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On Some Bearings of the Historical Method Upon Music

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NOVEMBER 3, 1884.

DR. STAINER
IN THE CHAIR.

*ON SOME BEARINGS OF THE HISTORICAL
METHOD UPON MUSIC.*

By C. H. PARRY, MUS. DOC.

IT appears to me that in this world all things move onwards together, and that just as in things external, and what we are accustomed to call material, so in things which concern the mind, there is no department of philosophy, or science, or art which goes on quite by itself, without influencing and being influenced by the progress which goes on in other lines. The tone and predisposition of men's minds, and the character of the prevalent courses of speculation, seems to be determined by causes which affect all branches of mental activity in a similar way, and the tendencies which show themselves strongly and effectively in one branch are sure to appear sooner or later in another.

The general tendency of thought, in our time, in science and philosophy, has been shown most strongly in the common adoption of the theory of evolution, and the attempt to explain phenomena of various kinds, and all manner of philosophical questions, on a system which amounts generally in the end to a study of the history of successive stages of change, and inferences based upon similarity of action, or uniformity of general tendencies in a long succession of events. It is in this way that people commonly agree, in these days, to study the history of races of beings, or the history of languages, or politics, or even of superstitions, and, on a broader and grander scale, even the history of the universe itself. We associate this way of looking at things chiefly with the name of Darwin; but he himself also was the product of the tendencies of the time before him, and though a great work fell to his share to do, it seems as if the accumulation of evidence and the accurate habits of observation, cultivated by the study of sciences, must have inevitably brought about the same condition of things in time, even without the advantage of having so much of the work centralised in him.

Now it seems to me that there is scarcely anything which concerns the mind of man, which is more suitable to be

studied in its historical development than music. It is unlike other arts in being essentially modern, and we are in a position in these days to piece together a tolerably continuous record of the progress of musical art from the earliest times when its modern forms presented themselves, and we can trace the gradual development of the various forms of art both in our own times and in the past, even in the minutest details; and we can judge how and why men were driven in particular directions by the limits of their opportunities or the circumstances of their lives, and why certain forms of art were prosperous at certain times in history, and different ones at others. Why, for instance, a particular kind of choral music came to its highest perfection first, and how and why a refined kind of instrumental music was brought to perfection at a later period, and why certain men and certain nations were drawn to the development of organ music and certain others to violin music, and certain others to operatic music. And it seems that if we observe the facts which lie ready to our hands carefully, and endeavour to frame our conclusions from them patiently without allowing preconceived ideas or prepossessions to get the better of us, we ought to find many things which will be of the most inestimable service in criticism, theory, and even the application of such abilities as we have to execution and composition.

It may, no doubt, appear to many people that such a method has always been the habit of wise musicians, and that the observation of the works and ways of great masters has always been the chief basis upon which we build our theories. Men appear to have tried to find out what it is right to do and what to avoid by the study of their works; and they have cultivated their taste and their perception of art mainly by frequent hearing and study of them, and they think their judgment secure in so far as it seems to be borne out by their practice. But the way in which this has commonly been done seems very far from that method of historical study from which we can safely reason; for it has been customary to fix all attention upon isolated individuals to such an extent that they have seemed to have no connection with anything that went before them, and very often the most erroneous impression has been produced by the way in which their greatness has been estimated and described. Even the habit of laying so much stress upon an individual, and trusting all to his wisdom and judgment, seems unlikely to give a broad and liberal view of the many-sided possibilities of art; for this is just the typical fault of all superstitions, and the besetting infirmity of many well meant but useless and exploded theories of past days. It inclines to that

common weakness of looking upon an exceptionally able man as a divinely appointed prophet whose judgment is infallible, and to ignore the fact that even the greatest men the world has produced were all of them products of the times that preceded them and of the circumstances in which they lived. Some men's judgment and powers of thought and execution seem so copious and so dazzlingly brilliant that we can hardly believe them to be made of the same stuff as ourselves, or to have only the same kind of wits that we have. They seem to work as quickly and lightly as they please and yet to be always sure of being right, and we are driven by our astonishment and admiration to credit them with almost supernatural powers, and to think of them as having received a special mission which makes them independent of all the usual courses of things. Yet in reality their work was only made possible by the work of those who went before them; and it will be impossible for us to understand its qualities and characteristics, or to realise justly the light it throws upon the state of music in our own time, without tracing the conditions which led to it, and following the steps from the small and insignificant beginnings to the masterpieces which we regard as the triumphs of our art. Such a study need not by any means lessen the pre-eminence of a great master, often rather the contrary; for it will show what he owes to his forerunners and what is essentially his work, and in what particulars his own personality expresses itself, and generally what is the real nature of his contribution to the progress and enrichment of art. It may also serve to show what principles and characteristics of his work were specially appropriate to the time and state of art when he lived, and why they may not be applicable to our own time. For the condition of art is constantly changing from generation to generation both in style and in treatment of musical materials; and till arbitrary formulas have been absorbed into first principles it is inevitable that the seeming dogmas of one generation should often be ignored by the next, and the ideals of one period become the commonplaces of another. It is easy enough to see historically why certain arbitrary restrictions, such as those of the old contrapuntal style, and many other restrictions relating to progressions of harmony, resolutions of discords, modulations, melodic progressions, and false relations, and other similar rules which are ignored by modern composers, were quite natural and necessary in those times when they were framed. For in less developed stages of the history of art it was necessary to have many such arbitrary laws to guide undeveloped musical instinct and prevent its transgressing in unguarded moments, or when venturing into paths which were not sufficiently explored

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to be trustworthy. But, in so far as these laws only applied to the special periods in which they were adopted, art cannot expand healthily or vigorously without casting them aside. Its advance must force them out of the road along which it is travelling, and if it is to prosper, some more general and broadly conceived principles must be found which shall answer the same purpose more elastically. And there is no way of finding out safely what are mere arbitrary restrictions based upon the observation of ill-digested special instances, or what are deeply grounded principles, but the study of the practice of successive generations of composers. It is in such a case that the observation of the practice of a single man may be fatal. Every man must have his idiosyncracies, and some of these may be perfectly irrational; and to say that such and such a great composer avoided a particular progression is not the least of a solid argument as to its being absolutely inadmissible. A composer often avoids certain things simply because they are not consistent with his style; early composers avoided many progressions and many harmonies simply because they did not understand them, and had not discovered how to use them. The study of the steps from elementary simplicity up to our complex condition of art shows how progression after progression became admissible by being made intelligible, and by analogy it may point to the roads along which it is still safe to go, without transgressing the most deeply set principles of art. That there must be laws of form, laws of combination of sound, laws of melodic progression is perfectly obvious. Art only exists by such means. It is by making combinations of sounds in intelligible forms that it justifies itself, and where real formlessness comes in, art is not. But the nature of form of every kind, both harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic, constantly changes, and even the very principles upon which it rests. At one time it has depended upon contrapuntal devices; at another, chiefly upon the relations of tonic and dominant harmonies; and it seems as if the instinct of composers constantly pushed them into regions where the dogmas of the generation that preceded them would not seem as lights, but rather stumbling blocks, and stones of offence. There is hardly anything more conspicuous to the superficial observer of history than the way in which composers have been at variance with the theorists of their day on such questions; but the commonplace inference that composers are always right and theorists always wrong, is not at all helpful or likely to be of service to anyone. What a more careful study of the matter shows is how far theorists have been wrong by mistaking a *special instance for a principle*; as by saying that such and such a modulation is wrong, or such a point of structure vicious, when they

ought to have said that it had always been wrong when it violated some principle of broader significance, but it might be right if a composer could use it without such violation. But we can no more hope to get to first principles in music than we can in the affairs of every day life, and all we can really do is to take the broadest view possible of the facts with which its history supplies us, and make sure of tendencies and the consensus of opinion which it shows us, and use them as the guides and supports in our own ventures.

It is not possible for an artist to train or develop himself to the full on the summary teaching of other men. He must inevitably work out his own salvation for himself. The rules of theorists are generally little more than restrictions, and they are chiefly necessary in the infantile stage of artistic development—when the instinct and judgment have been so little aroused that the hopeful scion of art can hardly distinguish between the safe roadway and the ditch, or the solid grass-covered ground and the pool hidden by the smooth coat of duckweed. But the artist does not only want to avoid pitfalls, he also wants to know where and how to walk and run, and how to explore new and fruitful lands of art; and to do that no teaching but the works and ways of men who have done what he wants to do will serve. His instincts must in the end be his guide, and these he can only educate by studying the education of the race from its infancy to its maturity, which is similar, but on a grander scale, to the education of the individual. A theorist may tell him so-and-so did this, and some one else did that, and that may serve to direct his attention to the *manner* in which a thing was done in special instances; but he does not want to do the same thing over again. To reproduce the form which some one else used exactly, is little better than plagiarism at any time; and it is all the worse if it is deliberately done. Ordinary people can see plagiarism of ideas, so most composers try to avoid them; but on the whole they are less objectionable than wholesale plagiarisms of form which the general public have not the cultivation to detect. If a theorist lays out the plan of a sonata of Mozart or Haydn, that may be an excellent basis to help a man to find a principle, and he may really find it with success if he traces the way in which Mozart and Haydn brought the form to perfection, in its way, by following and improving upon the lines of their predecessors: but it is not a fit thing for a man to reproduce the structure and call the work his own. There is individuality in structure, as in every other element of art, and no two composers of any great mark have treated it quite in the same manner, in works which are fit to be called representative of them. Haydn

and Mozart resemble each other more than any other two composers in this respect, but their position in the history of art, and their relations to one another, were exceptional; and even they had their individual peculiarities. And it is not only to be noticed that certain ways of dealing with structure are characteristic of individuals, but they *are also characteristic of periods*; and the style of music which is well adapted to one kind of exposition is not suited to another. Forms of the classical sonata order seem to be thoroughly well adapted to the style of ideas common in the sonata age. The two things grew up together, and fitted one another perfectly; but since then the style of ideas and the character of expression has changed, and become less self-contained and regular; and the increase of passionate dramatic expression, and strong poetical purpose, which is a feature of the music of the age we live in, makes the simplicity and well balanced evenness of the old structure almost impossible. Of course, composers can make sonatas of the old order, as they can make madrigals, or suites, or church music, in the old style, but it is not in such works that there is any chance of finding the genuine musical product which is representative of the time; for men can only produce real music, with life in it, in the spirit of the age in which they live. The condition of life, the condition of emotions, the state of men's nerves, are not the same at spaces of time only fifty years apart. Men do not feel the same with regard to music in two successive generations, and the conditions under which it is produced make it impossible to put the new wine into the old bottles. All the parts of the new product must be new. Genuine ideas of the year 1884 cannot be put in the form of the year 1800. The forms of 1800 may lie there in principle, but it must have expanded, and if art has gone on in the same lines, its law of cumulative progress must make that form more complex and more variable. Composers cannot go on saying the same thing over and over again, even the fact that they are differently constituted one from another would make that impossible, so they are inevitably driven to add their work to the sum of what has gone before. The known is their starting point, and the unknown their destiny, and it has been so from the beginning of art to the present day. But the only means of knowing how to direct their footsteps into the unknown, and to educate the instincts, which must in the end be their chief guide, is to watch the steps of greater men in the past days, and, accepting the line of art which is characteristic of their time in its highest and noblest forms, endeavour to work from that standard in the same spirit and the same manner as they did from the work of their predecessors. But the mere study of the works of great masters will not be sufficient to make their

journey secure, except in cases where these great composers follow close upon one another. The study of isolated instances is merely bewildering, and the very greatness of some man when separated from their context is so dazzling that it almost numbs the judgment. But if we could study the successive steps, and follow the progressive stages up to the great achievements, we should not only understand those achievements better, but see how to direct our own footsteps accordingly.

The stories of all great composers illustrate this clearly, scarcely one of them went through a regular course of academic training in art, and very many of them were reduced to develop their own education almost without help. Many of them found the most serviceable part of their education the careful study of the works of craftsmen of their art, more especially of those who were living nearest to them in point of time, and they always applied the knowledge they gained, as nearly as possible, to the style of their own age and country. Their instincts taught them to find principles, to escape from the trap of mistaking habits for truths, and to say what was natural to themselves, in forms in which it was possible to put their own ideas, and so it must be in modern times and in different countries. It seems probable that the time of great composers is past, and that the world will see no more of them in the highest sense; but even if composers are destined in the future to be mere illustrators and commentators upon the work of previous times, they cannot be true to themselves or to the art they profess to serve if they do not recognise the constant process of change, to which historical study of the art alone can give them the clue; and the fact that all genuine products must be outcomes of the time they live in, real expression of their own individuality and in consonance with the character of the nation they belong to. In all cases the real principles of art in the work of other times and other countries apply to their own case; for the principles, if we can get at them, are universal; but the mode of their application must vary with the varying conditions of men, and in the ways that are consonant to the race to which the composer belongs, or attaches himself in spirit.

There is an obvious analogy between the progress of music and the progress of the development of sciences and all kinds of discovery. While the civilised world was small, and knowledge limited, a man might make discoveries a few days' journey from his own door, and prove some fact of science with but a short stretch of observation. But when a great part of the world, and the universe, too, has been explored, and an enormous quantity of science mastered, it is a long journey to the new country where a man may set his seal on a new achievement, and if he wants to make his mark in science he

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must master all that is known of his own subject before he is fit to judge of what has yet to be known and proved. So it was in Mozart's time with the country of instrumental music and opera, and in Bach's time with organ music, and in Handel's with oratorio; and they did master the essence of the work that had been done before them, before they matured their own achievements. In our time the accumulation is vast, but the necessity of mastering the known is not less imperative, and before we can set our seal upon a great point of art we must do as they did, and know and understand what has been done before us.

I have been forced to confine myself to the bearings of this question on the department of composition, because of the largeness of the subject, and the necessary limits of time; and I have chosen this branch of the art in preference to discussing the influence of historical study upon executants, and critics, and the musical public at large, because it appears to be more generally appreciated, and is far more easily understood in connection with these latter. To critics it is obvious that an accurate knowledge of history is absolutely indispensable. They can neither deal rightly with the performances of the work of great masters of the past, nor estimate the true value and importance of such of their works as are brought forward, nor can they be just to rising musicians without it, and it is not only a question of dates, but of the why and how things came to be as they are. To say that the study must be serviceable to executants seems almost a truism, for though they may sometimes be inspired to grasp a composer's purpose and meaning, inspiration is not *always* ready, and tradition is very often required to guide and supplement it, while the knowledge of the ways in which such musicians as John Sebastian Bach, or Scarlatti, or Philip Emmanuel Bach, or Mozart, or Hummel, or any of the great school of early composers for the violin used their hands and heads, and the real condition of the instruments they wrote for must give them a far better chance of rendering their work in accordance with the composer's intentions; while far beyond that the knowledge of the condition of art in general, and the usages and conventions of previous times, is often necessary to explain much that is not intelligible from the bald and incomplete condition of the works as they are printed. To the public the matter is equally important; for they often fail to appreciate great works, simply because they do not see how to take them, and cannot trace the connection between those kinds of beauty which they are familiar with and the beauties of a strongly different style. Appreciation of art is with them, to a great extent, a matter of experience and opportunity, and they may be led to enjoy many things, which at first seem strange and uncouth to them,

by merely showing what the true place and position of such music is in the progress of musical development, and in what the art of it consists, and when they have learnt the technical side of the question, it is no long step for people who have any musical perception whatever to learn to understand and enter into the ideas which the form of art is meant to convey.

I am sorry I have not been able to treat my subject with more reference to detail, but I found its dimensions made it impossible. I console myself with the reflection that the details always lie ready to the hand of anyone who looks for them, and the study of them is as interesting and as full of surprises and discoveries of unexpected beauties and touches of human character as it must be serviceable for whatever purpose it is applied. Men may make their inferences from them differently, but difference of opinion is not always an evil, and if those differences are based upon broader grounds, and upon more real understanding of the points at issue than has frequently been the case on previous occasions, it will be a real gain to the art.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN.—I am sure we are all greatly indebted to Dr. Parry for this very admirable paper. I am quite sure, also, although I agree with every word of it myself, that there must be some here who do not agree with it, and I should be very glad if anybody who has any remarks to make will do so, so that the subject may be beaten out a bit. It is a capital opportunity, and a capital place for it, because we do not lose our tempers in this room; whereas when people write to the newspapers they very often lose their tempers, and very often also when they write books, but here we may have a general discussion on this very important subject without that danger. The few points which struck me as being so valuable, and what I believe Dr. Parry intended to be most important, referred to the growth of Form in composition. It seems to me that that is a subject which has been grossly misunderstood up to the present time, and I think this is the very first time I have heard it stated in what appears to my mind a reasonable and proper shape. Having heard what he said about it I seem to breathe freely, for it seems to me perfectly monstrous that an art like music should go on expanding in every direction by the gradual development of instruments, by the greater powers of executants, by the different language it speaks so fully to our emotions, and that when a man sits down to compose he should be required to pack the whole of that material into a small case of a certain size and shape which has

been brought from previous centuries. That is practically what musicians have been ordered to do. If he has the ability, and ventures outside of that, the critics are down upon him at once, they say his writing is perfectly formless, that the laws of beauty are permanent, and, therefore, he ought to stick to them when they have once been discovered. That has often been said; I have no doubt you have all heard it said, and read it again and again, that the laws of beauty are permanent, and that, therefore, all these experiments on form are mischievous. But there is one logical fallacy lying at the bottom of that statement. It is perfectly true to say that the laws of beauty are permanent, just as it is to say that the laws of the universe are permanent, but although the laws of beauty are permanent, the way in which nature expresses beauty will be constantly varying. There is nothing more beautiful than the rose, but can anybody say he has seen two roses exactly alike? If you were to apply in art the same thing, we should have people never copying a real natural rose, but copying the conventional rose which we used to see stamped on our wall papers, because they are all alike. This notion, that one must be confined to one particular form, reminds me of a trifling incident which happened in a place well known to Dr. Parry—the kitchen of Magdalene College, Oxford. We used to go there sometimes, and talk to the old cook, who was very fond of cutting camelias out of turnips, and putting them on all the things he sent up to the Hall, and I remember on one occasion we said, "Well, you have ornamented your dishes very prettily to-day," and he said, "Yes, my camelias are much more beautiful than nature." Of course, we looked rather astonished, and I said, "Really, why is that?" and he said, "The fact is, mine are so much more regular in form." Now, gentlemen, there is a large army of musical critics and musicians who would very much prefer turnip camelias to the real ones. I appeal to Dr. Parry as a historian whether that is not the fact, that we have examples before us and types of music which show the results of the persistent efforts to drag them all down to one form until they have at last gone down to the conventional rose, and the turnip camelia. One other thing I should like to say, which I dare say Dr. Parry would have worked out very elaborately had time permitted him, which is that music seems now to have a different function and different object entirely to what it had in its earliest history. Of course, I am making an exception of the Greek music, because we cannot say whether the stories we hear of the effect of that upon the people are absolutely and literally true or not—whether it is true that their emotions were wonderfully affected by it. If the music was on an equality with the exquisite taste

and beauty of the plays in which it was executed it must have had that effect, because nothing has ever approached them. A very fine Greek scholar made a very acute remark to me once when talking about the beauty of the Greek plays, and the religious associations which they had amongst the people, and he said the nearest approach to a Greek play in England at this moment he believed to be the Passion Service in St. Paul's Cathedral. It may seem rather blasphemous to some, but there is a deep truth at the bottom of it. They went to hear some history, or legend, which appealed very deeply to their feelings from a religious point of view. I hope Dr. Parry will give us a valuable book on the difficult subject of the gradual growth of what people thought music might do for them, what it should mean, and what it should say. The old form, very likely, was suitable for the age, but now music has a most curious and direct appeal to our emotions; the straight-jacket form is not adapted to it. The charge of formlessness is one of the nice things which one constantly meets with in the daily papers. Some of the men who write for the daily papers I know, and I have a great respect for them, but I think, as a rule, the musical criticisms in English papers are perfectly wretched. They generally fall into one of two extremes, either the man loves a thing without form, because it is without form, or he says it has no form, because he does not understand the form. I consider either of those two equally bad in its effect on art; a man has no business to profess to be a critic who can only come to one of those two conclusions. It is like the old stories of the sailors, who, when they heard languages in foreign ports, used to include them all under the term gibberish, because they could not understand them.

But the reaction in England against advance is to me a very remarkable thing. English people—and I am an Englishman myself, although I have a German-looking name—seem to be in the habit of going off in a certain direction with a splendid dash, and then suddenly the nation stops to consider whether it is not a dangerous expedition, whether it has not already proved itself to be a great nation, and might not as well stop and leave things to go on as they are. That seems to be the case in music; there seems to be at this moment a tremendous re-action for restoring old forms. But I should like it to be distinctly understood that the new point of view has nothing to do with the appreciation of the beautiful things of times past. I have just as much pleasure in listening to a mass of Palestrina as to going and listening to some glorious music of Wagner. One of the difficulties we have to contend with in England now is to try if we cannot knock out the party schools and make an eclectic school. Why should people, if they like Mendelssohn, abuse

Wagner, and if they love Wagner, why should they abuse Mendelssohn? I am perfectly prepared, if anybody will give me the opportunity, to listen to a fine performance of the "Elijah" one night, and to go and listen to "Tannhäuser" or "Lohengrin" the next night. But I appeal to you whether that is the feeling of the leading critics of the time. I think it is not. They would, if their opinions were powerful enough, drive us all into two camps, the old and the new, and that, I think, would be one of the most unfortunate results which could possibly be anticipated. I know that Dr. Parry is exceedingly eclectic in his tastes for music, and I think that every man who has at all a historical mind must be. As a church musician, I have often had to go to meetings of the clergy. I do not very often go now, but I used to go and read Papers at Church Congresses, and it did not matter what the Paper was, but one man immediately got up and said "Gregorian," and another "Anglican," and then it went on hammer and tongs, and there was nothing left for the rest of the evening, but an indiscriminate argument about those two things. Now, in church music, as in other branches of music, there is a regular progress upwards. I have the greatest pleasure in listening to a fine Gregorian or to the *Tonus Peregrinus*, and I have also the very greatest pleasure in listening to some of the fine double chants of my predecessor, Dr. Goss, or to a motett, or to any other good church music, but there seems, unfortunately, to be two schools, one of which is anxious to turn out every single thing written in the present day, and the other is anxious to have everything that is written in the present day. I beg most heartily to appeal to everybody to be more eclectic in their tastes.

Sir GEORGE GROVE.—I unfortunately missed the greater part of the Paper, and, therefore, can only gather what it consisted of from the Chairman's remarks. It seems to me we have got for the moment into rather a difficult position; we have forsaken principles, and have got into a sort of animated denunciation of persons, in the shape of critics, which I think we had much better let alone. As far as I can gather, we have, in the discussion that has taken place, confused two things. We have confused progress in music with adherence to form. Now, to take an analogous case, it does not seem to me that poetry has made less progress in the last hundred years because poets have adhered to the old forms. Wordsworth wrote as fine sonnets as anybody ever wrote, and also as fine an ode—that on immortality. These are in the same forms that Dryden and other persons used in their odes and sonnets before. And with regard to form in music, I cannot understand how anything can be very much better than the old forms that we

have in large works, for instance, the form that is observed in the first movement of a sonata, or the first movement of a symphony. It seems to me that that form is grounded in the very nature of the art, and in the essential differences between the eye and the ear. If you read a poem, and you come upon a passage or line which puzzles you, you can go back, you can look over that again, until you find out what it really means, and you can go on looking over a picture again and again, until you have mastered all the different details of the treatment; but in music, owing to the fact that sound is so very rapid, and passes by you, you must hear a subject over and over again, until you see what its relations are, and see how it is connected with the rest of the movement, how one subject agrees with another, and so on. It has always seemed to me that it was by a kind of inspiration that Haydn—if it was Haydn who did it—hit upon that form with which we are so familiar in the first movement of a sonata or symphony. Only the other day, when I heard a Brahms symphony at the Crystal Palace, I said to myself, "Thank God there is the repeat," because I had the chance of hearing over again a part of the movement which puzzled me very much, but which, when I heard it over again, became much more clear. I speak under a very great disadvantage, because I did not hear what Dr. Parry said on this subject, but it appears to me until you get a better form than that you must adhere to that form. It is the same thing in other arts, the landscape painter, or the figure painter, or the poet, they all work on a certain particular form, or principle of form. Beethoven has shown you in music, and Mendelssohn and Schumann, how the forms, adopting the general form, are susceptible of all sorts of additions, extensions, and compressions, and yet the form remains the same; but you must have that principle, it seems to me. You must, in long complicated movements, have that principle of order. You must be able to hear over again the different subjects, and be able to apprehend their relations to one another, and you can only do that by hearing them over and over again. Unless you do that it seems to me you must be in the position that one is when one hears a symphonic poem; at the end of it, unless I have a book with me, I am in a state of fog. Of course, I am only a miserable amateur, but what is music written for but for amateurs? It is written for those who hear it, for the general public, it is not written only for musicians.

The CHAIRMAN.—As Sir George Grove heard more of my remarks than of the paper in the first place, I must protest most strongly against music being compared with any other art whatever. If musicians are only weak enough to allow that music is to be guided by the rules which have guided

the other arts, they are giving up one of the most important positions. Music is now comparatively in its infancy; we do not know what future it has before it, and why should we confine it in that way? Let me turn for a moment to architecture. Can anything be more deplorable than the architect's duty? If you ask him to build you a church he says, Will you have a Gothic church, or a classical?

SIR GEORGE GROVE.—Architecture is a dead art, but music is a living art.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Just so; but I think if music is a living art the forms in which music is to be expressed should be living also. Surely form is a part of the art. As regards the beauty of the repeats, because one has been puzzled, I think Sir George Grove's remark would be very applicable to a new work one has never seen; but, I ask, when the first movement of a well-known symphony is heard are you very much puzzled at the development? Allow me to say it is very tedious indeed for me to have to go through the whole of those things again, and if I were puzzled I should say it was my own fault for not having studied the work.

SIR GEORGE GROVE.—You are a musician, you are not an ordinary hearer, that is the great difference. Music is not written for musicians, it is written for the world, and that is one of the things that I fear you are forgetting. If everyone took the enormous pains that Beethoven and Mendelssohn did to make their intention clear, and their instrumentation intelligible, it would be very much better for the hearers.

DR. PARRY.—I should like to add one or two words; I do not know whether they will come quite within the lines of the discussion, but I think I might enlarge a little on what I have said so far with regard to form. I have said plainly enough that I consider form is absolutely essential in some way or other. I recognise, and we must all recognise, the fact that in art there is no such thing as leaping across a gap; and the point I aim at is to show as far as I can that form, of whatever kind, whether operatic form, or symphonic form, or any other form, must be in its history continuous; that is to say, that those who have to stride into the unknown must make the known their basis. But in estimating the form which you see before you, as a composer's product, I fear that you are often too hasty in thinking that analysis is so much of your business. The pleasure of art ought not to come solely from analysis of form. I am sure that even in times when form was so extraordinarily prominent as it was in the days of Haydn and Mozart, it was not form only which gave people pleasure, although I think it was so to an exceptional extent, simply for the reason that for more than a century composers had been working at the definition of form. That was their principal object; and when they determined it in the works of

that time their audiences felt pleasure and delight in the certainty of it. That was peculiar to that period, but I think when we go beyond that time we come to a period in which the musical material, the musical feeling, the musical emotion is very much more prominent than the form. People make a great mistake in modern times in thinking that the great pleasure of music comes from their capacity to analyse the form of any given movement. Music has to absorb and to take possession of you. If you are listening to the Ninth Symphony you are not thinking of one particular subject, and how it is developed; it is the work as a whole takes possession of you, and you are swept away by the torrent of it. Form must be part of the art, but you need not analyse it and see it at every moment. That is no reason, however, for saying that a thing does not follow in the ordinary development of history, but at the same time it may be absolutely beyond the capacity of contemporary people to say what the form of a new work is. I do not see that we can lay down any particular laws about the strides that any composer may take, or that his instincts may lead him to; what I wished rather to point out was that the safest guide which a composer has must be a study of the course which has been pursued by the great composers of the past. I do not think the form ought to be the prominent point to the public, but I think the composer must be always conscious of it, and must strive with himself until he feels assured by his instinct that the form is satisfactory, and hereafter possibly he may satisfy other people.

Mr. PRAEGER.—Will you allow me to say one word on this question? It has been said that a composer writes for the people, and that it is his duty to make them understand what he writes. I totally deny that. The man that does that keeps a shop, and sells his wares. It is a very respectable thing to be a shopkeeper; but the real composer has no business to think of the public; if he does he is already untrue to his art. He composes what he feels. If the *furia* takes him he puts it down according to the form that is most natural to him, which must depend on his previous study as much as on the genius which some people have, and which you find even in quite young beginners, whilst others only gain it at a later age, as you see in sundry of the great composers, Gluck for example. But the composer who thinks will this please, or will that not please, is not an honest man in an artistic sense. Another thing is, if a musician or an amateur listens to music and he does not understand it, I have said many times, let him take the work afterwards and study it. Some people will have to study a work 150 times before they understand it, and some will never understand it, they will take little bits out of it. If you take

any common event, and ask anyone what did a person say; I have many times asked school girls what was the sermon about, and you hear the most ridiculous little bits given you, a little bit here and a little bit there, but you do not get a concise notion of what has been said in one case in 10,000; it is exactly the same with music. As Dr. Parry says—you take it in until your heart mounts up, but if you want to make a special acquaintance with a thing, you must take and study it. Whoever understood a poem at first reading, if there be any sense in it? Take the poem of any great man, and could you say you knew it very well in one reading? I am speaking only of those who really compose, who cannot help doing it. Those who merely learn composition and make the best of it are very respectable people in their way, but they are not like men who cannot resist composing, who must compose; that is something different, it is something sacred in the fullest sense of the word, and with these men other people must study to understand what they mean.

Sir GEORGE GROVE.—The last speaker seems to me to confuse invention with expression. You might just as well say an orator has a noble thought in his mind, and it does not matter whether he stutters or not. Expression in music is like expression in oratory, or in poetry; one man will make clear poetry, and, therefore, you will enjoy it much more than another's which you will take a long time to discover the meaning of.

The CHAIRMAN.—With regard to that point of expression, I do not follow my friend Sir George Grove's idea at all. Of course, an orator would not be such a good man if he stuttered, but is that an analogy? It is very much like saying that the music of such and such a man played on a violin would be as good music if the bow from nervousness danced about on the strings. Of course it would not be, because the result of the music has to be considered. Surely there was a time when the whole mass of books was written pretty much in the same form, but they have now wonderfully developed. If we had never got out of the Johnsonian style how very deplorable it would have been. As regards Sir George Grove's first remark about poets all having their form, what great pleasure has George Herbert given to all of us. I dare say everybody here knows almost every line of him, but is not that due to the immense variety of his forms?

Sir GEORGE GROVE.—I should have thought it was due to his fancy, his piety, and the beauty of his thoughts, much more than to the form. I should have thought the forms were drawbacks in George Herbert's poetry.

The CHAIRMAN.—I do not; I think the form is one of the greatest beauties of his poems. I could hardly be so foolish

as to suppose that any rubbish turned into those forms would be beautiful, that would be absurd; but one of the essences of the beauty of George Herbert's poems is the wonderful variety of form under which they are issued. As regards a sonata, a man may write a beautiful sonata now just as Brahms can write a beautiful symphony, but does that affect the case? I do not think it does. Because the symphonic form is so beautiful it seems to me no reason why it should not go through any amount of evolution commencing from the present time, and I sincerely hope it may.

The CHAIRMAN then proposed a vote of thanks to Dr. Parry, which was carried unanimously.