Great Italian and French Composers



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George T. Ferris

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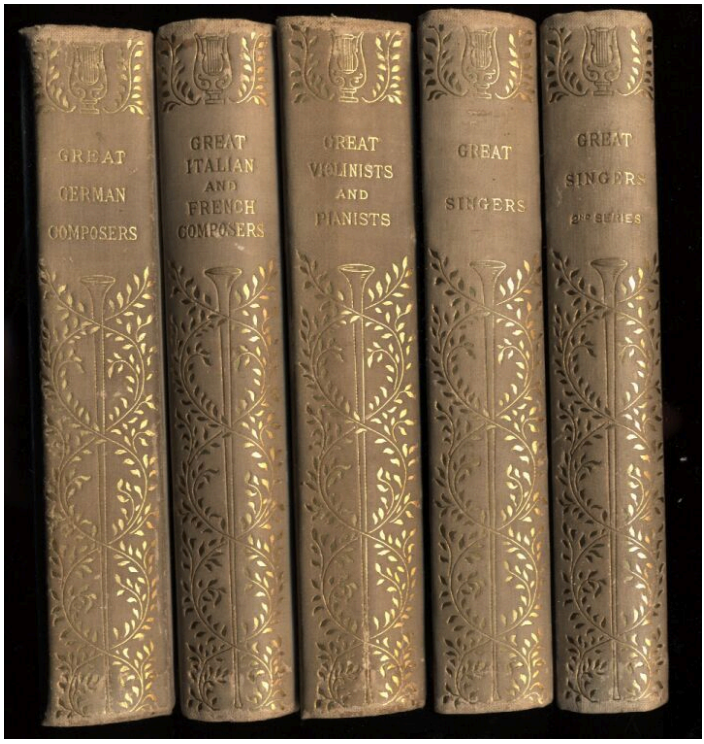
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GREAT

ITALIAN AND FRENCH
COMPOSERS
BY

GEORGE T. FERRIS
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NOTE.

The task of compressing into one small volume suitable sketches of the more famous Italian and French composers has been, in view of the extent of the field and the wealth of material, a somewhat embarrassing one, especially as the purpose was to make the sketches of interest to the general music-loving public, and not merely to the critic and the scholar. The plan pursued has been to devote the bulk of space to composers of the higher rank, and to pass over those less known with such brief mention as sufficed to outline their lives and fix their place in the history of music. In gathering the facts embodied in these musical sketches, the author acknowledges his obligations to the following works: Hullah's "History of Modern Music"; Fétis's "Biographie Universelle des Musiciens"; Clementi's "Biographie des Musiciens"; Hogarth's "History of the Opera"; Sutherland Edwards's "History of the Opera"; Schlüter's "History of Music"; Chorley's "Thirty Years'

Musical Reminiscences"; Stendhalls "Vie de Rossini"; Bellasys's "Memorials of Cherubini"; Grove's "Musical Dictionary"; Crowest's "Musical Anecdotes"; and the various articles in the standard cyclopædias.

"The Great Italian and French Composers" is a companion work to "The Great German Composers," which was published earlier in the series in which the present volume appears.

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THE GREAT ITALIAN AND FRENCH

COMPOSERS.

PALESTRINA.

I.

The Netherlands share other glories than that of having nursed the most indomitable spirit of liberty known to mediteval Europe. The fine as well as the industrial arts found among this remarkable people, distinguished by Erasmus as possessed of the *patientia laboris*, an eager and passionate culture. The early contributions of the Low Countries to the growth of the pictorial art are well known to all. But to most it will be a revelation that the Belgian school of music was the great fructifying influence of the fifteenth century, to which Italy and Germany owe a debt not easily measured. The art of interweaving parts and that science of sound known as counterpoint were placed by this school of musical scholars and workers on a solid basis, which enabled the great composers who came after them to build their beautiful tone fabrics in forms of imperishable beauty and symmetry. For a long time most of the great Italian churches had Belgian chapel-masters, and the value of their example and teachings was vital in its relation to Italian music.

The last great master among the Belgians, and,

after Palestrina, the greatest of the sixteenth century, was Orlando di Lasso, born in Hainault, in the year 1520. His life of a little more than three score years and ten was divided between Italy and Germany. He left the deep imprint of his severe style, though but a young man, on his Italian *confrères*, and the young Palestrina owed to him much of the largeness and beauty of form through which he poured his genius in the creation of such works as have given him so distinct a place in musical history. The pope created Orlando di Lasso Knight of the Golden Spur, and sought to keep him in Italy. Unconcerned as to fame, the gentle, peaceful musician lived for his art alone, and the flattering expressions of the great were not so much enjoyed as endured by him. A musical historian, Heimsoeth, says of him: "He is the brilliant master of the North, great and sublime in sacred composition, of inexhaustible invention, displaying much breadth, variety, and depth in his treatment; he delights in full and powerful harmonies, yet, after all—owing to an existence passed in journeys, as well as service at court, and occupied at the same time with both sacred and secular music—he came short of that lofty, solemn tone which pervades the works of the great master of the South, Palestrina, who with advancing years restricted himself more and more to church music." Of the celebrated penitential psalms of Di Lasso, it is said that Charles IX. of France ordered them to be written "in order to obtain rest for his soul after the horrible massacre of St. Bartholomew." Aside from his works, this musician has a claim on fame through his lasting improvements in musical form and method. He illuminated, and at the same time closed, the great epoch of Belgian ascendancy, which had given three hundred musicians of great science to the times in

which they lived. So much has been said of Orlando di Lasso, for he was the model and Mentor of the greatest of early church composers, Palestrina.

II.

The melodious and fascinating style, soon to give birth to the characteristic genius of the opera, was as yet unborn, though dormant. In Rome, the chief seat of the Belgian art, the exclusive study of technical skill had frozen music to a mere formula. The Gregorian chant had become so overladen with mere embellishments as to make the prescribed church-form difficult of recognition in its borrowed garb, for it had become a mere jumble of sound. Musicians, indeed, carried their profanation so far as to take secular melodies as the themes for masses and motetts. These were often called by their profane titles. So the name of a love-sonnet or a drinking-song would sometimes be attached to a miserere. The council of Trent, in 1562, cut at these evils with sweeping axe, and the solemn anathemas of the church fathers roused the creative powei's of the subject of this sketch, who raised his art to an independent national existence, and made it rank with sculpture and painting, which had already reached their zenith in Leonardo Da Vinci, Raphael, Correggio, Titian, and Michel Angelo. Henceforth Italian music was to be a vigorous, fruitful stock.

Giovanni Perluigui Aloisio da Palestrina was born at Palestrina, the ancient Præneste, in 1524.*

* Our composer, as was common with artists ar
those days, took the name of his natal town,
is known to fame. Old documents also give him
name of the town with the personal ending.

The memorials of his childhood are scanty. We know but little except that his parents were poor peasants, and that he learned the rudiments of literature and music as a choir-singer, a starting-point so common in the lives of great composers. In 1540 he went to Rome and studied in the school of Goudimel, a stern Huguenot Fleming, tolerated in the papal capital on account of his superior science and method of teaching, and afterward murdered at Lyons on the day of the Paris massacre. Palestrina grasped the essential doctrines of the school without adopting its mannerisms. At the age of thirty he published his first compositions, and dedicated them to the reigning pontiff, Julius III. In the formation of his style, which moved with such easy, original grace within the old prescribed rules, he learned much from the personal influence and advice of Orlando di Lasso, his warm friend and constant companion during these earlier days.

Several of his compositions, written at this time, are still performed in Rome on Good Friday, and Goethe and Mendelssohn have left their eloquent tributes to the impression made on them by music alike simple and sublime. The pope was highly pleased with Palestrina's noble music, and appointed him one of the papal choristers, then regarded as a great honor. But beyond Rome the new light of music was but little known. The Council of Trent, in their first indignation at the abuse of church music, had resolved to abolish everything but the simple Gregorian chants, but the remonstrances of the Emperor Ferdinand and the Roman cardinals stayed the austere fiat. The final decision was made to rest on a new composition of Palestrina, who was permitted to demonstrate that the higher forms of musical art were consistent with the solemnities of

church worship.

All eyes were directed to the young musician, for the very existence of his art was at stake. The motto of his first mass, "Illumina oculos meos," shows the pious enthusiasm with which he undertook his labors. Instead of one, he composed three six-part masses. The third of these excited such admiration that the pope exclaimed in raptures, "It is John who gives us here in this earthly Jerusalem a foretaste of that new song which the holy Apostle John realized in the heavenly Jerusalem in his prophetic trance." This is now known as the "mass of Pope Marcel," in honor of a former patron of Palestrina.

A new pope, Paul IV., on ascending the pontifical throne, carried his desire of reforming abuses to fanaticism. He insisted on all the papal choristers being clerical. Palestrina had married early in life a Roman lady, of whom all we know is that her name was Lucretia. Four children had blessed the union, and the composer's domestic happiness became a bar to his temporal preferment. With two others he was dismissed from the chapel because he was a layman, and a trifling pension allowed him. Two months afterward, though, he was appointed chapel-master of St. John Lateran. His works now succeeded each other rapidly, and different collections of his masses were dedicated to the crowned heads of Europe. In 1571 he was appointed chapel-master of the Vatican, and Pope Gregory XIII. gave special charge of the reform of sacred music to Palestrina.

The death of the composer's wife, whom he idolized, in 1580, was a blow from which he never recovered. In his latter days he was afflicted with great poverty, for the positions he held were always

more honorable than lucrative. Mental depression and physical weakness burdened the last few years of his pious and gentle life, and he died after a lingering and severe illness. The register of the pontifical chapel contains this entry: "February 2, 1594. This morning died the most excellent musician, Signor Giovanni Palestrina, our dear companion and *maestro di capella* of St. Peter's church, whither his funeral was attended not only by all the musicians of Rome, but by an infinite concourse of people, when his own 'Libera me, Domine' was sung by the whole college."

Such are the simple and meagre records of the life of the composer, who carved and laid the foundation of the superstructure of Italian music; who, viewed in connection with his times and their limitations, must be regarded as one of the great creative minds in his art; who shares with Sebastian Bach the glory of having built an imperishable base for the labors of his successors.

III.

Palestrixa left a great mass of compositions, all glowing with the fire of genius, only part of which have been published. His simple life was devoted to musical labor, and passed without romance, diversion, or excitement. His works are marked by utter absence of contrast and color. Without dramatic movement, they are full of melody and majesty, a majesty serene, unruffled by the slightest suggestion of human passion. Voices are now and then used for individual expression, but either in unison or harmony. As in all great church music, the chorus is the key of the work. The general judgment of musicians agrees that repose and enjoyment are more characteristic of this music than that of any

other master. The choir of the Sistine chapel, by the inheritance of long-cherished tradition, is the most perfect exponent of the Palestrina music. During the annual performance of the "Improperie" and "Lamentations," the altar and walls are despoiled of their pictures and ornaments, and everything is draped in black. The cardinals dressed in serge, no incense, no candles: the whole scene is a striking picture of trouble and desolation. The faithful come in two by two and bow before the cross, while the sad music reverberates through the chapel arches. This powerful appeal to the imagination, of course, lends greater power to the musical effect. But all minds who have felt the lift and beauty of these compositions have acknowledged how far they soar above words and creeds, and the picturesque framework of a liturgy.

Mendelssohn, in a letter to Zelter on the Palestrina music as heard in the Sistine chapel, says that nothing could exceed the effect of the blending of the voices, the prolonged tones gradually merging from one note and chord to another, softly swelling, decreasing, at last dying out. "They understand," he writes, "how to bring out and place each trait in the most delicate light, without giving it undue prominence; one chord gently melts into another. The ceremony at the same time is solemn and imposing; deep silence prevails in the chapel, only broken by the reechoing Greek 'holy,' sung with unvarying sweetness and expression." The composer Paër was so impressed with the wonderful beauty of the music and the performance, that he exclaimed, "This is indeed divine music, such as I have long sought for, and my imagination was never able to realize, but which, I knew, must exist."

Palestrina's versatility and genius enabled him to lift ecclesiastical music out of the rigidity and frivolity characterizing on either hand the opposing ranks of those that preceded him, and to embody the religious spirit in works of the highest art. He transposed the ecclesiastical melody (*canto fermo*) from the tenor to the soprano (thus rendering it more intelligible to the ear), and created that glorious thing choir song, with its refined harmony, that noble music of which his works are the models, and the papal chair the oracle. No individual preeminence is ever allowed to disturb and weaken the ideal atmosphere of the whole work. However Palestrina's successors have aimed to imitate his effects, they have, with the exception of Cherubini, failed for the most part; for every peculiar genus of art is the result of innate genuine inspiration, and the spontaneous growth of the age which produces it. As a parent of musical form he was the protagonist of Italian music, both sacred and secular, and left an admirable model, which even the new school of opera so soon to rise found it necessary to follow in the construction of harmony. The splendid and often licentious music of the theatre built its most worthy effects on the work of the pious composer, who lived, labored, and died in an atmosphere of almost anchorite sanctity.

The great disciples of his school, Nannini and Allegri, continued his work, and the splendid "Miserere" of the latter was regarded as such an inestimable treasure that no copy of it was allowed to go out of the Sistine chapel, till the infant prodigy, Wolfgang Mozart, wrote it out from the memory of a single hearing.

PICCINI, PAISIELLO, AND CIMAROSA

I.

Music, as speaking the language of feeling, emotion, and passion, found its first full expansion in the operatic form. There had been attempts to represent drama with chorus, founded on the ancient Greek drama, but it was soon discovered that dialogue and monologue could not be embodied in choral forms without involving an utter absurdity. The spirit of the renaissance had freed poetry, statuary, and painting, from the monopolizing elaims of the church. Music, which had become a well equipped and developed science, could not long rest in a similar servitude. Though it is not the aim of the author to discuss operatic history, a brief survey of the progress of opera from its birth cannot be omitted.

The oldest of the entertainments which ripened into Italian opera belongs to the last years of the fifteenth century, and was the work of the brilliant Politian, known as one of the revivalists of Greek learning attached to the court of Cosmo de' Medici and his son Lorenzo. This was the musical drama of "Orfeo." The story was written in Latin, and sung in music principally choral, though a few solo phrases were given to the principal characters. It was performed at Rome with great magnificence, and

Vasari tells us that Peruzzi, the decorator of the papal theatre, painted such scenery for it that even the great Titian was so struck with the *vraisemblance* of the work that he was not satisfied until he had touched the canvas to be sure of its not being in relief. We may fancy indeed that the scenery was one great attraction of the representation. In spite of spasmodic encouragement by the more liberally minded pontiffs, the general weight of church influence was against the new musical tendency, and the most skilled composers were at first afraid to devote their talents to further its growth.

What musicians did not dare undertake out of dread of the thunderbolts of the church, a company of *literati* at Florence commenced in 1580. The primary purpose was the revival of Greek art, including music. This association, in conjunction with the Medicean Academy, laid down the rule that distinct individuality of expression in music was to be sought for. As results, quickly came musical drama with recitative (modern form of the Greek chorus) and solo melody for characteristic parts of the legend or story. Out of this beginning swiftly grew the opera. Composers in the new form sprung up in various parts of Italy, though Naples, Venice, and Florence continued to be its centres.

Between 1637 and 1700, there were performed three hundred operas at Venice alone. An account of the performance of "Berenice," composed by Domenico Freschi, at Padua, in 1680, dwarfs all our present ideas of spectacular splendor. In this opera there were choruses of a hundred virgins and a hundred soldiers; a hundred horsemen in steel armor; a hundred performers on trumpets, cornets, sackbuts, drums, flutes, and other instruments, on

horseback and on foot; two lions led by two Turks, and two elephants led by two Indians; Berenice's triumphal car drawn by four horses, and six other cars with spoils and prisoners, drawn by twelve horses. Among the scenes in the first act was a vast plain with two triumphal arches; another with pavilions and tents; a square prepared for the entrance of the triumphal procession, and a forest for the chase. In the second act there were the royal apartments of Berenice's temple of vengeance, a spacious court with view of the prison and a covered way with long lines of chariots. In the third act there were the royal dressing-room, the stables with a hundred live horses, porticoes adorned with tapestry, and a great palace in the perspective. In the course of the piece there were representations of the hunting of the boar, the stag, and the lions. The whole concluded with a huge globe descending from the skies, and dividing itself in lesser globes of fire on which stood allegorical figures of fame, honor, nobility, virtue, and glory. The theatriccal manager had princes and nobles for bankers and assistants, and they lavished their treasures of art and money to make such spectacles as the modern stagemen of London and Paris cannot approach.

In Evelyn's diary there is an entry describing opera at Venice in 1645. "This night, having with my lord Bruce taken our places before, we went to the opera, where comedies and other plays are represented in recitative musiq by the most excellent musicians, vocal and instrumental, with variety of scenes painted and contrived with no lesse art of perspective, and machines for flying in the aire, and other wonderful motions; taken together it is one of the most magnificent and expensive diversions the wit of man can invent. The history was Hercules in

Lydia. The sceanes changed thirteen times. The famous voices, Anna Rencia, a Roman and reputed the best treble of women; but there was a Eunuch who in my opinion surpassed her; also a Génoise that in my judgment sung an incomparable base. They held us by the eyes and ears till two o'clock i' the morning." Again he writes of the carnival of 1640: "The comedians have liberty and the operas are open; witty pasquils are thrown about, and the mountebanks have their stages at every corner. The diversion which chiefly took me up was three noble operas, where were most excellent voices and music, the most celebrated of which was the famous and beautiful Anna Rencia, whom we invited to a fish dinner after four daies in Lent, when they had given over at the theatre." Old Evelyn then narrates how he and his noble friend took the lovely diner out on a junketing, and got shot at with blunderbusses from the gondola of an infuriated rival.

Opera progressed toward a fixed status with a swiftness hardly paralleled in the history of any art. The soil was rich and fully prepared for the growth, and the fecund root, once planted, shot into a luxuriant beauty and symmetry, which nothing could check. The Church wisely gave up its opposition, and henceforth there was nothing to impede the progress of a product which spread and naturalized itself in England, France, and Germany. The inventive genius of Monteverde, Carissimi, Scarlatti (the friend and rival of Handel), Durante, and Leonardo Leo, perfected the forms of the opera nearly as we have them today. A line of brilliant composers in the school of Durante and Leo brings us down through Pergolesi, Derni, Terradiglias, Jomelli, Traetta, Ciccio di Majo, Galuppi, and Giuglielmi, to the most distinguished of the early Italian composers, Nicolo

Piccini, who, mostly forgotten in his works, is principally known to modern fame as the rival of the mighty Gluck in that art controversy which shook Paris into such bitter factions. Yet, overshadowed as Piccini was in the greatness of his rival, there can be no question of his desert as the most brilliant ornament and exponent of the early operatic school. No greater honor could have been paid to him than that he should have been chosen as their champion by the *Italianissimi* of his day in the battle royal with such a giant as Gluck, an honor richly deserved by a composer distinguished by multiplicity and beauty of ideas, dramatic insight, and ardent conviction.

II.

Niccolo Piccini, who was not less than fifty years of age when he left Naples for the purpose of outrivaling Gluck, was born at Bari, in the kingdom of Naples, in 1728. His father, also a musician, had destined him for holy orders, but Nature made him an artist. His great delight even as a little child was playing on the harpsichord, which he quickly learned. One day the bishop of Bari heard him playing and was amazed at the power of the little *virtuoso*. "By all means, send him to a conservatory of music," he said to the elder Piccini. "If the vocation of the priesthood brings trials and sacrifices, a musical career is not less beset with obstacles. Music demands great perseverance and incessant labor. It exposes one to many chagrins and toils."

By the advice of the shrewd prelate, the precocious boy was placed at the school of St. Onofrio at the age of fourteen. At first confided to the care of an inferior professor, he revolted from the arid teachings of a mere human machine. Obeying the

dictates of his daring fancy, though hardly acquainted with the rudiments of composition, he determined to compose a mass. The news got abroad that the little Niccolo was working on a grand mass, and the great Leo, the chief of the conservatory, sent for the trembling culprit.

"You have written a mass?" he commenced.

"Excuse me, sir, I could not help it," said the timid boy.

"Let me see it."

Niccolo brought him the score and all the orchestral parts, and Leo immediately went to the concert-room, assembled the orchestra, and gave them the parts. The boy was ordered to take his place in front and conduct the performance, which he went through with great agitation.

"I pardon you this time," said the grave maestro, at the end; "but, if you do such a thing again, I will punish you in such a manner that you will remember it as long as you live. Instead of studying the principles of your art, you give yourself up to all the wildness of your imagination; and, when you have tutored your ill-regulated ideas into something like shape, you produce what you call a mass, and no doubt think you have produced a masterpiece."

When the boy burst into tears at this rebuke, Leo clasped him in his arms, told him he had great talent, and after that took him under his special instruction. Leo was succeeded by Durante, who also loved Piccini, and looked forward to a future greatness for him. He was wont to say the others were his pupils, but Piccini was his son. After twelve years spent in

the conservatory, Piccini commenced an opera. The director of the principal Neapolitan theatre said to Prince Vintimille, who introduced the young musician, that his work was sure to be a failure.

"How much can you lose by his opera," the prince replied, "supposing it be a perfect fiasco?" The manager named the sum.

"There is the money, then," replied Piccini's generous patron, handing him a purse. "If the 'Dorme Despetose' (the name of the opera) should fail, you may keep the money, but otherwise return it to me."

The friends of Lagroscino, the favorite composer of the day, were enraged when they heard that the next new work was to be from an obscure youth, and they determined to hiss the performance. So great, however, was the delight of the public with the freshness and beauty of Piccini's music, that even those who came to condemn remained to applaud. The reputation of the composer went on increasing until he became the foremost name of musical Italy, for his fertility of production was remarkable; and he gave the theatres a brilliant succession of comic and serious works. In 1758 he produced at Rome his "Alessandro nell' Indie," whose success surpassed all that had preceded it, and two years later a still finer masterpiece, "La Buona Figluola," written to a text furnished by the poet Goldoni, and founded on the story of Richardson's "Pamela." This opera was produced at every playhouse on the Italian peninsula in the course of a few years. A pleasant *mot* by the Duke of Brunswick is worth preserving in this connection. Piccini had married a beautiful singer named Vicenza Sibilla, and his home was very happy. One day the German prince visited Piccini,

and found him rocking the cradle of his youngest child, while the eldest was tugging at the paternal coat-tails. The mother, being *en déshabille*, ran away at the sight of a stranger. The duke excused himself for his want of ceremony, and added, "I am delighted to see so great a man living in such simplicity, and that the author of 'La Bonne Fille' is such a good father." Piccini's placid and pleasant life was destined, however, to pass into stormy waters.

His sway over the stage and the popular preference continued until 1773, when a clique of envious rivals at Rome brought about his first disaster. The composer was greatly disheartened, and took to his bed, for he was ill alike in mind and body. The turning-point in his career had come, and he was to enter into an arena which taxed his powers in a contest such as he had not yet dreamed of. His operas having been heard and admired in France, their great reputation inspired the royal favorite, Mme. du Barry, with the hope of finding a successful competitor to the great German composer, patronized by Marie Antoinette. Accordingly, Piccini was offered an indemnity of six thousand francs, and a residence in the hotel of the Neapolitan ambassador. When the Italian arrived in Paris, Gluck was in full sway, the idol of the court and public, and about to produce his "Armide."

Piccini was immediately commissioned to write a new opera, and he applied to the brilliant Marmontel for a libretto. The poet rearranged one of Quinault's tragedies, "Roland," and Piccini undertook the difficult task of composing music to words in a language as yet unknown to him. Marcnontel was his unwearied tutor, and he writes in his "Memoirs" of his pleasant yet arduous task: "Line by line, word by

word, I had everything to explain; and, when he had laid hold of the meaning of a passage, I recited it to him, marking the accent, the prosody, and the cadence of the verses. He listened eagerly, and I had the satisfaction to know that what he heard was carefully noted. His delicate ear seized so readily the accent of the language and the measure of the poetry, that in his music he never mistook them. It was an inexpressible pleasure to me to see him practice before my eyes an art of which before I had no idea. His harmony was in his mind. He wrote his airs with the utmost rapidity, and when he had traced its designs, he filled up all the parts of the score, distributing the traits of harmony and melody, just as a skillful painter would distribute on his canvas the colors, lights, and shadows of his picture. When all this was done, he opened his harpsichord, which he had been using as his writing-table; and then I heard an air, a duet, a chorus, complete in all its parts, with a truth of expression, an intelligence, a unity of design, a magic in the harmony, which delighted both my ear and my feelings."

Piccini's arrival in Paris had been kept a close secret while he was working on the new opera, but Abbé du Rollet ferreted it out, and acquainted Gluck, which piece of news the great German took with philosophical disdain. Indeed, he attended the rehearsal of "Roland;" and when his rival, in despair over his ignorance of French and the stupidity of the orchestra, threw down the baton in despair, Gluck took it up, and by his magnetic authority brought order out of chaos and restored tranquillity, a help as much, probably, the fruit of condescension and contempt as of generosity.

Still Gluck was not easy in mind over this intrigue

of his enemies, and wrote a bitter letter, which was made public, and aggravated the war of public feeling. Epigrams and accusations flew back and forth like hailstones.*

* See article on Gluck in "Great German Compo

"Do you know that the Chevalier (Gluck's title) has an Armida and Orlando in his portfolio?" said Abbé Arnaud to a Piccinist.

"But Piccini is also at work on an Orlando," was the retort.

"So much the better," returned the abbé, "for then we shall have an Orlando and also an Orlandino," was the keen answer.

The public attention was stimulated by the war of pamphlets, lampoons, and newspaper articles. Many of the great *literati* were Piccinists, among them Marmontel, La Harpe, D'Alembert, etc. Suard du Rollet and Jean Jacques Rousseau fought in the opposite ranks. Although the nation was trembling on the verge of revolution, and the French had just lost their hold on the East Indies; though Mirabeau was thundering in the tribune, and Jacobin clubs were commencing their baleful work, soon to drench Paris in blood, all factions and discords were forgotten. The question was no longer, "Is he a Jansenist, a Molinist, an Encyclopædist, a philosopher, a free-thinker?" One question only was thought of: "Is he a Gluckist or Piccinist?" and on the answer often depended the peace of families and the cement of long-established friendships.

Piccini's opera was a brilliant success with the fickle Parisians, though the Gluckists sneered at it as

pretty concert music. The retort was that Gluck had no gift of melody, though they admitted he had the advantage over his rival of making more noise. The poor Italian was so much distressed by the fierce contest that he and his family were in despair on the night of the first representation. He could only say to his weeping wife and son: "Come, my children, this is unreasonable. Remember that we are not among savages; we are living with the politest and kindest nation in Europe. If they do not like me as a musician, they will at all events respect me as a man and a stranger." To do justico to Piccini, a mild and timid man, he never took part in the controversy, and always spoke of his opponent with profound respect and admiration.

III.

Marie Antoinette, whom Mme. du Barry and her clique looked on as Piccini's enemy, astonished both cabals by appointing Piccini her singing-master, an unprofitable honor, for he received no pay, and was obliged to give costly copies of his compositions to the royal family. He might have quoted from the Latin poet in regard to this favor from Marie Antoinette, whose faction in music, among other names, was known as the Greek party, "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes." *

* I fear the Greeks, though offering gifts.

Beaumarchais, the brilliant author of "Figaro," had found the same inconvenience when acting as court teacher to the daughters of Louis XV. The French kings were parsimonious except when lavishing money on their vices.

The action of the dauphiness, however, paved the

way for a reconciliation between Piccini and Gluck. Berton, the manager of the opera, gave a luxurious banquet, and the musicians, side by side, pledged each other in libations of champagne. Gluck got confidential in his cups. "These French," he said, "are good enough people, but they make me laugh. They want us to write songs for them, and they can't sing." In fact the quarrel was not between the musicians but their adherents. In his own heart Piccini knew his inferiority to Gluck.

De Vismes, Berton's successor, proposed that both should write operas on the same subject, "Iphigenia in Tauris," and gave him a libretto. "The French public will have for the first time," he said, "the pleasure of hearing two operas on the same theme, with the same incidents, the same characters, but composed by two great masters of totally different schools."

"But," objected the alarmed Italian, "if Gluck's opera is played first, the public will be so delighted that they will not listen to mine."

"To avoid that catastrophe," said the director, "we will play yours first."

"But Gluck will not permit it."

"I give you my word of honor," said De Vismes, "that your opera shall be put in rehearsal and brought out as soon as it is finished."

Before Piccini had finished his opera, he heard that his rival was back from Germany with his "Iphigenia" completed, and that it was in rehearsal. The director excused himself on the plea of its being a royal command. Gluck's work was his masterpiece, and

produced an unparalleled sensation among the Parisians. Even his enemies were silenced, and La Harpe said it was the *chef d'oeuvre* of the world. Piccini's work, when produced, was admired, but it stood no chance with the profound, serious, and wonderfully dramatic composition of his rival.

On the night of the first performance Mile. Laguerre, to whom Piccini had trusted the rôle of Iphigenia, could not stand straight from intoxication. "This is not 'Iphigenia in Tauris,'" said the witty Sophie Arnould, "but 'Iphigenia in champagne.'" She compensated afterward though by singing the part with exquisite effect.

While the Gluck-Piccini battle was at its height, an amateur who was disgusted with the contest returned to the country and sang the praises of the birds and their gratuitous performances in the following epigram:

"La n'est point d'art, d'ennui scientifique;
Piccini, Gluck, n'ont point noté les airs.
Nature seule en dicta la musique,
Et Marmontel n'en a pas fait les vers."

The sentiment of this was probably applauded by the many who were wearied of the bitter recriminations, which degraded the art which they professed to serve.

During the period when Gluck and Piccini were composing for the French opera, its affairs flourished liberally under the sway of De Vismes. Gluck, Piccini, and Rameau wrote serious operas, while Piccini, Sacchini, Anfossi, and Paisiello composed comic operas. The ballet flourished with unsurpassed splendor, and on the whole it may be said that never

has the opera presented more magnificence at Paris than during the time France was on the eve of the Reign of Terror. The gay capital was thronged with great singers, the traditions of whose artistic ability compare favorably with those of a more recent period.

The witty and beautiful Sophie Arnould, who had a train of princes at her feet, was the principal exponent of Gluck's heroines, while Mile. La-guerre was the mainstay of the Piccinists. The rival factions made the names of these charming and capricious women their war-cries not less than those of the composers. The public bowed and cringed before these idols of the stage. Gaétan Vestris, the first of the family, known as the "Dieu de la Danse," and who held that there were only three great men in Europe, Frederick the Great of Prussia, Voltaire, and himself, dared to dictate even to Gluck. "Write me the music of a chaconne, Monsieur Gluek," said the god of dancing.

"A chaconne!" said the enraged composer. "Do you think the Greeks, whose manners we are endeavoring to depict, knew what a chaconne was?"

"Did they not?" replied Vestris, astonished at this news, and in a tone of compassion continued, "then they are much to be pitied."

Vestris did not obtain his ballet music from the obdurate German; but, when Piccini's rival "Iphigènie en Tauride" was produced, such beautiful dance measures were furnished by the Italian composer as gave Vestris the opportunity for one of his greatest triumphs.

IV.

The contest between Gluck and Piccini, or rather the cabals who adopted the two musicians as their figure-heads, was brought to an end by the death of the former. An attempt was made to set up Sacchini in his place, but it proved unavailing, as the new composer proved to be quite as much a follower of the prevailing Italian method as of the new school of Gluck. The French revolution swept away Piccini's property, and he retired to Italy. Bad fortune pursued him, however. Queen Caroline of Naples conceived a dislike to him and used her influence to injure his career, out of a fit of wounded vanity.

"Do you not think I remember my sister, Marie Antoinette?" queried the somewhat ill-favored queen. Piccini, embarrassed but truthful, replied: "Your majesty, there maybe a family likeness, but no resemblance." A fatality attended him even to Venice. In 1792 he was mobbed and his house burned, because the populace regarded him as a republican, for he had a French son-in-law. Some partial musical successes, however, consoled him, though they flattered his *amour propre* more than they benefited his purse. On his return to Naples he was subjected to a species of imprisonment during four years, for royal displeasure in those days did not confine itself merely to lack of court favor. Reduced to great poverty, the composer who had been the favorite of the rich and great for so many years knew often the actual pangs of hunger, and eked out his subsistence by writing conventual psalms, as payment for the broken food doled out by the monks.

At last he was released, and the tenor, David, sent him funds to pay his journey to Paris. Napoleon, the first consul, received him cordially in the Luxembourg palace.

"Sit down," said he to Piccini, who remained standing, "a man of your greatness stands in no one's presence." His reception in Paris was, in fact, an ovation. The manager of the opera gave him a pension of twenty-four hundred francs, a government pension was also accorded, and he was appointed sixth inspector at the Conservatory. But the benefits of this pale gleam of wintry sunshine did not long remain. He died at Passy in the year 1800, and was followed to the grave by a great throng of those who loved his beautiful music and admired his gentle life.

In the present day Gluck appears to have vanquished Piccini, because occasionally an opera of the former is performed, while Piccini's works are only known to the musical antiquarian. But even the marble temples of Gluck are moss-grown and neglected, and that great man is known to the present day rather as one whose influence profoundly colored and changed the philosophy of opera, than through any immediate acquaintance with his productions. The connoisseurs of the eighteenth century found Piccini's melodies charming, but the works that endure as masterpieces are not those which contain the greatest number of beauties, but those of which the form is the most perfect. Gluck had larger conceptions and more powerful genius than his Italian rival, but the latter's sweet spring of melody gave him the highest place which had so far been attained in the Italian operatic school.

"Piccini," says M. Genguèné, his biographer, "was under the middle size, but well made, with considerable dignity of carriage. His countenance was very agreeable. His mind was acute, enlarged, and cultivated. Latin and Italian literature was

familiar to him when he went to France, and afterward he became almost as well acquainted with French literature. He spoke and wrote Italian with great purity, but among his countrymen he preferred the Neapolitan dialect, which he considered the most expressive, the most difficult and the most figurative of all languages. He used it principally in narration, with a gayety, a truth, and a pantomimic expression after the manner of his country, which delighted all his friends, and made his stories intelligible even to those who knew Italian but slightly."

As a musician Piccini was noticeable, according to the judgment of his best critics, for the purity and simplicity of his style. He always wished to preserve the supremacy of the voice, and, though he well knew how to make his instrumentation rich and effective, he was a resolute opponent to the florid and complex accompaniments which were coming into vogue in his day. His recorded opinion on this subject may have some interest for the musicians of the present day: "Were the employment which Nature herself assigns to the instruments of an orchestra preserved to them, a variety of effects and a series of infinitely diversified pictures would be produced. But they are all thrown in at once and used incessantly, and they thus overpower and indurate the ear, without presenting any picture to the mind, to which the ear is the passage. I should be glad to know how they will arouse it when it is accustomed to this uproar, which will soon happen, and of what new witchcraft they will avail themselves.... It is well known what occurs to palates blunted by the use of spirituous liquors. In a few months everything may be learned which is necessary to produce these exaggerated effects, but it requires much time and study to be able to excite

genuine emotion." Piccini followed strictly the canons of the Italian school; and, though far inferior in really great qualities to his rival Gluck, his compositions had in them so much of fluent grace and beauty as to place him at the head of his predecessors. Some curious critics have indeed gone so far as to charge that many of the finest arias of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini owe their paternity to this composer, an indictment not uncommon in music, for most of the great composers have rifled the sweets of their predecessors without scruple.

V.

Paisiello and Cimarosa, in their style and processes of work, seem to have more nearly caught the mantle of Piccini than any others, though they were contemporaries as well as successors. Giovanni Paisiello, born in 1741, was educated, like many other great musicians, at the conservatory of San Onofrio. During his early life he produced a great number of pieces for the Italian theatres, and in 1776 accepted the invitation of Catherine to became the court composer at St. Petersburgh, where he remained nine years and produced several of his best operas, chief among them, "Il Barbiere di Seviglia" (a different version of Beaumarchais's celebrated comedy from that afterward used by Rossini).

The empress was devotedly attached to him and showed her esteem in many signal ways. On one occasion, while Paisiello was accompanying her in a song, she observed that he shuddered with the bitter cold. On this Catherine took off her splendid ermine cloak, decorated with clasps of brilliants, and threw it over her tutor's shoulders. In a quarrel which Paisiello had with Marshal Beloseloky, the temporary

favorite of the Russian Messalina, her favor was shown in a still more striking way. The marshal had given the musician a blow, on which Paisiello, a very large, athletic man, drubbed the Russian general most unmercifully. The latter demanded the immediate dismissal of the composer for having insulted a dignitary of the empire. Catherine's reply was similar to the one made by Francis the First of France in a parallel case about Leonardo da Vinci: "I neither can nor will attend to your request;' you forgot your dignity when you gave an unoffending man and a great artist a blow. Are you surprised that he should have forgotten it too? As for rank, it is in my power to make fifty marshals, but not one Paisiello."

Some years after his return to Italy, he was engaged by Napoleon as chapel-master; for that despot ruled the art and literature of his times as autocratically as their politics. Though Paisiello did not wish to obey the mandate, to refuse was ruin. The French ruler had already shown his favor by giving him the preference over Cherubim in several important musical contests, for the latter had always displayed stern independence of courtly favor. On Paisiello's arrival in Paris, several lucrative appointments indicated the sincerity of Napoleon's intentions. The composer did not hesitate to stand on his rights as a musician on all occasions. When Napoleon complained of the inefficiency of the chapel service, he said, courageously: "I can't blame people for doing their duty carelessly, when they are not justly paid." The cunning Italian knew how to flatter, though, when occasion served. He once addressed his master as "Sire."

"'Sire,' what do you mean?" answered the first

consul. "I am a general and nothing more."

"Well, General," continued the composer, "I have come to place myself at your majesty's orders."

"I must really beg you," rejoined Napoleon, "not to address me in this manner."

"Forgive me, General," said Paisiello. "But I cannot give up the habit I have contracted in addressing sovereigns, who, compared with you, are but pigmies. However, I will not forget your commands, and, if I have been unfortunate enough to offend, I must throw myself on your majesty's indulgence."

Paisiello received ten thousand francs for the mass written for Napoleon's coronation, and one thousand for all others. As he produced masses with great rapidity, he could very well afford to neglect operatic writing during this period. His masses were pasticcio work made up of pieces selected from his operas and other compositions. This could be easily done, for music is arbitrary in its associations. Love songs of a passionate and sentimental cast were quickly made religious by suitable words. Thus the same melody will depict equally well the rage of a baffled conspirator, the jealousy of an injured husband, the grief of lovers about to part, the despondency of a man bent on suicide, the devotion of the nun, or the rapt adoration of worship. A different text and a slight change in time effect the marvel, and hardly a composer has disdained to borrow from one work to enrich another. His only opera composed in Paris, "Proserpine," was not successful.

Failure of health obliged Paisiello to return to Naples, when he again entered the service of the king. Attached to the fortunes of the Bonaparte

family, his prosperity fell with theirs. He had been crowned with honors by all the musical societies of the world, but his pensions and emoluments ceased with the fall of Joachim Murat from the Neapolitan throne. He died June 5,1816, and the court, which neglected him living, gave him a magnificent funeral.

"Paisiello," says the Chevalier Le Sueur, "was not only a great musician, but possessed a large fund of general information. He was well versed in the dead languages, acquainted with all branches of literature, and on terms of friendship with the most distinguished persons of the age. His mind was noble and above all mean passions; he neither knew envy nor the feeling of rivalry.... He composed," says the same writer, "seventy-eight operas, of which twenty-seven were serious, and fifty-one comic, eight *intermezzi*, and an immense number of cantatas, oratorios, masses, etc.; seven symphonies for King Joseph of Spain, and many miscellaneous pieces for the court of Russia."

Paisiello's style, according to Fétis, was characterized by great simplicity and apparent facility. His few and unadorned notes, full of grace, were yet deep and varied in their expression. In his simplicity was the proof of his abundance. It was not necessary for him to have recourse to musical artifice and complication to conceal poverty of invention. His accompaniments were similar in character, clear and picturesque, without pretense of elaboration. The latter not only relieved and sustained the voice, but were full of original effects, novel to his time. He was the author, too, of important improvements in instrumental composition. He introduced the viola, clarinet, and bassoon into the orchestra of the Italian opera. Though, voluminous both in serious and

comic opera, it was in the latter that he won his chief laurels. His "Pazza per Amore" was one of the great Pasta's favorites, and Catalani added largely to her reputation in the part of *La Frascatana*. Several of Paisiello's comic operas still keep a dramatic place on the German stage, where excellence is not sacrificed to novelty.

VI.

A still higher place must be assigned to another disciple and follower of the school perfected by Piccini, Dominic Cimarosa, born in Naples in 1754. His life down to his latter years was an uninterrupted flow of prosperity. His mother, an humble washerwomen, could do little for her fatherless child, but an observant priest saw the promise of the lad, and taught him till he was old enough to enter the Conservatory of St. Maria di Loretto. His early works showed brilliant invention and imagination, and the young Cimarosa, before he left the Conservatory, had made himself a good violinist and singer. He worked hard, during a musical apprenticeship of many years, to lay a solid foundation for the fame which his teachers prophesied for him from the onset. Like Paisiello, he was for several years attached to the court of Catherine II. of Russia. He had already produced a number of pleasing works, both serious and comic, for the Italian theatres, and his faculty of production was equaled by the richness and variety of his scores. During a period of four years spent at the imperial court of the North, Cimarosa produced nearly five hundred works, great and small, and only left the service of his magnificent patroness, who was no less passionately fond of art than she was great as a ruler and dissolute as a woman, because the severe climate affected his health, for he was a typical

Italian in his temperament.

He was arrested in his southward journey by the urgent persuasions of the Emperor Leopold, who made him chapel-master, with a salary of twelve thousand florins. The taste for the Italian school was still paramount at the musical capital of Austria. Though such composers as Haydn, Salieri, and young Mozart, who had commenced to be welcomed as an unexampled prodigy, were in Vienna, the court preferred the suave and shallow beauties of Italian music to their own serious German school, which was commencing to send down such deep roots into the popular heart.

Cimarosa produced "Il Matrimonio Segreto" (The Secret Marriage), his finest opera, for his new patron. The libretto was founded on a forgotten French operetta, which again was adapted from Garrick and Colman's "Clandestine Marriage." The emperor could not attend the first representation, but a brilliant audience hailed it with delight. Leopold made amends, though, on the second night, for he stood in his box, and said, aloud:

"Bravo, Cimarosa, bravissimo! The whole opera is admirable, delightful, enchanting! I did not applaud, that I might not lose a single note of this masterpiece. You have heard it twice, and I must have the same pleasure before I go to bed. Singers and musicians pass into the next room. Cimarosa will come, too, and preside at the banquet prepared for you. When you have had sufficient rest, we will begin again. I encore the whole opera, and in the mean while let us applaud it as it deserves."

The emperor gave the signal, and, midst a thunderstorm of plaudits, the musicians passed into

their midnight feast. There is no record of any other such compliment, except that to the Latin dramatist, Plautus, whose "Eunuchus" was performed twice on the same day.

Yet the same Viennese public, six years before, had actually hissed Mozart's "Nozze di Figaro," which shares with Rossini's "Il Barbiere" the greatest rank in comic opera, and has retained, to this day, its perennial freshness and interest. Cimarosa himself did not share the opinion of his admirers in respect to Mozart. A certain Viennese painter attempted to flatter him, by decrying Mozart's music in comparison with his own. The following retort shows the nobility of genius: "I, sir? What would you call the man who would seek to assure you that you were superior to Raphael?" Another acute rejoinder, on the respective merits of Mozart and Cimarosa, was made by the French composer, Grétry, in answer to a criticism by Napoleon, when first consul, that great man affecting to be a *dilettante* in music:

"Sire, Cimarosa puts the statue on the theatre and the pedestal in the orchestra, instead of which Mozart puts the statue in the orchestra and the pedestal on the theatre."

The composer's hitherto brilliant career was doomed to a gloomy close. On returning to Naples, at the Emperor Leopold's death, Cimarosa produced several of his finest works, among which musical students place first: "Il Matrimonio per Susurro," "La Penelope," "L'Olimpiade," "II Sacrificio d'Abramo," "Gli Amanti Comici," and "Gli Orazi." These were performed almost simultaneously in the theatres of Paris, Naples, and Vienna. Cimarosa attached himself warmly to the French cause in Italy, and when the

Bourbons finally triumphed the musician suffered their bitterest resentment. He narrowly escaped with his life, and languished for a long time in a dungeon, so closely immured that it was for a long time believed by his friends that his head had fallen on the block.

At length released, he quitted the Neapolitan territory, only to die at Venice, in a few months, "in consequence," Stendhal says, in his "Life of Rossini," "of the barbarous treatment he had met with in the prison into which he had been thrown by Queen Caroline." He died January 11, 1801.

Cimarosa's genius embraced both the tragic and comic schools of composition. He may be specially called a genuine master of musical comedy. He was the finest example of the school perfected by Piccini, and was indeed the link between the old Italian opera and the new development of which Rossini is such a brilliant exponent. Schluter, in his "History of Music," says of him: "Like Mozart, he excels in those parts of an opera which decide its merits as a work of art, the *ensembles* and *finale*. His admirable, and by no means antiquated opera, 'Il Matrimonio Segreto' (the charming offspring of his 'secret marriage' with the Mozart opera) is a model of exquisite and graceful comedy. The overture bears a striking resemblance to that of 'Figaro,' and the instrumentation of the whole opera is highly characteristic, though not so prominent as in Mozart. Especially delightful are the secret love-scenes, written evidently *con amore*, the composer having practised them many a time in his youth."

This opera is still performed in many parts of Europe to delighted audiences, and is ranked by

competent critics as the third finest comic opera extant, Mozart and Rossini only surpassing him in their masterpieces. It was a great favorite with Lablache, and its magnificent performance by Grisi, Mario, Tamburini, and the king of bassos, is a gala reminiscence of English and French opera-goers.

We quote an opinion also from another able authority: "The drama of 'Gli Orazi' is taken from Corneille's tragedy 'Les Horaces.' The music is full of noble simplicity, beautiful melody, and strong expression. In the airs dramatic truth is never sacrificed to vocal display, and the concerted pieces are grand, broad, and effective. Taken as a whole, the piece is free from antiquated and obsolete forms; and it wants nothing but an orchestral score of greater fullness and variety to satisfy the modern ear. It is still frequently performed in Germany, though in France and England, and even in its native country, it seems to be forgotten."

Cardinal Consalvi, Cimarosa's friend, caused splendid funeral honors to be paid to him at Rome. Canova executed a marble bust of him, which was placed in the gallery of the Capitol.

ROSSINI.

I.

The "Swan of Pesaro" is a name linked with some

of the most charming musical associations of this age. Though forty years silence made fruitless what should have been the richest creative period of Rossini's life, his great works, poured forth with such facility, and still retaining their grasp in spite of all changes in public opinion, stamp him as being the most gifted composer ever produced by a country so fecund in musical geniuses. The old set forms of Italian opera had already yielded in large degree to the energy and pomp of French declamation, when Rossini poured into them afresh such exhilaration and sparkle as again placed his country in the van of musical Europe. With no pretension to the grand, majestic, and severe, his fresh and delightful melodies, flowing without stint, excited alike the critical and the unlearned into a species of artistic craze, a mania which has not yet subsided. The stiff and stately Oublicheff confesses, with many compunctions of conscience, that, when listening for the first time to one of Rossini's operas, he forgot for the time being all that he had ever known, admired, played, or sung, for he was musically drunk, as if with champagne. Learned Germans might shake their heads and talk about shallowness and contrapuntal rubbish, his *crescendo* and *stretto* passages, his tameness and uniformity even in melody, his want of artistic finish; but, as Richard Wagner, his direct antipodes, frankly confesses in his "Oper und Drama," such objections were dispelled by Rossini's opera-airs as if they were mere delusions of the fancy. Essentially different from Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Haydn, or even Weber, with whom he has some affinities, he stands a unique figure in the history of art, an original both as man and musician.

Gioacchino Rossini was the son of a town-trumpeter and an operatic singer of inferior rank,

born in Pesaro, Romagna, February 29, 1792. The child attended the itinerant couple in their visits to fairs and musical gatherings, and was in danger, at the age of seven, of becoming a thorough-paced little vagabond, when maternal alarm trusted his education to the friendly hands of the music-master Prinetti. At this tender age even he had been introduced to the world of art, for he sang the part of a child at the Bologna opera.

"Nothing," said Mme. Georgi-Righetti, "could be imagined more tender, more touching, than the voice and action of this remarkable child."

The young Rossini, after a year or two, came under the notice of the celebrated teacher Tesei, of Bologna, who gave him lessons in pianoforte playing and the voice, and obtained him a good place as boy-soprano at one of the churches. He now attracted the attention of the Countess Perticari, who admired his voice, and she sent him to the Lyceum to learn fugue and counterpoint at the feet of a very strict Gamaliel, Padre Mallei. The youth was no dull student, and, in spite of his capricious indolence, which vexed the soul of his tutor, he made such rapid progress that at the age of sixteen he was chosen to write the cantata, annually awarded to the most promising student. Success greeted the juvenile effort, and thus we see Rossini fairly launched as a composer. Of the early operas which he poured out for five years it is not needful to speak, except that one of them so pleased the austere Marshal Massena that he exempted the composer from conscription. The first opera which made Rossini's name famous through Europe was "Tancredi," written for the Venetian public. To this opera belongs the charming "Di tanti palpiti," written under the following circumstances: Mme. Melanotte,

the *prima donna*, took the whim during the final rehearsal that she would not sing the opening air, but must have another. Rossini went home in sore disgust, for the whole opera was likely to be put off by this caprice. There were but two hours before the performance, he sat waiting for his macaroni, when an exquisite air came into his head, and it was written in five minutes.

After his great success he received offers from almost every town in Italy, each clamoring to be served first. Every manager was required to furnish his theatre with an opera from the pen of the new idol. For these earlier essays he received a thousand francs each, and he wrote five or six a year. Stendhall, Rossini's spirited biographer, gives a picturesque account of life in the Italian theatres at this time, a status which remains in some of its features to-day:

"The mechanism is as follows: The manager is frequently one of the most wealthy and considerable persons of the little town he inhabits. He forms a company consisting of *prima donna, tenoro, basso cantante, basso buffo*, a second female singer, and a third *basso*. The *libretto*, or poem, purchased for sixty or eighty francs from some lucky son of the muses, who is generally a half-starved abbé, the hanger-on of some rich family in the neighborhood. The character of the parasite, so admirably painted by Terence, is still to be found in all its glory in Lombardy, where the smallest town can boast of some five or six families of some wealth.

"A *maestro*, or composer, is then engaged to write a new opera, and he is obliged to adapt his own airs to the voices and capacity of the company. The

manager intrusts the care of the financial department to a *registrario*, who is generally some pettifogging attorney, who holds the position of his steward. The next thing that generally happens is that the manager falls in love with the *prima donna*; and the progress of this important amour gives ample employment to the curiosity of the gossips.

"The company thus organized at length gives its first representation, after a month of cabals and intrigues, which furnish conversation for the town. This is an event in the simple annals of the town, of the importance of which the residents of large places can form no idea. During months together a population of eight or ten thousand people do nothing but discuss the merit of the forthcoming music and singers with the eager impetuosity which belongs to the Italian character and climate. The first representation, if successful, is generally followed by twenty or thirty more of the same piece, after which the company breaks up.... From this little sketch of theatrical arrangements in Italy some idea may be formed of the life which Rossini led from 1810 to 1816." Between these years he visited all the principal towns, remaining three or four months at each, the idolized guest of the *dilettanti* of the place. Rossini's idleness and love of good cheer always made him procrastinate his labors till the last moment, and placed him in dilemmas from which only his fluency of composition extricated him. His biographer says:

"The day of performance is fast approaching, and yet he cannot resist the pressing invitations of these friends to dine with them at the tavern. This, of course, leads to a supper, the champagne circulates freely, and the hour of morning steals on apace. At

length a compunctious visiting shoots across the mind of the truant composer. He rises abruptly; his friends insist on seeing him home; and they parade the silent streets bareheaded, shouting in chorus whatever comes uppermost, perhaps a portion of a *miserere*, to the great scandal of pious Catholics tucked snugly in their beds. At length he reaches his lodging, and shutting himself up in his chamber is, at this, to every-day mortals, most ungenial hour, visited by some of his most brilliant inspirations. These he hastily scratches down on scraps of paper, and next morning arranges them, or, in his own phrase, instruments them, amid the renewed interruptions of his visitors. At length the important night arrives. The *maestro* takes his place at the pianoforte. The theatre is overflowing, people having flocked to the town from ten leagues distance. Every inn is crowded, and those unable to get other accommodations encamp around the theatre in their various vehicles. All business is suspended, and, during the performances, the town has the appearance of a desert. The passions, the anxieties, the very life of a whole population are centered in the theatre."

Rossini would preside at the first three representations, and, after receiving a grand civic banquet, set out for the next place, his portmanteau fuller of music-paper than of other effects, and perhaps a dozen sequins in his pocket. His love of jesting during these gay Bohemian wanderings made him perpetrate innumerable practical jokes, not sparing himself when he had no more available food for mirth. On one occasion, in traveling from Ancona to Reggio, he passed himself off for a musical professor, a mortal enemy of Rossini, and sang the words of his own operas to the most execrable music,

in a cracked voice, to show his superiority to that donkey, Rossini. An unknown admirer of his was in such a rage that he was on the point of chastising him for slandering the great musician, about whom Italy raved.

Our composer's earlier style was quite simple and unadorned, a fact difficult for the present generation, only acquainted with the florid beauties of his later works, to appreciate. Rossini only followed the traditions of Italian music in giving singers full opportunity to embroider the naked score at their own pleasure. He was led to change this practice by the following incident. The tenor-singer Velluti was then the favorite of the Italian theatres, and indulged in the most unwarrantable tricks with his composers. During the first performance of "L'Aureliano," at Naples, the singer loaded the music with such ornaments that Rossini could not recognize the offspring of his own brains. A fierce quarrel ensued between the two, and the composer determined thereafter to write music of such a character that the most stupid singer could not suppose any adornment needed. From that time the Rossini music was marked by its florid and brilliant embroidery. Of the same Velluti, spoken of above, an incident is told, illustrating the musical craze of the country and the period. A Milanese gentleman, whose father was very ill, met his friend in the street—"Where are you going?" "To the Scala to be sure." "How! your father lies at the point of death." "Yes! yes! I know, but Velluti sings to-night."

II.

An important step in Rossini's early career was his connection with the widely known impresario of the

San Carlo, Naples, Barbaja. He was under contract to produce two new operas annually, to rearrange all old scores, and to conduct at all of the theatres ruled by this manager. He was to receive two hundred ducats a month, and a share in the profits of the bank of the San Carlo gambling-saloon. His first opera composed here was "Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra," which was received with a genuine Neapolitan *furore*. Rossini was feted and caressed by the ardent *dilettanti* of this city to his heart's content, and was such an idol of the "fickle fair" that his career on more than one occasion narrowly escaped an untimely close, from the prejudice of jealous spouses. The composer was very vain of his handsome person, and boasted of his *escapades d'amour*. Many, too, will recall his *mot*, spoken to a beauty standing between himself and the Duke of Wellington: "Madame, how happy should you be to find yourself placed between the two greatest men in Europe!"

One of Rossini's adventures at Naples has in it something of romance. He was sitting in his chamber, humming one of his own operatic airs, when the ugliest Mercury he had ever seen entered and gave him a note, then instantly withdrew. This, of course, was a tender invitation, and an assignation at a romantic spot in the suburb. On arriving Rossini sang his *aria* for a signal, and from the gate of a charming park surrounding a small villa appeared his beautiful and unknown inamorata. On parting it was agreed that the same messenger should bring notice of the second appointment. Rossini suspected that the lady, in disguise, was her own envoy, and verified the guess by following the light-footed page. He then discovered that she was the wife of a wealthy Sicilian, widely noted for her beauty, and

one of the reigning toasts. On renewing his visit, he had barely arrived at the gate of the park, when a carbine-bullet grazed his head, and two masked assailants sprang toward him with drawn rapiers, a proceeding which left Rossini no option but to take to his heels, as he was unarmed.

During the composer's residence at Naples he was made acquainted with many of the most powerful princes and nobles of Europe, and his name became a recognized factor in European music, though his works were not widely known outside of his native land. His reputation for genius spread by report, for all who came in contact with the brilliant, handsome Rossini were charmed. That which placed his European fame on a solid basis was the production of "Il Barbiere di Seviglia" at Rome during the carnival season of 1816.

Years before Rossini had thought of setting the sparkling comedy of Beaumarchais to music, and Sterbini, the author of the *libretto* used by Paisiello, had proposed to rearrange the story. Rossini, indeed, had been so complaisant as to write to the older composer for permission to set fresh music to the comedy; a concession not needed, for the plays of Metastasio had been used by different musicians without scruple. Paisiello intrigued against the new opera, and organized a conspiracy to kill it on the first night. Sterbini made the libretto totally different from the other, and Rossini finished the music in thirteen days, during which he never left the house. "Not even did I get shaved," he said to a friend. "It seems strange that through the 'Barber' you should have gone without shaving." "If I had shaved," Rossini explained, "I should have gone out; and, if I had gone out, I should not have come back in time."

The first performance was a curious scene. The Argentina Theatre was packed with friends and foes. One of the greatest of tenors, Garcia, the father of Malibran and Pauline Viardot, sang Almaviva. Rossini had been weak enough to allow Garcia to sing a Spanish melody for a serenade, for the latter urged the necessity of vivid national and local color. The tenor had forgotten to tune his guitar, and in the operation on the stage a string broke. This gave the signal for a tumult of ironical laughter and hisses. The same hostile atmosphere continued during the evening. Even Madame Georgi-Righetti, a great favorite of the Romans, was coldly received by the audience. In short, the opera seemed likely to be damned.

When the singers went to condole with Rossini, they found him enjoying a luxurious supper with the gusto of the *gourmet* that he was. Settled in his knowledge that he had written a masterpiece, he could not be disturbed by unjust clamor. The next night the fickle Romans made ample amends, for the opera was concluded amid the warmest applause, even from the friends of Paisiello.

Rossini's "Il Barbiere," within six months, was performed on nearly every stage in Europe, and received universally with great admiration. It was only in Paris, two years afterward, that there was some coldness in its reception. Every one said that after Paisiello's music on the same subject it was nothing, when it was suggested that Paisiello's should be revived. So the St. Petersburg "Barbiere" of 1788 was produced, and beside Rossini's it proved so dull, stupid, and antiquated that the public instantly recognized the beauties of the work which they had persuaded themselves to ignore. Yet for this work,

which placed the reputation of the young composer on a lofty pedestal, he received only two thousand francs.

Our composer took his failures with great phlegm and good nature, based, perhaps, on an invincible self-confidence. When his "Sigismonde" had been hissed at Venice, he sent his mother a *fiasco* (bottle). In the last instance he sent her, on the morning succeeding the first performance, a letter with a picture of a *fiaschetto* (little bottle).

III.

The same year (1816) was produced at Naples the opera of "Otello," which was an important point of departure in the reforms introduced by Rossini on the Italian stage. Before speaking further of this composer's career, it is necessary to admit that every valuable change furthered by him had already been inaugurated by Mozart, a musical genius so great that he seems to have included all that went before, all that succeeded him. It was not merely that Rossini enriched the orchestration to such a degree, but, revolting from the delay of the dramatic movement, caused by the great number of arias written for each character, he gave large prominence to the concerted pieces, and used them where monologue had formerly been the rule. He developed the basso and baritone parts, giving them marked importance in serious opera, and worked out the choruses and finales with the most elaborate finish.

Lord Mount Edgcumbe, a celebrated connoisseur and admirer of the old school, wrote of these innovations, ignoring the fact that Mozart had given the weight of his great authority to them before the daring young Italian composer:

"The construction of these newly-invented pieces is essentially different from the old. The dialogue, which used to be carried on in recitative, and which, in Metastasio's operas, is often so beautiful and interesting, and now cut up (and rendered unintelligible if it were worth listening to) into *pezzi concertati*, or long singing conversations, which present a tedious succession of unconnected, ever-changing motives, having nothing to do with each other; and if a satisfactory air is for a moment introduced, which the ear would like to dwell upon, to hear modulated, varied, and again returned to, it is broken off, before it is well understood, by a sudden transition in an entirely different melody, time, and key, and recurs no more, so that no impression can be made, or recollection of it preserved. Single songs are almost exploded.... Even the *prima donna*, who formerly would have complained at having less than three or four airs allotted to her, is now satisfied with having one single *cavatina* given to her during the whole opera."

In "Otello," Rossini introduced his operatic changes to the Italian public, and they were well received; yet great opposition was manifested by those who clung to the time-honored canons. Sigismondi, of the Naples Conservatory, was horror-stricken on first seeing the score of this opera. The clarionets were too much for him, but on seeing third and fourth horn-parts, he exclaimed: "What does the man want? The greatest of our composers have always been contented with two. Shades of Pergolesi, of Leo, of Jomelli! How they must shudder at the bare thought! Four horns! Are we at a hunting-party? Four horns! Enough to blow us to perdition!" Donizetti, who was Sigismondi's pupil, also tells an amusing incident of his preceptor's disgust. He was turning over a score

of "Semiramide" in the library, when the *maestro* came in and asked him what music it was. "Rossini's," was the answer. Sigismondi glanced at the page and saw 1. 2. 3. trumpets, being the first, second, and third trumpet parts. Aghast, he shouted, stuffing his fingers in his ears, "One hundred and twenty-three trumpets! *Corpo di Cristo!* the world's gone mad, and I shall go mad too!" And so he rushed from the room, muttering to himself about the hundred and twenty-three trumpets.

The Italian public, in spite of such criticism, very soon accepted the opera of "Otello" as the greatest serious opera ever written for their stage. It owed much, however, to the singers who illustrated its rôles. Mme. Colbran, afterward Rossini's wife, sang Desdemona, and Davide, Otello. The latter was the predecessor of Rubini as the finest singer of the Rossinian music. He had the prodigious compass of three octaves; and M. Bertin, a French critic, says of this singer, so honorably linked with the career of our composer: "He is full of warmth, *verve*, energy, expression, and musical sentiment; alone he can fill up and give life to a scene; it is impossible for another singer to carry away an audience as he does, and, when he will only be simple, he is admirable. He is the Rossini of song; he is the greatest singer I ever heard." Lord Byron, in one of his letters to Moore, speaks of the first production at Milan, and praises the music enthusiastically, while condemning the libretto as a degradation of Shakespeare.

"La Cenerentola" and "La Gazza Ladra" were written in quick succession for Naples and Milan. The former of these works, based on the old Cinderella myth, was the last opera written by Rossini to illustrate the beauties of the contralto

voice, and Madame Georgi-Righetti, the early friend and steadfast patroness of the musician during his early days of struggle, made her last great appearance in it before retiring from the stage. In this composition, Rossini, though one of the most affluent and rapid of composers, displays that economy in art which sometimes characterized him. He introduced in it many of the more beautiful airs from his earlier and less successful works. He believed on principle that it was folly to let a good piece of music be lost through being married to a weak and faulty libretto. The brilliant opera of "La Gazza Ladra," set to the story of a French melodrama, "La Pie Voleuse," aggravated the quarrel between Paer, the director of the French opera, and the gifted Italian. Paer had designed to have written the music himself, but his librettist slyly turned over the poem to Rossini, who produced one of his masterpieces in setting it. The audience at La Scala received the work with the noisiest demonstrations, interrupting the progress of the drama with constant cries of "*Bravo! Maestro!" "Viva Rossini!"* The composer afterward said that acknowledging the calls of the audience fatigued him much more than the direction of the opera. When the same work was produced four years after in London, under Mr. Ebers's management, an incident related by that *impresario* in his "Seven Years of the King's Theatre" shows how eagerly it was received by an English audience.

"When I entered the stage door, I met an intimate friend, with a long face and uplifted eyes. 'Good God! Ebers, I pity you from my soul. This ungrateful public,' he continued. 'The wretches! Why! my dear sir, they have not left you a seat in your own house.' Relieved from the fears he had created, I joined him

in his laughter, and proceeded, assuring him that I felt no ill toward the public for their conduct toward me."

Passing over "Armida," written for the opening of the new San Carlo at Naples, "Adelaida di Borgogna," for the Roman Carnival of 1817, and "Adina," for a Lisbon theatre, we come to a work which is one of Rossini's most solid claims on musical immortality, "Mosé in Egitto," first produced at the San Carlo, Naples, in 1818. In "Mosé," Rossini carried out still further than ever his innovations, the two principal rôles—*Mosé, and Faraoni*—being assigned to basses. On the first representation, the crossing of the Red Sea moved the audience to satirical laughter, which disconcerted the otherwise favorable reception of the piece, and entirely spoiled the final effects. The manager was at his Avit's end, till Tottola, the librettist, suggested a prayer for the Israelites before and after the passage of the host through the cleft waters. Rossini instantly seized the idea, and, springing from bed in his night-shirt, wrote the music with almost inconceivable rapidity, before his embarrassed visitors recovered from their surprise. The same evening the magnificent *Dal tuo stellato soglio* ("To thee, Great Lord") was performed with the opera.

Let Stendhall, Rossini's biographer, tell the rest of the story: "The audience was delighted as usual with the first act, and all went well till the third, when, the passage of the Red Sea being at hand, the audience as usual prepared to be amused. The laughter was just beginning in the pit, when it was observed that Moses was about to sing. He began his solo, the first verse of a prayer, which all the people repeat in chorus after Moses. Surprised at this

novelty, the pit listened and the laughter entirely ceased. The chorus, exceedingly fine, was in the minor. Aaron continues, followed by the people. Finally, Eleia addresses to Heaven the same supplication, and the people respond. Then all fall on their knees and repeat the prayer with enthusiasm; the miracle is performed, the sea is opened to leave a path for the people protected by the Lord. This last part is in the major. It is impossible to imagine the thunders of applause that resounded through the house: one would have thought it was coming down. The spectators in the boxes, standing up and leaning over, called out at the top of their voices, '*Bello, bello! O che hello!*', I never saw so much enthusiasm nor such a complete success, which was so much the greater, inasmuch as the people were quite prepared to laugh.... I am almost in tears when I think of this prayer. This state of things lasted a long time, and one of its effects was to make for its composer the reputation of an assassin, for Dr. Cottogna is said to have remarked: 'I can cite to you more than forty attacks of nervous fever or violent convulsions on the part of young women, fond to excess of music, which have no other origin than the prayer of the Hebrews in the third act, with its superb change of key.'" Thus by a stroke of genius, a scene which first impressed the audience as a piece of theatrical burlesque, was raised to sublimity by the solemn music written for it.

M. Bochsa some years afterward produced "Mosé" as an oratorio in London, and it failed. A new libretto, however, "Pietro L'Eremito,"* again transformed the music into an opera.

* The same music was set to a poem founded or
crusade, all the most effective situations be

dramatically utilized for the Christian leger

Ebers tells us that Lord Sefton, a distinguished connoisseur, only pronounced the general verdict in calling it the greatest of serious operas, for it was received with the greatest favor. A gentleman of high rank was not satisfied with assuring the manager that he had deserved well of his country, but avowed his determination to propose him for membership at the most exclusive of aristocratic clubs—White's.

"La Donna del Lago," Rossini's next great work, also first produced at the San Carlo during the Carnival of 1820, though splendidly performed, did not succeed well the first night. The composer left Naples the same night for Milan, and coolly informed every one *en route* that the opera was very successful, which proved to be true when he reached his journey's end, for the Neapolitans on the second night reversed their decision into an enthusiasm as marked as their coldness had been.

Shortly after this Rossini married his favorite *prima donna*, Madame Colbran. He had just completed two of his now forgotten operas, "Bianca e Faliero," and "Matilda di Shabran," but did not stay to watch their public reception. He quietly took away the beautiful Colbran, and at Bologne was married by the archbishop. Thence the freshly-wedded couple visited Vienna, and Rossini there produced his "Zelmira," his wife singing the principal part. One of the most striking of this composer's works in invention and ingenious development of ideas, Carpani says of it: "It contains enough to furnish not one but four operas. In this work, Rossini, by the new riches which he draws from his prodigious imagination, is no longer the author of 'Otello,'

'Tancredi,' 'Zoraide,' and all his preceding works; he is another composer, new, agreeable, and fertile, as much as at first, but with more command of himself, more pure, more masterly, and, above all, more faithful to the interpretation of the words. The forms of style employed in this opera according to circumstances are so varied, that now we seem to hear Gluck, now Traetta, now Sacchini, now Mozart, now Handel; for the gravity, the learning, the naturalness, the suavity of their conceptions, live and blossom again in 'Zelmira.' The transitions are learned, and inspired more by considerations of poetry and sense than by caprice and a mania for innovation. The vocal parts, always natural, never trivial, give expression to the words without ceasing to be melodious. The great point is to preserve both. The instrumentation of Rossini is really incomparable by the vivacity and freedom of the manner, by the variety and justness of the coloring." Yet it must be conceded that, while this opera made a deep impression on musicians and critics, it did not please the general public. It proved languid and heavy with those who could not relish the science of the music and the skill of the combinations. Such instances as this are the best answer to that school of critics, who have never ceased clamoring that Rossini could write nothing but beautiful tunes to tickle the vulgar and uneducated mind.

"Semiramide," first performed at the Fenice theatre in Venice on February 3, 1823, was the last of Rossini's Italian operas, though it had the advantage of careful rehearsals and a noble caste. It was not well received at first, though the verdict of time places it high among the musical masterpieces of the century. In it were combined all of Rossini's, ideas of operatic reform, and the novelty of some of the

innovations probablv accounts for the inability of his earlier public to appreciate its merits. Mme. Rossini made her last public appearance in this great work.

IV.

Henceforward the career of the greatest of the Italian composers, the genius who shares with Mozart the honor of having impressed himself more than any other on the style and methods of his successors, was to be associated with French music, though never departing from his characteristic quality as an original and creative mind. He modified French music, and left great disciples on whom his influence was radical, though perhaps we may detect certain reflex influences in his last and greatest opera, "William Tell." But of this more hereafter.

Before finally settling in the French capital, Rossini visited London, where he was received with great honors. "When Rossini entered,"* says a writer in a London paper of that date, "he was received with loud plaudits, all the persons in the pit standing on the seats to get a better view of him.

* His first English appearance in public was
Theatre on the 24th of January, 1824, when he
own opera, "Zelmira."

He continued for a minute or two to bow respectfully to the audience, and then gave the signal for the overture to begin. He appeared stout and somewhat below the middle height, with rather a heavy air, and a countenance which, though intelligent, betrayed none of the vivacity which distinguishes his music; and it was remarked that he had more of the appearance of a sturdy, beef-eating Englishman, than a fiery and sensitive native of the

south."

The king, George IV., treated Rossini with peculiar consideration. On more than one occasion he walked with him arm-in-arm through a crowded concert-hall to the conductor's stand. Yet the composer, who seems not to have admired his English Majesty, treated the monarch with much independence, not to say brusqueness, on one occasion, as if to signify his disdain of even royal patronage. At a grand concert at St. James's Palace, the king said, at the close of the programme, "Now, Rossini, we will have one piece more, and that shall be the *finale*." The other replied, "I think, sir, we have had music enough for one night," and made his bow.

He was an honored guest at the most fashionable houses, where his talents as a singer and player were displayed with much effect in an unconventional, social way. Auber, the French composer, was present on one of these occasions, and indicates how great Rossini could have been in executive music had he not been a king in the higher sphere. "I shall never forget the effect," writes Auber, "produced by his lightning-like execution. When he had finished I looked mechanically at the ivory keys. I fancied I could see them smoking." Rossini was richer by seven thousand pounds by this visit to the English metropolis. Though he had been under engagement to produce a new opera as well as to conduct those which had already made him famous, he failed to keep this part of his contract. Passages in his letters at this time would seem to indicate that Rossini was much piqued because the London public received his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, with coldness. Notwithstanding the beauty of her face and figure, and the greatness of her style both as actress

and singer, she was pronounced *passée* alike in person and voice, with a species of brutal frankness not uncommon in English criticism.

When Rossini arrived in Paris he was almost immediately appointed director of the Italian Opera by the Duc de Lauriston. With this and the Académie he remained connected till the revolution of 1830. "Le Siège de Corinthe," adapted from his old work, "Maometto II.," was the first opera presented to the Parisian public, and, though admired, did not become a favorite. The French *amour propre* was a little stung when it was made known that Rossini had simply modified and reshaped one of his early and immature productions as his first attempt at composition in French opera. His other works for the French stage were "Il Viaggio a Rheims," "Le Comte Ory," and "Guillaume Tell."

The last-named opera, which will ever be Rossini's crown of glory as a composer, was written with his usual rapidity while visiting the château of M. Aguado, a country-seat some distance from Paris. This work, one of the half-dozen greatest ever written, was first produced at the Académie Royale on August 3, 1829. In its early form of libretto it had a run of fifty-six representations, and was then withdrawn from the stage; and the work of remodeling from five to three acts, and other improvements in the dramatic framework, was thoroughly carried out. In its new form the opera blazed into an unprecedented popularity, for of the greatness of the music there had never been but one judgment. Fétis, the eminent critic, writing of it immediately on its production, said, "The work displays a new man in an old one, and proves that it is in vain to measure the action of genius," and

follows with, "This production opens a new career to Rossini," a prophecy unfortunately not to be realized, for Rossini was soon to retire from the field in which he had made such a remarkable career, while yet in the very prime of his powers.

"Guillaume Tell" is full of melody, alike in the solos and the massive choral and ballet music. It runs in rich streams through every part of the composition. The overture is better known to the general public than the opera itself, and is one of the great works of musical art. The opening andante in triple time for the five violoncelli and double basses at once carries the hearer to the regions of the upper Alps, where amid the eternal snows Nature sleeps in a peaceful dream. We perceive the coming of the sunlight, and the hazy atmosphere clearing away before the newborn day. In the next movement the solitude is all dispelled. The raindrops fall thick and heavy, and a thunderstorm bursts. But the fury is soon spent, and the clouds clear away. The shepherds are astir, and from the mountain-sides come the peculiar notes of the "Ranz des Vaches" from their pipes. Suddenly all is changed again.

Trumpets call to arms, and with the mustering battalions the music marks the quickstep, as the shepherd patriots march to meet the Austrian chivalry. A brilliant use of the violins and reeds depicts the exultation of the victors on their return, and closes one of the grandest sound-paintings in music.

The original cast of "Guillaume Tell" included the great singers then in Paris, and these were so delighted with the music, that the morning after the first production they assembled on the terrace before

his house and performed selections from it in his honor.

With this last great effort Rossini, at the age of thirty-seven, may be said to have retired from the field of music, though his life was prolonged for forty years. True, he composed the "Stabat Mater" and the "Messe Solennelle," but neither of these added to the reputation won in his previous career. The "Stabat Mater," publicly performed for the first time in 1842, has been recognized, it is true, as a masterpiece; but its entire lack of devotional solemnity, its brilliant and showy texture, preclude its giving Rossini any rank as a religious composer.

He spent the forty years of his retirement partly at Bologna, partly at Passy, near Paris, the city of his adoption. His hospitality welcomed the brilliant men from all parts of Europe who loved to visit him, and his relations with other great musicians were of the most kindly and cordial character. His sunny and genial nature never knew envy, and he was quick to recognize the merits of schools opposed to his own. He died, after intense suffering, on November 13, 1868. He had been some time ill, and four of the greatest physicians in Europe were his almost constant attendants. The funeral of "The Swan of Pesaro," as he was called by his compatriots, was attended by an immense concourse, and his remains rest in Père-Lachaise.

V.

Moscheles, the celebrated pianist, gives us some charming pictures of Rossini in his home at Passy, in his diary of 1860. He writes: "Felix [his son] had been made quite at home in the villa on former occasions. To me the *parterre salon*, with its rich

furniture, was quite new, and before the *maestro* himself appeared we looked at his photograph in a circular porcelain frame, on the sides of which were inscribed the names of his works. The ceiling is covered with pictures illustrating scenes out of Palestrina's and Mozart's lives; in the middle of the room stands a Pleyel piano. When Rossini came in he gave me the orthodox Italian kiss, and was effusive of expressions of delight at my reappearance, and very complimentary on the subject of Felix. In the course of our conversation he was full of hard-hitting truths on the present study and method of vocalization. 'I don't want to hear anything more of it,' he said; 'they scream. All I want is a resonant, full-toned voice, not a screeching voice. I care not whether it be for speaking or singing, everything ought to sound melodious.'" So, too, Rossini assured Moscheles that he hated the new school of piano-players, saying the piano was horribly maltreated, for the performers thumped the keys as if they had some vengeance to wreak on them. When the great player improvised for Rossini, the latter says: "It is music that flows from the fountain-head. There is reservoir water and spring water. The former only runs when you turn the cock, and is always redolent of the vase; the latter always gushes forth fresh and limpid. Nowadays people confound the simple and the trivial; a *motif* of Mozart they would call trivial, if they dared."

On other occasions Moscheles plays to the *maestro*, who insists on having discovered barriers in the "humoristic variations," so boldly do they seem to raise the standard of musical revolution; his title of the "Grand Valse" he finds too unassuming. "Surely a waltz with some angelic creature must have inspired you, Moscheles, with this composition, and *that* the

title ought to express. Titles, in fact, should pique the curiosity of the public." "A view uncongenial to me," adds Moscheles; "however, I did not discuss it.... A dinner at Rossini's is calculated for the enjoyment of a 'gourmet,' and he himself proved to be the one, for he went through the very select *menu* as only a connoisseur would. After dinner he looked through my album of musical autographs with the greatest interest, and finally we became very merry, I producing my musical jokes on the piano, and Felix and Clara figuring in the duet which I had written for her voice and his imitation of the French horn. Rossini cheered lustily, and so one joke followed another till we received the parting kiss and 'good night.'... At my next visit, Rossini showed me a charming 'Lied oline Worte,' which he composed only yesterday; a graceful melody is embodied in the well-known technical form. Alluding to a performance of 'Semiramide,' he said with a malicious smile, 'I suppose you saw the beautiful decorations in it?' He has not received the Sisters Marchisio for fear they should sing to him, nor has he heard them in the theatre; he spoke warmly of Pasta, Lablache, Rubini, and others, then he added that I ought not to look with jealousy upon his budding talent as a pianoforte-player, but that, on the contrary, I should help to establish his reputation as such in Leipsic. He again questioned me with much interest about my intimacy with Clementi, and, calling me that master's worthy successor, he said he should like to visit me in Leipsic, if it were not for those dreadful railways, which he would never travel by. All this in his bright and lively way; but when we came to discuss Chevet, who wishes to supplant musical notes by ciphers, he maintained in an earnest and dogmatic tone that the system of notation, as it had developed itself since

Pope Gregory's time, was sufficient for all musical requirements. He certainly could not withhold some appreciation for Chevet, but refused to indorse the certificate granted by the Institute in his favor; the system he thought impracticable.

"The never-failing stream of conversation flowed on until eleven o'clock, when I was favored with the inevitable kiss, which on this occasion was accompanied by special farewell blessings."

Shortly after Moscheles had left Paris, his son forwarded to him most friendly messages from Rossini, and continues thus: "Rossini sends you word that he is working hard at the piano, and, when you next come to Paris, you shall find him in better practice.... The conversation turning upon German music, I asked him 'which was his favorite among the great masters?' Of Beethoven he said: 'I take him twice a week, Haydn four times, and Mozart every day. You will tell me that Beethoven is a Colossus who often gives you a dig in the ribs, while Mozart is always adorable; it is that the latter had the chance of going very young to Italy, at a time when they still sang well.' Of Weber he says, 'He has talent enough, and to spare' (Il a du talent à revendre, celui-là). He told me in reference to him, that, when the part of 'Tancred' was sung at Berlin by a bass voice, Weber had written violent articles not only against the management, but against the composer, so that, when Weber came to Paris, he did not venture to call on Rossini, who, however, let him know that he bore him no grudge for having made these attacks; on receipt of that message Weber called and they became acquainted.

"I asked him if he had met Byron in Venice? 'Only

in a restaurant,' was the answer, 'where I was introduced to him; our acquaintance, therefore, was very slight; it seems he has spoken of me, but I don't know what he says.' I translated for him, in a somewhat milder form, Byron's words, which happened to be fresh in my memory: 'They have been crucifying Othello into an opera; the music good but lugubrious, but, as for the words, all the real scenes with Iago cut out, and the greatest nonsense instead, the handkerchief turned into a billet-doux, and the first singer would not black his face—singing, dresses, and music very good.' The *maestro* regretted his ignorance of the English language, and said, 'In my day I gave much time to the study of our Italian literature. Dante is the man I owe most to; he taught me more music than all my music-masters put together, and when I wrote my 'Otello,' I would introduce those lines of Dante—you know the song of the gondolier. My librettist would have it that gondoliers never sang Dante, and but rarely Tasso, but I answered him, 'I know all about that better than you, for I have lived in Venice and you haven't. Dante I must and will have.'"

VI.

An ardent disciple of Wagner sums up his ideas of the mania for the Rossini music, which possessed Europe for fifteen years, in the following: "Rossini, the most gifted and spoiled of her sons [speaking of Italy] sallied forth with an innumerable army of Bacchantic melodies to conquer the world, the Messiah of joy, the breaker of thought and sorrow. Europe, by this time, had tired of the empty pomp of French declamation. It lent but too willing an ear to the new gospel, and eagerly quaffed the intoxicating potion, which Rossini poured out in inexhaustible

streams." This very well expresses the delight of all the countries of Europe in music which for a long time almost monopolized the stage.

The charge of being a mere tune-spinner, the denial of invention, depth, and character, have been common watchwords in the mouths of critics wedded to other schools. But Rossini's place in music stands unshaken by all assaults. The vivacity of his style, the freshness of his melodies, the richness of his combinations, made all the Italian music that preceded him pale and colorless. No other writer revels in such luxury of beauty, and delights the ear with such a succession of delicious surprises in melody.

Henry Chorley, in his "Thirty Years' Musical Recollections," rebukes the bigotry which sees nothing good but in its own kind: "I have never been able to understand why this [referring to the Rossinian richness of melody] should be contemned as necessarily false and meretricious—why the poet may not be allowed the benefit of his own period and time—why a lover of architecture is to be compelled to swear by the *Dom* at Bamberg, or by the Cathedral at Monreale—that he must abhor and denounce Michel Angelo's church or the Baths of Diocletian at Rome—why the person who enjoys 'Il Barbiere' is to be denounced as frivolously faithless to Mozart's 'Figaro'—and as incapable of comprehending 'Fidelio,' because the last act of 'Otello' and the second of 'Guillaume Tell' transport him into as great an enjoyment of its kind as do the duet in the cemetery between 'Don Juan' and 'Leporello' and the 'Prisoners' Chorus.' How much good, genial pleasure has not the world lost in music, owing to the pitting of styles one against the other!

Your true traveler will be all the more alive to the beauty of Nuremberg because he has looked out over the 'Golden Shell' at Palermo; nor delight in Rhine and Danube the less because he has seen the glow of a southern sunset over the broken bridge at Avignon."

As grand and true as are many of the essential elements in the Wagner school of musical composition, the bitterness and narrowness of spite with which its upholders have pursued the memory of Rossini is equally offensive and unwarrantable. Rossini, indeed, did not revolutionize the forms of opera as transmitted to him by his predecessors, but he reformed and perfected them in various notable ways. Both in comic and serious opera, music owes much to Rossini. He substituted genuine singing for the endless recitative of which the Italian opera before him largely consisted; he brought the bass and baritone voices to the front, banished the pianoforte from the orchestra, and laid down the principle that the singer should deliver the notes written for him without additions of his own. He gave the chorus a much more important part than before, and elaborated the concerted music, especially in the *finales*, to a degree of artistic beauty before unknown in the Italian opera. Above all, he made the operatic orchestra what it is to-day. Every new instrument that was invented Rossini found a place for in his brilliant scores, and thereby incurred the warmest indignation of all writers of the old school. Before him the orchestras had consisted largely of strings, but Rossini added an equally imposing clement of the brasses and reeds. True, Mozart had forestalled Rossini in many if not all these innovations, a fact which the Italian cheerfully admitted; for, with the simple frankness characteristic of the man, he always

spoke of his obligations to and his admiration of the great German. To an admirer who was one day burning incense before him, Rossini said, in the spirit of Cimarosa quoted elsewhere: "My 'Barber' is only a bright farce, but in Mozart's 'Marriage of Figaro' you have the finest possible masterpiece of musical comedy."

With all concessions made to Mozart as the founder of the forms of modern opera, an equally high place must be given to Rossini for the vigor and audacity with which he made these available, and impressed them on all his contemporaries and successors. Though Rossini's self-love was flattered by constant adulation, his expressions of respect and admiration for such composers as Mozart, Gluck, Beethoven, and Cherubini display what a catholic and generous nature he possessed. The judgment of Ambros, a severe critic, whose bias was against Rossini, shows what admiration was wrung from him by the last opera of the composer: "Of all that particularly characterizes Rossini's early operas nothing is discoverable in 'Tell;' there is none of his usual mannerism; but, on the contrary, unusual richness of form and careful finish of detail, combined with grandeur of outline. Meretricious embellishment, shakes, runs, and cadences are carefully avoided in this work, which is natural and characteristic throughout; even the melodies have not the stamp and style of Rossini's earlier times, but only their graceful charm and lively coloring."

Rossini must be allowed to be unequaled in genuine comic opera, and to have attained a distinct greatness in serious opera, to be the most comprehensive and at the same time the most national composer of Italy, to be, in short, the

Mozart of his country. After all has been admitted and regretted—that he gave too little attention to musical science; that he often neglected to infuse into his work the depth and passion of which it was easily capable; that he placed too high a value on merely brilliant effects *ad captandum vulgus*—there remains the fact that his operas embody a mass of imperishable music, which will live with the art itself. Musicians of every country now admit his wondrous grace, his fertility and freshness of invention, his matchless treatment of the voice, his effectiveness in arrangement of the orchestra. He can never be made a model, for his genius had too much spontaneity and individuality of color. But he impressed and modified music hardly less than Gluck, whose tastes and methods were entirely antagonistic to his own. That he should have retired from the exercise of his art while in the full flower of his genius is a perplexing fact. No stranger story is recorded in the annals of art with respect to a genius who filled the world with his glory, and then chose to vanish, "not unseen." On finishing his crowning stroke of genius and skill in "William Tell," he might have said with Shakespeare's enchanter, Prospero:

> ".... But this magic I here abjure; and when
> Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
> To work mine end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff—
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And, deeper than did ever plummet sound, I'll

A bright English critic, whose style is as charming as his judgments are good, says, in his study of the Donizetti music: "I find myself thinking of his music as I do of Domenichino's pictures of 'St. Agnes' and the 'Rosario' in the Bologna gallery, of the 'Diana' in

the Borghese Palace at Rome, as pictures equable and skillful in the treatment of their subjects, neither devoid of beauty of form nor of color, but which make neither the pulse quiver nor the eye wet; and then such a sweeping judgment is arrested by a work like the 'St. Jerome' in the Vatican, from which a spirit comes forth so strong and so exalted, that the beholder, however trained to examine, and compare, and collect, finds himself raised above all recollections of manner by the sudden ascent of talent into the higher world of genius. Essentially a second-rate composer,* Donizetti struck out some first-rate things in a happy hour, such as the last act of 'La Favorita.'"

* Mr. Chorley probably means "second-rate" as
the few very great names, which can be easily
fingers.

Both Donizetti and Bellini, though far inferior to their master in richness of resources, in creative faculty and instinct for what may be called dramatic expression in pure musical form, were disciples of Rossini in their ideas and methods of work. Milton sang of Shakespeare—

"Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
"Warbles his native wood-notes wild!"

In a similar spirit, many learned critics have written of Rossini, and if it can be said of him in a musical sense that he had "little Latin and less Greek," still more true is it of the two popular composers whose works have filled so large a space in the opera-house of the last thirty years, for their scores are singularly thin, measured by the standard of advanced musical science. Specially may this be said of Bellini, in many respects the greater of the

two. There is scarcely to be found in music a more signal example to show that a marked individuality may rest on a narrow base. In justice to him, however, it may be said that his early death prevented him from doing full justice to his powers, for he had in him the material out of which the great artist is made. Let us first sketch the career of Donizetti, the author of sixty-four operas, besides a mass of other music, such as cantatas, ariettas, duets, church music, etc., in the short space of twenty-six years.

Gàetano Donizetti was born at Bergamo, September 25, 1798, his father being a man of moderate fortune.*

* Admirers of the author of "Don Pasquale" ar
be interested in knowing that Donizetti was c
descent. His grandfather was a native of Pert
Izett. The young Scot was beguiled by the fas
of a recruiting-sergeant into his Britannic m
service, and was taken prisoner by General La
the latter's invasion of Ireland. Already tir
private's life, he accepted the situation, ar
to become the French general's private secret
Subsequently he drifted to Italy, and marriec
lady of some rank, denationalizing his own na
Donizetti. The Scottish predilections of our
themselves in the music of "Don Pasquale," nc
"Com' e gentil;" and the score of "Lucia" is
flavored by Scottish sympathy and minstrelsy.

Receiving a good classical education, the young Gäetano had three careers open before him: the bar, to which the will of his father inclined; architecture, indicated by his talent for drawing; and music, to which he was powerfully impelled by his own inclinations. His father sent him, at the age of seventeen, to Bologna to benefit by the instruction of

Padre Mattel, who had also been Rossini's master. The young man showed no disposition for the heights of musical science as demanded by religious composition, and, much to his father's disgust, avowed his determination to write dramatic music. Paternal anger, for the elder Donizetti seems to have had a strain of Scotch obstinacy and austerity, made the youth enlist as a soldier, thinking to find time for musical work in the leisure of barrack-life. His first opera, "Enrico di Borgogna," was so highly admired by the Venetian manager, to whom, it was offered, that he induced friends of his to release young Donizetti from his military servitude. He now pursued musical composition with a facility and industry which astonished even the Italians, familiar with feats of improvisation. In ten years twenty-eight operas were produced. Such names as "Olivo e Pasquale," "La Convenienze Teatrali," "Il Borgomaestro di Saardam," "Gianni di Calais," "L'Esule di Roma," "Il Castello di Kenilworth," "Imelda di Lambertazzi," have no musical significance, except as belonging to a catalogue of forgotten titles. Donizetti was so poorly paid that need drove him to rapid composition, which could not wait for the true afflatus.

It was not till 1831 that the evidence of a strong individuality was given, for hitherto he had shown little more than a slavish imitation of Rossini. "Anna Bolena" was produced at Milan and gained him great credit, and even now, though it is rarely sung even in Italy, it is much respected as a work of art as well as of promise. It was first interpreted by Pasta and Rubini, and Lablache won his earliest London triumph in it. "Marino Faliero" was composed for Paris in 1835, and "L'Elisir d'Amore," one of the most graceful and pleasing of Donizetti's works, for Milan

in 1832. "Lucia di Lammermoor," based on Walter Scott's novel, was given to the public in 1835, and has remained the most popular of the composer's operas. *Edgardo* was written for the great French tenor, Duprez, *Lucia* for Persiani.

Donizetti's kindness of heart was illustrated by the interesting circumstances of his saving an obscure Neapolitan theatre from ruin. Hearing that it was on the verge of suspension and the performers in great distress, the composer sought them out and supplied their immediate wants. The manager said a new work from the pen of Donizetti would be his salvation. "You shall have one within a week," was the answer.

Lacking a subject, he himself rearranged an old French vaudeville, and within the week the libretto was written, the music composed, the parts learned, the opera performed, and the theatre saved. There could be no greater proof of his generosity of heart and his versatility of talent. In these days of bitter quarreling over the rights of authors in their works, it may be amusing to know that Victor Hugo contested the rights of Italian librettists to borrow their plots from French plays. When "Lucrezia Borgia," composed for Milan in 1834, was produced at Paris in 1840, the French poet instituted a suit for an infringement of copyright. He gained his action, and "Lucrezia Borgia" became "La Rinegata," Pope Alexander the Sixth's Italians being metamorphosed into Turks.*

* Victor Hugo did the same thing with Verdi's
other French authors followed with legal acti
was finally arranged on condition of an indem
to the original French dramatists. The princi
had been established nearly two centuries bef

privilege granted to St. Amant in 1653 for th
of his "Moïse Sauvé," it was forbidden to ext
epic materials for a play or poem. The descer
Beaumarchais fought for the same concession,
long ago it was decided that the translators
of "Le Nozze di Figaro" for the Théâtre Lyric
their receipts with the living representative
of "Le Mariage de Figaro."

"Lucrezia Borgia," which, though based on one of the most dramatic of stories and full of beautiful music, is not dramatically treated by the composer, seems to mark the distance about half way between the styles of Rossini and Verdi. In it there is but little recitative, and in the treatment of the chorus we find the method which Verdi afterward came to use exclusively. When Donizetti revisited Paris in 1840 he produced in rapid succession "I Martiri," "La Fille du Regiment," and "La Favorita." In the second of these works Jenny Lind, Sontag, and Alboni won bright triumphs at a subsequent period.

II.

"La Favorita," the story of which was drawn from "L'Ange de Nigida," and founded in the first instance on a French play, "Le Comte de Commingues," was put on the stage at the Académie with a magnificent cast and scenery, and achieved a success immediately great, for as a dramatic opera it stands far in the van of all the composer's productions. The whole of the grand fourth act, with the exception of one cavatina, was composed in three hours. Donizetti had been dining at the house of a friend, who was engaged in the evening to go to a ball. On leaving the house, his host, with profuse apologies, begged the composer to stay and finish his coffee, of which Donizetti was inordinately fond. The latter sent out

for music paper, and, finding himself in the vein for composition, went on writing till the completion of the work. He had just put the final stroke to the celebrated "*Viens dans un autre patrie*" when his friend returned at one in the morning to congratulate him on his excellent method of passing the time, and to hear the music sung for the first time from Donizetti's own lips.

After visiting Rome, Milan, and Vienna, for which last city he wrote "Linda di Chamouni," our composer returned to Paris, and in 1843 wrote "Don Pasquale" for the Theatre Italien, and "Don Sebastian" for the Académie. Its lugubrious drama was fatal to the latter, but the brilliant gayety of "Don Pasquale," rendered specially delightful by such a magnificent cast as Grisi, Mario, Tamburini, and Lablache, made it one of the great art attractions of Paris, and a Fortunatus purse for the manager. The music of this work perhaps is the best ever written by Donizetti, though it lacks the freshness and sentiment of his "Elisir d'Amore," which is steeped in rustic poetry and tenderness like a rose wet with dew. The production of "Maria di Rohan" in Vienna the same year, an opera with some powerful dramatic effects and bold music, gave Ronconi the opportunity to prove himself not merely a fine buffo singer, but a noble tragic actor. In this work Donizetti displays that rugged earnestness and vigor so characteristic of Verdi; and, had his life been greatly prolonged, we might have seen him ripen into a passion and power at odds with the elegant frivolity which for the most part tainted his musical quality. Donizetti's last opera, "Catarina Comaro" the sixty-third one represented, was brought out at Naples in the year 1844 without adding aught to his reputation. Of this composer's long list of works only ten or eleven

retain any hold on the stage, his best serious operas being "La Favorita," "Linda," "Anna Bolena," "Lucrezia Borgia," and "Lucia;" the finest comic works, "L'Elisir d'Amore," "La Fille du Regiment," and "Don Pasquale."

In composing Donizetti never used the pianoforte, writing with great rapidity and never making corrections. Yet curious to say, he could not do anything without a small ivory scraper by his side, though never using it. It was given him by his father when commencing his career, with the injunction that, as he was determined to become a musician, he should make up his mind to write as little rubbish as possible, advice which Donizetti sometimes forgot.

The first signs of the malady, which was the cause of the composer's death, had already shown themselves in 1845. Fits of hallucination and all the symptoms of approaching derangement displayed themselves with increasing intensity. An incessant worker, overseer of his operas on twenty stages, he had to pay the tax by which his fame became his ruin. It is reported that he anticipated the coming scourge, for during the rehearsals of "Don Sebastian" he said, "I think I shall go mad yet." Still he would not put the bridle on his restless activity. At last paralysis seized him, and in January, 1846, he was placed under the care of the celebrated Dr. Blanche at Ivry. In the hope that the mild influence of his native air might heal his distempered brain, he was sent to Bergamo, in 1848, but died in his brother's arms April 8th. The inhabitants of the Peninsula were then at war with Austria, and the bells that sounded the knell of Donizetti's departure mingled their solemn peals with the roar of the cannon fired to celebrate the victory of Goïto.

His faithful valet, Antoine, wrote to Adolphe Adam, describing his obsequies: "More than four thousand persons," he relates, "were present at the ceremony. The procession was composed of the numerous clergy of Bergamo, the most illustrious members of the community and its environs, and of the civic guard of the town and the suburbs. The discharge of musketry, mingled with the light of three or four thousand torches, presented a fine effect; the whole was enhanced by the presence of three military bands and the most propitious weather it was possible to behold. The young gentlemen of Bergamo insisted on bearing the remains of their illustrious fellow-townsman, although the cemetery was a league and a half from the town. The road was crowded its whole length by people who came from the surrounding country to witness the procession; and to give due praise to the inhabitants of Bergamo, never, hitherto, had such great honors been bestowed upon any member of that city."

III.

The future author of "Norma" and "La Sonnambula," Bellini, took his first lessons in music from his father, an organist at Catania.*

* Bellini was born in 1802, nine years after
contemporary and rival, Donizetti, and died i
thirteen years before.

He was sent to the Naples Conservatory by the generosity of a noble patron, and there was the fellow-pupil of Mercadante, a composer who blazed into a temporary lustre which threatened to outshine his fellows, but is now forgotten except by the antiquarian and the lover of church music. Bellini's early works, for he composed three before he was

twenty, so pleased Barbaja, the manager of the San Carlo and La Scala, that he intrusted the youth with the libretto of "Il Pirata," to be composed for representation at Florence. The tenor part was written for the great singer, Rubini, whose name has no peer among artists, since male sopranos were abolished by the outraged moral sense of society. Rubini retired to the country with Bellini, and studied, as they were produced, the simple touching airs with which he so delighted the public on the stage.

La Scala rang with plaudits when the opera was produced, and Bellini's career was assured. "I Capuletti" was his next successful opera, performed at Venice in 1829, but it never became popular out of Italy.

The significant period of Bellini's life was in the year 1831, which produced "La Sonnambula," to be followed by "Norma" the next season. Both these were written for and introduced before the Neapolitan public. In these works he reached his highest development, and by them he is best known to fame. The opera-story of "La Sonnambula," by Romani, an accomplished writer and scholar, is one of the most artistic and effective ever put into the hands of a composer. M. Scribe had already used the plot both as the subject of a vaudeville and a chorégraphie drama; but in Romani's hands it became a symmetrical story full of poetry and beauty. The music of this opera, throbbing with pure melody and simple emotion, as natural and fresh as a bed of wild flowers, went to the heart of the universal public, learned and unlearned; and, in spite of its scientific faults, it will never cease to delight future generations, as long as hearts beat and eyes

are moistened with human tenderness and sympathy. And yet, of this work an English critic wrote, on its first London presentation:

"Bellini has soared too high; there is nothing of grandeur, no touch of true pathos in the commonplace workings of his mind. He cannot reach the *opera semiseria*; he should confine his powers to the musical drama, the one-act *opera buffa*." But the history of art-criticism is replete with such instances.

"Norma" was also a grand triumph for the young composer from the outset, especially as the lofty character of the Druid priestess was sung by that unapproachable lyric tragedienne, the Siddons of the opera, Madame Pasta. Bellini is said to have had this queen of dramatic song in his mind in writing the opera, and right nobly did she vindicate his judgment, for no European audience afterward but was thrilled and carried away by her masterpiece of acting and singing in this part.

Bellini himself considered "Norma" his *chef d'oeuvre*. A beautiful Parisienne attempted to extract from his reluctant lips his preference of his own works. The lady finally overcame his evasions by the query: "But if you were out at sea, and should be shipwrecked—" "Ah!" he cried, without allowing her to finish. "I would leave all the rest and try to save 'Norma.'"

"I Puritani" was composed for and performed at Paris in 1834, by that splendid quartette of artists, Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, and Lablache. Bellini compelled the singers to execute after *his* style. While Rubini was rehearsing the tenor part, the composer cried out in rage: "You put no life into your music. Show some feeling. Don't you know what love is?"

Then changing his tone: "Don't you know your voice is a goldmine that has not been fully explored? You are an excellent artist, but that is not sufficient. You must forget yourself and represent *Gualtiero*. Let's try again." The tenor, stung by the admonition, then gave the part magnificently. After the success of "I Puritani," the composer received the Cross of the Legion of Honor, an honor then not often bestowed. The "Puritani" season is still remembered, it is said, with peculiar pleasure by the older connoisseurs of Paris and London, as the enthusiasm awakened in musical circles has rarely been equaled.

Bellini had placed himself under contract to write two new works immediately, one for Paris, the other for Naples, and retired to the villa of a friend at Puteaux to insure the more complete seclusion. Here, while pursuing his art with almost sleepless ardor, he was attacked by his fatal malady, intestinal fever.

"From his youth up," says his biographer Mould, "Vincenzo's eagerness in his art was such as to keep him at the piano night and day, till he was obliged forcibly to leave it. The ruling passion accompanied him through his short life, and by the assiduity with which he pursued it brought on the dysentery which closed his brilliant career, peopling his last hours with the figures of those to whom his works owed so much of their success."

During the moments of delirium which preceded his death, he was constantly speaking of Lablache, Tamburini, and Grisi; and one of his last recognizable impressions was that he was present at a brilliant representation of his last opera at the Salle Favart. His earthly career closed September 23, 1835, at the age of thirty-one.

On the eve of his interment, the Théâtre Italien reopened with the "Puritani." It was an occasion full of solemn gloom. Both the musicians and audience broke from time to time into sobs. Tamburini, in particular, was so oppressed by the death of his young friend that his vocalization, generally so perfect, was often at fault, while the faces of Grisi, Rubini, and Lablache too plainly showed their aching hearts.

Rossini, Cherubini, Paer, and Carafa had charge of the funeral, and M. Habeneck, *chef d'orchestre* of the Académie Royale, of the music. The next remarkable piece on the funeral programme was a *Lacrymosa* for four voices without accompaniment, in which the text of the Latin hymn was united to the beautiful tenor melody in the third act of the "Puritani." This was executed by Rubini, Ivanoff, Tamburini, and Lablache. The services were performed at the Church of the Invalides, and the remains were interred in Père Lachaise.

Rossini had ever shown great love for Bellini, and Rosario Bellini, the stricken father, wrote to him a touching letter, in which, after speaking of his grief and despair, the old man said:

"You always encouraged the object of my eternal regret in his labors; you took him under your protection, you neglected nothing that could increase his glory and his welfare. After my son's death, what have you not done to honor my son's name and render it dear to posterity? I learned this from the newspapers; and I am penetrated with gratitude for your excessive kindness as well as for that of a number of distinguished artists, which also I shall never forget. Pray, sir, be my interpreter, and tell

these artists that the father and family of Bellini, as well as of our compatriots of Catania, will cherish an imperishable recollection of this generous conduct. I shall never cease to remember how much you did for my son. I shall make known everywhere, in the midst of my tears, what an affectionate heart belongs to the great Rossini, and how kind, hospitable, and full of feeling are the artists of France."

Bellini was affable, sincere, honest, and affectionate. Nature gave him a beautiful and ingenuous face, noble features, large, clear blue eyes, and abundant light hair. His countenance instantly won on the regards of all that met him. His disposition was melancholy; a secret depression often crept over his most cheerful hours. We are told there was a tender romance in his earlier life. The father of the lady he loved, a Neapolitan judge, refused his suit on account of his inferior social position. When Bellini became famous the judge wished to make amends, but Bellini's pride interfered. Soon after the young lady, who loved him unalterably, died, and it was said the composer never recovered from the shock.

IV.

Donizetti and Bellini were peculiarly moulded by the great genius of Rossini, but in their best works they show individuality, color, and special creative activity. The former composer, one of the most affluent in the annals of music, seemed to become more fresh in his fancies with increased production. He is an example of how little the skill and touch, belonging to unceasing work, should be despised in comparison with what is called inspiration. Donizetti arrived at his freshest creations at a time when there

seemed but little left for him except the trite and threadbare. There are no melodies so rich and well fancied as those to be found in his later works; and in sense of dramatic form and effective instrumentation (always a faulty point with Donizetti) he displayed great progress at the last. It is, however, a noteworthy fact, that the latest Italian composers have shown themselves quite weak in composing expressly for the orchestra. No operatic overture since "William Tell" has been produced by this school of music, worthy to be rendered in a concert-room.

Donizetti lacked the dramatic instinct in conceiving his music. In attempting it he became hollow and theatric; and beautiful as are the melodies and concerted pieces in "Lucia," where the subject ought to inspire a vivid dramatic nature with such telling effects, it is in the latter sense one of the most disappointing of operas.

He redeemed himself for the nonce, however, in the fourth act of "La Favorita," where there is enough musical and dramatic beauty to condone the sins of the other three acts. The solemn and affecting church chant, the passionate romance for the tenor, the great closing duet in which the ecstasy of despair rises to that of exaltation, the resistless sweep of the rhythm—all mark one of the most effective single acts ever written. He showed himself here worthy of companionship with Rossini and Meyerbeer.

In his comic operas, "L'Elisir d'Amore," "La Fille du Regiment," and "Don Pasquale," there is a continual well-spring of sunny, bubbling humor. They are slight, brilliant, and catching, everything that pedantry condemns, and the popular taste delights

in. Mendelssohn, the last of the German classical composers, admired "L'Elisir" so much that he said he would have liked to have written it himself. It may be said that while Donizetti lacks grand conceptions, or even great heauties for the most part, his operas contain so much that is agreeable, so many excellent opportunities for vocal display, such harmony between sound and situation, that he will probably retain a hold on the stage when much greater composers are only known to the general public by name.

Bellini, with less fertility and grace, possessed far more picturesqueness and intensity. His powers of imagination transcended his command over the working tools of his art. Even more lacking in exact and extended musical science than Donizetti, he could express what came within his range with a simple vigor, grasp, and beauty, which make him a truly dramatic composer. In addition to this, a matter which many great composers ignore, Bellini had extraordinary skill in writing music for the voice, not that which merely gave opportunity for executive trickery and embellishment, but the genuine accents of passion, pathos, and tenderness, in forms best adapted to be easily and effectively delivered.

He had no flexibility, no command over mirthful inspiration, such as we hear in Mozart, Rossini, or even Donizetti. But his monotone is in sublile rapport with the graver aspects of nature and life. Chorley sums up this characteristic of Bellini in the following words:

"In spite of the inexperience with which the instrumental score is filled up, the opening scene of 'Norma' in the dim druidical wood bears the true

character of ancient sylvan antiquity. There is daybreak again—a fresh tone of reveille—in the prelude to 'I Puritani.' If Bellini's genius was not versatile in its means of expression, if it had not gathered all the appliances by which science fertilizes Nature, it beyond all doubt included appreciation of truth, no less than instinct for beauty."

VERDI.

I.

In 1872 the Khédive of Egypt, an oriental ruler, whose love of western art and civilization has since tangled him in economic meshes to escape from which has cost him his independence, produced a new opera with barbaric splendor of appointments, at Grand Cairo. The spacious theatre blazed with fantastic dresses and showy uniforms, and the curtain rose on a drama which gave a glimpse to the Arabs, Copts, and Francs present of the life and religion, the loves and hates of ancient Pharaonic times, set to music by the most celebrated of living Italian composers.

That an eastern prince should have commissioned Giuseppe Verdi to write "Aida" for him, in his desire to emulate western sovereigns as a patron of art, is an interesting fact, but not wonderful or significant.

The opera itself was freighted, however, with peculiar significance as an artistic work, far surpassing that of the circumstances which gave it origin, or which saw its first production in the mysterious land of the Nile and Sphinx.

Originally a pupil, thoroughly imbued with the method and spirit of Rossini, though never lacking in

original quality, Verdi as a young man shared the suffrages of admiring audiences with Donizetti and Bellini. Even when he diverged widely from his parent stem and took rank as the representative of the melodramatic school of music, he remained true to the instincts of his Italian training.

The remarkable fact is that Verdi, at the age of fifty-eight, when it might have been safely assumed that his theories and preferences were finally crystallized, produced an opera in which he clasped hands with the German enthusiast, who preached an art system radically opposed to his own and lashed with scathing satire the whole musical cult of the Italian race.

In "Aida" and the "Manzoni Mass," written in 1873, Verdi, the leader among living Italian composers, practically conceded that, in the long, bitterly fought battle between Teuton and Italian in music, the former was the victor. In the opera we find a new departure, which, if not embodying all the philosophy of the "new school," is stamped with its salient traits, viz.: The subordination of all the individual effects to the perfection and symmetry of the whole; a lavish demand on all the sister arts to contribute their rich gifts to the heightening of the illusion; a tendency to enrich the harmonic value in the choruses, the concerted pieces, and the instrumentation, to the great sacrifice of the solo pieces; the use of the heroic and mythical element as a theme.

Verdi, the subject of this interesting revolution, has filled a very brilliant place in modern musical art, and his career has been in some ways as picturesque as his music.

Verdi's parents were literally hewers of wood and drawers of water, earning their bread, after the manner of Italian peasants, at a small settlement called La Roncali, near Busseto, where the future composer was born on October 9, 1814.

His earliest recollections were with the little village church, where the little Giuseppe listened with delight to the church organ, for, as with all great musicians, his fondness for music showed itself at a very early age. The elder Verdi, though very poor, gratified the child's love of music when he was about eight by buying a small spinet, and placing him under the instruction of Provesi, a teacher in Busseto. The boy entered on his studies with ardor, and made more rapid progress than the slender facilities which were allowed him would ordinarily justify.

An event soon occurred which was destined to wield a lasting influence on his destiny. He one day heard a skillful performance on a fine piano, while passing by one of the better houses of Busseto. From that time a constant fascination drew him to the house; for day after day he lingered and seemed unwilling to go away lest he should perchance lose some of the enchanting sounds which so enraptured him. The owner of the premises was a rich merchant, one Antonio Barezzi, a cultivated and high-minded man, and a passionate lover of music withal. 'Twas his daughter whose playing gave the young Verdi such pleasure.

Signor Barezzi had often seen the lingering and absorbed lad, who stood as if in a dream, oblivious to all that passed around him in the practical work-a-day world. So one day he accosted him pleasantly

and inquired why he came so constantly and stayed so long doing nothing.

"I play the piano a little," said the boy, "and I like to come here and listen to the fine playing in your house."

"Oh! if that is the case, come in with me that you may enjoy it more at your ease, and hereafter you are welcome to do so whenever you feel inclined."

It may be imagined the delighted boy did not refuse the kind invitation, and the acquaintance soon ripened into intimacy, for the rich merchant learned to regard the bright young musician with much affection, which it is needless to say was warmly returned. Verdi was untiring in study and spent the early years of his youth in humble quiet, in the midst of those beauties of nature which have so powerful an influence in molding great susceptibilities. At his seventeenth year he had acquired as much musical knowledge as could be acquired at a place like Busseto, and he became anxious to go to Milan to continue his studies. The poverty of his family precluding any assistance from this quarter, he was obliged to find help from an eleemosynary fund then existing in his native town. This was an institution called the Monte di Pietà, which offered yearly to four young men the sum of twenty-five *lire* a month each, in order to help them to an education; and Verdi, making an application and sustained by the influence of his friend the rich merchant, was one of the four whose good fortune it was to be selected.

The allowance thus obtained with some assistance from Barezzi enabled the ambitious young musician to go to Milan, carrying with him some of his compositions. When he presented himself for

examination at the conservatory, he was made to play on the piano, and his compositions examined. The result fell on his hopes like a thunder-bolt. The pedantic and narrow-minded examiners not only scoffed at the state of his musical knowledge, but told him he was incapable of becoming a musician. To weaker souls this would have been a terrible discouragement, but to his ardor and self-confidence it was only a challenge. Barezzi had equal confidence in the abilities of his *protégé*, and warmly encouraged him to work and hope. Verdi engaged an excellent private teacher and pursued his studies with unflagging energy, denying himself all but the barest necessities, and going sometimes without sufficient food.

A stroke of fortune now fell in his way; the place of organist fell vacant at the Busseto church, and Verdi was appointed to fill it. He returned home, and was soon afterward married to the daughter of the benefactor to whom he owed so much. He continued to apply himself with great diligence to the study of his art, and completed an opera early in 1839. He succeeded in arranging for the production of this work, "L'Oberto, Conte de San Bonifacio," at La Scala, Milan; but it excited little comment and was soon forgotten, like the scores of other shallow or immature compositions so prolifically produced in Italy.

The impresario, Merelli, believed in the young composer though, for he thought he discovered signs of genius. So he gave him a contract to write three operas, one of which was to be an *opera buffa*, and to be ready in the following autumn. With hopeful spirits Verdi set to work on the opera, but that year of 1840 was to be one of great trouble and trial.

Hardly had he set to work all afire with eagerness and hope, when he was seized with severe illness. His recovery was followed by the successive sickening of his two children, who died, a terrible blow to the father's fond heart. Fate had the crowning stroke though still to give, for the young mother, agonized by this loss, was seized with a fatal inflammation of the brain. Thus within a brief period Verdi was bereft of all the sweet consolations of home, and his life became a burden to him. Under these conditions he was to write a comic opera, full of sparkle, gayety, and humor. Can we wonder that his work was a failure? The public came to be amused by bright, joyous music, for it was nothing to them that the composer's heart was dead with grief at his afflictions. The audience hissed "Un Giorno di Regno," for it proved a funereal attempt at mirth. So Verdi sought to annul the contract. To this the impresario replied: "So be it, if you wish; but, whenever you want to write again on the same terms, you will find me ready."

To tell the truth, the composer was discouraged by his want of success, and wholly broken down by his numerous trials. He now withdrew from all society, and, having hired a small room in an out-of-the-way part of Milan, passed most of his time in reading the worst books that could be found, rarely going out, unless occasionally in the evening, never giving his attention to study of any kind, and never touching the piano. Such was his life from October, 1840, to January, 1841. One evening, early in the new year, while out walking, he chanced to meet Merelli, who took him by the arm; and, as they sauntered toward the theatre, the impresario told him that he was in great trouble, Nicolai, who was to write an opera for him, having refused to accept a *libretto* entitled

"Nabucco."

To this Verdi replied:

"I am glad to be able to relieve you of your difficulty. Don't you remember the libretto of 'Il Proscritto,' which you procured for me, and for which I have never composed the music? Give that to Nicolai in place of 'Nabucco.'"

Merelli thanked him for his kind offer, and, as they reached the theatre, asked him to go in, that they might ascertain whether the manuscript of "Il Proscritto" was really there. It was at length found, and Verdi was on the point of leaving, when Merelli slipped into his pocket the book of "Nabucco," asking him to look it over. For want of something to do, he took up the drama the next morning and read it through, realizing how truly grand it was in conception. But, as a lover forces himself to feign indifference to his coquettish *innamorata*, so he, disregarding his inclinations, returned the manuscript to Merelli that same day.

"Well?" said Merelli, inquiringly.

"Musicabilissimo!" he replied; "full of dramatic power and telling situations!"

"Take it home with you, then, and write the music for it."

Verdi declared that he did not wish to compose, but the worthy impresario forced the manuscript on him, and persisted that he should undertake the work. The composer returned home with the libretto, but threw it on one side without looking at it, and for the next five months continued his reading of bad romances and yellow-covered novels.

The impulse of work soon came again, however. One beautiful June day the manuscript met his eye, while looking listlessly over some old papers. He read one scene and was struck by its beauty. The instinct of musical creation rushed over him with irresistible force; he seated himself at the piano, so long silent, and began composing the music. The ice was broken. Verdi soon entered into the spirit of the work, and in three months "Nabucco" was entirely completed. Merelli gladly accepted it, and it was performed at La Scala in the spring of 1842. As a result Verdi was besieged with petitions for new works from every impresario in Italy.

II.

From 1812 to 1851 Verdi's busy imagination produced a series of operas, which disputed the palm of popularity with the foremost composers of his time. "I Lombardi," brought out at La Scala in 1843; "Ernani," at Venice in 1844; "I Due Foscari," at Rome in 1844; "Giovanna D'Arco," at Milan, and "Alzira," at Naples in 1845; "Attila," at Venice in 1846; and "Macbetto," at Florence in 1847, were—all of them—successful works. The last created such a genuine enthusiasm that he was crowned with a golden aurel-wreath and escorted home from the theatre by an enormous crowd. "I Masnadieri" was written for Jenny Lind, and performed first in London in 1847 with that great singer, Gardoni, and Lablache, in the cast. His next productions were "Il Corsaro," brought out at Trieste in 1848; "La Battaglia di Legnano" at Rome in 1849; "Luisa Miller" at Naples in the same year; and "Stiffelio" at Trieste in 1850. By this series of works Verdi impressed himself powerfully on his age, but in them he preserved faithfully the color and style of the school in which he had been trained. But

he had now arrived at the commencement of his transition period. A distinguished French critic marks this change in the following summary: "When Verdi began to write, the influences of foreign literature and new theories on art had excited Italian composers to seek a violent expression of the passions, and to leave the interpretation of amiable and delicate sentiments for that of sombre flights of the soul. A serious mind gifted with a rich imagination, Verdi became the chief of the new school. His music became more intense and dramatic; by vigor, energy, *verve*, a certain ruggedness and sharpness, by powerful effects of sound, he conquered an immense popularity in Italy, where success had hitherto been attained only by the charm, suavity, and abundance of the melodies produced."

In "Rigoletto," produced in Venice in 1851, the full flowering of his genius into the melodramatic style was signally shown. The opera story adapted from Victor Hugo's "Le Roi s'amuse" is itself one of the most dramatic of plots, and it seemed to have fired the composer into music singularly vigorous, full of startling effects and novel treatment. Two years afterward were brought out at Rome and Venice respectively two operas, stamped with the same salient qualities, "Il Trovatore" and "La Traviata," the last a lyric adaptation of Dumas *fils's* "Dame aux Camélias." These three operas have generally been considered his masterpieces, though it is more than possible that the riper judgment of the future will not sustain this claim. Their popularity was such that Verdi's time was absorbed for several years in their production at various opera-houses, utterly precluding new compositions. Of his later operas may be mentioned "Les Vêpres Siciliennes," produced

in Paris in 1855; "Un Ballo in Maschera," performed at Rome in 1859; "La Forza del Destino," written for St. Petersburg, where it was sung in 1863; "Don Carlos," produced in London in 1867; and "Aida" in Grand Cairo in 1872. When the latter work was finished, Verdi had composed twenty-nine operas, beside lesser works, and attained the age of fifty-seven.

Verdi's energies have not been confined to music. An ardent patriot, he has displayed the deepest interest in the affairs of his country, and taken an active part in its tangled politics. After the war of 1859 he was chosen a member of the Assembly of Parma, and was one of the most influential advocates for the annexation to Sardinia. Italian unity found in him a passionate advocate, and, when the occasion came, his artistic talent and earnestness proved that they might have made a vigorous mark in political oratory as well as in music.

The cry of "Viva Verdi" often resounded through Sardinia and Italy, and it was one of the war-slogans of the Italian war of liberation. This enigma is explained in the fact that the five letters of his name are the initials of those of Vittorio Emanuele Rè D'Italia. His private resources were liberally poured forth to help the national cause, and in 1861 he was chosen a deputy in Parliament from Parma. Ten years later he was appointed by the Minister of Public Instruction to superintend the reorganization of the National Musical Institute.

The many decorations and titular distinctions lavished on him show the high esteem in which he is held. He is a member of the Legion of Honor, corresponding member of the French Academy of

Fine Arts, grand cross of the Prussian order of St. Stanislaus, of the order of the Crown of Italy, and of the Egyptian order of Osmanli. He divides his life between a beautiful residence at Genoa, where he overlooks the waters of the sparkling Mediterranean, and a country villa near his native Busseto, a house of quaint artistic architecture, approached by a venerable, moss-grown stone bridge, at the foot of which are a large park and artificial lake. When he takes his evening walks, the peasantry, who are devotedly attached to him, unite in singing choruses from his operas.

In Verdi's bedroom, where alone he composes, is a fine piano—of which instrument, as well as of the violin, he is a master—a modest library, and an oddly-shaped writing-desk. Pictures and statuettes, of which he is very fond, are thickly strewn about the whole house. Verdi is a man of vigor' ous and active habits, taking an ardent interest in agriculture. But the larger part of his time is taken up in composing, writing letters, and reading works on philosophy, politics, and history. His personal appearance is very distinguished. A tall figure with sturdy limbs and square shoulders, surmounted by a finely-shaped head; abundant hair, beard, and mustache, whose black is sprinkled with gray; dark-gray eyes, regular features, and an earnest, sometimes intense, expression make him a noticeable-looking man. Much sought after in the brilliant society of Florence, Rome, and Paris, our composer spends most of his time in the elegant seclusion of home.

III.

Verdi is the most nervous, theatric, sensuous composer of the present century. Measured by the

highest standard, his style must be criticised as often spasmodic, tawdry, and meretricious. He instinctively adopts a bold and eccentric treatment of musical themes; and, though there are always to be found stirring movements in his scores as well as in his opera stories, he constantly offends refined taste by sensation and violence.

With a redundancy of melody, too often of the cheap and shallow kind, he rarely fails to please the masses of opera-goers, for his works enjoy a popularity not shared at present by any other composer. In Verdi a sudden blaze of song, brief spirited airs, duets, trios, etc., take the place of the elaborate and beautiful music, chiseled into order and symmetry, which characterizes most of the great composers of the past. Energy of immediate impression is thus gained at the expense of that deep, lingering power, full of the subtile side-lights and shadows of suggestion, which is the crowning benison of great music. He stuns the ear and captivates the senses, but does not subdue the soul.

Yet, despite the grievous faults of these operas, they blaze with gems, and we catch here and there true swallow-flights of genius, that the noblest would not disown. With all his puerilities there is a mixture of grandeur. There are passages in "Ernani," "Rigoletto," "Traviata," "Trovatore," and "Aida," so strong and dignified, that it provokes a wonder that one with such capacity for greatness should often descend into such bathos.

To better illustrate the false art which mars so much of Verdi's dramatic method, a comparison between his "Rigoletto," so often claimed as his best work, and Rossini's "Otello" will be opportune. The

air sung by *Gilda* in the "Rigoletto," when she retires to sleep on the eve of the outrage, is an empty, sentimental yawn; and in the quartet of the last act, a noble dramatic opportunity, she ejects a chain of disconnected, unmusical sobs, as offensive as *Violetta's* consumptive cough. *Desdemona's* agitated air, on the other hand, under Rossini's treatment, though broken short in the vocal phrase, is magnificently sustained by the orchestra, and a genuine passion is made consistently musical; and then the wonderful burst of bravura, where despair and resolution run riot without violating the bounds of strict beauty in music—these are master-strokes of genius restrained by art.

In Verdi, passion too often misses intensity and becomes hysterical. He lacks the elements of tenderness and humor, but is frequently picturesque and charming by his warmth and boldness of color. His attempts to express the gay and mirthful, as for instance in the masquerade music of "Traviata" and the dance music of "Rigoletto," are dreary, ghastly, and saddening; while his ideas of tenderness are apt to take the form of mere sentimentality. Yet generalities fail in describing him, for occasionally he attains effects strong in their pathos, and artistically admirable; as, for example, the slow air for the heroine, and the dreamy song for the gypsy mother in the last act of "Trovatore." An artist who thus contradicts himself is a perplexing problem, but we must judge him by the habitual, not the occasional.

Verdi is always thoroughly in earnest, never frivolous. He walks on stilts indeed, instead of treading the ground or cleaving the air, but is never timid or tame in aim or execution. If he cannot stir

the emotions of the soul he subdues and absorbs the attention against even the dictates of the better taste; while genuiue beauties gleaming through picturesque rubbish often repay the true musician for what he has undergone.

So far this composer has been essentially representative of melodramatic music, with all the faults and virtues of such a style. In "Aida," his last work, the world remarked a striking change. The noble orchestration, the power and beauty of the choruses, the sustained dignity of treatment, the seriousness and pathos of the whole work, reveal how deeply new purposes and methods have been fermenting in the composer's development. Yet in the very prime of his powers, though no longer young, his next work ought to settle the value of the hopes raised by the last.

CHERUBINI AND HIS PREDECESSORS.

I.

In France, as in Italy, the regular musical drama was preceded by mysteries, masks, and religious plays, which introduced short musical parts, as also action, mechanical effects, and dancing. The ballet, however, where dancing was the prominent feature, remained for a long time the favorite amusement of

the French court until the advent of Jean Baptiste Lulli. The young Florentine, after having served in the king's band, was promoted to be its chief, and the composer of the music of the court ballets. Lulli, born in 1633, was bought of his parents by Chevalier de Guise, and sent to Paris as a present to Mlle, de Montpensier, the king's niece. His capricious mistress, after a year or two, deposed the boy of fifteen from the position of page to that of scullion; but Count Nogent, accidentally hearing him sing and struck by his musical talent, influenced the princess to place him under the care of good masters. Lulli made such rapid progress that he soon commenced to compose music of a style superior to that before current in divertissements of the French court.

The name of Philippe Quinault is closely associated with the musical career of Lulli; for to the poet the musician was indebted for his best librettos. Born at Paris in 1636, Quinault's genius for poetry displayed itself at an early age. Before he was twenty he had written several successful comedies. Though he produced many plays, both tragedies and comedies, well known to readers of French poetry, his operatic poems are those which have rendered his memory illustrious. He died on November 29,1688. It is said that during his last illness he was extremely penitent on account of the voluptuous tendency of his works. All his lyrical dramas are full of beauty, but "Atys," "Phaeton," "Isis," and "Armide" have been ranked the highest. "Armide" was the last of the poet's efforts, and Lulli was so much in love with the opera, when completed, that he had it performed over and over again for his own pleasure without any other auditor. When "Atys" was performed first in 1676, the eager throng began to pour in the theatre at ten o'clock in the morning, and

by noon the building was filled. The King and the Count were charmed with the work in spite of the bitter dislike of Boileau, the Aristarchus of his age. "Put me in a place where I shall not be able to hear the words," said the latter to the box-keeper; "I like Lulli's music very much, but have a sovereign contempt for Quinault's words." Lulli obliged the poet to write "Armide" five times over, and the felicity of his treatment is proved by the fact that Gluck afterward set the same poem to the music which is still occasionally sung in Germany.

Lulli in the course of his musical career became so great a favorite with the King that the originally obscure kitchen-boy was ennobled. He was made one of the King's secretaries in spite of the loud murmurs of this pampered fraternity against receiving into their body a player and a buffoon. The musician's wit and affability, however, finally dissipated these prejudices, especially as he was wealthy and of irreproachable character.

The King having had a severe illness in 1686, Lulli composed a "Te Deum" in honor of his recovery. When this was given, the musician, in beating time with great ardor, struck his toe with his baton. This brought on a mortification, and there was great grief when it was announced that he could not recover. The Princes de Vendôme lodged four thousand pistoles in the hands of a banker, to be paid to any physician who would cure him. Shortly before his death his confessor severely reproached him for the licentiousness of his operas, and refused to give him absolution unless he consented to burn the score of "Achille et Polyxène," which was ready for the stage. The manuscript was put into the flames, and the priest made the musician's peace with God. One of

the young princes visited him a few days after, when he seemed a little better.

"What, Baptiste," the former said, "have you burned your opera? You were a fool for giving such credit to a gloomy confessor and burning good music."

"Hush, hush!" whispered Lulli with a satirical smile on his lip. "I cheated the good father. I only burned a copy."

He died singing the words, "Il faut mourir, pécheur, il faut mourir" to one of his own opera airs.

Lulli was not only a composer, but created his own orchestra, trained his artists in acting and singing, and was machinist as well as ballet-master and music-director. He was intimate with Corneille, Molière, La Fontaine, and Boileau; and these great men were proud to contribute the texts to which he set his music. He introduced female dancers into the ballet, disguised men having hitherto served in this capacity, and in many essential ways was the father of early French opera, though its foundation had been laid by Cardinal Mazarin. He had to fight against opposition and cabals, but his energy, tact, and persistence made him the victor, and won the friendship of the leading men of his time. Such of his music as still exists is of a pleasing and melodious character, full of vivacity and lire, and at times indicates a more deep and serious power than that of merely creating catching and tuneful airs. He was the inventor of the operatic overture, and introduced several new instruments into the orchestra. Apart from his splendid administrative faculty, he is entitled to rank as an original and gifted, if not a great, composer.

A lively sketch of the French opera of this period is given by Addison in No. 29 of the "Spectator." "The music of the French," he says, "is indeed very properly adapted to their pronunciation and accent, as their whole opera wonderfully favors the genius of such a gay, airy people. The chorus in which that opera abounds gives the parterre frequent opportunities of joining in concert with the stage. This inclination of the audience to sing along with the actors so prevails with them that I have sometimes known the performer on the stage to do no more in a celebrated song than the clerk of a parish church, who serves only to raise the psalm, and is afterward drowned in the music of the congregation. Every actor that comes on the stage is a beau. The queens and heroines are so painted that they appear as ruddy and cherry-cheeked as milkmaids. The shepherds are all embroidered, and acquit themselves in a ball better than our English dancing-masters. I have seen a couple of rivers appear in red stockings; and Alpheus, instead of having his head covered with sedge and bulrushes, making love in a fair, full-bottomed periwig, and a plume of feathers; but with a voice so full of shakes and quavers, that I should have thought the murmur of a country brook the much more agreeable music. I remember the last opera I saw in that merry nation was the 'Rape of Proserpine,' where Pluto, to make the more tempting figure, puts himself in a French equipage, and brings Ascalaphus along with him as his *valet de chambre*. This is what we call folly and impertinence, but what the French look upon as gay and polite."

II.

The French musical drama continued without

much chance in the hands of the Lulli school (for the musician had several skillful imitators and successors) till the appearance of Jean Philippe Rameau, who inaugurated a new era. This celebrated man was born in Auvergne in 1683, and was during his earlier life the organist of the Clermont cathedral church. Here he pursued the scientific researches in music which entitled him in the eyes of his admirers to be called the Newton of his art. He had reached the age of fifty without recognition as a dramatic composer, when the production of "Hippolyte et Aricie" excited a violent feud by creating a strong current of opposition to the music of Lulli. He produced works in rapid succession, and finally overcame all obstacles, and won for himself the name of being the greatest lyric composer which France up to that time had produced. His last opera, "Les Paladins," was given in 1760, the composer being then seventy-seven.

The bitterness of the art-feuds of that day, afterward shown in the Gluck-Piccini contest, was foreshadowed in that waged by Rameau against Lulli, and finally against the Italian newcomers, who sought to take possession of the French stage. The matter became a natioual quarrel, and it was considered an insult to France to prefer the music of an Italian to that of a Frenchman—an insult which was often settled by the rapier point, when tongue and pen had failed as arbitrators. The subject was keenly debated by journalists and pamphleteers, and the press groaned with essays to prove that Rameau was the first musician in Europe, though his works were utterly unknown outside of France. Perhaps no more valuable testimony to the character of these operas can be adduced than that of Baron Grimm:

"In his operas Rameau has overpowered all his predecessors by dint of harmony and quantity of notes. Some of his choruses are very fine. Lulli could only sustain his vocal psalmody by a simple bass; Rameau accompanied almost all his recitatives with the orchestra. These accompaniments are generally in bad taste; they drown the voice rather than support it, and force the singers to scream and howl in a manner which no ear of any delicacy can tolerate. We come away from an opera of Rameau's intoxicated with harmony and stupefied with the noise of voice and instruments. His taste is always Gothic, and, whether his subject is light or forcible, his style is equally heavy. He was not destitute of ideas, but did not know what use to make of them. In his recitatives the sound is continually in opposition to the sense, though they occasionally contain happy declamatory passages.... If he had formed himself in some of the schools of Italy, and thus acquired a notion of musical style and hahits of musical thought, he never would have said (as he did) that all poems were alike to him, and that he could set the 'Gazette de France' to music."

From this it may be gathered that Rameau, though a scientific and learned musician, lacked imagination, good taste, and dramatic insight—qualities which in the modern lyric school of France have been so preeminent. It may be admitted, however, that he inspired a taste for sound musical science, and thus prepared the way for the great Gluck, who to all and more of Rameau's musical knowledge united the grand genius which makes him one of the giants of his art.

Though Rameau enjoyed supremacy over the serious opera, a great excitement was created in

Paris by the arrival of an Italian company, who in 1752 obtained permission to perform Italian burlettas and intermezzi at the opera-house. The partisans of the French school took alarm, and the admirers of Lulli and Rameau forgot their bickerings to join forces against the foreign intruders. The battle-field was strewed with floods of ink, and the literati pelted each other with ferocious lampoons.

Among the literature of this controversy, one pamphlet has an imperishable place, Rousseau's famous "Lettre sur la Musique Française," in which the great sentimentalist espoused the cause of Italian music with an eloquence and acrimony rarely surpassed. The inconsistency of the author was as marked in this as in his private life. Not only did he at a later period become a great advocate of Gluck against Piocini, but, in spite of his argument that it was impossible to compose music to French words, that the language was quite unfit for it, that the French never had music and never would, he himself had composed a good deal of music to French words and produced a French opera, "Le Devin du Village." Diderot was also a warm partisan of the Italians. Pergolesi's beautiful music having been murdered by the French orchestra players at the Grand Opera-House, Diderot proposed for it the following witty and laconic inscription: "Hic Marsyas Apollinem."*

* Here Marsyas flayed Apollo.

Rousseau's opera, "Le Devin du Village," was performed with considerable success, in spite of the repugnance of the orchestral performers, of whom Rousseau always spoke in terms of unmeasured contempt, to do justice to the music. They burned Rousseau in effigy for his scoffs. "Well," said the

author of the "Confessions," "I don't wonder that they should hang me now, after having so long put me to the torture."

The eloquence and abuse of the wits, however, did not long impair the supremacy of Rameau; for the Italian company returned to their own land, disheartened by their reception in the French capital. Though this composer commenced so late in life, he left thirty-six dramatic works. His greatest work was "Castor et Pollux." Thirty years later Grimm recognized its merits by admitting, in spite of the great faults of the composer, "It is the pivot on which the glory of French music turns." When Louis XIV. offered Rameau a title, he answered, touching his breast and forehead, "My nobility is here and here." This composer marked a step forward in French music, for he gave it more boldness and freedom, and was the first really scientific and well-equipped exponent of a national school. His choruses were full of energy and fire, his orchestral effects rich and massive. He died in 1764, and the mortuary music, composed by himself, was performed by a double orchestra and chorus from the Grand Opera.

III.

A distinguished place in the records of French music must be assigned to André Ernest Grétry, born at Liege in 1741. His career covered the most important changes in the art as colored and influenced by national tastes, and he is justly regarded as the father of comic opera in his adopted country. His childish life was one of much severe discipline and tribulation, for he was dedicated to music by his father, who was first violinist in the college of St. Denis when he was only six years old.

He afterward wrote of this time in his "Essais sur la Musique": "The hour for the lesson afforded the teacher an opportunity to exercise his cruelty. He made us sing each in turn, and woe to him who made the least mistake; he was beaten unmercifully, the youngest as well as the oldest. He seemed to take pleasure in inventing torture. At times he would place us on a short round stick, from which we fell head over heels if we made the least movement. But that which made us tremble with fear was to see him knock down a pupil and beat him; for then we were sure he would treat some others in the same manner, one victim being insufficient to gratify his ferocity. To maltreat his pupils was a sort of mania with him; and he seemed to feel that his duty was performed in proportion to the cries and sobs which he drew forth."

In 1759 Grétry went to Rome, where he studied counterpoint for five years. Some of his works were received favorably by the Roman public, and he was made a member of the Philharmonic Society of Bologna. Pressed by pecuniary necessity, Grétry determined to go to Paris; but he stopped at Geneva on the route to earn money by singing-lessons. Here he met Voltaire at Ferney. "You are a musician and have genius," said the great man; "it is a very rare thing, and I take much interest in you." In spite of this, however, Voltaire would not write him the text for an opera. The philosopher of Ferney feared to trust his reputation with an unknown musician. When Grétry arrived in Paris he still found the same difficulty, as no distinguished poet was disposed to give him a libretto till he had made his powers recognized. After two years of starving and waiting, Marmontel gave him the text of "The Huron," which was brought out in 1769 and well received. Other

successful works followed in rapid succession.

At this time Parisian frivolity thought it good taste to admire the rustic and naive. The idyls of Gessner and the pastorals of Florian were the favorite reading, and Watteau the popular painter. Gentlefolks, steeped in artifice, vice, and intrigue, masked their empty lives under the as sumption of Arcadian simplicity, and minced and ambled in the costumes of shepherds and shepherdesses. Marie Antoinette transformed her chalet of Petit Trianon into a farm, where she and her courtiers played at pastoral life—the farce preceding the tragedy of the Revolution. It was the effort of dazed society seeking change. Grétry followed the fashionable bent by composing pastoral comedies, and mounted on the wave of success.

In 1774 "Fausse Magie" was produced with the greatest applause. Rousseau was present, and the composer waited on him in his box, meeting a most cordial reception. On their way home after the opera, Grétry offered his new friend his arm to help him over an obstruction. Rousseau with a burst of rage said, "Let me make use of my own powers," and thenceforward the sentimental misanthrope refused to recognize the composer. About this time Grétry met the English humorist Hales, who afterward furnished him with many of his comic texts. The two combined to produce the "Jugement de Midas," a satire on the old style of music, which met with remarkable popular favor, though it was not so well received by the court.

The crowning work of this composer's life was given to the world in 1785. This was "Richard Coeur de Lion," and it proved one of the great musical

events of the period. Paris was in ecstasies, and the judgment of succeeding generations has confirmed the contemporary verdict, as it is still a favorite opera in France and Germany. The works afterward composed by Grétry showed decadence in power. Singularly rich in fresh and sprightly ideas, he lacked depth and grandeur, and failed to suit the deeper and sounder taste which Cherubini and Méhul, great followers in the footsteps of Gluck, gratified by a series of noble masterpieces. Grétry's services to his art, however, by his production of comic operas full of lyric vivacity and sparkle, have never been forgotten nor underrated. His bust was placed in the opera-house during his lifetime, and he was made a member of the French Academy of Fine Arts and Inspector of the Conservatory. Grétry possessed qualities of heart which endeared him to all, and his death in 1813 was the occasion of a general outburst of lamentation. Deputations from the theatres and the Conservatory accompanied his remains to the cemetery, where Méhul pronounced an eloquent eulogium. In 1828 a nephew of Grétry caused the heart of him who was one of the glorious sons of Liege to be returned to his native city.

Grétry founded a school of musical composition in France which has since been cultivated with signal success, that of lyric comedy. The efforts of Lulli and Rameau had been turned in another direction. The former had done little more than set courtly pageants to music, though he had done this with great skill and tact, enriching them with a variety of concerted and orchestral pieces, and showing much fertility in the invention alike of pathetic and lively melodies. Rameau followed in the footsteps of Lulli, but expanded and crystallized his ideas into a more scientific form. He had indeed carried his love of

form to a radical extreme. Jean Jacques Rousseau, who extended his taste for nature and simplicity to music, blamed him severely as one who neglected genuine natural tune for far-fetched harmonies, on the ground that "music is a child of nature, and has a language of its own for expressing emotional transports, which can not be learned from thorough bass rules." Again Rousseau, in his forcible tract on French music, says of Rameau, from whose school Grétry's music was such a significant departure:

"One must confess that M. Rameau possesses very great talent, much fire and euphony, and a considerable knowledge of harmonious combinations and effects; one must also grant him the art of appropriating the ideas of others by changing their character, adorning and developing them, and turning them around in all manner of ways, On the other hand, he shows less facility in inventing new ones. Altogether he has more skill than fertility, more knowledge than genius, or rather genius smothered by knowledge, but always force, grace, and very often a beautiful *cantileana*. His recitative is not as natural but much more varied than that of Lulli; admirable in a few scenes, but bad as a rule." Rousseau continues to reproach Rameau with a too powerful instrumentation, compared with Italian simplicity, and sums up that nobody knew better than Rameau how to conceive the spirit of single passages and to produce artistic contrasts, but that he entirely failed to give his operas "a happy and much-to-be-desired unity." In another part of the quoted passage Rousseau says that Rameau stands far beneath Lulli in *esprit* and artistic tact, but that he is often superior to him in dramatic expression.

A clear understanding of the musical position of

Rameau is necessary to fully appreciate the place of Grétry, his antithesis as a composer. For a short time the popularity of Rameau had been shaken by an Italian opera company, called by the French *Les Bouffons*, who had created a genuine sensation by their performance of airy and sparkling operettas, entirely removed in spirit from the ponderous productions of the prevailing school. Though the Italian comedians did not meet with permanent success, the suave charm of their music left behind it memories which became fruitful.*

* In its infancy Italian comic opera formed t
between the acts of a serious opera, and—simi
Greek sylvan drama which followed the tragic
frequently a parody on the piece which preced
more frequently still (as in Pergolcsi's "Ser
was not a satire on any particular subject, b
heighten the ideal artistic effect of the ser
broad comedy. Having acquired a complete form
of the small theatres, it was transferred to
stage. Though it lacked the external splendor
vocalization of the elder sister, its simpler
it with a more characteristic rendering of ac

It furnished the point of departure for the lively and facile genius of Grétry, who laid the foundation stones of that lyric comedywhich has flourished in France with so much luxuriance. From the outset merriment and humor were by no means the sole object of the French comic opera, as in the case of its Italian sister. Grétry did not neglect to turn the nobler emotions to account, and by a judicious admixture of sentiment he gave an ideal coloring to his works, which made them singularly fascinating and original. Around Grétry flourished several disciples and imitators, and for twenty years this charming hybrid between opera and vaudeville

engrossed French musical talent, to the exclusion of other forms of composition. It was only when Gluck * appeared on the scene, and by his commanding genius restored serious opera to its supremacy, that Grotry's repute was overshadowed. From this decline in public favor he never fully recovered, for the master left behind him gifted disciples, who embodied his traditions, and were inspired by his lofty aims—preeminently so in the case of Cherubini, perhaps the greatest name in French music. While French comic opera, since the days of Grétry, has become modified in some of its forms, it preserves the spirit and coloring which he so happily imparted to it, and looks back to him as its founder and lawgiver.

*See article on "Gluck," in "The Great Germar
(a companion volume to this), in which his cc
French music is discussed.

IV.

One of the most accomplished of historians and critics, Oulibischeff, sums up the place of Cherubini in musical art in these words: "If on the one hand Gluck's calm and plastic grandeur, and on the other the tender and voluptuous charm of the melodies of Piccini and Zacchini, had suited the circumstances of a state of society sunk in luxury and nourished with classical exhibitions, this could not satisfy a society shaken to the very foundations of its faith and organization. The whole of the dramatic music of the eighteenth century must naturally have appeared cold and languid to men whose minds were profoundly moved with troubles and wars; and even at the present day the word languor best expresses that which no longer touches us in the operas of the

last century, without even excepting those of Mozart himself. What we require for the pictures of dramatic music is larger frames, including more figures, more passionate and moving song, more sharply marked rhythms, greater fullness in the vocal masses, and more sonorous brilliancy in the instrumentation. All these qualities are to be found in 'Lodoi'ska' and 'Les Deux Journées'; and Cherubini may not only be regarded as the founder of the modern French opera, but also as that musician who, after Mozart, has exerted the greatest general influence on the tendency of the art. An Italian by birth and the excellence of his education, which was conducted by Sarti, the great teacher of composition; a German by his musical sympathies as well as by the variety and profundity of his knowledge; and a Frenchman by the school and principles to which we owe his finest dramatic works, Cherubini strikes me as being the most accomplished musician, if not the greatest genius, of the nineteenth century."

Again the English composer Macfarren observes: "Cherubini's position is unique in the history of his art; actively before the world as a composer for threescore years and ten, his career spans over more vicissitudes in the progress of music than that of any other man. Beginning to write in the same year with Cimarosa, and even earlier than Mozart, and being the contemporary of Verdi and Wagner, he witnessed almost the origin of the two modern classical schools of France and Germany, their rise to perfection, and, if not their decline, the arrival of a time when criticism would usurp the place of creation, and when to propound new rules for art claims higher consideration than to act according to its ever unalterable principles. His artistic life indeed was a rainbow based on the two extremes of modern music

which shed light and glory on the great art-cycle over which it arched.... His excellence consists in his unswerving earnestness of purpose, in the individuality of his manner, in the vigor of his ideas, and in the purity of his harmony."

"Such," says M. Miel, "was Cherubim; a colossal and incommensurable genius, an existence full of days, of masterpieces, and of glory. Among his rivals he found his most sincere appreciators. The Chevalier Seyfried has recorded, in a notice on Beethoven, that that grand musician regarded Cherubini as the first of his contemporary composers. We will add nothing to this praise: the judgment of such a rival is, for Cherubini, the voice itself of posterity."

Luigi Carlo Zanobe Salvadore Maria Cherubini was born at Florence on September 14, 1700, the son of a harpsichord accompanyist at the Pergola Theatre. Like so many other great composers, young Cherubini displayed signs of a fertile and powerful genius at an early age, mastering the difficulties of music as if by instinct. At the age of nine he was placed under the charge of Felici, one of the best Tuscan professors of the day; and four years afterward he composed his first work, a mass. His creative instinct, thus awakened, remained active, and he produced a series of compositions which awakened no little admiration, so that he was pointed at in the streets of Florence as the young prodigy. When he was about sixteen the attention of the Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany was directed to him, and through that prince's liberality he was enabled to become a pupil of the most celebrated Italian master of the age, Giuseppe Sarti, of whom he soon became the favorite pupil. Under the direction

of Sarti, the young composer produced a series of operas, sonatas, and masses, and wrote much of the music which appeared under the maestro's own name—a practice then common in the music and painting schools of Italy. At the age of nineteen Cherubini was recognized as one of the most learned and accomplished musicians of the age, and his services were in active demand at the Italian theatres. In four years he produced thirteen operas, the names and character of which it is not necessary now to mention, as they are unknown except to the antiquary whose zeal prompts him to defy the dust of the Italian theatrical libraries. Halévy, whose admiration of his master led him to study these early compositions, speaks of them as full of striking beauties, and, though crude in many particulars, distinguished by those virile and daring conceptions which from the outset stamped the originality of the man.

Cherubini passed through Paris in 1784, while the Gluck-Piccini excitement was yet warm, and visited London as composer for the Royal Italian Opera. Here he became a constant visitor in courtly circles, and the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Queensbury, and other noble amateurs, conceived the warmest admiration for his character and abilities. For some reason, however, his operas written for England failed, and he quitted England in 1786, intending to return to Italy. But the fascinations of Paris held him, as they have done so many others, noticeably so among the great musicians; and what was designed as a flying visit became a life-long residence, with the exception of brief interruptions in Germany and Italy, whither he went to fill professional engagements.

Cherubini took up his residence with his friend Viotti, who introduced him to the Queen, Marie Antoinette, and the highest society of the capital, then as now the art-center of the world. He became an intimate of the brilliant salons of Mme. de Polignac, Mme. d'Etiolés, Mme. de Richelieu, and of the various bright assemblies where the wit, rank, and beauty of Paris gathered in the days just prior to the Revolution. The poet Marmontel became his intimate friend, and gave him the opera story of "Demophon" to set to music. It was at this period that Cherubini became acquainted with the works of Haydn, and learned from him how to unite depth with lightness, grace with power, jest with earnestness, and toying with dignity.

A short visit to Italy for the carnival of 1788 resulted in the production of the opera of "Ifigenia in Aulide" at La Scala, Milan. The success was great, and this work, the last written for his native country, was given also at Florence and Parma with no less delight and approbation on the part of the public. Had Cherubini died at this time, he would have left nothing but an obscure name for Fétis's immense dictionary. Unlike Mozart and Schubert, who at the same age had reached their highest development, this robust and massive genius ripened slowly. With him as with Gluck, with whom he had so many affinities, a short life would have been fatal to renown. His last opera showed a turning point in his development. Halévy, his great disciple, speaks of this period as follows: "He is already more nervous; there peeps out I know not exactly how much of force and virility of which the Italian musicians of his day did not know or did not seek the secret. It is the dawn of a new day. Cherubini was preparing himself for the combat. Gluck had accustomed

France to the sublime energy of his masterpieces. Mozart had just written 'Le Nozze di Figaro' and 'Don Giovanni.' He must not lag behind. He must not be conquered. In that career which he was about to dare to enter, he met two giants. Like the athlete who descends into the arena, he anointed his limbs and girded his loins for the fight."

V.

Marmontel had furnished the libretto of an opera to Cherubini, and the composer shortly after his return from Turin to Paris had it produced at the Royal Academy of Music. Vogel's opera on the same text, "Demophon," was also brought out, but neither one met with great success. Cherubini's work, though full of vigor and force, wanted color and dramatic point. He was disgusted with his failure, and resolved to eschew dramatic music; so for the nonce he devoted himself to instrumental music and cantata. Two works of the latter class, "Amphion" and "Circe," composed at this time, were of such excellence as to retain a permanent hold on the French stage. Cherubini, too, became director of the Italian opera troupe, "Les Bouffons," organized under the patronage of Léonard, the Queen's performer, and exercised his taste for composition by interpolating airs of his own into the works of the Italian composers, which were then interesting the French public as against the operas of Rameau.

"At this time," we are told by Laf age, "Cherubini had two distinct styles, one of which was allied to Paisiello and Cimarosa by the grace, elegance, and purity of the melodic forms; the other, which attached itself to the school of Gluck and Mozart, more harmonic than melodious, rich in instrumental

details." This manner was the then unappreciated type of a new school destined to change the forms of musical art.

In 1790 the Revolution broke out and rent the established order of things into fragments. For a time all the interests of art were swallowed up in the frightful turmoil which made Paris the center of attention for astonished and alarmed Europe. Cherubini's connection had been with the aristocracy, and now they were fleeing in a mad panic or mounting the scaffold. His livelihood became precarious, and he suffered severely during the first five years of anarchy. His seclusion was passed in studying music, the physical sciences, drawing, and botany; and his acquaintance was wisely confined to a few musicians like himself. Once, indeed, his having learned the violin as a child was the means of saving his life. Independently venturing out at night, he was arrested by a roving band of drunken *Sansculottes*, who were seeking musicians to conduct their street chants. Somebody recognized Cherubini as a favorite of court circles, and, when he refused to lead their obscene music, the fatal cry, "The Royalist, the Royalist!" buzzed through the crowd. At this critical moment another kidnapped player thrust a violin in Cherubini's hands and persuaded him to yield. So the two musicians marched all day amid the hoarse yells of the drunken revolutionists. He was also enrolled in the National Guard, and obliged to accompany daily the march of the unfortunate throngs who shed their blood under the axe of the guillotine. Cherubini would have fled from these horrible surroundings, but it was difficult to evade the vigilance of the French officials; he had no money; and he would not leave the beautiful Cécile Tourette, to whom he was affianced.

One of the theatres opened during the revolutionary epoch was the Théâtre Feydeau. The second opera performed was Cherubini's "Lodoïska" (1791), at which he had been laboring for a long time, and which was received throughout Europe with the greatest enthusiasm and delight, not less in Germany than in France and Italy. The stirring times aroused a new taste in music, as well as in politics and literature. The dramas of Racine and the operas of Lulli were akin. No less did the stormy genius of Schiller find its counterpart in Beethoven and Cherubini. The production of "Lodoïska" was the point of departure from which the great French school of serious opera, which has given us "Robert le Diable," "Les Huguenots," and "Faust," got its primal value and significance. Two men of genius, Gluck and Grétry, had formed the taste of the public in being faithful to the accents of nature. The idea of reconciling this taste, founded on strict truth, with the seductive charm of the Italian forms, to which the French were beginning to be sensible, suggested to Cherubini a system of lyric drama capable of satisfying both. Wagner himself even says, in his "Tendencies and Theories," speaking of Cherubini and his great co-laborers Méhul and Spontini: "It would be difficult to answer them, if they now perchance came among us and asked in what respect we had improved on their mode of musical procedure."

"Lodoïska," which cast the old Italian operas into permanent oblivion, and laid the foundation of the modern French dramatic school in music, has a libretto similar to that of "Fidelio" and Grétry's "Coeur de Lion" combined, and was taken from a romance of Faiblas by Fillette Loraux. The critics found only one objection: the music was all so

beautiful that no breathing time was granted the listener. In one year the opera was performed two hundred times, and at short intervals two hundred more representations took place.

The Revolution culminated in the crisis of 1793, which sent the King to the scaffold. Cherubini found a retreat at La Chartreuse, near Rouen, the country seat of his friend, the architect Louis. Here he lived in tranquillity, and composed several minor pieces and a three-act opera, never produced, but afterward worked over into "Ali Baba" and "Faniska." In his Norman retreat Cherubini heard of the death of his father, and while suffering under this infliction, just before his return to Paris in 1794, he composed the opera of "Elisa." This work wras received with much favor at the Feydeau theatre, though it did not arouse the admiration called out by "Lodoïska."

In 1795 the Paris Conservatory was founded, and Cherubini appointed one of the five inspectors, as well as professor of counterpoint, his associates being Lesueur, Grétry, Gossec, and Méhul. The same year also saw him united to Cécile Tourette, to whom he had been so long and devotedly attached. Absorbed in his duties at the Conservatory he did not come before the public again till 1797, when the great tragic masterpiece of "Médée" was produced at the Feydeau theatre. "Lodoïska" had been somewhat gay; "Elisa," a work of graver import, followed; but in "Médée" was attained the profound tragic power of Gluck and Beethoven. Hoffman's libretto was indeed unworthy of the great music, but this has not prevented its recognition by musicians as one of the noblest operas ever written. It has probably been one of the causes, however, why it is so rarely represented at the present time, its overture alone

being well known to modern musical audiences. This opera has been compared by critics to Shakespeare's "King Lear," as being a great expression of anguish and despair in their more stormy phases. Chorley tells us that, when he first saw it, he was irresistibly reminded of the lines in Barry Cornwall's poem to Pasta:

> "Now thou art like some winged thing that cri
> Above some city, flaming fast to death."

The poem which Chorley quotes from was inspired by the performance of the great Pasta in Simone Mayer's weak musical setting of the fable of the Colchian sorceress, which crowded the opera-houses of Europe. The life of the French classical tragedy, too, was powerfully assisted by Rachel. Though the poem on which Cherubini worked was unworthy of his genius, it could not be from this or from lack of interest in the theme alone that this great work is so rarely performed; it is because there have been not more than three or four actresses in the last hundred years combining the great tragic and vocal requirements exacted by the part. If the tragic genius of Pasta conld have been united with the voice of a Catalani, made as it were of adamant and gold, Cherubini's sublime musical creation would have found an adequate interpreter. Mdlle. Tietjens, indeed, has been the only late dramatic singer who dared essay so difficult a task. Musical students rank the instrumental parts of this opera with the organ music of Bach, the choral fugues of Handel, and the symphonies of Beethoven, for beauty of form and originality of ideas.

On its first representation, on the 13th of March, 1797, one of the journals, after praising its beauty,

professed to discover imitations of Méhul's manner in it. The latter composer, in an indignant rejoinder, proclaimed himself and all others as overshadowed by Cherubini's genius: a singular example of artistic humility and justice. Three years after its performance in Paris, it was given at Berlin and Vienna, and stamped by the Germans as one of the world's great musical masterpieces. This work was a favorite one with Schubert, Beethoven, and Weber, and there have been few great composers who have not put on record their admiration of it.

As great, however, as "Médée" is ranked, "Les Deux Journées,"* produced in 1800, is the opera on which Cherubim's fame as a dramatic composer chiefly rests.

* In German known as "Die Wassertràger," in E
Water-Carriers."

Three hundred consecutive performances did not satisfy Paris; and at Berlin and Frankfort, as well as in Italy, it was hailed with acclamation. Bouilly was the author of the opera-story, suggested by the generous action of a water-carrier toward a magistrate who was related to the author. The story is so interesting, so admirably written, that Goethe and Mendelssohn considered it the true model for a comic opera. The musical composition, too, is nearly faultless in form and replete with beauties. In this opera Cherubini anticipated the reforms of Wagner, for he dispensed with the old system which made the drama a web of beautiful melodies, and established his musical effects for the most part by the vigor and charm of the choruses and concerted pieces. It has been accepted as a model work by composers, and Beethoven was in the habit of keeping it by him on

his writing-table for constant study and reference.

Spohr in his autobiography says: "I recollect, when the 'Deux Journées' was performed for the first time, how, intoxicated with delight and the powerful impression the work had made on me, I asked on that very evening to have the score given me, and sat over it the whole night; and that it was that opera chiefly that gave me my first impulse to composition." Weber, in a letter from Munich written in 1812, says: "Fancy my delight when I beheld lying upon the table of the hotel the play-bill with the magic name *Armand*. I was the first person in the theatre, and planted myself in the middle of the pit, where I waited most anxiously for the tones which I knew beforehand would elevate and inspire me. I think I may assert boldly that 'Les Deux Journées' is a really great dramatic and classical work. Everything is calculated so as to produce the greatest effect; all the various pieces are so much in their proper place that you can neither omit one nor make any addition to them. The opera displays a pleasing richness of melody, vigorous declamation, and all-striking truth in the treatment of situations, ever new, ever heard and retained with pleasure." Mendelssohn, too, writing to his father of a performance of this opera, speaks of the enthusiasm of the audience as extreme, as well as of his own pleasure as surpassing anything he had ever experienced in a theatre. Mendelssohn, who never completed an opera, because he did not find until shortly before his death a theme which properly inspired him to dramatic creation, corresponded with Planché, with the hope of getting from the latter a libretto which should unite the excellences of "Fidelio" with those of "Les Deux Journées." He found, at last, a libretto, which, if it did not wholly satisfy him, at least overcame some of

his prejudices, in a story based on the Rhine myth of Lorelei. A fragment of it only was finished, and the finale of the first act is occasionally performed in England.

VI.

Before Napoleon became First Consul, he had been on familiar terms with Cherubini. The soldier and the composer were seated in the same box listening to an opera by the latter. Napoleon, whose tastes for music were for the suave and sensuous Italian style, turned to him and said: "My dear Cherubini, you are certainly an excellent musician; but really your music is so noisy and complicated that I can make nothing of it;" to which Cherubini replied: "My dear general, you are certainly an excellent soldier; but in regard to music you must excuse me if I don't think it necessary to adapt my music to your comprehension." This haughty reply was the beginning of an estrangement. Another illustration of Cherubini's sturdy pride and dignity was his rejoinder to Napoleon, when the latter was praising the works of the Italian composers, and covertly sneering at his own. "Citizen General," he replied, "occupy yourself with battles and victories, and allow me to treat according to my talent an art of which you are grossly ignorant." Even when Napoleon became Emperor, the proud composer never learned "to crook the pregnant hinges of his knee" to the man before whom Europe trembled.

On the 12th of December, 1800, a grand performance of "The Creation" took place at Paris. Napoleon on his way to it narrowly escaped being killed by an infernal machine. Cherubini was one of the deputation, representing the various corporations

and societies of Paris, who waited on the First Consul to congratulate him upon his escape. Cherubini kept in the background, when the sarcasm, "I do not see Monsieur Cherubini," pronounced in the French way, as if to indicate that Cherubini was not worthy of being ranked with the Italian composers, brought him promptly forward. "Well," said Napoleon, "the French are in Italy." "Where would they not go," answered Cherubini, "led by such a hero as you?" This pleased the First Consul, who, however, soon got to the old musical quarrel. "I tell you I like Paisiello's music immensely; it is soft and tranquil. You have much talent, but there is too much accompaniment." Said Cherubini, "Citizen Consul, I conform myself to French taste."

"Your music," continued the other, "makes too much noise. Speak to me in that of Paisiello; that is what lulls me gently." "I understand," replied the composer; "you like music which doesn't stop you from thinking of state affairs." This witty rejoinder made the arrogant soldier frown, and the talk suddenly ceased.

As a result of this alienation Cherubini found himself persistently ignored and ill-treated by the First Consul. In spite of his having produced such great masterpieces, his income was very small, apart from his pay as Inspector of the Conservatory. The ill will of the ruler of France was a steady check to his preferment. When Napoleon established his consular chapel in 1802, he invited Paisiello from Naples to become director at a salary of 12,000 francs a year. It gave great umbrage to the Conservatory that its famous teachers should have been slighted for an Italian foreigner, and musical circles in Paris were shaken by petty contentions. Paisiello, however,

found the public indifferent to his works, and soon wearied of a place where the admiration to which he had been accustomed no longer flattered his complacency. He resigned, and his position was offered to Méhul, who is said to have declined it because he regarded Cherubini as far more worthy of it, and to have accepted it only on condition that his friend could share the duties and emoluments with him. Cherubini, fretted and irritated by his condition, retired for a time from the pursuit of his art, and devoted himself to flowers. The opera of "Anacreon," a powerful but unequal work, which reflected the disturbance and agitation of his mind, was the sole fruit of his musical efforts for about four years.

While Cherubini was in the deepest depression—for he had a large family depending on him and small means with which to support them—a ray of sunshine came in 1805 in the shape of an invitation to compose for the managers of the opera at Vienna. His advent at the Austrian capital produced a profound sensation, and he received a right royal welcome from the great musicians of Germany. The aged Haydn, Hummel, and Beethoven became his warm friends with the generous freemasonry of genius, for his rank as a musician was recognized throughout Europe.

The war which broke out after our musician's departure from Paris between France and Austria ended shortly in the capitulation of Ulm, and the French Emperor took up his residence at Schônbrunn. Napoleon received Cherubini kindly when he came in answer to his summons, and it was arranged that a series of twelve concerts should be given alternately at Schonbrunn and Vienna. The pettiness which entered into the French Emperor's

nature in spite of his greatness continued to be shown in his ebullitions of wrath because Cherubini persisted in holding his own musical views against the imperial opinion. Napoleon, however, on the eve of his return to France, urged him to accompany him, offering the long-coveted position of musical director; but Cherubini was under contract to remain a certain length of time at Vienna, and he would not break his pledge.

The winter of 1805 witnessed two remarkable musical events at the Austrian capital, the production of Beethoven's "Fidelio" and the last great opera written by Cherubini, "Faniska." Haydn and Beethoven were both present at the latter performance. The former embraced Cherubini and said to him, "You are my son, worthy of my love." Beethoven cordially hailed him as "the first dramatic composer of the age." It is an interesting fact that two such important dramatic compositions should have been written at the same time, independently of each other; that both works should have been in advance of their age; that they should have displayed a striking similarity of style; and that both should have suffered from the reproach of the music being too learned for the public. The opera of "Faniska" is based on a Polish legend of great dramatic beauty, which, however, was not very artistically treated by the librettist. Mendelssohn in after years noted the striking resemblance between Beethoven and our composer in the conception and method of dramatic composition. In one of his letters to Edouard Devrient he says, speaking of "Fidelio": "On looking into the score, as well as on listening to the performance, I everywhere perceive Cherubim's dramatic style of composition. It is true that Beethoven did not ape that style, but it was before

his mind as his most cherished pattern." The unity of idea and musical color between "Faniska" and "Fidelio" seems to have been noted by many critics both of contemporary and succeeding times.

Cherubini would gladly have written more for the Viennese, by whom he had been so cordially treated; but the unsettled times and his homesickness for Paris conspired to take him back to the city of his adoption. He exhausted many efforts to find Mozart's tomb in Vienna, and desired to place a monument over his neglected remains, but failed to locate the resting-place of one he loved so much. Haydn, Beethoven, Hummel, Salieri, and the other leading composers reluctantly parted with him, and on April 1, 1806, his return to Paris was celebrated by a brilliant fête improvised for him at the Conservatory. Fate, however, had not done with her persecutions, for fate in France took the shape of Napoleon, whose hostility, easily aroused, was implacable; who aspired to rule the arts and letters as he did armies and state policy; who spared neither Cherubini nor Madame de Staël. Cherubini was neglected and insulted by authority, while honors were showered on Méhul, Grétry, Spontini, and Lesueur. He sank into a state of profound depression, and it was even reported in Vienna that he was dead. He forsook music and devoted himself to drawing and botany. Had he not been a great musician, it is probable he would have excelled in pictorial art. One day the great painter David entered the room where he was working in crayon on a landscape of the Salvator Rosa style. So pleased was the painter that he cried, "Truly admirable! Courage!" In 1808 Cherubini found complete rest in a visit to the country-seat of the Prince de Chimay in Belgium, whither he was accompanied by his friend and pupil Auber.

VII.

With this period Cherubini closed his career practically as an operatic composer, though several dramatic works were produced subsequently, and entered on his no less great sphere of ecclesiastical composition. At Chimay for a while no one dared to mention music in his presence. Drawing and painting flowers seemed to be his sole pleasure. At last the president of the little music society at Chimay ventured to ask him to write a mass for St. Cecilia's feast day. He curtly refused, but his hostess noticed that he was agitated by the incident,'as if his slumbering instincts had started again into life. One day the Princess placed music paper on his table, and Cherubini on returning from his walk instantly began to compose, as if he had never ceased it. It is recorded that he traced out in full score the "Kyrie" of his great mass in F during the intermission of a single game of billiards. Only a portion of the mass was completed in time for the festival, but, on Cherubini's return to Paris in 1809, it was publicly given by an admirable orchestra, and hailed with a great enthusiasm, that soon swept through Europe. It was perceived that Cherubini had struck out for himself a new path in church music. Fétis, the musical historian, records its reception as follows: "All expressed an unreserved admiration for this composition of a new order, whereby Cherubini has placed himself above all musicians who have as yet written in the concerted style of church music. Superior to the masses of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and the masters of the Neapolitan school, that of Cherubini is as remarkable for originality of idea as for perfection in art." Picchiante, a distinguished critic, sums up the impressions made by this great work in the following eloquent and

vigorous passage: "All the musical science of the good age of religious music, the sixteenth century of the Christian era, was summed up in Palestrina, who flourished at that time, and by its aid he put into form noble and sublime conceptions. With the grave Gregorian melody, learnedly elaborated in vigorous counterpoint and reduced to greater clearness and elegance without instrumental aid, Palestrina knew how to awaken among his hearers mysterious, grand, deep, vague sensations, that seemed caused by the objects of an unknown world, or by superior powers in the human imagination. With the same profound thoughtfulness of the old Catholic music, enriched by the perfection which art has attained in two centuries, and with all the means which a composer nowadays can make use of, Cherubini perfected another conception, and this consisted in utilizing the style adapted to dramatic composition when narrating the church text, by which means he was able to succeed in depicting man in his various vicissitudes, now rising to the praises of Divinity, now gazing on the Supreme Power, now suppliant and prostrate. So that, while Palestrina's music places God before man, that of Cherubini places man before God." Adolphe Adam puts the comparison more epigrammatically in saying: "If Palestrina had lived in our own times, he would have been Cherubini." The masters of the old Roman school of church music had received it as an emanation of pure sentiment, with no tinge of human warmth and color. Cherubini, on the contrary, aimed to make his music express the dramatic passion of the words, and in the realization of this he brought to bear all the resources of a musical science unequaled except perhaps by Beethoven. The noble masses in F and D were also written in 1809 and stamped themselves

on public judgment as no less powerful works of genius and knowledge.

Some of Cherubini's friends in 1809 tried to reconcile the composer with the Emperor, and in furtherance of this an opera was written anonymously, "Pimmalione." Napoleon was delighted, and even affected to tears. Instantly, however, that Cherubini's name was uttered, he became dumb and cold. Nevertheless, as if ashamed of his injustice, he sent Cherubini a large sum of money, and a commission to write the music for his marriage ode. Several fine works followed in the next two years, among them the Mass in D, regarded by some of his admirers as his ecclesiastical masterpiece. Miel claims that in largeness of design and complication of detail, sublimity of conception and dramatic intensity, two works only of its class approach it, Beethoven's Mass in D and Niedermeyer's Mass in D minor.

In 1811 Halévy, the future author of "La Juive," became Cherubini's pupil, and a devoted friendship ever continued between the two. The opera of "Les Abencérages" was also produced, and it was pronounced nowise inferior to "Médée" and "Les Deux Journées." Mendelssohn many years afterward, writing to Moscheles in Paris, asked: "Has Onslow written anything new? And old Cherubini? There's a matchless fellow! I have got his 'Abencérages,' and can not sufficiently admire the sparkling fire, the clear original phrasing, the extraordinary delicacy and refinement with which it is written, or feel grateful enough to the grand old man for it. Besides, it is all so free and bold and spirited." The work would have had a greater immediate success, had not Paris been in profound gloom from the disastrous

results of the Moscow campaign and the horrors of the French retreat, where famine and disease finished the work of bayonet and cannon-ball.

The unsettled and disheartening times disturbed all the relations of artists. There is but little record of Cherubini for several years. A significant passage in a letter written in 1814, speaking of several military marches written for a Prussian band, indicates the occupation of Paris by the allies and Napoleon's banishment in Elba. The period of "The Hundred Days" was spent by Cherubini in England; and the world's wonder, the battle of Waterloo, was fought, and the Bourbons were permanently restored, before he again set foot in Paris. The restored dynasty delighted to honor the man whom Napoleon had slighted, and gifts were showered on him alike by the Court and by the leading academies of Europe. The walls of his studio were covered with medals and diplomas; and his appointment as director of the King's chapel (which, however, he refused unless shared with Lesueur, the old incumbent) placed him above the daily demands of want. So, at the age of fifty-five, this great composer for the first time ceased to be anxious on the score of his livelihood. Thenceforward the life of Cherubini was destined to flow with a placid current, its chief incidents being the great works in church music, which he poured forth year after year, to the admiration and delight of the artistic world. These remarkable masses, by their dramatic power, greatness of design, and wealth of instrumentation, excited as much discussion and interest throughout Europe as the operas of other composers. That written in 1816, the C minor requiem mass, is pronounced by Berlioz to be the greatest work of this description ever composed.

We get some pleasant glimpses of Cherubini as a man during this serene autumn of his life. Spohr tells us how cordially Cherubini, generally regarded as an austere and irritable man, received him. The world-renowned master, accustomed to handle instruments in great orchestral masses, was not familiar with the smaller compositions known as chamber music, in which the Germans so excelled. He was greatly delighted when the youthful Spohr turned his attention to this form of music, and he insisted on the latter directing little concerts over and over again at his house.

In 1821 Moscheles writes in his diary, apropos of Cherubini and his artistic surroundings: "I spent the evening at Ciceri's, son in-law of Isabey, the famous painter, where I was introduced to one of the most interesting circles of artists. In the first room were assembled the most famous painters, engaged in drawing several things for their own amusement. In the midst of these was Cherubim, also drawing. I had the honor, like every one newly introduced, of having my portrait taken in caricature. Bégasse took me in hand and succeeded well. In an adjoining room were musicians and actors, among them Ponchard, Levasseur, Dugazon, Panseron, Mlle, de Munck, and Mme. Livère, of the Theatre Français. The most interesting of their performances, which I attended merely as a listener, was a vocal quartet by Cherubini, performed under his direction. Later in the evening, the whole party armed itself with larger or smaller 'mirlitons' (reed-pipe whistles), and on these small monotonous instruments, sometimes made of sugar, they played, after the fashion of Russian horn music, the overture to 'Demophon,' two frying-pans representing the drums." On the 27th of March this "mirliton" concert was repeated at

Ciceri's, and on this occasion Cherubini took an active part. Moscheles relates of that evening: "Horace Vernet entertained us with his ventriloquizing powers, M. Salmon with his imitation of a horn, and Dugazon actually with a mirliton solo. Lafont and I represented the classical music, which, after all, held its own."

The distinguished pianist, in further pleasant gossip about Cherubini, tells us of hearing the first performance of a pasticcio opera, composed by Cherubini, Paër, Berton, Boïeldieu, and Kreutzer, in honor of the christening of the Duke of Bordeaux. Of the part written by Cherubini he speaks in the warmest praise, and says quizzically of the composer: "His squeaky sharp little voice was sometimes heard in the midst of his conducting, and interrupted my state of ecstasy caused by his presence and composition."

In 1822 Cherubini became Director of the reestablished Conservatory, that institution having fallen into some decay, and displayed great administrative power and grasp of detail in bringing order out of chaos. His vigilance and experience, seconded by an able staff of professors, including the foremost musical names of France, soon made the Conservatory what it has since re? mained, the greatest musical college of the world. He was incessant in the performance of his duties, and spared neither himself nor his staff of professors to build up the institution. His spirit communicated itself both to masters and pupils. Ten o'clock every morning saw him at his office, and interviews even with the great were timed watch in hand. This law of order even prompted him to rebuke the Minister of Fine Arts severely when one day that functionary

met an appointment tardily. Fétis tells us: "To his new functions he brought the most scrupulous exactitude of duty, that spirit of order which he possessed during the whole of his life, and an entire devotion to the prosperity of the establishment. Severe and exacting toward the professors and servants as he was with himself, he brought with him little love in his connections with the artists placed under his authority." His official duties finished, this incessant worker occupied his time with original composition, or copying out the scores of other composers from memory.

Though habitually cold and severe in his manner during these latter years, there was a spring of playful tenderness beneath. One day a child of great talent was brought by his father, a poor man, to see Cherubini. The latter's first exclamation was: "This is not a nursing hospital for infants." Relenting somewhat, he questioned the boy, and soon discovered his remarkable talents. The same old man was charmed and caressed the youngster, saying, "Bravo, my little friend! But why are you here, and what can I do for you?" "A thing that is very easy, and which would make me very happy," was the reply; "put me into the Conservatory." "It's a thing done," said Cherubini; "you are one of us." He afterward said to his friends playfully: "I had to be careful about pushing the questions too far, for the baby was beginning to prove that he knew more about music than I did myself."

His merciless criticism of his pupils did not surpass his own modesty and diffidence. One day, when a symphony of Beethoven was about to be played at a concert, just prior to one of his own works, he said, "Now I am going to appear as a very small boy

indeed." The mutual affection of Cherubini and Beethoven remained unabated through life, as is shown by the touching letter written by the latter just before his death, but which Cherubini did not receive till after that event. The letter was as follows:

Vienna, March 15,1823.

Highly esteemed Sir: I joyfully take advantage of this opportunity to address you.

I have done so often in spirit, as I prize your theatrical works beyond others. The artistic world has only to lament that in Germany, at least, no new dramatic work of yours has appeared. Highly as all your works are valued by true connoisseurs, still it is a great loss to art not to possess any fresh production of your great genius for the theatre.

True art is imperishable, and the true artist feels heartfelt pleasure in grand works of genius, and that id what enchants me when I hear a new composition of yours; in fact, I take greater interest in it than in my own; in short, I love and honor you. Were it not that my continued bad health stops my coming to see you in Paris, with what exceeding delight would I discuss questions of art with you! Do not think that this is meant merely to serve as an introduction to the favor I am about to ask of you. I hope and feel sure that you do not for a moment suspect me of such base sentiments. I recently completed a grand solemn Mass, and have resolved to offer it to the various European courts, as it is not my intention to publish it at present. I have therefore asked the King of France, through the French embassy here, to subscribe to this work, and I feel certain that his Majesty would at your recommendation agree to do so.

My critical situation demands that I should not solely fix my eyes upon heaven, as is my wont; on the contrary, it would have me fix them also upon earth, here below, for the necessities of life.

Whatever may be the fate of my request to you, I shall for ever continue to love and esteem you; and you for ever remain of all my contemporaries that one whom I esteem the most.

If you should wish to do me a very great favor, you would effect this by writing to me a few lines, which would solace me much. Art unites all; how much more, then, true artists! and perhaps you may deem me worthy of being included in that number.

With the highest esteem, your friend and servant,

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN.
LUDWIG CHERUBINI.

Cherubini's admiration of the great German is indicated in an anecdote told by Professor Ella. The master rebuked a pupil who, in referring to a performance of a Beethoven symphony, dwelt mostly on the executive excellence: "Young man, let your sympathies be first wedded to the creation, and be you less fastidious of the execution; accept the interpretation, and think more of the creation of these musical works which are written for all time and all nations, models for imitation and above all criticism."

VIII.

As a man Cherubini presented himself in many different aspects. Extremely nervous, *brusque*, irritable, and absolutely independent, he was apt to offend and repel. But under his stern reserve of

character there beat a warm heart and generous sympathies. This is shown by the fact that, in spite of the unevenness of his temper, he was almost worshiped by those around him. Auber, Halévy, Berton, Boïeldieu, Méhul, Spontini, and Adam, who were so intimately associated with him, speak of him with words of the warmest affection. Halévy, indeed, rarely alluded to him without tears rushing to his eyes; and the slightest term of disrespect excited his warmest indignation. It is recorded that, after rebuking a pupil with sarcastic severity, his fine face would relax with a smile so affectionate and genial that his whilom victim could feel nothing but enthusiastic respect. Without one taint of envy in his nature, conscious of his own extraordinary powers, he was quick to recognize genius in others; and his hearty praise of the powers of his rivals shows how sound and generous the heart was under his irritability. His proneness to satire and power of epigram made him enemies, but even these yielded to the suavity and fascination which alternated with his bitter moods. His sympathies were peculiarly open for young musicians. Mendelssohn and Liszt were stimulated by his warm and encouraging praise when they first visited Paris; and even Berlioz, whose turbulent conduct in the Conservatory had so embittered him at various times, was heartily applauded when his first great mass was produced. Arnold gives us the following pleasant picture of Cherubini:

"Cherubini in society was outwardly silent, modest, unassuming, pleasing, obliging, and possessed of the finest manners. At the same time, he who did not know that he was with Cherubini would think him stern and reserved, so well did the composer know how to conceal everything, if only to avoid

ostentation. He truly shunned brag or speaking of himself. Cherubini's voice was feeble, probably from narrow-chestedness, and somewhat hoarse, but was otherwise soft and agreeable. His French was Italianized.... His head was bent forward, his nose was large and aquiline; his eyebrows were thick, black, and somewhat bushy, overshadowing his eyes. His eyes were dark, and glittered with an extraordinary brilliancy that animated in a wonderful way the whole face. A thin lock of hair came over the center of his forehead, and somehow gave to his countenance a peculiar softness."

The picture painted by Ingres, the great artist, now in the Luxembourg gallery, represents the composer with Polyhymnia in the background stretching out her hand over him. His face, framed in waving silvery hair, is full of majesty and brightness, and the eye of piercing luster. Cherubini was so gratified by this effort of the painter that he sent him a beautiful canon set to wrords of his own. Thus his latter years were spent in the society of the great artists and wits of Paris, revered by all, and recognized, after Beethoven's death, as the musical giant of Europe. Rossini, Meyerbeer, Weber, Schumann—in a word, the representatives of the most diverse schools of composition—bowed equally before this great name. Rossini, who was his antipodes in genius and method, felt his loss bitterly, and after his death sent Cherubini's portrait to his widow with these touching words: "Here, my dear madam, is the portrait of a great man, who is as young in your heart as he is in my mind."

Actively engaged as Director of the Conservatory, which he governed with consummate ability, his old age was further employed in producing that series of

great masses which rank with the symphonies of Beethoven. His creative instinct and the fire of his imagination remained unimpaired to the time of his death. Mendelssohn in a letter to Moscheles speaks of him as "that truly wonderful old man, whose genius seems bathed in immortal youth." His opera of "Ali Baba," composed at seventy-six, though inferior to his other dramatic works, is full of beautiful and original music, and was immediately produced in several of the principal capitals of Europe; and the second Requiem mass, written in his eightieth year, is one of his masterpieces.

On the 12th of March, 1842, the old composer died, surrounded by his affectionate family and friends. His fatal illness had been brought on in part by grief for the death of his son-in-law, M. Tureas, to whom he was most tenderly attached. His funeral was one of great military and civic magnificence, and royalty itself could not have been honored with more splendid obsequies. The congregation of men great in arms and state, in music, painting, and literature, who did honor to the occasion, has rarely been equaled. His own noble Requiem mass, composed the year before his death, was given at the funeral services in the church of St. Roch by the finest orchestra and voices in Europe. Similar services were held throughout Europe, and everywhere the opera-houses were draped in black. Perhaps the death of no musician ever called forth such universal exhibitions of sorrow and reverence.

Cherubini's life extended from the early part of the reign of Louis XVI. to that of Louis Philippe, and was contemporaneous with many of the most remarkable events in modern history. The energy and passion which convulsed society during his youth and early

manhood undoubtedly had much to do in stimulating that robust and virile quality in his mind which gave such character to his compositions. The fecundity of his intellect is shown in the fact that he produced four hundred and thirty works, out of which only eighty have been published. In this catalogue there are twenty-five operas and eleven masses.

As an operatic composer he laid the foundation of the modern French school. Uniting the melody of the Italian with the science of the German, his conceptions had a dramatic fire and passion which were, however, free from anything appertaining to the sensational and meretricious. His forms were indeed classically severe, and his style is defined by Adolphe Adam as the resurrection of the old Italian school, enriched by the discoveries of modern harmony. Though he was the creator of French opera as we know it now, he was free from its vagaries and extravagances. He set its model in the dramatic vigor and picturesqueness, the clean-cut forms, and the noble instrumentation which mark such masterpieces as "Faniska," "Alédée," "Les Deux Journées," and "Lodoïska." The purity, classicism, and wealth of ideas in these works have always caused them to be cited as standards of ideal excellence. The reforms in opera of which Gluck was the protagonist, and Wagner the extreme modern exponent, characterize the dramatic works of Cherubini, though he keeps them within that artistic limit which a proper regard for melodic beauty prescribes. In the power and propriety of musical declamation his operas are conceded to be without a superior. His overtures hold their place in classical music as ranking with the best ever written, and show a richness of resource and knowledge of form in treating the orchestra which his his contemporaries admitted

were only equaled by Beethoven.

Cherubini's place in ecclesiastical music is that by which he is best known to the musical public of to-day; for his operas, owing to the immense demands they make on the dramatic and vocal resources of the artist, are but rarely presented in France, Germany, and England, and never in America. They are only given where music is loved on account of its noble traditions, and not for the mere sake of idle and luxurious amusement. As a composer of masses, however, Cherubini's genius is familiar to all who frequent the services of the Roman Church. His relation to the music of Catholicism accords with that of Sebastian Bach to the music of Protestantism. Haydn, Mozart, and even Beethoven, are held by the best critics to be his inferiors in this form of composition. His richness of melody, sense of dramatic color, and great command of orchestral effects, gave him commanding power in the interpretation of religious sentiments; while an ardent faith inspired with passion, sweetness, and devotion what Place styles his "sublime visions." Miel, one of his most competent critics, writes of him in this eloquent strain: "If he represents the passion and death of Christ, the heart feels itself wounded with the most sublime emotion; and when he recounts the 'Last Judgment' the blood freezes with dread at the redoubled and menacing calls of the exterminating angel. All those admirable pictures that the Raphaels and Michael Angelos have painted with colors and the brush, Cherubini brings forth with the voice and orchestra." In brief, if Cherubini is the founder of a later school of opera, and the model which his successors have always honored and studied if they have not always followed, no less is he the chief of a later, and by common consent the

greatest, school of modern church music.

MÉHUL, SPONTINI, AND HALÉVY.

I.

The influence of Gluck was not confined to Cherubini, but was hardly less manifest in molding the style and conceptions of Méhul and Spontini,* who held prominent places in the history of the French opera.

* It is a little singular that some of the mo
distinguished names in the annals of French m
foreigners. Thus Gluck was a German, as also
while Cherubini and Spontini were Italians.

Henri Etienne Méhul was the son of a French soldier stationed at the Givet barracks, where he was born June 24, 1763. His early love of music secured for him instructions from the blind organist of the Franciscan church at that garrison town, under whom he made astonishing progress. He soon found he had outstripped the attainments of his teacher, and contrived to place himself under the tuition of the celebrated Wilhelm Hemser, who was organist at a neighboring monastery. Here Méhul spent a number of happy and useful years, studying composition with Hemser and literature with the

kind monks, who hoped to persuade their young charge to devote himself to ecclesiastical life.

Méhul's advent in Paris, whither he went at the age of sixteen, soon opened his eyes to his true vocation, that of a dramatic composer. The excitement over the contest between Gluck and Piccini was then at its height, and the youthful musician was not long in espousing the side of Gluck with enthusiasm. He made the acquaintance of Gluck accidentally, the great ehevalier interposing one night to prevent his being ejected from the theatre, into one of whose boxes Méhul had slipped without buying a ticket. Thence forward the youth had free access to the opera, and the friendship and tuition of one of the master minds of the age.

An opera, "Cora et Alonzo," had been composed at the age of twenty and accepted at the opera; but it was not till 1790 that he got a hearing in the comic opera of "Euphrasque et Coradin," composed under the direction of Gluck. This work was brilliantly successful, and "Stratonice," which anpeared two years afterward, established his reputation. The French critics describe both these early works as being equally admirable in melody, orchestral accompaniment, and dramatic effect. The stormiest year of the revolution was not favorable to operatic composition, and Méhul wrote but little music except pieces for republican festivities, much to his own disgust, for he was by no means a warm friend of the republic.

In 1797 he produced his "Le Jeune Henri," which nearly caused a riot in the theatre. The story displeased the republican audience, who hissed and hooted till the turmoil compelled the fall of the

curtain. They insisted, however, on the overture, which is one of great beauty, being performed over and over again, a compliment which has rarely been accorded to any composer. Méhul's appointment as inspector and professor in the newly organized Conservatory, at the same time with Cherubini, left him but little leisure for musical composition; but he found time to write the spectacular opera "Adrian," which was fiercely condemned by a republican audience, not as a musical failure, but because their alert and suspicious tempers suspected in it covert allusions to the dead monarchy. Even David, the painter, said he would set the torch to the opera-house rather than witness the triumph of a king. In 1806 Méhul produced the opera "Uthal," a work of striking vigor founded on an Ossianic theme, in which he made the innovation of banishing the violins from the orchestra, substituting therefor the violas.

It was in "Joseph," however, composed in 1807, that this composer vindicated his right to be called a musician of great genius, and entered fully into a species of composition befitting his grand style. Most of his contemporaries were incapable of appreciating the greatness of the work, though his gifted rival Cherubini gave it the warmest praise. In Germany it met with instant and extended success, and it is one of the few French operas of the old school which still continue to be given on the German stage. In England it is now frequently sung as an oratorio. It is on this remarkable work that Méhul's lasting reputation as a composer rests outside of his own nation. The construction of the opera of "Joseph" is characterized by admirable symmetry of form, dramatic power, and majesty of the choral and concerted passages, while the sustained beauty of the

orchestration is such as to challenge comparison with the greatest works of his contemporaries. Such at least is the verdict of Fétis, who was by no means inclined to be over-indulgent in criticising Méhul. The fault in this opera, as in all of Méhul's works, appears to have been a lack of bright and graceful melody, though in the modern tendencies of music this defect is rapidly being elevated into a virtue.

The last eight years of Méhul's life were depressed by melancholy and suffering, proceeding from pulmonary disease. He resigned his place in the Conservatory, and retired to a pleasant little estate near Paris, where he devoted himself to raising flowers, and found some solace in the society of his musical friends and former pupils, who were assiduous in their attentions. Finally becoming dangerously ill, he went to the island of Hyères to find a more genial climate. But here he pined for Paris and the old companionships, and suffered more perhaps by fretting for the intellectual cheer of his old life than he gained by balmy air and sunshine. He writes to one of his friends after a short stay at Hyères: "I have broken up all my habits; I am deprived of all my old friends; I am alone at the end of the world, surrounded by people whose language I scarcely understand; and all this sacrifice to obtain a little more sun. The air which best agrees with me is that which I breathe among you." He returned to Paris for a few weeks only, to breathe his last on October 18, 1817, aged fifty-four.

Méhul was a high-minded and benevolent man, wrapped up in his art, and singularly childlike in the practical affairs of life. Abhorring intrigue, he was above all petty jealousies, and even sacrificed the situation of chapel-master under Napoleon, because

he believed it should have been given to the greatest of his rivals, Cherubini. When he died Paris recognized his goodness as a man as well as greatness as a musician by a touching and spontaneous expression of grief, and funeral honors were given him throughout Europe. In 1822 his statue was crowned on the stage of the Grand Opera, at a performance of his "Valentine de Rohan." Notwithstanding his early death, he composed forty-two operas, and modern musicians and critics give him a notable place among those who were prominent in building up a national stage. A pupil and disciple of Gluck, a cordial co-worker with Cherubini, he contributed largely to the glory of French music, not only by his genius as a composer, but by his important labors in the reorganization of the Conservatory, that nursery which has fed so much of the highest musical talent of the world.

II.

Luigi Gaspardo Pacifico Spontini, born of peasant parents at Majolati, Italy, November 14, 1774, displayed his musical passion at an early age. Designed for holy orders from childhood, his priestly tutors could not make him study; but he delighted in the service of the church, with its orˆan and choir effects, for here his true vocation asserted itself. He was wont, too, to hide in the belfry, and revel in the roaring orchestra of metal, when the chimes were rung. On one occasion a stroke of lightning precipitated him from his dangerous perch to the floor below, and the history of music nearly lost one of its great lights. The bias of his nature was intractable, and he was at last permitted to study music, at first under the charge of his uncle Joseph, the cure of Jesi, and finally at the Naples

Conservatory, where he was entered at the age of sixteen.

His first opera, "I Puntigli delle Donne," was composed at the age of twenty-one, and performed at Rome, where it was kindly received. The French invasion unsettled the affairs of Italy, and Spontini wandered somewhat aimlessly, unable to exercise his talents to advantage till he went to Paris in 1803, where he found a large number of brother Italian musicians, and a cordial reception, though himself an obscure and untried youth. He produced several minor works on the French stage, noticeably among them the one-act opera of "Milton," in which he stepped boldly out of his Italian mannerism, and entered on that path afterward pursued with such brilliancy and boldness. Yet, though his talents began to be recognized, life was a trying struggle, and it is doubtful if he could have overcome the difficulties in his way when he was ready to produce "La Vestale," had he not enlisted the sympathies of the Empress Josephine, who loved music, and played the part of patroness as gracefully as she did all others.

By Napoleon's order "La Vestale" was rehearsed against the wish of the manager and critics of the Academy of Music, and produced December 15, 1807. Previous to this some parts of it had been performed privately at the Tuileries, and the Emperor had said: "M. Spontini, your opera abounds in fine airs and effective duets. The march to the place of execution is admirable. You will certainly have the great success you so well deserve." The imperial prediction was justified by consecutive performances of one hundred nights. His next work, "Fernand Cortez," sustained the impression of genius earned for him by its predecessor. The scene of the

revolt is pronounced by competent critics to be one of the finest dramatic conceptions in operatic music.

In 1809 Spontini married the niece of Erard, the great pianoforte-maker, and was called to the direction of the Italian opera; but he retained this position only two years, from the disagreeable conditions he had to contend with, and the cabals that were formed against him. The year 1814 witnessed the production of "Pelage," and two years later "Les Dieux Rivaux" was composed, in conjunction with Persuis, Berton, and Kreutzer; but neither work attracted much attention. The opera of "Olympic," worked out on the plan of "La Vestale" and "Cortez," was produced in 1819. Spontini was embittered by its poor success, for he had built many hopes on it, and wrought long and patiently. That he was not in his best vein, and like many other men of genius was not always able to estimate justly his own work, is undeniable; for Spontini, contrary to the opinion of his contemporaries and of posterity, regarded this as his best opera. His acceptance of the Prussian King's offer to become musical director at Berlin was the result of his chagrin. Here he remained for twenty years. "Olympic" succeeded better at Berlin, though the boisterousness of the music seems to have called out some sharp strictures even among the Berlinese, whose penchant for noisy operatic effects was then as now a butt for the satire of the musical wits. Apropos of the long run of "Olympic" at Berlin, an amusing anecdote is told on the authority of Castel-Blaze. A wealthy amateur had become deaf, and suffered much from his deprivation of the enjoyment of his favorite art. After trying many physicians, he was treated in a novel fashion by his latest doctor. "Come with me to the opera this evening," wrote down the doctor. "What's the use? I

can't hear a note," was the impatient rejoinder. "Never mind," said the other; "come, and you will see something at all events." So the twain repaired to the theatre to hear Spontini's "Olympie." All went well till one of the overwhelming finales, which happened to be played that evening more *fortissimo* than usual. The patient turned around beaming with delight, exclaiming, "Doctor, I can hear." As there was no reply, the happy patient again said, "Doctor, I tell you, you have cured me." A blank stare alone met him, and he found that the doctor was as deaf as a post, having fallen a victim to his own prescription. The German wits had a similar joke afterward at Halévy's expense. The "Punch" of Vienna said that Halévy made the brass play so loudly that the French horn was actually blown quite straight.

Among the works produced at Berlin were "Nurmahal," in 1825; "Alcidor," the same year; and in 1829, "Agnes von Hohenstaufen." Various other new works were given from time to time, but none achieved more than a brief hearing. Spontini's stiff-necked and arrogant will kept him in continual trouble, and the Berlin press aimed its arrows at him with incessant virulence: a war which the composer fed by his bitter and witty rejoinders, for he was an adept in the art of invective. Had he not been singularly adroit, he would have been obliged to leave his post. But he gloried in the disturbance he created, and was proof against the assaults of his numerous enemies, made so largely by his having come of the French school, then as now an all-sufficient cause of Teutonic dislike. Spontini's unbending intolerance, however, at last undermined his musical supremacy, so long held good with an iron hand; and an intrigue headed by Count Brühl, intendant of the Royal Theatre, at last obliged him to

resign after a rule of a score of years. His influence on the lyric theatre of Berlin, however, had been valuable, and he had the glory of forming singers among the Prussians, who until his time had thought more of cornet-playing than of beautiful and true vocalization. The Prussian King allowed him on his departure a pension of 16,000 francs.

When Spontini returned to Paris, though he was appointed member of the Academy of Fine Arts, he was received with some coldness by the musical world. He had no little difficulty in getting a production of his operas; only the Conservatory remained faithful to him, and in their hall large audiences gathered to hear compositions to which the opera-house denied its stage. New idols attracted the public, and Spontini, though burdened with all the orders of Europe, was obliged to rest in the traditions of his earlier career. A passionate desire to see his native land before death made him leave Paris in 1850, and he went to Majolati, the town of his birth, where he died after a residence of a few months. His cradle was his tomb.

III.

A well-known musical critic sums up his judgment of Halévy in these words: "If in France a contemporary of Louis XIV., an admirer of Racine, could return to us, and, full of the remembrance of his earthly career under that renowned monarch, he should wish to find the nobly pathetic, the elevated inspiration, the majestic arrangements of the olden times upon a modern stage, we would not take him to the Theatre Français, but to the Opera on the day in which one of Halévy's works was given."

Unlike Méhul and Spontini, with whom in point of

style and method Halévy must be associated, he was not in any direct sense a disciple of Gluck, but inherited the influence of the latter through his great successor Cherubini, of whom Halévy was the favorite pupil and the intimate friend. Fromental Halévy, a scion of the Hebrew race, which has furnished so many geniuses to the art world, left a deep impress on his times, not simply by his genius and musical knowledge, which was profound, varied, and accurate, but by the elevation and nobility which lifted his mark up to a higher level than that which we accord to mere musical gifts, be they ever so rich and fertile. The motive that inspired his life is suggested in his devout saying that music is an art that God has given us, in which the voices of all nations may unite their prayers in one harmonious rhythm.

Halévy was a native of Paris, born May 27, 1799. He entered the Conservatory at the age of eleven years, where he soon attracted the particular attention of Cherubini. When he was twenty the Institute awarded him the grand prize for the composition of a cantata; and he also received a government pension which enabled him to dwell at Rome for two years, assiduously cultivating his talents in composition. Halévy returned to Paris, but it was not till 1827 that he succeeded in having an opera produced. This portion of his life was full of disappointment and chilled ambitions; for, in spite of the warm friendship of Cherubini, who did everything to advance his interests, he seemed to make but slow progress in popular estimation, though a number of operas were produced.

Halévy's full recognition, however, was found in the great work of "La Juive," produced February 23,

1835, with lavish magnificence. It is said that the managers of the Opera expended 150,000 francs in putting it on the stage. This opera, which surpasses all his others in passion, strength, and dignity of treatment, was interpreted by the greatest singers in Europe, and the public reception at once assured the composer that his place in music was fixed. Many envious critics, however, declaimed against him, asserting that success was not the legitimate desert of the opera, but of its magnificent presentation. Halévy answered his detractors by giving the world a delightful comic opera, "L'Éclair," which at once testified to the genuineness of his musical inspiration and the versatility of his powers, and was received by the public with even more pleasure than "La Juive."

Halévy's next brilliant stroke (three unsuccessful works in the mean while having been written) was "La Reine de Chypre," produced in 1841. A somewhat singular fact occurred during the performance of this opera. One of the singers, every time he came to the passage,

> Ce mortel qu'on remarque
> Tient-il Plus que nous de la Parque
> Le fil?

was in the habit of fixing his eyes on a certain proscenium box wherein were wont to sit certain notabilities in politics and finance. As several of these died during the first run of the work, superstitious people thought the box was bewitched, and no one cared to occupy it. Two fine works, "Charles VI." and "Le Val d'Andorre," succeeded at intervals of a few years; and in 1849 the noble music to Æschylus's "Prometheus Bound" was written with

an idea of reproducing the supposed effects of the enharmonic style of the Greeks.

Halévy's opera of "The Tempest," written for London, and produced in 1850, rivaled the success of "La Juive." Balfe led the orchestra, and its popularity caused the basso Lablache to write the following epigram:

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The "Tempest" of Halévy
Differs from other tempests.
These rain hail,
That rains gold.
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The Academy of Fine Arts elected the composer secretary in 1854, and in the exercise of his duties, which involved considerable literary composition, Halévy showed the same elegance of style and good taste which marked his musical writings. He did not, however, neglect his own proper work, and a succession of operas, which were cordially received, proved how unimpaired and vigorous his intellectual faculties remained.

The composer's death occurred at Nice, whither he had gone on account of failing strength, March 17, 1862. His last moments were cheered by the attentions of his family and the consolations of philosophy and literature, which he dearly loved to discuss with his friends. His ruling passion displayed itself shortly before his end in characteristic fashion. Trying in vain to reach a book on the table, he said: "Can I do nothing now in time?" On the morning of his death, wishing to be turned on his bed, he said to his daughter, "Lay me down like a gamut," at each movement repeating with a soft smile, "Do, re, mi," etc., until the change was made. These were his last words.

The celebrated French critic Sainte-Beuve pays a charming tribute to Halévy, whom he knew and loved well:

"Halévy had a natural talent for writing, which he cultivated and perfected by study, by a taste for reading which he always gratified in the intervals of labor, in his study, in public conveyances—everywhere, in fine, when he had a minute to spare. He could isolate himself completely in the midst of the various noises of his family, or the conversation of the drawing-room if he had no part in it. He wrote music, poetry, and prose, and he read with imperturbable attention while people around him talked.

"He possessed the instinct of languages, was familiar with German, Italian, English, and Latin, knew something of Hebrew and Greek. He was conversant with etymology, and had a perfect passion for dictionaries. It was often difficult for him to find a word; for on opening the dictionary somewhere near the word for which he was looking, if his eye chanced to fall on some other, no matter what, he stopped to read that, then another and another, until he sometimes forgot the word he sought. It is singular that this estimable man, so fully occupied, should at times have nourished some secret sadness. Whatever the hidden wound might be, none, not even his most intimate friends, knew what it was. He never made any complaint. Halévy's nature was rich, open and communicative. He was well organized, accessible to the sweets of sociability and family joys. In fine, he had, as one may say, too many strings to his bow to be very unhappy for any length of time. To define him practically, I would say he was a bee that had not lodged himself completely

in his hive, but was seeking to make honey elsewhere too."

IV.

MÉHUL labored successfully in adapting the noble and severe style of Gluck to the changing requirements of the French stage. The turmoil and passions of the revolution had stirred men's souls to the very roots, and this influence was perpetuated and crystallized in the new forms given to French thought by Napoleon's wonderful career. Méhul's musical conceptions, which culminated in the opera of "Joseph," were characterized by a stir, a vigor, and largeness of dramatic movement, which came close to the familiar life of that remarkable period. His great rival Cherubini, on the other hand, though no less truly dramatic in fitting musical expression to thought and passion, was so austere and rigid in his ideals, so dominated by musical form and an accurate science which would concede nothing to popular prejudice and ignorance, that he won his laurels, not by force of the natural flow of popular sympathy, but by the sheer might of his genius. Cherubini's severe works made them models and foundation stones for his successors in French music; but Méhul familiarized his audiences with strains dignified yet popular, full of massive effects and brilliant combinations. The people felt the tramp of the Napoleonic armies in the vigor and movement of his measures.

Spontini embodied the same influences and characteristics in still larger degree, for his musical genius was organized on a more massive plan. Deficient in pure graceful melody alike with Méhul, he delighted in great masses of tone and vivid

orchestral coloring. His music was full of the military fire of his age, and dealt for the most part with the peculiar tastes and passions engendered by a condition of chronic warfare. Therefore dramatic movement in his operas was always of the heroic order, and never touched the more subtile and complex elements of life. Spontini added to the majestic repose and ideality of the Gluck music-drama (to use a name now naturalized in art by Wagner) the keenest dramatic vigor. Though he had a strong command of effects by his power of delineation and delicacy of detail, his prevalent tastes led him to encumber his music too often with overpowering military effects, alike tonal and scenic. Riehl, a great German critic, says: "He is more successful in the delineation of masses and groups than in the portrayal of emotional scenes; his rendering of the national struggle between the Spaniards and Mexicans in 'Cortez' is, for example, admirable. He is likewise most successful in the management of large masses in the instrumentation. In this respect he was, like Napoleon, a great tactician." In "La Vestale" Spontini attained his *chef-d'oeuvre*. Schülter in his "History of Music" gives it the following encomium: "His portrayal of character and truthful delineation of passionate emotion in this opera are masterly indeed. The subject of 'La Vestale' (which resembles that of 'Norma,' but how differently treated!) is tragic and sublime as well as intensely emotional. Julia, the heroine, a prey to guilty passion; the severe but kindly high priestess; Licinius, the adventurous lover, and his faithful friend Cinna; pious vestals, cruel priests, bold warriors, and haughty Romans, are represented with statuesque relief and finish. Both these works, 'La Vestale' (1802) and 'Cortez' (1809), ire among the

finest that have been written for the stage; they are remarkable for naturalness and sublimeness, qualities lost sight of in the noisy instrumentation of his later works."

Halévy, trained under the influences of Cherubini, was largely inspired by that great master's musical purism and reverence for the higher laws of his art. Halévy's powerful sense of the dramatic always influenced his methods and sympathies. Not being a composer of creative imagination, however, the melodramatic element is more prominent than the purely tragic or comic. His music shows remarkable resources in the production of brilliant and captivating though always tasteful effects, which rather please the senses and the fancy than stir the heart and imagination. Here and there scattered through his works, notably so in "La Juive," are touches of emotion and grandeur; but Halévy must be characterized as a composer who is rather distinguished for the brilliancy, vigor, and completeness of his art than for the higher creative power, which belongs in such preeminent degree to men like Rossini and Weber, or even to Auber, Meyerbeer, and Gounod. It is nevertheless true that Halévy composed works which will retain a high rank in French art. "La Juive," "Guido," "La Reine de Chypre," and "Charles VI." are noble lyric dramas, full of beauties, though it is said they can never be seen to the best advantage off the French stage. Halévy's genius and taste in music bear much the same relation to the French stage as do those of Verdi to the Italian stage; though the former composer is conceded by critics to be a greater purist in musical form, if he rarely equals the Italian composer in the splendid bursts of musical passion with which the latter redeems so much that is

meretricious and false, and the charming melody which Verdi shares with his countrymen.

BOÏELDIEU AND AUBER.

I.

The French school of light opera, founded by Givtry, reached its greatest perfection in the authors of "La Dame Blanche" and "Fra Diavolo," though to the former of these composers must be accorded the peculiar distinction of having given the most perfect example of this style of composition. François Adrien Boïeldieu, the scion of a Norman family, was born at Rouen, December 16, 1775. He received his early musical training at the hands of Broche, a great musician and the cathedral organist, but a drunkard and brutal taskmaster. At the age of sixteen he had become a good pianist and knew something of composition. At all events his passionate love of the theatre prompted him to try his hand at an opera, which was actually performed at Rouen. The revolution which made such havoc with the clergy and their dependents ruined the Boïeldieu family (the elder Boïeldieu had been secretary of the archiépiscopal diocese), and young François, at the age of nineteen, was set adrift on the world, his heart full of hope and his ambition bent on Paris, whither he set his feet. Paris, however, proved a stern stepmother at the outset, as she always has been to

the struggling and unsuccessful. He was obliged to tune pianos for his living, and was glad to sell his brilliant *chansons*, which afterward made a fortune for his publisher, for a few francs apiece.

Several years of hard work and bitter privation finally culminated in the acceptance of an opera, "La Famille Suisse," at the Théâtre Faydeau in 1796, where it was given on alternate nights with Cherubini's "Médée." Other operas followed in rapid succession, among which may be mentioned "La Dot de Suzette" (1798) and "Le Calife de Bagdad" (1800). The latter of these was remarkably popular, and drew from the severe Cherubim the following rebuke: "Malheureux! Are you not ashamed of such undeserved triumph?" Boïeldieu took the brusque criticism meekly and preferred a request for further instruction from Cherubini—a proof of modesty and good sense quite remarkable in one who had attained recognition as a favorite with the musical public. Boïeldieu's three years' studies under the great Italian master were of much service, for his next work, "Ma Tante Aurore," produced in 1803, showed noticeable artistic progress.

It was during this year that Boïeldieu, goaded by domestic misery (for he had married the danseuse Clotilde Mafleuray, whose notorious infidelity made his name a byword), exiled himself to Russia, even then looked on as an El Dorado for the musician, where he spent eight years as conductor and composer of the Imperial Opera. This was all but a total eclipse in his art-life, for he did little of note during the period of his St. Petersburg career.

He returned to Paris in 1811, where he found great changes. Méhul and Cherubini, disgusted with the

public, kept an obstinate silence; and Nicolo was not a dangerous rival. He set to work with fresh zeal, and one of his most charming works, "Jean de Paris," produced in 1812, was received with a storm of delight. This and "La Dame Blanche" are the two masterpieces of the composer in refined humor, masterly delineation, and sustained power both of melody and construction. The fourteen years which elapsed before Boïeldieu's genius took a still higher flight were occupied in writing works of little value except as names in a catalogue. The long-expected opera "La Dame Blanche" saw the light in 1825, and it is to-day a stock opera in Europe, one Parisian theatre alone having given it nearly 2,000 times. Boïeldieu's latter years were uneventful and unfruitful. He died in 1834 of pulmonary disease, the germs of which were planted by St. Petersburg winters. "Jean de Paris" and "La Dame Blanche" are the two works, out of nearly thirty operas, which the world cherishes as masterpieces.

II.

Daniel François Esprit Auber was born at Caen, Normandy, January 29, 1784. He was destined by his parents for a mercantile career, and was articled to a French firm in London to perfect himself in commercial training. As a child he showed his passion and genius for music, a fact so noticeable in the lives of most of the great musicians. He composed ballads and romances at the age of eleven, and during his London life was much sought after as a musical prodigy alike in composition and execution. In consequence of the breach of the treaty of Amiens in 1804, he was obliged to return to Paris, and we hear no more of the counting-room as a part of his life. His resetting of an old libretto in 1811

attracted the attention of Cherubini, who impressed himself so powerfully on French music and musicians, and the master offered to superintend his further studies, a chance eagerly seized by Auber. To the instruction of Cherubini Auber owed his mastery over the technical difficulties of his art. Among the pieces written at this time was a mass for the Prince of Chimay, of which the prayer was afterward transferred to "Masaniello." The comic opera "Le Séjour Militaire," produced in 1813, when Auber was thirty, was really his début as a composer. It was coldly received, and it was not till the loss of private fortune set a sharp spur to his creative activity that he set himself to serious work. "La Bergère Châtelaine," produced in 1820, was his first genuine success, and equal fortune attended "Emma" in the following season.

The duration and climax of Auber's musical career were founded on his friendship and, artistic alliance with Scribe, one of the most fertile librettists and playwrights of modern times. To this union, which lasted till Scribe's death, a great number of operas, comic and serious, owe their existence: not all of equal value, but all evincing the apparently inexhaustible productive genius of the joint authors. The works on which Auber's claims to musical greatness rest are as follows: "Leicester," 1822; "Le Maçon," 1825, the composer's *chef-d'ouvre* in comic opera; "La Muette de Portici," otherwise "Masaniello," 1828; "Fra Piavolo," 1830; "Lestocq," 1835; "Le Cheval do Ihonze," 1835; "L'Ambassadrice," 1836; "Le Domino Noir," 1837; "Les Diamants de la Couronne," 1841; "Carlo Braschi," 1842; "Haydée," 1847; "L'Enfant Prodigue," 1850; "Zerline," 1851, written for Madame Alboni; "Manon Lescaut," 1856; "La Fiancée du Roi de Garbe," 1867; "Le Premier Jour de

Bonheur," 1868; and "Le Rêve d'Amour," 1869. The last two works were composed after Auber had passed his eightieth year.

The indifference of this Anacreon of music to renown is worthy of remark. He never attended the performance of his own pieces, and disdained applause. The highest and most valued distinctions were showered on him; orders, jeweled swords, diamond snuffboxes, were poured in from all the courts of Europe. Innumerable invitations urged him to visit other capitals, and receive honor from imperial hands. But Auber was a true Parisian, and could not be induced to leave his beloved city. He was a Member of the Institute, Commander of the Legion of Honor, and Cherubini's successor as Director of the Conservatory. He enjoyed perfect health up to the day of his death in 1871. Assiduous in his duties at the Conservatory, and active in his social relations, which took him into the most brilliant circles of an extended period, covering the reigns of Napoleon I., Charles X., Louis Philippe, and Napoleon III., he yet always found time to devote several hours a day to composition. Auber was a small, delicate man, yet distinguished in appearance, and noted for wit. His *bons mots* were celebrated. While directing a musical *soirée* when over eighty, a gentleman having taken a white hair from his shoulder, he said laughingly, "This hair must belong to some old fellow who passed near me."

A good anecdote is told *à propos* of an interview of Auber with Charles X. in 1830. "Masaniello," a bold and revolutionary work, had just been produced, and stirred up a powerful popular ferment. "Ah, M. Auber," said the King, "you have no idea of the good your work has done me." "How, sire?" "All

revolutions resemble each other. To sing one is to provoke one. What can I do to please you?" "Ah, sire! I am not ambitious." "I am disposed to name you director of the court concerts. Be sure that I shall remember you. But," added he, taking the artist's arm with a cordial and confidential air, "from this day forth you understand me well, M. Auber, I expect you to bring out the 'Muette' but *very seldom*." It is well known that the Brussels riots of 1830, which resulted in driving the Dutch out of the country, occurred immediately after a performance of this opera, which thus acted the part of "Lillibulero" in English political annals. It is a striking coincidence that the death of the author of this revolutionary inspiration, May 13, 1871, was partly caused by the terrors of the Paris Commune.

III.

Boïeldieu and Auber are by far the most brilliant representatives of the French school of Opéra Comique. The work of the former which shows his genius at its best is "La Dame Blanche." It possesses in a remarkable degree dramatic *verve*, piquancy of rhythm, and beauty of structure. Mr. Franz Hueffer speaks of this opera as follows:

"Peculiar to Boïeldieu is a certain homely sweetness of melody which proves its kinship to that source of all truly national music, the popular song. The 'Dame Blanche' might be considered as the artistic continuation of the *chanson*, in the same sense as Weber's 'Der Freischtitz' has been called a dramatized *Volkslied*. With regard to Boïeldieu's work, this remark indicates at the same time a strong development of what has been described as the 'amalgamating force of French art and culture'; for it

must be borne in mind that the subject treated is Scotch. The plot is a compound of two of Scott's novels: the 'Monastery' and 'Guy Mannering.' Julian, *alias* George Brown, comes to his paternal castle unknown to himself. He hears the songs of his childhood, which awaken old memories in him; but he seems doomed to misery and disappointment, for on the day of his return his hall and his broad acres are to become the property of a villain, the unfaithful steward of his own family. Here is a situation full of gloom and sad foreboding. But Scribe and Boïeldieu knew better. Their hero is a dashing cavalry officer, who makes love to every pretty woman he comes across, the 'White Lady of Avenel' among the number. Yet no one who has witnessed the impersonation of George Brown by the great Roger can have failed to be impressed with the grace and noble gallantry of the character."

The tune of "Robin Adair," introduced by Boïeldieu and described as "le chant ordinaire de la tribu d'Avenel," would hardly be recognized by a genuine Scotchman; but what it loses in homely vigor it has gained in sweetness. The musician's taste is always gratified in Boïeldieu's two great comic operas by the grace and finish of the instrumentation, and the carefully composed *ensembles*, while the public is delighted with the charming ballads and songs. The airs of "La Dame Blanche" are more popular in classic Germany than those of any other opera. Boïeldieu may then be characterized as the composer who carried the French operetta to its highest development, and endowed it in the fullest sense with all the grace, sparkle, dramatic symmetry, and gamesome touch so essentially the heritage of the nation.

Auber's position in art may be defined as that of the last great representative of French comic opera, the legitimate successor of Boïeldieu, whom he surpasses in refinement and brilliancy of individual effects, while he is inferior in simplicity, breadth, and that firm grasp of details which enables the composer to blend all the parts into a perfect whole. In spite of the fact that "La Muette," Auber's greatest opera, is a romantic and serious work, full of bold strokes of genius that astonish no less than they please, he must be held to be essentially a master in the field of operatic comedy. In the great opera to which allusion has been made the passions of excited public feeling have their fullest sway, and heroic sentiments of love and devotion are expressed in a manner alike grand and original. The traditional forms of the opera are made to expand with the force of the feeling bursting through them. But this was the sole flight of Auber into the higher regions of his art, the offspring of the thoroughly revolutionized feeling of the time (1828), which within two years shook Europe with such force. Aside from this outcome of his Berserker mood, Auber is a charming exponent of the grace, brightness, and piquancy of French society and civilization. If rarely deep, he is never dull, and no composer has given the world more elegant and graceful melodies of the kind which charm the drawing-room and furnish a good excuse for young-lady pianism.

The following sprightly and judicious estimate of Auber by one of the ablest of modern critics, Henry Chorley, in the main lixes him in his right place:

"He falls short of his mark in situations of profound pathos (save perhaps in the sleep-song of 'Masaniello'). He is greatly behind his Italian

brethren in those mad scenes which they so largely affect. He is always light and piquant for voices, delicious in his treatment of the orchestra, and at this moment of writing—though I believe the patriarch of opera-writers (born, it is said, in 1784), having begun to compose at an age when other men have died exhausted by precocious labor—is perhaps the lightest-hearted, lightest-handed man still pouring out fragments of pearl and spangles of pure gold on the stage.... With all this it is remarkable as it is unfair, that among musicians—when talk is going around, and this person praises that portentous piece of counterpoint, and the other analyzes some new chord the uoliness of which has led to its being neglected by former composers—the name of this brilliant man is hardly if ever heard at all. His is the next name among the composers belonging to the last thirty years which should be heard after that of Rossini, the number and extent of the works produced by him taken into account, and with these the beauties which they contain."

MEYERBEER.

I.

Few great names in art have been the occasion of such diversity of judgment as Giacomo Meyerbeer, whose works fill so large a place in French music. By one school of critics he is lauded beyond all measure

as one whose scientific skill and gorgeous orchestration are only equaled by his richness of melody and genius for dramatic and scenic effects; "by far the greatest composer of recent years;" by another class we hear him stigmatized as "the very caricature of the universal Mozart... the Cosmopolitan Jew, who hawks his wares among all nations indifferently, and does his best to please customers of every kind." The truth lies between the two, as is wont to be the case in such extremes of opinion. Meyerbeer's remarkable talent so nearly approaches genius as to make the distinction a difficult one. He can not be numbered among those great creative artists who by force of individuality have molded musical epochs and left an undying imprint on their own and succeeding ages. On the other hand, his remarkable power of combining the resources of the lyric stage in a grand mosaic of all that can charm the eye and car, of wedding rich and gorgeous music with splendid spectacle, gives him a unique place in music; for, unlike Wagner, whose ideas of stage necessities are no less exacting, Meyerbeer aims at no reforms in lyric music, but only to develop the old forms to their highest degree of effect, under conditions that shall gratify the general artistic sense. To accomplish this, he spares no means either in or out of music. Though a German, there is but little of the Teutonic *genre* in the music of Weber's fellow pupil. When at the outset he wrote for Italy, he showed but little of that easy Assomption of the genius of Italian art which many other foreign composers have attained. It was not till he formed his celebrated art partnership with Scribe, the greatest of librettists, and succeeded in opening the gates of the Grand Opera of Paris with all its resources, more vast than exist anywhere else, that

Meyerbeer found his true vocation, the production of elaborate dramas in music of the eclectic school. He inaugurated no clearly defined tendencies in his art; he distinctively belongs to no national school of music; but his long and important connection with the French lyric stage classifies him unmistakably with the composers of this nation.

The subject of this sketch belonged to a family of marked ability. Jacob Beer was a rich Jewish banker of Berlin, highly honored for his robust intellect and scholarly culture as well as his wealth. William, one of the sons, became a distinguished astronomer; another, Michael, achieved distinction as a dramatic poet; while the eldest, Jacob, was the composer, who gained his renown under the Italianized name of Giacomo Meyerbeer, a part of the surname having been adopted from that of the rich banker Meyer, who left the musician a great fortune.

Meyerbeer was born at Berlin, September 5, 1794, and was a musical prodigy from his earliest years. When only four years old he would repeat on the piano the airs he heard from the hand-organs, composing his own accompaniment. At five he took lessons of Lanska, a pupil of Clementi, and at six he made his appearance at a concert. Three years afterward the critics spoke of him as one of the best pianists in Berlin. He studied successively under the greatest masters of the time, Clemcnti, Bernhard Anselm Weber, and Abbé Vogler. While in the latter's school at Darmstadt, he had for fellow pupils Carl von Weber, Winter, and Gansbachcr. Every morning the abbé called together his pupils after mass, gave them some theoretical instruction, then assigned each one a theme for composition. There was great emulation and friendship between Meyerbeer and

Weber, which afterward cooled, however, owing to Weber's disgust at Meyerbeer's lavish catering to an extravagant taste. Weber's severe and bitter criticisms were not forgiven by the Franco-German composer.

Meyerbeer's first work was the oratorio "Gott und die Natur," which was performed before the Grand Duke with such success as to gain for him the appointment of court composer. Meyerbeer's concerts at Darmstadt and Berlin were brilliant exhibitions; and Moscheles, no mean judge, has told us that if Meyerbeer had devoted himself to the piano, no performer in Europe could have surpassed him. By advice of Salieri, whom Meyerbeer met in Vienna, he proceeded to Italy to study the cultivation of the voice; for he seems in early life to have clearly recognized how necessary it is for the operatic composer to understand this, though, in after-years, he treated the voice as ruthlessly in many of his most important arias and scenas as he would a brass instrument. He arrived in Vienna just as the Rossini madness was at its height, and his own blood was fired to compose operas *à la Rossini* for the Italian theatres. So he proceeded with prodigious industry to turn out operas. In 1818 he wrote "Romilda e Costanza" for Padua; in 1819, "Semiramide" for Turin; in 1820, "Emma di Resburgo" for Venice; in 1822, "Margherita d'Anjou" for Milan; and in 1823, "L'Esule di Granata," also for Milan. These works of the composer's 'prentice hand met with the usual fate of the production of the thousand and one musicians who pour forth operas in unremitting flow for the Italian theatres; but they were excellent drill for the future author of "Robert le Diable" and "Les Huguenots." On returning to Germany Meyerbeer was very sarcastically criticised on the one side as a

fugitive from the ranks of German music, on the other as an imitator of Rossini.

Meyerbeer returned to Venice, and in 1824 brought out "Il Crociato in Egitto" in that city, an opera which made the tour of Europe, and established a reputation for the author as the coming rival of Rossini, no one suspecting from what Meyerbeer had then accomplished that he was about to strike boldly out in a new direction. "II Crociato" was produced in Paris in 1825, and the same year in London. In the latter city, Veluti, the last of the male sopranists, was one of the principal singers in the opera; and it was said by some of the ill-natured critics that curiosity to see and hear this singer of a peculiar kind, of whom it was said, "Non vir sed Veluti," had as much to do with the success of the opera as its merits. Lord Mount Edgcumbe, however, an excellent critic, wrote of it "as quite of the new school, but not copied from its founder, Rossini; original, odd, flighty, and it might be termed fantastic, but at times beautiful. Here and there most delightful melodies and harmonies occurred, but it was unequal, solos being as rare as in all the modern operas." This was the last of Meyerbeer's operas written in the Italian style. In 1827 the composer married, and for several years lived a quiet, secluded life. The loss of his first two children so saddened him as to concentrate his attention for a while on church music. During this period he composed only a "Stabat," a "Miserere," a "Te Deum," and eight of Klopstock's songs. But he was preparing for that new departure on which his reputation as a great composer now rests, and which called forth such bitter condemnation on the one hand, such thunders of eulogy on the other. His old fellow pupil, Weber, wrote of him in after-years: "He prostituted his

profound, admirable, and serious German talent for the applause of the crowd which he ought to have despised." And Mendelssohn wrote to his father in words of still more angry disgust: "When in 'Robert le Diable' nuns appear one after the other and endeavor to seduce the hero, till at length the lady abbess succeeds; when the hero, aided by a magic branch, gains access to the sleeping apartment of his lady, and throws her down, forming a tableau which is applauded here, and will perhaps be applauded in Germany; and when, after that, she implores for mercy in an aria; when, in another opera, a girl undresses herself, singing all the while that she will be married to-morrow, it may be effective, but I find no music in it. For it is vulgar, and if such is the taste of the day, and therefore necessary, I prefer writing sacred music."

II.

"Robert le Diable" was produced at the Académie Royale in 1831, and inaugurated the brilliant reign of Dr. Véron as manager. The bold innovations, the powerful situations, the daring methods of the composer, astonished and delighted Paris, and the work was performed more than a hundred consecutive times. The history of "Robert le Diable" is in some respects curious. It was originally written for the Vontadour Theatre, devoted to comic opera; but the company were found unable to sing the difficult music. Meyerbeer was inspired by Weber's "Der Freischtitz" to attempt a romantic, semi-fantastic legendary opera, and trod very closely in the footsteps of his model. It was determined to so alter the libretto and extend and elaborate the music as to fit it for the stage of the Grand Opera. MM. Scribe and Delavigne, the librettists, and Meyerbeer, devoted busy days and nights to hurrying on the work. The whole opera was remodeled, recitative substituted for dialogue, and one of the most important characters,—Rainibaud, cut out in the fourth and fifth acts—a suppression which is claimed to have befogged a very clear and intelligible plot. Highly suggestive in its present state of Weber's opera, the opera of "Robert le Diable" is said to have been marvelously similar to "Der Freischtitz" in the original form, though inferior in dignity of motive.

Paris was all agog with interest at the first production. The critics had attended the rehearsals, and it was understood that the libretto, the music, and the ballet were full of striking interest. Nourrit played the part of *Robert*; Levasseur, *Bertram*; Mme. Cinti Damoreau, *Isabelle*; and Mile. Dorus, *Alice*. The

greatest dancers of the age were in the ballet and the brilliant Taglioni led the band of resuscitated nuns. Ilabeneck was conductor, and everything had been done in the way of scenery and costumes. The success was a remarkable one, and Meyerbeer's name became famous throughout Europe.

Dr. Véron, in his "Mémoires d'un Bourgeois de Paris," describes a thrilling yet ludicrous accident that occurred on the first night's performance. After the admirable trio, which is the *d'enoûment* of the work, Levasseur, who personated Bertram, sprang through the trap to rejoin the kingdom of the dead, whence he came so mysteriously. *Robert*, on the other hand, had to remain on the earth, a converted man, and destined to happiness in marriage with his princess, *Isabelle*. Nourrit, the *Robert* of the performance, misled by the situation and the fervor of his own feelings, threw himself into the trap, which was not properly set. Fortunately the mattresses beneath had not all been removed, or the tenor would have been killed, a doom which those on the stage who saw the accident expected. The audience supposed it was part of the opera, and the people on the stage were full of terror and lamentation, when Nourrit appeared to calm their fears. Mile. Dorus burst into tears of joy, and the audience, recognizing the situation, broke into shouts of applause.

The opera was brought out in London the same year, with nearly the same cast, but did not excite so much enthusiasm as in Paris. Lord Mount Edgcumbe, who represented the connoisseurs of the old school, expressed the then current opinion of London audiences: "Never did I see a more disagreeable or disgusting performance. The sight of the resurrection

of a whole convent of nuns, who rise from their graves and begin dancing like so many bacchantes, is revolting; and a sacred service in a church, accompanied by an organ on the stage, not very decorous. Neither does the music of Meyerbeer compensate for a fable which is a tissue of nonsense and improbability."*

* Yet Lord Mount Edgcumbe is inconsistent enc
ardent admirer of Mozart's "Zauberflote."

M. Véron was so delighted with the great success of "Robert" that he made a contract with Meyerbeer for another grand opera, "Les Huguenots," to be completed by a certain date. Meanwhile, the failing health of Mme. Meyerbeer obliged the composer to go to Italy, and work on the opera was deferred, thus causing him to lose thirty thousand francs as the penalty of his broken contract. At length, after twenty-eight rehearsals, and an expense of more than one hundred and sixty thousand francs in preparation, "Les Huguenots" was given to the public, February 26, 1836. Though this great work excited transports of enthusiasm in Paris, it was interdicted in many of the cities of Southern Europe on account of the subject being a disagreeable one to ardent and bigoted Catholics. In London it has always been the most popular of Meyerbeer's three great operas, owing perhaps partly to the singing of Mario and Grisi, and more lately of Titiens and Giuglini.

When Spontini resigned his place as chapel-master at the Court of Berlin, in 1832, Meyerbeer succeeded him. He wrote much music of an accidental character in his new position, but a slumber seems to have fallen on his greater creative faculties. The German atmosphere was not favorable to the fruitfulness of

Meyerbeer's genius. He seems to have needed the volatile and sparkling life of Paris to excite him into full activity. Or perhaps he was not willing to produce one of his operas, with their large dependence on élaborât e splendor of production, away from the Paris Grand Opera. During Meyerbeer's stay in Berlin he introduced Jenny Lind to the Berlin public, as he afterward did indeed to Paris, her *début* there being made in the opening performance of "Das Feldlager in Schlesien," afterward remodeled into "L'Étoile du Nord."

Meyerbeer returned to Paris in 1849, to present the third of his great operas, "Le Prophète." It was given with Roger, Viardot-Garcia, and Castellan in the principal characters. Mme. Viardot-Garcia achieved one of her greatest dramatic triumphs in the difficult part of *Fides*. In London the opera also met with splendid success, having, as Chorley tells us, a great advantage over the Paris presentation in "the remarkable personal beauty of Signor Mario, whose appearance in his coronation robes reminded one of some bishop-saint in a picture by Van Eyck or Durer, and who could bring to bear a play of feature without grimace into the scene of false fascination, entirely beyond the reach of the clever French artist Roger, who originated the character."

"L'Étoile du Nord" was given to the public February 16, 1854. Up to this time the opera of "Robert" had been sung three hundred and thirty-three times, "Les Huguenots" two hundred and twenty-two, and "Le Prophète" a hundred and twelve. The "Pardon de Ploërmel," also known as "Dinorah," was offered to the world of Paris April 4, 1859. Both these operas, though beautiful, are inferior to his other works.

III.

Meyerbeer, a man of handsome private fortune, like Mendelssohn, made large sums by his operas, and was probably the wealthiest of the great composers. He lived a life of luxurious ease, and yet labored with intense zeal a certain number of hours each day. A friend one day begged him to take more rest, and he answered smilingly, "If I should leave work, I should rob myself of my greatest pleasure; for I am so accustomed to work that it has become a necessity." Probably few composers have been more splendidly rewarded by contemporary fame and wealth, or been more idolized by their admirers. No less may it be said that few have been the object of more severe criticism. His youth was spent amid the severest classic influences of German music, and the spirit of romanticism and nationality, which blossomed into such beautiful and characteristic works as those composed by his friend and fellow pupil Weber, also found in his heart an eloquent echo. But Meyerbeer resolutely disenthralled himself from what he appeared to have regarded as trammels, and followed out an ambition to be a cosmopolitan composer. In pursuit of this purpose he divested himself of that fine flavor of individuality and devotion to art for its own sake which marks the highest labors of genius. He can not be exempted from the criticism that he regarded success and the immediate plaudits of the public as the only satisfactory rewards of his art. He had but little of the lofty content which shines out through the vexed and clouded lives of such souls as Beethoven and Gluck in music, of Bacon and Milton in literature, who looked forward to immortality of fame as the best vindication of their work. A marked characteristic of the man was a secret dissatisfaction

with all that he accomplished, making him restless and unhappy, and extremely sensitive to criticism. With this was united a tendency at times to oscillate to the other extreme of vaingloriousness. An example of this was a reply to Rossini one night at the opera when they were listening to "Robert le Diable." The "Swan of Pesaro" was a warm admirer of Meyerbeer, though the latter was a formidable rival, and his works had largely replaced those of the other in popular repute. Sitting together in the same box, Rossini, in his delight at one portion of the opera, cried out in his impulsive Italian way, "If you can write anything to surpass this, I will undertake to dance upon my head." "Well, then," said Meyerbeer, "you had better soon commence practicing, for I have just commenced the fourth act of 'Les Huguenots.'" Well might he make this boast, for into the fourth act of his musical setting of the terrible St. Bartholomew tragedy he put the finest inspirations of his life.

Singular to say, though he himself represented the very opposite pole of art spirit and method, Mozart was to him the greatest of his predecessors. Perhaps it was this very fact, however, which was at the root of his sentiment of admiration for the composer of "Don Giovanni" and "Le Nozze di Figaro." A story is told to the effect that Meyerbeer was once dining with some friends, when a discussion arose respecting Mozart's position in the musical hierarchy. Suddenly one of the guests suggested that "certain beauties of Mozart's music had become stale with age. I defy you," he continued, "to listen to 'Don Giovanni' after the fourth act of the 'Huguenots.'" "So much the worse, then, for the fourth act of the 'Huguenots,'" said Meyerbeer, furious at the clumsy compliment paid to his own work at the expense of his idol.

Critics wedded to the strict German school of music never forgave Meyerbeer for his dereliction from the spirit and influences of his nation, and the prominence which he gave to melodramatic effects and spectacular show in his operas. Not without some show of reason, they cite this fact as proof of poverty of musical invention. Mendelssohn, who was habitually generous in his judgment, wrote to the poet Immermann from Paris of "Robert le Diable": "The subject is of the romantic order; i.e., the devil appears in it (which suffices the Parisians for romance and imagination). Nevertheless, it is very bad, and, were it not for two brilliant seduction scenes, there would, not even be effect.... The opera does not please me; it is devoid of sentiment and feeling.... People admire the music, but where there is no warmth and truth, I can not even form a standard of criticism."

Schlüter, the historian of music, speaks even more bitterly of Meyerbeer's irreverence and theatric sensationalism: "'Les Huguenots' and the far weaker production 'Le Prophète' are, we think, all the more reprehensible (nowadays especially, when too much stress is laid on the subject of a work, and consequently on the libretto of an opera), because the Jew has in these pieces ruthlessly dragged before the footlights two of the darkest pictures in the annals of Catholicism, nor has he scrupled to bring high mass and chorale on the boards."

Wagner, the last of the great German composers, can not find words too scathing and bitter to mark his condemnation of Meyerbeer. Perhaps his extreme aversion finds its psychological reason in the circumstance that his own early efforts were in the sphere of Meyerbeer and Halé-vy, and from his

present point of view he looks back with disgust on what he regards as the sins of his youth. The fairest of the German estimates of the composer, who not only cast aside the national spirit and methods, but offended his countrymen by devoting himself to the French stage, is that of Vischer, an eminent writer on aasthetics: "Notwithstanding the composer's remarkable talent for musical drama, his operas contain sometimes too much, sometimes too little—too much in the subject-matter, external adornment, and effective 'situations'—too little in the absence of poetry, ideality, and sentiment (which are essential to a work of art), as well as in the unnatural and constrained combinations of the plot."

But despite the fact that Meyerbeer's operas contain such strange scenes as phantom nuns dancing, girls bathing, sunrise, skating, gunpowder explosions, a king playing the flute, and the prima donna leading a goat, dramatic music owes to him new accents of genuine pathos and an addition to its resources of rendering passionate emotions. Through much that is merely showy and meretricious there come frequent bursts of genuine musical power and energy, which give him a high and unmistakable rank, though he has had less permanent influence in molding and directing the development of musical art than any other composer who has had so large a place in the annals of his time.

The last twelve years of Meyerbeer's life were spent, with the exception of brief residences in Germany and Italy, in Paris, the city of his adoption, where all who were distinguished in art and letters paid their court to him. When he was seized with his fatal illness he was hard at work on "L'Africaine," for which Scribe had also furnished the libretto. His

heart was set on its completion, and his daily prayer was that his life might be spared to finish it. But it was not to be. He died May 2, 1864. The same morning Rossini called to inquire after the health of the sick man, equally his friend and rival. When he heard the sad news he sank into a fit of profound despondency and grief, from which he did not soon recover. All Paris mourned with him, and even Germany forgot its critical dislike to join in regret at the loss of one who, with all his defects, was so great an artist and so good a man.

Meyerbeer seems to have been greatly afraid of being buried alive. In his pocketbook after his death was found a paper giving directions that small bells should be attached to his hands and feet, and that his body should be carefully watched for four days, after which it should be sent to Berlin to be interred by the side of his mother, to whom he had been most tenderly attached.

The composer was the intimate friend of most of the celebrities of his time in art and literature. Victor Hugo, Lamartine, George Sand, Balzac, Alfred de Musset, Delacroix, Jules Janin, and Théophile Gautier were his familiar intimates; and the reunions between these and other gifted men, who then made Paris so intellectually brilliant, are charmingly described by Liszt and Moscheles. Meyerbeer's correspondence, which was extensive, deserves publication, as it displays marked literary faculty, and is full of bright sympathetic thought, vigorous criticism, and playful fancy. The following letter to Jules Janin, written from Berlin a few years before his death, gives some pleasant insight into his character:

Your last letter was addressed to me at Konigsberg; but I was in Berlin working—working away like a young man, despite my seventy years, which somehow certain people, with a peculiar generosity, try to put upon me. As I am not at Konigsberg, where I am to arrange for the Court concert for the eighteenth of this month, I have now leisure to answer your letter, and will immediately confess to you how greatly I was disappointed that you were so little interested in Rameau; and yet Rameau was always the bright star of your French opera, as well as your master in the music. He remained to you after Lulli, and it was he who prepared the way for the Chevalier Gluck: therefore his family have a right to expect assistance from the Parisians, who on several occasions have cared for the descendants of Racine and the grandchildren of the great Corneille. If I had been in Paris, I certainly would have given two hundred francs for a seat; and I take this opportunity to beg you to hand that sum to the poor family, who can not fail to be unhappy in their disappointment. At the same time I send you a power of attorney for M. Guyot, by which I renounce all claims to the parts of my operas which may be represented at the benefit for the celebrated and unfortunate Rameau family. Why will you not come to Konigsberg at the festival? Why, in other words, are you not in Berlin? What splendid music we have in preparation! As to myself, it is not only a source of pleasure to me, but I feel it a duty, in the position I hold, to compose a grand march, to be performed at Konigsberg while the royal procession passes from the castle into the church, where the ceremony of crowning is to take place. I will even compose a hymn, to be executed on the day that our king and master returns to his good Berlin. Besides, I have

promised to write an overture for the great concert of the four nations, which the directors of the London exhibition intend to give at the opening of the same, next spring, in the Crystal Palace. All this keeps me back: it has robbed me of my autumn, and will also take a good part of next spring; but with the help of God, dear friend, I hope we shall see each other again next year, free from all cares, in the charming little town of Spa, listening to the babbling of its waters and the rustling of its old gray oaks. Truly your friend, Meyerbeer.

IV.

Meyerbeer's operas are so intricate in their elements, and travel so far out of the beaten track of precedent and rule, that it is difficult to clearly describe their characteristics in a few words. His original flow of melody could not have been very rich, for none of his tunes have become household words, and his excessive use of that element of opera which has nothing to do with music, as in the case of Wagner, can have but one explanation. It is in the treatment of the orchestra that he has added most largely to the genuine treasures of music. His command of color in tone-painting and power of dramatic suggestion have rarely been equaled, and never surpassed. His genius for musical rhythm is the most marked element in his power. This is specially noticeable in his dance music, which is very bold, brilliant, and voluptuous. The vivacity and grace of the ballets in his operas save more than one act which otherwise would be insufferably heavy and tedious. It is not too much to say that the most spontaneous side of his creative fancy is found in these affluent, vigorous, and stirring measures.

Meyerbeer appears always to have been uncertain of himself and his work. There was little of that masterly prevision of effect in his mind which is one of the attributes of the higher imagination. His operas, though most elaborately constructed, were often entirely modified and changed in rehearsal, and some of the finest scenes both in the dramatic and musical sense were the outcome of some happy accidental suggestion at the very last moment. "Robert," "Les Huguenots," "Le Prophète," in the forms we have them, are quite different from those in which they were first cast. These operas have therefore been called "the most magnificent patchwork in the history of art," though this is a harsh phrasing of the fact, which somewhat outrides justice. Certain it is, however, that Meyerbeer was largely indebted to the chapter of accidents.

The testimony of Dr. Véron, who was manager of the Grand Opera during the most of the composer's brilliant career, is of great interest, as illustrating this trait of Meyerbeer's composition. He tells us in his "Mémoires," before alluded to, that "Robert" was made and remade before its final production. The ghastly but effective color of the resuscitation scene in the graveyard of the ruined convent was a change wrought by a stage manager, who was disgusted with the chorus of simpering women in the original. This led Meyerbeer to compose the weird ballet music which is such a characteristic feature of "Robert le Diable." So, too, we are told on the same authority, the fourth act of "Les Huguenots," which is the most powerful single act in Meyerbeer's operas, owes its present shape to Nourrit, the most intellectual and creative tenor singer of whom we have record. It was originally designed that the St. Bartholomew massacre should be organized by *Queen*

Marguerite, but Nourrit pointed out that the interest centering in the heroine, Valentine, as an involuntary and horrified witness, would be impaired by the predominance of another female character. So the plot was largely reconstructed, and fresh music written. Another still more striking attraction was the addition of the great duet with which the act now closes—a duet which critics have cited as an evidence of unequaled power, coming as it does at the very heels of such an astounding chorus as "The Blessing of the Swords." Nourrit felt that the parting of the two lovers at such a time and place demanded such an outburst and confession as would be wrung from them by the agony of the situation. Meyerbeer acted on the suggestion with such felicity and force as to make it the crowning beauty of the work. Similar changes are understood to have been made in "Le Prophète" by advice of Nourrit, whose poetical insight seems to have been unerring. It was left to Duprez, Nourrit's successor, however, to be the first exponent of *John of Leyden*.

These instances suffice to show how uncertain and unequal was the grasp of Meyerbeer's genius, and to explain in part why he was so prone to gorgeous effects, aside from that tendency of the Israelitish nature which delights in show and glitter. We see something in it akin to the trick of the rhetorician, who seeks to hide poverty of thought under glittering phrases. Yet Meyerbeer rose to occasions with a force that was something gigantic. Once his work was clearly defined in a mind not powerfully creative, he expressed it in music with such vigor, energy, and warmth of color as can not be easily surpassed. With this composer there was but little spontaneous flow of musical thought, clothing itself in forms of unconscious and perfect beauty, as in the case of

Mozart, Beethoven, Cherubini, Rossini, and others who could be cited. The constitution of his mind demanded some external power to bring forth the gush of musical energy.

The operas of Meyerbeer may be best described as highly artistic and finished mosaic work, containing much that is precious with much that is false. There are parts of all his operas which can not be surpassed for beauty of music, dramatic energy, and fascination of effect. In addition, the strength and richness of his orchestration, which contains original strokes not found in other composers, give him a lasting claim on the admiration of the lovers of music. No other composer has united so many glaring defects with such splendid power; and were it not that Meyerbeer strained his ingenuity to tax the resources of the singer in every possible way, not even the mechanical difficulty of producing these operas in a fashion commensurate with their plan would prevent their taking a high place among popular operas.

GOUNOD AND THOMAS.

I.

Moscheles, one of the severe classical pianists of the German school, writes as follows in 1861 in a letter to a friend: "In Gounod I hail a real composer. I have heard his 'Faust' both at Leipsic and Dresden, and am charmed with that refined, piquant music.

Critics may rave if they like against the mutilation of Goethe's masterpiece; the opera is sure to attract, for it is a fresh, interesting work, with a copious flow of melody and lovely instrumentation."

Henry Chorley in his "Thirty Years' Musical Recollections," writing of the year 1851, says: "To a few hearers, since then grown into a European public, neither the warmest welcome nor the most bleak indifference could alter the conviction that among the composers who have appeared during the last twenty-five years, M. Gounod was the most promising one, as showing the greatest combination of sterling science, beauty of idea, freshness of fancy, and individuality. Before a note of 'Sappho' was written, certain sacred Roman Catholic compositions and some exquisite settings of French verse had made it clear to some of the acutest judges and profoundest musicians living, that in him at last something true and new had come—may I not say, the most poetical of French musicians that has till now written?" The same genial and acute critic, in further discussing the envy, jealousy, and prejudice that Gounod awakened in certain musical quarters, writes in still more decided strains: "The fact has to be swallowed and digested that already the composer of 'Sappho,' the choruses to 'Ulysse,' 'Le Médecin malgré lui,' 'Faust,' 'Philemon et Baucis,' a superb Cecilian mass, two excellent symphonies, and half a hundred songs and romances, which may be ranged not far from Schubert's and above any others existing in France, is one of the very few individuals left to whom musical Europe is now looking for its pleasure." Surely it is enough praise for a great musician that, in the domain of opera, church music, symphony, and song, he has risen above all others of his time in one direction, and in all been surpassed

by none.

It was not till "Faust" was produced that Gounod's genius evinced its highest capacity. For nineteen years the exquisite melodies of this great work have rung in the ears of civilization without losing one whit of the power with which they first fascinated the lovers of music. The verdict which the aged Moscheles passed in his Leipsic home—Moscheles, the friend of Beethoven, Weber, Schumann, and Mendelssohn; which was reechoed by the patriarchal Rossini, who came from his Passy retirement to offer his congratulations; which Auber took up again, as with tears of joy in his eyes he led Gounod, the ex-pupil of the Conservatory, through the halls wherein had been laid the foundation of his musical skill—that verdict has been affirmed over and over again by the world. For in "Faust" we recognize not only some of the most noble music ever written, but a highly dramatic expression of spiritual truth. It is hardly a question that Gounod has succeeded in an unrivaled degree in expressing the characters and symbolisms of *Mephistopheles, Faust, and Gretchen* in music not merely beautiful, but spiritual, humorous, subtile, and voluptuous, accordingly as the varied meanings of Goethe's masterpiece demand.

Visitors at Paris, while the American civil war was at its height, might frequently have observed at the beautiful Theatre Lyrique, afterward burned by the Vandals of the Commune, a noticeable-looking man, of blonde complexion and tawny beard, clear-cut features, and large, bright, almost somber-looking eyes. As the opera of "Faust" progresses, his features eloquently express his varying emotions, now of approval, now of annoyance at different parts of the performance. M. Gounod is criticising the

interpretation of the great opera, which suddenly lifted him into fame as perhaps the most imaginative and creative of late composers.

An aggressive disposition, an energy and faith that accepted no rebuffs, and the power of "toiling terribly," had enabled Gounod to battle his way into the front rank. Unlike Rossini and Auber, he disdained social recreation, and was so rarely seen in the fashionable quarters of Paris and London that only an occasional musical announcement kept him before the eyes of the public. Gounod seems to have devoted himself to the strict sphere of his art-life with an exclusive devotion quite foreign to the general temperament of the musician, into which something luxurious and pleasure-loving is so apt to enter. This composer, standing in the very front rank of his fellows, has injected into the veins of the French school to which he belongs a seriousness, depth, and imaginative vigor, which prove to us how much he is indebted to German inspiration and German models.

Charles Gounod, born in Paris June 17, 1818, betrayed so much passion for music during tender years, that his father gave him every opportunity to gratify and improve this marked bias. He studied under Reicha and Le Sueur, and finally under Halévy, completing under the latter the preparation which fitted him for entrance into the Conservatory. The talents he displayed there were such as to fix on him the attention of his most distinguished masters. He carried off the second prize at nineteen, and at twenty-one received the grand prize for musical composition awarded by the French Institute. His first published work was a mass performed at the Church of St. Eustache, which, while not specially

successful, was sufficiently encouraging to both the young composer and his friends.

Gounod now proceeded to Rome, where there seems to have been some inclination on his part to study for holy orders. But music was not destined to be cheated of so gifted a votary. In 1841 he wrote a second mass, which was so well thought of in the papal capital as to gain for the young composer the appointment of an honorary chapel-master for life. This recognition of his genius settled his final conviction that music was his true life-work, though the religious sentiment, or rather a sympathy with mysticism, is strikingly apparent in all of his compositions. The next goal in the composer's art pilgrimage was the music-loving city of Vienna, the home of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, though its people waited till the last three great geniuses were dead before it accorded them the loving homage which they have since so freely rendered. The reception given by the capricious Viennese to a requiem and a Lenten mass (for as yet Gounod only thought of sacred music as his vocation) was not such as to encourage a residence. Paris, the queen of the world, toward which every French exile ever looks with longing eyes, seemed to beckon him back; so at the age of twenty-five he turned his steps again to his beloved Lutetia. His education was finished; he had completed his *Wanderjahre*; and he was eager to enter on the serious work of life.

He was appointed chapelmaster at the Church of Foreign Missions, in which office he remained for six years, in the mean while marrying a charming woman, the daughter of Herr Zimmermann, the celebrated theologian and orator. In 1849 he

composed his third mass, which made a powerful impression on musicians and critics, though Gounod's ambition, which seems to have been powerfully stimulated by his marriage, began to realize that it was in the field of lyric drama only that his powers would find their full development. He had been an ardent student in literature and art as well as in music; his style had been formed on the most noble and serious German models, and his tastes, awakened into full activity, carried him with great zeal into the loftier field of operatic composition.

The dominating influence of Gluck, so potent in shaping the tastes and methods of the more serious French composers, asserted itself from the beginning in the work of Gounod, and no modern composer has been so brilliant and effective a disciple in carrying out the formulas of that great master. More free, flexible, and melodious than Spontini and Halévy, measuring his work by a conception of art more lofty and ideal than that of Meyerbeer, and in creative power and originality by far their superior, Gounod's genius, as shown in the one opera of "Faust," suffices to stamp his great mastership.

But he had many years of struggle yet before this end was to be achieved. His early lyric compositions fell dead. Score after score was rejected by the managers. No one cared to hazard the risk of producing an opera by this unknown composer. His first essay was a pastoral opera, "Philemon and Baucis," and it did not escape from the manuscript for many a long year, though it has in more recent times been received by critical German audiences with great applause. A catalogue of Gounod's failures would have no significance except as showing that

his industry and energy were not relaxed by public neglect. His first decided encouragement came in 1851, when "Sappho" was produced at the French Opera through the influence of Madame Pauline Viardot, the sister of Malibran, who had a generous belief in the composer's future, and such a position in the musical world of Paris as to make her requests almost mandatory. This opera, based on the fine poem of Emile Augier, was well received, and cheered Gounod's heart to make fresh efforts. In 1852 he composed the choruses for Poussard's classical tragedy of "Ulysse," performed at the Theatre Français. The growing recognition of the world was evidenced in his appointment as director of the Normal Singing School of Paris, the primary school of the Conservatory. In 1854 a five-act opera, with a libretto from the legend of the "Bleeding Nun," was completed and produced, and Gounod was further gratified to see that musical authorities were willing to grant him a distinct place in the ranks of art, though as yet not a very high one.

For years Gounod's serious and elevated mind had been pondering on Goethe's great poem as the subject of an opera, and there is reason to conjecture that parts of it were composed and arranged, if not fully elaborated, long prior to its final crystallization. But he was not yet quite ready to enter seriously on the composition of the masterpiece. He must still try his hand on lesser themes. Occasional pieces for the orchestra or choruses strengthened his hold on these important elements of lyric composition, and in 1858 he produce "Le Médecin malgré lui," based on Molière's comedy, afterward performed as an English opera under the title of "The Mock Doctor." Gounod's genius seems to have had no affinity for the graceful and sparkling measures of comic music, and his

attempt to rival Rossini and Auber in the field where they were preeminent was decidedly unsuccessful, though the opera contained much fine music.

II.

The year of his triumph had at last arrived. He had waited and toiled for years over "Faust," and it was now ready to flash on the world with an electric brightness that was to make his name instantly famous. One day saw him an obscure, third-rate composer, the next one of the brilliant names in art. "Faust," first performed March 19, 1859, fairly took the world by storm. Gounod's warmest friends were amazed by the beauty of the masterpiece, in which exquisite melody, great orchestration, and a dramatic passion never surpassed in operatic art, were combined with a scientific skill and precision which would vie with that of the great masters of harmony. Carvalho, the manager of the Theatre Lyrique, had predicted that the work would have a magnificent reception by the art world, and lavished on it every stage resource. Madame Miolan-Carvalho, his brilliant wife, one of the leading sopranos of the day, sang the rôle of the heroine, though five years afterward she was succeeded by Nilsson, who invested the part with a poetry and tenderness which have never been quite equaled.

"Faust" was received at Berlin, Vienna, Milan, St. Petersburg, and London, with an enthusiasm not less than that which greeted its Parisian début. The clamor of dispute between the different schools was for the moment hushed in the delight with which the musical critics and public of universal Europe listened to the magical measures of an opera which to classical chasteness and severity of form and

elevation of motive united such dramatic passion, richness of melody, and warmth of orchestral color. From that day to the present "Faust" has retained its place as not only the greatest but the most popular of modern operas. The proof of the composer's skill and sense of symmetry in the composition of "Faust" is shown in the fact that each part is so nearly necessary to the work, that but few "cuts" can be made in presentation without essentially marring the beauty of the work; and it is therefore given with close faithfulness to the author's score.

After the immense success of "Faust," the doors of the Academy were opened wide to Gounod. On February 28, 1862, the "Reine de Saba" was produced, but was only a *succès d'estime*, the libretto by Gérard de Nerval not being fitted for a lyric tragedy.*

> * It has been a matter of frequent comment by
> musical critics that many noble operas, now r
> would have retained their place in the repert
> dramatic music, had it not been for the utter
> which the music has been set.

Many numbers of this fine work, however, are still favorites on concert programmes, and it has been given in English under the name of "Irene." Gounod's love of romantic themes, and the interest in France which Lamartine's glowing eulogies had excited about "Mireio," the beautiful national poem of the Provençal, M. Frederic Mistral, led the former to compose an opera on a libretto from this work, which was given at the Théâtre Lyrique, March 19, 1864, under the name of "Mireille." The music, however, was rather descriptive and lyric than dramatic, as befitted this lovely ideal of early French provincial life; and in spite of its containing some of

the most captivating airs ever written, and the fine interpretation of the heroine by Miolan-Carvalho, it was accepted with reservations. It has since become more popular in its three-act form to which it was abridged. It is a tribute to the essential beauty of Gounod's music that, however unsuccessful as operas certain of his works have been, they have all contributed charming *morceaux* for the enjoyment of concert audiences. Not only did the airs of "Mireille" become public favorites, but its overture is frequently given as a distinct orchestral work.

The opera of "La Colombe," known in English as "The Pet Dove," followed in 1866; and the next year was produced the five-act opera of "Roméo et Juliette," of which the principal part was again taken by Madame Miolan-Carvalho. The favorite pieces in this work, which is a highly poetic rendering of Shakespeare's romantic tragedy, are the song of *Queen Mab*, the garden duet, a short chorus in the second act, and the duel scene in the third act. For some occult reason, "Roméo et Juliette," though recognized as a work of exceptional beauty and merit, and still occasionally performed, has no permanent hold on the operatic public of to-day.

The evils that fell on France from the German war and the horrors of the Commune drove Gounod to reside in London, unlike Auber, who resolutely refused to forsake the city of his love, in spite of the suffering and privation which he foresaw, and which were the indirect cause of the veteran composer's death. Gounod remained several years in England, and lived a retired life, seemingly as if he shrank from public notice and disdained public applause. His principal appearances were at the Philharmonic, the Crystal Palace, and at Mrs. Weldon's concerts,

where he directed the performances of his own compositions. The circumstances of his London residence seem to have cast a cloud over Gounod's life and to have strangely unsettled his mind. Patriotic grief probably had something to do with this at the outset. But even more than this as a source of permanent irritation may be reckoned the spell cast over Gounod's mind by a beautiful adventuress, who was ambitious to attain social and musical recognition through the *éclat* of the great composer's friendship. Though newspaper report may be credited with swelling and distorting the naked facts, enough appears to be known to make it sure that the evil genius of Gounod's London life was a woman, who traded recklessly with her own reputation and the French composer's fame.

However untoward the surroundings of Gounod, his genius did not lie altogether dormant during this period of friction and fretfulness, conditions so repressive to the best imaginative work. He composed several masses and other church music; a "Stabat Mater" with orchestra; the oratorio of "Tobie"; "Gallia," a lamentation for France; incidental music for Legouvé's tragedy of "Les Deux Reines," and for Jules Barbier's "Jeanne d'Arc"; a large number of songs and romances, both sacred and secular, such as "Nazareth," and "There is a Green Hill"; and orchestral works, a "Salterello in A," and the "Funeral March of a Marionette."

At last he broke loose from the bonds of Delilah, and, remembering that he had been elected to fill the place of Clapisson in the Institute, he returned to Paris in 1876 to resume the position which his genius so richly deserved. On the 5th of March of the following year his "Cinq-Mars" was brought out at

the Theatre de l'Opéra Comique; but it showed the traces of the haste and carelessness with which it was written, and therefore commanded little more than a respectful hearing. His last opera, "Polyeucte," produced at the Grand Opera, October 7, 1878, though credited with much beautiful music, and nobly orchestrated, is not regarded by the French critics as likely to add anything to the reputation of the composer of "Faust." Gounod, now at the age of sixty, if we judge him by the prolonged fertility of so many of the great composers, may be regarded as not having largely passed the prime of his powers. The world still has a right to expect much from his genius. Conceded even by his opponents to be a great musician and a thorough master of the orchestra, more generous critics in the main agree to rank Gounod as the most remarkable contemporary composer, with the possible exception of Richard Wagner. The distinctive trait of his dramatic conceptions seems to be an imagination hovering between sensuous images and mystic dreams. Originally inspired by the severe Greek sculpture of Gluck's music, he has applied that master's laws in the creation of tone-pictures full of voluptuous color, but yet solemnized at times by an exaltation which recalls the time when as a youth he thought of the spiritual dignity of the priesthood. The use he makes of his religious reminiscences is familiarly illustrated in "Faust." The contrast between two opposing principles is marked in all of Gounod's dramatic works, and in "Faust" this struggle of "a soul which invades mysticism and which still seeks to express voluptuousness" not only colors the music with a novel fascination, but amounts to an interesting psychological problem.

III.

Gounod's genius fills too large a space in contemporary music to be passed over without a brief special study. In pursuit of this no better method suggests itself than an examination of the opera of "Faust," into which the composer poured the finest inspirations of his life, even as Goethe embodied the sum and flower of his long career, which had garnered so many experiences, in his poetic masterpiece.

The story of "Faust" has tempted many composers. Prince Radziwill tried it, and then Spohr set a version of the theme at once coarse and cruel, full of vulgar witchwork and love-making only fit for a chambermaid. Since then Schumann, Liszt, Wagner, and Berlioz have treated the story orchestrally with more or less success. Gounod's treatment of the poem is by far the most intelligible, poetic, and dramatic ever attempted, and there is no opera since the days of Gluck with so little weak music, except Beethoven's "Fidelio."

In the introduction the restless gloom of the old philospher and the contrasted joys of youth engaged in rustic revelry outside are expressed with graphic force; and the Kirmes music in the next act is so quaint and original, as well as melodious, as to give the sense of delightful comedy. When *Marguerite* enters on the scene, we have a waltz and chorus of such beauty and piquancy as would have done honor to Mozart. Indeed, in the dramatic use of dance music Gounod hardly yields in skill and originality to Meyerbeer himself, though the latter composer specially distinguished himself in this direction. The third and fourth acts develop all the tenderness and passion of *Marguerite's* character, all the tragedy of her doom.

After *Faust's* beautiful monologue in the garden come the song of the "King of Thule" and *Marguerites* delight at finding the jewels, which conjoined express the artless vanity of the child in a manner alike full of grace and pathos. The quartet that follows is one of great beauty, the music of each character being thoroughly in keeping, while the admirable science of the composer blends all into thorough artistic unity. It is hardly too much to assert that the love scene which closes this act has nothing to surpass it for fire, passion, and tenderness, seizing the mind of the hearer with absorbing force by its suggestion and imagery, while the almost cloying sweetness of the melody is such as Rossini and Schubert only could equal. The full confession of the enamored pair contained in the brief *adagio* throbs with such rapture as to find its most suggestive parallel in the ardent words commencing "Gallop apace, ye fiery-looted steeds," placed by Shakespeare in the mouth of the expectant *Juliet*.

Beauties succeed each other in swift and picturesque succession, fitting the dramatic order with a nicety which forces the highest praise of the critic. The march and chorus marking the return of *Valentine's* regiment beat with a fire and enthusiasm to which the tramp of victorious squadrons might well keep step. The wicked music of *Mephistopheles* in the sarcastic serenade, the powerful duel trio, and *Valentine's* curse are of the highest order of expression; while the church scene, where the fiend whispers his taunts in the ear of the disgraced *Marguerite*, as the gloomy musical hymn and peals of the organ menace her with an irreversible doom, is a weird and thrilling picture of despair, agony, and devilish exultation.

Gounod has been blamed for violating the reverence due to sacred things, employing portions of the church service in this scene, instead of writing music for it. But this is the last resort of critical hostility, seeking a peg on which to hang objection. Meyerbeer's splendid introduction of Luther's great hymn, "Ein' feste Burg," in "Les Huguenots," called forth a similar criticism from his German assailants. Some of the most dramatic effects in music have been created by this species of musical quotation, so rich in its appeal to memory and association. Who that has once heard can forget the thrilling power of "La Marseillaise" in Schumann's setting of Heinrich Heine's poem of "The Two Grenadiers"? The two French soldiers, weary and broken-hearted after the Russian campaign, approach the German frontier. The veterans are moved to tears as they think of their humiliated Emperor. Up speaks one suffering with a deadly hurt to the other: "Friend, when I am dead, bury me in my native France, with my cross of honor on my breast, and my musket in my hand, and lay my good sword by my side." Until this time the melody has been a slow and dirge-like stave in the minor key. The old soldier declares his belief that he will rise again from the clods when he hears the victorious tramp of his Emperor's squadrons passing over his grave, and the minor breaks into a weird setting of the "Marseillaise" in the major key. Suddenly it closes with a few solemn chords, and, instead of the smoke of battle and the march of the phantom host, the imagination sees the lonely plain with its green mounds and moldering crosses.

Readers will pardon this digression illustrating an artistic law, of which Gounod has made such effective use in the church scene of his "Faust" in heightening its tragic solemnity. The wild goblin

symphony in the fifth act has added some new effects to the gamut of deviltry in music, and shows that Weber in the "Wolf's Glen" and Meyerbeer in the "Cloisters of St. Rosalie" did not exhaust the somewhat limited field. The whole of this part of the act, sadly mutilated and abridged often in representation, is singularly picturesque and striking as a musical conception, and is a fitting companion to the tragic prison scene. The despair of the poor crazed *Marguerite*; her delirious joy in recognizing *Faust*; the temptation to fly; the final outburst of faith and hope, as the sense of Divine pardon sinks into her soul—all these are touched with the fire of genius, and the passion sweeps with an unfaltering force to its climax. These references to the details of a work so familiar as "Faust," conveying of course no fresh information to the reader, have been made to illustrate the peculiarities of Gounod's musical temperament, which sways in such fascinating contrast between the voluptuous and the spiritual. But whether his accents belong to the one or the other, they bespeak a mood flushed with earnestness and fervor, and a mind which recoils from the frivolous, however graceful it may be.

In the Franco-German school, of which Gounod is so high an exponent, the orchestra is busy throughout developing the history of the emotions, and in "Faust" especially it is as busy a factor in expressing the passions of the characters as the vocal parts. Not even in the "garden scene" does the singing reduce the instruments to a secondary importance. The difference between Gounod and Wagner, who professes to elaborate the importance of the orchestra in dramatic music, is that the former has a skill in writing for the voice which the other lacks. The one lifts the voice by the orchestration, the other

submerges it. Gounod's affluence of lovely melody can only be compared with that of Mozart and Rossini, and his skill and ingenuity in treating the orchestra have wrung reluctant praise from his bitterest opponents.

The special power which makes Gounod unique in his art, aside from those elements before alluded to as derived from temperament, is his unerring sense of dramatic fitness, which weds such highly suggestive music to each varying phase of character and action. To this perhaps one exception may be made. While he possesses a certain airy playfulness, he fails in rich broad humor utterly, and situations of comedy are by no means so well handled as the more serious scenes.

A good illustration of this may be found in "Le Médecin malgré lui," in the couplets given to the drunken *Sganarelle*. They are beautiful music, but utterly unflavored with the *vis comica*.

Had Gounod written only "Faust," it should stamp him as one of the most highly gifted composers of his age. Noticeably in his other works, preeminently in this, he has shown a melodic freshness and fertility, a mastery of musical form, a power of orchestration, and a dramatic energy, which are combined to the same degree in no one of his rivals. Therefore it is just to place him in the first rank of contemporary composers.

IV.

Among contemporary French composers there is no name which suggests itself in comparison with that of Gounod so worthily as that of Ambroise Thomas, famous in every country where the opera is

a favorite form of public amusement, as the author of "Mignon" and "Hamlet." Lacking the depth and passion of Gounod, he is distinguished by a peculiar sparkle, grace, and Gallic lightness of touch; and if we do not find in him the earnestness and spiritual significance of his rival's conceptions, there is, on the other hand, in the works of Thomas, a glow of poetic sentiment which invests them with a charming atmosphere, peculiarly their own. Perhaps in his own country Thomas enjoys a repute still higher than that of Gounod, for his genius is more peculiarly French, while the composer of "Faust" shows the radical influence of the German school, not only in the cast of his thoughts and temperament, but in his technical musical methods. Still, as all artists are profoundly moved by the tendencies of their age, it would not be difficult to find in the later works of Thomas, on which his celebrity is based, some unconscious modeling of form wrought by that musical school of which Richard Wagner is the most advanced type.

Ambroise Thomas was born at Metz, France, on August 5, 1811, and is therefore by seven years the senior of Charles Gounod. His aptitudes for music were so strong that he learned the notes as quickly as he acquired the letters of the alphabet. At the age of four he was instructed in his *solfeggi* by his father, who was a professor of music, and three years later he began to take lessons on the violin and piano. When he was seventeen he was thoroughly proficient in all the preparatory studies demanded for admission to the Paris Conservatoire, and he easily obtained admission into that great institution. He first studied under Zimmermann and Kalkbrenner, and afterward under Dourlen, Barbereau, Le Sueur, and Reicha. For successive years he carried off first prizes: for the piano in 1829; for harmony, in 1830;

and in 1832 the highest honor in composition was awarded him, the Prix de Rome, which allowed him to go to Italy as a government stipendiary.

Our young laureate passed three years in Italy, spending most of his time at Rome and Naples. The special result of his Italian studies was a requiem mass, which was performed with great approbation from its musical judges at Paris and Rome. After traveling in Germany, Thomas returned to Paris in 1836, thoroughly equipped for his career as composer, for he had been an indefatigable student, and neglected no opportunity of perfecting his knowledge. The first step in the brilliant career of Thomas was the production of a comic opera in one act, "La Double Échelle," produced in 1837. This met with a good reception, and it was promptly followed by the production of several other light scores, that further enhanced his reputation for talent. He was not generally recognized by musicians as a man of marked promise till he produced "Mina," a comic opera in three acts, which was represented in 1843. The beauty of the instrumentation and the melodious richness of the work were unmistakable, and henceforth every production of the young composer was watched with great interest.

Ambroise Thomas could not be said to have reached a great popular success until he produced "Le Caïd," a work of the *opéra-boitffe* type, which instantly became an immense public favorite. This was first represented in 1849, and it has always held its place on the French stage as one of the most delightful works of its class, in spite of the competition of such later outgrowths of the opera-bouffe, school as Offenbach, Lecocq, and others. The score of this work proved to be immensely amusing

and brightly melodious, and it was such a pecuniary success that the more judicious friends of Thomas feared that he might be seduced into cultivating a field far below the powers of his poetic imagination and thorough musical science. Strong heads might easily be turned by such lavish applause, and it would not have been wonderful had Thomas, dazzled by the reception of "Le Caïd," remained for a long time a wanderer from the path which lay open to his great talents. The composer's ambition, however, proved to be too high to content itself with ephemeral success, or cultivating the more frivolous forms of his art, however profitable aid pleasant these might be.

In 1850 Ambroise Thomas produced two operas: "Le Songe d'une Nuit d'Été," resembling in style somewhat that masterpiece produced in after-years, "Mignon," and a somber work based on the legend of "The Man with the Iron Mask," "Le Secret de la Reine." The melodramatic character of this latter work seems to have been imitated from the highly accented and artificial style of Verdi, instead of possessing the bright and airy charm natural to Thomas. The vacancy left by Spontini's death in the French Institute was filled by the election of M. Thomas, who was deemed most worthy, among all the musical names offered, of taking the place of the author of "La Vestale." He justified the taste of his co-members by his production in 1853 of the comic opera of "La Tonelli," a work which, though not greatly successful with "hoi polloi," was an admirable specimen of light and graceful opera at its best. The new academician was recompensed for the public indifference by the cordial appreciation which connoisseurs gave this tasteful and scientific production. Another comic opera, "Psyche," which

soon appeared, though full of witty burlesque and humor in the libretto, and marked by delicious melody in every part, failed to please, perhaps on account of the predominance of feminine rôles, and the absence of a good tenor part. Still a third comic opera, the "Carnaval de Venise" saw the light the same season, which was written in large measure to show the marvelous flexibility of Mme. Cabal's voice. Very few singers have been able to sing the rôle of *Sylvia*, who warbles a violin concerto from beginning to end, under the title of an "Ariette without Words."

Ambroise Thomas remained silent now for half a dozen years, aside from the composition of a few charming songs. It is natural to suppose that he was brooding over the conception of his greatest work, which was next to see the light of day, and add one more to the great operas of the world. Such compositions are not hastily manufactured, but grow for years out of the travail of heart and brain, deep thought, high imaginings, passionate sensibilities, elaborately wrought by time and patience, till at last they are crystallized into form.

"Mignon," a comic opera in three acts, was first represented at the Théâtre Lyrique, on November 17, 1866, before one of the most brilliant and enthusiastic audiences ever gathered in Paris. Its success was magnificent. This was seven years after Gounod had made such a great stride among the composers of the age, by the production of "Faust"; and it is within bounds to say that, since "Faust," no opera had been produced in Paris so vital with the breath of genius and great purpose, so full of sentiment and poetry, so symmetrical and balanced in its differentiation of music measured by its dramatic value, so instantly and splendidly

recognized by the public, cultured and ignorant, gentle and simple.

Like "Faust," too, the opera of Thomas was based on a creation of Goethe. Without the pathetic episode of "Mignon," the novel of "Wilhelm Meister" would lose much of its dramatic strength and quality. Of course, every libretto must part with some of the charm of the story on which it is built; but in this instance the author succeeds in preserving nearly all the intrinsic worth of the Mignon episode. The music is admirably suited to a noble theme. There is hardly a weak bar in it from beginning to end; and some of the work here done by the composer will compare favorably with any operatic music ever hoard. In this opera melodic phrase goes hand in hand with character and motive, and *Mignon, Philina, Wilhelm Meister, and Lothario*, are distinguished in the music with the finest dramatic discrimination.

Among the operas of recent years, "Mignon" ranks among the first for its taste, grace, and poetry. The first act is vigorous, bright, and picturesque; the second, touched with the finest points of passion and humor; the third is inspired with a pathos and poetic ardor which lift the composer to do his most magnificent work. But to describe "Mignon" to the public of today, which has heard it almost an innumerable number of times, is, as much as in the case of Gounod's "Faust," "carrying coals to Newcastle."

In 1868 Thomas produced "Hamlet," and it was represented at the Grand Opera, with Mile. Christine Nilsson in the rôle of *Ophelia*, the same singer having, if we mistake not, created the rôle of *Mignon*. "Hamlet," though a marked artistic success, has failed

to make the same popular impression as "Mignon," possibly because the theme is less suited to operatic treatment; for the music *per se* is of a fine type, and full of the genuine accents of passion.

In addition to the works named above, Ambroise Thomas has written "La Gypsy," "Le Panier Fleuri," "Carline," "Le Roman d'Elvire," several fine masses, many beautiful songs, a requiem, and miscellaneous church-pieces. Thomas is famous in France for the generous encouragement and help which he extends to all young musicians, assistance which his position in the Paris Conservatoire helps to make most valuable. He is now seventy-one years old, and, should he add nothing more to the musical treasures of the present generation, much of what he has already done will give him a permanent place in the temple of lyric music.

BERLIOZ.

I.

In the long list of brilliant names which have illustrated the fine arts, there is none attached to a personality more interesting and impressive than that of Hector Berlioz. He stands solitary, a colossus in music, with but few admirers and fewer followers. Original, puissant in faculties, fiercely dogmatic and intolerant, bizarre, his influence has impressed itself profoundly on the musical world both for good and

evil, but has failed to make disciples or to rear a school. Notwithstanding the defects and extravagances of Berlioz, it is safe to assert that no art or philosophy can boast of an example of more perfect devotion to an ideal. The startling originality of Berlioz as a musician rests on a mental and emotional organization different from and in some respects superior to that of any other eminent master. He possessed an ardent temperament; a gorgeous imagination, that knew no rest in its working, and at times became heated to the verge of madness; a most subtile sense of hearing; an intellect of the keenest analytic turn; a most arrogant will, full of enterprise and daring, which clung to its purpose with unrelenting tenacity; and passions of such heat and fervor that they rarely failed when aroused to carry him beyond all bounds of reason. His genius was unique, his character cast in the mold of a Titan, his life a tragedy. Says Blaze de Bussy: "Art has its martyrs, its forerunners crying in the wilderness, and feeding on roots. It has also its spoiled children sated with bonbons and dainties." Berlioz belongs to the former of these classes, and, if ever a prophet lifted up his voice with a vehement and incessant outcry, it was he.

Hector Berlioz was born on December 11, 1803, at Côte Saint André, a small town between Grenoble and Lyons. His father was an excellent physician of more than ordinary attainments, and he superintended his son's studies with great zeal in the hope that the lad would also become an ornament of the healing profession. But young Hector, though an excellent scholar in other branches, developed a special aptitude for music, and at twelve he could sing at sight, and play difficult concertos on the flute. The elder regarded music only as a graceful

ornament to life, and in no wise encouraged his son in thinking of music as a profession. So it was not long before Hector found his attention directed to anatomy, physiology, osteology, etc. In his father's library he had already read of Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, etc., and had found a manuscript score of an opera which he had committed to memory. His soul revolted more and more from the path cut out for him. "Become a physician!" he cried, "study anatomy; dissect; take part in horrible operations? No! no! That would be a total subversion of the natural course of my life."

But parental resolution carried the day, and, after he had finished the preliminary course of study, he was ordered up to Paris to join the army of medical students. So at the age of nineteen we find him lodged in the Quartier Latin. His first introduction to medical studies had been unfortunate. On entering a dissecting-room he had been so convulsed with horror as to leap from the window, and rush to his lodgings in an agony of dread and disgust, whence he did not emerge for twenty-four hours. At last, however, by dint of habit he became somewhat used to the disagreeable facts of his new life, and, to use his own words, "bade fair to add one more to the army of bad physicians," when he went to the opera one night and heard "Les Danaïdes," Salieri's opera, performed with all the splendid completeness of the Académie Royale. This awakened into fresh life an unquenchable thirst for music, and he neglected his medical studies for the library of the Conservatoire, where he learned by heart the scores of Gluck and Rameau. At last, on coming out one night from a performance of "Iphigénie," he swore that henceforth music should have her divine rights of him, in spite of all and everything. Henceforth hospital,

dissecting-room, and professor's lectures knew him no more.

But to get admission to the Conservatoire was now the problem; Berlioz set to work on a cantata with orchestral accompaniments, and in the mean time sent the most imploring letters home asking his father's sanction for this change of life. The inexorable parent replied by cutting off his son's allowance, saying that he would not help him to become one of the miserable herd of unsuccessful musicians. The young enthusiast's cantata gained him admission to the classes of Le Sueur and Reicha at the Conservatoire, but alas! dire poverty stared him in the face. The history of his shifts and privations for some months is a sad one. He slept in an old, unfurnished garret, and shivered under insufficient bedclothing, ate his bread and grapes on the Pont Neuf, and sometimes debated whether a plunge into the Seine would not be the easiest way out of it all. No mongrel cur in the capital but had a sweeter bone to crunch than he. But the young fellow for all this stuck to his work with dogged tenacity, managed to get a mass performed at St. Roch church, and soon finished the score of an opera, "Les Francs Juges." Flesh and blood would have given way at last under this hard diet, if he had not obtained a position in the chorus of the Théâtre des Noveauteaus. Berlioz gives an amusing account of his going to compete with the horde of applicants—butchers, bakers, shop-apprentices, etc.—each one with his roll of music under his arm.

The manager scanned the raw-boned starveling with a look of wonder. "Where's your music?" quoth the tyrant of a third-class theatre. "I don't want any, I can sing anything you can give me at sight," was the

answer. "The devil!" rejoined the manager; "but we haven't any music here." "Well, what do you want?" said Berlioz. "I sing every note of all the operas of Gluck, Piccini, Salieri, Rameau, Spontini, Grétry, Mozart, and Cimarosa, from memory." At hearing this amazing declaration, the rest of the competitors slunk away abashed, and Berlioz, after singing an aria from Spontini, was accorded the place, which guaranteed him fifty francs per month—a pittance, indeed, and yet a substantial addition to his resources. This pot-boiling connection of Berlioz was never known to the public till after he became a distinguished man, though he was accustomed to speak in vague terms of his early dramatic career as if it were a matter of romantic importance.

At last, however, he was relieved of the necessity of singing on the stage to amuse the Paris *bourgeoisie*, and in a singular fashion. He had been put to great straits to get his first work, which had won him his way into the Conservatoire, performed. An application to the great Chateaubriand, who was noted for benevolence, had failed, for the author of "La Génie de Christianisme" was then almost as poor as Berlioz. At last a young friend, De Pons, advanced him twelve hundred francs. Part of this Berlioz had repaid, but the creditor, put to it for money, wrote to Berlioz père, demanding a full settlement of the debt. The father was thus brought again into communication with his son, whom he found nearly sick unto death with a fever. His heart relented, and the old allowance was resumed again, enabling the young musician to give his whole time to his beloved art, instantly he convalesced from his illness.

The eccentric ways and heretical notions of Berlioz made him no favorite with the dons of the

Conservatoire, and by the irritable and autocratic Cherubini he was positively hated. The young man took no pains to placate this resentment, but on the other hand elaborated methods of making himself doubly offensive. His power of stinging repartee stood him in good stead, and he never put a button on his foil. Had it been in old Cherubini's power to expel this bold pupil from the Conservatoire, no scruple would have held him back. But the genius and industry of Berlioz were undeniable, and there was no excuse for such extreme measures. Prejudiced as were his judges, he successively took several important prizes.

II.

Berlioz's happiest evenings were at the Grand Opéra, for which he prepared himself by solemn meditation. At the head of a band of students and amateurs, he took on himself the right of the most outspoken criticism, and led the enthusiasm or the condemnation of the audience. At this time Beethoven was barely tolerated in Paris, and the great symphonist was ruthlessly clipped and shorn to suit the French taste, which pronounced him "bizarre, incoherent, diffuse, bustling with rough modulations and wild harmonies, destitute of melody, forced in expression, noisy, and fearfully difficult," even as England at the same time frowned down his immortal works as "obstreperous roarings of modern frenzy." Berlioz's clear, stern voice would often be heard, when liberties were taken with the score, loud above the din of the instruments. "What wretch has dared to tamper with the great Beethoven?" "Who has taken upon him to revise Gluck?" This self-appointed arbiter became the dread of the operatic management, for, as a pupil of the

Conservatoire, he had some rights which could not be infringed.

Berlioz composed some remarkable works while at the Conservatoire, among which were the "Ouverture des Francs Juges," and the symphonie "Fantastique," and in many ways indicated that the bent of his genius had fully declared itself. His decided and indomitable nature disdained to wear a mask, and he never sugar-coated his opinion, however unpalatable to others. He was already in a state of fierce revolt against the conventional forms of the music of his day, and no trumpet-tones of protest were too loud for him. He had now begun to write for the journals, though oftentimes his articles were refused on account of their fierce assaults. "Your hands are too full of stones, and there are too many glass windows about," was the excuse of one editor, softening the return of a manuscript. But Berlioz did not fully know himself or appreciate the tendencies fermenting within him until in 1830 he became the victim of a grand Shakespearean passion. The great English dramatist wrought most powerfully on Victor Hugo and Hector Berlioz, and had much to do with their artistic development. Berlioz gives a very interesting account of his Shakespearean enthusiasm, which also involved one of the catastrophes of his own personal life. "An English company gave some plays of Shakespeare, at that time wholly unknown to the French public. I went to the first performance of 'Hamlet' at the Odéon. I saw, in the part of *Ophelia*, Harriet Smithson, who became my wife five years afterward. The effect of her prodigious talent, or rather of her dramatic genius, upon my heart and imagination, is only comparable to the complete overturning which the poet, whose worthy interpreter she was, caused in me. Shakespeare, thus

coming on me suddenly, struck me as with a thunderbolt. His lightning opened the heaven of art to me with a sublime crash, and lighted up its farthest depths. I recognized true dramatic grandeur, beauty, and truth. I measured at the same time the boundless inanity of the notions of Shakespeare in France, spread abroad by Voltaire,

'... ce singe de génie,
Chez l'homme en mission par le diable envoyé-

(that ape of genius, an emissary from the devil to man),' and the pitiful poverty of our old poetry of pedagogues and ragged-school teachers. I saw, I understood, I felt that I was alive and must arise and walk." Of the influence of "Romeo and Juliet" on him, he says: "Exposing myself to the burning sun and balmy nights of Italy, seeing this love as quick and sudden as thought, burning like lava, imperious, irresistible, boundless, and pure and beautiful as the smile of angels, those furious scenes of vengeance, those distracted embraces, those struggles between love and death, was too much. After the melancholy, the gnawing anguish, the tearful love, the cruel irony, the somber meditations, the heart-rackings, the madness, tears, mourning, the calamities and sharp cleverness of *Hamlet*; after the gray clouds and icy winds of Denmark; after the third act, hardly breathing, in pain as if a hand of iron were squeezing at my heart, I said to myself with the fullest conviction: 'Ah! I am lost.' I must add that I did not at that time know a word of English, that I only caught glimpses of Shakespeare through the fog of Letourneur's translation, and that I consequently could not perceive the poetic web that surrounds his marvelous creations like a net of gold. I have the misfortune to be very nearly in the same sad case to-

day. It is much harder for a Frenchman to sound the depths of Shakespeare than for an Englishman to feel the delicacy and originality of La Fontaine or Molière. Our two poets are rich continents; Shakespeare is a world. But the play of the actors, above all of the actress, the succession of the scenes, the pantomime and the accent of the voices, meant more to me, and filled me a thousand times more with Shakespearean ideas and passion than the text of my colorless and unfaithful translation. An English critic said last winter in the 'Illustrated London News,' that, after seeing Miss Smithson in *Juliet*, I had cried out, 'I will marry that woman and write my grandest symphony on this play.' I did both, but never said anything of the sort."

The beautiful Miss Smithson became the rage, the inspiration of poets and painters, the idol of the hour, at whose feet knelt all the *roués* and rich idlers of the town. Delacroix painted her as the *Ophelia* of his celebrated picture, and the English company made nearly as much sensation in Paris as the Comédie Française recently aroused in London. Berlioz's mind, perturbed and inflamed with the mighty images of the Shakespearean world, swept with wide, powerful passion toward Shakespeare's interpreter. He raged and stormed with his accustomed vehemence, made no secret of his infatuation, and walked the streets at night, calling aloud the name of the enchantress, and cooling his heated brows with many a sigh. He, too, would prove that he was a great artist, and his idol should know that she had no unworthy lover. He would give a concert, and Miss Smithson should be present by hook or by crook. He went to Cherubini and asked permission to use the great hall of the Conservatoire, but was churlishly refused. Berlioz however,

managed to secure the concession over the head of Cherubini, and advertised his concert. He went to large expense in copyists, orchestra, solo-singers, and chorus, and, when the night came, was almost fevered with expectation. But the concert was a failure, and the adored one was not there; she had not even heard of it! The disappointment nearly laid the young composer on a bed of sickness; but, if he oscillated between deliriums of hope and despair, his powerful will was also full of elasticity, and not for long did he even rave in the utter ebb of disappointment. Throughout the whole of his life, Berlioz displayed this swiftness of recoil; one moment crazed with grief and depression, the next he would bend to his labor with a cool, steady fixedness of purpose, which would sweep all interferences aside like cobwebs. But still, night after night, he would haunt the Odéon, and drink in the sights and sounds of the magic world of Shakespeare, getting fresh inspiration nightly for his genius and love. If he paid dearly for this rich intellectual acquaintance by his passion for La Belle Smithson, he yet gained impulses and suggestions for his imagination, ravenous of new impressions, which wrought deeply and permanently. Had Berlioz known the outcome, he would not have bartered for immunity by losing the jewels and ingots of the Shakespeare treasure-house.

The year 1830 was for Berlioz one of alternate exaltation and misery; of struggle, privation, disappointment; of all manner of torments inseparable from such a volcanic temperament and restless brain. But he had one consolation which gratified his vanity. He gained the Prix de Rome by his cantata of "Sardanapalus." This honor had a practical value also. It secured him an annuity of

three thousand francs for a period of five years, and two years' residence in Italy. Berlioz would never let "well enough" alone, however. He insisted on adding an orchestral part to the completed score, describing the grand conflagration of the palace of Sardanapalus. When the work was produced, it was received with a howl of sarcastic derision, owing to the latest whim of the composer. So Berlioz started for Italy, smarting with rage and pain, as if the Furies were lashing him with their scorpion whips.

III.

The pensioners of the Conservatoire lived at Rome in the Villa Medici, and the illustrious painter, Horace Vernet, was the director, though he exercised but little supervision over the studies of the young men under his nominal charge. Berlioz did very much as he pleased—studied little or much as the whim seized him, visited the churches, studios, and picture-galleries, and spent no little of his time by starlight and sunlight roaming about the country adjacent to the Holy City in search of adventures. He had soon come to the conclusion that he had not much to learn of Italian music; that he could teach rather than be taught. He speaks of Roman art with the bitterest scorn, and Wagner himself never made a more savage indictment of Italian music than does Berlioz in his "Mémoires." At the theatres he found the orchestra, dramatic unity, and common-sense all sacrificed to mere vocal display. At St. Peter's and the Sistine Chapel religious earnestness and dignity were frittered away in pretty part-singing, in mere frivolity and meretricious show. The word "symphony" was not known except to indicate an indescribable noise before the rising of the curtain. Nobody had heard of Weber and Beethoven, and

Mozart, dead more than a score of years, was mentioned by a well-known musical connoisseur as a young man of great promise! Such surroundings as these were a species of purgatory to Berlioz, against whose bounds he fretted and raged without intermission. The director's receptions were signalized by the performance of insipid cavatinas, and from these, as from his companions' revels in which he would sometimes indulge with the maddest debauchery as if to kill his own thoughts, he would escape to wander in the majestic ruins of the Coliseum and see the magic Italian moonlight shimmer through its broken arches, or stroll on the lonely Campagna till his clothes were drenched with dew. No fear of the deadly Roman malaria could check his restless excursions, for, like a fiery horse, he was irritated to madness by the inaction of his life. To him the *dolce far niente* was a meaningless phrase. His comrades scoffed at him and called him "*Père la Joie*," in derision of the fierce melancholy which despised them, their pursuits and pleasures.

At the end of the year he was obliged to present, something before the Institute as a mark of his musical advancement, and he sent on a fragment of his "Mass" heard years before at St. Roch, in which the wise judges professed to find the "evidences of material advancement, and the total abandonment of his former reprehensible tendencies." One can fancy the scornful laughter of Berlioz at hearing this verdict. But his Italian life was not altogether purposeless. He revised his "Symphonie Fantastique," and wrote its sequel, "Lelio," a lyrical monologue, in which he aimed to express the memories of his passion for the beautiful Miss Smithson. These two parts comprised what Berlioz named "An Episode in the Life of an Artist." Our composer managed to get

the last six months of his Italian exile remitted, and his return to Paris was hastened by one of those furious paroxysms of rage to which such ill-regulated minds are subject. He had adored Miss Smithson as a celestial divinity, a lovely ideal of art and beauty, but this had not prevented him from basking in the rays of the earthly Venus. Before leaving Paris he had had an intrigue with a certain Mile. M———, a somewhat frivolous and unscrupulous beauty, who had bled his not overfilled purse with the avidity of a leech. Berlioz heard just before returning to Paris that the coquette was about to marry, a conclusion one would fancy which would have rejoiced his mind. But, no! he was worked to a dreadful rage by what he considered such perfidy! His one thought was to avenge himself. He provided himself with three loaded pistols—one for the faithless one, one for his rival, and one for himself—and was so impatient to start that he could not wait for passports. He attempted to cross the frontier in women's clothes, and was arrested. A variety of *contretemps* occurred before he got to Paris, and by that time his rage had so cooled, his sense of the absurdity of the whole thing grown so keen, that he was rather willing to send Mile. M———his blessing than his curse.

About the time of Berlioz's arrival, Miss Smithson also returned to Paris after a long absence, with the intent of undertaking the management of an English theatre. It was a necessity of our composer's nature to be in love, and the flames of his ardor, fed with fresh fuel, blazed up again from their old ashes. Berlioz gave a concert, in which his "Episode in the Life of an Artist" was interpreted in connection with the recitations of the text. The explanations of "Lelio" so unmistakably pointed to the feeling of the

composer for herself, that Miss Smithson, who by chance was present, could not be deceived, though she never yet had seen Berlioz. A few days afterward a benefit concert was arranged, in which Miss Smithson's troupe was to take part, as well as Berlioz, who was to direct a symphony of his own composition. At the rehearsal, the looks of Berlioz followed Miss Smithson with such an intent stare, that she said to some one, "Who is that man whose eyes bode me no good?" This was the first occasion of their personal meeting, and it may be fancied that Berlioz followed up the introduction with his accustomed vehemence and pertinacity, though without immediate effect, for Miss Smithson was more inclined to fear than to love him.

The young directress soon found out that the rage for Shakespeare, which had swept the public mind under the influence of the romanticism led by Victor Hugo, Dumas, Théophile Gautier, Balzac, and others, was spurious. The wave had been frothing but shallow, and it ebbed away, leaving the English actress and her enterprise gasping for life. With no deeper tap-root than the Gallic love of novelty and the infectious enthusiasm of a few men of great genius, the Shakespearean mania had a short life, and Frenchmen shrugged their shoulders over their own folly, in temporarily preferring the English barbarian to Racine, Corneille, and Molière. The letters of Berlioz, in which he scourges the fickleness of his countrymen in returning again to their "false gods," are masterpieces of pointed invective.

Miss Smithson was speedily involved in great pecuniary difficulty, and, to add to her misfortunes, she fell down stairs and broke her leg, thus precluding her own appearance on the stage. Affairs

were in this desperate condition, when Berlioz came to the fore with a delicate and manly chivalry worthy of the highest praise. He offered to pay Miss Smithson's debts, though a poor man himself, and to marry her without delay. The ceremony took place immediately, and thus commenced a connection which hampered and retarded Berlioz's career, as well as caused him no little personal unhappiness. He speedily discovered that his wife was a woman of fretful, imperious temper, jealous of mere shadows (though Berlioz was a man to give her substantial cause), and totally lacking in sympathy writh his high-art ideals.

When Mme. Berlioz recovered, it was to find herself unable longer to act, as her leg was stiff and her movements unsuited to the exigencies of the stage. Poor Berlioz was crushed by the weight of the obligations he had assumed, and, as the years went on, the peevish plaints of an invalid wife, who had lost her beauty and power of charming, withered the affection which had once been so fervid and passionate. Berlioz finally separated from his once beautiful and worshiped Harriet Smithson, but to the very last supplied her wants as fully as he could out of the meager earnings of his literary work and of musical compositions, which the Paris public, for the most part, did not care to listen to. For his son, Louis, the only offspring of this union, Berlioz felt a devoted affection, and his loss at sea in after-years was a blow that nearly broke his heart.

IV.

Owing to the unrelenting hostility of Cherubini, Berlioz failed to secure a professorship at the Conservatoire, a place to which he was nobly

entitled, and was fain to take up with the position of librarian instead. The paltry wage he eked out by journalistic writing, for the most part as musical critic of the "Journal des Débats," by occasional concerts, revising proofs, in a word anything which a versatile and desperate Bohemian could turn his hand to. In fact, for many years the main subsistence of Berlioz was derived from feuilleton-writing and the labors of a critic. His prose is so witty, brilliant, fresh, and epigrammatic that he would have been known to posterity as a clever *litterateur*, had he not preferred to remain merely a great musician. Dramatic, picturesque, and subtile, with an admirable sense of art-form, he could have become a powerful dramatist, perhaps a great novelist. But his soul, all whose aspirations set toward one goal, revolted from the labors of literature, still more from the daily grind of journalistic drudgery. In that remarkable book, "Mémoires de Hector Berlioz," he has made known his misery, and thus recounts one of his experiences: "I stood at the window gazing into the gardens, at the heights of Montmartre, at the setting sun; reverie bore me a thousand leagues from my accursed comic opera. And when, on turning, my eyes fell upon the accursed title at the head of the accursed sheet, blank still, and obstinately awaiting my word, despair seized upon me. My guitar rested against the table; with a kick I crushed its side. Two pistols on the mantel stared at me with great round eyes. I regarded them for some time, then beat my forehead with clinched hand. At last I wept furiously, like a schoolboy unable to do his theme. The bitter tears were a relief. I turned the pistols toward the wall; I pitied my innocent guitar, and sought a few chords, which were given without resentment. Just then my son of six years knocked at the door [the

little Louis whose death, years after, was the last bitter drop in the composer's cup of life]; owing to my ill-humor, I had unjustly scolded him that morning. 'Papa,' he cried, 'wilt thou be friends?' 'I *will* be friends; come on, my boy'; and I ran to open the door. I took him on my knee, and, with his blonde head on my breast, we slept together.... Fifteen years since then, and my torment still endures. Oh, to be always there!—scores to write, orchestras to lead, rehearsals to direct. Let me stand all day with *bâton* in hand, training a chorus, singing their parts myself, and beating the measure until I spit blood, and cramp seizes my arm; let me carry desks, double basses, harps, remove platforms, nail planks like a porter or a carpenter, and then spend the night in rectifying the errors of engravers or copyists. I have done, do, and will do it. That belongs to my musical life, and I bear it without thinking of it, as the hunter bears the thousand fatigues of the chase. But to scribble eternally for a livelihood—!"

It may be fancied that such a man as Berlioz did not spare the lash, once he griped the whip-handle, and, though no man was more generous than he in recognizing and encouraging genuine merit, there was none more relentless in scourging incompetency, pretentious commonplace, and the blind conservatism which rests all its faith in what has been. Our composer made more than one powerful enemy by this recklessness in telling the truth, where a more politic man would have gained friends strong to help in time of need. But Berlioz was too bitter and reckless, as well as too proud, to debate consequences.

In 1838 Berlioz completed his "Benvenuto Cellini," his only attempt at opera since "Les Francs Juges,"

and, wonderful to say, managed to get it done at the opera, though the director, Duponchel, laughed at him as a lunatic, and the whole company already regarded the work as damned in advance. The result was a most disastrous and *éclatant* failure, and it would have crushed any man whose moral backbone was not forged of thrice-tempered steel. With all these back-sets Hector Berlioz was not without encouragement. The brilliant Franz Liszt, one of the musical idols of the age, had bowed before him and called him master, the great musical protagonist. Spontini, one of the most successful composers of the time, held him in affectionate admiration, and always bade him be of good cheer. Paganini, the greatest of violinists, had hailed him as equal to Beethoven.

On the night of the failure of "Benvenuto Cellini," a strange-looking man with disheveled black hair and eyes of piercing brilliancy had forced his way around into the green-room, and, seeking out Berlioz, had fallen on his knees before him and kissed his hand passionately. Then he threw his arms around him and hailed the astonished composer as the master-spirit of the age in terms of glowing eulogium. The next morning, while Berlioz was in bed, there was a tap at the door, and Paganini's son, Achille, entered with a note, saying his father was sick, or he would have come to pay his respects in person. On opening the note Berlioz found a most complimentary letter, and a more substantial evidence of admiration, a check on Baron Rothschild for twenty thousand francs! Paganini also gave Berlioz a commission to write a concerto for his Stradivarius viola, which resulted in a grand symphony, "Harold en Italie," founded on Byron's "Childe Harold," but still more an inspiration of his own Italian adventures, which had

had a strong flavor of personal if they lacked artistic interest.

The generous gift of Paganini raised Berlioz from the slough of necessity so far that he could give his whole time to music. Instantly he set about his "Romeo and Juliet" symphony, which will always remain one of his masterpieces—a beautifully chiseled work, from the hands of one inspired by gratitude, unfettered imagination, and the sense of blessed repose. Our composer's first musical journey was an extensive tour in Germany in 1841, of which he gives charming memorials in his letters to Liszt, Heine, Ernst, and others. His reception was as generous and sympathetic as it had been cold and scornful in France. Everywhere he was honored and praised as one of the great men of the age. Mendelssohn exchanged *bâtons* with him at Leipsic, notwithstanding the former only half understood this stalwart Berserker of music. Spohr called him one of the greatest artists living, though his own direct antithesis, and Schumann wrote glowingly in the "Neue Zeitschrift": "For myself, Berlioz is as clear as the blue sky above. I really think there is a new time in music coming." Berlioz wrote joyfully to Heine: "I came to Germany as the men of ancient Greece went to the oracle at Delphi, and the response has been in the highest degree encouraging." But his Germanic laurels did him no good in France. The Parisians would have none of him except as a writer of *feuilletons*, who pleased them by the vigor with which he handled the knout, and tickled the levity of the million, who laughed while they saw the half-dozen or more victims flayed by merciless satire. Berlioz wept tears of blood because he had to do such executioner's work, but did it none the less vigorously for all that.

The composer made another musical journey in Austria and Hungary in 1844-'45, where he was again received with the most enthusiastic praise and pleasure. It was in Hungary, especially, that the warmth of his audiences overran all bounds. One night, at Pesth, where he played the "Rackoczy Indulé," an orchestral setting of the martial hymn of the Magyar race, the people were worked into a positive frenzy, and they would have flung themselves before him that he might walk over their prostrate bodies. Vienna, Pesth, and Prague, led the way, and the other cities followed in the wake of an enthusiasm which has been accorded to not many artists. The French heard these stories with amazement, for they could not understand how this musical demigod could be the same as he who was little better than a witty buffoon. During this absence Berlioz wrote the greater portion of his "Damnation de Faust," and, as he had made some money, he obeyed the strong instinct which always ruled him, the hope of winning the suffrages of his own countrymen.

An eminent French critic claims that this great work, of which we shall speak further on, contains that which Gounod's "Faust" lacks—insight into the spiritual significance of Goethe's drama. Berlioz exhausted all his resources in producing it at the Opéra Comique in 1846, but again he was disappointed by its falling stillborn on the public interest. Berlioz was utterly ruined, and he fled from France in the dead of winter as from a pestilence.

The genius of this great man was recognized in Holland, Russia, Austria, and Germany, but among his own countrymen, for the most part, his name was a laughing-stock and a by-word. He offended the

pedants and the formalists by his daring originality, he had secured the hate of rival musicians by the vigor and keenness of his criticisms. Berlioz was in the very heat of the artistic controversy between the classicists and romanticists, and was associated with Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Delacroix, Liszt, Chopin, and others, in fighting that acrimonious art-battle. While he did not stand formally with the ranks, he yet secured a still more bitter portion of hostility from their powerful opponents, for, to opposition in principle, Berlioz united a caustic and vigorous mode of expression. His name was a target for the wits. "A physician who plays on the guitar and fancies himself a composer," was the scoff of malignant gossips. The journals poured on him a flood of abuse without stint. French malignity is the most venomous and unscrupulous in the world, and Berlioz was selected as a choice victim for its most vigorous exercise, none the less willingly that he had shown so much skill and zest in impaling the victims of his own artistic and personal dislike.

V.

To continue the record of Berlioz's life in consecutive narrative would be without significance, for it contains but little for many years except the same indomitable battle against circumstance and enmity, never yielding an inch, and always keeping his eyes bent on his own lofty ideal. In all of art history is there no more masterful heroic struggle than Berlioz waged for thirty-five years, firm in his belief that some time, if not during his own life, his principles would be triumphant, and his name ranked among the immortals. But what of the mean while? This problem Berlioz solved, in his later as in earlier years, by doing the distasteful work of the

literary scrub. But never did he cease composing; though no one would then have his works, his clear eye perceived the coming time when his genius would not be denied, when an apotheosis should comfort his spirit wandering in Hades.

Among Berlioz's later works was an opera of which he had composed both words and music, consisting of two parts, "The Taking of Troy," and "The Trojans at Carthage," the latter of which at last secured a few representations at a minor theatre in 1863. The plan of this work required that it should be carried out under the most perfect conditions. "In order," says Berlioz, "to properly produce such a work as 'Les Trojans,' I must be absolute master of the theatre, as of the orchestra in directing a symphony. I must have the good-will of all, be obeyed by all, from prima donna to scene-shifter. A lyrical theatre, as I conceive it, is a great instrument of music, which, if I am to play, must be placed unreservedly in my hands." Wagner found a King of Bavaria to help him carry out a similar colossal scheme at Bayreuth, but ill luck followed a man no less great through life. His grand "Trojans" was mutilated, tinkered, patched, and belittled, to suit the Theatre Lyrique. It was a butchery of the work, but still it yielded the composer enough to justify his retirement from the "Journal des Débats," after thirty years of slavery.

Berlioz was now sixty years old, a lonely man, frail in body, embittered in soul by the terrible sense of failure. His wife, with whom he had lived on terms of alienation, was dead; his only son far away, cruising on a man-of-war. His courage and ambition were gone. To one who remarked that his music belonged to the future, he replied that he doubted if it ever belonged to the past. His life seemed to have

been a mistake, so utterly had he failed to impress himself on the public. Yet there were times when audiences felt themselves moved by the power of his music out of the ruts of preconceived opinion into a prophecy of his coming greatness. There is an interesting anecdote told by a French writer:

"Some years ago M. Pasdeloup gave the *septuor* from the 'Trojans' at a benefit concert. The best places were occupied by the people of the world, but the *elite intelligente* were ranged upon the highest seats of the Cirque. The programme was superb, and those who were there neither for Fashion's nor Charity's sake, but for love of what was best in art, were enthusiastic in view of all those masterpieces. The worthless overture of the 'Prophète,' disfiguring this fine *ensemble*, had been hissed by some students of the Conservatoire, and, accustomed as I was to the blindness of the general public, knowing its implacable prejudices, I trembled for the fate of the magnificent *septuor* about to follow. My fears were strangely ill-founded, no sooner had ceased this hymn of infinite love and peace, than these same students, and the whole assemblage with them, burst into such a tempest of applause as I never heard before. Berlioz was hidden in the further ranks, and, the instant he was discovered, the work was forgotten for the man; his name flew from mouth to mouth, and four thousand people were standing upright, with their arms stretched toward him. Chance had placed me near him, and never shall I forget the scene. That name, apparently ignored by the crowd, it had learned all at once, and was repeating as that of one of its heroes. Overcome as by the strongest emotion of his life, his head upon his breast, he listened to this tumultuous cry of 'Vive Berlioz!' and when, on looking up, he saw all eyes

upon him and all arms extended toward him, he could not withstand the sight; he trembled, tried to smile, and broke into sobbing."

Berlioz's supremacy in the field of orchestral composition, his knowledge of technique, his novel combination, his insight into the resources of instruments, his skill in grouping, his rich sense of color, are incontestably without a parallel, except by Beethoven and Wagner. He describes his own method of study as follows:

"I carried with me to the opera the score of whatever work was on the bill, and read during the performance. In this way I began to familiarize myself with orchestral methods, and to learn the voice and quality of the various instruments, if not their range and mechanism. By this attentive comparison of the effect with the means employed to produce it, I found the hidden link uniting musical expression to the special art of instrumentation. The study of Beethoven, Weber, and Spontini, the impartial examination both of the *customs* of orchestration and of *unusual* forms and combinations, the visits I made to *virtuosi*, the trials I led them to make upon their respective instruments, and a little instinct, did for me the rest."

The principal symphonies of Berlioz are works of colossal character and richness of treatment, some of them requiring several orchestras. Contrasting with these are such marvels of delicacy as "Queen Mab," of which it has been said that the "confessions of roses and the complaints of violets were noisy in comparison." A man of magnificent genius and knowledge, he was but little understood during his life, and it was only when his uneasy spirit was at

rest that the world recognized his greatness. Paris, that stoned him when he was living, now listens to his grand music with enthusiasm. Hector Berlioz to the last never lost faith in himself, though this man of genius, in his much suffering from depression and melancholy, gave good witness to the truth of Goethe's lines:

"Who never ate with tears his bread,
Nor, weeping through the night's long hours,
Lay restlessly tossing on his bed—
He knows ye not, ye heavenly Powers!"

A man utterly without reticence, who, Gallic fashion, would shout his wrongs and sufferings to the uttermost ends of the earth, yet without a smack of Gallic posing and affectation, Berlioz talks much about himself, and dares to estimate himself boldly. There was no small vanity about this colossal spirit. He speaks of himself with outspoken frankness, as he would discuss another. We can not do better than to quote one of these self-measurements: "My style is in general very daring, but it has not the slightest tendency to destroy any of the constructive elements of art. On the contrary, I seek to increase the number of these elements. I have never dreamed, as has foolishly been supposed in France, of writing music without melody. That school exists to-day in Germany, and I have a horror of it. It is easy for any one to convince himself that, without confining myself to taking a very short melody for a theme, as the very greatest masters have, I have always taken care to invest my compositions with a real wealth of melody. The value of these melodies, their distinction, their novelty, and charm, can be very well contested; it is not for me to appraise them. But to deny their existence is either bad faith or

stupidity; only as these melodies are often of very large dimensions, infantile and short-sighted minds do not clearly distinguish their form; or else they are wedded to other secondary melodies which veil their outlines from those same infantile minds; or, upon the whole, these melodies are so dissimilar to the little waggeries that the musical *plebs* call melodies that they can not make up their minds to give the same name to both. The dominant qualities of my music are passionate expression, internal fire, rhythmic animation, and unexpected changes."

Heinrich Heine, the German poet, who was Berlioz's friend, called him a "colossal nightingale, a lark of eagle-size, such as they tell us existed in the primeval world." The poet goes on to say: "Berlioz's music, in general, has in it something primeval if not antediluvian to my mind; it makes me think of gigantic species of extinct animals, of fabulous empires full of fabulous sins, of heaped-up impossibilities; his magical accents call to our minds Babylon, the hanging gardens the wonders of Nineveh, the daring edifices of Mizraim, as we see them in the pictures of the Englishman Martin." Shortly after the publication of "Lutetia," in which this bold characterization was expressed, the first performance of Berlioz's "Enfance du Christ" was given, and the poet, who was on his sick-bed, wrote a penitential letter to his friend for not having given him full justice. "I hear on all sides," he says, "that you have just plucked a nosegay of the sweetest melodious flowers, and that your oratorio is throughout a masterpiece of *naivete*. I shall never forgive myself for having been so unjust to a friend."

Berlioz died at the age of sixty-five. His funeral services were held at the Church of the Trinity, a few

days after those of Rossini. The discourse at the grave was pronounced by Gounod, and many eloquent things were said of him, among them a quotation of the epitaph of Marshal Trivulce, "*Hic tandem quiescit qui nunquam quievit*" (Here is he quiet, at last, who never was quiet before). Soon after his death appeared his "Mémoires," and his bones had hardly got cold when the performance of his music at the Conservatoire, the Cirque, and the Chatelet began to be heard with the most hearty enthusiasm.

VI.

Théophile Gautier says that no one will deny to Berlioz a great character, though, the world being given to controversies, it may be argued whether or not he was a great genius. The world of to-day has but one opinion on both these questions. The force of Berlioz's character was phenomenal. His vitality was so passionate and active that brain and nerve quivered with it, and made him reach out toward experience at every facet of his nature. Quietude was torture, rest a sin, for this daring temperament. His eager and subtile intelligence pierced every sham, and his imagination knew no bounds to its sweep, oftentimes even disdaining the bounds of art in its audacity and impatience. This big, virile nature, thwarted and embittered by opposition, became hardened into violent self-assertion; this naturally resolute will settled back into fierce obstinacy; this fine nature, sensitive and sincere, got torn and ragged with passion under the stress of his unfortunate life. But, at one breath of true sympathy how quickly the nobility of the man asserted itself! All his cynicism and hatred melted away, and left only sweetness, truth, and genial kindness.

When Berlioz entered on his studies, he had reached an age at which Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Rossini, and others, had already done some of the best work of their lives. Yet it took only a few years to achieve a development that produced such a great work as the "Symphonic Fantastique," the prototype of modern programme music.

From first to last it was the ambition of Berlioz to widen the domain of his art. He strove to attain a more intimate connection between instrumental music and poetry in the portrayal of intense passions, and the suggestion of well-defined dramatic situations. In spite of the fact that he frequently overshot his mark, it does not make his works one whit less astonishing. An uncompromising champion of what has been dubbed "programme" music, he thought it legitimate to force the imagination of the hearer to dwell on exterior scenes during the progress of the music, and to distress the mind in its attempt to find an exact relation between the text and the music. The most perfect specimens of the works of Berlioz, however, are those in which the music speaks for itself, such as the "Scène aux Champs," and the "Marche au Supplice," in the "Symphonie Fantastique," the "Marche des Pèlerins," in "Harold"; the overtures to "King Lear," "Benvenuto Cellini," "Carnaval Romain," "Le Corsaire," "Les Francs Juges," etc.

As a master of the orchestra, no one has been the equal of Berlioz in the whole history of music, not even Beethoven or Wagner. He treats the orchestra with the absolute daring and mastery exercised by Paganini over the violin, and by Liszt over the piano. No one has showed so deep an insight into the individuality of each instrument, its resources, the

extent to which its capabilities could be carried. Between the phrase and the instrument, or group of instruments, the equality is perfect; and independent of this power, made up equally of instinct and knowledge, this composer shows a sense of orchestral color in combining single instruments so as to form groups, or in the combination of several separate groups of instruments by which he has produced the most novel and beautiful effects—effects not found in other composers. The originality and variety of his rhythms, the perfection of his instrumentation, have never been disputed even by his opponents. In many of his works, especially those of a religious character, there is a Cyclopean bigness of instrumental means used, entirely beyond parallel in art. Like the Titans of old, he would scale the very heavens in his daring. In one of his works he does not hesitate to use three orchestras, three choruses (all of full dimensions), four organs, and a triple quartet. The conceptions of Berlioz were so grandiose that he sometimes disdained detail, and the result was that more than one of his compositions have rugged grandeur at the expense of symmetry and balance of form.

Yet, when he chose, Berlioz could write the most exquisite and dainty lyrics possible. What could be more exquisitely tender than many of his songs and romances, and various of the airs and choral pieces from "Beatrice et Benedict," from "Nuits d'Été," "Irlande," and from "L'Enfance du Christ"?

Berlioz in his entirety, as man and composer, was a most extraordinary being, to whom the ordinary scale of measure can hardly be applied. Though he founded no new school, he pushed to a fuller development the possibilities to which Beethoven

reached out in the Ninth Symphony. He was the great *virtuoso* on the orchestra, and on this Briarean instrument he played with the most amazing skill. Others have surpassed him in the richness of the musical substance out of which their tone-pictures are woven, in symmetry of form, in finish of detail; but no one has ever equaled him in that absolute mastery over instruments, by which a hundred become as plastic and flexible as one, and are made to embody every phase of the composer's thought with that warmth of color and precision of form long believed to be necessarily confined to the sister arts.

THE END.

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