

however, best suited to his peculiar talent, which lay in the interpretation of the symphonic works of the classical composers; and, therefore, abandoning the opera, at no slight pecuniary sacrifice, he devoted himself to establishing the Symphony soirées, which afterwards became so famous and successful.

The festival orchestra included one hundred and one instruments,* exclusive of the organ, which was built specially for the occasion. The organist was Mr. Dudley Buck, of Boston. Mr. Thomas had this powerful orchestra so perfectly under control that it could be made to represent, with equal perfection, the sighing of a breeze, "a vaporous mist of melody," as in the introduction to *Lohengrin*, or the triumphant shouts with which the approaching conqueror is greeted in Brahms's "Triumphlied." These two works with Beethoven's 7th Symphony, constituted the programme for the first evening.

Johannes Brahms is a name comparatively little known on this continent, and the performance of his "Triumphlied" at Cincinnati was the first that had ever been attempted anywhere out of Germany. Born at Hamburg, in 1830, Brahms early devoted himself to music. It was not, however, till 1852 that he attracted any public notice. It happened that in that year Joachim, the celebrated violinist, being at Brunswick and needing some one to accompany him on the piano, employed young Brahms. The work they first took up was Beethoven's Opus 47, (his greatest work for the violin), but, to Joachim's despair, it was found that there was a difference in pitch between violin and piano. "That is very easily remedied," said the young musician, "I can alter the key from A minor to A flat minor." This feat so astonished Joachim that he took an interest in his clever companion, examined some of his compositions, and, finding them full of merit, sent him, with a highly commendatory letter, to pursue his studies under Schumann. The latter was impressed very much as Joachim had been; indeed, he carried his admiration of Brahms so far as to speak of him in a letter as "the New Messiah."

The text of the "Triumphlied" is taken from the 19th chap. of Revelations. "Alleluia! Praise the Lord! Honour and power and glory to God; for in righteousness and truth the Lord giveth judgment," are the words of the first movement, which expresses most grandly a cry of gladness, a shout of joy. The second movement, in which praise is joyfully ascribed to the Most High, is similar in spirit to the first, but is in slower time and is more

expressive of fervid adoration than of eager excitement. The third movement expresses the welcome of the nation to their victorious Emperor Wilhelm, to whom this triumphal hymn is dedicated. This wonderful composition, it is stated, was placed in rehearsal lately, at the Crystal Palace, London, but had, to be abandoned as impracticable. Its difficulties are, indeed, extraordinary (one of these being a double chorus of eight parts), so that it was more dreaded by the festival singers than anything else they attempted. Still they carried it through nobly, to the great delight and surprise of Mr. Thomas, who congratulated them warmly on their success.

Beethoven's Seventh Symphony (performed after the "Triumphlied") displays the great composer's powers in their full maturity, having been written when he was forty-four years of age, before the terrible calamity of deafness had fallen on him. It is in four movements: many of its strains, wildly joyous, invite to mirth and gaiety; but in the allegretto, there steals upon the ear a sadder strain, intensely melodious, and heavenly in its soothing tenderness; and this again is succeeded by a quick playful movement, in which we seem to recognise, as it were, laughing streams of music flowing over rocks of massive chords, and here and there breaking into rippling runs, or bubbling up in foam-like shakes. Its performance occupied forty-five minutes. An effort was made to encore the allegretto movement; but this and all similar demands, save one, were invariably refused by Mr. Thomas. The exception made was in the case of Rossini's "Night Shades no Longer," sung by the school children.

The first night's performance ended with selections from "Lohengrin." Ever since 1862 Theodore Thomas has been labouring to introduce Wagner's music into America, but it is only during the last three years that his efforts have been attended by any marked success. At present Wagner enjoys in this country an equal popularity with the sweetest masters of Italian song. The general characteristics of his works are pretty well known. His imagination revels in the gigantic and grand, and he aims at, and we may fairly say accomplishes, effects never contemplated by earlier composers. Complaint has been made of the "anarchy" of Wagner's scores; but on this occasion Thomas had culled and arranged all the more melodious passages with excellent effect. The first selection presented the advent of *Lohengrin* in his boat, drawn by a swan, and then a tumultuous chorus succeeding the defeat of the Duke Frederic by an unknown knight (*Lohengrin*). The second scene begins with a representation of day-break, twelve trumpets sounding the "réveil," and answering one another from distant towers. The effect of this was magnificent, and called

* There were ten violas, one harp, ten violoncellos, nine double-basses, one piccolo-flute, three flutes, four oboes, one English horn, four clarionets, one bass clarinet, four bassoons, four horns, twelve cornets, three trombones, two tubas, and two double drums, &c.