Musical Honours

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obnoxious to my father, so the aspect of affairs speedily began to improve, and soon all went well." This course Mendelssohn strongly recommended to his brothers and sisters: "My father considers himself both much older and more irritable than, thank God, he really is, but however much we may be in the right it is our place to yield to him as he has often done to us. Strive, then, to praise what he likes, and do not attack what is implanted in his heart, more especially ancient established ideas. Do not commend what is new till it has made some progress in the world and acquired a name, for till then it is a mere matter of taste. Try, then, to charm my father into your magic circle, and be playful and kind with him." Here speaks the good son and wise brother, and in these words, perhaps, we may find some clue to the popularity of Mendelssohn in after-life, when his brilliant gifts were supplemented by more worldly wisdom than quick and impetuous feeling allowed him to show—though we now see that he possessed it—in youth. That a man may utter a great deal of truth while evading that which is obnoxious to his hearers is a fact worth remembering by most people; though, of course, there are occasions in every life when the truth must be told though the heavens fall.

All these Roman letters show with what intense earnestness Mendelssohn regarded art. His whole soul turned against the frivolity and heedlessness of the Italians concerning matters than which, to him, none were more sacred. "The fact is that the people are mentally enervated and apathetic. They have a religion which they do not believe; a Pope and a Government which they ridicule; a brilliant and heroic past which they disregard. It is thus no marvel that they do not delight in art, for they are indifferent to all that is earnest." Wherefore the young musician's wrath blazed up when he saw the Loggie of Raphael defaced "with inconceivable recklessness and disgraceful barbarity;" when he read the inscription "Christ" beneath the Apollo Belvedere; when he could not see a portion of Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment" for a huge altar erected before it; and when he found cattle driven through saloons decorated by the hand of Giulio Romano. It was natural under these circumstances that he should be prejudiced against what he must have regarded as the effete artistic society of Rome; but there were other reasons, above all in the case of the painters. Mendelssohn, the adored of polite society, the hero of numberless drawing-rooms, the gentleman *jusqu'au bout des ongles*, possessed little in common with the uncouth Bohemians of the Eternal City. Indeed, something of wonderment as well as contempt pervades his clever description of these people: "They are a formidable race to look at as they sit in their Café Greco. I scarcely ever go there, for I dread both themselves and their favourite place of resort. It is a small dark room about eight yards square, where you may smoke on one side, but not on the other. Round this they sit on benches, with sombrero hats on their heads and huge mastiffs beside them; their cheeks and throats and the whole of their faces covered with hair, puffing fearful clouds of smoke (only on one side of the room), and saying rude things to each other, while the mastiffs provide for a due distribution of vermin. A neckcloth or a coat would be here quite innovations; spectacles hide any portion of the face left visible by the beard, and so they drink their coffee and talk of Titian and Pordenone just as if they were sitting beside them, and wore beards and sou'westers like their own. Moreover, they paint such sickly Madonnas, such feeble saints, and such milkop heroes, that I feel the strongest inclination to knock them down. These infernal critics do not

even shrink from abusing Titian's picture in the Vatican, about which you asked me, saying it has neither subject nor meaning; yet it never seems to occur to them that a master who had so long studied a picture with due love and reverence must have had as deep an insight into the subject as they are likely to have, even through their coloured spectacles." The musicians were no better, in Mendelssohn's eyes, than their brothers the painters, and he mentions them with scorn: "The orchestras are worse than any one could believe; both musicians and a right feeling for music are wanting. The two or three violin performers attack in different styles, and join in when they please; the wind instruments are tuned either too high or too low, and they execute flourishes in the subordinate parts like those we are accustomed to hear in the streets, but hardly so good; in short, the whole forms an absolute caterwauling, and this applies even to compositions with which they are familiar. . . . I heard a solo on the flute where the flute was more than a quarter of a tone too high; it set my teeth on edge, but no one remarked it, and when at the end a shake came they applauded mechanically. If it were even a shade better with regard to singing! But the great singers have left the country . . . and the pigmies who remain copy their finest points, which they turn into intolerable ridicule." One cannot read the foregoing without being conscious of exaggeration. Mendelssohn made the worst rather than the best of what he saw and heard, but the fact is only another testimony to the intensity of his feeling on all such matters. He was a zealot in the cause of art, and, perhaps, his onslaughts were more vigorous than discriminating, but, happily, he never pointed the moral of Dobell's lines:—

'Tis a zealot's faith
That blasts the shrines of the false gods, but builds
No temple to the True.

Mendelssohn's "Temple to the True" is amongst us, beautiful and enduring.

While thus irritated by much around him in Rome, Mendelssohn found plenty of consolation. Monuments of ancient greatness and of the genius of the past appealed to his imagination and his keen sense of artistic verity, while the natural beauties of the country gave him exquisite pleasure. "Why should Italy," he exclaims, "still insist on being the Land of Art, while it is in reality the Land of Nature, thus delighting every heart! . . . I went lately with the Vollaris to Ponte Nomentano, a solitary dilapidated bridge in the spacious, green Campagna. Many ruins from the days of ancient Rome, and many watch-towers from the Middle Ages, are scattered over this long succession of meadows, chains of hills rise towards the horizon, now partially covered with glittering snow, and fantastically varied in form and colour by the cloud-shadows. And there is also the enchanting vapoury vision of the Albanian Hills, which change their hues like a chameleon as you gaze at them—where you can see for miles little white chapels glittering on the dark ground of the hills, as far as the Passionist Convent on the summit, and whence you can trace the road winding through the thickets, and the hills sloping downwards to the Lake of Albano, while a hermitage peeps through the trees. . . . That it is a lovely vision I say in earnest. No lack of music *there*; it echoes and vibrates there on every side; not in the vapid, tasteless theatres."

(To be continued.)

MUSICAL HONOURS.

By HENRY C. LUNN.

FALSTAFF says, "Will honour set a limb?" but assuredly those who fully acknowledge the sarcasm involved in the question will admit that much of the

pain of the shattered limb is mitigated by the conviction that honour is gained by a wound which has been received on the field of battle and in defence of a country's rights. Were an army divested of all chivalric surroundings, of all the pomp and glory which attend a soldier's life, where indeed could be found the men who cheerfully, and even eagerly, would lead a cavalry charge, or mount a scaling-ladder over heaps of dead and dying, at the head of what is appropriately termed the "forlorn hope"? If honour were not the feeling which principally animates men of high, and even noble, birth to these deeds of daring, the records of a nation's military heroes would be poor indeed. Granting then that titles conferred by monarchs for the successful conduct of a campaign or for numerous instances of bravery can never raise a man in public estimation as much as he has raised himself by his own actions; as a lasting acknowledgment of his merit from the nation he has fought for such honours should be ready for all who have legitimately earned them; and it would be unnecessary to point to the many whose distinctive title is indelibly associated with the special service for which it was granted.

Yet, with all due reverence for the memory of our departed warriors, and a firm reliance upon the courage and endurance of those still living and emulating their example, let us not forget that far removed from general observation and the possibility of any of their acts being chronicled, live a number of true and noble heroes of peace; persons who have bravely worked—even at much personal and pecuniary sacrifice—to relieve the necessities of their fellow-creatures. How many doctors in remote country-places have often driven at midnight over numberless dreary miles to attend on a dying man or woman without a thought of any recompense for the trouble and misery endured? How many clergymen work night and day in a small parish to mitigate the evils arising from ignorance and intemperance? How many real "Sisters of Charity" devote themselves to the service of the aged and needy, reaping their reward only in the consciousness of having lessened the misery existing around them? True these heroes labour but in a small circle, and their benevolent actions have no perceptible effect upon what may be termed the outer world; but they seek a healthy happiness during their lifetime, and their good deeds are recorded after their death in the memory of those amongst whom they dwelt.

And do we not find equally zealous workers in art—above all arts, too, in that which not only refines and elevates, wherever its influence is felt, but has the effect of knitting together large bodies of individuals in the pursuit of one object? Music is indeed a humaniser, in the highest sense of the word; for the works of the great composers speak in a language which requires not to be translated to make its way in every part of the world. Slowly, and almost imperceptibly, the art has crept onwards until it has grown from a luxury for the rich into almost a necessity even for the poor. Artists, too, who have toiled hard in the cause are beginning—perhaps somewhat tardily—to occupy a share of public attention, and to force upon those who have the power to influence Royalty the necessity of granting some kind of State recognition of their services. The list of those who have received this proof of national sympathy has recently been much enlarged; and as every musician must feel that in ennobling the artist the art itself is raised in proportion, the heartiest congratulations must be tendered to all who have been thus selected for musical honours.

But with every wish that those who have worked for and won these honours before the world may

long live to wear them, we must remember that there are many, very many, whose labours in the furtherance of art have been limited to a narrow space, and whose life-long services are known but to a few. As the comparatively obscure heroes we have already mentioned devote themselves to the relief of the physical, so do these administer to the mental wants of those around them; and often, within our own knowledge, has the cultivation of a taste for the highest class of music in a country-town been solely owing to the unwearied exertions of one man. In considering this subject, indeed, instances spring up the record of which would far exceed the limits of our present paper. A professor in a provincial town, who might content himself with the usual *routine* of a teacher's life, and obtain the best pupils—in a pecuniary point of view—by flattering their vanity and giving lessons upon the showy pieces of the day, commences his career by openly declaring his respect for the art and his fixed resolution to foster its best interests. At the church he positively refuses to play the trash provided for him, and substitutes music worthy of the occasion. In doing this he offends the authorities, resigns his situation as organist, and obtains another in a neighbouring parish. His influence, however, is felt in the place of his residence, and his lectures, at first heard from curiosity, are soon listened to with interest; the effect being that he is urgently requested to teach those very pieces the introduction of which a short time before lost him a good connection. Another emissary in the good cause, who begins by obtaining the post of organist in a country church, immediately forms—principally from the working-men of the neighbourhood—a class for the study of choral music, which he teaches gratuitously, and even occasionally copies out music for practice. Instead of organising concerts for the purpose of playing and introducing works of his own, he boldly attempts to inculcate a taste for the standard compositions by giving performances of pieces which, although entirely unknown to his hearers, he feels convinced must eventually meet with the appreciation they deserve. The success of these endeavours amply rewards him for his labour and anxiety; and although he becomes not a prosperous man, he is at least a happy one. A third, who devotes his mind exclusively to the difficult art of teaching, produces pupils who, although afterwards availing themselves of the instruction and the name of a celebrated master, in fact owe the whole of their training to the modest professor whose fame has reached only a few miles from his own residence. Let it also be said that often when accredited metropolitan Conductors visit a town for the purpose of directing a grand performance of high-class music, the local professor, whose name is only casually mentioned, is the one who bears the whole of the hard work of preparation. He it is who enters heart and soul into the spirit of the undertaking, calling rehearsals as frequently as he sees necessary for the due rendering of the works, directing at intervals separate departments of the choir, smoothing petty jealousies, and in truth never losing sight of the fact that on a certain given day he is to hand over his musical forces to the appointed General in command, perfectly trained for immediate action.

With these facts before us—and many others which might be adduced—may it not be truly said that the spread of music throughout the country is mainly effected by those who diligently and silently work in districts where, but for the earnest preaching and teaching of such missionaries, the most dense ignorance on the subject would prevail. Issue cheap

music as you will, and bring the best compositions within the reach of all; depend upon it until these treasures are opened by one who can thoroughly appreciate them, and will explain and illustrate their manifold beauties to those around them, but little real progress can be made. Those who, like ourselves, are in constant communication with the many who are thus scattering the seeds of art through the length and breadth of the land will, we are sure, join us heartily in this small tribute to their worth. "Musical honours," indeed, have they nobly earned by years of diligent and patient toil; and they may rest assured that these honours are no less respected because from their very nature they can receive no national recognition.

THE promised production of the "Mefistofele," at one of our large operatic establishments is, to a certain extent, a sign of the times, and is of some interest. The generation which most of us know "in print" has gone by. A new audience and new leaders of public opinion have come to the front. A British public is at no period self-reliant in art-criticism; and, generally speaking, the publicists on whose opinions it depends, have proceeded from a class—not social, but intellectual—in which there is a predominance of the "bourgeois," the "chauvinist," the "Philistine," or, to use a still more comprehensive word now universally adopted in our language, the "jingos." The orthodox jingoism has latterly been so much ridiculed, that the new leaders of the public taste—followed at a respectful distance by the older hands—seem to vie with one another in driving their flocks into new pastures. We have learned to recognise a few well-known harmony progressions as Wagneresque; and we clap our hands with joy at our critical acumen when we detect them, as we certainly can, in one new composition after another, foreign or British. We have been taught to admire enthusiastically the "Carmen" of Bizet, as an example of Wagnerian influence; whereas it is well known that, as far as Bizet is concerned, his "Carmen," compared with his earlier works, was a return to the old traditions of the "Opéra-Comique." Its success was due mainly to that circumstance; and also to the local colouring borrowed from the Spanish Zarzuela, of which, in this country, we know absolutely nothing. In the first few bars of Arrigo Boito's "Mefistofele" we shall be able to seize upon those eternal chords, those reminiscences of the old German hymns, so happily employed firstly by Meyerbeer, and afterwards by Wagner in modern opera. A younger composer, Gobatti, in the "Goti," and even Verdi in one part of his "Aida," and Macfarren in some celestial chorus in his Oratorio, "John the Baptist," have all condescended to copy those now commonplace effects. Signor Boito is a poet as well as musician. Like Wagner he writes the dramas he sets. Whether that innovation is an advantage to the art is a point we cannot stop to discuss. It however ensures in the musician a certain general cultivation which will be reflected in his music. The very photograph of Boito enlists sympathy in his favour. He looks the bright, clever, gentlemanlike artist and *littérateur* that no doubt he is. The "Mefistofele" is full of cleverness and of those lofty intentions we call audacity, when they fail. There are times when we are forced to call them puerilities. Young people who have a fancy for writing operas and dramas generally choose tremendous subjects. The "Faust" of Goethe with its supernatural *mise-en-scène* terrified even Beethoven; whilst Gounod has succeeded by limiting himself principally to the worldly love-story and the general terrestrial attractions of the drama.

Boito, on the other hand, makes a feature of the "Prologue" and its dramatis personæ. If we have only the sense to put Goethe and Wagner out of the question, we shall probably enjoy the musical edition of "Faust" M. Boito has provided for us. We have neither to criticise him as an Italian Wagner or Berlioz, nor as a true representative of the present-day Italian school of operatic music. Behind Boito, is at least Ponchielli, who in our opinion is *facile princeps* amongst the post-Verdians. Although dramatic and, for an Italian writer, even picturesque in his style, his favoured traditions are evidently more ancient than those of the followers of Verdi and Donizetti. Ponchielli is more of the school of Pacini and Mercadante, who were less dominated than some of their contemporaries by the influence of Rossini. And what do we know in this country of Ponchielli—of the "Promessi Sposi" or the "Lituani?" What are we likely to know? unless we judge for ourselves, with some universality of taste, and are not bullied by cliques and clagues of newspapers and theatres. We cannot abuse the theatrical managers. They are mere men of business, and are supposed to know their own interests. If we are taught that only this or that is possible, they will in course of time give us this or that; five and twenty years or more after date, as was the case with the "Lohengrin," or eleven years, as is now to be the case with the "Mefistofele." Why, like vulgar worshippers, should we allow ourselves to be prompted, English-like, to exchange only one shibboleth for another? Why dethrone Mendelssohn to put Wagner in his place? or depose one set of lunatics to instal another? when there is charming music to be had, suited to all tastes, and at present for the most part unknown to us in this country. It is time we were sufficiently educated to appreciate different styles of music. Any tolerably instructed charity-boy will appreciate the best style of music. Years ago we remember at an hotel in Edinburgh asking an old waiter if there was anything for a fellow to do—any music-hall or—"No, no, no, sir," he said; "there is nothing here but *Shackspere and Sir Waalter Scoot*."

SOME days ago a morning contemporary announced that the question of the Paris Opéra was, after tiresome delay, on the high road to a satisfactory settlement. At that time everybody acquainted with the facts thought so too. The Superior Commission nominated by the Minister of Fine Arts and the Sub-Commission of the Budget had agreed upon a scheme according to which the Opéra was once again to pass directly under State control. Experience had shown, according to the Commissioners, that private management (although public interests were to some extent guarded by the Government in right of the subvention) was a failure; and they proposed that the Department of Fine Arts should take the establishment in hand, appointing a manager with a council of advisers, and generally carrying on the business for the good of the people. The proposal seemed to meet with much favour, as might have been expected, on the principle that when things are at the worst any change must be for the better, and it was believed that as soon as the Legislature reassembled its sanction would be easily obtained. All this, however, was equivalent to reckoning without M. Jules Ferry, an exemplary Republican who happens just now to be Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. Before the scheme could reach the Chambers it was bound to obtain the approval of the Minister who would be responsible for it in the House. That approval M. Jules Ferry declined to give. Indeed, he vetoed the