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**VARIOUS**

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EDITORS FOR THE CLASS OF '96.

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GEORGE HENRY NETTLETON.

EDWIN SIDNEY OVIATT.

PHILIP CURRAN PECK.

CHAUNCEY WETMORE WELLS.

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GOUNOD'S "SAINTE CECILIA" MASS.

"God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear,  
The rest may reason and welcome—'tis we musicians know."

*Browning's Abt Vogler.*

WHEN Gounod died the critics were ready to assign him his position among musicians. Two years have passed since then and some of the critics are ready to reverse their decisions. It is still very questionable whether he can be named with Mozart and Haydn as a purely religious writer, but his fame seems, on the whole, to increase, much to the disappointment, doubtless, of the critics.

Those whom the flight of that fine spirit moved could hardly help being offended at reading that Gounod's anthems and masses are fast disappearing from the choir lofts, that the *Redemption* and *Mors et Vita* are sung less and less every year. *Faust* was permitted to be immortal and *Romeo and Juliet* allowed to rank with the work of Saint-Saens, but the master strain in Gounod's nature, the religious element, was disregarded. Nevertheless, that which has transfigured the play of Goethe and that of Shakes-

peare is Gounod's spirit of prayerfulness. Marguerite is no more Gretchen but a saintly creature; the mawkishly sentimental passages of the Montague and the Capulet become really noble.

As it seems indubitable that Gounod's gift was religious and that the hope of his immortality must be so based, it is natural that we should look for the acme of his work somewhere within the limits of the church liturgy rather than in such semi-secular work as oratorio. Inquiry rests satisfied with the *Sainte Cecilia Festival Mass*. Here we find the quintessence of what we hoped for in the *Redemption* choruses and Marguerite's death-song. From the *Kyrie* to the *Agnus Dei* there is a unified spirit of worship, and in this mass we can say, as we seldom can of this composer, there is no blemish.

To the unsensuous soul it seems like latter day idolatry to say that one needs the "dim religious light" of the cathedral for surrounding, and yet to perform high mass outside the cathedral arches seems like rending the veil. The "Lord have mercy upon us" of the *Kyrie*, Gounod conceives as the beginning of worship while yet secular affairs have freshly left their stain upon us; hence he makes his theme simple but Gregorian, and it is not until the plea for pardon has been repeated again and again that he throws aside restraint to express for us the sore travail of the soul that rises to a cry. It is much in the spirit of Gethsemane, a reflex of the "agony and bloody sweat," the struggle and the victory. There is also much that seems to come from a medieval monastery relieved of its barbaric hindrances.

It gives one light upon the nature of this great work to see a kneeling figure here and there, perhaps a Saint Agnes in a far corner of the transept—an embodiment of all that worship may mean. For there is an inner priesthood at which we, of the laity, who stand at its threshold, must forever wonder. Such penitence and yet such innocence! Not even a child's voice is so touching.

There follows the quavering of the organ and the uplifting of a soprano voice in the *Gloria in Excelsis*. It

passes into a "dim roll of voices" and becomes distant and majestic: and here the composer recalls us to a pained sense of unworthiness couched in the prayer of the tenor and bass soli. One always feels a certain priestliness of intercession in the "qui tolis peccata mundi," and when the chorus passes on into the exalting spirit of the gloria there is a feeling of regret as if one had lost a darling sorrow.

It has always seemed to me that the first part of this *Credo* should be sung "with the throat of a whirlwind," to use Carlyle's phrase, so grand and penetrative is its power, as if, somehow, one had struck the keynote of the universe. Gounod has given us, in contrast, the infinite quiet and peace in the "mystery of the holy incarnation," and the whole human-divine story which follows in the Nicene creed passes before us. Here is the face of the Sufferer, beautiful against a background of gloom; at last the end with its blessed release and the cool silence of the tomb. "Crucifixus" answered by "Crucifixus," seems like the melting of divine pity. "Crucifixus!"—Heaven grown dark with grief has hidden her face—until the awakening of chords, the shout of triumph from the grave, the dawn of the Resurrection, the reverberating of endless Hallelujahs.

How one can so conceive the inner mystery of mysteries as Gounod has done in the *Sanctus* evokes the subtlest analysis. He has taken a mere "three-time," which may be readily degraded into a waltz, and has made it the medium of the best piece of worshipful music he has given us. It would seem at first that such treatment would ill fit the sacred words, for there is an indefinable sacredness in the word "holy." It suggests all that a shrine implies, and coupled with Gounod's music we gather the impression of unalloyed adoration. There must have been an inherent, though, perhaps, an unconscious fitness, in assigning this theme to a tenor voice. The bass voice is said to represent pathos and the baritone the dramatic quality, but the tenor seems reserved for passion. Worship may be called the ideal passion, and hence Gounod,

following the precedent which the older masters have set, has tacitly agreed with them that the high heroism of the soul should be expressed by the tenor of all other male voices.

Passing to the *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*, simple and peaceful after such heights of beauty, one gets the effect of benediction. One is, perhaps, dimly conscious of having passed through the whole range of religious experience and of having one's emotions translated into the noblest language possible. Nor can one escape without feeling that the world jars, somehow, when one has no shrine like this for retreat.

Wonder may arise at the possibility of a Gounod in the hurry of the nineteenth century, and yet, recognized or not, the shrine is perennial and even inevitable. Wagner can show us the passions and struggles of mankind, and these are better and nearer to us; but Gounod has still a word of soothing and a refuge when the warfare is too fierce.

*Chauncey Wetmore Wells.*



### PICTURES IN SEASON.

Gray sky, gray sea,  
A white sail slipping listlessly  
Over the quiet heave  
Of the water that catches the light on the rise,  
E'er it rolls to the trough and in dull drab dies.  
—The sail is lost in the dreary skies.

Gray fields, gray sky,  
A white plumed bird wings slowly by  
Seeking the banished sun.  
Now a bird, now a shape, now a dot on the gray;  
It is gone, there is only the fading day  
Whose death-song moans in the gaunt tree's sway.

Gray eyes, gray gown,  
A glance—the lashes sweeping down  
Rest on a white, white cheek.  
As a picture that trembles through up-welling tears  
Is effaced in the sobbing, so disappears  
This fancy, too, in the mist of years.

*Charles E. DeCamp.*



## EDWARD ROWLAND SILL.

What if some morning, when the stars were paling,  
 And the dawn whitened, and the East was clear,  
 Strange peace and rest fell on me from the presence  
 Of a benignant spirit standing near.

And what if then, while the still morning brightened,  
 And freshened in the elm the summer's breath,  
 Should gravely smile on me the gentle angel  
 And take my hand and say, "My name is Death!"

NOT long after these lines were written and while for their author "the still morning brightened", there came to him a spirit who said "My name is Death." To him perhaps it brought peace and rest, but to those who had learned to know the noble-hearted poet it brought sincere sorrow. Death came to Sill when his mind was broadening out into a richness of thought and feeling which must have placed him, had he lived, in the front rank of American poets. His future was full of brilliant promise, and the little that he had written seemed only preparation for greater work that was to follow. He has, however, left a little book of verse which is able to draw the reader from the things of this earth into sympathy with a far nobler and purer life, a book therefore which is worthy to live.

In every line he wrote we are made aware of the spotless purity of his mind. We know it to be the simple unaffected expression of his nature, given unconsciously and without effort. He has felt, but conquered, the allurements of sensual things, as he tells us in the "Venus of Milo." The Medicean Venus, "naked like a slave," represents to him the

"Spirit of all short-lived love  
 And outward, earthly loveliness."

Beautiful as she is, her siren power is wasted upon him. It is the Venus de Milo, the "love celestial", who, with her more noble beauty, draws the poet to her feet, a worshipper, and shows him the mockery in the other's seductive laugh.

Macaulay has said that the combination of poet and thinker was unnatural and almost impossible. While Sill was essentially a thinker, his thoughts were not of a kind which could have been set down in prose. They were full of a delicate, poetic beauty, which left him in the form of his expression no choice but verse. He loved to ponder on the mysteries of this world and the infinite, and his poetry is the result of these meditations. It was not Macaulay's "fine frenzy" and vivid picture-painting. It did not show the wild, imaginative flights of primitive poets, nor did it tell of men and soul-stirring deeds, yet it was true poetry and of the most noble kind.

In his verse, Sill has told the story of his spiritual life. We can see him clearly as he struggles with the ardent eagerness of his nature toward the highest and most noble things. Never does he despair, never does he feel with Byron that "right and wrong are accidents," and this life is a "barren being" from which we reap nothing. He was not absorbed, as many poets are, in the contemplation of self, but with penetrating insight watched and sympathized with others in their life's battles.

He was one who saw in men the

"Inner light that but the few divine"

and

"The unseen beauty that doeth faintly gleam  
In stars and flowers and waters where they roll:  
The unheard music whose faint echoes even  
Make whosoever hears a homesick soul  
Thereafter, till he follows it to heaven."

*A. D. Baldwin.*

## IDOLS MADE OF MUD.

HE sat on a round stone in the middle of the field and watched the water ooze up around his boots as he pressed them in the matted grass. The snow had vanished suddenly during the night save for a ragged line beneath the fences, and there was a softness in the air, a deeper blue caught by the little pools between the hillocks. Spring was drawing its first breath, but there was no meaning in it to the man. Two troubled creases lined his forehead as he looked up and addressed the walking stick planted in the ground before him.

"Yes, she must be tall, quite tall, if this novel is to be strong," he said, "and have dark hair touched with red. That is my ideal heroine; she must be large. And then fine eyes, dark with long lashes, and a haughty pose of the head. She must appear, too, as often as possible, in white with a long train. Fan will give me points on the clothes, Fan is—Jove, she'd like that." He turned his eyes toward the yellow streak of road between the black fields where a little girl carrying a tin pail and dressed in scarlet plodded along. She became only a red blotch in the distance, where the pail caught the level rays of the sun and sent a white gleam back. "I suppose if Fan were here she would run after that child and ask her to pose in the road while she sketched her in. But then, Fan is doing soldiers now—short fat soldiers. She doesn't like long ones. I fancy it's because she's such a little thing herself. I wish I weren't such a long-legged fool," and he looked savagely down at the annoying stretch of muddy leggings, "if I weren't a fool I could get some mental conception of a proud beauty with lustrous eyes, who didn't seem like a silly dummy in a fashion plate with a black gown and an imbecile grin! But she must be effective, strong and—why did I think I could write a novel? Come, out of this! I am no further than when I started and it is late."