

## How Composers Work.

BY FRANCIS ARTHUR JONES.



ONE of my correspondents, writing to me on the subject of this article, says that he thinks I have undertaken a "tough job," and I fancy he is partly right. I trust, however, that my efforts have not been altogether futile, and that I have, in a measure, overcome most of the "toughness."

It has always appeared to me a curious fact that whereas one so often sees facsimile reproductions of the MSS. of famous authors and others, it is a comparatively rare occurrence to come across the compositions of musical composers treated in the same way, and I therefore determined to undertake the work of placing before the readers of this magazine portions of the MSS. of some of the foremost composers of the day, together with their opinions relative to that art of which they are the masters.

It may interest my readers still further to learn that the MSS. were, in most instances,

re-written for me by the composers, with the object of their being produced in THE STRAND MAGAZINE. They are given here as specimens of their compositions *when ready for publication*, for the first jottings of a composer are, as a rule, intelligible only to himself.

SIR JOSEPH BARNBY.

Sir J. Barnby, the late Precentor of Eton College, and newly elected Principal of the Guildhall School of Music, writes:—

"As a rule I do not work at the piano except to test what has already been written down. I have found ideas come most readily in the railway carriage or during a drive, and the time I prefer for composition is the morning."

As to writing on commission he says:—

"I see no objection to a composer writing 'to order,' as long as he sends out nothing of which he does not approve. Handel's 'Dettingen Te Deum,' Mozart's 'Requiem,'

*"Sweet and low"*

Lord Lyndgrou

Part-coups

Barnby



Mendelssohn's 'Elijah,' and a hundred other works furnish us with successful examples of this class of composition.

"I do not," he continues, "consider the *art* of composing one which can be acquired (the science may), but such an art is all but useless without serious cultivation."

In his modesty, Sir Joseph will give no opinion as to which he considers his best work, but sends, for publication here, a few bars of one of his part-songs which has had the widest acceptance—"Sweet and Low."

JOHN FRANCIS BARNETT.

Mr. Barnett's method of composing I give in his own words:—

"Sometimes," he says, "an idea will come to me spontaneously, but when this is not the case I try for something, generally at the

"To a great extent," he continues, "I believe that composition can be acquired and cultivated providing there is some groundwork of talent to go upon. Without cultivation it would be impossible to work out ideas satisfactorily; at the same time, I do not believe that any amount of cultivation will give original ideas unless they belong to the composer by nature."

I here give my readers a few remarks of Mr. Barnett's, on whether or no we are a musical nation. At the close of this article I hope to give his opinion on this somewhat oft-repeated question at greater length. For the present, then, he says: "I think that the English are generally fond of music, but the quality of music they are fond of is, in many cases, bordering on the commonplace. That there are a multitude



piano. If I succeed, I dot it down on music paper, but do not feel satisfied that it will be of any worth until I try it again the following day, because I have not infrequently found that an idea, which I considered good at the time, after the lapse of a day or more will appear to me insipid and not worth working out. I prefer the evening for composition, but not too late. For working out my ideas, putting them on paper, and for orchestration, I like the morning. Of my own compositions I consider 'The Building of the Ship,' written for the Leeds Festival, the best work I have yet done."

As many of Mr. Barnett's compositions have been written "to order," he not unnaturally believes in this method of composition. In fact, he feels all the better for having some strong reason for commencing a composition, but can easily understand that it would act detrimentally, especially if it involved the hurrying of the work.

of admirers of the classical in music amongst the English is, fortunately, quite true, but I am inclined to believe that there are too many who are quite content with perhaps dance music, and who would rather not hear such a thing as a Beethoven Sonata. The reason for the want of good taste amongst a certain portion of our people may be traced to the class of music given by some teachers to their young pupils." The portion of music is taken from Mr. Barnett's last cantata, "The Wishing Bell," produced at the Gloucester Festival.

JACQUES BLUMENTHAL.

"Sometimes," says Jacques Blumenthal, "I compose at the piano, at other times away from it. I am in the habit of reading a good deal of poetry, and when any poem strikes my fancy and seems adapted to musical treatment, I copy it into one of my MS. books, of which I always keep several,



in English, French, German, and Italian. These verses all lie patiently there till their time comes to be set to music. Some have to wait for years, some are composed almost at once; it all depends on the mood in which I happen to be, for according to my mood I look out for some verses corresponding to it, and then the song comes forth with ease; in fact, it takes much less time to compose the music than to write it down, but I invariably try to improve upon it, and file down or add almost up to the time of going into print. Sometimes I feel more attracted towards one language than towards another, and then I am apt to compose for some time nothing but songs in that language. This is the origin of my French and German albums, and as you ask me which I consider my best work, I must say in my estimation it is the album of twenty German songs with English version by Gwendoline Gore."

As to whether the art of composition can be acquired or learned and cultivated, Mr. Blumenthal says:—

"There is no doubt that the rules, or what we may call the grammar of composition, can be acquired by clear heads just as the

F. H. COWEN.

Mr. Cowen says, with reference to his mode of composing: "I usually work by fits and starts, or rather, I should say, that I work sometimes for months continuously, almost all day and evening with little rest, especially when I am engaged upon a large work, for then I can think of nothing else: it weighs upon my mind until completed. At other times, perhaps, I do little or nothing (except a few songs, etc.) for a month or two, lying quite fallow. This may be a greater strain than working systematically all the year round, but I cannot bear when engaged on anything important to lose the thread of it for a single moment."

As to composing to a piano, Mr. Cowen believes in it when writing for *voices* and singing every note and word oneself, but otherwise his opinion is that the music is very apt to be unvocal. In the case of *choral works*, he often makes the vocal score first, having made up his mind thoroughly beforehand what the orchestration is to be.

"I never work now very late into the night," continues the composer, "though I used to; usually beginning about 10 or

Moderato

First bars of the "Message"

Augustus Plummer

rules of any other grammar can be. But just as little as knowing the rules of language can make you write *one* phrase worth remembering, so will the life work of a mere musical scholar be cast into the shade by a few bars from the pen of a man of genius."

The two or three bars of music in the composer's autograph are taken from his well-known song "The Message."

10.30 a.m., and leaving off about 11 or 12 p.m., with intervals for meals and a constitutional (this is, of course, when working hard). Every composer should have a notebook of some sort to jot down ideas in when necessary. I may say, however, that I have carried about with me (mentally only) whole songs or movements perfected, sometimes for three or four years without writing down a note, and have afterwards used them in



almost the exact state in which they were photographed in my brain! I do not think it possible for composition to be taught or acquired, that is, *real* composition. I daresay that anyone with a certain musical taste can be taught to string a melody and accompaniment together; but the *genuine* thing must be born in one, though, of course, the gift is useless, or at least crude, without serious cultivation."

Mr. Cowen considers his best work up to the present the "Symphony in F, No. 8," and his new opera "Sigrid" (not yet performed).

In conclusion he says: "I do not believe in composers writing 'to order,' as a general rule, but I think they may often do their best work under pressure, and when they know it must be completed by a certain time. Of course, this means that the time allowed them is sufficiently long to prevent their unduly hurrying or 'scamping' their work."

The few bars of music are the beginning of a song published in an album of twelve by various composers, the words of which are by H. Boulton.

*Indie H Cowen*

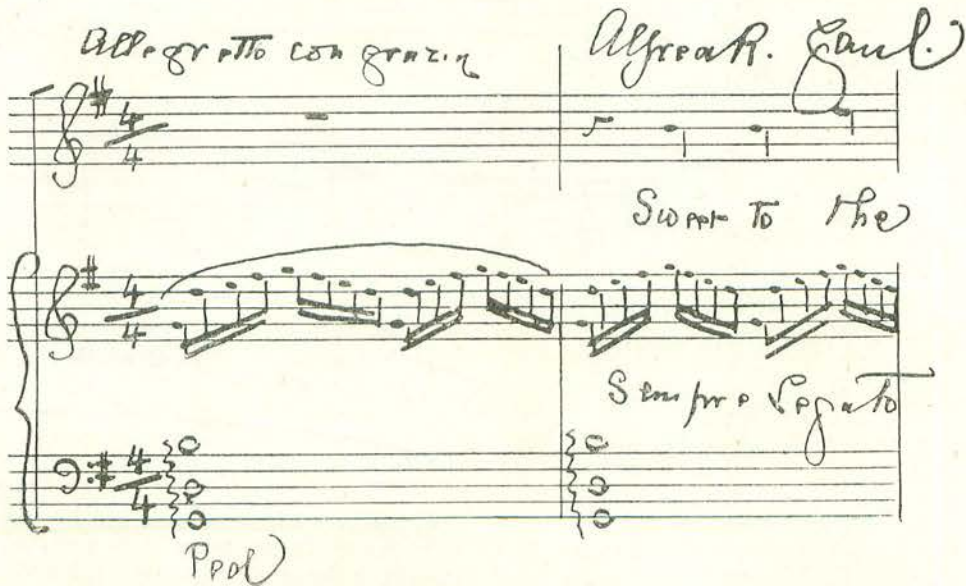
ALFRED R. GAUL.

Alfred Gaul when composing always thinks of the necessary construction for best bringing out the meaning of the words.

"This I do in the first place," he says, "without associating a musical idea with the words. Having, as far as possible, arrived at a conclusion on this point, I next think of the music, both as to melody and harmony. All these points being settled to my satisfaction, the work then proceeds with ease."

Mr. Gaul sets no particular part of the day aside for composing, working sometimes early and sometimes late.

Of all his cantatas and other compositions his favourite is "The Ten Virgins," Op. 42, a sacred cantata for four solo voices and chorus, and this he considers his best work.





As to the English being a musical nation, Mr. Gaul gives it as his opinion that the greatly improved esteem entertained by foreigners for English compositions and English performers may be taken as evidence of our country being a decidedly musical one.

With regard to writing on commission, he adds: "I do not think one is so likely to be as successful as under other conditions, although many of the best works of recent years have been written to order, *i.e.*, in consequence of commissions given by festival committees." The music is taken from Mr. Gaul's last work, "Israel in the Wilderness," performed at the Crystal Palace, July 9, 1892.

CHARLES GOUNOD.

The famous French composer, Charles François Gounod, briefly gives as his opinion: "Composer c'est exprimer ce que l'on sent dans une langue que l'on sait."

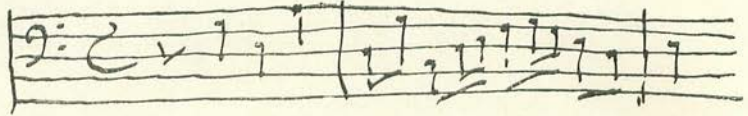
He adds that though the art of composition cannot be acquired, it may undoubtedly be cultivated; in fact, must be trained, like any other talent.

Mons. Gounod lays down no strict rules for composition, as he follows none himself, only composing when inclined to do so. As to his best work, he says: "I consider it is that which is still to be done"; and again: "Every nation is a musical nation."

Finally, the few bars of music given here are surrounded by more than the usual amount of interest, for Mons. Gounod, in presenting them, wrote: "The portion of

music I send you is from no *work* of mine, but 'instantaneous' for you, of an auto-graph."

*And.testo*



*Sujet de Fugue*

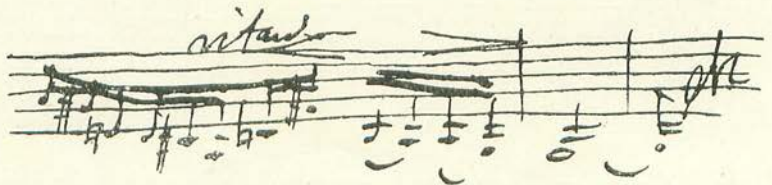
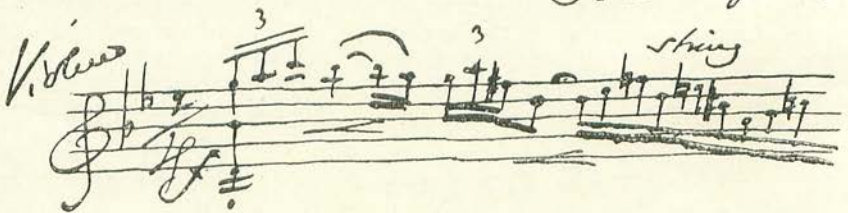
*Ch. Gounod*

EDVARD GRIEG.

The Norwegian composer, Edvard Grieg, sends his opinion over the sea, from his home at Bergen, where, by the way, he has just celebrated his silver wedding.

*Lento.*

*Sonata op. 13.*



*Edvard Grieg*

He says: "I have no particular rule when composing. In my opinion the art of composition is not at all to be learned, and yet

must be learned; for it is impossible for a composer to write melodies correctly without a complete mastery of his art. Just as hopeless as for an illiterate person lacking the necessary knowledge of language to sit down to write a standard work."

He adds that as he has no favourite composer, all *good* composers are his favourites.

Of his many compositions, Grieg gives his preference to his famous sonata for the violin, "Op. 13," a few bars of which are here given.

CH. H. LLOYD.

Professor Ch. H. Lloyd, when composing, generally proceeds on the following lines:—

"If I am setting words to music," he writes, "I generally read them over several times till they suggest appropriate music, and then jot down my ideas on paper. If it is an abstract composition, it is difficult to say what starts the machine. Ideas often come to me when I am in the train, or at less convenient times. Whenever possible, I write down a few bars before I forget them; but the main work is done sitting at a table with some music paper before me. I seldom go to the piano till I am well on with a composition, and I never seek for ideas at it. I have no regular or fixed time for compos-

ing—more often in the morning than at any other time; but sometimes I have not time to put a note on paper for months together."

Unlike some other composers, Professor Lloyd believes most decidedly in composers writing under compulsion "to a certain extent."

"For," he says, "if a composer knows that he *has* to finish a particular work by a certain time and for a certain purpose, why, I am of opinion that he will accomplish it far better under pressure than if he was working with no fixed object; at the same time, of course, such pressure in excess is not a good thing, and if carried to a great extent, actually detrimental to the production of good work."

Of his own works, Mr. Lloyd prefers his "Song of Balder," and this composition in his opinion is the best written.

In conclusion the Professor says: "If there is no aptitude for composition it can never be acquired; if, on the other hand, the aptitude exist, but the energy to cultivate it with hard and serious study be absent, it can never be brought to a successful issue."

The portion of particularly neat MS. is taken from his "Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte."

*Allegro grazioso*

Violin

P.F.

*Charles H. Lloyd*

(To be Continued.)



## How Composers Work.

### II.

BY FRANCIS ARTHUR JONES.

MEYER LUTZ.



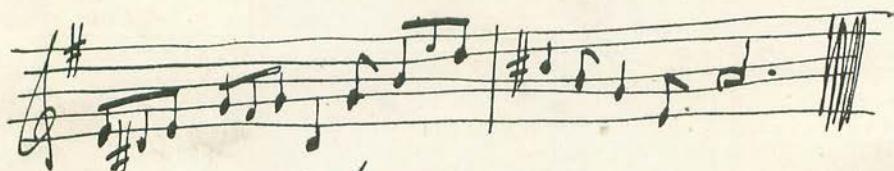
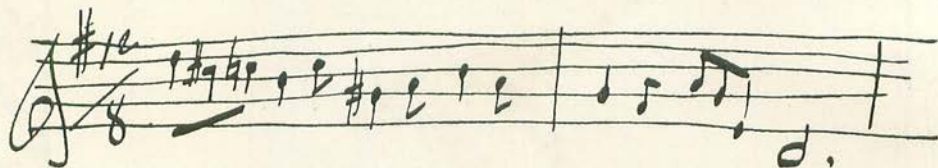
ERR MEYER LUTZ has the rather odd fancy of sitting in the dark for an hour or two at a time, and letting his fingers wander hither and thither over the keys, searching out those measures which set the fashion in the dancing world.

“are musical poets, and ‘Poëta nascitur, non fit.’”

The music in his autograph will, I imagine, be familiar to not a few of my readers.

A. C. MACKENZIE.

Most of Dr. Mackenzie's work is done in the morning from nine to one-thirty, and he never touches it in the afternoon. As a rule he leaves *scoring* for the orchestra or



truly yours  
Meyer Lutz

He composes anywhere and everywhere, in the streets, on tops of 'buses, and even in church.

“I remember,” says the popular Gaiety composer, “driving one Sunday evening to St. George's Cathedral, when the melody to an ‘O Salutaris’ struck me. I pencilled it down during the sermon, and my brother-in-law, Furneaux Cook, sang it after the sermon at Benediction the same evening.”

Herr Lutz believes in taking up some verses and carefully studying them.

“This I often do,” he says, “and soon seem to hear a fitting melody without trying it on the piano till finished.”

Fugues and canons, in his opinion, want studying and mathematically experimentalizing. “Composers,” he says in conclusion,

looking over the morning's work for the evening hours. “But,” in his own words, “if I feel capable of *inventing*, why, I begin to work again about eight-thirty and continue until I am tired.”

As a rule, the principal of the Royal Academy of Music sketches his music on two or three lines, as shown in the illustration.

“When I am engaged upon anything that absorbs my entire attention,” he continues, “I carry a little musical note-book about with me and jot down roughly any idea which may occur to me, and I have found this plan useful. When I am composing I never lose the thread of it, morning, noon, or night; even at meals I am unconsciously occupied with it—this goes on until the work is finished.”



HUBERT PARRY.

Dr. Mackenzie decidedly disapproves of the manner in which composers in England are made to work—viz., to order.

“Such pressure,” he says, emphatically, “is unproductive of the best work, and highly detrimental to one’s general health and comfort.”

For those reasons he objects to undertake commissions.

TITO MATTEI.

Signor Tito Mattei composes most of his instrumental music at the piano, but songs are composed anywhere, wherever and whenever he feels so inspired.

One thing he considers absolutely indispensable to the success of a composer, viz., a thoroughly good musical education, without which no one, however gifted, can hope to make a name.

“As a whole,” writes this composer, “the English people love music, but are not, strictly speaking, a musical nation, the reason being that they do not give sufficient time and care to the study.”

The accompanying few bars of music are taken from his popular song “Beside Me.”

Professor C. Hubert Parry, whose last work, “Job,” has been so enthusiastically received and criticised by the musical world, composes according to the nature of the composition on which he is engaged.

“There are a hundred and fifty different kinds of work to be done in composing,” he says, “and they vary in accordance with its being a big work like a symphony or an oratorio, or an opera, or a little thing like a song or a pianoforte piece. Then, what one wants may come into one’s head when walking or driving, or in bed—anywhere, indeed, but in front of the paper it has to be written on. Then there is the general scheme to be considered, which usually comes first, and has to be thought out in a big, cloudy way, out of which the details emerge into distinctness by degrees, and often want doing over and over again.”

Like many another composer, Mr. Parry prefers the morning for the mechanical part of the art, viz., the work of scoring and writing down and getting into order those ideas which have already been conceived.

*Beside me*





"As far as new ideas and schemes are concerned," he adds, "I am glad enough to take them at any time of the day they are so obliging as to come."

It is wonderful how chary the English composers are of answering the question as to whether or no they consider their countrymen a musical race. It seems a subject on which they fear to express an opinion, and either treat the matter with silence or, like Sir Joseph Barnby, content themselves by saying "We're on the mend." Not so Mr. Parry, however.

"I consider," he says, "that the English are naturally the most musical race in the world, except the Germans. It would take a good many pages to explain my opinion, as it is obviously contrary to all the received and accredited traditions, so I will not attempt to justify it at present beyond saying that I don't

that is thoroughly congenial to him when he has plenty of time to carry it out honourably. If the Philharmonic Society or Richter ask a composer to write them a symphony, they put at his disposal a magnificent orchestra for the interpretation of anything that he may have to say in that line; or if the committee of any great festival invite a composer to write them an oratorio several years before it is wanted, they put at his disposal a splendid chorus and soloists, and all the resources a man can desire. With such opportunities, I should have thought a man had a better chance of being inspired to some purpose than if he were pottering about just when the humour took him."

I am fortunate enough to be able to give here, in facsimile, a bar from the original first score of "Job."



mean that the race is gifted with any natural facility, but that taking it all round there is more appreciation of what is genuinely and wholesomely good—Beethoven, Bach, Haydn, Brahms, Handel (at his best), Mozart, and the great madrigalists and so forth—than in any other country except Germany. The fact that the English people have no great taste for opera is all in their favour."

Mr. Parry concludes with a few remarks on the merits and demerits of writing "to order." "Certainly no one could turn out anything worthy of the name of art," he says, "if he had it on his mind that he was writing under pressure; neither will any man do anything really good when he is thinking more of the money payment, or suiting managerial ideas, than of the thorough working out of his own devices. But this should not be confounded with a man's undertaking work

#### EBENEZER PROUT.

Mr. Prout, when composing, makes first a very rapid sketch on two staves—with instrumental works generally only the upper part and a figured bass; with choruses, anthems, etc., usually the four-voice parts. For songs he writes only the melody, with just enough indication of the accompaniment to prevent his forgetting the idea.

"My first sketches," he says, "are always written as fast as the pen will go. I make it an invariable rule *never* to write unless I am in the humour, and if I find that ideas do not come as fast or faster than I can put them down, if I have to stop to think what should come next, I at once put the music-paper aside, knowing that I am not in the mood for composing. After completing my sketch I begin the fair copy, the full score, in the case of orchestral work, putting in the details and often



making considerable improvements. My public works usually differ pretty widely from the original draft; but the first sketch, containing the fundamental idea, is invariably produced at what I may call a 'white heat.'

Composition, in this composer's opinion, can be taught so far as the technique is concerned; but if a student has no ideas, these cannot be given by any instruction, though a latent talent may often be brought out and cultivated by proper training. By this he means that there may be a natural aptitude for composition of which its possessor is unaware till his teacher discovers and develops it.

Of his own works Mr. Prout thinks he is, perhaps, hardly an impartial judge, but his own favourites are—among the instrumental work, his "3rd Symphony" and the two quartets in B flat and F; and among the vocal works, the cantatas the "Red Cross Knight" and "Damon and Phintias."

"It is difficult," continues Mr. Prout, "to

Well, I cannot speak for others, but for myself, when I receive a commission to write anything, I always accept, conditionally on the spirit moving me. If the work I am asked to undertake is sympathetic, the spirit generally moves pretty soon. Some of my best work has been commissioned, but to write *merely for money* is repugnant to me. I have never written a 'pot-boiler' in my life, and, please God, I never will."

Mr. Prout concludes by saying:—

"I usually compose in the evening, mostly between six and ten, seldom later. If I have a morning to spare, which does not often happen except during my holidays, I frequently find that a good time for composing. Recently I have composed very little, my time being too fully occupied with writing the series of theoretical works, which is still a long way from completion."

The MS. is taken from his well-known "Piano Quartet in F."

*Allegro moderato.*

From Quartett, Op. 18. *Ernest Prout.*

give a definite opinion as to whether the English are a musical nation; it depends so much on the point of view. Judging by the number of concerts, etc., we are musical enough, but the want of general public appreciation of the best class of music, especially in the Metropolis, would incline me

RUBINSTEIN.

From Herr Anton Rubinstein I have obtained no information whatever. He has, however, with the kindness which characterizes him, sent me the accompanying MS. :—

*Allegro moderato!*

*Three Variations*  
Op. 88

to a far less favourable opinion. In this respect I believe many parts of the provinces are far ahead of London.

"Do I believe in writing 'to order'?"

*Ant. Rubinstein*



Some time ago Rubinstein left the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, where he had been for so many years, and visited Dresden, in search of rest and quietness, and laid aside all business for the time. For any further information, I must refer my readers to his "Autobiography," a fragment published in America, and "A Conversation Upon Music," published by Augner.

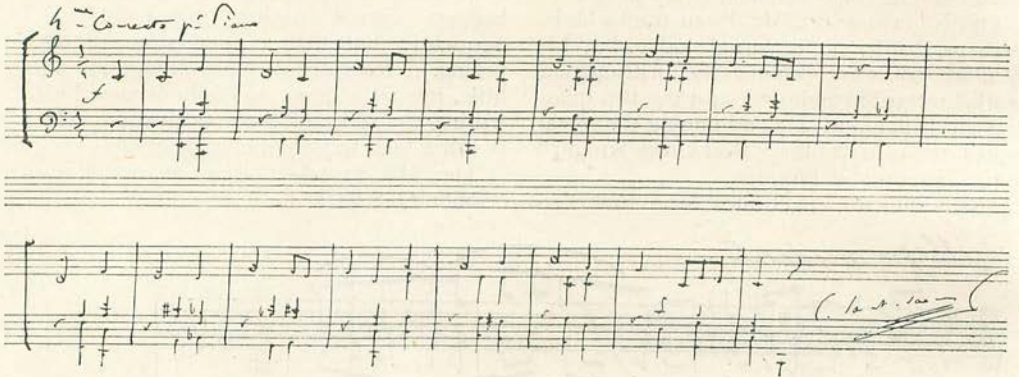
#### C. SAINT-SAËNS.

The French composer, Saint-Saëns, considers a piano a useless item in the art of

never acquired. He composes according to the mood in which he happens to be, and never keeps to any fixed rule or time.

As to composers working under pressure, he imagines that must depend greatly upon the temperament of the composer. He expresses no opinion as to which he considers his best work, but says: "That is for the future to determine and individual tastes to decide."

The half-dozen bars of music are taken from his "Irish Symphony."



composition, at all events in his case, for he rarely, if ever, makes use of one when composing, even to play over completed works.

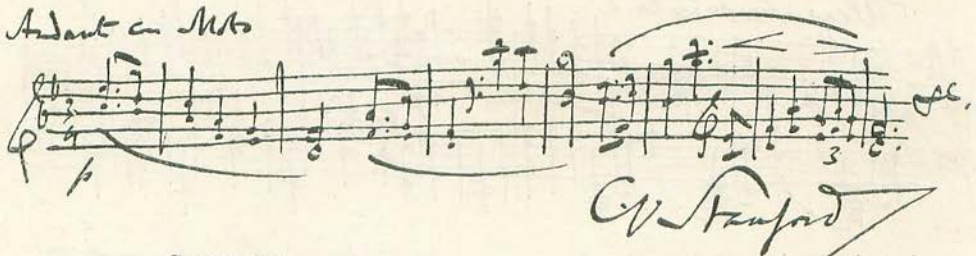
Some MS. paper and a pencil are the only materials he works with, and he has composed whole operas without a musical instrument in the house.

This manner of composing M. Saint-Saëns finds a great saving of valuable time (and if composers' time is not important, whose is?), and he does not consider that ideas come any the more readily when seated before a piano; in fact, rather the reverse.

The portion of MS. will be familiar to those who have studied his works.

#### STRAUSS.

Herr Johann Strauss, with whose dreamy waltzes most of us are familiar, for his part says that he is far too modest to designate any composition as his *best*. When he finishes one he forgets it completely for a time in the interest caused by his next work. Method he has none—only inspiration, genius—for in his opinion composers can never be made. "One may compose," he says, "very easily, or—not at all." The divine art must be innate, and a composer—like his brother genius, the poet—must be born, and can never be made. The music is taken from one of his well-known waltzes.



#### STANFORD.

In Professor C. V. Stanford's opinion the art of composition can be cultivated, but





in F" the best work he has yet done. This composition is a universal favourite with lovers of Church music, and deservedly popular at festivals.

It is pleasant to hear that this composer considers England a musical nation. "Not quite so great as Germany, perhaps, but during the last twenty years there has been

*Schön an 21. Juni Johann Strauß*

BERTHOLD TOURS.

Mr. Berthold Tours, who has written some of the finest anthems and "Services" of the present day, besides numerous songs, prefers the morning for composition, and being an early riser, is generally to be found hard at work soon after 9 a.m., and seldom ceases his labours till two o'clock. He never composes at an instrument, and thinks that people who do are very apt to get their ideas from it and not out of their head; nor does he force himself to compose, preferring to wait till the inclination is upon him or the composition on which he is engaged has matured itself in his brain, when there only remains the mechanical part of writing it down, which very often takes up the most time. If engaged upon a song, he first of all reads his words over two or three times carefully and thoughtfully, so as to obtain a grasp of the style of the verses, and then the music begins and the composition proceeds smoothly to its close. Mr. Tours considers his "Service

great talent shown in music. We are stronger now in clever composers than we have ever been, and no nation is so appreciative of good music as the English, or so quick to recognise and encourage true genius."

Like Dr. A. C. Mackenzie, Mr. Tours does not hold with the popular belief that composers produce as fine works when writing for commissions received as when left to follow their own inclinations, but acknowledges that many great works have been thus produced.

In conclusion, Mr. Tours says that the playing of good classical music, to those who know the rules of writing, might be a very great help, and would be an incentive to good composition.

The portion of MS. is taken from his well-known "Harvest Anthem."

P. TSCHAIKOWSKY.

Klin, near Moscow, was the home of one of the busiest of men. It is here that the late Russian composer Tschaiukowsky, lived

*While the earth remaineth*  
Harvest Anthem

*Berthold Tours*

Chorus *Chorus Recit*

*While the earth remaineth seed-time and harvest.*

*etc*



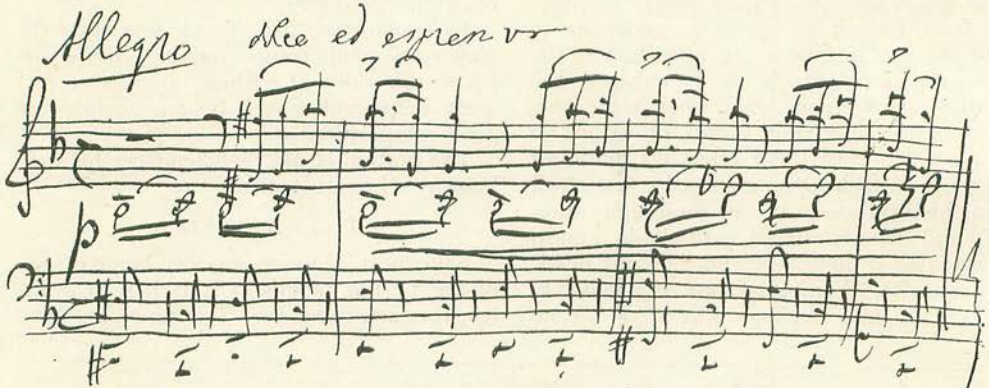
and worked, devoting the greater part of the day to his art. Nine o'clock every morning found him hard at work, and it was one before he stopped for a light lunch. Two hours every afternoon were rigidly set aside for one of the few recreations in which he used to indulge, viz., walking; and it was during these daily strolls that most of the sketches of his pieces were conceived, and entered into a note-book which was always forthcoming. Home was reached soon after four, and from five to half-past eight was employed in arranging and setting in order the sketches jotted down during the walk.

A piano, he considered, is not absolutely necessary, and he composed much without the use of one. For instance, on a journey, or long voyage, or when rusticated in some primitive, far-away little hamlet, where the peacefulness and quietude are suggestive of composition, but where the running brook does duty for a piano and you fit your melodies to the sighing of the wind among the fir-trees. Still, the instrument helped sometimes the development of his musical ideas, and gene-

rally when convenient he made use of one. "I believe," he said, "the creating power of music to be a precious gift of Nature, which cannot be obtained by work and study, but only improved and lighted by musical sciences, besides being purely *empirique*. With the belief that composers often work better and produce finer results when put under a certain amount of pressure the professor agrees, pinning his belief on history, which tells us of many masterpieces being done thus.

"I have never thought," he resumed, "of the reasons explaining why England, who produced such great poets, has had, comparatively speaking, but few musicians. It seems to me that the idea that the English are not gifted for music cannot be considered as 'definitive.' Who knows that a musical Shakespeare will not be produced? You have already men of much promise and whose work is very serious."

Of his own compositions, Tschai'kovsky considered his opera "La Dame de Pique" the best work he had ever done, an opinion which is shared by many of his admirers.



Tschai'kovsky  
Kline, près Moscou  
5/11 Février 1893.