

MUSIC AND ART.

The musical world was deeply stirred last week by the announcement of the death of Franz Liszt at Bayreuth, at midnight of July 31, at the age of seventy-five. Following so closely after the recent visits to Paris and London, when the venerable composer appeared in the full possession of health and faculties, and when his youthful triumphs were lived over again, the announcement of his sudden death at Bayreuth, whither he had journeyed to attend the Wagner festival, came with startling force, and it was difficult to realize that the career of Abbé Liszt, who for so long a time has occupied a foremost place in the musical world, was at last closed. The story of his life, in brief, is as follows:

"Franz Liszt was born at Raiding, near Oedenburg, in Hungary, on October 22, 1811. His father was a Magyar, his mother a German, the mixture of races being distinguishable in the artistic disposition of their only son. Adam Liszt, the father, although not a trained musician, had sufficient taste and knowledge to recognize the genius of his son, evinced at a very early age, and to undertake his education in the rudiments of the art. So rapid was the progress of the boy that at the age of nine he was able to play in public at Eisenstadt, and soon afterward at Pressburg, with such success that six Hungarian noblemen guaranteed a sufficient sum for the cultivation of such extraordinary talent during six years. The family accordingly removed to Vienna, where Liszt continued his studies under Salleri, the rival of Mozart, and Czerny, a famous pianist of the time. Here, also, his success was brilliant and instantaneous, among the admirers of the young virtuoso being Beethoven, who, after one of Liszt's concerts, strode on to the platform and kissed him before the audience. Liszt was one of the most constant as he was no doubt the greatest of the interpreters of Beethoven, whose works he held up to general admiration when the virtuosos of the day shunned them as abstruse and unpopular. Liszt's father took his son to Paris in 1823, where the boy received private lessons from Reicha and Paër, the fertile writer of operas. At Court, in the salons, and the public concert-rooms the young musician was received with enthusiasm, his simple, childish ways greatly adding to the impression produced by his marvelous executive power. "Le petit Litz," as his name was pronounced, became the pet of aristocratic circles, and a few veterans who remembered young Mozart's visit to Paris sixty years before compared him to that infant phenomenon.

"From Paris various concert tours were arranged, one of them, in 1824, being directed to England. Here, as every where, Liszt's reception was brilliant. He had to play before George IV. at Windsor, and a few days afterward the King was present at his concert in Drury Lane Theater, where he honored the young pianist with a recall. After his third visit to England, in 1827, Liszt lost his father, who died at Boulogne. The blow to the boy was terrible; but he soon awoke from his grief to the duty of providing for his widowed mother. With her, accordingly, he settled in Paris, which for a number of years became his home. These years were of the utmost importance for his intellectual development. For a time music was thrown into the background by the powerful impression which the young man received from the great historic events he witnessed. He was on terms of familiar intercourse with the leading spirits of the age—with Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset and Berlioz. The Abbé Lamennais was his spiritual guide, and George Sand was among his intimate friends. A tour to Switzerland, undertaken with her, the Countess d'Agout, and other kindred spirits, has been immortalized by the great novelist in her 'Lettres d'un Voyageur.'

"In the meantime Liszt never lost sight of his artistic vocation. Every now and then he emerged from his voluntary retirement to show the musical world that the promise of his childhood had not been unfulfilled by his later years. Thus, when Thalberg arrived in Paris and was proclaimed by one party the superior of Liszt, the latter left Geneva, where he was staying, accepted the challenge, and forced his bitterest enemies to confess that, as a clever woman put it, '*Si Thalberg est le premier pianiste du monde, Liszt est le seul.*'

"That the shallow ovations offered to the latter were not to his taste he proved sufficiently when, at the height of his unparalleled success, he retired from the concert-room and accepted the post of chapel-master and conductor at the modest Court of Weimar. Here he gathered around him a number of young and gifted musicians, and founded the school of pianists and composers associated with his name. For, as a composer also, Liszt now developed a power which his early works had scarcely foreshadowed. These, almost exclusively written for the piano, have, it is true, advanced the technique of that instrument to a pitch previously unknown. At the same time, it is true that, as Wagner remarks, 'Liszt did at the piano what others do with pen and ink;' that, by reproducing the works of the great masters, he prepared himself for original creation. The opera at Weimar under Liszt's auspices became the home of such works as were written regardless of immediate success, and therefore had little chance of a hearing elsewhere. Schubert's 'Alfonso and Estrella,' Schumann's 'Genoveva,' Berlioz's 'Benvenuto Cellini,' and Wagner's 'Lohengrin' saw the light under Liszt's auspices at Weimar. In 1848 he was made Kapellmeister at Weimar. Honors came thick upon him. The citizens of Oedenburg and Pesth presented him with the rights of citizenship; the Hungarian nobles gave him a sword of honor; the King of Prussia made him a member of the Order of Merit; the faculty at Königsberg created him Doctor of Music; the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar appointed him chamberlain; he was decorated

with the Legion of Honor, and in 1861 was raised to commander. On April 25, 1865, he received the clerical tonsure in the chapel of the Vatican, and became abbé.

"Liszt's works consist of 'Fantasias,' 'Poemes,' 'Symphoniques' (twelve in number), 'Faust,' 'Divina Commedia,' grand symphonies, two oratorios, 'Die Heilige Elizabeth' and 'Christus,' and variations innumerable. He was a writer as well as a musician, and in the department of literature as well as of art. He published the 'Life of Chopin' in 1852-54, and essays on the 'Tannhäuser' and 'Lohengrin' of Wagner; and in 1859 a dissertation on 'Bohemians and their Music in Hungary.' His vocal compositions have little reputation. As for his instrumental music, he preferred playing other pieces than his own at concerts. At the age of seventy-two he practically retired from public life, appearing only on great occasions."—[New York Tribune.