

The necessity of preparing oneself for the hearing of good music is frequently overlooked, and yet it is no uncommon thing for an individual to miss at a concert the greater part of the pleasure and profit that might have been his had he not neglected some apparently unimportant detail in making himself ready for the occasion. Good music, especially when unfamiliar, requires preparation on the part of the listener as well as the performer, the main point, of course, being to have the mind free from serious preoccupation. One might as well remain at home as attend a concert when the brain is troubled with any difficult problem which cannot be laid aside for the time. When that trial balance shows an error somewhere in the accounts and hours of hard work have failed to find it, or when that case in court is proving unusually difficult, or when the mind is absorbed in any other serious question what effect can a Bach fugue or a Beethoven adagio produce on us? A comic song might divert the attention, but classical music, except when very familiar, requires a certain concentration of the faculties which is rarely possible when the listener is not comparatively free from worry. To rush off to a concert while in the midst of hard brain-work without allowing a reasonable time for the brain to become rested often leads to the lamentable result that the best of music will make no impression upon us. If one merely wishes to be diverted, the most trivial tune is frequently better than a well-written sonata; and yet, to appear paradoxical, if we were to take our music a little more seriously we should find much greater enjoyment in it. It is scarcely worth while listening to good music unless our minds are in a reasonably receptive condition, and this condition cannot be arrived at without some care and forethought on our part. The managers of music halls are not merely providing for our physical well-being when they take pains to render the buildings as comfortable as possible, for petty annoyances such as undue heat or cold or a glaring light will prevent us from enjoying music as effectually as a few small pebbles in a shoe will mar the pleasure of an otherwise delightful pedestrian tour. To reach the best results the mind of the listener, the music and the surroundings should all be in harmony. Apparently slight details are sometimes of very great importance in attaining this end. Those who were fortunate enough to sit in All Saints' Church a week ago last Saturday afternoon, between the hours of four and five, will not need to be reminded how much the effect of the rich tone of the organ was enhanced by the changing shadows and the dim half-lights, far more beautiful and harmonious than would have been either the darkness of mid-winter, with the inevitable artificial light in the chancel, or the bright glare of summer at that same hour.

A copy of a "Dictionary of Musical Terms," compiled and edited by Dr. Th. Baker, has been received from the publishing house of G. Schirmer, New York. Though a small and inexpensive work it contains more than nine thousand words and phrases selected from six different languages, besides a brief summary of rules for the pronunciation of Italian, German and French. The definitions and explanations are limited, usually, to a few lines for each word, yet they are very clear and satisfactory. To the more important subjects a larger amount of space is devoted, over a page being allowed under such headings as *Form*, *Interval*, *Greek music*, *Chord*, etc. The information is tabulated in several instances for the sake of greater clearness and precision. The work is brought well up to date, as shown by the insertion of words of recent introduction, or which are now used in a sense different from the original. The paper is of good quality and the type large enough so that the print can be read without effort. Altogether the book is to be highly recommended for the use of those who require a dictionary convenient in size and reasonable in price.

The same firm has commenced the publication of a collection of operas, in vocal score, for which unusual completeness and accuracy are claimed. The intention is to print the original words with an English translation below, but this is departed from in the case of the first of the series, Gounod's "Faust," an Italian version being used to replace the original French text. The prices of the works to be published will be about the same as those of the cheapest editions now available, but the presswork, to judge from the present volume, will be of a superior character.

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## Art Notes.

ONE is sometimes inclined to suspect Millais' entire artistic sincerity during the building up of his monumental popularity. It is hard to conceive that his "Sleeping" and "Waking," "Yes or No," and "Yes" were a natural gradation from the asceticism of the early days of quasi-religious themes, stiff compositions, and ugly people. And it requires a somewhat large draft on our credulity to accept as a mere coincidence the fact that the change in his artistic convictions was immediately followed by a material improvement in his worldly fortunes. Like Little Billee, Sir John Millais has shown considerable business capacity—not that that, in itself, is in the slightest degree to his discredit: even the heroic and Dantesque Michel Angelo possessed that quality; and his bitterest denunciations were against, not the indifferent Philistine, not the slow of heart to believe the doctrines of high art, not the sordid creatures of a corrupt court, but the various individuals who had fleeced him of his hard earned savings, and the Pope who beggared him by his grinding parsimony.

One of the pictures on the lines of "The Hugonots," but much inferior to it in inspiration and depth, was the "Black Brunswicker"—a handsome black uniform bidding farewell to a pretty white satin gown. Then there was the portrait of a good-looking young woman, standing with her hands behind her (one holding a photograph), entitled "Yes or No;" and this was followed by the sequel to the story which is the meeting of the aforesaid young woman with a goodish looking young man in side whiskers and an ulster, who is accompanied by a portmanteau which has evidently been hastily deposited in the hall by the cabman who thought it discreet to retire before the lovers embraced, and Millais got a "focus" on them.

A large number of Millais' pictures are open to criticism; and it has been freely bestowed upon them by the foreign visitors to the Academy who find them commonplace and *bourgeois*. He has painted numerous canvasses of pretty children which have won him the admiration of every mother in the kingdom, but which have alienated him somewhat from the inner circle of the lovers of "art for art's sake." Not that it can be denied that even amongst these rather "kiss mammy" productions was occasionally a picture whose technical merits raised it above the level of the commonplace. The "Caller Herin," picture and the "Cinderella" and the "Sweetest eyes were ever seen" are so masterly painted as to command the applause of even the fastidious critic who searches either for some originality of theme or novelty of treatment. The "Bubbles" picture always seemed to me to be an artificial composition of an over-dressed but very pretty boy on a theatre-property log. This latter accessory has figured in more than one of Millais' pictures and is a regrettable addition to them as it always reminds one of the section of a tree on which the Christmas robins perch—the robins which the disciples of Buffon have found to possess detachable heads, and sweetmeats in their little insides. But if the subject pictures of Millais' are rarely of the sort that live beyond a passing day and generation, there are a few, a very few, which may arrest the critic of the future. Of these the finest, to my mind, is "The North-West Passage," which unfortunately has the insurmountable demerit of being composed almost exactly on the lines of a wood-cut in an old number of "Cornhill," by "great little" Fred. Walker. But if you can wink at the borrowed composition you cannot fail to enjoy the picture. The canvas represents an old sea dog sitting in his study surrounded by maps and flags. His daughter sits at his feet, with one hand clasping his, the other turning over the pages of a book—a record probably of the hardships of former searchers for a North-West passage. The canvas is large, the figures being life-size: and a kind of amplitude—a flowing and sumptuous quality—distinguishes this splendid achievement. Another fine work by the popular painter is the "Boyhood of Sir Walter Raleigh: a spirited and powerful presentment of an imaginative child listening eagerly to the tales of a swarthy sailor. The blue sea rolls beyond them and seagulls wheel over head. But space forbids a more detailed or critical account of the picture; and my next notes must contain a reference to Sir John's (he and Watts were offered baronetcies at the same time) greatest achievements (if you omit some marvels of ingenious design in his Pre-Raphaelite days)—his portraits.

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