Op. 33. The Banner of St. George.
Op. 35. Caractacus.
Op. 44. Coronation Ode.

The Black Knight—described on the title-page of the score as a Cantata—is said to be called by the composer himself a "Symphony for Chorus and Orchestra," a title which it deserves by reason of the closeness of its texture and the concision and economy in the use of its material. It is set to a ballad of Uhland—"Der Schwarze Ritter"—that has been translated into broken-backed, spavined verse by Longfellow. An old king is celebrating "Pentecost, the Feast of Gladness," among his children and his knights. His son is everywhere victorious in the tourney until a sable knight rides to the barrier and discomfits him in the first encounter. The Scene then changes to the hall where the

guests are dancing. The black figure again enters and dances with the king's daughter; at his chilling touch the flowers in her hair and breast fall faded to the ground. At the banquet that follows, the old king, "all distraught," gazes at his son and daughter, lost in mournful reflection upon their paleness. The black guest hands them a beaker of wine, telling them it will make them whole; their faces grow colourless when they have drained it, and they die before the eyes of their "fear-struck father." He appeals to the Black Knight to take him too; but the "grim guest" only replies, "Roses in the spring I gather."

The English verse, as already hinted, is not of a very high order, but its deficiencies are hardly noticeable through the music; while the ballad as a whole, with its quick dramatic narrative and its broad contrasts of mood, is admirably adapted to a musical setting. The first Scene, describing the rejoicings and the tournament, is mainly based on a swinging theme that is typical Elgar—

The choral writing is uncommonly spirited and attractive, and the picture as a whole very vividly drawn. Especially striking is the section descriptive of the tournament, with its vigorous vocal phrases and its fine orchestral colouring.

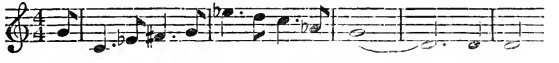
In the second Scene the Black Knight rides up to the barrier, accompanied by stately, portentous music. The theme commences quietly and rather mysteriously in the clarinets and bassoons, and gradually works up until it takes possession of the whole orchestra. The crowd demands his name and scutcheon. To their clamorous cry there succeeds a very effective silence, that is ultimately broken by a quiet echo of the choral phrase in the orchestra.

> "Should I speak it here
> Ye would stand aghast with fear,"—

replies the Knight in sombre tones. The sinister colour of the Scene is greatly heightened by two extremely effective chords in bass clarinet and horn. Fragments of the opening theme of this Scene are cleverly used to keep before us the picture of the Knight slowly and impressively advancing; the handling is already beginning to answer to the epithet "symphonic." The dreadful

nature of the grim visitor is always more and more definitely suggested as the theme develops. His announcement, "I am a Prince of mighty sway," is accompanied by a motive none the less striking because of its faint suggestion of a theme in *The Flying Dutchman*—

9

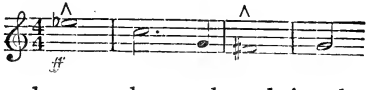


The succeeding passage, descriptive of the Knight riding into the lists and vanquishing the king's son, is based on a frequently recurring passage of rather undistinguished mould; but the whole Scene is redeemed by the dramatic strength of the music to the words—

> "The arch of heaven grew black with mist,
> And the castle 'gan to rock,"—

where the conception is extremely powerful. In the description of the overthrowing of the king's son by the Black Knight the sinister phrase No. 9 is very suggestively used, as well as another—

10



that is also much employed in the sequel

to represent the maleficent character of the Knight; and the Scene ends in a quiet way that gives us a curious sensation of awe.

The third Scene—that of the dance—opens with another melody that is wholly characteristic of Elgar—

The whole Scene is charmingly fresh and gracious, and orchestrated in the lightest of colours, till the "mighty shadow" enters; here, while the chorus keep up much the same movement as before, the sinister No. 9 is heard surging up in the dark tones of the basses, bassoons, and bass clarinet. When the Knight dances with the king's daughter—

> "Danced in sable iron sark,
> Danced a measure weird and dark,"—

the new dance is set in an appropriate atmosphere of trouble and foreboding; one can literally see the scared courtiers huddling together and whispering their fears to each other. There is some particularly expressive writing at the words—

> "From breast and hair
> Down fall from her the fair
> Flowerets, faded, to the ground,"—

where No. 10 is heard winding its way in and out on a solo horn.

The fourth Scene—the banquet—opens with another of those broad and pleasant melodies, to which one can find no valid objection, except that they have a slight air of fluent obviousness and do not cut quite deeply enough. The Scene as a whole, however, is dramatic and veracious, and good use is made of theme No. 9 in the 'cellos and bass clarinet, combined with No. 10 in violins and clarinet, when the son and daughter take the deadly beaker from the Knight. The unaccompanied chorus describing the fainting children embracing their father is musically expressive, but is slightly marred by occasional clumsiness in the vocal phrasing—as when the composer runs "son and daughter; and their faces" into one unbroken musical sentence, separated from what comes before and after. No. 10 is prominent throughout. When the old king speaks of his children being taken away "in the joy of youth" there is a brief choral and orchestral reference to the joyous strains of the opening of the work (No. 8). The king's cry "Take me too, the joyless father," is exceedingly poignant. When the "grim guest" speaks "from his

hollow, cavernous breast," we have a modification in the orchestra of No. 9 and No. 10 in combination, and a repetition of the hollow, sinister chords in horn and bass clarinet to which reference has already been made as accompanying him on his entry into the tournament. The words of the Black Knight—"Roses in the spring I gather"—are appropriately succeeded by an outburst of Nos. 9 and 10 *fortissimo* in the full orchestra. The work is rounded off with tender reminiscences of the buoyant theme (No. 8) with which it opened.

Altogether *The Black Knight* is a very striking little work. In 1893 it must have made every thoughtful hearer realise that its composer was a man of exceptional latent strength: and even now, after *Gerontius* and other later compositions of Elgar, one still listens to it with alert interest. It is for the most part decidedly personal to Elgar, showing few traces of other men's influence. It is all quite sincere and real, exhibiting in embryo those qualities of dramatic sympathy that later on, when expended upon a theme that caught up Elgar's whole nature into itself, was to result in the unerring psychological characterisation of *The Dream of Gerontius;*

and there is the germ of the now familiar mastery of the orchestra, making the score always a delight for its mingling of sensuous beauty and graphic truth.

It was to the tepid muse of Longfellow, again, that Elgar had recourse for the next of his cantatas, *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*, based upon the "Heimskringla," a collection of sagas of the Kings of Norway written by the Icelander Snorre Sturlesson, about 1150. Longfellow's poem not fitting in at every point with the musical scheme, Elgar has interpolated here and there a number of pedestrian verses by Mr. H. A. Acworth; they are poor but honest.

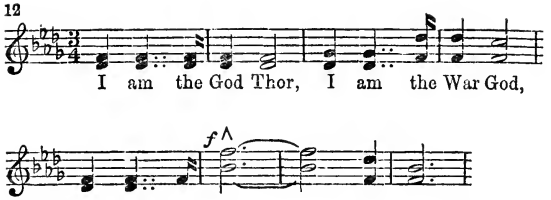
The composer has prefixed to his score this note: "In the following Scenes it is intended that the performers should be looked upon as a gathering of skalds (bards); all, in turn, take part in the narration of the saga, and occasionally, at the more dramatic points, personify for the moment some important character." There is no overture or prelude, but the orchestra gives out five bars of a mysteriously melancholy theme that is always used in the work to represent the old book of sagas. At the sixth bar the chorus enter quietly, and tell of this book of wonderful old legends, in which may

be found "the story that we now begin." This brief introduction is extremely impressive, bringing us at once into the right atmosphere—heroic, sad, and romantic—of the sagas.

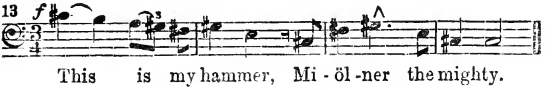
A bass soloist, in a short recitative, summons Thor, the god of thunder. In this we hear, in a modified form, the phrase shown in example No. 13, which later on becomes characteristic of the forceful pagan god. The chorus follows with the long *Challenge of Thor*. The god of thunder, the son of Odin, speaks of his might and the power of his hammer; the crimson light streaming from the heavens is his red beard; his eyes are the lightning, the wheels of his chariot the thunder, the blows of his hammer the earthquake. He is the embodiment of brute force :—

"Force rules the world still,
Has ruled it, shall rule it;
Meekness is weakness,
Strength is triumphant;
Over the whole earth
Still is it Thor's-Day."

The chorus is very dramatic, and particularly fine use is made of a *basso ostinato*. The typical Thor motive is heard at the commencement—



At the words, "This is my hammer, Miölner the mighty," we have the theme already referred to as symbolical of Thor's rude energy—



At the words—

> "The light thou beholdest
> Stream through the heavens,
> In flashes of crimson,
> Is but my red beard,
> Blown by the night-wind,
> Affrighting the nations,"—

the violins play round theme No. 12 with sharp tongues of flame. When Thor addresses the Galilean God, the chorus sing No. 12 softly in unison, while the violas and clarinets accompany with No. 13. The defiance of the Galilean, and the challenge to single combat, are delivered to a vigorous version of No. 12.

Olaf hears the challenge and sails northward into Drontheim fiord to accept it. The *basso ostinato* keeps the cry of Thor in our ears, and the sparkling violin figure reminds us again of "the red light in the sky" that Olaf sees. From a long and beautiful tenor solo we dimly learn the history and the motives of Olaf, for the clear realisation of which, however, we must go to the Saga itself. King Tryggve had been killed by Queen Gunhild. His wife, Astrid, took to flight, and in exile gave birth to Olaf. The boy had many adventures, proving himself at the age of ten to be of heroic texture. He sailed many seas and raided many lands; was converted to Christianity by a hermit in the Scilly Islands and baptized, but still kept up a healthy pagan interest in piracy and bloodletting. Ultimately he is recalled to Norway, whither he goes, urged by a complication of motives—the desires to win back his kingdom, to avenge his father, and to promote the new faith. The libretto of Elgar's work is a very imperfect thing, and in this Scene we come upon the first of a series of flaws in the structure. After the heathen outcry of Thor, the challenge to the Galilean God, and the acceptance of

the challenge by Olaf, we naturally expect the action here to hinge upon the strife between the two religions. But in the story of Olaf's return there is barely the shadow of a hint of this. What we are told is that—

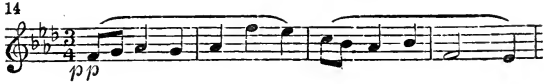
> " *To avenge his father slain,*
> *And reconquer realm and reign*
> Came the youthful Olaf home."

The motivation of the story is thus already approaching chaos.

Whatever faults there may be in the libretto at this point, however, one almost forgets them under the spell of the music. The solo tells how Olaf, sailing through the midnight, muses upon the memory of his mother, the tales she had told him of her flight, his contests with grim Vikings, his " cruisings o'er the seas," his baptism by the hermit—all to music that still remains among the finest Elgar has written, music of a singularly lucid, limpid beauty, full of magical suggestion, and flowing with an ease that Elgar's vocal writing does not always exhibit.

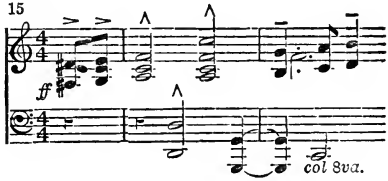
One or two musical motives here require quotation. The " Sailing " motive is used to accompany the recital of Olaf's voyage—

14



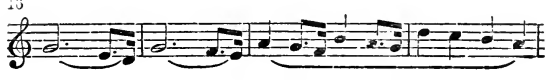
As he flings out defiance of Thor, the theme representative of Olaf's heroic character comes out—

15



When he thinks of his mother Astrid, her theme—one of the most beautiful in the whole work—is heard in the softest and tenderest of orchestral colour—

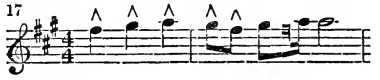
16



The description of his personal beauty and grace—Carlyle calls him "the wildly beautifulest man, in body and soul, that one has ever heard of in the North"—is based on a theme of picturesque charm, that need not, however, be quoted here.

In a unison chorus, accompanied by fugitive suggestions of the "Sailing" motive (No. 14), we are told how Olaf and his men

come to land. They are met by the pagans, led by one Ironbeard; he has a typical theme of his own, upon which is constructed the chorus that tells of their assembling to meet Olaf. The king blows his bugle-call—



a stirring phrase given to trumpets and trombones, and combined with the heroic theme No. 15. Olaf invites the pagans to become Christians. Ironbeard refuses; prominent in his solo is the theme of "Thor" shown in No. 13. Olaf raises his axe and shatters the golden image of Thor. Ironbeard springs forward murderously, but is shot by a retainer of Olaf, and dies affirming his faith in his old gods. The music as a whole is somewhat characterless, except in Ironbeard's monologue, where we get the poignant accents of reality. A fine chorus describes how the men of Drontheim were converted: Olaf exhorts them to "pass the gods of the Gothland," [1] and all join in a solemn chorale-like prayer.

[1] "Pass the gods of the Gothland; your serfdom shall cease
For the sacrifice bloody I offer you peace:
The peace of the Christian"—
he says in Mr. Acworth's verses. This is the marauding

Olaf weds Ironbeard's daughter, Gudrun, thus hoping to pay his wergild for the slaying of her father. On the bridal night she means to kill Olaf; but he wakens and catches the gleam of the dagger in the moonlight. She tries to make him believe it is the bodkin used to bind her hair, but the king sees through her purpose, and at dawn of day she rides away from him for ever. The Scene opens with the violins shimmering gently in octaves in the higher register, while the flutes slowly give out the typical "Gudrun" theme, that has been already heard in the preceding Scene, when her name was mentioned with that of her father Ironbeard. The theme is also much used during the ensuing recital, by the soprano, of Gudrun's resolve to avenge her father, and again in the comments of the chorus. The orchestral colour becomes appropriately tenuous and mysterious as Gudrun approaches the couch of the sleeping king. Her explanation when he wakens, and the ensuing duet with Olaf, are rather lacking in dramatic character.

gentleman whose object—avowed a few pages earlier—in returning to Norway has been "to avenge his father slain." The character is a mere muddle throughout; at one moment he is a bluff pirate-chieftain, at another a pious Sunday-school teacher.

At the end of the dialogue Olaf's bugle call is heard in the veiled tone of a muted trumpet—the impression of darkness and of nervous human tension being thus admirably preserved—and in a few lines the chorus tell of the departure of Gudrun.

The religious side of the picture comes forward again in the next Scene—"The Wraith of Odin." A skald, to the accompaniment of the "Saga" motive, bids the bards sing the story of how the wraith of Odin appeared. This is done in a long choral ballad. Olaf and his guests are feasting; the door swings open, and a one-eyed man, with cloak and hood, enters the hall. The orchestra, by giving out the motive previously allotted to Odin, make us aware who the visitor is. He accepts a draught of ale from the king, and then, seating himself at the table, tells old sagas. Here the "Saga" themes of the introduction are woven into the orchestral tissue with fine effect. There is, indeed, some particularly good choral writing at this point, some of the thematic reminiscences being very striking. The king falls asleep; when he awakes next morning, the strange guest has gone, though all the doors are barred, and none—not even the watch-dogs—had

seen him pass. This is told in awed monotone by the chorus, their phrases being interspersed with mysterious and suggestive phrases in the bassoons and clarinets. Olaf now realises that Odin, the old pagan god, is indeed dead, and that the mysterious stranger was his wraith. Before he comes to this conclusion it is again made clear to us by the "Odin" theme recurring in the orchestra as the passing of "the stranger" is referred to. When Olaf speaks of Odin being dead, and of the visit of his wraith being a symbol of the triumph of the Christian faith, we have a repetition of the music of the hymn that was sung at the end of the Scene of the conversion at Drontheim. The Scene just ended is mostly very graphic in its characterisation, and a curiously impressive effect is produced by the repetition every now and then of the monotonous ballad-burden "Dead rides Sir Morten of Fogelsang."

The greatest fault of the libretto is its patchiness. As its title indicates, it is not an organic piece of work, but merely *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf.* It is like watching the cinematograph; one set of characters is whisked off the sheet, and another set whisked on, without any con-

nection between them. A certain Sigrid now appears. She is the ruler of Svithiod, and Olaf desires to marry her. He comes with his spearmen, and exhorts the queen to give up her old gods and become a Christian. When she refuses, he becomes grossly rude—

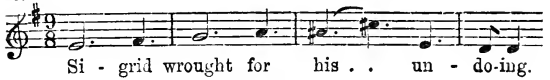
> "I will give my body and soul to flame
> Ere I take to my heart a heathen dame:
> *Thou hast not beauty, thou hast not youth;*
> *Shall I buy thy land at the cost of truth?*"—

from which it appears that, however zealous for the faith he may have been, he had a keen eye for the material side of the bargain; and presumably he would have been willing to marry Sigrid and put up with her plainness of person and her advanced years, if he could only have had the land and her conversion. He smites the lady on the cheek with his glove and departs—altogether he is a sweet specimen of the convert. The characterisation is all quite congruous if we take the man as a product of his times; but it is a mistake for a modern composer to wrap this raw being in religious music and make him pose as a kind of bulwark of the faith.

In the brief preliminary recitative of the

skald we get the representative motive of Sigrid's hate—

18.



(This becomes of further importance towards the end of the work, for it is through the machinations of Sigrid that Olaf ultimately meets his doom.) The chorus that tells the story of Sigrid is for female voices only; the music is fluent and spirited. There is a certain amount of courtly charm in the opening of the dialogue between Olaf and Sigrid, but as a whole it lacks point. There is distinct character, however, in the spitfire music that is set to Sigrid's angry championship of her old gods. Very fine, too, are the brief excited chorus that narrates the smiting of Sigrid with Olaf's glove, and the final soliloquy of the queen, trembling with suppressed passion, after the king has ridden away. Her last words, "Sigrid yet shall be Olaf's death," are sung to theme No. 18.

Another lady now appears—one Thyri, who, to avoid marrying old King Burislaf of Wenland, flies for protection to the court of Olaf. He weds the maiden, though this

act means war with Svend the Dane (her brother) and King Burislaf. All this is told in a superb choral ballad—supposed to be a recapitulation of the gossip of the town, brought by "a little bird in the air." The long movement is one of the very finest things ever done by Elgar. The narrative is consummately easy and fluent; the music has all the fragrant romance and at the same time all the iron strength of the old saga; at the passage—

> "For surely, if here she remain,
> It is war with King Svend the Dane,
> And King Burislaf the Vend,"—

there is a huge, full-throated outburst that is magnificently suggestive of letting loose the dogs of war. Another fine effect is in the final repetition of the refrain of the ballad "Hoist up your sails of silk" (vocal score, p. 120), where the tenors sharply catch up the refrain from the basses in an unexpected key. The whole thing is a masterpiece.

Thyri next sings that although everything else is happy in the spring, she is miserable, brooding over the loss of her lands. Olaf enters; she confides her troubles to him, and he promises to fight for the recovery

of her lands. Thyri's opening solo is somewhat characterless, only very faintly conveying an impression of the queen's sorrow; nor does Elgar greatly shine in love-music. The Scene as a whole, indeed, is rather tepid, and Thyri a colourless figure; while Olaf trips it like an Edwin Long young man in a Dendy Sadler garden.

The outraged Sigrid becomes the bride of King Svend, whom she goads into war with Olaf. At the end of the Skald's introduction to the Sigrid episode there was a short phrase heard in the *cor anglais*, accompanying the words "the insult and the wrong." This is now employed again to recall the passionate figure of Sigrid to us. The verbal references to her are of course accompanied by the typical "Sigrid" motive. When the chorus speak of Svend sailing to seek Olaf, we hear in the orchestra the "Sailing" motive (No. 14), in counterpoint with the theme just mentioned of Sigrid's insult. A fragment of the previous love-duet with Thyri also recurs, as if to suggest the happiness that is soon to be so rudely disturbed; while a further foreshadowing of the coming tragedy is had when the trombones give out *fortissimo* the theme of Sigrid's revenge (No. 18).

The sailing of Olaf and his fleet is graphically depicted in a spirited chorus, in which a number of the previous motives are heard again. The picture of the king on the deck "with war-axe grasped in both his hands" is accompanied by the theme representative of his personal beauty, from the Scene in which he first appeared. The words, "First of his fleet he leads the van," are sung *fortissimo* by tenors and basses to the theme of Olaf's bugle-call (No. 17), reinforced by oboes and horns; while during the following words, "And seeks the battle, man to man," the same theme is reiterated with fine defiance by horns and trumpets. The recital of the enemy swarming to the encounter is accompanied by the spiteful figure already referred to in connection with Sigrid's championship of her gods. The "Sailing" motive is used at "King Olaf's galley sweeps along," and at the words, "Woe, woe for Norroway," the typical theme of "Sigrid" is heard.

The defeat of Olaf is finely painted, much use again being made of themes associated with him in the beautiful Scene of his first appearance. At the words, "Thy latest fight is fought in vain," we have the motive of Sigrid's vengeance (No. 18) in chorus and

orchestra, accompanied by the deep tolling of a bell; and at the words—

> "No more the glittering crest
> Shall victory pluck from ruin's verge,"—

there is a last reminiscence of the theme of Olaf's beauty. In a final orchestral passage we have a melancholy version of the great "Olaf" theme (No. 15). The Scene as a whole is extremely impressive, and the interweaving and blending of typical themes are remarkably ingenious.

The Scene changes to the convent at Drontheim, where Astrid, the mother of Olaf, is praying at midnight; the preliminary narrative is of course accompanied by "Astrid's" theme (No. 16). Outside in the darkness she hears a voice—that of St. John—speaking of the final triumph of Christ, the God of Love. The chorus sing St. John's words, accepting the pagan challenge of battle and predicting the victory of love, to a reminiscence of the music of the challenge of Thor (No. 12) and other of the pagan themes, including No. 13. Their character, however, is now greatly softened. There is a falling-off of interest in the remainder of the work until just before the end, when a return to the "Saga"

motive of the opening serves to make a quiet and impressive finish.

The libretto of *King Olaf* is exceedingly defective, and its scrappiness and disjointedness must be held answerable for much of the failure of the music to compose itself into an organic whole. Any real continuity of expression or of psychology is impossible with a succession of disconnected scenes, in which various people come up for a moment and then disappear to be heard of no more. Nor can music delineate character consistently when there is no consistent character given it to delineate by the librettist. The climax of absurdity is reached at the end, where Olaf, who has been drawn as a quarrelsome, high-spirited, land-grabbing, bad-mannered, courageous viking—a real creature of his day—is made to figure as a saint in whose life and death are symbolised the struggle and triumph of the Christian faith. When the chorus sing, in the last scene—

> "Cross against Corslet,
> Love against hatred,
> Peace-cry for War-cry,"—

and the rest of it, one wonders what all this has to do with the sturdy pirate who

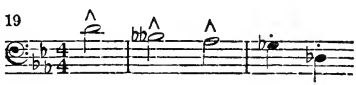
has gone into his last fight for the express purpose of wresting territory from his enemies—inspired thereto by the light of his lady's "radiant eyes." All through the cantata there is the same alternate presentation of Olaf as the pirate and the saint. With a book so fundamentally poor it is astonishing that Elgar should have been able to do so much; when a clear issue is presented to him, and both the situation and the verse lend themselves to musical treatment, he rises to great heights. There is rare beauty and consummate power in much of the writing.

The Banner of St. George is a slight work that does not bulk very largely in the total output of its composer. The verses, by Mr. Shapcott Wensley, deal with the old story of the dragon that devastates Sylene until the maiden Sabra offers herself to him as a sacrifice to save the town. St. George of Cappadocia appears, liberates the maiden, and slays the dragon. An epilogue rhapsodises upon the English flag in the customary patriotic drum-thumping vein. There is some expressive writing in the cantata, though the general level reached by the music is not a remarkably high one. It is conceived in a somewhat obvious vein

of sentiment, and the patriotic chorus at the end touches no deeper springs than is generally done by this class of composition.

With *Caractacus*, Elgar makes a bolder flight than any he had hitherto attempted; here, on page after page of the score, we have a foretaste of the deeper thinker and more expert craftsman of the *Variations* and *Gerontius*.

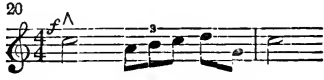
The libretto is by Mr. H. A. Acworth, who, as we saw, had a hand in *King Olaf;* the verse is respectable, but jog-trot and square-toed, and not exactly an ideal basis for music. The first Scene represents the British camp on the Malverns, at night; Caractacus and the British host are entering the camp. A brief orchestral prelude, in which we hear the typical motive of Caractacus—



paints the subdued commotion of the camp; this works up to a spirited chorus, in which the Britons (male and female), tell of the Roman invasion, and exhort each other to a heroic resistance. There is a theme characteristic of the British soldiers, and one

relating to the Romans, which latter is of importance later on—

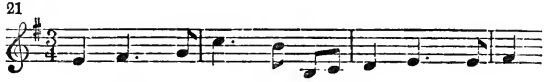
20



Caractacus addresses them; then he goes to the foot of a mound by the spring of Taranis, and soliloquises upon the past conflicts and the issue the future may bring; his references to Rome are accompanied by some fine modifications of No. 20. For a moment he wavers and believes the end has come; then he nerves himself up to one last great struggle with Rome; here his own theme (No. 19) is naturally prominent.

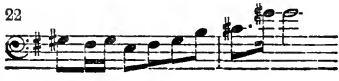
He is accosted by his daughter Eigen, who has come attended by her lover Orbin, a minstrel. "Eigen's" theme comes out suavely in the violin —

21



and "Orbin's" in the 'cellos—

22



She tells her father of her meeting with a Druid maiden, who has declared that the Britons, if they wish to be victorious, must encounter the Romans in the depth of the forest. Her narration is set to pleasant, fluent music. The three join in a trio in which they hope that the omens, which are to be taken next day, will be favourable to the British; then they descend the hill. The mention of the meeting of the Druids in the sacred oak-grove, in order to take the omens, is accompanied by the "Druids" motive, which becomes of importance later on—

The Spirits of the Hill sing softly over the sleeping monarch, and the Scene closes with the sentries, in the distance, again uttering their call of "Watchmen alert!" that has been appearing at intervals since the opening of the work.

The second Scene is the sacred oak grove by the tomb of the kings, where the Druids, Druidesses, and Bards are assembled, together with the Arch-Druid and Orbin. The "Druids" theme (No. 23) is of course prominent—the orchestral prelude being

founded on it—and there are many references to motives that have already appeared in the previous Scene when the mistletoe and the Druidesses were mentioned. A mystic dance round the sacred oak is in progress; then Taranis is invoked to descend and announce what is to be. The choruses lack the right imaginative quality, and convey hardly any sense of the scene and the emotions of the personages concerned in it. Orbin reads the omens, which are unfavourable to the Britons; as he says he sees "an eagle flying with beak and talons red," the orchestra plays suggestively with the theme of the Roman power (No. 20); the bulk of the texture of the music at this point, indeed, is made up of references to themes already heard. The Arch-Druid resolves to hide the truth from Caractacus, and when the king enters he is told that victory has been foretold for him. The vocal phrases (founded on a melody previously associated with Britain) are quite lacking in dignity. He resolves to take the offensive; his aria and the succeeding chorus are based on a "sword" motive of spirited character. Orbin makes a protest, but is cursed and cast out by the Arch-Druid and the rest. Throwing

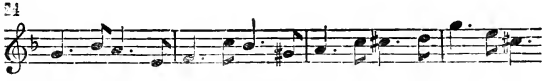
down his harp, he rushes off, determined to exchange the minstrel's rôle for that of the warrior. The final chorus of curses is based on some very fine metamorphoses of various themes, chiefly those of the "Druids" and "Orbin" (Nos. 23 and 22).

The third Scene is at morning in the forest of the Severn. A pleasant orchestral prelude introduces a chorus of youths and maidens, who sing as they weave sacred garlands. The chorus is not a success; it achieves simplicity at the cost of distinction. Eigen enters; she has appointed to meet Orbin here. Her solo expresses her joy and sympathy with the loving life of Nature. The music comes perilously near the trivial, for which the Clifton Binghamesque quality of the verse must no doubt be held largely responsible. Orbin appears, and tells her of the catastrophe of the previous scene, and of his resolve to fight for his country. The chorus softly break in upon his speech with their earlier strains, and for a little while the dialogue between the lovers is carried on against this choral background; then, in a duet, they sing of their aspiration for life in a land where all is peace and love. As usual in his love-duets, Elgar falls much below

the general level of his music. On occasions like this his characters become mere marionnettes, talking the commonplaces of the novelette; his musical idiom degenerates into a facile but inexpressive 12–8 or 9–8 rhythm, and the personages are as little like ancient Britons as Mr. Maurice Hewlett's lollipop warriors in sugar armour are like mediæval knights.

Scene IV. is set in the Malvern Hills. The maidens are disturbed by rumours of misfortune to the British arms; their chorus is full of troubled, agitated phrases and figures. Eigen tells them that again she has met the Druid girl, who once more has cursed Caractacus and prophesied defeat for him if he leaves the forest to fight. The recital is of course accompanied by references to the themes that appeared in Eigen's similar narrative in the first Scene. Caractacus and the remnant of his warriors enter in disorder; they narrate the story of their defeat in a chorus of poignant expression; especially noticeable is a wailing syncopated theme at the words, "And all day the mighty battle." Then Caractacus and his soldiers break out into a long lament in 7–4 time—a powerful and veracious piece of writing.

The fifth Scene is very short. It opens with an orchestral reminiscence of the phrases heard in the first Scene, where Caractacus, as if foreseeing the tragic end of his struggle, sings "But it ends, Freedom ends, and power and glory." The Druid maidens have a mournful chorus as the British captives embark in the Roman galleys; at the same time the clarinets give out expressively the theme to which the Druid maiden previously warned the Britons of their coming doom. A bard joins in the lamentation, and a ceaselessly flowing figure in the strings suggests the Severn lapping the bars "with sob and cry." The main motive is that symbolical of the captive Britons—



When the voices end, the orchestra continues the strains; with these there gradually mingle suggestions of the theme of the Roman triumph (No. 20), and we enter without a break into the sixth Scene—in Rome.

Here the "Roman" theme is developed into a grand triumphal march of gorgeous colouring; much use is made of a figure that

appeared in Caractacus' opening solo at the words, "Rome has heard my wheel-blades rattle." Eigen, Orbin, and Caractacus and the other captives pass along; there is a lull in the triumphal clamour, in which we hear the theme of the captive Britons (No. 24). Then the march is resumed. Soon—

> "The Emperor fills the curule chair,
> The captives halt before."

Claudius bids Caractacus plead for mercy; the Briton proudly refuses to bow the knee, says that they fought only in defence of liberty, and asks the emperor to do his worst on him, sparing the others. A theme to which Caractacus had in the first Scene invited his soldiers to rest recurs at the words, "We lived in peace; was that a crime to thee?" while at "We dwelt among our woodlands," there is an allusion to the forest music heard in the third Scene. Themes from the chorus of the soldiers after their defeat are also heard, and the "Captives" motive (No. 24), at the words, "Now all is lost." Caractacus' proud declaration, "My soul alone remains unshackled still," is followed by his theme (No. 19), first in the horns, then in the

trombones. Eigen and Orbin break in with a short duet of regret for the woodlands of the Habren (the Severn); it is based on reminiscences of their earlier love-duet. The Roman citizens demand the death of the captives. Caractacus pleads for mercy for his daughter and her lover, who in their turn repudiate the appeal. The Romans again clamour for their death, but Claudius declares they shall not die, but live in peace and safety in Rome. The four principals join in a quartet of conventional sentiment about freedom being lost, but "hope, memory, love, shall hide our golden chain." The music is largely based on a theme that has already been heard in the earlier scene between Caractacus and Eigen (Vocal Score, p. 28). The work concludes with a chorus that is a serious blot on the dramatic scheme. The actors are invited to—

> "Brood
> On glorious ages coming,
> And Kings of British blood."

The passing away of Rome and the rise of the British Empire are foretold; and the cantata ends with much conventional doggerel about Britain and the slave and

the rest of it and the vision of a time when—

> "The nations all shall stand
> And hymn the praise of Britain,
> Like brothers, hand in hand."

If the Roman populace is supposed to sing this, the whole thing is flatly nonsensical; if it is merely the choral society of the town that thrusts its head through the canvas in this way,[1] it is a lamentably inept manner of finishing up the work. The verse is commonplace, and could inspire no musician; and the ending of the chorus is unfortunately based on one of the most banal themes in the whole work—that to which the Arch-Druid, in Scene II., sings—

> "Go forth, O king, to conquer,
> And all the land shall know,
> When falls thy charmèd sword-edge,
> In thunder on the foe."

The cantata is thus made to end in a sputter of bathos and rant.

Much of the vocal writing in *Caractacus* is awkward, not in the sense that it is difficult to sing, but that time after time the union of words and music seems a

[1] Though this view seems to be negatived by the words first quoted above.

forced one—each seems an impediment to the other instead of a help. It is a feature that recurs every now and then in all Elgar's vocal work. Many a phrase is good orchestral but bad vocal idiom—a point that may be brought home to the reader most effectually by recalling to his mind a typical example, the "Angel's Farewell" in *Gerontius*. The melodic line is suave and well articulated in the orchestra, but is far less happy when the words are fitted to it; and in passages like "Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest" (Vocal Score, p. 169) the effect is positively clumsy. Elgar's writing for the voice is sometimes accurate and searching; but it is often very infelicitous, and perhaps more examples of this infelicity occur in *Caractacus* than anywhere else in his work.

He has been unfortunate, too, in his libretto. The verse is colourless, and nothing like a clearly cut dramatic personage exists in the whole poem, so that any vital psychological characterisation is made an impossibility to the composer of such a text at the outset. Orbin and Eigen are like Eric in *The Flying Dutchman*—lay figures that can do everything but breathe and look living. Caractacus comes nearer

realisation, but even he is not a real being as Gerontius, for example, is real. Yet in spite of all these defects—which, it must be remembered, lie primarily at the door of the librettist, not at that of the composer—*Caractacus* is in great part a vigorous and striking work, glowing with colour, and, in the choral and orchestral portions, at any rate, achieving many a fine feat of expression. A work lying next in opus number to the great *Enigma Variations* could hardly fail to contain many notable things. It has not the sheer melodic charm of *King Olaf*, but on the other hand it is always striving after a bigger utterance than we have in that work. It does not always reach what it strives after; its intention is often better than its achievement; but none the less it gives us a strong impression of real power.

In literary quality his next cantata—the *Coronation Ode*, the words of which are by Mr. A. C. Benson—surpassed anything he had yet set to music. A majestic and imposing opening, in Elgar's largest overture-style, recapitulating leading themes of the work, leads into a broad chorus, "Crown the King with life," that is interspersed with work for the four principals, and

touches upon various moods. The effect is always imposing and ceremonial, and sometimes reaches real grandeur. At the end, the well-known theme of one of the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches (Ex. No. 92) is introduced, the setting being for the four solo voices and chorus, mostly in unison, and orchestra.

The following chorus, "Daughter of ancient kings," is lacking in distinction, and unworthy of a place in the work. Then comes a bass solo with chorus of tenors and basses—"Britain, ask of thyself, and see that thy sons be strong." It begins in rather too colloquial terms, but in time expands into a bluff, big-throated heartiness that captures us in spite of ourselves. The movement has a good many analogies with the better patriotic verse of Mr. Kipling.

The soprano and tenor soli that follow, "Hark, upon the hallowed air," contains much fluent writing of a type that has been made familiar to us by many pages in the earlier cantatas, but that does not strike quite far enough home. The succeeding quartet, "Only let the heart be pure," would be more effective if it were not that by this time Elgar's peculiarly sinuous use

of 9–8 and 12–8 time, and of triplets in common time, begins to strike us as a mannerism. Still the part-writing is very interesting. The next movement—an unaccompanied quartet and chorus, "Peace, gentle Peace," written to perhaps the most poetical words in the Ode—is broad, dignified, and full of beautiful and sincere feeling.

The Finale (contralto solo and tutti)—"Land of Hope and Glory"—is a distended and glorified version of the familiar March-tune (Ex. No. 92). Its vocal form can hardly be called a success, either here or in the song-arrangement that has been published. In the first place it is married to the words much against its own will; in the second place, in spite of the heartiness of the tune, it really will not bear the attempt to make it look heroic. It is dignified in just the right kind of way in its proper place in the March, but when it is dressed up in the pompous sentiments of the *Coronation Ode* its clothes seem several sizes too large for it. The crowning of a king in these days is not the stuff out of which great art can be made; but when the *Coronation Ode* was written Elgar was at the height of his powers as a musician, and could hardly fail to turn out a work

pompous in phrase and opulent in colour. Occasionally it falls below the level of his average writing, occasionally it rises to some height above it. Its great defect is that, as in all his works when he has not a poetic theme that moves him through and through, fluency takes the place of genuine inspiration, and all his most familiar mannerisms of melody, harmony, and rhythm have too free a play.

CHAPTER III

ORATORIOS

Op. 29. Lux Christi (The Light of Life).
Op. 38. The Dream of Gerontius.
Op. 49. The Apostles.

The Light of Life is the second name of an oratorio that first appeared as *Lux Christi*. The text, founded on the story of Jesus healing the man blind from his birth, is partly the work of the Rev. E. Capel-Cure, partly arranged by him from Scripture. It is a typical English oratorio, with its blend of narration, dramatic impersonation, and choral sentiment, and has all the ineradicable faults of this kind of libretto. In the music the later Elgar is not yet fully revealed, though there are some sections of it that exhibit great power and beauty.

It is the only work of this kind by Elgar, with the exception of *The Dream of Gerontius*, that has an orchestral prelude. That to *The Light of Life* is called a "Meditation," and is sometimes played as a separate

concert piece. It opens with a solemn meditative theme, that is succeeded by the motive of the anguish of the blind man, given to the horns—

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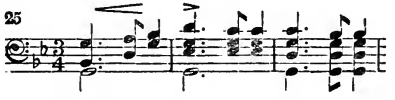

with a supplementary theme—

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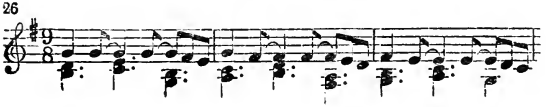

expressive of his longing for light. Worked up to a climax, it dies down into a theme that appears in the oratorio as accompaniment to Jesus' words, "I must work the works of Him that sent me," and later to the words, "I am the Light of the world."

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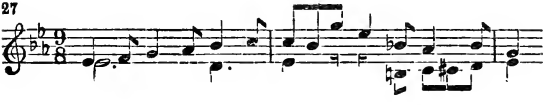
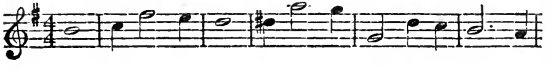


This, with references to No. 26, leads to an important theme—

28



specially appropriated to Jesus as the light-giver.[1] With this the prelude ends.

A chorus of Levites (tenors and basses) is at once heard, within the Temple courts, singing in praise of the Lord. The 'cellos and bassoons frequently reiterate the solemn theme with which the prelude opened, and later on, at the words, "Who hath made great lights," a modification of No. 28 peals out in the full orchestra with fine effect. The blind man (tenor) who is supposed to be outside the Temple, in a short solo prays for light; his music is based on Nos. 25 and 26, with hints of 28 in the orchestra. Repetitions of these two sections lead into the scene where, as Jesus passes by, the disciples ask "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Here, as throughout the work, the narrators' music is perfunctory and uninteresting; nor has the speech of the disciples any reality in it—it is choppy and formal. There is more sincerity in the ensuing aria, in which the mother of the blind man (soprano) asks,

[1] Elgar later on made effective use of this theme in "The Apostles," to the words, "And recovering of sight to the blind." See Vocal Score, p. 4. The above example shows it in the form it assumes in the prelude to "The Light of Life." In the work itself it almost always appears in 3–4 time, in a much more striking form.

in agitated accents, the meaning of the affliction that has been visited upon her son. When she says of those who attributed his misfortune to her sin, "Blinder than my own child are they," there is an expressive play with motive No. 25 in 'cellos and bassoons. Prominent in the tissue of her solo is a strenuous phrase expressive of the fervour of her appeal for enlightenment (Vocal Score, pp. 18, 20).

Jesus (baritone) replies proclaiming His Divine mission, theme No. 27 being used. He announces that those who follow Him shall have the light of life, upon which the chorus comment, No. 28 being illuminatingly employed. Interspersed in the chorus are some rather curious mystical passages in thirds, *pianissimo*, which carry our imagination on to certain pages in *Gerontius* and the *Apostles* that live in the same atmosphere. The musical speech here strikes at once to the very heart of the subject.

Next comes the performing of the miracle, and a chorus or duet (soprano and contralto), "Doubt not thy father's care," of no particular force. In the ensuing Scenes, where the cured man reappears and tells his story, there are fleeting suggestions in

the orchestra of the theme of "Jesus as the bestower of light" (No. 28), and that of "Blindness" (No. 25). The following solo (tenor) "As a spirit didst Thou pass before mine eyes"—the man's expression of gratitude to his healer—is perhaps the finest number in the whole work: it is thrilling and convincing. Much use is of course made of themes No. 25 and No. 28. The Pharisees and the people, in an effective and original chorus, contend as to whether Jesus is a sinner or of God; after which there is a superfluous contralto solo, "Thou only hast the words of life." The mother of the man testifies "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind," to the accompaniment of the phrase that was so prominent a feature of her earlier solo. The contest again rages as to the miracle and its performer, and ends in the man being cast out; the mother and a female chorus invoke woe on "the shepherds of the flock." Jesus searches out the man, receives from him a confession of faith, and then has a solo, "I am the good shepherd." At one point in it we hear in the orchestra a reminiscence of the mystical passages in thirds to which reference has already been made. The work concludes with a chorus,

"Light of the world, we know thy praise," in which theme No. 28 is employed.

Elgar has done almost all that could be done with this deadly form of British art, the day for which has long gone by. It cannot bring out of any composer the best that is in him, while it always forces him to commit a certain amount of music that is a good deal lower than his best. The human interest in such works is generally insufficient to spread itself over the whole scheme, which has to be padded out with a number of theological platitudes that almost inevitably call forth musical platitudes. It was because in his next oratorio Elgar was fortunate enough to get a theme alive with human emotion from first to last that he succeeded in making of it such a masterpiece.

A fuss was made, before one of the Festivals of a year or two ago, by some bishop or other, who demurred to having *The Dream of Gerontius* performed in the cathedral because of the decided Roman Catholic character of parts of the poem. The right reverend prelate would presumably have no objection to the representation in the cathedral of Handel's and other men's oratorios, in which some of the heathen characters utter decidedly heathen senti-

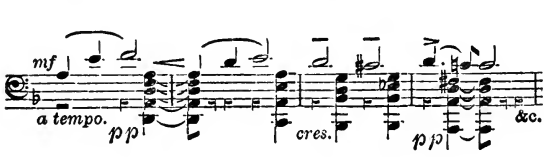
ments—but that is by the way. What short-sighted persons of this kind cannot see is that an art-work like *Gerontius* is a much greater and more important thing than all the theologies that were ever invented, precisely because it is alive with that humanity that is above and beyond theology. One need not care two straws about the sectarian points of the poem to appreciate the work of art. To the present writer, for example, a number of the dogmas about which *Gerontius* is so deeply exercised have about as much rational meaning as the dogmas of a worshipper of Moloch would have; but that in no way affects the power and vividness of Elgar's presentation of the character to whom they *have* a profound meaning. A human being wrestling in his own way with the problems of life and death is always a moving figure; and if an artist can present him to us in the lineaments and the colours of truth, if he can make him alive for us, it really does not matter whether his way of reading the universe is or is not ours. We would surely not refuse a thrill of compassion to the Hindoo who throws himself under the wheel of Juggernaut, although our reason tells us his action is an irrational one; nor

should one's artistic sympathy with Gerontius be affected in any way by one's opinions of the tenets he holds. Life will have new terrors for us if all the art, since the beginning of history, that presents man pondering upon the riddle of life, is to be tried by the standard of its conformity with the dogmas of this or that theological sect. The artist, purely as artist, and the hearer, in so far as he is an artist, has nothing to do with clerical puerilities of this kind. The only question for discussion is whether the artist has had sufficient imagination to see his man clearly, and to present him in a way that makes the secret essence of his soul clear to us. And judged by that test, *The Dream of Gerontius* is one of the master-works of the nineteenth century.

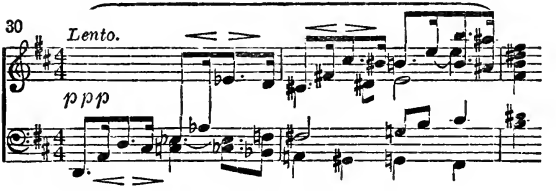
The poem was written by Cardinal Newman in 1865, under the stress of the emotion caused him by the death of a dear friend. Elgar has selected his material from it with great skill, and with a very good eye for the most human portions of the Cardinal's work. The dying Gerontius beholds in a trance the mysteries of the unseen world. His soul is accompanied in its passage through infinite space to the throne of the Omnipotent by his guardian Angel, who

expounds to him the meaning of the changes that have come upon his spirit, and prepares him for the final agony of delight, that "keen and subtle pain" that shall befall him, sick with love and yearning, when he sees his Judge. At last they come "into the veilèd presence of our God," and intercession is made for the soul of Gerontius by the Angel of the Agony. Finally the soul, admitted into the presence of its Creator, is "consumed, yet quickened, by the glance of God," and, after its ecstatic agony, given again into the enfolding arms of its Guardian Angel, who sings over it a tender, consolatory song of farewell.

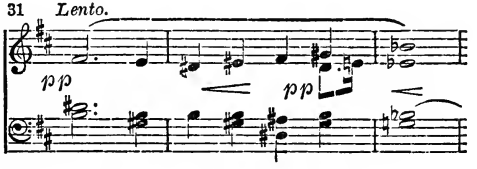
Following the Wagnerian precedent, the prelude recapitulates the leading themes of the work, and tells much of the story in epitome. A mystic theme is first given out by clarinets, bassoons, and violas, that is shortly taken up by other instruments and harmonised—



This is usually known as the "Judgment" theme;[1] it symbolises the reflections of Gerontius upon the problem of his fate after death. Then a figure makes its way up in the muted strings and disappears like vapour—



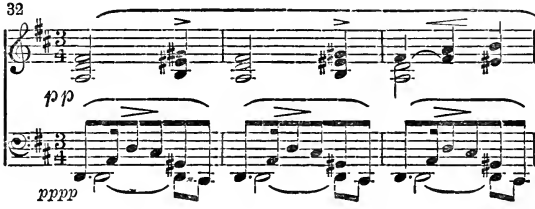
to be followed immediately by another—

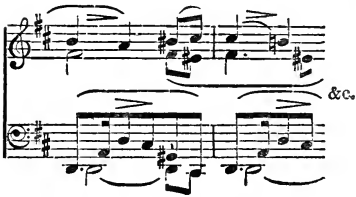


These typify respectively the fear that possesses the soul of Gerontius, and the prayer with which he tries to ward the spectres off. Troubled sleep comes to him, expressed in a melody that sings out plaintively in a solo viola over harmonies that

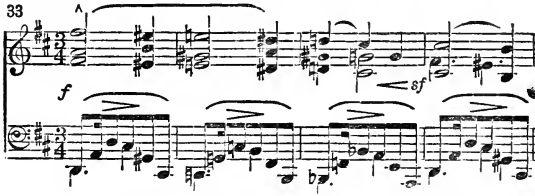
[1] I follow, in the naming of the themes, the precedent of Mr. A. J. Jaeger, who, with full knowledge of the composer's intentions, analysed the work most admirably for the Birmingham Festival of 1900.

toss restlessly like the sick man on his couch of pain.

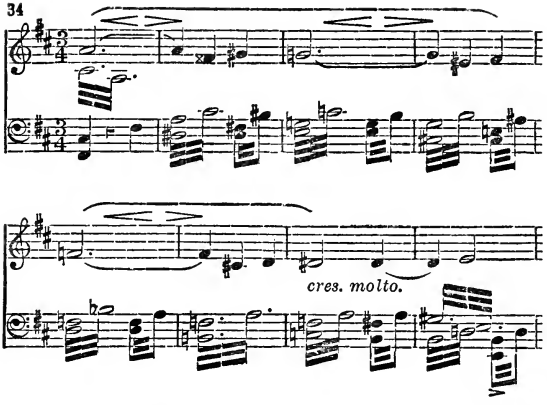




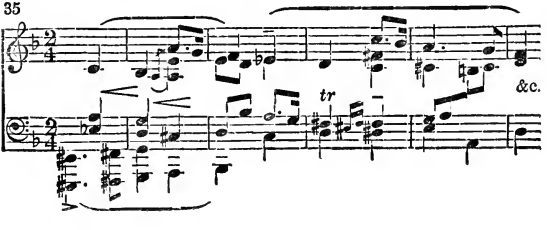
It rises to a passionate appeal for mercy—



—the strain to which, later on, Gerontius is to make his moving appeal, " Miserere, Judex meus, parce mihi, Domine "—and then sinks in exhaustion into the mournful melody of its commencement. The dying man cries out in his despair—

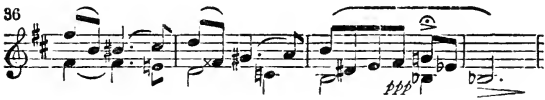


It is the melody of his cry, "O Jesu, help! pray for me, Mary!" It stands out in poignant tones in *cor anglais* and 'cellos over tremulous harmonies in the upper strings and clarinets. Then everything gathers to a climax; the wood-wind and strings give out the "Prayer" theme (No. 31), *fortissimo* in augmentation, while the trumpets and trombones thunder out with inexorable persistence beneath it. This dies away, to be succeeded for a moment by a reminiscence of the "Despair" motive; then enters the theme—



to which the chorus, after the death of Gerontius, sing "Go forth in the name of Apostles and Evangelists." There are two repetitions of it, each with fuller and more imposing scoring—the final enunciation of it being almost overwhelmingly impressive; it dies down gradually into a modification of its final bar, a stroke on the gong—suggestive of the passing of Gerontius' soul—and a quiet recurrence of the "Sleep," "Fear," "Miserere," and "Judgment" motives.

The prelude ended, there is a brief orchestral passage of eight bars, in the course of which we hear the insidious motive of "Death"—



Then Gerontius cries out that he is dying, every now and then appealing for mercy, to the strains of the "Prayer" motive (No. 31). The vocal writing here is absolutely that of a different man from the Elgar we have met with hitherto; the whole passage is the most veracious of human documents; just so, one thinks, must men feel when the dying sweat gathers

on their brow and the lips grow livid; in such a horror of revolt as this must they recoil from the darkness of the abyss at their feet.

The effect of the solo is greatly heightened by the lovely reply that comes to the request of the exhausted Gerontius, "So pray for me, my friends, who have not strength to pray." A semi-chorus of "Assistants" breathes out an exquisite "Kyrie eleison," of a spirituality so refined that it seems to be wafted from another world. The full chorus follows. Singing nothing more than the Roman Catholic formula, "Holy Mary, pray for him; all holy angels pray for him," they couch their speech in accents of such naïve sincerity that the strain becomes symbolical of religion itself.

The semi-chorus breathe their angelic "Kyrie" again. Gerontius rouses himself to a new spasm of energy, bidding himself spend the time that still remains to him on earth in preparing to meet his God; and the chorus once more close in upon his nervous speech with a prayer that, like its predecessor, goes to the very heart of the faith of which it is an expression. The contrapuntal interlacing of themes in it is extremely effective. Gerontius breaks in

on them with another passionate outcry. With a pathetic feverishness he confesses his belief in various dogmas of his Church; every now and then he gives out a clamorous cry—

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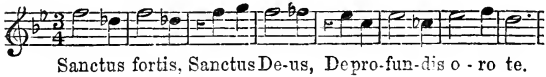
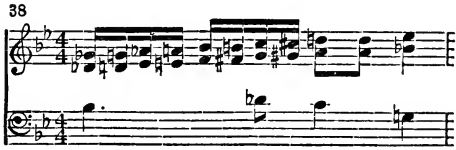


followed instantly by the "Miserere" (No. 33). The last "Sanctus fortis" is sung in a wail suggestive of complete exhaustion; but once more Gerontius rouses himself for a loud, despairing cry of "Miserere, Judex meus." The orchestra takes up the theme in a swirl and tosses it hither and thither, the urgency of the theme being intensified by the quite terrifying transitions from *piano* to *fortissimo* and back again. Even more terrifying is the fury with which the theme of "Despair" (No. 34) is treated.

This cyclonic outburst lasts only a few moments; then the voice of Gerontius sobs a confession of absolute weakness—"that masterful negation and collapse of all that makes me man." More than that, his soul is now filled with "a fierce and restless fright"—

"Some bodily form of ill
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and flaps
Its hideous wings,
And makes me wild with horror and dismay."

This is suggested in various graphic ways, of which space for quotation can be found only for the following—the figure more specifically appropriated to the demons—

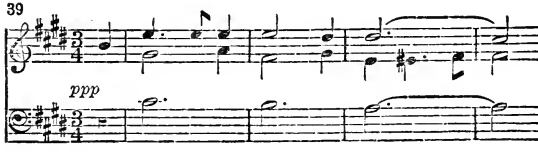


The orchestral picture is of extraordinary power and suggestiveness.

Once more Gerontius prays for help (the "Despair" theme, No. 34)—"Some Angel, Jesu, such as came to Thee, in Thine own agony." The agonised cry at the end of the phrase shakes one to the depths of one's being. The chorus reply, "Rescue him, O Lord, in this his evil hour," to a new version of the "Kyrie" formerly heard. Then occurs a page of admirable and daring *naïveté*. The semi-chorus recount the names of those who have been helped in their

trouble—"Noe from the waters in a saving home," "Job from all his multiform and fell distress," and so on—to an ancient "tone," while the chorus join in at the end of each phrase with a curiously beautiful "Amen." It is in such little episodes as this, no less than in the larger stretches of canvas, that the veracity of Elgar's conception of the work is made apparent. In two or three bars he can plunge us into the very centre of the atmosphere of mediæval Catholicism, with a representative power that puts the characters before us not only in their psychology but in their very flesh and habiliments. The art of the painter himself is hardly more vitally graphic.

A return on the part of the chorus to the original "Kyrie" music, broken at intervals by the wail of Gerontius, leads to the scene of his death. "Novissima hora est," he sings, to a spiritual melody that will be used again later on—



The desire for sleep comes over him; he gives up his soul into the hands of God—the orchestra gently murmuring the "Sleep" motive and that of the "Miserere," the latter ceasing without being brought to its proper ending. Then comes a total change of colour. Over a basis of broad, solemn chords we hear the bass voice of the Priest sending the Soul forth upon its last journey. The page that follows—commencing with the words, "Go in the name of God the omnipotent Father, who created thee"—is one of the most wonderful in the whole score. The vocal part has in it all the majesty and dignity of the ideal priesthood; all round it, gathering itself up from the depths and soaring steadily aloft, there floats a shifting web of tone that admirably suggests, as Mr. Jaeger has said, "the waving to and fro of censers." The same music reappears in the succeeding chorus, along with an exalted outburst of the "Go forth" theme (No. 35), and reminiscences of the "Kyrie" and other material. The first Part of the oratorio ends with the Soul of Gerontius thus being wafted aloft with all the pathetic pomp of the Church.

The opening of the second Part shows

the Soul of Gerontius in a kind of blessed quiescence that is almost without sensation; all round it is silence; time has ceased to show any divisions that can be marked. It is this state of ethereal stillness and repose that Elgar has had to suggest for us in his prelude. He has done it admirably; the strings alone are heard, in the most tranquil of *pianissimi*, in a long vague melody that has no defined rhythmic beat or pause; everything is *flottant*, elusive. The Soul begins to tell how it went to sleep and awoke refreshed—"a strange refreshment"—and how it is affected by the silence, the solitariness, of the place where it now finds itself. The opening of its recital may serve to illustrate the magic that has been wrought in Elgar's style by the fortunate accident of his having discovered a text that took complete possession of his being. The melody is in that 12–8 mould that has been made so familiar to us in his earlier work. There, with rare exceptions, it was perfunctory, obvious, and tending to the commonplace. Here the whole phrase rings true and natural; all the dangers of the lilting 12–8 rhythm are easily avoided. So again with the orchestral phrase (p. 58 of the Vocal Score) that follows the words

"so soothing and so sweet." [1] It is of a type so frequently used by Elgar as to have become a mannerism with him; yet here it seems just the one inevitable thing that should be said to bring the situation home to us.

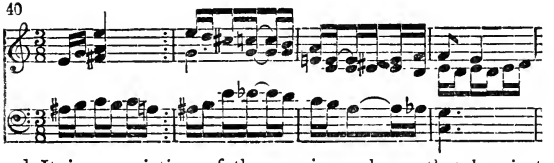
The Soul suddenly becomes conscious of—

"Another marvel; some one has me fast
Within his ample palm,"—

bearing it on its way; at the same time music is heard, "a heart-subduing melody." "Yet in sooth," to quote Newman's strangely penetrating words—

"I cannot of that music rightly say
Whether I hear or touch or taste the tones."

In this we hear foreshadowed two new themes of great importance, that soon appear in the fullest form. The voice of the Angel (mezzo-soprano) enters, telling of its care of "this child of clay" whose purified Soul it is now taking home. The "Angel" theme is one of the most original in the whole work—



[1] It is a variation of the previous phrase that has just been referred to.

At the end of each stanza is an extraordinarily beautiful "Alleluia," which the contrabassi double three octaves lower—a novel and effective device.

A dialogue between the Soul and the Angel follows. The Soul desires enlightenment upon various points. It had always believed that instantly upon death the soul of man "fell under the awful Presence of its God;" why then, it asks, is it now hindered from going thither? The Angel replies that actually it is hurrying to its Judge "with extremest speed." Then the Soul asks why it feels now none of the fear that made the thought of death and judgment so terrible to it during life. It receives the answer that it is because the agony has been forestalled, the bitterness of death is passed, and the judgment already begun. It is impossible, without much quotation, to make clear the solemn beauty of the music throughout this colloquy, or the significant way in which the "Fear," "Judgment," and other themes are here employed. Two new motives that are of importance in the future appear when the Angel speaks of a presage falling on the soul expressive of the happiness of its fate—

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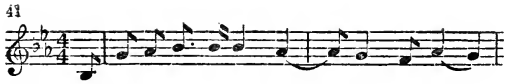

and—

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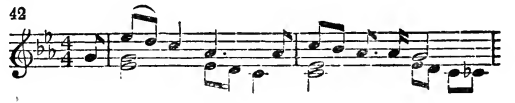
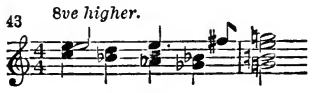


The Soul, too, sings softly of its serene joy, the voices blending for the only duet in the whole work. But the Soul is disturbed in its peace by a horrid noise, which the Angel explains to be the sullen howling of the demons who infest the judgment court, "hungry and wild to claim their property, and gather souls for hell." Dark and lurid colours are gradually piled upon the canvas, prominence being given to the "Demon" theme already quoted as No. 38.

Then follows the celebrated "Demon" chorus. They are the spirits who have been cast out of heaven, and who vent their rage by maligning the virtue of the saint. The chorus cannot be analysed in detail here. It has considerable pictorial power—such episodes as the "restless panting" of the Demons being realistically expressed—and it is always sure of making an effect upon an audience. Yet to the present writer it seems on the whole a failure. It

exhibits all the devices of theatricalism turned to excellent uses, yet it never rises above the theatrical—that is, it lacks the final and essential touch of conviction. The spiritual world, one can say of the rest of the oratorio, is just as Elgar paints it; the demon world, one is impelled to say, is not really like his painting of it. These demons are only pantomime demons; their rage is pantomime rage, their scorn pantomime scorn; they have not been seen from the inside as Gerontius, the Soul, and the Angel have been. A hell of this kind could have no terrors; one could not take it seriously enough for that.

The Demons pass out of sight, and a return is made to the placid music of the prelude to the second Part. "Shall I see my dearest Master," asks the Soul, "when I reach His throne?"—the words are accompanied by a short but significant motive that may be taken to symbolise some dread aspect of the Almighty—

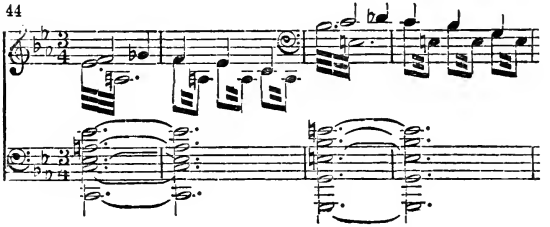


The Angel replies that for one moment the Soul shall see its Lord, but that while that

sight will gladden it will also pierce — use is made of No. 41 and No. 39. Then the Angel tells the story of St. Francis of Assisi, in a *quasi recitativo*, accompanied by a tremulous, shimmering enunciation of the "Judgment" theme (No. 29); the meaning of the use of the theme here is not at first clear, but Mr. Jaeger is probably right in the suggestion that the case of the Soul is parallel with that of St. Francis, who on being visited by the Angel of God prepared himself to meet his death and judgment with patience.

The voices of the Angelicals are now heard floating down. These are the happier spirits who live in communion with God. The burden of their hymn is mainly the sending of Jesus to be God's "Viceroy in the world of matter and of sense." The piece is designed as a musical counterpoise to the chorus of the "Demons," and is as ethereal and spiritual in its atmosphere as the other was material. A chorus and semi-chorus are employed, consisting at first of female voices only: the male voices enter towards the end, when the colours of the picture are all becoming deeper and richer. The movement is at times of exquisite *naïveté*. The whole thing admirably produces the

intended effect of heaven being neared and the gates opened. "But hark!" says the Soul as they reach the threshold, "a grand mysterious harmony;" and great waves of noble tone surge up and down in the orchestra—



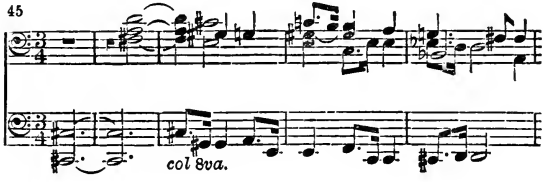
A modification of the "Fear" theme, with a new counterpoint to it, paints the agitation of the Soul as it nears its ordeal. They traverse the threshold, and the whole chorus bursts out into a magnificent version of "Praise to the Holiest in the height," followed by a flowing theme to the words "Oh loving wisdom of our God," with a soaring, sweeping accompaniment in sixths. Almost every shade of emotion in the poem is reproduced with marvellous accuracy. There is a mystic blending of rapture and pain in the music as the chorus sing of the incarnation of Jesus and His death on the cross. An extraordinary effect is produced here by

the constant reiteration in the strings of one note, A, in five octaves. The long and elaborate movement is somewhat unequal, but on the whole it is splendid in its emotion and its colour and masterly in its devices—a hymn of almost apocalyptic grandeur.

When it has ended there comes another picture of the utmost solemnity. The "Fear" theme mounts slowly in the orchestra, interspersed with the motive representative of the "grand mysterious harmony" of heaven (No. 44). Then, as the Angel warns the Soul that judgment is near, for they have come "into the veiled presence of our God," we hear the awe-inspiring theme (No. 43) associated with the majesty of the Judge. The Soul hears voices, which the Angel tells it are those of friends around his bed, saying the "Subvenite" with the Priest; here we have a reminiscence of the music heard when the Priest sent the Soul on its journey, with the same gentle swinging of censers.

Before the throne stands the Angel of the Agony, who, having once strengthened Jesus in the garden, will now plead for "all tormented souls, the dying and the dead." This it does in a long passage that for sheer

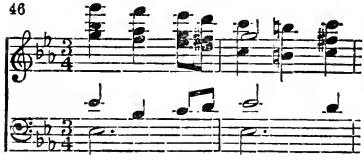
poignancy of expression has hardly its superior in any music, ancient or modern. After an extraordinary orchestral modulation, the voice enters with its long and moving appeal, that persistently reiterates this striking phrase—



At the words—

"Jesu, spare these souls which are so dear to Thee,
Souls who in prison, calm and patient, wait for Thee,"

there is a phrase that should be noted because of its significant return, later on, in the last utterance of the Soul—



while at the words, "Hasten, Lord, their hour, and bid them come to Thee," there is a heart-moving repetition of the old "Novissima hora" motive.

With a final impassioned cry the Angel of the Agony ceases his appeal. The orchestra twice give out, in the softest possible tones, the theme (No. 43) of "God as the Judge"; at the second time the Soul faintly murmurs, "I go before my Judge" —the brief passage—it is only six bars long —hushing us into awe. Then Elgar produces in us in an instant, by the simplest of means, the idea that in the poem has to be stated in the most obvious of words —the idea that all these thrilling experiences of the Soul have been crowded into the fraction of a second that has elapsed since the body died. Now, when the climax of the Soul's adventures has come, at one stroke we are transported back to earth; the semi-chorus sing softly, "Be merciful, be gracious; spare him, Lord," to the strains of the "Kyrie" that has already been heard at the bedside, blended with echoes of the Priest's dismissal. The Angel breaks out into a song of joy over the safety of the Soul· the old "Alleluia" that has already been so beautiful now soars into a higher octave, welling forth in full-throated rapture.

A modification of the "Judgment" theme in the orchestra, over a pedal A, and with

grand and terrifying harmonies, swells and swells till the climax comes in one great chord—the loudest in the whole work—where the Soul is to be conceived as gazing for a moment on its Lord. Then the Soul, after one passionate cry of "Take me away," chants its strangely moving song, in which all the spiritual tremor of Newman's soul is caught up and alchemised by the music into something inexpressibly rare and precious. The Soul prays that it may be sent to the lowest deep, where, motionless and happy, it may sing its "sad perpetual strain," and "throb and pine and languish, till possest of its Sole Peace." Expressive use is made of the theme from the solo of the "Angel of the Agony" (No. 46), the "Sanctus fortis" theme, and the "Miserere." As the Soul speaks of its aspiration to "rise and go above, and see Him in the truth of everlasting day," we hear in the orchestra the themes from the "Angel's song" (Nos. 41 and 42) that previously accompanied the words—

"A presage falls upon thee, as a ray
Straight from the Judge, expressive of thy lot.
That calm and joy uprising in thy soul
Is first-fruit to thee of thy recompense,
And heaven begun"—

an extremely beautiful use of the leit-motive.

A brief chorus (without soprani) follows, leading into the Finale of the work, that is dominated by the Angel. The main theme of her song is first of all given out by the orchestra :—

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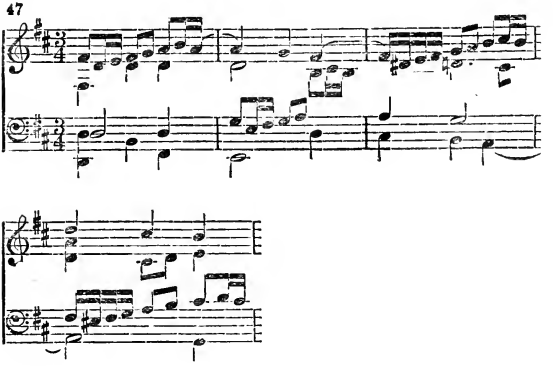
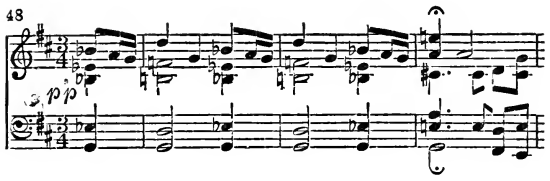


then it is taken up by the voice, which soon blends with the strains of the chorus that has just been heard. The Angel dips the Soul in the lake of " the penal waters," and bids it farewell, promising it a swift passing of its night of trial and a happy waking on the morrow. The lustration of the Soul is accompanied by one of the loveliest phrases of the work—



The typical "Angel's" theme (No. 40) is drawn upon; fragments of the "Angelical" chorus, "Praise to the Holiest in the height," are faintly heard, and the work ends with a long "Amen," solemn and placid.

The Dream of Gerontius is antipathetic to the temperament of some people, while to others—among whom is the present writer—it is one of the most remarkable achievements in all music, and one that cannot die so long as men's souls are vexed by problems of life and death, and keen to see in what a magic atmosphere genius can enshrine them. The work is not didactic, but philosophical—and before all it is art; the thought is all embraced by beauty, warmed and quickened by its touch. To call it neurotic, as some have done, is only to misuse that term. Nervous it may be,—for it is dealing with a theme that must needs draw out the finest threads of sensation in our nerves—but not neurotic. Music like much of that of Debussy may be called

neurotic, wherein the intellect plays so little part, while the nerves are just whipped or soddened by floods of tone of which the main element is the merely sensuous. But in *Gerontius* nowhere do the nerves either create or seek sensations on their own account. The effect may be piercing, shattering, but they are mental effects, born of the play of the brain upon the circumstances of life. Of the skill of the choral writing and the extreme beauty and resourcefulness of the orchestration it is superfluous to speak; if the vocal writing is once or twice not perfectly successful, this is because of that ever-present tendency of Elgar to awkwardness in this respect, to which allusion has already been made. But the work is of the first order almost throughout. Its detail work is poignant and convincing, while as a whole it has the homogeneity, the rounded completeness of vision, that only comes when the artist sees his picture through and through in the one white heat of imagination. Few contemporary works of its size can compare with it in this respect.

The Apostles belongs, in part, to another category than *Gerontius*. In the latter the human element is predominant, the religious

secondary; in the former, the human element at times almost disappears, and a frankly religious and didactic purpose flies out at us from the score. "It has long been my wish," says the composer in a preface to the work, "to compose an oratorio which should embody the Calling of the Apostles, their Teaching (schooling), and their Mission, culminating in the establishment of the Church among the Gentiles;" and as individual character-study is impossible with a set of *dramatis personæ* such as these, who scarcely have an individual as distinguished from their communal identity, it follows that they must be treated as symbols of the rise and progress of a certain religious doctrine, the vicissitudes of which, and not human beings purely as human beings, are the main concern of the composer. There is always the danger of drifting into dulness in a scheme like this; always the danger of the composer thinking that an impressive episode or an impressive piece of verse is sufficient to gain of itself the right of entry into our consciousness, without any care for the quality of the music that accompanies it—which is by no means the case. A picture of the crucifixion does not affect us because it *is* the cruci-

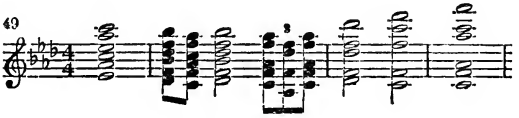
fixion, but because it is a fine picture; if it is not, the good pretext and the good purpose will not save the bad art. In *The Apostles* there seems to the present writer a number of episodes to which this analogy holds good—episodes where the music is not good enough to make one care anything about the words to which it is set, unless we are one of those people to whom the words of a sacred subject are enough in themselves, without regard to their setting. But people of this kind speak not as artists but as theologians.

The text of *The Apostles* has been compiled by the composer himself by means of patching together a number of verses from Scripture. The patchwork is extremely ingenious, but no solidly built work of art can be put together in this way; and it is no wonder that the first part of *The Apostles* exhibits all the vices of structure of *King Olaf*, scene following scene with little or no organic connection, and characters stepping on and off the stage with little or no reason for their being there at that particular moment rather than at any other. The second Part, dealing with the betrayal and death and ascension of Jesus, has, of course, the advantage

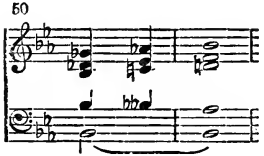
of a connected story, and one's attention, that has flagged a good deal in the preceding sections, is here kept alive almost every moment. But it may be noted that the work is mainly interesting precisely at those points where the avowed scheme of composing "an oratorio which should embody the Calling of the Apostles, their Teaching, and their Mission," goes to the wall. The presentation of Jesus appeals to us just in so far as it touches our human sympathies. It is the fine *dramatic* qualities of the scenes of the betrayal and death that seize upon us; one takes part in these scenes without the slightest thought of, or care for the Apostles, their Teaching, or their Mission. Truth to tell, the Apostles *as* Apostles are rather dull dogs, and one is always glad to see them go. Judas becomes enormously interesting at the finish, but that is because he is Judas the man, not Judas the Apostle. In fine, then, the oratorio is at its best when clear issues of human feeling are treated of in the music, and at its worst when the merely theological element comes uppermost.

The prologue to the work commences with an orchestral prelude of fifteen bars only, in which we first of all hear a theme

typical of "The Spirit of the Lord."[1] Then the chorus—



enter to the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," &c. The chorus is mostly very fine, breathing a tender and subtle mysticism. Several motives that are subsequently of importance are first stated in this brief prelude. Most important of all, perhaps, is that heard at the words "anointed me"; it is the theme symbolising "Christ, the Man of Sorrows"—a striking and poignant phrase of three chords only—



It is followed by the theme of "the Gospel"—

[1] Here, as in the case of *Gerontius*, I adopt for the leading-motives the titles given them in Mr. Jaeger's analysis, which may be taken to have the composer's sanction.

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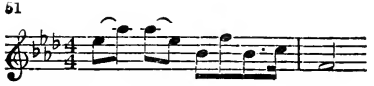

After the words, "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," we hear, in conjunction with the "Gospel" theme, a new phrase typifying "the Apostles as Preachers." In the middle of this fine choral movement comes a section based upon a commonplace tune in 3-4 time, that plays a large part in the work as representative of "the Church";—

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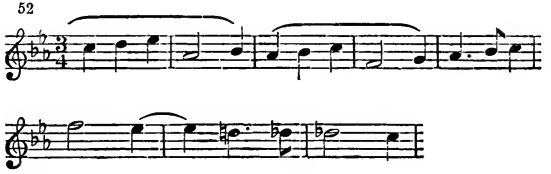

and just before the return to the words and music of the opening we hear an impressive modification of the "Spirit of the Lord" theme (No. 49), meant to express "Christ, the Son of God"—

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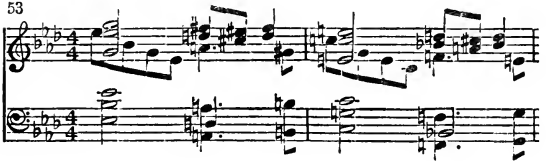
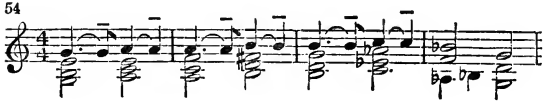


The Prologue ended, we enter upon the first section of the oratorio, "The Calling of the Apostles." In a short recitative the narrator tells us of Jesus going up into a mountain and continuing all night in prayer. The orchestra accordingly paints this night-scene. Two oboes and a *cor anglais*, outside the orchestra, play a pastoral tune that has in it all the mystery and sadness and remoteness that the picture requires. But before it has time to get past the fifth bar it is superseded by the theme of "Christ, the Man of Sorrows," which again lasts only a bar and a half, to be in its turn pushed aside by a new theme—that of "Christ's Prayer"—



so softly breathed as scarcely to disturb the air. After eight bars of this, there is a suggestion of the "Gospel" theme (No. 51), the object being to indicate the nature of Christ's prayer. Here we have, upon one page, a sample of the method of structure that makes *The Apostles* so unsatisfying as a work of musical art. Scarcely anything is allowed to develop far enough to arrest

the interest of the musical sense. The phrases are short—so short, in many cases, that they disappear almost before we have grasped them—and they succeed one another in obedience, not to musical, but merely to literary or pictorial necessities. That is, Elgar has running through his mind some such train of thought as this: "I have here to depict (*a*) Night on the mountain, (*b*) Jesus alone, (*c*) Jesus praying, (*d*) the subject of His prayer." So he gets one block of music-type to represent (*a*), another to represent (*b*), others to represent (*c*) and (*d*), and just lays the blocks end-on to each other, oblivious of the fact that all this does not make music. In the symphonic poem, musical pictures are played off against each other, but they are first of all made interesting in themselves, and then united to each other by tissue in which the musical no less than the literary sense can find a reason and a logic. In other words, in the symphonic poem the literary or pictorial purpose goes hand in hand with the musical purpose. But in a page like that of *The Apostles* at which we have now arrived, there is the maximum of literary indication and the minimum of musical connection.

The Angel Gabriel (soprano) now enters with a solo, the main burden of which is a general exhortation to be joyful in the comfort of the Lord. The typical theme of the Angel has a generic likeness to that of the Angel in *Gerontius* (No. 40). In the middle of the solo comes an orchestral passage of twelve bars, "which contains," says Mr. Jaeger, "no less than eight leit-motives new and old, woven into a piece of exquisite texture." As a matter of fact, there is scarcely any "weaving" at all in the passage; the motives are for the most part not woven into each other, but pasted together, and there is so little organic musical connection between them that were they pasted together in any other order no one would be able to tell the difference. It is the leit-motive system run mad, in obedience to a purpose that is merely didactic.

Three new themes appear in this little interlude, that of the "Apostles"—

[1] "Out of Christ's own suffering Humanity," says Mr. Jaeger, presumably voicing the intentions of the composer, "have been evolved the sublime conceptions of His Apostles and of His Gospel; and while He has thus ordained how and by whom mankind shall be taught the way through Him to salvation, He Himself is bowed down under the load of His own utter loneliness." It is music in a surplice.

55

that of "Christ's Loneliness"—

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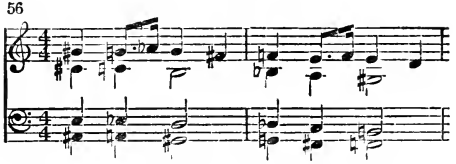

in the latter of which the clever scoring, with its utilisation of violas and 'cellos to produce a sense of weariness and pain, goes some way towards distracting our attention from the essential poorness of the theme—and that of "Christ's Passion," which, however, had better be shown in the form it assumes later on—

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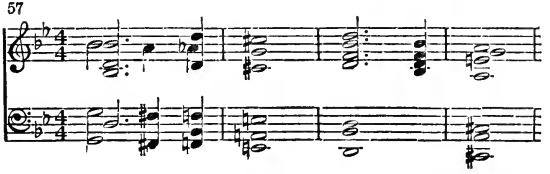

There are some beautiful moments in the remainder of the Angel's solo, notably where play is made with the themes of "Christ, the Man of Sorrows" (No. 50), and others from the Prologue of the work; while there is always a good deal of reference to other

motives. The scene closes with the orchestra enunciating the unsatisfactory "Christ's Loneliness" theme, the theme of the "Apostles," and that of "Night on the Mountains," all in eight bars—the system of patchwork thus prevailing to the last.

Dawn comes, and local colour is given to the scene by the use of the shofar—the old Hebrew instrument made from the ram's horn—and soldiery are alleged to be symbolised in a bar or two of consecutive fifths with triplets over them. Altos and tenors in unison greet the dawn with a cry of "The face of all the East is now ablaze with light; the dawn reacheth even unto Hebron." These are the watchers on the Temple roof; their phrases have a genuine Oriental origin.

The temple gates open, and from within is heard a morning psalm, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord," sung to the ancient Hebrew melody to Psalm xcii.—a noble and stately piece of work, embellished with appropriate Eastern colour and rhythmical effects; at the end the shofar pierces the air again. There follows a short orchestral interlude, commencing with a new theme, expressive of "Light and Life"—

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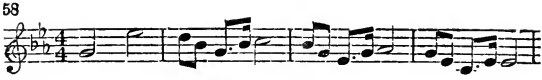
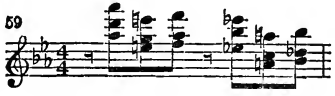


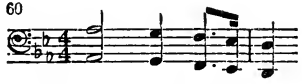
This is, indeed, as Mr. Jaeger says, "of a genuine Elgaresque type." It has the characteristics of a score of melodies of his —the alternate soar and dip of the tune, the repetition for two or three bars of the figure stated in the first, the rise and fall of the bass, generally in contrary motion with one or both of the upper parts. But the present theme is undignified and irresponsible in its lilt, and quite unsuited to its place in the score. Elgar is known to have had *The Apostles* in his mind for more than twenty years; and one suspects that this and some other themes of the work were invented in the earlier days.

The interlude develops into a picture of dazzling splendour of colour, representative of the full breaking of day; at the end of it there pierces through the texture, with enormous power, the theme of "Christ's Prayer" (No. 54), the intention being to indicate that the cosmic dawn is accompanied by a spiritual dawn, Christ having determined on the founding of the apostolate. The Narrator immediately tells us that when it was day Jesus called His disciples together and chose twelve of them,

whom He named Apostles—theme No. 55 accompanying the recital. Their function as preachers is typified in a modified version of a theme—



that has already been heard in the Prologue of the work. A big chorus now follows, "The Lord hath chosen them," largely based on the "Apostles" theme, but also employing Nos. 49 and 51. John, Peter, and Judas take up the strain. They are imperfectly if at all differentiated; but when Judas joins in there is heard in the orchestra a short phrase—



which, we are told, typifies Christ's "Earthly Kingdom." (Judas is supposed to think only of turning Jesus' power to material ends.) The chorus develops on broad lines, sometimes achieving real grandeur of expression, and indulging in a play of leit-motives far too complicated to analyse here. The Angel and the female voices of the chorus join in, and there is an ingenious union of rhythms

of 4–2, 6–2, and 3–2. The voice of Jesus enters, blending with the soft murmurs of the chorus. His words, "Behold, I send you forth; he that receiveth you receiveth Me," &c., are delivered to an impressive melody, during the course of which the motives of "Christ, the Man of Sorrows," and "The Spirit of the Lord," are used with fine effect. The movement ends with the chorus whispering, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon him," John, Peter, and Judas reiterating, "We are the servants of the Lord," and the Angel saying, "Look down from heaven, O Lord, and behold, and visit this vine," with a final grandiose enunciation of the "Apostles" theme, quickly dying away to *piano*.

The next section is entitled "By the Wayside," the characters entering into it being Jesus, the Virgin Mary, John, Peter, Judas, and the people. An orchestral introduction of eleven bars' length has an air of placid simplicity, but reminds us too much of the opening of the second Part of *Gerontius*. Jesus utters the Beatitudes, to phrases that no amount of familiarity can make us think anything but expressionless; the other characters interject remarks of a cognate kind. In spite of some fine

moments, the scene as a whole carries no conviction; the vocal writing is lame and colourless, and the phrases for the most part without beauty; while the constant snip-snap of speech between the various characters, each contributing no more than some half-dozen words, is itself fatal to any real dignity. The finest passage in the scene is that in which there is a recurrence of a tender and expressive theme from the Prologue,—there used to the words, "To give unto them that mourn a garland for ashes," and here to the words, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." A short concerted piece at the end winds the movement up in gracious loveliness. It expresses the blessedness of those who have sorrowed and shall rejoice with Jesus; its theme—to be used again later on—is designated that of "Strength of Faith."

Scene III. opens by the Sea of Galilee. The Narrator speaks of the disciples embarking on the sea, while Jesus goes into a mountain to pray, remaining there alone till evening. The recital is accompanied by clock-work enunciations of the motives (I follow Mr. Jaeger's statement) of "Fellowship," "the Ship," "Pastoral" (*i.e.* the theme of the previous scene on the moun-

tain), "Prayer," "Loneliness," "Apostles," and again "the Ship," "Fellowship," and "Prayer" — all in seventeen bars! A system of this kind is merely the *reductio ad absurdum* of the leit-motive; each motive appears practically in the same form as before—thus simply labelling the character but not developing with him—while at times, as in the case of "the Ship," the most arbitrary attempt is made to establish a symbolic union between a thing and a musical phrase. In *Gerontius*, a phrase like that of "Judgment" really does create in us the feeling of awe that the thought of judgment may be supposed to create. When Strauss depicts Don Quixote charging at the windmill, we hear a theme that in its unwieldy gyrations really suggests to the ear what the motion of a windmill is to the eye; in Wagner's "dragon-motive" there is something of the bulk and the heavy movement of the beast made visible; but "the Ship" motive is no more suggestive of a ship than it is of a banana or a motor-car.

While the disciples are adventuring upon the sea, Mary Magdalene, in the tower of Magdala, observes the storm that arises, and sees in it the analogue to the distressful state of her own heart. Her anguish of

repentance and her appeal for mercy are eloquently expressed in a solo of great power, and of an idiom that is quite individual to Elgar. In the middle of the solo occur orchestral suggestions of other melodies of a light character, which are intended to depict the recrudescence in Mary's memory of scenes from her past life of sin. These themes are heard in fuller form almost immediately, the chorus singing Bacchanalian exhortations to drink and pleasure, while Mary pursues her self-tormenting reflections. The chorus is *sotto voce*, the idea being that we are not so much listening to actual singers in an actual scene as watching the play of thoughts in Mary's brain. Her music is always sincere and moving, but that of the chorus is tame and inexpressive ; if Mary had done nothing worse than is suggested by these innocent, kittenish strains, she really had not much for her conscience to reproach her with. A Dorcas meeting is riotous in comparison.

The storm now rages—the painting is done with Elgar's customary power of delineation. As Mary speaks of seeing the ship and "One coming into it," the "Man of Sorrows" motive (No. 50) is heard in the orchestra. "It is a spirit," cry the

Apostles; and in a flash there is a change in the manner of conducting the story. We no longer see the storm, the disciples, and Jesus through the narrative of Mary; they are all now made directly visible to us, and the characters speak in their own persons. Jesus bids them be of good cheer, the orchestra accompanying with a theme from the "Beatitudes." Peter, to a modification of the music already associated with the Apostles, calls out, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters," the orchestral phrase at his first words well suggesting his impetuous nature. In a brief but pregnant little chorus the other disciples describe his perilous journey. A great cry, "Lord, save me, I perish," bursts from Peter, and Mary Magdalene is heard saying, "He stretcheth forth His hand." Jesus reproaches Peter for his little faith, and in a couple of pages of masterly expression we see them worshipping Him in almost silent awe, the storm dying down, and the motive of "Christ as the Son of God" (No. 53) breathing out with the utmost solemnity of phrasing and colouring. The ship passes out of sight, and Mary, in chastened and comforted mood, turns to the thought of Christ as her Redeemer. The

emotion is expressed with penetrating psychological power, and the interlacing of themes is extremely close and ingenious.

This scene merges into one "In Cæsarea Philippi," where Jesus, after hearing from His disciples the different views people hold of Him, obtains from Peter the declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; whereupon follows the promise to build the Church upon the rock of Peter, —to the accompaniment of the theme of the "Church" (No. 52). The music as a whole, up to this point, is not in Elgar's best manner, but the brief chorus that follows, "Proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth," is hugely expressive, and remarkable for the originality of the part-writing. It is based on the "Christ's Prayer" theme (No. 54), but this is enormously heightened in significance by the constant wave-like roll of the voices upon and round each other; in the last bar, to the words, "the everlasting Gospel," there is a grand enunciation of the themes of the "Gospel" and the "Apostles" (Nos. 51 and 55) in combination. In the subsequent solo of Jesus, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," there appears a new and striking theme—that of "Judgment"—

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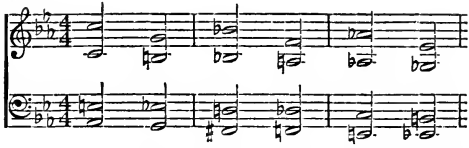


while at "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," there is an exquisite musing upon the tender theme of the "Spirit of the Lord" (No. 49). The whole music breathes gentleness and consolation as it merges once more into the theme of Mary Magdalene, who implores the help of Christ. She is accosted by Mary, the mother of Jesus (soprano), who, in a short solo, full of feeling, bids her be comforted. The tenor Evangelist describes her washing Jesus's feet with tears — a theme from the scene of the "Beatitudes," known as the motive of "Longing" (Vocal Score, p. 64), winds its way through the orchestra, accompanied by a triplet figure in thirds, the total effect being most easeful.

The women around remark, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is,"— the theme associated with her previous life of revelry, heard in the orchestra, making clear their insinuation. The Evangelist tranquilly resumes his narration to the

same music as before. Mary sobs out, "Hide not Thy face far from me," to an accompaniment that is a model of suggestiveness—the wailing motive formerly heard in conjunction with her words, "Have pity upon me, because I have sinned before Thee" (Vocal Score, p. 71), appears softly in the violins, but counteracted, as it were, by the theme of "Longing" in the woodwind, and that of the "Virgin's consolation" in the 'cellos, the last-named motive ultimately coming out alone in the sweetest of tones. Another fine touch follows immediately, Christ singing, "Thy sins are forgiven," &c., to the strains of the Magdalene's former appeal, "Hear and have mercy, for Thou art merciful" (Vocal Score, p. 71). The final "Go in peace," is based on the poignant theme of "Christ, the Man of Sorrows" (No. 50); and a scene that is mostly in Elgar's best manner, an admirable religious picture, ends with the troubled "Magdalene" motive in the major, suggestive of consolation won.

The long finale to the first Part of the oratorio now begins, the solo quartet and the chorus blending and dialoguing in words that describe the strength and loving kindness of God. The orchestral part is freely

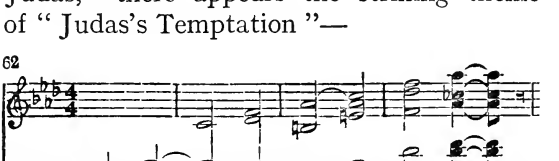
treated. At one point, at the repetition on a unison A of the words, "Turn you to the stronghold," the theme of "Longing" is heard in an inverted form (*i.e.* the lower figure at the top and the upper figure beneath). The piece as a whole is beautiful and original.

The second Part opens with an orchestral introduction that, in the opinion of the present writer, is the most unsatisfactory piece of work ever put together by Elgar. Here we can see all the vices of his use of the leit-motive in one concentrated exhibition. In a prelude like that to *Tristan* or *Lohengrin* or *Gerontius*, no more than two or three themes are made to tell the whole story; but their conduct, their development, appeal to us on the musical side as well: the literary and the musical messages run in harness. In this prelude to the second Part of *The Apostles* the musical interest diminishes to vanishing point. A theme is planked down nakedly; without any development, any dovetailing, it leads into another theme, and this in the same way into another. It is all built up like the pictures made by children by putting together painted blocks of wood; there is a crude pictorial continuity, but nothing

of the nature of an atmosphere. Elgar tells his story, but fails to make music in the process. First we have the theme of "Christ's Passion" (No. 57), then those of "Christ's Loneliness" (No. 56), "Christ's Prayer" (No. 54), "the Church" (No. 52), "Christ, the Son of God" (No. 53), "Christ, the Man of Sorrows" (No. 50), and again "the Passion" (No. 57). The orchestration of these forty bars is indeed exceptionally fine, but the movement in a musical, as distinct from a literary sense, means nothing at all. The conclusive proof of this is that the various motives could be played in any other order whatever without our being at all conscious of a disturbance of idea. No part of the whole flowing from or leading into any other part, it makes no difference in what order we take them.

The scene is now "The Betrayal." Jesus first teaches the twelve that He must be killed. They swear that they will not deny Him, to the theme that was previously heard (Vocal Score, p. 30) in the chorus ("The Lord hath chosen them") sung at the choosing of the Apostles, to the words, "He hath chosen the weak to confound the mighty"; the themes of "Peter" and the "Apostles" in general (No. 55) are also heard.

The chief Priests and Pharisees gather in council and resolve on the slaying of Jesus. At the words, "then entered Satan into Judas," there appears the striking theme of "Judas's Temptation"—



(Judas was supposed by some of the ancient fathers to have believed, like the other disciples, in the power of Jesus, but to have wanted to hasten the betrayal in order to "force Him to make such a display of His superhuman powers as would have induced all the Jews—and indeed the Romans too—to acknowledge Him King." As Canon Gorton puts it, "Judas was the misguided zealot who would substitute his own plan for Christ's will." This is the view Elgar has taken of the character.[1])

Judas confers with the priests, and the terms are agreed upon; the handing over

[1] Those who are interested in the matter may consult an "Interpretation" of *The Apostles* by Canon Gorton, published by Novello & Co.

of the thirty pieces of silver is made the occasion for a representation in the orchestra of the jingling of the money. The coming of the officers to take Jesus is exceedingly well illustrated, the whole scene being most vivid and impressive. Judas breaks out rhapsodically, "Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it," &c., the orchestra giving out the theme of "the Apostles" (No. 55), and that formerly heard in Peter's expression of the "faith of the Apostles" (Vocal Score, p. 34—"Thou wilt show us the path of life," &c.). As he dwells upon the thought of Jesus sitting "upon His throne, the great King, the Lord of the whole earth," there is heard a succession of grandiose enunciations of the fine theme of "the Earthly Kingdom" (No. 60) revealing the motives that are actuating Judas. The remaining episodes of the capture are dramatically and convincingly told.

A brief scene, "In the palace of the high priest," follows. Peter, questioned by the servants (in rather negative music, that does not suggest very much), denies Jesus, to the themes of "the Spirit of the Lord" (No. 49), and "Christ, the Man of Sorrows" (No. 50); his asseveration is followed, in the orchestra,

by the theme of "Christ's Loneliness" (No. 56), like a reproach. The episode of Christ turning and looking upon Peter, who goes out and weeps bitterly, is treated in a chorus of female voices of the utmost poignancy and beauty: there is something inexpressibly pathetic in the use of the "Passion" theme (No. 57) at the words "looked upon Peter."

Judas now repents and brings back the silver to the chief priests and elders; and we enter upon a scene of great dramatic power. From inside the Temple is heard a hymn to the God of Vengeance, asking how long the wicked shall triumph—a sombre, fateful strain. Judas, struck by the bearing of the hymn upon his own crime, cries out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear; my iniquity is greater than can be forgiven." The priests, while the chorus still continues, ask him the cause of his trouble. Over the sinister chords of the "Temptation" motive (No. 62), he breaks out, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." He casts down the pieces of silver—their metallic rattle is again painted—and departs, the chorus continuing their impressive hymn in a still more terrifying form. It does not end—

the suggestion being that Judas, having left the temple, no longer hears the singers. He despairingly voices his sense of his crime and his utter abandonment on earth. From the Temple comes a faint wave of a new hymn, "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, that Thou mayst give Him rest from the days of adversity." Judas mournfully and bitterly echoes the last few words. He recalls the words and the actions of Jesus, the orchestra giving out the theme of the "Beatitudes" and others that have been already associated with Christ. Then he has a long and pessimistic monologue, containing the finest words (from the Book of Wisdom) and some of the finest music in the oratorio. Theology goes to the wall, and a human being, claiming our interest on no other ground than that he *is* a human being, comes to the front. Judas is the one character in the whole work whose limning carries real conviction. There are several fine uses of leit-motives, among which the transformation that the "Earthly Kingdom" theme (No. 60) undergoes is particularly striking (Vocal Score, p. 156, last bar).

The chorus, with its austere, antique solemnity, is resumed, and Judas' mood becomes more and more despairing. As he

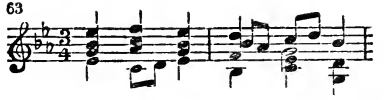
cries, "It is not possible to escape Thine hand," we hear in the orchestra the "Judgment" motive (No. 61). In the distance the people are now heard calling out, "Crucify Him"; there is a recurrence of the fine theme, suggestive of the power of armed men, that accompanied the capture of Jesus (Vocal Score, p. 162); then there are ferocious shouts of "Crucify Him," with a shriek from Judas, "They condemn the innocent blood." "The end is come, the measure of my covetousness," he says, and we hear again a mournful transformation of the "Earthly Kingdom" motive. In terror of the darkness he goes towards his doom, but he, he says, is unto himself "more grievous than the darkness." He is sent out of life in six bars of the most highly concentrated expression it is possible to imagine. The "Christ" motive (No. 50), treated with more and more force in the orchestra, shows Judas's brain collapsing under the strain of the thought of what he has done; then comes a terrific version of the "Earthly Kingdom" theme (No. 60), and the betrayer dies with the bitter taste of frustrated ambition upon his lips. Half-a-dozen bars of the hymn within the temple, "He shall bring upon

them their own iniquity," bring the scene to a gloomy end.

The drama now moves to Golgotha, where we see only the last episode of all, the death of Jesus. Believing that the cry of "Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani?" could not be fittingly given to any human voice, Elgar has entrusted it to the muted strings alone. The wail is piercing in its agony; one can only object in it to a too close resemblance to the music of the "Angel of the Agony" in *Gerontius*. "Truly this was the Son of God," sing the chorus softly in tones of awe. Then the voice of the Virgin Mary breaks in with a cry of grief; John answers her; and there follows a short dialogue of pain and compassion, remarkable for its subtle uses of previous leit-motives no less than for its exquisite human feeling.

The sixth Scene is at the sepulchre. Blended ingeniously with the Narrator's story of the women coming early in the morning to take the body of Jesus, is the remote song of the watchers greeting the dawn—the same strain that was heard near the commencement of the oratorio. The shofar call is used again, and the Narrator's recitative is accompanied by the theme of "Light of Life" (No. 58). Angels' voices

float down in waves of tone in an "Alleluia" that will be much used later on—



They accost the women, telling them that Jesus is risen, and bidding them inform His disciples that He is gone before them into Galilee; their speech flows on in tones and rhythms of heavenly simplicity. Again the "Alleluia" (No. 63) is heard, conducting us into the seventh Scene, that of the Ascension.

Christ enters to the disciples. His words, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you," are accompanied by the theme of "the Spirit of the Lord" (No. 49); while the inquiry of the Apostles, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel," is accompanied by the motive of the "Earthly Kingdom" (No. 60). He tells them it is not for them to know the times or the seasons, but promises them power when the Holy Ghost shall come upon them, and bids them go forth and teach and baptize all nations. The vocal writing all through Christ's monologue is rather inexpressive, but the orchestra is

weighty and suggestive, dealing with theme after theme of the work in a very ingenious fashion; though even here one sometimes feels again that the junction of the motives is rather too palpable and mechanical, and that the picture would have been the better for the diffusion of a little atmosphere over it, and a subtler and more gradual melting of the colours into each other.

Jesus ascends and is lost to their sight, the "Christ" motive (No. 50) being employed in the happiest manner, both to suggest the personality and to convey the sense of floating upwards.

This brings us to the great Finale. On earth the Apostles sing, "Give us one heart and one way," and the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, John, and Peter, forming another group, chant a "Magnificat"; in heaven there are a chorus and a semi-chorus of female voices, hymning the spiritual "Alleluia" (No. 63). These are all combined with consummate art. At one point (Vocal Score, p. 190), the four soloists have the theme formerly associated with the "faith of the Apostles" (see Vocal Score, p. 34), while the mystic chorus in heaven, aided by the remaining Apostles, gives out at the same time the theme of "Christ's Prayer" (No. 54).

The most remarkable passage in the Finale commences on page 194. The "Christ" motive (No. 50) is heard in the orchestra in various progressions; below on earth the Apostles repeat the farewell words of Christ, while in heaven the mystic semi-chorus softly sings, "I have done thy commandment," &c. Then, in most moving strains, the heavenly chorus dialogues with the semi-chorus—"What are these wounds in Thine hands?" "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." "They platted a crown of thorns, and put it above His head," the chorus continues; "they mocked Him, they spat upon Him, they smote Him with a reed, they crucified Him"—all to the simplest but most vital of music. At "they crucified Him" there is a fine reminiscence of the beginning of the "Passion" theme (No. 57).

Again the mystic "Alleluia" is heard from above. Then, to the words of the Apostles, "Give us one heart and one way," a new phrase of solemn, stately breadth appears, symbolical of "Christ's Glory" (Vocal Score, p. 198). This is taken up by other voices, and developed with added curve and colour. "The kingdom is the Lord's," the Apostles cry, to the theme of "The Spirit of the

Lord" (No. 49). The great climax comes with the vociferous enunciation of the theme of "Faith" [1]—

to the words, "All the ends of the world shall remember," against which the choruses in heaven have a counter-theme—"From henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God." The movement grows in power; the "Spirit of the Lord" motive comes out in fullest force, and the rapturous "Alleluia" from heaven seems like the constant gentle falling of flowers. Once more we hear the theme associated with the "ascension of Christ" (Vocal Score, p. 181), which, it will be remembered, is founded on the motive of "Christ, the Man of Sorrows" (No. 50). Then, to the words, "In His love and in His pity He redeemed them," we have the theme of "Christ's Peace" from *Gerontius*.[2]

[1] It has already been heard in the scene of the "choosing of the Apostles," when Peter sings to it the words, "Thou wilt shew us the path of life." (Vocal Score, p. 34).

[2] This is the theme heard in Gerontius' first solo, to the words, "Thou art calling me" (Vocal Score, p. 7). Later on it plays an important part in the chorus, "Be merciful, be

Finally all join in a softly breathed "Alleluia," rising in a *crescendo*.

The points of strength and weakness of *The Apostles* have been mostly indicated in the foregoing analysis. Much of the music is dull, the rhythms are frequently monotonous, and the atmosphere is often enervating. But there are scenes in the oratorio of incomparable beauty, and others where the psychology is as veracious and as penetrating as in *Gerontius*, even if there is none of the continuity of that work. Time after time we feel that we are in the presence of a musical gift of the first order; and when all is said, *The Apostles* remains a work that no one but a great musician, and a man with an unusual power of synthesis, could have put together.

gracious." (See the bass part—"By Thy birth and by Thy cross," p. 19.) The phrase heard to the words in the soprano part on p. 19 of *Gerontius*, which lower down in the page appears as a counterpoint to the "Christ's Peace" theme, is also used as a counterpoint to the same theme at the point in *The Apostles* which is now being described (Vocal Score, p. 212).

CHAPTER IV

SONGS AND MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

Op. 26. Two Part-Songs.
Op. 27. From the Bavarian Highlands.
Op. 28. Organ Sonata.
Op. 34. Te Deum and Benedictus.
Op. 37. Sea-Pictures.
Op. 45. Five Part-Songs: Words from the Greek Anthology.

THE two Part-Songs in Op. 26 are perhaps the best, and certainly the best known, of all Elgar's compositions of this kind. The poetry is by Lady Elgar, who has more than once supplied him with texts of a far better quality than he generally manages to find elsewhere. They were originally written for female voices with accompaniment for two violins and pianoforte; but since then the composer has scored them very effectively for a small orchestra. The first, "The Snow," is a delicately painted miniature, of the utmost refinement of feeling. The second, "Fly, singing bird, fly," is no less exquisite, but of more impassioned quality. In both the violin accompaniment

is used in the most charming way to echo or embroider the leading vocal phrases.

Op. 27, *From the Bavarian Highlands*, is a series of six choral songs, with accompaniment for orchestra or piano. The words are "imitated from Bavarian Volkslieder and Schnadahüpfler." The work is a reminiscence of a summer holiday of the composer. No. 1, "The Dance (*Sonnenbichl*)" is a piece of boisterous, infectious gaiety, with a fresh and varied rhythm. No. 2, "False Love (*Wamberg*)"—in which a swain goes light-heartedly to seek his "maiden true," but finds a rival with her, and goes off to "dwell unloved, unseen," in the forest—is pretty, but lacking in point and force. The central motive of the poem is insufficiently realised. The rustic sings—

> "As I climb and reach her door,
> Ah! I see a rival there,
> So farewell for evermore,"—

in much the same tones as if he were singing "Hush-a-bye baby."

No. 3, "Lullaby (*In Hammersbach*)," is the most beautiful and most popular of the series—a gem of lovely melody and delicate fancy. Particularly happy is the union of

the vocal phrases with the dainty, tripping melody of the orchestra. The whole thing is an example of the lighter Elgar at his best—the Elgar of the Minuet and the Gavottes, with just enough of a dash of the deeper-feeling Elgar to make it all very human and very tender.

No. 4, "Aspiration (*Bei Sanct Anton*)," is a short, hymn-like song, original in conception and effective in treatment.

No. 5, "On the Alm (*Hoch Alp*)," is a rustic love-song, treated on simple lines. The orchestra opens with a placidly flowing theme, which is afterwards used very happily as a refrain—sung to "Ah!" *pianissimo*, by the female voices—to the verses that have been sung by the tenors and basses.

No. 6, "The Marksman (*Bei Murnau*)," is a bustling song, dealing with the excitement of the village shooters before a contest of skill. It owes what excellence it possesses to its treatment rather than to its ideas. These are not very striking, but skilful handling contrives to invest them with a good deal of interest, and the constant animation of the song is exhilarating.

Op. 45 is a series of five short Part-Songs for men's voices (unaccompanied), set to words translated from the Greek anthology

by Richard Garnett, Edmund Gosse, Andrew Lang, and others. They are fairly successful, without showing ideally intimate feeling for the spirit of the poetry. The best of them are, "It's oh! to be a wild wind"; "Yea, cast me from heights of the mountain"; and "Whether I find thee."

The *Organ Sonata* (Op. 28), was "composed for the visit of some American musicians to Worcester Cathedral in July 1898." It is a fine work, full of originality, and, although rather difficult in parts, extremely effective on the organ. In the first movement (*allegro maestoso*) there is a slight weakness in working-out, but the themes themselves are striking. The second (*allegretto*) is a bold and fanciful piece of writing of great charm; the third (*andante expressivo*) is based on a broad melody of sincere feeling, belonging to much the same mental world as the *Sursum Corda* and *The Light of Life*. The finale (presto) is energetic and tuneful, and contains a curious reminiscence of the theme of the "Andante."

The *Te Deum and Benedictus* (Op. 34), in spite of some fine work here and there, on the whole leaves an unfavourable impression. The reason probably is that, listening to it now with the recollection of all the

music that Elgar has written before and since, we see it to be packed with his mannerisms—a certain type of melody that is frequent with him, a certain rhythm, a certain distribution of accents, certain harmonic devices, certain sequences that recur time after time in his music, all of which we here get crowded into a comparatively small space. Stereotyped subjects like this do not lend themselves to great originality of treatment; and the result in the present case is that we get extremely little of the deeper Elgar and a good deal of the Elgar that lies near the surface.

Elgar has never shone as a song writer. Original enough in many other respects, in the song he has mostly been content to work along the ordinary English lines and traffic in the ordinary English sentiments. No doubt the market for which he has written has had something to do with the character of his songs; while in some cases the mediocre or commonplace verses he has chosen to set have put any distinction of style quite out of the question. One finds it hard to believe that with so many good poems in existence a musician of Elgar's calibre should ever set such a thing as Mr. Clifton Bingham's "Come, gentle night!"

But taking the songs as they are, with the limitations of their class, some of them have a touch of a quality that may rescue them from neglect. The "Shepherd's Song" (words by Mr. Barry Pain) is pleasant and pretty, and the workmanship is always interesting. The "War Song" (words by Mr. C. F. Hayward), has some descriptive touches, and here and there a flash of real power. It is a good song of the popular kind, doing its honest best in spite of the words. "The Poet's Life" is superior Lawrence Kellie. "Like to the Damask Rose," "A Song of Flight," "Queen Mary's Song," "After," "Rondel," and "The Pipes of Pan," are fairly interesting —the last-named is more effective in its orchestral setting.

Elgar's most notable achievement in this line is the *Sea-Pictures*, a cycle of five songs for contralto and orchestra. Here the words are almost invariably good, while the opportunity for orchestral expression counts, as always, for a good deal with him. The value of this is seen in the opening of the first song ("Sea Slumber-Song," words by the Hon. Roden Noel), where a quite undistinguished vocal phrase is made fairly acceptable to us by the orchestral atmos-

phere in which it is set. So again in the lines—

> "I, the Mother mild,
> Hush thee, O my child,
> Forget the voices wild!"—

the orchestration, with the mysterious octaves in the strings, the arpeggios in the harp, the tremor of the drums, and the faint clang of the gong, gives an interest to the passage that it would not otherwise possess. There is, too, the old thoughtlessness in the melodic phrasing, as seen in such lines as—

> "Isles in elfin light
> Dream, the rocks and caves
> Lulled by whispering waves,
> Veil their marbles bright."

Here the sense of the first clause obviously ends at "dream"; there is no earthly necessity, merely because the poet has made a division at "light," for the composer to imitate and even exaggerate his procedure. Elgar's melodic sentence, however, ends definitely at "light," and the verb "dream," instead of belonging to the first melodic phrase, is thrust unceremoniously into the second, which thus runs, "Dream the rocks and caves, Lulled by whispering waves."

Then there comes a dead stop, and the verb that really belongs to the rocks and caves —the "veil" of the fourth line—is left stranded, apparently related to nothing. Elgar's phrasing is thus—

(1) Isles in elfin light.
(2) Dream the rocks and caves lulled by whispering waves.
(3) Veil their marbles bright.

The first melodic sentence should obviously run from "Isles" to "Dream" without a break, and the second from "The rocks and caves" to "marbles bright" without a break. This would necessitate a vocal phrase of quite another shape than that used by Elgar.[1] His ear is plainly insensitive to defects of phrasing of this kind; his tune is conceived for its own sake, and the words have to be made to fit it as best they can. He never sets a poem as Hugo Wolf, for example, would do, with the most delicate equipoise of poetry and music, the melodic phrase ignoring the artificial line-divisions of the poem, always paying the

[1] A singer with an ear would of course try to link the "Dream" with "Isles in elfin light"; but if this is not done with great emphasis the real verbal sense is not conveyed, and if it *is* done with great emphasis the melodic line is broken.

most perfect respect to the rational verbal phrasing, but without sacrificing any of its own independence.[1] With Elgar the cases of really felicitous verbal phrasing in his vocal music are quite scarce. Sometimes it is startlingly bad; at other times, while not bad enough to disturb us very deeply, the words are indeed made, by a process of lengthening this or that syllable, to go with the words, but without any sense of inevitableness. He has lately published the *canto popolare* from the *In the South* overture as a song with words by Shelley, and this may serve to illustrate the point I am enforcing. It is quite true that you can sing Shelley's words to the music, but only by the same process by which Procrustes made his victims, tall or short, fit his bed of torture. Your sense of verbal rhythm is pushed and pulled and jolted till its ribs are broken; and you

[1] The student who is interested in this point, that is so essential to good song-writing, yet upon which there is the most extraordinary ignorance and carelessness among both composers and audiences, should examine a song of Hugo Wolf's like "Das Ständchen" (in the Eichendorff volume), or "Auf dem grünen Balkon" in the "Spanisches Liederbuch." Wolf is, indeed, infallible in the matter of catching in his melody the right accent and phrasing of the poetry. Even Brahms can be caught tripping once or twice, but Wolf, I believe, never.

finally declare that by similar treatment anything—an Act of Parliament or a patent medicine advertisement—could be made to "go with" the melody equally well.

The two most completely successful songs in the *Sea-Pictures* are, "In Haven"—set to three admirable little verses by Lady Elgar—and "Where corals lie," the words of which are by Dr. Richard Garnett. In the former there is the loveliest of quiet orchestral colour, the flowing figures in the strings giving a happy placidity to the movement: the song is a little seascape in water-colours. In "Where corals lie," the vocal phrasing meets with no difficulties because the verbal sense always terminates with each line, and Elgar has found a melody that exactly squares with the orderly rhythm and accent of the verse. The orchestral colouring is again very suggestive, and saves one or two of the phrases from striking us as rather obvious. The melody is generally expressive, though it lacks distinction at the words—

> "But far the rapid fancies fly
> To rolling worlds of wave and shell."

The cadences, however, are always striking, especially the final one, where a certain

austerity is preserved that well suits the whole character of the poem and the music.

The "Sabbath Morning at Sea," the third of the scries, is very unequal. The words are by Mrs. Browning, and not always quite suitable for music, as in the muddled lines—

> "As glorified by even the intent
> Of holding the day glory."

The inspiration falters at times, but there are some deeply moving passages, and the song works up to a fine climax. At the words, "And on that sea commixed with fire," the violins bring in the string figure that has already been heard at the opening of the first song of the series. This system of quotation is again adopted in the last song of the set, "The Swimmer." The words—a rather ineffective imitation of the sonorous harmonies of Swinburne—are by Mr. A. Lindsay Gordon. In the lines—

> "One gleam like a bloodshot sword-blade swims on
> The sky-line, staining the green gulf crimson,
> A death-stroke fiercely dealt by a dim sun,"—

there is an absurdity of rhyme that is faithfully preserved in the musical setting. The orchestral prelude, depicting the sea in its fury, is, of course, graphically done; the

pictorial work is, indeed, good throughout. There is vigour in the swinging tune that follows, but rather too much use is made of it in its unvaried form, and it does not always go amicably with the words to which it is applied, as at "When we wandered here together." At the line "From the heights and hollows of fern and feather," the oboe repeats one of the themes from "Where corals lie"; and the section commencing, "The skies were fairer," is based on the theme of "Isles in elfin light" in the first song. Altogether the song, if not of impeccable workmanship throughout, has many striking passages, much tenderness, and a good deal of strength.

CHAPTER V

LARGER INSTRUMENTAL WORKS: MARCHES, OVERTURES, ETC.

Op. 19. Overture: "Froissart."
Op. 32. Imperial March.
Op. 36. "Enigma" Variations on an Original Theme.
Op. 39. Three Military Marches: "Pomp and Circumstance."
Op. 40. Overture: "Cockaigne."
Op. 42. Incidental Music to "Grania and Diarmid."
Op. 43. "Dream Children" — two pieces for small orchestra.
Op. 47. Introduction and Allegro for Strings.
Op. 50. Overture: "In the South."

THE *Froissart* overture, produced at the Worcester Festival of 1890, was Elgar's first Festival work. The explanation of the title is that the overture expresses Elgar's love for the days of chivalry, which live again for us in the pages of the charming old historian, Froissart. Prefixed to the score is a quotation from Keats—

"When Chivalry
Lifted up her lance on high."

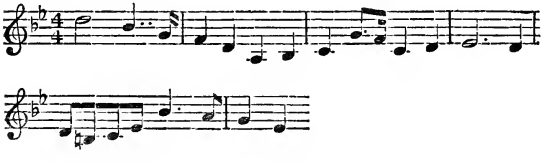
The idea of the overture grew directly out of a scene in Sir Walter Scott's "Old Mortality," where Claverhouse asks Morton: "Did you ever read Froissart?" When Morton replies "No," Claverhouse goes on: "I have half a mind to contrive you should have six months' imprisonment in order to procure you that pleasure. His chapters inspire me with more enthusiasm than even poetry itself. And the noble canon—with what true chivalrous feeling he confines his beautiful expressions of sorrow to the death of the gallant and high-bred knight, of whom it was a pity to see the fall, such was his loyalty to his king, pure faith to his religion, hardihood towards his enemy, and fidelity to his lady-love!—Ah, benedicite! how he will mourn over the fall of such a pearl of knighthood, be it on the side he happens to favour, or the other. But, truly, for sweeping from the face of the earth some few hundreds of villain churls, who are born but to plough it, the high-born and inquisitive historian has marvellous little sympathy—as little, or less, perhaps, than John Graham of Claverhouse."

The overture may thus be taken as a picture of the old knightly world, with its

fighting and romantic love-making, seen through eyes that idealise it all.

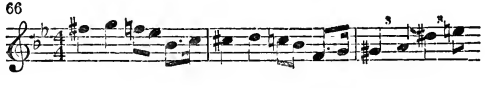
Two or three preliminary motives are sketched out before the principal subject enters. First of all the general atmosphere of the times the composer is delineating is suggested in some vigorous bars, dying away to a *pianissimo*. Then a gracious, suave theme, thoroughly characteristic of Elgar, enters in wood-wind and strings—

65



to be followed by a striking little passage for the horns, which in turn leads into another typical Elgar melody—

66



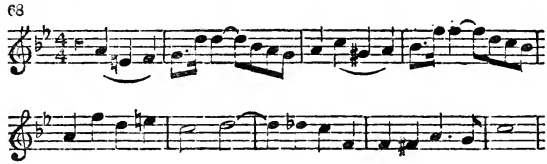
in the development of which the horn-call just referred to is heard pealing out cheerily (this time strengthened by the trumpets).

Some transitional matter of a buoyant character culminates in the statement of the chief theme (*allegro moderato*)—

67

This is pleasantly and freely dealt with, ultimately leading to a grandiose repetition of No. 65 in the full orchestra, the little figure for horns and trumpets again being prominent. All gradually becomes quite tranquil, and in a solo clarinet we hear the second subject, accompanied quietly by the upper strings—

68



It is repeated with fuller scoring, but never with any loss of its simple and winsome character. Fragments of No. 67 (end of bar 2 and bar 3) are quietly suggested in clarinet, viola, and flute, and then the development section begins.

The trombones give out a reminiscence of the beginning of No. 65, and are answered by the violas with the opening of No. 68. Further dialogue between these two themes ensues, as well as a good deal of reference to the phrases with which the overture

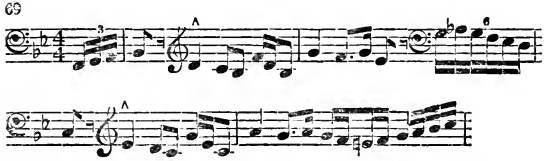
opened. The horn-call reappears in imposing form in the full orchestra, and is followed by a highly-coloured version of the knightly theme, No. 66. No. 68 is further dealt with, and the little melodic figure seen in bar 2 of No. 65 and bar 1 of No. 68 is always being put to use. No. 65 reappears, augmented, in clarinets, violas, and horns, and with further handling of this the development section ends.

At the beginning of the recapitulation section the *tempo* quickens again, and the colours become brighter, till after a big *crescendo* No. 67 emerges in full swing. It is followed by No. 68, at first in the 'cellos, with a quiet accompaniment, then with fuller instrumentation. In the ensuing transition-work there is an interesting recurrence, *piano ma marcato*, of the old horn-call. In the coda much use is made of fragments of the themes with which the overture opens, and of No. 65, the latter in vociferous form.

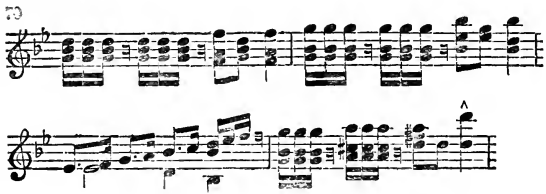
The *Froissart* overture is an exceedingly pleasant piece of work, breathing as healthy an atmosphere as one could wish to have in music. To hear it now, in the light of our knowledge of the later Elgar, is to realise how thoroughly, even in those early

days, he understood the secret of the orchestra. There is not, of course, the Giorgionesque opulence of colour of the latest works, but the colour is always fresh and vivid, and the calculation is always certain—the effect that comes out is always the effect that was planned when the notes were put on the paper.

The *Imperial March*, like the cantata *The Banner of St. George*, owes its origin to the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. It is a good specimen of this order of composition, its colour being rich and its tunes broad and swinging without descending into the obvious. A pompous theme first comes out—

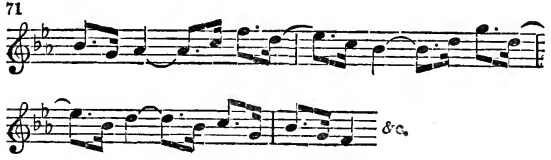


and is supplemented by another, marked *strepitoso*—



A repetition of No. 69 brings us to the middle section, based on a more suave motive—

71



which in due course leads back to No. 69 and No. 70, with a final glance at No. 71.

The *Enigma Variations*, brought out by Dr. Richter in London in June 1899, were practically the first work in which Elgar's genius was made fully manifest. From that time many people put him in the front rank of contemporary musicians, and each subsequent work of his had to be judged by the standard not of English music merely, but of the world's music.

The meaning of the word "Enigma" in connection with the score is that, according to the composer, "another and larger" theme which is never heard "goes with" the theme we hear and with each Variation of it; but what this other enigmatic theme is, nobody knows.

The score is dedicated "To my friends pictured within," from which it will be seen that each of the Variations is a musical portrait or character-study of one of the

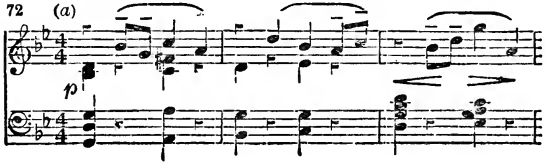
composer's friends—or, to put it in another way, each Variation shows the theme as seen through the eyes of another person. These are indicated in the score either by initials or by pseudonyms, and only Elgar and a few of his intimates have the key to the persons pictured. It is not at all necessary to have this key, however, in order to appreciate the work, which may confidently appeal to us as music pure and simple. It is full of delicate fancy and beauty tinged with warm feeling; and the consummate art of the orchestration makes it a perpetual delight to the ear.

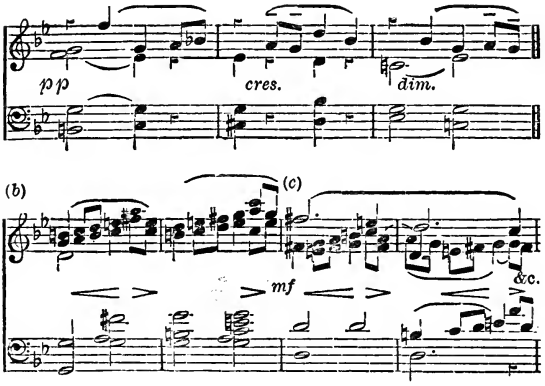
The Variations are fourteen in number, and the headings are as follows—

Enigma (the theme stated).
1. C.A.E. (Andante).
2. H.D.S.P. (Allegro).
3. R.B.T. (Allegretto).
4. W.M.B. (Allegro di molto).
5. R.P.A. (Moderato).
6. Ysobel (Andantino).
7. Troyte (Presto).
8. W.N. (Allegretto).
9. Nimrod (Moderato).
10. Dorabella (Allegretto).
11. G.R.S. (Allegro di molto).
12. B.C.N. (Andante).
13. * * * Romanza (Moderato).
14. E.D.U. (Allegro).

One or two of these initials are easy to decipher. Those who know that Sir Edward Elgar is married, and that "C. A. Elgar" figures as the poetess of one or two of the *Sea-Pictures*, will have little difficulty in forming the conclusion that the first Variation is Lady Elgar. "G.R.S." will be no mystery to any one who knows the names of the "Three Choir" organists; and a little transposition of "Nimrod" into another tongue will yield the name of a well-known London admirer of the composer. The "Dorabella" must represent some very dainty maiden; and the 13th Variation, with its curious drum-roll—like the faint throb of the engines of a big liner—and its quotation from Mendelssohn's "Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage," refers to a friend who was crossing the ocean when the Variation was written.

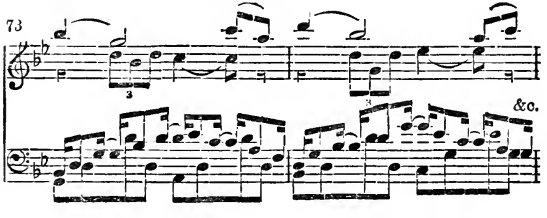
The theme itself runs as follows—





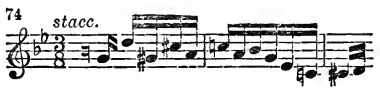
It begins, as will be seen, in the minor, goes, at (*b*), into the major, and ends with a return to the phrase marked (*a*).

I. In the first Variation, the flute and clarinet (with second violins and violas doubling them in an exceedingly quiet tremolo) muse upon No. 72*a*, while the first violins and 'cellos move up and down in light syncopated groups—



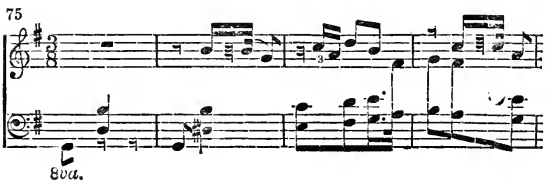
At the eighth bar No. *72b* hazards an appearance in violas, against a counter-theme in the wood-wind. Four bars later there is a noble climax in the full orchestra, an impressive descent in wood-wind and upper strings being accompanied by No. *72a* in horns, trumpets, and 'cellos; this becomes more and more refined in feeling, till at the last a solo clarinet softly utters it in the major.

II. Throughout this Variation there runs a quaint semiquaver figure—



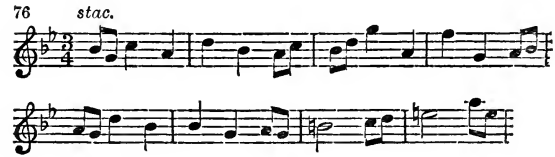
Small counter-themes appear against it, and at the eighteenth bar it is accompanied by No. *72a* in 'cellos and basses.

III. Here a solo oboe plays scherzando with No. *72a*, over a shifting basis of sixths in flutes, clarinets, and bassoons—



No. *72b* is taken up in the same playful mood by the clarinets, the theme being metamorphosed into whimsical triplets, and the violins clinching the clarinet phrase at the end of each bar. Towards the end, when the opening of the Variation is repeated in flutes, oboes, and clarinets, the bassoons are prominent with a humorous run upwards in triplets, which before it finishes is accompanied in sixths by the violins.

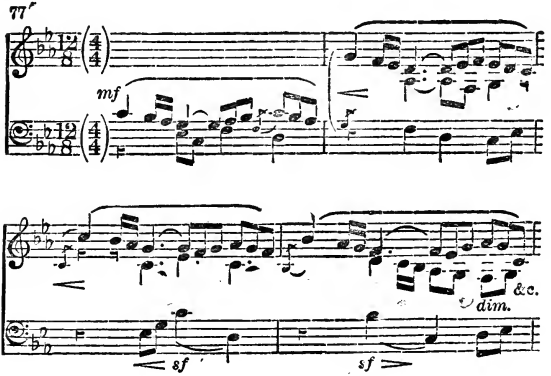
IV. Here we get back to a restatement of the theme almost in its original form; the mood however is now breezy and boisterous—



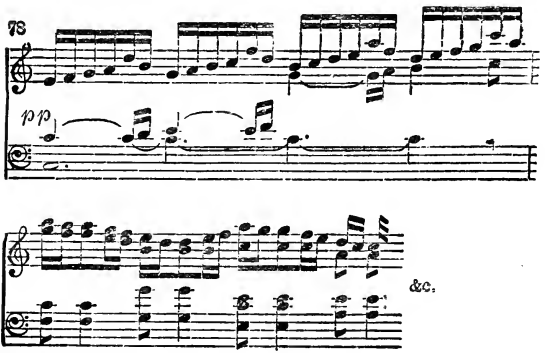
The gusty energy of the runs in the strings against No. *72b* (in the seventh and following bars) strikes one very forcibly. A middle section of a few bars takes us into a quieter atmosphere for a moment; but when the return to the beginning is made the orchestra lets itself go at its full power, the drummer working as hard as any one.

V. No. *72a* is now heard in grave tones in bassoons and basses, while the violins

have a counter-theme of equal gravity of feeling—

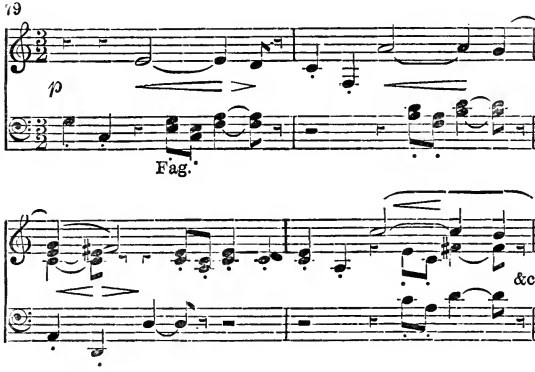


Then No. 72*b* appears in altered form in the flutes, with the oboes creeping up underneath—



the oboes breaking out at the second bar into a cheery chatter, which is imitated at once in other instruments. No. 77 returns, with the upper subject thickly underlined, as it were, in all the strings, bassoon and double bassoon in unison, and the under theme lifted up above it to the higher woodwind. The Variation ends with further play upon the intermediate matter commenced in No. 78, except for a reminder, at the very finish, of No. 77.

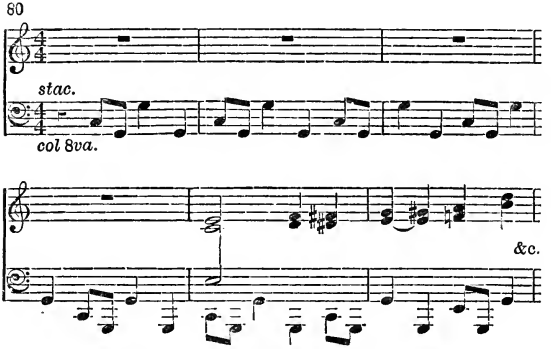
VI. No. V. runs without a break into No. VI. Here the violas have a new figure that is worked in dialogue against another in the bassoons, founded on No. *72a*.



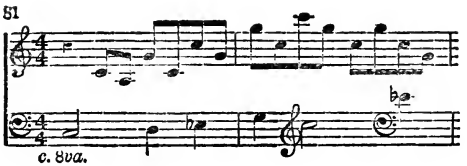
At the sixth bar a modification of No. *72b* steps out in the bassoons, and later on a

cantabile viola solo stands out prominently. Except for a bar or two of lighter colouring here and there, the tone of the Variation is very serious, sombre, and contemplative.

VII. Here everything is exceedingly impetuous: a characteristic feature of the Variation is the drum figure with which it commences, and which recurs persistently. The theme is in the wood-wind and violas; it will be seen to be derived from No. *72b*—

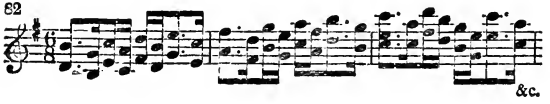


A peculiarity of it is the quiet beginning of each phrase, the rapid *crescendo* (the pace is very fast) and the drop again to *piano*. Later on No. *72b* carries on "a raging, tearing propaganda" in trombones, tuba, basses, and bassoons, accompanied by flying *arpeggio* passages in the strings—



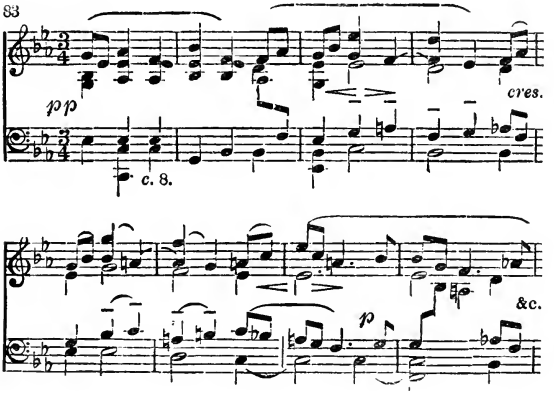
The drum figure reappears, and with it No. 80; the theme being this time encircled with brilliant string scale passages that sweep up and down through four octaves. No. 81 also returns, as vigorous as before, and the drum never tires of its own little theme. Towards the end the horns and brass throw out No. *72a* in superb lines and colours; there is an impetuous downward rush in the strings, and the drum manages to come in with a final tattoo at the very last. The whole Variation is as invigorating as a walk over the mountains with sun and wind at their best.

VIII. The portrait is feminine. No. *72a* is given in sixths to the clarinets, in a new rhythm of engaging lightness; at the third bar the strings complete the phrase in broad, suave curves—



The oboe then trills out suggestions of No. 72*b*, with decoration in the flutes. The 'cellos and bassoons take up the spirit of No. 82, the violins having a counter-theme; and so we work our way back to a proper resumption of No. 82, the wood-wind, as before, giving out the beginning of the theme and the strings completing it.

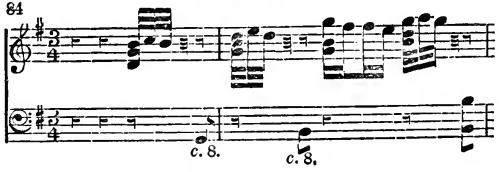
IX. The last three bars of Variation VIII. deal with the theme of bar 3 of No. 82 *largamente*, and then run without a break into the grave and composed ninth Variation. No. 72*a*, transposed into the major, is turned into a noble melody in E flat—



It is first of all heard in the strings, then with fuller scoring. Its final statement is

extremely dignified, glowing with the richest of colour, and breathing some of the most elevated inspiration that modern music can show. The hearer must not be misled by the title of "Nimrod" to suppose that the Variation has anything to do with a sporting character. As already explained, "Nimrod" is a linguistic play upon the name of an enthusiastic admirer who has done a great deal to make Elgar's music known and understood.

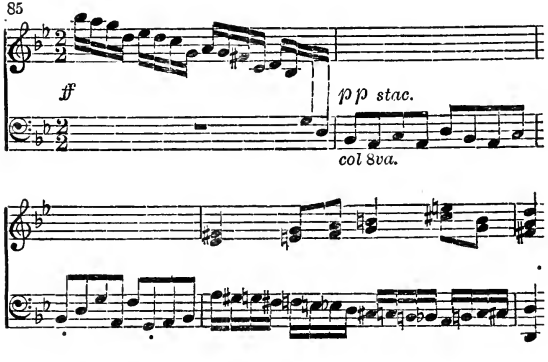
X. In the exquisite "Dorabella" Variation (styled an Intermezzo), there is only the slightest of references to the original theme. A dainty, ingenuous melody, of the most winsome charm, is sung in snatches by the wood-wind, the muted strings playing round it in delicate, gauze-like figures. There is something of the dart and flutter of the butterfly in the theme—



At the tenth bar there is heard in a solo viola, against the same kind of figure as is

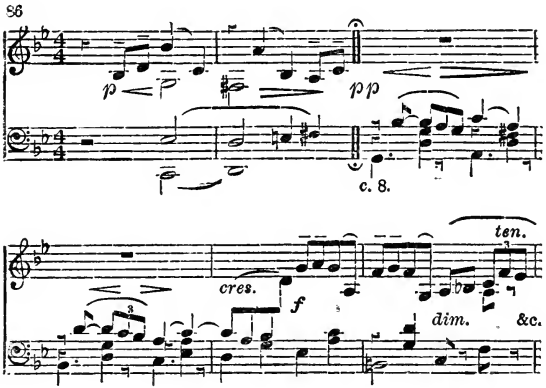
shown in No. 84, a distant reminder of No. *72b*. The Variation is mostly in G major; there is a middle section in G minor, in which No. *72b* is again most vaguely suggested in the violins; then No. 84 returns in G major as before. Finally the G minor violin phrase just referred to is put into the major, with a lovely cadence, and the Variation ends with a few suggestions of No. 84, *ppp*.

XI. The strings leap down in a cascade through three octaves; then, in bar 2, bassoons and basses pick out, *staccato*, a variation of No. *72a*; the wood-wind and violins answer in bar 3 with No. *72b*, and other instruments have rapid chromatic scales—



After fuller statements of this, the brass gives out a jerky and strongly accented modification of No. *72a*. The mood of No. 85 is resumed, the themes always being treated with sudden breaks and wild rushes. The general psychological characteristic of the Variation is an abrupt, explosive kind of energy.

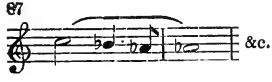
XII. We come back again to more contemplative moods. After a couple of bars suggestive of No. *72a*, the 'cellos have a long-drawn and expressive melody founded on that theme—



that dominates the whole movement. There are hints of No. *72b* in the middle section. No. 86 mounts to a dignified climax, and a

finely spiritual effect is produced at the end by a solo 'cello quietly giving out a reminiscence of the opening theme.

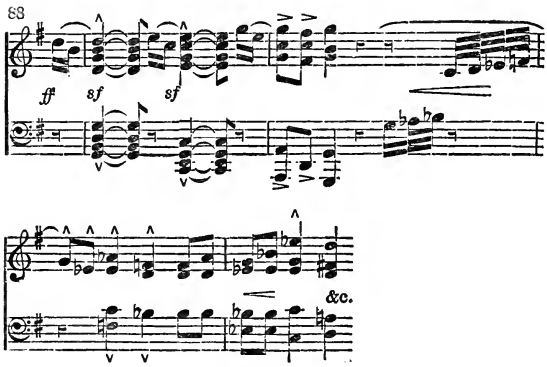
XIII. This Variation follows without a break on the preceding one. Here again, as in the tenth, the original theme is hardly ever in evidence. The clarinet begins with a melody over a swaying accompaniment in the strings. Soon the violas have a gently heaving figure in sixths, the kettledrum keeps up a faint roll like a long throb, and the clarinet softly gives out a quotation—



from Mendelssohn's "Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage" overture. The marine picture becomes still more lovely later on, where the viola figure is distributed over the whole of the strings, and the Mendelssohn quotation is breathed out softly in trumpets and trombones. At the very end the sense of the ship vanishing in the distance is exquisitely conveyed, the theme returning to the placid clarinet, and the drum keeping up its faint persistent throbbing.

XIV. The first sixteen bars of the last

Variation are devoted to leaping and flying preludial figures; then a broad and dignified subject thunders out in the full orchestra—



in which No. *72a* is clearly apparent. A vigorous development of this leads to a section commencing thus—

in which No. *72b* is seen below (in violas and 'cellos) while wood-wind and horns have a theme in counterpoint above it. No. *72b* is always prominent at this stage in some

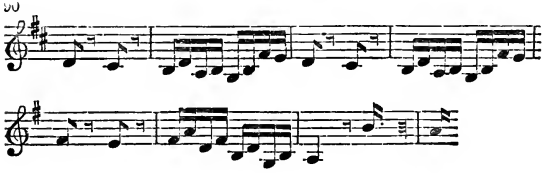
part or other. A fine climax comes with the "Nimrod" Variation (No. 83) in augmentation in the brass, with a counter-theme above and below it. The theme broadens and broadens, the falling sevenths being put to fine use in a great *stringendo* passage. The preludial matter is then resumed, followed by No. 88. Then a modification of No. 73 comes out very quietly, but in full scoring. The time quickens, and No. 89 is heard once more, leading in due course again into No. 88, and this in turn into a fine version of No. 72*a*. No. 88 is treated with bold variation to the end, and the "Nimrod" theme also appears in a new light. Altogether the finish is a superb outburst, remarkable both for its clever theme-weaving and its glorious colour.

The *Pomp and Circumstance* Military Marches are intended to be six in number. The first two were produced in 1901, the third in 1905. Elgar's idea was to treat the soldier's march symphonically—to blend the practical and the artistic in one, by making the March in every way adapted for marching purposes, while not sacrificing any of the qualities required for performance in the concert-room. The following lines of Lord de Tabley have been taken by the

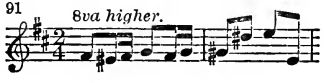
composer as a motto for the Marches as a whole—

"Like a proud music that draws men to die
Madly upon the spears in martial ecstasy,
A measure that sets heaven in all their veins
And iron in their hands.
I hear the Nation march
Beneath her ensign as an eagle's wing;
O'er shield and sheeted targe
The banners of my faith most gaily swing,
Moving to victory with solemn noise,
With worship and with conquest, and the voice of myriads."

No. 1, in D, after a stirring Introduction of a few bars, breaks out into a tune with any amount of snap in it; it is entrusted to violins, violas, and 'cellos in unison—



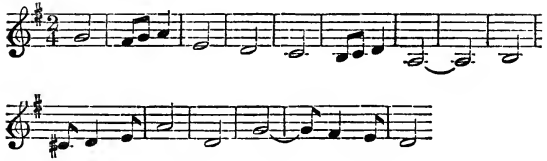
It has a brilliant continuation—



which after doing duty as a melody is used as a bass. Repetition of previous

matter, in which the introductory phrases serve to lead—contrary to the usual practice in Marches—into the next section, brings us to the Trio, where we have the healthy tune—popular in the best sense of the word—that was later on to be used for "Land of Hope and Glory" in the *Coronation Ode*—

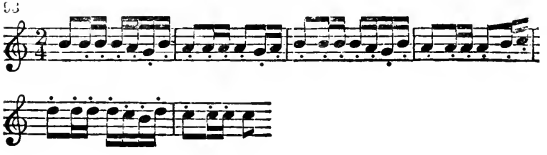
92



The melody is accompanied by a uniform beat throughout. Repeated with fuller scoring, it leads back into No. 90 and No. 91, as well as the strains of the Introduction. Then No. 92 recurs, this time not in the dominant but the tonic key, and the March ends with brief allusions to No. 90.

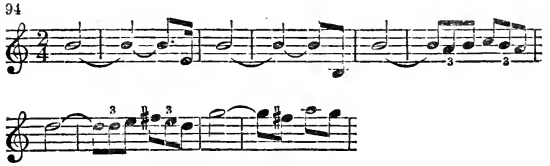
March No. 2 in A minor has an attention-arresting preface of two bars, followed by the first subject, lightly scored—

93



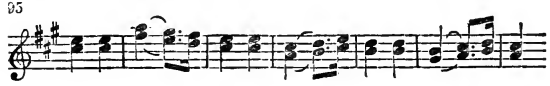
After sundry modulations a broad, rolling melody enters—

94



at the end of which the original preface introduces No. 93 once more. Then, with a change to A minor, a triplet figure is heard in the lower strings and wood-wind; this is soon made to serve as bass to the melody of the Trio—

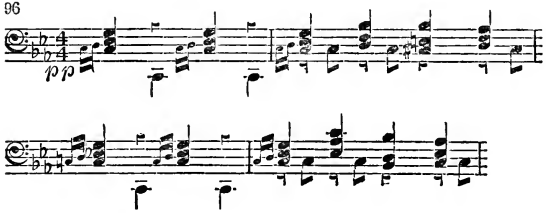
95



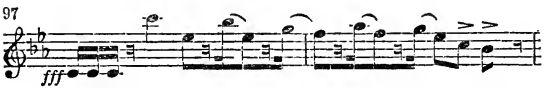
The melody is pleasingly varied and repeated. Some allusions to No. 93 bring us to a return of the whole March, which ends with a coda based on figures derived from the preface.

The third March, in C minor, is not so attractive as the other two. This is in part due to the curiously sombre character of a good deal of it, though it must be said that the thematic invention right through the March is of a rather inferior quality.

It opens with a quiet and mysterious theme in the clarinets, bassoons, and horns, punctuated by drum-beats on the weak accents of each bar—



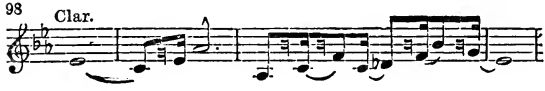
This is repeated higher up in the wood-wind, the first violins helping now and then with a *pizzicato;* then, with a great *crescendo* and a quickening of the pace, another theme appears. Here each phrase is prefaced by three sharp semiquavers in the brass, the remainder coming out in the full wood-wind and strings—



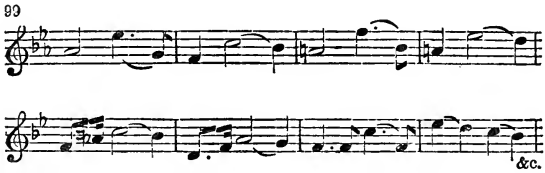
No. 96 recurs and is treated in a new fashion, with fresh effects of rhythm and scoring; and the section ends with a bar of upward and downward rushes and one sharp chord.

The Trio opens with a melody in the

clarinets over a *staccato* string accompaniment in tenths—



It is bandied about in the orchestra until a new theme enters in violins and 'cellos in octaves—



This is followed by a recapitulation of No. 98; then the first part of the March (No. 96 and No. 97) is repeated. On its next statement it is whipped up to higher excitement by rushing scale-passages in strings and wood-wind.

The coda is founded on the Trio, the theme of which (No. 98) now comes out *grandioso* in the full orchestra. A connecting section deals in spirited style with fragments of No. 96 and No. 97; then, in an *animato*, No. 98 comes out in a breezy kind of way, with a striking accompani-

ment in the brass. Finally the third bar of No. 98 is seized upon and tossed about in various forms, and the March ends with the runs and the brusque chord that finished the first section.

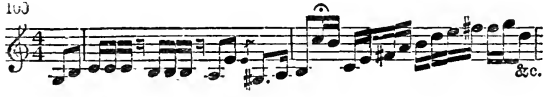
There is something enigmatic in the mood of the opening theme of the March, and one would like to know more definitely what it was that prompted this curious melody. It is, however, more puzzling than striking, while the other themes, as already hinted, are not of distinguished quality. The breezy melodies of the two other Marches are unconsciously popular in the best sense of the word; in the third March the conscious intention to write a popular tune—as in the Trio—is too plainly evident, and the tune fails and is apt to drop into banality.

In the *Cockaigne* overture Elgar has confined himself for the most part to the lighter side of London life; there is dignity, indeed, in it, but unflecked by any suspicion of care or "problem." It is not the sordid, harassed London of Mr. Charles Booth, but the happy-go-lucky London of Phil May—if we could imagine Phil May with a touch of romance in him—that Elgar dwells upon.

The gladsome *nonchalant* feelings of a typical easy-going Londoner strolling through

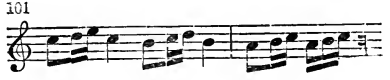
St. James's Park on a lovely summer day are described in the opening theme—

100



At the fourth bar another sprightly little figure enters—

101



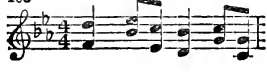
to add to the general gaiety.

Several presentations of the bustling, jaunty No. 100 lead to another theme—

102

that brings a more serious mood into the music. It represents the stronger side of the London character. More vociferations of No. 100 in the brightest colour of the brass, and then tranquil feelings come uppermost; we are introduced to a pair of happy, tender lovers on their walk. A preliminary phrase—

103

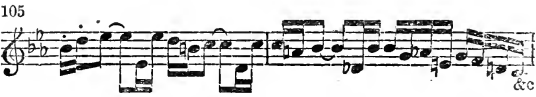


leads into the love-theme proper, which may be regarded as the second subject of the overture—

104

After listening for a moment to the lovers' conversation, the composer fastens on the phrase shown in No. 103, passes it through various modifications, and finally makes it conduct us into another scene, where we are introduced to the perky, self-confident, unabashable London street-boy—

105

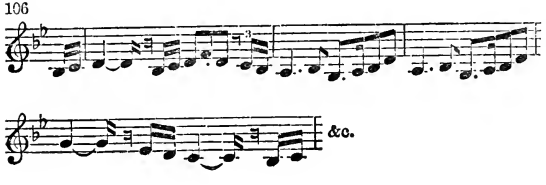


This theme, it will be noticed, is evoked out of that of the graver "Londoners," just as Wagner obtained the theme of his Nuremberg apprentices out of that of the Master-singers.

No. 104 is tossed about merrily from one key to another, until No. 101 reappears in a more assertive form, followed by the semiquaver passage shown at the beginning of No. 100. Continuing to play with this

in the strings (the drums assisting later on) the composer once more takes up No. 104 and modifies it.

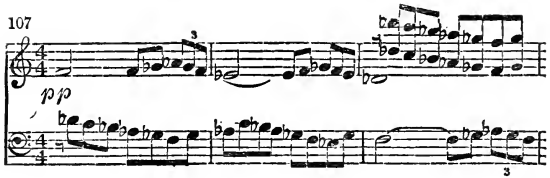
The development section opens with No. 102 high up in the strings *legato e dolce*, and followed by an equally smooth presentation of the end of the "lovers'" theme (the continuation of No. 103). This is shown in one dreamy form after another; at one or two points a solo clarinet breaks in upon the scene with an anticipation of the rough strains that are soon to disturb the love idyll. There is a military band approaching from somewhere, but as yet its noise is attenuated by distance. Rushing scale passages in strings and wind, however, interspersed with further suggestions of military music, indicate that the band is drawing nearer. Soon we hear it in full blast: against a whirr of tone in strings and wood-wind the cornets and trombones blare out their impudent, swaggering theme—



This is developed largely, and the joy of the youngsters in the soldiers, the band, and the procession is shown by pieces of No. 105 flitting about like broken ejaculations of delight.

The turmoil dies away, and fragments of No. 100 make their reappearance. The lovers are supposed to make for a quiet church, to avoid the crowd and the din; on their way their ears are assailed by the corybantic strains of a Salvation Army band that is stationed down a side street. The big drum and the tambourine are faintly heard; then the clarinets play a typical piece of Salvation Army music (a metamorphosis of No. 106), horribly out of tune with the basses, which are in F while the tune is in G flat. The basses obligingly change their tonality in the hope of putting things right, but the unskilled clarinettists repay their courtesy by again getting out of the key; this time the basses hold G, while the tune is in A flat. These episodes alternate with a short, tender phrase in the violins, that may be taken to denote the feelings of the lovers.

These are now in the church, and a calm phrase in the clarinets and horns is worked as a counterpoint with a figure in the strings—

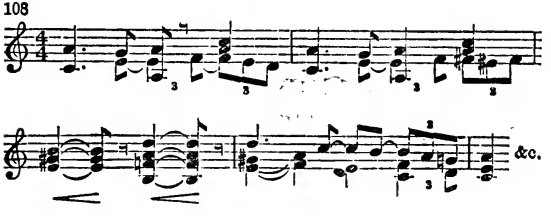


The noisy outer world is forgotten for a moment, but it soon obtrudes itself again, snatches of the "urchins'" theme (No. 105) mixing themselves up with that of the "lovers'" (No. 104). The *tempo* quickens again to that of the opening of the overture, and No. 100 reappears in the trombones, marking the commencement of the recapitulation section, and also—so far as the programme is concerned—the point at which the lovers leave the church and re-enter the streets. Nos. 100 and 101 are enunciated in full form with brilliant scoring. The "lovers'" theme and second subject (No. 104) is treated with the same richness of colour, and No. 103 appears as a pendant to it. The joyous No. 105 scampers about exuberantly, dies down quickly to *piano*, and makes way for new reminders of the coming of the military band, whose strident strains are soon heard again in full force. Finally, the "London" theme

(No. 102) comes out in the utmost fulness of scoring and nobility of phrasing, and the overture ends with a reminiscence of the sprightly No. 100.

The *Grania and Diarmid* music was written for a play by Mr. George Moore and Mr. W. B. Yeats. The incidental music—thirty-seven bars in all—commences with a series of answering horn-calls, in which the trumpets shortly join. Then, after some intermediary passages in strings and harp, an expressive melody, plaintive and haunting, is heard in the clarinet. It is passed on from instrument to instrument, until it dies away in the harp and strings. All that is aimed at in this brief fragment is the evocation of a delicate, fugitive mood.

The Funeral March commences, *maestoso*, with a march-like theme—



to which the use of the scale with the flattened seventh gives a peculiar atmos-

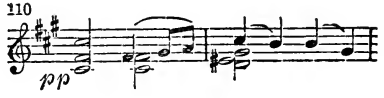
phere. Very melancholy is the effect of the series of rises and falls in the melody. The melodic figure shown in the fourth bar is specially symbolical of the somewhat weak character of Diarmid. A change to the major key introduces a fresh theme, by turns noble and pathetic in its expression—

109

Although the rhythm has altered from that of the commencement, the sense of a solemn procession is still maintained. In the further course of the melody we have a modification of the "Diarmid" motive just referred to.

This section terminates with a roll on the timpani and a vibrant note in the gong; whereupon there enters the lovely dream-like melody that has been already heard in the incidental music—

110



This time it is scored much more elaborately. Then the opening section (No 108) is re-

peated, followed as before by No. 109. In spite of occasional outbursts of fiery splendour, the tone of the funeral march as a whole is singularly subdued. Death has here represented itself to the composer's imagination not as the King of Terrors, at whose coming we must beat the breast and tear the hair, but as a power dignified, noble, and not altogether the enemy of mankind. The prevailing note of it all is a kind of wistfulness, a beautiful and touching resignation to fate. Its mood of elegiac regret is, in its way, as impressive as the more frenzied strains in which modern composers sometimes cry out their fear and horror of death.

Dream Children are a couple of delicate little pastels for a small orchestra, inspired by an essay of Charles Lamb. Elia, entertaining some children with stories of their grandmother, finds them gradually disappear from his sight—he is, indeed, only dreaming. "And while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding, till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: 'We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at

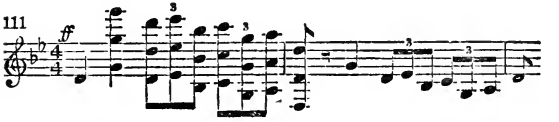
all. . . . We are nothing ; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been.' " The two pieces are very short—24 and 141 bars respectively. The first, a tender little reverie with much lovely feeling underlying its simplicity, is the better of the two. The second, though charming, is more obvious in its sentiment. At the end of it there is a return to the theme of the first.

The latest work of Elgar's is the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* (Op. 47), which was produced for the first time in March 1905, at the same concert at which the third *Pomp and Circumstance* March also received its first performance. He has said that the work had its origin in Wales some three years ago, when he was impressed by the sound of distant singing, in which the cadence of a falling third particularly caught his fancy (see bar 2 of Ex. No. 115 below). From the train of thought thus generated sprang the main theme of the work—the pseudo-Welsh tune shown in Ex. No. 115. Later on, a song heard in the valley of the Wye reinforced the Welsh impressions, and led to the completion of the present work.

It is written for a solo quartet (two violins, viola and 'cello) in conjunction with a string orchestra (first and second violins, violas,

'cellos, and basses, all *divisi*). This scheme gives plenty of opportunity for varied tone-colour, particularly in the hands of one who writes for strings with such consummate knowledge of their capacities as Elgar does. Even in the early *String Serenade* (Op. 20) he drew from the instruments a rich sonority that is quite remarkable.

The *Introduction* begins, *moderato*, with a preliminary theme in the two groups of strings—



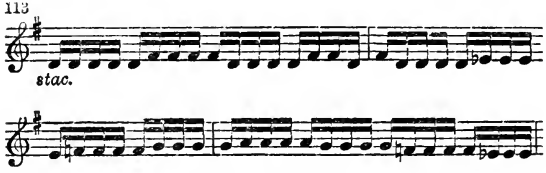
It is followed immediately by a minor version of a theme that afterwards appears in the form quoted as Ex. No. 112. Further handling of No. 111 in conjunction with this leads to a solo viola foreshadowing the Welsh tune with which the work ends (see Ex. No. 115). Broad and tranquil treatment of this is followed by a return of No. 111, and then one more quiet reference to the Welsh melody brings us to a pause, to which succeeds the *Allegro*.

Here the theme already tentatively touched upon is stated at length—

112

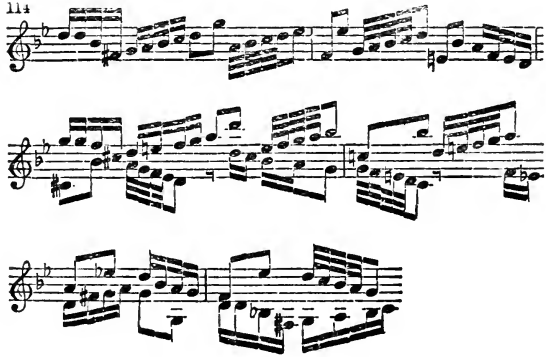
After a full development of it, the second subject enters *staccato* in the solo quartet—

113

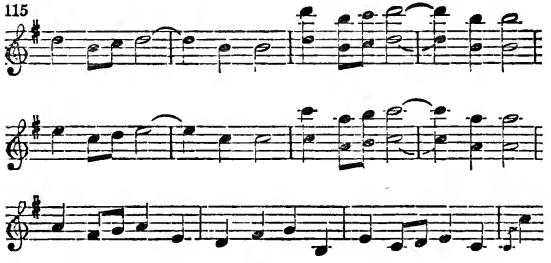


It is succeeded by further references to No. 111, and this in turn by more statements of No. 113. The section is brought to a dignified semi-close; then, instead of a formal working-out of the previous themes, the composer adds a sprightly *fugato* on the following theme—

114



Then Nos. 112, 113, and 111 are taken up again, and finally the so-called Welsh tune is given in full—



molto sostenuto, in both quartet and orchestra. The work ends with flying allusions to No. 112.

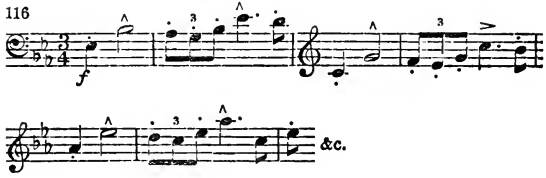
The concert overture *In the South* (Alassio) is said to be the fruit of a brief sojourn in Italy in the winter of 1903–1904, and to owe its immediate origin to the thoughts and sensations of one beautiful afternoon in the Vale of Andora. The composer has taken for a general motto for his work the following lines from Tennyson's poem, "The Daisy"—

> ". . . What hours were thine and mine,
> In lands of palm and southern pine,
> In lands of palm, of orange blossom,
> Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine."

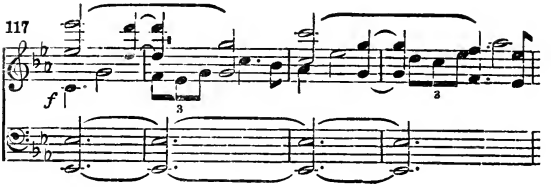
The whole poem, though it is only of second-rate quality as poetry, should be read for a broad idea of the pictures the composer has had in his mind. The manuscript of the overture also contains a quotation from Byron's "Childe Harold," canto vi. verses 25 and 26—

". . . a land
Which *was* the mightiest in its old command
And *is* the loveliest. . . .
Wherein were cast . . .
. . . the men of Rome!
Thou art the garden of the world."

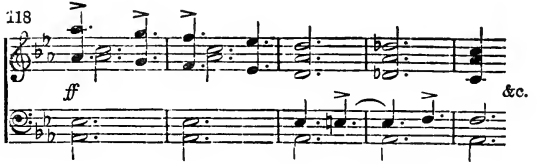
First we have an expression of the joy in life, the quickened energy, the bounding of the pulse, that comes in moments when earth seems entirely beautiful and enjoyable to us. A vigorous theme comes leaping out in clarinet, viola, 'cello, and horns—



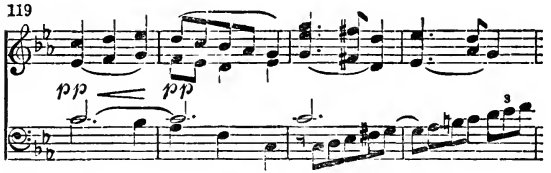
After a little development of this, it is continued in conjunction with a counter-subject—



In time there comes a fine outburst of feeling—



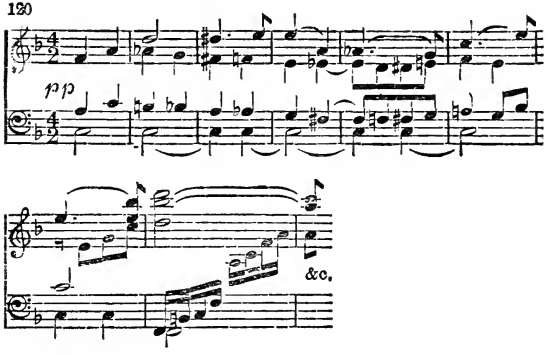
that continually expands in intensity, until No. 116 is resumed. The mood grows quieter and quieter, leading into a train of reflections evoked by the sight of "a shepherd with his flock and his home-made music"—



The orchestra breathes an exquisite sense-lulling calm. Ultimately this picture of placid soul-states merges into the delinea-

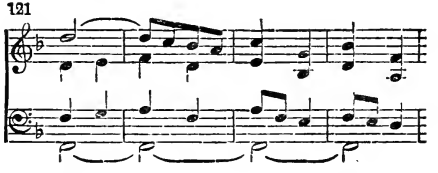
tion of a frame of mind that is at once contemplative and impassioned—

120



The cadences of this melody (which is the second subject of the overture) are particularly beautiful, while the after-thought—

121



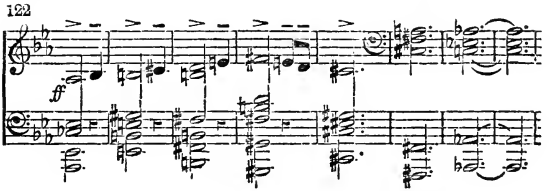
wraps our senses in the lotos-eaters' happy repose.

This ends the first section. The working-out section commences with variations upon No. 119. The composer's thoughts now turn to the glories of ancient Rome, as

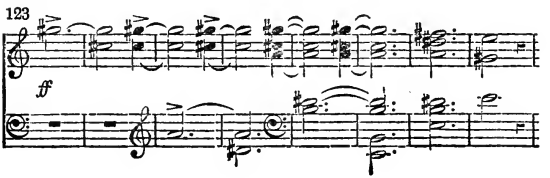
suggested by the ruins and remains around him ; he tells us that here we may take for motto a couple of lines from Tennyson's second verse—

> " What Roman strength Turbía showed
> In ruin, by the mountain road."

The whole tissue of the music seems to harden, and we come to a great passage that has the strength of tissue and the vibrancy of colour of some magnificent old bronze. An energetic theme forces itself strenuously upwards and then dies away—



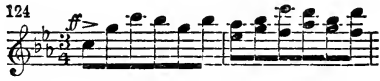
It is followed by a remarkably original and effective long-drawn cadence—



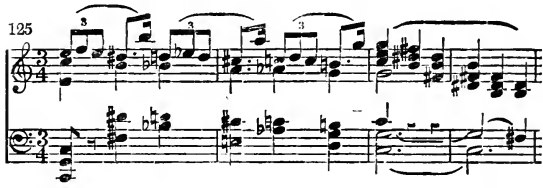
The composer puts it that here he has " endeavoured to paint the relentless and

domineering onward force of the ancient day, and to give a sound-picture of the strife and wars, the 'drums and tramplings,' of a later time."

The picture is continued in some turbulent passages, based on soaring figures of this kind—



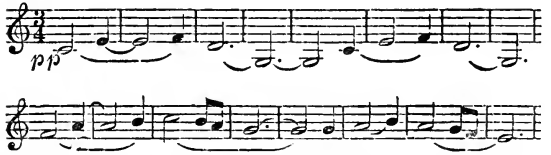
and dealing largely with No. 122. The tumult gradually dies away, and the transition to the next section is made by means of a passage suggesting the vanishing of the military picture from the composer's mind and the advent of a more peaceful mood—



(A curious similarity may be pointed out between the first half of No. 125 and one of the phrases in the *Apostles*).

Now the pastoral element becomes predominant again, the shepherd stepping forward with a new theme—

126



This was formerly supposed to be an adaptation of an Italian *canto popolare* that caught the composer's fancy, but he himself has said that this is not the case. It gets a peculiar colour by being played on a solo viola. In the development of this an augmented version of No. 116 is heard asserting itself; the subsequent statement of No. 126, too, is broken at points by reminiscences of the second part of No. 119 and the first part of No. 125. The so-called *canto popolare*, indeed, is ultimately unfinished; it pauses suspended for a moment, and then the recapitulation begins with No. 116 in the original key—softly at first, but soon growing in intensity. Nos. 117, 119, 120 and 121 are all made use of; No. 118 reappears toned down to the most dulcet *pianissimo* and is worked up into a broad flood of rich tone; No. 119 (second half) is again important; suggestions of No. 116 recur, much altered in phrasing; and finally Nos. 116 and 118 are combined, in augmentation, in grandiose style.

The excellences and defects of Elgar's two large overtures may be summarised in a few words—a certain weakness in development, compensated for by wonderfully expressive and pictorial phrases, and an orchestration that is always a sheer joy to listen to. The various "scenes" of the overture do not always coalesce into an indivisible whole, but individually they are excellent.

Such criticisms as suggest themselves upon Elgar's published work have been made in their proper places in the foregoing analysis; but it would obviously be unwise to hazard a final estimate of a composer who is still living, and in the prime of his powers. Certain general characteristics of his style may be briefly noted—his habit, in his melodies, of making the second section of the phrase an echo or imitation of the first, as in Ex. No. 34, 35, 36, 44, 52, 53, 54, 56, 58, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 90, 92, 105, 109, and 116, in the present volume; the tendency in his harmony to double a given part (as on page 7, Vocal Score of *The Apostles*); a peculiar mobility of the bass of his harmony, which is almost always moving at much the same rate as his melody—a long melodic line over two or

three broad chords, such as we have on every page in almost every other composer, being the exception in Elgar's music; a certain nervous vigour in his melodic accentuation, as in the opening phrase of *In the South* (Ex. No. 116); a habit of inserting triplet figures in melodies in duple or quadruple time, as in Ex. No. 8, 13, 20, 55, 107, 108, 109, 111, 116, and 125; a tendency of his melodies to proceed by alternate rises and falls, as if doubling back on themselves —as in Ex. 11, 14, 24, 34, 51, 58, &c. The occasionally quoted remark that he "has not yet attained a distinctive style" is a fiction, based on imperfect acquaintance with his work: to those who know that work there is scarcely any composer whose distinctive style can be so readily recognised as Elgar's. Any two consecutive pages of his have a stamp that enable us at once to name their author. In one department—that of orchestration—he may be said to be without a superior; his scoring is remarkable for its beauty even in these days, when to score well is a quite common gift. He treats the orchestra as one who loves and respects it, while Strauss, no less ardent, sometimes dissembles his love by kicking the object of his affection down-

stairs. Elgar is not, as we have seen, a predestined vocal composer; nor, on the other hand, does he handle the symphonic form with perfect mastery throughout. He is at his best either when he gets a fine poetic text that burns like a flame within him—as in *Gerontius*—or when he is working at a kind of necklet of gems—as in the *Variations*—where all his finest qualities of imagination, fancy, feeling, and technique have free play, and where the miniature form absolves him from the necessity of running on for a single moment after he has become tired. So much for the Elgar of the past; it will be interesting to watch the development of the Elgar of the future.

APPENDIX

ELGAR AND PROGRAMME MUSIC

SINCE the previous chapters were written Elgar has appeared in a new *rôle*—that of the literary publicist. In his capacity of Professor of Music at the Birmingham University he has recently delivered five lectures to the students. As these lectures treat at times of rather controversial matters, and as they are about to be issued in book form, they must, of course, be taken into account in any volume dealing with the life-work of Elgar. Only one topic in them, however, really calls for discussion here, and that is vital to our understanding both of Elgar the musician, and Elgar the æsthetician. In one of the lectures he held up the Third Symphony of Brahms as the height of music because of the absence from it of any "clue to what was meant." "It was simply . . . a piece of music which called up a certain set of emotions in each individual hearer. That, to his mind, was

the height of music. When music was simply a description of something else it was carrying a large art somewhat further than he cared for. He thought music, as a simple art, was at its best when it was simple, as in this case." And he protested against people, when they heard a Beethoven symphony, " calling up all sorts of pictures, which might or might not have existed in the composer's mind."

This was plainly an attempt to belittle poetic music as compared with absolute music. Even the allusion to Beethoven was unfortunate. Beethoven himself declared that he always had a picture in his mind when he composed; and if this may be set aside as an exaggeration, nothing is surer than that he often not only worked on a picture, but that he gave us " clues " to the concrete circumstances that had stimulated his imagination. He gave us a " clue " when he called his Sixth Symphony the *Pastoral;* when he called the Third the *Eroica*, and told us how it had arisen from his reflections upon Napoleon; when he said of the opening theme of the Fifth, " Thus Fate knocks at the door "; when he called one great overture *Leonora No. 3*, and limned Florestan and Fidelio in it,

and "painted" the arrival of the minister by means of a trumpet call; when he styled another overture *Coriolanus*, and "described" so definitely therein that no one is under any doubt as to whom the different themes represent. If all this is not "giving us a clue to what was meant," if this is not making music "a description of something else," by what appropriate name shall we call it? As a matter of fact, Elgar's hasty dictum would condemn three-fourths of the music of the nineteenth century; the very essence of the Romantic movement that began with Weber and developed through Mendelssohn, Schumann, Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz, and a dozen others to Strauss, was that it took impressions from life, nature, art, and books, and gave us them again in music with more or less definite "clues to what was meant."

But the case against Elgar may be pressed still further. He himself has written practically nothing on a large scale that is not frankly descriptive. What is the prelude to *Gerontius*, for example, or the Introduction to the Second Part of the *Apostles*, or *Froissart*, or *Cockaigne*, or *In the South*, but a series of musical descriptions to which he himself has given us copious clues? If

he really believes now that music is at its height only when it concerns itself with nothing but pure tonal pattern-weaving, he is condemning all his own best work *en masse*. Nay, not only his published but his unpublished work; for the symphony upon which he has been engaged so long, has *it* not a title? Has he not already given his friends the "clue" to it? If the music is not descriptive, in some way or other, of the character whose name is affixed to it, what is the use of the title —the "clue"? And if the title really applies, if the music really answers to it, why does Elgar choose to work in a medium that his judgment condemns as inferior?

In the last lecture of the series he endeavoured to reply to this criticism, but only succeeded in getting deeper into the mire. "He still looked," he said, "upon music which existed without any poetic or literary basis as the true foundation of the art. . . . He held that the symphony without a programme was the highest development of the art. *Views to the contrary, they would often find, were held by those to whom the joy of music came somewhat late in life, or by those who would deny to musicians that peculiar gift which was theirs—the musical*

ear, the love of music for its own sake." He thus ignored the real point, and chose to stand by a new proposition in which he can easily be shown to be wrong. The passage I have italicised is merely one of the current fallacies as to the "musical ear" of the programmist. We have said again and again—said it till we are tired of saying it—that we appreciate absolute music just as much as poetic music, and as much as any absolutist of them all can do. We have assured them that our enjoyment of a Bach fugue or a Beethoven or Brahms symphony is equal to theirs. But the theory that people like poetic music because they are not musical enough to appreciate absolute music is too convenient a one to be abandoned merely because it has been disproved. It is one of the sacred tags that will, I suppose, be given to the guileless young student as wisdom to the end of time; some æsthetician in a hurry invented it once, and other æstheticians in a hurry will always keep on repeating it. Any advocate of the symphonic poem who knows his business invariably insists that it is not sufficient to tell a story in music, but that the process of telling it must satisfy our musical sense. In the

handling and working out of the themes, satisfaction must be given to the demand of the purely musical ear for musical logic; and those of us who have striven most to have the nature of programme music properly understood have always contended most strongly that the building of the tissue into an organic, symphonic musical whole is as important as the invention of pregnant, characteristic themes.

But the best proof of the wildness of Elgar's last shot is to be seen in the present book. I personally am an advocate of programme music. According to Elgar, this often implies a lack of the "peculiar musical gift—the musical ear, the love of music for its own sake." Well, if there is one point that has been insisted on time after time in the foregoing pages, it is that Elgar's own large instrumental works fail precisely on this count. We have seen that in *Cockaigne*, *In the South*, many parts of *The Apostles*, and elsewhere, his practice is to draw a number of small pictures on separate pieces of paper, then paste them together and enclose them in a large frame. The criticism I have had to pass on this, a dozen times, is that in doing so Elgar delineates particulars accurately enough,

but does not make a musical whole of them. In a word, he, the champion of absolute music and of "the purely musical ear, the love of music for its own sake," always writes music that cannot satisfy this organ; we, lovers of poetic music, but who want poetic music to be as consistent and inevitable throughout as the perfect symphony—we, who have given Elgar one bad mark after another for not coming up to this ideal, are now told by him that we "would deny to musicians that peculiar gift which was theirs — the musical ear," and so on. His position is still more self-contradictory than when he began.

His further remarks, again, were no reply at all to the real point that had been raised. Adverting to the criticism passed upon him for writing nothing but programme music, and yet advocating absolute music as the highest form of the art, he said, "He had written overtures and things with titles more or less poetic and suggestive, but was he then so narrow as to admire his own music because he had written it himself? . . . When he saw one of his own works by the side of, say, the Fifth Symphony, he felt as a tinker might do when he saw the Forth Bridge." That is an admirable frame

of mind, no doubt, but it has nothing to do with the question. The point was not as to the comparative value of his works and Beethoven's *quâ* music, but as to his own æsthetic inconsistency, the contradiction between his theory and his practice, the inconsequence of his reasoning; and this point he only evades by his reference to Beethoven. For the rest, one quite agrees with him that the symphony is not necessarily "dead"; when the man comes who can write one as good as some of the great ones of the past, we programmists will enjoy it as much as any one. But we will still maintain what we have always maintained—that it is only superficial æsthetics to speak of poetic music as being an order of art inferior *per se* to absolute music; the one is as basic, as imperishable in human nature as the other.

Elgar has wound up by telling an interviewer that "programme music was essentially the literary man's attitude towards an art with which he had sympathy, but of which his knowledge was comparatively small." In his anxiety to score off his critics he has overlooked the little fact that the responsibility for programme music lies primarily not with the critics but with

the musicians who write it. If we are to take his latest dictum seriously, then every programme-music writer, from Beethoven, through Liszt, Berlioz, and Wagner, to Strauss, is not a musician but merely a literary man. Nor is this all. According to the interviewer, "if you point out to him that much of his own work is programme music, he laughingly acknowledges that you are quite right: he has written programme music because he cannot write anything else!" On his own showing, then, he is only a literary man, not a musician. There must be something very wrong with the premisses and the reasoning that land us in a conclusion like this.

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