artistic probity to say as much to a lady who sings so very well, and is otherwise so attractive as Lady Ramsay, is best known to himself.

I have been at some excellent concerts of good chamber music given by Miss Emily Shinner, Miss Fillunger, and Mr Leonard Borwick, and by Miss Amina Goodwin, Madame Lilian Griffiths, and Mr Paul Ludwig at Queen's Hall—two independent sets of high-class concerts which were well worth the subscription. Herr Zeldenrust's pianoforte recital proved him to be very neat, smart, and vigorous with his fingers, and gifted with a high degree of musical intelligence; but he failed to convince me that his evident enjoyment of his skill in playing was accompanied by much love of what he played; and so the impression he left was not very deep. Miss Douste de Fortis and her sister, Miss Jeanne Douste, who has now become an accomplished concert singer, have been active as usual: I heard them at a *matinée* given at Brinsmeads' by Miss Edith Nalborough, whose pianoforte playing I am not able to judge from the little I heard of it—though that was satisfactory as far as it went. One gentleman, Mr Sidney Dark, invited me to a vocal and dramatic recital at which he alternated various bass songs, from *Qui sdegno* to A Friar of Orders Grey,* with recitations from standard authors, from Marlowe to Rudyard Kipling. I heard Mandalay, Fuzzy Wuzzy, and the Friar, and am bound to say that Mr Dark acquitted himself, both as elocutionist and singer, very handsomely, and with a certain personal ability not too common in his profession. A different sort of combination of the orator with the musician was that effected by Miss d'Esterre Keeling in her lectures on great composers. As a rule I detest lady-lecturers on

* Title song of "a drawing room operetta" (1872) by William Mason, with lyric ascribed to E. Legge.

music, because they never even pretend to say what they think; but Miss d'Esterre Keeling relied on her mother-wit, and made it go as far as a ton of clergy. I disagreed with some of her observations, and gathered from a certain severity of style on her part towards her audience that she had a low opinion of our intelligence, which was doubtless justified; but I was not bored; and the playing was adequate. Probably Mr Isidore de Lara started a Parisian fashion in opening his recital on the 17th by a lecture from Paul Milliet, the editor of Le Monde Artiste. I say probably, since my pilgrimage to Bayreuth, of which I shall presently have plenty to say, prevents me from answering for anything that happened last week.

BAYREUTH'S INDIFFERENCE TO BEAUTY

The World, 1 August 1894

When I ran across to Bayreuth the other day I was fully aware that the cost of my trip would have been better spent in bringing a German critic to England. And I greatly regret that this article is not written in German, and for a German paper, since it is now evident that, as far as any musical awakening and impulse can come from one country to another, it must come for the present from England to Bayreuth, and not from Bayreuth to England.

First, as to the wonderful Bayreuth orchestra, to the glories of which we have been taught to look with envious despair. I beg to observe here, in the most uncompromising manner, that the Bayreuth orchestra, judged by London standards, is not a first-rate orchestra, but a very carefully worked up second-rate one. The

results of the careful working up are admirable; the smoothness, the perfect *sostenuto*, the unbroken flow of tone testify to an almost perfect orchestral execution in passages which lend themselves to such treatment. But there are two factors in the effect produced by an orchestra: the quality of the execution, and the quality of the instruments on which the execution is done. How much this may vary may be judged by the wide range of prices for musical instruments, even leaving out of account the scarcity values reached by certain exceptionally desirable old fiddles and bassoons.

Take, for example, the cheapest and most popular wind instrument in the orchestra—the cornet. Heaven knows how low the prices of the vilest specimens of cornet may run! but between the cheapest orchestrally presentable cornet and a first-rate one by Courtois or a good English maker the variation in price, without counting anything for electroplating or decoration of any sort, is from about thirtyfive shillings to eight or ten pounds. Fiddles range from a few shillings to the largest sums any orchestral player can afford to give for them; and the scale of prices for woodwind instruments varies from one to three figures.

Now, if there were such a thing as an international musical parliament, I should certainly agitate for a return of the prices of the instruments used in the Bayreuth and Crystal Palace orchestras respectively; and I should be surprised if the German total came to as much as half the English one. In the brass especially, the peculiar dull rattle of inferior thin metal at once strikes an ear accustomed to the smooth, firm tone of the more expensive instruments used in England. There is a difference in brightness too; but that I leave out of the question, as possibly due to the difference between Continental and English pitch, a difference which is all to the bad for us.

In judging the woodwind I am on less certain ground, since the tone is so greatly affected by the way in which the reed is cut. I have heard in the street what I supposed to be an execrable cracked cornet, and on coming round the corner have found an old man playing a clarinet with an old slack reed as easy for his feeble jaws as the reed one cuts for a child in a cornfield. The tone produced by such ancient men and that produced by Lazarus in his best days (which was, I think, purer, if less rich, than Mühlfeld's) mark the two poles of my experience of clarinet-playing; and I have always found that in German orchestras the standard tone leans more to the man in the street than to Lazarus.

Unfortunately, I am not expert enough to discriminate confidently between the difference due to the cutting of the reed and that due to the quality of the instrument; but except in the case of unusually fine players, who generally take the first chance of coming to England and settling here, the German woodwind player is content with a cheaper tone than the English one; and Bayreuth is no exception to this rule. The oboe there is as reedy as the *cor anglais* is here. The strings, as compared with ours, are deficient in power and richness; and even in the case of the horns, which we somehow or other cannot play, whilst the Germans can, the tone is much rougher and more nèarly allied to that of the Alpine cowhorn than what may be called the standard tone here.

I rather harp on the word standard, because the facts that so many of our best orchestral players are Germans, and that Mr August Manns, the conductor whose band, in the wind section, puts the Germans most completely to shame in point of fineness of tone, is himself not merely a German, but a Prussian, conclusively prove that the inferiority of the German orchestra to the English is not an inferiority in natural capacity, but an

inferiority in the current national standard of musical beauty—that is, an inferiority in the higher physical culture, and consequently in the quality of the demand to which the orchestral supply is a response.

That this inferiority is no new thing, and was well weighed by Wagner himself, is clear from the stress which he laid on the superiority of the instruments used by our Philharmonic band, and also by the fact that he always cited the Conservatoire concerts in Paris as the source of what he had learned from actual experience as to fineness of orchestral execution. All the other points he so strenuously urged on conductors have been mastered at Bayreuth; and the superficialities of the Mendelssohnian system have disappeared.

But the material of it all—the brute physical sound of the instruments which are so ably handled—still remains comparatively cheap and ugly; and the worst of it is that no German seems to care. As far as I can make out, the payment of an extra five pounds to an instrument maker for the sake of a finer tone would strike both conductor and player as an unreasonable waste of money.

And yet this German indifference to the final degrees of excellence in instrumental tone is conscientiousness itself compared to their atrocious insensibility to the beauty of the human voice and the graces of a fine vocal touch. The opening performance of Parsifal this season was, from the purely musical point of view, as far as the principal singers were concerned, simply an abomination. The bass howled, the tenor bawled, the barítone sang flat, and the soprano, when she condescended to sing at all, and did not merely shout her words, screamed, except in the one unscreamable song of Herzeleide's death, in which she subsided into commonplaceness.

The bass, who was rather flustered, perhaps from nervousness, was especially brutal in his treatment of

the music of Gurnemanz; and it struck me that if he had been a trombone player in the band, instead of a singer, the conductor, Levi of Munich, would have remonstrated. Indeed, I presently heard a trombone player, who was helping with the fanfares outside the theatre between the acts, pulled up by the sub-conductor for being "a little too strong." Accordingly, having the opportunity of exchanging a few words with Levi afterwards, I expressed my opinion about the bass in question. Levi appeared surprised, and, declaring that the singer had the best bass voice in Germany, challenged me to find him anyone who would sing the part better, to which I could only respond with sufficient emphasis by offering to sing it better myself, upon which he gave me up as a lunatic.

It had to be explained to him that I was accustomed to the "smooth" singing popular in England. That settled the question for the Bayreuth conductor. Good singing there is merely "glatt," obviously an effeminate, silly, superficial quality, unsuited to the utterances of primeval heros. The notion that this particular sort of smoothness is one of the consequences of aiming at beauty of tone and singing in tune is apparently as strange in Germany as the notion that it is more truly virile to sing like a man than like a bullock.

If I had passed the whole season listening to Alvary, Klafsky, and Wiegand at Drury Lane, no doubt I should not have noticed any great deficiency in Grengg or Rosa Sucher. Even as it was, after the first three performances my ear became so corrupted that the second performance of Parsifal did not infuriate me as the first one did. I had become accustomed to second-rate intonation, especially after Tannhäuser, in which from beginning to end there was not a vocal note placed, I will not say as Melba or Miss Eames or the de Reszkes would have

placed it, but as any tolerable English concert singer would have placed it.

This inveterate carelessness of intonation is only partly due to bad method. It is true that German singers at Bayreuth do not know how to sing: they shout; and you can see them make a vigorous stoop and lift with their shoulders, like coalheavers, when they have a difficult note to tackle, a *pianissimo* on any note above the stave being impossible to them.

But this system is nothing like so injurious to them as that of many of the operatic singers to whom we are accustomed. Their voices, it is true, get stale and rough; but they last astonishingly in that condition; the singers themselves are as robust as dray horses; and sixty appears to be about the prime of their shouting life. The thin, worn, shattered voice, with its goat-bleat or tremolo, and its sound as if it had taken to drink and wrecked its nerves and constitution, all shockingly common here, even among quite young singers, is not to be heard, as a rule, at Bayreuth. Singing there, in fact, is exactly like public speaking in England—not a fine art, but a means of placing certain ideas intelligibly and emphatically before the public without any preoccupation as to beauty of voice or grace of manner.

The music-dramas, are, so to speak, effectively debated; and the exposition of the poetic theme has all the qualities of a good Budget speech; but there is just about as much charm of voice and style as there is at a conference of the National Liberal Federation. The English political speaker learns his business by practice, and has neither the vices of the artificial elocutionist nor the fascinations of the cultivated artist. Nobody will listen to his voice for its own sake; but he does not break it: it lasts him until he is old enough to retire; and his general health is improved by the vigorous exercise of his lungs.

And that is just exactly the case of the German singer. Unfortunately, this disqualifies him from presenting the works of Wagner as completely as Sir William Harcourt is disqualified from playing Hamlet—a matter which will appear more fully when I come to describe the fate of Parsifal and Tannhäuser in the hands of German singers as compared with that of Lohengrin as performed by Belgian, Roumanian, American, and English singers. For I shall require more than one article to make myself sufficiently unpleasant to help those German lovers of music who are in revolt against the coarseness and laxity of German taste in this matter, and who are struggling to awaken the national conscience to the impossibility of a school of art in which the first lesson is one of callous indifference to beauty.

THE BAYREUTH FESTIVAL

Pall Mall Budget, 2, 9, and 16 August 1894

I.—ITS IMPROPRIETIES

[U] I begin with the improprieties of Bayreuth mainly because everybody else is likely to begin at the other end. There is something unbecoming in my plan, I know; for the journey to Bayreuth is essentially a pilgrimage, and should be described altogether in that spirit. But I have a constitutional inaptitude for solemn occasions which makes me the worst pilgrim in the world. It is not, believe me, that I am deficient in depth of feeling or seriousness of character. Rather, on that very account, the spectacle of people deliberately appointing a day and hour for a solemn mood, and making elaborate and costly mechanical preparations without the least misgiving as to their being able to live up to them when the hour strikes, is one which brings