The Position of Weber

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THE MUSICIANS' GIFT TO H.M. FORCES.

TO PROVIDE MUSICAL ACTIVITIES AMONG THE MEN.

Committee.—The Editors of all the Musical Papers of the Country.*Hon. Treasurer.*—Prof. H. Walford Davies, Mus. Doc.*Hon. Secretary.*—Percy A. Scholes, Mus. Bac.*Organising Secretary.*—Madame Lily Henkel.*Office.*—Y.M.C.A., Music Section, 25, Bloomsbury Square, W.C.-1.

Total received	£	s.	d.
Total received since December 31, 1918	4,045	0	0
Receipts during the month July 11 to August 10, 1919	1,124	0	0
	27	0	0

(a) THE MONTH'S DONATIONS AND COLLECTIONS.

Mr. Tobias Matthey. Collection at Invitation Concert	£	s.	d.
Miss Esther Gilfillan. Collection at Pupils' Concert	20	10	0
Miss Agnes Fennings (5th Donation)	5	5	3
Mr. W. Bartley Robinson	1	1	0
	0	5	0
	£27	1	3

(b) THE MONTH'S ORGAN RECITALS.

Preston. New Longton Church.—Mr. H. Lawson	£	s.	d.
	60	6	0

The receipts for this month are unfortunately smaller than ever before, while the needs are ever increasing. It is natural that summer brings with it a slackening of concert activities, but it is very desirous that those enjoying a holiday should remember their less fortunate fellow-men still on duty in Germany, in the East, in Russia and elsewhere, to whom music affords welcome recreation, as well as serious occupation for those who are taking it up as a study in leisure hours. It is hoped that not only will the autumn see renewed efforts from all music-lovers in organizing concerts to carry on the work of the Music Section, but that during the summer vacation open-air entertainments and organ recitals at seaside and country resorts may be arranged as a means of raising urgently needed money for the Musicians' Gift Fund.

A £1,000 SONG.

Wonderful is the enterprise of the Northcliffe Press. Some months ago the *London Magazine* offered a prize of £1,000 for a song commemorating 'Liberty.' As a result, nearly two thousand songs were sent in from all parts of the United Kingdom, and the decision was duly announced in the August issue of this Northcliffian organ. The three judges to whom the musical MSS. were submitted were: Sir Frederic Cowen, Mr. Landon Ronald, and Lieut. H. Williams, Mus. D. (Grenadier Guards), and they awarded the prize of £1,000 to Mr. Claude Arundale, of London, for his setting of 'The Flag of Liberty' to words by Fred E. Weatherly. The song has been issued, and our readers can form their own opinion of its merits, but the average musician will probably class it among the ephemeral trifles of 1919, although it is quite evident that the composer was writing down to the 'popular' level. If any reader seeks to know the personality of Mr. Claude Arundale, it is duly set forth in the August number of the *London Magazine*, copiously illustrated. It is permissible, however, to add that the pen-name 'Claude Arundale' disguises a really clever Irishman who is building up fame in another profession in London, one of whose forbears was the friend of Mozart and Brinsley Sheridan, and who came from the same county in Ireland that produced Oliver Goldsmith, T. P. O'Connor, and John MacCormack.

W.H.G.F.

Mrs. Mary Layton's annual students' concert took place at Fulham Town Hall on July 17, before a large audience. The programme included part-songs given by the Ladies' Choir and Mendelssohn's 'To the Sons of Art,' sung by the male-voice choir, recently strengthened by the return of demobilized pupils.

THE POSITION OF WEBER.

BY HERBERT ANTCLIFFE.

It is constantly asserted that the position of a musician is not assignable during his own lifetime because those who would assign it are too intermixed with his and their own circumstances. Judging by the fluctuating regard in which some composers who have been dead for several generations are held, it is no easy matter to place even these, unless they are of the few outstanding universal geniuses. None disputes the positions of Bach, Beethoven, Handel, Mozart, or Wagner. Many ask whether Brahms, Mendelssohn, Gluck, Spöhr, and even Haydn, Schubert and Schumann are great musicians in the fullest sense of the term. Carl Maria von Weber also is variously estimated, and ranked according to the idiosyncrasies and tastes of those who have to place him.

With such a composer as Weber, one whose work possessed qualities which make it above all things attractive, it is easy to overlook or to forget what he did in the development of musical spirit and technique. We are entranced by the sheer beauty of sound in his 'Aufforderung zum Tanz' and his overtures, by the brilliance and sparkle of his pianoforte music, and the poetry of every one of his ideas. Never are we repelled, scarcely ever are we awed; but always we have aroused within us a feeling of affection which few other composers induce. Scarcely has he suffered even the disparagements of the ultra-modernists or incurred the hatred of the ultra-conservatives. True it is that much of his work is forgotten, sunk in the kindly oblivion which takes away our faults and weaknesses even though it be along with some of those things that we could wish to have remembered.

Weber's influence has been none the less strong because frequently it has been unconscious and unrecognised. Conscious imitation may make little impression on the imitators, and may readily be altered. That which is unconscious becomes infused into the being, and it invariably leaves its mark, though it may not always change entirely the mode of thought and feeling. And the reason why nine out of ten of the composers of the latter part of the 19th century were deeply influenced by the music of Weber is that they found it pleasing and, without any deliberate copying, allowed themselves to be imbued with the feeling it expresses. Weber has never been a classic in name; his position as a 'great master' of the text-books has been quite a limited one. In actual practice, however, his work has moulded that of nearly all his successors. With Gluck he was the regenerator and vivifier of opera, though his reform was on more natural and less drastic lines. He was the first to find in the orchestra an inevitable means of beauty and expression, so that those who hear his orchestral works now are never conscious of weakness or experiment. Not even of Beethoven or of Wagner can this be said, but it is true of Weber, and of many who have followed his lead. It is the result of the deepening musical feeling; of the growing union between the composer and his music, whereby the latter has become the most natural expression of all human emotions and of many human thoughts. 'From Weber's time,' said the late Mr. Dannreuther, 'about 1820, a new spirit was in the air, and an increasingly rapid process of change and expansion resulted from its appearance.' And Weber was in fact as well as by chronology the leader and inaugurator of this spirit.

The technical expression of this spirit was the development of programme music, and in all the details of this Weber anticipated Liszt, Wagner, and Strauss, as well as Debussy, Bantock, and John Alden Carpenter, as effectively as did Bach himself, and much more fully and completely. The 'Concertstück' may not be a great masterpiece; but it is in no small degree remarkable how it anticipated the symphonic poems of Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Smetana, Richard Strauss, and other composers. Nor, although it went further than any of his previous works, was it in any way isolated or premature effort. In his Pianoforte Sonata in A flat first of all, and later in the 'Aufforderung,' the 'Jubel' Overture, and the Sonata in E minor, he had already prepared the way, and in each subsequent work he simply moved forward on logical lines. That it 'marks a new departure in the treatment of the pianoforte as a concert

instrument,' and is full of ingenious devices both in the solo part and the orchestration is only a matter of detail. It is of greater moment that it is written in one continuous movement, though based upon Concerto form.

This is an example of one of the strongest forces of Weber as a reformer. He never for a single instant lost sight of the firm support of classical tradition. His Overtures revolutionised that form, and prepared the way for the great concert-overtures and for such works as the 'Tannhäuser' Overture. Yet they were quite as closely related to those of Beethoven and even of Mozart and of their minor contemporaries.

Like all those who have created art-work which has demanded the attention of the world at large, his most important creations were of a national or racial character. Moreover, the nation to whose art he contributed and which in some degree he reformed was the only one in which he was really in sympathy. In spite of his friendship with foreigners, and particularly with Englishmen, he was a German of the Germans. Not, it should be noted, of the distorted Germanism of to-day, but of the best qualities of that race which produced the great musicians and the great writers as well as the finest housewives in the world.

His reforms arose from his essentially home-loving nature, not from any experience of other nations or any desire to take advantage of their better qualities or conditions. 'Oberon' was a German opera just as much as 'Der Freischütz,' though it was composed to English words and delighted the English people as much as the other had excited the Germans. In inaugurating or reinstating German opera he did for national opera in general what he could not have done had he been more cosmopolitan in education or sympathies. For he proved what no cosmopolitan could have done, that though it defies definition there is such a thing as nationality, and that it is a thing which finds expression in the higher forms of art. His principle that 'strict truth is the first and foremost requisite of vocal music,' and that 'any vocal music that alters or effaces the poet's meaning and intention is a failure,' sounds elementary now. It was by no means commonly recognised in his day, and even to-day many composers fail to put it into practice.

The music of Weber which suffers from modern disparagement more than any other is the bulk of what he wrote for the pianoforte. Apart from the pieces already mentioned, that is, those with a programmatic intention, his pianoforte music is frequently regarded as consisting of mere tonal glitter. There is some foundation for this idea, though it is somewhat exaggerated in its statement. Through the works of Chopin and his successors and imitators we have got into the way of expecting virtuoso music of any kind to be so labelled, and also to be given some other nominal object. Generally we demand that a 'study' shall be something more than a study in technic arranged in a manner to give musical satisfaction. It must be a study in emotion as well as in aesthetics. Weber, however, came before this method, and he adapted the methods of his own day to his own purposes. Consequently he wrote formal works which aimed chiefly at brilliance; and he achieved that—and at times something more. Pianists of to-day find his music not without its uses, and it does not altogether lack attraction to those who listen. When this is said, however, there is little more to add. What he did in this way was to help in making possible the brilliant technic of the 20th century. And he did it in a way that, except in rare instances, is always musical.

With these considerations Weber claims a place of his own, which, if it is not in the foremost rank of genius, is at least in its close vicinity.

BELLS.

By W. W. STARMER.

THE CATTISTOCK BELLS.

On Thursday, July 31, M. Josef Denyn gave his annual recital on the Cattistock Carillon. There was a very good audience, and the weather conditions were better than for some years past. A beautiful day—with ideal atmospheric conditions—added much to the enjoyment of a most interesting programme. Although the Carillon has a

limited compass (three octaves) of small bells, with certain defects as to accuracy of tune, it is gratifying that M. Denyn has been induced to come over annually for nearly a quarter of a century and give these recitals, which have ever been greatly appreciated by all lovers of bell music.

The Rev. R. P. Stickland, Rector of Cattistock, faithfully carries on the project initiated by the Rev. H. Keith Barnes—the donor of the bells and the beautiful tower in which they are placed, together with a sum of money the interest on which up to the present has been sufficient to provide for the proper upkeep of bells and chimes. Now, however, with the increased cost of everything, something must be done to help this fund if these annual recitals are to be continued and the chime tunes changed each year. There should be no difficulty about this, and if the exact needs are properly made known surely there ought to be no lack of support for such a worthy object. Cattistock is the only place where the chimes play tunes on the Continental plan, *i.e.*, melodies harmonized in three or four parts, and not melodies only as with us.

M. Denyn began his recital with a brilliant extemporisation on Mr. W. W. Starmer's Preludium specially written for the Peace celebrations at Malines, and played there for the first time on June 30. The Flemish songs were all charmingly treated, but the third item, by Miry, was exceptionally good. Pleyel's Rondo gave ample opportunity for executive display and artistic effect, while the most expressive number was undoubtedly Chaminade's 'Viens mon bien aimé.' The programme was as follows:

1. Extemporisation on Preludium for Carillon
W. Wooding Starmer
2. Flemish Songs—
 - (a) 'De Liefde op t'ys' Houben
 - (b) 'Roeland' Houben
 - (c) 'Al Zingend 't vry lied' Miry
 - (d) 'De Zwarte Leeuw' De Laet
3. Rondo from Second Sonatina Pleyel
4. Popular English Melodies.
5. Viens mon bien aimé Chaminade
6. National Anthems of the Allies.

TUNES ON BELLS.

One of the popular English melodies played by M. Denyn at Cattistock was 'Tipperary.' With skilful treatment by such a virtuoso it was exceedingly effective—and this on the bells of Cattistock Church! The Vicar of Wellingborough, the Rev. R. Smeaton, recently refused to allow 'Tipperary' to be played on the bells of the parish church. Said he, 'If "Tipperary," why not the "Fox Trot" or "Tommy, make room for your Uncle"?' The analogy is by no means an apt one, and in these columns we have nothing to do with his reasons or prerogative. 'Tipperary' should not be attempted on the Wellingborough bells, because it cannot be played upon them without gross mutilation. The mutilation of any tune, and particularly of well-known melodies, is much to be deprecated. No tune should be attempted on a smaller number of bells than the *exact* notes require. In this respect probably our National Anthem has been most sinned against. Words fail to describe such caricatures as the following:

DORSET.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

LINCOLNSHIRE.

and yet these have been tolerated and listened to year in and year out without a word of protest!