of difficulty, he enabled a host of teachers in elementary schools, girls' clubs, and institutes of various kinds to adopt them and so develop what might otherwise have been a mere rescue into a genuine revival. The reality of that revival is proved in the simplest of ways. In schools, clubs, and institutes, in city slum and village alike, you will find old and young singing, humming, or whistling such tunes as 'Dashing away with the smoothing iron,' 'Oh no, John,' 'Admiral Benbow,' 'The lark in the morn,' and dozens more of delightful ditties that but for Cecil Sharp might have been lost. True, they do not achieve the kind of vogue that stamps the 'winner' from Charing Cross Road or New York. They are not played by orchestras in restaurants, and the street organ as a rule knows them not. But the life of 'winners' is as short as it is strepitosus, and 'Dashing away' and its companions see them come and go, a fresh set every half year or so. The wise man of old who cared not for the making of a nation's laws so long as he could make its songs is so often quoted that one hesitates to drag him in once more. But he can hardly be kept out of the folk-song question. If a penny saved is a penny gained it may be said that a song saved is a song made. This being so, we might well envy the man who in our day has thus made more good songs than a score of composers put together. And there is a touch of the fantastic in the fact that a seat which occupied only a modest place as an executive or creative musician has made one of the biggest marks on the musical life of his country, and is as secure of fame as any composer of his day.

In connection with the Inspectorate mentioned above, a letter from Mr. H. A. L. Fisher (late Minister of Education) is of interest. Writing in The Times on June 24, he said:

... At my request Cecil Sharp called at the Board of Education in 1910 in order that we might discuss the best method of instilling a sense of rhythm and a love of our old English national songs and dances into the minds of children in the elementary schools. It soon became apparent to me that Sharp was marked out by his great knowledge and single-minded enthusiasm to spread the flame, and that the place in which his peculiar gifts would render the greatest contribution to national education in the shortest time was the training college. He was accordingly given a special appointment in relation to the training colleges, and in that capacity inspired a large number of intending teachers with something of his own delight in old English melodies and dances. The impetus which he gave will not soon die out, and if generations hence folk-music and folk-dance are familiar things in our towns and villages, the happy result will be largely due to his inspired and inspiring labours.

The reference to Sharp's ability to inspire others touches on the secret of his success. If the folk-music revival is as well-established as it appears to be, the fact is due to the large number of keen and accomplished teachers who passed under his hands.

No better tribute to Sharp can be found than that paid by Mr. Fox-Strangways in the Music and Letters article already quoted—an article descriptive of a week at one of the folk-dance schools:

Sharp has spoken for himself on an earlier page, but there are some things which he did not say. He did not tell us that he has given all his labour free; or that he has suffered all his life from a complaint of which doctors know too little to say whether this air or that soil will be 'beneficial,' and so he rushes off at a moment's notice to capture a new dance, not knowing whether he is going to be normal or miserable there; or that he is one of those rare people who combine the instincts of a true artist with shrewd powers of organization and the knowledge of men and women that these imply; or that, though most conversations are lectures or arguments, and most arguments come round at last to folk-dance, yet he has formed his own opinions on most subjects of human interest, and where he has not he is a good listener; or that when he does talk people do not as a rule want him to stop.

We spoke above of the position the folk-dance has made for itself in the competitive festival. With recollections of the delight taken in the dances by audiences and competitors of all ages, we have little doubt as to the answer to the 'if' in the end of Mr. Fox-Strangways' article:

Well; there, anyway, are these folk-dances of ours for us to take or leave. As you have seen, about two thousand people think it worth while to come for a week once a year and refresh their memories (or make them) at a 'school'; and we cannot suppose that these people do nothing with the dance when they get home, so that many thousands of men, women, and children know and care about it already. When the engineer of all this happiness is eventually laid on the shelf the dance will be on its trial. If it then proves itself to be a real thing, it will live; if not, it had better die.

But there was to be no 'shelf' for Cecil Sharp: no leisureed retirement from which he could watch the spread or otherwise of the happiness he had spent himself in 'engineering': he was hard at work until the last few weeks of his life. Doubts as to the permanency of the folk-music revival do not affect our gratitude to the man who, more than any other, brought it about. For well over a decade it has given to thousands recreation of a type all too rare to-day, and so has already proved far more worth while than dozens of 'art' movements that have made infinitely more noise in the world. Even if it came to an abrupt end to-morrow, the country's debt to Cecil Sharp is one that can hardly be over-estimated.

CONDUCTORS AND CONDUCTING

BY WILLIAM WALLACE

(Continued from July number, page 595.)

II.—DRAMATURGICS

Reference has been made to the dramatic instinct requisite in the conductor. We may now consider the matter more closely.

At a date when music was finding itself, the intense human note was not felt so universally and profoundly as is now manifest. There was for the most part a pellucid glittering surface which con-
sealed or veiled the deep underflow. Storms there were, but they were soon deluged in a flood of sunshine. When the predominating idea was one of tragedy it was relieved by contrasts which lightened the burden and dispelled the gloom. Subjects and episodes persisted (in sonata form), and were maintained for a space sufficient to allow the mind to meditate in serenity without that 'conflict of emotions' upon which the later schools of musical thought were nursed. Whatever the technical explanation may be of the 'repeat,' which in orchestral music meant nothing more than saying the same thing all over again without modification of colour or nuance, its existence gives us an indication of the workings of the musical mind. It would appear that it was necessary in order to impress upon the hearer the themes of the movement, so that when they came to be developed they could be recognized either in their original form or in material derived from them.

In works which are not disturbed by exuberance or violence there is a temptation to aim at refinement and finesses in performance by over-elaboration of detail. It is as if we were to print in italics every important—and unimportant—word in a sentence. Perfect accuracy and minuteness are eminently desirable, but it may be asked if in orchestras which have brought this polish to a fine art, much musical texture has not been sacrificed to uniformity of surface.

A conductor may strive to attain this finger-tip finish and yet distract the attention of the audience from his endeavours by obtruding himself, as it were, between the music and the audience, and thus emphasising his supreme accomplishment and not the composer's way of thinking. Under ideal conditions, the simpler the music the less apparent the need for a conductor, but orchestras, grown up in the midst of strenuous and intricate technique, do not so readily adapt themselves to the earlier modes of expression. On one occasion, at a classical concert, after two numbers from the modern repertoire had been played, the conductor and orchestra broke down at the beginning of a Mozart aria, and had to start afresh. At another concert, following a fully scored Wagner number, Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony was played, and its opening strains were received by the audience with a titter. As each conductor was independent of any society or committee to suggest the works to be performed, he should have constructed his programme with better judgment. But perhaps the choice of the 'Pastoral' was deliberate.

It is just the simpler music that cannot be left to take care of itself. The first seven bars of Mozart's Overture to 'Figaro' look simple enough, but with a modern orchestra at full strength there are sixty musicians playing the same notes in three octaves, not mezzo-forte but pianissimo. It is not quasi niente, inaudible and therefore impossible, but pianissimo. Here, if anywhere, is need for what has just been called 'finger-tip'—it might equally be called 'tip-toe'—precision. And, let it be added, finger-tip conducting.

On the dramaturgical side the conductor's gestures prepare the audience for developments. It may be that we have come to associate his movements with emotions of varying depth and intensity, and once this convention has been established we accept him in the dual rôle of conductor of the orchestra and interpreter to the audience. In this there are pitfalls to be avoided. The conductor must have a keen sense of the dramatic, not in the music alone, but in himself. It has been said that 'the greatest effect in music is no music,' and the pause over a rest, to which the remark clearly applies, can be heightened or rendered pointless according to the gesture. If he indicates that the pause is merely transitory by keeping his arm in readiness for the next outburst he carries the attention forward in anticipation of what is about to come. But if he abruptly ceases all movement during the pause he rivets attention and creates a feeling of strain, infinitely more pregnant. Similarly an inelastic beat in a purely cantilena passage may reduce poetry to prosaic drab, while an accent of sentimentality may awake a feeling of revulsion and charge with sickness an atmosphere which should have been of clear air.

In orchestral music, as has been said, the mental impression may owe nearly as much to the eye as it does to the ear, for unless the vision is turned away the conductor may shape the judgment in a wrong direction. The effect of hasty or indiscriminate appreciation may be far-reaching and not always beneficial to the art or the artist. Many in an audience are more preoccupied with sights than with sounds, and an exaggerated style of conducting may appear to them masterly activity, in spite of constant slips in the orchestra and a ragged performance. Thus a mediocre conductor may ultimately work his way by sheer gymnastics, impressing by a physical display and making up for lack of insight by energy. This is the corybantic style—the conductor as maestro di ballo.

There is no doubt that vigorous movement and alertness on the part of the conductor can infect the orchestra with some measure of responsiveness, but instrumentalists are too thoroughly proved to be beguiled. This is seen again and again when one conductor, almost without perceptible movement, obtains a reading equal to, and often better than, that of another, whose form of exercise would belong more appropriately to the prize-ring. It is not always the case that the excess of gesture is justified by the dynamics of the music. It can be—it not infrequently has been—wasted on some tiny flutter in the orchestra, an 'aside,' so to speak, during the composer's discourse.

The conductor, in fact, should have a sense of proportion, with an unerring flair for the essential. Again and again at rehearsal conductors have exhausted patience by going over some passage of subsidiary importance which the orchestra finally plays for the sixth time exactly as it did at the first. This particularly happens when the passage
contains a small solo which the musician, as the conductor ought to feel assured, has taken no little care to practise beforehand. [The subject of rehearsals will occupy us at a later stage.]

Up to the end of the last century organised orchestral societies had their permanent conductors. Hence men like Hallé, Henschel, and Richter in England, Pasdeloup, Colonne, and Lamoureux in France, Theodore Thomas and Damrosch in the United States, gave their names to orchestras under their direction. Manns at the Crystal Palace had his permanent orchestra, and thus was able to give new works a trial in private before he decided to place them in his programmes. Of these orchestras, some were independent of managers, committees, or impresarios, and decided their own policy, but others were limited in their duties. The programmes were drawn up for them, and any individual preference for this work or that was granted by courtesy. So it was that Wagner, in 1855, at the Philharmonic Society, in eight programmes had to conduct five works by Mendelssohn, whom he detested, as against three of his own ("Lohengrin" selection and the "Tannhäuser" Overture twice), along with works by Onslow, Potter, Macfarren, and the Hummel Pianoforte Concerto in B flat.

But the first years of the present century saw the permanent conductor disappearing from some Societies, and being replaced by "guests" who went on tour like pianists and other virtuosi. Hence programmes were constructed so as to trot out each conductor's "cheval de bataille" from a whole stableful, and audiences witnessed physical performances which had been rehearsed times without number. They, and the orchestra, were able to contrast one conductor with another, to note how the same result, demanding in one case an excess of effort, was obtained in another by the tiniest movement, or almost none at all.

To steer a course between the two extremes should not be difficult, but the immense energy that some conductors expend is apt to convey a wrong impression. Are they really carrying along the orchestra with their widespread "action," or did things go so badly at rehearsal that they must put forth all their strength? To anticipate the discussion of rehearsals at present, it may be asked, would it not be preferable to explain to the orchestra that the broad and generous movements are used to enforce points in interpretation, and that having been employed thus at rehearsal, they will be subdued or suppressed at the concert? Might not this exuberance during performance imply to some of the audience inadequacy of rehearsal? Whether some of those indications of nuances, to which orchestral players have become accustomed, are unduly insisted upon or whether conductors are aiming at a personal success with the audience more than with the music—these are questions which it is impossible to decide. But it may be said that a young conductor who had won his spurs got a hint on one occasion that if he was not more demonstrative he might be passed over when arrangements for the following season were made—and he was.

The ideal would be to make that which is essential at rehearsal superfluous at the concert. We have been assuming, of course, that the conductor has been working under ideal conditions, and that he has had at his disposal an orchestra whose personnel and strength are constant. But too frequently it happens that musicians with more or less important parts to play are absent, and are replaced by 'deputies' who have to be instructed in their new duties. In this way the attention and care which have been given to one instrumentalist have to be repeated in the case of his substitute, and with the press of work and limited rehearsals the conductor may not feel free to exercise that restraint which would have been possible with an orchestra every member of which understood his ways. A gesture, therefore, which might appear to be more for the audience than for the musician, may have a rational explanation.

But we are not going outside our province to consider the matter from another aspect. Still regarding the conductor as an actor in a certain sense, do we credit him with sincerity in every mood and gesture? His reading of a score may be compared with the actor's interpretation of a part, repeated till it borders on the mechanical. The question opens the way to a large discussion as to whether the impersonator should actually feel the emotion which he is depicting, or should have so schooled himself that the emotion is deliberate and assumed. In other words, is the emotional reaction of the music upon the conductor so potent that he is conscious of it every time he conducts some particular work, or has habit become so ingrained that at various points his methods are invariably the same? Who can say that the exponent of what, without disrespect, may be called the mechanical, is artistically on a lower plane than the exponent of the spontaneous? It must be remembered that however mechanical the manner now, at one time it had to be spontaneous, and that spontaneity through experience became stereotyped. To some extent we are foreshadowing points which will be dealt with at a later stage, but it may be said here that however mechanical and studied in his gestures the conductor may appear to have become, it would not be fair to deny him, or refuse to recognise, those flashes of inspiration—the divine "itus"—which suddenly light up his reading and illumine his task. It would not be fair—it would be closing our ears to the truth.

These questions are not put forward in a dogmatic spirit, but with the aim to stimulate thought—for we are apt to confine ourselves, in looking at the conductor's art, to the obvious, without attempting to penetrate the deeper mysteries of the mind which in him seem to crave for physical expression. Here perhaps we are going a little further than our present subject allows, and intruding upon the intimacy that exists between rhythm, music, and action.

(To be continued.)