The WORLD'S CONCERT HALL

ONE of the sweetest, most elevating and consoling gifts of heaven to man is music. Who has ever yielded at the singing of fresh children's voices! With music the young man woos the maiden of his choice. With song the bride or young wife expresses her longing for the absent one. Our meetings in the house of God are accompanied by devotional songs. And sad sooner succeeds in the house of mourning, and yet, what a relief this music is to the mourning hearts! With the sound of drum and trumpet and the shock of the cymbal the soldier plunges into the smoke and carnage of battle, and even the trained horses dance and curvet in time with the music and strain at the reins which restrain them, and learn the meaning of the different bugle calls. Love, anger, sorrow, enthusiasm, pain—all find a response and emotion of the human soul can be, and are, expressed in music.

The progress which has been made in the composition of music and in the building of musical instruments of every kind is enormous. The primitive instruments of the ancients and their monotonous music, or the barbaric music of barbarous or semi-civilized people and the intolerable noise which they call music cannot be compared with the expressive harmony of our music or with the multitude of beautiful and powerful musical instruments and in the execution of musical pieces our age has doubtless advanced further than any preceding time. In composition, however, in the art of producing musical pieces, the past century undoubtedly had greater masters than the present.

At the opening of the nineteenth century the musical leadership, which Italy had enjoyed for a considerable period, had passed to Germany, and in the twentieth century it appears as if Germany would also lose this exalted position in its turn, for in the field of art no nation can long hold the leadership. Perhaps the industrial and commercial development of Germany may be one of the causes why the number of its great composers is decreasing, for though prosperity is no obstacle to the enjoyment and exhilaration of art, yet it does not seem to form a specially favorable soil for the growing masters of this noble art.

When the nineteenth century ushered in, Handel and Mozart had raised German music to a pinnacle of glory, and Beethoven and Haydn were to follow. Chamber music has hitherto been at the zenith of their splendid powers, while Liszt, Weber, Meyerbeer and Schubert had reached their immortal careers. Before these thirteen great Mendelssohn, Schumann and Wagner had been born. This was therefore a golden age of instrumental and unaccompanied music of perfect music and unaccompanied musical works. Comparing the present age with that of nineteen time, we are compelled to admit that today there are no giants in the musical composition, for the three greatest composers of the present, Richard Strauss, Anton Dvorak and Richard Strauss, only the last named a German, do not reach up to the standard of the heroic age.

But though there are today no German composers of commanding genius, yet there has never been a time when their works were so highly esteemed and produced with such perfection as the highest stage of development in Germany.

In England also musical education has reached a high degree of perfection, but England never produced many composers and none of commanding genius. Richard Elgar has, however, succeeded in meeting with as much approval that he is being reckoned among the great composers. The majority of British and Irish composers, however, are content to follow in the footsteps of German masters, the latter ones, though following their own ideals, love to walk abroad in the mantle of Wagner or Brahms.

France has for three centuries occupied a prominent place on the musical stage and her great masters, Boieldieu, Auber, Herold, Adam and Chopin offer much that is interesting and valuable. Yet it must be acquired that here the tendency was mainly to write for the opera and for the production of light and frivolous music. Of a more serious and nobler character are the modern musical dramatists Berlioz, Gounod and Massenet, and in this premiere that the same love of music in its higher forms notes the development of a school under the leadership of Caesar Frank which gives special study to the noble forms of symphony and to chamber music, and the deep and earnest compositions of Camille, Saint-Saens, who has followed German models, are becoming more popular. Saint-Saens, though 71 years old, lately traveled in this country.

But if France has in modern times furnished important musical contributions to musical literature, Italy has done still less, though this country produced an unbroken line of great composers from Monteverde in the sixteenth century to Verdi in the nineteenth. Of the newer Italian composers, who for the most part write only superficial, extravagant and sensual works, only Pietro Mascagni achieved a genuine success with his beautiful and fiery "Cavalleria Rusticana." Puccini also, the composer of "Tosca" and "La Boheme," has gained the respect of the musical-loving public.

The newest field of musical composition and virtuosity has been occupied by Scandinavian and Slavic composers and virtuosos. It is remarkable how that the brilliant striving to the most difficult degree characterizes the Russian and Scandinavian music, while the Slavic music is more melodious and more rhythmical. Of the Scandinavian composers Edvard Grieg, Johann Svendsen and Richard Nordraak have reached a high degree of perfection, even to the highest form of musical composition, the symphony, but Grieg's fame rests chiefly on his lyric songs and his piano compositions, which are full of originality and charm. Svendsen's symphonies are also full of originality and charm. Svendsen's symphonies are also full of originality and charm. Svendsen's symphonies are also