"Tristan and Isolde". An Analysis of Richard Wagner's Music-Drama

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domination of Wagner's genius, after having from his youth upwards produced his compositions with the unerring instincts and unembarrassed facility of an improvisatore. The evil effect of the influence of the master-mind of modern music upon one who never can be *en rapport* with that spiritual force is clearly discernible in a recent production of Verdi: the Wagnerian element in "Aida" is too often suggestive of an unholy alliance, or, at least, it exists as an incongruity which strikes the hearer with a sense of pain, and makes him recall, with an avidity of compensating appreciation, the masterly force and originality of "Rigoletto." It is far otherwise when such an influence is exerted over the first productions of genius, when there exists, as in the case of Boito, a natural affinity between the dominating force and the plastic and fecund imagination that is conscious of the divinity that temporarily overawes it. This has ever been—Wagner himself not having been exempt from this natural law, as a study of Beethoven's symphonies and Meyerbeer's operas suffices to show; and it is through this subtle and spiritual interchange of influence that the philosophic historian of music is enabled to trace, in the diverse compositions of the great masters, the ethereal and protean links of a mighty chain of intellectual and sensuous production that has ever been in progress towards its sublime completion and fruition in the future. It is idle to talk of the music of the future as if music had no past, or were self-existent independent of that past; equally futile and uncritical is it to deplore Auber's comparatively narrow compass of creative power. His work as an artist is essentially his own, and his place is as irrevocably decreed to him, and with as much certainty, by fate as that of far greater men; and no foolish regrets that he was not such an one as this writer or that, and no pamphleteering, will affect his position or cause any settling in the pedestal of his statue in the temple of fame. It is not a little thing to make one of the vestibules of that mighty temple sweet with tenderest reminiscences of unsophisticated melody; and this is the glory of Auber.

"TRISTAN AND ISOLDE"

AN ANALYSIS OF RICHARD WAGNER'S MUSIC-DRAMA
BY F. CORDER.

BEFORE dealing with the *Nibelung Ring* and *Parsifal* it is our difficult duty to give some idea of a work which, while it is constructed on the same lines as these, stands apart from them, as from everything yet conceived in the operatic way—that stupendous, crushing effort of genius, which after twenty years is only now beginning to be appreciated and understood.

The love-tale of Tristan and Iseult is of very remote origin and is to be found in the French romance by Luce de Gast (twelfth century), a German poem by Eilhart von Oberg (1190), besides our own *Morte d'Arthur*. The opening incidents of the story are everywhere the same, and these Wagner has preserved, putting, however, a more poetic and dramatic conclusion than that afforded by the legend. The libretto may, indeed, be reckoned his very best, having none of the lamentable offences against good taste which disfigure the otherwise fine book of *Parsifal*. The verse is a compound of alliterative and rhyming verse, as unlike old poetry as our modern-antique furniture is to its models, but admirable for music, and all but impossible to translate. The music is, with the exception of one short movement, *entirely* formed on about thirty "leading-motives" and their symphonic working. What makes this work so entirely distinct from all others

by the same master is, first, the *intensity* of the component themes and, secondly, the tremendous grasp and power shown in their development. The force of emotional music can no further go than in "Tristan and Isolde."

Before the opening of the action events have happened which it is necessary to relate. *Tristan*, nephew of *Mark*, King of Cornwall, once fought and slew one *Morold*, an Irish chief, who came over to demand tribute. (Curious that 1,400 years have exactly reversed the mutual position of England and Ireland as to rent-paying!) His head being sent home in scorn to his friends, the *Princess Isolde*, his betrothed (his niece in the old legend), found in it a splinter of *Tristan's* sword. *Tristan* himself was so sorely wounded in the fight that he ordered himself to be placed in a boat with all his arms and cast adrift on the sea to die. This was done, and he drifted to the very spot on the Irish coast held by his late foe. As an unknown wanderer, and concealing his identity by the feeble device of calling himself *Tantris*, he was hospitably received and his desperate wounds healed by *Isolde*, the greatest living practitioner of "leechcraft." His valour endeared him to all the court, but one fatal day *Brangäne* (*Bragwaine*), *Isolde's* maid, with the inquisitiveness of her class, found a notch in the stranger's sword, exactly corresponding with the splinter found in *Morold's* head. With the noble chivalry of the time, instead of putting the murderer to death, his hosts sent him back to his own country with a grim warning to return no more. But alas! *Isolde* and *Tristan* had fallen violently in love with each other, though both now were forced to conceal and subdue their passion. In this these noble hearts would have succeeded had not fate been too strong for them. Some time afterwards *Tristan* was sent by his uncle as ambassador to make peace with Ireland and to demand the hand of *Isolde* for *Mark* to seal the bond. The offer was too good to be rejected; all was forgiven and forgotten, and the proud *Tristan* had to bring his beloved over to wed with his uncle. Her thoughtful mother, knowing *Isolde's* love-trouble, had intrusted a love-potion to the hands of *Brangäne*, with directions to give it to the bride on her wedding-day. According to the old story *Isolde* took it by mistake during the voyage—possible as a remedy for sea-sickness—and her smouldering passion for *Tristan* became uncontrollable. Let us now see how artistically Wagner has improved this incident; for with the sea-voyage his drama begins.

The wonderful prelude works out the principal motive:—

No. 1. *Lento.* Ob. *Fag.*

The "Love-potion" theme and other phrases more or less directly springing from it:—

No. 2. Cello.

No. 3. Str. *3 Fag. (a) & D. Bass.*

It should here be pointed out that most of the motives in this work have a more or less obvious mutual relationship, according to the ideas or objects which they represent. Thus, the oboe phrase in No. 1 occurs in various forms as the representative of *Isolde*; while the cello phrase already reappears as a middle part to No. 3, and is the germ of several motives connected with *Tristan*. No. 2 expresses the love-glances cast on each other by the pair after drinking the potion; while No. 3 is more complex still. The menacing bass notes (*a*) form the "death"-motive; while the phrase (*b*) recurs in the last act as representing *Tristan's* yearning for his absent love. These themes are all woven into a marvellously continuous web, culminating by means of the following new motive—

representing the lovers' wild intoxication of love (at the end of Act 1)—to an impressive climax, the uttering of No. 1 by the full orchestra, after which all gradually subsides and dies away with fragmentary repetition of the various phrases.

The curtain then rising—to silence—shows us the deck of *Tristan's* ship, or rather, a pavilion erected thereon and tenanted by *Isolde* and her faithful *Brangäne*. An unseen sailor sings on the mast-head (unaccompanied):—

Westward
surges slip,
eastward
speeds the ship.
The wind so wild
blows homeward now:
my Irish lass,
where waitest thou?
Say, must our sails be weighted,
filled by thy sighs unbated?
Waft us, wind strong and wild!
Woe! ah, woe for my child!
Irish maid,
thou wild and marvellous maid!

The music to one portion of this forms a motive expressive of the nautical element which pervades the whole of this act:—

"The wind so wild blows homeward now:"

Isolde, aroused from a reverie, and being told that the voyage is nearly over, bursts out into a furious appeal to the elements to destroy the ship and all in it. Her wrath is typified by the following unison for strings—

and a fierce phrase, moulded on No. 5, accompanies her speech:—

We are startled at the composer commencing the drama in such a tempestuous fashion, and it is indeed a prodigious effort to sustain the emotion at this high pitch throughout, without allowing a moment's repose.

Brangäne opens the curtains to give her mistress air, when *Tristan* is seen at the other end of the

vessel, with his knights, people, and squire, *Kurwenal*. At sight of him *Isolde* utters a deep malediction—

Death - de - vot - ed heart!

and after roundly abusing *Tristan* to the perplexed *Brangäne*, bids her summon him hither. *Brangäne* departs on her mission, but *Tristan* only evades compliance to the demand. On her insisting, *Kurwenal* volunteers to settle the matter, and sends her back to her mistress with a rough but decided answer, singing mockingly after her a song about *Morold* and his fate, in which the knights join with the refrain—

"Bra-vo, our brave Tris-tan! Let his tax take who can."

the first bar of which reappears in many other shapes as a *Tristan*-motive. *Isolde*, having overheard all the colloquy, is more indignant than ever at *Tristan's* coldness and apparent discourtesy towards her. In a long and violent scene she relates what we have already told, the *Morold* and *Tantris* business, declaring that her love is changed to hate—forgetting that as her blood-enemy he could not possibly wed her, but has made the best possible reparation by getting *Mark* for her husband. This *Brangäne* vainly represents to her incensed lady. The motive predominant in this scene is a chromatic phrase, evidently born of No. 1, and given in every possible key and tempo:—

At last *Brangäne*, endeavouring to soothe her mistress, says—while No. 1 is uttered in its original form:—

Mindest thou not
thy mother's arts?
Think'st thou that she
who'd mastered them
would have sent me o'er the sea
without assistance for thee?

She shows her a casket containing healing drugs, poisons, and—the love-potion. But *Isolde* sternly selects one and bids *Brangäne* give it her. "The draught of death!" cries the terrified maid. At this thrilling moment two interruptions occur—the shouts of the sailors reducing sail—

"Ho, heave ho, heave . . ho!"

and then the entrance of *Kurwenal*, to sprightly music, compounded of this motive and the sailor-theme (No. 5) put into 6-8 time. *Isolde* refuses to prepare for landing as she is requested unless *Tristan* will come to her and seek grace for his offences. The bluff *Kurwenal* takes back the message sulkily, and *Isolde*, hurrying to *Brangäne*, kisses her hastily, bids her comfort her parents, and now quickly make a loving-cup and pour the death-draught in it. The horrified confidant is kneeling to expostulate, but is silenced by *Kurwenal* announcing "Sir Tristan." "Sir Tristan may approach," says *Isolde*, calmly.

To a solemn and majestic theme, new, yet suggestive of the opening motives, *Tristan* enters and asks the *Princess's* will. First she upbraids him for shunning her on the voyage, to which he pleads etiquette. Then she reminds him of what took place in Ireland, and shows him what a heavy debt of revenge she has against him. He calmly offers her his sword and bids her take his life. She bitterly replies that it would never do to risk *King Mark's* displeasure: let them rather end the feud with a cup of reconciliation. *Tristan* understands her meaning and is content to end his hopeless love thus. The trembling *Brangäne*, in obedience to *Isolde's* repeated summons, brings the fatal cup, and *Tristan*, speaking words which show him to be aware that he is drinking his death, lifts it to his lips. *Isolde*, crying—

Deceived e'en here?
I must halve it!

snatches it from him, and herself swallows half. Then, as they stand gazing silently and with blanched faces on one another, awaiting the death agony, we hear the first yearning strains of the Prelude, and presently their eyes soften, their cheeks flush with love, their hearts palpitate, their blood boils, and at the passionate phrase No. 2 they pronounce each other's name with trembling lips, and stand locked in a blissful embrace unconscious of all around. The sailors without are shouting "Hail to King Mark!" Trumpets are sounding. *Brangäne* wrings her hands in terror at what she has done in trying to save her mistress's life, but the lovers, in a rapture of passion, sing a wild duet formed of various motives from the Prelude, heeding nothing.

Now the curtains are withdrawn, and we find the ship anchored by *King Mark's* burg; the stage is crowded with people shouting "Hail to King Mark!" In the accompaniment to these bits of chorus we find another form of the sailor-motive (No. 5). *Brangäne* forces the lovers apart, and throws the royal mantle over *Isolde*. *Kurwenal* comes in jolly, as usual, to announce the King. "Where am I?" asks *Isolde*. "Living?" Then, suddenly recollecting, "Ha! what potion was't?" "The love-draught," confesses *Brangäne*, grovelling in terror. *Isolde* sinks, overcome with emotion, into *Tristan's* arms. The music works up this thrilling situation to the utmost pitch, and during a *tutti*, in which four themes are to be found together, just as *King Mark* steps on board, amidst the acclamations of the people, the curtain falls.

The exhausted listener probably feels that nothing in music can equal, far less exceed, the tremendous emotion of this first act. Wait till he hears the second!

The prelude begins with startling abruptness. A simple phrase, derived from No. 8—

which is so marvellously worked out in the great love-scene—forms the commencement. Then after a

few bars of tremolo for strings, expressive of *Tristan's* impatient watch for *Isolde*, comes a bass theme with triplet accompaniment, used while he is hastening towards her. Presently a new motive—the "love-summons"—appears above, and to save space we will quote the two together:—

Notice the four chromatic semitones always—as in Nos. 1, 3, and 9—associated with *Isolde*. After a few repetitions of the *Isolde*-motive (No. 1) we burst into a new motive, representing the rapture of the reunited lovers: this is most strikingly and pathetically used, in an altered form, at the tragic close of the drama:—

After working these materials awhile, all dies away and the curtain rises, showing the garden of *King Mark's* castle, with *Isolde's* apartments at one side. A torch is burning as a signal at the door, which is up a flight of steps, and from the elevation *Brangäne* is watching the retreat of *King Mark* and his court on a night-hunt. Their horns are heard thus curiously sounding, the kettle-drums of the orchestra supplying a light pedal bass F:—

Presently *Isolde* comes out and asks impatiently if the horns are still within hearing. *Brangäne* hears them still plainly, though her mistress's ears are deaf to the sound. She warns *Isolde* that they are being betrayed by *Sir Melot*, *Tristan's* professed friend, who wishes to rise by *Tristan's* fall, but the Queen laughs at these fears. "This very night-hunt," she says, "was contrived by Melot to serve his friend." After a lengthy dialogue, in which Nos. 12 and 13 are prominent, and future love-themes are hinted at, *Isolde* exclaims—

Go watch without;
keep wakeful guard!
The signal!
And were it my spirit's spark,
smiling
I'd destroy it and hail the dark!

These words are accompanied by several bursts of No. 12, which then becomes a mere descending chromatic scale accompanying the "Death-motive" (No. 7) as *Isolde* throws down the torch. Now the agitated phrase (lower portion of No. 12) reappears and works up in an exciting *crescendo* as *Isolde* stands waving her handkerchief to the distant *Tristan*. A joyous burst shows that he is in sight, and the upper quaver figure in our next quotation sets in, rising higher and higher, till the lovers rush into one another's arms, when the orchestra plunges madly into the jubilant No. 13. A wild exchange of endearing epithets follows, and then a joyous love-phrase—

pours forth in a tumult of passionate rapture. The scene which ensues—a whole hour in length—almost baffles analysis. The lovers rhapsodise wildly about daylight being their cruel foe and night their friend, and the phrase (No. 11) identified with this idea is worked symphonically in a most astonishing manner, with inexhaustible variety and resource. At last, when the lovers have gradually calmed down, *Tristan* remarks that they have only one wish—

We yearn to hide
in holy night,
where unending,
ever true,
Love extendeth delight!

to which tender sentiment the following weird phrase is allotted, and much repeated hereafter:—

But now weariness overtakes the lovers, the orchestra sighs and throbs forth an exquisite slow movement, of which we only dare quote one tiny phrase, which reappears in Act 3:—

Although the “daylight”-motive is ingeniously worked into this splendid piece, the movement itself is but an enlargement of a lovely song, one of a set of five composed a short time before this opera. The song called “*Träume, Studie zu Tristan und Isolde*,” is not, as most people imagine, taken from the opera, but the opera from the song. And it is most interesting to note how Wagner has developed his own idea to such full dimensions.

The half-sleeping lovers are now warned by *Brangäne* that morning is approaching, but they only give vent to still more yearningly tender phrases:—

This, which has already been hinted at in the slow movement above mentioned, is perhaps the most delicious idea Wagner ever had. It is made plentiful use of, and only gives way to the crowning motive of the scene, a phrase of four notes which we give in its developed form below. The lovers wish that death might come and unite them wholly. This phrase gives way for a short space before another interruption from *Brangäne* and a renewal of the idea No. 16, made still more strange by the following astounding voice-parts:—

It may be questioned whether all music contains a passage to match this. But now we approach the climax: the “love-death” motive—

reappears and is worked up into a flood of passionate melody; No. 13 is added to it, and forms a rising, soaring *crescendo*, which culminates—alas! in a crash, as *Brangäne* shrieks, and *Kurwenal* rushes in with an unavailing warning. A discordant version of the hunting-phrase (No. 14) tells us what has happened. The lovers are surprised, and *King Mark* stands before them in noble sorrow and indignation, followed by all his retinue. Discordantly wail forth fragments of the love-themes, including the “daylight”-motive, as *Tristan* murmurs—

The dreary day!
It comes once more!

and the day indeed slowly dawns, while all parties stand in mute emotion. *Melot* advances, and with ill-concealed triumph shows the king that his accusations are just. Then the noble king (in all the legends *King Mark* was a mere cowardly ruffian) pours out a flood of touching reproaches to the hero he loved better than a son:—

Where now has truth fled
if *Tristan* can betray?
Where now are faith
and friendship fair,
when from the fount of faith—
my *Tristan*—they are lost?

And then, in a beautiful and expressive but lengthy solo, the theme of which we have quoted in our “*Meistersinger*” paper, he recalls the whole history of *Tristan's* fetching the bride. Was it for him, the stainless knight, to do his uncle this foul wrong? He implores him to explain. While *Tristan*, deeply moved, hesitates what to say, the love-potion theme (No. 1) is heard, for that is the unknown cause of all the trouble. Says *Tristan*—

O monarch,
I truly may not tell thee;
what thou dost ask
must ever be unanswered.

and, turning to the cowering *Isolde*, he goes on solemnly, while the music melts into the delicious No. 18, and its weird companion theme, No. 16:—

Where Tristan now is going
wilt thou, *Isolde*, follow?
The land that *Tristan* means
of sunlight has no gleams.
It is the dark
abode of night
from whence I first
was brought to light.

The solemn sweetness of the music here is most beautiful. At the mention of the land of night there is a slight reminiscence of the slow movement of the love duet. The remainder of the act is best told in the dramatist's own words:—

Is. To *Tristan's* house and home
Isolde will gladly roam.
The road by which
we ought to go
I pray thee quickly show.

(*Tristan bends down slowly and kisses her forehead. Melot starts furiously forward.*)

Mel. Thou villain! Ha!
Avenge thee, monarch!
Wilt thou suffer this scorn?

(*Tristan draws his sword and turns sternly round.*)

Tris. Who's he will set his life against mine?

This was my friend; [Looking at *Melot*.
he told me he loved me dearly.

Thy glance, *Isolde*,
glamour'd him thus,
and, jealous, my friend
played me false
to King Mark, whom I betrayed.
Guard thee, *Melot*.

(*He rushes on Melot. As they engage Tristan drops his guard, and instantly falls wounded in the arms of Kurwenal. Isolde faints over his body. Mark holds Melot back. The curtain falls quickly.*)

The story has hitherto been pretty closely followed, but the lapse of many years, and *Tristan's* marriage with the other *Isolde* (of the "white hands") being undramatic, Wagner invents a new end, thoroughly in keeping with what has gone before.

We are transported to *Tristan's* castle, on the rocky cliffs of Breitaine—wherever that may be. There is a short prelude of an intensely mournful character, in which the *Isolde*-motive (No. 1) takes strange and lugubrious forms, and a new subject of a wailing nature, No. 21, appears, representing the anxious waiting for *Isolde*. It is founded on the phrase marked *b* in No. 3:—

The curtain then rises, and shows us *Tristan* lying insensible on a couch in the castle garden, while the faithful *Kurwenal* watches beside him, and a shepherd without plays on a *Corno Inglese* the most afflicting and nightmarish strains it is possible to conceive. Two prominent phrases we quote:—

As the pipe ceases the orchestra takes up a portion of the theme, while the shepherd comes and looks over the wall to ask after *Sir Tristan*. *Kurwenal*, to a funeral version of No. 1, states his fears that his lord is dying. Then, to No. 21:—

Unless we find
the lady leech,
the only one to help.

And he bids the shepherd look out seawards, and if a ship appears in sight to play a merry air. As the shepherd withdraws, and his melancholy pipe dies in the distance, *Tristan* opens his eyes and murmurs faintly—

The ancient ditty!
Why wake to that!

whereupon *Kurwenal*, transported at hearing the beloved voice once more, bursts into a torrent of rapturous expressions, while the music assumes a most jubilant character. Another theme occurs here, the "Kareol"-motive, in an odd combination of 6-4 and 3-2 times, but space forbids our quoting it. *Kurwenal* explains how, after his wound, he bore his master home, where he hopes to see him cured. How touching is *Tristan's* gasping and broken rejoinder—

Think'st thou thou?
I know 'tis not so,
but this I cannot tell thee.
Where I awoke
walked I ne'er,
but where I wandered
I can indeed not tell thee.
The sun I could not see,
nor paysage fair, nor people;
but what I saw
I can indeed not tell thee.
It was
the land from whence I once came,
and whither now I fare;
the murky realm
of mortal night . . .

and thus he wanders on, recalling all his past, till at last, exclaiming (to No. 12)—

The light, how long it glows!
When will the house repose?

he sinks back exhausted. The four long soliloquies of *Tristan* in this act, perfect marvels as they are, must be passed over in a few words. *Kurwenal* reveals that he has sent for *Isolde* as a last chance of healing his master. To a new and joyous theme (founded on No. 1)—

Tristan pours out an eloquent flood of gratitude; then, wandering again, fancies he sees the ship coming, and insists on *Kurwenal* going to meet it. As the latter hesitates, the wail of the shepherd's pipe is heard, and *Tristan's* shifting thoughts transfer themselves to this:—

Why do I hear thee now,
thou old pathetic ditty,
with all thy sighing sound?
In evening grey
I heard thee once,
when as a boy
I heard my sire was butchered.
Through morning's mist,
still sadder stealing,
when the son
his mother's fate was taught.

And through a long soliloquy the weird ditty is maintained in combination with No. 1 and other themes. After much raving *Tristan* curses the fatal potion with the following deadly phrase—

which is repeated many times, and combined with No. 1. *Tristan* now falls senseless from his exertions (well he may!), and *Kurwenal*, deeming him dead, utters pitiful lamentations. But once more the wounded man revives, to a curious new form of the inexhaustible No. 1, spread out by hesitating chords in broken triplets. Then come lovely melodious phrases, founded on No. 18, as he dreams he sees *Isolde* smiling and beckoning him. So vivid is the impression that he begins to get excited again. The time quickens, the melody of No. 17 appears in the bass, and the agitation increases, till suddenly leaving the chromatic harmonies and vague tonalities, we are thrust boldly upon a long-continued chord of C (actually for the first time!), and the shepherd is heard without, playing quick phrases thus—

No. 25. *Vivace.*

and *Kurwenal*, rushing to the wall, sees the ship approaching. Breathless is the interest here, the subject (No. 25 *b*) being worked up vigorously by the orchestra. *Kurwenal* hastens to meet *Isolde* and bring her up the hill, while *Tristan* tosses on his couch in a fever of impatience, and a wild torrent of love-themes sets in. At last, mad with excitement, he tears off his bandages in delirious transport, and staggers to his feet. *Isolde's* "signal"-theme (No. 12) is heard, and her voice calls on *Tristan*. Shrieking—

The torch is extinct!
I come! I come!

he totters forward and falls into her arms. But ah! the "death"-motive (No. 7) crashes forth, and as *Tristan* sinks to the ground all melts into No. 1; and as his dying eyes look a farewell, and his lips murmur "Isolde!" the loving-phrase (No. 2) dies out with a whisper from the harp: the hero is no more!

Words entirely fail to paint the thrilling excitement, the gigantic dramatic force of this marvellous scene. It is simply Wagner's *chef-d'œuvre*: he has never approached it before or since. But does it make an anti-climax? Does the end of the drama suffer from its grandeur? Not a bit of it! observe the skill with which the interest is sustained to the end.

Isolde utters a most heartrending lament, in which there is a new theme, the last in the work—

and sinks fainting on her lover's body. Now another ship is in sight—*King Mark* is in pursuit of *Isolde*. *Kurwenal* and the shepherd barricade the gate, while the crew of *Isolde's* ship is being overpowered outside by the new-comers. But the besiegers gain an entrance, and are madly attacked by *Kurwenal*, who

kills *Melot*, and in reply to *Mark's* call of "Hold, madman!" exclaims:—

Here ravages Death!
That only, King,
is here to be holden.

Wilt he should own thee?—come on!

Mark calls in vain on *Tristan* (No. 26), and *Kurwenal*, overpowered by numbers, crawls to his master's feet, and gasping—

Tristan! true lord!
chide me not
that I try to follow thee—

expires, while the *King* utters his grief for the loss of his hero, mingled with reproaches at his renewed act of falseness. *Brangüne* has come, and endeavours to restore *Isolde*, telling her that she has revealed the story of the love-potion to the *King*, and that it was to make the lovers happy that he came—and only found death and horror.

Isolde is not dead, for in a drama of this epoch the hero requires a *drapa*, or death-song, and she must sing it. A few hints of No. 20 show that her senses are returning, and then, unconscious of all around, she sings not only *Tristan's drapa* but her own; for with the last words her heart breaks and her spirit flies to rejoin his. This piece, now well known in the concert-room, is identical in its music with the latter portion of the great love-duet, a magnificent climax and coda being added, formed from No. 13 augmented. The words we must quote, for they are certainly more genuine poetry than Wagner has ever been able to produce elsewhere:—

Mild and softly
he is smiling:
how his eyelids
sweetly open!
See, oh, comrades,
see you not
how he beameth
ever brighter,
steeped in starlight,
borne above?
See you not
how his heart,
with lion zest,
calmly happy
beats in his breast?
From his lips,
in heavenly rest,
sweetest breath
he softly sends.
Harken, friends!
Hear and feel ye not?
Is it I
alone am hearing
strains so holy
and endearing?
Passion swelling,
all things telling.

Gently bounding,
from him sounding,
in me pushes,
upward rushes,
trumpet tone
that round me gushes.
Brighter growing,
o'er me flowing,
are these breezes'
airy pillows?
Are they balmy
beauteous billows?
How they rise
and gleam and glisten!
Shall I breathe them?
Shall I listen?
Shall I sip them,
dive within them,
to my panting
breathing win them?
In the breezes around,
in the harmony sound,
in the breath of the
scent-floods be drowned;
and, sinking,
be drinking,
in a kiss
highest bliss!

The most striking points in "Tristan und Isolde" are the enormous use made of the love-potion theme, No. 1, the manner in which most of the other motives are derived from it (thereby seeming to multiply its repetition), and—what naturally results from this—the extreme chromatic nature of the harmony. In the prelude to Act I. not a single concord is heard, and so throughout, for many pages at a time. There is only one "full close" in the opera—at the end of Act I. All this adds to the "intense" or emotional character of the music and the unbroken continuity of the drama. "Tristan und Isolde" can never become popular, in the sense of being frequently played, because of the tremendous demands it makes on the powers of the two leading singers. We much doubt the wisdom of producing it to an English audience, which is as yet wholly unacquainted with the other and comparatively simpler works of Wagner's "third period." At the same time this work is slowly becoming understood, and must eventually stand unchallenged as the supreme masterpiece of its author—an ideally perfect lyric tragedy.