It may seem a paradox to say that no musician is so little known as Berlioz. The world thinks it knows him. A noisy fame surrounds his person and his work. Musical Europe has celebrated his centenary. Germany disputes with France the glory of having nurtured and shaped his genius. Russia, whose triumphal reception consoled him for the indifference and enmity of Paris,(1) has said, through the voice of Balakirew, that he was "the only musician France possessed." His chief compositions are often played at concerts; and some of them have the rare quality of appealing both to the cultured and the crowd; a few have even reached great popularity. Works have been dedicated to him, and he himself has been described and criticised by many writers. He is popular even to his face; for his face, like his music, was so striking and singular that it seemed to show you his character at a glance. No clouds hide his mind and its creations, which, unlike Wagner's, need no initiation to be understood; they seem to have no hidden meaning, no subtle mystery; one is instantly their friend or their enemy, for the first impression is a lasting one.

(Footnote 1: "And you, Russia, who have saved me...." (Berlioz, Mémoires, II, 353, Calmann-Lévy's edition, 1897).)

That is the worst of it; people imagine that they understand Berlioz with so very little trouble. Obscurity of meaning may harm an artist less than a seeming transparency; to be shrouded in mist may mean remaining long misunderstood, but those who wish to understand will at least be thorough in their search for the truth. It is not always realised how depth and complexity may exist in a work of clear design and strong contrasts--in the obvious genius of some great Italian of the Renaissance as much as in the troubled heart of a Rembrandt and the twilight of the North.

That is the first pitfall; but there are many more that will beset us in the attempt to understand Berlioz. To get at the man himself one must break down a wall of prejudice and pedantry, of convention and intellectual snobbery. In short, one must shake off nearly all current ideas about his work if one wishes to extricate it from the dust that has drifted about it for half a century.

Above all, one must not make the mistake of contrasting Berlioz with Wagner, either by sacrificing Berlioz to that Germanic Odin, or by forcibly trying to reconcile one to the other. For there are some who condemn Berlioz in the name of Wagner's theories; and others who, not liking the sacrifice, seek to make him a forerunner of Wagner, or kind of elder brother, whose mission was to clear a way and prepare a road for a genius greater than his own. Nothing is falser. To understand Berlioz one must shake off the hypnotic influence of Bayreuth. Though Wagner may have learnt something from Berlioz, the two composers have nothing in common; their genius and their art are absolutely opposed; each one has ploughed his furrow in a different field.

The Classical misunderstanding is quite as dangerous. By that I mean the clinging to superstitions of the past, and the pedantic desire to enclose art within narrow limits, which still flourish among critics. Who has not met these censors of music? They will tell you with solid complacency how far music may go, and where it must stop, and what it may
express and what it must not. They are not always musicians themselves. But what of that? Do they not lean on the
element of the past? The past! a handful of works that they themselves hardly understand. Meanwhile, music, by its
unceasing growth, gives the lie to their theories, and breaks down these weak barriers. But they do not see it, do not
wish to see it; since they cannot advance themselves, they deny progress. Critics of this kind do not think favourably
of Berlioz's dramatic and descriptive symphonies. How should they appreciate the boldest musical achievement of
the nineteenth century? These dreadful pedants and zealous defenders of an art that they only understand after it has ceased
to live are the worst enemies of unfettered genius, and may do more harm than a whole army of ignorant people. For in
a country like ours, where musical education is poor, timidity is great in the presence of a strong, but only half-
understood, tradition; and anyone who has the boldness to break away from it is condemned without judgment. I doubt
if Berlioz would have obtained any consideration at all from lovers of classical music in France if he had not found
allies in that country of classical music, Germany--"the oracle of Delphi," "Germania alma paren,"(2) as he called her.
Some of the young German school found inspiration in Berlioz. The dramatic symphony that he created flourished in
its German form under Liszt; the most eminent German composer of to-day, Richard Strauss, came under his influence;
and Felix Weingartner, who with Charles Malherbe edited Berlioz's complete works, was bold enough to write, "In
spite of Wagner and Liszt, we should not be where we are if Berlioz had not lived." This unexpected support, coming
from a country of traditions, has thrown the partisans of Classic tradition into confusion, and rallied Berlioz's friends.

(Footnote 2: Mémoires , II, 149.)

But here is a new danger. Though it is natural that Germany, more musical than France, should recognise the grandeur
and originality of Berlioz's music before France, it is doubtful whether the German nature could ever fully understand a
soul so French in its essence. It is, perhaps, what is exterior in Berlioz, his positive originality, that the Germans
appreciate. They prefer the Requiem to Roméo . A Richard Strauss would be attracted by an almost insignificant work
like the Ouverture du roi Lear; a Weingartner would single out for notice works like the Symphonie fantastique and
Harold, and exaggerate their importance. But they do not feel what is intimate in him. Wagner said over the tomb of
Weber, "England does you justice, France admires you, but only Germany loves you; you are of her own being, a
glorious day of her life, a warm drop of her blood, a part of her heart...." One might adapt his words to Berlioz; it is as
difficult for a German really to love Berlioz as it is for a Frenchman to love Wagner or Weber. One must, therefore, be
careful about accepting unreservedly the judgment of Germany on Berlioz; for in that would lie the danger of a new
misunderstanding. You see how both the followers and opponents of Berlioz hinder us from getting at the truth. Let us
dismiss them.

Have we now come to the end of our difficulties? Not yet; for Berlioz is the most illusive of men, and no one has
helped more than he to mislead people in their estimate of him. We know how much he has written about music and
about his own life, and what wit and understanding he shows in his shrewd criticisms and charming Mémoires .(3)

(Footnote 3: The literary work of Berlioz is rather uneven. Beside passages of exquisite beauty we find others that are
ridiculous in their exaggerated sentiment, and there are some that even lack good taste. But he had a natural gift of
style, and his writing is vigorous, and full of feeling, especially towards the latter half of his life. The Procession des
Rogations is often quoted from the Mémoires ; and some of his poetical text, particularly that in L'Enfance du Christ
and in Les Troyens, is written in beautiful language and with a fine sense of rhythm. His Mémoires as a whole is one of
the most delightful books ever written by an artist. Wagner was a greater poet, but as a prose writer Berlioz is infinitely
superior. See Paul Morillot's essay on Berlioz écrivain , 1903, Grenoble.) One would think that such an imaginative
and skilful writer, accustomed in his profession of critic to express every shade of feeling, would be able to tell us more
exactly his ideas of art than a Beethoven or a Mozart. But it is not so. As too much light may blind the vision, so too
much intellect may hinder the understanding. Berlioz's mind spent itself in details; it reflected light from too many
facets, and did not focus itself in one strong beam which would have made known his power. He did not know how to
dominate either his life or his work; he did not even try to dominate them. He was the incarnation of romantic genius,
an unrestrained force, unconscious of the road he trod. I would not go so far as to say that he did not understand
himself, but there are certainly times when he is past understanding himself. He allows himself to drift where chance
will take him,(4) like an old Scandinavian pirate laid at the bottom of his boat, staring up at the sky; and he dreams and
groans and laughs and gives himself up to his feverish delusions. He lived with his emotions as uncertainly as he lived
with his art. In his music, as in his criticisms of music, he often contradicts himself, hesitates, and turns back; he is not sure either of his feelings or his thoughts. He has poetry in his soul, and strives to write operas; but his admiration wavers between Gluck and Meyerbeer. He has a popular genius, but despises the people. He is a daring musical revolutionary, but he allows the control of this musical movement to be taken from him by anyone who wishes to have it. Worse than that: he disowns the movement, turns his back upon the future, and throws himself again into the past. For what reason? Very often he does not know. Passion, bitterness, caprice, wounded pride--these have more influence with him than the serious things of life. He is a man at war with himself.

(Footnote 4: "Chance, that unknown god, who plays such a great part in my life" (Mémoires, II, 161).)

Then contrast Berlioz with Wagner. Wagner, too, was stirred by violent passions, but he was always master of himself, and his reason remained unshaken by the storms of his heart or those of the world, by the torments of love or the strife of political revolutions. He made his experiences and even his errors serve his art; he wrote about his theories before he put them into practice; and he only launched out when he was sure of himself, and when the way lay clear before him. And think how much Wagner owes to this written expression of his aims and the magnetic attraction of his arguments. It was his prose works that fascinated the King of Bavaria before he had heard his music; and for many others also they have been the key to that music. I remember being impressed by Wagner's ideas when I only half understood his art; and that if his music baffled me, it was I who was at fault. Wagner was really his own best friend, his own most trusty champion; and his was the guiding hand that led one through the thick forest and over the rugged crags of his work.

Not only do you get no help from Berlioz in this way, but he is the first to lead you astray and wander with you in the paths of error. To understand his genius you must seize hold of it unaided. His genius was really great, but, as I shall try to show you, it lay at the mercy of a weak character.

* * * * *

Everything about Berlioz was misleading, even his appearance. In legendary portraits he appears as a dark southerner with black hair and sparkling eyes. But he was really very fair and had blue eyes,(5) and Joseph d'Ortigue tells us they were deep-set and piercing, though sometimes clouded by melancholy or languor.(6) He had a broad forehead furrowed with wrinkles by the time he was thirty, and a thick mane of hair, or, as E. Legouvé puts it, "a large umbrella of hair, projecting like a movable awning over the beak of a bird of prey."(7)

(Footnote 5: "I was fair," wrote Berlioz to Bülow (unpublished letters, 1858). "A shock of reddish hair," he wrote in his Mémoires, I, 165. "Sandy-coloured hair," said Reyer. For the colour of Berlioz's hair I rely upon the evidence of Mme. Chapót, his niece.)

(Footnote 6: Joseph d'Ortigue, Le Balcon de l'Opéra, 1833.)

(Footnote 7: E. Legouvé, Soixante ans de souvenirs. Legouvé describes Berlioz here as he saw him for the first time.)

His mouth was well cut, with lips compressed and puckered at the corners in a severe fold, and his chin was prominent. He had a deep voice,(8) but his speech was halting and often tremulous with emotion; he would speak passionately of what interested him, and at times be effusive in manner, but more often he was ungracious and reserved. He was of medium height, rather thin and angular in figure, and when seated he seemed much taller than he really was.(9) He was very restless, and inherited from his native land, Dauphiné, the mountaineer's passion for walking and climbing, and the love of a vagabond life, which remained with him nearly to his death.(10) He had an iron constitution, but he wrecked it by privation and excess, by his walks in the rain, and by sleeping out-of-doors in all weathers, even when there was snow on the ground.(11)

(Footnote 8: "A passable baritone," says Berlioz (Mémoires, I, 58). In 1830, in the streets of Paris, he sang "a bass
During his first visit to Germany the Prince of Hechingen made him sing "the part of the violoncello" in one of his compositions (Mémoires, II, 32.).

Footnote 9: There are two good portraits of Berlioz. One is a photograph by Pierre Petit, taken in 1863, which he sent to Mme. Estelle Fornier. It shows him leaning on his elbow, with his head bent, and his eyes fixed on the ground as if he were tired. The other is the photograph which he had reproduced in the first edition of his Mémoires, and which shows him leaning back, his hands in his pockets, his head upright, with an expression of energy in his face, and a fixed and stern look in his eyes.

Footnote 10: He would go on foot from Naples to Rome in a straight line over the mountains, and would walk at one stretch from Subiaco to Tivoli.

Footnote 11: This brought on several attacks of bronchitis and frequent sore throats, as well as the internal affection from which he died.

But in this strong and athletic frame lived a feverish and sickly soul that was dominated and tormented by a morbid craving for love and sympathy: "that imperative need of love which is killing me...." To love, to be loved--he would give up all for that.

Footnote 12: "Music and love are the two wings of the soul," he wrote in his Mémoires.

But his love was that of a youth who lives in dreams; it was never the strong, clear-eyed passion of a man who has faced the realities of life, and who sees the defects as well as the charms of the woman he loves, Berlioz was in love with love, and lost himself among visions and sentimental shadows. To the end of his life he remained "a poor little child worn out by a love that was beyond him." But this man who lived so wild and adventurous a life expressed his passions with delicacy; and one finds an almost girlish purity in the immortal love passages of Les Troyens or the "nuit sereine" of Roméo et Juliette. And compare this Virgilian affection with Wagner's sensual raptures. Does it mean that Berlioz could not love as well as Wagner? We only know that Berlioz's life was made up of love and its torments.

The theme of a touching passage in the Introduction of the Symphonic fantastique has been recently identified by M. Julien Tiersot, in his interesting book, with a romance composed by Berlioz at the age of twelve, when he loved a girl of eighteen "with large eyes and pink shoes"--Estelle, Stella mentis, Stella matutina. These words--perhaps the saddest he ever wrote--might serve as an emblem of his life, a life that was a prey to love and melancholy, doomed to wringing of the heart and awful loneliness; a life lived in a hollow world, among worries that chilled the blood; a life that was distasteful and had no solace to offer him in its end. He has himself described this terrible "mal de l'isolement," which pursued him all his life, vividly and minutely. He was doomed to suffering, or, what was worse, to make others suffer.

Footnote 13: Mémoires, I, 11.

Footnote 14: See the Mémoires, I, 139.

Footnote 15: Julien Tiersot, Hector Berlioz et la société de son temps, 1903, Hachette.
feel their absence. The adagio of Beethoven's symphonies, certain scenes from Gluck's *Alceste* and *Armide*, an air from his Italian opera *Telemacco*, the Elysian fields of his *Orfeo*, will bring on rather bad attacks of this suffering; but these masterpieces bring with them also an antidote--they make one's tears flow, and then the pain is eased. On the other hand, the adagio of some of Beethoven's sonatas and Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* are full of melancholy, and therefore provoke spleen ... it is then cold within, the sky is grey and overcast with clouds, the north wind moans dully...." (*Mémoires*, I, 246.)

Who does not know his passion for Henrietta Smithson? It was a sad story. He fell in love with an English actress who played Juliet (Was it she or Juliet whom he loved?). He caught but a glance of her, and it was all over with him. He cried out, "Ah, I am lost!" He desired her; she repulsed him. He lived in a delirium of suffering and passion; he wandered about for days and nights like a madman, up and down Paris and its neighbourhood, without purpose or rest or relief, until sleep overcame him wherever it found him--among the sheaves in a field near Villejuif, in a meadow near Sceaux, on the bank of the frozen Seine near Neuilly, in the snow, and once on a table in the Café Cardinal, where he slept for five hours, to the great alarm of the waiters, who thought he was dead. Meanwhile, he was told slanderous gossip about Henrietta, which he readily believed. Then he despised her, and dishonoured her publicly in his *Symphonie fantastique*, paying homage in his bitter resentment to Camille Moke, a pianist, to whom he lost his heart without delay.

(Footnote 17: *Mémoires*, I, 98.)

After a time Henrietta reappeared. She had now lost her youth and her power; her beauty was waning, and she was in debt. Berlioz's passion was at once rekindled. This time Henrietta accepted his advances. He made alterations in his symphony, and offered it to her in homage of his love. He won her, and married her, with fourteen thousand francs debt. He had captured his dream--Juliet! Ophelia! What was she really? A charming Englishwoman, cold, loyal, and sober-minded, who understood nothing of his passion; and who, from the time she became his wife, loved him jealously and sincerely, and thought to confine him within the narrow world of domestic life. But his affections became restive, and he lost his heart to a Spanish actress (it was always an actress, a virtuoso, or a part) and left poor Ophelia, and went off with Marie Recio, the Inès of *Favorite*, the page of *Comte Ory*--a practical, hardheaded woman, an indifferent singer with a mania for singing. The haughty Berlioz was forced to fawn upon the directors of the theatre in order to get her parts, to write flattering notices in praise of her talents, and even to let her make his own melodies discordant at the concerts he arranged. It would all be dreadfully ridiculous if this weakness of character had not brought tragedy in its train.

So the one he really loved, and who always loved him, remained alone, without friends, in Paris, where she was a stranger. She drooped in silence and pined slowly away, bedridden, paralysed, and unable to speak during eight years of suffering. Berlioz suffered too, for he loved her still and was torn with pity--"pity, the most painful of all emotions."(19) But of what use was this pity? He left Henrietta to suffer alone and to die just the same. And, what was worse, as we learn from Legouvé, he let his mistress, the odious Recio, make a scene before poor Henrietta. (Footnote 20: Recio told him of it and boasted about what she had done.

(Footnote 18: "Isn't it really devilish," he said to Legouvé, "tragic and silly at the same time? I should deserve to go to hell if I wasn't there already.")

(Footnote 19: *Mémoires*, II, 335. See the touching passages he wrote on Henrietta Smithson's death.)

(Footnote 20: "One day, Henrietta, who was living alone at Montmartre, heard someone ring the bell, and went to open the door.

"'Is Mme. Berlioz at home?"

"'I am Mme. Berlioz."

"'You are mistaken; I asked for Mme. Berlioz.'"
"And I tell you, I am Mme. Berlioz."

"No, you are not. You are speaking of the old Mme. Berlioz, the one who was abandoned; I am speaking of the young and pretty and loved one. Well, that is myself!"

"And Recio went out and banged the door after her.

"Legouvé said to Berlioz, 'Who told you this abominable thing? I suppose she who did it; and then she boasted about it into the bargain. Why didn't you turn her out of the house?' 'How could I?' said Berlioz in broken tones, 'I love her'" (Soixante ans de souvenirs).

And Berlioz did nothing--"How could I? I love her."

One would be hard upon such a man if one was not disarmed by his own sufferings. But let us go on. I should have liked to pass over these traits, but I have no right to; I must show you the extraordinary feebleness of the man's character. "Man's character," did I say? No, it was the character of a woman without a will, the victim of her nerves.

(Footnote 21: From this woman's nature came his love of revenge, "a thing needless, and yet necessary," he said to his friend Hiller, who, after having made him write the Symphonie fantastique to spite Henrietta Smithson, next made him write the wretched fantasia Euphonia to spite Camille Moke, now Mme. Pleyel. One would feel obliged to draw more attention to the way he often adorned or perverted the truth if one did not feel it arose from his irrepressible and glowing imagination far more than from any intention to mislead; for I believe his real nature to have been a-very straightforward one. I will quote the story of his friend Crispino, a young countryman from Tivoli, as a characteristic example. Berlioz says in his Mémoires (I, 229): "One day when Crispino was lacking in respect I made him a present of two shirts, a pair of trousers, and three good kicks behind." In a note he added, "This is a lie, and is the result of an artist's tendency to aim at effect. I never kicked Crispino." But Berlioz took care afterwards to omit this note. One attaches as little importance to his other small boasts as to this one. The errors in the Mémoires have been greatly exaggerated; and besides, Berlioz is the first to warn his readers that he only wrote what pleased him, and in his preface says that he is not writing his Confessions. Can one blame him for that?)

* * * * *

Such people are destined to unhappiness; and if they make other people suffer, one may be sure that it is only half of what they suffer themselves. They have a peculiar gift for attracting and gathering up trouble; they savour sorrow like wine, and do not lose a drop of it. Life seemed desirous that Berlioz should be steeped in suffering; and his misfortunes were so real that it would be unnecessary to add to them any exaggerations that history has handed down to us.

People find fault with Berlioz's continual complaints; and I, too, find in them a lack of virility and almost a lack of dignity. To all appearances, he had far fewer material reasons for unhappiness than--I won't say Beethoven--Wagner and other great men, past, present, and future. When thirty-five years old he had achieved glory; and Paganini proclaimed him Beethoven's successor. What more could he want? He was discussed by the public, disparaged by a Scudo and an Adolphus Adam, and the theatre only opened its doors to him with difficulty. It was really splendid! But a careful examination of facts, such as that made by M. Julien Tiersot, shows the stifling mediocrity and hardship of his life. There were, first of all, his material cares. When thirty-six years old "Beethoven's successor" had a fixed salary of fifteen hundred francs as assistant keeper of the Conservatoire Library, and not quite as much for his contributions to the Debits-contributions which exasperated and humiliated him, and were one of the crosses of his life, as they obliged him to speak anything but the truth.

(Footnote 22: Mémoires, II, 158. The heartaches expressed in this chapter will be felt by every artist.)

That made a total of three thousand francs, hardly gained on which he had to keep a wife and child--"mêmes deux," as M. Tiersot says. He attempted a festival at the Opera; the result was three hundred and sixty francs loss. He organised a
festival at the 1844 Exhibition; the receipts were thirty-two thousand francs, out of which he got eight hundred francs. He had the *Damnation de Faust* performed; no one came to it, and he was ruined. Things went better in Russia; but the manager who brought him to England became bankrupt. He was haunted by thoughts of rents and doctors' bills. Towards the end of his life his financial affairs mended a little, and a year before his death he uttered these sad words: "I suffer a great deal, but I do not want to die now--I have enough to live upon."

One of the most tragic episodes of his life is that of the symphony which he did not write because of his poverty. One wonders why the page that finishes his *Mémoires* is not better known, for it touches the depths of human suffering.

At the time when his wife's health was causing him most anxiety, there came to him one night an inspiration for a symphony. The first part of it--an allegro in two-four time in A minor--was ringing in his head. He got up and began to write, and then he thought,

"If I begin this bit, I shall have to write the whole symphony. It will be a big thing, and I shall have to spend three or four months over it. That means I shall write no more articles and earn no money. And when the symphony is finished I shall not be able to resist the temptation of having it copied (which will mean an expense of a thousand or twelve hundred francs), and then of having it played. I shall give a concert, and the receipts will barely cover half the cost. I shall lose what I have not got; the poor invalid will lack necessities; and I shall be able to pay neither my personal expenses nor my son's fees when he goes on board ship.... These thoughts made me shudder, and I threw down my pen, saying, 'Bah! to-morrow I shall have forgotten the symphony.' The next night I heard the allegro clearly, and seemed to see it written down. I was filled with feverish agitation; I sang the theme; I was going to get up ... but the reflections of the day before restrained me; I steeled myself against the temptation, and clung to the thought of forgetting it. At last I went to sleep; and the next day, on waking, all remembrance of it had, indeed, gone for ever."(23)

That page makes one shudder. Suicide is less distressing. Neither Beethoven nor Wagner suffered such tortures. What would Wagner have done on a like occasion? He would have written the symphony without doubt--and he would have been right. But poor Berlioz, who was weak enough to sacrifice his duty to love, was, alas! also heroic enough to sacrifice his genius to duty.(24)

(Footnote 23: *Mémoires*, II, 349.)

(Footnote 24: Berlioz has already touchingly replied to any reproaches that might be made in the words that follow the story I have quoted. "'Coward!' some young enthusiast will say, 'you ought to have written it; you should have been bold.' Ah, young man, you who call me coward did not have to look upon what I did; had you done so you, too, would have had no choice. My wife was there, half dead, only able to moan; she had to have three nurses, and a doctor every day to visit her; and I was sure of the disastrous result of any musical adventure. No, I was not a coward; I know I was only human. I like to believe that I honoured art in proving that she had left me enough reason to distinguish between courage and cruelty" (*Mémoires*, II, 350).)

And in spite of all this material misery and the sorrow of being misunderstood, people speak of the glory he enjoyed. What did his conpeers think of him--at least, those who called themselves such? He knew that Mendelssohn, whom he loved and esteemed, and who styled himself his "good friend," despised him and did not recognise his genius.(25) The large-hearted Schumann, who was, with the exception of Liszt,(26) the only person who intuitively felt his greatness, admitted that he used sometimes to wonder if he ought to be looked upon as "a genius or a musical adventurer."(27)

(Footnote 25: In a note in the *Mémoires*, Berlioz publishes a letter of Mendelssohn's which protests his "good friendship," and he writes these bitter words: "I have just seen in a volume of Mendelssohn's Letters what his friendship for me consisted of. He says to his mother, in what is plainly a description of myself, '---- is a perfect caricature, without a spark of talent ... there are times when I should like to swallow him up!'" (*Mémoires*, II, 48). Berlioz did not add that Mendelssohn also said: "They pretend that Berlioz seeks lofty ideals in art. I don't think so at
all. What he wants is to get himself married." The injustice of these insulting words will disgust all those who remember that when Berlioz married Henrietta Smithson she brought as dowry nothing but debts; and that he had only three hundred francs himself, which a friend had lent him.)

(Footnote 26: Liszt repudiated him later.)

(Footnote 27: Written in an article on the Ouverture de Waverley (Neue Zeitschrift für Musik)

Wagner, who treated his symphonies with scorn before he had even read them,(28) who certainly understood his genius, and who deliberately ignored him, threw himself into Berlioz's arms when he met him in London in 1855. "He embraced him with fervour, and wept; and hardly had he left him when The Musical World published passages from his book, Oper und Drama, where he pulls Berlioz to pieces mercilessly."(29) In France, the young Gounod, doli fabricator Epeus, as Berlioz called him, lavished flattering words upon him, but spent his time in finding fault with his compositions,(30) or in trying to supplant him at the theatre. At the Opera he was passed over in favour of a Prince Poniatowski.

(Footnote 28: Wagner, who had criticised Berlioz since 1840, and who published a detailed study of his works in his Oper und Drama in 1851, wrote to Liszt in 1855: "I own that it would interest me very much to make the acquaintance of Berlioz's symphonies, and I should like to see the scores. If you have them, will you lend them to me?")

(Footnote 29: See Berlioz's letter, cited by J. Tiersot, Hector Berlioz et la société de son temps , p. 275.)

(Footnote 30: Roméo, Faust, La Nonne sanglante .)

He presented himself three times at the Academy, and was beaten the first time by Onslow, the second time by Clapisson, and the third time he conquered by a majority of one vote against Panseron, Vogel, Leborne, and others, including, as always, Gounod. He died before the Damnation de Faust was appreciated in France, although it was the most remarkable musical composition France had produced. They hissed its performance? Not at all; "they were merely indifferent"--it is Berlioz who tells us this. It passed unnoticed. He died before he had seen Les Troyens played in its entirety, though it was one of the noblest works of the French lyric theatre that had been composed since the death of Gluck.(31) But there is no need to be astonished. To hear these works to-day one must go to Germany. And although the dramatic work of Berlioz has found its Bayreuth--thanks to Mottl, to Karlsruhe and Munich--and the marvellous Benvenuto Cellini has been played in twenty German towns,(32) and regarded as a masterpiece by Weingartner and Richard Strauss, what manager of a French theatre would think of producing such works?

But this is not all. What was the bitterness of failure compared with the great anguish of death? Berlioz saw all those he loved die one after the other: his father, his mother, Henrietta Smithson, Marie Recio. Then only his son Louis remained.

(Footnote 31: I shall content myself here with noting a fact, which I shall deal with more fully in another essay at the end of this book: it is the decline of musical taste in France--and, I rather think, in all Europe--since 1835 or 1840. Berlioz says in his Mémoires : "Since the first performance of Roméo et Juliette the indifference of the French public for all that concerns art and literature has grown incredibly" (Mémoires , II, 263). Compare the shouts of excitement and the tears that were drawn from the dilettanti of 1830 (Mémoires , I, 81), at the performances of Italian operas or Gluck's works, with the coldness of the public between 1840 and 1870. A mantle of ice covered art then. How much Berlioz must have suffered. In Germany the great romantic age was dead. Only Wagner remained to give life to music; and he drained all that was left in Europe of love and enthusiasm for music. Berlioz died truly of asphyxia.)

(Footnote 32: Here is an official list of the towns where Benvenuto has been played since 1879 (I am indebted for this information to M. Victor Chapôt, Berlioz's grandnephew). They are, in alphabetical order: Berlin, Bremen, Brunswick, Dresden, Frankfort-On-Main, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Hamburg, Hanover, Karlsruhe, Leipzig, Mannheim, Metz, Munich, Prague, Schwerin, Stettin, Strasburg, Stuttgart, Vienna, and Weimar.)
He was the captain of a merchant vessel; a clever, good-hearted boy, but restless and nervous, irresolute and unhappy, like his father. "He has the misfortune to resemble me in everything," said Berlioz; "and we love each other like a couple of twins."(33) "Ah, my poor Louis," he wrote to him, "what should I do without you?" A few months afterwards he learnt that Louis had died in far-away seas.

He was now alone.(34) There were no more friendly voices; all that he heard was a hideous duet between loneliness and weariness, sung in his ear during the bustle of the day and in the silence of the night.(35) He was wasted with disease. In 1856, at Weimar, following great fatigue, he was seized with an internal malady. It began with great mental distress; he used to sleep in the streets. He suffered constantly; he was like "a tree without leaves, streaming with rain." At the end of 1861, the disease was in an acute stage. He had attacks of pain sometimes lasting thirty hours, during which he would writhe in agony in his bed. "I live in the midst of my physical pain, overwhelmed with weariness. Death is very slow."(36)

(Footnote 33: Mémoires, II, 420.)

(Footnote 34: "I do not know how Berlioz has managed to be cut off like this. He has neither friends nor followers; neither the warm sun of popularity nor the pleasant shade of friendship" (Liszt to the Princess of Wittgenstein, 16 May, 1861).)

(Footnote 35: In a letter to Bennet he says, "I am weary, I am weary...." How often does this piteous cry sound in his letters towards the end of his life. "I feel I am going to die.... I am weary unto death" (21 August, 1868--six months before his death).)

(Footnote 36: Letter to Asger Hammerick, 1865.)

Worst of all, in the heart of his misery, there was nothing that comforted him. He believed in nothing--neither in God nor immortality.

"I have no faith.... I hate all philosophy and everything that resembles it, whether religious or otherwise.... I am as incapable of making a medicine of faith as of having faith in medicine."(37)
"God is stupid and cruel in his complete indifference."(38)

He did not believe in beauty or honour, in mankind or himself.

"Everything passes. Space and time consume beauty, youth, love, glory, genius. Human life is nothing; death is no better. Worlds are born and die like ourselves. All is nothing. Yes, yes, yes! All is nothing.... To love or hate, enjoy or suffer, admire or sneer, live or die--what does it matter? There is nothing in greatness or littleness, beauty or ugliness. Eternity is indifferent; indifference is eternal."(39)
"I am weary of life; and I am forced to see that belief in absurdities is necessary to human minds, and that it is born in them as insects are born in swamps."(40)

(Footnote 37: Letters to the Princess of Wittgenstein, 22 July, 21 September, 1862; and August, 1864.)

(Footnote 38: Mémoires, II, 335. He shocked Mendelssohn, and even Wagner, by his irreligion. (See Berlioz's letter to Wagner, 10 September, 1855.))

(Footnote 39: Les Grotesques de la Musique, pp. 295-6.)

(Footnote 40: Letter to the Abbé Girod. See Hippeau, Berlioz intime, p. 434.)
"You make me laugh with your old words about a mission to fulfil. What a missionary! But there is in me an inexplicable mechanism which works in spite of all arguments; and I let it work because I cannot stop it. What disgusts me most is the certainty that beauty does not exist for the majority of these human monkeys."(41)

"The unsolvable enigma of the world, the existence of evil and pain, the fierce madness of mankind, and the stupid cruelty that it inflicts hourly and everywhere on the most inoffensive beings and on itself--all this has reduced me to the state of unhappy and forlorn resignation of a scorpion surrounded by live coals. The most I can do is not to wound myself with my own dart."(42)

"I am in my sixty-first year; and I have no more hopes or illusions or aspirations. I am alone; and my contempt for the stupidity and dishonesty of men, and my hatred for their wicked cruelty, are at their height. Every hour I say to Death, 'When you like!' What is he waiting for?"(43)

(Footnote 41: Letter to Bennet. He did not believe in patriotism. "Patriotism? Fetichism! Cretinism!" (Mémoires, II, 261.).

(Footnote 42: Letter to the Princess of Wittgenstein, 22 July, 1862.)

(Footnote 43: Mémoires, II, 391.)

And yet he fears the death he invites. It is the strongest, the bitterest, the truest feeling he has. No musician since old Roland de Lassus has feared it with that intensity. Do you remember Herod's sleepless nights in L'Enfance du Christ, or Faust's soliloquy, or the anguish of Cassandra, or the burial of Juliette?--through all this you will find the whispered fear of annihilation. The wretched man was haunted by this fear, as a letter published by M. Julien Tiersot shows:--

"My favourite walk, especially when it is raining, really raining in torrents, is the cemetery of Montmartre, which is near my house. I often go there; there is much that draws me to it. The day before yesterday I passed two hours in the cemetery; I found a comfortable seat on a costly tomb, and I went to sleep.... Paris is to me a cemetery and her pavements are tomb-stones. Everywhere are memories of friends or enemies that are dead.... I do nothing but suffer unceasing pain and unspeakable weariness. I wonder night and day if I shall die in great pain or with little of it--I am not foolish enough to hope to die without any pain at all. Why are we not dead?"(44)

His music is like these mournful words; it is perhaps even more terrible, more gloomy, for it breathes death.(45) What a contrast: a soul greedy of life and preyed upon by death. It is this that makes his life such an awful tragedy. When Wagner met Berlioz he heaved a sigh of relief--he had at last found a man more unhappy than himself.(46)

(Footnote 44: Letters to the Princess of Wittgenstein, 22 January, 1859; 30 August, 1864; 13 July, 1866; and to A. Morel, 21 August, 1864.)

(Footnote 45: "... Qui viderit illas De lacrymis factas sentiet esse meis," wrote Berlioz, as an inscription for his Tristes in 1854.)

(Footnote 46: "One instantly recognises a companion in misfortune; and I found I was a happier man than Berlioz" (Wagner to Liszt, 5 July, 1855).)

On the threshold of death he turned in despair to the one ray of light left him--Stella montis, the inspiration of his childish love; Estelle, now old, a grandmother, withered by age and grief. He made a pilgrimage to Meylan, near Grenoble, to see her. He was then sixty-one years old and she was nearly seventy. "The past! the past! O Time! Nevermore! Nevermore!"(47)
Nevertheless, he loved her, and loved her desperately. How pathetic it is. One has little inclination to smile when one sees the depths of that desolate heart. Do you think he did not see, as clearly as you or I would see, the wrinkled old face, the indifference of age, the "triste raison," in her he idealised? Remember, he was the most ironical of men. But he did not wish to see these things, he wished to cling to a little love, which would help him to live in the wilderness of life.

"There is nothing real in this world but that which lives in the heart.... My life has been wrapped up in the obscure little village where she lives.... Life is only endurable when I tell myself: 'This autumn I shall spend a month beside her.' I should die in this hell of a Paris if she did not allow me to write to her, and if from time to time I had not letters from her."

So he spoke to Legouvé; and he sat down on a stone in a Paris street, and wept. In the meantime, the old lady did not understand this foolishness; she hardly tolerated it, and sought to undeceive him.

(Footnote 47: Mémoires, II, 396.)

"When one's hair is white one must leave dreams--even those of friendship.... Of what use is it to form ties which, though they hold to-day, may break to-morrow?"

What were his dreams? To live with her? No; rather to die beside her; to feel she was by his side when death should come.

"To be at your feet, my head on your knees, your two hands in mine--so to finish." (48)

He was a little child grown old, and felt bewildered and miserable and frightened before the thought of death.

Wagner, at the same age, a victor, worshipped, flattered, and--if we are to believe the Bayreuth legend--crowned with prosperity; Wagner, sad and suffering, doubting his achievements, feeling the inanity of his bitter fight against the mediocrity of the world, had "fled far from the world" (49) and thrown himself into religion; and when a friend looked at him in surprise as he was saying grace at table, he answered: "Yes, I believe in my Saviour." (50)

(Footnote 48: Mémoires, II, 415.)

(Footnote 49: "Yes, it is to that escape from the world that Parsifal owes its birth and growth. What man can, during a whole lifetime, gaze into the depths of this world with a calm reason and a cheerful heart? When he sees murder and rape organised and legalised by a system of lies, impostures, and hypocrisy, will he not avert his eyes and shudder with disgust?" (Wagner, Representations of the Sacred Drama of Parsifal at Bayreuth, in 1882.))

(Footnote 50: The scene was described to me by his friend, Malwida von Meysenbug, the calm and fearless author of Mémoires d'une Idéaliste.)

Poor beings! Conquerors of the world, conquered and broken!

But of the two deaths, how much sadder is that of the artist who was without a faith, and who had neither strength nor stoicism enough to be happy without one; who slowly died in that little room in the rue de Calais amid the distracting noise of an indifferent and even hostile Paris; (51) who shut himself up in savage silence; who saw no loved face bending over him in his last moments; who had not the comfort of belief in his work; (52) who could not think calmly of what he had done, nor look proudly back over the road he had trodden, nor rest content in the thought of a life well
"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."(53)

(Footnote 51: "I have only blank walls before my windows. On the side of the street a pug dog has been barking for an hour, a parrot screaming, and a parroquet imitating the chirp of sparrows. On the side of the yard the washerwomen are singing, and another parroquet cries incessantly, 'Shoulder arrms!' How long the day is!"

"The maddening noise of carriages shakes the silence of the night. Paris wet and muddy! Parisian Paris! Now everything is quiet ... she is sleeping the sleep of the unjust" (Written to Ferrand, Lettres intimes, pp. 269 and 302.).

(Footnote 52: He used to say that nothing would remain of his work; that he had deceived himself; and that he would have liked to burn his scores.)

(Footnote 53: Blaze de Bury met him one autumn evening, on the quay, just before his death, as he was returning from the Institute. "His face was pale, his figure wasted and bent, and his expression dejected and nervous; one might have taken him for a walking shadow. Even his eyes, those large round hazel eyes, had extinguished their fire. For a second he clasped my hand in his own thin, lifeless one, and repeated, in a voice that was hardly more than a whisper, Aeschylus's words: 'Oh, this life of man! When he is happy a shadow is enough to disturb him; and when he is unhappy his trouble may be wiped away, as with a wet sponge, and all is forgotten" (Musiciens d'hier et d'aujourd'hui).)

Such was the unhappy and irresolute heart that found itself united to one of the most daring geniuses in the world. It is a striking example of the difference that may exist between genius and greatness—for the two words are not synonymous. When one speaks of greatness, one speaks of greatness of soul, nobility of character, firmness of will, and, above all, balance of mind. I can understand how people deny the existence of these qualities in Berlioz; but to deny his musical genius, or to cavil about his wonderful power—and that is what they do daily in Paris—is lamentable and ridiculous. Whether he attracts one or not, a thimbleful of some of his work, a single part in one of his works, a little bit of the Fantastique or the overture of Benvenuto, reveal more genius—I am not afraid to say it—than all the French music of his century. I can understand people arguing about him in a country that produced Beethoven and Bach; but with us in France, who can we set up against him? Gluck and César Franck were much greater men, but they were never geniuses of his stature. If genius is a creative force, I cannot find more than four or five geniuses in the world who rank above him. When I have named Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Händel, and Wagner, I do not know who else is superior to Berlioz; I do not even know who is his equal.

He is not only a musician, he is music itself. He does not command his familiar spirit, he is its slave. Those who know his writings know how he was simply possessed and exhausted by his musical emotions. They were really fits of ecstasy or convulsions. At first "there was feverish excitement; the veins beat violently and tears flowed freely. Then came spasmodic contractions of the muscles, total numbness of the feet and hands, and partial paralysis of the nerves of sight and hearing; he saw nothing, heard nothing; he was giddy and half faint." And in the case of music that displeased him, he suffered, on the contrary, from "a painful sense of bodily disquiet and even from nausea."(54)

The possession that music held over his nature shows itself clearly in the sudden outbreak of his genius.(55) His family opposed the idea of his becoming a musician; and until he was twenty-two or twenty-three years old his weak will sulkily gave way to their wishes. In obedience to his father he began his studies in medicine at Paris. One evening he heard Les Danaïdes of Salieri. It came upon him like a thunderclap. He ran to the Conservatoire library and read Gluck's scores.
He forgot to eat and drink; he was like a man in a frenzy. A performance of Iphigénie en Tauride finished him. He studied under Lesueur and then at the Conservatoire. The following year, 1827, he composed Les Francs-Juges; two years afterwards the Huit scènes de Faust, which was the nucleus of the future Damnation; the Symphonie fantastique (commenced in 1830). And he had not yet got the Pri".
But Berlioz was already getting old. His daily cares and stormy domestic life, (61) his disappointments and passions, his commonplace and often degrading work, soon wore him out and, finally, exhausted his power. "Would you believe it?" he wrote to his friend Ferrand, "that which used to stir me to transports of musical passion now fills me with indifference, or even disdain. I feel as if I were descending a mountain at a great rate. Life is so short; I notice that thoughts of the end have been with me for some time past." In 1848, at forty-five years old, he wrote in his Mémoires: "I find myself so old and tired and lacking inspiration." At forty-five years old, Wagner had patiently worked out his theories and was feeling his power; at forty-five he was writing Tristan and The Music of the Future. Abused by critics, unknown to the public, "he remained calm, in the belief that he would be master of the musical world in fifty years' time."(62)

(Footnote 61: He left Henrietta Smithson in 1842; she died in 1854.)

(Footnote 62: Written by Berlioz himself, in irony, in a letter of 1855.)

Berlioz was disheartened. Life had conquered him. It was not that he had lost any of his artistic mastery; on the contrary, his compositions became more and more finished; and nothing in his earlier work attained the pure beauty of some of the pages of L'Enfance du Christ (1850-4), or of Les Troyens (1855-63). But he was losing his power; and his intense feeling, his revolutionary ideas, and his inspiration (which in his youth had taken the place of the confidence he lacked) were failing him. He now lived on the past—the Huit scènes de Faust (1828) held the germs of La Damnation de Faust (1846); since 1833, he had been thinking of Béatrice et Bénédict (1862); the ideas in Les Troyens were inspired by his childish worship of Virgil, and had been with him all his life. But with what difficulty he now finished his task! He had only taken seven months to write Roméo, and "on account of not being able to write the Requiem fast enough, he had adopted a kind of musical shorthand"; (63) but he took seven or eight years to write Les Troyens, alternating between moods of enthusiasm and disgust, and feeling indifference and doubt about his work. He groped his way hesitatingly and unsteadily; he hardly understood what he was doing. He admired the more mediocre pages of his work: the scene of the Laocoon, the finale of the last act of the Les Troyens à Troie the last scene with Aeneas in Les Troyens à Carthage (64) The empty pomposities of Spontini mingle with the loftiest conceptions. One might say that his genius became a stranger to him: it was the mechanical work of an unconscious force, like "stalactites in a dripping grotto." He had no impetus. It was only a matter of time before the roof of the grotto would give way. One is struck with the mournful despair with which he works; it is his last will and testament that he is making. And when he has finished it, he will have finished everything. His work is ended; if he lived another hundred years he would not have the heart to add anything more to it. The only thing that remains—and it is what he is about to do—is to wrap himself in silence and die.

(Footnote 63: Mémoires, I, 307.)

(Footnote 64: About this time he wrote to Liszt regarding L'Enfance du Christ: "I think I have hit upon something good in Herod's scena and air with the soothsayers; it is full of character, and will, I hope, please you. There are, perhaps, more graceful and pleasing things, but with the exception of the Bethlehem duet, I do not think they have the same quality of originality" (17 December, 1854).)

Oh, mournful destiny! There are great men who have outlived their genius; but with Berlioz genius outlived desire. His genius was still there; one feels it in the sublime pages of the third act of Les Troyens à Carthage But Berlioz had ceased to believe in his power; he had lost faith in everything. His genius was dying for want of nourishment; it was a flame above an empty tomb. At the same hour of his old age the soul of Wagner sustained its glorious flight; and, having conquered everything, it achieved a supreme victory in renouncing everything for its faith. And the divine songs of Parsifal resounded as in a splendid temple, and replied to the cries of the suffering Amfortas by the blessed words: "Selig in Glauben! Selig in Liebe!"
Berlioz's work did not spread itself evenly over his life; it was accomplished in a few years. It was not like the course of a great river, as with Wagner and Beethoven; it was a burst of genius, whose flames lit up the whole sky for a little while, and then died gradually down.(65) Let me try to tell you about this wonderful blaze.

Some of Berlioz's musical qualities are so striking that it is unnecessary to dwell upon them here. His instrumental colouring, so intoxicating and exciting,(66) his extraordinary discoveries concerning timbre, his inventions of new nuances (as in the famous combining of flutes and trombones in the Hostias et preces of the Requiem, and the curious use of the harmonics of violins and harps), and his huge and nebulous orchestra--all this lends itself to the most subtle expression of thought.(67)

(Footnote 65: In 1830, old Rouget de Lisle called Berlioz, "a volcano in eruption" (Mémoires, I, 158.).)

(Footnote 66: M. Camille Saint-Saëns wrote in his Portraits et Souvenirs, 1900: "Whoever reads Berlioz's scores before hearing them played can have no real idea of their effect. The instruments appear to be arranged in defiance of all common sense; and it would seem, to use professional slang, that cela ne dut pas sonner, but cela sonne wonderfully. If we find here and there obscurities of style, they do not appear in the orchestra; light streams into it and plays there as in the facets of a diamond.")

(Footnote 67: See the excellent essay of H. Lavoix, in his Histoire de l'Instrumentation. It should be noticed that Berlioz's observations in his Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes (1844) have not been lost upon Richard Strauss, who has just published a German edition of the work, and some of whose most famous orchestral effects are realisations of Berlioz's ideas.)

Think of the effect that such works must have produced at that period. Berlioz was the first to be astonished when he heard them for the first time. At the Ouverture des Francs-Juges he wept and tore his hair, and fell sobbing on the kettledrums. At the performance of his Tuba mirum, in Berlin, he nearly fainted. The composer who most nearly approached him was Weber, and, as we have already seen, Berlioz only knew him late in life. But how much less rich and complex is Weber's music, in spite of its nervous brilliance and dreaming poetry. Above all, Weber is much more mundane and more of a classicist; he lacks Berlioz's revolutionary passion and plebeian force; he is less expressive and less grand.

How did Berlioz come to have this genius for orchestration almost from the very first? He himself says that his two masters at the Conservatoire taught him nothing in point of instrumentation:--

"Lesueur had only very limited ideas about the art. Reicha knew the particular resources of most of the wind instruments; but I think that he had not very advanced ideas on the subject of grouping them."

Berlioz taught himself. He used to read the score of an opera while it was being performed.

"It was thus," he says,(68) "that I began to get familiar with the use of the orchestra, and to know its expression and timbre, as well as the range and mechanism of most of the instruments. By carefully comparing the effect produced with the means used to produce it, I learned the hidden bond which unites musical expression to the special art of instrumentation; but no one put me in the way of this. The study of the methods of the three modern masters, Beethoven, Weber, and Spontini, the impartial examination of the traditions of instrumentation and of little-used forms and combinations, conversations with virtuosi, and the effects I made them try on their different instruments, together with a little instinct, did the rest for me."(69)

(Footnote 68: One may judge of this instinct by one fact: he wrote the overtures of Les Francs-Juges and Waverley without really knowing if it were possible to play them. "I was so ignorant," he says, "of the mechanism of certain instruments, that after having written the solo in D flat for the trombone in the Introduction of Les Francs-Juges, I feared it would be terribly difficult to play. So I went, very anxious, to one of the trombonists of the Opera orchestra.
He looked at the passage and reassured me. 'The key of D flat is,' he said, 'one of the pleasantest for that instrument; and you can count on a splendid effect for that passage'” (Mémoires, I, 63.)

(Footnote 69: Mémoires, I, 64.)

That he was an originator in this direction no one doubts. And no one disputes, as a rule, "his devilish cleverness," as Wagner scornfully called it, or remains insensible to his skill and mastery in the mechanism of expression, and his power over sonorous matter, which make him, apart from his creative power, a sort of magician of music, a king of tone and rhythm. This gift is recognised even by his enemies--by Wagner, who seeks with some unfairness to restrict his genius within narrow limits, and to reduce it to "a structure with wheels of infinite ingenuity and extreme cunning ... a marvel of mechanism."(70)

But though there is hardly anyone that Berlioz does not irritate or attract, he always strikes people by his impetuous ardour, his glowing romance, and his seething imagination, all of which makes and will continue to make his work one of the most picturesque mirrors of his age. His frenzied force of ecstasy and despair, his fulness of love and hatred, his perpetual thirst for life, which "in the heart of the deepest sorrow lights the Catherine wheels and crackers of the wildest joy"(71)--these are the qualities that stir up the crowds in Benvenuto and the armies in the Damnation, that shake earth, heaven, and hell, and are never quenched, but remain devouring and "passionate even when the subject is far removed from passion, and yet also express sweet and tender sentiments and the deepest calm."(72)

(Footnote 70: "Berlioz displayed, in calculating the properties of mechanism, a really astounding scientific knowledge. If the inventors of our modern industrial machinery are to be considered benefactors of humanity to-day, Berlioz deserves to be considered as the true saviour of the musical world; for, thanks to him, musicians can produce surprising effects in music by the varied use of simple mechanical means.... Berlioz lies hopelessly buried beneath the ruins of his own contrivances" (Oper und Drama, 1851).)

(Footnote 71: Letter from Berlioz to Ferrand.)

(Footnote 72: "The chief characteristics of my music are passionate expression, inward warmth, rhythmic in pulses, and unforeseen effects. When I speak of passionate expression, I mean an expression that desperately strives to reproduce the inward feeling of its subject, even when the theme is contrary to passion, and deals with gentle emotions or the deepest calm. It is this kind of expression that may be found in L'Enfance du Christ, and, above all, in the scene of Le Ciel in the Damnation de Faust and in the Sanctus of the Requiem" (Mémoires, II, 361).)

Whatever one may think of this volcanic force, of this torrential stream of youth and passion, it is impossible to deny them; one might as well deny the sun.

And I shall not dwell on Berlioz's love of Nature, which, as M. Prudhomme shows us, is the soul of a composition like the Damnation and, one might say, of all great compositions. No musician, with the exception of Beethoven, has loved Nature so profoundly. Wagner himself did not realise the intensity of emotion which she roused in Berlioz,(73) and how this feeling impregnated the music of the Damnation, of Roméo, and of Les Troyens.

(Footnote 73: "So you are in the midst of melting glaciers in your Niebelungen! To be writing in the presence of Nature herself must be splendid. It is an enjoyment which I am denied. Beautiful landscapes, lofty peaks, or great stretches of sea, absorb me instead of evoking ideas in me. I feel, but I cannot express what I feel. I can only paint the moon when I see its reflection in the bottom of a well" (Berlioz to Wagner, 10 September, 1855.).)

But this genius had other characteristics which are less well known, though they are not less unusual. The first is his sense of pure beauty. Berlioz's exterior romanticism must not make us blind to this. He had a Virgilian soul; and if his colouring recalls that of Weber, his design has often an Italian suavity. Wagner never had this love of beauty in the Latin sense of the word. Who has understood the Southern nature, beautiful form, and harmonious movement like Berlioz? Who, since Gluck, has recognised so well the secret of classical beauty? Since Orfeo was composed, no one has carved in music a bas-relief so perfect as the entrance of Andromache in the second act of Les Troyens à Troie.
, the fragrance of the Aeneid is shed over the night of love, and we see the luminous sky and hear the murmur of the sea. Some of his melodies are like statues, or the pure lines of Athenian friezes, or the noble gesture of beautiful Italian girls, or the undulating profile of the Albanian hills filled with divine laughter. He has done more than felt and translated into music the beauty of the Mediterranean—he has created beings worthy of a Greek tragedy. His Cassandre alone would suffice to rank him among the greatest tragic poets that music has ever known. And Cassandre is a worthy sister of Wagner's Brünnhilde; but she has the advantage of coming of a nobler race, and of having a lofty restraint of spirit and action that Sophocles himself would have loved.

Not enough attention has been drawn to the classical nobility from which Berlioz's art so spontaneously springs. It is not fully acknowledged that he was, of all nineteenth-century musicians, the one who had in the highest degree the sense of plastic beauty. Nor do people always recognise that he was a writer of sweet and flowing melodies. Weingartner expressed the surprise he felt when, imbued with current prejudice against Berlioz's lack of melodic invention, he opened, by chance, the score of the overture of Benvenuto and found in that short composition, which barely takes ten minutes to play, not one or two, but four or five melodies of admirable richness and originality:—

"I began to laugh, both with pleasure at having discovered such a treasure, and with annoyance at finding how narrow human judgment is. Here I counted five themes, all of them plastic and expressive of personality; of admirable workmanship, varied in form, working up by degrees to a climax, and then finishing with strong effect. And this from a composer who was said by critics and the public to be devoid of creative power! From that day on there has been for me another great citizen in the republic of art."

(Footnote 74: Musikführer, 29 November, 1903.)

Before this, Berlioz had written in 1864:—

"It is quite easy for others to convince themselves that, without even limiting me to take a very short melody as the theme of a composition—as the greatest musicians have often done—I have always endeavoured to put a wealth of melody into my compositions. One may, of course, dispute the worth of these melodies, their distinction, originality, or charm—it is not for me to judge them—but to deny their existence is either unfair or foolish. They are often on a large scale; and an immature or short-sighted musical vision may not clearly distinguish their form; or, again, they may be accompanied by secondary melodies which, to a limited vision, may veil the form of the principal ones. Or, lastly, shallow musicians may find these melodies so unlike the funny little things that they call melodies, that they cannot bring themselves to give the same name to both."

(Footnote 75: Mémoires, II, 361.)

(Footnote 76: M. Jean Marnold has remarked this genius for monody in Berlioz in his article on Hector Berlioz, musicien (Mercure de France, 15 January, and 1 February, 1905).)

I have said that Berlioz had a matchless gift for expressing tragic melancholy, weariness of life, and the pangs of death. In a general way, one may say that he was a great elegist in music. Ambros, who was a very discerning and unbiased critic, said: "Berlioz feels with inward delight and profound emotion what no musician, except Beethoven, has felt before." And Heinrich Heine had a keen perception of Berlioz's originality when he called him "a colossal nightingale, a lark the size of an eagle." The simile is not only picturesque, but of remarkable aptness. For Berlioz's colossal force is at the service of a forlorn and tender heart; he has nothing of the heroism of Beethoven, or Händel, or Gluck, or even S
chubert. He has all the charm of an Umbrian painter, as is shown in *L'Enfance du Christ*, as well as sweetness and inward sadness, the gift of tears, and an elegiac passion.

* * * * *

Now I come to Berlioz's great originality, an originality which is rarely spoken of, though it makes him more than a great musician, more than the successor of Beethoven, or, as some call him, the forerunner of Wagner. It is an originality that entitles him to be known, even more fitly than Wagner himself, as the creator of "an art of the future," the apostle of a new music, which even to-day has hardly made itself felt.

Berlioz is original in a double sense. By the extraordinary complexity of his genius he touched the two opposite poles of his art, and showed us two entirely different aspects of music--that of a great popular art, and that of music made free.

We are all enslaved by the musical tradition of the past. For generations we have been so accustomed to carry this yoke that we scarcely notice it. And in consequence of Germany's monopoly of music since the end of the eighteenth century, musical traditions--which had been chiefly Italian in the two preceding centuries--now became almost entirely German. We think in German forms: the plan of phrases, their development, their balance, and all the rhetoric of music and the grammar of composition comes to us from foreign thought, slowly elaborated by German masters. That domination has never been more complete or more heavy since Wagner's victory. Then reigned over the world this great German period--a scaly monster with a thousand arms, whose grasp was so extensive that it included pages, scenes, acts, and whole dramas in its embrace. We cannot say that French writers have ever tried to write in the style of Goethe or Schiller; but French composers have tried and are still trying to write music after the manner of German musicians.

Why be astonished at it? Let us face the matter plainly. In music we have not, so to speak, any masters of French style. All our greatest composers are foreigners. The founder of the first school of French opera, Lulli, was Florentine; the founder of the second school, Gluck, was German; the two founders of the third school were Rossini, an Italian, and Meyerbeer, a German; the creators of *opéra-comique* were Duni, an Italian, and Gretry, a Belgian; Franck, who revolutionised our modern school of opera, was also Belgian. These men brought with them a style peculiar to their race; or else they tried to found, as Gluck did, an "international" style,(77) by which they effaced the more individual characteristics of the French spirit. The most French of all these styles is the *opéra-comique*, the work of two foreigners, but owing much more to the *opéra-bouffe* than is generally admitted, and, in any case, representing France very insufficiently.

(Footnote 77: Gluck himself said this in a letter to the *Mercure de France*, February, 1773.)

Some more rational minds have tried to rid themselves of this Italian and German influence, but have mostly arrived at creating an intermediate Germano-Italian style, of which the operas of Auber and Ambroise Thomas are a type.

Before Berlioz's time there was really only one master of the first rank who made a great effort to liberate French music: it was Rameau; and, despite his genius, he was conquered by Italian art.(78)

By force of circumstance, therefore, French music found itself moulded in foreign musical forms. And in the same way that Germany in the eighteenth century tried to imitate French architecture and literature, so France in the nineteenth century acquired the habit of speaking German in music. As most men speak more than they think, even thought itself became Germanised; and it was difficult then to discover, through this traditional insincerity, the true and spontaneous form of French musical thought.

But Berlioz's genius found it by instinct. From the first he strove to free French music from the oppression of the foreign tradition that was suffocating it.(79)

(Footnote 78: I am not speaking of the Franco-Flemish masters at the end of the sixteenth century: of Jannequin,
Costeley, Claude le Jeune, or Mauduit, recently discovered by M. Henry Expert, who are possessed of so original a flavor, and have yet remained almost entirely unknown from their own time to ours. Religious wars bruised France's musical traditions and denied some of the grandeur of her art.

(Footnote 79: It is amusing to find Wagner comparing Berlioz with Auber, as the type of a true French musician--Auber and his mixed Italian and German opera. That shows how Wagner, like most Germans, was incapable of grasping the real originality of French music, and how he saw only its externals. The best way to find out the musical characteristics of a nation is to study its folk-songs. If only someone would devote himself to the study of French folk-song (and there is no lack of material), people would realise perhaps how much it differs from German folk-song, and how the temperament of the French race shows itself there as being sweeter and freer, more vigorous and more expressive.)

He was fitted in every way for the part, even by his deficiencies and his ignorance. His classical education in music was incomplete. M. Saint-Saëns tells us that "the past did not exist for him; he did not understand the old composers, as his knowledge of them was limited to what he had read about them." He did not know Bach. Happy ignorance! He was able to write oratorios like *L'Enfance du Christ* without being worried by memories and traditions of the German masters of oratorio. There are men like Brahms who have been, nearly all their life, but reflections of the past. Berlioz never sought to be anything but himself. It was thus that he created that masterpiece, *La Fuite en Égypte* which sprang from his keen sympathy with the people.

He had one of the most untrammelled spirits that ever breathed. Liberty was for him a desperate necessity. "Liberty of heart, of mind, of soul--of everything.... Real liberty, absolute and immense!"(80) And this passionate love of liberty, which was his misfortune in life, since it deprived him of the comfort of any faith, refused him any refuge for his thoughts, robbed him of peace, and even of the soft pillow of scepticism--this "real liberty" formed the unique originality and grandeur of his musical conceptions.

(Footnote 80: *Mémoires*, I, 221.)

"Music," wrote Berlioz to C. Lobe, in 1852, "is the most poetic, the most powerful, the most living of all arts. She ought to be the freest, but she is not yet.... Modern music is like the classic Andromeda, naked and divinely beautiful. She is chained to a rock on the shores of a vast sea, and awaits the victorious Perseus who shall loose her bonds and break in pieces the chimera called Routine."

The business was to free music from its limited rhythms and from the traditional forms and rules that enclosed it;(81) and, above all, it needed to be free from the domination of speech, and to be released from its humiliating bondage to poetry. Berlioz wrote to the Princess of Wittgenstein, in 1856:--

(Footnote 81: "Music to-day, in the vigour of her youth, is emancipated and free and can do what she pleases. Many old rules have no longer any vogue; they were made by unreflecting minds, or by lovers of routine for other lovers of routine. New needs of the mind, of the heart, and of the sense of hearing, make necessary new endeavours and, in some cases, the breaking of ancient laws. Many forms have become too hackneyed to be still adopted. The same thing may be entirely good or entirely bad, according to the use one makes of it, or the reasons one has for making use of it. Sound and sonority are secondary to thought, and thought is secondary to feeling and passion." (These opinions were given with reference to Wagner's concerts in Paris, in 1860, and are taken from *A travers chants*, p. 312.)

Compare Beethoven's words: "There is no rule that one may not break for the advancement of beauty.")

"I am for free music. Yes, I want music to be proudly free, to be victorious, to be supreme. I want her to take all she can, so that there may be no more Alps or Pyrenees for her. But she must achieve her victories by fighting in person, and not rely upon her lieutenants. I should like her to have, if possible, good verse drawn up in order of battle; but, like Napoleon, she must face the fire herself, and, like
Alexander, march in the front ranks of the phalanx. She is so powerful that in some cases she would conquer unaided; for she has the right to say with Medea: 'I, myself, am enough.'"

Berlioz protested vigorously against Gluck's impious theory and Wagner's "crime" in making music the slave of speech. Music is the highest poetry and knows no master. It was for Berlioz, therefore, continually to increase the power of expression in pure music.

(Footnote 82: Is it necessary to recall the _épître dédicatoire of Alceste in 1769, and Gluck's declaration that he "sought to bring music to its true function--that of helping poetry to strengthen the expression of the emotions and the interest of a situation ... and to make it what fine colouring and the happy arrangement of light and shade are to a skilful drawing"?)

(Footnote 83: This revolutionary theory was already Mozart's: "Music should reign supreme and make one forget everything else.... In an opera it is absolutely necessary that Poetry should be Music's obedient daughter" (Letter to his father, 13 October, 1781). Despairing probably at being unable to obtain this obedience, Mozart thought seriously of breaking up the form of opera, and of putting in its place, in 1778, a sort of melodrama (of which Rousseau had given an example in 1773), which he called "duodrama," where music and poetry were loosely associated, yet not dependent on each other, but went side by side on two parallel roads (Letter of 12 November, 1778).)

And while Wagner, who was more moderate and a closer follower of tradition, sought to establish a compromise (perhaps an impossible one) between music and speech, and to create the new lyric drama, Berlioz, who was more revolutionary, achieved the dramatic symphony, of which the unequalled model to-day is still Roméo et Juliette.

The dramatic symphony naturally fell foul of all formal theories. Two arguments were set up against it: one derived from Bayreuth, and by now an act of faith; the other, current opinion, upheld by the crowd that speaks of music without understanding it.

The first argument, maintained by Wagner, is that music cannot really express action without the help of speech and gesture. It is in the name of this opinion that so many people condemn a priori Berlioz's Roméo. They think it childish to try and translate action into music. I suppose they think it less childish to illustrate an action by music. Do they think that gesture associates itself very happily with music? If only they would try to root up this great fiction, which has bothered us for the last three centuries; if only they would open their eyes and see--what great men like Rousseau and Tolstoy saw so clearly--the silliness of opera; if only they would see the anomalies of the Bayreuth show. In the second act of Tristan there is a celebrated passage, where Ysolde, burning with desire, is waiting for Tristan; she sees him come at last, and from afar she waves her scarf to the accompaniment of a phrase repeated several times by the orchestra. I cannot express the effect produced on me by that imitation (for it is nothing else) of a series of sounds by a series of gestures; I can never see it without indignation or without laughing. The curious thing is that when one hears this passage at a concert, one sees the gesture. At the theatre either one does not "see" it, or it appears childish. The natural action becomes stiff when clad in musical armour, and the absurdity of trying to make the two agree is forced upon one. In the music of Rheingold one pictures the stature and gait of the giants, and one sees the lightning gleam and the rainbow reflected on the clouds. In the theatre it is like a game of marionettes; and one feels the impassable gulf between music and gesture. Music is a world apart. When music wishes to depict the drama, it is not real action which is reflected in it, it is the ideal action transfigured by the spirit, and perceptible only to the inner vision. The worst foolishness is to present two visions--one for the eyes and one for the spirit. Nearly always they kill each other.

The other argument urged against the symphony with a programme is the pretended classical argument (it is not really classical at all). "Music," they say, "is not meant to express definite subjects; it is only fitted for vague ideas. The more indefinite it is, the greater its power, and the more it suggests." I ask, What is an indefinite art? What is a vague art? Do not the two words contradict each other? Can this strange combination exist at all? Can an artist write anything that he does not clearly conceive? Do people think he composes at random as his genius whispers to him? One must at least say this: A symphony of Beethoven's is a "definite" work down to its innermost folds; and Beethoven had, if not an exact knowledge, at least a clear intuition of what he was about. His last quartets are descriptive symphonies of his
soul, and very differently carried out from Berlioz's symphonies. Wagner was able to analyse one of the former under the name of "A Day with Beethoven." Beethoven was always trying to translate into music the depths of his heart, the subtleties of his spirit, which are not to be explained clearly by words, but which are as definite as words--in fact, more definite; for a word, being an abstract thing, sums up many experiences and comprehends many different meanings. Music is a hundred times more expressive and exact than speech; and it is not only her right to express particular emotions and subjects, it is her duty. If that duty is not fulfilled, the result is not music--it is nothing at all.

Berlioz is thus the true inheritor of Beethoven's thought. The difference between a work like Roméo and one of Beethoven's symphonies is that the former, it would seem, endeavours to express objective emotions and subjects in music. I do not see why music should not follow poetry in getting away from introspection and trying to paint the drama of the universe. Shakespeare is as good as Dante. Besides, one may add, it is always Berlioz himself that is discovered in his music: it is his soul starving for love and mocked at by shadows which is revealed through all the scenes of Roméo.

I will not prolong a discussion where so many things must be left unsaid. But I would suggest that, once and for all, we get rid of these absurd endeavours to fence in art. Do not let us say: Music can.... Music cannot express such-and-such a thing. Let us say rather, If genius pleases, everything is possible; and if music so wishes, she may be painting and poetry to-morrow. Berlioz has proved it well in his Roméo.

This Roméo is an extraordinary work: "a wonderful isle, where a temple of pure art is set up." For my part, not only do I consider it equal to the most powerful of Wagner's creations, but I believe it to be richer in its teaching and in its resources for art--resources and teaching which contemporary French art has not yet fully turned to account. One knows that for several years the young French school has been making efforts to deliver our music from German models, to create a language of recitative that shall belong to France and that the leitmotif will not overwhelm; a more exact and less heavy language, which in expressing the freedom of modern thought will not have to seek the help of the classical or Wagnerian forms. Not long ago, the Schola Cantorum published a manifesto that proclaimed "the liberty of musical declamation ... free speech in free music ... the triumph of natural music with the free movement of speech and the plastic rhythm of the ancient dance"--thus declaring war on the metrical art of the last three centuries.(84)

(Footnote 84: Tribune de Saint Gervais, November, 1903.)

Well, here is that music; you will nowhere find a more perfect model. It is true that many who profess the principles of this music repudiate the model, and do not hide their disdain for Berlioz. That makes me doubt a little, I admit, the results of their efforts. If they do not feel the wonderful freedom of Berlioz's music, and do not see that it was the delicate veil of a very living spirit, then I think there will be more of archaism than real life in their pretensions to "free music." Study, not only the most celebrated pages of his work, such as the Scène d'amour (the one of all his compositions that Berlioz himself liked best),(85) La Tristesse de Roméo, or La Fête des Capulet (where a spirit like Wagner's own unlooses and subdues again tempests of passion and joy), but take less well-known pages, such as the Scherzetto chanté de la reine Mab, or the Réveil de Juliette, and the music describing the death of the two lovers.(86) In the one what light grace there is, in the other what vibrating passion, and in both of them what freedom and apt expression of ideas. The language is magnificent, of wonderful clearness and simplicity; not a word too much, and not a word that does not reveal an unerring pen. In nearly all the big works of Berlioz before 1845 (that is up to the Damnation) you will find this nervous precision and sweeping liberty.

(Footnote 85: Mémoires, II, 365.)

(Footnote 86: "This composition contains a dose of sublimity much too strong for the ordinary public; and Berlioz, with the splendid insolence of genius, advises the conductor, in a note, to turn the page and pass it over" (Georges de Massougnnes, Berlioz). This fine study by Georges de Massougnnes appeared in 1870, and is very much in advance of its time.)

Then there is the freedom of his rhythms. Schumann, who was nearest to Berlioz of all musicians of that time, and, therefore, best able to understand him, had been struck by this since the composition of the Symphonic fantastique.(87)
He wrote:--

"The present age has certainly not produced a work in which similar times and rhythms combined with
dissimilar times and rhythms have been more freely used. The second part of a phrase rarely
 corresponds with the first, the reply to the question. This anomaly is characteristic of Berlioz, and is
natural to his southern temperament."

Far from objecting to this, Schumann sees in it something necessary to musical evolution.

"Apparently music is showing a tendency to go back to its beginnings, to the time when the laws of
rhythm did not yet trouble her; it seems that she wishes to free herself, to regain an utterance that is
unconstrained, and raise herself to the dignity of a sort of poetic language."

And Schumann quotes these words of Ernest Wagner: "He who shakes off the tyranny of time and delivers us from it
will, as far as one can see, give back freedom to music."(88)

(Footnote 87: "Oh, how I love, honour, and reverence Schumann for having written this article alone" (Hugo Wolf,
1884).)

(Footnote 88: Neue Zeitschrift für MusikSee Hector Berlioz und Robert Schumann. Berlioz was constantly righting for
this freedom of rhythm--for "those harmonies of rhythm," as he said. He wished to form a Rhythm class at the
Conservatoire (Mémoires , II, 241), but such a thing was not understood in France. Without being as backward as Italy
on this point, France is still resisting the emancipation of rhythm (Mémoires , II, 196). But during the last ten years
great progress in music has been made in France.)

Remark also Berlioz's freedom of melody. His musical phrases pulse and flow like life itself. "Some phrases taken
separately," says Schumann, "have such an intensity that they will not bear harmonising--as in many ancient folk-songs
--and often even an accompaniment spoils their fulness."(89) These melodies so correspond with the emotions, that
they reproduce the least thrills of body and mind by their vigorous workings-up and delicate reliefs, by splendid
barbarities of modulation and strong and glowing colour, by gentle gradations of light and shade or imperceptible
ripples of thought, which flow over the body like a steady tide. It is an art of peculiar sensitiveness, more delicately
expressive than that of Wagner; not satisfying itself with the modern tonality, but going back to old modes--a rebel, as
M. Saint-Saëns remarks, to the polyphony which had governed music since Bach's day, and which is perhaps, after all, "
a heresy destined to disappear."(90)

(Footnote 89: Ibid. "A rare peculiarity," adds Schumann, "which distinguishes nearly all his melodies." Schumann
understands why Berlioz often gives as an accompaniment to his melodies a simple bass, or chords of the augmented
and diminished fifth--ignoring the intermediate parts.)

(Footnote 90: "What will then remain of actual art? Perhaps Berlioz will be its sole representative. Not having studied
the pianoforte, he had an instinctive aversion to counterpoint. He is in this respect the opposite of Wagner, who was the
embodiment of counterpoint, and drew the utmost he could from its laws" (Saint-Saëns).)

How much finer, to my idea, are Berlioz's recitatives, with their long and winding rhythms,(91) than Wagner's
declamations, which--apart from the climax of a subject, where the air breaks into bold and vigorous phrases, whose
influence elsewhere is often weak--limit themselves to the quasi-notation of spoken inflections, and jar noisily against
the fine harmonies of the orchestra. Berlioz's orchestration, too, is of a more delicate temper, and has a freer life than
Wagner's, flowing in an impetuous stream, and sweeping away everything in its course; it is also less united and solid,
but more flexible; its nature is undulating and varied, and the thousand imperceptible impulses of the spirit and of
action are reflected there. It is a marvel of spontaneity and caprice.

(Footnote 91: Jacques Passy notes that with Berlioz the most frequent phrases consist of twelve, sixteen, eighteen, or
twenty bars. With Wagner, phrases of eight bars are rare, those of four more common, those of two still more so, while those of one bar are most frequent of all (Berlioz et Wagner, article published in Le Correspondant, 10 June, 1888.)

In spite of appearances, Wagner is a classicist compared with Berlioz; he carried on and perfected the work of the German classicists; he made no innovations; he is the pinnacle and the close of one evolution of art. Berlioz began a new art; and one finds in it all the daring and gracious ardour of youth. The iron laws that bound the art of Wagner are not to be found in Berlioz's early works, which give one the illusion of perfect freedom.(92)

(Footnote 92: One must make mention here of the poorness and awkwardness of Berlioz's harmony--which is incontestable--since some critics and composers have been able to see (Am I saying something ridiculous?--Wagner would say it for me) nothing but "faults of orthography" in his genius. To these terrible grammarians--who, two hundred years ago, criticised Molière on account of his "jargon"--I shall reply by quoting Schumann.

"Berlioz's harmonies, in spite of the diversity of their effect, obtained from very scanty material, are distinguished by a sort of simplicity, and even by a solidity and conciseness, which one only meets with in Beethoven.... One may find here and there harmonies that are commonplace and trivial, and others that are incorrect--at least according to the old rules. In some places his harmonies have a fine effect, and in others their result is vague and indeterminate, or it sounds badly, or is too elaborate and far-fetched. Yet with Berlioz all this somehow takes on a certain distinction. If one attempted to correct it, or even slightly to modify it--for a skilled musician it would be child's play--the music would become dull" (Article on the Symphonie fantastique).

But let us leave that "grammatical discussion" as well as what Wagner wrote on "the childish question as to whether it is permitted or not to introduce 'neologisms' in matters of harmony and melody" (Wagner to Berlioz, 22 February, 1860). As Schumann has said, "Look out for fifths, and then leave us in peace.")

As soon as the profound originality of Berlioz's music has been grasped, one understands why it encountered, and still encounters, so much secret hostility. How many accomplished musicians of distinction and learning, who pay honour to artistic tradition, are incapable of understanding Berlioz because they cannot bear the air of liberty breathed by his music. They are so used to thinking in German, that Berlioz's speech upsets and shocks them. I can well believe it. It is the first time a French musician has dared to think in French; and that is the reason why I warned you of the danger of accepting too meekly German ideas about Berlioz. Men like Weingartner, Richard Strauss, and Mottl--thoroughbred musicians--are, without doubt, able to appreciate Berlioz's genius better and more quickly than we French musicians. But I rather mistrust the kind of appreciation they feel for a spirit so opposed to their own. It is for France and French people to learn to read his thoughts; they are intimately theirs, and one day will give them their salvation.

* * * * *

Berlioz's other great originality lay in his talent for music that was suited to the spirit of the common people, recently raised to sovereignty, and the young democracy. In spite of his aristocratic disdain, his soul was with the masses. M. Hippeau applies to him Taine's definition of a romantic artist: "the plebeian of a new race, richly gifted, and filled with aspirations, who, having attained for the first time the world's heights, noisily displays the ferment of his mind and heart." Berlioz grew up in the midst of revolutions and stories of Imperial achievement. He wrote his cantata for the Prix de Rome in July, 1830, "to the hard, dull noise of stray bullets, which whizzed above the roofs, and came to flatten themselves against the wall near his window."(93) When he had finished this cantata, he went, "pistol in hand, to play the blackguard in Paris with the sainte canaille." He sang the Marseillaise, and made "all who had a voice and heart and blood in their veins"(94) sing it too. On his journey to Italy he travelled from Marseilles to Livourne with Mazzinin conspirators, who were going to take part in the insurrection of Modena and Bologna. Whether he was conscious of it or not, he was the musician of revolutions; his sympathies were with the people.

(Footnote 93: Mémoires, I, 155.)
Not only did he fill his scenes in the theatre with swarming and riotous crowds, like those of the Roman Carnival in the second act of *Benvenuto* (anticipating by thirty years the crowds of *Die Meistersinger*), but he created a music of the masses and a colossal style. His model here was Beethoven; Beethoven of the Eroica, of the C minor, of the A, and, above all, of the Ninth Symphony. He was Beethoven's follower in this as well as other things, and the apostle who carried on his work. And with his understanding of material effects and sonorous matter, he built edifices, as he says, that were "Babylonian and Ninevith," "music after Michelangelo," "on an immense scale."

From Beethoven," says Berlioz, "dates the advent in art of colossal forms" (*Mémoires*, II, 112). But Berlioz forgot one of Beethoven's models--Händel. One must also take into account the musicians of the French revolution: Mehul, Gossec, Cherubini, and Lesueur, whose works, though they may not equal their intentions, are not without grandeur, and often disclose the intuition of a new and noble and popular art.)

Berlioz thus describes the *Tibionnes* and the *Judex* of his *Te Deum*. Compare Heine's judgment: "Berlioz's music makes me think of gigantic kinds of extinct animals, of fabulous empires.... Babylon, the hanging gardens of Semiramis, the wonders of Nineveh, the daring buildings of Mizraim."

It was the *Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* for two orchestras and a choir, and the *Te Deum* for orchestra, organ, and three choirs, which Berlioz loved (whose finale *Judex crederis* seemed to him the most effective thing he had ever written(99)), as well as the *Impériale*, for two orchestras and two choirs, and the famous *Requiem*, with its "four orchestras of brass instruments, placed round the main orchestra and the mass of voices, but separated and answering one another at a distance." Like the *Requiem*, these compositions are often crude in style and of rather commonplace sentiment, but their grandeur is overwhelming. This is not due only to the hugeness of the means employed, but also to "the breadth of the style and to the formidable slowness of some of the progressions--whose final aim one cannot guess--which gives these compositions a strangely gigantic character."(100) Berlioz has left in these compositions striking examples of the beauty that may reveal itself in a crude mass of music. Like the towering Alps, they move one by their very immensity. A German critic says: "In these Cyclopean works the composer lets the elemental and brute forces of sound and pure rhythm have their fling."(101) It is scarcely music, it is the force of Nature herself. Berlioz himself calls his *Requiem* "a musical cataclysm."(102)

These hurricanes are let loose in order to speak to the people, to stir and rouse the dull ocean of humanity. The *Requiem* is a Last Judgment, not meant, like that of the Sixtine Chapel (which Berlioz did not care for at all) for great aristocracies, but for a crowd, a surging, excited, and rather savage crowd. The *Marche de Rakoczy* is less an Hungarian march than the music for a revolutionary fight; it sounds the charge; and Berlioz tells us it might bear Virgil's verses for a motto:--
When Wagner heard the *Symphonic funèbre et triomphale* he was forced to admit Berlioz's "skill in writing compositions that were popular in the best sense of the word."

"In listening to that symphony I had a lively impression that any little street boy in a blue blouse and red bonnet would understand it perfectly. I have no hesitation in giving precedence to that work over Berlioz's other works; it is big and noble from the first note to the last; a fine and eager patriotism rises from its first expression of compassion to the final glory of the apotheosis, and keeps it from any unwholesome exaggeration. I want gladly to express my conviction that that symphony will fire men's courage and will live as long as a nation bears the name of France."

(Footnote 103: Letter to some young Hungarians, 14 February, 1861. See the *Mémoires*, II, 212, for the incredible emotion which the *Marche de Rakoczy* roused in the audience at Budapest, and, above all, for the astonishing scene at the end:--

"I saw a man enter unexpectedly. He was miserably clad, but his face shone with a strange rapture. When he saw me, he threw himself upon me and embraced me with fervour; his eyes filled with tears, and he was hardly able to get out the words, 'Ah, monsieur, monsieur! moi Hongrois ... pauvre diable ... pas parler Français ... un poco Italiano. Pardonnez mon extase.... Ah! ai compris votre canon.... Oui, oui, la grande-bataille.... Allemands chiens!' And then striking his breast violently: 'Dans le coeur, moi ... je vous porte.... Ah! Français ... révolutionnaire ... savoir faire la musique des révolutions!'")

(Footnote 104: Written 5 May, 1841.)

How do such works come to be neglected by our Republic? How is it they have not a place in our public life? Why are they not part of our great ceremonies? That is what one would wonderfully ask oneself if one had not seen, for the last century, the indifference of the State to Art. What might not Berlioz have done if the means had been given him, or if his works had found a place in the fêtes of the Revolution? Unhappily, one must add that here again his character was the enemy of his genius. As this apostle of musical freedom, in the second part of his life, became afraid of himself and recoiled before the results of his own principles, and returned to classicism, so this revolutionary fell to sullenly disparaging the people and revolutions; and he talks about "the republican cholera," "the dirty and stupid republic," "the republic of street-porters and rag-gatherers," "the filthy rabble of humanity a hundred times more stupid and animal in its twitchings and revolutionary grimacings than the baboons and orang-outangs of Borneo." (Footnote 105: Berlioz never ceased to inveigh against the Revolution of 1848--which should have had his sympathies. Instead of finding material, like Wagner, in the excitement of that time for impassioned compositions, he worked at *L'Enfance du Christ*. He affected absolute indifference--he who was so little made for indifference. He approved the State's action, and despised its visionary hopes.) What ingratitude! He owed to these revolutions, to these democratic storms, to these human tempests, the best of all his genius--and he disowned it all. This musician of a new era took refuge in the past.

* * * *

Well, what did it matter? Whether he wished it or not, he opened out some magnificent roads for Art. He has shown the music of France the way in which her genius should tread; he has shown her possibilities she had never before dreamed of. He has given us a musical utterance at once truthful and expressive, free from foreign traditions, coming from the depths of our being, and reflecting our spirit; an utterance which responded to his imagination, to his instinct for what was picturesque, to his fleeting impressions, and his delicate shades of feeling. He has laid the strong foundation of a
national and popular music for the greatest republic in Europe.

These are shining qualities. If Berlioz had had Wagner's reasoning power and had made the utmost use of his intuitions, if he had had Wagner's will and had shaped the inspirations of his genius and welded them into a solid whole, I venture to say that he would have made a revolution in music greater than Wagner's own; for Wagner, though stronger and more master of himself, was less original and, at bottom, but the close of a glorious past.

Will that revolution still be accomplished? Perhaps; but it has suffered half a century's delay. Berlioz bitterly calculated that people would begin to understand him about the year 1940.(106)

After all, why be astonished that his mighty mission was too much for him? He was so alone.(107) As people forsook him, his loneliness stood out in greater relief. He was alone in the age of Wagner, Liszt, Schumann, and Franck; alone, yet containing a whole world in himself, of which his enemies, his friends, his admirers, and he himself, were not quite conscious; alone, and tortured by his loneliness. Alone--the word is repeated by the music of his youth and his old age, by the Symphonie fantastique and Les Troyens. It is the word I read in the portrait before me as I write these lines--the beautiful portrait of the Mémoires, where his face looks out in sad and stern reproach on the age that so misunderstood him.

(Footnote 106: "My musical career would finish very pleasingly if only I could live for a hundred and forty years" (Mémoires, II, 390).)

(Footnote 107: This solitude struck Wagner. "Berlioz's loneliness is not only one of external circumstances; its origin is in his temperament. Though he is a Frenchman, with quick sympathies and interests like those of his fellow-citizens, yet he is none the less alone. He sees no one before him who will hold out a helping hand, there is no one by his side on whom he may lean" (Article written 5 May, 1841). As one reads these words, one feels it was Wagner's lack of sympathy and not his intelligence that prevented him from understanding Berlioz. In his heart I do not doubt that he knew well who was his great rival. But he never said anything about it--unless perhaps one counts an odd document, certainly not intended for publication, where he (even he) compares him to Beethoven and to Bonaparte (Manuscript in the collection of Alfred Bovet, published by Mottl in German magazines, and by M. Georges de Massougnes in the Revue d'art dramatique, 1 January, 1902.).)

(The end)

Romain Rolland's essay: Berlioz

By Romain Rolland