

from the priest there *la taille* with all the old religious ceremonies.

SAINT-SAËNS AS A CRITIC.

Harmonie et Mélodie. Par Camille Saint-Saëns. Troisième édition. Paris: Calmann Lévy.

NOTE that the title of this work is not 'Melody and Harmony,' but 'Harmony and Melody.' This at once indicates its keynote. Though it is made up of a collection of miscellaneous essays, such as the Wagner Festival at Bayreuth (1876); the Birmingham Festivals in England; Bach and Handel; Liszt and Berlioz; Offenbach; the French Concert Societies; the Resonance of Bells, etc., what underlies all these themes is the notion, which will strike the semi-musical public with surprise, that harmony is of greater importance in music than melody, though the latter, too, is indispensable. "What the illiterate in music call, not without contempt, 'accompaniments,' or, ironically, 'science,' is *the flesh, and blood of music*, is, in a word, its substance." In an historic sense, continues Saint-Saëns, melody comes before harmony, for ancient music, like modern Oriental music, has only melody and rhythm. But in an æsthetic sense harmony, which (together with orchestration) constitutes the modern element in music, stands first. But the appreciation of harmony requires a high degree of musical culture; and as in most countries the majority of people have not attained that stage, it is natural that they should place more value on melody and rhythm (especially dance rhythm), which alone they are able to appreciate.

Unfortunately, a number of these semi-musical people have been clever *writers*, and have persuaded themselves and the public that not only are these more primitive elements of music superior to harmony, but that genius is manifested only in the creation of a new melody, whereas a new harmony is a mere matter of "reflection" which any talented student may command by means of study. This absurd notion greatly exasperates M. Saint-Saëns on account of its wide prevalence; and as he may be safely pronounced at once the most erudite and the most inspired musician France has ever produced, his retort is specially weighty:

"Beautiful melodies and beautiful harmonies are equally the product of inspiration; but who cannot see that it requires a much more powerfully organized brain to conceive beautiful harmonies? . . . Why is it that the men of genius who originate beautiful melodies are also the only ones who conceive beautiful harmonies, and that no mediocre professor and savant thought of writing, *e. g.*, the *Oro supplex et acclinis* of Mozart's 'Requiem,' which is nothing but a sequence of chords? . . . The power to create a complicated work will always be a mark of a superior organization. . . . And in the same way the love of beautiful harmonies indicates a public which has arrived at a high degree of culture."

Both the public and the composers are demoralized by the efforts of these literary critics to prove that melody alone is art, and harmony mere "science." Were the public frankly told that their love of bare melody and simple rhythms indicates a crude musical taste, they might make an effort to learn to appreciate the subtle harmonies in superior compositions; but as it is, they remain in their ignorance and indifference, thus starving the poor composers who have the courage to write "harmonies" according to their convictions, notwithstanding the persistent advice of the literary critics that they should write only simple, unaccompanied, "inspired" melodies, and avoid "algebraic" and "chemical" harmonies. Stendhal was one of these literary critics who dabbled in music. He believed in melody for melody's sake, in the isolated "solo voice which one may enjoy at his ease like a sherbet," as Saint-Saëns sarcastically

puts it. To what critical results this principle has led is shown in Stendhal's estimate of Beethoven, at which the veriest tyro in music will smile to-day: "When Beethoven and Mozart himself piled up their notes and ideas, when they searched for frequent and bizarre modulations, their erudite symphonies produced no effect; whereas, when they followed in the footsteps of Haydn, all hearts were touched."

M. Saint-Saëns might have easily quoted a hundred such judgments hurled (often by famous critics) against every composer who penetrated more deeply into the wilderness of undiscovered harmonies and modulations—the same regions where subsequently all composers gladly pitched their tents and the public followed with delight. And yet it seems that in musical history experience goes for nothing; and if to-day a composer should arise who dared to go beyond even Wagner in his modulations and discords, the Wagnerites would probably be the very first to throw stones and call him "algebraic" and "scientific." Indeed, something very like this has already happened. Franz Liszt was even bolder and more daring as a harmonist than Wagner; and it is well known that not a few thoroughbred Wagnerites underrated and even affect to despise Liszt as a composer. They admit that he is original in his harmonies and rhythms, but his melodic invention, they say, is scant, and therefore he is not a creative genius, but only a clever workman. Have we not here the same old story—the same undervaluation of the creative genius evinced by new harmonies, rhythms, and orchestration, in the conception of which Liszt was almost on a par with Wagner, although, it is true, he cannot be considered, like Wagner, one of the greatest melodists the world has ever seen, and has therefore achieved much less popularity?

One of the best chapters in M. Saint-Saëns's book is that devoted to Liszt. It includes admirable analyses of several of his symphonic poems, "so little known, and whose prospects appear to me so bright," and contains the best discussion of the vexed question of programme music which we remember to have ever seen. The French critic prophesies that ages after the memory of Liszt the pianist shall have faded, he will be admired as "the emancipator of instrumental music," the creator of the symphonic poem—a very aptly chosen title, indicating that while the orchestral apparatus of the symphony is retained (and enlarged), a poetic idea always underlies the work. The old fogies "who love above all things their little habits and the calm of their existence," violently resented the amalgamation of pure instrumental music with poetic and pictorial elements; but as long as the music itself is good, Saint-Saëns cannot see why there should be any objection to such a union. To the purely musical pleasures in this case the imagination adds others: "All the faculties of the soul are at once called into play, and in the same direction. I can see very well what art gains thereby, but cannot see what it loses." The spirit of the age demands programme music, and "the taste of the public, in France at any rate, has carried the artists in this direction"—as witness, *e. g.*, the symphonic poems of Saint-Saëns, some of which dispute the palm with Liszt's.

Between Liszt and Wagner, Saint-Saëns cannot see much in common except their method of constantly transforming a musical phrase rhythmically, so as to make it express in turn different shades of emotion. "In regard to style, and the employment of the different resources of harmony and instrumentation, they differ as widely as two contemporaneous authors belonging to the same school can differ." In Saint-Saëns's estimate of Wagner, one notes occasionally a desire to appeal to chauvinism, and a fear of the formidable rivalry of Richard of Bayreuth. Like

other great French composers, Camille has had a hard and long struggle with fame, and it seems that difficulties additional were strewn in his way on account of his former enthusiastic advocacy of Wagner's genius. He was, in consequence of this, insulted as a "Wagnerite," and his enemies actually went so far as to represent him condemned, in punishment for something, *to listen to a Beethoven symphony*—him, the most ardent worshipper of classical music! This made Camille cautious, and in the preface to 'Harmonie et Mélodie' (dated 1885) he exclaims: "I admire the works of Richard Wagner profoundly, notwithstanding their *bizarreness*. They are *supérieures* and powerful—that is enough for me. But I never was, am not now, nor will ever be of the Wagnerian religion." But now the Wagnerites accuse him of renouncing their master after profiting by his works. He retorts, however: "Not only do I not renounce him, but I pride myself on having studied him and profited thereby, as was my right and my desire." And in another place: "I have for a long time studied the works of Richard Wagner. I have found my greatest delight in these studies, and the performances of his works which I have attended have made a profound impression on me, which all the theories in the world will never make me forget or deny."

Nevertheless, he claims the right of expressing his disapproval of the [mythical] "Wagnerite" who insists that music begins and ends with Wagner; and in Wagner's works themselves he points out some details that do not please him, especially in the ethical and philosophic aspects of the plot—adding, however, with a frankness rare in a Frenchman, that he looks at these things from a French point of view, and that to a German they may appear in a different light. He says he would no longer, as he did in 1876, call the awakening of *Brünnhilde* (in "Siegfried") *un enchantement*, for the reason that the preceding scene is too long and the following one too languishing. "On the other hand, my admiration for 'Rheingold,' and for at least three-fourths of 'Tristan' and the 'Walküre,' has never ceased growing." And the sixty pages he devotes to the Nibelung Tetralogy constitute one of the most appreciative and fascinating accounts that have been given of the first Bayreuth festival. He notes as an important point that at Bayreuth the singer's voice is never drowned, thanks to the position of the invisible orchestra, and takes this opportunity to express his opinion of those who are continually denouncing Wagner's music as noisy—the same people who delight in the cymbals, drums, and cornets that make many other operas hideous: "It is certain that the least operetta makes more noise than 'Rheingold.'" As Saint-Saëns has the reputation of being the greatest living score-reader, the following is of special interest: "When one has read this score, when one has seen this marvellous jeweller's work, one has some difficulty in noting all the chasing relegated *au dernier plan* and sacrificed to the general effect. Wagner has imitated the mediæval artists, who sculptured a cathedral as they would have decorated furniture."

The great scene between *Siegmund* and *Sieglinde* in the "Walküre" causes the French critic's enthusiasm to bubble over in these words:

"Here nothing would have prevented the composer from writing an air and a duo in the traditional style; but no air, no duo, could have; from a theatrical point of view, the value of this monologue and this dialogue-scene. Melodic flowers of the most exquisite fragrance spring up at every step, and the orchestra, like a boundless ocean, rocks the two lovers on its magic waves. Here we have the theatre of the future; neither the opera nor the simple drama will ever rouse such deep emotions in the soul. If the composer had completely succeeded in no other scene but this, it would suffice to prove that his ideal is not an impracticable dream: the cause has been

heard. A thousand critics writing each a thousand lines a day for ten years would injure this work about as much as a child's breath would go towards overthrowing the pyramids of Egypt."

Of the fire scene in the same drama he says: "Here are harmonies which would not be approved in any conservatory; on reading the score, they seem impossible; on hearing it, they sound strange but delicious." "Siegfried" he calls the most original part of the Tetralogy. "Not only is this no longer opera, it is no longer the theatre; the spectator is transported to an entirely new world, which music alone makes possible." And, finally, the "Götterdämmerung," in which the auditor "loses all sense of time as by a magic effect," and forgets to count the hours. "It is impossible to give the faintest idea of such music: it resembles no other." "The music triples the intensity of the feelings with which the characters are animated—that is all one can say to those who have not heard it." "From the elevation of the last act of 'Götterdämmerung' the whole work appears, in its almost supernatural grandeur, like the chain of the Alps seen from the summit of Mont Blanc."

No doubt these enthusiastic utterances helped to bring about the recent change of opinion in Paris regarding Wagner's music—a change which has been so complete that Saint-Saëns himself has become alarmed, and warns his countrymen, somewhat chauvinistically, against an intellectual and artistic German invasion and conquest. But if the accounts he incidentally gives of the present state of affairs in musical France be correct, such an invasion could do no harm. Even from unmusical England France could learn much in one department—that of vocal music. He speaks in terms of the warmest admiration of the chorus singing at the Birmingham festivals. True, he adds, Lamoureux has shown that a French chorus can be trained to attain equal excellence, but in France such performances are spasmodic and not regular institutions, for the reason that "one does not find in France a sufficient number of amateurs who love music sufficiently to attend for a long time a regular series of rehearsals." One reason he gives why choral music is not more in favor is, that the attempts, have been too generally made with the music of Handel, which owes much to its religious associations and can therefore never be so popular as in "Biblical" England. In orchestral music Paris is better off, and Saint-Saëns dwells on its most curious characteristic—the division of labor. One society cultivates modern German music, another devotes some attention to French works, while the Conservatory concerts are exclusively devoted to the classical composers, rarely going beyond Beethoven. "How many (French) composers," he exclaims, "have wished to see their names in this little programme, the size of a hand, and have died without this supreme satisfaction." "We have searched in Schumann, one of the members of the Society told me one day, but we found nothing." Late-ly, however, Schumann has been admitted and warmly applauded by the conservative audience.

The rôle of France in musical history has been, according to Saint-Saëns, to develop dramatic music. Not only have her own composers always paid special attention to dramatic realism, but the foreigners who won fame in Paris—Gluck, Spontini, Rossini, Meyerbeer—had to modify their style to suit French taste; and to their advantage. Among France's minor achievements in music he mentions the magnificent edition of Gluck's operas, prepared (with his assistance) by Mlle. Pelletan, whose erudition was as great as her enthusiasm, as Saint-Saëns found when they began their joint labor of revising and conjecturing. He also pays a warm tribute to another French woman of musical endowment, Mme.

Holmès, whose "Argonautes" he analyzes at length and finds much to praise in it, not its least merit being that she does not attempt to deny her sex, like most female artists, "who seem anxious above all things to make us forget that they are women, and to show an exuberant virility, without thinking that it is precisely this anxiety which betrays the woman."

LECKY'S ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.—II.

A History of England in the Eighteenth Century.
By William Edward Hartpole Lecky. Vols. V. and VI. London: Longmans; New York: Appletons. 1887.

EVERY one who looks at Lecky's last volumes will turn to the chapters on Ireland. Every reader of these chapters will put the book down with a sense of disappointment. That this should be so is no discredit to our author. His readers are disappointed because they want something which he deliberately refuses to give them. They require clear and dogmatic opinions about the course of Irish politics. Lecky refuses to dogmatize, and provides facts from which every one must draw his own conclusions. He refuses to play the part of a rhetorician, and therefore achieves no rhetorical successes. He tries to perform in all seriousness the duties of an historian, and therefore earns the gratitude only of that small class who care much for knowledge of the past, and who care little for the direct bearing of such knowledge on the controversies of the day. Lecky, indeed, is not one of those authors who think it a duty to keep their own opinions concealed; and if you compare his earliest with his latest writings on Ireland, you will probably come to the conclusion that recent Irish history may to a certain, though to a very slight, extent have affected his views of Irish politics in the eighteenth century. That this should be so is inevitable. To interpret the past in the light of the present is as legitimate a process as to interpret the events of to-day by analyzing the causes whence they spring. What is absolutely certain is, that whether Lecky's views be or be not colored by political feeling; his one aim is to state, not his own opinions, but the facts on which these opinions rest, and that intelligent students find in our author's pages the data from which each man must form for himself his inferences as to the course of policy pursued by England towards Ireland during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. Our aim in this notice is to avoid as far as possible all contentious matter, and to point out two or three conclusions suggested by Lecky's work in which fair-minded Englishmen and Americans may, whatever be their views as to the present crisis in Irish affairs, acquiesce. Nor can any higher praise be given to our author than the acknowledgment that his pages may be consulted by Home-Rulers and Unionists alike, and that both Home-Rulers and Unionists may learn from his calm statements many truths from which they may each profit.

Three conclusions, at least, are suggested by Lecky which to an impartial critic seem hardly open to question.

First. The conduct towards Ireland pursued by the English Government between 1782 and 1793 was, whatever its intention, disastrous. To put the matter shortly, Pitt and Dundas entertained, according to Lecky, liberal, and in the main broad, views of Irish policy. Pitt's commercial ideas were very considerably in advance of his time. He had in religious matters no touch of bigotry. He was anxious to insure the material prosperity of Ireland, and was in no way averse to the policy of Catholic emancipation. The opposition on the part of George III. to concessions

towards the Catholics had not, at the period with which we are concerned, made itself apparent; possibly it did not even exist. The views, however, of Pitt on all measures connected with the Catholics were in direct opposition to the opinions of the Irish Administration. Fitzgibbon was vehemently opposed to concessions which either involved or tended towards emancipation. Pitt's policy was thwarted by the Irish leaders who were most loyal to the English connection. The Castle, neither for the first nor the last time, triumphed, or rather achieved a kind of half triumph which was possibly in the long run of worse omen for England and for Ireland than would have been a complete victory of the party of reaction. The net result of the attitude adopted by the English Government, by the Castle, and by the Irish Opposition, was that the Catholics obtained the Parliamentary suffrage, but the Irish Parliament was not reformed; the Catholics were not given the full rights of citizens, and the very imperfect political arrangement known as Grattan's Constitution was not completed or revised so as to place the relations between England and Ireland on a durable basis. If it were the function of an historian—which happily it is not—to distribute praise and blame among the actors in the drama of history, his verdict might be that all parties were pretty nearly equally to blame. A more just verdict, however, is that the men on whom fate imposed the necessity of solving most difficult problems, acted in a way which, considering the state of their knowledge and feelings, was too natural to be blameworthy; and that they one and all can plead the excuse that the position with which they had to deal was one of intolerable, and it may be insuperable, difficulty.

Second. Grattan's Constitution was a piece of incomplete machinery which, as every one can now see, was all but unworkable. Under it Ireland was independent, but was not self-governed:

"There was, properly speaking, no Ministry in Ireland responsible to the Irish Parliament. The position of Irish Ministers was essentially different from the position of their colleagues in England. Ministerial power was mainly in the hands of the Lord-Lieutenant and of his Chief Secretary, and this latter functionary led the House of Commons, introduced for the most part Government business, and filled in Ireland a position at least as important as that of the Prime Minister in England. But the Lord-Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary were not politicians who had risen to prominence and leadership in the Irish Parliament. They were Englishmen, strangers to Ireland, appointed and instructed by English Ministers, and changed with each succeeding administration. The Irish Government was thus completely subordinated to the play of party government in England. An Irish administration which commanded the full confidence of the Irish Parliament, might at any moment be overthrown by a vote of the English Parliament on some purely Irish question."

Nor does Lecky's language represent the full extent of the constitutional difficulty. A ministry might, under the conditions of the Irish representation, command the confidence of the Irish Parliament, and yet not represent the opinion of even Protestant Ireland. And a government which represented Protestant opinion might grossly misrepresent the feeling of Irish Catholics. Hence arose the immediate need both for Parliamentary reform and for Catholic emancipation. But on neither of these points were the popular leaders agreed. Flood and Charlemont wished to employ the Volunteers for the purpose of forcing reform upon the Protestants. Neither Flood nor Charlemont was willing to emancipate the Catholics. Grattan dreaded the attempt to carry out a revolution by moral pressure supported in the last resort by armed force. He hoped that Parliament would reform itself, and wished to confer on Catholics all the rights of citizens. No one can blame patriots for hesitat-