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DECEMBER 8, 1891.

W. H. CUMMINGS, Esq.,

IN THE CHAIR.

THE COMPOSER'S INTENTION.

BY EDGAR F. JACQUES.

THE subject on which I am about to address you has been so often before the public of late, in one form or another, that I might well have hesitated to bring it forward again, were it not that its great importance—which I assume no one will question—gives me reason to hope that I may count on your patience while I lay before you certain aspects of it upon which I greatly desire to elicit opinion. The necessity for careful study of the scope and meaning of art, and of the duties which devolve upon its interpreters, becomes more pressing every day; and yet the number of those who undertake it is exceedingly small. This, at least, I infer from the fact that the majority of those who express themselves on the subjects in question speak as though there were no difficulties in the way—a sure sign that they have given little attention to the problems involved. My own sense of these difficulties is such that I have prepared this paper less as an assertion of personal views than as an incentive to discussion. With that end before me I have drawn largely on the opinions of great writers, feeling that truth would become visible in proportion to the number of variously coloured lights I could bring to bear.

I will ask you, first, to consider the nature of that which, in this connection, we call an "Intention." I take it that the definition of this word given in Professor Fleming's "Vocabulary of Philosophy" fairly represents the meaning usually attached to it by the average Englishman. Professor Fleming defines an Intention to be "that act of the mind by which we contemplate and design the accomplishment of some end." Now it is felt by many that this describes a mental state which is far too deliberate—far too dependent on the reasoning powers to be identified with that of a musician of genius (or even of talent) in the act of composing. Something

is to be said in support of this view. We have, for instance, Schopenhauer's dictum that "the invention of melody, the exposition of all the deepest secrets of human desires and feelings, is the work of genius, whose work is here more obviously than elsewhere free from all reflection and conscious purpose, and may be called an inspiration. Here abstract notions are sterile as elsewhere in art: the composer reveals the innermost essential being of the world, and expresses the profoundest wisdom in a language his reason does not understand; as a magnetic somnambulist gives account of things of which she has no notion when awake."

And, should this be regarded as suspicious testimony on account of its transcendental origin, we have, in Mozart's attempt to describe the process by which musical works came to maturity in that marvellous brain of his, evidence that cannot be questioned. Writing to a friend, the Salzburg Master says:—

"I now come to the most difficult part of my letter, which I would willingly pass over in silence, for here my pen denies me its service. Still I will try, even at the risk of being well laughed at. You say, you should like to know my way of composing, and what method I follow in writing works of some extent. I can really say no more on this subject than the following, for I myself know no more about it, and cannot account for it. When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone, and of good cheer—say, travelling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or during the night when I cannot sleep; it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. *Whence* and *how* they come I know not, nor can I force them. Those ideas that please me I retain in memory, and am accustomed, as I have been told, to hum them to myself. If I continue in this way, it soon occurs to me how I may turn this or that morsel to account, so as to make a good dish of it, that is to say, agreeable to the rules of counterpoint, to the peculiarities of the various instruments, &c.

"All this fires my soul, and, provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodised and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost complete and finished in my mind, so that I can survey it, like a fine picture, or a beautiful statue, at a glance. Nor do I hear in my imagination the parts *successively*, but I hear them as it were all at once (*gleich alles zusammen*). What a delight this is I cannot tell! All this inventing, this producing, takes place in a lively pleasing dream. Still the actual hearing of the *tout ensemble* is after all the best. What has been thus produced I do not easily forget, and this is perhaps the best gift I have my Divine Maker to thank for.

"When I proceed to write down my ideas, I take out of the

bag of my memory, if I may use that phrase, what has previously been collected into it in the way I have mentioned. For this reason the committing to paper is done quickly enough, for everything is, as I said before, already finished ; and it rarely differs on paper from what it was in my imagination. At this occupation, I can therefore suffer myself to be disturbed ; for whatever be going on around me, I write, and even talk, but only of fowls and geese, or of Gretel or Bärbel, or some such matters."

And Richard Wagner, whose own music we are not accustomed to regard as altogether the "profuse strains of unpremeditated art," has these words in his essay on Beethoven :—

"There is but one state which can surpass the musician's : the state of the Saint ; and that especially because it is enduring and incapable of being clouded, whilst the ecstatic clairvoyance of the musician alternates with an ever recurring state of individual consciousness, which must be thought all the more miserable as in the inspired state he was lifted higher above the barriers of individuality."

Wagner's use of the word "clairvoyance" recalls Vogl's use of it to describe Schubert's state while composing his greatest works. He used even to tell an anecdote in proof of the composer's unconsciousness. Finding a song of Schubert's which had been left at his rooms too high for his voice, Vogl had it transposed, and after a fortnight sang it to Schubert in the lower key. When he had finished, the genial Franz said : "Really that song is not so bad. Whom is it by ?!"

It may be interesting to note that in an essay, entitled "The normal clairvoyance of the Imagination," Bulwer Lytton urges that the power, possessed by imaginative persons, of seeing with their mind's eye and describing places they have never visited, is every bit as wonderful as that claimed by clairvoyants properly so-called. The essay is one of the series called "Caxtoniana."

Of course there is an explanation of all this. It was, indeed, suggested long ago by John Locke in the very first paragraph of the work which immortalized his name. "The understanding," he says, "like the eye, whilst it makes us see and perceive all other things, takes no notice of itself, and it requires art and pains to set it at a distance and make it its own object." "It is difficult," as Goethe put it, "to think about thinking."

In that delightful essay of Hazlitt's, "Whether genius is conscious of its own powers?" we find this very suggestive remark : "It is only where our incapacity begins that we begin to feel the obstacles, and to set an undue value on our triumph over them." The question has been treated

with magnificent fulness by Carlyle in his essay headed "Characteristics." One or two plums may be extracted: "The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick; this is the physicians' aphorism, and applicable in a far wider sense than he gives it"; and again, "throughout the whole world of man, in all manifestations and performances of his nature, outward and inward, personal and social, the Perfect, the Great is a mystery to itself, knows not itself; whatsoever does know itself is already little and more or less imperfect. Or otherwise, we may say, Unconsciousness belongs to pure unmixed life; Consciousness to a diseased mixture and conflict of life and death: Unconsciousness is the sign of Creation; Consciousness at best that of manufacture. So deep in this existence of ours is the significance of mystery."

Professor Hanslick, in his book on the "Beautiful in Music," says: "Thanks to that primitive and mysterious power whose mode of action will for ever be hidden from us, a theme, a melody flashes on the composer's mind. The origin of this first germ cannot be explained but must simply be accepted as a fact."

There are some beautiful lines in Browning's wonderful poem "Abt Vogler," which embody the same thought:—

"Here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
 Existent behind all laws that made them and, lo, they are!
 And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
 That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star."

Now all this seems to tell in favour of those who urge the unfitness of the word "intention" to describe the guiding force which works in the mind of a composer. The ordinary operations of the mind—weighing, selecting, rejecting, piecing together, separating, arranging and what not, seem to have little, if anything, to do with the matter—seem, indeed, to be useless. I say "seem," for I do not think the process so mysterious as many would have us believe. It must be remembered that great proficiency in anything means a more or less automatic performance of the necessary operations. The whole theory of training is based on our power to acquire this automatic facility. And the fact that we are no longer conscious of certain adjustments, adaptations, and delicate discriminations, certain selections, fittings, and rejections is, of course, no proof that they are not taking place. Facility in the practice of an art may be natural or acquired. In the case of great composers it has nearly always been both. Incessant practice has developed to the full the gifts already possessed. Just as the writer thinks no longer of grammatical rules, or of the artifices explained in books of Rhetoric, so with the experienced composer. There is a very significant passage in Wagner's

work, "A Communication to his Friends," which well explains this:—

"I had previously had to gain the capability of musical expression, in the same way that we learn a language. Until we are completely masters of a foreign and unusual idiom, we must, in all we say, take into consideration its peculiar character; in order to be intelligible, we must continually pay attention to the expression itself, and weigh *what* we wish to say with express reference thereto. Thus in every one of our utterances we are hampered by having to observe the formal rules of the language; we cannot tell unreservedly from our involuntary sentiments the state of our heart, *what* we feel, and what we perceive; on the contrary, we must, for their manifestation, absolutely mould our views and sensations on the expression of which we are not such masters as of our mother tongue, wherein, completely careless about the matter, we find the right expression as a matter of course without even willing it. I had now, however, thoroughly acquired the language of music; I possessed it as though it was really my mother tongue, and when I desired to communicate anything, had no longer to trouble myself about the formal part of the expression; the expression was always ready whenever I required it to communicate, according to my inward impulse, a definite view or sensation. But we do not speak without exertion an unusual language quite correctly, till we have imbibed its spirit, till we feel and think in it, and thus desire to express in it exactly what, according to its spirit, can be expressed in it alone. It is not till we speak completely in the spirit of a language, till, quite involuntarily, we feel and think in it, that we gain the facility of extending the spirit itself, of enriching and expanding at one and the same time what is to be expressed at the same time as the expression."

In a letter to Liszt dated May 8, 1859, Wagner writes: "People say 'go to work, then all will be right.' Very well in its way, but I, poor devil, lack routine, and if ideas do not come to me of themselves, I cannot make them."

It is now, I think, sufficiently obvious that the "clairvoyance" we have been talking about is due to what is known as "unconscious cerebration." The brain, on account of its special aptitude in a particular direction, works more or less automatically, and the task of the composer is reduced, as we have seen in the case of Mozart, to little more than that of a secretary. He writes down what his imagination hears. And, of course, if we are to speak by the card, it is evident that there is a certain looseness in the use of the word "Intention" as applied to music so composed: for it is obviously a contradiction in terms to speak of an "unconscious intention." We may, therefore, I think, allow that those who cavil at the word have, at any rate, one leg

to stand on. But we cannot, I am afraid, admit that they have two, because there is another class of composers who do not produce so unconsciously. The sketch-books of Beethoven have, of course, already occurred to your minds as a case in point. A very little study of these invaluable records will convince the most sceptical that in the composition of each of his works Beethoven not only had a very strong clear "intention," but was able to keep it steadily before him while he sought for the exact musical sounds best fitted to express it. On this, Mr. Rockstro, in Grove's Dictionary, has very shrewdly said: "When carefully analysed, the method of Mozart and Beethoven will be found to bear a closer analogy to each other than we should at first sight feel inclined to suppose. Mozart was a mental sketcher; Beethoven a material one. The former carried on in his brain the process which the latter worked out on paper—*et voilà tout*." And if this view be correct we must accept the word "Intention" as the best available, under the circumstances, for both classes of composers—the conscious and unconscious. At the same time it is impossible to overlook the fact that while with Mozart the intention seems to have been the production of a purely musical result, with Beethoven this was by no means always the case. There is plenty of evidence on this score. To say nothing of the works to which he has given titles, such as the "Eroica" and "Pastoral" Symphonies, and the "Farewell" Sonata; or of the tabulation of certain harmonic progressions *with their emotional significance plainly indicated in writing* at the end of the "Studies in Thorough Bass"—we are told by Schindler, in his "Life of Beethoven," that in the year 1816 the master thought of preparing an edition of the pianoforte sonatas. For this he had three special reasons: the first alone, however, now concerns us. This was "to give the poetical idea underlying many of those works, and thereby make them easier of apprehension, and their interpretation more definite." Schindler gives the German words in italics as if they were the actual words of the master. Ries, too, in his "Notizen," tells us that "in his compositions Beethoven often imagined a definite subject." Of the pianoforte sonatas in E and G, Op. 14 (Nos. 1 and 2), Ries tells us that they contain as contents a dialogue between husband and wife, or between lover and mistress. In the second of these sonatas the dialogue, as well as its meaning, is expressed with greater significance, and the contrast between the two principles introduced becomes the more perceptible. These two principles Beethoven named the beseeching and resisting (*das bittende und das widerstrebende*). Schindler also says—and I would draw your special attention to this—"One can only get at the full

truth and certainty of the composer's intention by interpretation (Vortrag) which, nevertheless, is more difficult than is imagined. Especially are the words indicating a quicker or slower rate, such as *ritardando*, *accelerando*, and yet others, insufficient in their ordinary acceptance for the wonderfully shaded interpretation given by Beethoven." And we have Mr. Thayer's authority for it, that, in a conversation with Neate, Beethoven said: "I HAVE ALWAYS A PICTURE IN MY MIND WHEN COMPOSING AND I WORK TO THAT."

It is of course not impossible that Mozart may have produced his music under the influence of certain feelings or ideas; indeed, it is hardly possible to think otherwise when one hears his *best* works. But Mozart seems either to have been unconscious of this or to have regarded it as a matter that would take care of itself.

Haydn is more legitimately the forerunner of Beethoven in this respect. We read that, when about to compose, he imagined a little romance which might furnish him with musical sentiments and colours; and, further, that when disposed to tenderness and melancholy he noted down themes for adagios and andantes, and when in good spirits, subjects for airs and minuets.

If we take more recent composers we have our hands full at once: Schumann, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Liszt, and many others must be included among those who meant their music to convey something more than vague impressions of the sublime, the beautiful, the graceful, or the pretty.

"Schumann," says Reissmann, in his life of that composer, "never regarded music otherwise than as the art of representing those things that stirred his soul. He tried to give us towns, names, persons, and individual experiences." But a quotation from the master himself will give us an even clearer indication of his idea of music. He says: "Music commenced as the simple expression of joy and sorrow (major and minor). The ill-educated man can scarcely believe that it possesses the power of expressing particular passions, and therefore it is difficult for him to comprehend the more individual masters such as Beethoven and Schubert. We have learned to express the finer shades of feeling by penetrating more deeply into the mysteries of harmony." Hear, too, what Rubinstein says: "I am convinced that every composer writes not merely notes in a given key, a given *tempo*, and given rhythm, but, on the contrary, encloses a mood of the soul, that is, a programme, in his composition, in the rational hope that the interpreter and hearer may apprehend it."

We will now, if you please, ignore altogether the difference between unconscious and conscious composers, and use the word "Intention" *faute de mieux*, to designate—first, that

musical effect which the composer had in his mind whilst or before writing, and which he wishes his music to produce when performed; second, that feeling or idea (when it exists) which was the cause of the music; and some part at least of which it may be supposed the music will convey to suitably practised listeners, *if properly performed*.

To deal first with the purely musical effects. In ancient times the composer of a ditty was at the same time the singer of it, and in the East there is reason to suppose that he would have considered himself disgraced if he had sung it twice in the same way. If it attained to anything like popularity it spread over the land, and was gradually so transformed that its own father would probably not have recognised it. It had become the common property of the nation, and was a **FOLK-SONG**. Similarly with the music of the church: the Plain Chaunt melodies of the Antiphon and Hymn, both of which took their rhythm and time from the words to which they were set, and even the notes of which were not fixed with certainty, since (to quote Mr. Rockstro): "though the neumæ did, indeed, show at a glance the general conformation of the melody, they entirely failed to warn the singer whether the interval by which he was expected to ascend or descend was a tone or semitone, or even a second; third, fourth, or fifth." It is clear that all through the Middle Ages there could have been little question of the composer's "intention," since his office was simply to supply raw material for the singer to turn into living art. It is unnecessary to weary you with even a sketch of the stages through which notation passed—they are sufficiently familiar. I need only ask you to remember how the progress has all along been in the direction of definiteness; how, gradually, the *notes* were fixed, then their time-values indicated, and then the necessary accidentals (previously left to the singer) written in; how, finally, marks of expression were added and words used to indicate speed, these being supplemented later by metronome-marks. We have, indeed, so clipped the wings of the executant that we no longer expect extemporized cadenzas, either in an opera or in a concerto. The position of the creative artist has been slowly but surely rising in dignity and importance; and in proportion as this has been the case so has the responsibility of the performer increased. As Miss Frances Power Cobbe has very beautifully said, the performer "is the Aaron who must give forth to the chosen race the prophecies which Moses has received but cannot utter."

One of the most eminent of Italian singing-masters complained to me the other day that the change of which we have been speaking no longer made it necessary for the singer to use his or her inventive power. The remark of

course applies with equal strength to the instrumental performer. But it seems to me that the sympathy and insight, the self-repression, and the general culture necessary to enable a performer to convey to his hearers the thoughts of another and greater mind, with only a *minimum* admixture of his own, imply a higher and a worthier order of intellect than that which, possessing a certain facility of invention, simply allows the impulse of the moment to rule.

The degree in which it is incumbent on a performer to be faithful to the composer's intention is not, however, always the same. It is obvious that in the old days composers left a great deal to the performer. The system of "Figured Bass," for instance, shows how slight an importance composers attached to the literal reproduction of their own musical imaginings. And the great paucity of expression-marks in the works of Bach, Mozart, and others supplies similar evidence.

It is plain that the most earnest worshipper of his composer's intention will, if he confine himself to a strict obedience to *the text*, often derive therefrom more of the letter which killeth than of the spirit which giveth life.

There are two different schools of thought (if they may be so dignified) on this question of fidelity to the composer's intention.

Rubinstein said to a pupil: "Do I want *your* rendering of Bach, Tausig's of Chopin, or Mr. Bülow's of Beethoven? Not a bit of it. I want Bach, I want Beethoven, I want Chopin as they give themselves to us. They are good enough for me; for my pupils they must be good enough too."

That represents one view.

The other I cannot do better than put to you in the words of the Rev. P. T. Forsyth; I quote from that excellent book of his (which deserves to be more widely known) called "Religion in recent art." He says: "We shall never get the true taste for art afloat till we can set people free from the paralysing fear of going a jot beyond the direct and immediate consciousness of the artist at his work." I may mention that this view is taken also by Mr. Oscar Wilde, and many others. Mr. Wilde has put it in this way: "The beauty of the visible arts is, as the beauty of music, *impressive* primarily, and it may be marred, and often indeed is so, by any excess of intellectual intention on the part of the artist. For when the work is finished it has, as it were, an independent life of its own, and may deliver a message far other than that which was put into its lips to say."

The wish expressed by Rubinstein, who wants Bach as Bach gave himself to us, has this grave drawback—it cannot be granted. Of course, if he refers only to the notes, we can oblige him; but if any one really thinks that power to play the correct notes qualifies one as an interpreter of Bach—

why, he must be allowed to think so, that is all! It is true that even in these days Bach is often played with an almost entire absence of expression, or light and shade, and hated accordingly; but we cannot suppose Rubinstein (of all people) to wish Bach to be so played, and as he must very well know that no two players are agreed as to the speed or phrasing of, for instance, the Forty-eight, one would like to ask, how we are to get Bach "as he gave himself to us," with the certainty that we *are* getting him as he gave himself to us? The vendors of a famous starch, some years ago, used to advertise, "Ask for so and so's patent starch." After a time they found it necessary to add, "See that you get it."

I fear almost to tread the field on which but a few short months ago two heroes fought so fiercely on the subject of "additional accompaniments," but I trust that some one will touch upon this branch of the subject presently.

To me, I confess, it seems that tampering with the instrumentation of a master is allowable only when such interference leads to the better presentation—the more complete revelation of his thought to those for whose edification the change is made. If, by reason of the inevitable modifications effected by time, certain features in an old masterpiece sound odd and grotesque, and stultify or imperil the effect of higher qualities, are we not justified in removing them?

Let Tennyson answer:—

"He loves the present and the past
Who lops the mouldered branch away."

Then there is of course the debated legitimacy of transcriptions or performances on instruments of one kind, of works written for instruments of another, a practice in which even the greatest performers, as well as composers—from Bach to Liszt—have indulged. I hope that this too will be discussed.

With regard now to the feeling or idea which preceded the birth of the music, and of which we had an example in Beethoven's remark to Neate, "I always have a picture in my mind when composing."

It is evident that music cannot paint "pictures."

Music imitates: (1) certain of the characteristics by which emotions reveal themselves to our consciousness—either inwardly, as felt by ourselves; or outwardly, as inferred from sounds and signs (gestures and so on) made by others. We regard it, therefore, as "expressing" the emotion or emotions of its composer.

It imitates also (2) certain characteristics of the movements of things or living beings, or of the effects upon our sensations or perceptions of such objects even when they are not in motion; and *may*, therefore, bring to our minds (by

suggestion, and by suggestion *only*) notions of the objects themselves.

And it may of course imitate (3) the pitch, the intensity, the *timbre*, and the rhythm of all kinds of natural sounds; by this means also bringing to the mind's eye recollections of *things seen* in connection with *sounds heard*.

But no picture in the literal sense, that is to say, no visual image of any kind can be conveyed by music from one mind to another. The "pictures" we derive from music are subjective. "Music," says Dr. Crotch, "has been called the language of nature, but it is a very imperfect language; it is all adjectives and no substantives. . . . It may speak of something serene, joyous, wild, tender, grave, melancholy, troubled, agitated, or pathetic, but without words lend their aid we remain ignorant what this thing may be."

Bombet words his statement concerning Haydn's method of composing with great intelligence: "He imagined a little romance *which might furnish him with sentiments and colours*." Clearly the writer was aware that these were the only features of the "little romance" that could be expressed by means of music.

There are, however, many who will not admit that music can convey, with any degree of definiteness or certainty, even the limited number of impressions I have here attempted to describe. For such persons, of course, the "poetic basis" of music has no interest. The "composer's intention" with them means his *musical* intention, nothing more; and even this they are often content to regard as sufficiently if not fully expressed by the ordinary musical notation. On this head, too, I hope that something may be said.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I shall ask you to take up and unravel the tangled skein I have laid before you. If, afterwards, I am able to work the threads into a pattern of reasonable consistency, I shall esteem myself fortunate indeed.

DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Ladies and gentlemen, we are all agreed that Mr. Jacques deserves our cordial thanks for so interesting and instructive a paper. It affords much food for reflection, and must have taken a considerable amount of time and trouble to prepare. It could have been strung together by no mere scissors-cutting, and in your behalf, therefore, I beg to tender our most grateful thanks to Mr. Jacques. It is always very difficult, in the case of a paper of this kind, dealing with deep subjects, to make any critical remarks immediately following its reading. One requires not only to read, but to think it over. But I must say that Mozart's letter, which was read, was extremely interesting, particularly at a time like this, when the whole world has been celebrating the centenary of the death of that extraordinary man. It only proves what an in-born genius he was: his manner of dealing with music was quite unlike that of any musician who preceded or followed him. What he did was because he could not help it. He commenced, as you know, writing symphonies here in London, when he resided with his father in Pimlico; then but eight years of age he completed three symphonies, and I do not think that any kind of composer's intention could have accomplished that. It is also interesting to have the thoughts brought before us of Beethoven, whose principle appears to have been indomitable hard work. Undoubtedly his genius was great; but he seems to have felt the necessity for constant and steady application. That we learn from his sketch-books. But when one reads the stories which are told of him, I am somewhat sceptical, and I cannot believe, although Beethoven is reported to have said he always had a picture before him, that that could have been the case. I should much prefer to think that he wrote music because he could not help it. And again, when we come to the performing artist depicting something he has never seen, it must be obvious that the thing is impossible. Admitting that Beethoven had a picture in his mind's eye, how could the performers possibly reproduce it, when Beethoven himself, conducting his own symphony, deaf at the time, was beating out of accent entirely? I think it is one of the glories of music that, after all, the artist, whether he be instrumental or vocal, should have some part—if he have any talent or genius at all—in the exposition of the beautiful thing which may have been prepared for him. It seems to me that the composer's work lies, as it were, like a picture in simple black and white, and that the artist who sings or plays has to give it its colouring;

hence, I am inclined to differ from Rubinstein. I do not think that it would be at all a desirable thing that all executive artists conceived and delivered the message which was given to them in the same manner. When listening to the reading of the Scriptures I have often thought what delight there was in the varied readings one hears in church. One man, by his peculiar accent on a particular part of the sentence, brings out absolutely a new idea, something not thought of before. Surely in music—that glorious art—we, too, should be allowed the same freedom and the same privilege. All one can wish for is, that the composer should not be distorted, parodied, or travestied in any way; but when it comes to the mere colouring of the subject, then it is a question of taste, and I think it is very important that this should be left to the executant.

Mr. Jacques has touched upon one or two other matters very lightly; indeed, he seemed rather to avoid the question of additional accompaniments. I confess, for my own part—purist as I am—and loving to see old works reproduced as the composer left them, I am not at all of the opinion that they should always be produced without additional accompaniments. It is quite impossible to reproduce the surroundings in which they were first performed instrumentally or vocally; and with regard to the latter, though one hears a great deal about “modern vocalism,” and that the art of singing is dying out, I am bound to say that I do not believe it. I have frequent opportunities of examining old instruction books, and I can safely say that in almost every case the rules given for breath-taking are simply atrocious. In modern days we have much advanced in that respect, and we have also improved in the instrumental art. For instance, in the string department, although we may have super-added some vulgarities, yet I must say that my experience leads me to believe that the performing of music of the past was no better than that of the present. In matters of phrasing and kindred things, I think that vocalists and instrumentalists are better now than they were in days gone by. For that reason I feel very strongly that it would be absurd to try and tie down the performer to some prescribed method, presumably the intention of the composer. It is quite impossible for us to know what that intention was. Again, it seems to me that composers are often credited with more conservative intentions than they actually possessed, and would disclose were they amongst us now. A discussion took place some little time ago about the transposition of composers' keys, and a great fuss was made over the matter. I did not take any part in that discussion for the simple reason that my mind was not made up. I have, however, gone into the subject since, and find that the old masters—

Handel, for instance—were extremely gratified to get their works performed anyhow, utterly indifferent in what key they were played so long as they were produced. All the early composers were glad enough to transpose their pieces from one key to another. The composers naturally desired the best performance; but they were more anxious that their works should be performed.

Mr. J. S. SHEDLOCK.—Mr. Jacques spoke of Beethoven having a programme or an intention, and mentioned Haydn as the forerunner of Beethoven. I quite agree in that; but has he fallen back quite far enough? I think Mr. Jacques draws the line somewhat too sharply when he says that we do not know enough of what the older composers meant. We do know, for instance, that the church cantatas of Bach are full of what we call "programme music." There is a religious, romantic spirit running through them. Mr. Jacques also went on to say that composers now expressed themselves in a much more definite manner, and he spoke about Bach and Handel as being careless or indifferent as to the accompaniment. My own opinion is that they merely jotted down the figure heads, which, I take it, was the custom of the period, due, by no means, to indifference. In the case of Bach, who wrote his cantatas for St. Thomas's church in Leipzig, he superintended their preparation himself, and rehearsed them, as it were, by word of mouth; so that carelessness or indifference can hardly be ascribed to him. As to the question of following the intentions of the composer—*i.e.*, with reference to the reading, the query presents itself: "Have composers at all times recorded exactly what their intentions were?" It is my opinion that there are one or two instances in which we clearly see that they were unable to do so, as, for instance, in the case of Schubert's songs. Many say that he had the orchestra in his mind while writing his accompaniments, and composers such as Liszt or Brahms have arranged some of them for the orchestra. So that, if we follow the paper, we don't always get the intentions of the composer, because they have not been properly recorded. I quite agree that we ought not to have Chopin always rendered as Chopin would have rendered his music, or as Beethoven would have done. It would become monotonous in the end. The lecturer avoided the difficulty somewhat. He spoke about a minimum of individuality, and it is just that question of individuality which is so perplexing. If there be not enough of it, we call it a reading without any colour; or, on the other hand, if there be too much, we say that the interpreter is interfering with the composer's intentions.

Mr. WESCHÉ.—May I venture to submit, Mr. Chairman, that the "composer's idea" is to produce a work of art.

Now a work of art has been called the exposition or amplification of one idea. Take the composition of a fugue. The subject comes to the composer (or ought to come to the composer) as an inspiration or original thought, and it may be that his individuality has a better chance of expression there than in the progress of the work, where his course is in some degree laid out for him. In the case of fugue writers it is difficult, with one exception, to name one who has been able to express an abstract idea in his fugue; but in Bach you find many cases in which one can define the feeling produced as one of joy, sadness, playfulness, or grandeur, so that there is undoubtedly a musical expression. A composer to arrive at that point must have a tremendous mastery of his subject; a comparison with a poet using difficult forms of versification as hexameters suggests itself. Take the idea of a composer attempting serious work; having found his idea (and above all it is here that his inspiration comes in) it then becomes the turn of the artist. In the working out all must flow from the original idea, developments and beautiful harmonies—variety of tone and colour—form and orchestral effect, all tend to make the finished work of art, the glorification of the “one” idea. Even in the fantasias of the great masters you will find this leading idea still traceable. It is a curious thing that Beethoven's counterpoint has been often attacked, and we know that Schubert at the time of his death, and after having written his immortal works, was taking lessons in the same art—this with reference to Wagner's boast of having mastered his language; art is long and life is short—it is denied to even the greatest to master everything. Mendelssohn was sometimes remarkably spontaneous when writing in difficult forms; take, for instance, the first Organ Sonata—the first movement might pass on a first hearing for an improvisation, but the music is full of design and construction, and as much a piece of workmanship as the most elaborate fugue. We have a remarkable light on the subject of the composer's intention in the two “Leonora” Overtures of Beethoven, and the condensation of the second is a most valuable hint to composers.

Dr. FRED. J. TOMKINS.—I am sure that we have all been interested and instructed by Mr. Jacques' able paper; and yet it contains one or two points upon which I beg leave to differ with him, and also with our esteemed Chairman. My memory, in regard to music, though it is not my occupation in life, goes far back, and I feel quite certain that in the earlier years of this century the intention of the composer was so far departed from that if music were performed to-day as it was in my boyhood, the performers would be hissed off the orchestra. I remember, sir, long before the formation of the Sacred Harmonic Society, listening to the performance of

"Liberty," sung by Signor Sapio, and accompanied by that great cello player, Mr. Lindley. It would be utterly impossible to induce a singer to sing that music as it was rendered on that occasion. I remember my father describing to me the singing of Braham and Incledon, at Vauxhall Gardens, on the 31st December, 1799, and although the music itself was simple and popular, yet the runs, the trills, and cadences were so wonderful that they were listened to patiently for a period of several minutes. That was the way English music was performed in those early days. I venture, with all respect, to differ from you, Mr. Chairman, as to the interpretation given in the reading of the Scriptures. No doubt it is quite true that a very different reading is sometimes given, not only in the reading, but in the expounding of the Bible. My contention is this: that the meaning of the Bible is the Bible, and the meaning of the composer, of Beethoven and Handel, and of all those great masters, is what we should strive to interpret and to understand. I do not want to have an interpretation of Handel different to what he intended. We know there is great scope in the matter of accompaniment, and we know also that every cathedral and church has its traditional style of rendering the older anthems. I often heard the introductions by our friend, Dr. Hopkins, in the Temple Church. But then one understands that these were not written but belong to tradition, or were played from a figured bass. One cannot help thinking that in the writings of Mozart there is very much more than mere intention. There is a genius, a divine inspiration of music, which seems to transcend intention. Mozart, with his wonderful power, "untwists all the cords that tie the hidden soul of harmony." Take, as an illustration, the grand Overture of "Don Giovanni"; is there not something more than intention?—there is inspiration and genius. I should have liked Mr. Jacques to have compared the intention of Wagner, for instance, with the intentions of the more classical musicians, such as Mozart; and as he has told us so well something of the past, I should like to learn from him something about the future. Now I have a theory that no one can listen to the music of Mozart, as, for instance, to the grand overture to which I have alluded, without being impressed with the extraordinary genius of that composer, and with his wonderful combination of melodies. On the other hand, no one who has studied Wagner can help feeling that his inspiration for music—I do not say his *intention*—was by no means equal to that of Mozart. He certainly fathomed the depths of musical science far deeper than most men. I do, however, look forward to the day when we shall have the sublime intention of Wagner combined with the perfect melody, harmony, and instrumentation of Mozart. The

music of the present is as yet in an early epoch of its existence, and we may look forward to the time when some great musician shall rise up to combine the penetration and intention of the one with the inspiration of the other.

Miss OLIVERIA PRESCOTT.—There is one thing I must differ from, though it is said by no less a master than Wagner. I do not believe that music is a foreign language to us. It is our mother tongue. We may, perhaps, be a little deficient in a knowledge of the grammar, the rules of composition, and various other things; but, for all that, it is our mother tongue. This will explain how it became easy for a man like Mozart to compose correctly without having learned it. It was as natural to him as his own language.

Mr. GILBERT WEBB.—I think this is a most important subject, especially in these days of sensationalism and exaggerated versions; and the inference to be drawn from what we have heard to-night is that it is more than ever the duty of every responsible executant to study the composer, his life and manner of thought, the age in which he lived, the characteristics of the man, and, in fact, every little item which surrounded him. It is only in that way that we have a chance of rendering music as it should be reproduced—*i.e.*, with reference to the period in which it was composed, and to the possible thoughts and objects which the composer had in mind at the time he wrote. I think there must have been some such object in every composer's mind.

Mr. NEWMAN.—It seems to me a mistake to compare pictorial artists to composers, because, at any rate in these days, painters are their own exponents, while, in the case of composers, the illustration of their ideas is left to the executant. A better parallel will be found in the case of an architect. He depends upon the builder and the workmen as the composer depends upon the executant.

Mr. SOUTHGATE.—I am afraid I shall commence by uttering some frightful heresy. What does it matter about "the intentions of the composer" at all? After all, the intention of the composer is conveyed to us through the medium he has put his thought in, whether it be the orchestra or the pianoforte. I will ask you to remember what means Bach and Handel had at their disposal. Mr. Jacques referred to the former's Preludes and Fugues. These were written for the clavichord, and the amount of expression which can be got out of that instrument, if not absolutely *nil*, is nearly so. If then he gave us his intention on the clavichord, surely we have very much improved on that by the modern pianoforte! Although the interpreter of a certain work may possibly assert his own individuality unduly, it is quite possible that thereby we get a much more poetic idea than the composer himself entertained. Take, for instance, Handel's "Messiah." In his time the

string family did not have the same importance it has now. To a great extent the accompaniments now allotted to the violins, &c., were given to the oboes and bassoons. I will ask whether you could listen to "The Messiah" being delivered in that way—*i.e.*, the way in which the composer left it? Let us go a little farther. Mozart comes, and he "improved"—I use the word advisedly—"The Messiah" very much indeed. Not only does he alter the accompaniments, but he gives us a great deal more than Handel ever conceived. And when we contemplate Mozart's accompaniments we find that they have become so much a part of "The Messiah," and so embedded in our minds, that we could not dispense with them. If Handel had a certain intention, and could be present at a performance of "The Messiah" now, what would he say of Mozart's accompaniments? Naturally that that was not his intention at all! The intention of the composer must be gauged by the medium through which it is conveyed to us. When it is distinctly expressed in his programme, undoubtedly we derive much more pleasure from the music. Let me give you one example—*viz.*, that very beautiful and delightful Overture of Sterndale Bennett, "Paradise and the Peri." I think the programme which he attaches to the music very much increases our delight. You see the intention of the composer all the way through, and by that means you not only hear the music, but also realise what was passing through his mind, what he wanted to represent, and so the better appreciate what he puts before us with such great ability.

MR. A. TRICKETT.—My experience teaches me that the same organ music, played by the same organist, and on the same organ, often has a different and the most opposite effect. I have noticed that nothing clears a church quicker than one of Bach's fugues. On the other hand, I have also remarked that when that same fugue has been introduced into the programme of an organ recital, it has frequently proved the most attractive and interesting feature of the entertainment, and—to the same people. The only clue I can get for a good performance of Bach's organ music is to study it thoroughly, give an open reading, and take the consequences.

THE CHAIRMAN.—As to "O Liberty," I, too, have heard Linley, and that shake of his, at the commencement, on the A, which lasted several minutes, and believe that it came to him by tradition. I should be sorry to subscribe to the heresy that Beethoven was simply mechanical in his work, or that he could not write counterpoint. My own belief is that he was one of the greatest contrapuntists. His orchestral works are marvellous in stupendous genius and in the facility with which he uses counterpoint. Then as to Bach's fugues and pictures; someone said just now that

they could not possibly produce any pictorial reminiscence. Surely this is not so. Cannot you, yourselves musicians, realise, when you hear a certain piece performed, which has no words, no title, nothing whatever to distinguish it, that it recalls to your minds some event which occurred ten, nay fifteen years ago, some sorrow, grief, or joy? I, myself, cannot listen to these preludes without their bringing back to my mind, now a painful and again very pleasant memories. These are my pictures. Of course they could not recall the same pictures to anyone else, though they were played never so many times. Finally, I would say Mozart was the greatest musician who ever lived, and Beethoven stands on the same pedestal.

Mr. JACQUES.—I have been much interested in the many admirable and instructive remarks that have been made; but before I attempt to deal with any of them, let me correct one or two slight errors which have arisen, and from which I gather I have been misunderstood. For instance, I certainly had no intention whatever of placing Beethoven below Mozart because of the evidence that he "worked" more at his themes after writing them down. I simply instanced it as a curious fact which, in the case of any other man, might have been ascribed to want of genius. I read a passage from Mr. Rockstro pointing out that the two methods were not so different as they seemed to be. One thought the thing out in his head, while the other worked it out on paper. Mozart, however, was, I think, more unconscious than Beethoven. I threw out a hint—and I am sorry that it was not taken up—that probably Beethoven had a more definite poetical intention (as distinguished from musical intention) than Mozart. I think we may say, with perfect safety, that Beethoven's music is more dramatic and has more "meaning" than Mozart's. I am not sure that Mozart had any at all when writing *instrumental* music. It is possible, of course; but we have no evidence on the point. Mr. Wesché spoke about the "working out" of a theme. A piece of music, if we regard it apart from its expressiveness, is a pattern woven out of one, two, or more designs. You can have a fugue woven out of one design in the same way that a wall-paper may be made from one leading figure; or, in the same way, a characteristic style of design may appear in every part of a temple. But that is purely the plastic aspect of the matter. No doubt it is possible for a man to possess the musical gift in a marked degree without necessarily making use of it to express anything beyond. Such people we call absolute musicians. It is very doubtful whether the very great musicians of modern times have, any of them, composed music so exclusively musical as that. I think the early composers did. If we go back to the early

Flemish school, for instance, it seems to us that they had no other intention than to produce a euphonious "pattern," though that isn't a thing we can prove. It was remarked that music is as yet practically in its infancy. I do not think that is altogether the case as regards its technique, though, in the matter of expressive power, I certainly think it true. Miss Prescott spoke of music as our mother tongue. That is a very suggestive remark. I, myself, think that we have allowed that tongue to die out, that it has become to many of us a dead language. I agree with Mr. Webb that it is the duty of the performer to study the life and times of the composer if he would give us anything like his intention, and I agree entirely with Mr. Southgate that, the intention of the composer, as merely put down on paper, cannot be adhered to. It is quite obvious that those who stickle for literal adherence to the text, ask not only what is impossible, but what, if it were possible, would be hideous. We do not want Handel's works played as he left them. The proportions of his orchestra would give us rather an archæological than an artistic impression. Mr. Cummings' remark about the fugue bringing all sorts of reminiscences to his mind was interesting, though somewhat beside the question. Such associations must, of course, be personal to everyone; the music in these cases does not do anything but just recall accidental associations. The question of how much such music is intended to express or is capable of expressing is an entirely separate matter.