

and marked *fortissimo*, should be played as a bark lasting one quaver, followed by a *mezzo forte* of depraved quality lasting a few more quavers, and tailing off finally into premature silence. I submit that Mendelssohn meant it to be sustained with full tone to the bitter end; and I take the liberty to add that a band that cannot hold up a powerful *fortissimo* in this way is only fit for quiet and select private parties and *tableaux vivants*, however genteelly it may pick its way through the Pilgrims' March. Imagine having a splendid band like that, and being afraid to let its full voice be heard. When a band is weak in the artillery department, its refinement becomes mere effeminacy and cowardice.

Two concerts at St James's Hall on Saturday afternoons (clashing, of course, with the Crystal Palace concerts) have been given—one by Saurer, and the other by Miss Agnes Janson. Sauret still remembers the days when he was famous for having mastered the difficulties of the concertos of Vieuxtemps; and now that his artistic interest in them is so utterly worn out that he rasps through them without one gentle touch or one moment of concern as to whether he is playing in tune or not, he still goes through the old display, and still finds a few old moustaches to cry Bravo because they know how horribly difficult the passages are. As for me, it tortures and exasperates me. Vieuxtemps's real name now is Vieuxjeu; and I appeal to Sauret to let him rest, with Alfred Mellon and other relics of the sixties. Otherwise the concert was enjoyable enough, Miss Muriel Elliot, Ernest Gillet, and Miss Dews reinforcing Sauret for the occasion. Miss Elliot, by the bye, requires a more thorough physical training to make her musical gifts fully effective in large rooms like St James's Hall. Miss Agnes Janson's concert, an excellent one of its kind, shewed, among other things, that Miss Janson knows how to make the most of her voice by a perfectly sound

method, a good ear, and a nice sense of vocal touch. With this invaluable equipment, however, she takes things rather too easily, singing cheap operatic and quasi-operatic music frankly and genially, but without originality or conviction—in short, without having troubled herself seriously about its poetic or dramatic content. Mr Henschel's five vocal quartets *à la Russe* succeeded to admiration; and Sauret, again, won over the audience by a Beethoven sonata, only to disillusion them subsequently by a superannuated monstrosity of Ernst's—that wretched old fantasia on airs from Rossini's *Otello*. When Sauret's memory begins to fail he will become one of our most popular violinists.

THE MOST UTTER FAILURE EVER ACHIEVED

The World, 3 May 1893

For some time past I have been carefully dodging Dr Hubert Parry's Job. I had presentiments about it from the first. I foresaw that all the other critics would cleverly imply that they thought it the greatest oratorio of ancient or modern times—that Handel is rebuked, Mendelssohn eclipsed, and the rest nowhere. And I was right: they did. The future historian of music, studying the English papers of 1892-3, will learn that these years produced two entire and perfect chrysolites, Job and Falstaff, especially Job. I was so afraid of being unable to concur unreservedly in the verdict that I lay low and stopped my ears. The first step was to avoid the Gloucester Festival. That gave me no trouble: nothing is easier than not to go to Gloucester.

I am, to tell the truth, not very fond of Festivals. It is

not that the oratorios bore me, or even the new works "composed expressly," the word "expressly" here indicating the extra-special dulness supposed to be proper to such solemn occasions. These things are the inevitable hardships of my profession: I face them as the soldier faces fire, feeling that it is the heroic endurance of them that raises criticism from a mere trade to a profession or calling. But a man is expected to have the courage of his own profession only. The soldier must face cold steel; but he may without derogation be afraid of ghosts. The doctor who braves fever may blench from shipwreck; and the clergyman who wars daily against the Prince of Darkness is permitted to quit a field in which he unexpectedly meets a mad bull. The musical critic is ready at duty's call to stand up fearlessly to oratorios, miscellaneous concerts, requiems, and comic operas; but it is no part of his bargain to put up with the stewards at a provincial festival. It is not that these gentlemen intend to be uncivil, or are by nature more evilly dispositioned than their fellow creatures; but they have no manners, no *savoir vivre*: they are unsocially afraid of the public, snobbishly afraid of being mistaken for professional attendants, unaccustomed to their work (which requires either experience or tact and self-possession), and inflated with a sense of their importance instead of sobered by a sense of their responsibility.

Consequently they are fussy, suspicious, rude or nervous, as the case may be, constantly referring helplessly to the one or two of their number who have their wits about them, and not unfrequently blundering unintentionally to within a perilous distance of the point at which the more choleric and muscular sort of visitor will threaten violence and execute profanity, and the more subtly malicious will patronizingly offer the blunderer a tip. By good luck, I have never myself been outraged by a festival steward; but the mere flavor of

irresponsible and incompetent officialism poisons the artistic atmosphere for me.

It brings before me the appalling centralization of English intellectual and artistic life, and therefore of social grace, with the consequent boorification of the provinces. It will never be merrie England until every man who goes down from London to a festival or other provincial function will frankly say to his host "My friend: your house is uncommonly comfortable, and your grub of the best. You are hospitable; and you gratify my vanity by treating me, who am a Nobody at home, as a Somebody from London. You are not bad company when you go out into the fields to kill something. But owing to the fact that you have been brought up in a town where the theatre, the picture gallery, and the orchestra count for nothing, and the exchanges count for everything, you are, saving your presence, a hopelessly dull dog; and your son is growing up as dull a dog as you." Not a polite speech, maybe; but you cannot make revolutions with rosewater; and what is wanted in English provincial life is nothing short of a revolution.

Such being my sentiments, it will be understood that I forewent Gloucester and Job last autumn without regret. I have explained the matter at some length, not because I have not said all the above before, but solely to put off for awhile the moment when I must at last say what I think of Dr Parry's masterpiece. For I unluckily went last Wednesday to the concert of the Middlesex Choral Union, where the first thing that happened was the appearance of Dr Parry amid the burst of affectionate applause which always greets him. That made me uneasy; and I was not reassured when he mounted the conductor's rostrum, and led the band into a prelude which struck me as being a serious set of footnotes to the bridal march from Lohengrin. Presently up got Mr

Bantock Pierpoint, and sang, without a word of warning,
There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.
Then I knew I was in for it; and now I must do my duty.

I take Job to be, on the whole, the most utter failure ever achieved by a thoroughly respectable musician. There is not one bar in it that comes within fifty thousand miles of the tamest line in the poem. This is the naked, unexaggerated truth. Is anybody surprised at it? Here, on the one hand, is an ancient poem which has lived from civilization to civilization, and has been translated into an English version of haunting beauty and nobility of style, offering to the musician a subject which would have taxed to the utmost the highest powers of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, or Wagner. Here on the other is, not Bach nor Handel nor Mozart nor Beethoven nor Wagner, not even Mendelssohn or Schumann, but Dr Parry, an enthusiastic and popular professor, forty-five years old, and therefore of ascertained powers.

Now, will any reasonable person pretend that it lies within the limits of those powers to let us hear the morning stars singing together and the sons of God shouting for joy? True, it is impossible to say what a man can do until he tries. I may before the end of this year write a tragedy on the subject of King Lear that will efface Shakespear's; but if I do it will be a surprise, not perhaps to myself, but to the public. It is certain that if I took the work in hand I should be able to turn out five acts about King Lear that would be, at least, grammatical, superficially coherent, and arranged in lines that would scan. And I doubt not at all that some friendly and ingenuous critic would say of it "Lear is, from beginning to end, a remarkable work, and one which nobody but an English author could have written. Every page bears the stamp of G. B. S.'s genius; and no higher praise can be awarded to it than to say that it is

fully worthy of his reputation." What critic would need to be so unfriendly as to face the plain question "Has the author been able for his subject?"

I might easily shirk that question in the case of Job: there are no end of nice little things I could point out about the workmanship shewn in the score, its fine feeling, its scrupulous moderation, its entire freedom from any base element of art or character, and so on through a whole epitaph of pleasant and perfectly true irrelevancies. I might even say that Dr Parry's setting of Job placed him infinitely above the gentleman who set to music *The Man that broke the Bank*. But would that alter the fact that Dr Parry has left his subject practically untouched, whilst his music hall rival has most exhaustively succeeded in covering his? It is the great glory of Job that he shamed the devil. Let me imitate him by telling the truth about the work as it appeared to me. Of course I may be wrong: even I am not infallible, at least not always.

And it must be remembered that I am violently prejudiced against the professorial school of which Dr Parry is a distinguished member. I always said, and say still, that his much-admired oratorio *Judith* has absolutely no merit whatever. I allowed a certain vigor and geniality in his *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso*, and a certain youthful inspiration in his *Prometheus*. But even these admissions I regarded as concessions to the academic faction which he leans to; and I was so afraid of being further disarmed that I lived in fear of meeting him and making his acquaintance; for I had noticed that the critics to whom this happens become hopelessly corrupt, and say anything to please him without the least regard to public duty. Let Job then have the benefit of whatever suspicion may be cast on my verdict by my prepossessions against the composer's school.

The first conspicuous failure in the work is Satan,

who, after a feeble attempt to give himself an infernal air by getting the bassoon to announce him with a few frog-like croaks, gives up the pretence, and, though a tenor and a fiend, models himself on Mendelssohn's St Paul. He has no tact as an orator. For example, when he says "Put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face," there is not a shade of skepticism or irony in him; and he ineptly tries to drive his point home by a melodramatic shriek on the word "curse." When one thinks—I will not say of Loki or Klingsor, but of Verdi's Iago and Boïto's Mefistofele, and even of Gounod's stage devil, it is impossible to accept this pale shadow of an excitable curate as one of the poles of the great world magnet.

As to Job, there is no sort of grit in him: he is abject from first to last, and is only genuinely touching when he longs to lie still and be quiet where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. That is the one tolerable moment in the work; and Job passes from it to relapse into dulness, not to rise into greater strength of spirit. He is much distracted by fragments of themes from the best composers coming into his head from time to time, and sometimes cutting off the thread of his discourse altogether. When he talks of mountains being removed, he flourishes on the flute in an absurdly inadequate manner; and his challenge to God, Shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me, is too poor to be described.

Not until he has given in completely, and is saying his last word, does it suddenly occur to him to make a hit; and then, in announcing that he repents in dust and ashes, he explodes in the most unlooked-for way on the final word "ashes," which produces the effect of a sneeze. The expostulation of God with Job is given to the chorus: the voice that sometimes speaks through the mouths of babes and sucklings here speaks through the

mouths of Brixton and Bayswater, and the effect is precisely what might have been expected. It is hard to come down thus from the "heil'gen Hallen" of Sarastro to the suburbs.

There is one stroke of humor in the work. When Job says, The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord, a long and rueful interval after the words "taketh away" elapses before poor Job can resign himself to utter the last clause. That is the sole trace of real dramatic treatment in this dreary ramble of Dr Parry's through the wastes of artistic error. It is the old academic story—an attempt to bedizen a dramatic poem with scraps of sonata music.

Dr Parry reads, The wall are broken down: destroyed are the pleasant places; and it sounds beautifully to him. So it associates itself with something else that sounds beautifully—Mendelssohn's violin concerto, as it happens in this case—and straightway he rambles off into a rhythm suggested by the first movement of the concerto, and produces a tedious combination which has none of the charm or propriety of either poem or concerto. For the sake of relief he drags in by the ears a piece of martial tumult—See! upon the distant plain, a white cloud of dust, the ravagers come—compounded from the same academic prescription as the business of the dragon's teeth coming up armed men in Mackenzie's Jason; and the two pieces of music are consequently indistinguishable in my memory—in fact, I do not remember a note of either of them.

I have no wish to linger over a barbarous task. In time I may forgive Dr Parry, especially if he will write a few more essays on the great composers, and confine himself to the composition of "absolute music," with not more than three pedal points to the page. But at this moment I feel sore. He might have let Job alone, and let me alone; for, patient as we both are, there are limits to

human endurance. I hope he will burn the score, and throw Judith in when the blaze begins to flag.

As to the performance, it did not greatly matter. On the whole, it was somewhat tame, even relatively to the music. Mr Piercy's treatment of the high notes in his part offended all my notions of artistic singing. Mr Newman did what he could with the part of Job; and his performance was entirely creditable to him. Mr Bantock Pierpoint, as the Narrator, gave more pleasure than any of his colleagues. Miss Palliser was the shepherd boy. The chorus was not very vigorous or majestic; but it made the most of itself.

GOING FANTEE

The World, 10 May 1893

The success of Professor Stanford's Irish Symphony last Thursday was, from the Philharmonic point of view, somewhat scandalous. The spectacle of a university professor "going Fantee" is indecorous, though to me personally it is delightful. When Professor Stanford is genteel, cultured, classic, pious, and experimentally mixolydian, he is dull beyond belief. His dulness is all the harder to bear because it is the restless, ingenious, trifling, flippant dulness of the Irishman, instead of the stupid, bovine, sleepable-through dulness of the Englishman, or even the aggressive, ambitious, sentimental dulness of the Scot. But Mr Villiers Stanford cannot be dismissed as merely the Irish variety of the professorial species.

Take any of the British oratorios and cantatas which have been produced recently for the Festivals, and your single comment on any of them will be—if you know anything about music—"Oh! anybody with a bachelor's

degree could have written that." But you cannot say this of Stanford's Eden. It is as insufferable a composition as any Festival committee could desire; but it is ingenious and peculiar; and although in it you see the Irish professor trifling in a world of ideas, in marked contrast to the English professor conscientiously wrestling in a vacuum, yet over and above this national difference, which would assert itself equally in the case of any other Irishman, you find certain traces of a talent for composition, which is precisely what the ordinary professor, with all his grammatical and historical accomplishments, utterly lacks. But the conditions of making this talent serviceable are not supplied by Festival commissions. Far from being a respectable oratorio-manufacturing talent, it is, when it gets loose, eccentric, violent, romantic, patriotic, and held in check only by a mortal fear of being found deficient in what are called "the manners and tone of good society."* This fear, too, is Irish: it is, possibly, the racial consciousness of having missed that four hundred years of Roman civilization which gave England a sort of university education when Ireland was in the hedge school.†

In those periods when nobody questions the superiority of the university to the hedge school, the Irishman, lamed by a sense of inferiority, blusters most intolerably, and not unfrequently goes the length of alleging that Balfe was a great composer. Then the fashion changes; Ruskin leads young Oxford out into the hedge school to dig roads; there is general disparagement in advanced

* Manners and Tone of Good Society, or, Solecisms to be Avoided, by "A Member of the Aristocracy," was, Shaw later told Frank Harris, the first book he had ever consulted in the British Museum, in 1880.

† In earlier days Irish classes were held out of doors. The term carries the imputation of "low class."