Richard Wagner
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Published online: 28 Jan 2009.

To cite this article: Henry Cart (1889) Richard Wagner, Proceedings of the Musical Association, 16:1, 63-78, DOI: 10.1093/jrma/16.1.63
To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jrma/16.1.63

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February 3, 1890.

Professor W. Grylls Adams, Vice-President, 
In the Chair.

Richard Wagner.

By the Rev. Henry Cart.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I feel that by way of preface I must ask your pardon for venturing to intrude upon your notice a paper very hastily composed, scrappily written, and to a great extent carelessly put together. I must tell you that when the idea of this paper first suggested itself to me I hoped that I should be able to devote much time and study to the consideration of so vast and absorbing a subject, but since then circumstances have materially altered, and I have been obliged to give my whole time to other matters more especially connected with my work as a clergyman which previously had not been thrown in my way. But is not this the way with so many matters in this hurrying, driving, bustling, brain-wearing age in which we live; we propose to ourselves great things, but how many attain to them? I at least so far as this paper is concerned must in dust and ashes sit with covered head and say “Peccavi, I have sinned.” And then again, why should I speak to you about Richard Wagner? I never knew the man, I only saw him once; I have never been to that musical Mecca, Bayreuth; I have never seen any of his operas performed in his native land; and I have not exhaustively studied his life, works, or character. Well, I suppose there are two reasons to account for this whimsical caprice in my selection of a subject: first, a blind following of the spirit of the age, a spirit which prompts people to talk a great deal about what they know very little of; and secondly, an earnest desire on my part to ascertain the attitude of members of this Association towards so great a genius as Wagner, and to elicit a genuine expression of opinion as to the future prospects of what has been not inaptly, though I will not say prophetically termed “The music of the future.” If this paper only arouses and awakens an interesting discussion amongst the members here present, my object will have been more than fulfilled, and we
shall all leave this room with the very candid opinion that
the second half-hour has been far more entertaining and
useful than the first one. Such sentences may suggest to
wily-minded individuals that I am what is called "fishing for
compliments," but I assure you I am not; I am convinced
within myself that I am speaking solid and indisputable truth.

But enough, or rather too much, of preface; if I run myself
down any more I shall have you all leaving before I have
begun, and therefore let us to work. Richard Wagner was
born in "La Maison du Lion Rouge et Blanc," at Leipsic, on
May 22nd, 1813. He was the ninth and last child, and soon
after his birth, his father, who held a small appointment as
"greffier de police," died. It is noteworthy that Wagner's
father had a great taste for things dramatic, and was also
fond of poetry; on one occasion this worthy acted in a
somewhat rough and ready representation of one of Goethe's
plays. We must also bear in mind that Rosalie Wagner, a
member of the three triads which formed the family, was
accounted a good tragedian. Dramatic instinct and ap-
preciation were therefore existing elements in the family
from the outset. These elements were further accentuated in
the fact of Albert, the eldest brother, becoming an actor and
singer at Würzburg and Dresden, and afterwards "regisseur"
at Berlin. This brother had two daughters who were singers,
and one of them was compared to no less a person than
the famous actress—Wagner's star and ideal divinity—
Madame Schroeder-Devrient.

Wagner seems to have had a most inspired birth, for,
according to his own account, the Norn—i.e., one of the Fates in
the Scandinavian mythology—deposited on his cradle "the
never-contented spirit that ever seeks the new," a gift which
seems to me of somewhat more than doubtful value. But as
yet the apostle of Bayreuth lay in his cradle and peacefully
slumbered.

The mother did not long endure the estate of widowhood,
but in hot haste married one Geyer, now a painter, but
formerly an actor. This imported into the family a fresh
amount of enthusiasm for the drama and everything relative
to it, and had an immense influence on the very impression-
able mind of the young Richard. It seemed the decree of
the nursery-cradle Norn that Wagner from the first should be
bereft of paternal guidance, for Herr Geyer died just before
the boy had completed his seventh year. At the age of nine
Wagner was very fond of playing to his friends his small
repertoire, consisting of the Overtures to "La Flute Enchantée"
and "Der Freischütz." These were from necessity performed
on the pianoforte, an instrument with which Richard in after
years was never in love. The young enthusiast had a
wondrous admiration for Weber and for his works, and you
see in this that Wagner was unconsciously selecting a model for his own school of music, though little but blind devotion to a great master was evident at this early age. Writing in 1860 Wagner frankly says, "I received from this master my first musical impressions; his melodies filled me with enthusiasm, his character and his nature exercised on me a real fascination, his death in a far-off country filled my childish heart with desolation."

Wagner's first school was the Kreuz-Schule at Dresden, and whilst here he developed a great passion for the study of Greek, as also of poetry and mythology, and a great predilection for the works of our immortal Shakespeare, or Lord Bacon, or whoever else we may have to thank for our marvellous dramatic inheritance. As instances of his application to these subjects it may be mentioned that in his leisure time he translated, merely for amusement, some part of Homer's "Odyssey"; also that he took the prize at a "concours poetique," and undertook by himself a metrical translation of one of Romeo's monologues. (A remark en passant: does not all this remind you very much of certain similar characteristics in the early stage of the career of that illustrious musician, Hector Berlioz?)

It was at this time that the boy took in hand the stupendous and immense task of writing a tragedy, which was conceived on such liberal lines that no less than forty-two persons died in the course of the piece, and most of them were obliged to be resuscitated and to appear as ghosts in order to supply a dramatis personae for the last act.

In 1827 Madame Wagner returned to Leipsic, her daughter, Rosalie, having secured an engagement at the Stadt-Theater in that city. This necessitated the placing of young Wagner at another school, and it was now the College Nicolai that claimed him as a pupil. Wagner's natural pride at this juncture suffered a great rebuff, for, as regards his studies, he was now placed in a lower grade than that which he had occupied in the classes at the Dresden school, and so the young gentleman sulked a little, and thought a great deal more of and about music than he had hitherto done; in fact, lessons were soon neglected for the study of what was to become one of the absorbing passions of his life. This musical longing received a great impetus from the hearing of some excellent performances of Beethoven's Symphonies at the far-famed Gewandhaus concerts. The death of Beethoven which occurred at this time served much in intensifying the impression produced on the child by these mighty works of musical genius.

After hearing Beethoven's "Egmont" Wagner thought he would study harmony, and having purchased Logier's "Traité d'Harmonie" at a secondhand bookstall, and pored
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over it for eight days, he set to work to compose music for the grand tragedy of which I have already spoken. The music of the young Wagner was to be, in his own idea, somewhat similar to that written by Beethoven, for were they not, even though the hand of death had removed one of them, illustrious composers!

Wagner's next work was the composition of an overture, and this was taken with wondrous assurance to Dorn, the chef d'orchestre of the royal theatre, Wagner having obtained an introduction through his sister, Rosalie. Dorn accepted it, put it in rehearsal, and had it performed between the two acts of a piece then being played at the theatre. In the scoring of this composition the drum was very prominent, and indeed so preponderated that the overture was at once nick-named "Ouverture aux timbales." Wagner thus remarks on this early effort: "This overture was indeed the fulminating point of my folly. To facilitate the proper interpretation of the piece I had had the notion to write it in ink of three different colours: the music for the strings was written in red ink, that for the brass in green, and that for the wood-wind in black. The general treatment of the work was so elaborate that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony would have seemed, in comparison with it, as nothing more than a Sonata by Pleyel."

In 1830 Wagner entered the University of Leipsic as a student in philosophy and aesthetics. It was here that he met Theodore Weinlig, cantor of the Church of St. Thomas, and this good man made it his task to lay a thoroughly excellent foundation for any subsequent musical studies which his pupil, Richard, might engage in, and thereby did more real good for the youth than can at first sight be appreciated.

Wagner was soon at composition again, and now produced a polonaise, a sonata for the pianoforte, an overture with fugue, another overture, and a symphony in four parts or divisions.

In the summer of 1832 Wagner visited Vienna and Prague, and it was at this latter city that his symphony was first performed. Whilst at Prague he composed a dramatic poem entitled "La Noce," and on his return to Leipsic began to set it to music; but on his sister Rosalie objecting to the poem, he tore it up, and thus brought his work to a hasty conclusion. (Another passing question now suggests itself: Why is it that all musicians, especially those whom we call great musicians, are so uncontrollably violent as regards their temper? Are they out of tune with the universe, or only jarred by discordant humanity?)

Heinrich Dorn, writing in 1832 about Wagner's extraordinary devotion to and admiration for all that concerned Beethoven and his works, says: "I am doubtful whether there ever was a young musician more familiar with the
works of Beethoven than Wagner at eighteen. He possessed most of the master's overtures and large instrumental pieces in copies made by himself. He went to bed with the sonatas, and rose again with the quartets. He sang the songs and whistled the concerti, for with pianoforte playing he did not get on very well; in brief, there was in him a regular *furore Teutonicus*, which, combined with considerable scientific culture and an extraordinary activity of mind, promised powerful shoots."

During the course of the year 1833 Wagner's symphony and one of his overtures found a hearing at the Gewandhaus concerts in Leipsic.

The young composer was at this time much written up and belauded by his friend Henri Laube, who in the *Journal du Monde Elegante* gave him the most flattering criticisms.

Wagner now spent a year with his brother Albert at Würzburg, he having the post of *chef des chœurs* at a salary of ten florins per month. During this time he was engaged on the composition of his first grand opera, "Die Feen," the subject being taken from a fable by Gozzi entitled "La Femme Serpent." The music of this work reflects in great measure the triple influence of Beethoven, Weber, Marschner. It may seem strange to include the name of Marschner, but Wagner was at this time much impressed by a study of this composer's opera of "Hans Heiling," and it was during his stay at Würzburg that Wagner composed a finale to an aria in Marschner's "Vampire," writing both verses and music, of which latter there were 142 bars.

In the spring of 1834 Madame Schrédér-Devrient sang in opera at Dresden, and much was Wagner charmed and delighted with her singing and acting. From that time she became his ideal in so far as she represented to his mind a most perfect combination of the musical and dramatic arts.

It was about this time that Wagner, deserting the true principles of his art, began to think of what would please the masses and therefore result in pecuniary gain to his own pocket, and he noticed that applause was most frequently given to the music of Bellini and to the dramatic action contained in such operas as Auber's "Masaniello." What a happy thought, what a blest result, could he only in some way combine the two! The attempt was made in Wagner's second opera, written during a vacation at Toeplitz in Bohemia. The subject was taken from Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure," and the work was known in the French as "Defense d'aimer." If one pauses here for a moment to contrast these two early operas from Wagner's pen, "Die Feen" and "Defense d'aimer," you will see that they present in miniature the two opposite extremes of thought which may be discovered as running throughout
Wagner's subsequent and later works; two streams of thought, sometimes associated, but most often disassociated, the one tending towards all that is good, noble, pure, self-sacrificing, and heroic; the other boiling, bubbling up, and surging over with all that is fierce, passionate, hateful, sensuous, carnal, and immoral. You may see these characteristics, combined with a rare genius and extraordinary amount of inventive skill, in Wagner's "Tannhäuser," where Venus and St. Elisabeth strive alternately for the victory.

In 1834 Wagner accepted the position of musical director at the theatre of Magdeburg. During the first year he was in office there the overture to "Die Feen" was performed, as also another overture he had written for a drama called "Christopher Columbus," a composition for New Year's Day, the theme of which was based on the Andante of his symphony, and some songs he had written for a whimsical farce called "The Spirit of the Mountain."

Wagner's second opera was performed at Magdeburg in the spring of 1836. There were two representations, the first one being for the benefit of the director of the theatre, whose affairs were in a state verging on bankruptcy, while the second was for the benefit of the luckless composer. A fairly good audience assembled for the first performance, but as the singers were in a state of thorough disorganisation, a hopeless state of confusion prevailed throughout the evening. At the second performance matters came to a crisis. The audience consisted of the director and his wife, and a Polish Jew arrayed in holiday costume. Before the rising of the curtain a free fight was engaged in by all the artists, so that the "regisseur" was obliged to come forward and announce to the overflowing (?) audience that the performance could not take place at all. The music of the opera was much praised in a Magdeburg newspaper. It should be mentioned that, before the first performance took place, the dramatic censor, who had not seen the body of the work, yet objected to the title, and insisted on its alteration, though, as regards the work itself, he solemnly accepted Wagner's artfully-conveyed assurance that it was founded on a very serious play by William Shakespeare. The new title given to the opera was "La Novice de Palerme."

Wagner now tried to get the opera produced at Leipsic, but the very free tone of the libretto was objected to; he therefore took it to the manager of the Residenz Theatre of Berlin, and it was here that he saw Spontini conducting his opera of "Fernando Cortez," a sight which much impressed him, he being especially filled with admiration at the rhythm and precision of the whole, and the intimate connection between the music and the action.
It may be interesting here to note that Wagner uses an air from "La Novice de Palerme" in "Tannhäuser," in the introduction to the third act.

Wagner, after a short stay with Dorn at Riga, rushed off to Königsberg, whither he was attracted by the presence of Wilhelmina Planer, his fiancée, she having secured a part as première amoureuse at one of the theatres there, and, having gained the post of leader of the orchestra at the same house, he forthwith entered into the holy estate of matrimony. His marriage day was November 24th, 1836. Wagner stayed for a year at Königsberg, during which time he composed two overtures, one on "Rule, Britannia," the other entitled "Polonia."

He then returned to Riga, his friend Dorn having obtained engagements at the theatre there both for his wife and his sister-in-law, and having offered him the post of premier directeur de la musique.

On December 11th, 1837, a benefit performance was given for Wagner at the theatre at Riga, and at his own request the opera then performed was Bellini's "Norma."

But Wagner was by this time tired of the barrenness of life at Riga, and longed to try his chance in seeking fame and reputation in the great Parisian capital, which seemed to him then the veritable abode of all true art. The spell was on him, and whilst writing the music for an opera comique in two acts, "l'Heureuse Famille d'Ours," he made the discovery that he was really doing nothing more than composing music "à l'Adam," and his disgust reached its height.

As a sort of preface to his intended journey to Paris he made a sketch-plan of "La Grande Fiancée," a novel by Henri Koenig, and sent it to Scribe, asking him to use this as material for a poem, and to be good enough to get the work accepted at the French Opera House.

With this consummate piece of impudence we will, I think, take leave of the young man, Richard Wagner.

On January 25th, 1866, Wagner, who was at the time at Marseilles, received the news of his wife's death, and on August 25th, 1870, two months after the performance of the "Valkyrie" at Munich, he was united at Lucerne to Madame von Bulow, née Cosima Liszt, the daughter of Franz Liszt and Madame la Comtesse d'Agoult. Madame Bulow was at this time twenty-nine years of age, and she had a family of four daughters; the eldest of the number afterwards married the Italian Count Gravina, and another was united to M. de Thode, of the University of Bonn.

Von Bulow, who up to this date had been Wagner's bosom friend and staunch supporter, on discovering his wife's desertion of him, exclaimed: "If it had been some one
that I could have killed, I should already have done the deed." But to him Wagner, though his betrayer, was sacred as the Genius of Music.

It is often said that genius is not judged by any conventional standard of morality, and this maxim seems to have been appreciated in all its fulness by the immortal Richard; looked at with ordinary eyes his second marriage was certainly more of the Mona-Caird type than is generally considered desirable.

The fundamental principles which Schopenhauer has laid down, so far as music is concerned, for the metaphysical essence of the art, Wagner, without any modifications, has adopted as a basis on which to erect his own theories respecting the same. There are two sides to Wagner's artistic movement; one negative, the other positive. In the first instance, he has abolished the petrified formalities which, in the course of centuries, had gathered round the dramatic poem. His last and supreme purpose is the attainment of dramatic truth. The first excrescence of the opera which he attacked was the aria, which had, in the course of time, obtained undue importance. It need not be added that other forms of absolute music were also swept away by this modern reformer, but Wagner (and in this we have to recognize the positive side of his work) has at the same time erected a new form of musical expression, which originates from, and varies with, the impulse of dramatic passion. In one of his most important literary works, "Opera and Drama," Wagner urges the demand of a co-operation of all the arts, that is, of painting and sculpture as well as of poetry and music, in the drama of the future. When we look on Wagner we must remember that he was a dramatist as well as a musician, his stage directions being always of the minutest kind, and showing all that skill and knowledge of scenic effects which so favourably distinguish him from most other German dramatists.

Weber was the first of the so-called romantic school to engage in critical and aesthetic literature, but Wagner's fertility in this department exceeds anything ever before attempted. The results of his literary labours occupy no less than nine volumes, and besides these one may include such "miscellanea" as a collection of letters to the Mayor of Bologna on the stage; correspondence with Berlioz, Liszt, and others; and an autobiographical sketch extending to the year 1843. Consider also the enormous amount of painstaking labour expended upon the libretti for his operas, all of them the work of his own hand, and add to this the circumstance that a most intimate acquaintance with mediaeval folk-lore and Scandinavian mythology was a primary necessity in their
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composition, and you will gain a faint idea of this man's literary activity!

Wagner was also distinctly a poet—his whole nature and temperament were imbued with the poetic instinct—and though the form in which he has cast the dialogue of his great music-dramas may not accord with our preconceived notions of beauty, yet it was the most suitable to illustrate the impressions which were intended to be conveyed to the mind of the hearer. The alliterative principle which Wagner so largely employed is the metrical basis of all Teutonic poetry, and represents most nearly the " staff rhyme," as found in the Eddas and Sagas of the Northern mythology.

Wagner's position in musical history seems to me a somewhat unique one. He stands, as it were, in a niche of his own making. His peculiar tendencies may be said to have called forth a new class of singers, musicians, and litterateurs.

There is no doubt, as regards his relation to the new romantic school, that though Berlioz was the founder of the same, Wagner must ever be regarded as its first and foremost disciple, supporter, and adherent. Berlioz started the school, Wagner made it, threw into it all his life-work and full tide of rushing and tempestuous enthusiasm, and scored a brilliant second to Berlioz's somewhat uncertain first.

Wagner must ever be a remarkable figure in the history of the growth and development of music, for he marks a new era. He presents himself in so many and varied aspects—at one time we see him as a fierce controversialist and pamphleteer, at another as a poet, at another as a musician of extraordinary if mistaken powers, impatient of conventionality, and heedless of the prim-set confines and iron boundaries of musical form and expression; at one time as favouring the Italian school of melody, at another as scouting all connection with so degraded a form of art; at one time the companion of kings, at another correcting proof-sheets to earn his daily bread. The man is complex, intricate, many-sided, original; the artist is there though under various guises; the genius is unmistakable.

Wagner died on February 13, 1883, at the Palazzo Vendramini, at Venice, a house which was at that time the property of the Comte de Chambord. The composer had for nearly a year before this date been warned by many unmistakable symptoms of his rapidly failing health. On the day in question, Wagner was preparing to go out on his usual daily round in the gondola; but just before leaving the house he became engaged in some dispute which provoked him to one of those violent fits of temper which were an unfortunate attribute of his nature, and in the midst of his rage he suddenly jumped up, saying, "I feel very ill," and fell fainting
on the floor. He was at once carried to his bed, and his
doctor, Doctor Keppler, was summoned on the instant; but
all was over, and Keppler only arrived to find him a corpse
within the arms of his wife, who thought him asleep.

Madame Wagner was only removed from the body after
twenty-two hours had elapsed, and then gentle force had to
be employed, so terrible was the prostration and anguish of
her afflicted soul, and it is said that for nearly four days she
would partake of no nourishment.

The real cause of Wagner's death was a rupture of the
right ventricle of the heart, though many internal complications
naturally hastened such a catastrophe.

The body was embalmed by Professor Hoffmann of Berlin.
The funeral was at Bayreuth, at four o'clock on a Sunday
afternoon. In the long train of the funeral cortège were
three cars laden with more than 200 wreaths. King Louis,
Wagner's generous and beneficent patron, was unable to be
present; but the next day made a sad pilgrimage to the tomb,
placing the floral offerings thereon with his own hands, a
touching tribute from royalty to true genius. During the
procession from the station at Bayreuth to Wahnfried,
Wagner's residence, the funeral march from “Siegfried” was
played, and the Lieder-Kranz of Bayreuth sang Wagner's
composition written for the funeral of Weber.

Wagner was buried in the tomb he had prepared for him-
self in the garden at the back of his house. It is touching to
note in connection with this sad ceremony, that just in front
of the tomb was the grave made by Wagner for his faithful
dog that was poisoned, and the musician had marked the spot
by the simple inscription: “Here Russ lies and waits.” Both
master and hound are now removed from sight, but the
memory of the one is as imperishable as the fidelity of the
other.

Wagner's influence as regards his work and writings is
widespread, and, to my mind, ever increasing. We even see
a veteran like Verdi inexpressibly tinged if not saturated with
this influence, and such works as “Aida” and “Otello”
show us that, although the Italian composer has not forgotten
his own legitimate school, with its broad and happy
melodiousness, yet he has in the evening of his life been
straying in pastures new, and is not above learning a thing
or two when it is worth knowing. Professor Stanford is, to
my thinking, a most able and vigorous exponent of the
principles and traditions (if so young a school can have the
latter) of the Wagnerian system. In Germany the per-
formance of Wagner's works means for the management of a
theatre or opera house pecuniary success, and in France
there is a steady and increasing demand for excerpts from
the composer's works.
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In England, this unmusical and much-found-fault-with country, Wagner at the opera house does not mean money, and we are reduced to Italian versions of the smaller works in order to ensure even a moderate amount of success. At the Richter Concerts and Henschel's Symphony Concerts people cannot have enough of Wagner; why, I don't know. I suppose there's a good deal of fashion mixed up with it, for I am morally certain that the English do not appreciate and cannot understand Wagner or his works. That is just where Wagner fails; his music-dramas are grand, they are colossal both in design and treatment, but we must have the whole thing complete—music, scenery, and all accessories of a like nature; or else, as a rule, we don't understand them. Wagner wants us to study his works, to think deeply about them, to prepare our minds for their proper reception, and that is just what the majority of English people don't like doing.

Of course, some of Wagner's music does well by itself, and I shall never forget the impression produced upon me on hearing the "Walkürenritt" performed at the Albert Hall under Wagner's direction. If ever dramatic action was embodied and personified in music, it may here be found in unparalleled force; and I should question whether in the whole history of music so vivid and startling a presentment of a pictorial image has ever been made simply by orchestral means. All such attempts to familiarize the English people with the works of Wagner, as, for instance, the performance of a whole opera on a grand pianoforte, with a small company of selected singers, are worse than useless, and disgust not only the uninitiated, but also all those who respect and reverence the memory of so great a master. I would also deprecate all such utterances as "There are two great masters in music—Beethoven is the one, and Wagner certainly is the other." Beethoven is the one certainly, the one and only one, and he is like a familiar figure in a sacred narrative, a head and shoulders above his brethren. And I doubt not that amongst those who would readily subscribe to this opinion would be found, could he now have utterance, the Musician of Bayreuth, Richard Wagner.
DISCUSSION.

The Chairman.—I have now to invite the members of the Society to give us their opinions upon this interesting subject, which Mr. Cart has so clearly put before us, and I trust that we shall have a good discussion. Mr. Cart has told us that Wagner is not appreciated by the English people—i.e., by the great body of the English people who are interested in music. I fear that at the first introduction of Wagner's music into England, the attempt to select short pieces from his works, which should be pleasing at a mixed performance, led to the production of the same pieces over and over again, because the number of such short pieces is so limited. The first great introduction of Wagner's music into England was made by himself and Herr Richter in those six grand performances, at the Albert Hall, of considerable portions of his more important works. Speaking as one of the general public, who has some little appreciation of music, I should say that there is a great fascination about Wagner's music. Before those Albert Hall performances I was not much interested and allowed the two first to pass, but went to hear the third performance, which I think included a considerable portion of "The Walkyrie." So struck was I with the power of Wagner's music, and so fascinated, that I was careful not to miss the other three performances, but heard them all, and they led me to regard Wagner as a very great composer and musician. Then came those larger and grander performances still of his works in a more complete form, his "Niebelungen Ring" and "Tristan und Isolde," and his other and better known operas, the repetition of which has shown that they at least are appreciated by the English musical world. I was greatly struck with one thing in connection with the Albert Hall performances. Wagner himself conducted during the first part of the performance, but was succeeded by that renowned leader Richter, who conducted during the second part. The change from Wagner to Richter was most marked in the effect produced on the performers. When Richter took the wand, it was as though he were playing every instrument in the orchestra; all the performers recognised and acted up to his masterly leading, and the effect was most startling and grand.

I will now ask you to give a vote of thanks to Mr. Cart for his interesting paper.

[A vote of thanks was carried unanimously].

Mr. Southgate.—I think there is very little I can say with regard to the paper which has been read, for one cannot in an audience of a mixed character such as is ours to-day take a paper of this character and analyse it and criticise it as it deserves to be. We should be thankful to Mr. Cart for...
the facts he has brought under our notice. Probably many
of us knew most of them before, but he has put them in a
succinct form that will be useful for future reference. Although
Mr. Cart has not indulged in much criticism of Wagner's
works, there was one statement he made that to me was a
little surprising—namely, that Wagner whistled the concertos
of Beethoven. What a marvellous compass his whistle must
have had! I should imagine if he could have performed
those concertos at the concerts at Drury Lane or Covent
Garden, where the whistling lady was one of the attractions,
he would have quite extinguished the siffhouse. With regard
to the popularity of Wagner in England, I think possibly
Mr. Cart has underrated that to a certain extent. Among
musicians, and in certain respects, his works are known and,
I think I may venture to say, appreciated at their full value;
moreover, there are certain of his operas which are, speaking
generally, approved by the public. For instance, "Rienzi,"
"Lohengrin," "Tannhäuser," the "Flying Dutchman," and
the "Meistersingers of Nuremburg" are liked. The public
go to hear them, and my impression is that these fine works
pay fairly well. But some of his other operas, such as the
are productions which English musicians are hardly prepared
to accept. As to the reasons for that, it would take too
long to go into; there are many. Novelty, of course, is the
first cause. We know geniuses are always in advance of
the age, and it is some time before we get used to them,
their novelties and peculiarities, and we know that it has
always been so. But does not one cause lie in the libretti
and the extravagant stories that he has chosen for illus-
tration? No doubt, to the German mind, conversant as are
these people with these legends, such must appeal much
more forcibly than to us. They accept them as readily as
we accept the fairy tales of our childhood; but they are
not known to English people, and consequently there is
a certain amount of want of sympathy with the stories,
especially in their lack of natural human action. Of course,
we know that there are operas, such as Weber's, in which
there has been to some extent supernatural, but still there is
in most of these a certain amount of human, interest. Now,
in the Wagnerian subjects there is little of such sympathetic
interest. These mystic legends, which have come down to us
from early ages, seem to appeal more to Germans than
to English people, and I cannot but think that is one reason
why these later works of Wagner have not found the favour
his early operas did. Then, further, there is the question
of his last and most peculiar style—a very large question
indeed, and on which we could hardly come to any sort of
agreement. I was very glad to hear that, in grouping
the two composers, Mr. Cart gave Beethoven the pre-eminence. He should rightly have the pre-eminence, though one can hardly compare the two composers together. Still, as he has mentioned them by name, I will make one comparison, and that is this: we must never forget that Beethoven was an all-round genius—he produced symphonies, quartets, quintets, pianoforte sonatas, operas, oratorios, and so on. Now Wagner's works rest practically on what he calls the music of the Art Drama; therefore we are justified in classing him only as a dramatic composer. When the two eminent names are mentioned together, I say that here Beethoven must have pre-eminence. To my mind a genius, especially in music, ought to show his genius in every branch of the art. It has been so with Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and certainly with Beethoven; but Wagner will not stand the test, and so he can only rank as a genre composer. There was one remark which struck me as hardly accurate with regard to Berlioz being the author of the romantic school. I should say that Weber was the founder of the romantic school. I think "Der Freyschütz" was the first work in which that quality was so distinctly manifest. Weber had gifts greater than Berlioz in that respect, but, of course, Berlioz lived after him, and was able to do that with the orchestra which Weber never dreamt of. Still, Berlioz's works are certainly romantic. Some portions of his "Queen Mab" music are marvellous pieces of imagery, and his skill and genius in dealing with an orchestra are indeed extraordinary. I cannot but think that had Berlioz not lived and given us the wonderful orchestration he has written, that Wagner could never have done the great work we all admit he has accomplished in the realms of orchestral music.

Mr. Webb.—I would remark that the popularity of Wagner must be accepted as an undoubted fact, even by unmusical people having little or no knowledge of music. The reason for this is difficult to discover. Wagner's music is not easy, it is not always melodious, and it is not easy to follow. The only thought that has occurred to me with regard to the reason of its popularity is that it is thoroughly artistic, that it is real and earnest, and that it more thoroughly expresses the emotions than that of any other writer. On the other hand, I think perhaps we attribute too much to Wagner. There are other writers, such as Scharwenka, whom I think we ought to consider. I doubt whether a hundred years hence Wagner will be credited with such great genius as very many attribute to him now.

Mr. C. E. Stephens.—I think it is hardly fair to English people to say we do not appreciate Wagner, because he is evidently now quite in the ascendant in popularity. But there
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may be one reason, perhaps, which I should have liked to hear Mr. Cart deal with, with regard to Wagner's slower advancement than would otherwise have been the case—and that is the almost superhuman demands which his works make on executive power. Anyone who attended the performance of the "Nibelungen Ring" will remember the superb effort of Madame Vogl in the part of Brünnhilde, which makes unreasonable demands on human resources. When an orchestra of some hundred musicians were playing their loudest, Madame Vogl towered above them all in splendid self-abnegation on behalf of the master; it was evident that that actuated her. But that is a sort of thing which cannot continue for ever; artists are, after all, mere flesh and blood, and they really cannot bear, I think, such very heavy demands as are made upon them by Wagner's works. I do not say a word in depreciation of the music of Wagner, but I say that the very great difficulty of its execution stands very much in the way in this country, and in others too, of its being appreciated. People show their readiness to appreciate the works of Wagner, but their extreme difficulty hinders their more rapid advancement. I cannot admit that England is behind any other country in appreciating what must be considered the genius of Wagner.

Mr. Herbert.—I should like to call attention to three points of Mr. Cart's address. First, he thought all great musicians had bad tempers; but as against that I would think of Haydn, Mozart, and Mendelssohn. Then came a statement that the acts of great geniuses were to be judged by a different standard from the rest of the world, apropos to Wagner seducing his friend's wife. There I differ from him entirely. And in speaking of great musicians, he said that Beethoven was the first; but I think Mr. Cart forgot Sebastian Bach. I am a most uncompromising enemy of Wagner in every possible way, but at the same time I admit that I came to the task twelve years ago (in 1878) prejudiced; for all I had heard abroad from professional musicians, and all I had read in his works certainly prejudiced me against him. To mention one or two instances, he said that the music of "Don Giovanni" would one day not be worth the paper on which it was written. After that he could not, by any possibility, find any sympathy from me. Then there was the matter of the pamphlet containing the attack on Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, and the rest. In fact, on the moral side, Wagner's character was such as to prejudice me very much against his compositions. I admit it. Pougin says, in the supplement to his Dictionary, how difficult it is—almost impossible—to separate a man from his compositions, and there I entirely agree with him.

Mr. Southgate.—It is impossible to hear what Mr. Herbert
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says without feeling in unison with it; but, after all, we are only called upon to judge of Wagner's music, not of his morals. I think we must try and test his music alone, forgetting everything else. If we remembered the other things he has perpetrated, the Bayreuth master would undoubtedly be condemned by all right-minded people; but one has simply to judge by his music and estimate the artistic effect he has produced. I think we can only look at him in that light. His offensive attacks on Rossini, Mendelssohn, and Meyerbeer, and others of whom he was jealous, or not in sympathy with, were so ridiculous that no doubt he did himself a great deal of harm by them. Owing to outside matters of this kind it is very difficult to get people to look at his works in a fairly impartial spirit.

The Rev. H. Cart.—As regards the statement that Wagner whistled the concerti of Beethoven, I am not responsible for that, I was simply quoting the words of Dorn, his friend. I am afraid I was misunderstood with regard to the unfortunate second marriage, because, really, from my position, I could not advocate any such thing. I hinted that it would have pleased pupils of the school of Mrs. Mona Caird, and I do not see how it could be supposed that I defended it. Mozart has been mentioned as a good specimen in the matter of sweetness and good temper, but I have reason to doubt that altogether. I think Mozart occasionally attacked people, as also did Wagner. Of course, I am quite ready to admit with anyone that Wagner did sometimes make himself thoroughly ridiculous: his vanity was, to my mind, a most contemptible, childish thing. I was very pleased to hear Mr. Southgate say that we were to regard him so far as his music goes, and let us judge him by that standard. As regards the difficulty of his works, that cannot be gainsaid in any way. They do demand superhuman efforts, and it is a misfortune that it is so, for that will be one reason to prevent their ever becoming popular in the sense of their being appreciated by the masses.