Review

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enthusiastic lover of nature. The greater part of the book is perforce devoted to criticisms and analyses of his compositions and his *modus operandi* in bringing them into existence. As a writer on musical subjects, M. Debussy is gifted with an incisive style. For two years, 1901-02, he was music critic on the *Revue Blanche*, and in 1903 he contributed in the same capacity to the columns of *Gil Blas*. In this connection his remarks on Wagner's 'Ring,' which we give on page 233, are certainly entertaining. If one is unable to agree with all the deductions which Mrs. Liebich has so well expressed in her book, the little volume is an interesting contribution to musical literature; it should certainly find many readers by reason of the light it throws on the life-work of one of the most modern of modernists in music.

The Threshold of Music. By William Wallace.
[Macmillan & Co., Ltd.]

This book, to quote its sub-title, is 'An enquiry into the development of the musical sense.' In his preface, the author remarks that music has 'the advantage of supplying us with documents which demonstrate, step by step, the highest effort of which the musical sense was capable at definite points in its evolution.' Our author begins his survey at an early period, but in order to see his way of tracing the development of the art, let us start with Bach. We are told that although he 'was able to assure himself that a hitherto uncharted world of sound lay beyond the horizon, he hesitated to go in search of it.' To speak of the great old master as 'hesitating' is, to say the least of it, peculiar. Kuhnau set before him striking examples of a comparatively new art, and Bach, evidently attracted by it, wrote two pieces of a 'programme' character; but after that there was no hesitation; he decided not to work on such lines. As to 'the uncharted world of sound,' he went boldly in search of it, and what he discovered still renders his music powerful. Of Haydn and Mozart we read that it was 'their function to build the house in order that others might shelter in it and then furnish it according to their needs.' This statement places these great masters about on a level with Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who, although a highly-gifted musician, was not a genius. Again, of Mozart we are told that 'in his instrumental compositions there is not a vestige of a sign—saving in one, or perhaps two chamber works—that he realized the depth and magnitude of man's estate.' Surely such an opinion needs no comment! Beethoven is described as 'the first to suggest the relation of music to other mental states,' a statement which is certainly open to question. The new aspect of art, which Beethoven only 'suggested,' came into existence, so we read, 'after 1830.' Of Wagner we are informed that 'Mozart, Beethoven, Weber and Meyerbeer all suggested to him the means of distinction.' The author stops at Wagner. The predecessors of the Bayreuth master are represented as important stages in the development of the Art. But even when we have arrived at Wagner, as the title of the volume indicates we are still only on the 'threshold.' At present the author feels 'we are all groping in a mist.' This would indeed seem to point to a state of degeneration rather than to one of development.

Studies of the 18th century in Italy. By Vernon Lee.
Second edition, illustrated; with a new preface.
[T. Fisher Unwin.]

More than twenty-five years have passed since 'Vernon Lee' published her 'Studies.' She has now re-issued them as they originally appeared, but enriched with a large number of interesting and excellent illustrations, selected by Dr. Guido Biagi, of the Laurentian Library, Florence, which greatly enhance the attractiveness of the volume. A further and no less important addition is a new preface devoted to music. In this 'Retrospective Chapter,' as it is called, the fluent pen of the authoress seeks to prove that 'throughout the 18th century, and [to the best of her knowledge] throughout the 17th, the evolution of the musical phrase, the evolution of what I should like to call *melodic form*, took place in Italy.' She graphically describes

the difference between the conditions of 18th century musical life in Germany and Italy—the ecclesiastical environment of one country and the operatic atmosphere of the other—the contrast between 'Teutonic earnestness' and 'Latin levity.' 'Bach can out-Bach himself in his *Thomas Kirche*,' she says, 'he is playing and composing for the Eternities above, not for the citizens of Leipzig below. But the Italian maestro is not composing for Eternities above. The only *above* for him, are those high regions of the theatre where lazzaroni and gondoliers are apt to fling orange peel and over-ripe tomatoes among hideous howls and cat-calls. But the boxes are even worse, where the patricians and fine ladies sit playing cards between the chief airs, and keeping up an offensive chatter when the music bores them. . . . These are the persons, all too human and gifted with human, nay, animal modes of expression, whom the Italian composer feels listening to his music, as he sits—and sits with terror, perhaps—directing at his harpsichord, watching for the first hiss and howl that is to sweep his opera off the stage.'

Later on 'Vernon Lee' refers to the 'necessity' of the 18th century Italian composer 'being intelligible to an audience which was only imperfectly musical and very imperfectly attentive.' She adds: 'It meant clearness of intention, concision, definiteness of tonality, rhythm, accent, and interval; definiteness of harmonic effect in the accompaniments and definiteness in the employment of separate instruments; definite distribution of interest between voices and orchestra, definite fitting on to words, definite expression and dramatic effect; and, more important, perhaps, than everything else save the establishment of well-marked tonality and rhythm, it meant that precision of phrase, that possibility of breaking up into small, varying, but intelligent phrases and groups of phrases, without which concerted music in the modern sense (as distinguished from music based on counterpoint) could never have come into existence.' These 'definite' conditions are in no less measure—nay, in a greater degree—applicable to much 20th century creative music. The volume would make an agreeable present by reason of its varied contents and handsome appearance.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

History of the Edinburgh Choral Union. By James Waddell. Illustrated. Pp. xii. + 320; 3s. 6d. (Printed for the Society by T. & A. Constable.) For review see p. 233.

Brahms. By H. C. Colles. Pp. x. + 168; 2s. 6d. net (John Lane.)

Mozart: the story of his life as man and artist. By Victor Wilder, translated by L. Liebich. 2 vols. Pp. xvi. + 464; 10s. (William Reeves.)

Grieg. By E. Markham Lee. Pp. 80; 1s. net. (George Bell & Sons.)

Form in music: with special reference to the designs of instrumental music. By Stewart Macpherson. Pp. xii. + 273; 4s. 6d. (Joseph Williams, Ltd.)

London Churches, Ancient and Modern. By T. Francis Bumpus. Two volumes. Illustrated. Pp. 422 + 402; 6s. each net. (T. Werner Laurie.)

Studies in musical education, history, and æsthetics. Second series. A volume of 284 pages, containing the papers and proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association of America at its twenty-ninth annual meeting held at Columbia University, New York City, December 27-31, 1907. Published by the Association.

Report of the Librarian of Congress and Report of the Superintendent of the Library building and grounds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1907. Pp. 167. (Washington, Government Printing Office.)

The committee of the Patron's Fund have made grants towards the cost of publication of the following works: Four English Ballets, by Mr. Felix Swinestead; 'The Abbot' (the Dublin Prize Cantata), by Mr. Geoffrey Palmer; and four Rossetti Sonnets, by Mr. Hubert Bath. Grants have also been made to Mr. T. F. Dunhill (second donation) towards the expenses of his chamber concerts of British music, and Miss Hilda Lett (violinist) for her further studies abroad.