

VII.—NEW BOOKS.

Primitive Music: An Inquiry into the origin and development of music, songs, instruments, dances and pantomimes of savage races. By RICHARD WALLASCHEK. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1898. Pp. xi., 326.

This book is much more than an Ethnological Essay: it is an attempt in the light of ethnological facts to recast the biological and psychological theory of the origin and primary function of music. As such it is bold and ingenious, and sufficiently weighted with fact and argument to claim serious attention.

According to the common view music is not only an art confined to civilised races, it is a comparatively modern invention. Dr. Wallaschek seeks by a systematic review of such evidence as is accessible to prove that all the essentials of our European musical system are to be met with in the instrumental and vocal music of savage peoples. It is of course difficult to make sure of our facts here. Travellers have not always been musicians, and we know that it is exceedingly difficult to represent music, differing so widely in its form from our familiar melodies, in our notation. Dr. Wallaschek is quite alive to these difficulties and takes pains to obviate them. According to his generalisations music is common to all, or at least to the greater number of, savage tribes. And this music can be shown not to have been derived from contact with civilised men. The most noteworthy feature of this music, which we may suppose to be representative of primitive music, is its clearly marked rhythm. The song-dance, as illustrated, for example, in the war-dance of the Maoris, is carried out with perfect precision of movement by every member of the band. Our author allows that the tunes when judged as melodies apart from their rhythm are crude enough. Yet he argues very plausibly on the ground of a detailed examination of the musical instruments of savages that this embryonic art of untutored man is based on our diatonic scale of seven tones, and that it contains our so-called modern principle of tonality. Nay, more, he attempts to show that this savage music holds the germ of our elaborate modern system of harmony. The explanation of this early discovery of the underlying principles of our musical system is to be found, according to Dr. Wallaschek, not in any instinctive preference of ear or of vocal organ, but in the exigencies of practical instrumental music. The determination of the several intervals making up the diatonic scale is thus the result not of any æsthetic laws, such as those to which Helmholtz appeals, but of simple mechanical principles. The rôle which the author assigns to the musical instrument in the early development of the structure of music is a noteworthy feature of the book.

A full account is given of the connexions of this savage music with the whole life of the tribe. Singing is with the savage, as it is with the child, a common mode of expression of the changing emotional state. But this primordial singing seems, according to our author, to have as little relation to articulate speech as the first la-la song of an infant. In a separate chapter it is attempted to show that in primitive times vocal music is not a union of poetry and music. On the other hand, music does stand in a very special connexion with dancing or concerted pantomimic action. According to the author Richard Wagner was right

in referring the origin of music to dance-movement. This organic connexion between early music and concerted movement serves to explain the predominance of the rhythmic element.

Having thus reviewed and classified the facts the author proceeds to unfold his interpretation of these. This theoretic part of the essay is dealt with in the two concluding chapters, "On the Origin of Music," and "Heredity and Development". The author sets out with the proposition which his ethnological study supports, that a rhythmic arrangement of sounds is the starting-point in musical development. Rhythm is the "essence" of music, alike in its simplest form and in the most skilfully elaborated fugues of modern composers. But how does rhythm lead to melody with its discrete tones and definite tone-intervals? Here we have the most original and daring speculation in Dr. Wallaschek's book. Such discrete tones and tone-intervals serve, according to him, the better to mark the rhythmic phases of the movement. Unfortunately the author does not give us illustrations of his meaning here. He tells us that a rhythmical succession of bars and periods "is much more marked and can be more easily understood by a repetition of the same tones or tunes over the same rhythmical periods". Further, "in order to give a more pronounced tone to a rhythmical period, higher notes are used, lower notes marking a decreasing movement, and so on, till we have all the elements of a complete melody" (p. 234). I do not feel quite sure of the author's meaning here, but I take it that he looks at change of tone or pitch as an additional means of marking rhythm, and at similar arrangements of successive tones with respect to pitch as rendering equal divisions of time more easy of apprehension.

The author then proceeds to review the facts of so-called "Animal Music". He finds the song of birds destitute of rhythm, and on this ground is prepared to deny its musical character. On the other hand he detects in the "drumming" and dance of the gorilla, as in the concerted waltz-like dance of ostriches, a rudimentary form of that rhythmic sense which in primitive man originated the art of music. Hereupon he proceeds to criticise Darwin's theory that music had its origin in the love-songs of birds. He objects to this partly on the ground that birds' songs (as destitute of rhythm) are not true music, and that it is anthropomorphism to attribute to birds an æsthetic sense. He further urges the biological considerations that the development of sound-producing organs does not proceed concurrently with the evolution of the higher classes of animal; that birds' songs are not confined to the wooing season as Darwin assumed; that the transmission of love-associations in the way supposed by Darwin has been shown to be improbable by Weismann, and, finally, that the centre of song in the birds' brain answers not to the song-centre but to the speech-centre in the human cortex.

Having thus discredited the theory which would refer the origin of music to the lower animals, Dr. Wallaschek proceeds to criticise the theory, associated in recent times with the name of Mr. Herbert Spencer, that music is an outgrowth of human speech. In chapter vi. ("Text and Music") the author had already pointed out that in the earliest stages of its development music has but a very loose connexion with words. Many tribes have vocal music and no poetry, the two arts developing independently. Again, recitative, the oldest form of vocal music, according to this theory, does not, Dr. Wallaschek tells us, occur in the earliest stages of culture, but presupposes a comparatively developed language. In the later chapter he sums up the argument against Spencer's theory thus: (1) In the most primitive state of culture we find side by side a sort of recitative (this seems directly to contradict

what was said before, p. 180), a kind of music in which the rhythm alone plays a leading part, and also songs, the words of which are perfectly meaningless. This being so it is impossible for the musical modulations to have had their origin in the modulations of speech. (2) Primitive music is in many cases no modulation of tone but merely rhythmical movement in one tone, and so cannot be the result of modulations of the voice in speech. (3) Song does not develop *pari passu* with speech, but the intellectual importance of singing declines with the higher development of language. (4) Music expresses emotion; speech expresses thought; so that one could not have developed one of the other, but both were evolved from a common root, the primitive utterance.

After criticising the two best known current theories the author proceeds to formulate his own. Setting out with Weismann's theory he argues against the transmission of acquired musical ability. He seems disposed to regard the child of a modern European community as on a level with the child of a savage in respect of musical ability. Our great advance in the art of music is the result of "objective heredity," that is to say of a progressive musical tradition and education. Heredity counts for very little, if anything, in the explanation of musical genius: Haydn's father was a wheelwright, Schubert's a schoolmaster, Schumann's a bookseller. There is no such thing, moreover, as a special musical "faculty": what we call inborn musical genius is merely a superior mind directed by the special circumstances of its time to one particular form of art-production. If, now, we ask how the native rudiment of musical ability, in which we all appear to share, has come about, Dr. Wallaschek answers: "By natural selection". The sense of rhythm is absolutely necessary to concerted movement. Rhythmical sounds are, as we all know, the most effective means of regulating a succession of movements to be carried out in precise agreement by a number. The study of ethnological facts shows us that the earliest function of music was that of our modern military band. It assisted in an orderly harmonious performance of those pantomimic dances in which the fight and the hunt were rehearsed. Such rehearsals were of the greatest utility as exercise. Hence they are not to be regarded as 'play' in the sense of a mere overflow of surplus energy which primitive man could just as well have done without. Those tribes who had the finest sense of rhythm, and as a consequence executed these play-like rehearsals most perfectly, would have an advantage in the struggle for existence. In this way we may suppose that man's musical ability was developed by natural selection.

The reader may see from this brief outline of Dr. Wallaschek's argument that it is a new and exceedingly suggestive contribution to the psychology of music. Particularly interesting is the emphasis which his researches lead him to throw on rhythmic sound as the germ of musical composition, on the partial detachment of primitive music from poetry and language generally, more particularly through the early development of musical instruments, and on the useful character of that concerted pantomimic dance with which the earliest music was organically united. Dr. Wallaschek's theory will have to be carefully considered by anybody who in the future attempts to give an account of the genesis and development of what is in many ways the most puzzling of our arts. That he has completely proven his case, he himself would not, I suspect, wish to maintain. There is much in his theory that needs further elucidation and verification. For myself, I confess that I fail to follow him at more than one point. The necessary evolution of melodic interval and tonality out of the rhythmic impulse is far from clear to me. I can understand the occasional variation of pitch, say at the beginning of a bar, being

directly helpful to perception of rhythm, but I cannot help asking whether any considerable elaboration of melodic structure would not at the outset tend to distract attention from the time-relations. I, at least, can always best appreciate the rhythmic movement of a tune by demelodising it, so to speak, as in humming it on one note, or in tapping. Again, Dr. Wallaschek's way of explaining the growth of our elaborate modern music seems to me to present more than one difficulty. It is certainly a fact in his favour that savages easily pick up and reproduce European music. Yet this falls a good deal short of proving that we are only upon the savage plane in respect of native musical ability. It is a familiar fact that among ourselves individuals differ extraordinarily in their capacity for discriminating tones: and this serves to tell against Dr. Wallaschek's hypothesis that musical ability involves no special aptitude of ear. Indeed, I should say that a person with the finest sense of rhythm, if unable to appreciate tone-intervals with exactitude, ought to be called unmusical. Is it not probable then, *a priori*, that savages, if compared with Europeans, might be found inferior on this side of musical appreciation? It will be seen here that I am disposed to regard discrimination of pitch and appreciation of tone-interval, as such, as essential ingredients in musical capacity equally with the sense of rhythm. Lastly, I find the greatest difficulty in following Dr. Wallaschek in his account of musical genius. I have always thought of genius as involving a special constitutional bent to particular lines of mental activity. Musical genius, as its precocity strongly suggests, seems to be the most striking illustration of this selective speciality of all genius. The supposition that Mozart had in his musical endowment potentialities of high intellectual achievement in any other field of production to which his circumstances might have directed him is for me a sheer impossibility. I hope that Dr. Wallaschek will follow up his most interesting and stimulating study by developing and fortifying these and other parts of his theory.

JAMES SULLY.

The Process of Argument. A Contribution to Logic By ALFRED SIDGWICK, Author of *Fallacies, Distinction and the Criticism of Beliefs, &c.* London: A. & C. Black, 1898. Pp. 285.

This book is called a "contribution to Logic," but it is curiously unlike most other books that profess to treat of the same subject. Instead of the open effort to systematise—to classify and tabulate and define, to discover unity and likeness—instead of all the struggle after completeness, the keen and even violent desire to arrive at something, *totus teres atque rotundus*, which has impelled so many workers in the field of "Logic,"—we find rather what looks, at first sight, like a continual effort after differentiation, a progressive perception of differences, a splitting up of every argument into a part that is fact and a part that is inference; then, again, a recognition that the fact is not wholly fact, and the inference not wholly inference—a subtle investigation which drives one to admit that what one had held to be the best of arguments is not altogether good, that what one had taken to be the worst is not wholly bad. In any conflict of opinion, in any case where there is ground and matter for dispute, whether the conflict is in *one* mind or between different minds, *there*—the author would bring us to admit—there is something to be said for both sides.

We are ready enough to admit this in the case of our own suspended or doubtful judgment; but it is not so easy to see when we are struggling