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Author(s): Fr. Niecks

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 25, No. 501 (Nov. 1, 1884), pp. 625-629

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3356220>

Accessed: 13-12-2015 18:21 UTC

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THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR.

NOVEMBER 1, 1884.

MODERN SONG WRITERS.

II.—FRANZ LISZT.

BY FR. NIECKS.

THE name of Franz Liszt suggests to most people in the first place the phenomenal pianist, and only in the second place the composer. And, as a composer, the master is thought of first as a writer of pianoforte pieces, then as a writer of symphonic poems, next as a writer of oratorios and masses, and only lastly, if at all, as a writer of songs. This at least is the case in this country, where Liszt is little studied and adversely criticised, and consequently rarely heard, and hardly ever understood. Or should I have said, Liszt is rarely heard, and hardly ever understood, and consequently little studied and adversely criticised? England, however, does not stand alone in her inappreciativeness. Almost every European country neglects Liszt as much. Italy and Spain are closed to him,* and France shows no sympathy. Germany is an exception, though no brilliant one, for there, too, the composer Liszt does not get his due, at least not in all places. How he fares in his native country I do not know. Will this always be so, or is there any likelihood of a change in the attitude of the public? I am inclined to think that we shall see before long as complete a veering round of popular opinion in the case of Liszt as that which within the last fourteen years we have witnessed in the case of Berlioz. When this comes to pass, the Hungarian, like the French master, will for a time be as much blindly over-rated and frantically lauded as he was before blindly under-rated and frantically abused. And the critics—the blind that lead the blind—will again forget the past, swallow their own words—opinions, judgments, prophecies, and all—and look as infallible as ever. What with the misrepresentations of prejudiced critics, and the fooleries of the manufacturers of would-be poetical magazine articles, Liszt has become a myth in his lifetime. He is represented on the one hand as a being possessed of all the most precious, bodily and mental, natural and supernatural, qualities, as an angel of light, a god; and, on the other hand, as the very opposite of this. Although both portraitures are false, there is nevertheless more truth in the former than in the latter. The fact is, a man and artist like Liszt cannot be easily gauged. In examining so unique a phenomenon it is difficult to maintain the necessary objectivity and equanimity of mind—to avoid being unduly attracted or repelled by one or the other quality, by one or the other phase. We of the present day have no means, except by his pianoforte compositions, to judge Liszt as a pianist. But happily there is no need for a judgment on that point, it has long been given unanimously; friends and enemies are agreed that he stands alone, unapproached and unapproachable; the Paganini of the pianoforte, but a Paganini with intellectual powers which the Italian violinist could not boast. It is otherwise with Liszt, the composer. So few of his important orchestral and choral works are performed, and these few so unfrequently, that to most of us the master is all but a complete stranger. With regard to Liszt, the man, we are in a better position to judge.

* This, of course, is not to be taken literally; for in these two countries, especially in Italy, works of his may occasionally, though very rarely, be heard.

The master still dwells with us, and does not grudge his society; and what is even more valuable, he has furnished in his literary writings a faithful picture of his character and its development. These writings, which till lately had lain for the most part buried in the pages of the *Gazette Musicale*, are now made more easily accessible by L. Ramann's* collection and translation (from French into German), published by Breitkopf and Härtel, of Leipzig. They set forth strikingly the poetic bent, the passionate force, the piquant intellectuality, the universal sympathy, and the amiable disposition, of his nature. And they indicate also certain defects and a want of balance in the various faculties and tendencies: a preponderance of imagination over logic, of mobility over persistence; a predilection for colour, variety, and picturesqueness, even to the neglect of form, unity, and beauty.

The subject of this essay is "Liszt as a songwriter," but were I to limit my remarks strictly to his songs I should certainly fail to do justice to my theme. To prevent the reader from regarding my allusions to other compositions and my biographical notes as superfluities, I shall state the reasons which determine me to take the proposed course. My reasons are two: (1) With every noteworthy artist, and with none more than with Liszt, art and life are inseparable, the one being but an emanation from and manifestation of the other. (2) The individual works of an artist can only be fully understood, are only seen in their true light, when viewed in connection with the totality of his achievements.

Franz Liszt was born at Raiding, in Hungary, on October 22, 1811. At an early age his musical talents manifested themselves—first by his ear and memory, and, when he began to practise the pianoforte, by his technical dexterity, *prima vista* reading, and power of improvisation. Before long the boy was able to play in public, and by a concert at Pressburg he made such an impression that six noblemen were induced to provide the means for the prosecution of his studies. Having thus secured to him an annual subsidy of 600 florins for six years, Adam Liszt, the father and teacher of Franz, who up to that time had been in the service of Prince Esterhazy, gave up his post so that he might entirely devote himself to the education of his son. In 1821 the latter and his parents set out for Vienna, where the young musician studied, till 1823, pianoforte playing under Czerny, and harmony and counterpoint under Salieri. During the latter part of his stay in the Austrian capital Liszt gave two concerts, at the second of which he played Hummel's B minor Concerto and improvised on a given theme. When the boy had ended his improvisation, somebody strode precipitately forward, and, stepping on the platform, kissed him. This somebody was Beethoven. From Vienna the Liszt family went to Paris, Franz giving concerts as they travelled along at Munich, Stuttgart, and Strassburg, exciting everywhere the greatest wonder and admiration. Here, they said, is a new Mozart! Adam Liszt expected that his son would be admitted as a pupil of the Paris conservatoire, which was indeed the object of their journey. Great was therefore their disappointment when, in spite of high recommendations, they were told that the regulations of the institution forbade the admission of foreigners. Being balked of this hope, Franz's further artistic training was limited to instruction in composition, which he received first from Paër and afterwards from Reicha.

The division of a man's life into periods, of an artist's works into styles, is generally a more or less arbitrary proceeding. In the case of Liszt, however,

* Fräulein Lina Ramann, the second volume of whose biography of the master is looked forward to with impatience by the musical world.

we find that his life and artistic career present a natural division into two parts distinctly separated and characterised. The first part comprehends his activity as a pianoforte virtuoso and composer of virtuosic pianoforte compositions; the second his activity as a teacher, conductor, and tone-poet; a writer of symphonic poems, oratorios, masses, and other sacred and secular choral works. The first period, the time of fermentation, of individual evolution, of mental and moral development and formation, extends from his arrival in Paris, in the middle of December, 1823, or rather from his father's death, in 1827—what precedes may be regarded as a *Vorschule*, a preparatory schooling, as training in contradistinction to education—to 1849, when, finally abandoning the life of a travelling virtuoso, he settled down at Weimar.

Liszt cannot but have learned much from his teachers, but it does not seem that he was markedly influenced by any one of them. This will hardly be wondered at, for, although they were men of talent and note, none of them was a man of genius nor possessed of a striking amount of originality. The real instructors of Liszt were Paganini, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and Berlioz. His transcriptions of Paganini's caprices, of Beethoven's symphonies, of Schubert's songs, Berlioz's "Symphonie fantastique," overture to "Les Francs-Juges," &c., have quite another significance than his fantasias on operatic airs. They are studies in the fullest and widest sense of the word. Chopin's works afforded no material for transcription, but they left their impress on many of Liszt's compositions and on his style generally. Even more potent in the making of the man than these musical influences were the religious, literary, and social ones, which may be summed up in the names of Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, George Sand, Lamennais, Saint-Simon, Enfantin, Fourier, and Ballanche. Nor should the most important, the personal influences, be overlooked. There are many to be found among the celebrities above named, of whom his friend George Sand calls for special mention, and to whom ought to be added his more than friend, the Comtesse d'Agoult, who subsequently became known in the literary world as Daniel Stern.* Liszt himself shall now describe to us this time of fermentation, this storm and stress period; none, of course, can know so well as himself what his experiences were, and few could better interpret them. I dwell on these matters, because I hold them to be indispensable if we wish to understand the man, and let me remind you once more that *l'artiste c'est l'homme*, an adaptation at least as true as its original, *le style c'est l'homme*, and certainly applicable to Liszt.

"You know that time of youth, the life-period from the fifteenth to the twenty-fifth year," writes Liszt at the end of May, 1838, whilst staying in Venice, to Lambert Massard, of Paris. "You know that then, more than at any other time, man surrenders himself to the outer world, and men, things, and places win the greatest influence over his imagination. Such a variety of things enter his heart, and dominated by the fate-like need of loving he gives up a part of his *I* to whatever he comes in contact with. At this time the young man, stupefied by the tumult of his own thoughts, has hardly begun to live, he as yet only strives for life. In him all is curiosity, desire, restless aspiration, ebb and flow of the most opposed volitions. Without a guiding thread he loses himself in the labyrinth of his still unregulated passions—the simple, easy, natural, makes him smile compassionately. He oversteps all bounds, is eager for obstacles,

despises both the good he could do and the feelings that could make him happy—he is pitifully tortured by the sting of youth.

"This time of consuming fever, dissipated strength, energetic and mad life-manifestation I have passed through on the soil of France. Here also lie the ashes of my father; here, on the sacred burial-ground, my first sorrow found its asylum. How could I but feel myself a child of a country where I had suffered and loved so much? How could I have dreamt that I had entered life in another? that in my veins flows the blood of another race? that my people lived elsewhere?

"A sad occurrence awakened suddenly the feeling that I thought extinguished, and which nevertheless only slumbered, anew in me. One morning I read at Venice, in a German newspaper, a detailed account of the misfortune which had befallen Pesth. This account called forth in me a real agitation. An extraordinary sympathy, a lively, irresistible need urged me to assist the many sufferers. . . .

"Through these inward agitations and feelings the sense of the word 'fatherland' was revealed to me. I transported myself suddenly back into the past, and found in my heart the treasures of the recollection of my childhood pure and untouched. A grand landscape spread out before my eyes. That was the well-known forest out of which sounded the huntsman's call; that was the river Danube rushing down over the rocks; that was the wide meadow-land on which pastured peaceful flocks in freedom; that was Hungary, the vigorous, fertile soil which generated such noble sons; that my home-land. 'And I also,' I exclaimed, in a fit of patriotism at which you may perhaps smile, 'I also belong to this ancient strong race; I also am a son of this sturdy, untamed nation, which surely is yet destined for better days.'"

We now discern without difficulty the prominent features of Liszt's personality: a bright poetic intellect and a warm heart, both easily impressionable and inflammable; a frame of mind and tendencies developed, if not engendered, by the French romanticism that reached its acme in 1830, and permeated religion, philosophy, and political economy, as much as literature; and, in addition to these, a strong, proud feeling of nationality. His early writings in the *Gazette Musicale* prove that Germany, too, with her art and literature, counted for something in his education; nay, in those days he even called himself a German;* still, as yet at least, this influence was decidedly secondary, and though in after years it became stronger, its potency, perhaps, never equalled that of the others.

Up to 1849, then, Liszt was chiefly a virtuoso and composer of virtuosic pianoforte pieces. But most of these pianoforte pieces—not a few of which may now be regarded as obsolete—have qualities of style and matter which distinguish them from the generality of this kind of composition. Indeed, as regards style Liszt's achievements were epoch-making, for he was the creator of what has been called the orchestral pianoforte style, the now prevailing style. Moreover, apart from his remarkable transcriptions of Schubert's songs, &c., he planned and executed works which presaged what he one day would be. There were schemes of Titanic orchestral works; but also finished compositions of great beauty and lasting value—for instance, the "Années de Pèlerinage," some of which he wrote as early as 1835–1836. This was the year in which the clearing process began, and the first

* At least, I noticed him doing so on one or two occasions; but, although I remember being struck by the fact, I do not remember with certainty whether it was in the *Gazette Musicale* or in unpublished private letters. That it was during the time of his residence in Paris I am certain.

* Although artistically she was more influenced than influencing.

indubitable signs of his poetic endowment made their appearance. But I must say no more of this first period of Liszt's career. It is time that I should speak of the songs, which belong to the second period.

With a few unimportant exceptions—"Tre Sonetti di Pretrarca," "Angiolin dal biondo crin," &c.—Liszt's songs were composed since his settlement in 1849 at Weimar, being, therefore, contemporaneous with his great orchestral and choral works. The number of his songs is very considerable. The German collection (Franz Liszt's "Gesammelte Lieder"—Leipzig: C. F. Kahnt) contains as many as fifty-seven, and these are not all. Kistner, for instance, has published three songs for a soprano voice ("Hohe Liebe," "Gestorben war ich," "O Lieb' O Lieb'!"), and a single song (Die Macht der Musik); and then there is the dramatic scene by A. Dumas, "Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher." But some of my readers will object that a dramatic scene is not a song. True, and the same may be said of many compositions which the composer has sent into the world under that name.

Most of Liszt's songs are musical illustrations of the thoughts and images suggested by the poems. Songs they are only in the primary and general sense—namely, in the sense of "something sung"; short, they are *Gesänge* not *Lieder*.* Liszt frequently treats the poems which he chooses for composition as plain prose, disregarding their form, mercilessly destroying metre, rhythm, and cadences, and the recurrence of these in the several strophes. In fact, the musician overthrows with a light heart what the poet has taken the greatest trouble to construct. The words of a genuine song are the revelation of a mood; the different feelings expressed—if there are more than one—have their roots in this one mood; and the incidental images are subordinate, of tributary not independent significance. But the musical illustration of every phrase and word leads to an undue emphasising of the incidental, and a blurring, if not effacing, of the essential. The only true song is the strophic song, which confines itself to the realisation of the emotional key-note of the poem. Hence, if the musician wishes to form a partnership with the poet, he must respect the latter's formal and ideal disposition. Of course I am speaking only of genuine songs, not of poems which are wrongly so called by their authors or accepted as such by musicians.

The above is what may be called the "absolute" ideal of a song; it is the result of æsthetic consideration of the *genre*. But, besides this absolute ideal, individual ideals are possible and admissible. It is the duty of the critic to find and place himself on the standpoint of the artist he criticises. He must see his ideal, and see it as it is seen by him. And if he does that there can be no doubt that he will admit that though Liszt's songs are not always songs in the strict meaning of the word, they are almost always compositions full of interest and beauty. The excellences and defects are indeed too patent to be overlooked by any but those who cannot or will not see. Liszt's most attached partisans and the foremost of thorough-going progressists temper their praise with gentle blame, and his most determined opponents and the staunchest conservatives temper their blame with warmest praise. Thus, Franz Brendel ("Geschichte der Musik"), whilst acknowledging the master's profound comprehension of the contents of his poetic subjects, and the rich colouring and splendid picturing of the musical composition—qualities which place "these works in their originality" beside the best that has been produced in this branch of the art—does not hesitate to

point out that Liszt's songs are not songs in the German sense; that this composer requires more room, and in his principal works in this *genre* approaches the ballad and dramatic scene; that, lastly, he lacks the concentrated inwardness (*Innerlichkeit*) of the German song, the self-contained unity of the pervading mood (*Gesammtstimmung*), which is the characteristic of the German song, more especially the older German song. August Reissmann ("Geschichte des deutschen Liedes"), on the other hand, whilst regretting Liszt's lack of form-giving power, and condemning his breaking-up of the poetic form, and the interpretation of the contents only in its separate details, speaks in glowing terms of the composer's luxuriant imagination, wealth of expression, and unsurpassed capability and mastery of the tenderest and most passionate emotions, and in conclusion remarks that the treatment, though objectionable, "interests, because a significant personality presents itself in it, and seizes us like the vehement impulse of a strongly excited person, whose endeavour to impart, and the feeling of the inadequacy of his means of expression, set in motion every fibre, so that the right expression threatens to burst his breast." There is some truth in this last remark of Reissmann's, only the fact is greatly exaggerated. It is possible to be more fully in sympathy with him when he says: "He who wishes to copy Liszt without caricaturing him, must be a Liszt, and phenomena such as he are even rarer than comets."

Somehow almost all Liszt's critics dwell exclusively on what distinguishes him from other song writers; they overlook, or at least neglect to state, the fact that among his songs are to be found several whose form and matter are such that they might have proceeded from the pen of the most orthodox writer. It is, indeed, the misfortune of this master to be constantly judged by an insignificant fragment of the totality of his compositorial achievements. With some artists this is a safe enough proceeding; not so with a chameleon-like being like Liszt. Variety, dissimilitude, contrast, nay heterogeneity, wherever we turn. Compare the self-sufficient *esprit* and *bravura* of the Fantaiesies, Reminiscences, Amusements, and Soirées, with the earnest striving of the Sonatas and Concertos; the sweet soothing "Consolations" with the wild, exciting "Galop chromatique"; the sensuality of the "Mephisto-Walzer" (the second of the episodes from Lenau's "Faust") with the purity of "Die Legende der heiligen Elizabeth"; the worldliness of the "Rhapsodies Hongroises" with the religiosity of the oratorio "Christus," the "Missa choralis," "Missa solennis," and "Coronation Mass." And even if we remain in narrower bounds, what an immense diversity presents itself to us in the master's orchestral works, his "Faust" and "Dante" symphonies and his twelve symphonic poems—"Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne," "Tasso," "Les Préludes," "Orpheus," "Prometheus," "Mazeppa," "Festklänge," "Héroïde funèbre," "Hungaria," "Hamlet," "Hunnenschlacht," and "Ideale." Liszt's manifoldness is in like manner exhibited in the songs. The settings of Goethe's songs, for instance, have another character than those of Heine's or Redwitz's. And how different again from the settings of these German poems are those of the French verses of Victor Hugo!

With regard to form, we may divide Liszt's songs into three classes: (1) *Genuine songs*—namely, such as are simply melodious, and, although sometimes through-composed, respect the metrical structure of the poem; (2) *Chamber cantatas*. Thus I venture to call, for want of a better name, the more extended compositions, often many-membered, and, in some instances, a mixture of recitative and air; (3) *Im-*

* In this respect our composer is but the last degree of a climax; for in the songs of Schubert, Schumann, Franz, and Liszt this tendency makes itself increasingly felt.

provisions, the less distinctly articulated organisms, generally declamatory or wavering between recitative, air, and *arioso*. Otto Lessmann ("Franz Liszt. Eine Charakterstudie") applies indiscriminately the word to all of Liszt's songs, I think wrongly.

To the first class belong the settings of Oscar von Redwitz's, Joseph Müller's, and Heine's poems—"Es muss ein Wunderbares sein" ("Love's Marvel"), "Das Veilchen" ("The Violet"), and "Du bist wie eine Blume" ("A flower thou resemblest"). The most remarkable specimens of the second class are the settings of Heine's "Die Lorelei" ("The Loreley") and Goethe's "Es war ein König in Thule" ("The King of Thule") and "Mignon's Lied" (Mignon's song, "Know'st thou the land?"). The settings of Goethe's "Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh'" ("Wanderer's Night Song") and R. von Bügeleben's "Und sprich: Sieh auf dem Meer" may be cited as illustrative of the third class.

I need hardly tell the reader that there are no sharply drawn separating lines between these classes, and that if he sets about classifying the songs he will find himself often in doubt what to do with one or the other of them. But the proposed scheme is nevertheless not useless; it has, among other advantages, that of helping us to a better understanding of the composer's procedures and the nature of these compositions. About the songs of the first class, which is the least numerous and made up, as it were, of exceptions, I shall say nothing; they can be, and are sure to be, appreciated by all who make their acquaintance, be they classicists or romanticists, progressists or reactionists. It is otherwise with those of the second and third classes; here we may have to change our standpoint.

One hears it sometimes said that Liszt has been more successful than other song writers in wedding music to words. This may be true, but it can be true only in the strictly literal sense—"to words." For in the majority of cases he gives so much attention to the constituent phrases and words that the "poem" is lost sight of. The music acts as a dissolvent. Indeed, the new method leads to a result the very reverse of what is intended. Liszt's object no doubt was to co-ordinate music and poetry, and thus attain a fuller agreement, a more perfect unison, than had been previously known. But what is the actual result? A greater discrepancy than ever; nothing less than the domination of music and the almost entire annihilation of the poem. In fact, the poet proposes to make a certain thing and the musician, in finishing what the other has begun, turns out something altogether different. "*Amphora caput institui; currente rota cur urceus exit*"? There are many exceptions to be found, especially among the shorter songs, in which the underlying mood which gives unity to the poem is firmly seized and held fast throughout. But in most cases this unity is sacrificed to the multiplicity of the details. If we read first the poem and then compare with it Liszt's musical setting, we are struck by the disproportion existing between the two, and between the parts and the whole—a disproportion in force, and more frequently both in length and force. What the poet only glances at the musician contemplates; what with the former is merely a passing expression, a figure of speech, is with the latter an emotion, a picture. Take, for instance, his setting of the words "himmelhoch jauchzend, zum Tode betrübt" (literally, "heaven-high jubilating, sad unto death") in the charming "Freudvoll und leidvoll" (Clara's song). But almost any other song of Liszt's will

furnish examples of undue emphasis. One of the most striking examples is the well-known and much appreciated setting of Heine's "Die Lorelei" ("The Loreley"), a poem which in its simplicity, terseness, and unity of mood realises one's ideal of a song; being, indeed, a real folk-song, but which, under the hands of the musician, swells into a chamber cantata, or, if you like the term better, into a grand scena, wherein declamatory passages alternate with cantilenas, and a varied series of views of the inner and outer world are depicted.

As long, then, as we insist that in a song the first business of the music is to reinforce the emotional key-note, and thus to consolidate into a close union the parts of the poem, and make the latter as a whole more impressive, Liszt will again and again disappoint us. If, on the other hand, we can bring ourselves to look upon the poem simply as a programme, as a congeries of picturesque items suitable for musical illustration, the master's songs will be to us full of interest and delight. There is hardly a bar in them without some happy touch. Now the composer moves us to the very heart's core by his true accents of joy and sorrow; now he helps us to realise the various aspects of natural scenes—of hill and valley, of wood and field, of river and sea, in light and shadow, at peace and at war with the elements; and ever and anon there comes a flash that brings to us a revelation—a new thought, a new feeling. His force and subtlety of characterisation and illustration are equally marvellous. He dares even to attempt, and I think successfully, the translation into music of the exhalation of flowers that fills the air with sweet fragrance ("Flower and scent"). One who can do all this can be no ordinary man, he must be a magician, he must be a man of genius. Liszt's genius as a composer has been doubted by many. In most cases it was insufficient acquaintance with the master's works or a narrow-minded conservatism which caused the doubt. However, the fact that Liszt's works are very numerous, and of unequal merit, some of them wholly unworthy of him, should not be forgotten. Also this should be remembered, that there are not only various degrees, but also various kinds of musical genius. Spontaneity and reflection, inner and outer impulse, are, apart from craftsmanship, the chief factors of artistic production. In Liszt's production reflection has, generally speaking, a larger share, and outer impulses come oftener into play, than in that of most of the other great composers.

I hail with pleasure the publication of a representative collection of Liszt's songs ("Albums of German Song." No. II. Franz Liszt), which we owe to Messrs. Novello, Ewer and Co. It will enable musicians and amateurs to extend their acquaintance with this interesting master's works without the necessity of a great expenditure of money or time. I say I hail with pleasure the publication of these twenty of the best of Liszt's songs, because I am confident that it will win the master many friends, and bring nearer the day when he shall be esteemed according to his worth.

What I said a few months ago (January, 1884), in connection with the Robert Franz Album, about translations of songs in general and Mr. Hueffer's translations in particular, applies also to the present volume of the "Albums of German Song." Mr. Hueffer's translations are often happy, but now and then provoke criticism. Sometimes the objectionable points might be removed; at other times one does not see how it could be done—for instance, where Mr. Hueffer translates, in Goethe's poem "Kennst du das Land?" (Mignon's song), the words "Kennst du es wohl?" by "Know'st thou it well?" which is a literal translation, but not a rendering of

* In the present case it is rather the *urceus* that is begun and the *amphora* that is turned out.

the meaning. Of course, Mr. Hueffer knows this as well as anybody else. But how bring out the meaning and yet make the words march with the music? I tried and gave it up, and consequently cannot blame Mr. Hueffer for doing the same. On the contrary, he has my full sympathy; a man grappling with the impossible has a right to expect as much from his fellow-men. One remark more and I have done. Having to choose between two evils, I should have preferred, in "Du bist wie eine Blume" ("A flower thou resemblest"), the contraction "I'd" to "I would" (p. 49, line 1, bar 6), as that would have made the alteration of Liszt's three notes of varied value into four monotonous crotchets unnecessary.

LOCAL COLOUR

By F. CORDER.

LOOKING through the advertisement pages of my favourite weekly journal the other day, my eye was arrested by one sentence in the following advertisement:—

MR. HENNINGS J. GUBB Arranges, Transposes, Harmonises, or provides Accompaniments (Orchestral or Pianoforte) to Author's own Compositions. Tunes taken down from dictation. Music invested with any desired nationality or local colour. Harmony taught by correspondence. Address, 1, 294, Jerry Buildings, Somers Town.

It was not the advertisement as a whole which attracted my attention, for I had long been aware that persons of Mr. Gubb's peculiar calling are in no inconsiderable demand, owing to the large number of composers in what I may call the lower walks of musical life. The average music-hall singer or quadrille-band player gets, in the course of his professional life, so saturated with the particular kind of music he constantly hears, that, whether he possess musical talent or not, he cannot help producing original compositions in his particular line. As he has probably never received the least proper instruction, he has to call in the services of some one like Mr. Gubb, who puts these noble works into the form in which they are so readily printed by the publishers and so eagerly bought by the public. This is the universally recognised basis of English art, and I have nothing to say against it, only it would be better if all those who follow Mr. Gubb's profession would educate themselves into fitness for it.

The phrase about "Music invested with any desired nationality," excited my curiosity. I resolved upon the spot to interview the advertiser, and, invoking to my aid the powers of the various "circles" of metropolitan railways, lines of trams, and finally an antediluvian specimen of suburban cab, I tracked the great musician to his lair in the wilds of unexplored North London. No doubt Mr. Gubb would inhabit a less-out-of-the-way locality if he could, so I shall not dwell on this topic further than to say that my journey gave me something of that horror of the Infinite which Mr. Procter portrays in his well-known description of a journey through the universe. I found Mr. Hennings J. Gubb a very pleasant man, for I am not one of those who esteem people in proportion to the amount of soap and water they use. On my stating the object of my visit my host courteously offered full explanations of all the mysteries of his art. "Between brother artists'ees," he was good enough to say, "there need be no concealments." Finding him so ready to oblige, I therefore led up to my principal subject of enquiry by a few general questions relative to his profession. He informed me that he did a very good business with amateur composers, "even among the most upper classes," as he said with some pride. Songs were by far the most general kind of compositions sent to him to be "tittivated," but there was also considerable produc-

tion of pianoforte pieces of a vague and unambitious kind, the prevalent taste running much on the so-called Gavottes or "Danses." Did he not consider it remarkable that the music-hall singers who were unable to write down their own compositions should invent sometimes such capital tunes? "No, sir; it is not very extraordinary, considering all the circumstances. You only hear the few lucky hits they make; you little know the enormous quantity of unsuccessful songs they publish and sing, and the still more prodigious quantity which the publishers refuse. Why the great —" and he named a certain *star artiste* or *lion comique*, as they grotesquely style themselves, has dictated to me at this table no less than seven hundred songs in the past twelvemonth; come nearly every day, he does, with as many as half-a-dozen at once sometimes. Then they copy one another shameful, they do, and put in phrases out of the old and forgotten songs. Even their best songs are never original." What was the biggest job he had ever been engaged on? "Well, the biggest and hardest job was arranging an opera for a certain Indian rajah, which he tried to get performed at his own house in Kensington, but nobody could sing it. It was the queerest stuff you ever did hear—all out of rhythm, and in no key whatever. But he paid well, and my experience of real Indian music on that occasion was of good service in giving eastern flavour to other people's works, for that season Indian music was all the rage." Here we approached the subject I was curious about, and I asked him to explain his method of imparting "local colour." "With much pleasure," replied Mr. Gubb. "You give me a few bars of melody, your own if you like, and by merely altering the accompaniment and the value of a note here and there, you shall see that it can be made of any nationality you like." I played on the piano, which stood at hand, the first eight bars of "Home, sweet home." "Ah!" said my friend, with a queer smile, "I have met with a good many people who thought they had composed that. I could write a book upon the history of that tune and the way it has been maltreated. The story goes that Sir Henry Bishop cribbed it from a Sicilian popular song. But where did the Sicilians get it from? They haven't much music of their own. This song is to be found in many different forms among the gipsy music of Hungary, Bohemia, Spain, and the Basque provinces, besides being a Venetian gondolier's song and I don't know what besides. I shouldn't wonder if it was originally composed for the opening of Solomon's temple. There never was, and never will be, such a popular tune. All other variations may be forgotten, but Thalberg's 'Home, sweet home' is immortal. To this day composers make successes out of wretched songs by dragging in (quoting they call it) that melody as a refrain. Didn't that descending passage in the second part suggest the theme of the Adagio of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony? I'm sure it did. And what is the last Christy Minstrel success? why that very second part of 'Home, sweet home,' with scarcely a note altered. They call it 'Wait till the clouds roll by.'"^{*}

Mr. Gubb was so eloquent on this subject that there is no knowing where he would have ended had I not brought him back to the point by remarking that if the tune was of so polyglot a character it would perhaps form no good test for his powers. Mr. Gubb smiled pityingly at my ignorance. "What we call local colour is only the conventional means

^{*} It is rather an odd coincidence that, at the moment of penning these words, a street organ outside my window has just struck up "Home, sweet home" and simultaneously a brass band in the distance is playing "Wait till the clouds roll by." I could wish that the coincidence extended to the keys they are playing in.—F. C