1885 Strauss succeeded Bülow as conductor of the Meiningen orchestra, but the appointment was held only for a few months, since in April of this year Strauss resigned his post in order to travel in Italy, and on his return in the early autumn he became 3rd conductor of the Munich Opera under Hermann Levi. Four years later he was installed in Weimar as Hofkapell­meister, but once again he held his post only for a brief period, for in 1894, the year of his marriage to Pauline de Ahna, the eminent singer, he was promoted to be 1st conductor at Munich. Between these various appointments and that of Hofkapell- meister in Berlin (1899) Strauss travelled considerably in the near East and over Europe, now in search of health, anon in propagandism. His first professional visit to London was in 1897, and laid the foundation of a local English cult that culmi­nated six years later in a Strauss festival. From that time Strauss’s path lay in pleasant places. He frequently returned to London, notably to conduct a performance of *Elektra*, in Beecham’s season at Covent Garden in the spring of 1910, and a part of a concert at Queen’s Hall, when he achieved a genuine triumph by his conducting of Mozart’s music.

Of the early period of Strauss the composer there is little of importance to be said. His early works were neither better nor worse than those of scores of talented students of an ad­vanced skill in matters of technique. Indeed it has often been said, with some show of authority, that the ultimate develop­ment of Strauss is seen to any appreciable extent first in the symphonic poem *Macbeth* (op. 23). Here, in spite of the earlier *Don Juan* (op. 20), Strauss is himself, thematically and orchestrally, for the first time, for *Aus Italien* (op. 16) is a comparatively poor and quite unrepresentative effusion apart altogether from the *faux pas* contained in it by the mistaking of a popular song composed in St John’s Wood, London, for a Neapolitan folk-song. A year only divides *Macbeth* (1887) from *Don Juan* (1888)—“ Tondramen ohne Worte,” as they have been called. But there is an age between them and *Tod und Verklärung* (1889)—the bridge from one part to the other and the opening of the second section of which are amongst Strauss’s most glorious inspirations. Between the last-named work and *Till Eulenspiegels lustigen Streiche* (1894), Strauss’s first opera, *Guntram* finds place (first per­formance, Weimar, 1894), the latter a work that in spite of much *réclame* for the composer failed to maintain a position upon the stage. In *Till Eulenspiegel* is to be found a sense of fun that is worthy of note (as of emulation), and it is perhaps worth recording that no more noteworthy example of the Rondo form exists in modern music, while its approximate successor, *Don Quixote* (1897), is an absolutely outstanding example of the Variation form. Further, Strauss reached in *Don Quixote* his zenith as a musical realist. In between there occurred the Nietzschean poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1895), which stirred up more temporary strife than any of its predecessors, if not so much perhaps as was engineered later on by the production of *Ein Heldenleben* (1898), or by the comparatively ingenuous *Symphonia domestica* (1904). For various reasons these compositions roused the somewhat sleepy academics of musical Europe from their lethargy. They re­vived, with the usual negative results, the ancient fight as to the legitimacy or otherwise of programme music. But though performances were comparatively rare in England up to the middle of 1910, those that had occurred proved undoubtedly attractive, while their rareness might quite reasonably be attri­buted to the very large fees demanded for their performance.

Up to 1910 Strauss had composed four operas. Of these, *Guntram* was on frankly Wagnerian lines. *Feuersnot,* on the other hand, a satirical, purely Munich work—a page out of the Munich annals, as it were, so closely is it identified with the Bavarian capital in its musical and personal reference, though produced at Dresden in 1901, remained sufficiently alive to have merited performance at His Majesty’s theatre, London, again under Thomas Beecham’s direction in July 1910. The same enthusiastic musician had previously produced *Elektra* with immense yet equal success in London (Covent Garden) in the early spring of 1910. Perhaps none of these operas enjoyed the *réclame* of *Salome* (Dresden 1905), which in England was originally barred by the censor of plays, but was performed several times at Covent Garden under Thomas Beecham in the autumn of 1910.

As a composer of songs Strauss enjoys the widest popularity in the conventional sense of the word. Many an example could be given from the hundred and more of his “ Lieder ” of Strauss’s lawful right to be considered a lineal descendant of the royal line of German song writers. Some are transcendently beau­tiful. But this very fact has been thought to militate against his supreme greatness as a composer in the widest sense. The question, indeed, though in itself ridiculous, has been asked: which is the true Richard Strauss, the composer of the caco­phonous *Ein Heldenleben* or of the exquisite *Morgen* or *Traum durch die Dämmerung?* But by 1910 he had at any rate won his place in the musical Walhalla. Whether the composer’s name will survive by means of his many exquisite “ Lieder,” by means of his satire and grim humour, by means of his realism or his original classicism, remains to be seen. That his position is assured among the immortals is clear if only on account of his absolute independence of thought and of expression, of his prodigious breadth of artistic view and of his capacity to say his say in the musical language of his own day. His heartiest detractors admit that Strauss has enlarged the means of musical expression even if they cavil at his somewhat realistic utterance on occasion. To put it no higher, he must rank as a 20th-century Berlioz with a vastly wider musical knowledge and equipment. (R. H. L.)

**STRAW** and **STRAW MANUFACTURES.** Straw (from strew, as being used for strewing), is the general term applied to the stalky residue of grain-plants (especially wheat, rye, oats, barley). It forms the raw material of some important industries. It serves for the thatching of roofs, for a paper-making material, for ornamenting small surfaces as a “ straw-mosaic,” for plaiting into door and table mats, mattresses, &c., and for weaving and plaiting into light baskets, artificial flowers, &c. These applications, however, are insignificant in compari­son with the place occupied by straw as a raw material for the straw bonnets and hats worn by both sexes. Of the various materials which go to the fabrication of plaited head-gear the most important is wheaten straw. It is only in certain areas that straw suitable for making plaits is produced. The straw must have a certain length of “ pipe ” between the knots, must possess a clear delicate golden colour and must not be brittle. The most valuable straw for plaits is grown in Tuscany, and from it the well-known Tuscan plaits and Leghorn hats are made. The straw of Tuscany, specially grown for plaiting, is distin­guished into three qualities—*Pontederas Semone* being the finest, *Mazzuolo* the second quality, from which the bulk of the plaits are made, while from the third quality, *Santa Fioro,* only “ Tuscan pedals ” and braids are plaited. The wheat-seed for these straws is sown very thickly on comparatively elevated and arid land, and it sends up long attenuated stalks. When the grain in the ear is about half developed the straw is pulled up by the roots, dried in the sun, and subsequently spread out for several successive days to be bleached under the influence of alternate sunlight and night-dews. The pipe of the upper joint alone is selected for plaiting, the remainder of the straw being used for other purposes. These pipes are made up in small bundles, bleached in sulphur fumes in a closed chest, assorted into sizes, and so prepared for the plaiters. Straw-plaiting is a domestic industry among the women and young children of Tuscany and some parts of Emilia. Tuscan plaits and hats vary enormously in quality and value; the plait of a hat of good quality may represent the work of four or five days, while hats of the highest quality may each occupy six to nine months in making. The finest work is excessively trying to the eyes of the plaiters, who can at most give to it two or three hours’ labour daily.

The districts around Luton in Bedfordshire and the neigh­bouring counties have, since the beginning of the 17th century, been the British home of the straw-plait industry. The straw