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Henry Hiles Esq., Mus. Doc.

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JUNE 5, 1882.

C. E. STEPHEN, Esq.,

IN THE CHAIR.

*FROM RHYTHMIC PULSATION TO CLASSICAL
OUTLINE.*

By HENRY HILES, Esq., Mus. Doc.

FROM time to time such able papers have been read before this Association upon the outlines of those patterns of musical works which have been generally accepted, and deemed worthy of classification and imitation, that I should not have ventured to reintroduce the subject this afternoon, except with a hope that we may be able to trace back those rules of construction which have been diligently sought out and adopted by generations of earnest musicians, until we arrive at some clue to the leading principles, some glimpse of the natural law, which must underlie all satisfactory artistic work. And it will be admitted that the subject is of great importance to all students of music. For now—certainly not less than at any former time—there is a kind of impatient, restless spirit about, which (seeking to escape from the labour of a life-long study of the deeper, less obvious, principles of art; or prompted by a supposition that in its higher flights, such a pure, imaginative, art as ours should be free from all restraint, and absolved from all obedience) makes light of the achievements of bygone musicians, and refuses to profit by the experience gained, and bequeathed to us, by generations of earnest workers. No one would be more reluctant than I should to submit to mere dogmatic restriction. In a modest cautious spirit every student should carefully weigh each proposition submitted to him before he admits it among the articles of his creed. Our harmony codes, and especially our rules of part-writing, require to be examined, brought into accordance with modern usage, and systematised. The possibilities of orchestral variety also open out a large field for useful experiment. For surely it would be much better that the early training of our young musicians should be directed to the analysis, blending, and contrast of the many different

qualities of tone which a modern orchestra affords than to restrict it to a cowardly imitation of a few favourite models. So long as the teacher of harmony condescends to excuse the many breakings of obsolete rules as the "licences of genius," the contrapuntist thinks it wise to enforce obedience to the crude maxims of an age ignorant of a chromatic scale, and our guides in orchestration continue to refer us to scores nearly a century old as the only models we may safely study, we shall not escape the sneers which it is thought may be safely cast upon musicians; and with which, of late, English musicians have been pretty liberally besprinkled. But it is my pleasant belief that a brighter era is dawning for English music than, for many generations, it has enjoyed; that the old love of song (which never died out among us) is bursting through the fetters which so long repressed it; and that even our ridiculous national spirit of self-depreciation may, at last, give place to a more healthy—though still modest—readiness to value that which is good and true, from whatever source—even the brain of an English musician—it springs. The spirit of inquiry which is now awakened (peering into the principles of our art, and testing its foundations) will, I think, convince us that the architectural schemes whereby the best musicians moulded their compositions could not have been so successful and so generally accepted as they have been, and are, did they not rest upon some irreversible truth; and that the discovery of that truth would (by removing those plans from an apparent dependence upon mere imaginary bases, and establishing their connection with, and reliance upon, natural law) enable us more fully to appreciate the labours of our great predecessors, afford us new insight of the beauty and value of their patient researches, and supply us with more confidence to foresee in what direction the true advance and development of their principles must tend. And I am the more hopeful that you will yield me your attention, even should you be inclined to think that I dwell too long upon rudimentary matters, because an audience of such experience in teaching must be fully convinced of the primary necessity of arriving at some foundation, some common ground of agreement, before any theoretical superstructure could usefully be attempted.

Music is a language of sustained sounds; and, while it ranges over a greater diversity of pitch than is usual, or indeed possible, in less impassioned speech, it differs from the language of ordinary intercourse even more through the greater duration than through the melodic inflection of its sounds. Its more essential characteristic may, therefore, be said to be the length, rather than the varied acuteness, or gravity of its syllables. It necessarily follows that time is the more important element in its construction. Now our perception of the lapse of time is always derived from a measure-

ment of its more minute divisions. We gain no idea of vast ranges of time except by mapping them out in sections. The clearest conception of long past ages, and their influences, is acquired by counting the intermediate generations which link us to our remote forerunners. Our lives are mere agglomerations of years, of days, of minutes, of seconds. And the true measurement or pulsation of music is as distinct, regular, and pendular, as are the vibrations by which its sounds are formed, and as the tickings of a clock, whereby the lapse of time is measured and chronicled.

There is such a strict regularity in the march of song, that probably there is no unmechanical mode of reckoning the passage of time more exact than the onward flow of music. A succession of sustained sounds of different pitch must be governed by rhythmic laws, which cannot be broken without exciting a feeling of nervous disquietude, and even pain. Wrong notes are not more irritating to any one with an aptitude for music than a want of exactness in the rhythmic swing; a too long, or too short, step destroying the regularity of the march.

I am quite aware of all that has been, or may be, said about the supposed freedom from musical swing of what is called "plain-song," and (did time permit) I should be happy to show what are—or to me seem to be—the fallacies in some of the theories concerning it. But the most ardent advocate of "plain-song" will not question the truth of what I have asserted respecting what we all agree to call music; and will kindly bear with me if—in order to stick closely and usefully to one subject—I defer to some more suitable time any consideration of the possibility of "plain-song" being exempted from ordinary rhythmic conditions.

The pulses or steps in music may, within a tolerably wide limit, be quickened or retarded; but some definite time-relationship must be maintained, or a disagreeable and even positively torturing effect will result.

This pulsation agrees fairly with the steps of the various rates of movement which a good, healthy, robust walker would—in his different moods—naturally adopt. If walking slackens into a mere lazy saunter it tires more than would double the distance vigorously traversed. Every one has experienced the value of that decided rhythmic impetus which results from regularity of step. When walking quickens into a pace that seems to suggest running it fatigues; because the rate of movement is not in accordance with the character of the pulsation. For the difference between walking and running is one of kind, rather than of quickness, of movement. In walking each footfall is a distinct firm pulsation; but in running only the alternate steps have such a definite, marked, emphatic value.

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If we test the limits of a walking or marching pulsation—varying the movement between the excessive slowness that degenerates into an enfeebled, unequal step, without swing or decided impetus; and the hurried, fidgety, restless pace, which we naturally seek to relieve by breaking into a run that would be in better agreement with the rapidity of the footfall—we discover that with much fewer than sixty steps every minute we have (unless with the aid of some real or imagined intermediate pulsation) difficulty in measuring with certainty the regularity of the too slow march; and that with more than about a hundred and fifty paces each minute we get irritated and fatigued by the hurried accentuation of the movement.

In music like effects are experienced. With a medium rate of swing there is no difficulty in maintaining an exactness of measure: but, beyond a reasonable rate of pulsation, the mind divides steps that appear too long; and groups those that are too short and rapid. The exact limit of the power of registering the precision of pulsebeats will not be alike with different individuals; any more than the capacity of appreciating the pitch of extremely acute, or grave, sounds; or the perception of the niceties of minute shades of colour. But it may be roughly stated that the pulsation of music—like the steps in walking—ranges between 60 and 150 throbs (*a*) in a minute; and that, in a slower movement, the mind relieves itself from an uncomfortable watchfulness of the too long sounds by adopting (*b*) an intermediate gauge of regularity; and that, at a much faster speed (*c*) it calms itself by grouping the notes, and by measuring, or weighing, them in masses.

(a.) *From BEETHOVEN'S Sonata, Op. 2, No. 2.*

♩ = 60, or faster.

(b.) ♩ = 100, or slower.

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(c.) From BEETHOVEN'S Sonata, Op. 2, No. 1.
♩ = 60, or faster.

(b.) ♩ = 100, or slower.

(a.) From BEETHOVEN'S Sonata, Op. 14, No. 2.
♩ = 60, or faster.

(b.) ♩ = 100, or slower.

(c.) ♩ = 80, or faster.

It cannot be necessary that I should speak of duple, or triple, division of pulses; or how they may be grouped under the leadership of a more emphatic throb; guided in that grouping by some peculiarity in the arrangement of the sounds of the melody, or of the chords. You must have noticed the influence of a *definite melodic direction* even in the chiming of bells, as well as in the playing of scales, &c. Three bells suffice to give a clearly rising or falling tune. Tolloed at a slow pace each bell affords a distinct pulsethrob.

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More quickly rung, the three sounds fall under the domination of an initiatory accentuation:—

But the pertinacity with which our accentuation of the three sounds will always commence with the highest note, and the difficulty with which the mind can be made to fasten upon the middle (a), or even the lowest (b) note is very remarkable evidence of the influence of a definite direction of melody:

You must have noticed, also, the effect which *different harmonies* have in the determination of the rhythmic swing.

And you will be familiar with the difficulty with which any rapid change of cumbersome, and not very closely related, chords can be divested of a sort of hurried, fussy, agitated effect.

Of course the accentuation of music may be effected in various ways ; with which you are, at least, as familiar as I am.

In emphatic, impassioned utterance, and in poetic measures, a regularity of pulsation is maintained by the oft-recurrence of emphasised syllables ; and the speaker is greatly helped by the marked grip which he may, without offence, give to such syllables. But the separate syllables in music have no inherent, definite meaning, or fixed emphasis, apart from their length or position : and, just as it is not quite easy distinctly to articulate a long word having, between its accented, more than two unaccented syllables—such words as “literary,” “itinerary”—so, in music, not more than three distinct pulses, or syllables, may be grouped together under the influence of one strong initiatory accent. There are, however, only two entirely satisfactory kinds of rhythmic swing—duple and triple : though, as you well know, these two kinds may be mixed in various manners.

But even the accented pulses are of varying force ; and, like the simple throbs, may be grouped under the leadership of a stronger emphasis. The division of music into bars, by mapping it out in sections, not only enables the eye to fix more readily upon a particular note (just as the division of the great eleven-lined staff assists it to detect upon which line, or space, a character is placed) but marks where the graver of two, or the heaviest of three, accents falls.

It would save students much perplexity if musicians would uniformly carry out the mode of barring which they generally adopt ; assigning two or three accents to each apparent mea-

sure. The present system has been contrived in order to simplify to the eye measures properly containing a too great number of notes to be easily, or quickly, read. The occasional excess of modern subdivision gives rise to many incongruities. For—just as, in old church song, with its minim pulses, when intermediate crotchets began to appear thickly, the cumbersome and confused-looking bars were halved, so—in quick modern music some authors have (with the like purpose of facilitating the quick deciphering of complicated-looking measures) divided their bars of four crotchets; while others have adopted the plan of using, as their pulse-notes, quavers; the grouping of which so readily and plainly shows the accents.

But rhythmic influence extends yet farther; the bars themselves being of unequal force. The same natural law of responsive action which (1) makes it difficult to create pulses of such force that their direct influence will for more than a second of time retard the setting in of pendular reaction, which (2) precludes the swing of an accented pulse extending over more than two succeeding rhythmic steps, and (3) prevents the force of a strong accent dominating more than two of the following weaker accents, reaches also (4) to consecutive bars, and renders them positive and negative.

The initiatory accent of the first full bar in a musical sentence has a greater force than the corresponding pulse in the following bar. Generally, two bars suffice to contain the whole cycle of strong accents, weaker accents, and non-accents. For—although music may be so contrived that (as in a triple rhythm, an accent is followed by two weaker pulses; and, in a bar, a strong accent may be followed by two weaker accents, so) a strong bar may be responded to by two weaker measures—still it is not easy to construct phrases of such powerful, decided, and lengthened swing that the influence of the first great accent will endure over, and entirely pervade and control, three whole measures. Such an extension always has a somewhat artificial character; and can be most readily effected by making the second bar a mere repetition, or sequential imitation, of the first; and thereby deceiving the ear, and rendering the second measure (so far as its thematic effect influences the matter) a starting point equally as good as the first.

In many old compositions bar-lines were much less frequent than they are in music of modern notation. Often only the full rhythmic cycles were barred: and, occasionally, even more extended passages were included in one measure. In some more modern works (as well as in the unaltered editions of old compositions) examples may be found of bars of complete rhythmic cycles; each measure having double the ordinary number of pulses. I may cite the airs in the "Messiah" "How beautiful," and "Behold! and see," the slow movement in

Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, and the "Lacrymosa" in Mozart's *Requiem*, as familiar examples. While the juxtaposition, in Beethoven's *Sonata Pathétique*, of the bars of eight quaver-pulses in the introductory movement, and of the measures of only two minim-pulses in the succeeding *Allegro* affords an example of an eminently confusing diversity of notation.

I trust I have, thus far, carried with me your sympathies and assent. Indeed, I can claim the charm (or charge) of novelty for very little that I have yet advanced: and I have run some risk of wearying you by thus dwelling upon those rudimentary matters upon which rests the truth of all that I have yet to say.

I have described the rhythmic cycle of two, or occasionally three, bars as containing accents of all forces, and intermediate throbs of all weaknesses. But the impetus thus acquired does not cease with the termination of the cycle—which corresponds with one of the smaller sections of a literary sentence—but continues through such an added, balancing, cycle as serves to form an adequate response; and to complete a larger and more weighty section of a musical sentence, with a clearer, more comprehensive, and more developed meaning, marked off by a more decided punctuation.

Of those so-called "national" songs and melodies which have been handed down from generation to generation—in which no country is so rich as our own—as well as of all simple ballads and airs, one of the chief charms is that simplicity of rhythmic structure which commends them to all lovers of music, whether skilled, or unskilled, in the laws of the art. The first, and principal, portions of many of them are simple musical sentences of eight bars; with distinct semi-colon, or colon, division in the fourth measure; and a less formal (or comma) punctuation in the second and sixth bars.

But did I stay to explain the manifold ways of variously punctuating a musical sentence, I should be taking up your time unnecessarily and, perhaps, impertinently.

I pass on to consider whether the rudimentary principle of responsive pulsation—from which we have traced the growth of a simple sentence—will lead yet farther, even to the construction of those classical outlines of musical structure which the greatest masters have sought out and adopted. And evidently the same law which governs the balancing of an accented by a weaker pulse, of a positive by a negative bar, of an initiatory by a responsive cycle, leads to the addition to our eight-bar sentence of such a foil as will, by its subordinate interest, and in other ways, balance the pleasure of a return to the first and principal subject. In compositions of all kinds this chief positive theme, or text, directly or indirectly influences

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the whole work. In its direct treatment it may be simply repeated, or be developed, embellished, reharmonised, and served up in many ways; but, throughout the movement it initiates, it forms the chief source of interest; and all other phrases, sentences, or themes should be so constructed that, by subordination, illustration, or contrast, they may impart a fresh charm to every reappearance of the principal text, and serve to enhance, and draw attention to, its beauties. Thus, by artistic "form" in musical (as in all other) composition we mean that subordination of all detail to a central, fundamental, governing idea, which prevents thoughts (individually beautiful) killing each other by irrelevancy, incongruity, or want of proportion. In the construction of that simplest of forms—a compact, inartificial sentence, with its responsive sentence, in the dominant, relative minor, relative major, or other near akin scale—it is of great importance that the concluding harmonies and progressions of the second part should lead to, and create an expectancy of the resumption of, the original key, and of the first sentence; so that the repetition of the leading idea may serve to mould the whole into one congruous, well-balanced composition.

The development of instrumental music from simple dance-tunes is so well understood that I need only just refer to its history as affording the clearest possible elucidation of the natural growth, outcome, and still binding influence of rhythmic principles, for which I am contending. Dance music is necessarily formed of precise, compact sentences, agreeing in rhythm and length with the motions and figures of the measures. When the continued alternation of a simple eight-bar sentence with its second (or negative) strain was found, by oft-repetition, to grow wearisome a third sentence afforded a little variety, and completed a trio of themes; two of them duly subordinated in importance to the principal text.

A desire for yet further relief naturally prompted the addition to the primary tune (with its second part, and *Da capo*) of an entirely similar form, complete in itself, contrasted in style to the original composition, and used alternately with it; forming a kind of longer second or intermediate part, or foil to the first structure.

Whether the term "Trio"—which is still applied to any secondary portion of a musical composition used alternately with the principal section—originally signified three subjects, or three instruments (as distinguished from four, employed in the other sentences) is, as you know, doubtful. But, as instrumentalists became expert, and composers ambitious, the strict formality of the dance measures (the minuet, jig, gavotte, &c.) was no longer allowed to curb the imagination; and a kind of "*Coda*," or appendix, was added to the first sentence on its last appearance; and was formed by the mere addition

of an extra rhythmic cycle, or of two cycles; the simplest preparation for such an elongation being to break away from, or interrupt, in the eighth bar, the expected perfect cadence; and then to repeat a rhythmically complete section of the sentence; concluding with the orthodox fundamental chords.

So a primitive simplicity of construction was maintained: the interest of the composition being derived entirely from the charm of the several sentences, from their mutual dependence and influence, from agreeable harmony (perhaps varied on the reappearance of the themes), and from the symmetry and compactness of the whole.

Evidently such a stereotyped precision could not satisfy the artistic aspirations of the great masters, to whom the growth of the orchestra (with its increasing power, contrast of tone, and physical capability) offered such vast, varied, and charming effects.

In the *Rondo* form they discovered a way of combining compactness of outline with some little development of subject; of preserving that balance of the various sections, which a study of rhythmic law had taught them to admire; and yet of heightening the attraction of the themes by embellishment, by analysing them, by toying with their more striking features, and in many fanciful ways.

In a *Rondo* (especially in the middle or "Trio" portion), clever workmanship and considerable power of expansion and development are required. As there is no pretence of being, in any sense, an accompaniment, or incitement, to any kind of pedal movement, a *Rondo* is free from any narrow restriction as to length of phrase or kind of rhythm. In the older *Rondos*, the power of expanding, and working out, a theme was very timidly displayed. In Haydn's movements of this class, the various sections are very distinctly marked, and precise. Frequently the different sentences are divided by double bars. The more modern plan is to strive to hide the fragmentary formation of the movement, and to incorporate more thoroughly the sections in one sustained broad whole. The reintroduction—in the Coda, or winding up of the movement—of the theme of the middle (or "Trio") section, also serves to give compactness, consistency, and completeness to the work.

The yet more extended structural outline known as the *Sonata* form is also strictly divisible into three sections; the concluding portion of the earlier movements of the kind being—except so far as regards the transposition of the secondary subjects into nearer akin scales—entirely a repetition of the first part.

In the first section different themes are announced as texts for after-development. They should be contrasted in style, and yet have a certain relevancy and congruity of character.

The second (or "Trio") portion of the movement generally—not invariably—consists entirely of the fanciful development and working out of those subjects whose simple exposition occupied the first part. This portion is the chief test of the musicianlike qualifications of the author, as opposed to his mere power of producing melodic themes. It is the part of the movement which should bear evidence of thorough training, added to a fertile imaginative faculty. It would seem to be the latest contribution to musical architecture; for, in modern works, the expansion, and greater freedom and fancy of this heart of the *Sonata* form often surpasses the earlier efforts in the same direction, much as the navigation of to-day exceeds in boldness the timid hugging of the shore of primitive seamanship. Similarly, in vocal music, a fuller appreciation of rhythmic principles has led to free expansion of outline, and better balancing of sectional proportion. In Handel's larger songs, as in the older *Sonatas*, the drawbacks, to a modern ear, are the extreme brevity of the second part, and the consequent almost immediate repetition, without any change or added effect, of a long first part.

I have spoken of the first section of the *Sonata* structural outline as the *exposition* of subject matter for after use.

Need I call your attention for a moment to that form of work in which we constantly use the term "exposition"?

On a cursory examination it has been assumed that a *Fugue* is a kind of composition to be classed by itself, and chiefly regarded as the climax of contrapuntal effort.

It appears to me that no grosser mistake, no greater evidence of a defective power of analysis, could be made. For the first section of a sonata movement is an "exposition" of its themes in closely related keys; and the second part of a *fugue* is its "free fantasia," or fanciful and more modulatory working out, development, and mixture of subject matter. And, while there are numerous instances of the fugal treatment of the themes in the second division of movements avowedly in *Sonata* form, there are not wanting examples of the artistic use in a *fugue* of a second figure or subject, symphonically, rather than contrapuntally, treated. Mendelssohn's pianoforte *fugue* in E minor is an example known to all: and, in some degree, every *fugue* with a new counterpoint, introduced alone, toward the middle portion of the work affords an instance.

But as, perhaps, the brightest, most striking, and most modernly free in style, I would cite Bach's great *fugue* in E minor, on what is known as the wedge-like subject. In it I find one of the strongest possible evidences of the truth and binding power of what we call classical form, in that, with few theoretical dogmas as to the balance and proportion of the different sections of a movement, the *sonata* form was sub-

stantially adopted by the greatest *fugue* writer of all time; who, working with entirely different views and aims, achieved the compilation of a form perfect in itself according to the most modern notions, and, at the same time, full of a beauty of contrapuntal detail that remains not merely unsurpassed, but unequalled, by the cleverest part-writers of later days.

It is not necessary that I should speak of those irregular outlines entitled "fantasias," "impromptus," "caprices," &c. Such as admit of classification are—entirely to that extent—modifications and blendings of the plans already described, and it is certain that further experiments in similar directions will be made, and be more or less successful.

I noticed with much pleasure that Professor Macfarren (in his address to the Royal Academy students in September last) referred to the fact that many of Mendelssohn's "*Lieder ohne Worte*" are, however concise, perfectly symphonic in plan. An undeniable truth. But I regard the *lied* as a sort of spring, or early summer, growth—midway between the simple exhibition of the living expanding force of rhythmic pulsation in a musical sentence, and the full development of symphonic completeness, grace and beauty. For are not our two most ambitious forms—hurriedly sketched to day—mere extensions of that simple air of three—or, rather, two—sections, the plan of which was derived from the responsive character of pendular vibrations? The air, with its second sentence and *da capo*, grew into two airs, to be alternately used—as in the case of a minuet with its trio—the latter being a kind of enlarged second part, leading back to the original and principal theme, or predominant idea or text.

The beauties of a well-contrived musical composition are akin to those of a lecture, an essay, a poem. In each the author has a set purpose—apart from, and far higher than, the amusement of the listener, or reader—and ever seeks to cluster the sympathies of his audience round that text, or sentiment, or emotion, which forms the groundwork of his plan. Should he suffer himself to wander aimlessly, or be lured away by any "will-o'-the-wisp" fancy, or be unable to gather up the threads of his argument, and show their congruity and fitness, his work—be it *sonata*, sermon, or lecture—will be without form, and void of real, lasting, value.

You will pardon one or two suggestions which seem naturally to spring from our subject. The very gradual expansion of what we are sometimes apt to consider a perfected growth should inspire caution in condemning the attempts which (so long as our art is healthily studied) will continually be made still further to foster its progress; and, on the other hand, should supply us with some idea as to the direction in which legitimate, natural development must tend. Concentration of thought is of the greatest value in all

artistic work. But is it not possible to carry even simplicity of idea too far? Life is full of variety as well as of unity. In the study of its problems are we not often startled by a train of apparently unconnected thought suddenly throwing a new light upon, and revealing a hitherto hidden beauty in, our most familiar surroundings, imaginings and perplexities? By a judicious contrast of themes our greatest composers have produced some of their most powerful effects. Now-a-days the attempt is made to sustain, throughout a long work, the interest of the listener by the mere rhythmical alteration of one melodic outline: an endeavour that certainly shows the author's high ambition, and implicit confidence in his constructive power. But may not the excessive use of what may be called personal, or representative, themes (however highly we may admire the ingenuity with which they are interwoven) betray a somewhat restricted capacity for melodic invention? (Hear, hear!) Again, there was no great difficulty in giving necessary variety to a set of short dance tunes, including four, or more, movements. It does not follow that four or more symphonic developments may not often produce something like a surfeit of music of one style. We are familiar with classical compositions of five, six, or even more, long movements. I am not ashamed to own that in listening to them I generally feel that I could, without repining, dispense with some of the sections, and many of the repetitions; beautiful as the individual ideas may be. (Hear, hear!) And I venture to suggest that even a notion as to an advisable number (as well as form) of movements is derivable from our rhythmical inquiries; and that a *sonata* or symphony would gain (rather than lose) by the excision of one of the customary four movements. I appeal to your experience whether the difficulty of constructing an entirely satisfactory *finale* has always been altogether overcome, even by the great masters; and whether that difficulty does not largely depend upon the fact that the movement has to be lively, and yet, probably, has immediately to follow another brisk section. Do not the abandonment of the minuet (the last relic of the old dance tunes) and the extension of its substitute into a true symphonic movement, point to the elaboration of this section as the fitting termination of the work, and as the proper complement of the whole rhythmical plan—the symphony having its three movements as each section has its three divisions, and as the air (from the model of which it sprang) had its three sentences?

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN.—I hope we shall not have listened to this admirable paper without its eliciting some remarks from the many able gentlemen I see around me. There is a gentleman present who has written a most admirable work on the subject of fugue, and I trust he will not be silent: but I must ask you to be brief, because there is an interesting exhibition to be made afterwards.

Mr. J. C. WARD.—I may remark that in those illustrations Dr. Hiles gave us of the Old Hundredth Psalm I failed to follow him in the going out of the regular four beats in the bar. In each case with me the accent came on the second note.

Professor MONK.—I may be permitted to say, with regard to this most excellent paper, that it is a striking example of the pleasure and advantage of such societies as our own, that we are able to hear from time to time such papers as have been presented to us on this subject by our Chairman himself, and by Mr. Bannister; and, again, by Dr. Hiles. Although the subject matter may be said to be in its nature trite and known to us all, how much we learn from the successive papers thus presented to us, and how refreshing and interesting this paper of Dr. Hiles is to us, even after our recollection of what has been so ably said before. It also strikes me that in calling on any audience to "continue the discussion" on these subjects, it is almost impossible to succeed. I appeal to you as to whether the paper, to which we have just listened with such pleasure, is not studied and elaborated to an extent which makes it impossible to continue the discussion of the subject, unless in a fragmentary manner, in which a few speakers may make what Dr. Hiles called "a grip" at some isolated observation, and so present either their assent or dissent. It is impossible to offer anything in discussion on such a subject as this at so short notice; we can only hope to make better use of such papers when they come to us in our printed proceedings. The remarks with which Dr. Hiles concluded are extremely interesting just at this time when many, no doubt, have been listening to the newest development of great music with feelings springing first of all from our reverence and love of the old art-form which Dr. Hiles so ably enunciates and explains, and yet, let us hope, with every disposition to enjoy a new departure in art. We cannot sufficiently thank those who have undertaken to present to us such an enormous work as the "Ring des Nibelungen," and while we come away with very varied impressions, I think we shall always come to a striking agreement, that we learn

much, and receive from each composition a new start in artistic enjoyment and anticipation.

Mr. JAMES HIGGS.—I trust I may be allowed personally to express my individual thanks to Dr. Hiles for the extremely valuable paper he has read to us. I have been very much instructed, and I feel deeply obliged to Dr. Hiles for what he has said. One thought occurred to me in the earlier part of the paper, when he was speaking of the comparatively narrow limits within which appreciable pulsation can move. What relation does musical pulsation bear to the natural pulsation that is going on within each of us; and what effect has individual temperament on the interpretation of music? Because it seems to me that if a man whose pulse beats slowly attempts to play rapidly he is more outraging his natural instincts than is the case with the man who is of a more excitable temperament. It is more easy for the latter to play fast, and he *desires* to play more rapidly. Then, again, it occurred to me how very useful a knowledge of the biography, character and habits of composers must be, and how such knowledge must help to the proper appreciation and interpretation of their music, when we are able to some extent to think as they thought.

The CHAIRMAN.—As no one else seems disposed to say anything, I will conclude with a few words. I am very pleased to find that Dr. Hiles, while essentially a conservative—as I frankly avow myself to be in musical matters—not only would wish to steer a safe and middle course, but would altogether repudiate the idea which the admirers of the modern school wish to force upon us, that we must look with disapprobation on the works of the old composers, who have made us what we are. The works of Wagner, I must confess, from the opportunities which have been recently afforded me, have brought me a considerable amount of delight, although the tenets of that unquestionable genius are not altogether in accordance with the views of art which I hold to be the true ones. But, nevertheless, I say that so long as we are not called upon to look down on that which we have loved and revered of the great masters, we can afford to appreciate that which is beautiful in Wagner or any other composer. Another point we must commend Dr. Hiles for is speaking about the error, on which he has touched more fully in his published works, of teaching music, especially counterpoint, with reference to a bygone period of the art. It appears to me that one of the most serious mistakes that are committed in the teaching of our art—counterpoint especially—is that we should forbid things because they were forbidden in bygone days, but which, nevertheless, are perfectly good and perfectly true in art. I call to mind a remarkable instance of that triple grouping of bars of which Dr. Hiles spoke, in which, although the bar-line seems to indicate an equal emphasis, yet the first

of each three bars in succession has the prior emphasis and the prior position in mental appreciation as a rhythmical pulse, namely, the great Scherzo in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, where, if you recollect, the author himself has indicated, in order to prevent any confusion, *ritmo de tre battute*. That appears to me a very strong corroboration of the remarks so ably brought before us by Dr. Hiles. I will only say one word with regard to the number of movements in a symphony. When an author attempts to write a symphony, I do not see why he should compel himself to write four movements if he has only material for three; nor do I see why, like Rubinstein in his Ocean Symphony, he should go on year after year adding two movements to a work which originally contained six or seven. I hear that the Ocean Symphony now occupies about two-and-a-half hours in performance. I must corroborate what Dr. Hiles says, that sometimes the final movements of some of Mozart's sonatas have less interest than the rest. It seems as if it were merely necessary to end with something, and he seems to have bestowed less care upon it, and it has less of the high, exalted character of the previous movements. Therefore, I must confess, after having acknowledged myself a conservative, and a very humble worshipper at the feet of such a man as Mozart, that sometimes his last movements, especially of his sonatas, do seem to me as being not altogether equal to the rest of the work; and I think, with Dr. Hiles, that if we could end with a scherzo that should please us, on no occasion should we add another movement. I can mention one instance: the first pianoforte Concerto of Sterndale Bennett, the last movement of which he originally intended to be succeeded by a finale; yet that scherzo in 3-4 time makes a most satisfactory conclusion and climax to his admirable work. I will now ask Dr. Hiles if he has anything to say in reply.

DR. HILES.—I have very little to say, because your remarks have been of such a very undeservedly eulogistic kind that I have nothing to explain, although Mr. Ward mentioned, with regard to the four beats in the bar, he was not quite convinced about the alteration in the accent. That may have been my fault: but I think we shall agree that, although I may not have succeeded in making such alteration, it is possible. You will remember that I said that, if I wished to treat the subject at all unfairly, I should rather prefer to give you a new melody, in which you had no preconceived notion how the accent should fall. In treating a melody with which you are so familiar it would be almost impossible to drive you away from your accustomed reading. Still, I think the fact remains that the thing can be done. I have been much pleased with the remarks you have made, Mr. Chairman: they lead me to ask you what it is that Wagner does strive at principally. I was listening on

Saturday to the opera "Die Meistersinger," and it seemed to me that he was greatest when he was symphonic; and that, in fact, his highest aim was to be symphonic, and to treat the vocal part as a very subordinate, and immaterial, matter. There was a constant undercurrent of the orchestra going on with a development of an idea—it may not have been exactly our idea of symphonic treatment, but still it was the development of an idea. (I wish to speak with all possible deference and modesty; because no one can be more perfectly convinced than I am that Wagner is a very great man indeed: but the very greatest man may make mistakes; and I think it behoves us to be cautious against being led away by the fashionable worship of the day, which will pass off, and then people will ask what it was that we all lost our heads about.) But it occurred to me on Saturday, that this symphonic treatment of his goes on continually as an undercurrent, very cleverly done, but a little wearisome, because following Schumann's plan too closely. One of the peculiarities of Schumann was the want of perfect cadence; as if he felt it was rather schoolboyish to complete an eight-bar phrase: and so you get an unlooked-for chord where you expect to come to a state of rest. It seems to me that Wagner carries that to an excess: and that if one of the great masters could come back, or if we could have another great master (of which there does not seem any prospect at present), he would, in an infinitely more interesting manner, preserve the continuity of the symphonic form. If he chose to follow the same lines, and treat the voice in the same way, he would give us a much more beautiful undercurrent of instrumentation; and the voice would come in with more accord or relevance. With regard to what Mr. Higgs so ably said in respect to our knowing something of the character of a man before we could understand his music, it struck me that you may judge Mendelssohn's character very fairly by his music. Cannot you judge of the restless spirit which killed him ultimately? Did you ever hear his music played much too fast? You must not take Mendelssohn's music slowly—it damages it more than any music I know. (Hear.) It seems to me to give you at once the man. I mean that, with all his amiability and geniality, he was a restless man; and it was his restless spirit that killed him. Sterndale Bennett has been mentioned; and, although it has nothing at all to do with the subject which has been discussed, I will just ask whether we do not owe another lesson to Sterndale Bennett—which, as far as I know, has never been acknowledged—to his knowledge of orchestration, which was not generally considered one of his great qualifications. It happened to be my duty not long ago to look over an exercise which had been returned from one of the universities—I will not say which—

and one of the examiners had pointed out as a fault that the flutes were occasionally used beneath the oboes. Does not Sterndale Bennett do that frequently in many of his works? and has it never occurred to us that the beauty of the flute is in the lower part of the instrument, not in a feeble tootling up above; but in the thickness of tone which it gives in the lower octave?

The CHAIRMAN.—All that now remains for us is to thank Dr. Hiles for his most admirable paper.

The vote of thanks was carried unanimously.