

# RHAPSODIES.

(By BYRONSON TUCKER.)

## V.

### BEETHOVEN AND BERLIOZ, THE HEAVEN AND HELL OF MUSIC.

#### (a) HEAVEN.

If God speaks anywhere, in any voice,  
To us His creatures, surely here and now  
We hear Him, while the great clouds  
seem to bow

And to all the symphony's breath-  
less nose

Breaks over us, with challenge to our soul!  
Beethoven's music! From the mountain  
peaks,

The strong, divine, compelling thunder  
rolls,

And "Come up higher, come," the words  
it speaks,

Out of your darkened valleys of despair;  
Behold, I lift you up on mighty wings,  
Into Hope's living, reconciling air.

Breathe, and forget life's perpetual  
strife—

Dream, folded on the breast of patience  
sweet,

Some pulse of pitying love for you may  
beat.

The other day a creature who prided him-  
self on being a critic openly avowed to me  
his complete disapprobation of Beethoven's  
music. Poor chap, I wonder where he  
gleaned the assumptive knowledge to en-  
able him to express such an audacious dis-  
like.

Shakespeare—who anticipated everybody,  
and, by implication, said everything—spora-  
dically classifying the widespread genus,  
speaks in one place of "material fools," in  
another of "deliberate," and it flashed  
across my mind that here in our very midst  
was the individual stamped with Shake-  
peare's label, and who yet was con-  
fident and impudent enough to turn statements  
similar to this over on his palate as one  
does old sherry, with feelings that an angel  
might envy. He exhibited such an omniscient  
sense of learning that one could al-  
most discern the cuttlefish escaping in its  
own ink. But there—critics are the princes  
of cuttlefishes—nobody can possibly nose  
them out.

Let us examine this Papal Dogma a mo-  
ment, & only pour nous divertir. There  
never was a great genius but there was an  
equally great fool to match him—and patch  
him. In former times, alas, the fools were  
so numerous and rabid they burnt the  
great genius, from the times of Pythagoras  
downwards.

Oh! History, thou Unconscious Insanity!  
Shakespeare was soon plastered as thinking  
himself the only shake scene in a country;  
and there never was a man so stupendously  
modest, as well as so stupendous, as  
Shakespeare. Clever Voltaire—comme le  
diable—sat upon him—called him, forsooth,  
a barbarian—but an ape will pull Jove's  
nose.

And this ineffable dictum was subject  
dear to the fleshy heart—the mad-flame in-  
tellect.

In our own degenerate days a critic as-  
sumes, with all the appropriate solemnity of  
the Deliberate Fool, the crushing broad basis  
of the prig and pundit, and dares to sit  
upon the somnia poeta—the pure and  
powerful born poet—upon his genius and  
his inimitable masterpieces.

Man! MAN! I feel for thee—thou  
shouldst hug a biped to thy bosom.

I hate the cant. Away with it. Beeth-  
oven's life—circumstances made him fear-  
fully, unfathomably unhappy; and had he  
not been endowed with the purest as well  
as strongest brain he must have succumbed  
and gone down, in a hell of madness and  
suicide.

Beethoven's aberration, if most unhap-  
pily it had come to that, would have been  
due to the crushing of a giant by woo; he  
was electric, not galvanic; not of a mind  
incipiently tending to insanity, but really  
the opposite. It was a great sane mind,  
withal gigantically imaginative; that is, the  
peculiarity, the sublime beauty of it. He  
would not have gone mad for the same  
reason that a Byron or a Berboa might;  
nay, that even a thrice-hapless, thrice-  
beautiful, poor dear Schumann did; for  
the last withal seraph-pure, was o'er in-  
formed in his tenement of clay.

He was too pure for this earth—  
stretched on the rock of this farrish world.

When we look back to the Beethovens  
we find no sense of anything morbid. On  
the contrary, we are braced, and infinitely  
expanded; made first ourselves; wrap us  
the empyrian; first given, not a glimmer-  
ing, but a great glance into the SOUL of  
man.

Beethoven  
"Hath writ the style of the gods."

He could no more prevent his apt and pre-  
cious imagination from unfolding than the  
heavens can fall

"To arch the blue-hill'd flowery world."

Take, for example, the Ivanhoe Olden-  
Time Symphony in A major; the Ferdin-  
and and Miranda B flat; and, above all,  
the portentous C minor Symphony, below  
whose depths we have never steered—even  
yet.

'Tis the crass fault of the fool if he  
will not enjoy them; his odious vice if he  
blaspheme them.

Beethoven, whose soul rose up against  
his doom, who longed to burst the folded  
glooms, and bare the eternal heavens again;  
did bare the eternal heavens before him—  
where we may follow him. But not if  
we are prigs. Woe unto ye, ~~Barbarians!~~  
Pharisees—~~zamboni~~ hypocrites, ye snarl  
and bark at him; Darwin's theory is right,  
and dogs, sheep, apes, and asses.

Or, if  
too drastic an application, take  
his, which he who runs may read. "I bred  
a mongrel pigeon, which had its wings and  
tail too short, so that it could scarcely fly  
a foot from the ground!"

Beethoven was a giant—the Hercules of  
music—his work is like the sea clasping the  
world—it is an epitome of all music, a work  
in itself, mighty with wave and mountain  
chain—a sun-filled atmosphere, infinitely  
pure, opulent and powerful—a supreme  
eternal, all-embosoming heaven.

#### (b) HELL.

Tell me, where is that place that men  
call hell?

Meph.—Under the heavens.

Faust.—Ay, so are all things else; but  
whereabouts?

Meph.—Within the bowels of these ele-  
ments,

Where we are tortured and remain for  
ever;

Hell has no limits; nor is circumscribed  
In one self place; but where we are is hell;

And where hell is, there must we ever be,  
And, to be short, when all the world dis-  
solves,

And every creature shall be purified,  
All places shall be hell that are not heaven.

—Marlowe's Faustus.

Quoniam tandem! How much more  
Mephistophelean music are we to be af-  
fected with? When will composers cease  
to be haunted and harassed by this Faust-  
m-thebrain, whose worm doth not like  
that parasitic disease in the cerebellum of  
sleep.

Emerson says—"If you want to see the  
inferiority of Goethe's Faust, read Shak-  
speare."

From this it may be inferred that he did  
not consider Goethe a dramatic poet any  
more than a painter.

Truly his "Faust" is not written from  
nature, but like Shakespeare's dramas, re-  
sults of contrived. Iago is flesh  
and blood, Mephistopheles an unreal,  
phantom. I believe it is quite time to cry—  
"Down with the German  
thing German; made  
in an and read Shakes-  
peare's. In taking  
and indirection as  
radicalness betwixt  
Emerson Goethe"