

this was more especially the case in his Italian symphony. The last movement is a Saltarello, a kind of tarantella such as was used by Berlioz in his "Roman Carnival." This ended the symphony in vigorous and exciting fashion, and was much loved by an audience who were growing accustomed to the military trumpets or hunting-horns used, now and again, by Haydn and Mozart for their finales, and to the Polonaise of which Weber made frequent use.

Mendelssohn's association with the history of taste is an interesting study in itself. Of even more importance in this direction than the Italian symphony are his pieces of music inspired by Scotland. Because of Sir Walter Scott's poems and novels Scotland had become a land of romance. It even took away

a little at that time from the halo that has always been round Spain. Everyone had read Scott's novels, and felt the mountains and mists of the North to be full of inspiration. And there was Ossian to be read as well as Sir Walter Scott. Even so massive and serious a mind as Beethoven's was drawn aside a little into this by-pass, and the reminders of his interest in it are the schottisches, certainly the most delightful trifles left by him. "The Scottish Symphony" and the "Hebrides Overture" were Mendelssohn's contribution. They are two of his better works, and they did much to increase his popularity in England. He was a favourite figure with the British public—from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, for whom he often

played, down to remote clergymen in country parishes who had heard some hymn or anthem of his sung in their cathedral town. Had he lived, it is probable that he would have settled in England. His approach to the public was through oratorio, and "Elijah," immediately on production, was as popular in England as the "Messiah." It looked as if great days had come again. Mendelssohn was to become the Handel of the age, and it is interesting to think that had Handel died, as did Mendelssohn, at the age of thirty-seven, there would be little to remember him by. All his early successes had been in opera and his most famous works were not yet written. This may give an idea of what might have been produced by Mendelssohn had death spared him for another forty years. His talent fitted in as exactly as did that of Handel with the English taste. It pleased and flattered without ever trying to startle. But that Mendelssohn would also have improved taste, had he settled in England, there can be no doubt.

There were persistent attempts made to persuade him to write an English opera. Weber had produced "Oberon" in London, some twenty years before, and Plauche, his librettist, mentions in his memoirs how he submitted various projects and drafts of subjects to Mendelssohn, who always delayed while expressing much decision and determination to set to work. The truth seems to be that Mendelssohn knew opera to be the one branch of music in which he would fail. This can have been the only reason that held him back, for no undertaking could be vast enough to drain his fertility of invention.

He must have liked the English as much as they liked him. He had, evidently, an instinctive understanding of our race. But, indeed, it is difficult to think of Mendelssohn hating anything or anybody with bitterness. His nature was too good-humoured and urbane. His very music demonstrates a decisive change in sentiment. The days of the Regency were over; Napoleon and his Marshals were no more; the last rakes of the eighteenth century were dead. It was the reign of Queen Victoria and of Louis Philippe. The home and the family circle were a change after so many wars and so many nights out. This sentiment excuses some of Mendelssohn's melodies—or it does not, according to your individual taste—but at any rate it was only a small side, a facet, of his talent.

For there has seldom been a composer with more promise, more latent achievement lying always just in front of him. The disappointment of these great expectations lay in the fact that Mendelssohn wrote always for his own day and never in advance of it. He was a close and ideal interpreter of what was wanted; it was as if the taste of the time dictated its wishes to him and ordered their shaping into music. And Mendelssohn never interfered with this; he did exactly as he was told. This failing in courage, this easy acceptance and desire to please, can be attached too easily to his Jewish origin. The faults of that are to be found in Meyerbeer; though he, again, is a great man, and it is wrong to attack him when his music is never given, while in Mendelssohn the good qualities and the genius of his race are most in evidence.

But as well as all these other things there is his malady, his consumption, to be considered. The effects of it

coloured everything that he wrote, and indeed, made him write as much as he did. He had the usual facility and speed of the consumptive artist. He had, also, their liveliness of temperament which endeared him to a most extraordinary degree with his family and his friends. He was devoted to his parents, to his sister Fanny, and to his wife, and I think this excessive affection, as with Mozart, was a trait of youthful character left over, stabilised as it were, from the days when he was such a gifted and wonderful child.

Peaceful as was this atmosphere of affection that he lived in, and fortunate as he was in being removed from any want of money, there were, even yet, many exasperations and worries in his life. These were concerned, chiefly, in the production of his own works, and things which would not have been much nuisance to a man of tougher fibre wore Mendelssohn down and helped to kill him. He was interested in much other music, besides his own, but chiefly and principally in the great Bach. Every lover of beauty owes Mendelssohn a debt of gratitude for his enthusiasm over this; and, but for him, many works of the master would have been lost to the world. Mendelssohn's campaign to rescue his works and publish them came just in time; in another few years they would have gone irretrievably.

As he grew older his concerns, as was natural, increased in scope and in variety. They began to tell on his health, but the fatal blow from which he never recovered was the death of his loved sister Fanny. When this was broken to him Mendelssohn fell to the ground insensible. It must have been a kind of seizure, but when he got over the immediate effect of it he was left a hopeless and morose invalid. He had no longer any desire to write music, and in hopes to save his life his family conveyed him by slow stages to Interlaken.

There he made a recovery, and his health improved slightly for some months. He wrote only a few songs and part of his last oratorio, "Christus," said to be a work of peculiar beauty and strange character. Instead of writing music, for which he had still but little inclination, Mendelssohn spent his last few months in painting a series of large water-colour pictures of Swiss scenery. These are said to have been most successful productions of their kind, and it would be interesting to know what has become of them. It is possible that they still belong to his family in Germany. But he began to decline again, and on taking his last songs to be sung by a friend of his he had another and fatal seizure. This time he lingered for four dreadful weeks and then died.

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