Recent Books about Music.*

Some years ago, at the end of a long and animated discussion with that profound and sometimes illogical thinker, John Ruskin, when asked for a definition of art, W. J. Stillman replied: 'The harmonic expression of human emotion.' Elaborating on this definition, he afterwards pointed out that science — knowledge — is common to all men, and invariable; it is in the emotional nature that men differ; the character of the emotion is that of the individual, and it is this which gives tone and character to the art, which determines the artist, and imposes itself on all the judgments and criticisms of his art as the element that gives precedence. Art is therefore, in the last reduction, the proclamation of individuality; and the stamp of the art is that of the individuality, nature furnishing merely the pabulum. In her book entitled 'Makers of Song,' Miss Anna Alice Chapin has endeavored to indicate the men who have in the most marked degree influenced the development of song. She points out that the development of music, and especially of lyric music, has been a matter of such subtle and slow gradation that the task of particularizing and enumerating and selecting the dominant factors in the progress has presented many difficulties; but if the sign-posts pointed out should lead some student into a more comprehensive understanding of the history of song than it has been the author's privilege to achieve, the aim of the book will have been fulfilled. Beginning with the twelfth century, the days of Bernart de Ventadorn, of Regnault de Coucy, of John of Fornsete — who gave the world the earliest piece of harmonic music, 'Sumer is icumen in,' — through the days of the Minnesinger of Germany, with the Castanets, she passes on to the years of Pierre Guedron, teacher of kings and master of the seventeenth century chanson and romance in France, and of Stradella and Purcell. In regard to such departures as the inclusion of such men as Lully, Stradella, and John of Fornsete, the author feels that she will require no justification beyond a careful study of the works of these composers and of the lyrical productions immediately following their periods of activity. Miss Chapin's work is both statistical and narrative, and her well-written story of the origin of song will be read with interest.

It has been said of Dr. Daniel Gregory Mason that he often 'expresses what one has felt, but never quite formulated.' His first work, 'From Grieg to Brahms,' was commended for its succinctness, clearness, and gracefulness of expression. His latest work, 'Beethoven and his Forerunners,' displays that firm grasp of the subject which makes it interesting as well as valuable reading for the student. It opens with a chapter on 'The Periods of Musical History,' touches upon 'Palestrina and the Music of Mysticism' and 'The Principles of Pure Music,' followed by biographical and critical studies of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. In conclusion he says:

'As we glance over the life of Beethoven, and over that larger life of the art of music in the classical period of which it was the final stage, we cannot but be profoundly impressed by the unity and continuity of the whole evolution. From its first slight and tentative beginnings in the experiments of the Florentine reformers, secular music — the art of expressing through the medium of tones the full, free, and harmonious emotional life of modern idealism — gradually acquired, through the labors of the seventeenth century composers, definiteness of aim and technical resources. Then in the work of Haydn and Mozart it reached the stage of maturity, of self-consciousness; it became flexible, various, many-sided, adequate to the demands made upon it; it emerged from childhood and took its honored place in the circle of independent and recognized arts. Finally, it was brought by Beethoven to its ripe perfection, its full flowering. It was made to say all that, within its native limitations, it was capable of saying. It reached the fulness of life beyond which it could live only by breaking itself up into new types, as the old plant scatters forth seeds. And even then, these new types were dimly divined, and suggested to his successors by Beethoven. Was it not his effort to express, in absolute music, the most various shades of personal, highly specialized feeling, vigorous, sentimental, mystical, or elfishly wayward, that inspired the romantic composers, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, and their fellows, to pursue even further the same quest? Was it not his feeling out toward novel dramatic effects in the combined chorus and orchestra, in the Ninth Symphony, that showed Wagner the path he must take?'

There is a chord of sincerity in all that Dr. Mason writes; and while he is never pedantic, his work shows remarkable insight into the origin and development of musical works.

Mr. W. J. Henderson's work entitled 'Modern Musical Drift' is divided into six parts, namely, 'Parsifalia,' 'Der Ring des Nibelungen,' 'Isolde's Serving Woman,' 'Richard Strauss,' 'Aux Italiens,' and 'The Oratorio of Today.' A number of these chapters have been previously published in contemporary periodicals and papers. Keen in diagnosis and critical in analysis, and free from personal preju-

* Makers of Song. By Anna Alice Chapin. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.

Beethoven and his Forerunners. By Daniel Gregory Mason. With portraits. New York: The Macmillan Co.

Modern Musical Drift. By W. J. Henderson. New York: Longmans, Green, & Co.

Phases of Modern Music. By Lawrence Gilman. New York: Harper & Brothers.

A Handbook to Chopin's Works. By G. C. Ashton Jonson. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co.

Stories of Popular Operas. By H. A. Guerber. Illustrated. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.

dice, Mr. Henderson never hesitates to call a spade a spade; and while one cannot always agree with him, he cannot but admire the trenchant way in which the critic gives expression to his views and opinions.

'So weave your fancies; I'll weave mine;
And let them wander, dark or bright,
The Lords of Art have graven fine;
Perchance we both discern aright.'

Speaking of the oratorio of today, Mr. Henderson points out that Sir Edward Elgar's style belongs entirely to the present; that his polyphony is built on a harmonic basis which almost completely ignores the ecclesiastic tonalities of the earlier church writers, and utilizes the diatonic and chromatic scheme of the present, the method of Wagner's 'Tristan und Isolde.' And while he is credited with oratorio quite as dramatic as Tinel's, but saved from mere theatricalism by the artistic discretion of the composer, the thing itself is considered anomalous, because the narrator becomes an imperative necessity and oratorio now demands scenic representation and that is forbidden.

'The oratorio of today tends steadily toward the completion of a cycle. It started from the primitive religious play of Cavaliere, and through the development of the method of choral composition reached a point at which all conception of action disappeared. From that point it has been slowly and surely moving around to the restoration of the dramatic element, till now it stands once more at the very threshold of the theatre. In its present form it is an absurdity. Even the singers find it almost impossible to sing the oratorios of the new sort without putting at least facial expression into their work, and every one of them looks solemnly conscious of the foolishness of evening dress. Mr. Elgar's interpretation makes Judas Iscariot altogether too realistic for a white waistcoat, and his Mary Magdalen in a Princess gown with kid-gloved arms is a portrait which would make Henner gasp and Ruskin stare.'

In 'Phases of Modern Music,' Mr. Lawrence Gilman has written in a trenchant way of certain phases of present-day music. The author is endowed with grace of style, and he knows how to bring into relief the interesting features of unattractive subjects. Among the subjects treated are Richard Strauss, who is adjudged 'an artist of profound and just convictions, the most penetrant and sympathetic of humanists'; Edward MacDowell, the composer, 'a romantic of the finer order'; Edward Elgar, whose 'Dream of Gerontius' has been declared the finest musical work since Wagner, but which the present author declares owes its extreme and affecting eloquence to Wagner. Wagner, Verdi, Mascagni, Loeffler, and Grieg are also touched upon with discrimination, vividness, and spirit. In the essay on 'Woman and Modern Music,' Mr. Gilman answers in the negative the question, 'Has Woman ever done greatly in creative music?' In conclusion, he adds a few pertinent words to the fast accumulating bibliography on the 'Parsifal' controversy.

'It is undeniable that in "Parsifal" Wagner has not written with the torrential energy, the superbly prodigal invention, which went to the creation of his earlier works; he is not here, unquestionably, so compelling and forceful, so overwhelming in vitality and climacteric power, as in the exuberant masterpieces of his artistic prime. But never before, on the other hand, had this master of illusion shaped such haunting and subtle symbols of suffering and lamentation, of sadness and terror, of pity and aspiration.'

A unique handbook to the music of Chopin has been compiled by Mr. G. C. Ashton Jonson. It is a sort of a 'musical Baedeker,' made particularly useful through modern conditions. 'Three years ago,' says the author, 'this book could only have met with a very limited demand, owing to the fact that the number of amateurs possessed of sufficient technique to play Chopin's music (for the most part extremely difficult) is very small. But today, owing to the invention of the pianola and the fact that all Chopin's works, including even the least important of the posthumous compositions, are now available for that instrument, the whole domain of his music is for the first time open to all.' It has been the author's aim to make his book equally useful and helpful to concert-goers, for whom it forms a permanent analytical programme, to pianists, and to those amateurs of music who can now, owing to the pianola, pursue for the first time a systematic and co-ordinated study of Chopin's works. Comments from newspaper articles have been grouped under the opus numbers of the works to which they refer. In addition, a brief account is given of each composition, its relative place among Chopin's works, and notes of any special points of interest attaching to it. A chronological table is included, and the compilation of the approximate dates of the compositions enables one to study the development of the composer's individuality. The volume opens with a brief sketch of Chopin's life, which is followed by short preliminary chapters on various aspects of his work. A perusal of Mr. Jonson's book will increase the artistic pleasure to be obtained from the intelligent study of this master of his class — for in Chopin the romantic school found its highest expression.

In similar vein to her 'Stories of the Wagner Operas' and 'Stories of Famous Operas,' Miss H. A. Guerber has now given us a volume of 'Stories of Popular Operas,' in which are traced the stories of the librettos of 'William Tell,' 'L'Africaine,' 'Der Freischütz,' 'The Magic Flute,' 'Rigoletto,' 'Othello,' 'Fra Diavolo,' 'L'Elisire D'Amore,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'I Pagliacci,' 'La Tosca,' and 'Le

Prophète.' As explained by the author, the object of these stories is to enable the reader to follow the motions of the singers, and, even if unfamiliar with the language in which the opera is given, to have a fair idea of the meaning of what is said and done. The author has studied her subjects with enthusiasm and fidelity, and with singular thoroughness.

INGRAM A. PYLE.