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the days of our last Tudor and our first Stuart rulers, which have the same vestiture of whiteness, how impure soever they may be at the core. Can it be that they conceive this practice of making the breve instead of the semibreve the standard for measuring the divisions of a bar, though never till now peculiar to Church writers, has been or is unexceptionably followed in Church music? If yes, how grossly do they ignore the countless appropriations from oratorios and other works for anthems, and the original compositions of Handel for the Church; not to say the anthems themselves have written, many of which stand in the notation that is familiar to every musical eye, and is proportionably facile of comprehension. Can it be that they wish to associate with the Church Service for ever, the idea of the triumphantly bemadrigalled virgin, in whose reign round notes and the Church of England both were established? If yes, they should recollect that her Majesty of pious memory danced to galliard tunes, written in this notation, to display her well-formed legs to the French Ambassadors, who were thereby sorely scandalized. Can it be that they would commemorate the initiation of religious Reform by preserving to the Church the musical notation proper to its era? If yes, they should consistently hold by the diamond and lozenge notes, and by the staff of four lines that were then in use; since the round notes, white and black, belong to a later stage of the Church's and the Art's development. In sober earnest, I can find no reasonable justification of this apparently pragmatical tenacity to a point comparatively immaterial; of which, its misleading inconvenience is the thing most noticeable, since even the permanence in the Church of this method of writing music is not without exception, Handel having in his Services employed quavers and semiquavers, and the first published chants being noted in characters of half the length of those now used for the same pieces.

(To be continued.)

THE publication of "Mendelssohn's Letters" has undoubtedly thrown an additional interest around his music. In many of his compositions those pure and genial thoughts so vividly expressed in his correspondence are clearly traceable; and we can often picture to ourselves, by the date of a letter, the precise state of mind which influenced him in the creation of a work. When the letters of Beethoven were afterwards given to the world something more than a mere curiosity was gratified; for the conventional Beethoven was annihilated at once and for ever. The morose and untamed recluse, who was popularly supposed to have scared everybody from his presence, was at length placed before the world in his true light. The irritability which would naturally arise from his incurable deafness is even admitted by himself in many of his confidential communications; but the manner in which he fulfilled the self-imposed office of guardian to his nephew is sufficient to show how he longed to have some one to love—some one who could occasionally draw him from the world of art, and share with him the joys and sorrows of his everyday life. Again in the letters of Mozart, how perfectly does the man, with all his virtues, and all his failings, stand before us; how thoroughly are all the disgraceful intrigues of the petty German courts reproduced, and how heartily do we sympathize with a man who was compelled to do battle with those who,

although placed so far above him in position, were so immeasurably below him in intellect. It may reasonably be imagined that the public, having enjoyed the privilege of communing with the minds of such men in their holiday moments, would scarcely rest contented until something more was known of the many other popular composers who had hitherto spoken to the world only through their works. The indefatigable Ludwig Nohl has once more set himself the task of supplying this want; and Lady Wallace has, with equal zeal, translated the correspondence thus collected into English. The result is an agreeable volume, called "Letters of Distinguished Musicians," recently published by Messrs. Longmans, a firm to which the thanks of all English artists are assuredly due, not only for the collections of letters by Mendelssohn, Beethoven, and Mozart, but for that delightful autobiography of Spohr, a work which cannot be too highly estimated as a mental photograph of that accomplished composer. The volume before us contains letters by Gluck, Haydn, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Weber, and Mendelssohn. Of these undoubtedly the most interesting, as having any direct bearing upon art, are those of the great reformer Gluck, whilst to those who love to linger over the correspondence of such cultivated musicians as Haydn, Weber, and Mendelssohn, the letters here given (most of which are addressed to their intimate friends), will prove of inestimable value. The autobiography of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, will be also read with much pleasure by the admirers of this earnest and enthusiastic pianist.

We can make but few extracts from this volume; but a quotation from a letter in which Gluck unfolds his theory of the principles which should regulate the composition of operatic music (written in Italian to the Grand Duke Leopold, of Tuscany,) is too valuable to be passed over:—

When I undertook (he says) to compose music for *Alceste*, I proposed entirely to abolish all those abuses introduced by the injudicious vanity of singers, or by the excessive complaisance of masters, which have so long disfigured the Italian opera, and instead of the most splendid and beautiful of all entertainments, thus rendering it the most ridiculous and tiresome. My purpose was to restrict music to its true office—that of ministering to the expression of the poetry and to the situations of the plot, without interrupting the action, or chilling it by superfluous and needless ornamentation. I thought that it should accomplish what brilliancy of colour and a skillfully adapted contrast of light and shade effect for a correct and well-designed drawing, by animating the figures without distorting their contours. I wished, therefore, to avoid arresting an actor in the most excited moment of his dialogue, by causing him to wait for a tiresome *ritournelle*, or, in the midst of half uttered words, to detain him on a favourable note, either for the purpose of displaying his fine voice and flexibility in some long passage, or causing him to pause till the orchestra gave him time to take breath for a cadence. It did not appear to me that I ought to hurry rapidly over the second part of an aria, possibly the most impassioned and important of all, in order to have the opportunity of repeating regularly four times over the words of the first part, causing the aria to end where in all probability the sense did not end, merely for the convenience of the singer, and to enable him to vary a passage according to his caprice; in short, I have striven to banish the abuses against which reason and good sense have so long protested in vain. My idea was that the overture should prepare the spectators for the plot to be represented, and give some indication of its nature; that the concerted instruments ought to be regulated according to the interest and passion of the drama, and not leave a void in the dialogue between the air and the recitative, so that the meaning of a passage might not be perverted, nor the force and warmth of the action improperly interrupted. Further, I thought that my most strenuous efforts must be directed in search of a noble simplicity, thus avoiding a parade of difficulty at the expense of clearness. I did not consider a mere display of novelty valuable, unless naturally suggested by the situation and the expression; and on this point no rule in composition exists that I would not have gladly sacrificed in favour of the effect produced.

That this conscientious composer was equally earnest in carrying out his theoretical convictions to a practical result may be gathered from the following

conditions which he imposes upon M. Herbert, Director of the Grand Opera at Paris, before he will grant him permission to produce his "Armide." Referring to the stipulations mentioned in a former letter, he says: "I must repeat that the most essential are that, when I come to Paris, I am to have at least two months to train my actors and actresses; that I am to be empowered to have as many rehearsals as I shall consider necessary; that, no part is to be doubled; and that another opera is to be held in readiness in case any actor or actress should be indisposed. These are my conditions, and without their fulfilment I will keep my 'Armide' for my own pleasure. I have written the music in a manner which will prevent its soon growing old."

This implicit confidence in his own powers (one of the surest proofs of genius) runs through the whole of his correspondence, as an illustration of which it is related that when the Queen (Marie Antoinette) asked him about his opera, *Armida*, he drew himself up to his full height, and said, in his German accent: "Madame, Il est bientôt fini; et vraiment ce sera superbe." It is also said that during the rehearsals of this opera he excited the jealousy of Vestris (who at that time was a great favourite with the Parisians), by declining to allow him to interrupt the opera by a display of dancing. If he composed a ballet, he said, "the stage would be left entirely at his disposition," and as a proof of the estimation in which he held the natural gifts of Vestris, he told him that "an artist whose sole talent lay in his heels, had no right to kick down such an opera as *Armida*." My subject (added Gluck) is taken from the immortal author of the 'Gerusalemme Liberata.' I have composed the music in accordance with the rules of art, and the prompting of my own genius, so that there cannot be much space for *entrechats*; and if Tasso had wished to make Rinaldo a dancer, he would not have displayed him in the guise of a warrior."

The few letters of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach contained in this volume are chiefly business communications with the music publisher Artaria, in Vienna; but his autobiography, as we have already mentioned, is of the utmost interest, as reflecting the state of pianoforte playing during the period of his career. In a list of his compositions he mentions "a minuet, with the hands crossing over, arranged for the piano," which he engraved himself on copper, one of the number, we presume, included amongst those works "written for particular individuals and for the public," which he carefully separates from those written "for his own pleasure." The following remarks from his autobiography may be taken to heart by those representing the class to which they are specially addressed; although their age protects his observations from the charge of personality.

I must take advantage of this occasion (he says) to observe that critics, even when they write without prejudice, which is, however, seldom the case, very often treat the compositions they criticise too unmercifully, not being aware of the circumstances, requirements, and various causes from which the pieces originate. How seldom we meet with a proper amount of sympathy and knowledge, honesty and courage in a critic, four qualities which they ought, at all events, to a certain extent, to possess. It is therefore very sad for the realm of music that criticism, in many respects so useful, should often be the occupation of heads by no means gifted with these qualities.

And, speaking of pianoforte music, he says, "My idea is that music ought to move the heart with sweet emotion, which a pianist will never effect by mere scrambling, thundering, and arpeggios, at least with me." Thus we may clearly perceive that, even in these early days, the keyboard had been seized

upon by pianoforte gymnasts for the exhibition of feats of agility.

Haydn's letters have an inexpressible charm for English readers; for much as we have learned to respect the man through the biographical sketches which have hitherto appeared, it is only through his personal communications with his contemporaries that we can thoroughly arrive at a just appreciation of his truly genuine and simple character. His letters to Artaria, the publisher, are full of interest, and in many instances show the man as he really was—hasty to resent, and yet equally ready to forgive. In one, for instance, where he accuses the publisher of having taken a "very Jewish step," he writes, "By Heavens! you have wronged me to the extent of more than fifty ducats;" and concludes the letter by saying, "This step must cause the cessation of all further transactions between us." Yet in his next communication he apologises to him thus: "I regret having written my last letter to you in a moment of hasty passion; and I do hope that, in spite of it, we shall remain good friends." How keenly he was alive to the duty of a real artist towards his art, even when such duty entailed a serious prostration of his physical powers, may be seen by an extract from a letter to Breitkopf and Härtel, in Leipzig, which accompanied his Oratorio, the *Creation*.

My business (he writes) multiplies with my years; and yet it almost seems as if with the decrease of my mental powers, my inclination and impulse to work increase. Oh, God! how much yet remains to be done in this splendid art, even by a man like myself! The world, indeed, pays me many compliments even on the fire of my last works; but no one could believe the strain and effort it costs me to produce these, inasmuch as many a day my feeble memory, and the unstrung state of my nerves, so completely crush me to the earth that I fall into the most miserable condition; so much so that for days afterwards I am incapable of finding one single idea, till at length my heart is revived by Providence, when I seat myself at the piano, and begin once more to hammer away at it. Then all goes well again, God be praised.

Haydn's will (the original of which is in the Court Library at Vienna) is printed in this volume for the first time in its integrity; and in this the goodness of his heart and the largeness of his benevolence are so conspicuously shown that we do not wonder at his servants, to whom he read the will six weeks before his death, being affected to tears at their master's generosity.

Most of the letters of Weber here given have appeared already in Max Maria von Weber's biography of his father; but we agree with Herr Ludwig Nohl that "many a new *trait* will gratify those friends of Weber who knew the attractiveness of his character," and they are therefore appropriately included in the volume. The whole of Mendelssohn's letters contained in this work are, we believe, published for the first time. Those addressed to his friend Bärmann are written in that genial, easy, and animated style so remarkably characteristic of the man as to awaken a new interest in these delightful reminiscences of that period of his life when the buoyancy of his spirits was almost equal to the brilliancy of his creative powers. As our desire, however, is solely to send our readers to the book itself, we refrain from extracting from these tempting letters; and with a warm commendation of the manner in which the volume is got up, conclude our brief notice of its interesting contents in the words of Herr Ludwig Nohl—"May this new collection also succeed in interesting the friends of our art."