ROBERT SCHUMANN.

OME years ago, a young lady was sitting at the piano, singing, on board a steamer on the coast of Norway. When she paused, a stranger stepped up to her, introducing himself as a lover of music. They fell into conversation, and had not talked long when the stranger exclaimed: "You love Schumann? Then we are friends!" and reached her his hand.

This is characteristic as illustrating the intimate quality in Schumann's art. To meet in quiet comprehension of the master during a mysterious tête-à-tête at a piano — that is genuinely Schumannesque; to swear by his banner in associations and debating-clubs, or amid the glare of festal splendor — that is decidedly non-Schumannesque. Schumann has never ostentatiously summoned any body of adherents. He has been a comet without a tail, but, for all that, one of the most remarkable comets in the firmament of art. His worshipers have always been "the single ones." There is something in them of the character of the sensitive mimosa; and they are unhappily so apt to hide themselves and their admiration under the leaves of the "Blue Flower" of romanticism, that it would seem a hopeless undertaking ever to gather them (as, for instance, the Wagnerians) into a closed phalanx. Schumann has made his way without any other propaganda than that which lies in his works; and his progress has therefore been slow, but for that reason the more secure. Without attempting by artificial means to anticipate the future, he lived and labored in accordance with his own principle: "Become only an ever greater artist, and all other things will come to you of their own accord."

That this principle was a sound one has been confirmed by the present generation, by whom Schumann's name is known and loved even to the remotest regions of the civilized world, nay, up to the very Ultima Thule. It is not to be denied, however, that the best years of his artistic activity were lost without any comprehension of his significance, and when recognition at last began to come, Schumann's strength was broken. Of this melancholy fact I received a vivid impression when, in the year 1883, I called upon his famous wife, Clara Schumann, in Frankfort on the Main. I fancied she would be pleased to hear of her husband's popularity in so distant a region as my native country, Norway; but in this I was mistaken. Her countenance darkened as she answered dismally, "Yes, *now!*"

The influence which Schumann's art has exercised and is exercising in modern music cannot be overestimated. In conjunction with Chopin and Liszt, he dominates at this time the whole literature of the piano, while the piano compositions of his great contemporary Mendelssohn, which were once exalted at Schumann's expense, would seem to be vanishing from the concert program. In conjunction with his predecessor Franz Schubert, and in a higher degree than any contemporary,— not even Robert Franz excepted,— he pervades the literature of the musical "romance"; while even here Mendelssohn is relegated *ad acta*. What a strange retribution of fate! It is the old story of Nemesis. Mendelssohn received, as it were, more than his due of admiration in advance; Schumann, less than his due. Posterity had to balance their accounts. But it has, according to my opinion, in its demand for justice identified itself so completely with Schumann and his cause that Mendelssohn has been unfairly treated or directly wronged. This is true, however, only as regards the above-mentioned genres, the piano and the musical romance. In orchestral compositions Mendelssohn still maintains his position, while Schumann has taken a place at his side as his equal. I say his equal, for surely no significance can be attached to the circumstance that a certain part of the younger generation (Wagnerians chiefly) have fallen into the habit of treating Schumann, as an orchestral composer, *de haut en bas*. These enthusiasts, being equipped with an excess of self-esteem, and holding it to be their duty to level everything which, according to their opinion, interferes with the free view of the Bayreuth master, venture to shrug their shoulders at Schumann's instrumentation, to deny his symphonic sense, to attack the structure of his periods and his plastic faculty. They do not even hesitate to characterize his entire orchestral composition as a failure; and in order to justify this indictment, they propound the frank declaration that his orchestral works are only instrumentalized piano-music. The fact that Schumann did not occupy himself with Mendelssohn's formally piquant effects, and was not an orchestral virtuoso in the style of Wagner, is turned upside down in the effort

totally to deny him both the plastic sense and the faculty of instrumentation. At the same time they refrain from recognizing all the ideal advantages that primarily make Schumann the world-conquering force he has now virtually become.

All this appears too ridiculous, too stupid, to be in need of refutation. Nevertheless, this propaganda of pure conceit has of late become so prevalent that it has gained a certain authority, and has even found a most sensational expression in the press. It would, therefore, seem to be the appropriate time for investigating it a little closely. It is perfectly well known where the commotion had its origin. It will be remembered that in the year 1879 an article appeared in the "Bayreuther Blätter" entitled "Concerning Schumann's Music," signed Joseph Rubinstein, but (this is an open secret) unquestionably inspired, and probably more than inspired, by no less a man than Richard Wagner. The style, the tone, as well as the inconsiderate audacity with which the writer hurled forth his taunts, the public recognized as truly Wagnerian, and promptly designated the Bayreuth master as the one who must bear the responsibility of its authorship, in spite of the fact that he had attempted to disguise himself by simpler constructions than those which we recognize in his public writings. In this incredible production Schumann's art is by all possible and impossible means reduced *ad absurdum.* Not a shred of honor is left to it. The very greatest qualities of the master — his glowing fancy and his lofty lyrical flights — are dragged down into the dirt, and described as the most monstrous conventionality. His orchestral music, his piano compositions, his songs — all are treated with the same contempt. One does not know which ought to be the greater object of astonishment, the man who did put his name to this pamphlet, or the man who did not. The former is said to have been one of Wagner's piano lackeys, who was contemptible enough to allow himself to be used as a screen. There is nothing more to be said of him, except that he will not even attain the fame of a Herostratos. But upon Wagner's relation to Schumann this article throws so interesting a light that it cannot well be overlooked. As a matter of course, Wagner as a man is here left out of consideration. And from out of the depth of my admiration for Wagner the *artist*, I can only affirm that he was as one-sided as he was great. As regards Schumann, the very opposite is true. He was anything but one-sided. He is, in most respects, a remarkable counterpart to Liszt. The rare faculty of both these masters of recognizing anything great and new that was stirring about them forms a contrast, as beneficent as it is evident, to the unintelligent and illiberal view of the greatest contemporary talents which is so prominent a trait of Wagner, and (in his attitude toward Schumann) also of Mendelssohn. Compare only the harsh judgments of Wagner on Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms — to name only the most important — with Schumann's warm and sympathetic criticism of the great men of his day, as it is found on nearly every page of his collected writings; and it will be necessary to take exception to the poet's declaration, "*Alles grosse ist einseitig.*" Schumann has, indeed, raised a most beautiful monument to himself in his unprejudiced judgment of all that was considerable among his surroundings. I need only refer to his introduction into the musical world of such names as Berlioz, Chopin, Brahms, Gade, etc. We find him in his youth so busily occupied in clearing the way for others that we are left to wonder how, at the same time, he found it possible to develop his own deep soul as he must have done in the first great creative period of his life, which was chiefly devoted to piano-music. What a new and original spirit! What wealth, what depth, what poetry, in these compositions! The fantasia in C major, with its daring flight, and its hidden undertone for him who listens secretly (*für den der heimlich lauscht*), as the motto declares; his F sharp minor sonata, with its romantic enthusiasm and its burlesque abandon; Kreisleriana, the Carnival, Davidsbündlertänze, Novellettes,— only to name a few of his principal works,— what a world of beauty, what intensity of emotional life, are hidden in these! And what bewitching harmony — out of the very soul of the piano — for him who is able to interpret, for him who can and will hear! But the above-mentioned Bayreuth hireling has not taunts enough for Schumann's piano-music, which he finds to be written in a certain virtuoso style that is, after all, absolutely false and external. "The difficult passages in Schumann," he says, "are effective only when, as is mostly the case, they are brought out obscurely and blurred."

A poor witticism! And then this talk about virtuoso style, falseness, and objectiveness in Schumann's piano-phrasing! Can anything more unjust be imagined? For one ought rather to emphasize his moderation in his use of virtuoso methods, as compared, for instance, with Liszt or Chopin. And to accuse him of unadaptability for the piano, amounts of course to a denial of familiarity with the piano.

It is a fact, however, well known to every genuine piano-player that Schumann could not have written a single one of his many piano compositions without the most intimate familiarity with the subtilest secrets of that instrument. Nor need any one be told that he was

a most admirable player. One of the best friends of Schumann's youth, the late Ernst Ferdinand Wenzel, teacher at the Leipsic Conservatory, with whom I often talked about the master, used to recall with a sad pleasure the many evenings, in the olden time, when he would sit at twilight in the corner of the sofa in Schumann's den, and listen to his glorious playing.

The attempt to turn the master's greatest and most obvious merits into defects is such sharp practice that one would be justified in attributing to its author an acquaintance with that "jurisprudence" which he flings into Schumann's face, reproaching him with having devoted too much time to it at the expense of his music. However much energy and infernal ingenuity in the invention of charges one may be disposed to concede to the writer, here — in the question of the technic of the piano — he has allowed his zeal to run away with him to such an extent that he has forgotten to cover himself. In wishing to hit Schumann, he hits himself. He openly betrays how destitute he himself is of any idea of the technic of the piano. Liszt, whose judgment on the subject of everything relating to the piano Wagner on other occasions respected, expressed, as is well known, a very different opinion of Schumann's piano compositions, of which he always spoke with the warmest admiration, and in the appreciation of which he was an enthusiastic and powerful pioneer. Liszt advocated Schumann's claims at a time when no one else ventured to do it. Wagner, on the contrary, tried to make an end of him long after his death, when his reputation was as firmly established as that of Wagner himself. If this matter concerned Wagner only as an individual, I should not undertake to discuss it in an article on Schumann. But it concerns, in my opinion, in an equal degree Wagner the artist. It is possible that Wagner the individual *would* not recognize Schumann's greatness; but it is absolutely certain that Wagner the artist *could* not recognize it. However, his effort to dethrone Schumann was happily a total failure, for the simple reason that it was not feasible. Schumann stands where he stood, impregnable — as does Wagner.

So much for Schumann the piano-composer. When I turn to his chamber-music, I find here, too, some of his most beautiful inspirations. It has been asserted that he is greatest in the smaller forms. But the quintet, the piano quartet, the trio in D minor, both the sonatas for the violin, and the quartets for stringed instruments in A major and A minor, afford sufficient evidence that where a larger mold was required he had also a wealth of beauty at his command. It is not to be denied that in his tone-blending of piano and stringed instruments he never attained the height which Mendelssohn and Schubert reached. It has also been affirmed that he neglects absolute harmony, that his stringed instruments, carrying the melody, do not always enter in the most appropriate places, etc. But such things are trifles which an intelligent conception and careful study will easily remedy. The principal thing — viz., the splendid impulse and illusion — is rarely wanting. Minor impracticabilities, which hundreds of smaller spirits easily avoid, are, strange to say, to be met with in Schumann. In the piano quartet, for instance, he has had the delightful idea of uniting the andante and the finale thematically. But the retuning of the cello from the deep B flat to C, which is here absolutely required, excludes the immediate transition to the last movement, whereby the exquisite effect which has been obviously intended is lost.

The three quartets for stringed instruments (Opus 41) are conceived with as much originality as love. Schumann, to be sure, often ignores the traditional notion that the character of the quartet for stringed instruments is only polyphonic.[1] Hence the complaint of want of style in his quartets, as well as the charge that the instruments do not attain their full musical value. But who, having heard, for instance, the distinguished performance of the quartet in A major by Brodsky and his fellow-artists, will forget the flood of harmony which Schumann can entice from stringed instruments when they are in the hands of great artists? It is related by reliable contemporaries that these quartets did not find favor in Mendelssohn's eyes. It was during the intercourse of both masters in Leipsic that Schumann one day confided to Mendelssohn that he had suddenly been seized with a desire to write quartets for stringed instruments, but that he had just taken steps to carry out a long-cherished plan to visit Italy, and was therefore in a dilemma.

"Remain here and write the quartets," was Mendelssohn's counsel, which Schumann accepted. He remained in Leipsic, and concentrated the whole strength of his soul upon the completion of the task which he had set himself. When Mendelssohn, however, received the quartets, he is reported to have said: "I rather wish now that Schumann had gone to Italy."

We ought not to wonder at this. Mendelssohn never, or at least very rarely, departed in his works for stringed instruments from the

[1] Defined thus by the "Century Dictionary": "Noting a method of composition or a work in which two or more voice-parts are simultaneously combined without losing their independent character, but with harmonious effect."

severest principles of polyphony, as practised by Haydn, Mozart, and by Beethoven in his earlier works. Schumann had his roots rather in the later works of Beethoven, where—as is also the case with Schubert—he is not afraid of applying homophony, or even symphonic orchestral style, in quartets for stringed instruments. Upon this fact, in part, rests the opinion that Mendelssohn and Schumann, though they may be named as contemporaries, are yet far apart, the former closing a great artistic period, the classic, and the latter preparing and introducing a no less great one, the romantic. Both masters met, as it were, upon the same threshold. But they certainly did not pass each other coldly by. On the contrary, they paused to exchange many a winged word. It is not to be denied, however, that it would have been better for Schumann if he had listened less to Mendelssohn's maxims and set more store by his own. His admiration for Mendelssohn is beautiful, but there is in this beauty a certain weakness, and this is perhaps closely connected with his later tragic fate.

A survey of Schumann's art will disclose the fact that, having emerged from his youth and early manhood, he was no longer able, as it were, to think his own thoughts with full consistency to the end. He was afraid of himself. It was as if he did not dare acknowledge the results of the enthusiasm of his youth. Thus it happened that he frequently sought shelter in the world of Mendelssohn's ideas. From the moment he did this he passed his zenith; his soul was sick; he was doomed long before the visible symptoms of insanity set in. It is therefore a futile labor to seek the real Schumann in his latest works, as one may do in the case of Beethoven and Wagner. This is most obvious if we examine his latest choral compositions. But before doing this, we have happily the satisfaction of registering as masterpieces of imperishable worth a series of orchestral compositions, and foremost among these his four symphonies. Who has not been carried away by the youthful freshness of the symphony in B flat major; by the grand form and impulse of the C major symphony, and its wonderful adagio with the heaven-scaling altitudes of the violins; by the E flat major symphony, with its mystically medieval E flat minor movement (Schumann is said to have imagined here a procession entering Cologne Cathedral); and finally, who has not marveled at the conception of the D minor symphony, with its tragic exaltation and magnificent unity! Truly, the proud, victorious bugle-blasts which open the first symphony—instinct with a noble self-esteem—are fully justified. About this opening we have, however, an interesting tradition, that it was originally written a third lower, viz.:

TRUMPETS AND HORNS IN B FLAT.

But during the first rehearsal it was demonstrated that the old-fashioned instruments then exclusively used could not produce the stopped notes A and B. The practical Mendelssohn was promptly at hand with the suggestion to place this motif a third higher, as we now have it. In this way it came to consist of natural notes only, which could be rendered with all desirable *éclat.* If Schumann had written his work now, when these instruments have been abandoned, and improved instruments with valves, etc., have taken their places, he would have retained the motif in the tone compass in which it was first conceived, and where, according to the opening of his allegro, it properly belongs. If I were to lead the B flat major symphony at this time, I should not hesitate to change the passage, and carry out Schumann's original intention.

It is this B flat major symphony which the above-mentioned lampooner in the "Bayreuther Blätter" chooses as the target for his most poisonous arrows. Through a long series of musical citations the attempt is made to prove that this work (like all the other orchestral compositions of the master) is made up of an almost uninterrupted succession of what he calls "shoemaker's patches." By this expression he means to indicate "repetitions of musical phrases in related tone intervals, which pupils in composition are especially wont to toil over in their first labors." Now, however, in the year 1893, every musician who is not too much of a Philistine will maintain it as an incontestable truth that the means by which a musical effect is produced are of minor consequence compared to the effect itself; and it is a matter of no moment to us if a pupil by "repetitions in related tone intervals" attains only "the deadliest monotony," when Schumann, by dint of his peculiar application of these "shoemaker's patches," woven together by the force of his genius, contrives to enchain and enrapture us. Schumann's repetitions always sustain the flight of his thought; and where he does not reach his own proper level, it is not the fault of a repetition, but it is because his inspiration is running low. These repetitions, so frequently assailed, occur, however, with all the great masters from Bach to Wagner himself. A repetition, applied with intelligence, has the same object in music as in language, viz., to produce an impressive, stimulating effect. It will not do, then, to stamp every repetition in related tone intervals as a "shoemaker's patch."

Before taking leave of the B flat major symphony, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of recalling the performance of this work in the Leipsic Gewandhaus immediately after the appearance of the ominous Bayreuth article. The air of the hall was as if charged with electricity. The work was listened to with strained attention and breathless silence, and as the last chord died away there broke forth a storm of applause more vehement and continued than ever before had greeted an orchestral composition in the Gewandhaus. It was indeed a remarkable ovation. It was musical Leipsic protesting as one man against a biased partizan attack upon the work and its master, whom the nation loves, in spite of all hair-splitting charges of "shoemaker's patches."

A peculiar place among Schumann's productions is occupied by his famous piano concerto. Inspired as it is from beginning to end, it stands without a parallel in musical literature, and arouses our wonder no less by its originality than by its noble avoidance of a "mere objective virtuoso style." It is beloved by all, played by many, well played by few, and ideally comprehended by still fewer — nay, perhaps only by a single one, his wife.

In the series of his choral works, "Paradise and the Peri" stands out in luminous relief, with its enchanting fancies and its Oriental coloring. The whole first part is one uninterrupted inspiration. Whether Schumann constructs greater or smaller forms, everything bears here the stamp of genius. The broadly arranged final chorus is above all praise. Here Schumann is, in truth, architect in a grand style. The second part is likewise dazzling. Only consider the passage where the plague is depicted! It is as if these chords exhaled poisonous fumes. The third part is also rich in beauty; but it appears to me that there is a lack of the breadth of conception which is necessary to conclude so great a work. What a pity that his treatment of the text in this part necessitates a cutting up in small forms which, according to my experience, at last run the risk of being tiresome. Nevertheless, I have never, during the performances in my own country, been able to make up my mind to omit a single bar; for every page is teeming with evidences of genius which we cannot afford to dispense with. Taking everything into consideration, I am of the opinion that "Paradise and the Peri" is the one of Schumann's choral compositions in which he reached his high-water mark.

From old residents of Leipsic I have heard the account of the first performance of this masterpiece at the Gewandhaus in the year 1845, with Schumann as conductor. The part of the *Peri* was sung by Frau Livia Frege, who enjoyed an equal reputation in the Leipsic of that day for her beauty, her affability, and her glorious voice. Immediately after having put down the baton, Schumann, who notoriously was a man of few words, rushed up to Frau Frege, and with an ungentle gesture tore some flowers out of her hair, mumbling dryly, "I should like one of these." That was his way of thanking.

Both Mendelssohn and Schumann were great admirers of Frau Frege. Some years ago I met both her (she was then a stately and handsome old lady) and her husband, and could not forego the opportunity to subject the latter to an inquiry regarding the personal relations of Schumann and Mendelssohn. But if I had suddenly stabbed the old gentleman, it could not have affected him more unpleasantly. He abruptly broke off the conversation, and left me. There was no doubt that I had unwittingly touched upon a theme which was not agreeable to him, but into which, nevertheless, from an artistic point of view, it was of importance to gain an insight. As both Herr and Frau Frege, in whose hospitable house all artistic Leipsic of that day held rendezvous, are now dead, and all the friends of Schumann's youth have also departed, there is little prospect of ever clearing up the dusk of this interesting interior.

Much is being whispered in corners about the attitude of Schumann and Mendelssohn toward each other. One thing is, however, likely to impress the unprejudiced observer as being curious; viz., that Schumann's writings furnish numerous and striking evidences of his boundless admiration for Mendelssohn, while the latter in his many letters does not once mention Schumann or his art. This cannot be due to accident. Whether Mendelssohn was really silent, or whether the editor of his letters, out of regard for his memory, has chosen to omit all references to Schumann, is of slight consequence. This, however, is beyond dispute: his silence speaks, and we of posterity have the right to draw our inferences from this silence. We arrive at the conclusion that here we have the clue to a judgment of the opinions which the two masters entertained of each other. Of petty envy on Mendelssohn's part there can be no suspicion. He was of too pure and noble a character to be animated by such a sentiment; and, moreover, his fame was too great and too well established in comparison with Schumann's. But his horizon was too contracted to enable him to see Schumann as the man he was. How perfectly comprehensible! He had his forte in clear delineation, in classical harmony; and where Schumann fell short of his requirements in this respect, his honesty forbade him to feign a recognition which he could not candidly grant.

Another musical and warm-hearted family in whose house Schumann was a constant guest during his residence in Leipsic was that of Herr Voigt, to whose wife, Henrietta Voigt, his intimate friend, Schumann dedicated his beautiful G minor piano sonata. The silent Schumann loved this peaceful home. It is told that he was in the habit of daily entering the drawing-room unannounced, giving a friendly nod to the "lady of the house," walking the length of the room, and departing by the opposite door, without having uttered a single word. All he wanted was to see her.

But to return to the choral works. Besides "Paradise and the Peri," his music to Byron's "Manfred" must be reckoned among his most glorious compositions, in spite of the fact that it belongs to his last period. The overture is a tragic masterpiece cast whole in one mold. His music to Goethe's "Faust" also contains many a stroke of the purest inspiration; but as a whole, it is unequal, and can scarcely, in the same sense as the preceding ones, be characterized as a monumental work.

If we now turn to his later choral compositions,—"Der Königssohn," "Der Sängers Fluch," "Vom Pagen und der Königstochter," "Das Glück von Edenhall," "Neujahrslied," "Requiem,"—we must admit that it is easy for those who wish to make an end of Schumann to find points of attack; for these productions indicate, almost uniformly, soaring will and failing power. His self-criticism is lax, and the greater part of this work is unclear in color as in drawing.

Here we have melancholy evidence that the master's strength was forever broken. It would be far better to pay no attention to these and similar productions of his later years bearing the mark of his decadence. But as regards the derogatory judgment of Schumann which has of late become the fashion in certain influential cliques, I may be permitted to ask: Why should not he, like other creative spirits, have the right to be judged by the best that he has done? Homer, as we all know, will nod. And I should fancy that no one need search long in Schumann's production before finding its core. Although his later activity resulted in such glorious things as "Manfred," the violin sonatas, the symphony in E flat major, etc., it is easy, if one prefers, to leave this entire period out of account, and to judge Schumann by his Opera 1 to 50. I should think that there was to be found among these a sufficient treasury of priceless jewels to entitle Schumann to a seat among the immortals of music. If we are to judge Mozart by his "Concert Arias"; Beethoven by his "Prometheus," "Christ on the Mount of Olives," and the "Triple Concerto for Piano, Violin, and Cello"; Mendelssohn by his "Antigone," "Ruy Blas," "Lobgesang," and the "Reformation Symphony"; Schubert by his dramatic attempts; Wagner by "Rienzi"—in short, if we are to hunt high and low for the weak moments of strong souls — then, considering the imperfection of everything human, we shall find no lack of material for a very unprofitable labor. But such a search would not be in the interest of justice. Happily, in art, as in life, it is the good that is cherished; mistakes are consigned to oblivion, especially when, as is the case with Schumann, the good so largely preponderates.

A beautiful conclusion of Schumann's chamber-music is his two sonatas for violin, particularly the first (A minor, Opus 105); and in this the first movement especially has always appeared to me highly significant. Every time I read or play them, I hear in these tones the master's foreboding lament of the heavy fate which was soon to overtake him. The first marvelously singing motif of the violin is instinct with an overpowering melancholy, and the surprising return of the first motif in the last movement shows what importance Schumann attached to it. It is the worm gnawing at his mind, which lifts its head afresh in the midst of the passionate toil of the fancy to banish it. In enchanting contrast to all this gloomy soul struggle are the suddenly emerging, bright, sweet, appealing — nay, entreating — melodies. Is it not as if one heard the cry, "Let this cup pass from me"? But in the council of Fate the terrible thing has been decreed; and the work closes in manly, noble resignation, without a sign of the unclearness and groping occurring in much of Schumann's production belonging to this period upon which I have commented.

I have also referred to the slowness with which Schumann's popularity spread during his lifetime. This is the more remarkable because of the many advantages which he enjoyed. He lived in the very center of the musical world; occupied important positions, being at one time a teacher at the Leipsic Conservatory; and was married to one of the most soulful and famous pianists of his day. With his wife he even made musical tours, from which he brought home with him many evidences of his unpopularity. Thus, in the year 1843 he accompanied his wife to Russia, where in many of the principal cities she was received with great enthusiasm, and where also she endeavored to introduce the works of her husband. Let it not be forgotten that in 1843 Schumann had already written and published much of his most beautiful chamber-music,— piano works, songs,— and even his symphony in B flat major. Nevertheless, it is said that at a court soirée where Clara was greatly fêted, one of the most exalted personages addressed him in this wise,

"Well, Mr. Schumann, are you, too, musical?" The story bears the stamp of truth. What artist is there who could not relate similar incidents? The reigning princes and their hangers-on seem to possess a peculiar aptitude for uttering stupidities when they have the misfortune to stray within the pale of art. But what happened to Schumann is a signal instance of what can be achieved in this direction by those who represent the claim "We alone know."

That after such an experience Schumann could dedicate his C major symphony to a prince—though this time really a musical one, viz., Oscar I. of Norway and Sweden—is an evidence that he had not yet achieved his emancipation from the naïve notion of an earlier time, that the king is the best guardian of art. In spite of the abnormal relation of King Louis of Bavaria to Richard Wagner, our age is happily on the point of outgrowing this great misconception.

The chief impediment to Schumann's popularity was his total lack of that faculty of direct communication which is absolutely indispensable to the making of a good conductor or a beloved teacher. I fancy, however, that he was himself very little troubled about this. In fact, he was too much of a dreamer. Proofs are not wanting that he actually took pride in his unpopularity. Thus, in a letter to his mother he writes, "I should not even wish to be understood by all." He need give himself no anxiety on that score. He is too profound, too subjective, too introspective, to appeal to the multitude.

I cannot take leave of Schumann's larger labors without pausing for a moment at the opera "Genoveva," a work which has rightly been named his "child of sorrows." He expended upon it much of his best power, and it prepared for him the bitterest disappointments. So many pens have been set in motion against this composition, especially by Wagnerians, that it seems almost foolhardy to lift up one's voice in its defense. Nevertheless, I must maintain as my unalterable opinion that Schumann's music cannot be briefly dismissed as undramatic: there are so many passages in the opera which furnish incontestable proof that Schumann was not without dramatic talent—but wanting, indeed, in knowledge of the requirements of the drama. The most excellent dramatically inspired things stand side by side without transitions, demanding frequently only a few bars to bring them into harmonious relations. On the other hand, there seems occasionally to be a little too much transition. The external apparatus is not always practically applied. The rare skill of Wagner on this point furnishes a striking contrast. But, as I have said, the dramatic flight is often enough present; and I am convinced that the day will come when a performance, by skilled and affectionate hands, will yield at least a portion of that which the master, in certain passages, has hinted and indicated, but which he had not sufficient technic to express with clearness and force. If Schumann in his youth had had experience as leader of the orchestra in a theater, we should probably have lived to see him admired even as a dramatist. The great public will not put up with mere dramatic spirit, if this spirit is not incorporated in a dramatic body. It demands, as it were, the spirit plainly presented upon a tray. And this is exactly what Schumann could not do—or perhaps would not do, if this conclusion may be inferred from his own words: "German composers usually suffer shipwreck in wishing to please the public. But only let somebody offer, for once, something individual, deep, and German, and he will see if he does not achieve something more." No one will deny that Schumann's reasoning is here esthetically correct; but being what he was, he would have acted more prudently, at all events, in not running counter to the legitimate demand of the public for clear dramatic characterization. To descend to the level of a foolish public would to him have been an impossibility; while, on the other hand, a stricter regard for the requirements of the drama, a greater accuracy and sobriety in scenic calculations, unquestionably would have enabled him to compass far greater achievements.

Intentionally I have chosen to consider last that portion of Schumann's work which proves him to be what, according to his innermost nature, he really was—a poet. I refer to his songs. Even all the demons of hate which possess the Bayreuth critic do not here suffice to reduce the composer to a nonentity. In order to disparage, however, and minimize even this expression of his genius, he resorts to far-fetched humor. I cannot refrain from quoting literally the following choice effusion:

> Since nowadays one does not find it ridiculous when, in our salons, a lady, holding a fan and a fragrant lace handkerchief between her gloved fingers, sings of her former lover as a "lofty star of glory who must not know her, the lowly maid,"—or when a gentleman in swallow-tail coat assures us that he has seen in his dream a serpent feeding on the gloom-engulfed heart of a certain miserable person who shall not be mentioned,—then certainly one ought not, primarily, to be angry with the composer because in his illustration of such poems, popular in our higher circles of society, he has, in his effort not to be outstripped by the poet, sounded all the depths and heights of musical expression.

What a quantity of genuine Wagnerian gall is concentrated in this long-winded monster of a sentence! But—it goes too far. Schumann's songs emerge from this mud-bath as

pure as they were before they were dipped into it. If there is anything at all that Schumann has written which has become, and has deserved to become, world literature, it is surely his songs. All civilized nations have made them their own. And there is probably in our own day scarcely a youth interested in music to whom they are not, in one way or another, interwoven with his most intimate ideals. Schumann is the *poet*, contrasting in this respect with his greatest successor, Brahms, who is primarily *musician*, even in his songs.

With Schumann the poetic conception plays the leading part to such an extent that musical considerations technically important are subordinated, if not entirely neglected. For all that, even those of his songs of which this is true exert the same magic fascination. What I particularly have in mind is his great demand upon the compass of the voice. It is often no easy thing to determine whether the song is intended for a soprano or an alto, for he ranges frequently in the same song from the lowest to the highest register. Several of his most glorious songs begin in the deepest pitch and gradually rise to the highest, so that the same singer can rarely master both. Schumann, to be sure, occasionally tries to obviate this difficulty by adding a melody of lower pitch, which he then indicates by smaller notes placed under the melody of his original conception. But how often he thereby spoils his most beautiful flights, his most inspired climaxes! Two instances among many occur to me,—"Ich grolle nicht," and "Stille Thränen,"—for which one will scarcely ever find an interpreter who can do equal justice to the beginning and the end. But if, on the other hand, a singer has a voice at his command capable of such a feat, he will produce the greater effect. Thus, I remember as a child, in 1858, having heard Frau Schröder-Devrient, then fifty-five years old, sing "Ich grolle nicht," and never shall I forget the shiver that ran down my spine at the last climax. The beautiful timbre of the voice was of course lacking; but the overwhelming power of the expression was so irresistible that every one was carried away.

To be able to sing Schumann is a special faculty which many excellent singers do not have. I have heard the same singer render Schubert to perfection, and Schumann absolutely badly. For with Schubert the most of what is to be done is explicitly expressed; while with Schumann one must understand the art of reading between the lines — of interpreting a half-told tale. A symphony, too, of Schubert plays itself, as it were; but a symphony of Schumann has to be studied with a subtile perception in order to uncover and bring out what is veiled in the master's intentions. Otherwise it will lose much of its effect. In speaking above of the excessive demands upon the compass of the voice in Schumann's songs, I refer chiefly to those more broadly composed. The smaller and more delicate ones do not usually strain a voice of ordinary register.

A quite peculiar stamp of genius is impressed upon Schumann's epic romances and ballads. In this genre he has created unattained masterpieces. I will cite as instances Chamisso's "Die Löwenbraut," and (from Opus 45) Eichendorff's "Der Schatzgräber," and Heine's "Abend am Strande." In the last named Schumann attains a realistic effect of great intensity. How pictorial is here the description of the different peoples, from the dweller on the banks of the Ganges to the "dirty Laplanders" who in a truly impressionistic style "quack and scream"! Strangely enough, there are as yet not many who both feel and are able to render these effects, and they are accordingly scarcely ever heard in a concert-hall. A ballad the popularity of which (according to E. F. Wenzel) vexed Schumann, was Heine's "Two Grenadiers," because he regarded it, and perhaps rightly, as belonging to his weakest productions. A volume which contains things of the very highest order, and which for some incomprehensible reason is almost unknown, is Opus 98[a], "Lieder und Gesänge aus Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister.'" Once in a while one may, to be sure, stumble upon the magnificent, grandly molded ballad, "Was hör' ich draussen vor dem Thor!" but one never hears the most beautiful of all, "Kenn'st du das Land wo die Citronen blüh'n?" with which I have seen a gifted vocalist move an audience to tears.

It is rarely the happiest inspirations of a creative spirit that win the hearts of the many. In that respect the musical intelligence of the so-called cultivated society leaves much to be desired. However, the other arts are scarcely more favorably placed. Everywhere it is cheap art which has a monopoly of appeal to the general intelligence.

It cannot be maintained that Schumann was the first to accord a conspicuous rôle to the accompaniment of his songs. Schubert had anticipated him as no other of his predecessors had done, in making the piano depict the mood. But what Schubert began, Schumann further developed; and woe to the singer who tries to render Schumann without keeping a close watch of what the piano is doing, even to the minutest shades of sound. I have no faith in a renderer of Schumann's songs who lacks appreciation of the fact that the piano has fully as great a claim upon interest and study as the voice of the singer. Nay; I would even venture to assert that, up to a certain point, he who cannot play Schu-

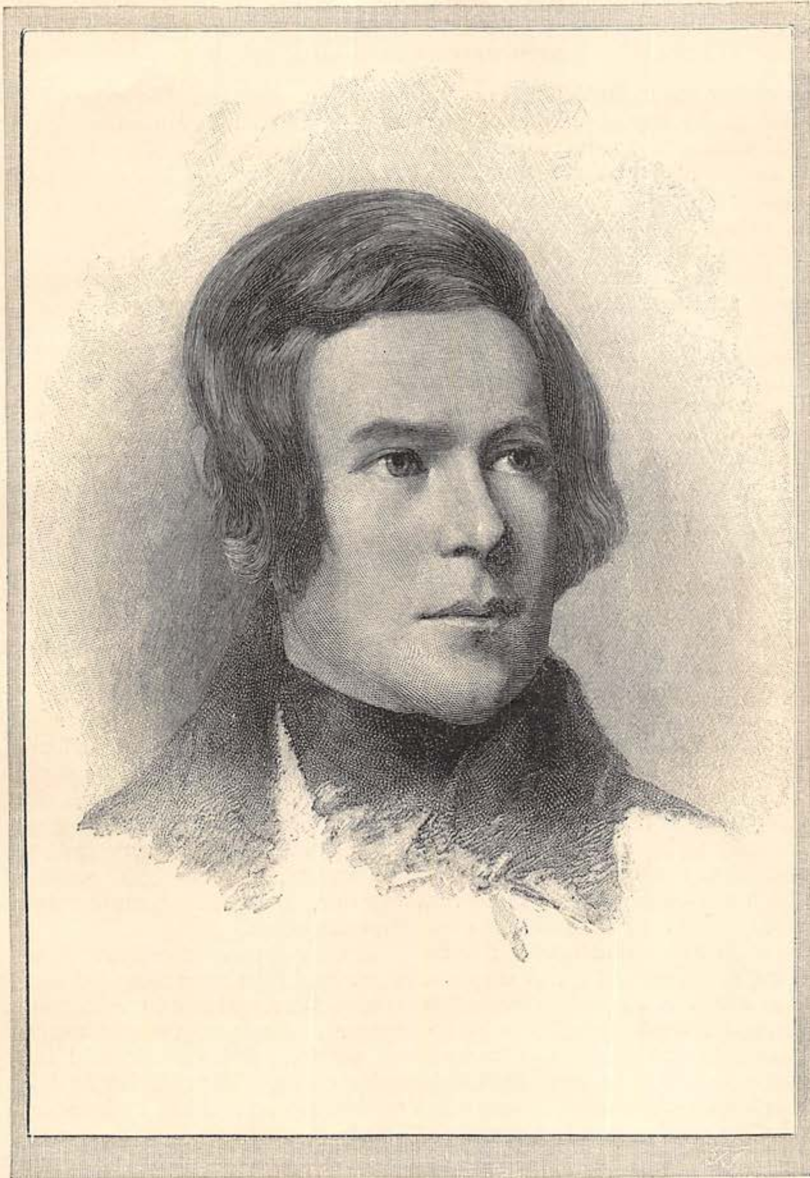
mann cannot sing him either. In his treatment of the piano, Schumann was furthermore the first who, in a modern spirit, utilized the relation between song and accompaniment, which Wagner has later developed to a degree that fully proves what importance he attached to it. I refer to the carrying of the melody by the piano, or the orchestra, while the voice is engaged in the recitative. Heaven preserve me, however, from insinuating that Wagner consciously could have received an impulse from Schumann! A dyed-in-the-wool Wagnerian would, of course, regard even a hint of such a possibility as an outrageous want of respect for the master of Bayreuth which would amount almost to an insult. But, for all that, it is a fact that contemporaries influence each other whether they want to or not. That is one of nature's eternal laws, to which we are all subject. You will perhaps ask, Where is, then, the mutual influence of Rossini, Beethoven, and Weber? And my response is, It is of a negative character, and accordingly still present. But in the above-mentioned particular case — that of Schumann and Wagner — it is absolutely positive. It is, however, true that Schumann only hints at the things out of which Wagner constructs a perfect system. But there is this to be said, that Schumann is here the foreseeing spirit who planted the tree which later, in the modern musical drama, was to bear such glorious fruit.

That gradually increasing conservatism which, in the case of an artist, is usually a mark of failing powers, was never noticeable in Schumann. Even though his creative force went out in the darkness of insanity, this in no wise affected his views of art, which remained fresh and youthful to the very last. His enthusiasm for the young Brahms is a striking proof of that receptivity as regards the new which did not desert him even on the downward incline of his scantily allotted career. We gain hereby a beautiful glimpse of the purity of his character, just as it revealed itself in his younger years in his relation to Mendelssohn and others. And just as Schumann was the first interpreter in modern music of the profounder emotions and true intensity of sentiment who could exclaim with Beethoven, when the latter had finished his "Missa Solemnis," "From the heart it has come, to the heart it shall go," so now, the spirit of unreason, pettiness, and envy having passed away, all hearts, old and young, respond jubilantly to Schumann's art, and honor him as a man, pioneer, and artist. Schumann's conceptions of art will again come to their right when that army of inflated arrogance which wrongfully have adopted the title of "Wagnerians" and "Lisztians" will have lost their influence. I discriminate, however, expressly between the true and genuine admirers of these two mighty masters and the howling horde which calls itself "——ians." These patentees of speculative profundity do not know the most priceless jewel of art — naïveté. How, then, are they to love Schumann, who possessed this rare gift in so rich a measure? Many of the so-called Liszt performers render Schumann in a manner which is most significant. In most cases they will, indeed, give you the genuine Liszt, but, on the other hand, Schumann falsified beyond recognition. All attempts at artistic treatment and a well-studied execution of details cannot compensate for the lack of that warm, deep tone which a real interpreter of Schumann will know how to produce. As different as Mendelssohn's art of orchestration is from that of Wagner, so different is the coloring of Schumann from that of Liszt; and to give this a vivid expression on the piano imposes so great a task upon the performer that it calls his whole personality into play. He must be able to orchestrate upon the piano. Only then will he become a "Schumann-player" in the sense in which we speak, for instance, of "Chopin-players" — that is to say, performers who, to be sure, are able to play a good deal besides, but play Chopin to perfection. Wagner somewhere expresses the opinion that a sympathetic nature is required even to comprehend his meaning: this is no less true of Schumann, who, in his demands upon the player's comprehension, ventures to propound this postulate, "Perhaps only genius can completely understand genius."

That these lines, while embodying much of my own personal conception of Schumann, also in a considerable degree are concerned with Mendelssohn and Wagner, was in the nature of the case, and thus scarcely to be avoided. These masters stand in a peculiar relation of reciprocity to each other. Each has, as above shown, either sought to be influenced by the other, or purposely sought to avoid being influenced. Like mighty planets in the firmament, they either attracted or repelled each other. Each owes the other much, both positively and negatively. As regards Schumann, he failed, perhaps, of the full achievement which his rare gifts entitle us to expect, because his need of being influenced is intimately connected with that germ of early decay which prevented him from consistently pressing on to his goal. But whatever his imperfections, he is yet one of the princes of art, a real German spirit to whom Heine's profound words concerning Luther may well apply:

> In him all the virtues and all the faults of the Germans are in the grandest way united; so that one may say that he personally represents the wonderful Germany.

Edvard Grieg.



ENGRAVED BY T. JOHNSON.

ROBERT SCHUMANN.

FROM A WATER-COLOR MADE IN VIENNA IN HIS YOUTH; IN POSSESSION OF DR. M. ABRAHAM OF LEIPSIC.