Franz Liszt and his music

Arthur Hervey

FRANZ LISZT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ALFRED BRUNEAU

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FRENCH MUSIC IN THE XIXTH CENTURY

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FRANZ LISZT
AND HIS MUSIC

BY

ARTHUR HERVEY

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INTRODUCTION

LISZT occupies a unique place in the musical Pantheon. Acclaimed almost from his childhood as the greatest pianist of the age, his genius as a composer is even now strangely underestimated. In many people's minds he is associated with brilliant pianoforte pieces too difficult for any but first-rate executants to attempt, and though his name constantly figures on concert programmes in connection with some of his minor compositions, most of his larger and more important works are persistently ignored. The influence he has exercised upon the development of music and the trend of modern musical thought is immense, and yet no composer perhaps has been more misunderstood and more misjudged. If a tardy recognition has long since been accorded to his great contemporaries Berlioz and Wagner, the same is still due to Liszt, to the glorious artist who was their champion and devoted friend, to the man who in his

noble and self-sacrificing efforts on behalf of others forgot to look after himself, to the creator of the Symphonic Poem; in short, to one of the greatest, sincerest, and most original musical thinkers of the nineteenth century.

The celebrity enjoyed by Liszt as an executant from the time when, a mere child, he became the wonder of the musical world, curiously enough seems to have proved rather a hindrance than otherwise to his fame as a creative artist. He had long been recognised as *facile princeps* among pianists, but his attempts to shine in the higher spheres of musical composition were received from the first with suspicion on the part both of musicians and public, and the opposition against which he had to struggle lasted to the end of his days. Far from embittering him, however, it seemed to make him more and more anxious to devote all his energies, all his talents, to the furtherance of music in its varied manifestations.

The beautiful nature of Liszt reveals itself in the following words, which occur in a letter written by him to Wagner, December 29, 1853: "You may be sure that I have no vanity concerning my works: were I in the whole of my life to produce

nothing good or beautiful, I should none the less feel a deep and eternal joy in appreciating what I recognise and admire as beautiful and great in others."

This is the sentiment which may be said to have permeated the entire life of Liszt. To do good, to help others, to serve his art, these were his sole aims, his sole desires. The fulsome adulation he owed to the dexterity of his fingers had not tarnished the beauty of his mind, had not destroyed the innate simplicity of his nature or robbed him of his idealism. To be acclaimed the greatest living pianist did not satisfy him, for he aspired to create as well as to reproduce, and so it was that before he had reached his prime he forsook the lucrative career of a virtuoso in order to devote himself more and more to composition, producing in rapid succession works that will endure long after the ephemeral successes of their author's career as an executant have been forgotten.

Comparatively little has been written in England about Liszt, outside the pages of biographical dictionaries and histories of music, although in Germany quite a literature has developed around the personality of the master.

In the following pages the author has

endeavoured to give an idea of the important place occupied by Liszt as composer and musical thinker, and of the part he has taken in furthering the development of music.

Although he realises only too well the difficulty of doing justice to a musical personality such as that of Liszt, yet he hopes that the present volume may at any rate serve as an introduction to the study of the master's works.

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1811. Franz Liszt born at Raiding, near Oedenburg, Hungary, October 22nd.

1821. First appearance in public, at Oedenburg.

1821–23. Vienna. Studied piano under Czerny, harmony and composition under Salieri.

1823. Met Beethoven. Left Vienna for Paris. Studied under Paër.

1824. First visit to London. Played before King George IV.

1825. Concert tour through France. Second season in England. His opera "Don Sanche" produced at the Paris Académie Royale de Musique, October 17th.

1826. Publication of "Etudes en douze exercices." Studied counterpoint with Reicha.

1827. Death of his father.

1828. Played Beethoven's E flat concerto for the first time in Paris.

1830–32. Paris. Became acquainted with Paganini, Berlioz and Chopin.

1834. Met the Comtesse d'Agoult.

1835–36. Travelled in Switzerland. Composed many pianoforte works and transcriptions. Wrote essays on musical subjects.

1837. Composed "Fantasia quasi sonata," Paganini Etudes, &c.

1839. Sojourn in Rome.

1840. First meeting with Wagner.

1841. First visit to Weimar.

1843–44. Concert tours through Europe.

1845. Inauguration of Beethoven monument at Bonn. Beethoven cantata.

1846. Concert tours.

1847. First meeting with the Princess Carolyne de Sayn-Wittgenstein.

1848. Settled at Weimar as Hofcapellmeister.

1849. Finished "Tasso," "Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne," "Héroïde funèbre."

1850. Finished "Mazeppa," "Prometheus," and Choruses for Herder's "Prometheus." Produced Wagner's "Lohengrin," Aug. 28th.

1851. Composed "Festklänge," Organ fantasia on chorale from "Le Prophète," &c.

1852. Produced Berlioz' "Benvenuto Cellini."

1853. Composed Sonata in B minor. Commenced "Faust" symphony.

1854. "Faust" symphony. "Les Préludes," "Orpheus," "Hungaria."

1855. "Graner Messe," Psalm XIII., "Dante" symphony, &c.

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1858–59. Two episodes from Lenau's "Faust." Missa Choralis.

1858. Produced Cornelius' "Barber of Bagdad."

1861. Left Weimar.

1861–62. Composed "The Legend of St. Elizabeth."

1863. Commenced the oratorio "Christus."

1865. Took minor Orders and became an Abbé.

1866. "Graner Messe" performed in Paris. Finished "Christus."

1867. Hungarian Coronation Mass.

1870. Beethoven Centenary Festival at Weimar.

1872. Began the oratorio "St. Stanislaus" (left unfinished).

1873. Production of "Christus" at Weimar.

1875. Elected president of new Hungarian musical Academy at Pesth.

1876. First Bayreuth Festival.

1878–79. Missa pro organo.

1883. Composed "Am Grabe Richard Wagners." Published third volume of "Années de Pélerinage."

1886. Visit to London. Death at Bayreuth, July 31st.

FRANZ LISZT

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CHAPTER I

THE LIFE

ASKED one day whether he had written the history of his life, Liszt replied that he had found it quite sufficient to live it.

Born in a Hungarian village, on October 22, 1811, the son of a Hungarian father and an Austrian mother, he was destined to become famous when still a mere youth, and his extraordinary precocity seemed to presage the arrival of another Mozart. His father, Adam Liszt, who was agent to Prince Nicholas Esterhazy, the patron of Joseph Haydn, was also a musical enthusiast and played several instruments. He it was who taught his son the rudiments of music. There was indeed no mistaking the genuineness of the boy's vocation. Young Franz progressed so rapidly under the paternal

guidance that at nine years of age he was able to make his first appearance in public, taking part in a concert at Oedenburg given by Baron von Braun, a blind musician, when he surprised and delighted his audience by a performance of Ries' Concerto in E flat and of various improvisations on well-known themes.

This initial success was followed by others at Eisenstadt and Presburg. Several Hungarian noblemen now came forward and subscribed a sum sufficiently large to provide an annual income for the next six years in order to furnish the boy with means to complete his musical education.

Adam Liszt thought of placing his son under the direction of Hummel, then *Capellmeister* at Weimar and at the height of his celebrity as composer and pianist. This idea, however, had to be abandoned on account of the high fees asked by Hummel, and father and son journeyed to Vienna, where they were more fortunate, for the famous Czerny was so much impressed by the boy's talent that he offered to take him as his pupil at a mere nominal fee, finally refusing to accept any remuneration whatever. During two years, 1821 to 1823, young Franz studied with this excellent master, and also

took lessons in harmony and composition from Salieri, the erstwhile rival of Mozart. Under these two eminent musicians he progressed rapidly, and made occasional appearances in public, meeting with ever-increasing success. It was on one of these occasions, in April 1823, that he had the good fortune to play before Beethoven, who was so moved to enthusiasm that he stepped on to the platform and embraced the child, thus giving the supreme consecration to the boy's rising genius.

It was in the autumn of the same year that Adam Liszt took his son to Paris with the idea of enabling him to enter the Conservatoire in the French capital, but a regulation prohibiting foreigners from studying at this institution frustrated his object. Young Liszt, however, remained in Paris and took lessons in composition from Paër, a well-known composer of that time, whose name has survived in connection with a little one-act opera entitled "Le Maître de Chapelle." He also appeared as pianist in various aristocratic salons as well as in public, and soon became the rage. The entirely abnormal nature of the impression created in Paris by "le petit Litz," as he was called, was evidenced when this boy of twelve was

commissioned by the management of the Opera to compose the music of a one-act work. Such a thing had never occurred before, and has certainly never been repeated. It was during the period that he was engaged in the composition of this opera that Liszt paid his first visit to London, where his public début took place on June 24, 1824. He played before King George IV., and his success here equalled that which he had gained on the Continent.

His return to Paris was succeeded by a tour through the French provinces. Then came a second visit to England, in the course of which he appeared at Manchester, where an overture of his composition, concerning which there is no available information, was performed on June 20, 1825. On October 17 of the same year, his opera, "Don Sanche, ou Le Château de l'Amour," was produced at the Paris Académie Royale de Musique, the celebrated tenor, Adolphe Nourrit, the future creator of Robert and Raoul in Meyerbeer's two famous operas, taking the principal part. As might well be expected, the work did not create much impression. It disappeared after three performances and has never been published.

During the next two years Liszt under-

took further concert tours, through France, Switzerland and England, finding time between whiles to study counterpoint with Reicha in Paris. In 1827 he published a set of twelve studies for the piano, composed the previous year. These contain in germ some of the subject matter which he was later on to develop and give to the world as the "Douze Etudes d'exécution transcendante." The religious bent of his mind became so pronounced about this time that he seriously thought of entering a seminary, a course which his father succeeded in dissuading him from following. It is worthy of record that only a few weeks before his death Liszt told his pupil and biographer, Herr August Göllerich, that if it had not been for music he would have dedicated himself entirely to the Church and become a Franciscan. The death, in August 1827, of his father, who had been such a mentor and friend to him, was naturally a great blow to the young artist. During the next three years we find him in Paris living with his mother and earning his livelihood by teaching and making occasional appearances at concerts.

Liszt was now no longer a child, and circumstances had made Paris his home, the Paris of 1830, in the full flood of the

romantic movement. Thrown as he was amongst the most famous musicians, artists, writers and philosophers of the day, he soon developed an insatiable desire to read and acquire information upon all subjects. It is said that one day he startled the historian Mignet by asking him to teach him the entire literature of France! His ardent and imaginative nature was a prey to the most varied influences, and these left indelible impressions on his mind and reacted upon his career. The magic of Paganini's playing caused him to work with renewed vigour and endeavour to produce on the piano effects as striking as those realised by the Italian on his violin. His arrangements of Paganini's twenty-four Caprices, published in 1839, are the outcome of his admiration. The impression produced upon him by Paganini's *tours de force* was, however, evidently only superficial; at any rate when the great virtuoso died a few years later, in 1840, Liszt wrote a necrological article in which he expressed himself thus: "Let the artist of the future wholeheartedly give up the egoistic and vain rôle of which Paganini was, we believe, a last and illustrious example; let him place his object not in himself, but outside; let virtuosity be to him

a means and not an end ; let him ever remember that, like nobility and doubtless more than nobility, *Génie oblige.*" These words, read in the light of Liszt's subsequent abandonment of his career as a pianist, are particularly interesting, and evidence the trend of his mind at a period when his fame as an executant was at its zenith.

A far more important influence upon the impressionable mind of the young artist was that of Berlioz. Fired with admiration for the French composer's "Symphonie Fantastique," Liszt wrote a piano transcription of this extraordinary work, the first proof of a life-long devotion to the interests of Berlioz—a devotion which in later years the latter might have remembered when he went out of his way to disparage the music of his friend and benefactor.

Another influence was that of Chopin, with whom Liszt struck up a great and enduring friendship. Not the faintest trace of jealousy disturbed the relations between these two monarchs of the piano. Liszt did all in his power to propagate the music of his friend, and the admiration he felt for him has been chronicled in the book he wrote in his honour many years later.

Music did not by any means, however,

monopolise his attention at this period. His mind was actively assimilating ideas of all sorts. The religious and mystical bent of his nature caused him for a time to listen to the Père Enfantin, the apostle of Saint-Simonism, then to the Abbé de Lamennais, whose influence upon him seems to have been still more marked. On the other hand, the free and Bohemian ideas advocated by Georges Sand doubtless appealed to his young and ardent nature. The omnivorous character of his mind at this period reveals itself in the following extract from one of his letters: "Homer, the Bible, Plato, Locke, Byron, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Beethoven, Bach, Hummel, Mozart, Weber are all around me. I study them, meditate over them, devour them with avidity."

The period which now followed was the one during which he achieved his greatest triumphs as a pianist, his period of *Sturm und Drang*, the romance of which was furnished by the Comtesse d'Agoult, whose union with Liszt lasted some years.[1] An

[1] Of the three children which were its fruits, Daniel, the son, died young; Blandine became the wife of Emile Ollivier, the celebrated French statesman, and also died young; and Cosima was married first to Hans von Bülow, and secondly to Wagner. The Comtesse d'Agoult later on became well known under her literary pseudonym of Daniel Stern.

attachment cemented at the bedside of a dying child between an impressionable young man and a romantic young woman some years his senior was indeed but too unlikely to prove permanently successful, and the inevitable break finally occurred in 1844.

The life led by Liszt, which obliged him to travel all over Europe, was scarcely conducive to the concentration of mind necessary for the production of serious compositions. It is all the more surprising, therefore, to note the amount of work he performed in the course of the feverish existence he was compelled to lead. His unselfish devotion to art nevertheless revealed itself in many ways during this agitated period. Realising that Beethoven's symphonies were but imperfectly known and not duly appreciated, he set himself the gigantic task of transcribing these for the piano, and succeeded in reproducing the composer's intentions in a manner truly marvellous. Such transcriptions of instrumental scores had never been attempted before, and they have remained unsurpassed. He also transcribed the songs of Schubert, and doubtless helped in this way to popularise the Viennese master's music. The operatic fantasias he wrote about this time were musically far superior to the show

pieces of the same type then in vogue. Concerning these and also his original works belonging to this period more will be said in a subsequent chapter.

To follow Liszt in his journeys through Europe and chronicle his numberless triumphs as a pianist would be beyond the scope of the present volume. Two examples, however, may be given of his disinterestedness and nobility of character. Whilst on a concert tour through Italy the news came to him of terrible floods which had occurred in Hungary. At once, and without hesitation, Liszt interrupted his tour, departed for his native land, and gave several concerts for the benefit of the sufferers.

The second example is in connection with the monument then proposed to be erected to Beethoven at Bonn. Indignant at the small amount of subscriptions sent in for the purpose, Liszt offered to provide the remainder of the money required, and raised this by giving a number of concerts.

During these *Wanderjahren*, Liszt inhabited many places in turn: Paris, where he had Thalberg as his rival; Rome, where he made a profound study of Italian art and old Italian music; Nonnenwerth and Weimar, where he became acquainted with German

literature and was imbued with German romanticism.

He had met Schumann in Dresden in 1840, and the same year witnessed his first meeting, so pregnant in its results, with Richard Wagner, then a poor and unknown musician striving to keep body and soul together by doing hack-work for publishers in Paris.

In 1845 took place the inauguration at Bonn of the Beethoven monument due mainly to his exertions. Liszt was the leading spirit of the fêtes arranged for this solemnity, and appeared in the triple capacity of conductor, pianist and composer, conducting the C minor symphony, playing the solo part in the "Emperor" concerto, and producing a cantata composed by himself in honour of Beethoven. His labours in connection with these fêtes did not, however, escape hostile criticism. Mean and petty jealousies were aroused. Berlioz, who was present, and thought highly of the cantata composed by Liszt, wrote that "some people were angry with Liszt because he possessed a phenomenal talent and obtained exceptional successes, others because he was witty, others because he was generous." The opposition he was to meet with later on in his career as a composer had now begun.

The Beethoven fêtes at Bonn nevertheless constitute an important episode in the career of Liszt, and it is not impossible that they may have had something to do in shaping his future and in deciding him to abandon the nomadic existence of a virtuoso in order to devote himself more thoroughly to musical creation. Certain is it that the life, in spite of the successes it brought, had begun to pall upon him, and some two years later, in 1847, he gave it up without regret and settled at Weimar as *Hofcapellmeister*.

It was at the beginning of this same year that he had become acquainted with the Princess Carolyne de Sayn-Wittgenstein, who was destined to exercise so great an influence on his career. The daughter of a wealthy Polish nobleman, this strangely gifted woman had been married very young to the Prince Nicholas de Sayn-Wittgenstein, from whom she had soon become separated. Having met Liszt, first at Kiev and then at Odessa, she invited him to visit her at her country residence at Woronince in Podolia, where she resided with her young daughter and devoted much of her time to literary studies. The romantic attachment which arose between these two imaginative and highly strung natures culminated in the

Princess leaving Russia with her daughter and settling at Weimar, where she remained for several years. The influence she possessed over Liszt must doubtless greatly have stimulated the florescence of his genius and helped to invest him with some of that energy and self-confidence by which he was able to produce the series of master-works belonging to the Weimar period. For many years she tried in vain to obtain an annulment of her marriage from the Pope, but when she finally became a widow, in 1864, religion seems to have obtained a strong hold over both her and Liszt, and the long-thought-of union did not take place. The two, however, remained fast friends until the end, and the Princess only survived Liszt a few months.

After the life of continuous excitement he had been leading for years, Weimar must have seemed a veritable haven of rest to Liszt. It was not, however, to indulge in repose that he had established himself in the quiet town on the Ilm, imperishably associated with memories of Goethe and Schiller. Having met Marschner in Hanover, where the composer of "Hans Heiling" occupied the position of *Capellmeister*, the latter said to him: "Well, you are now in Weimar! There cannot be much to do

there." "Oh," answered Liszt, "I shall soon find enough to do." How far he made good his words the sequel shows.

Weimar had, as every one knows, been a famous literary centre in the time of the Grand Duke Carl August, the patron and friend of Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Wieland and others, and Liszt found the reigning Grand Duke Carl Alexander ready to help him in doing for music that which his predecessor had done for literature. With the means at his disposal, Liszt was now able to indulge to his heart's content in musical propagandism, and he lost no time in so doing. The altruistic spirit he had ever displayed burst forth with renewed fire, and the work he accomplished at Weimar in the space of about a dozen years is veritably staggering in its immensity and artistic significance.

One of his first acts was to take up the cause of Wagner, then an exile from German soil owing to his connection with the revolutionary movement of 1849 in Dresden, and on that account by no means a *persona grata* in Court circles. With Liszt, however, difficulties existed only to be overcome, and he at once strove to kindle in others some of the enthusiasm with which the works of

his great friend had inspired him. Having initiated the inhabitants of Weimar to the beauties of "Tannhäuser" in 1849, he produced "Lohengrin" the following year, for the first time on any stage, an event the importance of which cannot be exaggerated. His cult for Wagner, however, did not prevent him recognising the claims of other composers.

With tireless zeal he pursued his mission as an apostle of music, displaying the independence of his mind by according hospitality to composers representing every school of thought and every epoch. Among the works he produced on the Weimar stage were Raff's "King Alfred"; Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini," which had failed in Paris some years before; "Alfonso e Estrella," a hitherto unperformed opera by Schubert; Rubinstein's "The Siberian Hunters"; Sobolewski's "Comala"; Schumann's "Genoveva" and "Manfred"; Cornelius' "Barber of Bagdad"; besides operas by Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Grétry, Cherubini, Spontini, Spohr, Weber, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Auber, Halévy, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, and others.

Liszt was equally active in the concert room, and his répertoire there was singularly comprehensive. Under his baton were

heard the most famous works of Handel, Beethoven, Mendelssohn; the "Struensee" music of Meyerbeer; the "Faust" and "Paradise and the Peri" of Schumann; the principal compositions of Berlioz; also works by contemporary composers, such as Ferdinand Hiller, Gade, Raff, Joachim, Hans von Bülow, Litolff, Rubinstein, &c. Besides bringing to a hearing works which he considered worthy of admiration, Liszt repeatedly took up his pen and expatiated on their beauties, writing at one time on the operas of Wagner, at another on the works of Schumann or the songs of Robert Franz.

Considering the multifarious labours connected with the position he occupied at Weimar, it might be imagined that Liszt would have had no time left to devote to composition, for it may be added that he was also at this time busily engaged in teaching. Yet it is precisely during the Weimar period that he wrote his greatest works, the Symphonic Poems, the "Dante" and "Faust" symphonies, the "Graner" Mass, the setting of Psalm XIII., the two piano concertos, the pianoforte sonata, &c. In truth a magnificent, a unique period of labour and achievement, and one eminently calculated to shed an effulgent light over the

capital of the German principality. Extraordinary though it may seem, however, the appreciation meted out to the great artist who controlled the musical life of Weimar was by no means unanimous. The more conservative musicians of Germany, of whom there were many, had for some time viewed with suspicion, not to say with alarm, the progressive tendencies of the new school. The opinions often tactlessly expressed by Wagner in his writings had been greatly resented in many quarters, while his theories on the art work of the future had been freely condemned and ridiculed, the same treatment being accorded to Liszt in his attempts to emancipate himself from the old and worn-out symphonic forms. Musical Germany was now divided into two camps, and the combatants on both sides indulged in bitter and acrimonious words. Joachim, who had been one of the early adherents of the new Weimar school, but whose musical tendencies were really more conservative, now definitely joined the opposite camp. This seems to have been the rift within the lute, and with the defection of the great violinist began, according to Wagner, "that furious agitation against the generous and unsuspicious Franz Liszt, which caused him the bitter

disappointment of seeing his splendid efforts to make Weimar a place of musical progress fall to the ground." It is but fair to add that Wagner's uncalled-for pamphlet, "Judaism in Music," published about this time, added fuel to the flame.

In the midst of all these bickerings and recriminations Liszt remained calm and undisturbed, tranquilly continuing his labours, serene in the consciousness that he was advancing the interests of his art. As time went on, however, his enemies increased in numbers, and his position became more and more difficult to retain without loss of dignity. The climax was approaching. Liszt had decided to produce "The Barber of Bagdad," the charming opera by Cornelius, now so well known. The first performance, which took place on December 15, 1858, under the direction of Liszt himself, provoked a storm of disapproval. Indignant at the outrageous behaviour of the audience, the master decided that the time had come for him to resign the post he had occupied with so much honour and glory. Thus came to a sudden end one of the most remarkable periods in the annals of music.

Liszt did not finally leave Weimar until 1861, when he took up his quarters in

Rome. It was generally thought that he would marry the Princess Carolyne de Sayn-Wittgenstein, but the religious bent of his nature, so prominent from his earliest childhood, appears to have gradually acquired fuller control over him, and a few years later the world heard with surprise that he had taken minor orders, and would henceforth be known as the Abbé Liszt.

From this time he occupied himself more and more with compositions of a sacred character. The cantata "St. Elizabeth," the oratorio "Christus" and the Hungarian Coronation Mass belong to this period of his life. For a long while he was working at an oratorio entitled "St. Stanislaus," which he did not live to complete. A Symphonic Poem, "From the Cradle to the Grave," the set of simple pieces entitled "Christmas Tree," and a Mass with organ accompaniment, are among the fruits of his old age.

During the last few years of his life he divided his time between Rome, Weimar and Buda-Pesth, directing the piano classes of a musical academy of which he was president in the Hungarian capital.

The end of his great career was preceded by a series of triumphs which must have gladdened his heart and atoned for many

past trials. In the early part of 1886, the seventy-fifth year of his life, various festivities were arranged in his honour. He first went to Paris, was enthusiastically received there, and was able to attend a performance of his "Graner Mass," which had been misunderstood in the French capital twenty years previously. From Paris the venerable master came to London, where his visit created a great sensation. He cannot fail to have been gratified by the ovations accorded to him on the occasion of the performances of his "St. Elizabeth" at the St. James's Hall and Crystal Palace. A reception at the Grafton Galleries, organised by his friend and pupil, Walter Bache, was one of the functions given in his honour.

A festival at Sondershausen followed the London triumphs, after which the master went to Bayreuth, where he was able once more to hear "Parsifal" and "Tristan." A few days later he caught a chill against which his enfeebled constitution was unable to react, and the end came on the night between July 31 and August 1.

Thus ended the life of this great artist and noble-hearted man, whose devotion to the cause of others and absolute disinterestedness of purpose would alone be sufficient to

entitle him to the immortality which is assured to him by his creative work. It is fitting that his remains should lie at Bayreuth, not far from those of the one whose genius he uplifted and whose glorious career he rendered possible. A statue erected at Weimar perpetuates his memory in the city he loved so well.

CHAPTER II

THE MUSICIAN AND THE MAN

To describe so complex a musical personality as that of Liszt is by no means easy, for the very nature of his genius seems rebellious to analysis.

The short account of his life given in the preceding chapter has doubtless been sufficient to show the variety and complexity of his career, and it will be realised that no musician probably has ever been exposed to influences so many and so diverse.

A Hungarian by birth, receiving his musical education first in Vienna then in Paris, thrown into the most brilliant and intellectual society of the French capital at the most impressionable age, travelling all over Europe as a virtuoso for a considerable period, spending the years of his maturity in a small German "Residenz" as *Hofcapellmeister*, and finally drifting to the Eternal City and ending his days in the odour of

sanctity and the garb of an ecclesiastic! What wonder that a personality subject to so many impressions should be a difficult one to fix!

Yet through the turmoil of his existence, notwithstanding the contrary currents of thought to which he was exposed, certain traits stand out which may be said to characterise all his actions and to be reflected in his works,—a peculiarly vivid idealism, a deep mystical sentiment, and an ardent romantic feeling, grafted on to a nature overwhelmingly enthusiastic and unflinchingly sincere.

The feverish agitation of the life he led as a pianist during his youth and early manhood doubtless reacted upon the development of his musical personality, and in a measure may be said to have retarded it. So much of his time had to be devoted to interpreting the works of others that it is a wonder he was able to compose at all. The piano was naturally the first recipient of his thoughts, and he enriched the literature of this instrument with many priceless gems, but the strong creative impulse, which had for years been in a measure restricted, burst forth irresistibly when his appointment at Weimar procured him a greater liberty of

action. Ideas which had simmered in his brain for many a long day now expanded and took a definite form, fragmentary thoughts developed into organic wholes, and through him a new impulse was given to symphonic music the importance of which at first was scarcely realised.

No musician probably ever possessed so comprehensive an intelligence or was so susceptible to the influence of the other arts, and some of his greatest works are associated with the names of Dante, Goethe, Shakespeare, Schiller, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Byron, Raphael, Kaulbach, &c. His emotional character, sincerity of feeling, ideality of thought are vividly reflected in his works, while if the cry of human anguish can at times be heard in his music, if he proves himself emphatically the interpreter of the sorrow-stricken, the consoler of those who weep, he can also be light-hearted and gay, his strains can make the blood course through the veins, can conjure up mirth and gaiety and dispel the clouds of melancholy as if by magic. An eclectic by nature, a cosmopolitan by the force of circumstances, Liszt was also a patriot at heart, and the music he must have heard in Hungary as a boy left an indelible impression on his mind.

The Hungarian Rhapsodies, the Symphonic Poem "Hungaria," the Hungarian Coronation Mass, the song "Die drei Zigeuner," and the cantata "The Legend of St. Elizabeth," show how deep this impression must have been.

Notwithstanding the fact that the most varied elements combined to make up his musical personality, the genius of Liszt was characterised by a powerful originality, an unmistakable individuality. In order to realise this, it is only necessary to study his works and note what an enormous influence these have had upon contemporary musical thought. If he was sometimes prone to be rhapsodical, and occasionally allowed himself to become prolix, this was because of his efforts to rise above the commonplace and endeavour to attain the sublime.

The influence exercised by Liszt has shown itself in several ways. His creation of the "Symphonic Poem" brought into being a new form which considerably enlarged the boundaries of instrumental music. It might be imagined that his attempts to strike out new paths would have been welcomed by musicians, instead of which his efforts at emancipation called forth torrents of abuse and ridicule. The orthodox were alarmed

at what seemed to them to be an attack upon principles which had long endured. And yet Liszt was no musical anarchist; his love and respect for the great masters had been proved over and over again in countless ways. It was perhaps this very admiration for the older masters that made him realise the futility of attempting to compete with them in their own field. Besides this, he instinctively felt that the time had come for fresh forms to be evolved. The cold, dry formalism of the past had disappeared, swept away by the current of romanticism which pervaded the whole of Europe during the early years of the century. Beethoven in his symphonies, Weber in his operas, Schubert in his songs, had opened new worlds, had invested music with a strong human element. Music was more and more becoming a language of the emotions, and mere formal perfection no longer sufficed. Berlioz in his "Symphonie Fantastique" (1828) had revolutionised the orchestra and heralded a new departure. It was unconsciously felt that music should be essentially expressive and descriptive. The composers of the generation active during the thirties all realised this more or less. Chopin expressed the sorrows of his native land,

Schumann poured forth his innermost feelings into his works, and Mendelssohn retailed his impressions of Italy and Scotland in his symphonies. Long before, Beethoven had been moved by his admiration of Napoleon to write the "Eroica" symphony, and had disclosed his love of nature in the "Pastoral" symphony. Consciously or unconsciously, therefore, all these composers had been working with some idea in their minds outside the range of actual sound. Programme music is, of course, of far greater antiquity still, and the only reason the above instances are given is to show that the fundamental idea of what might be termed music painting was generally accepted by the most famous composers of the time. It was reserved for Liszt, however, to emancipate music from the thraldom of symphonic formalism and to create a new art-form pregnant in possibilities. It stands to reason that the musician desirous of translating into sounds the impressions received from some poem or picture would find himself considerably hampered by being obliged to express his ideas according to certain rules prescribing the exposition, development, and recapitulation of the principal subjects. The Symphonic Poem, as imagined by Liszt, affords

the required liberty and leaves the composer free to exercise his imagination without restriction, provided his music justifies its existence by its intrinsic worth as well as by its value as a tone painting.

"Not so long ago instrumental music had only two forms at its disposal, the symphony and the overture. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven had not written anything else; who then would have dared to do otherwise than they had? Neither Weber, nor Mendelssohn, nor Schumann had dared to do so. Liszt dared it."[1] These words were written by Camille Saint-Saëns, one of the master's greatest admirers and one of the first to follow in his footsteps and to adopt the form of the Symphonic Poem. In the course of the same article he observes that "for many people, programme music is a necessarily inferior *genre*. Much has been written on this subject which I am unable to understand. The music—is it, in itself, good or bad? Everything lies there. Whether or not it has a programme, it will neither be better nor worse." These words by a universally admired master puts the matter in a nutshell. Since the time when they were written, some five-and-twenty

[1] "Harmonie et Mélodie," Camille Saint-Saëns.

years ago, matters have progressed considerably, and so many composers have adopted the methods of Liszt in the construction of their symphonic works that the value of these has been well tested.

A very important feature in the new art form devised by Liszt relates to the metamorphosis of themes, leading to what might be termed thematic unity. The enormous advantage this affords to the composer, both from a strictly musical point of view or as regards poetical interpretation, can scarcely be denied. If Berlioz may possibly be named as the originator of this system, he can only be said to have indicated it when he made the *idée fixe*, a species of *leit motiv*, in his "Symphonie Fantastique," and the idea has been immensely expanded and employed in a totally different manner by Liszt. Both these composers were imbued with the desire of making their music interpret the emotions evoked by some outward cause, and both possessed ardent and poetic natures. Beyond this the resemblance between them was purely superficial. Liszt may indeed be said to have been quite as much influenced by Beethoven, whose work he compared, in a letter to von Lenz, the author of "Beethoven and his Three Styles,"

to a "pillar of cloud and fire which guided the Israelites through the desert—a pillar of cloud to guide us by day, a pillar of fire to guide us by night, '*so that we may progress both day and night.*'" [1] This passage leads one to conclude that Liszt did not consider Beethoven as having said the last word in music, but rather as having enlarged its scope and prepared the way for his successors to achieve further conquests in the realm of sound. This view has evidently long since been the one generally adopted, and there is no further necessity to labour the point.

There can be no doubt that from the very beginning of his career Liszt was imbued with the desire to make his music both emotional and descriptive. The political events of 1830 in Paris stirred him to the extent of making him sketch out a *Symphonie révolutionnaire*, the slow movement of which he utilised, many years later, as the basis of his Symphonic Poem, "Héroïde funèbre." Most of his piano pieces bear titles and belong to the category of programme music. Thus the "Années de Pélerinage" record his impressions of Switzerland and

[1] See "Letters of Franz Liszt," translated by Constance Bache.

Italy, while even the "Etudes d'exécution transcendante" are of a descriptive character and differ fundamentally from any other studies. One of these last, "Mazeppa," was eventually developed into one of his finest Symphonic Poems. It is said that in the early thirties Liszt was present at a party in Paris where Victor Hugo recited his poem, "Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne," and was so entranced by this that for years the impression remained indelibly fixed on his mind, until ultimately he was moved to compose the Symphonic Poem known by the above name, the first of the series of twelve.

Does this mean that Liszt was entirely dependent upon a programme of some sort for his inspiration? Assuredly not, and he proved this in his admirable sonata in B minor, a work of the deepest emotional feeling, which he left to tell its own tale. As a matter of fact, there is not so very much difference between so-called programme music, of the legitimate kind, and abstract music. A work bearing a title, which merely indicates to the listener the general character of the music he is about to hear, simply gains an added interest thereby.

It is generally recognised that music

possesses an immense power of suggestion, and it certainly seems unreasonable that this should in any way be restricted. The actual imitation of physical sounds must always remain unsatisfactory in symphonic music for obvious reasons, though even in this respect the composer should be allowed to use his discretion. For instance, the gallop of a horse has been suggested with telling effect by Berlioz in his "Damnation de Faust," by Liszt in his "Mazeppa," by Raff in his "Lenore" symphony, and similar examples might be multiplied by the dozen. There is no reason why a composer should be debarred from endeavouring to reproduce, say, the notes of birds or the bleating of sheep, as Beethoven and Richard Strauss have done, the first in his "Pastoral" symphony and the second in his "Don Quixote," only the probability is that the imitation will prove very inferior to the real thing. It is therefore safer for a composer to rely on suggestion and the association of ideas for the realisation of his object rather than on direct imitation.

Liszt did not seek to destroy existing forms, but sought to add to these, and by creating a new form, which he practically illustrated in an unapproachable manner, he

rendered an invaluable service to the art of music.

That Liszt should have written almost entirely for the piano during the early part of his career, and should not have entered the fields of instrumental composition until he had reached his maturity, has been thought curious. The circumstances of his life, however, would seem to furnish a sufficient answer to this. A pianist by profession from his earliest childhood, he very naturally wrote mainly for his instrument, until, finding it inadequate to his requirements, he showed what he was capable of achieving in another and more complicated branch of composition. Many of his early piano pieces give one the idea that he must have had the orchestra in his mind when composing. What he required was time, opportunity, and the stimulating influence of a kindred mind. He found all these at Weimar, the last being supplied by the Princess Carolyne de Sayn-Wittgenstein, to whom he dedicated the entire series of his twelve Symphonic Poems.

It has also been considered strange that since his boyish attempt at the Paris Grand Opera he should entirely have neglected dramatic composition, in spite of his un-

doubted capabilities in this direction (as evidenced by his oratorio "The Legend of St. Elizabeth," which in Germany has often been given on the stage with success). There is no doubt that he considered the matter seriously, and in 1849 was even actually engaged upon an Italian opera founded on Byron's "Sardanapalus." Wagner strongly advised him to compose an opera and even offered him the text of a work he had written entitled "Wieland der Schmied," but Liszt, for some reason or other, finally decided to leave the field of the Music Drama to his famous friend and to confine his attention to the concert room and the church.

Essentially a musical poet, Liszt was a dreamer whose thoughts often rose to the loftiest heights. His deeply sensitive nature vibrated in response to the impressions produced by some poem, some picture, or else he felt impelled to express in sounds the innermost feelings of his heart, to sing his joy, to cry out his anguish, or to proclaim his faith in accents ringing with sincerity. That he should ever have been considered as lacking in musical invention is certainly extraordinary, for his works literally teem with melodic ideas and are superabundantly

rich in new harmonic combinations and original modulations.

If Liszt the musician occupies a place to himself among the great musical creators, Liszt the man is equally worthy of admiration. Upon this last point there cannot indeed be two opinions. Time has gradually revealed his goodness, self-abnegation, humility, devotion to art and to the interests of others, and the world has wondered. The comprehensiveness of his outlook and his entire absence of envy enabled him to adopt a thoroughly independent attitude towards his contemporaries, all of whom were unfortunately not endowed with similar characteristics. Musicians are often inclined to be narrow-minded in their opinions, and to obstinately close their ears to any music the conception of which does not correspond with their own special ideas. There was no vestige of this feeling in Liszt. He was able to discover and to relish beauty wherever it existed, and because he was specially attracted by one composer he did not therefore consider it necessary to depreciate others. We have seen how hard he laboured in order to popularise the works of Beethoven and Schubert. He showed himself equally eager to help his contemporaries Berlioz, Chopin,

and Schumann, while his enthusiasm for Wagner did not prevent him from admiring Rossini and Meyerbeer.

Concerning Liszt's whole-hearted devotion for Wagner too much cannot be said. It is certainly unexampled in the entire history of music. At a moment when Wagner was in dire straits, an exile from his country owing to his connection with the Dresden revolutionary movement of 1849, Liszt, realising his towering genius, at once determined to do all in his power to befriend him, and constituted himself in a way his guardian angel, watching closely after his interests, helping him in every conceivable manner, pecuniarily as well as artistically, pleading his cause with ever-increasing enthusiasm, producing and conducting his operas, writing essays on his theories—in a word, achieving the possible and the impossible. What Wagner's career would have been had Liszt never existed no one, of course, can tell, but it is probable that it would have been considerably more arduous even than it was. It must be remembered that the difficulties against which Liszt had to contend were very great indeed, for Wagner was not only looked upon with suspicion on political grounds, but his music was not understood by most

people. It is only necessary to read some of the criticisms of the period in order to realise this. Here, for instance, is what Henry F. Chorley, the once famous critic of the *Athenæum*, wrote about "Tannhäuser": "I shall hardly be able to represent my impressions without appearing, to those who have not suffered under this extraordinary opera, in the light of one indulging in hyperbole and caricature; for, in truth, I have never been so blanked (!), pained, wearied, *insulted*[1] even (the word is not too strong), by a work of pretension as by this same 'Tannhäuser.'" These words are not the result of a hurried impression, but are included in the volume entitled "Modern German Music," which appeared in 1854. As all music-lovers know, the most virulent anti-Wagnerian spirit prevailed in musical circles all over Europe for many subsequent years, and the only reason the matter is alluded to here is to give an idea of the opposition which Liszt had to face in his generous and self-sacrificing efforts to further the cause of his great friend. Throughout the course of his relations with Wagner, Liszt exhibited almost superhuman self-abnegation. "The object

[1] The italics are Chorley's.

*

of my whole life," he wrote to him, "is to be worthy of your friendship." No wonder that Wagner was able to pen these words: "Your friendship is the weightiest (*wichtigste*) and most important event of my life."

The attitude of Liszt towards his juniors in the musical career was equally worthy of admiration. Entirely exempt from jealousy, ever ready and anxious to help rising talent, he did all in his power to smooth the paths of those young artists and budding composers who sought his advice. The friend and protector of Raff, he also encouraged the débuts of Rubinstein and Joachim, while Cornelius, Lassen, Dräsecke, and von Bronsart found in him a devoted mentor. Brahms when quite a young man journeyed to Weimar in order to show the master some of his compositions. It is needless to say that he received both sympathy and encouragement from Liszt. The contrast existing between the two musicians was, however, never so well exemplified as it was in the course of their first meeting. An authentic account of what happened on this occasion has been furnished by William Mason, the American pianist, who was an eye-witness of the occurrence. It appears

that Brahms was too nervous to play his own works, so Liszt sat down to the piano in his place, " and taking the first piece at hand from the heap of manuscripts, he performed the *scherzo* at sight in such a marvellous way, carrying on at the same time a running accompaniment of audible criticism of the music, that Brahms was both surprised and delighted." And now for the sequel. " A little later," Mr. William Mason writes, " some one asked Liszt to play his own sonata, a work which was quite recent at that time, and of which he was very fond. Without hesitation he sat down and began playing. As he progressed, he came to a very expressive part, which he always imbued with extreme pathos, and in which he looked for the especial interest and sympathy of his listeners. Glancing at Brahms, he found that the latter was dozing in his chair " ! ! ! This incident throws a curious light on the respective characters of Liszt and Brahms. To comment upon the younger musician's extraordinary lack of manners is unnecessary. There can, however, be no doubt whatever that under similar circumstances, apart from his innate feeling of courtesy towards a famous artist his senior, Liszt would have found his interest in an important new work

amply sufficient to keep him awake. Brahms and Joachim, it is well known, in a preposterously worded manifesto signed by themselves and two other musicians, later on ostentatiously proclaimed their want of sympathy with the doctrines of the Weimar school, notwithstanding which Liszt never displayed any but the most kindly feelings towards them.

Happily he was more fortunate in his relations with other famous musicians whom he had befriended. The celebrated Bohemian composer Smetana, when quite a young man and almost destitute, wrote him a long and veritably agonising letter imploring his help. It was entirely due to the exertions of Liszt on his behalf that he was able first to get his works published and subsequently to found a musical institution, a fact which Smetana acknowledged some years later when he wrote to his benefactor: "You are my master and to you I owe everything." Very much the same words were used by Robert Franz when he remarked that Liszt was the only one who exerted himself on his behalf in times of difficulty, and that he owed him all.

Saint-Saëns found an enthusiastic friend and admirer in Liszt. It was through the

latter's influence that the French composer's "Samson et Dalila" was performed at Weimar in 1877, for the first time on any stage.

It may also be mentioned here that if the world was slow in recognising the merits of César Franck, these had long been realised by Liszt, who interested himself in the débuts of this remarkable musician and endeavoured to find a publisher for his works.

Wherever he discovered any indications of talent, Liszt's interest was invariably aroused, and his enthusiasm did not diminish with the progress of years. The following passage occurs in a letter to Constantin Sandor, music publisher in Leipzig, dated November 15, 1876: "The compositions of Tschaikowsky interest me. A few of my pupils here play his Concerto and several of his pieces really capitally. I have also recommended Riedel to include Tschaikowsky's Symphony in the programme of the next *Tonkünstler-Versammlung.*" Liszt was also greatly attracted by the more essentially national representatives of the modern Russian school, Balakireff, Borodin, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff and César Cui. A delightful account of his meeting with Liszt has been furnished by Borodin

in the volume entitled "Borodin and Liszt," by Alfred Habets, translated by Mrs. Rosa Newmarch.

Grieg, in 1868, received from the master the following unsolicited letter concerning his first violin sonata, in F: "I am very glad to tell you what pleasure it has given me to read your sonata (Op. 8). It bears testimony to a talent of vigorous, reflective, and inventive composition of excellent quality—which has only to follow its natural bent in order to rise to a high rank. I am pleased to think that in your own country you are meeting with the success and encouragement that you deserve: these will not be wanting elsewhere either; and if you come to Germany this winter I cordially invite you to stay a little at Weimar, in order that we may thoroughly get to know each other." Mr. H. T. Finck, in his interesting volume on Grieg, says that "the letter had momentous consequences. Unsolicited commendation from one so famous as Liszt was a great feather in the cap of a twenty-five-year-old composer; it induced the Norwegian Government to grant Grieg a sum of money, which enabled him, in the following year, to visit Rome again, and there to meet Liszt personally." Two delightful letters of Grieg

concerning his meeting with Liszt are reproduced by Mr. Finck. The Norwegian composer was wonderstruck by Liszt's playing and altogether enchanted with the master's attitude towards him. His enthusiasm was boundless, and he wrote: "I did not know what to admire most in him, the composer or the pianist, for he played superbly. No, he does not really play—one forgets he is a musician—he becomes a prophet proclaiming the Last Judgment till all the spirits of the universe vibrate under his fingers. He enters into the most secret recesses of the mind and stirs one's inmost soul with demonic power." In his second letter Grieg alludes to words of encouragement spoken to him by Liszt, and concludes thus: "At times, when disappointment and bitterness are in store for me, I shall recall his words, and the remembrances of that hour will have a wonderful power to uphold me in days of adversity." Thus did this truly great and noble man succeed in helping his younger colleagues in their early and arduous struggles.

Countless other examples of the unfailing kindness and benevolence of Liszt might be cited, and many were the young composers who received from him that sympathy and

encouragement so precious to the musical neophyte. "This man," says Herr Weingartner, "himself so great, never ceased to make himself of use to those artistic natures which were congenial to him; he undertook to make a reputation for their works; assisted youthful talent and genius; he ever upheld them and sustained them with his advice and his acts. Besides that, he never undertook anything which would bring profit to himself, and, too kind to others, he neglected almost completely to take care of his own creations." [1]

Liszt suffered from the excess of his qualities. He was far too good, and his well-known kindness resulted in his being constantly pestered by pianists of all sorts anxious to be able to call themselves his pupils. His heart was never closed, neither was his purse, and unfortunately there were too many who knew this. Among the most remarkable pianists who studied under him may be mentioned Hans von Bülow, Tausig, von Bronsart, Klindworth, Alfred Jaell, Walter Bache, Emil Sauer, Moritz Rosenthal, Joseffy, Liebling, Buonamici, Friedheim, Reisenauer, Göllerich, Eugen d'Albert, Stavenhagen, Mmes. Jaell, Vera Timanoff

[1] "Symphony Writers since Beethoven."

and Sophie Menter, to name a few at random.

Liszt's kindness of heart was equalled by his unselfishness and his generosity. Had he not given up his career as a pianist when still a young man he might have become very rich. As it was, he spent so much in helping others that he had but little left for himself. It may come as a surprise to some to hear that in a letter to Marie Lipsius, dated March 2, 1879, Liszt wrote that since the end of 1847 he had not earned a farthing by pianoforte-playing, teaching, or conducting. "All this," he adds, "rather cost me time and money. Since the year '47 I only played *in public* twice in Rome—'63 and '64—at the gracious command of Pope Pius IX.; often in Budapesth later on, twice in Vienna, once in Presburg and Oedenburg (my native town) as a child of the country. Nowhere else. May my poor pianoforte-performing at last come to an end! It has long been a torment to me. Therefore—Amen!" And this is the man whose actions have been so constantly misunderstood and whose sincerity has been doubted! The world has too often been censorious and unjust, but never more so than in the case of Franz Liszt.

Enough has been said to give an idea of the rare qualities which characterised this extraordinary man's unique personality, to demonstrate the immense influence he exercised on the progress of music, both by his practical example and by the help he extended to others. It now remains to discuss the works which entitle him to be numbered among the great tone poets of all time.

CHAPTER III

THE PIANOFORTE WORKS

THE works written by Liszt for the piano may be roughly divided into three categories: (1) Original compositions; (2) transcriptions more or less faithful of other composers' works; and (3) fantasias on themes from famous operas. The Hungarian Rhapsodies, which have done so much to popularise the master's name, occupy a place to themselves. There remain the compositions for piano and orchestra, the two concertos in E flat and A, and the "Todtentanz," besides various fantasias on well-known works for the same combination of instruments.

Many of Liszt's pianoforte pieces belong to the early part of his career, the period of his triumphs as virtuoso, when his astounding feats of execution were taking Europe by storm, and it is only natural that they should vary greatly in merit. Yet if in

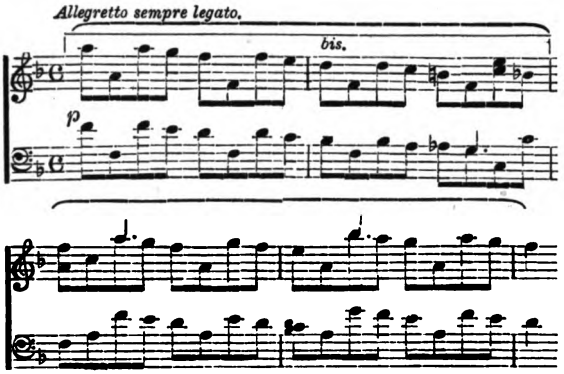
later years the composer was to rise so much higher, his genius asserted itself fitfully in many of these early works.

The circumstances of a musician's life exercise a great influence on the shaping of his thoughts, and determine to a considerable extent, at any rate at first, the line he is to follow. We have seen how Liszt was practically bound for many years to express his ideas through the medium of the piano, and to provide himself with the means of exhibiting his wonderful executive ability to the best advantage by accumulating difficulties of every description in the works he wrote for his instrument. Among the compositions of this period there are several, however, which deserve consideration for reasons other than those associated with the virtuosity of the pianist. In discussing the piano works of Liszt in their ensemble, including those of his later years, it will be advisable to concentrate our attention upon the ones which in one way or another characterise the composer's genius; and we cannot do better than begin with the "Douze Etudes d'éxécution transcendante."

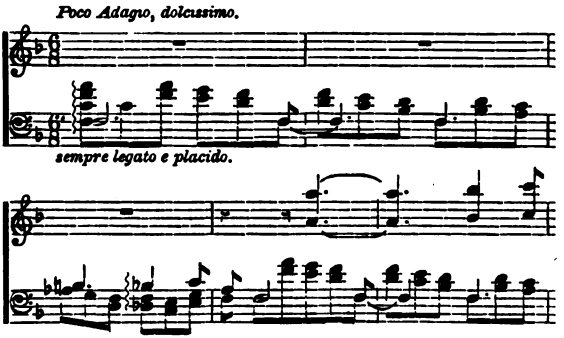
The genesis of the "Douze études" is so curious that it merits to be explained at length.

When he was in his sixteenth year, Liszt wrote a set of twelve studies for the piano, which appeared the following year under the title of " Etudes en douze exercices." These contain the germs of the " Grandes études," published by Haslinger, Vienna, in 1839, concerning which Schumann wrote a laudatory article. This edition was, however, suppressed. Liszt further elaborated his ideas, and finally gave to the world, in 1852, the " Etudes d'éxécution transcendante," dedicated to C. Czerny, " en témoignage de reconnaissance et de respectueuse amitié de son élève." As a study in transformation of style, a comparison between the composer's early work and that of his maturity would be extremely interesting. The limits of the present volume do not, however, admit of the copious quotations necessary to illustrate this. It must be admitted that only the merest thematic or rhythmical suggestions of the earlier work subsist in the later one. Three of the Etudes, Nos. 6, 7, and 8, are indeed entirely new, and the others are so thoroughly transformed that their connection with the " Douze exercices " remains exceedingly slight.

As an example, here is how No. 3 originally began :



and here is the beginning of the later version:



An instance of how a mighty work may gradually be evolved from the merest rhythmical suggestion occurs in the Etude No. 4 of the series. The embryonic version

of this is but a harmless pianoforte exercise, doubtless useful for teaching purposes, but devoid of any poetic intentions. In the second and suppressed version it is employed as the accompaniment to a melody of an impassioned character. Between the publication of the two versions Liszt had not only advanced musically, but he had read Victor Hugo, and the simple inoffensive exercise of his youth, again considerably expanded, forms the basis of the wild stirring piece published in the latest edition of the Etudes under the title of "Mazeppa." This was destined to be yet further transformed and elaborated, and finally to appear as the famous Symphonic Poem bearing the above name.

The twelve "Etudes," wonderfully adapted to display the highest development of pianoforte technique, have a yet nobler claim to consideration, inasmuch as they are poetically conceived, imaginative, and essentially musical in their structure. They bear the following titles: (1) "Preludio"; (2) "Etude"; (3) "Paysage"; (4) "Mazeppa"; (5) "Feux follets"; (6) "Vision"; (7) "Eroïca"; (8) "Wilde Jagd"; (9) "Ricordanza"; (10) "Etude"; (11) "Harmonies du Soir"; and (12) "Chasse-Neige."

"Paysage," No. 3, and "Harmonies du Soir," No. 11, are refined and poetical pieces of a restful character, contrasting well with others, such as "Eroïca," No. 8, full of sombre grandeur, and "Mazeppa," No. 4, the wildly exuberant description of a breathless ride, while each study possesses some special characteristic feature of its own.

The enormous difficulties which abound in the "Etudes" naturally prevent these from appealing to any but first-rate executants. Schumann considered that there were at the most ten or twelve pianists in the world able to play them. Since his time, however, pianists have greatly increased not only in numbers but in skill, and there are doubtless now many hundreds who would be capable of conquering the difficulties of these "Etudes." Other studies by Liszt which have become equally popular with pianists are the six "Grandes Etudes d'après Paganini." The best known of these is "La Campanella," a tiresome show piece which has attained a somewhat unaccountable vogue.

When we turn to the first two sets of pieces collectively entitled "Années de Pélerinage" we enter into an entirely different region of art. Here we find the composer, free and

untrammelled, expressing in sounds the various impressions and emotions engendered in his mind during his wanderings through Switzerland, 1835–36, and Italy, 1837–40. The pieces contained in these two collections are not only highly interesting from a musical point of view, but they reflect the master's thoughts at the most impressionable period of his life, and show the essentially imaginative nature of his genius, thus in a manner presaging the creation of his Symphonic Poems.

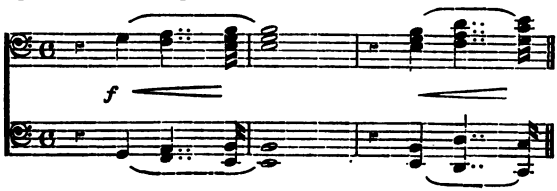
In the original edition, published in 1842, the first set included a piece entitled "Lyon," composed in 1834, and bearing the motto, "Vivre en travaillant et mourir en combattant." The Swiss collection in the later and revised edition consists of the following nine pieces: (1) "Chapelle de Guillaume Tell" (after Schiller); (2) "Au Lac de Wallenstadt" (after Byron); (3) "Pastorale"; (4) "Au bord d'une source" (after Schiller); (5) "Orage" (after Byron); (6) "Vallée d'Obermann" (after Sénancour's romance of that name); (7) "Eglogue" (after Byron); (8) "Mal du Pays" (after Sénancour); (9) "Les Cloches de Genève," Nocturne (after Byron).

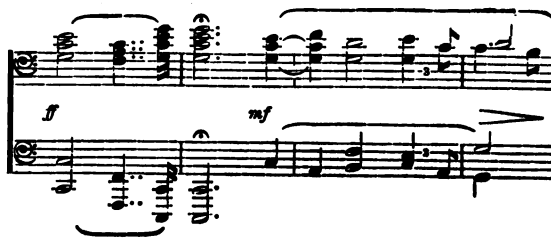
The motives which actuated Liszt to write

the above pieces may best be understood by perusing the preface he affixed to the first edition, which runs thus: "Having recently visited many new countries, many diverse sites, many spots consecrated by history and poetry; having felt that the varied aspects of Nature and of the scenes attached thereto did not pass before my eyes like vain pictures, but that they stirred up in my soul deep emotions; that there was established between them and myself a vague but immediate relationship, an indefinite but real connection, an inexplicable but certain communication, I have tried to express in music a few of the strongest of my sensations, of my most vivid perceptions. . . . As instrumental music progresses, develops, frees itself from its first fetters, it tends to become more and more imbued with that ideality which has marked the perfection of the plastic arts, to become not only a simple combination of sounds, but a poetic language more apt perhaps than poetry itself to express all that within us oversteps the accustomed horizons, everything that escapes analysis, everything that attaches itself to inaccessible depths, imperishable desires, infinite presentiments. It is in this conviction and with this tendency that I have under-

taken the work published to-day, addressing myself to the few rather than to the crowd; desiring not success, but the suffrage of the small number of those who conceive for art a destination other than that of affording a pastime during a few idle hours, and ask more of it than the futile distraction of a passing amusement."

The above words acquire a peculiar significance when read in the light of the composer's subsequent achievements, for they unmistakably reveal the idealism of his mind and disclose the loftiness of his outlook. The pieces contained in the Swiss album are avowedly impressionistic, and are written without any after-thought. Romantic in character, they convey their message in a simple and direct manner and answer admirably to their titles. William Tell's Chapel fires the imagination of the young artist, who evokes the memory of the famous Swiss patriot in glowing and inspired accents. Do not the following bars breathe the very spirit of lofty patriotism?





Do they not also strike one as rather Wagnerian in style, anticipating by several years the rich harmonies of "Lohengrin" and affording one of the first instances of the influence exercised by Liszt over the mighty German master? Of course, the resemblance is but a superficial one, and it only tends to demonstrate the existence of a certain spiritual affinity between two composers each of whom possessed so powerful and unmistakable an individuality.

Two of the pieces in the Swiss collection are written under the direct influence of Sénancour, the French writer whose speculative and pessimistic works fired the imagination of his generation and who seemed pre-eminently the interpreter of those suffering from what has been termed the *maladie du siècle.* Forgotten nowadays, Sénancour appealed to intelligences such as those of Georges Sand and Sainte Beuve, and our

own Matthew Arnold has celebrated his memory in two elegies. The "Vallée d'Obermann," suggested by Sénancour, reveals the philosophical tendency of Liszt's mind in the attempt to interpret musically the queries "Que veux-je? que suis-je? que demander à la nature?" In this as well as in the other pieces forming the Swiss collection one notes depth of thought, sincerity of feeling, and individuality of expression. If they are only of comparative importance, these pieces afford a rich promise of future achievement and, psychologically as well as musically, fittingly exemplify the following words addressed by Liszt to Georges Sand: "That musician especially who is inspired by Nature, without copying her, breathes out in tones the tenderest secrets of his destiny: he thinks, feels, and speaks through her."

The second set of the "Années de Pélerinage" was the outcome of the composer's early sojourn in Italy, and is a worthy complement of the Swiss album. The pieces contained therein reveal Liszt's admiration for Raphael, Michael Angelo, Petrarch, and Dante. They are seven in number: "Sposalizio" (after Raphael's painting); "Il Penseroso" (inspired by Michael Angelo's

statue) ; " Canzonetta del Salvatore Rosa " ; three sonnets of Petrarch, composed originally as songs and later on arranged for the piano and included in the present album ; and, last but not least, the " Fantasia quasi sonata " entitled " Après une lecture de Dante." These pieces were only published some years after their composition, and Liszt added three more to the collection, " Gondoliera," " Canzone," and " Tarantella," bracketed together under the title of " Venezia e Napoli."

If the Italian album is interesting throughout, it contains one number of special significance, the " Fantasia quasi sonata," a work of deep emotional feeling and individuality of expression. Beyond the subtitle of " Après une lecture de Dante," Liszt has given no indication of what his music is intended to describe. A passionate and enthusiastic admirer of Dante—was he not later on to celebrate the famous Italian poet by writing a symphony in his honour ?—he is said never to have travelled without a copy of the " Divine Comedy," and this immortal work invariably rested on his writing-table. The Fantasia strikes one as a deep and sincerely felt attempt to express the agitation of a mind swayed by thoughts

gloomy yet hopeful. The moody unrest, clearly indicated at the outset, is dispelled at the close, when the music becomes almost triumphant, suggesting ultimate victory. Altogether the Fantasia marks a distinct step in the development of the composer's genius.

Many years later Liszt supplemented the two albums of his early wanderings with a third consisting of pieces composed in the quietude of the Villa d'Este, near Rome, after he had become an abbé, where he was able to indulge in solitary meditations and retrospections. The first of these pieces, "Angelus," is a beautifully simple little tone picture, the idea of which was suggested to Liszt by a painting of the Russian artist Baron Joukowsky representing the "Holy Family." It bears the sub-title "Prière aux Anges Gardiens," and indeed there is something peculiarly ethereal in its strains which transports the mind to some fair region very remote from the ordinary surroundings of life. Music such as this conveys a sense of peace, consolation, and hope. This piece has been arranged for strings, and in this form it was played at the reception given in honour of the master during his last visit to London. Its full beauty can perhaps better

be realised when heard in this form. The next two pieces are of a pessimistic nature, threnodies or lamentations, "Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este," bespeaking a sadly introspective frame of mind, deep and thoughtful in character. The "Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este," No. 4, on the other hand, is conceived in quite another spirit, the rippling wavelets of sound, suggesting the spraying waters, being invested with a symbolical meaning by a quotation from the Gospel according to St. John. The next number, styled "Sunt lacrymæ rerum," and dedicated to Hans von Bülow, is as sombre as its title implies, a remark which may be equally applied to "Marche funèbre" in memory of the unfortunate Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico. More satisfactory in every respect is the last number of the album, "Sursum corda," a glowing expression of hopeful feeling, which effectually disperses the pessimistic thoughts aroused by the two preceding pieces.

A collection which ranks at least as high in merit as those already mentioned is the one entitled "Harmonies poétiques et religieuses," after Lamartine. With one exception, the "Pensée des Morts," which dates from 1834, the pieces forming the above were composed

between 1846 and 1850, and they seem vividly to reflect the composer's state of mind at that period. Their general character may be gauged by the following words of Lamartine, which serve as their preface :—

"Il y a des âmes méditatives, que la solitude et la contemplation, élèvent invinciblement vers les idées infinies, c'est à dire vers la religion ; toutes leurs pensées se convertissent en enthousiasme et en prière, toute leur existence est un hymne muet à la Divinité et à l'espérance. Elles cherchent en elles mêmes et dans la création qui les environne des degrés pour monter à Dieu, des expressions et des images pour se le révèler à elles mêmes, pour se révèler à lui : puisse-je leur en prêter quelques unes !

"Il y a des cœurs brisés par la douleur, refoulés par le monde, qui se réfugient dans le monde de leurs pensées, dans la solitude de leur âme, pour pleurer, pour attendre ou pour adorer ; puissent-ils se laisser visiter par une Muse solitaire comme eux, trouver une sympathie dans ses accords et dire quelque fois en l'écoutant : nous prions avec tes paroles, nous pleurons avec tes larmes, nous invoquons avec tes chants !"

Aspiration towards the infinite, a profound feeling of sadness somewhat tinged with morbidness, a devotional and mystical re-

ligious sentiment, an ardent expression of love and affection, these are the emotional features respectively characterising the ten pieces forming the above collection. In the "Invocation" the composer musically paraphrases Lamartine's eloquent appeal to seek and celebrate God in the various manifestations of Nature :—

"Elevez-vous aux bords des ondes
Dans les solitudes profondes,
Ou Dieu se révèle à la foi!"

In the "Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude," he pours forth all the pent-up feelings of his soul in a glowing hymn of gratitude to the Deity. Wonderfully expressive and terribly sad is the piece entitled "Funérailles," said to have been written in memory of three of the composer's friends, victims of the Hungarian disturbances of 1849.

The "Andante Lagrimoso" furnishes another instance of the deepest pathetic intensity and of heart-probing accents. The "Ave Maria," No. 2, and the "Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil," No. 6, on the other hand, convey sentiments of a very different nature and suggest a more hopeful outlook, while the concluding "Cantique d'amour"

answers fully to its title and terminates the collection on a distinctly optimistic note.

To discuss in detail the numberless works written by Liszt for the piano would be a gigantic and indeed unnecessary task. A brief mention must therefore suffice for pieces such as the six labelled "Consolations," the melodic charm and refinement of which have long since ensured them a universal popularity, the two Ballades and the two Polonaises, familiar to all pianists, and the two fanciful and delightful studies respectively entitled "Waldesrauschen" and "Gnomenreigen," to mention a few out of many. The last two were composed in 1863, the same year as the legends entitled "St. Francis preaching to the Birds" and "St. Francis walking on the Waters," two remarkable examples of tone painting, and the magnificent variations on Bach's "Weinen-klagen-sorgen-zagen."

The Sonata in B minor, however, demands special attention, for it is not only one of the master's most admirable compositions, but one of the finest works ever written for the piano.

The impression it produced upon Wagner was so great that he expressed himself as follows in a letter to the composer: "The

sonata is beyond all conception beautiful; great, lovely, deep and noble—sublime, even as thyself."

This astonishing and veritably unique work was written in 1853 and published the following year. It is dedicated to Robert Schumann.

Belonging to the period when Liszt was engaged on the composition of his Symphonic Poems, the sonata, although devoid of any programme, possesses characteristics very much akin to these. It is needless to say that in the matter of form there is little about it that suggests the sonatas of earlier masters. Free and unfettered by rules or precedents, Liszt chose here again to be a law unto himself. Discarding the three or four movements consecrated by long usage, he built his sonata in one part, developed his themes unconventionally, following the principles of metamorphosis adopted in his Symphonic Poems, and succeeded in producing a work of extraordinary unity and astonishing originality. That he should have adopted the name of sonata for a composition differing so entirely from any previous work thus named must doubtless have caused surprise at the outset. Yet there is no earthly reason why this name should necessarily

imply adherence to any special form. The term, as Mr. J. S. Shedlock informs us in his excellent book, "The Pianoforte Sonata," "appears first to have been used in contra-distinction to *cantata*: the one was a piece *sounded* (*suonata*, from *sonando*) by instruments; the other, one *sung* by voices." This description tallies with the one given by no less an authority than Sir Hubert Parry, who, in his interesting article in Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians," says that "a sonata is, as its name implies, a sound-piece and a sound-piece alone; in its purest and most perfect examples, it is unexplained by title or text, and unassisted by voices; it is nothing but an unlimited concatenation of musical notes."

It is clear from the above that there is nothing in the term which binds a composer to mould his work in any special form, and the name may equally be applied to Liszt's sonata as to any by Mozart or Beethoven. Sir Hubert Parry indeed finds that there is a certain affinity between Liszt and Beethoven disclosed in the sonata now under consideration, that "in the actual treatment of the subject-matter, Liszt adopts, as Beethoven had done, the various opportunities afforded not only by harmonic structural principles,

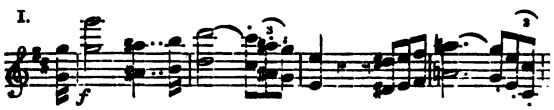
but by the earlier fugal and contrapuntal devices, and by recitative, adapting them with admirable breadth and freedom to a thoroughly modern style of thought." As regards the form of Liszt's sonata, the following words of Mr. C. A. Barry afford an admirable explanation: "All the leading characteristics of a sonata in three movements are here fully maintained within the scope of a single movement, or, to speak more precisely, an uninterrupted succession of several changes of *tempo*, thus constituting a more complete organism than can be attained by three distinct and independent movements."

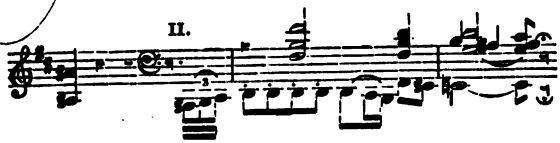
From the above definitions and opinions it will be admitted that Liszt was perfectly justified in applying the name of sonata to his work, and those timid persons who attach an exaggerated importance to appellations associated in their minds with some preconceived ideas may take comfort to their souls in the knowledge that the term sonata is open to a variety of interpretations. The point is indeed only of very relative importance, for after all the main question to be answered is with regard to the value of the work under discussion. Concerning this we have already noted the opinion of

Wagner, an opinion which every one will admit is worthy of more than ordinary consideration !

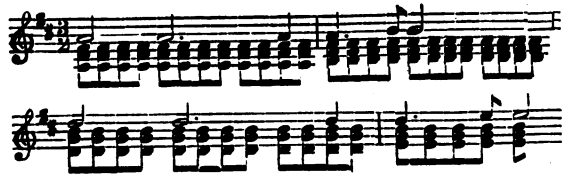
Liszt did not think fit to disclose the feelings which induced him to compose this wonderful sonata. It is, however, more than likely that he must have yielded to some strong inward impulse to depict the struggle of one filled with the noblest aspirations and battling against relentless destiny, now soaring to the empyrean and striving to attain seemingly inaccessible heights, or fighting a strenuous battle against remorseless fate, finally ending in a spirit of intensely sad yet peaceful resignation, suggesting the capitulation of a human soul to the immanent forces of Nature.

After a few preliminary bars marked *Lento assai*, introducing a motive pregnant with a sense of foreboding, which reappears at intervals in the course of the work and at its close, comes an *Allegro energico*, presenting two of the principal themes of the sonata :—

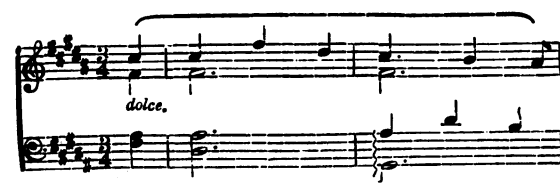


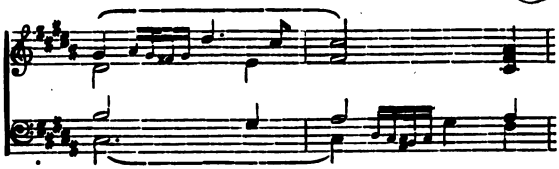


Strenuously do these two themes struggle for ascendancy one over the other, their conflict being interrupted by a return of the initial motive, which gradually leads to the appearance of a new and noble theme :—



The developments to which the above themes are subjected are of the greatest interest, the music becoming alternately soft and pleading, then grandiose and sombre, until the *Andante sostenuto*, which introduces another theme of veritably entrancing loveliness :—

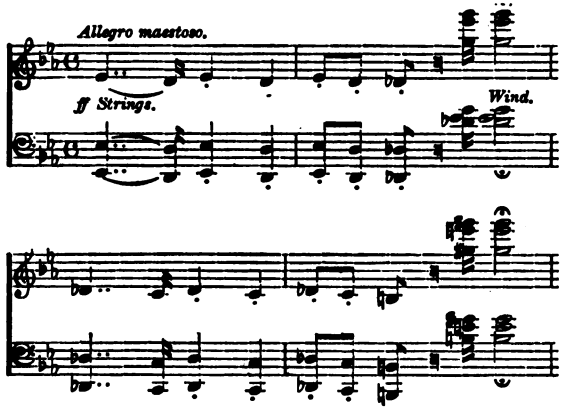




This section, in which the second theme of the sonata appears transformed into a soft and tender melody, attains the highest degree of romantic beauty. With the return of the *Allegro energico*, the conflict between the two initial themes of the work recommences, and a striking fugal development is succeeded by a sort of free fantasia, the music becoming more and more expressive of a feeling of intense exaltation, and then, after a sudden stop, changing in character and gradually dying away in strains ineffably sad and pathetic. Thus ends a work which in point of originality of conception, thematic invention, depth of thought, and emotional feeling has not been surpassed by any other in the entire range of pianoforte literature.

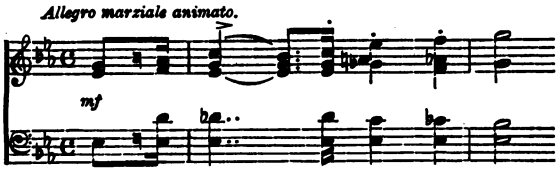
Very much the same principles which guided Liszt when writing the above sonata were adopted by him in the composition of his two piano concertos. The first of these, in E flat, is, of course, very well known

and counts among the composer's most popular works. Who has not been thrilled by the magnificent entry of the motto theme with which the work begins?



Who has not been charmed by the insinuating theme of the *quasi Adagio?*

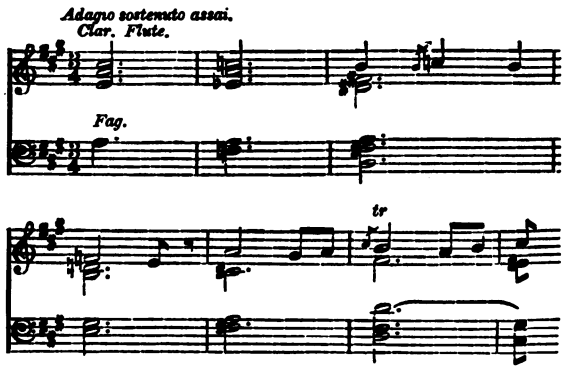
Who has not been carried away by the irresistible swing of the final *Allegro marziale* when the same theme reappears in an entirely different guise?



Between these two movements comes the delightfully fanciful *Allegretto vivace*, in which Liszt has made the most effective and original use of the triangle. Curiously enough, this very effect stirred up a veritable storm of disapproval when the concerto was first heard in Vienna. No one apparently had ever thought of employing so trivial an instrument as the triangle in so serious a work as a concerto, and this was quite enough to disturb the equanimity of the Viennese pundits. The redoubtable critic Eduard Hanslick dubbed the work a triangle concerto, and for several years it became impossible to perform it in the Austrian capital. It was in 1869 that the then sixteen-year-old pianist Sophie Menter, unheeding all warnings to avoid this dangerous concerto, played it on the occasion of her début in Vienna at a Philharmonic concert. The success she achieved was enormous, and the silly objections of Liszt's enemies were thus effectively silenced.

Since then this brilliant work has been a favourite item in the répertoire of every pianist.

The pianoforte concerto in A, although not so often played as the one in E flat, is equally worthy of admiration. Also in one movement, it is constructed according to the same method of thematic metamorphosis as the former. A rich glowing romantic feeling pervades it throughout, and the inspiration never flags. The beautiful dreamy opening, *Adagio sostenuto*, with which the work begins,



assumes a martial and triumphant character when it reappears towards the close of this imaginative and very typical example of the master's genius.

Another work for piano and orchestra which has been strangely neglected is the "Todtentanz" or "Danse Macabre," not to be confused with the well-known Symphonic Poem by Saint-Saëns, of which, by the way, Liszt has written a splendid paraphrase for the piano. The "Todtentanz" is an extraordinary and unique work consisting of a fantastic set of variations founded on the old mediæval chant of the "Dies Iræ." The idea of writing it originated in Liszt's mind in 1839 during his sojourn in Italy. He was profoundly impressed by a fresco representing "The Triumph of Death," the work of the famous Florentine painter and sculptor Andrea Orcagna, which figured in the Campo Santo at Pisa. This painting was perhaps the first of a series of allegorical and symbolical dances of Death, a weird and gruesome subject which seems to have appealed greatly to the painters of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, including Holbein. Liszt's "Todtentanz" was written in 1849, some ten years after its original inception, revised in 1859, and published in 1865. These dates will give some idea of the scrupulous care exercised by Liszt in the composition of his works, and his determination in not bringing these before the public until they satisfied his

artistic sense. Thus it is that some of his larger compositions were the product of a slow elaboration. Many, on the other hand, and some of the best (such as the Symphonic Poems "Prometheus" and "Orpheus"), were composed very rapidly.

A general survey of the music composed by Liszt for the piano would be incomplete without some allusion to the many transcriptions, paraphrases, and fantasias written by him on famous operas and other works. These are indeed sufficiently numerous to furnish a library by themselves! They include transcriptions of organ Preludes and Fugues of Bach; of *lieder* by Beethoven, Robert Franz, Lassen, Mendelssohn, Rubinstein, Schubert, and Schumann; paraphrases and fantasias on operas by Auber, Bellini, Berlioz, Donizetti, Gounod, Halévy, Meyerbeer, Mozart, Raff, Rossini, Tschaikowsky, Verdi, Wagner, and Weber. Nowadays it is possible that the great merits of these operatic fantasias are underrated, as it is the fashion to look upon them merely as show pieces and nothing more. Yet there can be no doubt that fantasias such as those on "Don Juan," "Robert le Diable," and "Les Huguenots" possess qualities which entitle them to be considered as works of

art, far above similar productions of inferior musicians. On this point the opinion of a celebrated composer and pianist like Saint-Saëns may prove interesting. This is what he says in the course of an article on Liszt included in the volume entitled "Portraits et Souvenirs": "There is a good deal of pedantry and prejudice, be it said in passing, in the disdain often affected towards works such as the fantasia on 'Don Juan' or the Caprice on the waltz from 'Faust'; for there is here more talent and veritable inspiration than in many productions of serious appearance and pretentious nullity, such as one comes across every day. Have people ever realised that most celebrated overtures, for example, those of 'Zampa,' 'Euryanthe,' 'Tannhäuser,' are in reality only fantasias on motives from the operas which they precede? If one takes the trouble to study the fantasias of Liszt, one will see to what extent they differ from an ordinary potpourri, from pieces where the motives of an opera taken haphazard are there only to serve as a canvas for arabesques, festoons, and ornamentations."

As regards the excellence of transcriptions, such as those of Schubert's *lieder*, or of

Bach's organ Preludes and Fugues, there cannot be two opinions. Admirable also are the pianoforte reproductions of the nine symphonies of Beethoven and that of the "Tannhäuser" overture.

There still remain for consideration the famous Hungarian Rhapsodies which have contributed so much to popularise the name of Liszt, just as the Hungarian Dances have rendered a similar service to Brahms, perhaps the solitary point of contact existing between two composers utterly dissimilar in every other respect. These Rhapsodies occupy a special place to themselves among the composer's works. They reflect to perfection all the characteristics of the tzigan, his sadness as well as his exuberant buoyancy of spirit. (In his volume entitled "Des Bohémiens et leur Musique en Hongrie," Liszt has explained his ideas at length, the term Rhapsody being chosen by him to designate the "fantastically epic element" present in pieces intended to evoke "the expression of certain states of the soul in which are resumed the ideals of a nation." This certainly seems rather vague, and it is doubtful whether it conveys very much.) As regards the term Hungarian, it is necessary to remember that the style of music known

by that name is really due to the mixture of different races. If the Magyars, who settled in Hungary in the ninth century, had a music of their own, this must have been greatly modified by the arrival of the Gipsies, who came some centuries later from Hindustan. ~~Every one knows what are~~ the special characteristics of present-day Hungarian music; its accentuated rhythms, the constant employment of the intervals of the augmented second and augmented fourth, and the ornamental passages which savour of improvisations. Liszt's Rhapsodies are in reality a species of glorified Hungarian Gipsy music. They generally consist of two movements connected together: the first, of a mournful or contemplative character, labelled *Lassan;* and the second, *Friska,* instinct with wild exuberance of spirit. Several of these Rhapsodies have been arranged for the orchestra, and in this garb have become universally popular.

Before closing this chapter, a brief mention may be made of some of the works written by Liszt for the organ, chief among which are the magnificent Fantasia and Fugue on the Chorale "Ad nos, ad salutarem undam" (from "Le Prophète"); the Prelude and Fugue on the name of Bach;

and the Variations on a theme from Bach's cantata "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen," an admirable composition, which was written in 1863 and later on transcribed for the piano by Liszt himself.

CHAPTER IV

THE SYMPHONIC WORKS

THE ideas held by Liszt on the poetical aspect of music and the art principles which he championed have been explained in the course of the two preceding chapters. They attained their fullest realisation in the series of symphonic works composed by him during the Weimar period. This series includes twelve Symphonic Poems, the "Dante" (1854)[1] and "Faust" (1854) symphonies, and the two Episodes from Lenau's "Faust" (1859).

The following are the titles of the Symphonic Poems: (1) "Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne" (after Victor Hugo), 1849; (2) "Tasso," Lamento e Trionfo, 1849; (3) "Les Préludes" (after Lamartine), 1854; (4) "Orpheus," 1854; (5) "Prometheus," 1850; (6) "Mazeppa" (after Victor Hugo), 1850; (7) "Fest-Klänge," 1851; (8) "Heroïde funèbre," 1850; (9) "Hungaria";

[1] The dates refer to the completion of the work.

(10) "Hamlet," 1858; (11) "Hunnen-Schlacht" (after Kaulbach), 1857; (12) "Die Ideale" (after Schiller), 1857.

The names of these works are in themselves sufficient to indicate the vastness of Liszt's all-embracing outlook, to show how his mind soared aloft in the endeavour to express in tones the most varied emotions, the deepest thoughts of humanity. Should it be averred that the twelve Symphonic Poems are not all of equal merit, the question might fairly be put as to whether a composer has ever existed every one of whose works could be pronounced absolutely perfect? If the Symphonic Poems of Liszt are not all quite of the same value, if some fall short in one way or another, it may at any rate be stated that not one of them is devoid of interest, that several are veritable masterpieces, and that all are stamped with the hall-mark of the composer's individuality. They divulge an extraordinary richness of imagination, poetical sentiment, ideality, melodic invention, harmonic subtlety, originality, power, depth of feeling, allied to a thorough knowledge of the art of musical structure and of instrumental technique. In addition to their individual merits, they stand as the first examples of a new form of art, one which

has exercised an immense influence on the minds of composers of the present day. In his interesting book on programme music, Professor Niecks has said that, " Important as Berlioz is in the development of programme music, Liszt is so far more. Indeed, he is the most important of all, and is this quite apart from the value of his productions as works of art. His importance lies chiefly and mainly in the impulses he gave—in the vistas he opened, the new problems he proposed, the solutions of old problems he attempted; in short, in the new ideas, methods, procedures, and means he suggested."

The importance of Liszt from a historical point of view as an innovator and musical reformer is obvious enough. It is not sufficient, however, to create new forms and suggest new methods and procedures unless these can be justified by the results. The glory of Liszt lies in the fact that he not only suggested new ideas, but that he practically illustrated these in a manner which has not since been surpassed. To give a parallel instance, Wagner attempted to reform the musical drama, and the works exemplifying his ideas still remain unequalled, yet his theories have exercised an immense and

stimulating influence on composers of all nationalities and of the most opposite temperaments! It has been very much the same as regards Liszt, whose creation of the Symphonic Poem opened entirely new paths to the composer, but who remains the most admirable exponent of his own methods. The fact that others have employed these methods in a different manner or have endeavoured to extend them in various ways only demonstrates their value. Those, however, who have studied the Lisztian symphonic works, and have really penetrated their spirit, cannot, it seems to me, do otherwise than acknowledge their uniqueness. I am therefore anxious to combat the oft-expressed opinion that Liszt is to be considered more as a gifted pioneer, who had not the requisite inventive genius to realise his ideals, than as a great creative artist whose place is by the side of the most famous composers of this or any age. Wagner in a letter to Liszt once said that he considered his orchestral works so new and incomparable to any others that criticism would take a long time to discover what to make of them. These words have proved too true.

It is often the practice in discussing the value of a musical work to dissect it and

appraise its value according to some preconceived notions, and if this does not fit in with these to forthwith dismiss it as being formless, vague, or incoherent; or else to accuse the composer of inability to develop his ideas. Criticism of this kind is often the result of a failure to grasp the composer's intentions. It was perhaps more frequently resorted to formerly than it is at present. Now, as regards the Symphonic Poems of Liszt, it is absolutely necessary to approach them with an open mind and not to endeavour to make them fit a frame for which they were not intended.

What strikes one immediately in perusing the scores of these works is the manner in which the composer has succeeded in vivifying his subjects, in musically illustrating their meaning, in intensifying their poetry, in evoking the various sentiments they suggest. Thus, although the composer's style is distinctly traceable in each work, yet the plan and the development differ according to the nature of the theme he is treating, and a proof is thereby afforded of the plasticity of the symphonic form due to the initiative of Liszt.

It may be well here to give Liszt's own definition of what he understands by the

term programme as applied to symphonic music. A programme should, he states, be " only some foreword couched in intelligible language added to purely instrumental music, by which the composer has the intention of preserving his work against any arbitrary poetical interpretation, and of directing his attention in advance towards the poetical idea of the whole and some particular point in it." Further on he writes that " the programme has no other object than to make a preparatory allusion to the psychological ideas which have impelled the composer to create his work." It must surely be admitted that there is nothing in this calculated to unduly alarm the most ardent upholder of tradition, who will find that the desire to treat music as an expressive art has existed from the very beginning of time.

The first of the Symphonic Poems, " Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne," is a musical illustration of Victor Hugo's poem taken from " Les Feuilles d'automne." The poet meditating by the seashore falls into a reverie. Soon he distinguishes two voices, " confused and veiled," singing together the universal chant. The one comes from the sea, the other from the land :—

" L'une venait des mers ; chant de gloire ! hymne
heureux !
C'était la voix des flots qui se parlaient entre
eux ;
L'autre, qui s'élevait de la terre où nous sommes,
Etait triste : c'était le murmure des hommes."

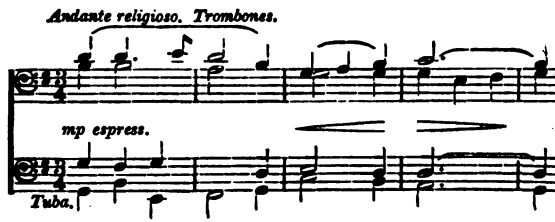
The first voice joyfully celebrates the beauty of creation ; the second, the wretched lot of mankind. The first is that of Nature ; the second that of Humanity. And the poet wonders what the meaning of it all is, and why we are here—

" Et pourquoi le Seigneur, qui seul lit à son livre,
Mêle éternellement dans un fatal hymen
Le chant de la nature au cri du genre humain ? "

It will be seen that Victor Hugo ends with a note of interrogation. Liszt, however, seems to supply an answer to this by concluding his work in a manner suggestive of resignation to the inscrutable designs of Providence.

Truly this " Mountain" symphony, "Berg-symphonie," as it is called in Germany, is a work of very exceptional beauty—Wagner termed it " the greatest delight " (*die grösste Wonne*)—and it soars to the loftiest altitudes of art.

The soft mysterious murmuring triplets played by the muted strings, at the commencement, at once create the requisite atmosphere. Then are heard the voices of Nature singing of joy and beauty and triumphantly resounding through space. They are succeeded by sounds expressing the discords and sorrows of suffering humanity. Throughout the work the music symbolising the two contrasting forces is wonderfully imaginative and poetical, while Liszt has genially added a third element to the poet's conception and suggested the presence of an unseen Power conveying the light and consolation of religion :—

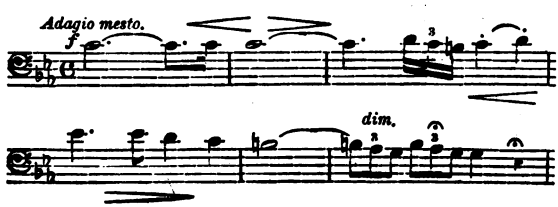


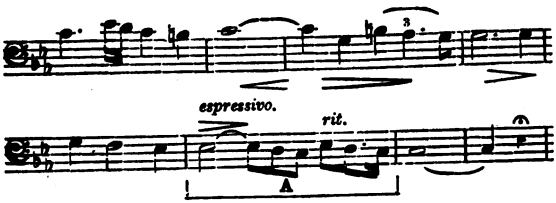
Admirable is the way in which the various themes are employed, either singly or jointly ; the music pursuing its emotional course until the reposeful finish bears its message of hope to struggling mortals.

The second Symphonic Poem, "Tasso," is far better known than the first, and has been repeatedly performed. Liszt informs us in the preface to his score that in 1849, on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Goethe, he was asked to compose an overture for the performance at Weimar of the famous poet's drama "Tasso." It is interesting to note that Liszt alludes in this preface to Goethe and Byron as the two most powerful poetical geniuses of the period, and says that in writing his work he was more directly inspired by the English than by the German poet. "At the same time," he writes, "Byron, in transmitting to us in a manner the wailings of Tasso in his prison, has not been able to add to the remembrance of these poignant sorrows, so nobly and eloquently expressed in his Lamentation, that of the Triumph which awaited, through a tardy but striking Justice, the chivalrous author of 'Jerusalem Delivered.'" Later on he adds: "Tasso loved and suffered in Ferrara; he has been avenged in Rome; his glory still lives in the folk songs of Venice. These three moments are inseparably connected with his immortal memory. In order to express them in music we have first evoked the great shade of the hero, such

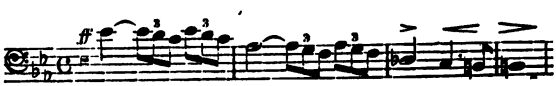
as it appears to us nowadays, haunting the lagunas of Venice; we have then glanced at his proud and saddened face as he wandered amidst the festive scenes of Ferrara, where he had given birth to his masterpiece; finally, we have followed him to Rome, the Eternal City, which, in handing him her crown, glorified in him the martyr and the poet."

In adding the supplementary title of "Lamento e Trionfo" to this work, Liszt has intended to symbolise the "two great oppositions of the destiny of poets," the vicissitudes of their lives, and the inevitable consecration of their genius after death. He has in a way directly associated himself with the famous Italian poet by founding his work on the following theme sung by the gondoliers of Venice to the words of the opening stanzas of Tasso's "Gerusalemme liberata":—

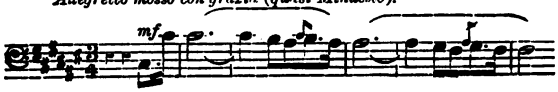




The composer has employed a fragment of the above melody (marked A) with extraordinary ingenuity, changing its character according to the poetical requirements of his subject. It imparts a tragic significance to the commencement of the work :—



assumes the form of an elegant minuetto suggesting Tasso's presence at the festivities of Ferrara :—



and finally celebrates his triumph :—

Several years after he had composed the Symphonic Poem in honour of Tasso, Liszt again turned his thoughts towards the great poet, and added an Epilogue to the above work which he entitled "Le Triomphe funèbre du Tasse." Composed in 1866, this work was heard for the first time some eleven years later in New York, under the direction of Dr. Damrosch, to whom it is dedicated. As a preface to this little-known work, Liszt quotes a passage from the Abbé Serassi's life of Tasso telling how after the death of the poet his friends and admirers were inconsolable, and that one of them, Cardinal Cintio (Aldobrandino), wishing to glorify his memory, organised a magnificent funeral ceremony, and how the body, clad in rich garments and the brow crowned with laurel, was escorted through the city by all the chief representatives of the nobility, art, and science. A very curious and interesting story in connection with this is told by Mme. L. Ramann in her admirable biography of Liszt. It appears that one day Liszt, accompanied by a friend, walked to the monastery of S. Onofrio, where Tasso died, in order to view the sunset, and took the same way by which the poet's funeral cortège had passed. This produced so deep an impression on the

mind of Liszt that on that very evening he drove over the same ground in a close carriage. Afterwards he related that he imagined himself to be Tasso lying in his coffin, and noted the impression he might have had if he had been conscious of what was occurring. He also expressed the hope that those poets and artists who had been badly treated during their lifetime might be spared this cruel irony of a useless apotheosis.

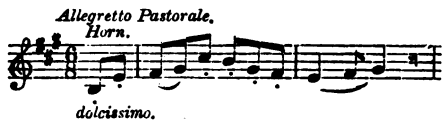
Like so many of Liszt's compositions, this Epilogue has been entirely neglected, and this is a great pity, for it is a noble and sincere work through which runs a strain of warm heartfelt Southern melody.

The third Symphonic Poem of Liszt, "Les Préludes," is by far the most popular of the twelve, and has long since occupied a permanent place in every concert répertoire. Its inspiration is derived from Lamartine's "Méditations poétiques," and its gist may be gathered from the following words of the French poet which serve as its preface: "Is our life anything more than a series of preludes to that unknown song of which death intones the first and solemn note?—Love forms the enchanting dawn of every existence; but where is the destiny in which the first delights of happiness are not inter-

rupted by some storm whose mortal breath dissipates all beautiful illusions, whose fatal lightning consumes its altar, and where is the cruelly-wounded soul which after one of these tempests does not seek to rest its memories in the soothing calm of country life? Man does not, however, resign himself for long to the beneficent languor he had at first found so enchanting in Nature's bosom, and when the trumpet has sounded the signal of alarm, he rushes to the post of danger, whatever may be the war which calls him to the ranks, in order that in the fight he may again find full consciousness of himself and entire possession of his powers."

In his musical paraphrase of Lamartine's words, Liszt has employed a sort of idealised variation form. As in the case of "Tasso," his themes undergo a number of transformations and furnish a succession of vivid tone pictures. The music becomes in turn tender and contemplative, bold and triumphant, as it describes various phases of life. No more fascinating picture of idyllic surroundings could well be painted in tones than the one labelled "Allegretto Pastorale," in which the composer evokes scenes of pastoral life and transports his hearers to some beautiful spot among the mountains "far

from the madding crowd." How eloquently do the wind instruments convey their message! Listen to the soft appeal of the horn, answered first by the oboe, then by the clarinet! Undoubtedly this is one of the most enchanting episodes of a magnificent work, and Liszt has here again proved himself a real musical poet.



"Orpheus" shows the genius of the composer in another light. It is shorter than the three preceding Symphonic Poems and has a character quite apart from them. Liszt explains in a preface how he was impelled to compose this work. Having to conduct the "Orpheus" of Gluck, he let his mind dwell during the rehearsals upon "that Orpheus whose name soars so majestically and harmoniously over the most poetical myths of Greece." He thought of an Etruscan vase he had seen in the museum of the Louvre on which was represented the figure of the first poet-musician. He imagined him taming the wild beasts of the woods, calming the brutal instincts of man, by

accents " which revealed to Humanity the soothing power of art, its glorious illumination, its civilising harmony." To-day, he states, Humanity still " preserves in its bosom those instincts of ferocity, of brutality, and of sensuality, which it is the mission of art to soften, to subdue, and to ennoble. To-day, as it has been in the past and will be in the future, Orpheus, that is to say, Art, must pour its melodious waves, its chords vibrating like a soft and irresistible light, on the contrary elements which wage a bloody conflict in the soul of every individual, as well as in the entrails of all society. Orpheus mourns for Eurydice, that emblem of the ideal engulfed by sin and by sorrow, whom he is permitted to snatch from the monsters of Erebus, to bring forth from the depths of Cimmerian darkness, but whom he is unable, alas, to keep on this earth." The high and noble character of the present work may be realised by the words with which Liszt concludes his preface, explaining his desire " to reproduce the serenely civilising character of the melodies which shine in every work of art ; their suave energy, their august empire, their sonority nobly voluptuous to the soul, their undulations soft as the breezes of Elysium, their gradual ascent

like vapours of incense, their diaphanous and azure ether enveloping the whole universe as in an atmosphere, as in a transparent garment of ineffable and mysterious harmony."

If Liszt has expressed himself in language of a somewhat flowery nature, there can be no denying the loftiness of his outlook. Everything in the present work is suave and harmonious, and no discordant element is allowed to obtrude itself or mar the beauty of a conception over which melody reigns supreme.

Very different are the two following Symphonic Poems, "Prometheus" and "Mazeppa." The first of these, a work of real power and great depth of feeling, was written to celebrate the inauguration of Herder's statue at Weimar in 1850. Liszt states that he chose for his subject the "Prometheus Unbound," as he thought that this work expressed "that which was purest and most generous in the sentiments of one who was called the apostle of humanity." From this ancient myth, immortalised by Æschylus and interpreted in so many different ways by poets and thinkers of all times, Liszt has extracted the fundamental idea which he explains in the following words:

" Audacity, suffering, endurance, and salvation : bold aspiration towards the highest destinies which the human mind can attain ; creative activity, want of expansion . . . expiatory sufferings exposing our vital organs to an incessant gnawing, without annihilating us ; condemnation to a hard enchainment on the most arid shores of our nature ; cries of anguish and tears of blood . . . but an instinctive belief in our native grandeur, in a future deliverance ; a tacit faith in a liberator who will make the long-tortured captive rise to the transmundane regions from which he stole the luminous spark . . . and lastly, the accomplishment of the great work of mercy, the arrival of the great day." He ends by summing up his idea in the words *Malheur et Gloire*, which may be taken as the motto of the work. Apparently he also has intended to symbolise in his music the two elements of progress and reaction, the latter being suggested by a double fugue which is very skilfully and elaborately worked out. Altogether " Prometheus " is a remarkable example of classic sentiment allied to romantic feeling. It will be noticed that here, as well as in so many of his other works, Liszt ends in a spirit of optimism. He himself might in some ways be described

as the apostle of the hope "that springs eternal," for although at times he probes the very depths of the soul with his searching accents, although he feels intensely the sorrows and miseries of mankind, although he weeps with those who are afflicted in mind or in body, yet he endeavours to comfort and solace by adopting a hopeful outlook, by presaging a future reparation, or at any rate by inculcating a spirit of resignation.

This same optimistic feeling asserts itself at the close of "Mazeppa," the wonderfully imaginative and realistic work concerning which Wagner wrote to Liszt, "I was quite breathless after I had read it through." Prefixing his work with Byron's words "Away!—Away!" from "Mazeppa," Liszt applies himself to illustrate Victor Hugo's poem of the same name, describing how the wild horse, with its human freight tightly bound to its side, starts on its terrible ride, careers madly through space, accompanied at first by other wild horses, then by birds of prey, passing frozen rivers, steppes, forests, deserts, until after three days it drops down dead, with the hero, torn and bleeding, tied to its corpse. The end, however, has not arrived, for Mazeppa is destined to be rescued

and ultimately to reign over a tribe of the Ukraine. As Victor Hugo puts it—

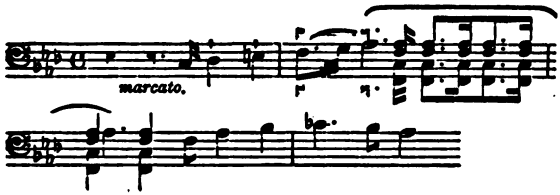
" Il court, il vole, il tombe,
Et se relève roi ! "

It has been mentioned in an earlier chapter that the present work is an extended and considerably elaborated version of one of the " Etudes d'éxécution transcendante." The conclusion, which takes the form of a brilliant march with a quaint section of a barbaric type, does not figure at all in the earlier work, and is intended to illustrate the above words of Victor Hugo. " Mazeppa " is altogether a magnificent example of tone painting, the personality of the hero being expressed by a striking melody which runs through the entire work.

No greater contrast could be afforded than that which exists between the two Symphonic Poems respectively entitled " Festklänge " and " Héroïde funèbre " ; the first expressive of the most absolute happiness, triumphantly celebrating the *joie de vivre ;* the second, a sad, intensely mournful elegy of a heroic character. It is said that Liszt intended the " Festklänge " to be his wedding music. At the time when this work was composed, the difficulties which barred the way to his

union with the Princess de Sayn-Wittgenstein seemed likely to be overcome, and he expressed his joy with all the exuberance of his enthusiastic nature. In the present instance no definite programme has been furnished by the composer, who has deemed the title a sufficient indication of his intentions and preferred to let the music tell its own tale. "Festive sounds" indeed they are, festive in every sense of the word; but if they bring to the mind scenes of rejoicing and brilliant pageants, they also at times seem to express thoughts of a more solemn nature, thoughts which resolve themselves in a fervent song of thanksgiving—the triumphant expression of dearly-won victory. Both in its form and its contents this inspiriting and vivifying work testifies to the immense originality of Liszt. It abounds in exquisite details and possesses a veritably astonishing vitality.

When Liszt was in his nineteenth year he sketched out a "Symphonie révolutionnaire" inspired by the events of 1830. Many years later he employed a fragment of this early work as the basis of his Symphonic Poem entitled "Héroïde funèbre." The distinctively Hungarian character of the principal theme—



would lead one to suppose that Liszt in writing this work was thinking of his native land rather than of France. The conception is altogether on a large scale, and the composer has in the most heart-stirring, poignant accents apparently voiced the sorrows of an entire nation. In deep grief-laden yet heroic tones he seems to lament the loss of some great patriots, while in a lovely elegiac melody he expresses feelings of a more intimate and personal nature. This intensely moving work was performed in several German towns in memory of the master after his death in 1886.

The following Symphonic Poem, "Hungaria," is, as its name implies, a tribute to the composer's country, a musical epic in which the Liszt of the Hungarian Rhapsodies paints in vivid colours a series of pictures describing the aspirations and the struggles, the sufferings and the woes, and finally the triumphs and the joys of his countrymen.

"Hamlet," the tenth work of the series, discloses another phase of the master's genius. The serious nature of the conception, so thoroughly in accord with the sombreness of the theme, may to a certain extent account for the almost entire neglect into which this work has been allowed to fall, but it does not excuse it. It appears that Liszt himself heard it but once on the orchestra, and this only a few months before his death. Yet "Hamlet" is a work of peculiar significance and striking originality, deeply and earnestly thought out, and fully worthy of being associated with the immortal drama which gives it its name. Liszt has left no indication as to his intentions in the present instance. The brooding character of the music permits one to suppose, however, that a musical interpretation of the "To be or not to be" must have been intended. At the same time the character of Ophelia is suggested by an enchanting passage which appears twice and is succeeded by a phrase marked *ironisch* (ironical), seemingly typical of Hamlet's frame of mind, so that it is possible and even likely that the master may have intended his work to be a little more than a mood picture. However this may be, it does not affect the value of the

work as music. It possesses a character of its own, and reveals an emotional power of a deeply concentrated nature as well as a peculiar intensity of feeling and great nobility of thought.

I have noted before how sensitive Liszt was to both poetry and painting, and how often these arts impelled him to compose. His eleventh Symphonic Poem, "Die Hunnenschlacht" ("The Battle of the Huns"), was inspired by Kaulbach's famous fresco in the Berlin Museum. It deals with a legend connected with the struggles between the Huns under Attila and the Goths, the former representing Paganism and the latter Christianity. Liszt has prefixed no programme to his work, but in a letter to Frau von Kaulbach, dated May 1, 1857, after saying that he is sending her the manuscript of the two-pianoforte arrangement of his Symphonic Poem, he gives a clue to his poetical intentions in the following words: "Perhaps there may be an opportunity later on, in Munich or Weimar, in which I can have the work performed before you with full orchestra, and can give a voice to the meteoric and solar light which I have borrowed from the painting, and which at the Finale I have formed into one whole by the gradual work-

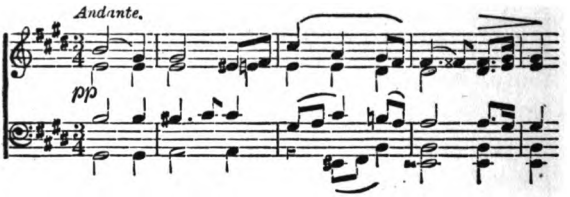
ing up of the Catholic Chorale 'Crux fidelis,' and the meteoric sparks blended therewith. As I have already intimated to Kaulbach in Munich, I was led by the musical demands of the material to give proportionately more place to the solar light of Christianity, personified in the Catholic Chorale 'Crux fidelis,' than appears to be the case in the glorious painting, in order thereby to win and pregnantly represent the conclusion of the Victory of the Cross, with which I, both as a Catholic and as a man, could not dispense." [1]

Here again we see exemplified the predominating idea of the triumph of Christianity which permeated Liszt's thoughts during the whole of his life. The contrast between the two conflicting elements is well maintained throughout the present work, though perhaps on the whole this does not convey so satisfactory an impression as some of its predecessors.

In the last of the twelve Symphonic Poems, "Die Ideale" (after Schiller), Liszt follows a different course. Not content with giving his work a title or explaining his intentions in a preface, he endeavours to

[1] "Letters of Franz Liszt," translated by Constance Bache.

musically illustrate various fragments of Schiller's poem, and in order that his meaning should be clear, he prefixes no fewer than nine portions of the poem to as many sections of his composition. Possibly it would have been better had he confined himself to the four superscriptions with which he has marked the chief divisions of his work: (1) Aspiration; (2) Disillusion; (3) Activity; (4) Apotheosis. The work is perhaps rather unduly spun out, but it contains some very beautiful portions, such as the lovely episode, so full of tenderness, intended to symbolise friendship, which commences thus :—



Many years later, in 1881, Liszt was moved by his admiration for a drawing by Count Michael von Zichy to compose yet another Symphonic Poem entitled "Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe" ("From the Cradle to the Grave"). He does not seem to have attached much importance himself to this

work, for in a letter to Gevaërt, the Belgian composer and director of the Brussels Conservatoire, he alluded to it as " assez courte et sans chevilles." This work is divided into three parts respectively called " Die Wiege " (" The Cradle "), " Der Kampf um's Dasein " (" The Struggle for Life "), and " Zum Grabe ; Die Wiege des zukünftigen Lebens " (" The Grave ; the Cradle of future Life "). Here indeed was a subject well calculated to appeal to a composer. Unfortunately, when he wrote this work Liszt no longer possessed the strength and imagination of former years, with the result that his last Symphonic Poem is more remarkable as denoting good intentions than for the manner in which these have been realised. From his earliest youth Liszt had expended his musical energies in astoundingly generous fashion, and during the heyday of his life he had concentrated an immensity of labour on the production of his greatest works ; but as old age crept on he seemed to become more and more imbued with a sort of religious mysticism, and some of his later compositions in consequence convey the impression of visionary aspirations and introspective thoughts vaguely expressed.

The full force of his creative genius found

its expression in the " Faust " and " Dante " symphonies, his longest and most ambitious works, the first of which he dedicated to Hector Berlioz and the second to Richard Wagner.

No subject has attracted musicians to a greater extent than that of " Faust," and it must be added that none has proved so potent a source of inspiration in whatever form it has been treated. Neither is this to be wondered at, for its appeal is so many-sided, and it offers to the composer endless opportunities of exercising his imagination in probing its philosophy and illustrating its phantasy and romance. Thus has it brought luck to many musicians. The subject has been popularised all the world over by the exquisite operatic setting of Gounod ; it has furnished Berlioz with the basis on which he has constructed what is perhaps his masterpiece ; it has enabled Schumann to write one of his best works ; it has inspired Wagner and Liszt to compose, the one an overture and the other a symphony ; and it has been treated in various forms more or less successfully by a number of other composers, including Spohr, Boïto, Litolff, Lassen, Rubinstein, Lindpaintner, Zöllner, &c.

Liszt has planned his symphony in three

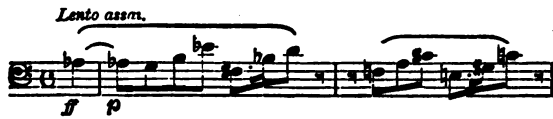
parts or, as he terms them, "Character pictures," respectively entitled "Faust," "Marguerite," and "Mephistopheles." Having completed his work in 1854, he subsequently added, three years later, to the last section of his symphony, a choral epilogue set to the words which conclude the second "Faust" of Goethe—

"Alles Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichniss;
Das Unzulängliche,
Hier wird's Ereigniss;
Das Unbeschreibliche,
Hier ist es gethan;
Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan."

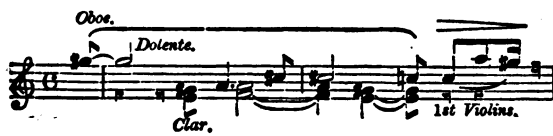
In this splendid work Liszt has veritably surpassed himself. Nowhere else has he showered so great a profusion of original ideas, nowhere else has he displayed such power, nowhere else has he shown himself so individual, so tender, so passionate, or has he revealed so much depth of thought. The "Faust" symphony, composed more than half a century ago, is modern in the best sense of the word. It is a great and glorious masterpiece, one of those few works of which it may be said that time cannot stale their infinite variety. The perform-

ances it has received in England have been so few and so far between that it is still practically unknown to the majority of British music-lovers. Some day perhaps it may be "discovered," just as pianists have "discovered" the great sonata in B minor mentioned in an earlier chapter, and its beauties may gradually be appreciated.[1]

The first section of the symphony, intended to characterise Faust, commences in a strange and mysterious fashion, the following theme suggesting the perplexed thoughts, gloomy meditations, and general disillusionment of Faust :—



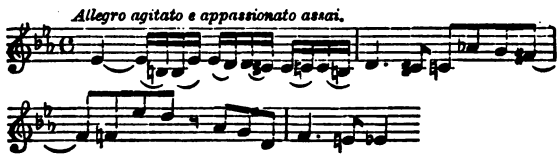
To this succeeds a plaintive yearning theme like the cry of a soul in pain :—



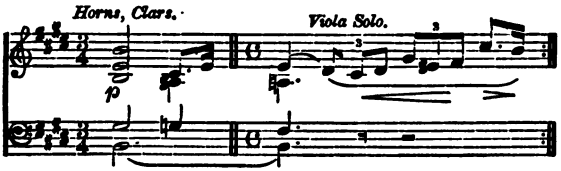
The gradually increasing agitation of Faust

[1] Sir Henry J. Wood conducted a fine performance of the "Faust" symphony at the Queen's Hall some years ago.

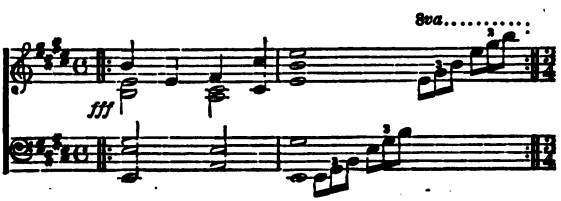
in his efforts to rise above his destiny is suggested by the fiery *Allegro agitato :—*

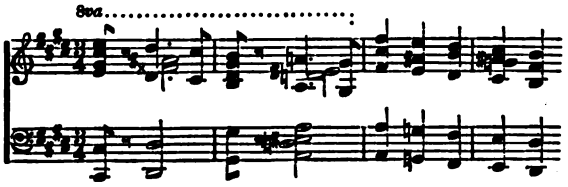


There can be no mistaking the nature of the sentiment expressed by the following theme, a metamorphosis of the second motive associated with Faust quoted above, and which is now transformed into a love melody of entrancing beauty :—

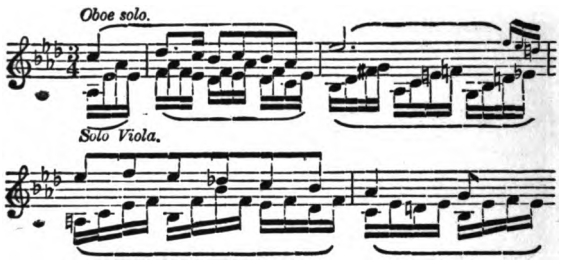


while the expression of an all-conquering determination is writ large in the inspiring section marked *Grandioso :—*





The "Gretchen" movement is exquisitely lovely throughout. What more adorable melody could well be imagined than the one which so simply and eloquently evokes the figure of the sweet and innocent maiden?

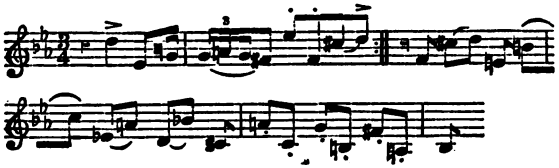


To give fragmentary quotations of this ideally beautiful movement, in which one of the "Faust" themes is employed with telling effect, would serve no purpose. Such music must be heard to be appreciated.

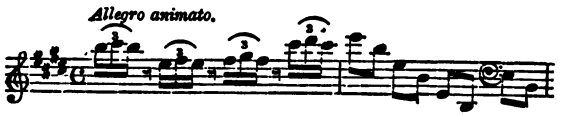
The last part of the symphony depicts Mephistopheles, and Liszt has here adopted a unique method of characterisation. Goethe

makes the fiend describe himself in the words, "Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint" ("I am the spirit that ever denies").

Mephistopheles thus exemplifying negation, Liszt has not provided him with a special representative theme, but has evoked his satanic figure by parodying the themes associated with Faust, an idea as original as it is effectively carried out. Here, for instance, is a distorted version of the motive which in the first part so eloquently expresses Faust's passionate longings :—



while Mephistopheles turns Faust's ambitious thoughts into ridicule as follows :—



It would be difficult to convey an idea of the extraordinary, one might say diabolical, *entrain* which pervades this movement, evoking the very spirit of derision in its sardonic

mockery and bitter irony. The transient apparition of the image of Marguerite momentarily stops the unholy carnival of sound, which, however, recommences, until gradually the evil influence is dispelled, and in an enchanting series of modulations Liszt transports us to other and purer spheres, the male chorus intoning the first six lines of Goethe quoted above, and the tenor voice entering with wonderful effect and singing the words "Das Ewig-Weibliche" (the ever-womanly) to the ravishing Marguerite theme, the sentence, "Zieht uns hinan" (draws us upwards), being completed by the chorus. From whatever point of view the "Faust" symphony is approached, it reveals its greatness. Highly original in design and in musical inventiveness, admirable in its psychology as well as in its emotional strength, it stands absolutely by itself, a glorious monument to the composer's fame. The reason that it has been so neglected may possibly be attributed to its length—it plays a little over an hour—but it is throughout so interesting and well proportioned that it does not appear too long.

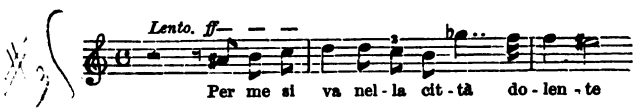
The "Dante" symphony, the companion work of the above, was completed in 1856, but had occupied the composer's attention

for many years previously. It was first heard in England, under the direction of Mr. Ganz, in 1882. Wagner's admiration for it was unbounded, and he termed it "one of the most astounding deeds of music," an expression of opinion which occurs in the course of an article entitled "The Public in Time and Space," included in the sixth volume of Mr. Ashton Ellis's translation of Wagner's prose works, from which the following is taken: "It was a fresh hearing of Liszt's 'Dante' symphony that revived the problem what place in our art world should be allotted to a creation as brilliant as it is masterly. Shortly before I had been busy reading the 'Divine Comedy,' and again had revolved all the difficulties in judging this work which I have mentioned above; to me that tone-poem of Liszt's now appeared the creative act of a redeeming genius, freeing Dante's unspeakably pregnant intention from the inferno of his superstitions by the purifying fire of musical ideality, and setting it in the paradise of sure and blissful feeling. Here the soul of Dante's poem is shown in purest radiance. Such redeeming service even Michael Angelo could not render to his great poetic master; only after Bach and Beethoven had taught our music to wield

the brush and chisel of the mighty Florentine could Dante's true redemption be achieved."

The "Dante" symphony commences with a description of the Inferno. In solemn accents the trombones, tuba, and double basses interpret the terrifying words which are stated by Dante to be inscribed over the gate of Hell :—

"Per me si va nella città dolente ;
Per me si va nell' eterno dolore ;
Per me si va tra la perdutta gente."



This is succeeded by the pronouncement, "Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate" ("Abandon all hope ye who enter"), and now the composer's task becomes a particularly difficult one, for he has to depict the despair of the lost souls and the fearful horrors which the mediæval mind apparently reconciled with the conception of an all-merciful God. Frankly the subject is anything but an agreeable one, and it is indeed happily impossible to realise it musically in a convincing manner. Liszt has done his best,

and his music is expressive of the direst anguish and despair. The appearance of Paolo and Francesca, a lovely episode when the violins sing a passionate melody quite Southern in feeling to a harp accompaniment, brings with it a temporary relief, and the words—

> " Nessun maggior dolore
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria "

(" There is no greater grief than to remember days of joy when misery is at hand ")—have been poignantly expressed. All the same one is not sorry to leave the infernal regions for Purgatory, which, according to Liszt, cannot be such a bad place; at any rate, the music he has written to describe it is very suave and beautiful, if somewhat spun out. To suggest the Paradiso the composer has employed the old church melody known as the " Magnificat," which is sung by a female choir, and the work thus closes in an essentially devotional manner. Liszt wrote two endings to his work—the one soft and ethereal, and the other brilliant and triumphant. Wagner liked the first of these the best, and it is undoubtedly the most poetical. It is probable that most music-lovers will

prefer the "Faust" to the "Dante" symphony, if only on account of the greater fascination of the subject, which, in spite of its metaphysics and mediævalism, appeals far more to the modern mind than does the imaginary inferno of Dante with its attendant horrors. Herr Felix Weingartner, however, while expressing his admiration for both works, gives the preference to the latter, concerning which he writes thus in his volume on "The Post-Beethoven Symphonists": "Of a still greater unity, and perhaps still more powerful than the 'Faust' symphony, is the music to Dante's 'Divine Comedy,' with its expressive picture of the infernal tortures and Purgatory, rising higher and higher towards the utmost heights of purity of sentiment."

The Faust legend evidently possessed a particular attraction for Liszt, as in addition to the symphony bearing this name, he musically illustrated two episodes taken from the "Faust" of Lenau and respectively entitled "Der nächtliche Zug"—"The Midnight Procession"; and "Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke" (Mephisto-Walzer)—"The Dance in the Village Tavern" (Mephisto-Waltz). Sad indeed was the career of the poet Lenau, whose works exhibit so deep a

sentiment of nature and are characterised by so profound a melancholy, for he lost his reason when only forty-two years of age, in 1844, and died in an asylum some time afterwards. One of his best poems is the "Faust," from which Liszt culled the two above episodes. The first of these is an admirable tone picture describing Faust riding alone in the darkness of the night. With his marvellous powers of musical description Liszt has illustrated the beautiful words of the poet :—

"Am Himmel schwere, dunkle Wolken hangen
Und harrend schon zum Walde niederlausschen.
Tiefnacht ; doch weht ein süsses Frühlingshangen
Im Wald, ein warmes, seelensvolles Rauschen,
Die blüthentrunknen Lüfte schwinden, schwellen
Und hörbar rieseln alle Lebensquellen.
O Nachtigall, du theure, rufe, singe !
Dein Wonnelied ein jedes Blatt durchdringe ! "

Presently there passes a procession of children dressed in white, carrying flowers for the celebration of St. John's Eve ; maidens in nuns' veils, and priests clad in sombre garments bearing crosses. The composer here employs the old hymn, "Pange lingua," with wonderful and awe-inspiring effect. The procession passes by ; Faust is once more left

alone; he falls into the deepest melancholy and sheds the bitterest of tears :—

" Als Faust im Finstern wieder steht allein :
Da fast er fest und wild sein treues Ross,
Und drückt das Antlitz tief in seine Mähnen
Und weint an seinem Halse heisse Thränen,
Wie er noch nie so bitter sie vergoss."

In strong contrast to the above, the " Mephisto-Walzer " asserts itself as one of the most wildly intoxicating works in existence. Faust and Mephistopheles have stopped to refresh themselves at a village inn where a wedding festival is being celebrated to the accompaniment of music and dancing. Mephistopheles, seizing a fiddle from the hands of a village player, produces from it wondrous and magic tones and gradually sets every one dancing in a frenzied way. Faust, who has put his arm round the waist of one of the bridesmaids, dances madly through the open door followed by the entire throng. Over the hills and meadows they rush, to the accompaniment of the alluring sounds, until they reach the woods, where the Mephistophelian strains gradually give way to the love songs of the nightingales :—

" Sie tanzen taumelnd zum Wald,
Und leiser und leiser die Geige verhallt.
Die schwindenden Töne durchsäuseln die Bäume,
Wie lüsterne, schmeichende Liebesträume.
Da hebt den flötenden Wonneschall
Aus duftigen Büschen die Nachtigall,
Die heisser die Lust der Trunkenen schwellt,
Als wäre der Sänger vom Teufel bestellt.
Da ziehet sie nieder die Sehnsucht schwer,
Und brausend verschlingt sie das Wonnemeer."

It is impossible to describe the peculiar fascination of the music, which seems animated by a veritably diabolical spirit of mockery, its extraordinary *verve*, its vivid colouring, curious rhythms, the insinuating seductiveness of the throbbing theme, in D flat, so suggestive of amorous thoughts, or indeed the brilliant fantasy of the entire piece. These two episodes from Lenau's " Faust " fully deserve to rank by the side of their composer's Symphonic Poems.

In closing this chapter I find it difficult to avoid a feeling of sadness at the thought that so many of the beautiful tone poems of which I have been writing should have been neglected to such an extent. This feeling, however, is tempered with the hope that the moment is perhaps not far distant when their merits will receive due recognition and a

tardy justice be meted to a great composer whose wonderful executive skill has seemingly caused his creative ability to be underrated, and who is *par excellence* the pioneer of the modern musical movement.

CHAPTER V

THE SACRED WORKS AND THE SONGS

If the symphonic works of Liszt have been neglected in this country, his sacred works have been so to an even greater extent. Yet the importance of his achievements is as remarkable in the domain of the Church as it is in that of the concert-room.

The strongly religious bent of his mind, which had asserted itself in so many of his secular works, rendered it probable that sooner or later he would devote his attention to music of an essentially sacred character, while the individuality of his nature made it equally certain that he would here display that independence of thought which had marked his other creative efforts. There can be no doubt that Liszt felt impelled from within to write religious music, and found here another manner of expressing his aspirations towards the infinite. After he had donned the cassock and as he grew older, he became more serene in the expression of

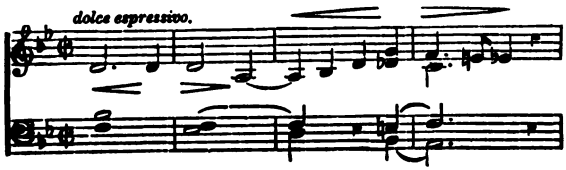
his thoughts, and his later works are often strictly devotional in style and bear evidence to a simple and naïve faith.

Among the many compositions of a religious character written by Liszt, there are four which stand out as monuments of his creative genius: the "Missa Solemnis," composed for the inauguration of the cathedral at Gran, known as the "Graner Messe"; the setting of Psalm XIII.; the cantata "The Legend of St. Elizabeth"; and the oratorio "Christus."

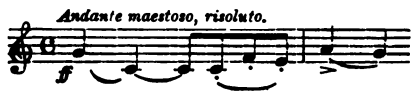
The "Graner Messe," dating from the year 1855, belongs to the most productive period of the master's life, and is certainly one of his most admirable works. Liszt wrote that it was "more prayed than composed," implying that he had put his whole heart and soul into his endeavour to realise the text in all its solemnity. Instead of being content with supplying a more or less perfunctory work which might have done duty as a *pièce d'occasion* and passed muster as being no worse than many settings of the Mass, he attempted to interpret the inner meaning of the words and bring out their full significance, and in order to do this he adopted to a certain extent the principles which had served him so well in the com-

position of his Symphonic Poems; that is, he sought to convey a sense of unity by employing the same themes in different parts of the divine service, varying these according to the nature of the text. The advantage to be derived from this method, both as regards the purely musical and the interpretative point of view, is obvious enough. The "Graner Messe," however, commands admiration not only on account of the originality of its structure and the sumptuousness of its presentment, but also on account of the loftiness of its style, the inherent beauty of its themes, the richness of its harmonies, the vividly emotional and at the same time ardently devotional character of its accents, the descriptive and poetical nature of its musical treatment. The power of evocation which Liszt possessed to so remarkable a degree is exemplified at its fullest in this Mass, with its varied suggestions of sentiments and moods, its expressions of sturdy faith, its humble supplications for mercy, its awe-inspiring reference to the mortal doom of man relieved by belief in Redemption and confidence in the existence of a future state. The music of this beautiful work seems to convey all this and more. Listen to the soft appeal for mercy conveyed in the

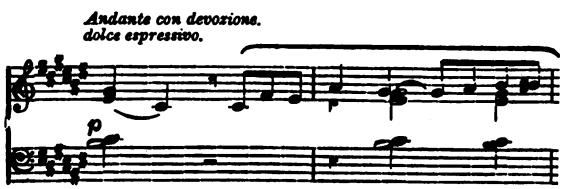
" Christe eleison " by the following tender theme, which will reappear later on to the words " Benedictus qui venit in nomini Domine " :—

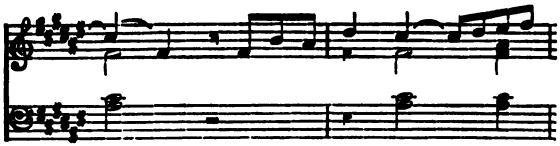


and does not the immutability of dogma seem to assert itself in the opening bars of the " Credo " ?

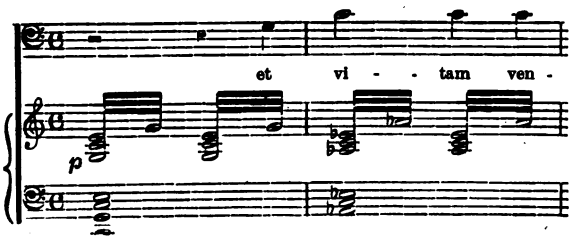


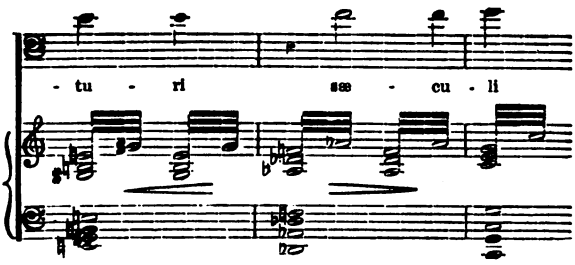
This same theme acquires an entirely different character when heralding the words " qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de cœlis " :—





Afterwards it assumes a more aggressive form when associated with the words " et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam," the indication *Allegro militante* presumably defining the composer's desire to suggest the Church militant, and it reappears at the end of the entire Mass as a final expression of belief. The conclusion of the " Credo " is admirable in its dramatic simplicity and wonderful originality, the tenor, as if suddenly transfigured, singing the words " et vitam venturi sæculi," which are repeated to the same theme first by the soloists and then by the choir with overwhelming effect :—





To enter into further details concerning this magnificent work is unnecessary, and I can only deplore that so sublime an example of religious music should be so totally ignored here.

The setting of Psalm XIII., for tenor solo, chorus, and orchestra, was composed the same year as the "Graner Messe," and although of smaller dimensions, deserves to rank by the side of this masterpiece, which it equals in point of beauty, inspiration, and depth of thought. In no other work has Liszt expressed the anguish of his heart with greater poignancy than in this Psalm. Writing to Brendel, he said that he had tried to identify himself with the Psalmist, and one cannot fail to be struck by the obvious sincerity of the feeling underlying his music. The despairing outburst of a suffering soul, it graphically interprets the agony of the

initial words, "How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord?" Then it becomes more pleading, and in a passage of really exquisite tenderness implores the divine help, while finally it resolves itself into a song of praise and thanksgiving. This admirable work is not altogether unknown in England. It was given many years ago under the auspices of the late Walter Bach, and more recently it was performed at the Birmingham Festival of 1903 under the direction of Dr. Hans Richter.

The oratorio, "The Legend of St. Elizabeth," has also been heard in England, though to the younger musical generation it is probably nothing but a name, for it received performances at the Crystal Palace and the St. James's Hall in 1886 on the occasion of the composer's last visit to London, when it was conducted by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the part of the heroine being sung by Mme. Albani. A portion of the work had been previously performed by Dr. Wylde in 1870, and Walter Bach had produced it in 1876, omitting one scene.

The subject of this oratorio, familiarised to English readers through Kingsley's dramatic poem, "The Saint's Tragedy," was particularly likely to appeal to a mind so

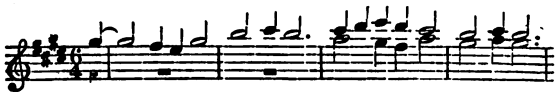
poetical and mystical as that of Liszt, whose own nature resembled that of his heroine, famous for her devotion and almsgiving. The librettist Otto Roquette divided his work into two parts and six episodes, these having been, it is said, inspired by Moritz von Schwind's frescoes at the Wartburg representing scenes from the life of St. Elizabeth. Briefly the story tells first of the arrival of the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of King Andreas of Hungary, at the Wartburg as the affianced bride of Ludwig, son of the Landgrave Hermann of Thuringia. Several years are supposed to have elapsed between the first and second scenes, Elizabeth now being the wife of Ludwig, who has succeeded to his father's throne and devotes himself to knight-errantry. A famine rages in Thuringia, and during one of her husband's absences Elizabeth devotes herself to the relief of the poor. In order to obtain sufficient means for this she is obliged to sell some of her lands, a course which meets with the disapproval of her mother-in-law, the Dowager Landgravine Sophie, and causes Ludwig to try and check her liberality. This leads to what is perhaps the most beautiful episode in the entire work. Ludwig, unexpectedly returning, comes across

Elizabeth wandering by herself some distance from the Wartburg. His suspicions being aroused, he asks her what she has got in the basket she is carrying. In order to excuse herself, Elizabeth replies that she has been gathering flowers, but Ludwig, not believing what she says, snatches the basket from her, and to the astonishment of both finds that it contains roses. Elizabeth now confesses that she left the house with bread and wine to give to some sick people. These have been converted by a miracle into roses. Ludwig, remorseful at his unfounded suspicions, craves her forgiveness, the two return thanks to God, and their prayer is re-echoed by a short chorus with which the scene closes. The first part of the work ends with the preparations for Ludwig's departure to the Holy Land and his farewell to Elizabeth, who is to represent him during his absence. At the beginning of the next scene there comes news of Ludwig's death, whereupon the Dowager Landgravine claims the Wartburg as her inheritance and drives Elizabeth and her children away in the midst of a violent storm. In the penultimate scene we find that Elizabeth has sought shelter in a hospital founded by herself in her more prosperous days, and where she is still able

to follow her charitable instincts. This scene closes with her death. The canonisation of Elizabeth at Marburg, in the presence of the Emperor Frederick II. and an imposing assemblage of princes and clerics, concludes the work.

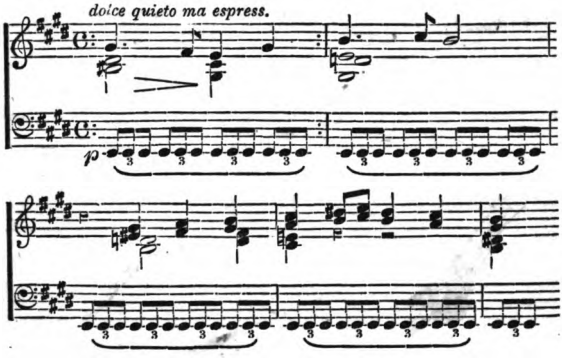
The oratorio as a whole suffers from the disadvantages pertaining to works of a hybrid *genre*. At one moment it suggests the concert-room and at another the theatre. A strong dramatic spirit animates several of the scenes, whereas the form in which others are conceived appears scarcely suitable for stage presentment. The work has, however, often been successfully performed as an opera in Germany.

In his music Liszt has made a veritably astonishing use of an old liturgical theme, "Quasi stella matutina," which he employs throughout his work to typify his beautiful and saintly heroine. The Prelude, one of the loveliest pieces imaginable, is entirely constructed on this theme and commences as follows :—

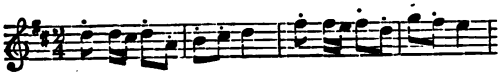


There is something essentially pure in the

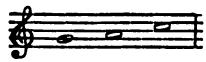
music of this Prelude. I do not know of any other word which would more adequately convey the impression it produces, and I expect that this has been the composer's intention. It affords an admirable synthesis of the character of Elizabeth. What can be more entrancingly beautiful than the version of the above theme, which later on will reappear in connection with the "rose miracle"?



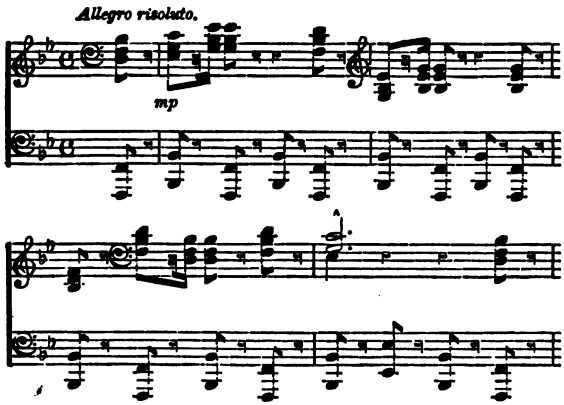
Liszt has also employed the following Hungarian national tune with great effect:—



The Gregorian "intonation" of the Magnificat, symbolising the Cross—



already introduced by Liszt into other works, here forms the basis of the Crusaders' March, which begins thus :—



The trio of this March is founded on a touching Pilgrims' song of great antiquity and another old Hungarian tune also figures in the two last scenes.

Out of the above simple elements Liszt has constructed a work remarkable in many

ways, its predominating feature being the element of spirituality and mysticism characterising the angelic nature of Elizabeth which the composer has admirably realised. The Prelude and scene of the "rose miracle" are sufficient in themselves to ensure the vitality of this very typical and touching example of the master's genius.

"Christus," although also entitled oratorio, is a work of a different character altogether. It is the supreme tribute offered by the composer to that faith which was within him throughout his life and which gained more and more control over him as the years progressed. Liszt prefaces his work with the following words taken from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." The essence of the religion professed by Liszt is expressed in these words—a religion exemplified by love and charity in the person of its Founder.

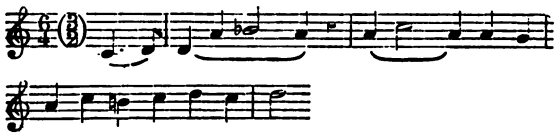
It was in 1856 that Liszt first turned his attention to the subject of this oratorio. One portion of this, "The Beatitudes," dates from that year, but the remainder of the work was composed between 1863 and 1866. The exact date of its completion is

indeed fixed by Liszt himself in a letter to Dr. Franz Brendel, dated October 2, 1866, in which he says: "My Christus Oratorio has, at last, since yesterday got so far finished that I have now only got the revising, the copying, and the pianoforte score to do." It was, however, only in 1873 that the complete work was heard for the first time in public, at Weimar, under the direction of the composer.

The Latin text of "Christus" was selected by Liszt himself from Biblical and liturgical sources. The work is divided into three principal parts, which correspond with three important feasts of the Church, and are thus entitled: (1) "Christmas Oratorio"; (2) "After Epiphany"; (3) "Passion and Resurrection." Wagner, in expressing his admiration of the work to Liszt, wrote that "if in Rome they were as enlightened as they are infallible, the fragments of 'Christus' should be performed at each of the festivals to which they relate, and the entire work on the great days of the Church."

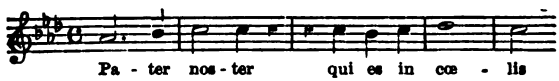
"Christus" is a work quite *sui generis*. Essentially devotional in spirit, much of it is intimately associated with the Church and its ceremonies, while many portions come under the category of picturesque or descrip-

tive music;—mediæval thoughts and ideas expressed in a modern idiom and the Middle Ages allied to the nineteenth century, illustrating in a measure the continuity of belief. The first part, "Christmas Oratorio," commences with a theme borrowed from the Liturgy:—



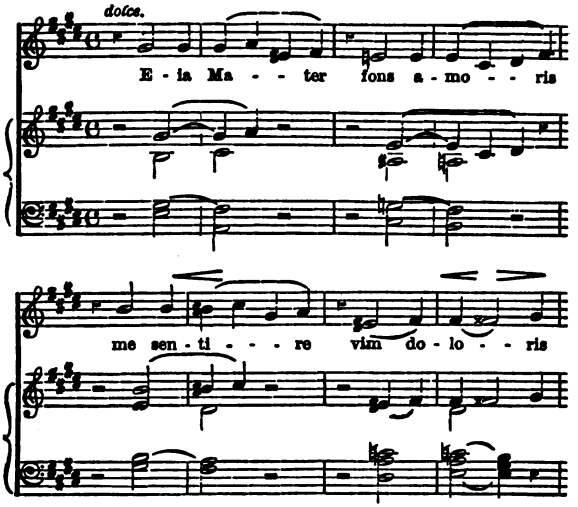
This theme is transformed into an adorably naïve, if somewhat lengthy, pastoral movement which leads to the Annunciation, a solo for soprano with chorus. The hymn "Stabat Mater speciosa," which follows, is simple and does not present any very striking feature. After this comes a second pastoral movement describing the Shepherds at the Manger, an exquisite tone picture which, like the first Pastorale, would gain by being somewhat curtailed. The "March of the Three Holy Kings," admirable in its colouring and containing a really beautiful episode describing the appearance of the star in the East and the subsequent adoration of the Magi, ends the first part of the oratorio.

The second part, "After Epiphany," opens with a very impressive setting of the Beatitudes for baritone solo and chorus, followed by a "Pater noster" founded on the well-known intonation :—



This is succeeded by an effective chorus, "The Foundation of the Church." Instrumental storms cannot ever prove very convincing, and the one describing the tempest quelled by Christ is quite good of its kind, but what is wholly admirable is the close of this movement, when a beautifully suave theme, already heard in the Beatitudes, expresses to perfection the words "Et facta est tranquilitas magna," and the music softly dies away. The "Entry into Jerusalem" is a gorgeous example of tone painting, magnificently devised and rising to a splendid climax. This is quite one of the most notable portions of the oratorio. The third and last part, "Passion and Resurrection," commences with a monologue, "Tristis est anima mea," the sublime and poignant words of Christ on the Cross being interpreted with the utmost depth of feeling. There follows a setting of the "Stabat Mater dolorosa,"

which as regards poignancy of expression is assuredly unsurpassed. The music is pervaded by an intense sadness suggestive of the profoundest grief, while at times it overflows with an intensity of feeling and ardent mystical longing, as in the setting of the words "Eia Mater fons amoris me sentire vim doloris fac ut tecum lugeam" :—



A quaint little hymn tune of an archaic character succeeds this deeply impressive "Stabat Mater," and the oratorio comes to a conclusion with a jubilant "Resurrexit,"

to the words "Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat in sempiterna sæcula." The reason why this truly astonishing work has been so neglected possibly lies in the fact that it is very long as it now stands. Certain superfluous portions could be excised with advantage, or else, better still, the parts could be given singly. It certainly seems a vast pity that so magnificent a contribution to the literature of sacred music should be entirely ignored.

In his "Hungarian Coronation Mass," produced in 1867, Liszt made the somewhat hazardous experiment of employing certain familiar Hungarian rhythms and melodic turns, such as those he used in his Rhapsodies, in order to obtain local colour. His sacred compositions further include a Mass for male voices and organ, a Choral Mass dedicated to Pope Pius IX., a Requiem for male voices and organ, besides settings of various Psalms. These works are specially adapted for the use of worship and are distinguished by the sobriety of the means employed, an avoidance of outward effect, and a strictly devotional feeling. In order to convey an idea of the spirit which animated Liszt when writing for the Church, the following words may be quoted from a letter he wrote to

Herbeck concerning the performance of his Mass for male voices: "The Credo must sound rock-like as the dogma (*felsenfest wie das Dogma*); the 'Sanctus,' mysterious and blissful; the 'Agnus Dei,' soft and deep, sorrowful and suggesting heartfelt sympathy for the Passion of Christ; and the 'Dona nobis pacem,' quiet, propitiating and trustful, a cloud of fragrant frankincense. The Church composer is also a preacher and a priest, and where the word is no longer sufficient to express the sentiment, music transfigures it and lifts it aloft."

If Liszt has acquired an undying fame through his pianoforte, symphonic, and choral works, he has no less distinguished himself as a composer of songs. His pre-eminence in this branch of the art can indeed scarcely be contested, and his *lieder* deserve to rank by the side of the most beautiful examples of their kind. Even those musicians who are not able to appreciate the master's achievements in the symphonic field cannot do otherwise than admit the beauty of songs concerning which Mr. Fuller Maitland has written: "All, or almost all, are highly original, effectively written for the voice, and interesting in the accompaniment; some are a little forced in

sentiment, but in all the natural accentuation of the words is followed with singular fidelity, and a few are among the most expressive lyrics of the world." [1]

Most of Liszt's songs are written to German words, and several of these, such as "Mignon's Lied," "Die Loreley," "Du bist wie eine Blume," "Es mass ein wunderbares sein," have become famous. The collection of "Gesammelte Lieder," however, contains many others which are equally deserving of attention and have been inexplicably neglected. Some of these last were brought forward at a memorable Liszt recital given by Miss Susan Strong at the Bechstein Hall a few years ago, and this artist's beautiful interpretation of several lesser-known songs remains an indelible memory in the present writer's mind. Where there is so much to admire it becomes difficult to particularise, and the collection of fifty-eight songs mentioned above should be the treasured possession of every vocalist.

Liszt put the query in one of his essays as to whether the day was not yet at hand when composers would consider it beneath their dignity to write music to words of which Voltaire, with biting sarcasm, made

[1] Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians."

the remark, often repeated since, "The words that are sung are those which are not fit to be spoken." Carefully adhering to the idea here expressed, Liszt took pains only to associate his music with words of a high poetical quality. Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Uhland, Lenau, Rückert, Hoffmann von Fallersleben, Victor Hugo, these were some of the poets who inspired him. The mention of the latter draws attention to the few songs written by the master to French words, an altogether charming specimen of which is the setting of this poet's "S'il est un charmant gazon," while another, "Comment disaient-ils?" is delightfully quaint and original. One of the most striking songs in the collection is the one entitled "Die drei Zigeuner," in which the composer has made use of those Hungarian rhythms he knew so well how to employ. The tender "Angiolin dal biondo crin" is the earliest of all his songs, and was an expression of his affection for his little daughter Blondine.

In addition to the songs contained in the above collection are the three sonnets of Petrarch, included as pianoforte pieces in the "Années de Pélerinage," which were first composed by Liszt as songs, while another vocal composition of a different

character is the dramatic scena, "Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher," written in 1845, an effective setting of words by Alexandre Dumas.

Most of the songs of Liszt are permeated by an indefinable poetic charm, a peculiar strain of tenderness, a spirituality of thought. In them he seemed to pour out the innermost feelings of his heart, to express his longings, his hopes, his joys, and his griefs. It is in his German songs that he is at his best. Some of these are quite short; others, on the other hand, by their developments are veritable music-dramas in miniature. It stands to reason that he always endeavoured faithfully to interpret the meaning of the words. In many cases he refused to be bound by the strophic form, but shaped his music according to the requirements of the text, thus realising the highest conception of the Art song. In an essay on the songs of Robert Franz, Liszt wrote that from a poetical and musical point of view the *lied* was "strictly a speciality of the German Muse." His own lovely songs, both on account of their originality and beauty, as well as by their expression of Teutonic sentiment, entitle him to rank by the side of the greatest masters of the German *lied*.

Enough has been said to show that as a writer for the voice Liszt displayed an individuality equal to that which he so triumphantly asserted in his instrumental works. The subject could be pursued at greater length did the dimensions of the present volume allow it, but after all there would be little gained thereby, for a song does not demand analysis or dissection. "I will not attempt to explain what constitutes a beautiful song," says Schumann; "it is as easy and as difficult as a beautiful poem." The songs of Liszt may therefore well be allowed to tell their own tale and disclose their manifold beauties without further comment. They fitly illustrate the opinion of Wagner that "a poet's work consists in what he leaves to imagination, and to elucidate and express by music is the task of the composer."

CHAPTER VI

PERSONALITY AND INFLUENCE

In the foregoing chapters I have endeavoured to convey an idea of the creative genius of Liszt. To do justice to a personality so complex as his, to evoke the inspired composer, the peerless executant, the lovable man, is a well-nigh impossible task. His figure seems to dominate the century, and the influence he has exercised upon his art is immeasurable; it reveals itself everywhere. One phase of the master's life which has only been lightly touched upon—his pre-eminence as a teacher—is vividly described in the pages of Miss Amy Fay's "Music-Study in Germany." The master is here presented to us in the midst of his pupils, a grand, venerable, inspiring figure, devoting his precious time to helping and encouraging youthful talent. Miss Fay, who went to Weimar in 1873 expressly to study under Liszt, gives a graphic account of the great man and his *entourage* of young

artists. "Never," she writes, "was there such a delightful teacher! and he is the first sympathetic one I've had. You feel so *free* with him, and he develops the very spirit of music in you. He doesn't keep nagging at you all the time, but he leaves you your own conception. Now and then he will make a criticism, or play a passage, and with a few words give you enough to think of all the rest of your life. There is a delicate *point* to anything he says, as subtle as he is himself." As she gets to know the master better Miss Fay becomes more and more enthusiastic and gives many delightful word-pictures of his personality. "His playing," she writes, "was a complete revelation to me, and has given me an entirely new insight into music. You cannot conceive, without hearing him, how poetic he is, or the thousand *nuances* that he can throw into the simplest thing. And he is equally great on all sides: from the zephyr to the tempest the whole scale is equally at his command." And later: "The more I see and hear Liszt, the more I am lost in amazement! I can neither eat nor sleep on those days that I go to him. All my musical studies till now have been a mere going to school, a preparation for him. I often think of what Tausig said once:

'Oh, compared with Liszt, we other artists are all blockheads.'" Miss Fay's attractive volume furnishes many interesting details concerning the master and his methods of teaching. Her enthusiasm for Liszt is by no means extraordinary, as all who came in contact with him were impressed by the charm of manner which characterised his every action and stamped him as a born *grand seigneur*.

A delightful account is given by the famous singer and actor, Eduard Genast, in his interesting recollections, "Aus dem Tagebuche eines alten Schauspielers," of his first meeting with Liszt in 1841 at Weimar, and how impressed he was by the latter's gallant bearing and exquisite courtesy. Genast relates that on this occasion he was sitting in the dining-room of the Russischer Hof Hotel in the company of Schumann and his wife. During the course of conversation Frau Schumann admired a handsome scarf-pin which Liszt was wearing. Without hesitation Liszt took it out and presented it to her as a souvenir. At first she would not accept it, but Liszt insisted to such an extent that finally she was obliged to do so. Later on when Liszt became Capellmeister at Weimar, Genast was associated with him at

the theatre as *régisseur*. "This daily intercourse with him," he writes, "freshened my spirit and increased my strength. How splendidly did the orchestra grow under his direction! No mere beater of time stood at the conductor's desk, but a leader full of fire and energy, who knew how to bring out every detail of the music at its full value, and irresistibly lifted the performers to his own level."

The personal magnetism and power of fascination possessed by this wonderful man must have been quite extraordinary, and it is only natural that he should have had many devoted adherents. Among these was the English pianist Walter Bache, who proved his devotion by ceaseless endeavours to popularise the master's music in London, and spent considerable sums of money on the concerts he gave during the Seventies and Eighties in order to bring the works of Liszt to a hearing. Walter Bache was a leading spirit of the festivities which took place on the occasion of the master's last visit to London in 1886. Liszt spent a little over a fortnight in England, during which time he went to Windsor and played before Queen Victoria, attended performances of his "St. Elizabeth," a concert of his works

conducted by Manns at the Crystal Palace, and various social functions, including an entertainment at the Grosvenor Gallery given in his honour. The following extract from the *Times* will give an idea of the interest aroused by his presence in London:—

"The performance last night of Liszt's oratorio 'St. Elizabeth' was an event not likely to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. The St. James's Hall was crowded to the last seat by an audience representative both in a social and artistic sense, and including the Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family. The reception given to the master is perhaps unequalled in the annals of English music. On driving up to St. James's Hall he was recognised and loudly cheered by the crowd in the street, and as he entered the concert-room the enthusiasm at once reached fever heat, one salvo of applause following upon another in rapid succession. The composer occupied a seat in one of the side-rows of the stalls, but after the first part, and again at the end of the performance, the audience insisted upon his ascending the platform to acknowledge the cheers intermingled with an occasional *eljen* which rose from every

side. Needless to add that Mr. Mackenzie, the conductor, and Madame Albani, who represented the sainted heroine of the Oratorio, received the tribute of praise justly due to them. Another incident of the evening remains to be recorded. In the interval between the first and second parts the Prince of Wales went into the artists' room and soon returned to the hall with Liszt, to present him to the Princess and the other members of the Royal party, with whom the composer engaged in a long and animated conversation. Distinctions so fully deserved and so graciously offered are pleasant to witness and to remember."

A few short months after this triumph the master had passed away. Writing of the sad event, Walter Bache said that he considered as the greatest privilege of his life " the honour and happiness of having known the great Hero," and added, " Indeed, it is no sentimental exaggeration to say that his life was one of self-sacrifice and self-renunciation ! " Poor Bache did not survive Liszt very long. He died less than two years later in the prime of life.

It would be pleasant to dwell further on the personality of the master did space permit. The influence he exercised over

the musical art of his epoch has shown itself in many different ways. Paramount as a pianist, he made his instrument the slave of his fancy and realised effects never before attempted, revolutionising all previous ideas as to the capabilities of the piano, virtually creating an entirely new technique, and thus practically teaching an entire generation of pianists. As a composer his influence was at least as great, and the stimulus he gave to music cannot be overestimated.

The importance of Liszt as a musical thinker and reformer is perhaps not adequately realised. At the outset of his career, during the period of his executive triumphs and in spite of the fatigues of an exceptionally strenuous existence, he found time to ponder seriously over many weighty questions relating to his art, and fearlessly expressed his ideas in various essays and letters. His wanderings through Switzerland and Italy, which succeeded his early experiences in Paris, by bringing him into immediate contact with the beauties of nature, had further developed his idealism, had enlarged his views, ripened his judgment, and afforded him opportunities for self-concentration.

The spirit of the apostle which burned within him was not long in asserting itself, and in a manner which affords one out of countless examples of his nobility of mind and disinterestedness of purpose. Although success had been his from the outset, and he might have been considered as a specially favoured child of fortune, yet he had remarked with pain how hard was the lot of the artist in Paris and how unsatisfactory as regards music were the general conditions prevailing in the French capital. The outcome of his reflections was a series of articles "On the Situation for Artists" which appeared in the columns of the *Gazette Musicale de Paris* in 1835. In these essays, written with all the enthusiasm and ardour of youth, Liszt constituted himself the champion of artists, the upholder of true art, the enemy of musical philistinism. To Jean Jacques Rousseau's division of musical artists into two classes, performers and creators, he added a third, that of teachers. Reverting to classical times, he showed how important to the state and to civilisation was the social position of the artist, and what a beneficial influence the art of music had exercised over the world. He spoke his mind out freely

concerning many prevalent abuses, not forgetting to castigate those musicians who sacrificed their dignity and prostituted their talents for the sake of gain, or those whose only ambition was to become popular.

He studied the workings of the various French musical institutions and took stock of what was being done in church, concert-room and theatre. Having gone thoroughly into all these matters, this young man, not yet twenty-five years of age, brought forward a series of admirably-thought-out plans for reform, including the introduction of musical instruction into schools, suggestions for the improvement of choral singing, the creation of a chair of musical history and philosophy, the publication of cheap editions of important works by old and new composers. His desire was to found a universal musical union for the unlimited development of music, raising the position of artists, and removing abuses. It is worthy of note that some of his ideas were adopted in 1859 by the artists of Leipzig when they established the "Universal German Union." These early essays are eminently typical of the man as he revealed himself throughout his life, always anxious to devote himself to the

highest interests of his art.[1] They were succeeded by a veritable outburst of literary activity, and the young artist showed that he could wield the pen as well as he could play the piano and criticise as well as compose. Under the title of *Lettres d'un Bachelier-ès-Musique* he wrote a most remarkable series of letters, addressed to Georges Sand and others, which appeared in the pages of the *Gazette Musicale de Paris*. In one of these he mentions a trick played by him at a concert in order to test the musical intelligence of the public. Beethoven's music was at that time little known, but his name was universally revered. On the programme in question figured a trio by Beethoven and one by Pixis, a composer whose works have not survived. Without the public being apprised, the order of the programme was changed, and the audience enthusiastically applauded the Pixis trio under the impression that it was by Beethoven. When, however, Beethoven's trio was performed, in the place of the one by Pixis, it was but coldly received, and some people went so far as to allude to the presumption of the composer in allowing his work to

[1] A certain affinity exists between these essays and Wagner's "Art and Revolution," written several years later.

be played after such a masterpiece as the one previously heard! In this same letter Liszt laments the prevalent lack of musical education and general ignorance of good music. He expresses his ardent desire to remedy this state of things, and pleads for the establishment of a good orchestra and choir to give performances of modern works.

The essays he wrote at this period include those on Church music of the future, popular editions of famous works, Meyerbeer's "Huguenots," Thalberg's "Grande Fantaisie" and "Caprices" (which created a sensation on account of the outspoken manner in which the author criticised the musical value of these compositions), and Schumann's early pianoforte works. Later on, during the Weimar period, Liszt was again active with his pen, and wrote a large number of articles on works by Gluck, Beethoven, Schubert, Auber, Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Mozart, Donizetti, Bellini, Schumann, Franz, and Wagner. A complete collection of his writings in seven volumes, including the life of Chopin and the "Bohemians and their Music in Hungary," has been published by Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel. In addition to the above, several volumes of his corre-

spondence have also been brought out by this firm.

Sufficient has been said to demonstrate how varied was the influence exercised by Liszt over the musical movement of his time, to show what an impulse he gave to pianoforte-playing by his unequalled executive gifts and the character of his teaching, how active was the part he took in the production of important works, and how, by helping some of the most celebrated composers on the road to fame, he contributed to the progress of his art. The ideas he put into circulation, the reforms he advocated, and, more especially, the new symphonic forms he evolved, all furnish evidence of his many-sided influence over music and its destinies. There, however, still remains to be considered the more direct influence exercised by his own works, and this, though perfectly evident, is more difficult to describe. It reveals itself in many ways and permeates in a measure a great portion of the musical productivity of the present day. What Wagner achieved in the domain of opera by his creation of the music drama, Liszt achieved in that of the concert-room by his creation of the symphonic poem. More than this, there is no doubt that Wagner himself

was greatly influenced by Liszt at the period when he was effecting a radical transformation of his own style.

In discussing the influence of one composer over another care must be taken to show in what sense the term is employed so as to avoid any possible misconception. No composer ever existed who did not possess a kinship of some sort with one or more of his predecessors or contemporaries, and absolute originality cannot be claimed for any master past or present. Certain æsthetic ideas promulgated by one composer may conceivably and perfectly legitimately be applied by another in a totally different manner. Again, the admiration incited by the perusal of some composition on the mind of a musician may be reflected by the unconscious reproduction of certain thematic or harmonic features in a work of a totally different kind. In speaking, therefore, of the influence exercised by Liszt over Wagner, there is no intention in any way of belittling the towering genius or the immense originality of the great German master.

The intense admiration felt by Wagner for the symphonic works of Liszt was expressed by him over and over again, not only in a famous essay but in many letters. In

one of these last he writes to Liszt in the most enthusiastic terms how the latter's symphonic poems have delighted him and how he daily reads one or the other through as he would a poem. The influence of Liszt's "Faust" symphony is distinctly traceable in the "Walküre." Wagner indeed admitted as much when he remarked to Liszt on the occasion of the production of his music drama at Bayreuth, "Here, papa, is a theme which I have borrowed from you." To which Liszt is said to have replied, "All the better. It will at least have a chance of being heard." It has been stated that Wagner only heard the "Faust" symphony after he had completed the "Walküre," but dates prove conclusively that the first of these works was completed, with the exception of the final choral section, which contains no new thematic material, before the "Walküre," and it must therefore be supposed that either Wagner had the opportunity of reading through the score or that the similarity of the two passages in these works is an instance of musical telepathy. After all, the matter is not one of much importance. It certainly does not detract from the originality of Wagner any more than does the presence in the same work

of a theme from Mendelssohn's Scottish symphony. "Le style c'est l'homme même," as Buffon says, and there is certainly no mistaking the individuality of Wagner's style. Several instances might be given of thematic resemblances that occur in the works of Liszt and Wagner. The latter, it is well known, was particularly fond of Liszt's "Orpheus," which he termed "a unique master-work of the highest perfection." A passing suggestion of this admiration finds its way in the magnificent scene between the Wanderer and Mime in the first act of "Siegfried." Other similar instances could easily be mentioned. A curious one is given by Liszt's biographer, Herr August Göllerich. Shortly after the death of Wagner, it occurred to Liszt to write a short work for strings and harp in memory of his great friend, and he prefixed the manuscript with the following words :—

"By the grave of Richard Wagner.

"Richard Wagner reminded me once of the likeness his 'Parsifal' motive bore to an earlier-written work of mine, 'Excelsior' (the introduction to the 'Bells of Strasburg Cathedral').

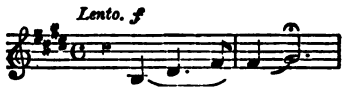
"May this remembrance herewith remain.

He achieved the great and the sublime in the art of our time!

"F. LISZT.

"WEIMAR, *May* 22, 1883."

This is the theme in question :-



To attempt to give an idea of the influence exercised by Liszt over other composers would require more space than I have at my disposal. Directly or indirectly it asserts itself over the entire domain of modern programme music. His creation of the Symphonic Poem has been fruitful to an extraordinary extent, and has brought into being examples from the pens of composers of all nationalities, while it has prepared the way for the more elaborate tone poems of Richard Strauss. The principle of thematic unity, so much prized by certain composers nowadays, has been strikingly exemplified by Liszt in his sonata and other works. Many are the harmonic subtleties and novel progressions which belong distinctively to him in the first place, but have since become public property. Does not his piano piece, "Les Jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este," in a

way foreshadow the impressionism of a certain section of the modern French school? Has not the peculiar mystical, and at the same time human, sentiment of his "St. Elizabeth" and "Christus" placed another element at the disposal of the composer of sacred music? But why say more? With an extraordinary prophetic sense Liszt appears to have dipped into the future and anticipated various forms of musical expression now current, and his influence over music generally has been greater than it is possible to measure.

To render anything like justice to this wonderful man would necessitate several volumes. Concerning so prodigious an activity, so far-seeing an intelligence, so all-embracing a mind, so complete a musical organisation, so ardent an imagination, so enthusiastic a nature, so unselfish a character, anything that may be said must seem inadequate. The spirit of Franz Liszt soared far above the petty meannesses of life. His influence has been great and far-reaching, and if he has left a priceless artistic legacy to the world, he has also given it a magnificent and unique example of benevolence and self-abnegation, and realised to the fullest extent his own motto, *Génie oblige!*

PRINCIPAL COMPOSITIONS

LISZT wrote between twelve and thirteen hundred works, including about seven hundred original compositions. A detailed list of these will be found in Ramann's biography. The last edition of Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians" also contains a full and reliable catalogue. Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel, who have published a *Thematisches Verzeichniss* of these works, are gradually bringing out a complete and revised edition of all the master's compositions. Several volumes of this have already appeared. The entire edition when complete will afford a magnificent tribute to the genius of the composer.

The following list contains a brief enumeration of the principal compositions of Liszt :—

ORCHESTRAL WORKS

Twelve Symphonic Poems. Published by Breitkopf & Härtel.

1. " Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne " (Berg Symphonie).
2. " Tasso " Lamento e Trionfo.
3. " Les Préludes."
4. " Orpheus."
5. " Prometheus."
6. " Mazeppa."
7. " Festklänge."
8. " Héroïde funèbre."
9. " Hungaria."
10. " Hamlet."
11. " Hunnenschlacht."
12. " Die Ideale."

Symphonie zu Dante's " Divina Commedia." Published by Breitkopf & Härtel.

Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Characterbilder. Published by Schuberth.

Zwei Episoden aus Lenau's Faust. Published by Schuberth.

1. " Der nächtliche Zug."
2. " Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke " (Mephisto-Walzer).

Fest-Vorspiel. For Goethe-Schiller Festival, Weimar, 1857. Published by Kahnt.

Goethe-Fest-Marsch. Published by Schuberth.

" Vom Fels zum Meer ! " March. Published by Schuberth.

Huldigungs-Marsch. Published by Bote.

Bülow-Marsch. Published by Schuberth.

Ungarischer Fest-Marsch. Published by Schuberth.

Ungarischer Sturm-Marsch. Published by Schuberth.
" Le Triomphe funèbre du Tasse." Published by Breitkopf.
" Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe." Symphonic Poem. Published by Bote.
Six Hungarian Rhapsodies. Published by Schuberth. (Nos. 14, 12, 6, 2, 5, 9, of pianoforte edition.)

SACRED WORKS

Missa Solemnis (Graner Messe). Published by Schuberth.
Ungarische Krönungsmesse. Published by Schuberth.
Missa Choralis. Published by Kahnt.
Messe für Männerchor. Published by Breitkopf and Härtel.
Requiem für Männerstimmen. Published by Kahnt.
Psalms XIII., XXIII., CXXIX., CXXXVII. Published by Kahnt.
Psalms XVIII., CXVI. Published by Schuberth.
Pater Noster, Ave Maria. Published by Breitkopf and Härtel.
Etc., etc., etc.

ORATORIOS

" The Legend of St. Elizabeth " (published with English words by Novello & Co.). Published by Kahnt.
" Christus." Published by Schuberth.

CANTATAS, ETC.

Zur Säcular-Feier Beethovens. Published by Kahnt.

Choruses for Herder's "Prometheus." Published by Kahnt.

"Die Glocken des Strasburger Münsters." Published by Schuberth.

"Die Heilige Cäcilia." Published by Kahnt.

Vierstimmige Männergesänge. Published by Schott.

Etc., etc., etc.

WORKS FOR PIANOFORTE AND ORCHESTRA

Concerto No. 1, in E flat. Published by Schlesinger.

Concerto No. 2, in A. Published by Schott.

"Todten-Tanz," Paraphrase on the "Dies Irae." Published by Siegel.

Fantasia on Beethoven's "Ruins of Athens." Published by Siegel.

Fantasia on Hungarian folk melodies. Published by Heinze.

Schubert's Fantasia in C, Op. 15, "Symphonisch bearbeitet." Published by Cranz.

Weber's Polonaise brillante. Published by Schuberth.

WORKS FOR PIANOFORTE SOLO

Douze Etudes d'exécution transcendante. Published by Breitkopf & Härtel.

Trois Grandes Etudes de Concert. Published by Schuberth.

Zwei Conzert-Etüden. Published by Trautwein.
1. Waldes-Rauschen.
2. Gnomen-Reigen.

Six Grandes Etudes d'après Paganini. Published by Breitkopf & Härtel.

Technische Studien in drei Teilen. Published by Schuberth.

Impressions et Poésies. Published by Schuberth.

Fleurs mélodiques des Alpes. Published by Schuberth.

Années de Pélerinage. Suite de compositions. Published by Schott.
Première Année (Suisse).
Seconde Année (Italie).
Troisième Année.

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Valse Impromptu. Published by Schuberth.
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2. Saint François de Paule marchant sur les flots.
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TRANSCRIPTIONS

Beethoven, Nine Symphonies, Septet; Hummel, Septet; Berlioz, Symphonie Fantastique, overture "Les Francs-Juges"; Rossini, overture to "Guillaume Tell"; Weber, "Freischütz," "Oberon," and "Jubel" overtures; Wagner, "Tannhäuser" overture; Bach, Organ Preludes and Fugues; Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, "lieder," etc., etc., etc.

ORGAN WORKS

Fantasia and Fugue on the Chorale from "La Prophète." Published by Breitkopf and Härtel.

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Etc., etc.

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A COMPLETE edition in German of the writings of Liszt has been prepared by Mme. Lina Ramann and published by Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel, six out of the seven volumes having already appeared.

Vol. I.—Friedrich Chopin.
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- Zur Stellung der Künstler. (1835.)
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- Uber Volksausgaben bedeutender Werke. (1836.)
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Vol. VII.—(In preparation.) Will include Vorworte zu Liszt's musikalischen Werken.

CORRESPONDENCE

LISZT was a voluminous correspondent. His letters have been collected by La Mara and published in eight volumes by Messrs. Breitkopf & Härtel. An English translation by Constance Bache of the first two volumes has been published by Messrs. H. Grevel and Co., under the title of "Letters of Franz Liszt." Messrs. Breitkopf & Härtel also publish the following correspondence :—

Briefwechsel zwischen Liszt und Wagner. 2 vols.
Briefwechsel zwischen Liszt und Hans von Bülow.
Briefwechsel zwischen Liszt und Gross Herzog Carl Alexander.
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