MENDELSSOHN.

By J. F. ROWBOTTOM, Author of "The History of Music."

Who has not listened with rapture to the "Songs Without Words"? What girl, be she ever so unsentimental, has not longed to play one of these lovely compositions on the piano, and when she has succeeded, has found her greatest delight in playing over and over again on the instrument at all sorts of moments in moments of melancholy to cheer her, in moments of meditation to encourage her reflection, and in moments of merriment to harmonise with her lively and happy mood. Full of every shade of human feeling, these wonderful songs, like the glancing of shot silk, or like the shimmering of a prism, seem to yield forth every emotion, and always the one which is most wanted at the time. It is owing to this versatility of utterance that they have attained such widespread and abiding popularity, and have made Mendelssohn's name commensurate with that of civilised mankind.

A friend of ours has informed us that he heard one of Mendelssohn's "Songs Without Words" in a hut in the wilds of California, and we have read descriptions of the impression made upon fearless bushrangers by the performance of a similar ditty by a lady in Australia. The power of Orpheus, who could still the wildness into the most savage breasts, seems peculiarly true of Mendelssohn, and it is questionable whether any composer since the time of Handel has been so generally accessible to all sorts and orders of listeners, to all races of men, and at all times and seasons. It is a significant fact, in illustration of this assertion, that the directors of the music at the Crystal Palace, wishing to substitute the works of another composer for those of Handel at one of their gigantic festivals, could find no other musician so suitable for that purpose as Mendelssohn, and have therefore established a Mendelssohn as well as a Handel Festival.

The man himself was one of the most genial beings who ever lived—we generally find a man's character reflected in his writings—and everybody who met him at once became attached to him. He used to say to himself that he could get on with everybody, and that he never came across a person with whom he failed to fraternise. He never had any prejudices and no aversions, but to feel the same towards all. Yet those who knew him most intimately were well aware of one very strong and marked preference which he had. He was desperately fond of children. Nothing pleased him better than to get among a number of children and to have a romp.

On one occasion when he was performing at Windsor before the Queen and the Prince Consort, he played so divinely on the piano that Her Majesty, dropping her usual reserve, told him to ask any reasonable favour of her and it should be granted. Mendelssohn at first protested that he could not take so great a liberty as to name any request whatever, more especially that one which was on the tip of his tongue. The Queen, however, repeated her promise, and then he said, "Majesty, if I may be permitted, your Majesty, it has all along been my most earnest desire to see your royal children in their royal nursery. I know that the present nursery is like, and wish very much to see a new one wherein princes and princesses are brought up. If you will grant me this favour, you will make me the happiest man in the world." The Queen was astonished and amused at this singular demand, but true to her word, did not hesitate to grant the favour. She led the way in company with the Prince Consort, and the royal pair conducted the composer through the various nurseries at Windsor, in which the young princes and princesses, at that time in pinnacles, were commencing their acquaintance with life.

If he admired at a distance the children of royalty, he was very free, jovial, and familiar with the children of his acquaintances. Nothing, as we have seen, could be better than a romp. Once in a room with his young friends, he was immediately down on his hands and knees, while they were merrily leaping over his back, or rolling over and over on the ground. Strange story is told in connection with these eccentric habits of his. One afternoon he had called at a friend's house, and finding no one in, the children at home had stayed to have a romp with them. Then getting tired of his sport he sat down at the piano and began to indulge his musical genius in a fit of divine extemporisation very discreet and prophetic choice of the sobriquet. For while "Felix" is the Latin name of Mendelssohn's Christian name, and those who gave him that name made a
course of surpassing interest as a musical curiosity, and would far better have figured among the little works that have not yet been the subject of a manuscript or a museum that have not yet been lost or destroyed.

A most wholesome experience befell Mendelssohn at this period of his life. He went on a tour through Italy. We all know how Goethe speaks of an Italian tour, what a necessity it is for perfect culture, how insensibly it impresses its influence on the character, if we let it in. And such influences were impressed most potently upon Mendelssohn by the tour he took through Italy at this date. He went with a great many valuable connections to people of eminence and culture, and there were perhaps as little as to him as well as to his uses; the sculptures and paintings which he made his steps in profusion through that land of art.

At Venice, at Milan, at Florence, at Rome, at Naples, he mixed with the best artistic society, and met the sculptor Thorwaldsen, the painter Horace Vernet, and a crowd of distinguished men and women, who were astonished at the spectacle of a musician, who was at the same time an artist, a flâneur, and a man of varied culture. True, the combination is not often met with. Drawing and music do not often go together, as may easily be concluded from a consideration of our own personal friends who are gifted with one accomplishment or the other, but not as a rule with both. Mendelssohn could draw well, and furthermore was an excellent art critic. He was a very cultivated man so far as literature is concerned. And finally, he was not afflicted with that taciturnity or reserve which, as a distinction, is advantageous to many musicians; but was a man of most polished manners, of much bonhomie, and of universal good temper, as we have before remarked, and which enabled him to communicate its contagion wherever he went. What wonder that he should be popular in Italy? And the taste wherever he went the Italians, and the foreign society who resided in their midst, should have a good word to say for him, and should predict in such a sanguine manner, as they did, the great future which lay before him.

Mendelssohn's own impressions of Italy have been given us through the medium of his journal, and most instructive reading they are. The only thing that he could ever bear himself away from a land which delighted him so much, and where he made so many and such valuable acquaintances.

Another great musician had the advantage, like Mendelssohn, at an early era in his life, of making a tour through Italy, and of mixing with the artistic society there. This was Handel, who about a hundred years before went through much the same experiences as Mendelssohn after. Handel has confessed that his genius for melody was sharpened by the contact with the Italian mind at that impressionable period of his life. The Italians used to call him "the fair Saxon." Was not we, who name they applied to Mendelssohn, but certainly it is that he won as many hearts during his Italian pilgrimage as did Handel himself.

When, finally, Mendelssohn did hear him at Paris that he took his way. He had anticipated much from Paris, had thought about it long and eagerly— the city of modern refinement, the cradle of pleasure and— but how grieved were his anticipations disappointed! A few weeks in Paris were sufficient to disgust him with the French capital, and to make him long for a change even to smoky London by way of variety. In his letters written from Paris at this date he says, "People do not care a fig about music or art here. The only thing they exist for is society. This is no place for me." We wonder that when he came to London he found the English capital so very opposite to the French in this particular. But let us not forget that this was more than fifty years ago, and doubtless London has in the meantime changed for the worse. At present, perhaps, many an aspiring musician and artist in London could echo Mendelssohn's words, "People do not care a fig for art or music here. All they take any interest in is society." Mendelssohn seems from the first to have had a marvellous affinity for the English. Perhaps his Low German extraction may have had something to do with this. He was born at Hamburg, and have before mentioned, and a few miles from Hambourg lies the wealthiest and flatest from whence our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, nearly fifteen hundred years ago, passed for the conquest of Britain. The language which is spoken there, even at the present day, bears a very strong analogy to English, and in the Platt Deutsch or Low German we may trace many of the peculiarities and strange pronunciations of our own English tongue.

Whatever was the case, Mendelssohn's sympathies with the British race were strong in the extreme, and few men were more completely adapted to be naturalised among us than this good-tempered vivacious German, so much at home amongst the nations of Europe, and found Paris less inviting than London in the early half of this century.

(To be concluded.)

**USEFUL HINTS.**

**Lafayette Cakes.**—Into a warm bowl put six ounces of butter and six ounces of candied sugar, beat with a wooden spoon till light; break in one egg, beat, then put in a second egg, and beat well; mix into six ounces of fine flour one teaspoonful of baking-powder. Let the flour be quite warm, and dipped in boiling water, and then put into the cake mixture, stir it well to form a batter; then add two spoonfuls of icing-sugar; it may be that you will require a little more extra sugar, and a little more water, and ice the remaining cakes. A little practice only is required to make this icing. You will see by doing this that out of one baking you have actually three different tarts. Only experience will teach you at first how much water is needed; very little does, as if made too thin it will not set. After mixing, if the bowl is held to the fire for a moment or two, it helps to make it spread smoothly and also to set.

When iced, dip frequently into a cup of boiling water; the wet blade puts it on much better.

**Orange Cake.**—Three eggs, their weight in butter, sugar, and flour. Beat butter and sugar to a light cream, add two eggs and half the flour, beating well, then add the grated rind of one orange, and half the juice; then put in the remainder of the flour in a small tea-cup, mix together, and add the third egg. Bake for half an hour.

**Icing for Cake.**—Six ounces of icing-sugar, and enough orange-juice to make it a thick cream. Pour it evenly over the cake while it is a little warm; let it set in a warm place. This is a most delicious cake. Another orange cake makes an equal bid for favour on account of its excellence. Six eggs, two cups of fine sugar, one scant cup of butter, one cup of milk, three good cups of flour, three teaspoonsful of baking-powder. Beat sugar and butter to a cream, and add two eggs; sift powder into flour, and add it lightly, and also a little orange-juice. Bake in a round tin. When cold, cut the cake into three layers, and place the following icing between.—Grate the rind of one sweet orange, add it to the strained juice, and mix in enough icing-sugar to make a stiffish paste, and spread it evenly on the layers; pile upon each other, and ice over with more of the icing; make a little stiffer with extra sugar. Lemon used instead of orange is very good, and especially refreshing for summer.

**German Cakes.**—Half a pound of flour, quarter of a pound of sugar, quarter of a pound of butter, one teaspoonful of baking-powder, one teaspoonful of lemon-orange, and one egg. Rub butter, sugar, and flour together till like bread-crumbs; add powder, essence, and egg well beaten. Work to a stiff paste with the hands, then divide into two pieces. Have a flat dinner-plate ready well buttered, roll out one, and put the other between; spread a thin layer of apricot or greengage-jam on it, then the other piece of paste rolled out. Trim the edges, pinch them up to keep in the jam, brush over the jam, and sprinkle a handful of blanched and chopped almonds over it. Bake in a moderate oven for half-an-hour. When cold, cut into small squares or triangles.
THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER.

The guests came in the shape of madame's contemporaries, with their daughters, young woman fresh from Huguenot schools—substitutes for convents, brought, not without ulterior motives, to be presented to madame and her son. These ladies grew to be on cautious bowing and speaking with such dubious, rather objectionable strangers as English girls. The Beaufois were so left to themselves as to have started a period at the chateau, in repayment of some ancient kindness shown to Hyacinthe when he was a prisoner of war in England.

Hyacinthe also brought his fellow-landowners and gentlemen who had been fellow-officers with him, who had been soldiers serving on land while he was serving at sea. These representatives of young and old France offered for our inspection many suits and cropped hair worn in queues—the high-buttoned vests and buckled black "stocks" which replaced the lingering frilled shirts and cravats of the Revolution, still to be seen on the older men in the company.

The manners of these messieurs were either suave with the pleasant national suavity, or gruff in an affectation of republican austerity which the splendours of the Empire had not instilled long enough to efface. Just as the women talked domestic annals, interchange remarks on the heads of the last sermon by the last favourite preacher at the temple, partly talked national and provincial politics; men and women with waggling heads, gleaming eyes and waving hair.

I should have relished making acquaintance with these new specimens of humanity if it had not been for the gnawing dread at my heart—the dread which was causing poor Sally to look wan and haggard in that room because of her interest in another person's too audacious attempt. I suffered an additional pang with every fresh proof of friendly, regard and unbounded faith in which the Beaufois were displayed. For were we not, in truth, ingrates and traitresses, threatening the prosperity, the very safety of our unsuspecting host and hostess?

(To be continued.)

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BEYOND all composers, Mendelssohn possessed the peculiar faculty of transmitting impressions of Nature and augmenting these impressions by his music. Of course we are all aware that Beethoven has given the world a marvellous illustration of this faculty in his Pastoral Symphony, in which he has enshrined for ever in immortal music the sounds and impressions of the country. Among the sounds we must not forget the voices of birds, of which a whole chorus is introduced into one portion of his symphony.

But Beethoven has only done this occasionally; Mendelssohn makes a frequent practice of it. He would go into a wood, hear it rustling, and come home and write a piece of music which would exactly reproduce the sound. He would hear a girl at her spinning-wheel, and would emblaze the pretty whirring of the axle in a lovely piece of music destined to be immortal. Wherever he went, whatever he saw, whatever he heard, he had his eyes and ears open, and was ever ready to transform the impressions he received from without into musical tones.

In this way he took a tour into the Hebrides of Scotland, and passed through a panorama of scenery very different from the scenes which had met him during his Italian tour. He spent days and weeks amidst a picturesque pagentry of lake, glen, woodland stream, moor, hill, and mountain. The heather bloomed around him, and sent up its scent to heaven. The glorious Scotch sun, which beats down in such soft rays through the vanishing mists of the moorland, played around his path and filled him with the divinest inspirations. Romance was around him, picturesque nature was on every hand, and can we wonder that he embraced the opportunity of transforming these impressions into a tapestry of gorgeous sound?

Such were the scenes he moved among, and as a result of them he produced two noble and celebrated works—the first an overture, the second a symphony. The overture, which is always known as "The Hebrides," is full of sweet and weird beauty of tone, which recalls in an amazing manner the scenes which suggested it.

The symphony is popularly known as "The Scotch," and among musicians it is spoken of as the Symphony in A minor. The first conception of it was formed and written down at Edinburgh, where he spent ten days, and for a few days on his return from the Hebrides. The symphony is therefore most justly called "The Scotch," for it was suggested by Scotland and written in Scotland.

We hear the bagpipe in some parts, but the effect of that most gratifying of instruments is modified by the music being assigned to the clarinet. In other parts we listen to the echoes of a Highland reel; but the natural unmorthness of this dance is toned down by the use of sweet, harmonious, and pleasing modulation. Mendelssohn has also touched on of those tender melodies such as breathe through the songs of Burns, and all the romance and supreme poetry of Scotch song is gone to heaven by each strain of melody has ceased.

Suddenly towards the conclusion of the symphony we are surprised at hearing all reminiscences of Scotland fade away from the music, and instead thereof a fine old German chorale rings out clear and distinct. The meaning of this abrupt transition is that Mendelssohn, much against his will, tears himself away from the land which has feasted him with so many sights of beauty, and looks back with eyes of faithful allegiance to his native land Germany, which, whilst thought to be true and lasting, is as much a country as most of his countrymen, still claims his fidelity and remembrance.

But what constitutes Mendelssohn's most abiding title to remembrance are the great oratorios which he has written, and which as we said before have raised him almost to the level of Handel himself. Of these "St. Paul" was the earliest work, "Elijah" not having been composed until ten years later. We in England are apt to reckon "Elijah" as the greatest work of the two. Not so in Germany. Opinion seems to point quite the other way there, principally, it should seem, because "St. Paul" is composed of music for voices only, whereas "Elijah" has more character and a far more German cast in the manner and the matter of its music. On the contrary, it is precisely because "Elijah" is the less German of the two that we English rank it as the prime favourite. Thoroughly original in "Elijah," with more individuality, and the work was therefofore all the more heartily welcomed by a public which places originality above all things.

"St. Paul" was produced at Düsseldorf in 1836, and the circumstances attending its production were greatly in keeping with the character and temperament of Mendelssohn himself. To begin with, the month was May, the season was pleasant, sunlight laughed over the gardens of Düsseldorf, and the sweet smell of flowers was rising in the air from the newly-awakening buds and the trim hedges round the town. The place which was fixed upon for the performance of "St. Paul" was a concert-room of good proportions, though with a ceiling too low, and with a space somewhat confined for the hundreds of people who either took part in the oratorio or crowded in to be present. Five hundred and odd performers assisted in the delivery of the oratorio. Of these, three hundred constituted the vocal, and the remainder the instrumental portion of the performance, and all were placed on a large platform with seats mounted above one another. Over a thousand listeners filled the auditorium, and many hundreds more who were unable to gain admission climbed up to the windows, whilst others, more placid of temperament, quietly listened to the music in the gardens outside.

The concert-room stood in the midst of a large and well-kept garden full of waving trees and branches just budding into bloom. This, and the draught through the windows, kept the air in the hall fresh, despite the large assemblage of people who were crowded into the building. In front of the orchestra was the conductor's desk, which was tenanted by Mendelssohn himself, and was decorated with a golden lyre. The performance of the great oratorio created the wildest enthusiasm, and after the work had been brought to a conclusion, all the young ladies in the hall brought baskets of flowers and showered them in prodigious profusion on the successful composer, who had thus added one more immortal work to the gallery of classical music. So flattering a reception seldom falls to the lot of any composer, but Mendelssohn had the good luck to obtain, and Mendelssohn in this as in so many other instances was a favourite of fortune.

How very different was the occasion of the
production of the "Elijah." There could be no greater contrast than between the first performance of Mendelssohn's "Elijah" in St. Paul's, and that of the company approved of it. An interesting account remains to us in the diary of Ignaz Moscheles, the celebrated pianist, and a great friend of Mendelssohn's, who describes a choral work which the composer invented, and at which he assisted along with his wife and some other amateur actors.

The work consisted of the basis of the choral was Gwandnauhaus, which was the name of the great concert-hall at Leipzig, where so many of the master's works were performed, and which Mendelssohn gave to serve as the text for a very merry interlude. Taking the syllables apart, we find they resolve themselves into Ge-wand-nauhaus, which thus gives three syllables and one which, in four scenes in all. To represent the first syllable and to mystify the audience as to what it was, Herr Joachim, the violonist, who was one of the party, came in and played a fantasia à la Paganini on the "Ge," or as we should say in English, the "G" string. This strange performance excited many genuine suspense, but none were more well to comprehend what the syllable was when the great violinist had finished.

The second syllable "wand" means in German "a wand," and was there a very neat reproduction in all its drollery of the scene between Pyramus and Thisbe, where the two lovers whisper through the chinks of a wall. Nothing better than this could have been desired, for Wall, as students of Shakespeare will remember, is one of the prominent characters in the scene, and the ridiculous side of him, how up is his fingers are sufficient to provoke the most melancholy spectator to laughter. While this scene was going on, Mendelssohn sat at the piano, and played a short selection from his own music to Shakespeare's play.

The third syllable "haus," which we may transliterate by its English equivalent as "home," was portrayed by a little domestic picture, in which the celebrated pianist Moscheles and his wife were the main figures. Mrs. Moscheles sat on a chair when the curtain drew up dangling a blue stocking, while from her talk and the various actions she performed with unspeakable gravity and sedateness, there was not much difficulty in seeing that she was one of the inhabitants of the house of the word. After a while the more practical things of life seemed to claim possession of her, and she relined the slits of a blue-stocking so far as to ring the bell for the dinner. Her husband in the attire of a cook attended, and the two together began to discuss the menu for the following day most humorously manner, and to the great mirth of the spectators.

Finally the complete word was reached, and then the secret was very soon let out, for the scene consisted of nothing less than the curtain was drawn up, than an orchestra of young people, among whom Mendelssohn's children were conspicuous. They were furnished with footballs, flutes, toy drums, and last not least, toy violins, on the latter of which some of them could play very well. Their leader was Herr Joachim, in person, who was provided with a toy violin as diminutive as that of the rest of the company, and with a bow about as long as an article of household furniture.

Yet he stood to his work gallantly, and pleased not a few of the young people, as the bow as a bimbo, and they all started off. He naturally played his tiny violin better than any us such, and entered thoroughly into the spirit of the thing.

At the spectacle of this orchestra, twanging, scraping, and too-toing away, some of the audience saw light at last, and there were shouts in the room of "Gwandnauhaus!" Although this was a very sorry copy of the celebrated Gwandnauhaus, the clock seems to have been stopped, and much laughter was evoked when the youngsters, despite the discovery of the word, determined on finishing their piece before they stopped playing.

Such were some of the innocent diversions which furnished Mendelssohn with relaxation after his hours of toil were over. For although so simple-minded and universally happy a man, he was a great toiler, a great worker. Few men ever excelled him in that particular; but he would work by its end and start—not as some composers have done, but till the definite and stated amount of music every day. Mendelssohn would sit for days and days at a stretch at his writings, when the mood was on him, and then as suddenly he would break off his labours and indulge in the luxury of a holiday.

He was a great letter-writer, and over and above his writing of music carried on a voluminous correspondence with friends and even with strangers, often devoting a precious hour which might more probably have been employed on his compositions in penning some epistle to utter strangers, from whom he could expect no thanks and scarcely even sympathy as a return for the twice-sounding important questions or in explaining things which needed no explanation. Yet he himself attached the greatest possible importance to his correspondence, and would as soon have thought of neglecting his composition as his letter-writing. The best hours of the day—that is to say, the first ones—were devoted to his letters, and only the latter ones to his composition.

But when he at last commenced his composition he became like someone inspired. He would walk up and down the room, snap his fingers, smile, raise his eyes to heaven, and talk frequently to himself. Then he would suddenly sit down at the table and become absorbed in his work; nor would he rise till he had finished a considerable portion of the score.

It was his habit, as we said, to work for hours and days together, when in the mood. At the end of these long spells of exertion he suffered cruelly from the reaction, and would often fall into a state of torpor or lethargy, which would pass into a deep sleep, from whence nothing would rouse him for twenty hours and more. Such a habit was indeed a great weakness, and in one of these lethargic sleeps he was passed away, being a comparatively young man at the time, and only thirty-eight years of age on the day of his death.

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Mendelssohn's, there was generally the chance of a charade being acted, if the composer was in a good mood, and if the company approved of it. An interesting account remains to us in the diary of Ignaz Moscheles, the celebrated pianist, and a great friend of Mendelssohn's, who describes a charade which the composer invented, and at which he assisted along with his wife and some other amateur actors.

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