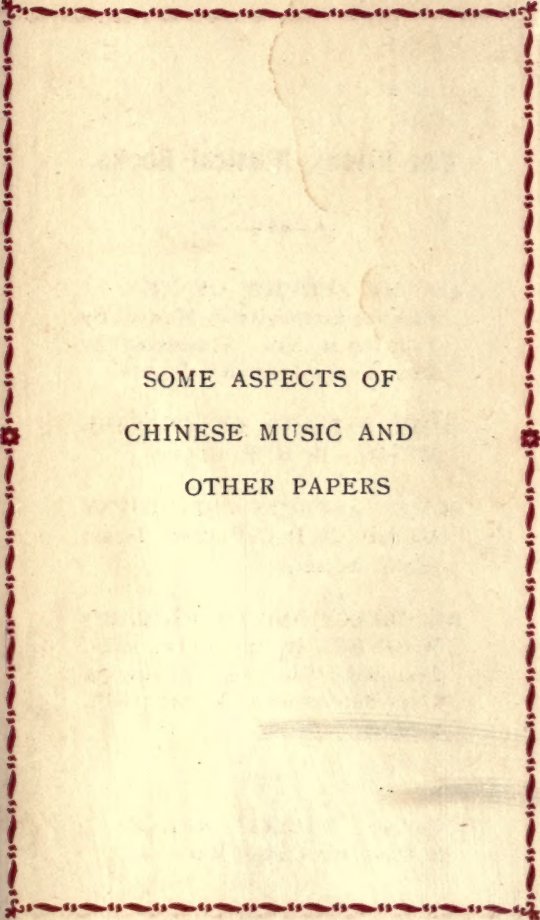


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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SOME ASPECTS OF
CHINESE MUSIC AND
OTHER PAPERS

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SOME ASPECTS
OF
CHINESE MUSIC

AND SOME
THOUGHTS & IMPRESSIONS
ON ART PRINCIPLES IN MUSIC

BY
G. P. GREEN

LONDON :
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To my Mother.

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FOREWORD.

THE majority of these Essays are here presented to the public for the first time. The Notes on Chinese Music appeared originally in the "Musical Standard," the Eternal Melody in the "Musical Times," and On Acquiring Music in the "Musical News." They are included in this little volume by permission of their respective proprietors.



I

Music in Relation to
Life and Art



ART, THE SILVER LINING OF LIFE.

IT is a commonplace, nowadays, to lightly pass sentence on music as the youngest of the arts, and with some truth. As an art, we have only some hundreds of years to go back to find its beginnings, and we might fairly take as a starting point to this new intellectual force, the efforts of St. Ambrose at the close of the fourth century A.D. and Gregory in the sixth century.

But as a natural factor of everyday life, music is as old as the earliest nations themselves, and I hope in the following pages to give some proof of the universal sense of music throughout all the ages.

Music seems naturally to fall into

MUSIC IN RELATION TO

the two headings of emotional and academical: Let us, for a short space, inquire into the former class and see what relation it bears to the latter. Firstly, we may distinguish between religious and terrestrial or secular emotional music; one which instinctively calls out our best, and urges the heart to exult with praise or lament with humiliation, the other which excites or calms irrespective of religious feeling.

It is unnecessary to be actually in an atmosphere of religious influence, such as a cathedral, a temple, or wherever worshippers are gathered, to feel the first of these emotional distinctions: Cannot one be upraised or abased through the music of absolute orchestration, to cite only one case? As also one may remain

LIFE AND ART.

unmoved by the tones of an organ, when feeling is not suffused in the whole.

Emotional music is from the earliest times an outlet for religious feeling, and we find the oldest musical records are in connection with the act of worship.

Through many hundreds of centuries, music was as much a part of religious life as was speech itself.

When music was seriously taken in hand and given its primal forms and technique, a certain amount of the barbaric impressiveness was eliminated, and although, from a greater knowledge of its resources, it can now more readily depict the composers varying emotions, yet a part of nature's untaught spirit is

MUSIC IN RELATION TO

absent. Is this a bold statement to make? Listen to the still uncultivated music of the East, and you will realise the missing ingredient.

At some far distant prehistoric date, the first inhabitants of this earth must have existed near the tract of country known afterwards as Media, and from this point extended east and west, the former passing on to Thibet and China, the latter to Babylon and Egypt.

Hence from inference and records, we can safely assume that during the thirtieth century B.C., two great peoples—the Chinese and the Egyptians—were simultaneously advancing in manners and ideas.

It is a noteworthy fact that music

LIFE AND ART.

is so intermingled with the life of these nations, chiefly the religious life, that we have accurate knowledge of these subjects long before the cultivation of painting or other arts is recorded.

Firstly, looking through Egyptian records of, at the latest, B.C. 3000, we read that "the Divinity was provided with plentiful food, drink, fine clothing, music and the dance."*

The music here spoken of was probably vocal, with priestesses jingling sistrums, by way of accompaniment.

Life at this period also shows us a fondness for music in all classes

* James Henry Breasted's "Egypt."
Ctesibus, an Egyptian, invented an hydraulic organ 300 B.C.

MUSIC IN RELATION TO

of the Egyptians, and folk-songs were common among the poorer people, two of which survive to this day.

One of these known as the Bearer's Song describes how the bearers assure their lord in the chair that the vehicle is lighter to them when he is in it than when it is empty: The other is the Shepherd's Song which he sings to his sheep: Dr. Breasted gives a translation of this which I copy below:

The shepherd is in the water among the fish:
He talks with the Nar fish:
He passes the time of day with the West fish.

The sistrum was entirely devoted to religious music, whereas the instrument of secular life was the harp; also reference is made to a small species of flute.

LIFE AND ART.

Music to this versatile nation was entirely overlooked as an art, being instinctively such a part of social and religious life, whereas painting, pottery and architecture were all taught and taken as serious branches of a higher intellect.

Following the trend of musical life in these western districts, one has only to read the descriptions of the commemoration service on the completion of Solomon's Temple, B.C. 1005,* to show how much the Jews had taken from Egyptian worship, and how strongly the sense of music as a form of praise was imbued in them.

The Medes, and more especially the Persians, B.C. 700-400, were

* Milman's "History of the Jews."

MUSIC IN RELATION TO

strongly influenced by music in their religious observances, and the sun worship of the Magi was attended by much chanting and clashing of cymbals.

This tract of country was comprehensively inhabited by the Aryan division of the then human race, and branches from this section spread through Asia Minor to Greece, and northward to the Crimea and Southern Russia.

The early Greeks were perhaps the least sensitive to emotional influences, and thus their early records are silent as to musical life.*

* Orpheus, poet, musician and religious teacher, is supposed to have lived about 1250 B.C. during the reign of Theseus, but he is too shadowy a character for historical reference.

LIFE AND ART.

We can believe that cymbals and some sort of stringed instrument were the chief means of conveying tone emotions, and it is a fact that the epics of Homer were chanted to music and in this way passed down by memory from father to son (900 B.C.).

To show how the spirit of music had grown up and entwined itself around the social life, note the contests in music and poetry at the Olympic Games as far back as 750 B.C.

Even at this period, the "art of design" was taught at properly organised schools,* whereas it was not until 550 B.C. that Simonides of Ceos and Pindar of Thebes most enterprisingly

* Edmund Ollier.

MUSIC IN RELATION TO

started some system of choral organisation.

It is more with the beginnings of different races that we have to deal, so passing on to the pre-Romans or Etruscans about 800 B.C. we find music closely allied to this artistic people. Turning now to the East, we find from ancient local writings and word history, that the Chinese as far back as 3000 B.C. had evolved a system of music out of the former ideas of the aboriginal Miaotsz, together with their own knowledge. We know that the drum performed a large part in their acts of worship, and an enormous double-pieced trumpet or horn is supposed to be contemporary with these ancient rites.

As all the books, records and musical writings were destroyed in

LIFE AND ART.

B.C. 200, we lose the absolute proof of more western records, though it is not really hard to reconstruct the enharmonic and wonderfully emotional music of these conservative people. In a former paper of mine which appeared in "The Musical Standard," I followed through the history of this slow moving and intellectual people with the dates marking various times of progress, and the names of some of their leading musical lights.

Coming down to quite latter times, we read of the worship of the Aztecs during the third century A.D., and note how great an influence music in a rough form had upon the emotions of these wild people.

The same spirit is noticeable in the Incas of a later date (1050 A.D.).

MUSIC IN RELATION TO

A description of the sun worship festivals will convey my meaning :

No sooner did his first rays appear than a shout broke forth accompanied by songs of triumph and the wild melody of barbaric instruments. And again: The revelry of the day was closed at night by music and dancing.*

When European nations began enlarging and organising the cult of music, the sense of absolute composition crept in, and the progress through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, culminated with Goudimel (1505 A.D.) and his more illustrious pupil, Palestrina, who already had evolved a grammar of music, and had settled rough laws of form and restriction.


It has been my wish to point out

* Prescott.

LIFE AND ART.

the great importance of music in national life since earliest times, and the study of these first musical happenings well repay such as care to follow out this rough line of thought.





II

Peking

PEKING.

WOULD you know this vast city of the old East, this mysterious spot in which sentiment and imperialism are waring with fatalism and intrigue?

Come on the magic carpet of the spirit and I will touch the impenetrable here and there for you, and leave you to sort impressions.

A glorious day with blue, blue sky, such as even Italy can scarcely vie with, and this teeming city guarded by high overtowering temples and encircled—almost imprisoned with a “wall.”

And colour everywhere.

Imagine some genius of architecture enveloped in a madness of

PEKING.

colour run riot; gaudily coloured
rococo mixed with exquisite
marble carving: arabesque in
terms of China.

And in the middle of this shifting
life of colour, a placid green Eng-
lish park: a sweet shaded spot of
old trees and the smell of hay.
You recoil at the shock of an old
temple, though beautiful and
well-toned in green tiles.

On to the temple of the heavens:
perfection of delirious colour:
blue, bluer than the sky: bluer
than one ever knew existed,
against the full rich green of
summer trees.

You must not linger at the three
tiers of Grecian marble outside,
but look once at the tinsel and
faded gold inside, that faintly
recall Omar and St. Marks.

PEKING.

The barbaric emotional worship of this eastern race is so much a part of their life that I take you first to the fountain-head, and if you care to listen with me to the wail of the sacrificial music, the spell of elemental things will fall upon you.

But on. Through the imperial city to the gates of that "forbidden city," the prison of their royal ones, symbolised in its golden tiles. Poor lonely souls, shut in; it requires all the emblematic gold to hide the shadow of their lives.

How the sense of these great high temples, watching over the city comes upon one. How real seem the powers of darkness, as the roll of enormous drums floats over the darkening scene. The Chinese capital by night is, in its way,

PEKING.

more absolutely enchanting than even Paris or London, and the kaleidoscope of colour and sound, the lights and shadows and the various groupings, make for incessant wonder. And over all is the mystery of Peking in hiding; the inexplicable sense of the hovering unknown.

Ring up the curtain of darkness,
and snatch another glimpse or
two of this dream city.

Come down this broad, busy street
of noise and moving colour. You
wish to see that travelling
acrobat, attracted by the noise
of his enharmonic orchestra,
and the wonderful crowd of
children.

Now we have the stillness of dead
things and immobility; the calm
peaceful cloisters and courtyards

PEKING.

of a Confucian temple A path-
way of fir-trees, and a framed
vista of yellow roof. Silent-
footed priests pass to and from
the vast, dim interior.

We are out again in the bustle of
thronged life.

A public holiday for the moon's
birthday, and surely the reds and
yellows and blues have taken
on a deeper hue, to do her
honour.

Children everywhere; and such a
tremendously happy mass of
young vitality, watched by de-
voted parents.

Let us mount this temple, set high
up on the city walls, and look out
over the flat, wooded country,
specked with the white towers of
mysterious symbolism: huge

PEKING.

temples, making the sense of gods
and devils very real and close.

And has a little corner of the veil
of the East been lifted? For
good or ill my part is done.





III

The Music of China
(Historical)

25

3

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

THE early history of China may be divided into three periods, the "mythical period," ranging from absolutely obscure times until about 3000 B.C.; the "highest antiquity," or "legendary" period, from 3000 B.C. to 2200 B.C.; and the "early dynasties" period, from 2200 B.C. on till 618 A.D.

Now at some far, pre-historic date, the first inhabitants of this earth probably existed near the tract of country known afterwards as Media and Persia.

From this spot we know they spread south to Egypt, and west, through the modern Crimea to Greece and Europe, and by inference and plain deduction from

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

records, we can trace the tribes journeying east to China. MacGowan, in his "History of China," says that "the originators of this present race are said to have come from the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea, and by some, from the Euphrates plain."

We know hardly anything about these early and mythical folk, and of their music, practically nil.

As with all ancient races, the music of the Chinese was in close affinity to their religion, and the symbolism of the former is worth noting. Music, say the Chinese, is the harmony between heaven and earth: and they therefore rest their musical ideas on two principles, the natural production, represented by unity, i.e.,

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

heaven; and that which man evolves, or plurality, i.e., earth.

Again the five notes which originally constituted their scale, were called after five planets. The number five seems to have originated from a combination of *three*, the symbol of heaven, and *two*, that of earth. Myth finishes and history commences in the story of the Chinese nation, as nearly as we can tell, with the Emperor Fuh-shi (*circa* 3000 B.C.), who practically founded China as a nation, as distinct from the Miaotsz or aboriginals. He was a great reformer, and a most clever and able man, and at once evolved a system of music from the primitive state in which it already existed, together with certain notions of the Chinese, about which more anon. He was also the reputed inventor of the

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

lute and the lyre (most probably a form of the modern ch'in), that, in his own words, "the people might be charmed with music, and thus be enabled to bear more cheerfully the burdens of life." Undergoing many changes of development and enlargement, we next hear of music having assumed a more characteristic form, under the direction of the Emperor Huang-Ti (B.C. 2690), who gave names to certain notes and fixed upon a root bass note.

Passing on to the end of the "highest antiquity" period (about 2300 B.C.), it is recorded that when the Emperor Yao died, the people mourned for him three years, and musical instruments between the "four seas" were stopped and stored away.

In the "Li-Ki" (book of rites) the

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

prohibitions against music when in mourning were pretty numerous, from the remotest ages into which this literature of the empire allows us to penetrate. Now this very conservative and severe rite would naturally have checked the progressive flow of music as an art; and when this budding art was under state supervision, as it has been from time immemorial, the bureaucratic influence stopped any form of innovation. One wonders what their early symphonies were like, and undoubtedly they were most remarkable as Confucius is said to have fasted for three months after hearing a certain piece.

However, it must be remembered that the Chinese are most sensitively responsive to certain musical combinations, quite incomprehensible to the European ear.

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

A hanging stone gong, the Tê-ch'ing, was much in favour at this time, though it still exists in the present-day temple services, and the following chant of Konei, Yao's court musician, may be of interest :

'When I smite my musical stone—
Be it gently or strong,
Then do the fiercest hearts leap for joy,
And the chiefs do agree among themselves."

* * *

"When ye make to resound the stone
melodious,
When ye touch the lyre that is called
Ch'in,*
Then do the ghosts of the ancestors come
to hear."

Certainly the ancient Chinese virtuoso had no false modesty !

The next musical light was Shun,

* As I noted before.

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

founder of the last dynasty in the "highest antiquity" period, and a prolific composer.

A curious, if somewhat pointless, little anecdote I append, taken from a translation of the "Lue-Yü," the Confucian canon:

"A man who wanted to see Confucius called on him. Confucius, not wishing to see him, sent to say he was sick. When the servant with the message went to the door, Confucius took up his musical instrument and sang aloud purposely to let the visitor hear it and know that he was not really sick!"

Delightful amenities of old-world life.

In these ancient times, the Chinese placed a very high value on the

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

art of music, in fact, the knowledge of sounds was said to be so closely connected with the science of government, that only those who understood the science of music were fit to perform the duties of rulers.

The "Shi-King," or book of odes, dates back to a considerable period before the production of any other authenticated works, and in it we read of the court music masters, whose duty it was to set to music the contemporary folk-songs. I wish now to pass on to the Chen dynasty (1100 B.C.), and the following extract from "The Religious System of China," by J. de Groot, will show how deeply the sense of music was planted in these people at this period :

"During this dynasty, at burials

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

of royal personages, the musical instruments which had been played by the court musicians during the interment, were placed inside the grave"; and as the ritual says, "for the purpose of gratifying the soul of the dead with dulcet tones."

Here I will give the "liberal branches of education," showing how the various musical evolutionists, from earliest times, contributed to the literature of their music, as it is now.

The first of these branches, altogether six in number, is "rites," the second is "music," which includes:

- (a). Ywun-that of Whangdi (B.C. 2697).
- (b). Hienchu of Yao (B.C. 2357).
- (c). Dashao of Shun (B.C. 2255).

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

- (d). Dahia of Yu Wang (B.C. 2205).
- (e). Dahoo of Yin (B.C. 1766).
- (f). Dawoo of Woo Wang (B.C. 1122).

These are kept at the Yö Poo or "board of music," at Peking, an office attached to the Lé Poo or "board of rites."

A considerable check came to the progress of the musical art, by the edict of the Emperor Tsin or Chin (B.C. 200),* that all books and music were to be burned.

Now this tyrannical man was the first universal emperor of China, and withal a strong, capable ruler. The name of the country—China—literally means Chinna, and the other Asiatic peoples

* Von Alst cites Huang Ti, one of the dynasty.

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

call the Chinese empire Tsin or Tsinistan; and it is generally believed to be referred to in Isaiah, xlix, 12, as the land of Sinim.

However, to keep to the subject in hand, this great emperor did throw the work back, as far as music was concerned, and he was supposed to be intensely irritated by it, so much so that a proverb was started by some court wit to the effect of "Playing the zither to an ass, and talking astrology to the blind."

After this, efforts were made in the direction of instrumental rather than vocal music, which has heretofore been the principal medium of expression. The Emperor Kai-Huang, of the Sui dynasty (*circa* A.D. 600) did much for the cause, and the following extract

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

from Bretschneider's "Mediæval Researches" is interesting as showing how much stock they set by this subject: "During the Sui dynasty, a Chinese traveller to Medina (the present Mecca), reports, "they are well versed in astrology, medicine and music."

The two Emperors Ching-Kwan and K'ang Hsi, who largely patronised the musical art during the seventh century A.D., left practically the modern form as it now is: though it gets more and more difficult to trace through the links of past ages as the western influence spreads and alters their outlook, whilst much of the old musical tradition is dying out.

The present music is of two distinct kinds, the southern and the northern scale, quite distinguishable by the people: and

THE MUSIC OF CHINA.

these two kinds are each divided again into two sections, of *ritual* or *sacred* music (generally in the minor mode) and *theatrical* music. All time is common. The scales, notation and instruments are dealt with in a further paper, but to sum up these few notes I may add that their theories and rules are based on infinitely difficult and symbolic meanings which are hard to get at, and that, though the result may sound horribly enharmonic, yet it is wonderfully emotional. The reasons, I think, why Chinese music is not attuned to western ears may be defined roughly as: (a) the untempered and unchanging scale of this eastern music; (b) the lack of proper and necessary "atmosphere" essential for grasping the emotional possibilities of such music.



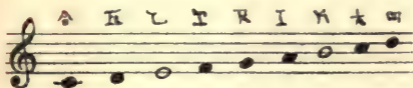
IV

On Chinese Music
(Analytical)

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

CONTINUING the subject of Chinese music, I think it advisable to commence with some notes on the Eastern scale and notation.

As mentioned before, the scale originally consisted of five notes, which is still adhered to by the people of the north: the southerners, however, possess a diatonic octave, *with* a super-numerary note, as follows :



ko eg i cheng ché kung fan lin wa

The semitones "i" and "fan" are seldom used, making an enharmonic scale. No absolute chromatic scale exists.

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

About the period of Fu-shi's reign, a system was invented of the division of the octave into twelve semitones, represented by twelve "Lūs" or bamboo tubes of differing lengths. On all great ceremonial occasions, the chanting was done in the "Lū" corresponding to the month. Any note may commence the octave (from the fifth to the fifth—i.e., from sol to sol—tonic sol-fa), which would be called the mode of the fifth.

^ The earliest scale used to correspond with our present C, D, F, G, A, which about two hundred years afterwards was enlarged to seven notes by the inclusion of F sharp and B.

^ This was again cancelled some time later, and the scale reverted to C, D, F, G, A, which has remained till to-day.

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

The notation of Chinese music is peculiar and ingenious, for although no value is attached to a note, yet vague signs are used sometimes to give a suggestion of time.

The following is a Confucian chorale, chanted at their ceremonies. By giving the rough English equivalent, readers will see how many difficulties there are in following this weird system of music literature.

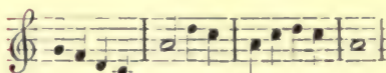
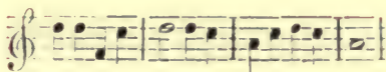
In Chinese notation:

工	合	工	四
	工	六	四
	四	五	工
	合	六	四
	工	尺	四
	六	上	四
	六	四	合

Read down from right top
corner.

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

In English notation :



This chant is accompanied by shengs, gongs and drums. The vocalisation is strange and un-reproducible, sound being emitted through the nose, not altogether as unattractive as one might imagine from this description, but rather soft and plaintive.

A choir always sings in unison.

There are roughly about seventy different instruments used, which include drums, cymbals, chimes, gongs, flutes, bells, lutes, guitars, the Säng (or Sheng) and the Kin.

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

✓ The first impression of musical life appears to be the very large part played by the drum. Drums with a marriage procession, drums at a funeral cortège, "drum towers"—where, every evening, vast drums of six feet diameter are beaten against the powers of evil.

Again, like so many things Chinese, drums are symbolic in many ways. At the Confucian temple in Peking are ten old stone drums made for the Emperor Chu-Kung (B.C. 669), and supposed by many authorities to have been actually beaten in religious ceremonies; the modern Pekinese, however, say that they were only carried round as symbols. Afterwards they were engraved and placed in their present position. A new set of similar drums was added by Chien-Lung (A.D. 1700).

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

The religious rites at the Lama temple include much music, necessitating a somewhat large orchestra of drums, trumpets and stringed instruments.

- These drums are of two descriptions, one, about three feet in diameter, made with a long handle and carried by a priest, with another priest to beat a slow note of intonation, generally B. The other is a highly ornate drum of some proportions, the skin always being nailed on instead of being braced with cords. A treatise on drums was written in A.D. 860, giving over one hundred symphonies!

- The trumpets used are of various forms and sizes. At the aforementioned Lama temple, one hears the deep roar of great cylindrical instruments, having a pull-

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

out tube; the whole resembling somewhat a fantastic coach-horn: eight of these large trumpets are used, four with each choir.

When closed they stand about four and a half feet high, and about double this length when opened out. The broad end is some five or six inches in diameter, and by shortening the length of the expanding tube, the note is modified and made shriller.

Chinese cymbals are of very good workmanship, though the secret amalgam is lost to all but a few families: it is generally supposed that the old sacred cymbals were compounded of eighty-one per cent copper, with nineteen per cent tin.

The SHENG is of enormous interest historically, as it is the original

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

idea of our present perfect organ. It is quite a small instrument about a foot long, having a circular air chamber, from which fourteen reeds of differing length are led, each having in it a valve opening either up or down, and thus answering to pressure or suction from a mouthpiece in the air-box.

Some authorities claim for it the additional interest of being identical with Jubal's organ. The **KIN** or **SH'IN**, the most perfect of Chinese stringed instruments, has comparable relationship with the early European forms. From **Fu-shi** (B.C. 3000) the instrument was handed down, till quite late years, in an unaltered condition.

It consisted of a convex plank of wood, about three and a half feet

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

long, over which was stretched strings, varying from five to seven. These strings pass over a bridge, and then through holes in the plank, and are secured underneath. They are tightened on the reverse at the other end by brass pegs.

Latterly, another plank was put across the back to form a sound-box.

The music for this instrument is complicated and not easily understood, characters conveying to the player which string to use, which finger to play with, and how it should be played: it is more entirely confined to the highly educated and is used for their *salon* music.

The strings are in the following order : G, A, C, D, E, G, A.

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

Another, and later form, is the Sè, or Goto, of which there are three or four kinds, with strings varying from twenty-five to fifty.

- ✓ The Japanese imported this instrument, under the name of Koto, and considerably enlarged its possibilities and literature. A volume of Koto music, in my possession, is prefaced by the following quaint passage: "Though most of the pieces contained in this collection are selected from the better portion of the old Koto music, yet for those words and tunes occurring therein, which are liable to offend the public feelings on account of their vulgarity and meanness, pure and elegant ones have been substituted, thus preventing their baneful effects upon the character."

✓ The last and most perfect form of

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

this instrument, or rather in family descent from it, reached by the Chinese, is the Tsing or Chin.

This is a four-sided sounding box with one side about half the length of the opposite side, over which is suspended a series of strings in threes, after the manner of the present-day "tricord" piano, diminishing in length with the shape of the instrument.

These tricords are raised at alternate ends, and are struck with small bamboo sticks, emitting a sound of much sweetness, not unlike a harp. The strings are fixed to turnable screws at one end, and can be tuned by a special brass key.

Now looking back over European

ON CHINESE MUSIC.

music, we find in a work by Luscinius (A.D. 1536) an engraving of the "dulcimer," played by two small sticks, and with minor details aside, extraordinarily similar to the Chinese Tsing.

It is more than interesting to notice the development of two races, on opposite sides of the world, and working entirely apart.

The Western intellect has of course carried on the "dulcimer" to our grand piano, whereas the Chinese, not a wit less intellectual, are perfectly content with the music they have produced for centuries.

I can recommend Rimbault's "Origin and Construction of the Piano" to the reader, for a fuller account of the dulcimer.

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The symbolic side of the Sh'in is not without interest, so I give it as far as I have been able to gather.

Its inventor called it "Sh'in," meaning restriction, as its influence was to restrict evil passions and to soothe the spirit.

The chief parts of the instrument were designed after natural laws: the length was originally in inches, corresponding to the days of the year; the five strings were the five elements; the rounded body represented the heavens; and the pegs, irrespective of strings, were placed in to stand for the moons.

The SAN-HIEN is a two-stringed guitar, very roughly made of bamboo, the small drum being covered with snake skin. It is

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much used by the poor people, who tune it to the "fifth" interval.

The SHU-TIH is an embryo clarinet, blown through a small reed slit, in the manner of the "chanter" of the bagpipe, and with a movable trumpet end.

The "musical stone"* has already been mentioned, and one can only add that it is exclusively a temple property.

*Street bands are common, and one meets them in every quarter of a big city. Their ensemble is comprised of drums, small Shu-Tih trumpets, cymbals, and a sort of wooden rattle, not unlike the modern "bones."

* Tê-ch'ing.

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I will close these few stray notes with an extract on mourning etiquette from De Groot's "Religious System of China," including parts of the "Li-Ki" or book of rites, to show how largely music enters into the national life of China.

"From the most ancient times on record in native literature, music was forbidden to mourners. Musical instruments were always interred with emperors and grandees during the dynasties of Chen and Han."

"When in mourning one does not talk of music."

Of Confucius, in the same work, we read:

"After the sacrifice of Felicity, he began to handle his cithern

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during five days, without, however, producing perfect sounds out of it; and ten days later he played the pipes and sang."

The Chinese character for the "cithern," here mentioned, is the same as the Japanese use for their Koto, so we may presume that some form of Kin is referred to. Again: "Should they have Buddhistic ceremonies performed, and sung with accompaniment of bamboo flutes and silken strings, the local officers shall interfere with severity and put a stop to it." One can see the local officers delighted to "hold up" the poor Buddhists "with severity"!

In conclusion, one can only say that in all probability, within the next ten years, a modern spirit will have invaded China, and a

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western musical system will have banished much of this old-world music. As it stands, it is not without interest, and the study of its travel across Asia, its differences at different localities, and its comparison with Egyptian and European music, will repay the student amply.





V

The "Eternal Melody":
An Eastern Legend.

THE "ETERNAL MELODY."

A LIFE spent in travelling round and over the earth teaches many unexpected things, and gives glimpses of the most unsuspected wheels within the wheels of our ken. I first came in contact with the "Eternal Melody" through some chance-overheard, whispered sentences in a bazaar in Northern Persia.

No more than a few, low words, muttered by a passing priest to one of his disciples, but, I happened to catch the phrase—"Eternal Melody," and also to note the expression on the priest's face, one almost of fear; and my interest was roused and memory dented. However, I could gather no more information or even a shadow of interest

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in the subject at that time, and life's work calling me to other parts, I had practically pigeon-holed it as a delightful theme whose study was ended prematurely, soon after its birth. Two years afterwards I was to get nearer the heart of this "Melody," and in what way it sounded to me this second time I will tell in full.

A spare week at Penang with many friends is not difficult to live through, and though the weather was hot, yet the snipe were in and I was delighted at the prospect of two days' shooting, taking camp with us, and as much ammunition and cold tea as we could carry.

Birds rose plentiful and well that first day, and we had a hard, hot mêlée through the paddy fields

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to a small "island" of huts and coco-nut palms, under which latter we proposed to camp the night.

We had taken three rather respectable Malayan coolies with us as bearers, and these spread out our rugs and pitched our tent in no time, whilst we lay with much sleepy satisfaction on the grass, sucking fresh coco-nut milk and smoking our pipes. We had the evening meal quite early, being tired and entirely ready for sleep, and intending an early start on the morrow, so about nine o'clock the conversation had snuffed out under drowsy "good-nights."

It was certainly warm, but I dozed off almost at once and cannot say how long I slept before I was awakened by the low voices of the

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coolie bearers outside, engaged in a conversation of much import, judging by the accentuated tones and solemnity of their accents.

I think we must have been ready to wake quickly despite our tired bodies, for though the natives would in no way have molested us, yet one gets in the habit of sleeping with one ear open in tropical climes. Be this as it may, one of my companions also awoke, and swearing softly, complained of the mosquitos, when, becoming aware of the voices he listened until sure that it was only the coolies, and then uplifted his voice in denunciation, aided by a boot from under the tent.

"What were they jabbering about?" I asked sleepily, for I

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thought they might have been disturbed by some unfriendly power outside, and I knew my friend was well up in coolie patois.

"Oh! something about some infernal melody, as far as I gathered, but if they attempt to sing I shall probably shoot them. —Goo'-night."

I lay for quite two minutes with my mind gradually getting clearer and clearer, all the time saying over and over again, "Infernal Melody," "Eternal Melody," until I was wide awake and trying to reason out a connection between these two. Had another glimpse of this unsought subject, stored away for so long, been given to me? What made me think so I cannot tell, but it should yield something this time

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if I could wrest it from the natives.

The next morning I took A. aside—my awakened companion of the night—and asked him to act as interpreter for me without asking me any questions or repeating my request, which he having willingly acceded to, the coolies were called and my examination began.

It would be waste of time to give the conversation in full, but at the mention of the words, "Eternal Melody," all three of them looked horribly scared and shook their heads as though to deny any knowledge.

I assured them, through A., that their conversation had all been heard, and shooting a random dart, I told them that I was

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waiting to hear "the Melody." At this they gazed at me in pure stupefaction, and were unable to speak for some time, eyeing each other the while with questioning eyes, half filled with sad amazement and half of doubt.

In the end I got little or nothing from them except that the "Eternal Melody" had been heard in the tiny village last evening; and then they absolutely refused to say another word, becoming merely sulky and fidgety, at which A. suggested I should "stop rotting the poor devils, and let's get on."

As we were about to start off, a wailing as of several voices uprose from the huts, and we saw white figures passing to and fro as if in trouble; but not a word could we get from the coolies as

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to the cause, and they only eyed me with considerable fear.

Nothing further of note happened during this "melodic" episode, and thus for the second time the subject was blocked.

And now I will pass to the third and last time of my life when I was to touch the problematic string of the "Eternal Melody."

Whilst staying in Peking, early in the year 1910, during such spare time as my duty allowed me, I was studying the ethics and idiosyncrasies of Chinese music, and had much wanted to meet the president of the Yö-Poo, or board of music, a division of the national Board of Rites.

My guide had thought that if it

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was known that a distinguished [*sic*] stranger was interested in musical lore, and with the aid of certain monetary outlay wherewith to approach the household servants, the audience might be arranged: but I was surprised when I was sitting in the hall of the "Waggons-Lit" Hotel one evening, about ten o'clock, smoking a last cigar, to hear my guide announce in my ear that our rickshas were waiting to carry us to the house of the mandarin Lew-ki, President of the Yō-Poo! Without hesitation I slipped on a thin coat and followed the guide out to the waiting rickshas.

I was not paying much attention, however, that evening, and did not notice how far we had gone until the stillness and shifty darkness gave pause to wonder

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how our evening was going to end.

We arrived at length before an imposing gateway, some distance outside the city, and immediately upon our drawing up the gates were thrown back, and a brilliantly dressed figure beckoned to us to enter.

Telling the rickshas to wait, I passed in, followed by my guide, and the gorgeous one led us across a long courtyard, fringed with fir trees and lighted only by a small Chinese lantern, hanging over a doorway at the far end.

Through this doorway we were conducted, and I was ushered into a large room, comically European and decoratively Chinese, with a faint smell of burning "joss-stick" hanging upon the air:

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and here we were invited to remain until the great one would see us. I was admiring some exquisite carving on a small side table, when the door again opened and in came the smallest and oldest Chinese that I had ever seen, dressed quite plainly though handsomely in dark blue silk brocade, and wearing a small round black hat with the red mandarin's button.

The guide and myself bowed on his entrance, the former doing acrobatic marvels which I was incapable of imitating, and the mandarin returned our salute and announced he was most honoured that his humble roof should welcome such a distinguished visitor.

I made appropriate reply as to the magnificence of his house and the

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utter unworthiness of myself, and after about ten minutes of this exhausting game of adjectives, I started in on some questions which I really wanted to know about.

Now I have knowledge of certain musical terms in Chinese, and know the names of the scale in that language, so that it was not long before the guide was left out of the conversation, my host also having some small store of English, and being withal a most accomplished artist at the translation of ideas into the language of the hands.

We warmed to each other, as enthusiasts will, and the old gentleman was really delighted that anyone knew so much of his beloved music, and then offered to show me the treasures of musi-

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cal history in his keeping. I was tremendously pleased with his suggestion, as these things were rare and not for many eyes, and so he led me through numerous passages and down many stairs until we reached a heavy, studded door which he unlocked. We then entered a circular chamber, brilliantly lighted with numerous lanterns and surrounded with shelves of instruments and various old books of ancient music and old parchments. I noticed how very hot it was in this room, and thought that it must be from its situation underground, as there were no windows at all.

We took down and examined instruments galore, I asking a hundred questions, but conscious of a growing faintness as the heat grew more insistent: also I seemed to hear a faint sound of

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a harp from somewhere far away, and infinitely sad were the strains, yet no air did it play that I could recognise as either European or Chinese.

I had reached a shelf on which was one very old and yellow roll of parchment, and lifting it gently down had just seen at the top the symbol (A), which is the sign of Adam or "ancestor of mankind," when my legs seemed to give way, my head swam, and I heard the music growing louder in most wonderful sad cadences as though some great theme was about to enter, and the voice of my old host saying to me: "Ah! I see you look upon the Eternal Melody."

Then I remembered no more.

• • • •

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"Yes," the mandarin was saying, "it is quite the oldest record we have, and it is verily the song that Adam sang when the shadow of death first crossed his path; and so it is sung by the departed ones when another is about to join them from this earth of ours."

* * * *

We were back in the spacious room of our first meeting, and I was feeling refreshed and recovered, having rested whilst my kind host had unfolded to me many things that I would love to retell.

Looking at my watch I discovered it to be nearly two o'clock in the morning, so, rising, I told the guide to make my dutiful apologies for trespassing so long on the great man's time, and to re-

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turn my best thanks for all his kindness and help.

And so, bowing, I left him, and we found the rickshas outside and were whirled back to the hotel—and to life. But I kept trying to regain that sad lilt which I knew to be the overture to the "Eternal Melody." The next evening I was shocked and much grieved to read of the death of the President of the Yō-Poo, who had suddenly died early that morning.

Whether the old man himself heard the "Eternal Melody," and whether I only imagined it myself, I cannot tell.

I questioned the guide on the subject, but he assured me that no white man had ever heard it:

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and indeed it may be so, but I wonder if perhaps one day I shall hear that great air in full harmonies to the end.





VI

The Evolution of Music
from the 13th to the
17th Century

THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC.

EXAMINING the progress of the various European nations in musical knowledge, we find a curious phenomena in the fact of universal, though perfectly independent expansion and accumulation. One is apt to assume that all things musical began with Palestrina, and to lay the weight of responsibility on his shoulders for the present trend of Western, as opposed to Eastern, music.

However, I hope to show in the following notes, the different branches of music, and how they were nurtured and tended in different parts of Europe.

One of the foundations of French music lays with the troubadours of Provence, those lyric poets

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who counted in their company many of high birth and position.

During the thirteenth century they travelled largely through France and Spain. The King of Aragon being one of them himself (thus a musical link from Spain).

The Germans, through their volkslieder, were welded into their present musical position as great formists. The thirteenth century, which was essentially the age of volkslieder, saw its culmination in men like Martin Luther, 1483, who even whilst still at school was noted for his singing, and through all his life was an ardent advocate of sacred music and singing; also one must remember that "Ein Feste Burg" was not his only composition.

Another name, worthy of mention,

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is that of Henrich Isaak (1440), a prolific German chant writer.

The Csardas and gipsy music of Hungary, are extensions from an early form.

Celtic music, which one must remember comprises "local colour" from Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, parts of Scotland, and Wales, was in a flourishing condition, in the last-named country, during the thirteenth century. A certain Rhys ap Rhiccert, was a composer of numerous love songs, strange plaintive airs, one of which I remember hearing some years ago. The "March of the Men of Harlech" was to commemorate the capture of the town by the Yorkists against the Lancastrians in 1486, and is a very advanced standard of harmony.

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We have a Genevan psalter of 1540, showing that in central Europe the musical movement was in forward progress.

And now, having very scantily touched upon the back soil, as it were, in which the future blossoms were to thrive, we will pass from generalities to a great personality, namely, Claude Gou-dimel.

This musician, born at Besançon in 1505, the teacher of Palestrina, was of French parentage, and having absorbed all available knowledge from his native land, he journeyed to Rome, where he set up as a teacher. This period is responsible for many songs, masses, motets, etc., from his pen, and one can imagine him always expending his powers for the good of the

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Church. In later life he returned to France, and harmonised Clement Marot's translation of the psalms; he died at Lyons through religious persecution as a Huguenot, on August 29, 1572, just after St. Bartholomew's.

The next direct step, from teacher to his yet more famous pupil, brings us to Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. So many full biographies of this great man are available, that I shall not enter into details about his life.

Born at Palestrina, about twenty miles from Rome, in 1524, he commenced his musical education early, studying under Goudimel, and at the age of thirty was *maestro di capella* of the Julian Chapel of St. Peter's. While there, he published a collection

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of masses, which led to his joining the singers of the Sistine Chapel; this post he lost under Pope Paul IV, owing to his married state, and in 1555 he was made choirmaster of the Lateran, the first of the Roman churches, and styled in the Roman usage, "the Mother and head of all the churches of the city and the world." The council of Trent, having the reform of church music under discussion, turned the remodelling over to Palestrina, who, as a result, produced a set of three masses—one, the "Missa Papæ Marcellæ," now so universally known: the only compositions of a secular character that he published were two volumes of madrigals.

He died on February 2, 1594, in the arms of St. Philip Neri, a canonised saint of the Roman

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church, whom one can almost call the founder of oratorios and religious music-drama.

Two contemporaries I shall mention, as typical heads of their respective national music: the first, Sebastian Franck, was an early German poet, living about 1490, and a composer of much mystic and "spiritual" music.

The other, our first English composer of note, William Byrd, was born in London during the year 1538.

He was a pupil of Thomas Tallis, also an organist and composer, whose celebrated canon, "Glory be to Thee," we now sing, and subsequently became an organist at Lincoln. His virginal book of Queen Elizabeth, containing many organ and clavier pieces, was his *chef d'œuvre*, and one of

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his credited songs, "Oh Mistress Mine," a setting of Shakespeare's words, is well known. He died on July 4, 1623.

A link in international music comes from Holland in the person of Sweelinck (1562-1621), about whom not much is known.

Elizabeth's reign was fruitful of musicians, many of the first water: John Bull (1563) and Orlando Gibbons (1583) from England; Monteverde (1568), that great harmonist, from Italy; and the year after the virgin queen's death, was born the Italian, Carissimi (1604-74).

In 1633, Jean Baptiste Lully was born at Florence, and his is a notable figure in the history of the growth of musical art, inasmuch as he was the father of

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opera in Paris, where his own principal works, "Psyche" and "Arminde" were produced. He died in the year 1687, and one wonders if he ever met his celebrated successor, Couperin.

The year 1568 gave us Purcell, another English link in the great art, and about whom it is unnecessary to discuss at length—greater writers have done him honour in full.

In 1659, Alessandro Scarlatti was born, an important event in Italian music, as this musician lived for sixty-six years, during which time the forms were ever enlarging.

France's famous son, François Couperin, was born on November 10, 1668, near Paris, his father being of a family of French or-

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ganists. François, known and rightly famous for his clavier pieces, was organist at St. Gervaise in Paris, succeeding his uncle. He died at Paris in 1733.

Another great French composer was born at Dijon, on September 25, 1683—namely, Jean Philippe Rameau. He was eighty-one years old when he died in Paris, and his life was a busy one, spent in composition and the further development of musical theory.

And then in 1685, the two great German giants, Bach and Handel, were born, and music took on new forms and meaning, and rapidly developed towards our present day accumulation of knowledge.

These few notes, garnered from

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many sources, may perhaps be of interest to some, and I await eagerly for the author who has time and inclination to deal fully with this subject.



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VII

Music—Absolute and
Otherwise

“Above all, get understanding.”

FOR purposes of this short paper upon certain phases of musical understanding, let me classify music under two headings—viz., *absolute* and *explicable*.

The first dividing must be taken in a broad sense, to mean, perfectly grammatical and idiomatic music; mathematically correct in its mechanism, and euphonically balanced, over and above any emotional side. The second may be any feeling, emotion, action, colour, or combination of these, set out musically in such a way that the brain grasps quickly and concisely the meaning, and the emotional spirit is swayed in the required direction.

Now, having defined my two classifications, let me at once say that too strict a line between them is fatal and erroneous to the proper understanding of any tone literature.

Because a symphony is a symphony, may it mean nothing, and contain nothing than mere mechanical work? Berlioz seemed to think otherwise; Tchaïkovsky undeniably did, though some there be who would tie this emotional giant down to academic rules. And may we read nothing into the Ninth Symphony save peerless construction? Berlioz again seemed to think otherwise, as did Wagner, and as I hope—many others.

May not the great John Sebastian have been swayed by moods during the making of his fugues?

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Does not the C sharp minor Fuga of the "Well-Tempered Clavier" convey aught but a splendid technical exercise?

It was my misfortune, lately, to have been compelled to sit through an "absolute" performance of Grieg's pianoforte sonata. Now this work is a truly great piece of orchestral transcription—from the brain to the piano—and merely to give it a correct technical reading is to translate the meaning inadequately, if not wholly, wrong.

This sonata is, to my mind, so worthy of production, that I shall give a solution of it, heard once in past years, which impressed me greatly, though probably far-fetched from the original idea.

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The complete masterpiece may be said to represent the onward march of Fate, and how powerless and unavailing it is for man to attempt an evasion from its sweeping, crushing progress.

The opening "Allegretto doloroso"—typical sonata form—is the basis of the whole first movement and foreshadows the tragedy of the third, or "Fate," movement.

A short phrase of but four bars works up to harmonic chords on the dominant, which introduce the first phrase in octave chords, fugally.

At this point a struggle is made to check the march of fate. Fiercer and fiercer it rages, till a soft, plaintive argument quells the strife, rising gradually, as its

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force is felt, until with full discords it announces a charming message of hope.

This passage, which occurs again later in the movement, is the most "intimate" Grieg in the whole sonata. We now come to a most singular and beautiful motive, a re-occurrence of the original phrase in the major mode and anon, a syncopated *tempo*.

It seems that Fate whispers, she is not altogether a tragedian, and announcing some coming joy.

A new clause, in 6-8 time, gives us a short glimpse of different lives, before Fate swings them into her path. The high, passionate yearning is followed by its reaction of deep melancholy, until the approach of Fate—note the

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crescendo, and ever-increasing restlessness—works the spirit up to pure desperation.

Fate having seized its victim, passes suavely on to a running, triplet bass. The jade grows more presumptuous; and, with a fanfare of trumpets, the old theme comes crashing down in fugal octaves, twisting the air through a triplicate maze, and fights onward, till, in an exhausted condition of descending staccato chords, she glides into a hopeful, peaceful phase—before noted.

Gradually Fate emerges from this theme, and taking it on, swells her train up to two great chords, and then plunges off, “*con fuoco*,” unchecked and uncheckable. The movement ends in a tremendous passage up and up.

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always triumphant, and is lost in a great Amen, *sforzato assai*.

The second movement—C major—is perhaps the most difficult to analyse in words, for though the Fate scheme is working all through, the feeling is more instinctive than acknowledged.

The opening melody is just a pure, sweet life, untouched as yet by the vagaries of Fate, and still in its first innocence.

The time suddenly changes to 12-8, and a restless mood grows up. Fate gives sudden warnings at the fourth and eighth bars, the undercurrent of events getting more and more unsettled, and the pace quickening.

The original air begins to take on richer harmonies, as the life

grows stronger and more self-reliant, till with a great, glad rush up from the bass, the young life bursts—untried, but nothing daunted—with a song of expected victory.

The air grows more complex and strange rumblings are heard, as of doubt: till merely uncertainty remains, and all the joy of victory has died out. The movement ends with deep, rich, descending chords, like sleep upon the tired soul; yet disturbed by a strange lurking nightmare of distrust, as to the final issue.

The growing sense of an undefeatable Fate in this section of the sonata must, as I said before, be *felt*, rather than described.

The third movement is, without

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doubt, the crux, the climax, of the whole sonata.

It opens with a slow and marvelously harrowing march, in 3-4 time, commencing *piano*, working up to *fortissimo*, and then subsiding again.

Such absolute conviction is carried in this onward march, that you realise how futile it is to attempt resistance or evasion.

A second theme follows, soft and plaintive, as though Fate were sorry for her "brick wall" attitude, but bursts again into a smouldering anger, and suddenly stops abruptly.

And now—how can I describe the beauty of the following passage; the purity, the aloofness: it is the song of Providence, who cares

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not at all for Fate. After this exquisite melody, Providence, her time not being yet, returns to silence.

The Fate march is again heard advancing, and now proudly sweeps on to the end, stopping abruptly, to signify a complete mastery of the situation.

The deep intensity and meaning of the movement will be readily understood, and very minute analysis seems unnecessary.

The finale is a tone poem, picturing the triumph of Providence over Fate.

The latter flings out a challenge! Three times it is given out, and three times it remains unanswered. Unchallenged, in return, Fate now whirls off in a sort of delirious dance, growing

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madder and dizzier, till at length she sinks exhausted for the time, and the melody dies away in the bass.

Providence now awakens, and sets forth her purpose, as opposed to any dealings of chance.

The song of Providence, or rather Providence herself, pictured in tone, is heard, repeated in full harmony. She then, with a loud flourish, retires, and Fate, angry and alarmed, advances to the attack.

The whole of the last section can be better imagined than described, and indeed the writer doubts not that by this long discoursing, much of the imaginative point has been lost.

It has been merely my wish, how-

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ever, to instance a great "absolute" musical creation, capable of "explicable" form, without suffering deterioration in the transferment.

Let music be an exact art: let it have its grammar and idioms, its mechanics and mathematics; but let feeling and *understanding* play through it all, so may we be on our way to understand the manner of men our great masters were, and such thoughts as were theirs.



VIII

Music and Mood

MUSIC AND MOOD.

EVERYONE with a grain of individuality in their composition must know the feeling of utter inability to imbue certain tones with music, whether by playing or listening. It may arise from various reasons, chiefly, I think, being an intuitive knowledge of soiled and unfit condition of one's "personality," to use one expression out of many.

It is nature's law of protection over her most precious gifts, and unhappy he who forces music in direct revolt against this instinct.

Schumann knew this when he wrote: "It is better to rest than to play without pleasure or freshness." A really great pianist, temporarily in this state, was

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pressed beyond all boundaries of good taste to play the Beethoven C sharp minor Sonata. It rose a poor dead outline from the piano, suffused with a little humility and much defiance; the final movement was strangely contorted in this mood, and the restless soul brooded without any sting of rebellion or gleam of hope.

The fullest and most perfect mood in which to approach music is one of thanksgiving.

Such a complete cameo of this state, to my mind, is the D major march of "Scipio"; the sense of uplifting is extraordinary, and it might well be used as a kind of preliminary "office" before playing.

If the spirit is receptive, and the

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mood one of exultation, go and hear, or if you are wonderful enough, play Schumann's great C major Fantasia (Op. 17). It is perhaps the most exciting thing in the whole of piano literature, and after it is over, just let the mood lead where it will, and assuredly listen to nothing else.

To properly fulfil in oneself the Ninth Symphony, the intellect must rule the mood, and then, and only thus will the mood carry one above the intellect at its own unfettered time.

It seems to me that one should go to hear music in a prepared frame of mind—or not at all. It is nearly always possible to know the programme beforehand, and by no means inflict an unsympathetic creation upon your present mental atmosphere. Imagine an

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absolutely joy-filled mind, struggling with the "Pathétique" symphony, or conceive a sorrow-torn soul writhing under a Liszt rhapsody!

Cowper's lines rather aptly describe the "simpatia" of music:

There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
And as the mind is pitched, the ear is pleased
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave,
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.

Has the reader ever experienced a sudden jar to the system at the entry of the E flat Scherzo in Chopin's Second Sonata?

The Pole was such a bundle of moods himself that he sometimes sinned against the sense of form: and yet we know how greatly he valued the latter, as the man who

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turned a contemptuous shoulder
on Schumann's "Carneval."

One is forced to admit that the
"mood" of the age has changed;
and the composition of to-day is
a good mental barometer of
the restlessness and tricked-out
cleverness of the generation.

Comparison is bad, but one need
not offend by glancing back to
the melody of Mozart, and keep-
ing in mind the smudged har-
mony of certain "moderns."

When nerves are racked and senses blunted
By some shrill Strauss, melodic stunted;
Then find repose from mood thus dark,
In sunny fugues of J. S. Bach.



IX

Reflections on Music
and Religion

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MUSIC AND RELIGION.

WE seem to have wandered far from the days when Plato wrote of music as a moral law; from the days of whole-hearted devotional plainsong; and from the days of Bach's inspired life work. We like our services to be decorative, artistic and emotional; our Bach, from the concert-platform, in diluted doses. During the growth of musical art the absolute side has developed as the root and body of the whole structure, to the slight overshadowing of its initial emotional character. If this latter is the stronger influence in a mind, then, without doubt, that mind is elevated and shown dimly of the mysteries of heaven; as Hogg says, "Slight emblem of the bliss

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above." But if the former predominates, then the musician becomes a fanatic, with no room in his mind, soul or intellect for aught but his art. The misdirected talent of Max Nordau states this idea by saying that: "Listening to the music of 'Parsifal' has become the religious act of all those who wish to receive the communion in musical form." Now these points of view need reconciling, and I fully believe that the problem is solved, neither by compromise nor wholehearted advocacy of one or the other, but by great-minded combination. Can we have a better example set before us than the life of Beethoven? Has the world produced anything greater symphonically or devotionally? The religious ascetic finds no consolation in a mere work of art, however noble, if the conscience is

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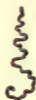
shocked by the absence of the reality of religion. He will bring the charge of perpetual repetition of sacred words in practice, as tending to deaden the spiritual meaning, and introduce exact mathematics into inspired mysteries. But the marvellous uplifting effect of perfect music, as an aid to devotional thought, is not to be denied: and, after all, the idea of praise in musical form is impressed all through the Scriptures. Again, if music is to form any part of religious services, let it be of the highest, needing much willing practice to the glory of God and combining the emotional spirit with the best results of absolute music. I think it was George Macdonald who summed up the question in these words, which we can so aptly apply to the great Beethoven: "Content to keep the upper win-

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dows of his mind open to the holy winds and pure lights of heaven, and the side windows of tone open to the earth, to let forth upon his fellow men the tenderness and truth those upper influences bring forth in any region exposed to their operation." I am of opinion that it cannot be right to assume that music is merely one of the greatest art-forces of the day, and pass from one constructive development to another, without some pause for thought as to its higher effects. It is against the point as well as useless to name modern work of religious tendency, but are we to get no higher than festival productions and academic chants? I feel that Browning would so thoroughly disagree with these sentiments, in so much that a work of beauty, in whatever form, is a

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constant pledge before heaven of used talents: and yet I cannot help throwing out these reflections upon a subject that interests me so deeply.





X

Spring Song

SPRING SONG.

THIS afternoon I have been collecting jewels from every part of the world, so the fancy pleases me.

It has rained for the past week, and small comfort for improvement dawned with the mists of morning: however, by noon, the royal splendour of the day was in its full glory, and I was up and away to wash my jaded spirit with the kiss of spring.

My way from this small village led me down a country lane, blue sky above me, and the sun in most unexpected and delightful magnificence beaming benevolently over all.

Spoil was to hand from the very

SPRING SONG.

start, and I gathered rich-hued garnets from the bramble hedges: wonderful shades of colour, from greeny-brown bloodstones to full, deep red.

But as I passed on my way, the joy of new things seized upon me, and I all but flung my garnets from me as soiled treasure from a past year.

Then the magic road became a small mountain pass of Switzerland, and I urged on to the snowy heights showing above me, in patches between the firs. Here, as I mounted, little beautiful sapphires disclosed themselves, small starry flowers of great loveliness. The woods smelled of pine and bursting life, and once I thought that Pan darted across a sun-streaked glade: but maybe it was only a rich-plumed pheasant.

SPRING SONG.

The summit reached, lo, Japan lay
before me, with snow-capped
Fuji in the distance, and a
stunted pine wood stretching into
the middle distance.

The descent took me through real
English coppice again, of bud-
ding hazel this time: and what
treasure trove, think you, was
in this sylvan scene?

A straw-yellow topaz! The first
found in England I'll swear, or
so it seemed to me must be the
case, for I had listened most
jealously as to news of the first
primrose.

Well, it was mine, and for five
minutes I hardly dared to pick
it: oh wondrous gem, what friend
is worthy of such a gift!

And so I passed to the lower slopes,

SPRING SONG.

and saw the plains of Greece
lying below me, the mountains all
round, and a tiny clump of arbor
vitæ in a sunny corner of an
emerald field, for all the world
like Marathon.

It was sad to touch the road once
more, though it brought me my
dear England again: and pre-
sently I passed a little village
church, surely of all things most
close to the heart of English
scenery. Walking up the mossy
path to the old black wooden
door, I suddenly knew for whom
should be my topaz treasure.

Surely to-day was the feast of
first-fruits, and what a small re-
turn to Him for such an exquisite
time. And so the little primrose
blooms were laid on the porch
step with one word of thanks,
when on turning back toward the

SPRING SONG.

gate I discovered a pearl of price
—a tiny snowdrop, nearly hidden
in the long grass: and I knew, as
everyone must know sooner or
later, that nothing is ever given
without it being returned a
hundredfold.

So have I spent my first day of
spring, and surely the poet was
right to speak of England as
“nature’s fairest garden.”



XI

Humoresque

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HUMORESQUE.

AUNT Sarah would flatter herself that she was entirely adequate and charming in any conversational situation, and though a most kind heart prompted the dear lady in all her ways, words and works, yet there were times when —.

I was studying in London for a musical degree, and being quite enormously keen, seldom took an evening away from my studies; when heigh-presto, Aunt Sarah's invitation rushed me from my primers and contrapuntal communings to my fate. A maiden lady of ample means and huge vitality, of wide sympathies without comprehension, and with a reputation for excellent dinners and amusing parties, Aunt Sarah had never the slightest difficulty in filling

HUMORESQUE.

her house with interesting and distinguished people: And I had been asked to come and meet Monsieur Grandton, the eminent pianist and composer, on the following Monday evening, for the benefit of my education and the furthering of my worldly prospects--if possible!

The aunt had rather less idea of music than the wood a piano is made of, but this was no deterrent to her sense of social intercourse should occasion arise; and above all things did she dislike being found at fault, or in any way "off the (artistic) line."

Heaven has granted me two small talents, music and tact, which I find of considerable value, the former as a keen "life-long joy," and the latter for smoothing the way over many bad ruts in the

HUMORESQUE.

life of "earning bread and cheese." It had won a certain place for me in the aunt's affections, and she confided to me once that at her decease I should be quite more than ordinarily well off.

M. Grandton was an artist, most truly to the finger-tips, and withal was endowed with a rich fund of quiet humour:

Such pupils as he cared to take both loved and feared him, for though study was but a means to an end, yet woebetide the mortal who failed to exert him or herself to the utmost in the pursuit of perfection.

An incident will more concisely convey his character :

A very rich and heated, yet dull

HUMORESQUE.

pupil, had toiled bravely for two solid hours, and was rewarded with: "Hopeless, hopeless, Mr. ———, absolutely no sense of rhythm. You have colour ———" and with a comical air of kindness and despair, "but then so has your face!" The stern, whimsical master shouted with laughter, which the poor, red, perspiring student could not resist; and so these two, with newly-joined sympathies again tackled the scaly heights of Parnassus. So much for the dramatic personæ, and now to return to the action of this tiny drama.

Dinner had passed off in a perfect froth of laughter and conversational nothings, and Aunt Sarah, nothing daunted and greatly daring, had begged M. Grandton to play for them.

Now your virtuoso hates being put

HUMORESQUE.

through his paces to amuse the passing moment of a probably unsympathetic crowd, yet on this particular occasion he very graciously walked to the piano and seated himself, waiting for a lull in the conversation.

And then he began to play the exquisite little minuet of his own composing, so well known and beloved of all, and no choice could have been more acceptable.

When the delighted applause had died down somewhat, my aunt hurried up to him: "Oh, a thousand thanks, Monsieur, quite too lovely—yes, my favourite tune, Mendelssohn, is it not. Ah, yes, such a great composer, I prefer him to anyone—yes, nearly all his 'things.'" Aunt Sarah always alluded to compositions as "things." "And would you

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give us just one of your own? Ah, how good of you." Grand-ton was smiling amiably. "Now let me sit down so that I can listen properly," rattled on the aunt: "Oh, there's Mrs. Gibson looking for a seat: I must just see to her. Yes, please go on," and she darted off to a far corner where, for the next ten minutes, a fevered whispering took place with Mrs. Gibson. Meanwhile the great pianist had resumed his seat and commenced a familiar theme, which, after much sly hiding under various forms of fugue and variation, issued forth in the full harmonies of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March."

After the complete statement, one heard a queer, unfamiliar to do in the bass, swelling upwards in minor chords and swamping the whole under the rather hack-

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neyed funeral march from the
"Lieder ohne Worte."

The two *motifs* were then most wonderfully woven into a solid structure of tone, culminating with a tremendous passage of virtuosity right up the keyboard.

Everyone gasped with surprise and wonder. Aunt Sarah, hearing the noise stop, had got up and made for M. Grandton, taking me by the arm as she passed me.

"How most charming—quite, quite beautiful, and I always say that is the best thing you ever wrote"; and turning to me, she added: "Now wasn't Monsieur a wonderful man to have written that."

The great man looked sharply at me: Remember he did not know

HUMORESQUE.

who I was, and I stood absolutely speechless, crushed in this vast dilemma.

And then he turned to me with a twinkle, and remarked:

“Is it that you like the tempo di minuetto?”

“Indeed, truly, Monsieur, but not according to Mendelssohn!”

And I shall always maintain that M. Grandton’s laugh is almost as wonderful as his playing.



XII

On Acquiring Music

ON ACQUIRING MUSIC.

IT makes one's heart ache to see the enormous waste of really good material and talent from indifferent, and even downright wicked tuition. The sadness of hearing the story, "I had all the music taught out of me as a child," is pathetic, and so appallingly common.

From the earliest stage, the seeker after this wonderful emotional lever is bound down to pitiful examples of mathematical dullness, and scales, which are the hardest things to play in the world.

Repetition entirely takes any rhythmic feeling from the music, and it isn't as though we could all be Paderewski--there's the waste.

ON ACQUIRING MUSIC.

It fell most wonderfully to my fortune to have learnt my earliest lessons from a fine old musician, who kept me a year "listening" and "soaking in rhythm," if I may be allowed the expression. Far from von Bülow's "Technique, Technique, 'Technique,'" he cried for "Emotion, Rhythm, Technique": and very rightly too, for is not music essentially and primarily emotional?

And, after all, a single instrument, say a piano, is only one of the many facets of the diamond "music"; a very beautiful and a very personal one, but still by no means the finest and not even the most emotional: therefore, is not listening enormously more important than Clementi? When the seeker is shown visions of a wonderful tone land, and helped to gauge some of its exquisite

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mysteries, it follows that when the steep ascent, the actual work he does, commences, he will press gladly on to gain that kingdom of tone, and willingly fight with the trials of the early climbing.

How can the poor, deaf mute—musically deaf, and unable to interpret the stirrings that it feels—show any enthusiasm at the bleak outlook and weary road of studies, knowing nothing of the ultimate end.

I should make it a law that every pupil did a year's course of listening before any thought of applied study was undertaken; and then he should acquire rhythm for another three months or more before the field of personal labour was unrolled before him.

The pupil must be taught at an

ON ACQUIRING MUSIC.

early stage to differentiate between "emotion," "sensation" and "perception."

Emotion is really a manifested sensation, and sensation is perception fulfilled.

Sir William Hamilton, an old Scottish philosopher of the early nineteenth century, analyses as follows: "Perception is only a special kind of knowledge, and sensation is a special kind of feeling. Knowledge and feeling, perception and sensation, though always co-existent, are always in the inverse ratio to each other."

And imagination must be cultivated: that power which combines our varied conceptions and impresses the whole with the stamp of the supernatural. more

ON ACQUIRING MUSIC.

attractive and delightful, or more grotesque and horrible, as the case may be. And never let passion be mistaken for these sensitive vibrations of the mind.

A great English preacher once said that "passion is the drunkenness of the mind, and therefore not always controllable by reason," and it is just this control which will lead the aspirant to the very heights of intellectual emotion.

Let us do all we can then for the beginners, to train their perception, that they may realise this intellectual emotion of music at the right time.

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