GROVE'S "DICTIONARY," PART XX.*

To the amount of research and ability exhibited in this encyclopedic work, now amplified to four instead of three volumes, we have borne willing witness before this. The *Dictionary* is not only the best, taking up its subjects, that has appeared, but it is a fine production in the entire field of reference books in art; and painting, poetry, and sculpture have yet to be treated in similar form with such conciseness and completeness. We suppose that the faults we have marked, as it has continued to appear, part by part, are merely another evidence that no very good thing in this world is perfect. It has been rather annoying to see that such mistakes as the space allowed to particular topics, a niggardliness of information here, and a plethora of it, when not wanted, there, have been repeated in recent installments, and that even looseness of statement and a judgment turned awry, have characterized increasingly the discussion, by particular contributors, of several important subjects. Encyclopedias are supposed to be exempt from the hurry-to-get-through fever, owing to the broad distribution of the hard work coming under each letter. In this Twentieth Part we, nevertheless, get suggestions of haste and inattention on the editor's side, which we do not at all like.

The important articles (the Part runs from the middle of T to the first portion of V) are "Tonal Fugue," and "Tone," "Tonic Sol Fa," "Trio," "Trombone," "Tuning," "Tudway," the study of music in this country under the odd title of "United States," "University Societies," "Variations," and "Verdi." For the tenor of the "Tonic Sol Fa" article we were quite prepared, owing to the intolerancy of most of those furtherers of the system best able to write intelligently about it. The paper is fairly exhaustive in its technical information; more might have been suitably said in regard to the history of the movement. Nevertheless, we are not disposed to quarrel with any observer in treating a system with which we are so entirely at variance, which aims such a blow at the universality of musical notation; one mischievous and meretricious and full of complications, while claiming to be simple; worthy of the days of Hucbaldus. No doubt it is a hard thing for any one to learn to read music rapidly. Approved notation is full of quips and cranks, and myriad niceties for the eye and mind. But it is a nobly perfect growth, and there is hardly a detail of it that could be improved; and better it—were clefs, staves, dots, and signs far more exactly adjusted than they are—than any Tonic Sol Fa for any class of persons, gentle or simple. In the article on "Trio," the significance of it in the Minuet and Scherzo movements of the symphony is not illustrated, as is proper it should be, by analysis and citation. "Trombone" is admirable in almost every respect, although there are some striking examples of the use of the instrument in particular scores that ought to have been mentioned; and, in view of the masterly and novel functions which contemporary composers have allotted to its notes, such a claim as that "no instrument has been so misused and neglected by modern composers and conductors" is absurd on its face.

Naturally, interest in this Part has greatly centered in the expected discussion of Verdi. We have no adequate biography of him. *Facile princeps* in Italy to-day, he has, by the strange broadening and deepening of his style, which later years illustrate, taken high place in the general galaxy of musicians of the century of any nationality. We are sorry to say that this article, though extended enough, recites very little that is valuable as well as new in the episodes of Verdi's career, and in critical worth is exceedingly disappointing. It is for the most part confessedly a gracefully written *résumé* of the composer's own souvenirs of his struggles and successes, as he good-naturedly told them over one day to a friend. It has just the flavor of an interesting "unedited conversation," such as makes a good magazine article. Far more is said about what are known as Verdi's first and second periods, those days of "Nabucco" and "Il Trovatore," than of the unexpected and wonderful epoch when the Trans-Alpine wind blew upon him and "Don Carlos" foreshadowed "Aïda,"

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to be succeeded by that ideal of the Italian music-drama. The Manzoni Requiem, which is the last thing Signor Verdi has given us of importance, is given a page or two by itself, with a digression on its right to recognition as ecclesiastical music, in which the same want of critical stamina is observable. No comparisons are instituted, no weighing of Verdi's weaknesses and strength, such as can be so interestingly and (in such a book) usefully done. No examination into his originality as a melodist is made, nor of his style as an instrumentalist, and little said concerning his use of the voice. So far as concerns purely personal characteristics and private life, we cannot censure the author of the article, as Signor Verdi's extreme reserve and the unbroken retirement in which he lives permits only the fewest possible friends to be able to say more of him than that he is a simple-minded and estimable gentleman.

The examination into opportunities for musical education and training in this country is not as complete as a very little more carefulness would have made it. The only "Undine" mentioned among musical works so entitled, is the cantata by Sir Julius Benedict; not a word of Hoffman's magnificent opera (which Beethoven so especially esteemed) or Lortzing's fine work. We are also informed that, up to date, New York has not heard one of Wagner's operas. This surprising declaration occurs in the Verdi article referred to above.