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MORE MASTER-SINGERS

MORE MASTERSINGERS

STUDIES IN THE ART OF MUSIC

BY
FILSON YOUNG

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To MRS. EARLE

To you, my dear friend, crowned in the summer evening of your life with the love of three generations, I can bring no wreath or chaplet. I can only offer you this nosegay picked from the garden of the arts: not from that southern corner, aglow with colour, in which you yourself have laboured; not from the sombre groves of learning and poetry; but from that place of music where the fountain murmurs and the blossom shakes and the wind sings in the leaves. And you, who care chiefly that life should be earnest, caring also that it should be beautiful, and holding in fellowship all true labourers in the garden however remote their corner or humble their task, have with your friendship made fragrant that part of my life in which this work was done; therefore I bring it to you in homage and affection.

FILSON YOUNG.

April, 1911.

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MEMORIES OF A CATHEDRAL

MEMORIES OF A CATHEDRAL

I

IT stood, when its mediæval builders planned it, on the low sandstone banks at the meeting-point of two limpid rivers; nothing much in sight from it but the collegiate buildings and school; beside it the old hall of Strangeways on the slope to the north; the few scattered cottages of the hamlet of Manchester to the south, and beyond, the smithy and the river bank and the old arched bridge with the chapel on it, the bridge that carried the road over to the west country and the sea. But many things happened in the centuries to that smiling green country of low hills and pleasant talking streams. Progress and civilisation and industry crept in from every side, and the black shadow of commerce fell upon it; smoke began to darken the earth, the grass and trees to disappear in the spreading invasion of stone and brick, the river to turn from silver to lead colour, from lead to chocolate, from chocolate to ink; until now at length the

cathedral stands there solitary in the throng, everything of its own date long vanished but its old comrade Cheetham's College, where the monks who once served it used to live; stands there as on an island, grey and sad and isolated in the mists and the rain, its bell daily calling with the voice of the departed centuries to men whose ears are filled with other sounds, while the great tides of commercial life go roaring round it for ever.

Within, in the twilight, the sounds of the city are something stifled, although even there the whine and clash of the electric tramcar, the hoot of the motor-horn and the whistle of the railway break in on the voice of prayer. Yet there is a strange and sudden peace here, all the grander and more impressive for the strife and sordid clatter without, all the more precious because it was established by the spirit that is for ever banished from among us. The nave with its double aisles, the intricate forest of pillars through which the sight reaches the Derby and Ely chapels; the lovely rood-screen surmounted by the mysterious, jewel-coloured, soaring organ-case; the perspective of the choir aisles and triforium; the grim rough arch of the western tower that is a reminder of the dark periods of the nineteenth-

century taste, the obliteration of which caused this picturesque damage—these at first produce an effect of confusion on the mind that is in odd contrast to the dignified simplicity of so many English cathedrals. The building is indeed unique in that and other ways ; unique in the kind of its beauty, which depends not so much on size and proportion as on loveliness of detail and the naturalness of its orderly confusion, like a thing that has grown by time and with men's needs, and yet in general accord with one noble and original plan.

It is not of architecture that I am to write, but of music ; not of the fine old building, a Minster in miniature, or of the carved and painted glories of its choir and ancient misty chantries, but with the life of music and ancient custom that I shared there for some years. Music is the soul of a Gothic cathedral, and the organ is its voice. There and there only can you hear in perfection those grave and suave tones, those vast harmonic structures of sound-waves that build and build themselves up from the profoundest deeps that the ear can recognise, and spread in harmonic overtones, and break against the senses in endless and effortless succession ; there and there only can music be moulded into

a thing that shakes and awes us as only mass and proportion can—as in architecture, in mountains, in the sea; there and there only can the vast sound-waves generated by true organ-tone find at once space enough in which to spread, and a shell great enough to be filled with their murmuring voices.

II

I remember as though it were yesterday my first introduction to that organ-loft and to the unique personality associated with it—an occasion that was to influence so much my musical life and my associations with the cathedral. I was, I suppose, about sixteen years old, a devotee of music, a player on keyed instruments of some twelve years' standing (or sitting), filled beforehand with veneration for the talents of the great man whom, by the introduction of a friendly ecclesiastical official, I was about to meet. It was a Sunday afternoon; and as I sat in the loft on the rood-screen looking at the four rows of yellow keys and the ranks of mellow ivory draw-stops with their beautiful sound-suggesting names of Diapason, Dulciana, Suabe Flute, Gamba, Keraulophon, Dulcet, Clarion, Tuba Mirabilis,

Violone, Bourdon, and so on, I could hardly believe in my own good fortune. The octave clash of the bells died away and gave place to those single beats of a high bell that produce always such an effect of expectancy; until these too died away, and there were only the sounds of footfalls and rustlings and creaking chairs. Far away in the vestries a clock chimed, and the murmur of an intoning voice fell on the ear. Was he going to be late? No, there was a sound of footsteps at the bottom of the stone stairs, a stumbling and fumbling, the sound of a voice talking to itself, panting and heavy breathing, and a query that made my heart beat. "Who's there? Is anybody there?"—and at last the emergence through the narrow door of a short figure with a massive head and broad clean-shaven face, peering at me with short-sighted eyes, and then, when I said who I was, smiling reassuringly and giving me a left hand to touch while he climbed, still panting, on to the organ bench. The whole business became familiar to me afterwards, but I shall never forget that first impression—the hazardous punctuality that brought him to the organ bench just as the distant Amen floated through the aisles of the cathedral, the condition of out-of-breathness, the sense of dignity

and solemnity and general air of ancient days suddenly brought into the organ loft. And then that wonderful moment when, two or three soft stops having been drawn on the choir organ, the fingers were dropped firmly and softly on to the keys and there began, through the simplest movements and the most diatonic harmonies, to steal through the building such waves of sound, such harmonies and sequences, as probably no future generation will ever hear again in a quality at once so austere and so beautiful. I was spell-bound from the first. The strange great man had not said "How d'you do?" or any of the things one had expected him to say, but had just sat down and shut his eyes and continued for a few moments to make this marvellous music, swaying about a little, sometimes shaking his head slowly as though he were singing to himself, and all the while marshalling his creeping fingers over the yellow keys as crisply as trained soldiers executing a manœuvre. It was all too short: forty or fifty bars of mellow sound, part crowded against part in perfect sequence and suspension, melody threading its way against melody through mazes of harmonies of the most exquisite dissolving hues, and then the long dominant pedal with the sequences climbing higher and higher and droop-

ing again to the quiet close, with the deep murmur of a thirty-two-foot pipe drawn on the last note. No wonder I was impressed and rapt out of myself, for I was listening consciously for the first time to one of the most remarkable gifts in the world, the gift inherited from a family containing generations of musicians, and nourished and guided in the hands of the great Samuel Sebastian Wesley; and I had the discernment to know it.

After that, with the last note, he opened his eyes as if released from a spell and began to talk to me, asking a string of questions and accepting my transparent homage with smiling and indulgent complacency, taking snuff the while from a little papier-mâché box that had its place under the double diapason and was not allowed to be moved; offering me some, I remember; and as I was too nervous to refuse, and it was my first introduction to that agreeable narcotic, I spent the remainder of the time until the beginning of the Psalms alternately weeping and sneezing. But we got on famously from that point, and although I was more or less dazed and intoxicated by what I saw and heard, to say nothing of the snuff, all the events and the music and that first cathedral evensong remain with me among the highest peaks of memory that will catch the light until

the last. And by the end of the service we had begun a friendship that brought me some of the best and happiest interests of my life, and was not shaken in the difficult relations of master and pupil, and remains to-day, I hope, unshakable.

III

Glamour is a quality that seldom survives familiarity, but it never departed from that organ loft during my master's reign there. When I had decided to forgo the more beaten and more orthodox paths of adolescent education and to apply myself seriously to the study of music, it became for three years the centre of my life. That time remains in my memory as a misty confusion of services, classes of counterpoint, harmony, composition, lessons on the organ and pianoforte, rehearsals, concerts, the writing of exercises, and the private enterprise of laborious compositions on a grander scale; practising, travelling to and fro, transient college-of-music acquaintances and friendships, but always with this life on the rood-screen as the centre and key of it all. There were generally two or three of us pupils and assistants present at the daily

services; sometimes there was quite a levee, sometimes only one pupil; and in my time when there was only one pupil it was generally I.

The world of a cathedral organ loft, which is as strictly traditional as any of the other worlds that make up cathedral life, is entirely independent of all these other lives; it hardly touches them except in the person of the organist himself, who, if he be in time, may gossip for a few minutes in the robing-room with his reverend brethren. There is the clerical life of the church, there is the choir life, the administrative life of the chapter-house, the musical world of the organ loft; and, I suppose one must add, the life of the congregation, though I am afraid that is a somewhat unimportant department of ordinary cathedral life. The handful of habitués who made the congregation in the choir morning and evening were augmented by a few scattered people sitting dreaming in the nave, the casual loiterers or visitors who wandered in and out during the services, and a strange little knot of amateur musicians who used to sit under the western tower and take deep cognisance of all musical doings in the Cathedral. The serious doings of the daily services all took place in the choir, and these nave-dwellers were mere critics and spectators of

what of the performance drifted there to them under and over the rood-screen ; they came merely for the music and the general effect ; but it was characteristic of us that we played always—the pupil-assistants, at any rate—for the benefit of the nave and not of the choir. For our in and out voluntaries, that is to say, we chose stops which sounded particularly well in the nave, and we did not mind very much how they sounded to the ears of the poor devout worshippers and the Cathedral staff. It was indeed all the nave got, except, of course, on Sundays and on major feasts, when the service was held in the nave itself, and the choir, but for a solitary canon or archdeacon, was deserted.

Every day, at eleven and half-past three, the Cathedral bell set going this piece of mediæval life which went through its rhythmic process for less than an hour, and then was dispersed again. At the chiming of that voice high up in the foggy air the elements of this life would come converging upon the Cathedral : the choir-men from their lesson-giving or from their morning draught in the Cathedral hotel, the boys from the choir-school, the dean from his deanery, the canon-in-residence from his busy parochial life, the minor canons and clerks-in-orders from their homes or

their rooms, the organist and his little court of pupils from rehearsal or college or study, all came in and took their appointed places independently of each other, assembled when the clock struck, performed the prayers and music appointed for the day, rehearsed the music appointed for the morrow, and departed again. The organism was perfect, the independence absolute. In the organ loft the same music was set out as in the choir-stalls; nothing was ever announced; at the appointed moment the fingers dropped on the keys and the voices rose from the choir below in perfect and punctual accord. And all the while one was pleasantly conscious that the ocean of modern life with its buying and selling, struggling and scheming and fighting, was roaring outside up to the very buttresses of the firm old walls; and that the same firm old walls performed their office admirably, stood between us and all that modern practical life, and held it out of the Cathedral, keeping the ancient spot dry and separate for the performance of music and prayers.

IV

The discipline of the organ-loft was very severe, though it was entirely unwritten and unstated. There were no rules, but anyone who had the freedom of that place conformed to an etiquette as rigid as that of a German court. There were certain chairs upon which certain pupils might sit, but on which it would have been presumptuous for others to sit. There were certain places upon which a hat or a coat might be laid, but if a coat had been hung on the highly convenient points of the wrought-iron grille one would have been aware that something unseemly had happened. There was a place where the music—the books containing the anthems and the services—were laid in their order, and from which they were handed up to the music-desk at exactly the right moment. There was a way in which the chant-book was folded down inside the psalter at the end of the Psalms, departure from which, one felt, would have threatened the existence of the foundation. There were times for conversation, and times for silence; there were topics that might, and others that might not be discussed. The presiding genius in the organ loft had his

own way of joining in the services, which was difficult and disconcerting for a stranger to comprehend. Some devout visitor from a distant cathedral would, for example, bow himself down in prayer at the conventional moment, to be roused by a voice saying pleasantly, "I hear you have beautiful bacon in your town," and be compelled to join in an animated conversation on the subject of bacon, again to be interrupted by his interlocutor suddenly singing "Amen" in a clear tenor voice. And then, thinking perhaps that the organ loft was regarded as having nothing whatever to do with the devotional proceedings below, the visitor would himself venture upon a mild jest, to find that his distinguished friend had got off the organ-bench, turned his back to him, and was engaged in reciting the creed.

The tenor voice would go on in most pathetic and devotional tones, until, sitting down and reaching for his snuff-box, the Believer would say, "The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen. Yes, I must say that I always thought at least you had good *bacon* in your town."

I do not think that we were at all like disciples or students in a book. We had the greatest reverence for our master, and some of us were afraid

of him; but though he was a master in the true artistic sense of the word, we certainly never referred to him as *maestro* or *maître*. We generally called him "He." The vergers and choir-men called him "The Doctor"; members of the foundation, who were older than he and rather touchy on the score of years, generally called him "Old P——." The adjective was used in an affectionate rather than in a temporal sense. To us he was generally simply "He." "Is He coming this afternoon?" "I saw Him walking down Victoria Street." "You had better push in that trumpet; I believe He is somewhere in the building," and so on. We each had our individual relationship with him, but loyalty and affection, I think, were common to all, or nearly all. There were backward pupils who were rather stupid and whom he used to bully unmercifully, sending them out for pennyworths of snuff in the middle of the service, and overwhelming them with comic irony if they ventured upon an original remark. Nothing they could do was right; if by any chance he was late and they had begun to "play in," his voice would be heard ascending the stairs, saying, "Stop! for God's sake, stop!" although they knew well that they dared not stop. If, on the other hand, fearing his wrath, such a one had

waited and not begun to play, the same agitated voice would be heard at the bottom of the spiral staircase saying, "Go on, sir, go on; why don't you begin? Can't you begin instead of sitting there like a——? Here, get out of the way; get out of the way! Let me come!" If a favourite pupil or two were there, then the dullard would be sent either for a pennyworth of snuff, or else, "Do, like a good fellow, listen at the bottom of the nave and tell me how the anthem sounds." On his return he would be questioned.

"Well, Mr. Smith, how did the anthem sound?"

"Oh, it sounded all right, Doctor."

"All right! What do you mean by all right, sir? Do you mean to say you didn't notice anything wrong with it?"

"Well, perhaps it might have been a little better."

"Oh, really, Mr. Smith! Then it wasn't all right. It might have been a little better! How might it have been better, sir?"

"I don't know."

"*Don't know!* You must mean something when you say it might have been better. Tell us in what way you think it might have been better."

"Well, I thought the tenors were a bit off."

"Really? *Really!* Mr. Smith is of the opinion that the tenors were 'a bit off': that is a most important and valuable opinion. Upon my word, Mr. Smith, your critical faculties are most penetrative; you ought to take an appointment on the Press. The tenors are 'a bit off'! God bless my soul! I wonder where you learn such horrible expressions." And for the remainder of the service, in the pauses between the prayers, he would at intervals ejaculate "a bit off!" in a shocked undertone, with solemn shakings of the head, to the delight of the favoured audience and the nervous smiles of Mr. Smith.

We were all very like children in the charge of a more grown-up child. But it was a very happy and innocent world, deepened and made serious by the simple and high artistic standards according to which we worked and judged each other. The discipline was good for us all, and there is no department of music in which such discipline is so necessary as in the playing of the organ. Again, there were no formulated rules about our playing or our art. What we were actually taught by word of mouth was very little; what we learnt by study and example was immense. We had simply the constant association with perfection in this particular branch of art, and we imbibed the tradi-

tions of the great cathedral school of organ-playing, that our master had himself acquired direct, not only from his father at Bath Abbey, but from Samuel Sebastian Wesley at Gloucester and Winchester. However secular we might be in our thoughts or our conversation, our playing in the Cathedral was required to be in the spirit of the building and of the office which we accompanied, and the slightest secularity in that would have involved banishment from the organ loft. Austerity was the note of our tradition; extraneous effects were absolutely forbidden; adornment was not to be the outward adornment of fancy stops and tremulants, and the putting on of the apparel of tone colour, but the "meek and quiet spirit" of pure part-playing, the rhythm and melody coming from the hidden man of the heart, which, in the eyes of our master at any rate, were of great price.

Such discipline as this is always necessary, as I have said, in the study of the organ, but especially so in cathedral playing. There is an intoxication in producing sound on the organ in a fine cathedral such as is experienced by a player of no other instrument; and a cathedral organ is a weapon which is not lightly to be entrusted to the hands of the inexperienced, who are

apt to be carried away by the sense of the tremendous power which they control. The unaccustomed organist, suddenly placed in this position, loses his head altogether; he is carried away by the astounding acoustic results of putting his fingers on the keys. He casts restraint to the winds, tries this stop and that, and does not rest until he has the full organ blaring away to the roof; perhaps forgetting that a slovenly progression, which does not so much matter when played on a few quiet stops in a closed swell-box, becomes excruciating when heard in the clangorous tones of high-pressure reeds. Only familiarity and discipline can cure this fault of the organist, and often it is never cured at all, as you may hear for yourself if you go and listen in more than one English cathedral.

V

What actually did we learn, sitting up there amid the dust, and the rare sunbeams, and the many echoes? It depended very much on ourselves. Looking back at it, I do not remember any of us being actually and deliberately taught anything; and I repeat, I think it is hardly

possible to teach any art except by example. We were led to the water and given free access to it; no attempt was made to force us to drink, and each of us imbibed and, according to his capacity, took away something different. Some of us became great executant players, and departed to different parts of the globe to astonish the natives with organ recitals; others imbibed a love of architecture—in fact, I think we all learnt a little about that; others became learned pundits, and wore hoods, and wrote themselves "Doctor," and went forth to bear that drab banner onward in their own spheres of work; and others acquired, what was perhaps the most precious secret of that place, a pure style in organ-playing, the style of our master and of his master before him, a style which is unfortunately carried on only by direct tradition. The pupils of my master and of some of his rare contemporaries have it, provided they have not wantonly overlaid it with garish decorations of their own; but I doubt whether it outlives that generation; I doubt whether any of their pupils have it. What it is I shall presently try to define; but it is almost hopeless to render a thing like this in words when it was only learned by days and months and years of association with its exponent.

We learned other things besides organ-playing. If we did not learn piety in the modern sense of the word, we learned it in the ancient sense; we learned reverence, and the willingness to recognise and worship greatness when we found it—a thing by no means sufficiently taught to students of any art in this country; who too often, instead of trying to raise themselves to the level of greatness when they see it, try to pull down greatness to their own level, and explain it away by their own small experience. And we learned about literature, and cooking, and old furniture, and ritual.

For my own part I acquired in those days a curious sense of the detachment of the cathedral and its music from the rest of the world. I lived with both; and sitting there so long, morning and afternoon, my ear got tuned to a certain austerity, and I learned to love the old church music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the music of Tye, Tallis, Farrant, Bull, Lawes, Byrd, Gibbons, Child, Humphrey, Purcell, and Blow. The eighteenth century, with perhaps the exception of Boyce and Kelway, never so much appealed to me; and it was not much to be wondered at that modern church music began and ended for me with the Wesley family. But even while I loved

all these composers, and delighted to hear their music floating up to me out of the carved choir stalls, I knew well all the time that it was music the love of which I could not communicate to anyone else who had not, like me, passed some time in this ancient atmosphere, in the theatre for which it was designed. It is not sufficiently remembered by critics of the work of English church composers that their work was nearly all written for performance in cathedrals. As I have said, the setting in motion of great sound waves in a cathedral is an art in itself. You are not dealing with notes and chords so much as waves and masses of tone; and many a composition which would sound sublime in a cathedral would sound feeble enough if tried over on the pianoforte or performed in a room—and vice versa. Music of this school does not always stand the test of severe analysis on the music desk; it is music written for a certain instrument, and that instrument the cathedral; for the cathedral performs the music as well as the organ and voices, joins with them, a very orchestra of stone and space and proportion, the secret of which we have lost.

VI

Modern music did not in any form invade our organ loft; we had, I think quite properly, to seek that elsewhere, with the result that our lives were agreeably shot with all kinds of varied colours in music. From writing our own double counterpoint at the College of Music we would attend an orchestral rehearsal under Richter of, say, Strauss's latest symphonic poem; and from there would hurry to the cathedral to play Kelway in B minor, and after that one would perhaps accompany the great man across the high seas of the city, through the busy secular traffic of full afternoon tide to the town hall, there to sit surrounded by the glowing frescoes of Ford Madox Brown, and smoke a meditative pipe while he practised on the lovely Cavaillé-Coll organ there some great classic of Bach, or one of the mighty, well-nigh unplayable masterpieces of Liszt. For the eccentric, snuff-taking, eighteenth-century's master of the organ loft, and sober inventor of diatonic sequences there, became quite another person in the concert-room. With the penny snuff-box, left reposing under the double diapason, was left behind the austerity

and conservatism of the cathedral player; and instead of him there appeared an extremely modern solo performer, with parcels of the very latest music on his table, who practised by the hour on a dumb clavier to keep his fingers up to the standards of modern technique, and who could import clarity and simplicity into compositions which in the hands of other players became too often a distressing scream and jumble of sound. I think that, with the possible exception of Widor's symphonies, which are inferior to it in musical value, the extreme limit of possibility in organ playing has been reached in the Organ Fantasia of Liszt—notably that one on the chorale "Ad nos ad salutarem," which not many organists dare, and which hardly any of them accomplish. He is one of the few whom I have ever heard attempt it, and the only one whom I have heard achieve it with ease and mastery. And while we talked, and dusk and darkness gathered in the hall, and only the little bunch of lights glowed on us above the console, we would talk of music or of people—always on these two topics, people and music, music and people—and chiefly of people who made music and of music that supposed people. In earlier days than this Ford Madox Brown when at work on his frescoes

used to be his companion where I now sat; and sometimes in the dusk he used to have weird ideas and look into the surrounding shadows and tell me how often when he was playing alone he had the sense that Madox Brown had come back and was somewhere near him. . . . It was an odd, weird atmosphere; and if I were to revisit that place after an absence of twenty years it would be solely and definitely associated with the personalities of those two artists.

Sometimes the days were very severe, and, to youth hardly yet finished growing, inadequately supported by material nourishment. On a Saturday, for example, there would probably be one's own private practice in the morning, the cathedral service at eleven, choir rehearsal at twelve, which might last an hour, a dive into some German restaurant for a meal, a walk to some curiosity shop or other where an old print or piece of furniture was to be examined, the return to the cathedral at half-past three, and adjournment from there to the town hall; the remainder of the afternoon till about six o'clock being spent in practice on his part and listening and smoking on mine; from six to seven conversation and smoking in his room; from seven to a quarter past eight organ recital in the town

hall; and at last, famished and exhausted, home to his house for supper. But as I said, the interval between lunch and this late supper was often, from my point of view, inadequately spanned. With some one upon whom you are at once on the terms of reverence, a kind of laughing awe, and affectionate intimacy, relations are bound to be complex, because you may be summoned to adopt any one of these attitudes at any moment. He used to think that I was given to general extravagance and over-fastidiousness in the matter of what I ate and drank and smoked; and he used to take a delight on our way from the cathedral to the town hall in suddenly turning into some particularly low and vile tea-shop, and either administering there and then the nauseous corrective of a halfpenny cup of tea and a halfpenny bun (which I was obliged to take, knowing I should get nothing else till ten o'clock), or, worse still, purchase a particularly hateful pennyworth of bread and butter, which was carried away in a paper bag and consumed, but divided by him with strict impartiality between us, together with some nasty cocoa which we used to concoct with condensed milk over the fire in his room. No person has ever taken a greater toll of my affection than was taken on these occasions;

but I was positively afraid to criticise or object, from a kind of glorious artistic shame which bade me realise that what was good enough for him was surely good enough for me. He used to try me further (because he himself had a catholic although discriminating taste in tobacco) by buying me rank penny cigars and insisting on my giving my opinion of them; and afterwards, after supper in the evening perhaps, by giving me a really fine Cabaña and telling me that it had cost a halfpenny. . . . But there was nothing that he could do to any of us, no task or trouble that he could impose upon us, for which we had not forgiven him by the time his fingers had been ten seconds on the keys.

VII

Nothing could have been more austere than the method of our technical training. We were started on Best's Pedal Exercises, went through the increasing intricacies of Merkel's Pedal Studies, and from that we launched out on Bach's Eight Short Preludes and Fugues and his Six Trios. After that probably Rheinberger's Sonatas, or possibly a sonata of Guilmant interposed before the more difficult Rheinbergers,

then more and more elaborate Bach, and beyond that anything you pleased. What we were drilled in was absolute precision; hesitation, slovenliness, or lack of rhythm were the unforgivable sins, and his most scathing criticism was, "You are playing like an old lady." We were drilled also in playing the chorales of Bach from open score written out by ourselves in the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass clefs—an admirable simultaneous training in sight-reading and pure part-playing. The more brilliant pupils (alas! I was never one of them) could perform almost incredible feats in this direction, reading at sight and playing the transcription into open score of some of the fugues from *Das wohltemperirtes Klavier*. But anything in the nature of show pieces, things written for display, was strictly excluded from the curriculum. It was understood that if we wished to do such things we must do them by ourselves, with a touch of smiling derision at the mere mention of them. And the greatest things of Bach, such as the G Minor Fantasia and Fugue, the A Minor, E Minor, B Minor, D Minor, were held sacred from the degradation of being used for educational purposes; quite properly, I think. Little things that most teachers of the organ ignore were

curiously insisted upon by him, such as absolute precision and firmness in putting down the notes of a chord. A sloppy, nerveless method, where one note sounded sooner than another, gave him positive physical distress, and I have seen a pupil kept for half an hour doing nothing but putting down a chord and taking it off again. The true value of dotted notes—much ignored in organ-playing; phrasing—almost totally ignored by other masters; and the getting of accent by playing the accented note a fraction of a beat late, holding it down to its extreme value, and preceding it by a staccato note—these were all features of his style of playing and teaching. I think more than anything else he drilled us in the importance of strict time, knowing quite well that later discretion would supply us with the necessary freedom from a mechanical style, but that unless we had the sense of time and rhythm firmly implanted in us at the beginning our future individualities of style would be built on a shifting and insecure foundation. How necessary this was any one can test for himself by attending nine out of ten organ recitals that are given in England. In playing Bach, or contrapuntal music, the tendency of all players not so drilled is to get faster and faster, which they do,

having to bring themselves back to a *tempo* at which they can play the notes at all by sudden and obvious reining-in at difficult moments. It is dreadfully nervous work to listen, say, to the G Minor Organ Fugue of Bach played in this way. A certain pace is set; but if you keep the rhythm of that pace in your head you will find that by the time the fourth voice has entered the *tempo* has increased almost by one half. The result is that, instead of every note sounding clear and separate, the composition from the middle to the end is blurred and stumbled over in a dreadful way, as though by adding more stops and making more noise it had ceased to matter whether all the notes were played or given their natural value. This is sometimes called a broad style of playing; the large manner, tone-painting, and so on. Believe me, these are only other names for slovenliness, inaccuracy, and digital incapacity. The exciting tendency of all contrapuntal music makes it necessary for the player to apply to himself a kind of mental brake; the piece acquires momentum; it is like a thing running down a hill; true breadth and dignity are only attained by getting the mass in check and holding it, while still rolling forward, in true restraint and control.

Organists sometimes wonder why their instrument is unpopular among the majority of refined and cultivated musicians; or perhaps they would even be surprised to learn that it is; but I can assure them of the fact; and not only that, but I say the detestation in which it is held by many sensitive musicians is in far too many cases amply justified. If public performers on the pianoforte committed such faults as I have described they would be laughed out of existence. By these inartistic habits, however, organists have brought upon themselves the disrepute in which, as musicians, they are held. And unfortunately they are all lumped together; the really skilful player, the artist and student, has to suffer for the misdemeanours of the fumbling amateur who, Sunday by Sunday, makes hideous the service in the parish church. It is unfortunate that the only experience many people have of the organ is these dismal travesties of musical performance; yet it is not only the humble village organist who is to blame, but often his eminent and skilful superior. The organ is the most dominating and magnificent of all musical instruments, but it does not always attract the most dominating and magnificent musical talent, partly because its emotional range is (or ought to

be) limited, and also because, like all magnificent things, it becomes a terrible weapon in the hands of the incompetent. It demands a greater exercise of those two artistic qualities, taste and restraint, than any other instrument ; and I think that I am right in saying that in proportion to its demands it probably receives less of these than any other instrument. That is why the quiet routine of work done for thirty-four years in the organ loft of my cathedral should receive the gratitude and praise of every artist and musician, since it was singly directed to the inculcation and preservation of purity of style.

VIII

It may interest the reader of these pages, who perhaps associates the use of the organ in church with feelings of vague distress for which he cannot quite account, to hear how the services were played in the cathedral of my memory. I have said how my master's own style is founded on the great West of England school of organ-playing, but he did not strictly follow it ; it stood somewhere between those old leisurely days, when it was customary before the Psalms for the congregation to sit down and the organist to

improvise a long and magnificent prelude, and these later days, when there is a tendency to gallop things through. His style was somewhat different on Sundays and feast days, when there was a large congregation, from the strict manner in which the daily choir services were accompanied. The daily routine was invariable in form, and to me always the most delightful thing in it was the thirty or forty bars of prelude, which almost invariably took one of two or three forms: either it was a piece of pure part-playing on the soft voices of the Choir organ, beginning in two or three parts and extending to six or seven or eight, always founded on a theme or germ of the first few notes, a web full of inner melodies, imitations, and suspensions, with most wonderful harmonic changes arising out of them; or else, beginning in the same way, the left hand would take up the theme on a quiet reed in the tenor octave of the Swell organ, presently imitating it in delightful duet and canon, with the thumb and first finger dropped on to the Great organ with a quiet flue stop drawn in contrast. The harmony would always be kept above the parts with the right hand on the Choir organ, calm and quiet; and often this method was productive of delightful results. Or sometimes the solo part would be

confined to a single tenor reed on the Swell, and would answer and interrogate the harmonic movement of the parts on the Choir organ, with perhaps a little cadenza, dropping to the dominant pedal before the end. But it was always a perfect movement in miniature. In all the hundreds of times I have sat in the organ loft I have hardly ever heard him "play in" at the daily services except in one of these three ways, and I can honestly say I have never heard him repeat himself. The playing of solos in the treble on a high stop with an accompaniment in the middle register, so beloved for the formless twiddlings of vicious organists, is a thing I have never heard him do. And in all this experience of hearing him "play in" I have never heard him use fancy stops, such as the Voix Céleste, but always the quietest, calmest tones, a real prelude in the devotional mood.

The organ was, of course, not heard again until the Psalms; and in the accompaniment to them again a very strict form, with infinite freedom in the treatment of it, was used. The first verse was played full on the Great organ diapasons which were practically never used again until the Gloria. The rest of the verses were either on the Choir organ, often without pedals;

or with the body of the accompaniment on the Swell organ, with perhaps some slow-moving counterpoint held against the melody of the chant by a single voice on the Choir or Solo organs ; or sometimes with the melody itself played an octave below on the Great organ on the Gamba and Double Diapasons. In a long psalm infinite variety of accompaniment was permitted, but it was all kept very quiet, and where the upper part on the organ was prominent it was never either the melody of the chant or a counter melody moving in the same time with it, but long holding-notes, moving preferably by fourths and fifths and octaves ; hardly ever by thirds and sixths, except as mere passing notes. The Swell reeds, which can so easily get monotonous and tiresome, were used with the greatest reserve, and were taken off again almost before one realised they were there ; just sometimes and suddenly, and underneath the running course of the chant, one would feel rather than hear the muttering and quaking of the sixteen and thirty-two foot pedal pipes and the subdued reverberation and glow, as of a line of fire running along a cloud bank, of the Swell organ reeds. And immediately after it, almost overlapping it, would be heard the clear passionless tones of the Choir organ.

Always in the last half verse before the Gloria the Great-to-Pedal coupler was drawn—a very old custom, the origin of which I have not been able to discover, unless it was originally designed to warn the clerks in the choir that the Gloria had been reached. My cathedral being an old collegiate church, it was the custom to turn to the east at the Gloria ; and my associations with that fine burst of praise are always, so far as sound goes, Hill's beautiful diapasons, and, visually, the sight through the canopies of the rood screen of the perspective of the choir, the violet cassocks and scarlet hoods decorating the sombre darkness of the oak stalls, and the Gothic decorations of swine, gamecocks, bear-baiting, and men playing backgammon.

The services, if of the old English school, were played very strictly, the Choir organ without pedals being used to accompany all the "verses" ; or if of the modern school a freer and more orchestral treatment was used. The anthem, if it had no written prelude, was one of our points of anticipation in the service ; usually it would receive only a few bars of introduction, but sometimes, and especially in the twilight of an afternoon in the fall of the year, the player would perhaps imagine himself back in Bath or Gloucester

or Winchester, and prelude the anthem in the old grand manner, greatly to our edification and the delight of the "gang" clustered under the western archway. "Playing out" was the next and last point of interest. Here, again, he never played a note of written music, although he by no means approved of his own practice being generally adopted in cathedrals. But he used to say that at his weekly organ recitals people had all the opportunities they needed for listening to the performance of pieces, and that it was unnecessary to give anything in the nature of a performance at the cathedral; otherwise, where there is not a regular municipal organ recital, people in cathedral towns generally expect to hear some classical music at the close of the afternoon services. But for all that, his improvised movements were often elaborate enough, and entirely different in style from the preludes to the anthems in the services; very free in form, but again always unified by the presence of a really happy and definite theme, and often exhibiting astounding *virtuoso* feats of contrapuntal and executive dexterity. If he were in a happy mood he would go on for a long time, sometimes for ten or fifteen minutes; and how the minor canons used to hate it if perchance they had a christen-

ing at the end of the service, and had to wait on a cold winter afternoon shivering in the baptistery until the magnificent music had come to an end! . . . And then we would troop out after him across the ancient stones of the churchyard into the gathering gloom, and out among the lights and noises of the city; and so would end another day of music.

IX

We are all living still, I believe; this is not a memoir of dead people, but of a dead life. We are all living—all my contemporaries of the organ loft, that is to say—but we are all scattered: the piece of life that held us together is as dead and vanished as any other nucleus of the many that have kept spinning the thread of music in that place for hundreds of years. A dean other than the good friend who lies beneath the tessellated pavement of the presbytery keeps his state in the carved stall beneath the screen; minor canons and clerks-in-orders other than those whose voices were so familiar to us continue to sing and recite the same words; another organist sits in the seat of the mighty; other pupils surround him, and in their day, like us, will wear down their

fraction of the stone spiral steps that lead to the organ loft. I should be less than human if I did not sigh over these changes. The successor[1] of my master is a musician and a scholar of distinction, who will doubtless bring new life and new interest and a fresh point of view to his work. But it will not be the same life or the same interest or the same tradition. Why should it be? My master in his day came as a youth, an innovator, a reformer; and I hope that his successor, when he shall have served so long, will in his turn be regretted and deplored as one who upheld the custom of old and good things, and whose departure will cause head-shakings and doubtful apprehension as to what is to come next. It is the whole essence of life in this world: things that are new become stale and old and customary, and the innovation of to-day is the tradition of to-morrow. It is the old tale of the generations which we used to hear on the eighteenth morning of every month: *Thou turnest man to destruction: again thou sayest, Come again, ye children of men.*

You who wander in and out of cathedrals, whose interest in them is chiefly architectural,

[1] Mr. Sydney J. Nicholson, M.A., Mus.Bac.

and whose knowledge and experience of their service is fragmentary, who say, "The organ was playing," or "The choir was singing something that sounded beautiful," have little knowledge of the way in which that music binds together the daily life of the place into a composite and corporate whole. The daily singing of the Psalter is in itself one of the most pleasant and enlightening experiences that can fall to any man at the formative age; in itself it is an education in literature and poetry. The collegiate life of a cathedral, moreover, is the nearest thing to the monastic life outside the walls of a conventual establishment; but it is associated with none of the cowardly evasions of life that are implicit in the convent. Our life in the cathedral was a thing entirely of our own; we never talked of it in the outside world, because no one would have understood; I used to wish often that I could communicate or explain to people I cared for something of the charm of that life; but it was of no use; they merely thought it odd that one should go to church so much. In a strictly Protestant community a purely ritual observance of religion is not in the least understood; and those who only associate religion with emotional experiences of the soul and deeply personal contemplations of spiritual life have no

idea of a reverence not associated with extreme spiritual self-consciousness and inward concentration. We never thought about such things. But everything done daily and regularly at the same time and in the same way becomes a rite and a ceremony, and if it be in itself a fine thing, and done well in a beautiful place, it becomes a highly religious thing in the true sense of that word.

But this very isolation made us live, as we say, a double life. All the rest of our time we were secularists, out in the ordinary world, going to dinners and to theatres, and never mentioning the cathedral; but once inside its gates we took up the monastic life, forgot the world completely, and existed for nothing but the office at which we assisted. And I cannot help thinking that some such rhythmic observance as this would have a most unifying and steadying effect on the lives of most men and women. To do regularly every day something that is entirely outside your world; to do it in company or "in college," and to see that it has nothing whatever to do with the rest of your daily life, is soothing without being deadening, and unifying without being monotonous. It becomes in time a medium in which the changing and disturbing experiences of life can be quietly examined and seen in re-

lative proportion to each other; and a verse of the Psalms, recurring rhythmically through the months and the years, will come to have a strange linking effect when you consider in what various moods you have recited it. It comes round again and again, like the sun and the moon and the stars; something regular and stable and impersonal against which to measure the change and flowing away of things that make one's own life. And they are fortunate who, like us, have taken their term of service in that ceremonial world, who know the Psalter so well that any few words together will suggest the whole of a long context; and not only suggest the context but give it in memory a beautiful setting, perhaps of a dark winter morning, with the candlelight gleaming on polished oak, and the glowing pipes of the organ case, and the ranks of violet and snow and scarlet colour beneath the canopies; or of an April afternoon, with the sunlight striking through the clerestory windows in dusty slants and beams, and the solemn cadence of the chant, and the shudder of harmony through the building—and Spring waiting for you all riotous outside. There were endless fragments of words which had for me such definite associations of time and place. *Jesu dulcis memoria*, although

it belongs to the season of Epiphany, is a late summer afternoon, warm and sleepy ; and *Holy Night, Peaceful Night,* is reminiscent of the Advent mists and chills, and lights in the empty cathedral, and vespers on a Christmas Eve, and cold fingers on the ivory keys. There was something lovely and primitive and indescribable in the atmosphere here, and out there in the world a suggestion of holly and feasting, and the expectation that takes a long while to die in the hearts of those whose childhood has been happy. And that wonderful picture of the king's daughter, with her raiment of needlework and clothing of wrought gold, signifies to me the spirit of true festival, the frosty exhilaration of the traditional Christmas morning, and many other things entirely amiable and pleasant, such as exist only in a world where *all thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia : out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*

X

Although the beginning of these associations is so clearly and definitely in my mind, they remain otherwise undated and undistinguished, a

glow in the perspective of memory, like the lights of a town seen from far away at sea. I came to the end of my pupilage ; I do not remember anything about that, but there came the day when I played for the last time, when I for the last time took any part in the music of the organ loft. I know that I often played after I ceased to be a pupil, and I think that perhaps the last time I took any formal part was after I came home from South Africa, where I had been as a war-correspondent, and I went to the cathedral one Sunday afternoon to see my master. I felt that so much had happened to me since I had sat there as a pupil that I was a person considerably increased in importance ; but if I had any such idea, it vanished during the course of the service. There was a hymn on Sunday afternoons after the sermon, and I generally played it when I was there, as my master preferred to continue the pleasant doze into which the combined effects of his lunch and the sermon never failed to cast him. He went on, as usual, as if he were speaking to a child of six years old : "Do you know this hymn? Can you play it? Well, then, go on and play it quietly, but for goodness' sake be careful and don't do anything ridiculous." He always spoke to us as if we had just mastered the

elements of music and as if the playing of a simple hymn tune was a doubtful and even rash experiment which it was his unhappy duty to permit us to attempt ; and if he heard another stop being pulled out, or any quite ordinary addition being made to the four-part harmony, he would moan and squirm in his chair as if he were being torn on the rack. He went on in just the same way on this afternoon, and without the slightest justification ; for whatever his pupils can or cannot do, they know how to accompany choral harmony on the organ. And at the end of it I remember feeling thoroughly reduced, and that although I might go to wars and write books, I should never, never, never, in any circumstances, be able to play the organ.

That is the last time I remember playing in the cathedral. There is a magnificent new organ there now, and I shall never play the old one again ; so perhaps I had better write no more of these memories. I have been deliberately prolonging them, you see, because while I have been writing them I have been living again those years. They are not so long ago, but I feel that if I do not write it down now, something of what I fain would remember may be brushed away by the constant passage of time and change. I have

always promised myself to write this chapter, both as an act of homage to the living and pious commemoration of what is past and gone; and if I am reluctant to bring it to an end it is because I feel that with the last word of this page that piece of life will definitely end for me. I have had it in my mind for years; and a thing that one intends to write is always very much alive and fluent; but one possesses it only while it remains unwritten. That is one reason why some of the most beautiful stories are never written, because once they are written they are dead and done with to the writer. One must choose between keeping a thing for oneself and giving it away to other people—one cannot do both. So remember, when you read this, that although it may be a small thing for you to receive, it is a great thing for me to give.

THE PLACE OF MUSIC IN MODERN LIFE

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I

THERE are periods in the world's age when the great things that run through our human history like continuous threads have to be reconsidered; when our thought about them has to be readjusted to the new ideas and new conditions at which we have arrived in our journey. No one who contemplates calmly the civilised world to-day can pretend that ours is a moment of deep spiritual or artistic growth. The present time is essentially one in which the things of the spirit —that is to say the arts and the philosophies—after a time of great and rapid development, have to come to a pause, and when material things are developing so rapidly as to absorb almost the whole of the world's time. This is a time of spiritual and artistic maturity; after a period of growth and struggle there has come a pause, in which these spiritual affairs of ours detach themselves from the great onward-rushing tide

of movement which we call progress, and are floating as it were in still water, away from the main current, away from the great pathway of the world's progress; out of sympathy with it perhaps, but most certainly detached from it. In every day, after the glory of the dawn and freshness of the early morning, after the fire has faded from the skies and the dews have dried from the fields of promise, there comes a time of stagnation and flatness, when the air seems to hang heavily, and the life and vitality to have departed from the day. In every human life there is a similar moment when, after emergence from the dreamy realms of childhood, after the promises and the enthusiasms and fires of youth have been a little dulled and chilled by contact with the crude realities of life, a flatness and weariness and sense of disillusionment come like a cloud over our existence, and the material asserts itself over the spiritual. And so with that longer day and greater and more complex life in which we image the history of an age or a civilisation; so with the component currents of human effort of which that life is made up; so, at some time or other, with discovery, with invention, with religion, with art; these things all have their time of accomplishment, and their time of pause. And

so, among other arts, with the art of music—a thing founded on phenomena which are as old as the human race, but which in the form that we know it now is the youngest of the family of arts, one whose development through the last few centuries has been increasingly rapid, whose birth lies within the span of recorded human history, and whose maturity we witness to-day.

Think, then, of music to-day as a mature, fully evolved art, of the technique of which we would appear to know practically everything there is to be known ; and think of modern life as the existence of men and women in this world to-day, and the special circumstances that make that existence different from the lives of men and women of an earlier age. In what way is the life we live more suitable for the cultivation of music, in what way is it less suitable than in the life of the last two centuries, in which music came to its rapid and splendid maturity? These, I think, are questions worth considering.

Unfortunately, the moment one begins to talk about modern life one is almost bound to begin to talk in platitudes ; there are some things so obvious and yet so true that they can only be expressed in a commonplace. We do live in an age of hurry. We do live in a world where rapidity is

often counted higher than thoroughness, and where the conditions of life demand a smattering of information on many subjects, rather than a depth of knowledge on any one. We do live in a civilisation where such things as telegraphy, railroads, telephones, mechanical substitutes for labour, have enormously complicated the life of every human being in our country, and where in the hurry and glamour and chaotic activities of the struggle we seem to drift farther and farther away from that quieter, younger age that was the golden age of the fine arts, where there was sunshine and silence, and room for the soul of man to grow, and space for it to soar on its wings of poetry and music.

It may seem absurd to suggest that music is an anachronism here, and that where other things are developing and changing and growing so rapidly it alone is to be condemned to a state of stagnation. Surely music, you may say, which is such a living art, and so closely bound up with the senses and emotions of mankind, can express the particular spirit of every age; surely it too can move with the times, and readjust itself to a new age and new conditions. I know that this view is held by many; but I should be dishonest if I pretended that it was my view. I do not

believe that music can "move with the times" in the common sense of that expression; I do not believe that music can be used as a happy or suitable expression for the fluctuations of the cotton market, for the spirit of wireless telegraphy or valveless motor engines, or for our emotions about murder trials and rubber shares. Music is no time-server. It is, and has always been, an expression of the inner soul of man, the most subtle form of expression known to us, but an expression always of those great fundamental emotions that are common, not to one country or to one time, but to the soul of man in all times and places.

Then, you say, why should it be any less at home in our modern life than in the life of the generations before us? The answer is to be found in those very conditions of modern life that give it its distracting, hurrying, and unrestful character. Music, I have said, is primarily an expression of the soul; an escape, if you like, for the imagination; a means where we may be independent of our immediate conditions, and escape beyond them into a world of poetry and fantasy. And the need for that escape is found in a simple and quiet life rather than in a complex and hurrying life—or to put it in an extreme way, the need

for this imaginative escape exists more in a dull life than in an interesting life. If all our activities of thought and imagination are fully occupied by the things around us, we shall not need to use our imagination to escape into a more interesting world; in short, material things are so many, so varied, and so engrossing, that we do not feel the need of things of the spirit.

II

Let me try to make this rather obscure point plainer by picturing the typical lives of two men. The one man lives, in an age other than this, in a little country town far removed from any great metropolitan activities. He is not rich, but his means are, and have always been, sufficient for his wants, and he lives in a dignified simplicity into which it is hardly ever necessary for the thought of money to enter. He has some regular occupation connected with the life of the people immediately about him, but he has leisure for reading and cultivating himself, time to be a student of any subject that interests him. The mountains that tower above the little town, the river that wanders through the meadows beyond,

the road that comes down through the valley and goes on into the unknown world—these all supply him with material for interest, speculation, and wonder. The mountains, though visible, are inaccessible to him, and their peaks remain unspoiled by familiarity ; the river that has shone and rippled through his childhood is a living though speechless companion of his daily life ; the road is for him a connecting link in the chain that binds him to other worlds and other lives, coming from one unknown and going on to another. His human interests lie in the people and the lives immediately round about him ; there is no such thing as a newspaper, and letters are rare, things brought by the hand of some chance traveller, eagerly passed from hand to hand, read, re-read, and discussed until their minutest interest is threadbare. His excitements and distractions are all on this minute scale, and are savoured and enjoyed to their fullest extent, however small and narrow they may be. In such a life imagine the place of music—how enlarging to the horizon, how deepening to the cultivation of that quiet soul living that quiet life ! How lovingly would not such a man study its secrets, how gladly would he not give that labour that sweetens all acquirement, how deeply would he not pore over

the works of the masters until he became imbued with their spirit! Real growth, real artistic cultivation, real musical perception, would soon be the mark of such a man, and to him and his friends, living such a life in such a place, music would be a great door opened into the world of the spirit, at once employing and satisfying the imagination.

And now take another man. He lives in a great city crowded with commerce, where labour struggles against labour for a bare living, and riches are piled on riches; where the air is darkened with smoke, and from dawn till night the streets are filled with clamour and movement and hurry. This man too has his occupation, but it is an occupation that is never finished; he dares not pause or rest for fear some one should step in and take his place; whatever means he has are not enough, for about him on every side are people with more money, with greater means, through whose example the standard of life goes steadily up. He opens his daily paper every morning, and immediately, as in a mirror, the whole world lies open before him; he sees the explorer at work amid the ice-packs of the North; the life of a hundred famous or notorious people is spread before him in minute detail; he reads

the thoughts of his fellow-men half a world away; he hears the strife of parliaments, witnesses the rise and fall of kings, and sees the mine of revolution fired, and republics founded on the ashes of dynasties. His imagination, in short, is more than occupied. The swift trains can carry him within an hour or two to the outer world in a dozen different directions; from that outer world men and women come, daily mingling with and confusing his own existence; time and distance are both annihilated, and the doings of the whole world brought visibly and audibly before him. Again, what room is there in such a life for imagination? What place is there for music, or, more truly, what time is there for music?

For no one can cultivate music without giving time and trouble to it. As there is no royal road to learning of any kind, so there are no short cuts to musical cultivation. The advertisements of gramophone makers and the sellers of mechanical piano-players tell us that the years spent in musical study are no longer necessary, that all the charm, all the wonder, and all the cultivation of music are open to any one, however ignorant, at the cost of a few shillings and a succession of monthly payments. There never was a greater lie uttered. The ignoramus may put the roll of a

Beethoven sonata on his piano-player, turn the necessary cranks and adjust the necessary levers, and succeed in producing—what? At the best an amazingly clever and life-like caricature of a musical performance—at the worst a hideous travesty and debasement of the noblest artistic creations of mankind. Depend upon it, it is by labour and study, and by them alone, that we attain to any real achievement or high artistic enjoyment; and this mechanical substitution, this effort to get results without any expenditure of time or trouble on the process, is to me one of the most pathetic and futile things which our time has brought forth. Let us deal with these mechanical inventions once and for all, and then dismiss them from our thoughts. Let us admit all their marvellousness and their possibility, in the hands of an artistic manipulator, for illusion and deception. The more mechanically perfect they seem to be, the more hateful they should be to us, and the more strenuously we should set our faces against any tolerance of them or traffic with them. For music from beginning to end,-from its inception in the brain or impulse in the heart, to its utterance by voice or instrument, is a thing of human feeling, human touch, human effort. If we use purely mechanical means of locomotion and move-

ment we soon lose the use of our arms and legs; and so in music the cultivation of artificial and mechanical processes will merely mean the neglect and atrophy of our natural powers; in a word, cultivation of mechanical means of musical performance must surely mean the ultimate loss of power to invent music, loss of power to produce it, and loss of power to enjoy it.

III

Music is cultivated in three great departments. There is the music of the church, the music of the concert-room and theatre, and the music of the home. The first of these is allied to a departing thing, and will depart with it; the other two belong to our everyday life, and reflect its characteristics. What is it in the music of the theatre and concert-room that most flourishes today? I am the first to admit the enormous strides that public taste has made in orchestral music in the last ten or fifteen years. Orchestral music has become what it never was before—really popular among musical amateurs; and London, which for some time lagged behind the North in its appreciation and support of orchestral music, has

now probably more orchestral performances, attended by more people, than any other city in the world. This is largely due to the development of the modern art of conducting and the consequent improvement in orchestral playing, and the consequent unlocking of a whole treasure-house of sound to the general public. But it still remains a fact that orchestral music does not "pay" in the large sense of the word, and if one wants a rough test for what is popular, not with amateurs predisposed to be interested, but with the public at large, one had better apply the money test. There are no fortunes to be made in running orchestras or giving orchestral concerts. Neither will any one seriously contend that grand opera is popular in England. It is of no use to say that it ought to be, that it would be under such and such conditions; the fact for our immediate consideration is that it is not—that is to say, that people will not pay to hear operas in sufficient numbers to make it financially worth any one's while to produce them. The heroic struggles of the Carl Rosa Company have proved it in the past. The equally heroic efforts of the Moody Manners Company are proving it in the present; and though Mr. Thomas Beecham has done admirable work with his opera season in London,

and is getting any amount of appreciation and support, we must not forget that there is a well from which the general public is believed to draw health, and from which Mr. Beecham is believed to draw wealth. In short, the fact that Mr. Beecham is very generously and patriotically spending his father's money on the production of operas does not alter the fact that opera is not closely enough in touch with modern life in England to be economically possible.

What, then, is popular? We have one thing that really does flourish in England as it flourishes nowhere else, and that is so-called musical comedy. Serious musicians are too apt to despise these productions, but they have survived the criticism of the learned and the denunciation of musical enthusiasts, myself included, and they have proved that they do belong in a very real way to the life of our time. I remember in my own early days as a musical critic, when I must admit these musical comedies had not reached the high standard they have reached since, involving my newspapers in more than one libel action by Mr. George Edwardes, on account of my denunciation of his productions on artistic grounds ; but I should be less than honest if I did not now admit that time and development

have proved me wrong; that there was a germ of real life in these things, and that it has lived and developed into a mode of expression peculiarly English. For we must remember that the great characteristic of English music in its best days was always its gaiety; it was never melancholy, never romantic, never savage or barbaric; it was always gay, gay with the gaiety of the English country-side, of village songs and games, and romping dances in the meadows, and the bucolic hilarity of the tavern. Well, much of that has gone from us. The gaiety of the country-side, the games and village dances have vanished; but still, when the thread of English music reasserts itself, it is found, though wonderfully transformed, to be still uttering its gay message. What is it we have always most needed in England, with our heavy climate and grey cloudy skies, with our sternness and thoroughness and dignity? A little laughter, surely. It has always been the thing missing from our composition, and the thing with which the divine art has tried to supply us. Now to-day we are all a little jaded, a little tired, a little worried; though we cannot repair to the meadow-side, or join in the happy ridiculous games of former generations, we go to the theatre and laugh at the ridiculous situations

invented for us there, and in the music that accompanies them we have found something that evidently answers to some need in us, so that the airs that are born there are whistled and sung in the country-side, and, as much as any music can, become part of our national life. I say not a word in criticism of this music, whether it is good or bad ; that is beside my point here. It is a part of our life, and it is one of the supreme expressions of music in our modern life. But we may admit that, without overrating its importance, or without denying the enormous share that the dresses, the scenery, and the personalities of the people taking part in these performances have in spreading the popularity of the music.

This frivolous expression of music is at one end of the scale ; but at the opposite end there is another way in which it enters very considerably into our modern life, and that is the economic way. Music has been pressed into the great service of wage-earning to such an extent that its practice as an art threatens often to be obliterated by its practice as a trade or profession. There are many institutions in this country which exist almost solely for equipping those who join them to be teachers of music—the success or failure of which is judged on almost purely

economic grounds. Now the teaching of music is not a thing for which every musician is fitted, and because a student is a successful performer, it by no means follows that he or she will be a successful teacher. And here, I think, we touch upon a very real weakness of some of these institutions. Those who join them in order to learn a trade, whose parents invest so much money with the idea that in a few years it will be able to earn so much more, do not, in many cases, pursue their studies with any very real deep devotion to the subject, but too often with a view merely to acquire the necessary smattering that will enable them to earn fees by giving lessons. The teachers of music are thus divided very sharply into two classes. There is the genuine artist who works and studies hard, seeking always to perfect himself in his particular branch of music; a singer, or a player perhaps, who finds himself unable to live on the engagements that he can get as a performer. There is no help for such a one, except in teaching; not the teaching of geniuses, but of any one who will come—often far removed from genius. There is no sadder thing in the world than to see some really artistic spirit gradually crushed and wearied by the drudgery of teaching, and its bright wings, that aspired to mount to the

sun, soiled with the dust of the earth in the struggle for an actual living. To those genuinely artistic spirits, thoroughly sound musicians perhaps, but without the superlativeness of voice or technique which alone to-day commands a wide hearing, the modern world is no friendly place, and modern life is no easy condition. Such people necessarily live completely out of harmony with the world about them. Their ambition is the attainment of perfection, and perfection is a luxury which they are neither allowed to attain themselves, nor assist others to the attainment of. If they have a brilliant pupil, he or she soon passes into other hands; the dull ones require results of some kind in the shortest possible time, and with the least possible expenditure of money; to be taught how to get through a song or pianoforte piece, in a way that will secure the admiration of their uncritical friends, is all they want. And in the deadly struggle for life the artist is again and again forced down into the prosecution of this melancholy business, until too often his faith in himself, and even in his art, is lost, and he becomes a mere drudge in the economic service. In such a life it can hardly be said that music is in harmony with modern conditions.

With the other kind of teacher, the one who

deliberately goes into music as into any other trade, we need have less sympathy. The spread of cheap education has broken down the barriers that divided one economic class from another, and that formerly kept the different departments of labour clearly separated. A girl, let us say, who under normal conditions would have earned her living as a shop assistant, or a clerk, or a waitress, is discovered to have a voice above the average. In former days she would not have had the necessary small amount of general education to allow her to pretend to be a teacher of anything; now, however, she has just enough to disguise her often deep and extreme ignorance. She is sent to a college of music, her voice cultivated, a smattering of subsidiary musical studies is added, and in three years she is launched out on the world as a professional singer and teacher. She secures a few local engagements, enough to make her conspicuous and give her the necessary advertisement, and pupils come to her. She has probably no deep musical feeling, and was impelled on her course by no deep artistic impulse; what she knows of music she has learned as she would have learned any other trade. The drudgery of teaching is to her merely the drudgery of time and trouble; there is no soul weariness,

no degradation and blunting of fine artistic perception, for she has possibly very little soul to weary, and probably no artistic perception to degrade. She makes more money than she would have made at some of the other trades open to her—for a little while, that is to say. But what about her future? This branch of musical economics does not always bear looking into; the position of the old artist and teacher, with which we are all familiar, is a sufficiently melancholy one. But in the case under our consideration the same commercial instinct which prompted the young woman to take up music has probably, at the right moment, also caused her to drop it before it has finally dropped her. And there, again, music, in the true sense of the word, enters very little into the affair, and we cannot say that here music is otherwise than out of touch with the conditions of modern life.

IV

I could multiply instances of this kind to any extent, and in a way rather depressing to those who love and study music for itself; but they only tend to strengthen and support my theory,

that all attempts to change the character of music with the changed character of our age; all attempts to force it from what it is into something that it is not and cannot be; all efforts to turn an artistic and spiritual thing into an economic and commercial thing; in a word, all efforts to make music move with the times are bound to end in failure. What place, then, has music in our modern life? I believe that it has a very real place and use with us to-day. And the great use of music in modern life, it seems to me, may be expressed in a paradox. Its use in modern life is as a means of escape from modern life. Its value to us lies, not in its likeness to the conditions around us, but in its difference from them; not in its correspondence with our everyday life, but in its contrast to it. It is a lifebelt which will preserve those who carry it from altogether sinking in the welter of sordid material conditions about them; it is a fiery chariot that will catch us up out of cares and struggles here, and bear us to a world of serene and exalted things. Poetry and music, as Hector Berlioz said, are the two wings of the soul; and as it has in all times been regarded as a means of rising beyond the limitations of material conditions into the free world of the spirit, so, more truly to-day than ever, it may

still be regarded. And to those who have chosen music as the main work and study of their lives, and who are not infrequently confronted with these very questions of its apparent incompatibility with the general run of the world's thought and interest to-day, I cannot help feeling that it will be a great strength, a great consolation, and a great encouragement to them if they will think of music in this way, as having nothing whatever to do with the material interests and affairs of mankind, but as belonging to another world, another dimension, another element.

How often at sea is one not awed and confounded, if one's eye is raised no higher than the horizon, by the tumult and desolation of the waters, the busy, tiresome, laborious activities of the ship, the grinding and commotion, the throbbing and pulsing, the humming of winds and roar and crashing of waves. Yet raise your eyes above the salt wilderness of water, above the labouring ship, above the swinging mast-heads, and there, visibly above you, is a world of peace, unbroken and eternal, where stars are shining quietly, and whither the tumults of the sea do not reach. And those of us with the cultivation and perception to appreciate great music have always close at hand just such another world,

another element in which our spirits may refresh themselves. There never was a time when we more needed such an escape; there never was a time when material things were so pressing; when the clamour and tumult of the world was so outrageous; when the ground-tone of life itself was so deafening as to dull our ears to all its finer harmonics. We need music more than ever in the world to-day, and the mission of those who cultivate it is a higher and more sacred mission than ever it was. It is no longer for the mere adornment and elegance of life that they labour, but for spiritual life itself; it is not to give the musical spirit more balmy airs to breathe, but for its very breath they are fighting.

It goes without saying that there are certain kinds of music that appeal to us more easily to-day than other kinds. It is always easy to listen to Wagner or Chopin, because there is in all their music a trace of that emotional fever that is never far below the surface of our modern life; but it is often hard to get into the necessary frame of mind to be able to enjoy the music of Beethoven or Mozart. We must all have been aware of experiencing this difficulty of going into a concert-room and looking forward to hearing a favourite symphony, and finding when it came

to be played that it had nothing to say to us, that we were not in the mood for it, that we were listening to its notes without really hearing it. All very serious music requires an atmosphere, a *stimmung* to be established, before it can really come to life, and this atmosphere is one which it is increasingly hard to establish, in proportion as it becomes farther and farther removed from the atmosphere in which we live our lives. All chamber music needs it; for example, how often is one really in the mood to appreciate or even enjoy a Beethoven quartette? Such things have really no part with our everyday life; they belong to a region of things into which we must deliberately enter if we are to appreciate or enjoy them, and that region is very far from the region which we inhabit during the greater part of our waking lives.

In a simpler age it lay near at hand, and from the daily life of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was but a step into that world, now so spiritually removed from us. Between the life of London to-day, with its high pressure, its domination by money, its fierce battles, the endless struggle for life that is going on in it, the endless grim effort to keep a foothold at all amid its jostling crowds, the tremendous hurrying tide and torrent of activity that roars for ever in our

ears—ah ! between that and the quiet little world of candlelight in a home in some German country town, two hundred years ago, what a contrast ! Could we but open the windows of our mental vision, and see the little family group surrounding the open scores, and steeping themselves in the joy and understanding of deep and true music, what peace and refreshment might we not find !

Well, it is to some extent possible for us to do it still ; that world lies still within our reach, although the journey to it becomes longer and longer every day. It is very hard for the individual to reach it alone. The atmosphere that I have spoken of may be, and is, still established where a number of people who really care for music gather together and work at it. Such things as quartette parties and singing societies, even though the standard of performance which they attain may not be a very high one, are invaluable aids to the cultivation of music in our life to-day. One of the strongest and healthiest branches of English music is to be found in the choral societies and bands of the provincial towns of England. And why ? Just because they involve the association of people, the meeting together with the one purpose of working at and studying

music, and, consequently, that temporary escape from ordinary life, which I have emphasised as being the most valuable thing that music can give us to-day.

The main thing to be striven for to-day is the cultivation of a musical atmosphere. It is less important for the moment that we should produce new music than that we should cultivate an atmosphere in which music that has already been produced can be heard and enjoyed. That really is the thing that is in danger to-day. There is no danger that we shall lose our technical accomplishments, for there never was an age when technique was in such a high state of perfection as it is to-day. It is unlikely that we shall lack performers or producers of music. What we may come to lack is listeners—not because the world will have grown weary of music, or will come to need it any the less, but because in the crowded material conditions of modern life the atmosphere in which people can listen at all may become less and less easy of attainment. And the establishment of that atmosphere, whenever and wherever it is possible, is the best service that we can render music to-day. Thus shall we preserve it, not as part of our modern life, but

as a part of that greater life that is not ancient or modern, but universal and eternal, into which our spirits may escape in hours of heaviness or oppression.

THE MUSICIAN AS COMPOSER

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I

IN considering the position in the modern world of the musician whose office it is, not to hear or interpret music, but to create it, we must realise how very widely the attitude of the composer towards his art differs from that of the ordinary person who merely takes part, or hears, or enjoys music. The attitude of most of us towards music is a passive one. Music is a thing which we receive. It falls, an influence from outside ourselves, on minds occupied with other things; it tells us something for which we are not prepared, something which we do not know; it is news from the spiritual world; our attitude towards it is entirely receptive. But the composer's attitude towards it is different; with him it is a creative thing. It comes from within himself, and is uttered forth to the world around him; it is a fountain that is always springing in

his mind; his mind is always occupied with it, it is always there, and when he utters it, it is only that a part of his mind is projected into the surrounding world, and endowed with form and utterance. Even when he is listening to music not his own he more often than not hears it from the composer's standpoint rather than the hearer's; he sees it, not as a stream coming towards him, but as a stream going out from his direction even though its source was not within himself. He thinks of it as though he had written it himself; in short, his attitude is the very opposite of that of most of us.

At first sight it would seem as though this made for disunion and lack of sympathy between the composer and his audience; but it is not really so, for it is a comparatively modern distinction, that between composer and listener. In its origin, primitive music knew no such thing as a composer. The performer came first, for I suppose someone once sang in the world, sang for very joy of life, when perhaps there was no other human soul to listen, and undoubtedly the performer is the most ancient and venerable of the musical brotherhood. The audience would come next; for there would come a day when the singer who sang to himself would sing to someone else,

and wish to have a sharer in his emotion of joy or ardour or melancholy. But there was no such thing as a composer in those days, except in so far as the singer was the composer ; it would be more true to say that even the singer did not consciously invent what he sang, but was simply inspired by emotion within himself, or by the influence of things external to himself, to utter some vague and primitive expression of elementary and primitive emotions. The composer, in that case, was no individual man or woman, but the spirit of life itself singing in the heart, and uttering itself in the voice of man. In short, in its primitive beginnings music was universal, like speech or sight or hearing ; it belonged to everybody, and nobody thought of associating any of its varieties of expression with any particular individual.

But as time went on, it would be noticed that of all the men and women who made use of rhythms or vocal melodies to express their emotions some had a greater freedom of range than others ; that it was more instantly apparent what certain singers meant to express than what others meant ; that it was more agreeable to listen to some than to others ; that while the emotions expressed by some were always agreeable, those expressed by others were always disagreeable ;

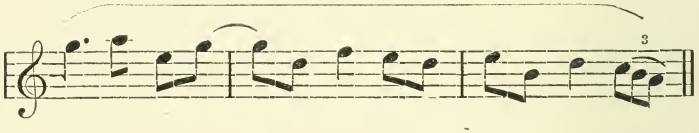
that the utterance of some gave pleasure, and the utterance of others, pain. If we were all obliged to express our particular emotion of the moment in song, exactly the same result would be apparent; an impartial jury would decide that, quite apart from the nature of the emotion which we were trying to express, the mere manner of expression would, in some cases, be a pleasant thing to listen to, and in other cases not pleasant at all. It is easy to imagine, then, that people in the primitive world would begin to cultivate this pleasure; that when it was known that such and such a member of the tribe was in love, or in a temper, or was bewailing the loss of something, it would be worth while strolling round in the direction of his cave in order to hear the performance. We may take this as an indication that even in the Flint and Stone ages there may have been such people as "stars." From grubbing among the roots, and chipping experimentally with bones and flints, it would be a pleasant change to listen to a fellow-creature making a succession of vocal sounds, and to speculate as to what they may mean. In some such way may the æsthetic life have had its origin.

This discovery that some people were better equipped in the vocal expression of emotion than

others would lead, first of all, to an unconscious differentiating between the vocal and the unvocal, to a certain degree of competition, to the cultivation of the gift of musical expression in order that, in love or battle, or for any of the time-honoured guerdons for which men have struggled and contested since the world began, this gift might be used as an advantage ; and there would come a preference for a certain kind of musical expression, and the discovery that it was to be heard at its best from such and such a man ; just as later, when people began to tell each other tales and stories, some men got great renown as tale-tellers, not only for the substance of their stories, but for their manner in telling them. And later still, when people wanted songs of their own, but could not make them or sing them to their own satisfaction, when they perhaps could think of words to sing, but not of pleasant sounds to fit to the words, they would apply to some of these gifted ones to fit a lilt or a cadence to their halting words. And thus began the differentiation of music as to its creative and receptive aspects ; thus, in short, was evolved the composer.

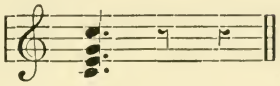
But the composer of to-day is far removed from his primitive ancestor. How does he stand ? What is his equipment ? He has become the master and

controller of a battery of technical and scientific apparatus that, strange to say, has not restricted, but enormously increased, his power to express emotion. We will consider three things about this composer : first, where his equipment has come from ; secondly, what it is ; and thirdly, what he is to do with it. And first, as to the source of the modern composer's equipment or technique. It rests, in my opinion, broadly on one thing ; I mean (thinking for the moment of music as it appears written, and not as one listens to it), the horizontal aspect of music as opposed to the vertical aspect. We are all familiar with musical notation, those staves of five lines on which are noted signs expressing sounds of greater or lesser duration, and of higher or lower pitch. I want you to imagine for a moment the appearance of a melody written along one such stave :



a kind of waving horizontal ribbon of notes—let us say a banner of sound, like a banner streaming in the wind. And now think of a chord as it appears written on such a stave—a vertical bar

of notes all sounding together, expressing one short pulse of sound, and not a prolonged connected stream of sound.



The harmonic chord is like a staff planted in the ground from which the banner of melody floats and flows. Now there are certain kinds of music which, looked at on the printed page, appear to us in horizontal lines of melody, uninterrupted by the vertical pulses of chords. A fugue of Bach's is a good example of such music. And there are other kinds of music which look like a succession of chords, the appearance of which is that of a succession of vertical lines, or columns of notes, scattered over the page. A mazurka of Chopin's, with the exception of the ornamented stream of melody on the top, would present this appearance. And these two kinds of music, which I call vertical and horizontal, represent an immense cleavage and difference in method of musical expression. The oldest forms of written music that are at all scientific arose from the old church melodies, and from the discovery that it was possible to combine two notes

of different pitch, that it was even possible to combine two simple melodies simultaneously, provided the notes composing them were written in accordance with certain simple acoustic rules. From them was evolved the quite elaborate polyphonic music of Palestrina and the Italian Church school, which was horizontal music pure and simple. Music continued to be written in this way, and although very archaic and beautiful and suitable for the grave expression of church music, it was an essentially narrow and restricted form of expression, in which rhythm was lacking; until Bach, by informing it with freedom of movement and genius of melodic invention, gave it new life, and adapted it to practically the whole needs of musical expression at the time.

The genius of Bach, however, was unique. No one before him—and certainly no one since—has been able to combine the beauty of outline, perfection of classical feeling and freedom and height and depth of expression, with severity of form in the way that he combined them. The result was that the horizontal kind of music, in which Bach achieved such perfection, did not develop in his successors, but rather for a time went back. The next development of music was in what is called the romantic direction; that is

to say, it broke away from strictness and severity of form, or rather developed itself in newer and freer forms. After the fugue came the sonata, and as the sonata did not lend itself to the horizontal treatment of music, it followed, as a natural result, that music after Bach became vertical again. The music of Beethoven and Mozart is practically all of the vertical kind ; and the great influence of Beethoven on musical form, the freedom and range of expression which he introduced into music, practically kept what I call the vertical form of music in existence for a century. Mendelssohn showed a slight tendency to revert to the polyphonic style, the horizontal method of music, but it was only a slight tendency ; and with Schumann, Chopin, and Meyerbeer the vertical form of instrumental music reached its extreme of freedom and development. But with Wagner a great change came. I do not think it is sufficiently realised yet how directly in the line of descent from Bach Wagner stands. With Wagner music became horizontal again, and has remained so ever since ; by that I mean that its greatest development has been along the line of polyphonic treatment. But Wagner did more than merely restore music to the horizontal, he enormously developed that form of treatment ; and

next after Bach, the modern composer's equipment comes chiefly from Wagner. In Bach's day the composer thought, so to speak, in voices; four parts, or six parts, or eight parts were the extremes to which his polyphonic treatment went; but Berlioz and Wagner, by their enormous freedom and extension of the use of the orchestra, entirely changed the composer's method of conceiving music. Instead of four or eight parts, or as many parts as there were voices, Wagner had as many parts as there were instruments or tone colours; and by recognising the individuality of every instrument in the orchestra, by realising that every part should be a melody, instead of only the top part, he did for the orchestra what Bach had done for the chorus; music was horizontal again, but enormously enriched and complicated by the fact that the horizontal lines were not mere voices of different pitch, but streams of different tone colour, and of different quality. The fabric that in Bach's hands had been woven of one sober colour became shot with myriad shades and hues, so that the instrumental composer may now be said to think in tone colours rather than in voices. And every one of these colours and shades of colour is now recognised by the composer as having, so to

speak, a right to individual existence ; one part of the horizontal fabric is as important as another, and the modern ear is trained not merely to listen to the notes at the top of the column of sound, but to attend to, and listen for, simultaneous melodies sounding throughout the whole stream of sound. The most modern of modern composers, Debussy, is also in the direct line of Bach and Wagner. The strangeness of his music, which is chiefly due to his use of a modal scale, and the consequent unfamiliarity to our ears of so many of his harmonies and his sequences, does not disguise the fact that this extremely delicate and, in some ways, decadent art of his, rests not on mere waywardness, but on a profound scholarship, and a deep knowledge of those fundamental principles which Bach fixed for ever as the laws of music.

II

So much for the sources of the modern composer's equipment. We will now consider for a little what that equipment is—what are the means at the disposal of the artist who wishes to give musical expression to his ideas. One is struck at once by the enormous extent and complication

of the mere technical side of this art as compared with any other. Compare the materials of the composer's art with that, say, of the painter's or the sculptor's or the poet's. The poet, given pen and paper, or one human voice, can complete and present a masterpiece; the sculptor needs some clay, a few cloths, and a block of stone or marble, a mallet and half a dozen chisels, and quite primitive steel instruments; the painter needs a few brushes, four or five elementary pigments, a little oil, a knife, and a plane surface: with such materials, and nothing more, the greatest pictorial masterpiece in the world is realised. But consider the resources of the composer, and especially of the modern composer—consider what he has to acquire before he can handle the simplest material. If he is a great natural performer, it is true that he can improvise his compositions, and so produce his masterpieces with no other machinery but his fingers and a keyboard; but even so, such a performer only touches a corner of the great field of musical possibility. The modern composer has first of all to master what is nothing more nor less than an extremely intricate system of mathematics. The natural inner ear of the composer may lead him to write music well and grammatically, but it

does not release him from the necessity of knowing that complicated mathematical system of notes which we call harmony and counterpoint; his genius may enable him to grasp it without trouble, and almost by instinct, but he is bound to have it. He has to study the human voice in its several varieties, and to know what it is and is not capable of. He has to know the construction and technique of keyed instruments, such as the pianoforte and organ; of another group of instruments known as stringed instruments; of another group known as wood-wind instruments; of another entirely different group known as brass instruments; and of another known as instruments of percussion. Within these several groups are again varieties and subdivisions, containing instruments and technique and a method of playing which are entirely different, and the study and performance of each one of which is a life's work for one man. Further, the composer must know by experience all the effects to be got by the countless changes in combination of all these instruments, and of their combination collectively and individually with voices. And when he has done this he has, so to speak, only dealt with the raw material of his equipment. He has to study musical form, and to train his mind in qualities

of symmetry and balance and proportion; to learn that most difficult of all things, how to develop a theme of a few notes, and to make out of it a fabric of sound which may last continuously, perhaps for half an hour, which will not become monotonous, but which will be so related to the original theme of a few notes that it all seems to grow and flow naturally out of it. And having done all that, and conceived his music in his mind, he has to begin the highly difficult, laborious, and complicated work of writing it down on paper, in such a form that the music, which he has hitherto heard only in his own brain, will be exactly reproduced by perhaps a hundred different men, playing instruments of perhaps thirty different kinds. And thousands and thousands of men in factories all over the world—metal-workers, cabinet-makers, fitters, polishers, tuners, packers, will all have been working in order that the instruments shall be ready to be played—all this before a single orchestral chord imagined by the composer can be heard by his audience. Of all these resources, of all this technique, the composer has to be master and controller; by these devious and complicated channels must his idea flow from him to you; through all this veil of interposed mechanism and personalities must his emotion

reach to you. And when we remember that what we call musical ideas are by far the most delicate and most subtle form of artistic expression, is it not the more amazing that they should be able thus to survive the transit of an intervening space so crowded with deflecting and interposing influences ?

Consider, again, the composer's own attitude towards his art, for upon that more than anything else the character of his music depends, and by that the character of a whole period of music is largely determined. One of the tendencies of modern life is towards a great increase of self-consciousness. This is true of all the arts ; it is true in our daily intercourse and conduct ; it is true especially with regard to music. Let us imagine, if we can, Bach's attitude towards his art, and compare it with even that of Wagner, who is far from representing the extreme of self-consciousness. Bach was an artist, but he was also an official with considerable duties, and a citizen who had his living to earn. He lived a life of routine, playing the organ, training the various choirs under his charge, teaching his pupils, and writing his music. But it is almost certain that Bach never sat down deliberately to write music for no other reason than to express some emotion

with which his soul was charged. He wrote music because it came in the way of his daily occupation to write music. For the various services in which he was engaged, for various functions of the church and of the town in which he lived, it was necessary to have music; and because the music in existence was not good enough, and because he could not bear to have anything but the best, he generally wrote his own music. It was even expected of him. All the grandeur and nobility of feeling, all the perfection of form that we find in his music, were not deliberately and self-consciously put into it; they came there only because they were part of his being and character, and were found in whatever he did, naturally and inevitably. It is impossible for us to think of Bach going away, even if he had had the means and time to do so, to Italy, let us say, for six months in order to produce a masterpiece. I doubt whether any single work of Bach's took more than the half of six months to compose, and the greatest of them all came in the way of his daily life—things that had to be done by a certain time, for a certain place, and that were magnificent, not because Bach had sought and found such and such an inspiration, but because he could not escape artistic magnificence in what-

ever he did. In other words, Bach was a workman who did his daily work; and, being a great genius also, that work outlived the day for which it was written, and lives still in the form of masterpieces; but Bach did not know that they were masterpieces, nor realise how profoundly they would affect the music of the future.

And now turn to Wagner, that strange, philosophical, artistic, political revolutionary, whose only regular work in life that he ever did was the work of conducting and directing operas, and who had no office or post which required him to compose. On the contrary, the world very soon showed him that it did not require him to compose; that it would make it as difficult as possible for him to compose; that it would try to starve and discourage him out of all idea of composing. Wagner had none of the apparent outward signs of a great creative musician. He played the pianoforte execrably, and, I believe, had no gift of improvisation. Moreover, far from being like Bach, incapable of writing anything that was not stamped with beauty and perfection, Wagner was not only capable of writing, but did write a considerable amount of music that can only be described as rubbish, that was not even worth preserving, and was probably never worth

performing. But a still greater difference existed between his attitude and that of Bach towards their art. Bach, as I have said, came to his in the course of his everyday life; with Wagner, the mere decision to compose came comparatively late in his career, and was incredibly mixed up with, and in some ways the outcome of, his views on philosophy, religion, ethics, politics, and economy. It is true that the form in which he wrote was immensely complex and vast in scale compared with anything that Bach did; but in so far as they were both creators and inventors of music, the comparison between their respective attitudes holds good. Wagner prepared himself with extraordinary care for the act of composing; the place in which he was living mattered enormously; he made journeys, changed house, town, country of residence, cultivated this companion or abandoned that, all for no other purpose than to assist himself into the right frame of mind in which he could compose. Years would be spent on a single work from its inception to its completion; he had to live with it in misery and exaltation, through all the fits of despondency and of torture that seemed inseparable from the modern act of artistic production, tearing himself into tatters until the work was born and com-

pleted. Compared with the circumstances attending a production of anything of Bach's, it was a kind of emotional earthquake. That it was all justified, that it was all necessary, and that it was all a thousand times worth while, no cultivated person of to-day can be found to deny. Like Bach, the work that Wagner has given us is not only immortal in itself, but it has influenced and stamped itself upon the work of all musicians who followed. His influence, like Bach's, has run throughout the whole life of modern music, so that even people who have never heard a single work of his are unconsciously influenced and affected by it in their musical ideas.

But compared with the composer of to-day Wagner is already old-fashioned, in some ways he is early Victorian to us. It would not add anything to the influence of a composer to-day that he should write voluminous prose works to explain his philosophic position, or his position in politics, or his attitude towards vegetarianism. That kind of tedious and diffuse self-explanation is out of date, and a man has to be a very great man indeed before we will listen to him with any patience on subjects other than those of which he has made himself a master. But the self-consciousness remains, and has, I think, increased.

Wagner, at any rate, had a mission, which was to reform the opera and put the spirit of life into what had become a dry conventional form ; but it is very hard for a composer to-day to have any very serious musical mission. He is confronted with the naked necessity of merely having to make music ; and though that is the only thing for a composer to do, the only thing which we want him to do, it is not always easy for him to do it deliberately and self-consciously. So much of the most beautiful music in the world has been produced, as it were, accidentally—because some one had a birthday, or was being crowned or married or buried—that we do not always remember how comparatively small a proportion of great music has been produced deliberately, just because the musician was a composer, and thought he had better compose. The works of the kind of which I have been speaking did not depend for their production on turning out great and striking ; they would have been performed in any case.

But nowadays the modern composer has very few definite certainties of performance ; he has to write something for no particular place and no particular occasion, something quite in the air, and to hope that some conductor will take

the trouble to look at the score, and having looked at it, think it interesting or striking enough to please an audience that pays for its seats, and expects to get what pleases it. And that is a great handicap to the composer, and a great temptation to the development of a morbid self-consciousness, and is, in the long run, damaging to art generally. The same thing has seriously damaged the art of painting. The old masterpieces were practically all commissioned works, pictures painted for a certain place, with a definite view to their effect in a certain position, so that the artist was considerably helped and directed in his intention by the actual limitations of his commission. Now people no longer commission pictures to be painted for certain places in their houses, nor, except in the case of rare municipal buildings, are artists commissioned to decorate public buildings; with the result that painters have nothing to paint for, except exhibitions, which of all possible environments for a picture are utterly and indisputably the worst. In fact, it may be said that a picture deliberately painted in order to look well and have a telling effect at such an exhibition as the Royal Academy cannot possibly be a good picture. And though it would not be true to say that a musical composition,

deliberately composed in order to become popular with conductors of concerts, could not be a good composition, it is true to say that that particular kind of inspiration is not a wholesome one for the composer, and does not make either for great sincerity or great loftiness in the composition.

III

What, then, should be the composer's inspiration? To what use should he put this vast technical equipment with which the development of the art has provided him? What is to be his message to the modern world? These are questions which each individual composer must answer for himself, for they are of vital importance to him, and to the work which he produces. As for his inspiration, that must come directly from within himself if his music is to make any mark, if it is to have any real life or any place in the world of true art. This, as I have said before, is not an age of deep musical inspiration, but it is an age of extreme technical accomplishment, and there are many people engaged in composing music more as an exercise of their technical accomplishment than in obedience to any impelling force

from within. These composers and their work are easily recognised by the fact that their inspiration is always external ; they have to go to poetry or legend, steep themselves in literature of some kind, and then, as it were, reproduce it in the form of music. But this at its best is only a kind of musical translation, or paraphrase in sound of ideas which have already been conveyed to the mind by the written word ; and in this case it is the author or poet who is the true inventor, and the musician who is only a translator or interpreter. The modern symphonic poem is a constant example of this method of composing, and although, no doubt, the best of modern music is put into symphonic poems, the fact that it is so rather supports my argument that there is rather a dearth of original inspiration for music pure and simple in this age. That is one reason why I regard the music of Tschaikovsky, and some of Elgar's music, as having so important a place in modern art. It stands out quite by itself as music that had to be uttered ; it has no programme, it is not a representation of anything already expressed in any other form ; whatever it is, it comes straight from the composer's own being, and speaks directly to us from him. And that is why I regard Elgar's symphony in A Flat as a work

on a higher scale than, say, the finest of Strauss's symphonic poems, although there is occasionally music of a far higher order to be found in Strauss than in anything Elgar has written. But I believe that it is better to write music like Elgar's on the higher plane, than to write music like Strauss's on a plane that is a little less high than that. These two men represent among modern composers the two paths between which the composer is bound to choose; and it is for himself to say whether he will make musical translations of literary ideas, or whether he will wait until he has musical ideas pure and simple to express.

There is, it is true, another source of inspiration, represented by the music of Debussy—the school of colour and atmosphere. Here the inspiration is not from ideas or emotions, nor can it be described as what used to be called "absolute" music, and what I still mean when I speak of music which is inspired purely from within the composer's own being. The method of this school is rather to throw upon the auditory senses masses of tone colour, and to make them fade and dissolve into each other, so that wave after wave of cloud-like colour floats upon the hearing. It is the most purely sensuous and, if one may

say so, physiological of all musical effects, and it can be used with great subtlety to produce an actual atmosphere of certain imagined scenes or places. Such music is very delightful, it is very wonderful, but the sensation of it is almost purely physical ; it seems to lead nowhere in particular, and to be a wonderful and beautiful decadence rather than an advance.

These, then, are the three chief mediums in which music of the essentially modern school is written, but whichever of them the composer chooses, there is one thing which he must never lose sight of if he wishes his message to be really uttered. He should say to himself before he writes one note : "Here are assembled a number of artists who have given years of their lives and spent all the labour and money they can afford on perfecting themselves in their art, whether of voice or of instrument; many of them are consummate artists and masters in their own department. I am about to ask them to use that art and skill of theirs in playing my music, in representing my ideas. Am I certain, first of all, that what I am asking them to perform is worthy of the time and study they have spent in becoming perfect? And, if so, have I spared any pains to make the technical expression of it as exact as

possible? If not, how can I conscientiously ask them to use their great talents in producing my imperfect work?" That is a question which every composer owes it to himself, and to every performer who is to interpret his work, to put to himself most seriously; for nowadays slipshod workmanship in any branch of art is utterly inexcusable. Technical perfection, as I have said, is one of the characteristics of our time, and its effect should be, not to excuse spiritual or creative imperfection, but rather to demand that the excellence of the thing done shall not fall short of the method of doing it.

The perfect music of the past has produced the perfect technique of the present. We must strive, and at any rate hope, that the perfect technique of the present will produce the perfect music of the future.

THE MUSICIAN AS INTERPRETER

THE MUSICIAN AS INTERPRETER

I

MUSIC as it is imagined and invented in the composer's brain cannot reach directly to his audience. There must be a human channel, a middle party who receives the composer's idea and transmits it, through his or her personality, to the listener. This is a fact of the greatest importance to the position of music among other fine arts ; it ensures for music that quality, at once most intimate and most human, that makes it like nothing else in the world. And this human interpretation of music falls naturally into three divisions, and is distributed among three principal groups of performers. There is the singer, who uses his natural vocal gift to express the ideas of the composer ; there is the player of instruments, who acquires a technique which gives him the control of sounds mechanically produced, by which further ex-

pression is given to the composer's ideas; and there is the conductor, who interposes his own personality between the composer and the performers, thus adding a fourth link in the chain between inventor and hearer; it is he, who, when the ideas of the composer are complex and need complex expression, gathers them into his own mind and transmits to each individual performer the composer's intention with regard to his particular part. We will deal with these three groups in their order.

The singer is the most primitive of the interpreters of music. As we saw, he comes even before the composer, for it was in order to find varied expression for his natural gift that the idea of musical invention or composition must originally have arisen. The singer needs no instrument or apparatus other than that with which nature has provided him, and according to the quality of these vocal organs the expression of the singer is limited or varied, ugly or beautiful. If human beings were bred deliberately, as race-horses and other animals are bred, we could no doubt by this time have produced a strain of people in which the vocal organs would be so developed as to have possibilities at present undreamed of. One has only to look at the German

canary as an example of this. The canary in its natural form was a dull greenish bird, rather smaller than the common sparrow, and with very little more natural song than the sparrow has; but by continual breeding and selection we can at will produce canaries of markedly different shape, size, and plumage; and, in the case of the German canary, which has been bred solely with a view to its song, a creature whose vocal powers are nothing less than astounding. When we consider the smallness and frailty of the bird, and the depth and quality and range, as well as sometimes the ear-splitting volume of its song, it seems little short of miraculous. But although we have had a certain amount of natural development in the case of families which have continued to cultivate one occupation throughout several generations, we do not as yet deliberately breed human beings for any definite purpose—what we call "nature" is left to herself.

There are other ways, however, in which we may cultivate our human gifts and faculties—by study, exercise, and practice. When we find a natural musical gift we try thus to cultivate it, with the result that some voices are a great deal better and more suited to the composer's purpose than others; but we nearly always find that the

degree of really deep musical cultivation is in an inverse ratio to the amount of natural vocal faculty. Let me take as an example the voices of two very well-known performers—the voices of Madame Melba and Mr. George Henschel. In Melba you have what may be described as a perfect human voice and a perfect method of producing vocal sounds, so that to hear a single note or a trill of Melba's voice is to receive an exquisite pleasure of the senses. But the musician who listens to her learns that his pleasure often stops at that point; that the voice does not always mean all it seems to mean; that the singer appears not to feel or understand all the depths of the composer's feeling and meaning; that although the voice is perfect and perfectly cultivated, the musical understanding is less perfect. In the case of Henschel you have the opposite state of affairs—a voice the quality of which is to many ears positively disagreeable, and the utterance of which may produce no sensuous pleasure whatever, but which is so cultivated, which is used as the expression of a musical personality so profoundly artistic and so masterly in its realisation of the composer's finest meaning, that one receives a pleasure of a much higher order, and quite different from the pleasure of the senses. The

ideal, of course, is the combination of the two, a voice as lovely and unearthly as that of Madame Melba, allied to a musical sensibility as delicate and masterly as that of Henschel; but it is an ideal very seldom realised.

But every one has a voice, and every one can sing even a little, with the result that every one, however unmusical he may be, can understand singing and experience a direct appeal from it; and therefore song is at once the simplest, the most popular, and, in some ways, the most perfect form of musical art. It has developed almost exclusively on two lines—the folk-song or natural music of a people, simple and traditional, sung by every one, and expressing all national characteristics; and the composed song, narrative or dramatic, which began with the ballad, and developed right on to the opera. Perhaps the most perfect form of song hitherto produced has been the German *lied* as it was developed by Schubert and Schumann; it is a combination of folk-music and invented music; and in its length and proportion, its power of giving perfect expression in a few bars to a complete musical idea, and yet remaining truly lyrical, this form of musical art has never been surpassed. The interpreter here must not only have a voice to sing with, but a genuine community with the

romantic spirit that inspired those compositions, so that their performance is a test not so much of vocal technique on the part of the interpreter as of genuine musical feeling and understanding.

II

Let us now turn to the second group of interpreters—the players of musical instruments—and consider for a moment their qualifications and opportunities. In this case, odd as it may appear, no natural gift is absolutely essential, except the one gift which is necessary to all interpreters in common—the gift of what we call an accurate musical ear. I call this a gift because it appears so to us to-day ; we have people who cannot distinguish one note from another, and we have other people with an ear so sensitive that they can tell the pitch of any note sung in any environment, and in relation to any other note. But I doubt very much whether this condition of the auditory senses ought to be regarded as abnormal. It seems to me that what we call a perfect ear for music is only the auditory sense in a perfectly healthy state, and that the majority of people who have not got it are to that extent diseased. Among the Hungarians,

for example, what is exceptional with us is commonplace ; it is the exception for a Hungarian peasant not to have what we should describe as a perfect ear for music. So that I cannot regard this as a particular gift or endowment in the ordinary sense of the word, and to that extent I feel justified in saying that the player of an instrument has no need for any particular endowment. It is with him almost purely a matter of training, but it is training of a very elaborate and arduous kind, combining physical dexterity with a curious mental process for which we have no name, but which consists in an absolute correlation of the hand and the eye, a faculty which is found at its highest development in jugglers or conjurers, and in pianists.

For what has to be done in the case of the interpreter of music who plays an instrument is that he or she, reading from the printed page a series of symbols representing musical sounds, must instantly translate those symbols into muscular movements of the fingers, which are not only combined, but which follow each other with extreme rapidity, and with an extraordinary complexity of variation. The production of sound in musical instruments being mechanical, the composer can himself control the interpretation to a slightly

greater extent than in the case of vocal performers ; for when he has indicated that a certain note has to be struck and held for a certain time, and when by marks and directions he has determined, not only the length of the note, but the degree of force with which it shall be struck and even the method of laying the finger upon it—or, in the case of music for the violin, when he has directed which string is to be played, the weight with which the bow has to be pressed upon it, the position of the bow on the string, near to or distant from the bridge, and the direction of the bow whether upward or downward—when the composer has done all this, although he still leaves a great deal in the power of the performer, absence of musical feeling or of sympathy with him on the part of the performer will probably not work such havoc as it would in the case of the singer.

From this has probably resulted the immense variety in the merits of instrumental interpreters of music, and from this also arose an evil which happily we are getting away from now, which went far to damage the musical sense of the middle classes in this country during three parts of the nineteenth century. I refer to the absence of any recognised standard of ability, which made it possible for people to play and sing in public who

had no right to do so, and whose doing so was for sensitive people an infliction of the most dreadful kind. Who has forgotten, or can ever forget, the intolerable agonies of the evening party of twenty years ago?—when some hapless young woman would go to the piano, and there commit a deliberate and hideous murder on the spiritual idea of some great mind—a murder as revolting in its details as many of those merely physical offences which rouse our anger to such a degree that we hang people by the neck for them. And the gentleman who sang bass, and who perhaps did not murder any fine composition, but who deliberately and wantonly created a nuisance by interpreting a composition which was not fine, but in all respects base and absurd—we all remember him too, remember him with fear and resentment.

Now how did this state of things come about? In this connection the psychology of that evening party which we would otherwise so gladly forget is worth a moment's consideration. This dreadfully low standard, or rather absence of standard, this lack of shame which permitted people to attempt to do what they were totally unable to do, had its origin in the very universality of music. Not every one can paint a little; not every one can balance on his chin a pole up which his wife

and two children have climbed ; no one pretends to be able to do these things who has not seriously practised the art of doing them ; and therefore you do not, in fact, find people seriously inviting you to watch them balance a pole on their chins who have not the faintest idea how to set about it. But every one, as I said, has a voice, and is capable of uttering a song of some kind ; and as the musical faculty is in the minds of some people confounded with the mere ability of uttering sounds, you get people uttering sounds, or causing instruments to produce them, under the impression that what they are doing has some relation to music. There is thus no absolute standard, no sharp line dividing those who have a musical sense from those who have none. That unhappy expression "musical" has indeed much to answer for.

"Are you musical?" asks Mr. A. of Miss B.

"No," says Miss B. "I don't know one note from another ; but my sister, Miss C., is musical."

"Do you like music?" asks Mr. A.

"I tell you I don't know anything about it," says Miss B., "but I know what I like."

"Do you like the piano?" says Mr. A.

"Not much," says Miss B.

Mr. A. thereupon passes over to Miss C., and says :

AS INTERPRETER

"I hear you are very musical."

"Oh yes, I adore it," says Miss C.

"I hear you play the piano," says Mr. A.

"Well, I do a little," says Miss C.

"Do play us something," says Mr. A.

"Oh! I couldn't really," says Miss C.

"But do play something," says Mr. A.

"But I am so out of practice," says Miss C.

"Never mind, play anything," says Mr. A. desperately.

"Oh! I didn't know there was going to be music," says Miss C.

"Have you brought your music?" says Mr. A.

"Yes," says Miss C. "It is in the 'hall,' I think."

Whereupon, after much fuss and feigned reluctance on the part of Miss C., the music is brought, the plants and photograph frames pushed a little way back from the piano, and the sacrifice prepared.

"I am afraid the piano is rather out of tune," says Mrs. A.

"Oh! it doesn't matter," says Miss C.

Indeed it does not. Miss C. sits down, and coldly and wickedly perpetrates what is a very monstrous affront, not only to the ears, but to the intelligence of every normal person present. No

one enjoys it, except Miss C. and her mother, who is totally without the musical instinct, and who fatuously regards this feat of her offspring as a species of public triumph. No one else really likes it. Many of the people present are people of genuine common sense and sound understanding, but a kind of charm hangs over them, the charm of the so-called Musical Evening. They are there to play or sing, or to be played at or sung at. It is considered polite to ask people to do this, even if they are incapable of it, and, astounding fact! to press those to do so who show an inkling of shame or reluctance. Meanwhile Miss B. sits apart in her corner, genuinely disenjoying herself, and under the impression that it is because she is not musical. She is, in fact, the only musical person in the room, and has a sensitive ear which is daily tortured by what she is taught to regard as music.

"What a pity you are not musical," says Mr. A., "but then, of course, you paint"—which indeed the poor girl does, very badly, having an exquisite ear for sound and no sense of colour at all; but her mother had made up her mind, before she was married, that her eldest daughter should paint and her youngest daughter play the piano; hence the evening party.

Happily that state of things is passing from us,

if not already past. It is no longer deemed a compliment by intelligent people to ask their guests on the one hand to exhibit their incapacity, or on the other to endure acute suffering under the name of music. It was an inevitable state in our musical progress, brought about by the spread of education, and the improvements in the manufacture of pianos, and the cultivation of that mid-Victorian ideal of home-life which has so much to answer for in our lives, both good and bad. We are indeed going to the other extreme. The technique of playing has been studied to such an extent, and scientific methods cultivated of producing the necessary muscular strength and freedom of action in the finger-joints, that the technical standard of performance has risen very rapidly. By the methods of such a master as Leschetitzky, it is possible for a frail young girl of quite feeble physique to acquire in a few years the technique of a virtuoso and a mechanical power of control which would have made many a virtuoso of the nineteenth century envious. The result has been that what we may call the "parlour performer" has not a chance in competition with her professionally trained friend. The increase of music-schools and conservatoires has placed this professional training within the

reach of almost any youth or girl with decided musical tastes. People, in short, are accustomed to hear competent performers, and are learning not to tolerate the incompetent.

But here again, in spite of such a manifest and obvious improvement in musical conditions, we are confronted with the inevitable drawback. With the great advance in technique, excellence is not always associated with a corresponding advance in musical feeling or understanding. There is a great danger that people may come to care more for performances than for the thing performed. Not what is done, but how it is done, seems to be the chief question with modern audiences. Now, extremely important as the manner of a thing is, I cannot admit that it is quite so important as the matter. It is right that we should hear music as perfectly performed as possible, but it is also right that we should consider what it is that is being performed. The interpretation is not everything, and the interpreter in music is not the highest order of musician. It is very necessary, whenever we listen to a musical performance, to make this distinction to ourselves between the performance as a performance and as an opportunity of hearing a work of art. We all know what it is to

hear perfect performances that leave us absolutely cold, and to hear other performances that are far from perfect, and which have yet succeeded in conveying to us an absolute and unforgettable interpretation of the music performed.

So that we must make another distinction, and say that a perfect performance is not necessarily a perfect interpretation. If you go to the opera in London, Paris, or New York, you will hear the most famous vocal artists in the world sing some of the most famous music. But it is very rarely that you hear there a really perfect interpretation. People do not go there to hear the music, but the performers ; they do not go to hear Tristan or Traviata, but to hear Caruso in Tristan and Melba in Traviata. That merely means that the personality of the interpreter, instead of being a conducting link between composer and listener, is obtruded as a barrier or screen between them. It was, as we know, one of Wagner's great missions to do away with that inartistic state of affairs, to banish the *prima donna* from the entirely false place which she had acquired. And though his influence was great, it has only succeeded in the case of his own works, and only partially in them ; it is very hard indeed to get an opera performance in which the

singers are content to be impersonal and to devote their talents, not to the glorification of themselves, but to the true interpretation of the work in hand. Yet this undoubtedly is at once a duty and a great opportunity of the musician as interpreter—to lay his powers and his talents at the feet of the composer, and devote them solely to the perfect interpretation of his music. And I need not say that where that is the interpreter's sole idea, only the worthiest music is likely to be performed ; for whereas any rubbish may serve to show off a voice or a talent, it will only be to the finest and greatest music that a true artist will be content to surrender his personality.

In the career of every artist there comes a supreme moment when he or she must choose between two services—the service of art or the service of self. While the artist is actually studying and qualifying, this choice is hardly offered ; he is all artist then, because he is learning and trying to grasp and achieve a command of his art ; the artist is always a learner, and the true learner is in some degree an artist. But with achievement and mastery come recognition and applause, come opportunity and power. The artist has become a master, a teacher,

endowed with that subtle quality that lays the world at his bidding; when he may either make his followers glorify him or glorify his art. The choice is between serving his art or making it serve him. For the artist who remains true there can be no choice; he must go on serving and learning. I have very vividly in my mind a performance which I recently heard in London by one of the very greatest singers of the day. It is many years now since this singer reached the cross-roads at which the choice, to which I have referred, was offered to her; and I am afraid that since then she has learnt nothing more of music, and has bound her art in golden chains to the service of herself. At the concert of which I am speaking this was very clearly demonstrated. In arias by Verdi and Donizetti, which were written by masters in the art of displaying the voice, her performance left nothing to be wished for; Verdi and Donizetti knew their business too well. But in a song-cycle by a modern composer, a work demanding far higher artistic qualities in its rendering than these, because vocally inferior to them, the singer showed very clearly her conception of the relations between singer and composer. The point for the moment has nothing to do with the merit of the com-

position. It was deemed worthy by the performer to be sung before some thousands of people who had paid a great deal of money for their seats; and in such circumstances there is only one thing for the artist to do if she has any respect for herself, her audience, the composer, or the art of music—to spare no effort or inquiry or pains to bring out every fragment of meaning and beauty that there may be in the composition. What happened was that the great artist sang these four little songs in a way that, if I had been the composer, would have made me turn hot and cold alternately. It was not only that the ideas which the composer had attempted to express were apparently unsympathetic to the singer, and that she had not a clear conception of how these four little songs should be sung; it was that she made no attempt to disguise her complete lack of interest in such passages (and they were many) that did not lend themselves to the display of her voice. It was so obvious that these little songs were beneath her contempt; the passages in which the lyrical expression was given to the accompaniment instead of to the voice were so hurried and slurred over in the main business of getting to the high note or the beautiful winging cadences of tone that are

this singer's secret, the poor composer's secret (supposing him to have had one) remained untold. Now if these songs were bad songs, or not worth the singer's trouble to sing as well as she was able, their appearance on her programme was wholly inexcusable ; if they were good songs or deemed by her worthy to be sung to her audience, her neglect to sing them with respect, with care, and with all the mastery of which she is capable, was equally inexcusable. It is the sign of the true artist that he glorifies everything he touches and puts new meaning and new life into the meaning and life around him ; that he takes a small thing and transmutes it by his art into a great thing. But this singer, apparently finding no meaning in these songs, had no meaning of her own to bring to them ; and if she found them a small thing she certainly made them no greater, since they issued from her magic throat a considerably smaller thing than when they left the composer's brain. And that is what I mean when I say that the artist who tries to interpret music must distinguish between interpretation and mere performance.

III

We will now consider the third and most complex of the methods of interpreting music—the art of conducting. The psychology and technique of this art are discussed in a later chapter ; here we shall merely consider the conductor as the interpreting link between composer and audience. Conducting, as we know it and as it is understood to-day, is an entirely modern art, dating no farther back than Wagner. He may be said indeed to be the inventor of it. Berlioz, his contemporary, shared the pioneer work with him, although they worked on different lines and in a mistrustful independence of one another. But it was Wagner who first insisted in any large way on a training and discipline of the orchestra which would ensure to the conductor the absolute control of every note sounded, and it was Wagner who sent out into the world that band of apostles who devoted their lives entirely to this one art, and spread its methods and technique throughout the world of music. With the exception of Liszt and Von Bülow, who were also pianists, these musicians were conductors pure and simple ; they were the first who raised conducting to the level of a separate art, and they were

the first great *virtuosi* in conducting. Such a thing had been hitherto unheard of. The old Kapelmeister, who simply beat time with a roll of music or a violin bow, had really no more in common with them than had the old *pulsator organum*, who beat with his fists broad organ notes which by heavy mechanism admitted wind to a few pipes, with a Kendrick Pyne or an Alexandre Guilmant. As with the organ throughout several centuries of evolution, so within a space of only fifty years has the whole technique of conducting been revolutionised. And the modern frail wand of hickory, which sometimes hardly moves in the conductor's hand, is not more different from the old roll of music, or the later pot-stick which was wielded from side to side by movements of the conductor's whole arm, than is the sensitiveness of modern orchestral players different from the phlegmatic stolidity of their predecessors. It may surprise some of us to know that there is such a thing as technique in conducting; it looks so very simple to stand in front of an orchestra and beat time with the music; but that is not what is done by the modern conductor. He has to acquire a very elaborate technique. He must have the wrist action of a violinist; for if you watch born conductors with such perfect technique as Nikisch or

Henry Wood, or, among the younger school, Landon Ronald, you will notice that their movements, although quiet and unobtrusive to the audience, are as varied and as expressive to the orchestra as the music which they are conducting. Henry Wood has perhaps the most perfect wrist action of any conductor who has ever lived. His bâton moves as freely as a branch swinging in the wind, although his arm may not be moving at all; and you can easily imagine that the extraordinary delicacy of control from wrist and fingers thus produced when it is added to greater gestures of the forearm or of the whole arm give a range of expressive gesture which is almost infinite. All this is quite modern, quite a new thing, and it means that the conductor is doing far more than giving the time to the orchestra; he is giving by these very gestures not only the time but the *nuances* of expression, and, more subtly still, transmitting his own emotional sense of the music to every member of the orchestra, so that, in a sense, and through the sensitive human medium of the players, the conductor is himself playing every instrument.

It will be realised at once what a very great revolution a new art like this is bound to effect in music. It has for one thing revolutionised the art of writing for the orchestra, and greatly

developed the technique of orchestral players ; so that whereas in the old works on orchestration great numbers of notes and sequences of notes were marked as "unplayable" for this instrument or that, there is practically nothing now that is unplayable on any instrument. In a first-rate modern orchestra every player is a *virtuoso*, and the instruments themselves have been so enormously improved that passages can now be written which would have been laughed at fifty years ago as unplayable. Here, again, the modern composer's resources have been infinitely extended ; for formerly any work of a florid nature, any rapid passage work, and free and elaborate melodic movement, was confined to the strings, the other instruments being merely used to fill in the harmony or support the rhythm ; now the same passage work can be entrusted equally well to the wood-wind and even to the brass.

Well, all this complex machinery is controlled by the conductor in the interests of the composer. He is the only interpreter of music whose business it is to be absolutely silent ; in silence he receives the idea of the music from the composer's score, and in silence transmits it to the company before him, who bring it to its birth of sound. And the equipment which fits him for this task is no simple

one. He must have all the composer's knowledge of the different instruments ; in fact, with the exception of the creative genius, he must have all the composer's technical equipment ; and in addition he must have certain qualities of personality which fit him to control and co-ordinate so various and difficult a body as is represented by a hundred extremely sensitive and able musicians. It is not enough for him to know how the piece of music ought to be interpreted ; he must be able to transmit the knowledge to his orchestra, to convince them that there is only one way in which that music must be played, and that is his way. Before he comes to his desk with a modern score he must have spent hours and hours in private reading and study of it, as a pianist would practise a piece or an actor con his part ; and he must lead his orchestra from the first stages of unfamiliarity to a perfect comprehension of his meaning with regard to the music, and finally present through them to his audience a perfect interpretation of the composer's task. No light task that, as you may imagine. As Berlioz has said : "He should feel, comprehend, and be moved, and the performers should feel that he feels, comprehends, and is moved : then his emotion communicates itself to those whom he directs, his inward fire

warms them, his electric glow animates them, his force of impulse excites them ; he throws around him the vital irradiations of musical art. If he be inert and frozen, on the contrary, he paralyses all about him, like those floating masses of the polar seas, the approach of which is perceived through the sudden cooling of the atmosphere.

"Of the three intermediate agents between the composer and his audience, singers have often been accused of forming the most dangerous ; but, in my opinion, without justice. The most formidable, to my thinking, is the conductor of the orchestra. A bad singer can spoil only his own part ; while an incapable or malevolent conductor ruins all. Happy also may that composer esteem himself when the conductor into whose hands he has fallen is not at once incapable and inimical. For nothing can resist the pernicious influence of this person. The most admirable orchestra is then paralysed, the most excellent singers are perplexed and rendered dull ; there is no longer any vigour or unity ; under such direction the noblest daring of the author appears extravagance, enthusiasm beholds its soaring flight checked, inspiration is violently brought down to earth, the angel's wings are broken, the man of genius passes for a madman or an idiot, the divine statue is precipitated

from its pedestal and dragged in the mud. And, what is worse, the public, and even auditors endowed with the highest musical intelligence, are reduced to the impossibility (if a new work be in question, and they are hearing it for the first time) of recognising the ravages perpetrated by the orchestral conductor—of discovering the follies, faults, and crimes he commits. If they clearly perceive certain defects of execution, not he, but his victims, are in such cases made responsible. If he have caused the chorus-singers to fail in taking up a point in a *finale;* if he have allowed a discordant wavering to take place between the choir and the orchestra, or between the extreme sides of the instrumental body; if he have absurdly hurried a movement; if he have allowed it to linger unduly, if he have interrupted a singer before the end of a phrase, they exclaim, 'The singers are detestable! The orchestra has no firmness; the violins have disfigured the principal design; everybody has been wanting in vigour and animation; the tenor was quite out, he did not know his part; the harmony is confused; the author is no accompanist; the voices are——' etc., etc., etc.

"Except in listening to great works already known and esteemed, intelligent hearers can hardly distinguish the true culprit, and allot to him his

due share of blame; but the number of these is still so limited that their judgment has little weight; and the bad conductor—in presence of the public who would pitilessly hiss a vocal accident of a good singer—reigns with all the calm of a bad conscience, in his baseness and inefficiency."

These words are no exaggeration of the bad influence exerted by unworthy, insincere, or incompetent interpreters of music. Happily they are becoming rarer every day. The art of musical performance is one in which we can definitely say that there has been steady progress, and it has probably never reached so high a pitch of excellence as it has reached to-day. The performers have educated the audience, and the audience in turn have continued the education of the performers by insisting on a higher and higher standard. Technical perfection may for the present be left thus automatically to look after itself; what requires constant criticism and constant vigilance is the spirit in which the performance is given. When you go to a concert or an opera or a recital there are two questions which you must ask yourself about the performer—what is his equipment for his task, and in what spirit does he perform it? It has hitherto been the custom with most people, I

think, to put these two questions in the order in which I have given them ; but I would advise my readers to reverse the order, and inquire first into the spirit of the performance, and afterwards into its technical merits. No one is likely to come before us now in absolute technical incompetence; but many people will come before us who are spiritually and artistically incompetent, whatever their technical accomplishments may be. Depend upon it we shall soon be aware, or ought to be aware, if the spirit in which the performer works is a true one. If his object is the display of his own talent, or any other form of self-glorification, then I do not care what his technical equipment may be—we shall get no true interpretation of the music. If, on the other hand, his motive and spirit are pure, and his desire is to sink his own personality and to be a mouthpiece by which the composer's message may reach us, then his work will be artistic and, even if it falls short of technical brilliance, will leave with us a definite impression, and produce a definite atmosphere.

It is the business of the musician, as interpreter, not to pursue fame or reputation as ends in themselves, but to leave them to come or not as they will, and if they do come, to come as the results of a genuine foundation of artistic work

which he has laid. We must leave the flowers of things to bloom of themselves ; our work is among the roots and the soil. In musical interpretation, as in everything else, we must not expect to reap where we have not sown. The suns and rains and dews of heaven will bring things to blossom and fruit and flower in their own time and order ; and we who wish to be rich in these things must cultivate the soil in which they are to grow, and keep it free from other growths that would drain it of its virtue. In music, as in all life, we must choose first what we want, and then work for it ; for it is by working, and not by wishing, that men achieve their desires.

THE MUSICIAN AS HEARER

THE MUSICIAN AS HEARER

LISTENING to music, if it is not exactly an art, is at any rate a thing which can be cultivated and enjoyed in a greater or less degree in proportion as we concentrate and prepare our minds for it. There are very few people who can enjoy music in any and every frame of mind, and there is very little music that can be enjoyed without a considerable degree of attention and concentration. The concentration is, or ought to be, almost automatic, so that we are not conscious of making a mental effort; nevertheless we find, as a general rule, that our enjoyment is in exact proportion to the degree with which we clear our minds of all previous occupations, and address them singly to the music we are hearing.

This is true especially of music heard in the concert-room; and let us admit at once that the concert-room is far from being an ideal place for hearing any kind of music. The concert-room is

a makeshift ; the earliest music definitely written to give people pleasure was essentially chamber-music, meant to be played in a room to a few people gathered there for the express purpose of listening to it. As more people wished to listen to the music it became necessary to find a larger room, and so on, until it was found convenient to have a very large room or hall set apart for the purpose. And then the number of performers was increased, and the size of the orchestra ; for the modern orchestra as we know it is nothing more nor less than a development of the string quartette. But the development of the modern orchestra has not been quite logical. It has attained a standard size of about a hundred performers at the outside ; and yet that is an illogical thing, because if an orchestra of a hundred is right for a hall of a certain size, it would certainly be wrong for a hall of greater or less dimensions. A skilful organ-builder, when he is designing an instrument for a given building, designs it in accordance with a certain acoustic principle or diapason of that building. The number of pipes and stops, and the scale or size of each pipe, vary with the size and shape of the building, in order that the instrument when complete shall generate sound-waves of exactly the right length

and volume in proportion to the building. Thus an organ that would be suitable for the Albert Hall would not be suitable for Ripon Cathedral; yet the same size of orchestra would be expected to serve for both.

The fact that we have thus standardised our orchestras without respect to the size of buildings in which they are heard means an inevitable blurring of certain effects when the building is out of proportion to the size of the orchestra. It also means, for the listener, that music which sounds perfect and agreeable in one place will sound imperfect and not so agreeable in another, and the listener will often quite unfairly blame the players or the conductor for what is in effect a fault of acoustics. This is one of the few directions in which there remains something to be done in the development of modern orchestral performances. No one, so far as I know, has yet discovered what is the ideal building for an orchestra of a hundred players. The acoustics of the matter are still left to guesswork, and we continue to build concert-halls the dimensions of which are governed by considerations of space, of the number of people that can be got into them, of architectural convenience—considerations of every kind, in fact, except the one which

ought to be regarded as most important of all—consideration of the effect which will be produced by a full orchestra playing in the building. The ideal concert-hall will be so built that the average orchestra of a hundred players will sound to perfection in it; and the ideal orchestra of the future will add to its numbers or take away from them in accordance with the size of the hall in which it is playing. Concert-hall performances will then not be so much in the nature of a compromise as they are at present.

I have said that the frame of mind of the listener is all-important, and especially at a concert, because of the unideal conditions which exist, and which the listener has often to conquer by a deliberate effort of the mind. I will return to these conditions presently; but in order to realise that they need not exist, I would point out three forms of music in which the preparation of the mind on the part of the listener is not all-important. The one is chamber-music, where the music is so near to one, so intimate in its appeal, and so dominating, that we surrender ourselves to it at once; it is almost as though we were taking a direct part in it ourselves. Another such case is that of ideal church music heard in a vast cathedral. There, again, no effort is needed,

because the mind is already prepared by the spirit of the building, by the exalting effect of sublime architecture which, when the soft notes of an organ begin to sound in a great cathedral, seems to have found an actual voice. Organ-tones are the true voice of a cathedral; without them, something seems to be wanting, we are conscious of a sense of incompleteness until those suave voices are uttered in the soft waves of sound that flow out and creep round the building. The mind is then soothed and satisfied; there is a sense of consummation. The third instance is that of the opera—opera, I mean, performed under proper conditions. There the scenery and the movement of the drama attune and concentrate the mind and the attention, and bear the same relation to the music as the building itself does in the case of a cathedral. The effort of concentration is not necessary, because a want has already been created in the mind which the music satisfies.

But to return to the concert-room. How often do we really hear music under ideal conditions there? We get so accustomed to it that we take all the deficiencies of the concert-room system for granted; but, in fact, at least fifty per cent of our enjoyment of music is wasted in the ordinary

concert-room. To begin with, we are very seldom physically comfortable. It appears to be beyond the ingenuity of man to devise a form of seat for a concert-room or a church which, while being hygienic and portable, is anything else but an instrument of mild torture, grotesquely unfitted to the anatomy of the human beings who are to occupy it. You may sometimes sit comfortably in a theatre or a music-hall, but not in a concert-room or a church. And if part of one's consciousness is occupied with aches and pains of one's body, it will be inevitably less free to steep itself in the atmosphere, musical or religious, with which it is surrounded. There are many other things which tend to distract one in the ordinary concert-room ; and by far the chief distraction is the presence of other people there. The ideal concert-room would contain only one person—oneself, or such companions as one carefully chose to admit—too difficult and desirable an achievement for any one but a man who was called mad—King Ludwig of Bavaria. Failing that, the next ideal arrangement for a concert-room would be that every seat should be constructed on the principle of the condemned pew in a prison chapel, from which murderers have the privilege of seeing and hearing a religious

celebration alone, without afflicting, or being afflicted by, the sight of their fellow-convicts.

But not being murderers or madmen, we have to put up in the concert-room with the thousand little distractions occasioned by the presence of other human beings, each with his or her own individuality, and each given to the expression of it in some way which may not be our way. If you are moved by certain music to wave or nod your head, there is no reason why you should not do so ; but it seems a pity that I should be annoyed by the sight of it to such an extent that my own enjoyment is quite spoiled ; while it is equally a pity, if the same music moves me to smile or make faces, that you should be disturbed by the spectacle. Yet, as we all know, these little things do exist, and our minds are in such an extremely sensitive state when we are listening to music that the tiniest thing is apt to ruffle and jar us. The rustling of programmes, the movement and shaking about of feathers in hats, the jingle of chains and purses, and above all that annoying passion for coughing with which some people are invariably seized in a public building—these are all things which, whether we are conscious of them or not, subtract from the sum of consciousness which we have at our disposal, and

which is our machinery for the enjoyment of music.

Another difficulty which the hearer has to contend with lies in what may be called the literary interpretation of music. The annotated programme is sometimes, and ought always to be, a great assistance to the listener ; but it may also be a great snare to him. It may be overdone ; he may come to rely too much upon it, with the result that any music about which there is no printed information available is apt to be quite meaningless to him. This means that he does not use his imagination ; that, reading in the programme that certain mental images will be produced by the music he is about to hear, he has those mental images already in his mind before a note is played, and merely identifies what he hears with them. This is a very different thing, you will agree, from receiving a mental image direct from the music itself, and it is dangerous because, not only does it prevent the imagination from being exercised on its own account, but because it is apt to impose upon the mind quite an arbitrary association of certain music with certain ideas.

Now the number of images or ideas that you can definitely express in music, so that there shall

be no doubt whatever about your meaning is comparatively few. Restlessness and tranquillity you can express, but the restlessness may be that of strife, of discontent, of anger, of joyful impatience, of misery, or of excitement; and without a context or guide of some kind you cannot tell by the music which was intended. And the tranquillity may be that of a hillside sleeping in summer sunshine, or of a child in its mother's care, of satisfied love, of sluggish content, of a river wandering through a meadow, of sleep, or of death; and again the music will not definitely tell you of itself which of these ideas is intended. The result of this ambiguity of the musical idiom is that a great deal is left to the individual temperament. And this, again, is one of the great charms of music, because each listener will, or ought to, interpret the music in accordance with his own particular individuality.

What music can express is a mental atmosphere or, as we say, a frame of mind. The contemplation of certain ideas produces in the composer a certain frame of mind, to which he gives expression in his music; and that induces in the listener the same frame of mind, which suggests to him, not necessarily the same images which inspired it in the composer, but the set of

images which are most closely associated in the hearer's personality with the frame of mind which has been induced. To take an elementary example : the composer contemplates the clouds on a still summer afternoon, and writes a tranquil open-air piece of music. I hear it and receive an extremely definite open-air impression ; but that open-air tranquillity being in my mind, through youthful associations perhaps, or for any one out of a dozen reasons, associated with trees, it is perhaps large masses of trees and shadows of leafy green foliage that are suggested to me when I hear the music played. And to some one else perhaps that tranquillity of the open-air will suggest a great, still, shimmering sheet of water ; and to yet another the silence and space of an empty moorland. So you see, in this case, although the composer has transmitted his frame of mind to each hearer, yet in each case the image suggested to the mind is different. Now comes the programme-annotator, who happens to know where the composer was when he invented that music ; and he tells us that this piece of music represents drifting clouds on a summer afternoon. Unless our own powers of musical translation are very strong and very sensitive, we shall be apt to accept that statement, to think about clouds, and

be listening for music which shall suggest clouds to us, and when we hear it say to ourselves, "That is cloud music." But deep within each of us there is a sense of disappointment; for to one of us it was really tree music, to another sea music, and to another moor music; our mind is really at war with our consciousness, and the effect is bewildering and blurring.

To give you a practical example of this condition of things, I will consider a piece of music which will be familiar to most of my readers—Chopin's A Minor impromptu—and write two "programmes" for it, each of which shall be different from the other, but both sufficiently in accord with the main outlines of the music. Here is one interpretation.

> *A sensitive impetuous feminine heart goes on its way in lightness and in sadness, a pretty lightness and a pretty sadness, now grave, now gay, but a beautiful singing thing too full of life and movement to pause for very long or be sad for very long; eager and impetuous, soaring one moment, drooping the next as though on tired wings, but filling the world about it with melody and sunshine. It opens to no more human power than the ordinary things about*

it, it is untouched, untroubled—until suddenly its song pauses, it becomes quiet, awed, gradually hushing itself in the presence of some unknown and approaching thing. That eager and unconscious lightness becomes conscious, and listens and waits and holds its breath.

From the surrounding world comes another voice, firm, dominating, troubling, neither gay nor sad, but grave with purpose, full of intention, full of moment and of destiny for the feminine voice that fluttered into silence at its approach. And suddenly the grave voice breaks into song, into melody ; and the feminine voice, awakened to something new, answers it, breaks into new melody with it, sings a new and more soaring song, in which its own life and movement is mingled with the graver and stronger melody of the other voice. This double song rises in intensity, rises to fervour, rises to passion, rises to storm.

And suddenly it breaks off in some such stormy transport, uncompleted. The feminine voice returns, goes back to its simpler song, like a song that is sung by solitary birds, not to please any other creature, but to please the singer herself. And the voice sings on to itself in the old strain, grave and gay, bubbling and

soaring and drooping; and yet surely there is something in it that there was not before, a tinge of darker colour, a strain of deeper sadness, a memory of that greater, graver song which it sang once and sings no more. It becomes quieter, the voice sings on to itself, but ever more murmuringly; it sings to a close, it sings itself to sleep.

Now there you have a purely fantastic verbal paraphrase of this piece of music. Play it to yourself, or think of it, and fit my little story to it, and see how well it fits. Now let me give you one more interpretation. Try to forget the other and your own, pretend that you are about to hear the music for the first time, and that this is what you are going to hear.

It is a May morning in a woodland glade through which a great main road passes. The birds are singing in every tree, the hawthorn buds are breaking, the river ripples in silver over its stones and pebbles, the breeze, a cool and wonderful morning breeze of spring, comes blowing down the valley, tossing the tree-tops and making the young leaves flash back the sunshine from a thousand shining surfaces. White clouds hurry across the valley, and their

shadows stream over the meadows where the lambs are frisking and playing. And ever the breeze blows fresher and fresher; it tumbles the tree-tops merrily, so that the birds that are singing there break into louder and louder melody.

And suddenly the birds are stilled; there is a lull in the wind; another sound breaks upon their ears—the tramp of feet, the sound of military music. Along the road through the valley is marching a battalion of soldiers; drums beating, flags flying, bands playing, and the sunlight flashing on swords and helmets and bayonets. The birds are silent as this mighty force sweeps by, the music growing louder and louder and the banners streaming in the wind and unrolling all their bright colours to the sun. And presently, while the army still marches by, the soldiers break into a song, not a fighting song, but a marching song of the road, of the things that they have left behind them, the things that make life precious to them—not a song of the fight, but a song of the things for which men fight. And the song passes and ends, and the army passes, the music dies away in the distance; the road is empty again, and over the woodland glade

sweeps the sunshine. Again comes the breeze, again wakes the music of the tree-tops, the love-music of the birds; and so waking, it soars through the morning, it sings itself into ecstasy till the sun stands high in the heavens, and the breeze dies, and sound and movement begin to sink into noontide quiet, into noontide rest, into the peace and silence of the sun.

You see that one might go on to any extent inventing verbal paraphrases for a piece of music like this, and each one would find its adherents; but clearly it is entirely a matter of choice which you take; whatever you feel most truly in yourself, that is the right one. So far as Chopin is concerned, I am sure nothing at all like either of my interpretations was in his mind when he wrote that music. He found an interesting figure in two parts and worked it up to a climax; then, as a little variety was demanded to make the music symmetrical and beautiful in form, he added a simple melody in the middle by way of contrast, and developed and embroidered it in his own inimitable manner. And then again, for the sake of symmetry of form, he returned to his first figure and brought the music to a close. But what is important is that in inventing that

music, although his ideas were not the ideas which I have suggested to you, his frame of mind was a similar frame of mind to that suggested to me by the images I have given you. The tone of the middle passage is obviously graver and sterner than that of the beginning and the end; and so far my interpretation is not discordant with the composer's intention, although for me to impress it upon any one, or to suggest to you that it is with those images in your mind that you should in future listen to this music, would be a gross assumption on my part, and an attempt to get you to substitute my ideas for the composer's and your own.

The truth is that when one sits down to hear a piece of music, one should try to make one's mind as nearly a blank as possible; in fact, the kind of concentration of mind needed is that most difficult of all kinds—concentration upon nothing. One wants to prepare, as it were, a field of white upon which the music can throw its own images; and naturally the slightest distraction, the slightest sound or sight, is just as likely to get thrown upon the field as the music is. That is why our modern concert-rooms are in some ways so unsuitable for the hearing of music. The sense of sight can distract us just as easily

as the sense of sound, and my own feeling is that music, to be heard in perfection, should be heard in absolute darkness. I know that there are practical difficulties in the way of the carrying out of that idea, but any one who has attended a performance of Wagner operas at Bayreuth or Munich, or at any of the German theatres where his ideas are properly carried out, must have been conscious of the great practical assistance which absolute darkness gives to the sense of hearing, and to mental concentration of that sense. In the ideal concert-room of the future the lights will certainly be turned down during the performance of orchestral music, and probably of all music. I say nothing about ballad concerts, or other occasions devoted to the worship of the *prima donna*, because these things have nothing to do with ideal music ; but the first conductor who insists upon a darkened hall for the performance of a symphony will make an advance which others will soon be glad to follow.

There is another thing which curiously affects one's mood in listening to music, and that is the time of day in which we hear it. At present most big concerts are given in the evening, which is perhaps the worst time of day for the proper appreciation of music. Like so many

other things in our lives, this is a compromise; the evening is the only time which many people have at their disposal, and they come to hear music tired out with the labours of the day. That is all wrong. It is only certain kinds of music, very soothing, very hypnotic and physical in their effect, that one can really listen to with any pleasure when one is tired; but a large work demanding great concentration, and leading one through a vast range of emotion or of ideas, is in itself extremely exhausting, and is not a thing to come to at the end of the day. Indeed, most of us lead absurdly irrational lives. In the ideal life, the morning would be devoted to work —and by the morning I mean a really long morning, say from eight o'clock till one; the afternoon would be devoted to æsthetic recreation and more serious kinds of artistic enjoyment, such as music and the drama; the evening would be left free for only the lightest kinds of recreation and amusement, so that we should always finish the day, if possible, in a laughing mood. Some people might consider that my arrangement involved a great waste of working time; but I believe if all the people who now spread their work over from eight to ten hours were to concentrate it into those morning hours, they

might so occupy their minds for the rest of the day that both the volume and quality of their work would be increased rather than decreased. People would live more fully, and their lives would be enlarged and extended; and music would then have its rightful place as an educating, civilising, and spiritualising influence. As it is, it is mostly listened to by people who are mentally and physically tired, and its message is more than half muffled and lost.

It may be said that I dwell too much on ideal conditions instead of on conditions as they exist; but it is only by concentrating our minds on the ideal that we ever improve conditions at all, or move them on in the direction of our desire. And we should remember that in the three groups of people among whom the actual birth of musical sensation takes place—the composer, the interpreter, and the hearer—the hearer has an equally important place with the other two. In some ways he is the predominant partner, for it is he who ultimately determines how the music shall be produced, and how it shall be interpreted, and it is he who, by regulating the conditions in which music is produced and listened to, can do more than any one else in securing the attainment of the ideal.

THE ART OF THE CONDUCTOR

THE ART OF THE CONDUCTOR

CONDUCTING as we know it to-day—that is to say, the interpretation of complex symphonic music by one man—is an entirely modern art. Bach, Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven never heard their works as we can hear them. In one sense they wrote entirely for the future; when they looked at their scores they no doubt realised and heard with the inner ear all the delicate effects and possibilities of which the music was capable; but they never heard it with their outward ears. Even at the time of Beethoven's death orchestral performances were extremely rough; there was no such thing as a really trained professional orchestra, accustomed always to play together, available for the interpretation of symphonic music; but small permanent orchestras were on such occasions reinforced by amateurs, with such results as we know. And even when Mendelssohn, who did so much to draw attention to the great music of the past and

to secure its adequate interpretation, came to conduct symphonies and large orchestral works, his sole advice to conductors was to take everything at a fairly brisk *tempo*, so that faults of execution should not be too prominent. And this was his own method.

The modern art of conducting was invented by Richard Wagner. In saying this I do not forget Hector Berlioz, who at the same time and by different means had arrived at profound dissatisfaction with the existing methods, and laboured to improve them ; but Berlioz founded no school of conducting, while Wagner sent out disciples all over the musical world to spread the good news that the "pigtail" school, as he called it, was at an end, and that orchestral performance was a thing as capable of variety and contrast and delicacy in the range of its expression as any other form of musical interpretation. This art arose entirely from his own works. He had indeed, by long and patient study of Beethoven, Mozart, and Weber, arrived at the conclusion that the orchestral works of the great masters had hardly ever been properly heard, and his essay on conducting marked an epoch in the history of music. But when his own scores came to be examined, they were pronounced unplayable. By

the old methods, moreover, they were unplayable, and ghastly indeed must have been some of the performances of opera orchestras in Germany at their first rehearsal of his scores. No amount of merely beating one, two, three, four in a bar could produce melody and harmony out of the chaos presented by the score. The thing seemed hopeless.

Like every creator or originator, Wagner had to begin at the beginning and form the tools with which his work was to be done. Liszt and Von Bülow, the greatest contemporary masters of the technique of the pianoforte, were the first to realise that there was at least a possibility of the performance of Wagner's works ; they had learned from him how to conduct Beethoven, and the knowledge thus gained was applied to the interpretation of his own scores. And after them he trained a whole band of disciples in the interpretation of his operas—Richter, Seidl, Levi, Richard Strauss, Mottl, Weingartner, and Nikisch were the chief of them ; all these became great exponents of the new art of conducting.

These men had many varieties of quality and talent, but it will be seen that one thing was common to the equipment of all of them: they were all trained in the interpretation of one set

of works—Wagner's own operas. And that fact gives us the key to the new art of conducting as compared with the old art of beating time; for they had these scores absolutely in their heads. They lived with them; their lives were spent in rehearsing and copying and drilling until every note was as much their own as if they had themselves composed the score; thus when they came to conduct they were not merely reading the music of the printed page a bar in advance of the orchestra; they were leading the orchestra in something that was within themselves, something that came from their own inner being. They knew every note of every part, often knew it better than the player himself; and if he stumbled or made a mistake they could sing the right note for him through all the maze of other parts.

This kind of familiarity with the score on the part of the conductor had been practically unknown before, and it is one of the chief features of modern conducting. Before the conductor to-day confronts an orchestra with a new score he has probably spent hours in silent study of it, reading it to himself as you read a book of which you wish to master the contents, and being already familiar with the sound of every part of

it when he takes his place at the first rehearsal. The first band of Wagner's disciples, realising the enormous mastery which this familiarity with the music gave them over the orchestra, applied it to other works which they had to interpret; applied it in time to every piece of music laid on the desk before them; with the result that in the chaos of a first "running-through" they could recognise the relation of the orchestral players' efforts to the true results intended by the composer.

The interpretation of the Wagnerian scores was also a great training ground for conductors in the actual instrumental technique of the orchestra; and in the extension of this, and the first modern definition of it in the form of an authoritative monograph, the work of Hector Berlioz is pre-eminent. It was of old the invariable excuse of the lazy orchestral player to pronounce a passage presenting any unusual difficulties "unplayable"; and the ignorant conductor, hesitating to contradict the player on a matter concerning the technique of his own instrument, was obliged to accept his verdict. But Berlioz and the disciples of Wagner changed all that. They armed themselves with an exact knowledge of what was and what was not possible

for every instrument in the orchestra; they were careful not to write anything physically impossible. They thus abolished a great piece of bluff with which orchestral players had hitherto been able to oppose the exacting conductor; for composers had often written without any regard to the construction of the instrument employed, had even written notes which did not exist on the instrument; so that the conductor who should have demanded their execution would have been laughed at by his band, which would not fail to take advantage of this state of affairs when presented with a passage which was merely difficult and not impossible. But under the new *régime* the conductors very often knew as much about the technique of the instrument as did the players themselves; they were firm in demanding the execution of passages which were only difficult because they were unusual; and the natural pride of the artist, responding to the challenge, was found equal to the new demands. The old phrase "I can't do impossibilities," or "I can't play notes that are not on the instrument" gave way to "If the instrument can play it I can play it."

The first result of this was a great increase in the efficiency of orchestral players, who began to find that their work was not a mere dull, slovenly,

and rhythmic scraping and blowing, but a new and intricate art in which their artistic pride was challenged, a task arduous indeed and involving hitherto unheard-of labour and study, but rewarded, as all true artistic labour is, by the new interest and intrinsic joy found in the doing of the work. Thus the conductors improved the orchestras; the orchestras reacted on the conductors; the public found new pleasure in listening to orchestral performances; composers found a limitless field of possibilities in orchestration, and the whole art of music, borne high on this great wave, was swept forward to a new stage in its development.

The secret of conducting is domination. That can be achieved in various ways; sometimes by magnetism, as in the case of Nikisch and Landon Ronald; sometimes by intellectual weight and assurance and calm majestic grasp of the whole artistic material, as in the case of Hans Richter; sometimes by unflinching strictness and discipline, as in the case of Henry Wood; sometimes by sheer native enthusiasm for the work, as in the case of that unique person among conductors, Thomas Beecham. We shall consider the chief of these methods in the persons of their exponents; but we must bear in mind that the

domination thus exercised must also be founded on absolute technical equipment. The man who stands up before an orchestra with a baton in his hand stands before a most formidable array of expert criticism, compared with which the criticism of the audience behind him is as nothing. Every member of the orchestra is in a sense the conductor's examiner in a branch of art of which the player has made himself a master ; and the slightest failure or the smallest lack of grasp will not go unnoticed. And orchestras are very like a collection of schoolboys in some ways ; although they may consist of serious and responsible artists, they will at once take advantage of any lack of firmness and any lack of knowledge on the part of their conductor, and, according to the circumstances, be impish, mulish, stupid, or perverse. If they think that their conductor is trying to impose upon them in any way, they will put up one time-honoured bluff after another ; and equally, if the bluff fails or is seen through by the conductor, they will smilingly give it up and either try another or set to work in serious earnest. Unless the conductor holds them in the hollow of his hand, he is entirely at their mercy ; they can ruin his performance if they choose ; or, if he has won their

sympathy, they can help him over the awkward places in which any conductor may find himself, and never give him away to the audience. Therefore the first thing which the conductor has to achieve is absolute mastery of his forces. Let us study this mastery as revealed in three personalities.

I

THE DISCIPLINARIAN

If Sir Henry Wood had no other claim to consideration he would be famous as the man who had made good orchestral music on a large scale popular and possible in London. There were pioneers before him, of course; the names of Manns and Henschel, for example, should never be forgotten in England; there were societies and orchestras subsidised by associations of rich amateurs; there were a few enthusiastic musicians who gave orchestral concerts willingly, not hoping that they would pay, but content if the concert-giver could get out without serious loss. How the association of Henry Wood and Mr. Newman came about which changed all that is an old story now; but it is a story that has

brought great and deserved credit to Henry Wood and great convenience to the London public. Among other things, it has raised Henry Wood from the position of a City organist to that of the chief of English conductors; I do not think that any one could seriously and justly deny his right to the title. For a long time, indeed, he was the only English conductor equipped with a modern technique and modern methods; for brief as the history of the art of conducting is, it has already passed through two phases—the school of Wagner and Bülow and Richter, who were its authors and beginners, and whom most of the great German conductors have followed, and the school of Nikisch, who, although originally one of Wagner's young men, has carried the art of conducting a stage farther than that to which his masters brought it, and whose influence on the modern French and English schools is strong. Henry Wood was the first conductor in England to realise that a very perfect manual technique is as important for a conductor as for a pianist; he was also the first to acquire it. For a great many years his prestige was unchallenged, his position unthreatened; no one else had a chance. But like all great pioneers he sowed more than he could reap himself, and

other men have come up to share the harvest with him. It is inevitable, and he will be the last to regret it; for time and the seasons cannot be bound to the ploughshare of one man, nor are those his only harvests which he gathers with his own hand. In a way Henry Wood has had a great part in preparing the success of some of the younger men who are now becoming his rivals. For a long time their rivalry was not serious; but a few years ago a wave of new life went over orchestral music in London, and instead of one conductor and one orchestra there were half a dozen. Henry Wood's position was no longer unchallenged; one felt that the time had come for him either to make good his position by further energy and advance, or to prepare for that slow process of retiring into the background, which is the ultimate fate of every successful man, however brilliant he may have been.

He held his own. The summer seasons of Promenade Concerts rouse an increasing degree of enthusiasm among their frequenters, who have excellent value for their money, and hear an unusual number of new works as well as all their old favourites; and to carry through a season like this, with a long concert every night conducted in a stifling atmosphere, as well as going through

all the work incidental to other orchestral engagements, is a feat in which no living conductor has achieved so much success as Henry Wood. It is true that of the new works produced by Henry Wood there are more foreign than English compositions ; he has always shown a preference for foreign music, notably for that of the Russian and Slav schools ; in fact, we owe a great deal of our knowledge of such music here to him. I am delighted that he should continue on this line ; there are plenty of other people looking after English music—in fact, we are in for something like an orgy of it, and that also is an excellent thing and a sign of native artistic life. But modern English music has many grave disadvantages from the conductor's point of view, and Henry Wood is a conductor who has always above all things played for his own hand. He has not the rehearsal time to spare for a complex work unless it is likely to take a permanent place in his répertoire and to add to his own credit as a conductor—a perfectly comprehensible point of view. Such works are almost always difficult and require serious rehearsing to make anything of them ; they are generally scored for a large and therefore expensive orchestra, and the box-office receipts show quite clearly that the economic response

to them is not commensurate with the artistic enthusiasm which produces them. Often works like these, which have cost time and money to produce, become practically obsolete after their first performance; in other words, every penny spent in producing them has to be written off; whereas the same money could often be invested in the preparation of other new works which would almost certainly prove popular. I think this state of things will gradually change, but in the meantime the guarantors of concerts, and often the members of the orchestra themselves, have to bear the losses incidental to musical patriotism.

But from Henry Wood's point of view there is another reason why he leans so much to music of quite a different school—because it particularly suits his genius as a conductor, and music of the English school, with rare exceptions, does not. And what is the nature of this genius? I am told that Henry Wood is nicknamed by members of his orchestra the "Band-Sergeant," and the name indicates the direction in which a great part of his successes and a certain part of his defects lie. He is a great organiser, a great disciplinarian, a great business man, a great showman; he undertakes to produce a certain effect on the public, and he produces it. His rehearsals are more like

barrack-yard parades than the easy-going, pipe-smoking, just-run-it-through-gentlemen-please conversaziones of the old days; programmes are mapped out like time-tables of a great railway system; it is pure business from first to last. That is a great strength; let no one think that any kind of excellence, artistic or otherwise, is achieved by loose and slipshod methods. Yet there remains in the art of interpreting music an entirely intangible, ethereal quality that cannot be bound or scheduled or reduced to a departmental system; and sometimes from amid all Henry Wood's perfect organisation and perfect discipline that wayward spirit escapes and flies away, and the result is hard and mechanical and soulless. That it should be so is not wonderful; that it should so seldom be so is to me very wonderful indeed.

I have spoken of Henry Wood's technique and of his sympathy with Slavonic music. It has indeed moulded him, moulded his mind, and affected even his appearance, so that now he looks more like a foreigner than an Englishman —an effect to which the flowing tie and rugged beard contribute. Henry Wood is a great master of savage rhythm and of extreme *nuances*, but not of those subtler dynamic variations which

make their balance and contrast within a much smaller range; he is great at the thunder and the whisper, but not at that steadier and more human diapason that is the body of life and art in this world; he can always produce an effect, but he is not so good at interpreting a condition or a mood. Perhaps this is little more than saying he is, like most of us, imperfect; that the upper part of his face, with its fine brow and magnetic eyes, is not matched by the lower part; that he is a god with feet of clay—or, say, Orpheus in peg-top trousers.

He has certain mannerisms with which the world is familiar—a fixed routine of gesture which personally I think tiresome and unworthy. I would not like to say that my opinion is shared by the majority of his public, or that the performance which he goes through when conducting a great work is not carefully calculated to assist his personality. But it is a melancholy thing, after listening to a really fine interpretation of a noble work, full of fire and rhythm, passion and tenderness and understanding, to see the interpreter posturing before the audience, with gestures comparable only to those of a trapeze performer who has just alighted on the canvas, bending on this side and that, and describing,

between bearded lips and the utmost reach of his arm, arcs in the air which Ruskin might have described as "curves of beauty," but which for my part I find merely disconcerting and disagreeable. Yet it would be easy to exaggerate the importance of these defects of Henry Wood's qualities—qualities which have raised him where he is, high above most of us who criticise him. Forget his antics and gestures in the moment of applause; watch his right wrist when he is at work—that most wonderful wrist in the world of conducting; watch the left hand, which talks to the horns and the wood-wind and 'cellos like a familiar spirit; watch that glance which is always ready to look up from the score a second or two before some unimportant entry to reassure the player that the master's eye is on him and the master's mind controlling his work—look at these, and you will be studying the elements of a technique which is in many ways unrivalled in the world, and marks in England the greatest height to which we have so far attained in this art.

II

THE EMOTIONAL

The greatest master of the emotional method was Nikisch ; but his emotion is becoming worn out, spent, exhausted ; and his mantle has fallen on his disciple, Landon Ronald, who is the chief exponent of this method in England. Ronald as a conductor is one with the musicians and composers of the young English school who, although themselves the reverse of academic, are really the true musical progeny of the more academic generation which preceded them, and which some of them affect to despise. One of the soundest characteristics of this young English school—the best of them, I mean—is their extreme technical accomplishment ; a quality which they owe almost entirely to the despised contrapuntists. They are all aware that the contrapuntists were woefully lacking in inspiration ; and they feel, no doubt, that the contempt that they entertain for their methods can best be justified by a younger generation that shows itself not inferior to the old in technical ability.

Nothing could be less academic than Landon Ronald ; nothing could be more accomplished or more modern. He does not affect the antique in any way, nor believe that in order to be great it is necessary to be old-fashioned. He is as up-to-date as his own motor-car, and as commercially formidable as a Jersey city land agent or Dr. Richter. He is entirely typical of his own time, as any man who proposes to do great things must be. But he is a product of something much greater than his own time. He has the blood of a great race in his veins, which, mingling with his English blood, gives to his wide and solid ability that additional quality of imagination and emotionalism, of excess even, that has carried the Jews so very far on the two open roads of imagination of modern times—art and finance. Of course in this racial admixture lie also such snares and pitfalls as are likely to be encountered in Landon Ronald's career. The Englishman in him desires to be like other people; the Jew in him insists on an individuality of its own. The Englishman thinks of prosperity and a safe success ; the Jew in his dreams of greater things, of a hazardous but splendid pre-eminence, and devises means for its attainment. The Englishman says, "Be like other people, but appear to be different" ; the Jew says, "Appear to be like

other people, but be different." And in Landon Ronald the Jewish characteristics, seen in him at their very best, are winning everywhere because they are the greater. They represent the stronger, the more soaring side of his nature; and though their English partner works well in harmony with them, it is the negative part that he plays; it is they who lead and determine, they who are the dark, unknown, implacable Mr. Jorkins, and the Englishman who is the bland and deprecating Mr. Spenlow, of Dickens's famous partnership.

Landon Ronald, though far from being the greatest, is probably the most accomplished all-round musician at present (to use a delectable phrase) before the public. If he had not determined to be a great conductor he would certainly have been a great pianist; and if he had not been a great pianist he would probably have been a great violinist. The one thing in music that he probably would not have been is a great composer; instead, he is one of the most accomplished composers in his own line that one can imagine. Composition, oddly enough, represents the commercial side of him. The shop is filled with compositions—well written, always interesting, always acceptable to his public; and in the shop

he serves for so many hours a day, handing you out songs, overtures, suites—what you will; all honest value for your money. But the dwelling-house behind the shop is full of dreams and poetry. It is there that what is great in him lives and matures; comes to itself a little more every day; and comes not by idle waiting for the hour, but by the closest study, the hardest work, the most unsparing effort. It is to that element in this double personality of Landon Ronald which he must pin his faith; it is that element that inspires his orchestra; it is that element which, if he gives it fair play, will penetrate to a wider and more discerning world of taste than that rather inferior circle that buys, sings, and adores his sentimental compositions.

Since he has had an orchestra of his own he has advanced enormously in technique and in certainty of touch. No one can really judge him who does not hear him at his own symphony concerts. The New Symphony Orchestra, which he has made entirely his own, is certainly one of the best orchestras in London, and will in time be a great orchestra; but like all young and more or less struggling organisations it is often heard under disadvantages of place and rehearsal. You cannot, for example, judge any orchestra by

hearing it in the Albert Hall, where it and Landon Ronald perform every Sunday afternoon. Yet his work there is quite admirable ; whatever you hear there, whether it is a great or trivial work, you may be sure that it will be done with care, with trouble taken to make its good points tell and to bring out whatever interest there may be in it; in a word, whatever Landon Ronald does he takes trouble to do as well as he can. But to realise how thoroughly well he can do you must go to his symphony concerts at Queen's Hall. There even an uninstructed amateur cannot fail to realise some of his most striking qualities—his splendid grip of the orchestra, his quite unusual concentration, and (what follows from it) that almost psychic quality of magnetic control without a little of which no one can be a good conductor at all, but of which Landon Ronald has almost as much as Nikisch at his best.

His methods, were they not entirely his own, are based on those of Nikisch. He is frankly an imitator, but of the right kind. He knows what he is trying to develop in himself, and whenever he sees something that will help in that development, a missing fragment of the pattern he is building within himself, he steals, begs, borrows, or imitates it. The result is not a patchwork

of other men's methods; the result is Landon Ronald, because the thing towards which he is striving is not external, but within himself. The two most typically fine interpretations of his that I know owe practically nothing to any conductor that I have ever heard; they are the Elgar Symphony in A Flat and Weber's "Oberon" overture. I have heard the Elgar Symphony conducted by Richter, by Wood, by Nikisch, and by Elgar himself; but I have no hesitation in saying that the broadest, loftiest, and most sympathetic interpretation of that work is Landon Ronald's. And in the "Oberon" overture he displays a poetic sense quite startlingly unlike what only a casual appreciation might have led one to expect. The remote, dreamy entrance of the horns at the beginning, floating in as from another world, the light and rapid series of *crescendi* at the end, are wonderful; they have a true quality of fairy music such as I have not found so happily achieved in the rendering of any other conductor. His style is perfectly quiet, and free from antics or disagreeable affectations. Perhaps he is a little too much addicted to an undulating movement of the lower arm, wrist, and hand invented by Miss Maud Allen; but undoubtedly he means something, communicates

something, when he uses it. The small, dapper figure expresses little; it is the striking head and powerful physiognomy, the burning, commanding, compelling eyes, the wide forehead, frowning or serene, and, above all, the changeless, unwinking attention to what is going on in the world of sound about him that brings his orchestra, and through them his audience, so completely under the power of his personality. There is brain dominating the sentiment, and intellect controlling the emotion; and as a result there are outline and proportion, those valuable qualities that are so rarely allied with a temperament so sensitive and volatile as his.

Emotion is at once the power and the snare of a temperament like this. Emotion is no friend to judgment; overthrows judgment, in fact, and drags it along in its wake. Landon Ronald can do nothing about which he is not enthusiastic; and as one cannot always be in an enthusiastic mood, he must either batter himself into enthusiasm for a neutral subject or do it flatly and badly. The thing that he does best is the newest and the latest thing that has attracted his personality; he pours the whole of himself into every new mould that attracts him. His personality is thus always fluent and ductile;

but this continual emotional expenditure is rather like that of a man who is living up to every penny of his income and putting nothing by in the bank against the day when the springs of emotion shall have run dry; who reinvests his capital every day, moreover, with a little wastage in the process. I do not say that at present this is a fault of Landon Ronald's; I say that it is a danger. He will have to beware of the defects of his qualities; of temptation to deviate from the main certainty to follow the main chance; of letting his vitality stream off in other directions than from the end of his baton; of exercising, in his impatience with other people's incapacity, the commercial side of his faculties at the expense of the artistic; of caring too much for the applause of the crowd so long as it is large enough, without considering of what elements the crowd is composed. If he avoids these dangers he will go far and fare well, and stand at last in the company of the great.

III

THE INTELLECTUAL

It is very far from being a complete description of Hans Richter as a conductor to say that he is intellectual ; but he stands among the exponents of this art as the supreme type of domination by mind, by force of knowledge, by all-embracing comprehension of the whole matter in hand. His work is done now ; he has lived to see the second generation of conductors spring up, and the art of which he is the living head develop possibilities which even Von Bülow and Wagner never realised. Richter is so great that he can never become obsolete ; but it is probably true that his method in any other hands than his own would already be regarded as old-fashioned, and those who should imitate his technique would find themselves taking up a wand that in their hands was lifeless.

A great many adjectives have been used in the attempt to fix and define the peculiar quality of Richter's genius as a conductor. The statement that he is a past master at his business is not sufficient ; for although his immense experience

and the numberless resources for meeting an emergency which are always at the command of an "old hand" would in themselves be enough to give him a unique position of authority among orchestral players, they would not account for his power over audiences often ignorant of the technicalities in which he works. It is his personality which accounts for that. There is a massive plebeian impassiveness in the very round of his back that suggests the peace and security, not only of the individual, but of a whole race of men. One might find grander terms for it, and yet do him less justice than by describing his principal attribute as an immense stolidity—stolidity allied to a prodigious slow momentum or power of going unsensitively on to the goal he has in view. Thus he not only arrives himself, but he sees that those under his command arrive with him.

His technical methods in conducting are wonderfully different from those of the ultra-modern school, although to many of them he has been the chief inspiration. The large wadded pole which he wields is not more different from the slender wand of Nikisch than is the ponderous stability of the one man from the volatile energy of the other. It is a saying attributed to Richter

that he never makes two beats where one will do, never beats four in a bar where he can hold his rhythm together by beating two ; and this is characteristic of the man and of his interpretations. This method means often the sacrifice of some very fine detail, or rather it means the necessity of trusting for it entirely to the player. For where a detailed phrase occurs on the fourth beat of a bar in which the conductor is only beating two or even one, it is impossible that he should control the player's phrasing. But it also makes for a large simplicity and coherence in the outline of the whole piece ; and it is in the achievement of that outline that Richter is supreme and never fails. He often seems to miss fine points, phrases the value of which has been discovered and exhibited by conductors whose minds are bent on detail ; but you never, in any performance conducted by Richter, fail to obtain a definite impression of the composition as a whole. Your impression may be right or wrong, or, let us say, more right or less right according as the music is of the kind that Richter himself understands and sympathises with ; but it will never fail of a meaning of some kind, consequently it will never bore you or seem dreary as the same work might if presented

by another conductor in a long series of brilliant episodes, each interesting in itself, but all remaining detached and incoherent to the end.

Among the great discoveries made by Wagner in the art of conducting, and of which Richter became undoubtedly the greatest exponent, his power of achieving an outline, or due balance of proportion, among the component parts of a movement, is probably the chief. And other arts of the conductor which are not half a century old are the achievement of a long *crescendo* or *diminuendo;* the building up of a long climax by a series of *pianissimos* working up to *mezzo fortes*, which thus produce the effect of *fortissimos* without anticipating or forestalling the effect of the grand *fortissimo* at the climax; the securing of pure *cantabile* tone in the inner parts of the orchestra; the achievement of a real *pianissimo* and real *fortissimo* instead of the commonplace *mezzo* tone of the pre-Wagnerian orchestra; the effects to be obtained from *fermata* when prolonged to the right extent, and the melodic use of many sections of the orchestra formerly regarded as valuable only for rhythmic purposes. These things are now the heritage of every conductor, but it is really Richter who developed them, expounded them and added them to the resources of modern music.

THE CONDUCTOR

Undoubtedly the best place to study his methods, and the place in which his qualities were most splendidly exhibited, was the opera. The "old hand" reigned there in all his glory; of all the disconcerting accidents that could happen in the performance of an elaborate Wagnerian opera, there was not one that had not happened to him already; there was not one that could disconcert him or for a moment disturb his phlegmatic security. The most nervous player could hardly fail to be reassured by that heavy, motionless figure and grave incurious countenance; in the most tempestuous moments of musical storm and dramatic commotion he sat at his desk controlling it all, like an old scholar reading in a lamp-lit room. Nothing moved but the arm, except that occasionally the grave countenance and beard slowly revolved in a half-circle to left or right; but behind the spectacles were eyes, weary-looking at all other times, that could be trained upon defaulting players with gimlet sharpness. He was utterly indifferent to applause; at the end of a great performance of "The Ring" he would step down from his desk, and look up at a house shouting with enthusiasm for him alone, with a countenance no more expressive of emotion than that of a cow looking

over a fence. It was at once comic and grotesque and sublime, but it was much more sublime than anything else.

And if the opera was his kingdom, *Meistersinger* was his throne in that kingdom. He is a part of *Meistersinger* as much as Pogner or Eva or Sachs; when he took up the stick the whole of that great music seemed to flow out spontaneously, inevitably, like a banner unrolled at his bidding. That was the place to study his method and his power of achieving an outline; that was the place to observe his peculiar methods of obtaining a climax, his manner of treating a long *crescendo* or *diminuendo* so that there was always a sense of something kept in reserve at the end of it; there, in a word, was the place to make a study of artistic achievement and mastery, of what could be done by work and enthusiasm and simplicity of purpose in this world of dissipated forces.

The supreme conductor of the future will have to add to all the technical accomplishments and emotional magnetism of his age the dignity, the simplicity, and the humbleness of this great man Hans Richter; and it will be a task worth attempting.

THE MUSIC OF THE SALON

THE MUSIC OF THE SALON

I

IN attempting to define the music of the Salon, one must first realise what it is not. It is not the greatest music. The most sublime heights to which this art has reached take us into a region far different from that of the social world. The greatest music is, in fact, a world by itself, and cannot be used as mere adornment of any part of life, however elegant and refined. But we do not always dwell on the mountain tops; some of us, in fact, never get there at all, but walk along happily enough in the valleys, and are content to see the cold snowy peaks soaring into the blue above us. It is one of the very human attributes of art that it provides for us on the smaller as well as on the greater scale; and although all great art is, of course, good art, all good art is not necessarily great art.

That is the first point, that in considering the

music of the Salon we are not necessarily considering the greatest kind of music, although we find in it some of the most perfect music that has ever been written in any form or kind ; the scale, that is to say, is a small scale. Now just as there are plants that live and flourish in a certain atmosphere and are found only in those parts of the world where the temperature never rises or falls below the extremes within which they can flourish, so there is a certain kind of music that can be heard to advantage only in a certain human temperature or atmosphere. We are all familiar with many such kinds of music. There is the music that needs a cathedral, a vast place of shadows and echoes, and the accompaniment of solemn rites and religious ceremonies—the music that sounds sublime in these conditions, and which makes no effect whatever if these conditions are wanting. There is the music which needs the accompaniment of the stage and scenery and action and visual illusion—which is a part of these things, and which is incomplete without them. There is the music for the solitary player, which yields its greatest delight to the patient scholar who spends long hours in unravelling its mysteries. There is the music for the chamber, where the association of two or three fellow-

artists in the task produces an atmosphere unattainable elsewhere, and without which the music itself would be a dumb and lifeless thing. There is music for outdoor festivals, with sunshine and great moving crowds and banners streaming in the wind and troops marching with glittering arms. There is music which a lover can sing alone to his mistress, and music that a mother can sing to her child. There are songs which a singer can sing to a vast crowd, and other songs, expressive of some national or universal theme, which the crowd itself can sing.

Hardly any one of these kinds of music will bear transposition from its own suitable atmosphere without damage and loss of effect. In other words, nearly all music is to some extent dependent on environment, and no music is so dependent on environment as that which I have called the music of the Salon—music, that is to say, that is suitable for intimate gatherings of people who are met, not for any great serious purpose, but for the cultivation and enjoyment of the more elegant sides of life ; delicate, subtle music designed for the pleasure of the polite world, and to satisfy the sense of beauty of a highly civilised and, if you like, a slightly decadent society.

For music, let us remember, like all pure art, has no concern with ethics or morals; it is a universal art, it follows us and accompanies us everywhere through life. Even if we do not carry it within ourselves, we still find it wherever we go, simply because it is everywhere and adapted to everything. It is in the clouds and on the mountain tops, speaking there to us in awful voices like the thunders of Sinai; it is in the valleys, in the song of birds and the soft rush of murmuring streams; it is in the surges of the sea, on the empty moorland, by the cottage fireside, in the palace ball-room. And it is in the Salon, taking its place amid the intrigues of the idle world, the talk of politicians, the whispers of diplomacy, and the voice of love.

II

Let us consider this music of the Salon from two points of view: from the point of view of the hearer of the music, and from the point of view of the maker of it. The music of the Salon is an accompaniment to, and an adornment of something else. It is not the primary object which has brought its hearers together. They

have come to see each other, to shine and be shone upon, to cultivate the more refined and subtle pleasures; above all, to gratify the pride of the eye and the joy of the senses. Beautiful colours and beautiful forms must be there to please the eye; beautiful sounds must be there to please the ear. But as the essence of the Salon, after it had emerged from its more elementary condition, was that all these other tastes were dominated by wit and intellect, so in matters of art higher taste and higher discrimination came to be exercised. In short, the music of the Salon, while not being of the deepest or the greatest, had to be of the best.

There is only one country in which this kind of light perfection has been consistently cultivated and enjoyed, and that is France; so it is no wonder that Paris, which saw the Salon in its perfection, saw also the production of by far the greatest successes in Salon music. The Parisian loves to disguise all laborious processes, loves to pretend that the efforts of his brain and all his most arduous toil are trifles thrown off into the air in an idle moment. In music especially the French school has tended more and more to substitute form for substance, to cultivate perfection of manner rather than significance of matter.

The products of French genius must always be well dressed; anything uncouth, anything too great or too spontaneous to fit into any of the ready-made forms of art is intolerable there. And in literature and in music both, as the substance of what the French people have to say has become smaller and smaller, so has the form and manner of its utterance become more and more polished, more and more delicate, more and more perfect in finish.

Take the work of Debussy, as an example which will occur to every one. I think it probable that no composer with so splendid a technical equipment ever had so little to say. But what is important about Debussy is that what little he has to say is said in absolute perfection of form. One of his pieces is like a miniature painting on ivory; there is not a line, however trifling and delicate, that is not as carefully studied as anything in the whole composition; and not a line that could be otherwise than it is without loss of effect. Here, of course, you have the ideal conditions for Salon music ready made.

But the perfection of form and finish, although they are the first essentials of the music of the Salon, are not by any means the whole of it. We desire, in the polite and artificial world in which

we hear it, to be moved, to be interested, to have our emotions even agitated ; but not too much. We must not be too much moved, nothing must occur to disturb the bright and pretty surface of the artistic life of the hour. Smiles there may be, but not loud and side-shaking laughter ; there may even be tears, but the utmost delicacy is required in evoking those tears. For tears which look beautiful when standing unshed in starry eyes cease to be beautiful when they brim over and run down powdered cheeks. Therefore the tears may rise, but they must not be allowed to fall.

All this is but another way of saying that the music of the Salon must not stir us too deeply. It must not appeal to the elemental and really vital things in us ; we are not to be harrowed or ravaged by storms of passion, or filled with the desolation of great tragedies, or raised to states of high exaltation. The music of the theatre and of the church and of the orchestra may do all that, but in the music of the Salon we must not experience anything too deeply. We must, in short, be onlookers at life, and not partakers in it. We want emotions represented to us, but we do not want to share them ; we must be like people sitting in a balcony watching the crowds march by, and listening to the laughter and the jests and

the bustle and the strife, but we ourselves must sit apart from it all, where the dust does not reach us, nor the din deafen us, nor the mire in the streets splash our immaculate condition.

Music has a singular power of giving us this sense of isolation from what we are contemplating; take, for example, a waltz of Johann Strauss's and a waltz of Chopin's. The music of Strauss suggests waltzing pure and simple, it excites the sense of rhythm in us, it makes us want to dance, it is a kind of elemental appeal to set our pulses and our feet moving to its rhythm —and that is all. Set the orchestra playing such a waltz in suitable circumstances, and you will find the effect of the music will be to break down whatever artificial conditions may be existing, and to set people dancing; simply dancing, and nothing more. Now that is elementary music, which makes a direct appeal to us, and summons us to experience something. Take, on the other hand, a waltz of Chopin's. It does not make us want to dance, but it suddenly and powerfully reveals a scene of dancing. It is like a curtain drawn back, through which we have a vision of a crowded and glittering ballroom, burning with all the feverish gaiety and strange, half-spiritual, half-sensual exaltation of the dance; and we, sitting

apart in our alcove, undisturbed by these passions, nevertheless see them at work in all the glory of colour and rhythm and movement; and all the world seems to shine with the glitter, and shake with the rhythm of energy and laughter and love. Of course the music that can show us scenes like this is far greater than the music which can merely excite us, all unconscious of their significance, to take part in them; yet the one music is experience at first hand, and the other, the music of Chopin, the music of the Salon, is experience at second hand. We observe emotion at work, but we do not ourselves experience it too deeply.

III

So much for the music of the Salon from the hearer's point of view. We will now consider it from the other side, the side of the maker of the music. Now the music which I am trying to describe possesses a definitive quality not so much because of the deliberate intention of the composer, but because of the perhaps accidental presence in it of the essential character which I have indicated. I shall try to make some broad classifications of composers and schools of com-

position that have produced the music of the Salon. But they can only be very broad classifications, which will include endless contradictions and exceptions. Handel, for example, who was very far from being a Salon composer, has produced in some of his suites, notably that one containing the air and variations which have, owing to an absurd and untrue anecdote, been nicknamed "The Harmonious Blacksmith," some of the most perfect Salon pieces in existence. In the same way, a few suites of Bach, the music of some of the old Italian masters, a great deal of Mozart and Haydn, and a good deal of Weber—these are all Salon music, and yet they are accidental and exceptional, and have not come from the true sources of the music of the Salon.

Let me give you an instance how the same music, and the same musical idea, can be presented both in the most magnificent and lofty form of universal music, and in the elegant and polished miniature of the music of the Salon. I suppose every reader of this page knows well the great love duet in the second act of *Tristan und Isolde*. You have there a piece of music in which the limits of artistic expression are reached—music to which we do not merely

listen, but in which we live ; music which does not leave us to contemplate life, but which drags us in our persons and experience to the very portals of heaven and hell. And now take Wagner's song, *Traume*, the same theme, the same music, but robbed of all its terrible power to sear and ravage our souls, and presented merely as a delicate, languorous, delicious trifle, to which we can listen with mere pleasure. The sting and the terror have been taken out of it ; it has been reduced in scale ; it has become a charming picture, dreamy and elegant and unreal as a landscape by Watteau, instead of being a veritable arena in which we struggle with love and with death. In other words, it has become a piece of Salon music.

When we come to consider the source of this music we find, as I have said, that the French have contributed more largely to it than any other nationality. The seriousness and gravity of the German genius has prevented it, as a whole, from achieving the lightness and elegance necessary in Salon music. Seriousness is apt to break through at any moment. In German music, even when an attempt at lightness is made, we are never really secure from life and seriousness ; the thin ice of artificiality on which we are

skating is apt to bend and crack, and we are suddenly plunged, with all our finery and flimsy elegance, for a souse in the cold realities of life. *Ernst ist das Leben*, said Goethe, and it has been the unwritten text of nearly all the music that has made Germany glorious. The result of this high seriousness is that when an atmosphere of lighter emotion is sought for it is apt to degenerate into the other extreme, and become mawkish and sentimental. The voice of a stout German *Geheimrath* calling to his little maiden to come into his arms and his great heart, because earth and sea and heaven are all melting away together for love, which represents too truly much of the lighter side of the romantic movement in Germany, can hardly be described as Salon music. It is rather the romance of the beer-garden and the tobacconist's counter. It is, however, but the reflex of that deep reality that we know and worship in German music, the reality that has given us Bach and Beethoven and Brahms and Wagner.

There are, however, two German composers who have written what I would call Salon music on a considerable scale—I mean Mendelssohn and Schumann ; and I would add a foreign composer whose music is closely allied with that of the

German school—Grieg. Of course the whole of the literature of music represented by the German *lieder* school, or a great part of it, might be described as Salon music, yet I think that even here a great part of the songs of Schubert in one style, and Hugo Wolff in another, do not quite conform to our standards ; for small as they are in scale and design, they take us often into a great reality of life, and not by any means into a mere sheltered and adorned corner of it. But Schumann, who could be great and serious, could also be slight and perfect, and much of his pianoforte music has that note of wistfulness, of things felt deeply for the moment and forgotten again presently ; of concentration on the hour and the person of the hour, which is only, maybe, one of the forms of mental dissipation. For just as the most charming people who are fickle and inconstant prettily excuse themselves by saying that they are always constant to themselves, so in the world of the Salon the thing of the moment is the thing of importance, the person of the moment is the person who matters. There is immense concentration, therefore, on the person of the moment, but alas ! there are so many moments and so many people, and concentration upon each of them in turn becomes, in short, dissipation.

IV

The music of Mendelssohn in its relation to the music of the Salon stands rather in a department by itself. I would describe it rather as representing the music of the Salon of Young People. It is the ante-room of that greater and more important world in which, beneath the surface of smiles and civilities and gaieties, life itself begins to burn and work within us. Mendelssohn, I think, has suffered some injustice at the hands of modern criticism. As we know, he made as great a reputation in his lifetime as any musician in history, but much of his music has not withstood the test of time. Its great reputation survived during the mid-Victorian era, but later it began to be scrutinised rather ruthlessly, and much of it could not stand the critical test applied by the awakened critical interest that followed the advent of Wagner. The pendulum swung, in fact, a little too far the other way, and Mendelssohn was for some years accorded a little less than his due. Now, however, criticism is more just to him—more just really than it was in the great unquestioning acceptance of him in the days of his supremacy ;

as discriminating praise must always be more just than mere uncritical adulation. What Mendelssohn really did was to bring music, which had hitherto been rather a tremendous and lofty and isolated thing, into the home, to make it a domestic thing ; to apply a sense of beauty, which had hitherto been regarded as an attribute of music written only on a great and difficult scale, to music that was not beyond the reach of the schoolroom Miss to play upon the piano at home. The "Songs without Words" was a really epoch-making work. Those little pieces, each perfect in form, each a complete treatment of some little theme, and many of them charmingly instinct with atmosphere and colour, were like nothing else that had ever been written before. They were tender and emotional and romantic, and, after the austerer music of the preceding age, they brought poetry and romance into the parlour piano, as it were, just as the breeze will blow the scents of roses and honeysuckle through the open window.

You may say that it is derogatory to Mendelssohn to call his music domestic music, and point to his popular oratorios, his symphonies, his cantatas, and other orchestral works. Well, I can only say that I do not agree. The test of any artist is what he does better than any one else, what he

does perfectly ; those are the things that are really characteristic of him. Now Mendelssohn never did a great thing perfectly. Bach and Handel wrote infinitely finer oratorios than he, Beethoven wrote far finer symphonies, Schubert wrote far more beautiful songs, Schumann wrote greater pianoforte works on the larger scale. Mendelssohn did small things perfectly, and the small perfect things that he did have all this intimate atmosphere which I have associated with Salon music. Now examine these works of Mendelssohn which I have thought perfect and perfectly characteristic of him, and which I call intimate and domestic. What is it that makes them so? In what way do they differ from the works, say, of Bach, which fill one with lofty ideas and have an atmosphere of religion and remoteness? To begin with, their beauty is all of a very obvious kind and on a very small scale. Bach's great and remote supremacy rests partly on the fact that he never tried to express emotion directly in music; he made grand and beautiful things, and the emotion found its own way naturally into them. In Mendelssohn the emotion is always very near the surface, if not actually on the surface. Very often his music has much in common with the artless, self-conscious decorations of the mid-Victorian drawing-room.

THE SALON

One associates it with antimacassars and crewel-work, and those wonderful ornaments unhappily protected from decay by being kept under glass shades. Yet these things, which represented merely the transient taste of a period, have vanished, and still Mendelssohn's music remains ; and it remains, and will remain, because beneath the transient external form of its art it contained the true spirit of the fireside, of the drawing-room, of the home. The English home has much to answer for in our æsthetic life ; but let us not be too ready to laugh even at its errors. I deem that person fortunate who was brought up on nothing worse than Mendelssohn ; more than that, I deem unfortunate him who had not in his childhood and youth, while his tastes were supple and simple, the benefit of an enjoyment from music of a kind which perhaps a later and more educated taste would have made wearisome and intolerable to him. There is an age for everything ; a time which is the right time for appreciating and enjoying certain things. I, for my part, am glad that I was brought up on many things which in later life I would not deliberately choose for myself. I do not care to hear very much of Mendelssohn's music now, and I would not choose to hang woollen antimacassars on the backs of my chairs ; but I would not

willingly be without remembrance of a world in which both were familiar to me.

If you will take, then, the "Songs without Words" as the supreme expression of what I call elementary Salon music, you will find them interesting in a new way. They are in music what the poems of Longfellow are in literature; they raise no unpleasant or premature questions; they do not ravage the soul with emotion; there are tears in them, but they are the tears of romantic adolescence; they are soon wiped away. There is beauty in them, but it is not beauty of a disturbing kind; it is the beauty of a little story, pretty or gay or sad. It is a little story after all; if it is cheerful, it leaves one cheerful too; if it is sad, well, it never really happened, and we need not be sorry about it. Above all, this music has the power which certain perfumes have to convey memory and association. That is a very precious quality, especially in the music of the home and of the Salon, and for that reason the music of Mendelssohn with its formal melodies, its simple and definite rhythms, its sweetness, its pretty colours, its tenderness and femininity, and simple, if somewhat vapid wholesomeness, is the best example I know of this music, the music of social adolescence. Remember, it is polite adolescence;

and picture a drawing-room full of intelligent young people on the threshold of life, *Backfische* with their hair very neatly plaited and tied up with large, stiff, crinkly bows; and young men, a little awkward perhaps, but charged like electric machines with feeling, ready to melt at a glance, and to discharge their emotions, also like electric machines, at the first contact with an opposite pole. All that was expressed by Mendelssohn with the most perfect finish and the most delicious and untroubled melody; and in music of a kind so entirely decorative and pleasant, that it is entitled to be ranked with the best music of the Salon.

Germany, I think, has contributed little else to this music. Every great composer has, of course, written one or more pieces that entirely conform to my standard, for such broad rules that I have been laying down must necessarily bristle with exceptions. Of other nationalities that produce music, Russia has contributed practically nothing to the music of the Salon. Just as seriousness lies too closely below the surface of German music, so a strain of savagery lies too closely behind the Russian music. If the German is banished from the Salon because he is not amusing, the Russian must be banished because he is not safe. We may dress him up in the most modern and fashionable

garments, and he may bow and smile and languish with the best of us, but at a word or a look or a touch the savage may leap forth and break into wild cries, and the spirit of savage nature be let loose in your pretty drawing-room. The old saying, "Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar," can here be most aptly applied ; for although people do not scratch in Salons, still, one never knows ; an accident might happen, and a Tartar would be unendurable in our world of epigrams and compliments and leashed emotions. Tschaikovsky is probably, if I may so put it, the best-bred, the most civilised of Russian composers ; yet even Tschaikovsky is hardly safe, although he has written examples of the perfect Salon music. His song, *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*, is an almost perfect example ; yet for him too life, when it was not savage, was grave and earnest. But his contribution to the music of the Salon form the exceptions which prove my rule about Russia.

The music of England again, although full of exceptions in this particular, has never been really rich in music of this polite and polished type. English music at its best has either been gay music, music for out-of-doors, the music of the meadow and the village green, or, in its later manifestations, music of a deep and serious type

that has no place amid the effervescent emotions of the Salon. There are, in my opinion, only two schools of modern music of any importance—the schools of France and of England—and by far the most important and serious of the two is the British school; for this very reason, that the modern English composers are working with music as with life itself, while the French are engaged in perfect and consummate trifling, and at the best in the production of Salon music.

V

It remained for Poland, that strange troubled borderland of a country which is neither savage nor civilised, but has imported more savagery into civilisation and more civilisation into savagery than any other nationality, to provide the perfect and masterly examples of the music of the Salon. In the music of Chopin we have a quite different atmosphere from the music of Mendelssohn or Schumann. Gone is the period of adolescence; gone are the pretty romantic tales, the trifling ideas, the untroubling occupations and the sheltered home; we are plunged into the great world, the social world where men and women meet and mix on

their own responsibility, to their own advantage, at their own risk. The music of Chopin is the supreme expression of that human atmosphere that is contained in the polite world where, although the elemental influences are always at work, their results are hidden beneath a polite and formal mask. We have moved on from the drawing-room trifles of Mendelssohn, from the pretty atmosphere of bowers and arbours, although we have not perhaps reached the real profundities of existence. We are in the transition world that is bounded by outward politeness and decorum. The particular qualities that Chopin's music developed would have been impossible had he lived anywhere else than in Paris in the nineteenth century. His passionate Polish temperament provided him with a fire, an elemental force that needed to be tamed and subdued within bounds of some kind before it would successfully achieve formal expression. He lived in a world strangely compounded for himself of physical weakness and suffering, of unbounded adulation and praise, of hard work and great human distractions, and yet with a singular remoteness and apathy in his own attitude towards it all. He was a great artist, a supremely great musician, and he was as incapable of the mere graceful pretti-

ness of Mendelssohn as of the calm passionless majesty of Bach. There are fever and emotion in every note that he wrote ; real fever and real emotion, but fever and emotion produced by causes that the philosopher would hardly think worthy to produce so much unrest. Yet, as you know, we cannot measure the degree of people's suffering by the importance or reality of the cause that makes them suffer. People will fret themselves into fevers over an imaginary wrong or an imaginary injury just as though it were a real one, and their sufferings are not any the less acute for being caused by fancy.

In the same way, the Salon, the polite world of the clever and the witty, and the world of amusement, is as real a theatre for passions and storms as any other ; and it is these passions and these storms that are reflected in the music of Chopin. Into his own native dance rhythms he crowded a sense of all the emotions that are associated with beauty and youth and gaiety and excitement. His waltzes, as I have said, are not things that any one can waltz to, they are, rather, great feverish pictures of the ballroom with its lights and its movements and its music and its rhythm, and the suggestion of melancholy that always underlies any formal gaiety.

In Chopin, too, we have the most splendid and serious development which the music of the Salon is ever likely to reach. It is serious because it was all serious to him ; his life is in it, and all his pain and suffering ; but he polished it and made it beautiful for us. In him also we have the supreme example of the terrible toll which society takes of those, at once its darlings and its victims, who keep it entertained and amused. This social and polite world of people who amuse themselves has really nothing to do with the artist ; its aims are not his aims, its ways are not his ways, and its rewards are not his rewards. Yet in every artist's soul there is a need and desire for the things of life that society can give ; and therefore it gives them to him, and receives payment in the terrible coin of his life. Every bar of Chopin's music is for me haunted by the picture of that frail figure racked with pain, a mass of jangled nerves, troubled and tormented to the verge of madness, who was the idol of the Paris drawing-rooms of his day. Every note that he wrote, he wrote with blood and tears ; yet there are no wounds visible on the fair body of his art, and the tears are hidden beneath smiles and graces. It is the rule of the game, it is the condition of the polite and well-bred world to keep pain and suffering hidden,

and to smile and be witty in every extremity. This rule Chopin observed to the letter. To understand his music thoroughly, and with it to understand the best of the music of the Salon, we must, as Professor Niecks has said, have something of his delicate sensibility and romantic imagination. "To understand him we must moreover know something of his life and country. For, as Balzac truly observed, Chopin was less a musician than *une âme qui se rend sensible*. In short, his compositions are the celestial echo of what he had felt, lived, and suffered ; they are his memoirs, his autobiography which, like that of every poet, assumes the form of truth and poetry."

THE OLD AGE OF RICHARD WAGNER

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IT has been the strange fate of the musician Richard Wagner, who died at the age of seventy, to grow old only after his death. In those seventy years, so filled with struggles, disappointments, privations, griefs, fightings, and only at the very end illuminated by a triumph that was like the bright sunset of a winter's day, the artist in him grew strong and came to maturity, but never grew old. The lover, the philosopher, the revolutionary—these partners in his personality all went through the normal course of life and saw old age; but the musician, who dominated them all, also outlived them all, and remained young and untouched by the decadence of age. The others were all buried in the grave at Bayreuth a quarter of a century ago; but the musician, being of imperishable stuff, was released at that general dissolution to inhabit the wide world, and to have for his home those free regions of the spirit that we call universal.

THE OLD AGE OF

It is more than thirty years now since the first Bayreuth festival, when Wagner's art was first revealed to the world in the ultimate form to which he had brought it, and in which he was obliged to leave it. Ever since then it has been living and growing, extending its influence, and continually creating anew those four great classes that are the product of contact with a living as opposed to a dead masterpiece: the people who are in the actual process of initiation into its mysteries; the enthusiasts, intoxicated by discovery, on whom its beauty has just dawned; the devotees who have studied it, understood it, and taken it as a permanent possession into their lives; and those rapid gallopers through the sensations who can never retain possession of anything, who have in their day been discoverers, enthusiasts, devotees, but in whom familiarity has bred a contempt which makes them see in the object of their former devotion defects and shortcomings which are, in fact, inherent in themselves. You may meet all these classes to-day at any opera-house where Wagner's later works are performed, and London audiences have had many and various opportunities of studying them in that curious, mixed, unfamiliar audience that now fills Covent Garden when any serious per-

formance of Wagner is attempted. You still find there the people, attracted, in spite of themselves, by the sheer human power of the music, to whom everything that goes on upon the stage is a dull mystery, relieved only by certain familiar moments, as when Siegfried forges the sword, Brünnhilde is laid to sleep on her fire-girt rock, or the gods march into Valhalla. For such people it is no light affliction to go dinnerless to the theatre for four consecutive nights, and to sit there from half-past six until half-past eleven, observing events which they do not understand, enduring the *longueurs* of Wotan and Erda, the terrible harangues of Fricka, for the sake of the bright moments that they know are coming.

How acutely must they suffer, who often do not know who is who upon the stage, who have only the common sign-posts of operatic convention to guide them; who, if they see people embracing, suppose them to be lovers, or if a sword is drawn conceive that some one present is about to be killed; who at one time imagine Wotan to be making love to Brünnhilde, and at another believe that he has killed her; who never know which is Gunther and which is Hagen, who think Siegfried meets his death because he was caught making love to the Rhine maidens, and so on! There is

no such excruciating boredom as that engendered by any great work of art in the minds of people who have not some key to its meaning; and the solemnity with which it is approached by others, their attention and devotion to every detail, only add a sense of irritated bewilderment to the sufferings of the ignorant. Yet these are the people whom one should really praise; they have stumbled, all unknowing, into the right path, and having strayed there are held, against their reason, against their comfort, by nothing more than an occasional gleam of far-distant light that twinkles fitfully through the fog of their misunderstanding. And it is this, I say, which is the great evidence of the universal youth and vitality in the actual music of Wagner: that year by year it takes hold of the raw human material of the world and woos it to ultimate understanding and appreciation; for the bewildered sufferers of one cycle are perhaps the enthusiasts of the next but one.

But Wagner was not a musician only; he was also a poet and a dramatist. It was his dream to make a new art out of music and drama combined, and he pretended and insisted that he had done it. We know now perfectly well that he did not do it, that you cannot cross the arts as you can

orchids and produce new species; hybrids are not fertile. The arts are like the elements, primitive and final, and on this planet we shall discover no more of them. We know (what Wagner did not know, or refused to believe) that the fine arts are separate from one another, even jealous and intolerant of one another, for it is the function of each to re-create the whole universe in its own terms. We know that you cannot appreciate painting in terms of poetry, or poetry in terms of music, or music in any terms but its own; and we know that all these so-called hybrid forms of art are to a greater or less extent debased and cannot rank with the great arts.

Wagner, then, did not create a new art of music and drama; what he did was to make opera a much more reasonable and respectable form of entertainment than it had been as he found it. Formerly only one sense—that of hearing—had been seriously appealed to, and every other artistic sense had been flippantly outraged. By insisting that since opera is founded on drama it should be in actual fact, and not in name only, dramatic; that since words had to be sung they should be used in a sense agreeable to the ear and mind, and not outrageous to both; and that since scenery had to be used, it should, if possible, be beautiful

scenery that would help the imaginative illusion which is a primary condition of good drama, Wagner made opera reasonable and coherent.

To do all this was an immense achievement; and he did it practically single-handed. He was a great organiser, a great beggar; he convinced the world that the achievement of his end was a thing of which it stood desperately in need (although, left to itself, the world had been really of quite another opinion); he got the money, he built the theatre, he wrote the play, he wrote the music, he taught the singers, he invented the scenery, he thought out every detail, from the spiritual and philosophic meaning of his work to the conduct of the attendants at the doors and the arrangements for people to take their seats in the easiest and most orderly way; in fact, the festival music-drama as planned, invented, and carried out by Richard Wagner is perhaps the most magnificent game that has ever been invented for the pleasure of human beings, and was a stupendous thing for one man to have done in the later years of an arduous and, on the whole, sorrowful life. He did it so well because he was passionately in earnest about it; and the principle which, above all others, supremely governed him in his wonderful administration of every detail

was the determination to make a clean sweep of all custom and convention where these could be improved upon, or where anything better could be substituted ; to do nothing in the way that it had been done before if any better way could be discovered ; to cut through the conventions of any particular method to the original end for which that method was devised, to find how far that end was being served by the existing method, and to improve upon it, or to do away with it altogether if necessary.

There is no form of art which he touched upon which he has not left the mark of this reform. The technique of the modern orchestra is Wagner from beginning to end ; notes on the violin that were, in his day, unplayable except by *virtuosi* are now at the fingers' ends of every player who earns his ten shillings a night in an orchestra. He raised the whole body of brass instruments from a degraded position of being mere accentors of rhythm and increasers of noise to the dignity of partnership in the melodious chorus of his scores. He first practised, and to a great extent invented, the modern system of orchestration which treats each family or group of instruments as a separate voice in the orchestra, and insisted upon each family being complete in itself and having its

scale extended to include the highest and lowest notes of the harmony. He banished every convention of the old opera and substituted for them the methods of true drama. He invented modern conducting as we know it, and sent Richter, Von Bülow, Levi, and Mottl out into the world as apostles to bear the glad tidings that orchestral interpretation need no longer be at the mercy of the "pig-tail" school. He even invented a new kind of melody; and if one soberly considers the meaning of those words, the achievement will appear astounding. The recitative of his operas imitates the accent and inflection of the human speaking tones, merely exaggerating them to the degree necessary to give them definite musical pitch. He was perhaps more successful in this than in any other thing which he attempted, always excepting his actual writing of orchestral music. If you try to sing and play on the piano a few lines of rapid recitative from any of the later Wagner scores, you will find it almost impossible, however good your ear is, to hit accurately the curious intervals between the notes; and yet, as any Wagnerian singer knows, once these passages are learned by heart and sung at the proper speaking pace it is almost impossible not to sing them right; they come as if by nature, and the voice,

if left to itself, will fall upon the right notes as though by instinct. A tremendous thing—and yet only one of the hundred ways in which Wagner's youthful spirit assailed all the conventions of his time and created an entirely new set of conditions to serve his purpose.

How does it come, then, that he is growing old? Whence come these mists in which, like the gods when Freia with her golden apples of youth was taken away from them, he appears to be withering and ageing?

In the thirty years which have elapsed since "The Ring" was first produced at Bayreuth many things that were startling innovations then have passed through the stages of being ordinary, of being old-fashioned, of being obsolete. Many things in connection with stage representation which were wonderful in 1876 are not wonderful now; many things which were advanced then are old-fashioned now: hence what I have called the old age of Richard Wagner. "The Ring," which depends for its success as a stage production on the employment of every effect which an enlightened and artistic and mechanical genius can compass, is being produced to-day exactly as it was produced thirty years ago. A few mechanical details have been altered—not always for the

better; but the minute rules as laid down by Wagner for the government of every stage effect throughout that great entertainment form the Bible which to-day is accepted as the only true guide. The only deviations permitted are deviations below Wagner's standard. We are permitted to produce "The Ring" worse than he produced it, but we are not permitted to produce it better. The conditions which have brought about such a state of things are very peculiar and intricate, and while Wagner's family at Bayreuth retains its jealous grip of authority, and still more—for with the lapse of years legal authority is passing away from it—while it is still regarded as the fountain-head of wisdom and tradition in such matters, there are difficulties in the way of any improvement.

But it is time to say that the need of such a group as that which pontificates from Villa Wahnfried is past. Its work is done, and it was well done. It needed a strong guiding hand and a real reverence for the master's memory to carry the business of the festival performances through the difficult years that followed Wagner's death, and that strong and guiding hand was furnished by Madame Wagner. She nursed his art—that true Siegfried of his dreams—through the early years of its fatherless life, and the world will always owe

her reverence and gratitude. But Wagner's art is no longer in need of a nurse ; in fact, it has had a little too much supervision ; Siegfried has been kept in curls and petticoats long after he should have been wearing holes in the knees of his trousers. All this nursing and coddling of Wagner's works as though they were local and not universal, as though one had to belong to a special family to understand them, and as though they could not bear the ordinary light of the ordinary day, has become entirely mischievous to the development of those very ideals which Wagner most passionately believed in. How would Herr Siegfried Wagner (who aids and abets his mother in the business) like it if ever since his father's death he had been confined in one room and made to wear the same kind of clothes which he was wearing in 1883 ? For all living things do grow and develop in the world ; you cannot, if they be really living, arrest them at any one point and say : "This is perfection—stop here." Herr Siegfried Wagner has changed very much since 1883 ; he wears different clothes, thinks different thoughts, dreams different dreams from the dreams and thoughts and clothes of twenty-five years ago. The very body of the master has not been denied the benefit of the common law ; it has changed, its con-

stituents have been liberated to go back and take up the endless tale of matter in the universe : why should his spirit only, or the outward shell of it, have been imprisoned all these years within that very crust of convention which he spent so much strength in breaking? It is of no use to pretend that it is not so ; it is so, and the art of Richard Wagner as it is presented to-day at an ordinary opera-house would be in peril from every clear, youthful, unbiased critical intelligence if it were not for the almost hypnotic power of the actual music to win even the fault-finder to an emotional allegiance.

It is another sign of the mischievous influence of those who should have been the truest friends to Wagner's interests, that while they have turned all his ideas into conventions and made what was living and molten in him into a hard mould of custom, it is the letter of his teaching much more than the spirit that they have observed. The thing about which he was most particular, rightly or wrongly, was that "The Ring" should be treated as a festival play, that for its proper appreciation it was necessary that people should have to take a certain amount of trouble, should even have to make a little pilgrimage, and should, at any rate, during the four days of its performance, have their minds

almost entirely occupied with it. A considerable experience of Wagner performances of every kind has convinced me that he was profoundly right in this ; the scale of his work is such that an immense deal of concentration of mind is necessary if the whole is to be understood, and the world in which his characters live is one so different from any world of experience that the projection of oneself into it for the purposes of witnessing a performance at an ordinary theatre is an imaginative feat of which most people are incapable. Yet this principle of Wagner's, while continually expressed and insisted upon in his writings, is subverted whenever any member of the original Wagner group directly or indirectly assists a production at an ordinary opera-house. The only work they kept hold of was "Parsifal," and "Parsifal," a drama requiring one day for performance, might, under certain conditions, be much more satisfactorily given in an ordinary opera-house than "The Ring." I emphasise this point, not because Wagner's works cannot stand the ordinary light of the ordinary day, but for a quite practical reason. The snare of ordinary operatic performances of these works is that, while the music is sufficiently attractive to make them pay, many of the people who support them, and support them willingly, cannot

be said actually to enjoy the performances as a whole, or to have any real conception of what Wagner intended to give them ; and that so long as they put up with these operatic performances there is the less chance of suitable theatres being built. I am convinced that there is enough appreciation of Wagner in England to build a modest festival theatre and pay for annual performances in it, if people knew that there was no other way for them to hear Wagner's later operas ; but so long as they are performed in the ordinary opera-house the public will put up with that instead of striving for ideal conditions. It is not my business here to go into the question of a festival theatre, but I need only say that I do not mean by that an establishment restricted to the performances of Wagner's operas ; I merely mean a rationally built theatre, equipped with a stage suitable for the performance of opera, and built somewhere away from the din of streets and moil of towns, yet within easy reach of London—as Mr. Bernard Shaw suggested long ago ; a theatre, moreover, in which performances of Shakespeare, of Greek plays, and of any other great works demanding the festival spirit could also be performed.

The participation in imperfect performances is only one of the many ways in which Wagner's

friends and pupils have failed to carry out the spirit of his work; and yet they have given away the principle of hard-and-fast adherence to the conditions as they were in 1876 just enough to vitiate that as an excuse for refusing to sanction any improvement that did not occur to Wagner. The theatre and stage at Bayreuth in 1876 were lighted by gas, but the management does not now dispense with the advantage of electric light just because it had not been perfected in Wagner's time. He changed his mind a dozen times in the course of the rehearsals of "The Ring" about quite serious points in interpretation, and if he had lived longer he would have changed his mind again; yet all the principles of interpretation as promulgated in the Bayreuth edicts are as unchanged as the laws of the Medes and Persians; no new light, no new intelligence, no new genius or talent willing to spend itself in the service of Wagner, are allowed to modify those fixed ideas by ever so little; costumes—some quite ridiculous in the light of modern intelligence and cultivation—scenery, decorations, stage actions even, these have all become as much conventionalised in Wagner's opera as the costumes and scenery and stage actions of ordinary opera had become in the days when he set himself to destroy them.

My point is that if Wagner had been alive (and aged sixty-three) now he would not have remained stuck at the point which his development had reached in 1876. He was a man always in advance of his time, never behind it. He cared nothing for the fact that any given condition had existed for a number of years if he thought that by any effort or trouble that condition could be made better. He felt this deeply; he felt it about life, about social government, about politics, about laws of conduct, about dress, about food, but most of all and most passionately he felt it about art. That was his youth and that was his greatness; age is a stiffening, a loss of curiosity, a loss of courage, a deadening; death is a state of fixity; but life and youth are conditions of movement and of progress. And though I said in the beginning of this article that Wagner's influence in the world is still growing, I must admit that I think the garment of opera in which he clothed it is in danger of growing also, growing as garments can alone grow—growing old. It will be the world's fault if, because of that, his art itself is ever allowed to become old-fashioned or obsolete, or alien to what is strong and fluent in the currents of life. The thing itself, the music, can never grow old; but in this curious combina-

tion of music and drama, the drama and all its appurtenances are like a mortal body in which the immortal spirit of the music is vested; the spirit will remain, but the body must be renewed from generation to generation; and there is no reason that even the body should be dressed in the clothes of a bygone age or fashion.

It is the business of the younger generation, those who care for his art, to rescue Wagner from this old age into which he is being allowed to fall. His dramas as he left them were full of faults, which he himself would have seen and remedied in time. They are too long, they are full of repetitions, they have wearisome excrescences which should be cut away, as he certainly would have cut them away had he lived; but in the eyes of the keepers of the Bayreuth mortuary disease is as sacred as health, death more respectable than life, and every excrescence of equal importance with the most vital part of the design. Those of us who care will have to fight that spirit sooner or later. We shall be accused of irreverence, of every kind of quackery and vandalism, but it will not matter; we shall be fighting to rescue Wagner, as I have said, from a condition of age and decrepitude which would have been very hateful to him, and to restore to

his work that glory of youth which it had when it left his hand. Not a note of his music, the living spirit, need ever be touched; but the operas must be reconsidered, some of them cut down and endowed with the grace of proportion which at present they lack, and the whole question of the mounting of them gone into from the very beginning—not on the lines of existing stage methods, with strips of cloth for skies and fretwork trees and cloth stones, but on such lines as the most able and imaginative genius which can combine poetry and stage illusion shall lay down. The time is not quite yet, but it must come before long, and the sooner we begin to accustom ourselves to the idea the better.

It is purely this question of its external clothing that has put Wagner's work in danger. Bach does not grow old, nor Beethoven; it is the immortal, ever-youthful spirit of music that speaks to us in them. We must not let it be different with Wagner, for the years have nothing to do with it. Who that has stood in the gallery at Vienna before Titian's "Nymph and Shepherd" can ever think of it as the work of an old man, or associate Titian with age or death? And Wagner's place is with him, among the gods who have life and strength and youth for ever.

THE TWO WESTMINSTERS

THE TWO WESTMINSTERS:

WITH SOME THOUGHTS ON MUSIC AND RELIGION

I

MUSIC, child of the world's joy, and religion, heir of all its sorrows, have in their origins little or nothing in common; and music had well-nigh outlived its Pagan youth before the religion that was to befriend it had been born. They developed each on their own lines and were nourished each from different sources; but when both had become definitely developed channels of human expression they met and united in the early maturity of civilisation. From that point, for a long time afterwards, they flowed together on parallel lines. Wherever there was a religion there was also music; the Christian Church especially took music under her wing, cherished, endowed, and

developed it, and finally united it with religion in the plainsong and Gregorian melodies of the Church.

It was a happy marriage; had the world stood still in the Middle Ages, had it thereafter never grown or developed any more, it might have been happy to the end of the chapter. But you have often seen in human life a parallel case to this, where one party grew and developed after marriage and the other did not, so that the one outgrew the other, and the community of tastes and interests on which the union had been founded was lost. Religion, the feminine element in this union, had reached her full maturity, her day of beauty and splendour; music had been toiling to reach a similar stage of development; and, always growing and developing, music at last reached an equal stage of perfection with religion. Then came the union. But that which had been moving went on moving, and that which had become stationary remained stationary, with the result that music, which had once overtaken religion from a long way behind, ultimately passed her and left her far behind in her turn. You will realise, of course, that I am speaking of religion in the external sense of the word; I am judging simply by the condition of its ex-

ternal manifestations, by the degree in which it enters into the everyday life of man in this world; I shall not be expected to attempt any more subtle or spiritual estimate of its power, or lack of power. But it once, as we know, really filled man's life in the Western world; was a channel through which art and learning reached men, was their sole and complete point of contact with the things of the spirit; and in that day we had perfect architecture, perfect painting, and, so far as it went, perfect music. We shall never, I am sure, achieve anything more beautiful in architecture than the perfection of ecclesiastical architecture, not because the architect of the future will not create buildings as fit for scientific or commercial purposes as the old buildings were for religious purposes, but simply because science and commerce are less mysterious and less beautiful things than religion, and the buildings which are part of their concrete expression will be less beautiful than the buildings which express religion. But there is a great deal of paganism in music; it has its own life, its own line of development; and when its foster-mother, the church, could do no more for it, I am afraid it had little compunction in seeking development on other lines until its incompatibility with religion has

become so marked that, to pursue my metaphor to its limit, a separation seems imminent, if it has not already taken place. One has grown while the other has been standing still; and there is no gulf in the world so deep and so impassable as the gulf between things that move and things that are stationary, between things that grow and things that are stagnant, between the living and the dead.

We must accept it as a fact that much, and indeed most, of the leading thought of our time is not at all identified with religion. It has admittedly lost its hold on our world. But music has not slipped back with it, has not become a beautiful anachronism, but has retained its hold on human life and still claims the interest of the cultivated and advanced thought of the day. In that union of which we spoke music would have had either to drag religion forward with it, or be held back by it if they had remained really united in spirit; but that has not happened. Music has not been held back; or rather it has happened only in religious music; in every other kind of music the art has progressed. No one can write religious music now as well as it used to be written, but the resources of all other kinds of music have been developed. We get a far finer tone out of an

orchestra than we did a hundred years ago, though I doubt if we get as fine a tone from our organs as we did a hundred years ago. And why, if not that improvement means growth, although growth does not necessarily mean improvement; but where you find that a thing has become stationary and improved no more, you will probably find that it has ceased to grow.

II

If this were all, if the music that we associate with religion had remained merely where it was at its best, we should be well off, but that is not the case. There is another inexorable law that comes into operation in a matter of this kind—the law of decay. Things that cease to live cannot remain in a state of fixity; they die, or in other words they begin to go back; for the death of anything is simply the apex of its development, the point at which it ceases to go forward or grow, and at which it begins to go back or decay —there is really no pause. It is no wonder, then, that we do not find religious music in anything like the state of perfection that it reached at its zenith.

It is not sufficiently realised how very much

lower the *average* standard of musical taste and performance is in our churches than anywhere else. Its badness is indeed worth a moment's study. A very ominous fact in connection with it is that the more genuine and real the religion nowadays, the worse the music. I suppose the bed-rock of musical bad taste is the Salvation Army, but I do not think that any one denies that the whole success of that great organisation is founded on its power to evoke a genuine, although emotional, sense of damnation and salvation. Go into many a parish church where real hard social work is being done, into any Catholic church in a slum crowded with people who really go there in spiritual belief and sincerity, or into any of those brightly lighted, hideous little chapels that are crowded with bad taste and heartiness—that is where you will find the worst music. Remember, I speak from a purely æsthetic standpoint; the music may be hearty indeed, it may be obviously the real expression of something, but as music it will be bad—bad form, bad taste, a vulgar and meretricious performance. And go into Westminster Cathedral where still you can hear the perfection of church music, where the beauty and austerity, the carefully studied traditional methods of expression, the noble formality, and

the fine and classically religious spirit of the music that is performed, combine in a very fine æsthetic effect. And then look round you in the cathedral. How many people are there? Can that vast building really pretend to be a centre and fountain of great spiritual life? Of course not. Its music is a beautiful anachronism; just as the neighbouring Abbey of Westminster is an anachronism, happily preserved for us by means of ancient endowments and foundations, but having no more to do with the spiritual life of to-day than the Elgin Marbles or the temples of Egypt that the desert sand has covered.

Now when we find a combination like this, the badness of the music proceeding in exact proportion with the goodness of the religion, and the best and purest music existing only in circumstances from which the vital spirit of religion has long departed, we may be pretty sure that there is something essentially incompatible between the two and their relations with modern life.

Music, as I have said, is and ought to be the very best vehicle for the religious emotions. Religious worship is the most magnificent drama performed among men—the most complete, the most beautiful. The thing which it expresses is upon the very verge of the imagination. The

ideal of it is seldom attained, for to attain it is to lose touch with earth and mingle ourselves with mysteries. For that great journey beyond our own consciousness we need strong wings. The idea that we seek is shaped for us in words, but to lift it and us wings of music are needed. The particular suitability of music for this purpose is that it is at once more and less articulate than any other kind of expression. More articulate, in that its expression begins where that of language ends, and deals with subtleties which a word would destroy; less articulate, in that it is not yet formed into a common language of life, debased by being fitted to petty or gross ideas. It reveals or expresses things of which we might remain for ever unconscious without its aid; it is to our inner consciousness what sunlight is (or should be) to our outer; a chord of music, if it but sound at the right moment, will shine right into the soul as a shaft of sunlight into a dark room. Hence its inevitable place in that drama whereby man makes a supreme effort to fix heart and understanding upon eternity, divinity, infinity, or any other humanly inconceivable thing; hence its glory and honour, as the means whereby we may rise beyond our material limitations.

And yet, as we have seen, the music associated

with religious worship in England is in a very low and unworthy condition. Churches and chapels are too often the homes of the most grotesque travesties of what is beautiful in music. The national taste is only beginning to be educated; but then, so is our taste in architecture and in painting, as the middle-class house and the pictures on the dining-room walls of the middle-class house show. Yet we do not build or decorate churches entirely in accordance with the average middle-class taste. We borrow from other nations, other ages, in which these arts were at their zenith, and so make an attempt at least to make the ceremonies of religion worthy of their purpose. But with music these attempts are abandoned. Tunes that tickle the uneducated ear are "wedded" to words of steamy sentimentality, and offered as an adequate expression of the exquisite flower of human devotion. Luscious, cloying harmonies, wafted on the tone of fantastic organ stops, prolong the sickly feast; and the silly imagery of words wholly unsuited to men and women with hearts to be braced and burdens of flesh and spirit to be borne is matched with strains so ignoble, so cheap in the employment of the elementary tricks of popular musical phrase-making as to be nothing but offences to ears

even slightly accustomed to music in its nobler form.

The reason for this state of things constitutes its most serious mischief. Music, more than anything else, except, perhaps, some perfumes, can breathe life into these dead leaves of the memory that float on the stream of thought and are called associations. The sound of voices long silent, the brush of wind on the face, a landscape, a group of figures, a night-sky—these things can all be brought instantly, and for an instant, to life by a chord or melody of music. And tender memories of childhood, of happy dependence on parents before the sad and dismaying sense of loneliness and self-dependence had set in—those most beautiful things live for us in music; and (since for most of us the first associations of religion are bound up with nursery memories) it happens that some of these sentimental hymn-ditties are identified with some of the best and most tender feelings that we know. Well, let us grant it. We may admit that, if you sang a stupid hymn at your mother's knee, that hymn is certainly not stupid to you, but a holy and beautiful thing; still, that is no reason why you should load the same tune with the seed of your child's future harvest of memories. If you do, you are

perpetuating an ugly thing, and endangering your child's sense of beauty. And you run a further risk ; for the child may find out for himself that the thing he was taught to regard as beautiful is essentially ugly, and he may argue from this that the idea it carried for him is also false and even ugly. When anything which has been "hallowed" by time, custom, sentiment, or association is attacked, there is always this outcry from the sentimentalists ; a cry with which we can sympathise, although it merely shows that the sentimentalists are incapable of forming a sane judgment in the matter. But it is not enough to destroy. There is something better to be put in the place of all these musical sweetmeats, something true to art and (if people would only believe it) infinitely more capable of serving as a vehicle for solemn and tender associations.

There are two ways, and two ways only, out of a state of affairs like this—to go forward or to go back. If that union of which I have spoken, that marriage still holds good, if its tie is still undissolved, the choice is open to us. But the choice is not open to us. We cannot go forward ; and there is nothing in the development of modern music that is in the least suitable for

the expression of religion. Its modern development is on lines entirely dissociated from religious ideas. By merely technical effects you can always produce a sort of religious atmosphere; a few chords on an organ in a theatre will do it; but that is the merely theatrical and external association of ideas; it is not the deep quality that informed the Gregorian music, the music of Bach and the German Reformation, and the music of the old English church with the really religious spirit. That is hopelessly and utterly beyond the reach of modern music; and my own explanation, which no one need accept against his own observation or experience, is that music has developed and religion has not; that music is a living thing and religion in our world a dying thing.

III

Well, then, if we cannot go forward, there remains the other alternative, to go back. The forward movement has been tried, but unsuccessfully. Modern music has lived only in the romantic school, and has developed only in song, opera, and symphony. Church music has not developed any more than religious ceremonial has developed. We should be shocked if the modern arts of stage

management were applied to the ceremonies of worship, and so we ought to be shocked when we hear *Credos* and *Kyries* sung to strains of the bastard French opera school. The thing, if it were nothing worse, is an anachronism. But as we follow the line of musical development backwards, we find two points at which it comes to a kind of focus in forms of dignity and austere beauty which are most suitable for association with religious ceremonies. Plainsong is, after all, the obvious and perfectly satisfactory musical vehicle for our Western forms of worship. It is at once so bare and so beautiful, so restrained and austere, that it obtrudes nothing, but is capable of receiving everything. But one other kind of music, far different in scope but springing directly from plainsong, is also perfectly adapted for the more magnificent commemorative acts of worship—I mean the German chorale. That is the most perfect kind of music that has ever been devised for what we call congregational performance—that is to say, a service in which the people themselves take part. Its descendant in England was the old English psalm or hymn-tune ; there is in our collection of these a real treasure of religious music. But the treasure is mixed up witn an infinite amount of dross ; the bad tunes are pre-

ferred to the good one, and popularity and uneducated taste are allowed to rule and ruin the general effect.

You see, then, that it amounts to this, that the taste, the universal taste that governs the association of music with religion is thoroughly bad. People have ugly and badly performed music in their churches and chapels because, their taste being uneducated, they like ugly and badly performed things, just as the artisan would prefer to decorate the wall of his room with a coloured illustration from a Christmas number than with a drawing by Blake. Taste in other departments of music, as we have seen, is being educated and improved; is it really being educated and improved in the music associated with the church? I think not. Vulgarity is more rampant there than anywhere else; music is drifting away from religion, spreading its wings in other directions, and leaving what was once its twin soul comfortless and deserted. I do not think there is any real remedy; and those of us who are interested in the association of music and religion will do well to realise that in its modern development music has nothing in sympathy with religion, and that for a suitable and dignified expression of religion in music we

must go back to the period when these two were all in all to each other and found in each other the reflection of all that was best in themselves.

IV

The age and youth of music can be studied to great advantage in the two temples of religion that stand within a stone's-throw of each other at Westminster. In the hoary Abbey, crowded with the history of England and reeking with the dust of dead things, is heard the last and most modern development of religious music, the dry, gentlemanly, scholarly music of the gentlemanly and scholarly Anglican Church. And a little way down the street, surrounded by flats and offices, rises another building, as new as the flats and offices, its walls a monument of nothing except the supreme personality of a dead cardinal and the supreme genius of a dead architect; in which all that is most venerable and ancient in music can be heard and studied in a considerable degree of perfection. It is one of my pleasures, in those mid-hours of the afternoon which are apt to be otherwise blank, to alternate between these two places; to sit sometimes in the organ loft of Westminster Abbey and look down upon the

venerable and well-endowed building thronged with its prosperous, middle-class congregation of sight-seers, and to sit on another day in the apse of Westminster Cathedral and look down the whole length of that mighty nave as yet unwritten upon by time or history, and furnished only with its own majestic proportions and the handful of poor people who come for the music of Vespers and the solace of Benediction.

There can be no question about the religious contrast between these two places, but the musical contrast is not less striking. The modern church music of Westminster Abbey—and by "modern" I do not mean the music of to-day, but the music of yesterday—this sounds strangely stiff and old-fashioned, with a certain Georgian plainness and Georgian symmetry, and a certain coldness and inhumanity that leave a little chill in the heart. The lovely building, the fine organ, and the fine singing, the sense that the whole thing is inextricably bound up with the English constitution, social and political, may compensate, it is true, for the lack of the highest qualities in music; for the place itself is hypnotic and lulls one into the belief that if people would but go to prayers twice a day all would be well with England and the world.

But at Westminster Cathedral there are none of these aids to appreciation. You feel at once when you enter those portals that you are, in spite of the bold and intelligent effort to make this Catholic cathedral really English in feeling and atmosphere and tradition, on foreign ground. As on a British ship all over the world, although you lie in the frozen harbour of Archangel or on the burning waters of the Caribbean, you feel that you are on British territory; so in any Catholic church, in whatever country, the Protestant cannot escape the feeling that he is on Roman territory, just as the true Catholic feels when he steps within the doors of a church, that he is treading the soil of a vaster country than can be claimed by any nationality—the country of the Church, the spiritual world. Sometimes, it is true, in Westminster Cathedral one may feel, when some great pageant is in progress, that one is taking a peep into the pages of English history; but the Reformation is too strong for us, the effect does not last, it is not the England that we know; and between the English gentleman, educated in a public school and at a University, sitting in his white surplice and hood, and remaining much more an Englishman and a gentleman than anything else—between him and

the Catholic priest with his downcast eyes, his strange mediæval garments, and his dull mumble or strident intonation of Latin, there is as much difference as between the noble scholarly simplicity of the English Prayer Book and the elaborate mosaic of Latin fragments that make up the Gradual and Missal. In his carved stall the Anglican canon still retains his own private personality; he is a part of English society, and the emoluments of his stall are the equivalent of many acres of English soil. But the Catholic priest represents nothing but his church and his office; when he lays aside his embroidered cope or dalmatic or chasuble, when he leaves the mystic precincts of the altar, he becomes, from an English social point of view, nobody at all. He may be stupid and ignorant, or wise and learned, he may be boorish or gentle—it is all one; within the sanctuary he is but a voice and an instrument, without it, in England to-day, he is nothing but himself.

When we come to the music itself we come to another startling set of contrasts. The music at the Abbey is helped into a visual prominence; there are the great organ cases clinging to the triforium on either side; there are the ranks of choristers robed in white and scarlet in the most

prominent place in the building; a seat in the Abbey is considered good in proportion to the view it affords of the singers and the clergy. But in the Cathedral the choir and organ are alike invisible, hidden behind the greater glories of the sanctuary and the altar; it does not matter where you sit, you can see nothing of the music, you can only hear it, and you see nothing of the choir except at their entrance and departure when in couples they make their genuflection to the High Altar and their ceremonial bows to one another. After that they are swallowed up in the gloom of the apse and become as impersonal as the music itself.

And yet another contrast. In the Abbey at its very best you feel that it is not the music alone that you are listening to; but it is music deeply associated with two other senses, the sense of literature and the sense of personal religion in the Protestant meaning of the word. To hear Wesley's "Ascribe unto the Lord" sung there on a winter afternoon is more than to hear fine music; the sense of literature is also flattered, the memory of great words and great phrases is awakened; associations inseparable from the Protestant education are stirred. But at the Cathedral, when the music of Palestrina or

Vittoria is flowing out, or some of those incomparable polyphonic webs of the mediæval Spanish school are being woven, you lose all sense of anything except the music itself. It is far more modern than the most modern religious music; and far more Pagan than the earliest secular music; it often seems to me like the pure elemental sound of voices, like the crying of fauns in a forest. But above all it is impersonal, and like all impersonal things is as mystical as you choose to make it.

And if you take an intimate part in the music there is again a great difference. Up on the rood screen at Westminster with its lovely proportions spread before your eyes you are, as in all English cathedrals, detached from the actual choral performers; the whole thing goes on automatically without any other link but that of sound between the *Magister Chori* and his forces down below. It is an august position; and in no case do you, if you are a person with any sense of reverence, feel its solemnity so deeply as when you play the organ yourself and, looking down into the vista of chapels and monuments, realise whose dust it is that your sound waves are stirring. But to sit in the apse of Westminster Cathedral is to sit in a friendly and intimate association with the

makers of the music; they are in a place apart, there is no ceremonial appearance to be kept up; the director of the music can correct on the spot either a fault of behaviour or of singing; it is almost like being in a class-room to sit among his group of men and little boys singing the most difficult and elaborate music from crabbed manuscript copies. You may play the organ, but you do not see where your sound is going, it escapes into the vast open cathedral behind you; it is like playing and singing in a room whose doors are wide open to the world.

Of these two places, the one is a survival, the other a revival. The survival is kept going indefinitely by reason of its mighty endowments; but it is a formidable thing to attempt the revival of something which once died of its own corruption. That is why the work at Westminster Cathedral, in addition to its profound musical importance, has a pathetic interest of its own. But for any one who doubts the musical health of England to-day it is instructive and encouraging to go and compare these two things, and to examine what musically it is that a past age has allowed to survive, and what it is that the present age is attempting to revive.

DEBUSSY

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IT is most important that those who care for music as a living art should come to their critical bearings about Debussy. He is a discoverer ; he has wandered into a new world of tonality and what for want of a better term we must call musical colour ; he speaks to us in a new language, which we are obliged to learn before we can form any judgment of his work ; in a word, he is an artist with a new technique, and with at least some degree of inspiration. What does he say in this new language? What does he discover in his new world? What does his inspiration reveal?

A really deep curiosity and interest in Debussy date with most of us from our first hearing of *l'Après-midi d'un Faun*, that strange, remote piece of loveliness in which, like ethereal harmonics sounding high above a deep note, an exquisite artistic essence is derived from a primitive and elemental idea. The reedy, bubbling notes of the flute, the stringent, murmurous tones of the 'cellos and violas, the strange scale, the unquiet

intervals, the melancholy, burdened cadences, the languors and insidious melodies that steal from among the buzzing harmony—what are they but reflections in sound, in etherealised, poetic sound, of the sultriness of a windless afternoon, of the drowsy stirring of the pagan and animal forces, the peace and the terror that lurk together in the still, sun-baked landscape of the classical world? This is simply a form of musical hypnotics which, if we surrender ourselves to it, will faithfully re-create in us the mood of the composer. And it may be taken as typical of the inspiration of Debussy's music; it is remote from intellectual speculations, philosophic ideas, mental agonies or conflicts; it is founded on primitive matter, primitive sensation; it is an harmonic resultant or overtone of these. One may extend the metaphor, and say that all his music is written in harmonics, on the stopped and touched springs of emotion —hardly ever are the natural, open notes heard. And though the harmonics are very high and ethereal, there is never any doubt whence they are derived; the sensual, the material, the fundamental aspects of human nature are the pools from which these misty clouds are drawn, to float away and melt into the hot distance of desert skies.

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What is new is, or should be, always interesting, and one always approaches Debussy with curiosity and expectation, with open ear and mind. But one is not always rewarded. In almost all these songs and pianoforte pieces one goes through the same process : one is interested at first, one is bewitched by sudden moments of unfamiliar beauty, and finally one is too often frankly bored, losing interest as soon as the strange flavour of the new fruit has been tasted. For that is the risk run by a composer whose appeal is chiefly to the surface nerves and sensations ; he stimulates the appetite for more sensation, more variety, and too often he is unable to gratify the appetite he has aroused. Sometimes you feel as though he were experimenting on you, trying how much you will stand of a certain reiterated effect, and as though, having made a note of your symptoms, he then passes on to exhibit and test a new device in the same way. Of course that is not true ; Debussy is a serious musician, with an extremely high technical grasp of his art ; he knows perfectly well what he is doing, and what effect he is trying for. His experiments are based on experience ; his curiosity is the result of profound knowledge ; his dissonances and harsh effects are founded on a very deep sense of beauty. He is deliberate in all his

nonconformity, and there is that deadly logic behind his apparent waywardness that makes modern French art the technical despair of the English mind. And yet he constantly fails to transmit his sense of beauty, constantly fails to convince us about that new world he has discovered—the new world of *l'Après-midi d'un Faun*. True, he has brought back pearls and precious stuffs, strange gums and spices and foreignly wrought treasures as a proof that he has been there ; but has he kept a chart? Does he know the way back? Often, sitting with tortured ears, journeying across what seems a mere desert waste of meaningless dissonance, one wonders about that ; one has misgivings that not the audience only have lost their musical bearings but the composer also, and it is in moments like these that curiosity is apt to turn to resentment.

Such misgivings are unprofitable. Like Berlioz in his day, Debussy has made an addition to the resources of the musical composer that has an importance quite independent of the actual merit of any of his individual works. He has done that most difficult thing—he has cleared his mind of the conventional idiom and the conventional tonality, and gone straight back to the beginning of things, to the musical scale itself, and practically

rearranged that. Our major and minor keys, our tonic and dominant harmonies, are not the structural skeletons on which his music is built. He writes in modes rather than in keys; he has gone back to the old scales, which were used before the science of harmony had been developed, and he has built upon them a tonal structure in which all the resources of modern harmony are applied to these old scales. One cannot really understand his music unless one makes an effort to forget the modern scale and the modern key, and listen with an ear unprejudiced by those powerful tonal advocates, the tonic and dominant of a major or minor key. That is the scientific explanation of the strange effect produced by the music of Debussy, and still more of Ravel, and all the modern French school. In spite of the beauty of much of the music that has been produced in this new tonality, it remains yet in a purely experimental stage; if it really develops we shall probably find that our present scale of twelve semitones will not be enough, and we shall probably have instruments constructed, as some organs were at the end of the eighteenth century, with additional quarter tones in various parts of the scale. But the difficulty in the way of a musical revolution of that kind, even if we are sure that it is desir-

able, is that all the new music would be fatally at war with the old, which would become coarse and intolerable to ears really trained in the familiar combination of quarter tones. And a musical revolution that would make Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner intolerable would be hard to accomplish.

But Debussy, having given us a new (or, if you like, restored an old) tonality, has an absolute claim on our respect and attention. For good or ill, he has deflected the compasses of all the younger school of navigators in the musical art, and his influence is bound to be great—greater, no doubt, than his individual achievement; and others will carry the possibilities of this new tonality farther than he will carry them, and so reap where he has sown. Future ages may not rank Debussy with the great composers, but they cannot deny that he is a great innovator, and he is to be saluted for that; it goes far to excuse those long periods of downright ugliness in some of his pianoforte works, or such an acoustic horror as the first movement of his string quartet. The secret of this new tonality has not yet been thoroughly plumbed. Many of its harmonic effects depend entirely on the *timbre* of the instruments on which they are played, and are

often based on the subtle harmonic effects of stringed instruments in combination; you might transpose many of Debussy's really beautiful passages from strings to wood-wind or keyed instruments, and produce mere ugliness or cacophony. That is only another way of saying that we are outgrowing the old scale, the old octave on which the music of the last two hundred years has been founded, and feeling our way into a new scale, a new tonality, which the perfection of modern keyed instruments has hitherto prevented us from cultivating. For it is almost certain that if all pianos, organs, and similar instruments in which every note of the scale has a fixed dynamic relation to every other note were to be silenced for ten years, we should by that time have developed an entirely new scale and tonality in which all our musical imaginings would be cast. Debussy is the chief of modern composers who have anticipated this development; and for that reason, if for no other, his music would be interesting.

But it has many other claims. It helps to make obsolete many forms which should have been obsolete long ago—forms in which the great composers of the past wrote great music, but in which no modern composer can write any but

feeble music. It makes it a little more absurd for us to go on flogging those dead donkeys, the oratorio and cantata; it makes experiment respectable, and even fashionable, where yesterday it was deemed disgraceful. It helps in the real appreciation of the great composers of the past, and will help to send us back to Bach for our fugues, Handel for our oratorios (if we really want oratorios), Schumann for our romance, Brahms for our musical philosophy; it will help us to discriminate between what was and what was not inspired in the works of the great, instead of accepting everything as pure gospel which bears the name of Mozart, Beethoven, Rameau, Bach, Palestrina. It will do this because, whatever its faults and failures, it appeals boldly on the single ground of beauty, and not of erudition, imitation, or conservatism. It claims every licence, and stands or falls by its justification of that licence. Its failure or success is singularly definite and complete; it is either beautiful or abominable. Two-thirds of the music of Debussy that I have heard is abominable to my ear; but the remainder is so entirely, so certainly, and so strangely beautiful as to convince me that the unpleasing part, although the greater in quantity, is infinitely the less impor-

tant, and is to be regarded as studio work which carries the mark of the master's manner and eccentricity, but not of his ultimate and abiding personality.

POSTSCRIPT

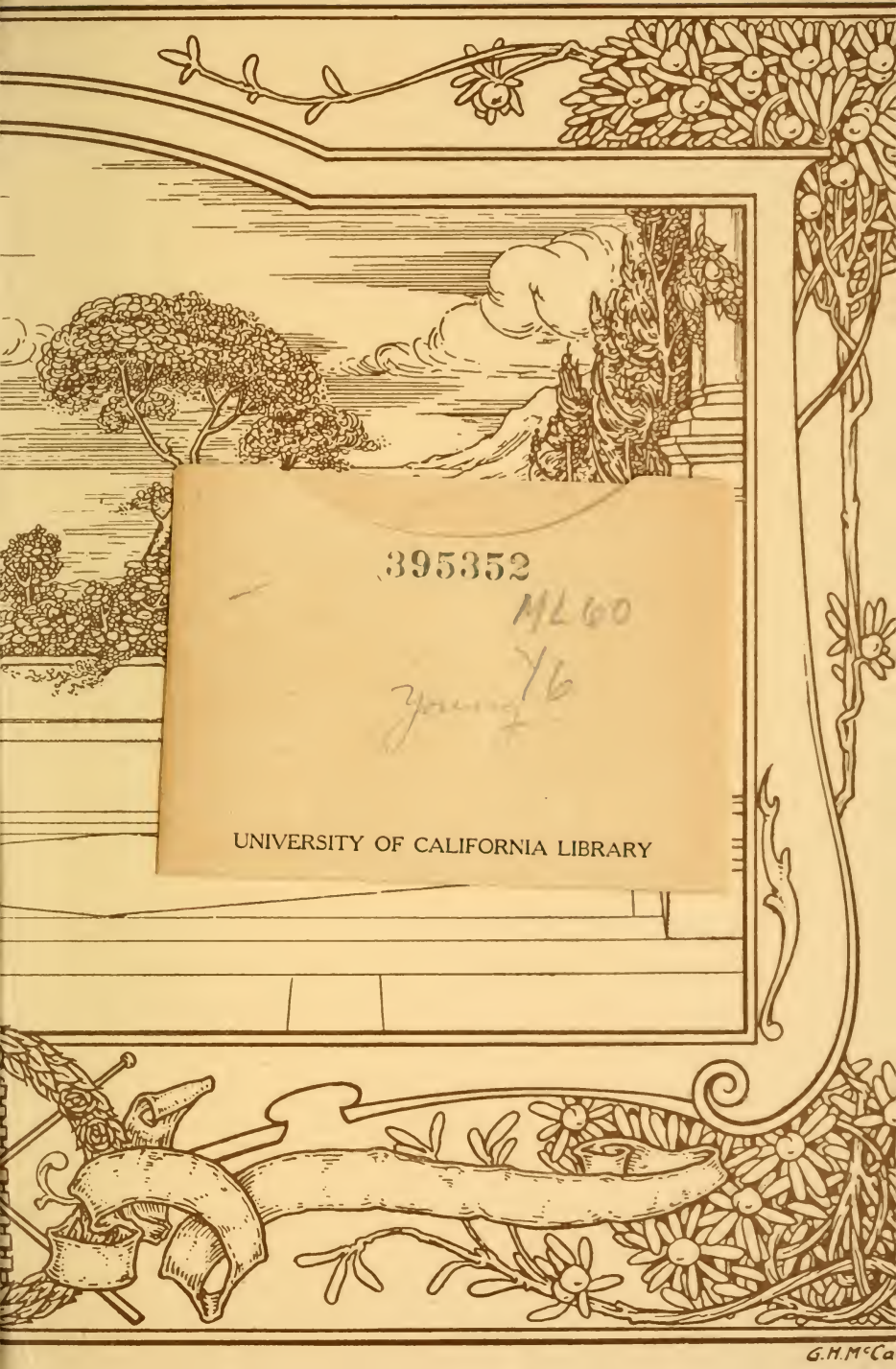
THE contents of this volume, like those of its companion *Mastersingers*, represent the work of some years ; and most of the essays, at some stage or other of their evolution, have made a preliminary appearance, while all have been worked over and to some extent rewritten before taking their final form. The greater part of the first chapter appeared serially in *The Saturday Review*, where also appeared portions of the chapters entitled respectively "The Art of the Conductor" and "Debussy." "Music in Modern Life" appeared in *The English Review*, and "The Musician as Composer" in *The Fortnightly Review*, and "The Old Age of Richard Wagner" in *The Englishwoman*. The substance of chapters II., III., IV. and V. formed part of a course of University Extension Lectures delivered in Liverpool; "The Music of the Salon" was, practically as it stands, delivered as an address at the Haymarket Theatre in connection with the *Causeries*

POSTSCRIPT

du Jeudi. I make my acknowledgments to the various editors and authorities concerned.

Music is a very difficult and baffling thing to write about, and I am far from looking with unmingled satisfaction on the contents of this volume. Excuse for imperfection lies in the extreme scarcity of literature, either good or bad, which attempts to deal with music at once humanly and critically.

April, 1911.



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