

JOHN SULLIVAN DWIGHT: TRANSCENDENTALIST
AND LITERARY AMATEUR OF MUSIC

By

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FOREWORD

This thesis is a study of the personality and writings of John Sullivan Dwight, American writer and "literary amateur" of music, who lived in or near Boston all his life, from 1813 to 1893.

Dwight's contribution to American literature is worthy of re-appraisal today largely because he was identified, for a longer period than any other writer, with the kind of American idealism known as "transcendentalism." As it is applied to a movement in American letters, this term defies strict definition. For our purposes it can be described as that state of mind shared by certain idealistic, individualistic, anti-conventional, culturally alive thinkers and writers in New England between 1830 and 1860. Dwight must be called a "minor" transcendentalist because he is over-shadowed today, like so many others, by Emerson and Thoreau; but the current attempt to round out our understanding of this movement must include studies of such men as Dwight. In a peculiar and limited way he held to the faith long after it ceased to be a concerted force in American life. On the other hand, he was temperamentally, physically, and perhaps intellectually unsuited to transcendentalism in any of its relatively pure or positive forms. The following account of Dwight's life and writings is an attempt to run this paradox down and to increase thereby our understanding of transcendentalism.

No attempt has been made to write an exhaustive and definitive biography, or to supersede entirely the work of George Willis Cooke, whose book on Dwight* is the only source for much of the biographical material used here. Cooke's work is quite understandably uncritical and over-sympathetic, since it was written at the suggestion of Dwight's friends in the first decade after his death. The occasion called for a memorial, not a critical appraisal; and Cooke fulfilled his purpose without distorting the facts or overplaying the sentiment among the people for whom he wrote, a group of admirers who knew Dwight as a grand old man.

Some biographical details which Cooke did not know about, or did not use, have been introduced here primarily because they illuminate Dwight as a person and as a writer. Many more facts, particularly of Dwight's life after 1850, remain to be gathered; but the bibliography of Dwight's writings seems to be practically complete, and the author feels he has enough material to give a fair picture.

The author acknowledges mountainous debts to the many librarians who have been so helpful and patient, and especially to Professor Carl Bode, of the University of Maryland, who directed the research, suggested the topic, and criticized the manuscript page by page. Debts not measurable even in

*John Sullivan Dwight: Brook Farmer, Editor, and Critic of Music. A Biography. (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1898). Hereinafter referred to as "Cooke."

terms of mountains are due Aunt Helen, perennially on call for hunting and checking, and Catharine, who typed the whole and checked some more.

Crawfordsville, Indiana

April 30, 1952

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PART ONE

THE LONG APPRENTICESHIP

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

In the long afternoon and evening of his career, John Sullivan Dwight, a childless widower, lived as the autocrat of Boston music under the benevolent auspices of the Harvard Musical Association. He did a very respectable amount of work, including a great volume of writing and many other less congenial tasks connected with keeping his beloved symphonic music alive in Boston. One would think, however, that a man in such a position would have found time to write his memoirs. Dwight had graduated from Harvard with the illustrious class of 1832, had been a minister, transcendentalist, Brook Farmer, Fourierist, literary critic, music critic, translator, poet, and historian. For years he was librarian of the Harvard Musical Association, secretary of the class of 1832, and an active journalist. He remained stationary while his musical and philosophical and literary friends traveled over America and the rest of the world. Because his address was always reliable and he was nearly always at home, he received hundreds of letters and more hundreds of callers. No one was ever in a better position to write a detailed, first-hand account of a long and active life. But Dwight left us no autobiography. Apparently he wrote far fewer letters than he received.*

*Not nearly all the possible repositories have been explored for this study. The many persons who furnished Cooke with letters and reminiscences are listed in his Preface, pp. ix-x.

And he seems to have been the one transcendentalist who did not keep a journal.

Dwight's silence about his background and early experiences cannot be explained easily. That he was lazy and not given to performing protracted labors of any kind is well established. But there were other reasons. Dwight was a sensitive, touchy person. Much of his life has overtones of a deep-seated frustration. Apparently he never felt that inner security which would have given him self-confidence enough to write a candid autobiography.

In this study, Part One covers the first half of Dwight's life in as much detail as available sources and the scope of the work permit. The self-portrait Dwight never unveiled appears, piecemeal, when his writing and the established facts of these years are allowed to speak for themselves. Further, Dwight's long success as a music critic after 1850 emerges as so much a continuation and repetition of the basic thought and expression of his early years as to be largely predictable, almost anti-climactic. Whatever made Dwight reticent about discussing his early experiences, his long apprenticeship could never be described as aimless or wasted. It is the focal point of this book.

CHAPTER I

BEGINNINGS: 1613-1632

All the New England Dwights can trace their ancestry back to John Dwight, who settled in Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1634. For the main body of the family, including nearly all those who have brought special honor to the name, the line of descent from John of Dedham is clear and straight. But in the eighteenth century a family of Dwights appeared in Shirley, Massachusetts, and their direct connection with the Dedham branch has not been definitely established. From this Shirley branch of the family, John Sullivan was descended, and he seems to have been by far its most illustrious member.¹

Looking into the immediate ancestry of John Sullivan has its interesting moments, but for the most part the Shirley Dwights were undistinguished people. Captain John Dwight, our John's great-grandfather, was lost in a shipwreck in 1744. His son John, born about 1740, became a farmer and stonecutter in Shirley. He and his wife, Susanna (Moore), and their son Francis and his wife, all died in the fall of 1816 from eating poisoned corned beef.

¹See Seth Chandler, History of the Town of Shirley, Massachusetts (Shirley: Published by the author, 1883), pp. 391-394; and Benjamin W. Dwight, The History of the Descendants of John Dwight, of Dedham, Mass. (New York: Published by the author, 1874), II, 1009-1013.

Their other children included John Sullivan's father John, five daughters, and another son Sullivan. Uncle Sullivan and three of the aunts, together with many of their children who were John Sullivan's cousins, lived well into the second half of the nineteenth century.² Our John never seems to have had any close connections with any of them, nor is there any evidence that he quarreled with them. Apparently no property worth having was ever in the picture. The family was not a clan, and John Sullivan never had much occasion to be proud of his relationship with the Shirley Dwights.

John Dwight the stonecutter and farmer was known as "an honest, industrious man, and in comfortable circumstances."³ He was a strict Calvinist who apparently decided that his oldest son should find a place among the learned clergy. The John Dwight who was to become John Sullivan's father was accordingly sent to Harvard, where he graduated in 1800.⁴ He was in his middle twenties, five or six years older than most of the graduates.⁵ Before he could finish his studies for the ministry he got interested in medicine,

²Chandler, History of the Town of Shirley, pp. 391-394.

³B. W. Dwight, History of the Descendants of John Dwight, II, 1011.

⁴Ibid., p. 1012.

⁵Three sources agree that he was born on December 22, but Cooke gives the year as 1776 (p. 1.); Dwight gives 1773 (op. cit., II, 1012.); the records of the Harvard faculty give 1774. (MS in the Harvard University Archives.)

studied under Dr. John Jeffries, and set up as a doctor. He made only a fair living.⁶

The material on Dr. John Dwight is meagre. His record at Harvard was undistinguished, although apparently unblemished. As for his reputation as a citizen of Boston, certain sources should first speak for themselves. First, the official history of the Dwight family.

"He was brought up in the strictest doctrines of Calvinism, against which however his mind reacted afterwards strongly and he became a very decided free thinker. He was exceedingly positive in his political and religious opinions--which is one of the unmistakable Dwight traits wherever found."⁷

Dr. Dwight was something of a mechanic and inventor. He is credited with a "piano on a peculiar model, a fire engine and orreries." Further, "He was very temperate in his habits, eating but little and very regularly. He was a man of but moderate means."⁸

Speaking at Dr. Dwight's funeral in 1852, Theodore Parker was strangely unconvincing.

Our friend is said to have held opinions which were not popular. I know not of those opinions; but this I do know,--that, whatever they were, he was true to them. And greater praise could be given to no man.⁹

⁶B. W. Dwight, History of the Descendants of John Dwight, II, 1012.

⁷Loc. cit. No source is given, although this paragraph appears as it is reproduced here, in quotation marks.

⁸Loc. cit.

⁹Cooke, p. 2.

What John Sullivan Dwight was thinking at his father's funeral we do not know. But surely in the back of his mind must have been at least one unpleasant memory. The story of the Dwights at Brook Farm lies ahead of us, but it is important here to notice how Dr. Dwight fared among the transcendentalists. In the summer of 1844, four Dwights were nominated to become members of the Brook Farm Association. They were Dr. and Mrs. Dwight, and two daughters, Mary Ann¹⁰ and Frances. Brother John Sullivan had been a member since February, and all the Dwights had been living at Brook Farm off and on for the past two years. On June 10, Mrs. Dwight and Mary Ann were voted in. Frances' election was postponed, but confirmed June 16. On August 18, Dr. Dwight's nomination was brought to a vote (perhaps not for the first time), and he was refused admittance. The question was brought up again at the same meeting and deferred. On August 25, the question was again "negativated." Dr. Dwight never signed the roll book as a member of the association, although he lived at the farm from time to time after 1844.¹¹

We are permissibly ahead of our story, for after John Sullivan begins to speak largely for himself, his father will be an inarticulate shadow, far in the distance before he is actually in the past. To Theodore Parker, one of Dwight's

¹⁰Thus the older of Dwight's sisters signed her name in the Secretary's Book at Brook Farm (MS in the Massachusetts Historical Society). Soon afterwards she began to use "Marianne."

¹¹See the minutes of the meetings on the above dates in the Brook Farm Secretary's Book.

oldest and closest friends, Dr. Dwight was unknown. For some reason, he was unacceptable to the Brook Farm community, where harmless eccentricity coupled with some knowledge of medicine should have been a fairly good recommendation in 1844. There was something seriously wrong with Dr. John Dwight. He failed to establish the Shirley line in Boston society. He was a radical and probably erratic thinker. Guessing, we can say that he was unreliable, impecunious, not "respectable." Is it any wonder that his son cherished his membership in the Saturday Club, and yet felt always a little uncomfortable with Emerson, Dana, Longfellow, and Agassiz?

On May 18, 1812, Dr. John Dwight married Mary Corey, of West Roxbury, "Simple, modest, child-like . . . , fresh in her feelings and instincts and of a lovely disposition."¹² Some evidence shows that John Sullivan was very much more like his mother than like his father. She was known as a person who appreciated things aesthetic and artistic. John Sullivan was the oldest child of this marriage, born May 13, 1813.¹³

The boy received the best education Boston could offer, "infant school", grammar school, and the Boston Latin School. He entered the last in 1823 when the school was at the height of a classical renaissance under Benjamin Gould,

¹²B. W. Dwight, History of the Descendants of John Dwight, II, 1012.

¹³The other children were Marianne, born April 4, 1816; Frances Ellen, born December 13, 1819; and Benjamin Franklin, born September 5, 1824. (Cooke, p. 2.)

headmaster from 1814 to 1828. Dwight was known as a quiet, efficient student--a winner of prizes and lover of books.¹⁴

Dwight's reminiscences about his early days are few. He seems to have searched his memory for indications that his was a spirit dedicated to music from childhood, but the evidence is not convincing. He never seems to have had any training in music. He remembered an old 'cello "standing in the corner under the paternal roof,"¹⁵ but he played no instrument until he went to Harvard. In 1891 he recalled

a performance of "Der Freischutz" . . . at the old Federal Street Theatre, when . . . the singing of the Chorus of Bridesmaids and the ringing Hunters' Chorus left an impress, half pleasure and half pain, or restlessness, in the boy brain just awakening to music.¹⁶

His recollection of the Pierian Sodality went back to 1827, when, as a Latin School student, he went out to Harvard on Exhibition Day and was "captivated and converted to the gospel of the college flute, as the transcendent and most eloquent of instruments."¹⁷

One mysterious and disturbing circumstance should be mentioned here. When Dwight graduated from Harvard he apparently wrote his own biographical notice in the Class Book,

¹⁴Cooke, p. 3.

¹⁵"The Pierian Sodality," in F. O. Vaille and H. A. Clark, compilers, The Harvard Book (Cambridge, Mass.: Welch, Bigelow, 1875), II, 364.

¹⁶From a concert review in the Boston Evening Transcript, February 16, 1891, p. 6.

¹⁷"The Pierian Sodality," p. 365.

just as did everyone else. Most of the biographies are dated in the summer of 1832. Dwight's entry as it now stands is a laconic record of events, the last of which is his marriage in 1851. Three pages have been torn out of the Class Book just ahead of this entry. These pages undoubtedly contained an earlier entry which Dwight decided to destroy after he became secretary of the class.¹⁸ Why Dwight did this, there is no indication anywhere. Presumably the entry he destroyed ante-dated the Brook Farm days, but it must have contained something that he did not want the world to know.

Dwight was admitted to Harvard on September 11, 1828, in a class which included Henry W. Bellows, Charles T. Brooks, Samuel Osgood, and Oliver Wendell Holmes' brother John. He was not musician enough to become a member of the Pierian Sodality immediately, which meant certainly that he could not play a note on any instrument. The array of flute players was so imposing already that Dwight took up the clarinet and became the leader of "a little preparatory club--the purgatory which half-fledged musicians of his own ilk had to pass through before they could be candidates for

¹⁸MS in the Harvard University Archives. This is confirmed by a letter pasted near the front of the book, from Henry G. Denny to William W. Wellington, of October 24, 1893, shortly after Dwight's death. Denny has asked Dwight's younger brother Benjamin to look out for the Class Book. Denny continues: "A slight inspection of it confirms what Mr. Dwight has often told me, that he did not keep up the record. . . . His own life he cut out, as he has told me, three leaves being gone after his name, while he has rewritten a page only."

the Pierian paradise"--the Arionic Society.¹⁹ Dwight described the Pierian of 1830-1832 as "comparatively rich in instruments," with half a dozen flutes, "the clarionet, a pair of French horns, violoncello, and part of the time a nondescript bass horn."²⁰ Music had no place in the curriculum, and the Pierian was as much a drinking and serenading society as anything else. The musical accomplishments of the organization were, by modern amateur standards, negligible. The quality of Dwight's clarinet playing can be surmised from his own admission that his instrument "for the sake of a smooth tone, had the reed cut thick and cost the blower such a stress of wind as would not have lasted now to write about it."²¹ The old Puritan prejudice against secular and instrumental music was still alive among many of the higher powers of the college. The undergraduate who liked music was suspect, and Dwight admitted that membership in the Pierian "had the fatal charm of a truant occupation."²²

¹⁹"The Pierian Sodality," p. 365.

²⁰Loc. cit.

²¹Review of "First Sanders Theater Concert," Boston Evening Transcript, October 18, 1890, p. 7.

²²Loc. cit. The Records for the Pierian Sodality between 1822 and 1832 are missing from the Harvard Archives. Dwight was apparently an enthusiastic, but not outstanding member. He never held office in the organization. (The volume labeled "Pierian Sodality. Book No. IV." in the Harvard Archives lists all the officers of the Sodality during Dwight's time. Dwight apparently was elected in 1831, and "honorably dismissed" the next year.)

Dwight was elected to the Hasty Pudding Club November 26, 1830, after the month of haggling and blackballing which preceded the election of nearly every member. He was elected vice-president on December 20, and poet "for the next anniversary" on July 4, 1831. At the meeting of September 8, 1831, Dwight read a "Dirge" upon the death of Andrew Peters, a poem in four stanzas which is the earliest composition of Dwight's extant.²³ It is not distinguished, but it is short and in reasonably good taste for an undergraduate effort on a very uncomfortable occasion.

The Widener Library at Harvard has a folder of eleven themes written by Dwight in his senior year, in addition to some exercises in forensics. Not one of these papers is on music in any phase. Either Dwight did not take the "truant occupation" very seriously, or the official frown was unbelievably forbidding. One of the themes does contain an interesting self-analysis. Dated June 22, 1832, it is called "Thoughts upon completing a course of academical exercises." Dwight admits he has enjoyed academic life and dreads going out into the world. He has been "accustomed to feel, more than to act." "Calculating ambition" repels him, but he decides that to avoid being lonesome or being accused of misanthropy, he must get interested in money. Finally he asks, "May I not collect my scattered energies, and turn them to an Eternal Principle?" Dwight was to ask himself this

²³Records of the Hasty Pudding Club. MS in the Harvard University Archives.

question in various forms for years to come. Once Dwight discussed in forensics "Whether eminence in literature or politics is more desirable." Here Dwight defends the literary life, and expresses for the first time a life-long dislike for feverish excitement and ballyhoo.²⁴

During his senior year, on November 7, 1831, Dwight was granted leave from Harvard to keep school in Northborough, Massachusetts, where he gave a lecture on music before the Northborough Lyceum. He is also reported to have introduced music into the school there.²⁵ Of these earliest attempts to further the cause of music we have no positive records. In the same winter he gave a paper on poetry before the Harvard Union,²⁶ and was honored with the office of class poet for the Class of 1832. His class poem was read at graduation, July 17, 1832. It is an ambitious effort in thirty Spenserian stanzas, based on the ancient figure of speech about shipping out on the sea of life. "We are bounding on," is the theme; the flavor of the poem can be had from such lines as

Wildly we gaze as with the bounding swell
Of the elastic waters on we hie. . . .

Here gathered on the shore we trembling stand:²⁷

²⁴Folder of Dwight papers in the Harvard Archives.

²⁵Cooke, pp. 7-8.

²⁶Cooke, p. 7.

²⁷Class Book of the Class of 1832. (MS not in Dwight's hand.)

At the commencement exercises in August, Dwight took part in a literary discussion on "English Biography and French Memoirs." He graduated with a high rank in his class, and was recommended by President Quincy as a man of "unexceptionable character," competent to teach in any school or academy. Professor Felton recommended him as well prepared for the "business of instruction, in which he proposes to engage. . . ," and Charles Follen vouched for Dwight's ability to read "the standard German works in any department of literature."²⁸

From this account of Dwight's first nineteen years, one might guess that he would very probably become either a teacher or a minister like many of his classmates. We know that he has no family fortune to fall back on, and he seems to have no special talents in politics or literature, although poetry seems to be his favorite study, along with German and a "truant occupation," music. Trying to find evidence of a basically "musical" temperament is snatching at straws, but the studies of German and poetry and the enthusiastic participation in the Pierian Sodality were the foundations of his career.

²⁸A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library. The letters of Quincy and Felton are dated April 25, 1832. Follen's letter is dated July 17, 1832.

CHAPTER II

EARLY EXPERIMENTS: 1832-1841

1.

When he graduated from Harvard, Dwight had apparently no very definite plans for the future. Obviously his father's profession was not attractive to him at all. He loved the atmosphere and the life at Harvard, and decided to postpone facing the world by making an obvious move. He enrolled in the Divinity School in September of 1832, probably because he saw no chance to make a respectable living any other way. There is no indication that he ever heard a "call." Nor was there any family tradition or pressure to steer him, except perhaps the thwarted paternal ambition of his grandfather.

Dwight undoubtedly thought of himself as a prospective teacher more than anything else, and before he started his work in the Divinity School he accepted a position as tutor in the famous household of Harm Jan Huidekoper in Meadville, Pennsylvania. This prosperous and aristocratic Dutchman had five children whose private education he entrusted to a long series of young men just out of Harvard College. The school was in the north wing of Pomona Hall, the Huidekoper mansion, described as a gay place in the 1830's.¹

¹Nina Moore Tiffany and Francis Tiffany, Harm Jan Huidekoper (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1904), p. 246.

Dwight's situation in Meadville was pleasant, but somewhat confining. The Huidekopers did not take much part in the civic affairs of Meadville, and Dwight's native inertia prevented his making much impression on this western community. He was hired especially for Frederic Huidekoper, but Frederic "could only look with wonder and some distaste upon the special talents and idiosyncrasies of Mr. Dwight," whom he remembered as a person "of gentle disposition," without much "aptitude for teaching," but with "an admiration for Shakespeare and a strong desire for playing upon the piano . . ."² Perhaps the piano at Huidekoper's was the first Dwight ever had at his disposal. Apparently he had a lot of time to try to teach himself this instrument, and to play the flute in the evenings.³

Along with William Henry Channing, who filled the local pulpit for a few months, Dwight made some attempt to contribute to the cultural life of Meadville. Early in 1834 he became an officer in a short-lived Meadville Lyceum, which "languished" after his departure in the summer. Before this group he read a lecture on "Education." The text is not available.⁴

²Tiffany, Harm Jan Huidekoper, p. 257.

³Octavius B. Frothingham, Memoir of William Henry Channing (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1886), p. 101.

⁴Tiffany, op. cit., p. 258. See also the notice in the Crawford Messenger (Meadville, Pennsylvania), February 14, 1834, p. 3. "---- Dwight" is listed as secretary and treasurer of the new organization. The Huidekopers were unpopular in Meadville, and lived usually apart from the society and politics of the community. (The author is here indebted to a personal conversation with Mr. J. R. Shryock of Meadville.)

A good guess would be that Dwight found the leisure in Meadville to develop some minimum facility on the flute and the piano, and to establish himself, in his own mind at least, as a well-qualified amateur in the "truant occupation." But he had not found himself. His classmate Samuel Osgood wrote from Cambridge:

I suspect, my friend, that both of us were intended for something. . . . It should be a great question with us how we may best bring out our powers. . . . We are both of us given to speculation . . . 5

The Dwight letter to which this is a reply could almost be reconstructed. He was drifting, not acting--"feeling" his way, literally and figuratively.

Dwight returned to Divinity School in the summer of 1834. During the next two years he formed lasting friendships with Christopher Pearse Cranch and Theodore Parker, and became gradually recognized as something of a musician and writer with transcendentalist leanings. At least two stories of friendly clashes between Dwight and the notoriously unmusical Parker are on record.⁶ Thomas Wentworth Higginson remembered Dwight and Cranch playing the flute at the Higginson home.⁷

Dwight's first published literary work was a translation of Schiller's "Hymn to Joy," which appeared in the New England

⁵A.L.S. of February 24, 1834, in the Boston Public Library.

⁶See Julia Ward Howe, Reminiscences, 1819-1899 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), pp. 162-163; and Cooke, pp. 8-9.

⁷Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Cheerful Yesterdays (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898), p. 18.

Magazine for May, 1835.⁸ The manuscript had been sent to Park Benjamin in the winter of 1834, and Benjamin wrote to Dwight complimenting him on the work and urging him to contribute more.

It will give us great pleasure to receive from your pen constant contributions to the magazine both prose and verse--Can you not favor us with some original piece or short prose translation from the German for our February number?⁹

Dwight apparently did not follow up this opportunity. His interests were still too diverse. Literature, music, and theology were all making calls on his relaxed, dreamy temperament. Sometime in 1835 or 1836 he prepared a manuscript "On Music," growing out of reflections on two of Lowell Mason's publications for the old Boston Academy of Music.¹⁰ His divinity school dissertation was presented in August of 1836, and its title, "On the Proper Character of Poetry and Music for Public Worship," shows how large was the field of his speculations.

Dwight's career in the ministry began before his graduation, probably on odd Sundays in various pulpits during the spring of 1836. Cranch wrote from Richmond, Virginia, on June 15: "I can feel with you as you describe your feelings in the pulpit. It is a throne, and you can hardly conceive

⁸VIII, 380-381.

⁹A.L.S. of December 23, 1834, in the Boston Public Library.

¹⁰MS in the Boston Public Library.

the uplifting sensations . . ."¹¹ The "uplifting sensations" were certainly accompanied by many painful moments. As early as 1837 he wrote to Theodore Parker, "I am almost afraid that I cannot succeed as a preacher."¹² He was to try four years longer, but he could never gain the sustained respect of a congregation. True, he was connected with the Emerson group at Concord in 1836 and was generally regarded as one of the transcendentalists, but no philosophical considerations turned Dwight directly away from the ministry. With the example of Emerson before him, he still would have been happy with a worldly "success" in the ministry. He turned to Parker for frank criticism, and got it, in March of 1837.

You have a deep love of the beautiful, strong likings and keen dislikings, a quick discernment, a deep love of freedom. I love the spontaneity of reason displayed in your mind and the beautiful active power of your imagination. But I must speak of 'faults' under each of these heads. You do not always see the beautiful clearly. . . . you love vagueness, mistaking the indefinite for the Infinite, and, like Ixion of old, embracing a cloud instead of a goddess. You surround yourself with the perfumed clouds of music. You mingle the same perfume and melody in your sermons, but you carry all the vagueness of musical clouds where clearness and precision are virtues. Thus you will be feeble in expression where your feeling is strong. . . . You are deficient in will. This is the most important statement I have to make.

Parker goes on to say that Dwight's strong likes and dislikes cut him off from many people, and his lack of "will-controlled

¹¹Leonora Cranch Scott, *The Life and Letters of Christopher Pearse Cranch* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 24.

¹²Letter of February, 1837, quoted without exact date in Cooke, p. 11.

thought" keeps him from doing anything worthy of himself. He has not "will enough to be free." "You must get a place in the real world before you can walk into the ideal like a gentleman."¹³

The frankness and acumen of this letter from Parker is remarkable. We will be reminded of its phrases throughout the course of this study. Indeed, the advice about getting "a place in the real world" so that he could "walk into the ideal like a gentleman" became a ruling principle with Dwight, a principle that caused him much pain and frustration. But we must not let Parker's analysis stand without quoting Dwight's contemporary reading of his own character, written to Parker a few weeks earlier. In trying to be frank about Parker's faults, Dwight reveals himself.

I don't like to see a man have too much will; it mars the beauty of nature. . . . I like not impetuosity, except that of unconscious impulse. . . .

I think your love of learning is a passion, that it injures your mind by converting insensibly what is originally a pure thirst for truth into a greedy, avaricious, jealous striving, . . .

Dwight admits that he admires Parker's drive, because he himself is "so passive."¹⁴ He must have known that success in any profession, and a "place in the real world" would come very hard.

During his divinity school days Dwight made one of the first of several unsuccessful attempts to attract a woman who

¹³Letter of March 14, 1837, quoted in Cooke, pp. 11-13.

¹⁴Letter quoted without date in Cooke, pp. 14-15.

would help him in the "real world." Something about Dwight repelled at least three women he courted before he finally married in 1851. A letter from Henry Whitney Bellows in the fall of 1836 tells its own story. Bellows acknowledges a "pregnant letter" from Dwight, who was vacationing in Keene, New Hampshire, and then goes on to say:

You confess what I had long expected, nay even to the details. Perhaps you have felt in some of our casual interviews that I was not entirely unobserving of the fire that burned on that altar. . . . Perhaps it will be very poor consolation for me to tell you that I cannot regret the turn matters have taken. . . . allow me to say that I hardly think you would have found Miss W [Mary Whitney] the ideal of your soul. Poets love too easily and indiscriminately. They clothe the possessor of a single alluring trait with all others. . . . I think that you are extremely exposed to this delusion. You could love many that you have seen, I fancy.

Bellows admits that Miss Whitney is acceptable, but she has some "spiritual weaknesses." He writes quite a long exposition on marriage, ending "fate has better things in store for you," and reports Miss Whitney's marriage to Dwight's old professor, C. K. Felton, described as a man of no deep feelings at all.¹⁵

Bellows goes on to join what rapidly became a chorus of Dwight's friends who thought he needed their advice about how to get along in the world.

A good many of your friends who admire your genius, fear, I think whether it is destined to have a full manifestation. Their fears and mine are founded upon a certain contempt you have for the details of life, for the common modes of usefulness, for the use of means. They fear for your stability. . . . I

¹⁵A.L.S. of October 25, 1836, in the Boston Public Library.

have feared that your fortunes might be those of genius too often without sympathy, too often disastrous.¹⁶

In spite of his idiosyncrasies, Dwight was not obnoxious enough to alienate his stronger-minded friends in the transcendentalist group. Ripley, Emerson, and Parker always loved him and encouraged him, just as intelligent parents love and encourage eccentric children. Emerson once described Dwight to Margaret Fuller as "a valiant good boy."¹⁷ In 1838, despite a discouraging report from Hedge,¹⁸ Emerson asked Dwight to fill his pulpit at East Lexington. This should have been all the opportunity Dwight needed, for the parish was newly formed and very sympathetic toward "radical" preaching.¹⁹ But after about a year, during which Dwight preached half the Sundays, the invitation to settle was not forthcoming.²⁰ In 1839, Hedge tried to help by inviting Dwight to Bangor, Maine. Here Dwight was momentarily very happy because he was constantly entertained and taken out of himself.²¹ But he was only visiting.

¹⁶Bellows to Dwight, October 25, 1836. (Cooke, p. 16, quotes only the last section of this letter, omitting all the discussion of love and marriage.)

¹⁷Letter of January 17 (?), 1840, in The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. by Ralph L. Rusk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), II, 250. (All subsequent references to Emerson's Letters are to this edition.)

¹⁸See Emerson's letter to Hedge of May 5, 1837, in Letters, II, 73.

¹⁹Cooke, p. 17; and see Emerson's letter to Lydian, February 19, 1838, in Letters, II, 113.

²⁰Cooke, p. 18.

²¹Ibid., pp. 19-20; and see Edward Waldo Emerson, The Early Years of the Saturday Club (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), p. 279.

Finally, in 1840, Dwight was invited to accept the pulpit of the little Unitarian church in Northampton, Massachusetts. His regular ministry began in February. The ordination took place May 20. At the ordination Dwight was sent off in a cloud of transcendentalist preaching by George Ripley, William Ellery Channing, and Samuel Osgood; but Ripley, sincere and enthusiastic as he was, could not easily be deluded. Dwight apparently urged him to publish the ordination services, which he did²² only after the misgivings expressed in a letter to Dwight of July 7.

As to the Ordination services, is it not almost too late in the day to revive them? Your time may be up in Northampton before they can be carried through the press; . . . for I take it for granted these days the better the man, the shorter his term of service in one spot. I had come to the conclusion that the "sober second thought" of your people had decided against endorsing so much spiritual Sans-Culottism, as you were welcomed with . . . ²³

Dwight had capable advisors and well-wishers as he took up his new position, but not many of them were members of his congregation. No amount of encouragement and good advice from the Ripleys, Channing, and Elizabeth Peabody could influence the minds of dubious parishoners. Perhaps we can best begin to estimate Dwight's stature as a preacher by

²²"The Claims of the Age on the Work of the Evangelist." / A / Sermon / Preached at the Ordination / of / Mr. John Sullivan Dwight, / as Pastor of the / Second Congregational Church / in Northampton, / May 20, 1840 / By George Ripley. / Boston: / Weeks, Jordan, and Company / MDCCCXL. (The volume contains the "Charge," by Rev. William Ellery Channing; "Right Hand of Fellowship," by Rev. Samuel Osgood; and "Address to the People," by Rev. Edward B. Hall.)

²³A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

hearing what one of his few Northampton supporters said of him. Caroline Briggs was a girl of eighteen in 1840. In her Reminiscences we find:

Following Mr. Stearns came John S. Dwight, and under his preaching I began to feel that I stood nearer to God than I had ever dreamed about before. How well I remember the ordination service. . . . Mr. Dwight's soul reveled in all beauty. The world was paradise to him, into which no serpent entered. He could not appreciate or understand much about those who sat in darkness and deep trouble. That side of life had not been opened to him; . . . It was not himself alone, but the atmosphere in which he lived, which was like the blossoming of a great tropical flower on a granite rock in New England soil.

. . . Mr. Dwight's ministry was short. Of course he was misunderstood. The people began to cry for the old props and the old faith,--the universe seemed crumbling under their feet. . . . Their Saviour was spoken of as a man like themselves, subject to temptation and limitation, and they would have none of that.²⁴

The irrepressible Lydia Maria Child was living in Northampton at the time. She wrote to Ellis Gray Loring:

I did not go to Mr. Dwight's ordination, nor have I yet gone to meeting. He has been to see me, however, and though I left my work in the midst, and sat down with a dirty gown and hands somewhat grimed, we were high up in the blue in fifteen minutes. I promised to take a flight with him. . . any time when he would come along with his balloon.²⁵

Dwight was becoming an object for the busy affections of the strong-minded, enthusiastic women who left such a heavy

²⁴Reminiscences and Letters, ed. by George S. Merriam (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897), pp. 150-151.

²⁵Letters of Lydia Maria Child (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883), p. 29. (This letter is dated "June 9, 1838," which is surely a mistake for "June 9 [?], 1840.")

mark on the New England of this time. To them he seemed a delicate, feminine spirit who needed sympathetic, feminine guidance. Elizabeth Peabody, for example, did not miss the opportunity. She wrote with great frankness to Dwight at this crisis in his career, and certainly with no lack of confidence in herself or him.

A certain want of fluency in prayer has been the real cause of your want of outward success more than any other thing; . . . I suppose the evil has originated in your idea of being spontaneous. . . . You have heard so much formal praying that you have shrunk from it as the only evil . . .

She advises Dwight to write out his prayers, and to stop short of groping for more words. She has noticed a great improvement in his sermons, and assumes that the prayers will come along.

The last years of your life, in which you have borne an apparent failure with such courage, dignity, and beauty, have done for you, palpably, what no outward success could have done. It has turned you visibly from a child into a man in bearing; and, in hoping for you now a continued prosperity, I can hope for nothing more than that you should adorn it as you have adorned adversity.²⁶

"In bearing" perhaps Dwight did become a man between 1836 and 1840, but manhood in certain other senses was still far distant. Elizabeth Peabody suspected the worst, but she was so attracted to Dwight that she was moved to help inflate his balloon and hope for the best. She wrote in the fall of 1840, saying first that she felt more comfortable writing to the wicked and unhappy.

²⁶Letter of May 20, 1840, quoted in Cooke, pp. 35-37.

How then am I to write to you?--As well might I address an angel in Paradise--

Is the falling leaf only another tone of the music of life--another hue of the beauty you always see?--Does the spirit still put into your mouth what you must say every Sunday without writing and anguish?--I hope so, even though it may deprive me of all chance of writing you a letter--and may the roses you gather have no thorns--the sweet no bitter--and your life be an amaranthine flower--

She goes on to speak of the powerful effect of a Parker sermon.

If your people get frivolous--send for him to give you a labor of love--and you too can sprinkle your honeydew over his people to their edification--. . .

And she hopes to hear soon that Dwight is engaged to be married.²⁷

Dwight fell in love with the natural beauty and the atmosphere of Northampton, and apparently he also made some advances toward a young lady. The hints are few, but unmistakable. We know only that the affair occurred, and that nothing came of it. In addition to Miss Peabody's hopeful suggestion, we have the evidence of a note from Cranch, written October 16, 1841, upon the occasion of Cranch's engagement to his future bride: "At last--for her person--not so faultlessly beautiful as your young flower of Northampton, . . ."²⁸ By the time this note was written, the affair was probably over, for Dwight had resigned his pulpit and was preparing to leave.

In a few limited respects, Northampton had possibilities as a transcendentalist's paradise. The kindred spirits among the local inhabitants were not many, but Dwight's own spirits

²⁷A.L.S. of September 20, 1840, in the Boston Public Library.

²⁸Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, p. 76.

soared for a time on the strength of visits and letters from his old friends. Christopher Pearse Cranch was perhaps the most inspiring of all. Soon after his ordination, Dwight must have written Cranch an enthusiastic invitation to visit him and share his pulpit. Cranch replied from Quincy on June 19, 1840: "I thank you for your account of your delightful environment. You seem to be in a paradise."²⁹ Cranch made his visit in October, and the reunion was a complete success. Dwight wrote on October 12,

Two whole Sundays from Cranch! . . . I have never listened to four sermons all so noble and so inspiring. . . . Nothing has gratified me more since I have been here than to witness the warm response of our people to his bold and stirring declarations of truth. I feel as if the victory was won in regard to liberty of opinion here, and he feels that it is the freest and most genial atmosphere in which he has spoken.³⁰

Some of this "genial atmosphere," perhaps most of it, must have been an emanation from the minds of the two flute-playing transcendentalists. Cranch was not one to worry his friend about a "place in the real world."

I have dreamed, really dreamed in sleep, of Northampton several times since I left. My visit there seems to have enlarged and embellished my possessions and estate in dreamland considerably. It was a good speculation that way,--my going up to see you. . . . I would cultivate the art of dreaming, were I you.³¹

This last sentence may be idle chatter, but taken seriously, it may provide a touch to Dwight's portrait. To

²⁹Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, p. 56.

³⁰Quoted in Cooke, p. 37.

³¹Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, pp. 57-58.

Parker, Dwight was not Yankee enough. To Cranch he was not enough of a dreamer. Such a comparison certainly tells a lot about Parker and Cranch, but it also re-enforces the idea that Dwight was more moody and unpredictable than anything else. His temperament showed a cycle made up of dreamy optimism, depression, skepticism, revival. Only by realizing this can we account for the following passage in a long, gossipy letter to Dwight from Sophia Ripley. She imagines that Dwight would spend a cold day in Northampton

stretched on the hearth rug before a great fire--the side not next the fire freezing--reading the narrative of some voyage to the North Pole--indulging the most selfwilled skepticism--not doubting the existence merely of goodness, happiness, and friendship, but denying that there is anything good in goodness--happy in happiness or friendly in friends.³²

Dwight did what he could to provide his potential paradise with poetry and music, as well as straight religion. His old rival in love, C. C. Felton, sent him some copies of Shakespeare for a regular Monday evening meeting to discuss the great plays.³³ Tuesday was Glee Club; Wednesday, choir; Saturday, the singing school for children. Sometimes he preferred the privacy of books or the Dial to more social pursuits.³⁴ No routine, no matter how pleasant and varied, could hold Dwight long in these days.

³²A.L.S. of February 9, 1840, in the Boston Public Library.

³³See a letter from Felton to Dwight of January 17, 1841. A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

³⁴Letter from Dwight "to one of his sisters" of January 12, 1841. Quoted in Cooke, pp. 38-39.

George Ripley's prediction was a little premature, but accurate. On the anniversary of his ordination Dwight preached some tactless words about the worldliness and narrow-mindedness of the congregation. He tried to smooth things over early in June, but by the end of the month he was through.³⁵ He wrote on June 22,

From all that I have discovered of the character of the individuals of whom my society is composed, I feel more and more convinced that the relation between us never could have been lasting, . . . The truth is, the true state of things was from the first concealed from me. The enthusiasm of that ordination time deceived us. . . . Very nearly all the women, and a majority of the men, I count upon confidently. But the favor with which I am looked upon by the female portion seems to be one chief offence. . . .³⁶

This letter may have been addressed to Elizabeth Peabody. At any rate she made a brave and fluent attempt to provide the silver lining, on June 24.

. . . I know your nature is divine and a hundred years hence you will be all the sweeter angel. . . .

The Ravens shall feel thee. . . . It looks regal to stay on the spot--and minister in a truly transcendental way to a true church of friends. . . . without money and without price. . . . I rejoice to remember your gentle temper--your freedom from all petulance-- . . . If I had command of a Northampton paper I would like to put in it an article--headed "J. S. D.--versus--'River People'" . . .³⁷

One surely wonders what consolation Dwight could find in the brave words of Elizabeth Peabody, and in the fact that he was

³⁵Cooke, p. 44.

³⁶Quoted in Cooke, pp. 44-45.

³⁷A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

really too charming to the ladies, at least in the pulpit and at the Thursday whist club.

2.

Dwight's short career in the ministry coincided exactly with the beginnings of the intellectual stimulus generated by Emerson's "Nature," "Divinity School Address," and "The American Scholar." Under this influence, Dwight did not deliberately quit a well-chosen profession, as Emerson and George Ripley did, but his natural shortcomings as a preacher were undoubtedly cultivated and enlarged by his early and intimate connection with New England transcendentalism. He was one of the young men for whom both Alcott and Emerson had great hopes and admiration. At the first meeting of the "Symposium" on September 19, 1836, Dwight was invited to join in the next meeting to be held October 3. Alcott did not remember Dwight at this second meeting,³⁸ but Hedge remembered him at what Cabot calls the "second" meeting, at Emerson's sometime in October.³⁹ Dwight probably attended these meetings as often as he could, for he loved social intercourse of almost all kinds. But he is never mentioned as a contributor to the conversations. Van Wyck Brooks pictures him rather ridiculously as a sort of pure transcendentalist essence, a spirit representing the movement in its unadulterated form. "John Dwight was the type of them all,"

³⁸The Journals of Bronson Alcott, ed. by Odell Shepard (Boston: Little, Brown, 1938), p. 79.

³⁹James E. Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1887), I, 245.

³⁹James E. Cabot, A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1887), I, 245.

with "too much Mozart in his cosmos."⁴⁰ Certainly we must add that Dwight was young, shy, and not very quick in expressing himself. Just three months out of divinity school, he was indulging his taste for "truant occupations" and at the same time looking for an opening in the world as a scholar or minister.

Emerson did his best for Dwight, although he may have found Dwight a little difficult, perhaps a little boring. In 1838 he wrote,

Dwight came . . . & staid longer & we got as far as speech, this time. . . . between him & me, as chances so often with those we reckon intelligent, a good understanding was supposed not certified. But I find him now a very accurate mind active & genial with fine moral qualities though not of great reading or variously cultivated. What is a great satisfaction too, he has his own subject, Music.⁴¹

In writing to Carlyle a year later, Emerson described Dwight as a "good, susceptible, yearning soul, not so apt to create as to receive with freest allowance."⁴² When he was day-dreaming about the ideal transcendentalist school, Emerson did not think of including Dwight on the faculty which would have had for its leaders Ripley, Hedge, Parker, Alcott, and himself.⁴³

⁴⁰Life of Emerson (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1932), p. 105.

⁴¹To Margaret Fuller, May 24, 1838, in Letters, II, 134-135.

⁴²Letter of March 19, 1839, in The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1832-1874 (3rd ed.; Boston: James R. Osgood, 1883), I, 226.

⁴³Letter to Margaret Fuller of August 16, 1840, in Letters, II, 323-324. See also Cabot, Memoir of Emerson, II, 409.

Emerson's remarks on Dwight fill out the picture a little more. Dwight was sincere and earnest but seldom really industrious. He was sensitive and receptive, but not brilliant either in analysis or creation. He was a person in whom his well-wishers wanted very much to see promise, and about whom it was easy to say something complimentary if one put his mind to it. But he was also easy to forget about.

On at least two occasions before 1840, Bronson Alcott admitted Dwight into quite select company. In thinking about "living men," Alcott noted, "How rare are such men! . . ." In one group he placed Dwight along with Emerson, Brownson, Ripley, Hedge, Parker and others. He called this group "philosophical, and therefore more potent" than a second group including Channing, Follen and Garrison.⁴⁴ Another time he wrote in his diary, "We have writers enough, but they are neither accomplished nor free. Half a dozen men exhaust our list of contributors; Emerson, Hedge, Miss Fuller, Ripley, Channing, Dwight, and Clarke are our dependence."⁴⁵ This was written in November, 1839, in connection with a proposed transcendentalist magazine. Dwight already had some reputation as a translator and reviewer, but he had scarcely shown any real promise as a "potent," "philosophical" writer. Perhaps Alcott knew Dwight better than he indicates. Perhaps also

⁴⁴Journals, p. 105.

⁴⁵Quoted in George Willis Cooke, An Historical and Biographical Introduction to Accompany the Dial (Cleveland: The Rowfant Club, 1902), I, 58-59.

he was just hoping. We do know that Dwight thought enough of Alcott to solicit funds for Alcott's relief in 1840.⁴⁶

Dwight never could complain of his treatment by any of the principal transcendentalists. They did what they could for him, both in his attempts to get established as a minister and in his early struggles as a writer. From Northampton he sent sermons which were published in the Dial, along with his first significant piece of concert reviewing and his most successful poem.⁴⁷ The Christian Examiner published his divinity school dissertation and many of his early reviews. George Ripley made Dwight responsible for the third volume of his Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature.⁴⁸

But in 1841, all these opportunities seemed to have been wasted. The latter half of this year was a very dark period for Dwight. His literary production stopped; his career in the ministry was over. Perhaps the removal to Northampton had been a bad mistake. It cut Dwight off from his real friends and helpers at a time when he needed their guidance

⁴⁶See a letter to Dwight from Robert Bartlett, A.L.S. of June 11, 1840, in the Boston Public Library.

⁴⁷"The Religion of Beauty," Dial, I (July, 1840), 17-22. "Ideals of Everyday Life, No. I," Dial, I (January, 1841), 307-311. "Ideals of Everyday Life, No. II," Dial, I (April, 1841), 446-461. The poem called "Rest" in later reprints appears without title in Dial, I (July, 1840), 22. "The Concerts of the Past Winter," Dial, I (July, 1840), 124-134.

⁴⁸Select Minor Poems . . . of Goethe and Schiller (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1839). This book, together with the other writings mentioned here, will be discussed in a later section.

most. His going to Brook Farm in November has been regarded as a very natural step, an inevitable and happy development in his career. Cooke describes him at this moment as a

born idealist, by temperament an enthusiast, and by conviction a come-outer from the conventionalities of society and religion, . . . who could see the promise of such a movement, and forsake all things cheerfully for its sake.⁴⁹

Such a statement must not stand unqualified, for in some ways Brook Farm seems to have been a last resort, a move of desperation or resignation. Joining Ripley at Brook Farm was not finding a place in the real world, and Dwight knew it. His correspondence in 1841 and 1842 was not full of reforming enthusiasm. He was looking for a job. Henry W. Bellows in New York apparently looked like the classmate in the best position. Sometime in September Dwight appealed to him for help in securing a position as lecturer or teacher. Bellows replied on October 5, 1841:

I have no sort of official connexion with any of the Societies for diffusing knowledge in this city, but if I can use any personal influence in your behalf, I shall most cheerfully do it . . .⁵⁰

In this same letter, Bellows makes an amusing statement which reflects perfectly what the outside world was thinking about the transcendentalist movement: "I am very curious to see a Transcendentalist. We have no such birds this way."⁵¹ This and the following were probably anything but amusing to

⁴⁹Cooke, p. 49.

⁵⁰A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

⁵¹Loc. cit.

Dwight, however, He must have felt truly like an exotic "bird," caged and starving in a part of the world where no suitable food was available for him.

You are reputed a martyr to that creed. And if the papers on Daily Life in the Dial are your esoteric confession I heartily wish you had more disciples, and I will be one of them myself.⁵²

Dwight was not cut out for martyrdom, and he did not seek it. He did not want disciples. He wanted acceptance by a woman who could love him and by a society which could respect him. He also wanted to live by the particular kind of transcendentalist creed he had fallen into. After we have examined his early writings and the thinking which made up this creed, we should be able to see exactly what kind of man went to Brook Farm in November of 1841.

3.

Dwight's serious thinking about music and his concerted attempts to gain proficiency, both as performer and commentator, began in the divinity school days. About 1835 he was reading Lowell Mason's "Second Annual Report of the Boston Academy of Music," and the "Manual of the Boston Academy." He prepared a review of these publications, entitled simply "On Music," a thirty-three page manuscript apparently never published in its original form.⁵³ This

⁵²Bellows to Dwight, October 5, 1841.

⁵³Now in the Boston Public Library. A part was published as "Sacred Music" in the American Monthly Magazine, New Series II (November, 1836), 447-457.

document probably ante-dates the divinity school dissertation, and the first half of it contains many of the generalizations about music which Dwight never ceased to reiterate.

Music is the language of feeling, he says, especially religious feeling or devotion. Words are the language of thought. The person who cannot feel what music communicates is cut off from the deepest mysteries of life. This was the axis of Dwight's belief, and his thinking never revolved around any other axis for very long.

Love, striving to amalgamate with all--devotion, reaching forward to eternity--all that mysterious part of our nature, which binds us to one another, to the beauty of the world, to God and to an hereafter,--require a different language from that common sense or intellect, which looks coldly upon the outward world, only to dissect it, and which occasions separations, instead of harmony, in human hearts.⁵⁴

The "truant occupation" of the undergraduate days had provided Dwight with a life-long ideal. We shall find it again and again, in the Harbinger of the Brook Farm days, throughout the Journal of Music, and finally permeating the the last essay Dwight published, fifty-five years later.

Already the social significance of music had suggested itself. Society is defective, says Dwight, "when all men are either politicians or money makers. . . ."

The fine arts, and particularly music, as being the least exclusive of them all, seem intended to supply this defect, by familiarizing men with the beautiful and the infinite. These influences . . . excite common feeling, create common associations, and

⁵⁴"On Music," p. 5 .

unite individuals in common sympathies founded in things eternal; . . .⁵⁵

"Common Sense," wrote Dwight in 1890, "is the sum total-- say the vital harmony--of all those innate, universal, unavoidable convictions, prepossessions, which lie at the bottom of every soul. It is the instinct of complete humanity."⁵⁶

As a divinity student and prospective minister, Dwight was interested primarily at this time in the problem of how music should be used in church services. The second part of "On Music" is given to a somewhat formalized discussion of church music. The atmosphere of this section is eighteenth-century, neoclassical. Since this is a sort of preliminary essay to the dissertation, it does not demand separate discussion. But we must not fail to notice the irony of the fact that this entire piece was inspired by the work of Lowell Mason, whom Dwight here commends without reservation.⁵⁷ It does not require much foresight to guess what Dwight would think later of Mason's highly commercialized musical enterprises.

Although the divinity school dissertation⁵⁸ deals primarily with church music, it reveals a basic factor in Dwight's

⁵⁵"On Music," p. 14.

⁵⁶Unitarian Review, XXXIII (May, 1890), 392.

⁵⁷"On Music," pp. 30-31.

⁵⁸"On the Proper Character of Poetry and Music for Public Worship," Christian Examiner, XXI (November, 1836), 254-263.

thinking about all music. His attitude toward the fine arts was neither Calvinist-Puritan nor equalitarian. He thought music never should be used as a mechanism for communicating extra-musical ideas, nor should it be made "common" to everyone in the sense of becoming a "folk" art.⁵⁹ The participation of the congregation or audience, or of the mass of people generally, in the composition or performance of music is a secondary and sometimes undesirable thing.⁶⁰ Most important is that "a musical, religious service should preserve the essential characteristics of music . . ."⁶¹

Dwight believed that music has absolute esthetic and spiritual and moral qualities which are best available to the individual when music composed by a musical genius is performed by the best singers and players available. Consequently, he moves immediately from his introduction to a discussion of the magic in Haydn, Beethoven, and Rossini.⁶² When he says music "is the language of our far-reaching aspirations,"⁶³ he does not mean that each individual must actually employ the "language" himself. The individual must, in the presence of music, simply be prepared for transcendence into an ideal world. The power of music is wholly subjective;

⁵⁹"On the Proper Character of Poetry and Music for Public Worship," pp. 254-255.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 260-261.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 254.

⁶²Ibid., p. 256.

⁶³Loc. cit.

its influence depends on the individual who comes into contact with it. And its communication is always vague, untranslatable in words.⁶⁴

No wonder Dwight had trouble at Northampton. We are beginning to see what Parker meant when he said Dwight mistook the indefinite for the infinite.

In both the dissertation and the essay "On Music" Dwight sounds like a neoclassic critic when he distinguishes three kinds of music--the sublime, the beautiful, and the ornate.⁶⁵ The sublime is characterized by vastness, grandeur. It is the kind often best performed by the whole congregation, like the Doxology.⁶⁶ The beautiful music, which should dominate the service, should be performed by trained musicians. Ornate music is not suitable for religious services ordinarily,⁶⁷ although mechanical simplicity and clumsy uniformity are often mistaken for true solemnity and reverence.⁶⁸

In his short discussion of the words to be sung to church music, Dwight reveals that he is primarily anxious to subordinate meaning to sound. The words should be poetry, first and last.⁶⁹ They should be suggestive rather than

⁶⁴"On the Proper Character of Poetry and Music for Public Worship," pp. 256-257.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 260-261; "On Music," p. 29.

⁶⁶"On the Proper Character . . .," p. 260.

⁶⁷"On Music," p. 29.

⁶⁸"On the Proper Character . . .," p. 258.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 261-262.

explicit, should support the subjective response of the individual to the music. Often repeated, familiar words are best, like those of the Catholic Mass.⁷⁰ The music should be "the inexhaustible commentator upon the simple words in which are wrapped up infinite feelings and infinite imaginings."⁷¹ Protestant hymnody puts the cart before the horse. Numerous doggerel verses to one repeated tune destroy the spiritual effects of music altogether.⁷² In the Catholic Mass, the words are fixed, poetic, and simple. The musical possibilities are infinite.⁷³

Extended comment on this dissertation would be superfluous. To say that it adumbrates Dwight's successive failures to find a place in the real world is to speak from hindsight. Its academic and derivative qualities must not be minimized.⁷⁴ There is no reason why, holding these views, Dwight could not have been a successful and liberal Unitarian minister like his classmates Bellows, Brooks, and Osgood.

⁷⁰"On the Proper Character of Poetry and Music for Public Worship," p. 262.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 262-263.

⁷²Ibid., p. 263.

⁷³Ibid., p. 262.

⁷⁴Although a detailed study of the sources of Dwight's musical thought is not part of this thesis, references will be made at appropriate points to the most important items in this category. The dissertation shows, among other things, his early acquaintance with romantic music criticism. See J. Wesley Thomas, "John Sullivan Dwight: A Translator of German Romanticism," American Literature, XXI (January, 1950), 430-432.

The theory of aesthetics he expounds is anti-Calvinist, but not pagan or revolutionary. Many of the finest qualities of transcendentalism--high idealism, moral earnestness, and individualism--are here, but certainly not in any extreme or obnoxious form.

Two developments, however, are clear. First, music had begun to occupy more of Dwight's thought than literature and theology combined. When Emerson expressed pleasure in the fact that Dwight had his "own subject, Music," he certainly did not think of music as a vocation. Emerson meant merely that Dwight had acquired an interesting and unusual sideline about which he could make conversation. Preaching and teaching in one form or another was still assumed to be the lifework of any divinity-school graduate, transcendentalist or not.

Even Dwight never lost the feeling that he should preach and teach. He never lost sight of what he considered the connection between music and man's eternal soul. Now we see the second development, a disturbing one. Dwight's communication was bad. Trained as a linguist and preacher and not at all as a musician, he tried in the dissertation to do what he explicitly says cannot be done. He tried to explain in words what is unexplainable in words--the language of music. Dwight recognized and wrestled with this difficulty from time to time. But he never achieved a convincing solution.

Immediately after his graduation from divinity school Dwight began to be recognized as a leader in musical circles.

In the summer of 1837 he helped found the Harvard Musical Association, with which we shall be concerned at great length later on. In 1838, he was one of the "talented gentlemen" who were occasional contributors to the newly founded Boston Musical Gazette.⁷⁵ For this periodical Dwight wrote only one article, "Music, as a Branch of Popular Education."⁷⁶ The title shows that Dwight was already attacking the problem of how to make the power of music felt by more and more people.

"Why may not Music become a popular influence among us?" he asks.

He, who loves music with his whole soul, feels his soul uttered in it, dreams it, walks by it, prays by it,--who sees not a sweet sight in nature without a silent accompaniment of melody in his own heart, and conceives not a heroic resolution without a war-march sounding (all unheard by others) through the chambers of his soul. . . .

must certainly realize that musical feeling is possibly common to everyone.

He feels that as a man he is musical, and not as an odd exception to his race. . . .

If music . . . performs an office for man which no other of the arts can, . . . then ought she to rank among the guardian dieties of the soul, and preside over a department in every liberal system of education. . . .

At the entrance to the garden of life each young inquiring wayfarer should be saluted by the bust of Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven; these no less than Socrates, Shakespeare and Newton, have something to say to him which concernes him deeply. . . . No man can be quite a man without it.⁷⁷

⁷⁵See the "Prospectus," I (May 2, 1838), 1.

⁷⁶I (May 16, 1838), 9-10.

⁷⁷"Music as a Branch of Popular Education," pp. 9-10.

The apologia pro vita sua, a recurrent element in Dwight's musical writing, is obvious here. But he certainly realized his own limitations, and eloquently proclaimed that no more generations should be deprived of musical education as he was. Boston, he says, needs "common-school instruction in the rudiments of music," and concerts to educate the public.⁷⁸

In 1838 Dwight wrote his longest article for the Christian Examiner,⁷⁹ a review of a curious book, William Gardiner's The Music of Nature.⁸⁰ Dwight admits the book is superficial, but he is strongly attracted to it because Gardiner has tried to solve one of Dwight's chief problems. He makes "an approach at least, not wholly unsuccessful, to a power of translating music into words."⁸¹ Dwight calls the book a contribution to the natural history of music, a "first step towards a well-grounded philosophy of music, which shall comprehend its unity and find its fundamental idea."⁸² But Gardiner has not shown the true nature of music. The higher criticism is yet to come, Dwight says, because pure music is so recent a development.⁸³

⁷⁸"Music as a Branch of Popular Education," p. 10.

⁷⁹XXV (September, 1838), 23-36.

⁸⁰The Music of Nature; or, An Attempt to prove that what is passionate and pleasing in the Art of Singing, Speaking, and Performing upon Musical Instruments, is derived from the Sounds of the Animated World. With curious and interesting illustrations. (Boston: J. H. Wilkins and R. B. Carter, 1838.)

⁸¹Review of The Music of Nature, p. 23.

⁸²Ibid., p. 25.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 25-26.

This occupies three pages, and is simply an introduction to Dwight's longest essay yet on his own theory of music. Much of it we have heard already. Dwight is now convinced that composers write their inner autobiographies into their music.⁸⁴ The difference between music and the other arts is that music begins with feeling which calls up images. Other arts begin with images which call up feeling.⁸⁵ Each man's affinity with the feeling in music is instinctive, and the cultivation of musical taste is cultivation of the soul.⁸⁶

Some of the Sonatas of Beethoven and Haydn, as we learn to appreciate them, like the deepest poetry, seem to express all the deepest undefined yearnings of the soul. If we cannot readily and certainly conjecture their meaning, we instinctively catch their spirit; they win us to the mood in which they were written; the feelings they express are not of time, so that hearts in all times, and places, and circumstances are not excluded from a full response.⁸⁷

The year 1839 seems to have been occupied with preaching and strictly literary work, but when Dwight was asked to contribute to the first number of the Dial, he responded both as preacher-essayist and as concert reviewer. The musical season in Boston of 1839-1840 he reviewed in "Concerts of the Past Winter."⁸⁸ He remarks on some improvement in taste over past seasons, but says the music lover "must still keep

⁸⁴Review of The Music of Nature, pp. 27-28.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 30.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 31.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 32.

⁸⁸I (July, 1840), 124-134.

apologizing to his . . . neighbors for the heavenly influence which haunts him." New England is still chilled by "the cold east wind of utility."⁸⁹ "We want two things. Frequent public performances of the best music, and a constant audience, . . ."⁹⁰ When his mind turned to music, Dwight must have felt that he belonged in Boston, not in Northampton.

In this review we find the first of Dwight's ceaseless encomiums on Handel's Messiah.⁹¹ In this one composition Dwight found realized all the ideals for religious music he had expressed in the divinity school dissertation.

We feel tempted to call "The Messiah" the only Oratorio, and to doubt if there will ever be another. . . .

Handel seems to have monopolized the one subject for an Oratorio, Humanity's anticipation of its Messiah. This properly is the one theme of all pure music; this the mysterious promise which it whispers; this is the hope with which it fills us as its tones seem to fall from the blue sky, or to exhale through the earth's pores from its secret divine fountains. Music is the aspiration, the yearnings of the heart to the Infinite. . . . This longing of the heart, which is a permanent fact of human life, and with which we all know how to sympathize, has received its most perfect historical form in the Jewish expectation of a Messiah. . . . They are almost the only words we know, which do not limit the free, world-permeating, ever-shifting, Protean genius of music . . .⁹²

But Boston is "a community only beginning to be musical."

"A repeated performance of The Messiah . . . would do more to bring out the latent musical taste of the people, than anything

⁸⁹"The Concerts of the Past Winter," p. 124.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 133.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 125-129.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 125-126.

else . . . "93 These repeated performances became a tradition in Boston from about this time, and whether or not they had the effect Dwight predicted, they continued for years to inspire Dwight himself.

The virtuoso school of pianists was showing some of its wares in Boston at this time. Dwight admits he finds the performances "rich, brilliant, wild, astonishing."⁹⁴ He can expend a little poetic effort on them. "They are the heaving of the billowy deep, now dark, now lit by gleams of lightning; they are the sweeping breeze of the forest; they are the flickering aurora . . ."⁹⁵ But we should have been much more pleased to have heard the Sonatas of Beethoven, . . . written not for the sake of displaying the Piano Forte, but for the sake of music."⁹⁶ Music for music's sake. Dwight committed himself to this principle very early.

With the growth of musical taste, . . . one acquires a more and more decided preference for instrumental music . . . ; music pure, rather than music wedded to another art, . . . We prefer a Beethoven's Symphony to anything ever sung, with the single exception of Handel's Messiah.⁹⁷

⁹³"The Concerts of the Past Winter," p. 129.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 130.

⁹⁵Loc. cit.

⁹⁶Loc. cit.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 127. That Dwight had ever heard an orchestral performance of a Beethoven symphony at this time is very doubtful.

The short-lived Boston Musical Gazette⁹⁸ was succeeded in 1839 by Hach's Musical Magazine,⁹⁹ with Dwight and "other eminent literary amateurs of music"¹⁰⁰ as contributors. Hach reprinted "The Messiah and the Creation" from the Dial article,¹⁰¹ and in 1841 gave almost an entire issue to a speech Dwight made before the Harvard Musical Association on August 25.¹⁰²

In reading this speech, one seems to find himself at a turning point in Dwight's career and in his thought. He is passing through Boston on his way from Northampton to Brook Farm. He is addressing his old friends of the Pierian Sodality, thinking partly in terms of his divinity school dissertation, and at the same time looking forward vaguely to a new experience, a new start in life. He sounds a little like an old codger already, rambling and reminiscing.

A multitude of topics rush upon the mind, which we must take up unceremoniously in the order of their coming, trusting that all the details of our rambling discourse will be so steeped in a devout love for music . . . as to give them a unity of spirit, if not of form.¹⁰³

⁹⁸May 2, 1838, to April 17, 1839.

⁹⁹H. Theodore Hach and T. B. Hayward, edd., The Musical Magazine: or, Repository of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence (Boston, 1839-1842).

¹⁰⁰Musical Magazine, III (January 9, 1841), 1.

¹⁰¹Musical Magazine, II (August 15, 1840), 263-265.

¹⁰²"Address . . . before the Harvard Musical Association," Musical Magazine, III (August 28, 1841), 257-272.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 257.

In speaking of "the true office and dignity of Music," Dwight expands on an idea suggested in the dissertation. The distinction between "sacred" and "secular" music is false. Church music tends to be regarded as automatically "holy"; other music becomes a trivial entertainment.¹⁰⁴ But "are not . . . some of the adagio movements, scattered through the instrumental works of Beethoven, almost the very essence of prayer?"¹⁰⁵ Music, and especially pure instrumental music, is the "language of natural religion."¹⁰⁶ The effect and influence of great music is "to hallow pleasure, and to naturalize religion."¹⁰⁷ To Dwight, "music stands for the highest outward symbol of what is most deep and holy, and most remotely to be realized in the soul of man."¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, music has a prophetic character. It shows us a vision of a better world.¹⁰⁹

Dwight must have been very proud to address the Harvard Musical Association. They certainly were a more appreciative audience than the congregation at Northampton. Dwight probably let himself go a little more than usual in this speech, but we cannot assume that he was relaxed and completely happy.

¹⁰⁴"Address . . . before the Harvard Musical Association," pp. 258-261.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 265.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 269.

From the Pierian Sodality to transcendentalism and Brook Farm was not at all a common or natural progression. Most of the members of the Association were probably reservedly tolerant of Ripley's experiment. Some may have been openly disrespectful. Not one, except for Dwight, was on his way to join. In discussing the prophetic quality of music, Dwight was never the slightest specific. If he hoped a better world might emerge from Brook Farm, he was reticent about expressing the hope. He merely reminded the members of their duty to propagandize Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven, and to promote the acceptance of music into the Harvard curriculum.¹¹⁰ These were the specific things Dwight really wanted to do, and it seems a very safe guess that he would have joyfully settled in Boston in 1841 if he could have made a living there. The address before the Harvard Musical Association assumes a note of tragedy.

4.

Dwight's claim to the title of "literary amateur" in the music field was based not only on his writings about music, but on somewhat promising beginnings he made between 1837 and 1840 as a literary critic and translator. His earliest book review was written for the Christian Examiner in 1837, on his friend William Ware's Letters of Lucius M. Piso from Palmyra.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰"Address . . . before the Harvard Musical Association," p. 272.

¹¹¹XXIII (September, 1837), 99-121.

Dwight's enthusiasm over this long-forgotten book is interesting because it shows how Dwight could apply his feeling about art and the artist to literary criticism. He praises the calm, classic spirit of the work, with "no breaking through of the self-consciousness of the writer."¹¹² The book exerts the greater moral force because no specific moral is attached.¹¹³ The moral must come from "the all-pervading moral spirit of its author." The true poet, like the composer of genius, "loves truth, and beauty, and God, and is in a very high sense religious, whether he knows it himself or not."¹¹⁴ Here is an early and unmistakable indication that Dwight thought of himself as a potential poet.

The next review Dwight wrote is a very bright spot in his literary career. Sometime in 1837 he borrowed from Emerson the first two volumes of Tennyson's poems, and in the January, 1838, issue of the Examiner he published the first full and comprehensive review of Tennyson to appear in America.¹¹⁵

Dwight declares that Tennyson is a true poet, suffering as to be expected from neglect and harsh, unsympathetic criticism.¹¹⁶

¹¹²Review of Letters from Palmyra, p. 99.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 100.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 101.

¹¹⁵John Olin Eidson, Tennyson in America (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1943), p. 6. See also W. J. Rolfe, "Biographical Sketch," in The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson (Cambridge ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898), p. xv. Dwight's review is in the Christian Examiner, XXIII (January, 1838) 305-327.

¹¹⁶Review of Tennyson's Poems, pp. 305-306.

But he has a "poet's faculty to answer for." "From the every-day world of contradictions and deformities, he aspires to a world of beauty and harmony."¹¹⁷ Indeed, "he seems often to have descended to the mechanical task of trying to make up something," but "he cannot write unmusically."¹¹⁸ His diction has a "Wordsworthian truth and freshness."¹¹⁹

The homeliness and quaintness of poems like "The Miller's Daughter" especially attracted Dwight, for "all things in nature are beautiful, when once beautiful feelings have become associated with them . . ."¹²⁰ (Emerson obviously lent thoughts as well as books.) "The Ballad of Oriana" is "the height of the passive heroic."

From the agony of that true heart flashes a ray,
which cleaves the veil of the eternal world. . . .
It shines in upon the deep obscure fountain of
faith in our souls; it makes us feel the necessity
of immortality. Why cannot our poet always write
thus? . . . What care we for his pretty fancies,
which belong only to him, the individual, when he should
be speaking out of the depth of the universal Spirit,
and waking our own spirits within us?¹²¹

Dwight admits Tennyson has the organization of a poet. But does he have the true poetic spirit? Is he "all sense, with neither feeling nor faith? . . . Does he utter what is in all men, or only the mood of one man?"¹²² At present he

¹¹⁷Review of Tennyson's Poems, p. 307.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 308.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 309.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 311.

¹²¹Ibid., pp. 319-320.

¹²²Ibid., p. 324.

has not lived up to his promise; he avoids "the sphere of active interests, the momentous struggles of great principles, the tragic situations of the human heart . . ."123

Obviously then, the true poet will be a musician and a transcendentalist, whether he uses musical sounds or words. Dwight sounds bold and inspired in this review, as well as judicious and perceptive. At this moment we can understand why Alcott and Emerson encouraged him.

In 1839 Dwight published his volume of Goethe and Schiller for Ripley¹²⁴ and almost nothing else. In the January Examiner he reviewed briefly a translation of William Tell,¹²⁵ and advertised his forthcoming volume a little. ". . . an infusion of German literature may very much benefit our own. We have come to look upon all fresh and childlike utterance as ballad-like and antiquated."¹²⁶ Dwight also makes an astute distinction between Schiller and Goethe.

Schiller . . . is often wordy, and often obscure, with all his divine merits. The translator would often like to abridge and condense him; while, with Goethe, and all perfect artists in language, the difficulty is, how to say the same thing with the same strong brevity.¹²⁷

¹²³Review of Tennyson's Poems, p. 325.

¹²⁴See below, pp. 53-64.

¹²⁵XXV, (January, 1839), 385-391.

¹²⁶Review of William Tell, p. 385.

¹²⁷Loc. cit.

Before he went to Northampton Dwight had his say on two other great writers, Dickens and Spenser.¹²⁸ Neither of these reviews has the excitement of the Tennyson article. Dwight says the obvious things about Oliver Twist, commenting on Dickens' "striking powers of observation," his "interest in men and things" infused with "a great deal of Faith."¹²⁹ A somewhat undigested Coleridgean influence appears when Dwight says Dickens has the fancy and imagination

to animate his given materials into a living whole, so that his work shall seem no chance or choice affair, but a necessary product of the Soul of all things, a true creation, justified by the like necessity with Nature itself.¹³⁰

Dwight was naturally attracted by the social commentary in Dickens. "This writer connects himself with the movement tendency of the age. The love of man shines on his pages. He is a reformer and believes in making society better."¹³¹

Dwight found some interesting limitations in Spenser's poetical powers. Spenser, he says, is the poet of optimistic youth, concerned with the "contemplation of quiet beauty."¹³² He nourishes "the sentiment of glory and moral

¹²⁸Review of Oliver Twist, Christian Examiner, XXVII (November, 1839), 161-174; and review of The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, Christian Examiner, XXVIII (May, 1840), 208-223.

¹²⁹Review of Oliver Twist, pp. 166-167.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 167.

¹³¹Ibid., pp. 173-174. Lindsay Swift records that the young Charles Dana almost ruined his eyesight reading Oliver Twist by candlelight. (Brook Farm; Its Members, Scholars, and Visitors [New York: Macmillan, 1900], p. 146.)

¹³²Review of The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, p. 209.

trust, . . . of the beauty and safety of holiness."¹³³ Like the young Tennyson, he has the organization and senses of a poet, but lacks

The deep yearning for more than actual life affords; the thirst for the Infinite; . . . We feel that we have conversed with a gentle, chaste, industrious soul, whom we shall be glad to meet again; but our bosoms do not burn when he leaves us, nor does his presence haunt us, like a mystery, and make us serious wherever we go . . .¹³⁴

Imagination, in the "new" (i.e., Coleridgean) sense, Spenser does not have. "There is not the key-note of all nature and of all being ringing through his soul."¹³⁵ He is not really a philosopher, except conventionally.¹³⁶

Unfortunately, this review displays the limitations of Dwight as a scholar and critic rather nakedly, but it probably is far from the most objectionable example of romantic criticism.

5.

The "Translator's Preface" to Select Minor Poems . . . of Goethe and Schiller¹³⁷ is dated December 22, 1838,¹³⁸ a day that can be designated as the climax of Dwight's literary

¹³³Review of The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, p. 210.

¹³⁴Ibid., pp. 220-221.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 221.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 223.

¹³⁷Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1839. Hereafter referred to as Select Minor Poems.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. xv.

career. This was the only complete book ever to carry Dwight's name alone on the title page, and it represents the culmination of his creative and critical efforts in the field of poetry. It was well done. It was well received and showed promise. It commands our special attention because of its unique station in the canon of Dwight's works, and because it actually has power enough to make us wonder momentarily why it was not the earliest volume in a distinguished series.

The book was actually many years in the making. Dwight learned to read German as an undergraduate at Harvard, and probably was one of the enthusiastic students at the feet of the magnetic Edward Everett. In the divinity school days Goethe, Schiller, and Beethoven became his idols. The translation of Schiller's "Hymn to Joy" in 1835 was followed early in 1837 by one of the most successful translations Dwight ever made, the "Song of the Bell."¹³⁹ The commission from Ripley must have come about this time, for Dwight wrote to James Freeman Clarke on March 10, 1837, describing the plan of the book and calling for assistance to fill out the proposed three hundred and fifty pages.¹⁴⁰ Cooke reports that

¹³⁹American Monthly Magazine, New Series III (January, 1837), 33-40. In a review of this translation by "N. L. P." (probably N. L. Prothingham) in the Christian Examiner, XXII (May, 1837), 235-245, Dwight's work is described as showing "marks of haste," although it is "fervid and poetical . . . like the rapid effort of one who is something of a bard himself." (pp. 240-241.)

¹⁴⁰A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library. The final text actually covered 439 pages, with many apologies for omissions and possible commentaries withheld.

the sermons for the East Lexington parish in 1838 were composed on Saturday night and Sunday morning, and that Dwight's thoughts and conversations and hand baggage were all filled with German books and music.¹⁴¹

Statistically speaking, Dwight's own work in the volume consists of a fifteen-hundred word preface, eighty pages of closely printed notes, translations of sixty-nine poems by Goethe and sixteen by Schiller (counting the group of forty-one epigrams as one). Collaborators supplied seventeen additional poems by Goethe and eighteen by Schiller.¹⁴² More than fifty percent of the material for the notes is quoted, partly in Dwight's own translation, from the works of Goethe, especially Dichtung und Wahrheit, and from such secondary sources as the translations of Sarah Austin and Carlyle's Life of Schiller. But the book is no ordinary job of compiling and translating. It has an atmosphere of sound scholarship and deep, sincere enthusiasm. Its positive merits are many.

First of all, there is no evidence that Dwight worked from any textual source other than the original German.

¹⁴¹Cooke, p. 19.

¹⁴²Dwight's collaborators, with the number of poems each contributed in parentheses after his name, were these:
 In the Goethe section--George Bancroft (5), Margaret Fuller (2), James Freeman Clarke (4), William Henry Channing (1), Frederic H. Hedge (1), M. L. Frothingham (2), G. W. Haven (2).
 In the Schiller section--Bancroft (1), Clarke (1), Channing (6), Hedge (1), Frothingham (5), Charles T. Brooks (3), Christopher P. Cranch (1).

Fourteen of the Goethe poems he translated for the first time into English.¹⁴³ In the preface and notes, Dwight is very humble about his powers as a translator. He recognizes the unevenness and incompleteness of the book.

Poems, which had haunted the translator's mind until they all but translated themselves, are here, . . . strung together with some similar poetical accidents of his friends, and the whole eked out into a little more completeness, so as to look like an abridgment of the minor poems of Goethe and Schiller. . . . In accomplishing even this degree of completeness, it has been necessary at times to descend to a halting and mechanical execution, in the case of pieces which did not of themselves invite and inspire translation.¹⁴⁴

Particularly in the selection of the Goethe songs Dwight was bound by a modest, but uncompromising artistic ideal.

. . . all thought of completeness has been sacrificed to the one first condition of translating lyric poems with any success. Only such of them are given, as have, from time to time, interested the translator, and such as he could translate in the hours when they have most filled his fancy and spoken to his experience. . . . Many a time he has turned them over, attracted only by a significant look, a promising glimpse of a meaning, in here and there one; and often has a song, several times dismissed with a look of irreognition, revealed itself afterwards, in all its beauty, by the merest accident. . . . On this fact he founds whatever confidence he has that these translations are in any degree successful.¹⁴⁵

These statements show a real pride in a labor of love honestly and carefully done.

¹⁴³These are listed individually in Lucretia Van Tuyl Simons, Goethe's Lyric Poems in English Translation Prior to 1860, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No. 6 (Madison: [University of Wisconsin Press,] 1919), p. 52.

¹⁴⁴Select Minor Poems, pp. xii-xiii.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 361-362.

Dwight's theory of translation was exacting and idealistic. Basically, it was the doctrine of Coleridge. In a work of true poetic genius, form, matter, and spirit are one, inseparable. The mechanics--rhyme and meter--should be preserved, but mere mechanical reproduction is low-grade translation.¹⁴⁶ Particularly in lyric poetry "the rhythm, the tones, the coloring, the imagery . . . are determined by a sort of inward necessity . . ."

A song is a feeling which has found utterance in a beautiful form, and satisfied itself. . . . The translator's only hope then is to . . . reoriginate . . . in himself the very experience in which the song first had its birth.¹⁴⁷

As far as actual practice goes, the author admits that this is "a simple confession of inability."¹⁴⁸

But Dwight undoubtedly had a feeling that he had succeeded about as often as anyone could. His study of music helped in an unusual way. He was acquainted with Zelter's musical settings of Goethe's songs.

The verbal form seemed to defy translation; but being held some time in solution in this subtler element of music, it shaped itself again in his [the translator's] own language more readily. Walking about with the melody ringing through him, while he pondered the sentiment, a literal imitation came out in a manner quite spontaneous and unmechanical.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶Select Minor Poems, p. xiii.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 362.

¹⁴⁸Loc. cit.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 367.

Under close philological scrutiny this theory may appear quite porous. But the fact remains that to this day no set of more satisfactory translations from German lyrics has been produced.¹⁵⁰

Finally, the Goethe and Schiller translations were more than a scholarly and artistic success. In his preface and notes, Dwight turned them deftly and unobtrusively into a convincing piece of transcendentalist propaganda. He testifies in the following passages to what the work of producing the book has done for him.

Whatever the worth of the results of the present effort, the translator feels that, personally, he owes unspeakably much to the discipline which it has been to him; and he would invite his friends, . . . to indulge it largely: provided they will work after the strictest ideal which they can set up for themselves, the time will not by any means be thrown away. Such an exercise unfolds much of the subtlest philosophy of expression, and consequently of thought, of creative genius itself. . . . Translating from Goethe, especially, gives one a thousand hints towards the understanding of himself . . .¹⁵¹

By both Goethe and Schiller the reader should be inspired to better things.

¹⁵⁰See Bayard Quincy Morgan, A Critical Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation (2nd ed.; Stanford University, California; Stanford University Press, 1938), p. 152. The Select Minor Poems gets a double asterisk, Morgan's most favorable sign, used very sparingly, indicating "unusually high quality." See also Simmons, Goethe's Lyric Poems in English Translation, p. 56. "From the point of view of workmanship and choice of poems, it is far better than anything that had preceded it and most of the attempts which followed it."

¹⁵¹Select Minor Poems, pp. xiii-xiv.

From Schiller he learns lofty aspirations, and from Goethe how to realize them. The one speaks to him amid the hackneyed forms of life of a better ideal world, and warns him, inspires him, to trust all inward intimations of the True, the Beautiful, the Perfect, however contradicted by the Actual. The other shows him the riper practical wisdom, which makes much of the moment, and turns life into poetry.¹⁵²

The friendship and collaboration of Goethe and Schiller is instructive.

To the common interests of all as men it speaks; it explores that great common field, and tells us, with the glow of ever fresh discovery, how boundless are its riches; how life, and thought, and poetry, and beauty, are the inheritance of Man, and not of any class, or age, or nation; and how each, however humble, by fidelity to himself, shall find the natural current of his own being leading back into the very bosom of that ocean.¹⁵³

Dwight returns to these themes again and again in the notes to the poems.¹⁵⁴ Goethe is a perfect example of a true, unfettered, uncompromising idealist philosopher.¹⁵⁵ Every lyric he wrote is a significant phrase from his inner, spiritual biography. Therefore, the disciple who can "reoriginate . . . in himself" the spiritual experience behind the lyric will momentarily at least assume the philosophic stature of a superior man.

Thomas Carlyle certainly was a most appropriate person to receive the dedication of such a book, and Dwight opened

¹⁵²Select Minor Poems, p. x.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. xi.

¹⁵⁴See especially pp. 361-367; 377-378; 393-396; 403-409.

¹⁵⁵Select Minor Poems, p. 365.

a correspondence with the English writer in October of 1838¹⁵⁶ with Emerson's blessing and encouragement, describing the plan of the book and asking for the pleasure of inscribing

one page to the most successful interpreter of the beauties and deep wealth and wisdom of German mind to the English people, with whom, in spirit at least, we younger and younger Americans, New Englanders, claim to be numbered.¹⁵⁷

Carlyle, "flattered and honored," replied at some length, rejoicing that Dwight had undertaken such a work, and wishing him prosperity.¹⁵⁸

After he had looked into his complimentary copy, Carlyle wrote with great enthusiasm from Chelsea, March 14, 1839.¹⁵⁹

With great pleasure I recognize in you the merit, the rarest of all in Goethe's translators, yet the first condition, without which every other merit is impossible, that of understanding your original. You seem to me to have actually deciphered for yourself, and got to behold and see the lineaments of this great mind, so that you know what it means and what its words mean. I have heard from no English writer whatever as much truth as you write in these notes about Goethe.¹⁶⁰

In such a congenial atmosphere, Carlyle cannot resist taking the stump for a moment.

How the public will receive your book is perhaps very doubtful, perhaps not very momentous. One great acquisition you have infallibly made, far beyond what any public could do for you,--the

¹⁵⁶Letter quoted in Cooke, pp. 22-25, without exact date.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁵⁸A.L.S., undated, in the Yale University Library. Reprinted in Cooke, pp. 25-26.

¹⁵⁹A.L.S. in the Harvard College Library. Reprinted in Cooke, pp. 26-30.

¹⁶⁰Loc. cit. (Cooke, p. 27.)

acquisition of a Teacher and Prophet for yourself. Alone of men, very far beyond all other men, Goethe seemed to me to have understood this century, to have conquered his century, . . . Glory to strong man! say I.¹⁶¹

Dwight must have written to Carlyle discussing his plans for the future, perhaps asking for advice, and perhaps complaining a little. Carlyle's remarks are tantalizing. Dwight's letter is not available.

Your scheme of activity pleases me well. Taken up in singleness of heart, with modesty, with cheerful courage to do and to endure, it cannot but lead you towards a good goal. Neither must poverty depress you overmuch. . . . Heed not poverty. Speak to your fellow-men, what things you have made out by the grace of God.¹⁶²

At any rate, Dwight surely could not have chosen a dedicatee who would give him and his book a more inspiring send-off.

Theodore Parker paid his old friend a great compliment by writing Dwight a frank and perceptive letter, showing a careful reading of the entire volume immediately after its publication. He pointed out individual lines which he thought unpoetical, or which did not render the original accurately. Generally he thought the volume very good.¹⁶³

Considering the non-inflammatory character of the book, the reviews were encouraging in number and length.¹⁶⁴ All

¹⁶¹Carlyle to Dwight, March 14, 1839. (Cooke, p. 28.)

¹⁶²Loc. cit. (Cooke, p. 29.)

¹⁶³A.L.S. of January 10, 1839, in the Boston Public Library.

¹⁶⁴Simmons, Goethe's Lyric Poems in English Translation Prior to 1860, lists (p. 89) eight reviews in periodicals. The five discussed here are the only really contemporary ones. The other three are insignificant notices, two dealing largely with other works. Apparently there were no contemporary reviews abroad.

July.¹⁷¹ Ware, who owed Dwight a compliment, refers to him as "our young friend,"¹⁷² and continues:

. . . Mr. Dwight . . . has acquitted himself admirably. He understands fully the poems he would translate; . . . and he rather reproduces, than copies. . . . He proves himself to be familiar with German culture, to have a mind enriched by various study, to have felt, to have reflected; to have gained the valuable accomplishment of a good knowledge of the German, and to possess in an eminent degree, what is far more valuable and perhaps more rare, a thorough knowledge of his own language and a ready skill in its use.¹⁷³

The general approbation of the work should inspire Dwight "to a still severer discipline of his powers."¹⁷⁴

On this implication, Ware expands for some fifteen pages. Goethe is an immoral person and writer, a bad influence. ". . . the admirers of Goethe interpret their own feelings, their own vague aspirations into his works . . ." ¹⁷⁵

The reviewer quotes little from Dwight's notes because he "wished only to quote what we are willing to accept."¹⁷⁶

Schiller is much the better man, and here Dwight's translations are "eminently successful."¹⁷⁷ All in all, "the work does high

¹⁷¹XXVI, 360-378.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 361.

¹⁷³Ibid., pp. 360-361.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 361.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 366.

¹⁷⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. 375.

were complimentary. Indeed, not many American reviewers of that day knew what to say of such a book, except those in Dwight's circle of friends or acquaintances. James Freeman Clarke was the first to respond, in the Western Messenger for February, 1839.¹⁶⁵ He found nothing but excellence, and did little but quote from the poems. G. S. Hilliard wrote a sanguine, relaxed, and unconvincing notice for the April North American Review,¹⁶⁶ admitting that he knew very little of the material in the original. The Boston Quarterly Review quoted and commended Dwight's theory of translation,¹⁶⁷ and went so far as to say that two or three of the poems were "improvements on the originals."¹⁶⁸ "High as Mr. Dwight has placed his ideal," the Quarterly continued, "he has uniformly approached nearer to it than he could reasonably expect."¹⁶⁹ The New York Review liked the Schiller translations by far the better, and used phrases like "very stiff" and "very inaccurate" in describing some of the Goethe lyrics.¹⁷⁰ This review has many more reservations than the others, but they seem rather arbitrary.

By far the longest and most interesting reaction, written by William Ware, appeared in The Christian Examiner for

¹⁶⁵VI, 259-265.

¹⁶⁶XLVIII, 505-514.

¹⁶⁷II (April, 1839), 187-205.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 194.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 195.

¹⁷⁰IV (April, 1839), 393-400.

honor to Mr. Dwight," who shows catholic tastes, and great toleration for untenable philosophy.¹⁷⁸

William Ware's father was Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard. It is not surprising that he should bristle at doctrines reminding him of the "Divinity School Address." But generally, Dwight's book was harmless, and it brought much pleasure to its readers. Years later, Julia Ward Howe could describe it as "ever precious."¹⁷⁹

6.

George Ripley's series of translations from foreign literatures is sometimes considered the finest literary work of the Brook Farm transcendentalists, the associationist-minded members of the Ripley-Hedge school.¹⁸⁰ Of course, the early volumes antedate the beginnings of Brook Farm, and it is important to remember that Dwight very probably was not thinking in associationist terms at all in 1838-1839. Whatever he wrote to Carlyle early in 1839, Carlyle's answer does not sound as if Dwight had proposed to reform society by the Brook Farm method. Because Dwight joined the Brook Farm movement early and stayed until the bitter end, he has always been associated with the anti-individualist, anti-Emersonian group of transcendentalists. In the early days, however, Dwight did not identify himself positively with any "branch" of transcendentalism. Indeed the centrifugal and centripetal forces

¹⁷⁸Ware, review of Select Minor Poems, p. 378.

¹⁷⁹Reminiscences, p. 147.

¹⁸⁰See Cooke, Introduction to the Dial, p. 25.

of this movement, like his own divided interest in music and literature, seem to have whipped the somewhat passive Dwight back and forth.

In speaking of transcendentalists and transcendentalism, classification and definition are impossible. Dwight and Emerson agree on this fundamental difficulty. "No person's statement of any transcendental truth ever entirely satisfies another person," wrote Dwight in his discussion of Goethe.¹⁸¹ There is no such thing as a pure transcendentalist, and no two transcendentalists are alike.¹⁸² The particular hue of Dwight's transcendentalism can be seen from the previous discussion of his writing before 1842. A synthetic summary would be difficult and wasteful here, but a partial one can be constructed as we introduce some of the interesting aspects of Dwight's early writing which have been neglected up to this point.

The German-English literary and philosophical influences on American transcendentalism are very obvious in Dwight's thought. From Goethe, Schiller, and German Romantics, from Carlyle and Coleridge, and from the great German musicians, Dwight tried to learn a language of "feeling" instead of a language of "thought." He tried to live in the realm of "imagination," "Reason," and instinctive truth rather than in

¹⁸¹Select Minor Poems, p. 407.

¹⁸²R. W. Emerson, "The Transcendentalist," in The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Centenary edition; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-1904), I, 336. (All subsequent references to Emerson's Works are to this edition.)

the realm of "fancy," "understanding," and rational, empirical conclusions. "Feeling is the substance of life," he wrote. "Ideas are only the forms."¹⁸³ This is expanded in a note headed "Goethe's Aversion to Systems."

Is it not evident, that to think at all, with a view of resting in a thought, is to err, since it is contemplating the Partial, and forgetting the Whole? and that one is nearest absolute Truth, in the unconscious feeling, which is a total act of the soul?¹⁸⁴

The next note takes up the same theme.

To exhaust a thought would be to kill it. And herein the true artist, preserving the life of nature in his works, distinguishes himself from the vulgar man of understanding, who thinks that to have explained is to know a thing, that to have settled a question is to have got forward; and who strives to draw a thread clean out of the wondrous web, as if so he could lay bare the laws of life to us. Nature turns upon him, and tells him he has not even been living.¹⁸⁵

Dwight probably read Aids to Reflection in the edition introduced by the "Preliminary Essay" of James Marsh,¹⁸⁶ who tried to make clear the vital distinction between Reason and Understanding. We must study ourselves and the words we use, to "discover the principle of unity and consistency, which reason instinctively seeks after, which shall reduce to a harmonious system all our views of truth and of being . . ."¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³Review of Poems of W. T. Bacon, Boston Quarterly Review, I (January, 1838), 77.

¹⁸⁴Select Minor Poems, p. 394.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., p. 404.

¹⁸⁶. . . First American . . . Edition (Burlington, Vermont: Chauncey Goodrich, 1829).

¹⁸⁷Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

Philosophy and theology must be combined, to show that spiritual, mysterious things are rational. The tyranny of cause and effect must be broken by the triumph of Reason and free will.¹⁸⁸

In the combination of philosophy and theology, Dwight felt nearest the absolute truth when he thought in terms of beauty, beauty in art and beauty in nature. The first and third sections of Emerson's "Nature" seem to have moved him most strongly. One of the sermons Dwight sent to the Dial was called "The Religion of Beauty."¹⁸⁹

The greatest blessing, which could be bestowed on the weary multitude, would be to give them the sense of beauty. . . . Religion makes man sensible to beauty; and beauty in turn disposes to religion. Beauty is the revelation of the soul to the senses.¹⁹⁰

Beauty is "the . . . Spirit . . . holding us up." It is "the moral atmosphere."¹⁹¹ And in so far as we can create our own atmosphere, Dwight thought we should learn from nature, and from the great creators of beauty--Shakespeare and Goethe, Beethoven and Mozart and Handel.

But as Dwight ascended in his balloon, he was whipped about by disturbing cross-currents. The real world was not ready for a "religion of beauty." Parker warned Dwight not to battle the real world, but to "get a place" in it. At the

¹⁸⁸Marsh, "Preliminary Essay," p. ix.

¹⁸⁹I (July, 1840), 17-22.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁹¹Ibid., p. 18.

ordination in Northampton, George Ripley reminded the young minister of his duty to society. "The idea which was realized in the life of Jesus, must be also realized in the institutions of men, before the kingdom of God can be established on earth."¹⁹² "The true work of the Evangelist," Ripley said, was "to bring the religion of society into accordance with the religion of Christ."¹⁹³ Ripley was calling for disciplined thought and action. He was disappointed with Dwight's articles in the Dial, and said so in a letter to Dwight of July 7, 1840.

Do give us some truly artistic products be it ever so small. Your beautiful improvisations are a sin against your soul; and unless you repent--amend your ways, you will be damned, when the day of judgment comes.¹⁹⁴

But "improvisation" was one word for the very essence of what he had learned from Goethe and Emerson! Dwight must have felt himself spinning around in 1840-1841.

Perhaps, he thought at times, it would be better to drop theology and philosophy altogether, and devote himself to beauty in a wordless form--the beauty of great music. But the practical difficulties were great. For the realization of the ideals nearest his heart--the introduction of musical training into the schools and the spread of musical culture by efficient professional performance--Dwight needed the patronage that only a stratified, established society could offer.

¹⁹²"The Claims of the Age on the Work of the Evangelist," p. 4.

¹⁹³Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁹⁴A.L.S. of July 7, 1840, in the Boston Public Library.

Contradicting himself, in the best transcendentalist tradition, was a luxury Dwight could scarcely afford. He would have been happiest as an idealist in a non-idealistic society--if the society would have supported him. He was not really at home either as an Emersonian individualist, or as a member of a group setting out to remake society. For a transcendentalist whose "subject" was music, Brook Farm was almost as poor a place as Walden Pond. As we shall see in the next chapter, Dwight tried convulsively hard to make a main highway of Brook Farm, but from what we know of him already, we should be prepared to find that he was really on a long detour.

CHAPTER III

BROOK FARM IN THE EARLY YEARS: 1841-1845

1.

When George Willis Cooke wrote his book on Dwight, the now voluminous literature on Brook Farm was just beginning to appear; and Cooke's fourth chapter is one of the significant contributions to this literature.¹ At the present time, however, there is no reason for discussing the very interesting history of Brook Farm except in so far as it furnishes suggestions about Dwight himself, as a person and writer. The previous pages will have prepared the reader for a somewhat deflated portrayal of Dwight as a reformer and man of the wide-open spaces; but, although he was far from an ideal associationist, Dwight made himself a very important member of the group. In retrospect, his activities of the Brook Farm days seem to have had more lasting influence than anything else Ripley and his followers did. Lindsay Swift admits that Dwight's "capital stock was mainly a lofty enthusiasm." But this stock paid delayed dividends. "The other influences of Brook Farm were indirect; but John Dwight, diffident and seclusive as he was, imposed on the Association a cult . . .,"² the cult of great music. "No external

¹Pages 48-128.

²Brook Farm, p. 155.

influence has been so potent or lasting in Boston as the genuine love for Beethoven, and for the few other names clustering about the greater genius."³ The skeptical scholar cannot ignore this side of the picture. Perhaps a balance can be struck between this view and the obvious, darker one.

West Roxbury had been the home of Mary Corey Dwight, and all the Dwights may have been interested in the Brook Farm movement from the beginning. But when Ripley bought the farm and began discussing association with Emerson and others in October of 1840, Dwight was still in relatively good favor at Northampton. By the time community life began at the farm, in April, 1841, Dwight's position in Northampton was beginning to get uncomfortable. He wrote to Elizabeth Peabody asking many questions about Ripley's experiment, and she answered at length on April 26, emphasizing the hard work and planning of the Ripleys.⁴ Apparently he did not communicate much with the Ripleys themselves, because Sophia wrote on May 6 and filled nearly an entire page chiding Dwight for not writing. She also included a lot of information about the farm, but did not indicate that it was solicited.⁵ Dwight was holding back, partly from inertia perhaps, but partly because he knew Brook Farm would not be an ideal place for him. He tried to patch up his differences with the Northampton congregation,

³Swift, Brook Farm, p. 156.

⁴A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

⁵A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

and he stayed on there for four or five months after his resignation. He finally went to Brook Farm in November, 1841, as a teacher of music and Latin, having hesitantly renounced the ministry, and having failed to find a lectureship or teaching position elsewhere.

The first-hand accounts of Brook Farm are hard to evaluate. Many of them are long-dormant memories, written down in the 1890's by persons who had been students there in the early days. Everyone remembered Dwight, but everyone also knew the grand old man of Boston musical circles who died in 1893. Such factors throw a slight shadow over testimony like this:

Touched with the divine desire to do good to all, he [Dwight] entered into the work with his whole earnest soul. Modest to a fault, but singularly persistent in what he felt to be his duty, he never flinched or failed to act when occasion required it. His tastes were of the most refined order. He shrank from coarse contact with an unusual degree of sensitiveness, but his great heart embraced all mankind in brotherhood.⁶

Arthur Sumner, who had been a boarder-student of about sixteen in 1842, wrote more than fifty years later:

Dwight used to come in from his toil in the hot sun at noon, to give me a lesson on the piano; and after faithfully doing that job, he would lie down on the lounge and go to sleep, while I played to him. What a piece of nonsense it was, to have a man like that hoeing corn and stiffening his eloquent fingers.⁷

Miss Amelia Russell was actually fifteen years older than

⁶John Thomas Codman, Brook Farm, Historic and Personal Memoirs (Boston: Arena Publishing Co., 1894), p. 16.

⁷"A Boy's Recollections of Brook Farm," New England Magazine, XVI (May, 1894), 311.

Dwight, but as a teacher of dancing and "Mistress of the Revels" she became very much attached to him. At the age of about eighty she described his

delicately sensitive organization, . . . to which discords of every kind were as antagonistic . . . as were false chords in music. His whole life seemed one dream of music, and I do not think he was ever fully awake to all the harsh gratings of this outer world. We were indebted to him for much of the pleasure of our evening social life. He was too really musical to endure the weariness of teaching beginners the first rudiments of his own art, although for some time he was our only teacher. I must say he was wonderfully patient, considering his temperament, in the task he had assumed, for his nerves must have been most fearfully taxed in some of his labors; but his outward demeanor did not bear testimony to what must often have been his earnest desire to tear his hair out by the roots.⁸

Miss Russell also recalled how she, Ripley, and Dwight were inspired one morning to weed the onion patch before breakfast.

We enjoyed it so much the first morning that we met again and again until the work was fully accomplished. . . . Mr. D. for once forgot his musical harmonies in the click of the hoe against the stones.⁹

Such material is certainly not worthless, but its limitations are obvious. Even Miss Russell hints that Dwight lived most of the time in a dream world of his own. The frequency of his toiling before breakfast and in the hot morning sun is open to some question, and the suggestions that he was something of a virtuoso on the piano are pure fancy.

⁸Home Life of the Brook Farm Association (Boston: Little, Brown, 1900), pp. 65-66. (This volume is a posthumous reprint, with considerable additions, of two articles published anonymously by Miss Russell under the same title in The Atlantic Monthly, XLII [October, 1878], 458-466; and [November, 1878], 556-563.)

⁹Ibid., pp. 105-106.

When the Eyrle was completed in the summer of 1842, Dwight set up headquarters there with the newly acquired piano. Georgianna Bruce wrote to a friend of her "inexpressible joy" at this event, and went on to give a very interesting and intimate glimpse of the new music teacher, who had not yet found his bearings.

Poor Mr. D. said tonight, when we were washing up the tea things with two or three of the gentlemen wiping, . . . "How fast you live here; I like it, but really my head, my head suffers," . . .¹⁰

Lindsay Swift confirms a natural deduction that Dwight was the person Ripley and Parker were watching when Ripley remarked, according to Emerson, "'There is your accomplished friend -----: he would hoe corn all Sunday if I would let him, but all Massachusetts could not make him do it on Monday.'¹¹ Swift adds the rumor that Parker replied, "It is good to know that he wants to hoe corn any day in the week."¹²

We can well believe that any man with his feet on the ground would occasionally get very impatient with John S. Dwight. Parker was skeptical about the Brook Farm experiment from the beginning,¹³ probably because Dwight seemed more

¹⁰Quoted in Swift, Brook Farm, pp. 78-79, without exact date.

¹¹"Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England," Works, X, 366.

¹²Op. cit., pp. 158-159.

¹³See John Weiss, Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker (New York: D. Appleton, 1864), I, 107-108.

typical of the personnel than Ripley. Old Harm Jan Huidekoper called Brook Farm a "hospital of invalids" in a letter to his daughter of August 18, 1841. At least this early, the word was about that Dwight was thinking of joining.

I pity my friend Dwight from the bottom of my heart. What will he do at the Community? He has no physical strength to live by bodily labors and besides he will find little of poetry in practical agricultural operations.¹⁴

These fragmentary accounts and opinions are not, of course, basically conflicting, but they scarcely make up a vivid and consistent picture. For this we should be prepared. Dwight at Brook Farm was like Dwight at Northampton. On some days, to some people, he was the most esteemed person on the place. On certain days, easily forgotten by his admirers, he was a misfit, even a drag on the experiment.

He was not giving all his energies to association. He still felt that he needed to make money. He still needed the love of a woman. He was publishing nothing, but in the spring of 1842 he prepared and delivered in Boston a series of lectures on music. Cranch heard some of them and reported to a Miss Julia Myers on April 11:

My friend Dwight has been delivering a great course of lectures on the musical composers, but to very small audiences. The people are hardly prepared to enter into those moods from which his lofty strains flow.¹⁵

The Reverend James Flint of Salem invited him to fill his

¹⁴Quoted in Tiffany, Harm Jan Huidekoper, p. 288.

¹⁵Quoted in Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, p. 79.

pulpit for a few Sundays, but Dwight could not accept. In declining, he wrote on June 18:

Already I had resolved never again to be settled (even if I could be, which is doubtful); . . . I have doubts about the Church. . . . I have less sympathy than I had with the prevailing spirit of the churches, and less hope of ever being able to mould the Church and the profession to my idea, . . .

What pangs this costs me, what breaking of old hopes fondly cherished, and what plunging upon a new sea of uncertainties, I have not time or spirit to detail to you.¹⁶

What wholeheartedly enthusiastic Brook Farmer could have described himself in the busy and beautiful month of June as lacking "spirit" and "plunging upon a new sea of uncertainties"?

In November of 1842 Dwight wrote again to Henry W. Bellows, reminding him of his letter of a year before, pleading an acute need of money, and proposing that he give his course of musical lectures in New York.¹⁷ Bellows' replies of November 25 and December 18 were not the slightest encouraging.¹⁸

For the brighter side of the picture, we have Cooke's statement that Dwight at this time "gave himself up with enthusiasm to the new life around him," supported by quoting a note Dwight wrote to James Russell Lowell in the summer of 1842.

¹⁶Quoted in Cooke, p. 47.

¹⁷A.L.S. of November 17, 1842, in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁸A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

I should delight to have you long enough to conduct you about our wood and river walks, or to take you out in our boat, when we might discuss matters human and divine, or, better yet, deliver ourselves up to the water-sprites and to our own wayward fancies, whether of noisy talk or silent reverie, like Nature's happy children. I have forgotten how to write or think or picture out a scene or thought in words. I only feel.¹⁹

Dwight's varying moods during the first two years of his stay at Brook Farm may be partly explained by the fact that he, in a sense, was neither fish nor fowl. He was a few years older than the congenial group of young people including his sisters, and not quite old enough nor wise enough to be one of the administrative leaders along with Ripley, Charles Dana, and Minot Pratt. His exact status remains uncertain. Cooke says simply that he "became a member" in November, 1841.²⁰ But according to the "Secretary's Book" of the association, Dwight was elected a member on February 1, 1844.²¹ He was slow getting into the spirit of the place, and he was to undergo the painful experience of becoming one of the real leaders at Brook Farm only after the community had begun to disintegrate.

The moodiness can perhaps be traced to another source, a very familiar one. Almira Barlow was living at Brook Farm

¹⁹Cooke, p. 69.

²⁰Page 52.

²¹MS in the Massachusetts Historical Society. This fact is confirmed in a letter to Dwight from George W. Curtis of February 25, 1844. See Early Letters of George William Curtis to John S. Dwight, ed. by George Willis Cooke (New York: Harper Brothers, 1898), p. 150.

in 1842-1843. Six years older than Dwight, she was a great beauty with wisps of gossip about her. She was fond of men, and seems to have played the role of a lofty-minded damsel in distress. Her husband, David Hatch Barlow, graduate of Harvard Divinity School in 1829, had left her in 1838. He was known to be a scoundrel.²² Dwight's attentions to Mrs. Barlow must have become very serious near the end of 1842, for the following letter obviously has a long history behind it.

Thank you Mr. Dwight for the opportunity to write to you what it has given me so much pain to express by act.

She regrets having refused to see Dwight when he called because she had other guests. Then comes serious business.

Do you remember a conversation we had some two or three weeks since, when we must have understood each other and had better have spoken out like true man and woman as we are. I had felt for some time, that whether consciously or not you were getting too much attached to me. You seemed to wish to absorb me quite; demanded much of my time, my sympathy, my tender expression.

Oh the mysterious working of human emotion! I could give all these most when you least demanded them. Any claim upon me, which I could not fully and truly meet, produced such a reaction upon my feelings as to lead me from you, as far as I had been drawn. I did and do now value you as a friend. How to keep the friend and reject the lover was my query. I thought this conversation would do it, place us again upon true relations by your renouncing what I could not give, and accepting, if you wished, what I could. Have I been deceived in the facts? If not, have I done wrong in giving myself up freely and naturally as I did to making your acquaintance? It has brought us both sweet moments, shall either regret it, even if it must change from its first

²²See Early Letters of Curtis to Dwight, p. 74.

blush and freshness? There is much in our congeniality of tastes and similarity of opinions to bring us together in various pleasant interchange and I see not why, because we cannot have "intimate communion", we should give up what we may have of genial trustful friendship.

Such intercourse to be agreeable on both sides should be placed upon a perfectly simple and frank basis. If I wish an evening to myself, or with other friends I ought to have the privilege of saying so, and that without any hindrance. I am subject to various moods of mind in some of which the presence of any one is a grand impertinence. Any relation of friendship which hampers me, makes me impatient--hence the brusquerie I have sometimes manifested to yourself.

Will you forgive this and any other pain I may have caused you?--It is certainly an unkind return for the constant kindness I have received from you. When shall we be so transparent and loving that . . . thought feeling and expression may be one! Then shall we indeed be angels when we wound not, and are yet sincere!

Truly your friend.

A. C. Barlow²³

Certain laconic entries in the secretary's book indicate that Mrs. Barlow left Brook Farm, perhaps by indirect request, about June 1, 1843.²⁴ But Dwight did not forget quickly. The following note was written in November of the same year.

My dear Friend,

I have not sent for you, because I have been so in the depths of darkness, as to be wholly unable to give any one pleasure. I hope you have been more

²³A.L.S. of January 6, [1843], in the Boston Public Library.

²⁴See the minutes of the directors' meetings for April 29 ("Voted to convert the parlor occupied by Mrs. Barlow to public use"), and May 27 ("Mrs. Barlow is requested to vacate her rooms by 1st of June."), in the Brook Farm Secretary's Book.

avored in your states, and have tasted the fruits of the spirit,--love joy and peace. Unsphered as I am, I fear I shall not be able to give you, (seeker of harmonies as you are) any adequate return for the cost of a walk. But if you have courage to run the risk, come any afternoon this week, except Tuesday or Friday, when I read Italian with Miss Searle. . . .

Love to all cherished friends at dear Brook Farm.

Affectionately,

Almira²⁵

A fascinating correspondence, which tells, we trust, all of the story that needs knowing, in spite of Dwight's complete silence. Again Dwight tried, apparently both impetuously and patiently, and again he failed. But did he jump at the new hope offered by the pathetic and pleading November note, or did he retreat in terror? Perhaps the question is an irrelevant impertinence.

At any rate, Almira Barlow was not the only one who felt "unsphered" in the latter half of 1843. Dwight became discouraged and restless after her departure. He seems to have poured out his troubles to his favorite correspondents--Cranch, George W. Curtis, and Lydia Maria Child. Cranch tried to bolster him up late in the summer by writing as a fellow exile.

. . . Is the world all occupied, that you and I cannot find a single corner to stand in and eat our bread and cheese? . . . But your lot is a harder one than mine, for you have less in common with the ways and tastes of the many than I. You

²⁵A.L.S., undated, in the Boston Public Library. "Nov. 1843" is in Dwight's hand.

stand upon a loftier summit, and feed on purer nectar, and more divine ambrosia, and the world acknowledges none such as useful. . . . Yet, my friend, I am in the hope you will one day be not without your reward, even in hard specie. Only produce, produce, hide not your light under a bushel, but let it blaze forth, wherever there is an eye to appreciate it, for it is a rare genius you are endowed with, and you should not hide it like the Rosicrucians, nor dream it away in the fields, but bear it like a torch into the very thickest of the multitude, and make them acknowledge and honor you.²⁶

He thought of going to Europe, and asked advice of Curtis. The latter's reply was not much help, but for us it adds something to the atmosphere of the situation.

My impulse is to say at once, go. The worst and all you can dread is the foul breath that will befog your fair name, . . . because you were a minister and are a Transcendentalist and a seceder from the holy office, and a dweller at that place, unknown to perfumed respectability and condemned of prejudice and error. . . . If your mind is determining itself towards no pursuit, and you anticipate the same general employment that has filled the last year or two, I should say go. If God doesn't call here, he may in Europe . . .²⁷

Perhaps Dwight took the walk with Mrs. Barlow and was momentarily revived. At least he decided against leaving Brook Farm and America sometime in November, to the relief of Cranch and Curtis.²⁸ On Christmas day he was inspired to begin a long letter to Lydia Maria Child, who had spoken

²⁶Letter of August 13, 1843, quoted in Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, p. 82.

²⁷Letter of November 11, 1843, in Early Letters from Curtis to Dwight, pp. 115-116.

²⁸See letter from Cranch of December 6, 1843 (Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, p. 86); and from Curtis of November 20, 1843 (Early Letters from Curtis to Dwight, pp. 119-124).

to him "irresistibly in that splendid letter to the Courier about 'Ole Bulbul'."²⁹

This last, I believe, I must thank for effectually breaking the spell of my strange, unpardonable,--to myself even,--inexplicable silence. . . . Have I not for two whole years been receiving the kindest and sweetest recognitions from you, and, like a selfish dog, hoarded them up in silence, answering not a word? . . . message after message of kindest sympathy and remembrance, which have been to me among my great encouragements in a life of perplexity and loneliness; . . .

. . . Alas! I hope my friends know expression with me is no measure of regard. . . . I hereby rebuke, renounce, and cast out from myself the dumb spirit. If he has occupied so long as to have somewhat weakened my original faculty of speech . . . (for my dumbness has been to all my friends, not to you alone), this, too, you will pardon, and accept a first lame effort encouragingly.

Here follows a long and excited paragraph on a concert by the violinist Vieuxtemps, a stimulant that may have helped Dwight pull himself together. The letter is continued two days later in the midst of another event that gave him a new spark--the "Fourier convention" in Boston.³⁰ Reorganization was in the air at Brook Farm, and Dwight was taken into the inner circle just four days before the "Institute of Agriculture and Education" became, on February 11, 1844, "The Brook Farm Association for Industry and Education."

²⁹"Noble families sometimes double their names, to distinguish themselves from collateral branches of inferior rank. I have doubled his, and in memory of the Persian nightingale have named him Ole Bulbul." Lydia Maria Child, Letters From New York, Second Series (3d ed.; New York: C. S. Francis, 1845), p. 22.

³⁰Quoted in Cooke, pp. 75-80.

For the moment, Dwight's "perplexities" seem to have been resolved, and the "loneliness" somewhat mitigated. He began to be a spokesman, a propagandist for "association," finding his vocabulary gradually in the beautiful and ever-expanding complexities of Fourierism. Only three weeks after he was officially accepted at Brook Farm, he read a lecture on association and education before the New England Fourier Society in Boston. He described the educational theory of Brook Farm in Fourierist terms: "To develop what is in the child, by placing him in harmonious relations with all about him . . ."31 More interesting is his demand for the "presence of one artist, or even of one person artistically and earnestly devoted to an art. . . ." "Music should be valued in an Association," he continued, "if not as a study, yet as a pervading presence. . . . There should be music floating about in the air . . ."32

Dwight had finally begun to feel that a person of his particular talents was indispensable to social reformation. His friend Curtis was respectful, dubious, and very accurate in his analysis and predictions.

I do not think (and what a heresy!) that your life has found more than an object, not yet a centre. . . . Is it not the deeper insight you constantly gain into music which explains the social economy you adopt, and not the

³¹A Lecture on Association, in its Connection with Education, Delivered . . . February 29, 1844 (Boston: Benjamin H. Green, 1844), p. 11.

³²Ibid., p. 16.

economy the music? . . . Association will only interpret music so far as it is a pure art. . .

The new Brook Farm is not individualistic enough for Curtis.

". . . I feel that our evils are entirely individual, not social. What is society but the shadow of the single men behind it."³³

Dwight's cycle of moods seems to have fallen into phase with the seasons of the year. After serving as a delegate to an Association meeting at Northampton in July, he became despondent again in the autumn. Marianne Dwight reported to their younger brother that John opened an October meeting of the Association "with some dismal and discouraging remarks about the state of feeling here. I don't know what has got into him, but he was very unlike himself."³⁴ Cooke quotes a fragment of a letter partly destroyed by Mrs. Child, written about this time: "The truth is, my friend, I am oppressed with sadness. I have had heavy sorrows to bear in these later times which have quite checked the elasticity that seeks expression."³⁵ Mrs. Child had been urging Dwight to write on Ole Bull for the Democratic Review. He says he has heard Bull twice, but doubts his ability to carry out the task. "I have, to be sure, very, very little time, my musical and literary life being almost indefinitely postponed." Because

³³Letter of March 3, 1844, in Early Letters of Curtis to Dwight, pp. 153-154.

³⁴Letters from Brook Farm, 1844-1847, ed. by Amy L. Reed (Poughkeepsie, New York: Vassar College, 1930), p. 44.

³⁵Page 80.

he is "so lost to intellectual society in Boston, so identified with a despised sect," he cannot contrive to meet Bull socially.³⁶

What all the "heavy sorrows" were, we do not know. Dwight had taken on many new responsibilities and had cut himself off from things he loved best. And his father had been refused membership in the Association after repeated ballotings.³⁷

With the Christmas season, Dwight's spirits began to rise again. On December 21, the great apostle of Fourierism, Albert Brisbane, arrived for a long and inspiring visit to Brook Farm. On December 29 a committee was appointed to revise the constitution along Fourierist lines. Dwight was not a member of the committee, but he had a lot to say before it.³⁸ Marianne describes a memorable coffee party held on the evening of January 26, 1845, at which "a holy inspiration from high heaven was stealing quietly and unseen over the souls of all present."³⁹ John made "beautiful allusions. . .

³⁶Cooke, p. 82.

³⁷See above, p. 6. The spirit, if not the person, of Almira Barlow may still have been present. Her son Edward was admitted to the school as a pupil in September, 1843. Among the "assets" listed in the Brook Farm Journal for November 1, 1844, was "stock" held by her worth \$141.18. Dwight's stock was listed at \$19.38. (MS in the Massachusetts Historical Society.)

³⁸Ripley, Pratt, and Dana had been committed to "ultimate expansion into a perfect Phalanx" since the beginning of the year. (Swift, Brook Farm, pp. 279-280.) The building of the Phalanstery was begun in the summer.

³⁹Letters from Brook Farm, p. 73.

to our circle, and to circles within circles," and fell into a paroxysm of punning, one of Brook Farm's favorite amusements. Brisbane called Dwight "the fringe in the great associative movement, not a common fake, civilized fringe, but one that was centred deep in inward principles."⁴⁰ John Codman remembered one of the last parties for Brisbane, in April, 1845, at which, after an eloquent and "warm gush of rapture" by the honored guest, Dwight gave "one of those sweet, calm, choice, dignified, exact speeches for which he was noted . . ."⁴¹ At the farewell party on April 9, Dwight set the tone by saying that they all "felt by what an ocean of joy and beauty they were surrounded," and should be "able to bear the deep tragedy that must be going on in the soul, when one is living for a great idea."⁴²

His official position at the beginning of 1845 was still not very high. He was serving under chairman Charles A. Dana on the committee for "Direction of Education." But Fourier had made him enthusiastic and optimistic about Brook Farm again.

2.

After Dwight left his pulpit at Northampton, one of his friends after another urged him to take up his pen and write. Henry Tuckerman, James Russell Lowell, Mrs. Child, Cranch,

⁴⁰Letters from Brook Farm, pp. 74-75.

⁴¹Brook Farm, Historic and Personal Memoirs, p. 154.

⁴²Marianne Dwight, Letters from Brook Farm, p. 91.

Curtis, Ripley, and others prodded him continually to get his name before the reading public by publishing the musical lectures, collecting the Dial essays in a book, making translations, or writing musical articles for periodicals. But their efforts were more than half wasted. Even under the most propitious conditions, Dwight could seldom make himself prepare copy for the press, or meet publishers' deadlines and space requirements. In the uncertain years between his resignation at Northampton and the beginning of The Harbinger in June, 1845, his bibliography is pitifully meagre in spite of many opportunities. In music criticism he did nothing between July of 1840 ("Concerts of the Past Winter" for the Dial) and a review in two installments for Lowell's short-lived Pioneer at the beginning of 1843.⁴³ Then followed three articles in ten months for the Democratic Review, undoubtedly texts of the 1842 lectures,⁴⁴ and that was all before the first issue of the Harbinger.

These articles are partly pure hack work, including long quotations from German sources; but the portions original with Dwight show very clearly the development of his musical thought between the address before the Harvard Musical Association in 1841 and the Fourier Society lecture of 1844. The "fringe" began to push its roots into the "inward principles" of

⁴³"Academy of Music--Beethoven's Symphonies," I (January, 1843), 26-28, and (February, 1843), 56-60.

⁴⁴"Handel and his 'Messiah'," The U. S. Magazine and Democratic Review, XII (March, 1843), 264-279; "Mozart," XIII (November, 1843), 465-473; "Haydn," XIV (January, 1844), 17-25.

association as early as 1842. Dwight explored the historical and social aspects of music, and began to think of it as a dynamic force in the really progressive aspects of nineteenth-century life. He writes:

. . . when we consider that music is the peculiar art of this last century, that more of the highest kind of genius has been employed of late in music than in any art or literature, . . . the fact becomes one of great significance for the future development of humanity.⁴⁵

The music critic, he says, must first of all be conscious of the limitations in his art. Music is beyond words and thought. Indeed, it frees one from the responsibility of being an individual, thinking entity. "One imagines this, another that; and each is right if he does not impose his interpretation upon the rest." The best criticism will be not strictly interpretation, but "allegorical illustration."⁴⁶ The critic must be a creator, a poet, capable of embodying "the vague . . . in a form appreciable to thought and sense."⁴⁷

The role of the literary amateur of music in the associationist movement was to be a very exacting one. But an intelligent reading of Dwight's admirable critical principles cannot be made today without recognizing the startling amateurishness of his musical abilities. The comparison between Dwight and such critics as Robert Schumann or Olin Downes is almost negligible. In 1842 he had heard a few

⁴⁵Pioneer, I (January, 1843), 26.

⁴⁶Pioneer, I (February, 1843), 56.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 57.

concerts at the old Academy of Music, perhaps a few professional soloists, and many amateur vocal performances. He studied piano scores of symphonies and operas and wrote about the compositions without ever having heard them performed. His confidence in his mind's orchestra was amazing. "I have divined," he wrote to Mrs. Child,

recognized (through a glass darkly), genius in the works of great composers through the imperfect medium of uninspired performers, or through my own poor efforts to study myself into their meaning by slow and painful transfer of the printed notes to the keys of my piano.⁴⁸

He could even find special virtue in a faltering performance.

The very difficulty of executing a piece of such breadth and energy and rapidity [Beethoven's Symphony No. 2] helps out its true expression. Just as your wrists and fingers, if you try to play it on the piano, begin to give out, the music itself falters and pants exhausted . . .⁴⁹

If Dwight had had fingers as "eloquent" as his pupils at Brook Farm thought they were, his whole career would have been different. But a skill like technical mastery over a musical instrument was not characteristic of New England Transcendentalism.

The article on Handel for the Democratic Review was one of Dwight's most ambitious efforts up to this time. He tried to paint in the background of musical history and Handel's life, quoting frequently and at length from his reading in Friedrich Rochlitz⁵⁰ and Dr. Charles Burney. His old

⁴⁸Letter of December 25, 1843, quoted in Cooke, p. 77.

⁴⁹Pioneer, I (January, 1843), 28.

⁵⁰"Handel's Messiah," Für Freunde der Tonkunst, (Leipzig: Carl Cnobloch, 1824-1832), I, 236-280.

enthusiasm for the Messiah is expressed in a new metaphor, sparkling and succulent. The oratorio combines

all the essential juices of the Gospels, old and new, into one bright cordial, which goes straight and warm to the heart, quickening it into forgetfulness of dry dogmatics and the stumbling-blocks of tradition . . .⁵¹

The aria "I know that my redeemer liveth" reminds him of

calm, crystal light from the red west at sunset,-- the pure crescent of a new moon above, and the friendly stars still brightening, whispering faith, and waking a love which cannot think of death . . .⁵²

The break from the ministry gave Dwight some pleasant moments to offset the many uncomfortable ones.

When he first wrote about Mozart, Dwight had never heard any of the symphonies or operas performed; but in the romantic life of the composer and in the characterization of Don Juan he found affinities with his own experience that make his critique surprisingly valuable for the student of Dwight's life and thought. After four columns of biographical material on Mozart which sound very much like a translation, Dwight seems to abandon his secondary sources and write from his own feelings.

Real greatness and the talent of succeeding are separable things. . . . In truth he had not the inherent faculty of influence; he was not one of those Powers whom all heads and hands involuntarily serve. A pale, diminutive young man, . . . sensitive, nervous, and awkward, seeking sympathy, but with nothing imposing about him. . . . Perhaps a man in whose sensibility is the main quality, should not have . . . power. Perhaps it is a wise fatality

⁵¹"Handel and his 'Messiah'," p. 268.

⁵²Ibid., p. 270.

which excludes him from all the vulgar politics of life, and postpones his influence, that it may not strike, but pervade and last forever. The world, by its very neglect, pays such characters the highest compliment, by seeming to take for granted that they are the peculiar care of heaven. And so they are. It is mysterious how they live without "getting along," how they glide through circumstances as calmly as the moon through clouds, making the clouds look beautiful.⁵³

(The substitution of Dwight for Mozart in such passages is unmistakable.)

All things in this world were nothing to him, save as the heart has property in them. His life was one intense longing to be loved; his music the expression of it, and in great degree the satisfaction of it--Heaven's answer to his prayer. Such fond sensibility always stands on the very brink of the infinite, thrilled with strange raptures or strange fears.⁵⁴

He finds a "vein of sadness" throughout Mozart's music, even in the comic operas, where the only comedy "consists in the contrast of a pathetic melody with a ludicrous theme." Dwight is thinking of Don Juan now, his favorite opera by far from long before he ever heard it to the end of his life.

But why does sadness wait so peculiarly on those who have the keenest sense of enjoyment, those who have the fairest dreams, the most refined excitements? . . . It is to show that Aspiration lies nearer to the principle of life than Ecstasy itself; . . . that behind the Finite is the Infinite, and just when we are happiest, we pause on the brink of it.

Mozart's life and music are full of this presentiment. If we enter into the true spirit of Don Juan, we will realize that the hero is

not a vulgar sensualist; but noble in mind and person,

⁵³"Mozart," p. 467.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 470.

endowed with the finest gifts and the loftiest aspirations, eager to embrace all, filled with an intense longing for sympathy which amounts to torment, blindly seeking relief in the excitement of the passion, still restless and disappointed, till love turns to hate, and aspiration to defiance, and he drinks the cup of pleasure to the dregs, not from sensuality, but from proud denial of the law, and, like a serpent charming a bird, seduces innocent woman to her ruin, in assertion of the devilish sense of power. No man ever came quite to this--but many have come to dread it. Beings, as we are, inclined to excess, we dread the madness of it. Thirsting for love, we instinctively suspect a lurking wickedness in the desire to be loved for our own sakes, which if carried out may lead us far from the virtues which we should seek to make loved in us.⁵⁵

For those who have "come to dread" the dangers of such strong emotional states, the opera itself has a cathartic effect, bringing about "a reconciliation between the higher and the lower tendencies in man, between the spirit and the flesh, between the sacred and the secular."⁵⁶

In these years when his life was so unsettled, his moods so variable, and his musical experience so limited, Dwight had no "favorite" composer. His announced preference for "pure," instrumental music, which should have turned him to Beethoven, was as yet largely theoretical. He was still drawn instinctively to music with a text, a "literary accompaniment," as he might have put it. In noting the interesting

⁵⁵"Mozart," pp. 472-473. The influence of German Romantic criticism is strong here. Compare especially the passage in E. T. A. Hoffman's "Don Juan" beginning, "Nur der Dichter versteht den Dichter;" Werke, ed. by Georg Ellinger (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong, n.d.), I, 79-80.

⁵⁶"Mozart," p. 471.

comparison which follows, we must remember that "Handel" means The Messiah, and "Mozart" means Don Juan produced by Dwight's imaginary company and directed by E. T. A. Hoffman and others.

Handel is naturally strong; calmly, always so. Mozart is sometimes strong; but then it is with violence, with convulsion, more like striving after strength. Handel invigorates us to that pitch, that the great, broad, monotonous ocean, the monotonous day-light, the wide unvaried plain, the mere masses and spaces of life, and the great wide waste of monotonous reality which lies around us in our dull moods, become conversible and full of novelty to us. But in the spirit of Mozart we should feel sea-sick on the ocean; we should feel strange all through the garish day, and long for moonlight bowers and the magic coloring of sentiment and fancy.⁵⁷

The most exciting musical event of this period was Ole Bull's first tour of America. His first concert in New York, on November 25, 1843, sent George William Curtis off into raptures. Curtis wrote to Dwight that the force of Bull's genius had finally made him see the unity of the arts.

It seemed a bitter thing to me, formerly, that painters must only paint and sculptors carve; but I see now the wisdom. In one thing well done lies the secret of doing all.⁵⁸

This letter and some of Mrs. Child's published effusions⁵⁹ made Dwight's anticipation very eager. He could not find the

⁵⁷"Mozart," p. 470.

⁵⁸Early Letters of Curtis to Dwight, p. 128.

⁵⁹See the letter in Cooke, pp. 75-80, referred to above, p. 82. Typical of Mrs. Child's reactions are statements like these: ". . . music came from his soul into mine, and carried it upward to worship with the angels." "Yankee Doodle in a state of clairvoyance." "The next day I felt like a person who had been in a trance, seen heaven opened, and then returned to earth again." (Letters from New York, Second Series, pp. 22-23.)

confidence to publish anything of his own about Bull until some eighteen months later, but he heard him twice in the winter of 1843-1844 and wrote his reactions to Mrs. Child.

Excepting only a symphony of Beethoven or a mass of Mozart, nothing ever filled me with such deep, solemn joy. . . . The most glorious sensation I ever had was to sit in one of his audiences, and to feel that all were elevated to the same pitch with myself, that the spirit in every breast had risen to the same level. My impulse was to speak to any one and to every one as to an intimate friend. The most indifferent person was a man--a living soul--to me. The most remote and proud I did not fear nor despise. In that moment they were accessible,--nay, more, worth reaching. This certainly was the highest testimony to his great art, to his great soul.⁶⁰

By not rushing into print with these sentiments, Dwight saved himself some back-pedaling later on. Indeed, it was probably better for his ultimate reputation that he did not write very much in periods of depression and uncertainty.

The winter of 1841-1842 was a difficult period of orientation and readjustment. Not over night does one begin to make an essential contribution to Association by creating "allegorical illustrations" of music which embody "the vague" in forms "appreciable to thought and sense." The lone item in Dwight's bibliography for 1842 shows the trend of his thinking on the problems of the poet, hence the problems of the "literary amateur" too, in American society. In this isolated article, a review of Griswold's Poets and Poetry of America,⁶¹ Dwight says we have had American poetry, but no

⁶⁰Letter of October, 1844, quoted in Cooke, pp. 80-81, without exact date.

⁶¹Christian Examiner, XXXIII (September, 1842), 25-33.

American poet as yet.⁶² Potential poets have been turned to other things in their mature years by "the utilitarian, money-getting spirit of the age."⁶³

. . . the poet, if he would pass for anything, must snatch for his portion, and first get to be fashionable. No one, but the artist himself, can conceive of the immense moral courage which it costs to be an artist, a true one, in such a state of society.⁶⁴

Dwight tries eloquently to convince himself and us that Ripley is right.

. . . the truest poetry for us at present is, to carry out in practice the ideal principles of human brotherhood and justice, which we have hung out as our national banner. . . . the most ideal and poetic impulse of our people is engaged in the movements of reform; . . . when our social life comes near to the beauty of our national principles, then there will be poetry gushing forth from a full heart, that trusts its own words.⁶⁵

3.

Significantly enough, Dwight's Brook Farm nickname did not connect him directly with music. He was known as "the poet." One would surely expect to find that a person bearing such a sobriquet had produced at least a respectable volume of verse, including one or two anthology pieces. Knowing Dwight as we do, however, we shall be disappointed but not surprised to find that his original poetry is not worth collecting, and that none of it is worth commentary or

⁶²Review of Poets and Poetry in America, p. 30.

⁶³Ibid., p. 32.

⁶⁴Loc. cit.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 33.

reprinting except for very specialized purposes. Such a purpose arises here, and the chronological order of this study will be broken at this point to investigate what verses he did produce. The break is justified because we have just noted one of his most significant statements about poetry, and because we are in the midst of the period from which his most interesting poetry comes.

Dwight had some reputation as a potential poet from the days of the Hasty Pudding Club and the commencement of the Class of 1832. The earliest original poem he published appeared in 1837. Entitled "Morning Hymn,"⁶⁶ it is a simple religious song in four ballad stanzas.

Within the next ten years, Dwight wrote the three poems by which he is represented in Cooke's anthology, The Poets of Transcendentalism⁶⁷--"Rest"⁶⁸ from the Dial;⁶⁹ and "Work, While It Is Day"⁷⁰ and "Music"⁷¹ from the Harbinger.⁷² Cooke also reprinted "Rest" in his life of Dwight, describing it as "popular" and as having "secured the honor of familiar quotation."⁷³ Parts of the poem sound very much like a translation

⁶⁶The Western Messenger, IV (September, 1837), 17.

⁶⁷(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903.)

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 117-118.

⁶⁹I (July, 1840), 22.

⁷⁰Poets of Transcendentalism, pp. 118-119.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 119.

⁷²I (June 28, 1845), 44; V (October 30, 1847), 328.

⁷³Pages 42-43.

from the German, and it was so regarded by many people.⁷⁴

The theme is a transcendental paradox. Rest is not-rest.

The fourth of seven stanzas reads:

Rest is not quitting
The busy career:
Rest is the fitting
Of self to its sphere.

And finally:

'Tis loving and serving
The Highest and Best!
'Tis onwards! unswerving,
And that is true rest.⁷⁵

"Work, While It Is Day" expounds the same theme in a more straightforward manner. By the time he wrote this poem, Dwight had put five harrowing years between him and Goethe.

All things work and move;
Work, or lose the power to will,
Lose the power to love.
.
. . . thy law obey,
And thy calling fill.
.

⁷⁴Cooke, p. 42. In speaking of how the minor transcendentalists often had their work attributed to major figures, Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote: "The late John S. Dwight was perhaps more boldly robbed and complimented than any other of his circle; since his poem called "Rest" . . . still appears periodically as an occasional resurrection in the newspapers, but always as a translation from some supposed poem of Goethe." (Old Cambridge [New York: Macmillan, 1899], p. 63.)

⁷⁵The rhythm of many of Goethe's songs is echoed here. For example, "Grenzen der Menschheit."

Was unterscheidet
Götter von Menschen?
Dass viele Wellen
Vor jenen wandeln,

(Werke, ed. by Karl Heinemann [Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, n.d.], I, 307.)

Load the day with deeds of thought,
 While it waits for thee;
 Then dispatch it, richly fraught,
 To Eternity.

Dwight came to preach the lessons of Ripley and Parker,
 whether he ever practiced them consistently or not.

"Music" deserves quotation in full because it is short,
 and because it is Dwight's poetical tribute to his favorite
 topic. Candor does not permit much excitement over the poem,
 which is rather heavy with overtones of Fourier and Swedenborg.

Music's the measure of the planets' motion,
 Heart-beat and rhythm of the glorious whole;
 Fugue-like the streams roll, and the choral ocean
 Heaves in obedience to its high control.
 Thrills through all hearts the uniform vibration,
 Starting from God, and felt from sun to sun;
 God gives the key-note, Love to all creation;
 Join, O my soul, and let all souls be one!

Since no original composition is without some slight
 interest to the biographer, five other poems Dwight wrote for
 the Harbinger will receive brief attention here. The stanzas
 called "Day and Night" contain a striking and unexpected
 parallel to Dwight's comparison of Handel with Mozart. They
 also confirm the suspicion that Dwight preferred the moon-
 light of Mozart to the challenging daylight of Handel, and
 the evening relaxation at Brook Farm to the manual labor in
 the onion patch.

The Sun, which lights our task, shuts out
 The worlds that compass us about;
 All day the spirits' sails are furled,
 Moored in its little work-day world;
 This work-day world is then the All,
 For duty knows nor great nor small.

But labor done, then cometh Night,
 Unveils the sky; and in full sight
 Stars numberless salute our star,

And shoals of worlds tempt thought afar.
Then trim the sails, O soul, and try
The ocean depths of Unity.⁷⁶

In the summer of 1845, Dwight apparently began an ambitious philosophical poem to be called "The Four Streams from the Fountain." Only the first "stream" was versified, for publication at least, but its twenty-one explosive, heavily italicized stanzas contain much more than abstract philosophy in verse. The title is "Love," and the theme could not be more obvious.

(Stanza three) . . . though this flame must burn till it
consumeth
My mortal part,
All thoughts shall feed it, for 'tis this
illumeth
With God my heart.

.

(Stanza six) To love the whole was eye a cold abstraction,
A thing above:--
One hour of thee, of life one real fraction,
And all is love.

.

(Stanza eight) World wide and warm! Of vaster worlds let
Science
Spread out her map:
Not there I lay my head with blest reliance,
But on thy lap:--

.

(Stanza twelve) Come, let us join hands! let our two flames
mingle
In one mere pure,
Since there is truth in nothing that is single:
Be love love's cure!⁷⁷

⁷⁶Harbinger, I (October 11, 1845), 284.

⁷⁷Harbinger, I (September 20, 1845), 236.

The reminiscence of John Donne and Andrew Marvel leaves Dwight in an unfortunate position artistically, but no coy mistress ever evoked a more sincere and less stoical expression from a philosopher. The late date of publication does not preclude the possibility that Almira Barlow was the addressee.⁷⁸

A companion piece to "Love" is "Emblem," in six ballad stanzas, published four months later. It is calmer and more conventional, written perhaps to accompany an actual floral gift.

Lo! I bring thee here two roses;
 White as sinless souls above
 Is the one, the other blushing
 To the very core with love.

After speaking of "a morning spent divinely," the poet continues:

O! the thoughts, the dreams, the feelings
 Of those hours, it were a vain
 Hope to bring away, and tell thee;
 But consult these roses twain.⁷⁹

The other two poems are strictly "reform verse," and suffer the congenital ills of such composition. "The Street Organ" begins:

Through the city,
 Hear the ditty
 Of the organ-grinder go!

Has the tune been played about
 Till 'tis thread-bare and worn out?
 Say not so!
 More's the pity:

⁷⁸John Codman says the Brook Farmers suspected that this poem had a "double meaning." (Brook Farm, p. 136.)

⁷⁹Harbinger, II (January 31, 1846), 124-125.

In this ditty
 You a touching emblem see:
 Such the music
 Of this slow-sick
 Worn Humanity.⁸⁰

"Song of Life" is an example of this genre at its worst. It ends thus:

If thou love thy fellow man,
 If thou serve the general plan,
 Harmony, Harmony
 Thy whole life shall be.⁸¹

The above poems, totaling some 250 lines, seem to be the sum of the original verse published by Dwight before 1850. Afterwards only two occasions inspired Dwight to write poetry. One was the commemoration service for the Harvard men killed in the Civil War, July 21, 1865. Dwight contributed a "Horatian Ode"⁸² which does not compare in any way with Lowell's famous ode read on the same day. But Dwight's five simple stanzas were designed to be sung to the tune of "Integer Vitae," and fulfilled their purpose.

Eighteen years later, on October 24, 1883, the indomitable "Class of '32" held its annual dinner at Young's hotel in Boston. Charles T. Brooks, who years before had taken over the office of Class Poet from Dwight, had died on June 14. To honor his old friend, Dwight produced fifteen delightfully sentimental stanzas which may be, on the whole, the best

⁸⁰ Harbinger, VI (November 6, 1847), 3.

⁸² First printed in Dwight's Jou7), 328.
 (August 5, 1865), 78. Reprinted in

First printed in Dwight's Journal of Music, XXV
 (August 5, 1865), 78. Reprinted in Cooke, p. 197.

verse he ever wrote. The stanza third from last is typical.

Our Spring's a dream; but there's an Indian summer,
Of well-kept faith the mellow aftermath,--
Whereof life's raw recruit and gay new-comer
No inkling hath.⁸³

After all, nicknames are not scientific labels. Oftener they are whimsical accidents, or expressive of an air or atmosphere about a person, a real but intangible, sometimes incongruous quality that flashes forth momentarily and then is seen again and again, perhaps because of the suggestion supplied by the nickname itself. The people at Brook Farm, and not a few other people besides, saw in Dwight the essential characteristics of a poet. He met many of the requirements of such authorities as Wordsworth and Shelley. Lack of creative ability cannot be postulated of one who does not create for public consumption. We do not know how many poems died in Dwight's brain, or on manuscripts lost or destroyed. What Dwight lacked more than anything else was confidence in himself--confidence which might have generated the energy and the patience and the individual initiative essential to

⁸³Boston Evening Transcript, October 30, 1883, p. 6. This poem elicited a spontaneous response from E. W. Whipple. "I can hardly express to you how much I was delighted by your poem on Brooks. . . . But my dear Dwight, why don't you write more poems? It seems to me that any journal in the country would gladly accept such a poem as this of yours."--From a letter of October 30, 1883, quoted in Cooke, p. 288.

Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography (New York: D. Appleton, 1892) records that Dwight's "best known original poem is 'God Save the State'." (II, 279.) This statement, written before Dwight's death, is retained in the edition of 1898, the year in which Cooke published his book on Dwight. Cooke does not mention such a poem, nor has any other mention of it appeared in any of the sources available for this study.

creative effort. The factors contributing to this lack of confidence have been the leitmotifs of the preceding pages-- the lack of distinguished family background, the mundane failures in love and in the ministry, the cross-currents and contradictions of transcendentalism.

These considerations help explain Dwight's very considerable success in the limited field of translation. Select Minor Poems came to be something of a classic. In the years before the founding of the Journal of Music, Dwight experimented continually with the verses of many German writers, as the early pages of the Harbinger show.⁸⁴ He also made translations for some of the songs published in 1851 in the beautiful Sartain's Magazine.⁸⁵ Successful translations of lyric poetry are not often made by literal-minded linguists. Dwight the poet was at home here. He thrived on the collaboration, the companionship, and the reassurance provided by another writer who would take the first step.⁸⁶

⁸⁴I (July 12, 1845), 74; I (September 6, 1845), 204; I (December 6, 1845), 413; II (March 14, 1846), 220.

⁸⁵VIII (June, 1851), 408-409; IX (July, 1851), 72-73; IX (October, 1851), 313-314.

⁸⁶Dwight translated quite a volume of German and French prose, although without much relish. He could have had two or three more volumes in Ripley's Specimens if he had carried out a commission to translate Goethe and Herder in 1840-1841. (See the letters quoted by Cooke, pp. 43-44.) He did complete a translation of Books Sixteen through Twenty of Goethe's Dichtung und Wahrheit for Parke Godwin's edition, Truth and Poetry (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845-1847).

CHAPTER IV

ASSOCIATION AND THE HARBINGER: 1845-1847

1.

During the preliminary discussions of the new constitution for Brook Farm, Marianne Dwight wrote to Frank that their older brother had recently spent a sleepless night. Mrs. Ripley was Marianne's authority for saying that John had been looking more deeply into Fourier than anyone else at the Farm. The insomnia was caused by nothing less than a deduction from Fourier, which Dwight promptly presented to the committee as a simple and all-embracing plan of government.¹

No copy of Dwight's constitution is available, but its tone and outlines can be reconstructed. The basic idea was that the officers of the government should not be arbitrarily elected, but should grow into their positions by an organic process of natural selection.² How Dwight deduced this from Fourier will be seen in a later section.³ Here it is important simply to note the fact that the "poet" thought of himself as a lawgiver, as an inspired leader in a society reformed.

¹Letter of February 15, 1845. Letters from Brook Farm, pp. 78-79.

²Ibid., p. 79.

³See below, pp. 123-128.

His speech before the committee was so effective that his idea was immediately pronounced "perfect"--and impracticable. Mr. Ryckman requested that the plan be written down, so that he could see how much he was affected by its real merits, and how much by the force of Dwight's eloquence. Charles Dana, whose attitude Marianne resented, objected that the plan was not "scientific," although Dwight thought it was nothing if not "scientific."⁴ He sent copies to absentee friends of Brook Farm, and their reactions were much the same as the committee's. James Kay wrote from Philadelphia, saying he thought Dwight's plan, with its "beautiful structure," would have a better chance of success after five years of slow and careful development under the committee's more practical code. He granted, however, that if Dwight's version "were a simple literary exercise, with no practical object, it would win universal applause for its author."⁵ Christopher List, an ex-Brook Farmer, expressed much the same opinion. He thought Dwight's composition the most enjoyable thing he had ever read on the subject of government.⁶

Inspired by the impact of Fourier and Brisbane, Dwight apparently jumped several intermediate steps necessary for converting Brook Farm into a "scientific" phalanx. The open

⁴Marianne to Frank, February 15, 1845, Letters from Brook Farm, p. 79.

⁵Letter of March 14, 1845, quoted by Clarence Gohdes, "Three Letters by James Kay Dealing with Brook Farm," Philological Quarterly, XVII (October, 1938), 379-380.

⁶A.L.S. of March 14, 1845, in the Boston Public Library.

debate on the constitution actually adopted began on March 2, and the sections were voted on one by one until March 20. Perhaps Dwight carried some of his points in this debate. His beautiful essay on the ideal government may have served as a useful antidote to recommendations of the worldly-wise like Charles Dana.

The temporary failure of his legislative efforts did not depress the mercurial Dwight, because in June of 1845 another large and much more congenial responsibility fell to him. He became one of the chief contributors to The Harbinger, the publication of which was by far the most important activity of Brook Farm in its last two years. The paper was established as the successor to Brisbane's Phalanx⁷ and for four years was the chief organ of Fourierist propaganda in the United States. Dwight contributed not only a large share of the Fourierist literature, but also nearly all of the music criticism which appeared in each issue, many book reviews, and the poetry mentioned above. In an early number he proclaimed joyfully the end of his banishment from the things he loved, "books, and art, and the conversation of poetic friends."⁸ At last he had an outlet for whatever he wanted to express. The paper depended upon him as much as upon anyone else for copy, as well as editorial and administrative leadership. Dwight became a key figure at Brook Farm only

⁷October 5, 1843, to May 28, 1845.

⁸"Books from our Friends," Harbinger, I (June 28, 1845), 41.

after farming and industry and community life had almost ended.⁹

In the division of the members of Brook Farm into the "groups" and "series" of the Fourieristic phalanx, no appointment could have been more natural than Dwight's. He became Chief of the Festal Series. Throughout the primary sources on life at Brook Farm are brief suggestions that Dwight reveled in the amenities of everyday, non-intellectual social intercourse. He liked to play cards in the evening.¹⁰ We

⁹The extent of Dwight's contributions to the Harbinger is hard to express precisely. By counting the authors' initials in the indexes, John Humphrey Noyes made Dwight the chief contributor with 324 "articles." Ripley had 315, Dana 248, and all others many fewer. (History of American Socialisms [Philadelphia; J. B. Lippincott, 1870], p. 212.) This calculation, however, makes no distinction between such different items as short poems and single installments of books translated from the French appearing in more than twenty consecutive numbers. Nevertheless, Dwight's relative importance to the periodical seems to be accurately expressed by Noyes' figures. On some occasions, Dwight carried almost the entire burden himself. For example, in the number for October 17, 1846 (III, 290-304), Dwight filled seven of fourteen pages, writing everything but a long translation of a George Sand novel, some letters to the editor, and the back-page advertisements.

Incidentally, Noyes suggests "a transcendental reason for the failure of Brook Farm," symbolized by the very effectiveness of the Harbinger. "The transcendental afflatus, like that of Pentecost, had in it two elements, viz., Communism, and 'the gift of tongues;' or in other words, the tendency to religious and social unity, represented by Channing and Ripley; and the tendency to literature, represented by Emerson and Margaret Fuller. But the proportion of these elements was different from that of Pentecost. The tendency to utterance was the strongest." The Brook Farm leaders "went over from practical Communism to literary utterance when they assumed the propagandism of Fourierism; and utterance has been their vocation ever since." (History of American Socialisms, pp. 561-562).

¹⁰See a letter from Marianne to Anna Parsons of January 6, 1845, in Letters from Brook Farm, pp. 59 and 61.

hear of picnics;¹¹ of walks in the woods, "always beside some fair maiden, in cheerful conversation";¹² of Dwight at a fancy party dressed in "a sky-blue silk frock coat" from the wardrobe of a former minister to Russia.¹³ In the effulgent spring of 1845, Dwight gave a small party to celebrate his own birthday on May 13.¹⁴ However reluctant he may have been to hoe corn when it needed it, his name became almost synonymous with the joy and enthusiasm of the evening's relaxation, of festive occasions, and of the Association meetings, particularly after the official formation of the phalanx.¹⁵

¹¹See a letter from Curtis to Dwight, dated September 1, 1843, in Early Letters from Curtis to Dwight, p. 111.

¹²Codman, Brook Farm, p. 95. See also p. 189. ". . . the man of music and song could not despise the poetry of motion, neither could his social soul neglect the opportunity of seeing so much enjoyment, and feasting his eyes on those developing buds of womanhood, those fair-haired, clear-eyed, joyous young girls who were present." (Loc. cit.)

¹³Ora Cannett Sedgwick, "A Girl of Sixteen at Brook Farm," The Atlantic Monthly, LXXXV (March, 1900), 403.

¹⁴Marianne to Anna Parsons, May 14, 1845, in Letters from Brook Farm, p. 96.

¹⁵After one meeting, Marianne wrote to her brother Frank that "Channing and John were beautiful and like angels." (Letters from Brook Farm, p. 103.)

Dwight almost failed the company, but not quite, at the marriage of Marianne to John Orvis, December 24, 1846, one of the last happy days at Brook Farm. Codman tells the story. "It was a homelike affair, and after the ceremony 'the Poet' . . . was invited to speak to us; but no, he was not in the mood. He was urged--for all liked to hear his kindly voice, and we thought this a particularly pleasant subject--so at last he rose from his seat and commenced with these words: 'I like this making one.' It seemed to touch various chords in the minds of the hearers, for the applause and laughter that followed silenced the rest of the speech and it was never finished." (Brook Farm, p. 135.)

Such a temperament was certainly as important in a Chief of the Festal Series as any technical or artistic training. The Festal Series was unquestionably efficient. Indeed, it probably occupied far too many man-hours for the good health of the phalanx. In the jargon of Fourierism, the Festal Series "had attractions proportioned to the destinies of every member of every group in the industrial organization, and a deal of care and attention were given to its functions."¹⁶ Naturally, music made up most of the entertainment, and the standards of selection, if not of performance, were high. Dwight's choral groups, aided by "a dozen or more players of the violin and piano,"¹⁷ made the place "melodious from morning until night."¹⁸ They attacked the masses of Haydn and Mozart,¹⁹ and even Mendelssohn's St. Paul,²⁰ to say nothing of "selections from the operas then known . . . with all the characters and choruses."²¹ Furthermore, the music lovers often walked into Boston to hear concerts, and occasionally Dwight could get expert musicians to visit the farm.²²

¹⁶John Van Der Zee Sears, My Friends at Brook Farm (New York: Desmond Fitzgerald, 1912), p. 159.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁹Swift, Brook Farm, p. 73. See also Georgiana Bruce Kirby, Years of Experience (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1887), p. 103.

²⁰Sears, op. cit., p. 82.

²¹Ibid., p. 81.

²²Swift, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

He himself, as chief music critic for the Harbinger, attended nearly every musical program Boston offered.

The advent of Fourierism was the beginning of the end for Brook Farm, but it brought Dwight the most prolonged period of optimism and high spirits he had enjoyed for several years. There were dark moments near the end of the year, but things kept happening to brighten them. The eloquent and unworldly William Henry Channing joined the Association in September. Dwight was exultant. "Channing is ours," he said, in a voice Marianne thought quite remarkable.²³ When reckoning time approached with the end of the year, it was obvious that the phalanx would show serious financial weakness. To Brisbane, Dwight wrote something about "patient perseverance,"²⁴ and in Association meeting he refuted bravely the arguments of those doubting spirits who were saying in private conversation that Brook Farm could not go on. He insisted that the movement should not be judged by its financial statement, but should be sustained by faith until the finances could be brought into line.²⁵

Brisbane was impatient with faith and perseverance, and he tried to stir Dwight to action.

. . . your spirit and feeling are right, but you ought to have something better than you have got.

²³See a letter to Anna Parsons, of September 28, 1845, in Letters from Brook Farm, p. 118.

²⁴See Brisbane's answer of December 2, 1845. A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

²⁵Letter of Marianne Dwight to Anna Parsons, of December 12, 1845, in Letters from Brook Farm, p. 141.

There is no justice in such people as you have among you being placed in the positions they are.²⁶

He paid Dwight a high compliment by asking him to come to New York to give expert testimony on the associative value of music.

I want three or four lectures from you on the genius and science of music, which will give a deeper insight into the subject than is now possessed. I should want one lecture on the philosophy of the gamut and the character of the 7 fundamental notes composing it. . . . My idea is that you could give the people a deeper theoretical view of the art and philosophy of Music than any man in the world . . .²⁷

Dwight sent a prompt acceptance to this flattering invitation,²⁸ in spite of trials and disappointments that broke the health and spirit of Channing, who wrote from Brattleboro on January 18, 1846:

You speak the truth, when you say, "this disappointment is mine as much as yours." Indeed the anxieties and mental suffering which I underwent with and for you was the cause perhaps, as much as all else, of my breaking down. I confess the prospect looked all but hopeless to me; and the shock was too strong . . .

Channing could only admire the "true heroic devotedness" and the "human greatness" with which the members bore up under stress.²⁹

Something was giving Dwight a strength he had never shown before, and it was something more powerful than an invitation from Brisbane. In the most successful pageant

²⁶A.L.S. of December 2, 1845, in the Boston Public Library.

²⁷Loc. cit.

²⁸See Brisbane's acknowledgment in a letter of December 30, 1845. A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

²⁹A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

ever staged by the Festal Series--an Elizabethan extravaganza with Ripley himself as Shakespeare--the role of Mary, Queen of Scots, was played by "the most beautiful" young woman then at Brook Farm--Mary Bullard.³⁰ She was not a regular member of the phalanx, but she made frequent visits there over the protests of friends and relatives at home.³¹ She seems to have been at the Farm almost continuously from January 1 to March 1 of 1846, perhaps originally invited by Dwight as a guest singer. The effect of her presence on Dwight we shall have to construct for ourselves from what we know of his propensities and from future events. In the memory of John Codman, she was the most attractive person who ever appeared at Brook Farm. He recalled her every feature--the blonde hair; the "mild tranquil countenance" with its "delicately small" blue eyes, a Grecian nose, and a long upper lip showing "strength of character"; the short, "fairly full figure, and not above the average grace."³² When she sang, she awakened Codman to "new ideas of duty and destiny." She was the first from whom he "learned that music was not a put-on art, an accomplishment, but the outpouring of soul."³³

³⁰Sears, My Friends at Brook Farm, p. 101.

³¹Codman, Brook Farm, p. 165.

³²Ibid., pp. 163-164.

³³Ibid., p. 168.

During this time Dwight wrote a letter to James Kay that almost knocked the Philadelphia business man off his feet. Kay replied with several pages of good sound managerial advice for Brook Farm, inspired by a new faith in "the poet."

The most striking feature of your letter is the force with which it is written. I was breathless as I read it. Is this not a singular quality to be predominant in your production? I hope that it remains with you. It is the element of character which I most earnestly wished to see developed in you; and is the guarantee of illimitable, incomputable good for yourself and Association if it be kept active.

Kay says he cannot accept an invitation to visit Brook Farm, for the simple reason that he would lose \$1000 a month if he did. He closes by repeating "words which thus far have been wasted. Get married . . . as many . . . as are ready. Marriage and parentage are to be the hydraulic cement of Association."³⁴

Dwight might have carried out many of Kay's suggestions very soon if more pressing matters had not been at hand. On the evening of March 3, 1846, the half-finished Phalanstery burned to the ground, consuming \$7000 of the community's very scarce capital. The blow did not hurt at first. It was parried bravely as an acid test of Brook Farm's strength.³⁵ Dwight was scheduled to begin his lectures in New York on

³⁴A.L.S. of March 2, 1846, in the Boston Public Library.

³⁵Marianne wrote a detailed description of this fire to Anna Parsons on March 4, 1846, describing its glorious beauty, and rationalizing it into a blessing in disguise. (Letters from Brook Farm, pp. 145-149.)

the eleventh,³⁶ and he left Brook Farm a few days after the fire in good spirits.

The two or three weeks Dwight spent in New York were the happiest, fullest, proudest period in his life up to that time, in the face of the ironic fact that the movement he was representing so well to the world at large was just entering its last convulsions. He talked association everywhere, and he was cordially received by many people. He even "extemporized association" at the end of his first lecture.³⁷ One after another, the New York stockholders in the Brook Farm Phalanx surrendered their claims under the force of Dwight's persuasion, and such a concrete, unpoetical accomplishment made him very proud. "You may consider the whole of the stock held in New York as cancelled,"³⁸ he wrote to Ripley. With his host and hostess, Rev. Henry W. Bellows and his wife, he talked "hours and hours" until even they were partly convinced.³⁹

The change from the simple life of Brook Farm was wonderful.

Of gastrosophic adventures I have too much to tell; that shall be for Brook Farm evening chats. Parties, music, dinings out and in, and hosts of visitors,

³⁶See the announcement in the New York Daily Tribune, March 10, 1846, p. [2].

³⁷See a long letter to George Ripley of March [?], 1846. A.I.S. in the Boston Public Library. Reprinted in Cooke, pp. 111-114.

³⁸Loc. cit. (Cooke, p. 113.)

³⁹Loc. cit. (Cooke, pp. 113-114.)

besides the tremendously long walks, and hitherto unfortunate attempts to write, on my last lectures, crowd my days to the fullest.⁴⁰

To have scorned the luxuries offered him by the New York friends of Association would indeed have been tactless, but Dwight's expression of the great pleasure he found in them might have been even more tactless in a letter to Brook Farm, if he had not been very sure of his high position there. He was now one of the Farm's most effective propagandists, and at the same time he was sorely missed at home. Sophia Ripley wrote of

trying to get used to the thought of a slightly prolonged absence on your part. I wish you could have seen the group in the reading-room last evening after supper, the tall ones stooping over and the short ones standing on tiptoe to read the notice of you in the Tribune.⁴¹

George Ripley wrote on March 19, urging Dwight to return as soon as he could without sacrificing important business.⁴²

The lectures themselves, Dwight wrote,

in one sense were very successful; that is, they produced a deep impression, and were even received with enthusiasm. But, pecuniarily, the result will not be what I expected. I shall hardly realize over one hundred dollars instead of two. This is owing to the great expense of hall and advertising. The audience doubled on the second night, and shrank a little after that.⁴³ . . . it will be a

⁴⁰Dwight to Ripley, March [?], 1846. (Cooke, p. 114.)

⁴¹A.L.S. of March 14, 1846, in the Boston Public Library.

⁴²A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

⁴³"At the first lecture there were about one hundred and twenty persons present, some of the subscribers failing on account of short notice and other accidental reasons."--Letter to Ripley, March [?], 1846. (Cooke, p. 111.)

fine opening, I think, for another time.⁴⁴

Horace Greeley's Daily Tribune, editorially committed to the doctrines of Association, reviewed the lectures enthusiastically. The notice of the first lecture, read so eagerly in the reading room at Brook Farm, said in part:

It is impossible for us to give anything like a report of the Lecture; and to express simply in general terms the admiration it excited in us would expose us to the charge of affected exaggeration. . . . The beautiful thoughts with which it peopled our brain--the fervid enthusiasm it awakened in our heart--the sublime prospects of immortal truth it opened to the mental vision--are among the things never to be forgotten.⁴⁵

The second lecture, on March 16, made a great impression "in spite of" the subject before "many of the most distinguished ladies and gentlemen of our intellectual circles."⁴⁶ After the last lecture a ten-inch article proclaimed the series "an era in the musical history of New York," in which "the perfect skeleton of Theory was vested with the fairest flesh of eloquence."⁴⁷ The general plan of the lectures was this:

1. The general character of music, especially as an expression of the religious sentiment.
2. The Scientific Era, with Bach as an example.
3. The Expressive Era,--Beethoven and Mozart.

⁴⁴Quoted in Cooke, p. 114, "to one of his sisters," without date.

⁴⁵March 12, 1846, p. [2].

⁴⁶March 17, 1846, p. [2].

⁴⁷March 25, 1846, p. [1]. This article, signed "C," may have been by George William Curtis.

4. The Age of Effect,--Paganni and the Modern Piano Composers.⁴⁸

When he returned to Brook Farm near the end of the month, Dwight found doubt, distrust, disintegration.⁴⁹ Eloquenty he pleaded with the members, reminding them of the high objectives of Association, and of the enthusiasm and harmony even after the great fire. He spoke of New York as a noisy, dirty, discordant place from which he longed to escape to the beautiful life at the farm.⁵⁰ In order to help fill the empty treasury, he offered to go away, anywhere, wherever he could earn the most money as a lecturer.⁵¹ But it was too late. Ripley and Dana had lost faith in associative industry except as a far-distant ideal. Soon they had Dwight along with them, except that he hated to think of leaving Brook Farm. Only a group of the younger members wanted to continue under the constitution of March, 1845.⁵² Dwight proposed a compromise involving separation of the school and the Harbinger from the farm management, and elimination of the industrial plans.⁵³ Somehow the experiment struggled on for another year, with numbers and activities much reduced.

⁴⁸New York Daily Tribune, March 25, 1846, p. [1].

⁴⁹Codman, Brook Farm, p. 224.

⁵⁰Loc. cit.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 225.

⁵²See an undated letter from Marianne Dwight to Frank, [July, 1846], in Letters from Brook Farm, p. 171.

⁵³See a letter from James Kay to Marianne, September 27, 1846, in Gohdes, "Three Letters," pp. 386-388.

Dwight wrote to Mrs. Child in September:

Brook Farm must either stop or change its form and operations most entirely. And I am in the midst of this,--everything to settle, nothing that is not altogether loose and unsettled, and meanwhile the Harbinger to edit, and ever so much of other work to which I had pledged myself. . . . I think we shall go on, but on a much reduced scale, and everyone who stays responsible for supporting his own business and his own material person.⁵⁴

As Brook Farm lapsed into a group of individuals each responsible for making his own way in the world, the associative ideal entered what may be called the "union" stage. When practical experiment failed, the enthusiasts turned to club-forming, and a way of life shrank to a once-a-week ritual. Dwight was very active in this pathetic and short-lived movement. He was one of the original directors of The American Union of Associationists, formed in New York on May 27, 1846, with Horace Greeley as president.⁵⁵ At a New York meeting on June 18, he spoke as an authority on Fourier.⁵⁶

In Boston, the leader was William Henry Channing, for whom Brook Farm had never been quite spiritual enough anyway.⁵⁷ He wrote to Dwight in November, speaking in humble, religious terms:

. . . we none of us have a theology, a science of the divine, that deserves the name. We are watchers

⁵⁴Quoted in Cooke, p. 120, without exact date.

⁵⁵See the first of many back-page notices in the Harbinger, III (June 13, 1846), 14.

⁵⁶Harbinger, III (June 27, 1846), 47.

⁵⁷Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Memoir of William Henry Channing (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1886), p. 215.

in the dawn, and though the gleams are in higher clouds, we do not yet see the sun.⁵⁸

In the same month, Dwight was still hopeful enough to call for the preservation of Brook Farm in the Harbinger,⁵⁹ but by Christmas he admitted its failure while maintaining that the unions showed the increasing strength of Association.⁶⁰ Channing's Religious Union of Associationists (vaguely distinct from the "Boston" Union and the "Women's" Union) was founded on Sunday, January 3, 1847. Dwight played the opening music on the piano, helped sing the "Sanctus" from Mozart's Twelfth Mass with Mary Bullard and others, and made the speech nominating Channing for minister.⁶¹ About the same time he gave the seventh lecture in a series sponsored by Association at the Masonic Temple.⁶² By virtue of his membership on the

⁵⁸Letter of November 8, 1846, quoted in Frothingham, Memoir of Channing, p. 213.

⁵⁹"How Stands the Cause?" III (November 7, 1846), 348-350.

⁶⁰"Convention of Associationists in Christmas week," Harbinger, IV (December 26, 1846), 43-44.

John Allen and John Orvis made a frantic and Herculean effort to save Association by lecturing and selling subscriptions to the Harbinger. Between them they gave forty lectures in Vermont alone in the last five weeks of 1846. (Dwight, "The Convention in Boston," Harbinger, IV [January 9, 1847], 78.) On December 9, Orvis wrote to Dwight from Middlebury, Vermont. The youthful impatience and disgust expressed in the letter are refreshingly human. "There is nothing so detestable as the two-penny piety and six-penny aristocracy of an insignificant country village--especially if it has made a successful failure to sustain a college--" (A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.)

⁶¹Frothingham, op. cit., pp. 220-221.

⁶²Announcement in the Harbinger, IV (January 9, 1847), 79. Dwight's subject was "Integral Education," reprinted in Harbinger, V (July 17, 1847), 89-92, (July 24, 1847), 108-110, (August 7, 1847), 140-144.

Executive Committee of the American Union, he was successful in his efforts to keep Brook Farm on the masthead of the Harbinger until June, when its publication was transferred to the Union itself. The editorial offices were moved to New York about November 1, and Dwight became a Boston editor.⁶³ In one of the last issues for which he was largely responsible, Dwight reported a public meeting of the friends of association and said a brave farewell to the man whom he had followed faithfully for six long years.

The breaking up of the life at Brook Farm was frequently alluded to, especially by Mr. Ripley, who, on the eve of entering a new sphere of labor for the same great cause, appeared in all his indomitable strength and cheerfulness, triumphant amid outward failure. The owls and bats and other birds of ill omen, . . . which are busily croaking and screeching of the downfall of Association, had they been present at this meeting, could their weak eyes have borne so much light, would never again have coupled failure with the thought of such men, nor entertained a feeling other than of envy of experience like theirs.⁶⁴

None of the leaders of Brook Farm ever felt like writing a detailed account of his experiences there, in spite of many requests.⁶⁵ Hard struggles with the "real world" occupied

⁶³See Harbinger, IV (May 29, 1847), 391.

⁶⁴"The Meetings in Boston," Harbinger, V (October 23, 1847), 317. Ripley's biographer returns the compliment thus: "One of the last to go, one of the saddest of heart, one of the most self-sacrificing through it all, was John S. Dwight. It may be truly said that Brook Farm died in music." (O. B. Frothingham, George Ripley, American Men of Letters [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1883], p. 192.)

⁶⁵See for example a letter to Dwight from William Dean Howells, dated November 19, 1873. "By the way, would you feel like writing out your reminiscences of Brook Farm for the Atlantic?" (A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.)

completely the energies of Ripley, Dana, and Dwight in the productive years left. When the history of transcendentalism began to be studied in the 'eighties, the writing was done by a younger generation. One of the best of this group was Octavius B. Frothingham, who was the principal speaker at a social meeting held in Boston during the first week of March, 1882, for the purpose of discussing "Brook Farm; what it was and what it aimed to be."⁶⁶ After some coaxing, the sixty-nine-year-old Dwight was prevailed upon to supplement Frothingham's remarks. He spoke at some length once he got started, and the audience laughed when he pictured Charles Dana and George Curtis washing dishes after tea on the evening of his arrival. "It was very enchanting; quite a lark as we say."⁶⁷

Besides reminiscing, Dwight tried to correct some common misconceptions about Brook Farm.

Communism it was not, because property was respected. . . . Only justice was sought for in the matter of labor and in the distribution of any surplus, if there were any, which seldom occurred. . . .

The great point aimed at was to realize practical equality and mutual culture, and a common-sense education for the children in a larger sense than prevails in ordinary society. . . .

I do not think Brook Farm was wholly a dream. This aspect has been too strongly represented. I think it was very practical, for we had very practical and common-sense men and women among us. It was a great good to me. Every one who was there will say it was to him, though it is extremely hard to tell of it. . . . I felt and still think that it

⁶⁶Reported by Belle C. Barrows for The Christian Register, LXI (March 9, 1882), [1].

⁶⁷"Remarks of John S. Dwight," Loc. cit.

was a wholesome life, that it was a good practical education. I have no doubt I should not have been living at this day if it had not been for the life there, for what I did on the farm and among the trees, in handling the hay and even in swinging the scythe. Those who have survived, and been active in their experiences, have certainly shown themselves persons of power and faculty, with as much common sense, on the average, as ordinary men.

Many troubles, mostly financial, led Ripley and Dana to an adoption of very rudimentary Fourierism. This, Dwight admitted, was "mere pretense," an "idle dream."

The idea of most of us was that, beginning with what we felt to be a true system, with true relations to one another, it would probably grow into something larger, and that by bringing in others we should finally succeed in reforming and elevating society and put it on a basis of universal co-operation.⁶⁸

This belated and extemporaneous account of the Brook Farm days is interesting not only for what it says directly, but because it shows how Dwight's memory could shift the emphasis of his Lehrjahre from the Fourierist days, when he was most active and important but which most Brook Farmers tried to forget, to the idyllic earlier days of the farm, when he was lonely, discouraged, and almost ready to run away. From a distance, Fourierism looked extremely ridiculous to Dwight, and he apparently forgot that he had spent two or three years as one of its chief propagandists. Since this part of the Brook Farm story is usually passed over hastily, it is appropriate to open the discussion of Dwight's voluminous bibliography in this period by examining his Fourierist writing in some detail.

⁶⁸The Christian Register, LXI (March 9, 1882), [1]. In Cooke's quotation of these remarks (pp. 56-61), the paragraphs are re-arranged and all reference to "dream," "pretense," and Fourier are omitted.

2.

Reviewing Dwight's strictly Fourierist articles is more confusing than exciting. First of all, it is hard to separate his slender margin of original thought from the large body of ideas he derived from Fourier and his principal followers, especially Victor Considerant and Albert Brisbane. Further, Dwight's work in this line would be at most points indistinguishable from the work of his collaborators--Ripley, Dana, Brisbane, and Channing--if it were not for the invaluable indexes to the Harbinger.⁶⁹

The fact is that Dwight and the other Brook Farmers were caught up in something very like a fad, a game, a "pretense." It involved learning a special language and relating all of one's thoughts and activities to a sort of mystic, cosmic formula--"Attractions proportional to destinies." Indeed, Ripley and Dana were not playing a game. They were expounding a way of life, and trying to get Brook Farm on its feet financially. Dwight could drop the pretense too in his aesthetic judgments of books and music. But the verbiage and mental gymnastics so often found in Fourierist writing make annoying reading for the unbeliever.

⁶⁹Lindsay Swift ventures this distinction: "The heaviest articles came from Ripley, Dana, and Brisbane; and now and then Dwight would write something on Association or an allied topic, which seemed little more luminous than the downright-ness of Ripley, or the fierce, polemic tone of Dana, . . ." (Brook Farm, p. 268.) A defensible impressionist analysis, perhaps, but it suggests a degree of irresponsibility with which Dwight cannot be charged.

Dwight's most interesting and important contributions to the Harbinger, the musical and literary reviews, will be discussed later. Not more than thirty of his original articles, numbering over two hundred, can be classed as primarily Fourierist propaganda. The burden of exposition and application was assumed by Ripley and Dana. Dwight introduced the writings of Fourier and Considerant, and translated them in considerable bulk. His original work consisted largely of answering current objections to Fourierism, explaining some points left doubtful by Fourier, and reporting meetings and other current events connected with the cause.

In preparing the readers of the Harbinger for his translations, Dwight declared that Fourier was to be classed with philosophers like Plato and Swedenborg, not with a scientist like Newton, nor with a poet like Shakespeare.⁷⁰ Fourier's "science" is implied, inspirational, rather than demonstrative.

. . . there is something in the grandeur and catholicity of his statements, which reveals so complete, harmonious, and all-encompassing a view, that demonstration must be there in one sense, latently, had we only the clearness, patience and severity of mind to trace the thread of inferences.⁷¹

Dwight seems to be trying, out of sheer necessity, to develop some "patience and severity of mind" as he writes these articles. The organizing genius of Fourier is needed to keep the wealth of great poetry "from being thrown away,"

⁷⁰"Fourier's Writings," Harbinger, I (November 1, 1845), 333-335.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 333.

for, rich as the poet finds our life, we are growing more and more weary of it, and feel that its very wealth will sink us, unless the divine order shall descend upon the earth, and no longer suffer all these worlds of consciousness to go unsphered.⁷²

The easy shift from "the poet" to "we" shows how hard it was for "the poet" to keep himself out of the picture. Nevertheless, Dwight's translation of Fourier's Cosmogony began to appear serially in the first number of the second volume of the Harbinger.⁷³ When this was completed,⁷⁴ the "poet" submerged himself again in a complete translation of The New Industrial World, which ran for almost a year.⁷⁵ Later he translated Victor Considerant's Harmony,⁷⁶ and many selections from Democratie Pacifique and La Phalange.

Dwight's own commentaries on Fourierism are repetitious and fragmentary. It is impossible to show any logical or chronological "development" of his views. The following summary is built around quotations which, regardless of their chronology, represent fairly his approach to the subject. If the result is a lopsided and sketchy exposition

⁷²"Fourier's Writings," p. 335.

⁷³December 13, 1845, pp. 1-4.

⁷⁴II (January 3, 1846), pp. 52-55.

⁷⁵II (January 31, 1846), 113-116, to III (November 28, 1846), 390-392.

⁷⁶Beginning V (September 11, 1847), 209-212, to VII (September 16, 1848), 153.

of Fourier's doctrine, it is probably true to Dwight's understanding and application of that doctrine.⁷⁷

After two years of indoctrination, Dwight formulated the basic belief of the Associationists thus:

We believe, as the only statement which will bear the test of reason, conscience and the heart, and of inward experience faithfully and fully noted, that there is not one impulse or spring of activity native to human character, in all its created varieties, which does not presuppose and seek some good,--nay, universal good.⁷⁸

With such a statement most of the Transcendentalists would have agreed, as they would have agreed in principle with Dwight's description of evil as "a lower transitional state in the ascending series, the progressive development of Good."⁷⁹ He says the skeptical persons who doubt that man's impulses or passions can be synchronized with social well-being are simply short-sighted. There is harmony now; the creation of

⁷⁷Certainly more repetitious, if less fragmentary, are the various sources from which Dwight could have learned his Fourierism. Most of his ideas could have come from Brisbane's two books--Social Destiny of Man: or, Association and Reorganization of Industry (Philadelphia: C. F. Stollmeyer, 1840); and A Concise Exposition of the Doctrine of Association, . . . (New York: J. S. Rodfield, 1843), hereafter referred to as Social Destiny of Man and Concise Exposition respectively. These works, the most readily available to us as to Dwight, will be cited at appropriate points. The original French writings, especially those volumes translated by Dwight, cannot be discounted as direct source material, but since almost any Fourierist statement can be traced to any one of several similar statements, no scholarly purpose would be served by an exhaustive study of Dwight's possible sources in these works.

⁷⁸Harbinger, V (July 3, 1847), 59. (Here, and in many succeeding references to Dwight's articles for the Harbinger, the title or heading is omitted because it is not unique and is not needed for identification.)

⁷⁹Harbinger, II (January 17, 1846), 94.

God is allowed to continue its existence because "it does harmonize, not with itself now, but with the purpose, with the consummation towards which it is laboring." Man's present sin may be only a covering for his best potential.⁸⁰

But starting from such premises, a false turning will lead to "a monstrous, yet an almost universal heresy," the concept of individual salvation.⁸¹ This, Dwight points out, is the heresy at Concord. Emerson recognizes the principle of Unity, but his Unity does not need all its components.

. . . by communing with his own heart alone, by absolute subjective consciousness, by isolated self-reliance, no man ever came near realizing that unity of which the heart whispers. . . . With this gospel of self-reliance must be coupled that other of general mutual affiance, each to each; of a unity of system and organic solidarity, wherein no one can rely upon himself, or be himself, without the aid of all, completing the related character of all the faculties and tendencies which properly are himself.⁸²

The "science" of Fourier is the deduction from the basic premise which forestalls such an error. True individuality is indeed necessary in Association.

It is men that we want in Association, it is genuine, self-centered, independent characters; and not the indifferent, though faithful and uninterrupted service, in which men feel not a man's influence.⁸³

But there is no true individuality without true Association.

⁸⁰Harbinger, I (September 6, 1845), 206.

⁸¹Harbinger, VI (February 12, 1848), 117.

⁸²Review of Emerson's Poems, Harbinger, IV (January 23, 1847), 107.

⁸³Harbinger, I (October 4, 1845), 266.

In the complete Phalanx, in Association realized, individualism is but the definite and actual side of the reigning unitary idea, which otherwise were but an idea, an abstraction without life.⁸⁴

The basic law for the formation of the true Phalanx is "Attractions Proportional to Destinies," which seems to mean that, if the individual follows his innate instincts, or "passions," he will be attracted to exactly those activities of body and mind which will fulfill his destiny, his role, in the perfectly harmonious society.⁸⁵ The passions are divided into three groups--the sensitive, corresponding to the five senses; the affective, or "group" passions (friendship, love, familism, and ambition); and the intellectual, or "distributive" passions (planning, or "cabalist"; changing, or "alternating"; unifying, or "composite ").⁸⁶

For one who tried to write a constitution for the Brook Farm Phalanx, Dwight seems to have had very little patience with the mathematical details of the Fourierist social theory. To him the whole thing was extremely simple. The following summary of his remarks on the government of the Phalanx may indicate why Charles Dana thought his plan "unscientific."

⁸⁴Harbinger, I (October 4, 1845), 265.

⁸⁵"The Creator distributes passions and attractions to all his creatures in exact proportion to their Destiny; he adapts their instincts and feelings to the place they are to fill in the scale of creation, and to the life they are to lead; he connects their happiness with the functions they are to exercise, and secures the performance of them without resort to constraint." Social Destiny of Man, p. 245.

⁸⁶Harbinger, III (August 29, 1846), 188. See Brisbane's "Analytical and Synthetical Table of the Passional System," Social Destiny of Man, p. 160.

The real unit of society is the "group," which "comes into being spontaneously, by pure attraction; it is of God."⁸⁷ For instance, a man is either attracted to growing Bartlett pears, or he is not attracted to growing Bartlett pears. If he is so attracted, he is by divine will a member of the Group of Bartlett Pear Growers, which is part of the Series of Pear Growers, which is part of the Series of Fruit Growers, which is part of the Series of Agriculture, which is a part of Industry, which is the natural activity of the Sensitive Passions.⁸⁸

. . . from such a harmony and full representation of attractions some outward form of order would result, some graduated perfect hierarchy of persons. . . . A congress of these higher Unities will be the government. It will be neither an arbitrary, nor a democratic government of the majority. It will be one of spontaneous, providential growth.⁸⁹

Because his own niche as Chief of the Festal Series was so clearly marked for him, Dwight seems to have fallen into oversimplification.⁹⁰

When the outside world could contain its laughter and derision, it attacked Fourierism as immoral, anti-Christian,

⁸⁷Harbinger, III (October 10, 1846), 286.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 287.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 285-286. See also Social Destiny of Man, pp. 115-116.

⁹⁰Brisbane's recommendations for founding a Phalanx are in small print, but they are specific and should have discouraged the Brook Farmers. At least four hundred persons are necessary for a trial, "with eight hundred a brilliant experiment could be made," and the ideal number is eighteen hundred to two thousand. The organization should begin as a well-heeled stock company. (Social Destiny of Man, pp. 345-349.)

communistic, and ridiculously fantastic. The defenders had tried to forestall some of this by refusing to call themselves "Fourierists" and insisting on the term "Associationists." On August 15, 1846, the Harbinger carried a formal "Statement of the 'American Union of Associationists,' with Reference to Recent Attacks;"⁹¹ and a series called "Objections to Association" had already been running for a month.⁹² The "Statement," signed by Dwight and the other leaders, disclaimed Fourier's views on marriage, cosmogony, and immortality. It declared Fourier the servant of the cause, not the master.⁹³ Six months earlier, Dwight had defended his publication of the Cosmogony as "evidence of the grandeur and consistency of the man's mind," proving that Fourier was not a "literal, narrow, mechanical man of the nineteenth century."⁹⁴ The Cosmogony is not revelation, but the work of a transcendentalist and poet,

one of those bold, gigantic, and impatient essays, in which he has tried to sketch, upon the grandest scale, a portion of the vanishing outline of that great infinity of Unity implied in his analysis of man⁹⁵

Even in the midst of such a precarious experiment as the Brook

⁹¹III, 153-155.

⁹²Of these, Channing wrote the first three, Brisbane the fourth, and Dwight the last four, beginning III (August 29, 1846), 188-191, and ending (October 17, 1846) 301-303.

⁹³Harbinger, III (August 15, 1846), 154-155.

⁹⁴Harbinger, II (January 17, 1846), 93.

⁹⁵Harbinger, II (December 13, 1845), 14.

Farm Phalanx, Dwight did not lose his taste for transcendental speculation.

Why are men so much more enraged at a paradox, than they are at a platitude? The one may strike out something from them even by opposition, while the other benumbs all thought.⁹⁶

A defense by barrage balloon, Mrs. Child might have called it.

The emphasis on religion in the first New York lecture shows that Dwight never ceased looking for the Christian significance of whatever cause he espoused. In the last of his papers on "Objections to Association,"⁹⁷ he maintained that Christianity, the great spiritual force exerted inwardly upon man by Christ, must now "have hands and feet."⁹⁸

That which wrought the miracles of old, that which inspired the sacred writers and which tamed the heathen, is now, in continuation and completion of its great work, revealing to us the science of the true social order . . .⁹⁹

The spontaneous formation of the Fourierist Group is truly the work of the Christian God. If men commune with God only on Sunday, they will sacrifice the spirit for bread each Monday until Association provides them with unity of material interests.¹⁰⁰ When Channing's Religious Union was attacked in a long, sententious, and ill-informed article in the American

⁹⁶Harbinger, II (January 17, 1846), 94.

⁹⁷Harbinger, III (October 17, 1846), 301-303.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 303.

⁹⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁰"Association the Body of Christianity," Harbinger, II (February 21, 1846), 175-176.

Review,¹⁰¹ Dwight replied sharply that the Associationists did not worship Fourier, but thought he had shown the way better than anyone else toward realizing "thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."¹⁰²

All of this tends to make Dwight look rather small and naive. The uncharitable view would be that Fourierism was a convenient shroud behind which he could hide all his limitations as a true reformer--his indolence, his lack of practical judgment, his inability to live in the "real world." But such an analysis must be modified, just as the common description of his sunny, optimistic, gentle disposition must be modified. In New York, Dwight could talk business as well as "extemporize association," and he often made practical as well as poetic suggestions in Association meetings at Brook Farm. Under the Phalanx, he was neither a better nor a worse social reformer than he had been before. He became a better Brook Farmer because for various reasons he felt more like working in 1845-1847 than he had in the previous years. Keeping Brook Farm alive was a problem in household economy, not in social science. Dwight did everything he could to help solve this problem, and at the same time kept his imagination alive by talking and writing Fourierism. Association did not really appeal to him as social science with a "long view." Like a true transcendentalist he was uninterested in

¹⁰¹H. N. Hudson, "Religious Union of Associationists," V (May, 1847), 492-502.

¹⁰²Harbinger, V (June 19, 1847), 28-29.

long views. He was satisfied with a narrow strip on the earth, if there were no obstructions over his head. Inflated with Association, his balloon rose higher than it had since the early days in Northampton.

Association's strong lifting power was especially attractive to Dwight because it could raise up, along with him, the companions his sociable nature loved. He may have enjoyed association as well as ever in the "union" phase, when all of Fourier's complicated economic theories were not necessarily being put to a practical test. For two years after Brook Farm was definitely given up he enjoyed the meetings and festivities of the Associationists. The celebrations of Fourier's birthday, April 7, were gala occasions in 1847 and 1848. At the first there were beautiful piano music, dancing, plenty to eat, symbolic decorations, and high words from Channing and Ripley. Dwight sang in the quartette, and found "Freedom, unaffected gaiety and mutual good will, refinement . . . of manners, and indeed a cheerful and religious sentiment . . ." ¹⁰³ Similar activities during a meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Union "fratified at once the sense of order and the impulse of expansion." ¹⁰⁴ The breaking up of Brook Farm may have saddened Dwight, but he was not affected strongly by the failure of Phalanx government.

¹⁰³"Celebration of Fourier's Birthday in Boston," Harbinger, IV (April 17, 1847), 297-298.

¹⁰⁴"The Meetings in Boston," Harbinger, V (October 23, 1847), 317.

3.

The Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress, was not a newspaper, but the contributors often reported their reactions, as Associationists, to significant events in the outside world. Dwight's copy in this department is much more readable than his Fourierist propaganda, and at least equally as significant. He was very good at seeing signs of regeneration in society, and of disintegration in evil or negative elements.

At the inauguration of Edward Everett as President of Harvard, for example, Dwight felt "a grateful thrill in every memory," in spite of the fact that he believed in "a new social world, where colleges shall be superseded, and life itself become a university." When Everett quoted Burke's "our passions instruct our reason" he stumbled unconsciously upon one of the arguments of social science simply because he possessed the "spontaneous emotion and the common sense of those who study to educate and bless Humanity, without a system . . ."105

Dwight was known as a lover of young people himself, although he probably lacked the patience and self-confidence to be a consistently inspiring teacher.¹⁰⁶ He had visions of

¹⁰⁵Harbinger, II (May 9, 1846), 347-349.

¹⁰⁶See an interesting reference in Nora (Schelter) Blair, "Some School Memories of Brook Farm by a Former Pupil." (MS in the Boston Athenaeum, dated December 22, 1892 at St. Elmo, Tennessee). ". . . such was [Dwight's] gentle diffidence that comparatively few then recognized his high merit as a scholar."

great improvements in education under Association, when society would have "the tenderness of a parent towards all its youthful members."¹⁰⁷ A troupe of dancing children from Vienna inspired in him a vision of transcendent beauty.

On waves of music, amid flowers and perfumes, with bright faces and gay dresses, the youthful choirs in perfect unity and concert, like one soul, in wreathed dances float before us, falling into beautiful figures and falling out again . . . like the colored atoms in the kaleidoscope . . . now scudding in flakes before the music, like wreaths of falling blossoms borne up by the spring breeze . . . the whole thing a scene of innocence, and purity, and freedom, flowing always into the beautiful and wise forms of perfect law . . .¹⁰⁸

Of all the Fourth of July festivities in Boston in 1845, only the children's floral parade had a "touch of Nature amid so much artificial life; one sweet breath of hope among the noisy glorifications of the past."¹⁰⁹

The "Glorious Fourth" merely annoyed Dwight. The ballyhoo preceding the Mexican War made him see red. It almost ruined one of the great events in his musical experience, a trip to New York for a festival performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Nothing made him a more dogmatic Associationist than "war and the black triumphs of little men made mad by office." One can scarcely believe that Dwight composed this bitter, breathless invective. For him who is trying to absorb every word Dwight wrote, it is admittedly refreshing

¹⁰⁷Harbinger, III (October 10, 1846), 284.

¹⁰⁸"Integral Education. No. I." Harbinger, V (July 17, 1847), 90.

¹⁰⁹Harbinger, I (July 12, 1845), 77.

to read of "events which mark our lapsing backwards or hellwards," of "the ultimate cutaneous eruption of strife continually raging in the veins of a competitive commercial society," and of a crowd of fifty thousand in the Park, listening to the President's war summons, described as "a gathering of fiends."¹¹⁰ Beethoven pulled Dwight through.

The sins and follies of Humanity apparently are coming to a crisis; the battle will be clearly fought out between the powers of darkness and of Light; but we trust our own hearts and God's word, and the Symphony, that Light will prevail . . .¹¹¹

But he cited without reservation the complete failure of Beethoven's Battle Symphony, and described all such pieces as the lowest form of music, especially when they are used to whip up war fever.¹¹²

Under the title "The War--Its Poetry and Its Piety," he lashed out at President Polk again.

If there were half the virtue in this nation which it boasts of, it would paralyze every nerve of the president's strength, it would let him call in vain, . . . and leave him impotent and ridiculous in his conspicuous solitude, that he should be glad to dive down into obscurity as fast as possible, cured of the ambition of filling a post too great for him.¹¹³

When the Boston Morning Post condemned the novelist George Sand, and then defended the Mexican War, Dwight exploded.

These moralistic papers, these fine guardians of public virtue, are the slaves, the cringing saucy

¹¹⁰Harbinger, III (June 13, 1846), 9.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹²Harbinger, III (November 21, 1846), 381.

¹¹³Harbinger, III (December 5, 1846), 411.

slaves, sold body and soul, to this all-ruling selfishness, the panders of the Arch-Demoralizer, and the self-printed satire of a corrupt and hypocritical generation.¹¹⁴

Looking squarely at the real world, the dreamy New England transcendentalist could often see the devil with a powerful vision inherited directly from Michael Wigglesworth.

Even if it did not make his constitution for the Phalanx "Scientific," this vision sometimes helped Dwight write some striking sentences. The low status of the laboring classes-- and a volume of Thomas Hood--inspired a description of

the lean sempstress, feverish, hollow-cheeked, and eyes red with watching and suppressed weeping, making shirts at sixpence apiece, and possibly by competition crowded off from even that last narrow ledge of lucrative employment, to die or make a "business" of the heart's own sacred treasures¹¹⁵

"When shall men working charm as much as men's works?" asked Dwight, as he showed how the Mechanic's Fair in Boston suggested the evils as well as the possibilities of modern society.¹¹⁶ But he was much better when he dropped the sentimentalism to attack a juicy vested interest. The opponents of Association parading under the banners of Patriotism and Democracy called forth one of the longest, flintiest periods Dwight ever wrote.

The fact that we hold three or four millions of our human brethren in slavery; that we have got up a war for the acquisition of territory as a background of support to that beautiful distinction,--

¹¹⁴Harbinger, IV (January 30, 1847), 122.

¹¹⁵Harbinger, V (July 3, 1846), 56.

¹¹⁶Harbinger, V (October 2, 1847), 266.

a war which is draining off our youth from peaceful industry, and teaching them the taste of blood;-- which is doing its best, so far as it is prolonged, to reconvert us from a peaceful, intelligent, industrious people, . . . the fact that seventy deserters (from an unjust, inhuman cause) are shot without even a murmur of protestation throughout the whole newspaper press, which coolly, patriotically records the devilish fact; . . . that industrial feudalism, by the concentration of all enterprise in the hands of the great capitalists, making dependent employees of all the rest, is rapidly succeeding to the anarchy of free competition; that poverty and crime are on the increase; that the "Tombs" and the "Five Points" are recognized necessities of our great cities; . . . that our very privilege of voting is for the most part but the privilege of dropping our bit of paper into some current whose circuitous channel has been cunningly dug out and determined by wire-pulling party leaders, so that the expression of our will is only water to their mill;--these things, and a thousand more as bad, are nothing in the eyes of these most pure and righteous democrats, these lovers of freedom, and perhaps worst enemies of man.¹¹⁷

Most of the adjectives usually applied to "the poet" do not describe the man who wrote this.

Incidentally, Dwight found to his dismay that one of the leaders of Boston music was practicing "commercial feudalism." But, although it was mechanical and uninspired, Lowell Mason's annual "convention of singing marms" did a lot of good. Dwight sensed a "unitary feeling" at the meeting.¹¹⁸

He thought most of the "good" being done in the world outside Association was being done indirectly or half-way. The National Anti-Slavery Standard represented a good cause,

¹¹⁷"Democracy versus Social Reform," Harbinger, V (October 16, 1847), 300-301.

¹¹⁸"Teachers Convention for 1845," Harbinger, I (September 20, 1845), 236.

but slavery would never be abolished until society was reorganized.¹¹⁹ In July of 1847, Dwight spent a Sunday with the Shakers at New Lebanon, Pennsylvania. It was a relaxing experience.

We shall always recall with satisfaction that cool twilight hour in which we sat conversing with those sober and yet cheerful men; it was . . . just on the top of the year, when we are nearest the sun, whose burning rays that day had overwhelmed us with the very luxury of languor and inactivity of mind and body, while the corn grew almost visibly, and the whole exuberance of vegetable life was celebrating the high noon of its annual career . . .¹²⁰

But he concluded that the Shakers had created only "the ghost as it were, the pale and bloodless sketch or outline of the unitary life." They tried to have the spiritual without the material. Associationists knew that "the instinct of the soul demands the peace and reconciliation, not of negative restraint and self-denial, but of positive and all-accepting harmony . . ."¹²¹

Although their intrinsic interest is not negligible, the articles discussed in the preceding paragraphs are not highly significant contributions to social history or literature;

¹¹⁹Harbinger, V (October 30, 1847), 330.

¹²⁰Harbinger, V (August 21, 1847), 174.

¹²¹Harbinger, V (August 14, 1847), 176. Earlier Dwight had written: "The splendors of the Phalanstery rest upon a firm material basis; and base and superstructure both repose on the fixed foundations of eternal Laws, to have caught a sight of which, as Associationists feel that they have done, imparts an unwonted sobriety and earnestness to the whole character, at the same time that it inspires a boundless ardor, and emotions which demand a lyric utterance." (Harbinger, III [June 13, 1846], 12-13.)

and they are not so representative of Dwight's main interests as the literary and musical reviews in the Harbinger, to be discussed next. But they are an important source of balance in our estimate of Dwight as a person. Cooke's chapter called "Personal Traits,"¹²² is based primarily on the impressions and memories of selected people who knew Dwight in his later years. "Quiet," "diffident," "sunny," "beaming," "genial," "hopeful," are the principal colors in this picture. Cyrus A. Bartol is quoted as saying: "John S. Dwight was as gentle as the apostle whose name he bore."¹²³ This one-sided conception of Dwight's character is also supported by persons, especially women, whose contact with him was not often closer than a seat in the audience at one of his sermons or lectures. Mrs. Child was certainly more misleading than charming when she wrote the following about Dwight after hearing the New York musical lectures in 1846.

Inwardly rich and outwardly unpractical, his artless and beautiful soul is strangely out of place in these bustling and pretending times. He always seems to me like a little child who has lost his way in the woods with an apron brimful of flowers, which he don't know what to do with; but, if you can take them, he will gladly give you all.¹²⁴

Being out of sympathy with the times does not make one child-like or out of place. More than any other transcendentalist, Dwight needs rescuing from such superficial observation.

¹²²Pages 265-281.

¹²³Ibid., p. 267.

¹²⁴quoted in Cooke, p. 118.

4.

"Artists! Artists!" cried Victor Considerant in Brisbane's translation,

you, men of brilliant imagination, of hearts of poetry, here is a new and noble sphere open to you. What are you doing in this prosaic world? do you feel yourselves at ease in the industrial and commercial society which surrounds you?¹²⁵

This suggestion was the keynote of Dwight's principal work for the Harbinger. "The military hero is only the hero of the vulgar," he wrote,

the politician is for the most part little better; the philosopher never gets beyond abstractions; the religionist looks away to the life that is not for the life that should now be; the reformer plans and preaches and is misunderstood;--but the artist multiplies forms of beauty, shows us something now which is of the Imperishable, and convinces men of their capacity for heaven and harmony . . .¹²⁶

Art is "thus far the world's only practical recognition of the doctrine that man was made in the image of God." The artists and reformers in America "do not yet know each other, but it is their destiny to meet."¹²⁷

Dwight felt he was destined to help effect this meeting. He reviewed enthusiastically any writer who showed signs of being idealistic, and was particularly glad to find hopeful signs in unexpected places, like the inauguration address of President Everett. Indeed, he seems sometimes to be admitting tacitly that the world as it is pleases him on the

¹²⁵Concise Exposition, p. 25.

¹²⁶Harbinger, III (November 21, 1846), 380.

¹²⁷Harbinger, I (November 22, 1845), 377.

whole, and is much more idealistic than some reformers think.

On the first page of the first number of the Harbinger began the opening installment of George Sand's Consuelo, in a translation by Francis Shaw. In the same number Dwight reviewed this book at some length, declaring that the life of an author should not prejudice us against a work of genius. The book shows a "rare union of Wisdom and Love," he says, and the heroine is "a female incarnation of the Godlike."¹²⁸ The real mission of the author is to proclaim the divinity of music, "the art of this age."¹²⁹

Eighteen months later Dwight defended Sand again in a review of Jaques, by showing that the book exposes social injustices and proves that the author is not immoral, in spite of what other critics may say.¹³⁰

Eugene Sue impressed Dwight even more. Although it is over-plotted and weak in characterization, The Wandering Jew is the most remarkable novel of the day,¹³¹ "a noble exposition . . . of the destructive tendencies of Civilized Competition." It helps to prove "that all the materials of romance and poetry are obsolete, except those furnished by the great Hope of the Age."¹³²

¹²⁸Harbinger, I (June 14, 1845), 11.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 12.

¹³⁰Harbinger, IV (January 30, 1847), 121-122.

¹³¹Harbinger, I (November 15, 1845), 364-366.

¹³²Harbinger, I (November 22, 1845), 383.

In return for many encouraging words, Dwight complimented Lydia Maria Child by describing her as a "sportive prophetess, truly full of the bright future," and by devoting two long columns to her feelings for the analogies and correspondences of Fourier and Swedenborg.¹³³ The child lost in the woods saluted his playmate with the gentlest of reservations about over-enthusiasm,¹³⁴ a fanaticism later outlived, and a lack of any constructive social theory.¹³⁵

By investigating "New Symptoms in Fashionable Literature," Dwight found that even supposedly conservative writers could be swept up by reform. Simple charity and human kindness, as they appear in such works as D'Israeli's Sybil: or, The Two Nations, could lead young English aristocrats to see the "social lie."¹³⁶

Dwight recognized Carlyle's detestation of sham as one of the great philosophical forces of the day, but disliked "Might makes Right," and the way Carlyle made "one or two virtues stand for all."¹³⁷ Even Dickens' Pictures from Italy presented Dwight with many facts to speculate on,

¹³³Review of Letters from New York, Second Series, Harbinger, I (June 2^d, 1845), 42-43.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 42.

¹³⁵Review of Fact and Fiction, Harbinger, IV (January 2, 1847), 57.

¹³⁶Harbinger, I (August 2, 1845), 126-128.

¹³⁷Review of Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches . . ., Harbinger, II (January 3, 1846), 56-57.

for have we not the beautiful solution of them in the faith which points us to the Harmonic consummation into which all these things are steadily tending to resolve themselves, whether by mouldering decay or by ascending growth?¹³⁸

Of any book which he found good reading, Dwight's criticism was charitable and undogmatic. He could not help liking William Beckford, for example, "although his book and life were apparently without moral aim."¹³⁹ The respectful review of Margaret Fuller's Papers on Literature and Art covered seven columns,¹⁴⁰ although Dwight was not over-impressed with the book and objected to the lack of rhythm in the prose and the "preponderance of intellect over feeling."¹⁴¹

The literature of feeling, regardless of its form, was poetry for Dwight, and he thought that if society's mould were right, all life and its literature would be poetry. For him, even such a work as Carlyle's French Revolution "successfully established the fact, that it takes a poet either to record things or to see things truly . . ."¹⁴² In 1842, Dwight had spoken of poetic inspiration in terms of American "national principles." When he reviewed the poems of Emerson, Ellery Channing, and W. W. Story at the beginning of 1847, he spoke of poetry as "the aspiration of the soul, as of any

¹³⁸Harbinger, III (June 20, 1846), 28.

¹³⁹Review of Italy, Spain, and Portugal . . ., Harbinger, III (September 12, 1846), 217.

¹⁴⁰Harbinger, III (September 26, 1846), 249-252.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 250.

¹⁴²Harbinger, IV (December 12, 1846), 11.

of its pure passions, for its true harmonic life." True poetry

should come out all redolent of passion and deep earnestness, and thus rhythmical and fluid, for feeling sings and never prosed; it should attest an ordering wisdom in the adaptation of its parts, and the symmetry and unity of the whole; and it should wear that shining, hard enamel, from which the very tooth of Time must slip.¹⁴³

Such criteria had already led to a very sympathetic discussion of Robert Burns, who dared to sing the passions against conventionality and social injustice;¹⁴⁴ but the same criteria also produced six columns of rather ridiculous-sounding encomium on Philip James Bailey's Festus,¹⁴⁵ which Dwight ranked with the works of Swedenborg, Fourier, and Beethoven as one of the great prophecies of the age. How the usually perceptive Dwight could have described this ephemeral work as "interesting and . . . refreshing as Goethe's best daguerreotypes of outward fact"¹⁴⁶ is one of the ritualistic secrets of high-level Associationism. Much easier to explain, and somewhat easier to defend, is his favorable notice of the Poems of Christopher Pearse Cranch.¹⁴⁷ Cranch, he says, has a deep feeling for the "Unity of Nature,"¹⁴⁸ and

¹⁴³Harbinger, IV (January 16, 1847), 92.

¹⁴⁴Harbinger, I (September 20, 1845), 235. ¹⁴⁴ of The Genius and Character of Burns, by Wilson ("Christ's Review"), Harbinger, I (September 20, 1845), 235.

¹⁴⁵Harbinger, II (December 20, 1845), 25-27.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁴⁷Harbinger, I (July 19, 1845), 105-107.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 105.

has come up with "some of the most perfect little gems of poetry which have yet been mined in America."¹⁴⁹

A modern literary historian has singled out Dwight's review of Poe's The Raven and other Poems¹⁵⁰ as "fairly representative" of the literary criticism in the Harbinger.¹⁵¹ Actually, the review seems to have derived a rather special benefit from mixed feelings on Dwight's part. He liked to praise what the conventional world condemned, and he recognized Poe's technical proficiency. But he found that Poe did not "write for Humanity." He was repelled by Poe's lack of humility and his "morbid egotism." For his aesthetic judgment of the poems, Dwight used a distinction found often in his music criticism. Poe's poetry is more "effect" than "expression."¹⁵² Poe himself recognized the validity of this criticism, and reprinted it in The Broadway Journal along with his severe reservations.¹⁵³ He called the Harbinger "the most

¹⁴⁹Harbinger, I (July 19, 1845), 107.

¹⁵⁰Harbinger, I (December 6, 1845), 410-411.

¹⁵¹Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), I, 411.

¹⁵²Harbinger, I (December 6, 1845), 411.

¹⁵³The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. by J. A. Harrison (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1902), XIII, 27-32.

Albert Brisbane's reaction to this review shows in what narrow channels his mind worked. He wrote to Dwight on December 15, 1845, "You were wrong for criticising Poe: never criticize individuals: It is fully as respectable to get drunk as it is to cheat our fellow men, and the highest in our land are doing nothing else." (A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.) One wonders if Brisbane had actually read either Poe's poems or Dwight's review.

reputable organ of the Crazyites,"¹⁵⁴ but after many wisecracks expressed the modest hope that "The Snook Farm Phalanx" would cease forming any opinion of him at all.¹⁵⁵

Dwight paid Longfellow the compliment of reviewing Evangeline in strictly non-Associationist terms.¹⁵⁶ He thought the epic had true pictures of the simple life, with more spiritual depth than Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea. In the "grand sweeping melody" he found "a true marriage of form and spirit," and he quoted the poem at great length to prove his point.¹⁵⁷

In his longest literary review, Dwight discussed individual volumes of Poems by Emerson, Ellery Channing, and W. W. Story.¹⁵⁸ From this, his positive, exacting poetic principles and the statements about the heresy of individual salvation in Emerson have already been quoted. In the poems themselves Dwight found much that he liked. Emerson is "a consummate artist in expression," and his verse is characterized by an "almost unnatural absence of all common-place."¹⁵⁹ But his beauty is a "cold beauty," and his poems "counsel loneliness."¹⁶⁰ Channing shows a "true poet's fire," a "spiritual manliness,"

¹⁵⁴Poe, Works, XIII, 27.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁵⁶Harbinger, VI (November 13, 1847), 14.

¹⁵⁷Loc. cit.

¹⁵⁸Harbinger, IV (January 16, 1847), 91-94, and (January 23, 1847) 106-109.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁶⁰Loc. cit.

in spite of difficulties with rhythm and "distribution of words."¹⁶¹ Story reminded Dwight of Schiller, with his humanity and aspiration.¹⁶²

These criticisms of American poetry are good enough to make us regret that Dwight could not find a position as comfortable as Longfellow's, at least for long enough to set down a more complete commentary on American writing, unhampered by weekly deadlines and co-editorship. He developed a good ear and a wide range of sympathies. If his aesthetic estimates of his transcendentalist friends were a little too charitable, he did not call Poe either a genius or a "jingle man." He did not often censor an author for failing to achieve what the author had not tried to do, and he was perceptive enough to make us curious about his opinions of works he did not discuss.

In addition to the panegyric on Bailey's Festus, Dwight wrote scattered reviews of other English authors. He enjoyed Thomas Hood's Poems immensely, comparing the serious verses with the best of Tennyson and Keats.¹⁶³ In discussing Hood's "electrifying" wit, Dwight let fall a delightful bit of irreverence toward a proud institution.

. . . his jokes are not ground out by the painful necessities of an occasion, like the stale supplies

¹⁶¹Harbinger, IV (January 23, 1847), 108.

¹⁶²Loc. cit.

¹⁶³Harbinger, II (May 16, 1846), 360-361.

of annual mirth expected at our Phi Beta Kappa festivals . . .¹⁶⁴

Endymion, A Tale of Greece, by Henry B. Hirst, gave Dwight a chance to write mostly about Keats' poem in very appreciative terms. He compared the two thus: "Hirst shows Endymion dreaming, and Keats dreams his dream."¹⁶⁵

When Tennyson's Princess came up for his approval, Dwight had a chance to gloat a little.¹⁶⁶ He chided those who had accused him of "literary heresy" and "transcendental enthusiasm" ten years before. With his re-affirmation of faith in Tennyson's genius, and the Associationist rider attached, this section may appropriately end.

. . . Tennyson's genius, though peculiarly liable to . . . the danger of one-sided idealism, and of dreamy self-indulgence, has proved itself a vigorous plant, winning more and more of manly pith and seriousness.¹⁶⁷

But Tennyson would be even better if he could see the "Laws of Social Science!"¹⁶⁸

5.

According to the Fourierist doctrine, man has already discovered one universal harmony, the harmony of celestial

¹⁶⁴Harbinger, II (May 16, 1846), 360. This statement tastes a little sour when we learn that Dwight was elected to Phi Beta Kappa as an alumni member in 1862; thirty years after his graduation. (Catalogue of the Harvard Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa [Cambridge: Published by the Society, 1912], p. 23.)

¹⁶⁵Harbinger, VII (June 17, 1848), 55.

¹⁶⁶Harbinger, VI (March 18, 1848), 158-159.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 158.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 159.

motions; and he has, in himself, developed completely one of the twelve passions, the sense of hearing.¹⁶⁹

. . . the ear does not lead to discords and combinations, which violate its laws; this sensitive passion therefore is a true guide in its sphere,--it leads to the finest and richest of musical harmonies.¹⁷⁰

Therefore the function of the music critic in Fourierist Association went far beyond "embodying the vague" in an "allegorical illustration . . . appreciable to thought and sense." In the first number of the Harbinger, Dwight expanded the suggestions made in the Pioneer to their Associationist conclusions, proclaiming in effect that the "fringe" was not only an extension of the basic threads in the Associationist fabric, but also the position from which the Laws of Social Science could best be explained. Music was now not only a Faith which initiates us "into the great hopes of the Future," but a Science to which Dwight dedicated all his powers and opportunities as music reviewer for the Harbinger.¹⁷¹ He proposed to develop three approaches to music: (1) "criticism of music as an art;" (2) Interpretation of music as an expression of the Zeitgeist; and (3) "development of its correspondence as a Science with other sciences, and especially with the Science of the coming Social Order, and the transition through which we are passing towards it."¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹Social Destiny of Man, pp. 208-209.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁷¹Harbinger, I (June 14, 1845), 13.

¹⁷²Loc. cit.

In this introductory essay, Dwight announces the beginning of a Musical Movement in America, corresponding with the movement of society toward social justice. Psalm tunes, drums and fifes, and simple dance music are being supplanted by Mozart and Beethoven, heralds of the age when all will become one.¹⁷³

Whenever the life of a people is deep; whenever broad and universal sentiments absorb and harmonize the petty egotisms and discords of men; whenever Humanity is at all inspired with a consciousness of its great Destiny, whenever Love gives the tone to the feelings, the thoughts, and the activity of an age; whenever a hundred Reforms, all springing from so deep a source, all tend, in the very antagonism of their one-sidedness, in the very bigotry of their earnestness, to one grand thought and aim, the Unity of the race; in short, whenever there is a Movement, then, too, as by a law of Correspondence, there should be a new development of the passion and the art of music.¹⁷⁴

The canonization of Beethoven and Mozart must be underlined very carefully. The music of the Musical Movement was not to be composed by enlightened Associationists. The Movement was to consist simply of recognizing the "Scientific" perfection of the great German composers. Lesser music, new or old, was automatically judged by this standard. The greatest of all, the zenith above which it was impossible to rise, was Beethoven. Dwight's long series of commentaries on him will be discussed together in a separate section. What he wrote in the Harbinger about some of the other German masters falls into place here.

¹⁷³Harbinger, I (June 14, 1845), 12.

¹⁷⁴Loc. cit.

If Beethoven was the greatest, Mozart was Dwight's private favorite. Beethoven was somewhat difficult to approach. For one thing, his preeminent works required a large and proficient orchestra. But the Brook Farm singers could approximate the easier sections of the Mozart masses and operas; and in piano score, Don Juan was much more satisfying than the Fifth Symphony. Moreover, Mozart's life was better known than Beethoven's, and his romantic career and personality more attractive. We have seen how Dwight linked his own spirit with those of Don Juan and his musical creator. As he heard more of Mozart's music, he detected much more than the "vein of sadness" and the introspection he found in Don Juan.

. . . while his personality is so very distinct, while there is so much confession of the private heart in all his melodies, they at the same time transport you into an element of which no soul knoweth the riches and the depths. To know what Music is, distinguished from other spheres, . . . a little communion with Mozart will help you more than the profoundest distinctions of Aesthetic philosophy.¹⁷⁵

In contrast with the sensuous composer of Don Juan, Mozart now seemed to have "only sound for a body." In the quartettes Dwight found the "quintessence of music," "music in its naked beauty."¹⁷⁶ The overture to The Magic Flute surprised him with its "summer warmth and fairy lightness."¹⁷⁷ Mozart had

¹⁷⁵Harbinger, I (August 2, 1845), 124.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁷⁷Harbinger, III (June 13, 1846), 10.

now brought Dwight both sadness and joy, both introspection and pure musical pleasure. A few years later Dwight effected a reconciliation between these reactions, thus:

. . . you feel that your faculties and your emotions, and all your appetite for every sort of harmonies, have all got out for once in this cold, cramping, barren world, and swim in a willing and congenial element, where all you touch is vital and responsive. Sense and soul have met and mingled. Spirit and matter have forgot their quarrel.

In the music of Mozart one experiences

a tremulous recognition of the near presence of the spiritual world to this our every-day life; . . . as if the breath of one, whose love was your communion with the soul of all things, fell upon your cheek.¹⁷⁸

Dwight thought the mystic and prophetic qualities of German music were often so subtle that the composers themselves, tied in political strait jackets, did not realize what they had produced, "murmuring and whispering such music."¹⁷⁹

In such a transition period as this, amid the symptoms of such a mighty revolution; when every day is a surprise and a miracle even to the unimaginative . . . are not this music and this marvelous vein fast yielding us an explanation? Do we not see how prophetic is all true music?¹⁸⁰

The German mind, deep, strong, and free, combining sentiment with patient, thorough intellect, reveals a man who is

alive in the inmost center of him, where he was first lit from God, and . . . the warmth and the

¹⁷⁸"The Sentiment of Various Musical Composers," Sartain's Magazine, VIII (February, 1851), 132.

¹⁷⁹Harbinger, I (June 21, 1845), 26-27.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 27.

light proceeding thence, flow out forcibly through all his faculties, refining his senses, modulating his voice to all grand or gentle utterance, and imparting what seems supernatural swiftness to the motions of his understanding.¹⁸¹

In comparison with the "worn and languid" genius of Italy, German music reflects a "science which . . . feeling has warmed into life to do its bidding. Love would not have created Wisdom, if Love could live alone."¹⁸²

After allowing more than two years for the acceptance of these pronouncements, Dwight grew impatient. "The time has passed," he wrote at the end of 1847,

when German music can be called strange; human nature has only to be quickened and set free from benumbing bonds of false conventionalism to feel most at home in this strangeness and this mysticism. Every man is mystical at heart.¹⁸³

In the field of German song, Dwight's favorite was Schubert, whom he early admitted into the highest sphere. "Of the songs of Schubert we cannot possess too many, and yet one of them is more than we can exhaust in a life-time."¹⁸⁴ After Association lapsed into an "idle dream," Dwight preferred German song to Italian as much as ever.

Most of the songs now-a-days are manufactured; in Germany, songs grow. Italian Opera airs are full of melody and sweetness, but one is too much like another; it is an endless re-galvanizing into life of a vein of sentiment and melody long since exhausted. But every German composer of any note

¹⁸¹Harbinger, I (June 21, 1845), 26.

¹⁸²Loc. cit.

¹⁸³Harbinger, VI (December 11, 1847), 47.

¹⁸⁴Harbinger, I (June 21, 1845), 27.

produces songs which could have been produced by no other. Each has its distinct style and meaning, and seems like a fresh inspiration, as if nature gave it a form to preserve, as she has given to each plant and crystal.¹⁸⁵

Such profound Germanophilia was bound to make Dwight look ridiculous occasionally, as when he described the waltzes of Strauss and Lanner as breathing "the very soul of the dance, . . . one of the finest expressions in Art of voluptuous sensuousness, finding its truest freedom in the chaste embrace of Order."¹⁸⁶ But he established his cult anyway, for the most part on firm artistic grounds, and without really trying very hard to convert its devotees to Fourierism.

For Dwight, the clearest manifestation of the transitional stage through which society was passing in the middle 'forties was the "intense individualism" represented in philosophy by Emerson and in music by the virtuoso school of violinists and pianists.¹⁸⁷ When Ole Bull made his second appearance in Boston, on June 21, 1845, Dwight had just published his first two musical articles in the Harbinger, including the introductory remarks and some of the high words about German music quoted above. He was ready to classify Bull's music rather accurately. Admitting the genius, fire, and force of his playing, Dwight found a serious "want of unity" in the "wild, abrupt, aimless starts, and flights and

¹⁸⁵"Schubert's Songs," Sartain's Magazine, VIII (March, 1851), 214.

¹⁸⁶Harbinger, VI (January 1, 1848), 70.

¹⁸⁷Harbinger, I (June 28, 1845), 44-45.

cadences." Such music may be necessary in an age of transition, but it is hard on the artist, who soon finds that he cannot play with anyone else. "When Unity shall be the law of all society, there will be orchestras of genius," not merely virtuoso soloists.¹⁸⁸ Even in later, saner years Dwight would not admit that Bull was a humbug. He came to describe Bull's music as cheap and melodramatic,¹⁸⁹ but at the time of Bull's death in 1880 he praised the magnetic personality and magnanimity of the man while blaming his trashy music on ignorant listeners who refused to move beyond a painful stage of "transition."¹⁹⁰ After Dwight's death in 1893, Mrs. Ole Bull recalled "many pleasant meetings" between her husband and Dwight. "Ole Bull once remarked to me," she wrote to Marianne, "that Mr. Dwight and himself had

¹⁸⁸Harbinger, I (June 28, 1845), 45.

¹⁸⁹Dwight's Journal of Music, I (June 5, 1852), 69-70, and (June 12, 1852) 77. (Here, and in many succeeding references to Dwight's articles for the Journal of Music, the title or heading is omitted because it is not unique and is not necessary for identification.)

¹⁹⁰Journal of Music, XL (August 28, 1880), 143. When Bull first played in Boston in 1844, Emerson wrote to Margaret Fuller on June 3 that he was "very glad to hear the wonderful violinist; quite as glad to see his person & manners, . . ." (Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, III, 252.) In his Journal he recorded a reaction much like Dwight's. "Ole Bull, a dignifying, civilizing influence. Yet he was there for exhibition, not for music; . . . It was a beautiful spectacle. I have not seen an artist with manners so pleasing. What a sleep as of Egypt on his lips in the midst of his rapturous music!" (Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. by Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1911], VI, 512.)

as pleasant talks when they met as though Mr. Dwight could admire him artistically."¹⁹¹

Near the end of 1845, Dwight wrote at length on "The Virtuoso Age in Music,"¹⁹² pointing out that such exhibitions of skill had occasionally produced good music and had improved instrumental mechanics,¹⁹³ but that they constituted a serious threat to high musical standards.¹⁹⁴ Variations, like those of Thalberg on the "Prayer" from Moses in Egypt, tempted the powers of the "literary amateur" with their "fluid aurora-borealis streams of light, investing with its flickering gauze of fire the stable, majestic columns of the central melody."¹⁹⁵ Art might gain in the long run from such gymnastics,¹⁹⁶ but they reminded Dwight mostly of "childish attempts to alter the expression of a marble bust by decking it with filagree and ribbons."¹⁹⁷

Nevertheless, the showy and genial Austrian pianist, Leopold de Meyer, charmed Dwight at a small pre-concert party in Boston. Dwight was wary of classifying him. "Whatever his sphere may be, he exerts the power of genius in that

¹⁹¹A.L.S., undated, in the Boston Public Library.

¹⁹²Harbinger, I (November 15, 1845), 362-364, and (November 22, 1845) 378-381.

¹⁹³Ibid., pp. 378-379.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 364.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 379.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 380.

¹⁹⁷Harbinger, III (August 8, 1846), 141.

sphere, and therefore must be in harmony with true genius in all spheres."¹⁹⁸ After hearing him play, Dwight felt "thankful for the prodigy," but remained "faithful yet to . . . Beethoven, and content with the fixed stars."¹⁹⁹ A year later, de Meyer reminded him of the "Little Khan," captain of Fourier's "Little Herdes," or groups of children; and de Meyer's music was still all "Schwung."²⁰⁰

With such criticism, Dwight ruffled one old friend, but pleased another still older. Christopher Pearse Cranch wrote from New York on November 30, 1845:

. . . I was glad to see your criticism on the virtuoso school, and your last word about Leopold de Meyer. Such views are much needed among us, when there is so little soundness of faith. What you say of Ole Bull I think is perfectly just, neither too little nor too much. Mrs. Child, however, is angry with you because you do not make him the god he is to her, but assign him his proper niche and pedestal.²⁰¹

If Dwight's music criticism appears naive by modern standards, it was apparently more severe and exacting than even some of his sympathetic readers expected. But more interesting for us is the early appearance here of a human factor in Dwight's aesthetic code. If he liked an artist personally, he could always find some way to like his music, at least tentatively. Thus in a leading Associationist we find the

¹⁹⁸Harbinger, I (November 29, 1845), 397.

¹⁹⁹Loc. cit.

²⁰⁰Harbinger III (October 24, 1845), 317.

²⁰¹Quoted in Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, pp. 89-90.

Life which Emerson could not find in Fourier.²⁰²

Of the composers with whom Dwight became acquainted for the first time in the early days of the Harbinger, Mendelssohn made by far the strongest impression on him. The "sweetest thing" of his life in the summer of 1846 was "working over" some of the Songs without Words at the piano.²⁰³ In a "rush attempt" to describe these compositions for the Harbinger, he produced several columns of extremely tenuous verbiage of which the less said the better. For example:

What is the meaning of Venice in history, is a question which might perhaps be answered, if we could only tell what influence this music ministers to the mind.²⁰⁴

.

The sentiment is so pure, that one might dream himself in heaven; only the sadness makes it human.²⁰⁵

A year later he was still trying. Mendelssohn's music

is to the every day life of the mind, what plunging into the watery element is to the body; the same shudder and the same firm delight and sense of wholesome, purifying change.²⁰⁶

In the G-minor Piano Concerto he heard an "unbroken flow of life, wherein thought and sentiment and sense are one," and, something really characteristic of Mendelssohn, a "reverent

²⁰²See "Historic Notes," Complete Works, X, 352.

²⁰³See a letter to Mrs. Child of September, 1846, quoted in Cooke, pp. 119-121, without exact date.

²⁰⁴Harbinger, III (September 19, 1846), 231.

²⁰⁵Ibid., p. 232. Mrs. Child may have been responsible for some of the worst of this. See the letter quoted in Cooke, p. 120.

²⁰⁶Harbinger, V (August 28, 1847), 134.

childlike wonder of a fresh soul listening to sacred and marvelous traditions."²⁰⁷ This sudden enthusiasm even led Dwight to proclaim Mendelssohn "preeminently the Master now."²⁰⁸ As an antidote to Beethoven, the joyful and transparent melodies of Mendelssohn were so strong as almost to turn Dwight's head.

As one would readily expect by now, Dwight was somewhat condescending in his notices of the Italian opera companies which had begun to visit Boston. But with their flashy repertoire of Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti, and the early Verdi, they attracted so much applause that Dwight could not discount their influence for good, which he explained this way:

Nothing acts so suddenly upon the latent musical sense and feeling of the general mind as a successful performance of a good opera. The unity of the story, the constant interpretation of the music through words, action, and scenery, and the appeal to easy sympathies which demand no great culture, powers of thought, or depth of character, make whole multitudes musical who were not before.²⁰⁹

He agreed that a little Bellini was good for anyone sometimes,²¹⁰ although he soon tired of the public's favorite, Norma, with its "very monotonous and over-elaborate prolongation of a sweet but sickly sort of melody."²¹¹ Such music was much too

²⁰⁷Harbinger, III (June 13, 1846), 10. Before the intrusion of Mrs. Child.

²⁰⁸Harbinger, III (July 11, 1846), 77.

²⁰⁹Harbinger, I (August 23, 1845), 173.

²¹⁰Loc. cit.

²¹¹Harbinger, VI (November 27, 1847), 30.

far separated from the strength of Beethoven and Handel.

An opera of Bellini . . . bathes you in a delicious flood of tenderness. . . . You are sad, and full of passive, sympathetic sensibility; softened, melted, but not roused, not strengthened. A surfeit comes, and you are glad to have a good cold north wind sweep away the mild, vague haziness that hangs about your senses, and breathe a bracing atmosphere, feel your spirit and your nerves invigorated, and see things by the clear, literal light of day, until the time for twilight reverie shall come again.²¹²

Unfortunately, Don Juan was never performed by these early companies, but in Rossini's Semiramis and Barber of Seville, Dwight found almost acceptable substitutes. He described the former as "a masterpiece of opera," composed, of course, after Rossini's "genius had become impregnated somewhat with the atmosphere of Germany."²¹³ The Barber he later decided was probably the best after Mozart.²¹⁴ In the New York lectures and later in Sartain's Magazine, Dwight pointed to Rossini as a man of real genius who had founded a "false and dangerous" school, the school of melodramatic, "effect" music.²¹⁵ This however was the beginning of the "transition," according to Dwight's chronology, and, as such could be made to serve a good purpose.

He has done more, perhaps, than any composer who ever lived, to popularize music, to educate the ear

²¹²"The Sentiment of Various Musical Composers," Sartain's Magazine, VIII (February, 1851), 132.

²¹³Harbinger, III (July 11, 1846), 77.

²¹⁴Journal of Music, VI (January 27, 1855), 133.

²¹⁵"Rossini," Sartain's Magazine, VIII (April, 1851), 282-283. An article very probably based on the New York lecture.

of all mankind; . . . he is but opening the transition from the limited to the more universal schools of art which shall come after . . .²¹⁶

Donizetti's musical ideas seemed, on the whole, "sugary and feeble" to Dwight,²¹⁷ although he liked the forceful dramatic effects of Lucia²¹⁸ and Lucrezia Borgia.²¹⁹

After his first taste of Verdi's music, Dwight said only, "nous verrons,"²²⁰ but soon he was warning his disciples about being "blinded by a good prejudice [the preference for great German music]

when they condemn "the Verdi trash" as a weak dilution of Donizetti. Whatever may be his faults, whatever he may lack, he certainly has nothing in common with Donizetti, . . . or Bellini.²²¹

In I Lombardi, Dwight heard Verdi trying to deepen Italian opera with German ideas, but only succeeding in cluttering it up.²²² Ernani, however, won Dwight's respect, in spite of its absurd plot, with its rich accompaniments and effective ensembles.²²³ The resolution of these tentative opinions, along with Dwight's reactions to the later Verdi, will appear in a later chapter.

²¹⁶"Rossini," p. 283.

²¹⁷Harbinger, III (November 21, 1846), 381.

²¹⁸Harbinger, VI (February 5, 1848), 110.

²¹⁹Harbinger, VII (June 10, 1848), 47.

²²⁰Harbinger, IV (January 30, 1847), 124.

²²¹Harbinger, IV (June 5, 1847), 409.

²²²Harbinger, IV (April 17, 1847), 294.

²²³Harbinger, IV (May 1, 1847), 331-332.

Dwight instinctively distrusted "fashionable" music; and after experiencing an intense delight in the obscure Saffo of Pacini, he began to believe that much good music was buried by the popular demand for old favorites.²²⁴ Nevertheless, he admitted that Bostonians had learned "a new delight," which, with all its "imitation and affected, ignorant excitement," could serve as an essential stepping stone in the Musical Movement.²²⁵

The foregoing examples show that most of the mild excitement provided by reading the music column in the Harbinger arises from sensing Dwight's weekly struggle with masses of music he has just heard for the first time. Only occasionally could he relax with an old favorite of his own. For a satisfying performance of Don Juan he was to wait many years, but a much more jarring disappointment was the shoddy and unrehearsed Messiah presented at the end of 1845, snowed under by the gaudy Italian opera.²²⁶ Dwight admonished Boston not to let such a sacrilege happen again,²²⁷ and got more excited over a new edition of the oratorio than over any number of symphonies or operas. He declared that everyone should own a copy, and cried out especially to his progressive friends.

Associationists! Pioneers of the first humble
Phalanxes! ye that can sing, learn Handel's Hallelujah

²²⁴Harbinger, IV (May 15, 1847), 361-362.

²²⁵Harbinger, V (June 12, 1847), 27.

²²⁶Harbinger, II (January 10, 1846), 76.

²²⁷Ibid., p. 77.

chorus; it will be a grand unitary act of worship . . .²²⁸

Handel is still omnipotent. "He commands his publics, like an emperor; whose is not loyal to him, virtually banishes himself from the realm of music . . ." ²²⁹ Nevertheless, the Handel and Haydn Society let the Messiah drop altogether in the Christmas season of 1846,²³⁰ and Dwight hailed the revival in 1848 with a shout of joy.²³¹ For years after he became an established music critic he was thrilled at the annual performance of this work,²³² and not until 1865 did he admit that he could no longer listen to it with quite the old enthusiasm.²³³

Association and Fourierism suggested to Dwight a revival and expansion of many principles he had expressed at the beginning of his career. The passages quoted many pages back from the manuscript "On Music" would have fitted well into the Harbinger; and Dwight again contrasted, as he had in the divinity school dissertation, the true religious qualities of great music with the unmusical, hence unreligious qualities of most conventional church music. The "celestial

²²⁸Harbinger, II (January 24, 1846), 109.

²²⁹Harbinger, II (January 10, 1846), 76.

²³⁰Harbinger, IV (March 27, 1847), 252.

²³¹Harbinger, VIII (February 3, 1849), 109.

²³²See for example Journal of Music, VIII (December 29, 1855), 101. "We did not care to listen very critically, for why should we lose the real Christmas enjoyment and edification of that sublime and soul-satisfying music. . . ."

²³³Journal of Music, XXIV (January 7, 1865), 374.

choir" from I Lombardi seemed to him particularly uncelestial, and he promptly described it as "tame and heavy, as any congregational New England Psalm."²³⁴ He still had some faith in Lowell Mason's "Teachers' Conventions," because they might help Americans to realize their musical destiny by "gradually rising to meet the influence which flows down from the true holy land of Art . . ."²³⁵ But he still could not understand

why our Protestantism should exclude the real vital piety of the Catholic worship, the natural religion of the heart which never clothes itself in such immortal warmth and beauty as in the music of the Mass.²³⁶

The Religious Union of Associationists departed deliberately from the "poor Protestant practice of singing innumerable stanzas of didactic and prosaic hymns to the same brief and hum-drum melody."²³⁷ This practice fostered one of the "Objections to Association" which Dwight answered.²³⁸ Citing Fourier's solution to liturgical problems in the formula "Unity in Worship, Variety in Doctrine," Dwight described "worship" as "an act of feeling, from the heart." Furthermore, "the whole tendency of Feeling is to unity; hence music is its best expression, which is a unitary language understood

²³⁴Harbinger, IV (April 17, 1847), 294.

²³⁵Harbinger, V (September 4, 1847), 203.

²³⁶Harbinger, III (August 15, 1846), 153.

²³⁷Harbinger, VI (December 4, 1847), 38.

²³⁸See for example Hudson's remarks in the American Review, V (May, 1847), 492-493.

by all . . . "239 The Religious Union announced that it would use whatever music had "intrinsic meaning and beauty," whether it be Catholic Mass or Congregational hymn.²⁴⁰

Fortunately for everyone ever concerned with the music criticism in the Harbinger, except perhaps the ardent Fourierists, Dwight never carried very far his proposed "development" of music's "correspondence as a science with the other sciences." In most of the reviews, Fourieristic "science" is superimposed lightly if at all upon purely aesthetic, poetic, impressionistic commentary. Sometimes it seems forcibly dragged in at the end of an article, as if Dwight from a sense of duty had tacked on something he had almost forgotten.²⁴¹ In his opening article he stated the basic assumption: "the scale of musical tones is only the scale of the human Passions . . . as that scale is repeated in the sphere of sound."²⁴² This law he illustrated briefly in discussing "Fourier's Writings" five months later,²⁴³ but such illustration in the musical articles is very rare. It was a difficult, cumbersome, and inartistic operation to perform, as the following quotation from one of Dwight's few

²³⁹Harbinger, III (October 17, 1846), 303.

²⁴⁰Harbinger, V (June 12, 1847), 30.

²⁴¹See for example "Music in Boston during the Last Winter," Harbinger, I (August 2, 1845), 123-124; and, even more striking, the remarks on the Andante from a Mozart quartette, Harbinger, IV (April 17, 1847), 295.

²⁴²Harbinger, I (June 14, 1845), 13.

²⁴³Harbinger, I (November 1, 1845), 333-335.

attempts will show. The innocent victim is Beethoven's song, "The Quail," written in the key of F, "the key-note of the general hum of things around us. . . .

In the natural scale of tones and colors, as shown by Fourier, the great analogist, side by side with the scale of the Passions, the fourth or F, corresponds to green, the color of variety, of the "Alternating Passion," which preserves the general balance, by effecting wholesome changes and saving from one-sided excess. Let Genius and Science never quarrel.²⁴⁴

As a sample of this mumbo-jumbo in reverse, the description of extramusical phenomena in musical terms, we have the following passage in Dwight's letter to Mrs. Child of September, 1846.

You date, I see, from the resolution of the flat Seventh into the Sixth, or composite. That is a very lovely region. Mendelssohn is there, it is true; and I sometimes effect a transition into it. But you may judge from what I have said above that I hail from the sphere of all distraction and discordance,²⁴⁵ perhaps I might say from the chord of the Diminished Seventh, the type of universal transition, wild, impatient, tortured with uncertainty and suspense. As I can hardly expect to reach the octave, the sublime height of universal unity, I humbly hope I also may resolve into the lovely A.²⁴⁶

Luckily, the Harbinger was not written for many readers like Mrs. Child, and a safe guess would be that even Dwight was glad of it.

Indeed, near the end of his work on the Harbinger, Dwight was ready to forget this whole business. In the number for

²⁴⁴Harbinger, I (June 21, 1845), 27.

²⁴⁵See the preceding paragraph of the letter, dealing with the difficulties at Brook Farm, quoted above, p. 118. (Cooke, p. 120.)

²⁴⁶Quoted in Cooke, pp. 120-121.

October 26, 1848, he had ventured an objection to an editor's transposition of a newly published song from C-major to D-major.²⁴⁷ On November 18, "Musical Queries" printed a letter from "D. W. B." asking what occult difference such a transposition makes, since all pitch is relative anyway and the tone "C" is not a fixed point in nature.²⁴⁸ Dwight's answer was a music lover's denial of the Master Associationist.

. . . the contrasted coloring, effect, expression of the different Keys [in] music, is an experience, to which all persons blessed with musical perception always have borne witness, whether the theory thereof has been assigned or not. . . .

. . . This is an aesthetic, not a scientific experience.²⁴⁹

When Dwight began to write for the Harbinger, he seriously believed that he would make a significant contribution to the Laws of Social Science in the music reviews. What he actually did was take advantage of the opportunity to hear in three or four years more concert performances than he had heard in all his life before. Fourierism was simply the indirect means of making Dwight an articulate "literary amateur" of music, and when the "idle dream" passed, he was deprived of nothing but an artificial vocabulary. The development we find in his music criticism is far from the development of "scientific analogies" or social consciousness. It is the gradual building of a vocabulary for describing accurately what Dwight heard

²⁴⁷Harbinger, VII, 204.

²⁴⁸Harbinger, VIII, 22-23.

²⁴⁹Harbinger, VIII (December 30, 1848), 70.

and felt at a concert or an opera. The earlier criticisms have a derivative, theoretical atmosphere which gives way in the Harbinger to a fresh, spontaneous impression, sometimes extremely amateurish and fragmentary, but nearly always genuine and original. When Dwight deplored the "tearing quality" of the trombonist's tone, he was not contributing to Fourierist "analogies," but he created a wonderfully vivid commentary on the familiar sound produced by a military bandsman drafted temporarily for a "high-brow" job.

All his life Dwight was patient to a fault with inaccurate execution if he had a soft spot for the composer or the performer, or even if the occasion was gay and the company congenial. But this does not mean at all that he could not distinguish between good performance and bad. He was readily disturbed by a violinist playing "obstinately flat." Once an otherwise "good" performance was spoiled for him by "that unmitigated drum. We cannot imagine why it should make itself so prominent, unless it has grown insolent with the revival of the war-spirit in our Christian country."²⁵⁰ He began to describe effects that he had actually heard, not "divined." In the first section of the overture to Der Freischutz he found that

the character of every instrument is brought out with masterly discrimination. The low, earthy, smothered sounds of violon cellos and bassoons and the clarinet's low octave . . . the golden flood of distant light poured in by the four French horns;

²⁵⁰Harbinger, IV (February 27, 1847), 187.

the exquisite solo of the clarinet . . .²⁵¹

He could now speak with assurance of such things as "intonation," "a want of flexibility and smoothness" in the "descending scales" of a singer.²⁵²

The newly found "force" which so astounded James Kay in the spring of 1846²⁵³ carried over into the Harbinger. The fluency and accuracy of Dwight's expression was partly the result of a new confidence in his own reactions and opinions. This confidence came too late for the ministry and for original, creative writing, but it came in time to fit him for a long and useful, if modest career as a music critic. When he was irked, whether by war-mongering or obnoxious drumming, his unlimited space in the Harbinger gave him a chance to say so, at any length and in any terms he chose. At one time, after several gentle criticisms, he finally became so disgusted with both the person and the playing of a violinist that no fewer than half a dozen adjectives would suffice-- "screeching, obtrusive, egotistical, morbid, feverish, and Tarantula-like."²⁵⁴ He came to despise nothing so much as cheap sentiment in music, and was nauseated at a "Teachers' Convention" by a country soloist singing

with an agony of expression a song about "his Mother, God bless her!" and how he used to "sit upon her"

²⁵¹Harbinger, IV (February 27, 1847), 187.

²⁵²Harbinger, V (October 30, 1847), 328.

²⁵³See above, p. 113.

²⁵⁴Harbinger, IV (April 17, 1847), 295.

knee;" neglecting all the while to inform us whether that respectable lady "knows that he is out."²⁵⁵

Apparently this belatedly acquired force and self-confidence came in a large dose, for Dwight was known to some people in his later years as "peppery" and sometimes very opinionated. At any rate, the musical columns of the Harbinger are not monotonous reading, and they could not have been written by a child with an apron full of flowers.

We are justified in describing Dwight's criticism as "amateurish" only if we remind ourselves again that under the circumstances it could not possibly have been otherwise by modern standards. Not only was his musical training limited, but the performances he heard in Boston, particularly of orchestral music, must have shuttled between the passable and the terrible.

Oratorio was in the hands of the Handel and Haydn Society, which had quite a large repertoire and thirty years of experience by 1845. Their singing, and that of the Italian opera principals, was probably often passable and sometimes good, even by modern standards. But Boston's instrumental music was in its earliest infancy in 1845. Beethoven's symphonies were first played by the orchestra organized in 1841 by the Boston Academy of Music.²⁵⁶ This orchestra and its successor

²⁵⁵Harbinger, V (September 4, 1847), 204.

²⁵⁶For a list of the compositions performed during this historic first season see Hach's Musical Magazine, III (May 8, 1841), 135. The "heavy" numbers included the first and fifth symphonies of Beethoven and the overtures to The Magic Flute and Fidelio. Dwight was in Northampton and did not hear many of these programs, if any.

in 1847 sponsored by the Musical Fund Society (probably with the same personnel) were the only sources of Dwight's symphonic education in the days of the Harbinger, except for one or two concerts he heard in New York. Dwight admitted that the performances were very imperfect, but said that such playing of Beethoven was better than none, and that the performers and the audience were growing up together.²⁵⁷

The John S. Dwight who was to become "Autocrat of Music" was growing up at the same time. At first he did not object specifically to performances of Beethoven with ten strings and a full wind section, but the preponderance of military brass got on his nerves long before anything was done about it.²⁵⁸ Early in 1843 he had called for a performance of Mendelssohn's Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream,²⁵⁹ but when the Academy orchestra attempted to rehearse it three or four years later under George Webb, who had no score, they could not get through it at all. After playing the opening string passage at "accomodation train" tempo, the orchestra broke into laughter at the dissonant chord in the woodwinds (measure 39) and discarded the number as trash.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷Harbinger, I (August 16, 1845), 154. Dwight described one pell-mell performance of the Egmont Overture as a "nightmare." (Harbinger, I [August 2, 1845], 140.)

²⁵⁸See Harbinger, IV (January 9, 1847), 76; and VII (October 28, 1846), 204.

²⁵⁹Pioneer, I (January, 1843), 27.

²⁶⁰Thomas Ryan, Recollections of an Old Musician (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1899), pp. 46-47. Ryan played clarinet in the orchestra, which was about half professional and half amateur. As one of the professionals he cried when Mendelssohn was laughed at (op. cit., p. 47), but he could not carry his point. He was later violist with the famous Mendelssohn Quintette Club.

The maturing critic was not only far ahead of the performing musicians, but also too much interested in music for music's sake to tolerate the Boston audiences. By 1847 he was complaining frequently about people leaving after the "popular" music was over and during the symphony. He deplored

the rude, unmusical behavior of our audiences, who yawn and talk during the best passages, and spoil every delicate effect by the interruption of their gross and untimely applause.²⁶¹

A year later he still complained that there was no settled taste, that the fad was the thing--a pretty voice, a handsome appearance, a flashy set of piano variations, anything to keep people amused.²⁶²

In this unfavorable atmosphere Dwight produced what one scholar has called "the first noteworthy criticism of the ethereal art in the history of American journalism."²⁶³ It was a pioneering job which no trained musician would have accepted and which not many literary men could have carried out. It was a labor of faith and love which Dwight probably thought was leading him nowhere when Brook Farm disbanded. No comfortable living was to be made in Boston by a music critic in 1850; but the "truant occupation" had won a complete victory over the ministry, the teaching profession, and Fourierism. To say that the victory came largely by default

²⁶¹Harbinger, IV (February 6, 1847), 138.

²⁶²Harbinger, VI (January 15, 1848), 86.

²⁶³Clarence L. F. Gohdes, The Periodicals of American Transcendentalism (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1931), 113.

may be a statement of fact, but a sympathetic study of Dwight destroys many of its implications. Brook Farm was only the longest section of a rough detour which still had some distance to run.

CHAPTER V

APPRENTICESHIP COMPLETED: 1847-1852

1.

In the winter of 1847-1848 Dwight was again back in Boston, and again looking for a job. Ten strenuous and largely disappointing years had passed since he had made his first start in this same community as a graduate of the Divinity School at Harvard. In 1847 the prospects were no better than they had been in 1837, but what Dwight had to offer now was entirely different from what he had offered earlier. He had tried and abandoned preaching, teaching, and scholarly writing. He was now an experienced journalist who could write fluently and convincingly about books and music, and who had espoused an esoteric social theory so long and enthusiastically that he could not let it go. There were not many openings.

He was not entirely on his own. The Harbinger still had more than a year to live, and the Boston, Religious, and Women's Unions of Associationists were still active. Several months before he left Brook Farm himself he began to make "Suggestions to Affiliated Societies," recommending co-operative buying, insurance, library facilities, and so forth. He imagined that the urban Unions, by assimilating gradually the "principle of Association," could eventually turn club rooms into club houses, and club houses into co-operative hotels.¹

¹Harbinger, IV (March 27, 1847), 254-255.

Thus a Phalanx might one day be achieved in the midst of that "civilization" the Brook Farmers had despised and turned away from.

The "idle dream" was too pleasant to be quickly shaken off. Near the end of 1846, Dwight and four other ex-members of the Brook Farm Phalanx formed the nucleus of a co-operative house in High Street. Here all the Unions held their meetings, and the particularly efficient Women's Union fed its own sex on \$1.50 a week, the men on \$1.75.² After a year, the experiment was moved to the Pinskney Street house of Anna Q. T. Parsons, a leader in the Women's Union and a close friend and correspondent of Marianne Dwight.³ In these co-operative houses and club rooms Association died so slowly, and its body was so shrunken near the end, that no exact date can be assigned to its passing. It was another difficult period for Dwight, longer and leaner than the first two years at Brook Farm. But he was older and more confident now. He had learned a trade. And Mary Bullard was one of the faithful few who moved into Anna Parson's house with him.

The enthusiasm and gusto of the Harbinger in the early days was gone. Before the Religious Union was a year old, Dwight was reduced to pleading directly for meager funds to keep William Henry Channing on the job. He thought of the Religious Union as the spiritual center of Association, and

²Cooks, pp. 129-130.

³See the "Note on Anna Q. T. Parsons," in Letters From Brook Farm, pp. xiv-xv.

of Channing as the fountain of this spirit.⁴ The Boston Union, affiliated with the American Union and probably including the Women's Union and the Religious Union, had a club room at No. 30 Broomfield Street, where about fifty people, "more or less," attending the meetings. Here, in December of 1847, Dwight found

Friendship, refinement, intelligence, and cheerfulness, and at the bottom of the whole a deep religion, which makes no pretense, and knows neither cant nor fear, . . . doing their best to embalm that little humble room with very rich aromas.⁵

(Surely the poet was careless in using the ambiguous "embalm.")

The "pretense" was still kept up, on a pitifully miniature scale. The Boston Union had an annual budget of one thousand dollars. There were three Groups: Indoctrination, headed by Dwight; Social Affairs, headed by Mary Bullard; and Practical Affairs, headed by J. T. Fisher.⁶ Channing was President, and Anna Parsons was Secretary.⁷

Women made particularly good Associationists at this stage, thought Dwight.⁸ Their bazaar was open from eleven until two each day at the Bromfield Street club room, where they took orders for fancy work and were prepared to give

⁴Harbinger, VI (November 27, 1847), 28.

⁵Harbinger, VI (December 25, 1847), 60.

⁶Loc. cit.

⁷See the back-page notices beginning in the Harbinger, VII (June 24, 1848), 64.

⁸Harbinger, VI (December 25, 1847), 60.

lessons in music, drawing, painting, writing, and French.⁹ Perhaps they felt like a Group of Hester Prynnes, proudly bearing the scarlet "A" of Association on their breasts while they ministered to the frivolous tastes of a society which shunned them. But unfortunately their best customer was their own Dimmesdale, whose few pennies would surely have gone to Association anyway. Hawthorne himself might have hesitated to pronounce this metaphor ridiculous if he could have read Dwight's own expression of his feelings at this time.

Thus the poor bachelor, who makes his bride of perfect constancy Association, instead of adding so much daily to the profits of the civilized restaurant for his cake and coffee, is enabled in this way to make a little daily contribution out of his poverty to the cause which he most loves, and at the same time tastes the true sweets of society to cheer him on through his dull civilized banishment, and make him feel that this his heavenly bride is not a mere abstraction, but has warm, willing favors and glad words for him.¹⁰

Nothing so whining, embarrassing, and personal as this "Letter from Boston to New York" had ever appeared in the Harbinger before. Enlightening as it is for the student of Dwight, it must have worried the New York editors, Ripley and Park Godwin. Dwight apparently sent the letter down in answer to a note from Godwin, dated December 10, 1847, which had asked for something quite different. He had urged Dwight to come to New York for a meeting of the American Union. He

⁹See the advertisement in the Harbinger, VI (February 26, 1848), 135.

¹⁰Harbinger, VI (December 25, 1847), 61.

wanted to discuss the "woefully neglected" artistic department, and even suggested that Dwight settle in New York.¹¹ "Music in Boston" duly appeared in the first two numbers of 1848,¹² but soon afterward the reports became sporadic again. The Harbinger was dying, and Dwight was unable to help much. He could never keep going very long under another's editorship. By the end of the year Godwin was completely out of patience. He wrote to Dwight on December 8:

There seems to be a great waste of time and labour, on the part of the Editors of the Harbinger, from the want of an understanding as to their respective functions. . . . This morning again we receive from you a batch of news, most of which was ready for the paper two days ago. . . . it was supposed that you would devote yourself mainly to the artistic and literary departments of the paper . . . it seems to me that you are the fittest person for that task, for the reason that you are most capable, have most leisure, and people expect it from you . . .¹³

The kind of leisure Dwight had in 1848 was not conducive to artistic criticism. The Boston editorship of the Harbinger was not a comfortable place in the real world, and when the paper ceased publication in February, 1849, Dwight was a month behind again.¹⁴

No matter how low his fortunes were, Dwight loved Boston so much that he was determined to "get his place" there,

¹¹A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

¹²Harbinger, VI (January 1, 1848), 70-71, and (January 15, 1848) 85.

¹³A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

¹⁴Volume VIII of the Harbinger (November 4, 1848, to February 10, 1849) has no index. Only about four articles, one each month, are certainly by Dwight.

however humble the place might be. His connections with the non-Associationist world were not very good. The elder Richard Henry Dana described him to Julia Ward Howe as "a man of moderate calibre, who had 'set up for an infidel,' and who had dared to speak of the Apostle to the Gentiles as Paul, without the prefix of his saintship."¹⁵ Boston had bred much infidelity, transcendentalism, and social radicalism; but all three, unrelieved by a "good" family background, made an offensive combination.

Dwight's connections with Harvard were apparently cordial, but unproductive. He attended the summer reunions of his class in 1846 and 1849.¹⁶ Longfellow wrote a polite note of thanks for the favorable notice of Evangeline.¹⁷ But Cambridge had nothing to offer, and sometimes Dwight doubted the value of what he had already gained there. Sentimentally, he was always a loyal and loving alumnus. But early in 1846 he wrote of how education makes one uncomfortable, especially when he has to "look about for a place for himself in the world!"¹⁸ The italics were Dwight's way of saying that Harvard was fine for those whose places were ready for them, but a fool's paradise for a descendant of the Shirley Dwights.

¹⁵Julia Ward Howe, Reminiscences, pp. 434-435.

¹⁶See the Class Book of the Class of 1832. There were apparently no reunions in the intervening years.

¹⁷Quoted in Samuel Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (3rd. ed.; Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1886), II, 101.

¹⁸Harbinger, II (January 3, 1846), 62.

A little later he said the disinterestedness learned in college was paid for in pain when the graduate found himself "a scrambling competitor for enough . . . loaves and fishes to enable him to keep soul and body together, to love, and have a home and family around him."¹⁹ By the summer of 1847 he was calling his education a "curse," and saying that the best educated must conform "unless they prefer unpopularity, and poverty, and neglect, with Truth alone for a companion."²⁰ This ascetic alternative Dwight never could accept very gracefully. Significantly enough he found his place in Boston, in 1852, under the auspices of the Harvard Musical Association, having never been a real non-conformist at heart, except on fair days when he was ballooning, or on dark days, when the cold logic of Association and the black phase of his moods coincided. There were probably many of these dark days, however, in the five years before the ex-Fierians replaced the logic with the old faith.

Less than a week after the appearance of the last Harbinger, on February 10, 1849, Dwight began to contribute short notices to the most inartistic sheet imaginable, the Boston Daily Advertiser. Never did his writing look more threadbare or out of place. True to its name, the paper was three-fourths advertisements, and carried no regular feature articles at all. Dwight merely reported briefly and irregularly on the opera or on the concerts of the Musical Fund

¹⁹Harbinger, II (May 9, 1846), 347.

²⁰Harbinger, V (July 17, 1847), 91.

Society. The columns are unsigned and hard to identify, but the faint sound of Dwight dies out in mid-summer, after about a dozen appearances beginning with the issue of February 16.

By the end of August he had made another arrangement, much more promising. Two years earlier he had sent some of the Harbinger copy to Elizur Wright's Daily Chronotype,²¹ and later had defended Wright's sincerity and general outlook, if not his tactics, against the editor of the Transcript.²² In the congenial atmosphere of the Free Soil daily, Dwight made one last attempt to arouse interest in Association. Beginning August 23, he had at his disposal three prominent columns on the front page. He explained a few days later that this, plus Channing's Spirit of the Age, was the living continuation of the old Harbinger.²³

The first few columns of this new venture are refreshing reading. Dwight discusses current struggles of little men against social injustice--the strike of the Boston tailors;²⁴ the revolt of the Hungarians, who, he says, are well qualified to lead a crusade because they are not so corrupted by Commerce as other occidental peoples.²⁵ Once in a while he shows his

²¹See for example "Herz and Sivori," Daily Chronotype, October 20, 1847; and Harbinger, V (October 30, 1847), 327-328.

²²"The Magnanimity and Honesty of the Boston Transcript," Harbinger, VII (June 17, 1848), 52.

²³Daily Chronotype, August 28, 1849, p. 1. The Spirit of the Age was published weekly in New York from July 7, 1849 to April 27, 1850.

²⁴Daily Chronotype, August 24, 1849, p. 1., et passim.

²⁵Daily Chronotype, August 25, 1849, p. 1., et passim.

teeth. In a hot answer to an article in the Christian Examiner he describes author Andrews Norton as that "orthodox Unitarian, Christian par excellence."²⁶ In replying to an article in the Lowell Courier, which called one of his pieces "an outburst of transcendentalism," he makes another of his acid comments on national politics:

'By the way, what is our socialistic "transcendentalism" compared to the moral transcendentalism so common among editors and practical common-sense folks today and hereabouts, which makes black white, and night daylight, and which repudiating war and slavery with holy horror, can so transcend all simple logic, as to elect into the Presidential chair and glorify with all the enthusiastic signs our language has, the roughest fighter in a war for slavery?'²⁷

But we know from the beginning that Dwight was out of his depth. He was not nearly quick enough with eye or pen to write a forceful, timely column every day. He went pretty strong for about six weeks; but as early as September 4, on the very day he was angry enough to slap at Andrews Norton, he filled two of his three columns with gleanings from foreign newspapers.

In addition to his limitations as a journalist, Dwight faced another difficulty on this assignment. He could not reconcile peaceful, all-embracing transcendentalism with violent political action. On the receipt of bad news from Hungary he cried, "Alas! For Hungary! Alas! For Humanity!" But he added hastily that the goal would be reached, "Not by

²⁶Daily Chronotype, September 4, 1849, p. 1.

²⁷Daily Chronotype, September 24, 1849, p. 1.

war, not by political revolution, not by bloody battle between the future and the past; but by peaceable measures of cooperation."²⁸ After two weeks of defending the tailors, he warned them against being vindictive. "You have a destiny to realize; it should not leave you time to set up idle court-martials against your enemies . . ."²⁹

On September 25, the initials "J. S. D." appeared for the last time. Presumably Dwight continued to supply the unsigned columns, although they began to contain much second-hand material, including reprints from the Harbinger.³⁰ Collaborators often helped out, especially "W. F. C." (W. F. Channing), "W. H. M." (William H. Muller, of Zelienople, Pennsylvania), and "C." (Albert Brisbane). The Chronotype suspended operations on January 12, 1850, and Dwight's column did not re-appear when publication was resumed on September 30 of the same year. The "principle of Association" could be enthroned neither by the sword nor by daily arguments from so unreliable a pen as Dwight's.³¹

His near-charter membership in the Transcendentalist Club did Dwight little more good in the winter of 1847-1848

²⁸Daily Chronotype, September 7, 1849, p. 1.

²⁹Daily Chronotype, September 11, 1849, p. 1.

³⁰For example, "Social Science," Daily Chronotype, October 2, 1849, p. 1; and Harbinger, IV (March 27, 1847), 252-254.

³¹Cooke, without citation, says, "The publishers of the Chronotype were not able or willing to carry out their part of the agreement." (p. 139.) Even if this ambiguous statement has some basis in hidden fact, it is misleading.

than his Harvard diploma and his specialized journalistic abilities. He had attended a meeting called by Alcott in April to discuss a journal to succeed the Dial, but nothing came of it.³² Most of the transcendentalists who had helped him to literary distinction between 1837 and 1840 were either settled in a profession, like Hedge and Bartol, or doing their thinking and writing far from Boston. Margaret Fuller was in Europe. Emerson sailed in October of 1847 and did not return until July of the next year. Ripley was in New York to stay. In 1849, two invitations showed Dwight he was not forgotten. Along with more than seventy other persons in Boston literary circles, he was asked to join Alcott's short-lived Town and Country Club;³³ and Elizabeth Peabody included his essay "Music," the most significant piece of writing he did in these years, in the first and only volume of Aesthetic Papers.³⁴ But the "heresy" of individual salvation seemed to have triumphed, and there was no turning back to Concord.

In 1848 Association began a brief flurry in Philadelphia, apparently under the influence of James Kay, John Sartain, and William Henry Furness. Dwight spoke at the dedication of the Philadelphia Union in May,³⁵ and this contact was fruitful

³²See the quotation from Alcott's MS diary in Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson, III, 392, n. 82.

³³P. E. Sanborn, Recollections of Seventy Years (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1909), II, f. 306.

³⁴pp. 25-36. See below, pp. 192-194.

³⁵See Dwight's report, "Dedicatory Festival of the Philadelphia Union of Associationists," Harbinger, VII (May 27, 1848), 28.

for a time. An early plan for him to become a regular contributor to Sartain's Magazine fell through because a Mr. Sleanaker did not think he would be a profitable addition to the staff. John Sartain urged him to send copy anyhow, preferably something "light and sprightly."³⁶ Before 1851 Dwight had two insignificant pieces of hack work accepted,³⁷ and probably did not submit anything more. In the spring of 1850, however, he delivered a course of his musical lectures in Philadelphia, mostly from older manuscripts.³⁸ The publicity

³⁶See a letter from Sartain to Dwight of April 6, 1849. A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

Dwight seems to have been often awkward and unlucky in his personal contacts with people he wanted to impress. (See for example the opening paragraph of the long letter from Almira Barlow of January 6, 1843, quoted above, p. 78.) Perhaps the accident referred to by Sartain in the following passage hindered Dwight's progress considerably. "Letters that are meant to me personally, please to direct to 28 Sanson Street, otherwise they are apt to get into the letter box of John Sartain & Co. and are liable to be opened in the hurry of business as your last was, and you will readily perceive the awkwardness of my partner reading as he did in yours, an allusion to my having written to you of there being no congeniality of feeling between him and me." (See. cit.)

³⁷"Victor Hugo, President of the Peace Congress," Sartain's Magazine, V (December, 1849), 334-335 (largely quotation from Corkran's History of the National Constituent Assembly); and "Perseus amid his Pupils," VII (November, 1850), 302-304 (a short text to accompany one of Sartain's beautiful engravings).

³⁸See a letter from William Henry Furness to Dwight of February 12, 1850. A.M.S. in the Boston Public Library.

Sometime between the Philadelphia lectures and the permanent appointment with Sartain's, Dwight may, as Cooke suggests (p. 143), have tried journalism in New York. No positive evidence exists to prove this. Cooke refers to two urgent letters from Ripley (p. 142). A circumstance adding some weight is the fact that Dwight's bibliography in 1850 after the end of the Chronotype column (January 12) is almost completely blank. But the second letter from Ripley was written in September, and Dwight was certainly "of Boston" before the end of the year. (See below, p. 187.)

derived from these lectures was enough to make Sartain's congratulate itself, at the beginning of 1851, on the "engagement of JOHN S. DWIGHT, Esq., of Boston, as Musical Editor." 39 Dwight fulfilled this agreeable assignment, which included the selection and arrangement of piano and vocal music to be published in Sartain's elaborate format, for thirteen consecutive months, until just before he started his own Journal of Music. Sartain's was not at all Associationist, but it was the handsomest and most prosperous looking magazine Dwight ever was connected with.

At the time he began to write for Sartain's, Dwight also assumed the musical editorship of the new Free Soil paper in Boston, The Commonwealth. Here he was in the stimulating company of Samuel Gridley Howe and Elizur Wright. In the second issue, he had an imposing column on the front page in which he criticized, severely and confidently for him, an amateur performance of the Messiah.⁴⁰ But even when he did not have to produce something every day, he could not keep up with the pace of a daily paper. He quickly lapsed into using filler material like correspondence and translations, and soon anything he wrote became filler, often crowded out for days by news and an increasing volume of advertising. The paper itself was suffering from dissension in high places. When Elizur Wright became editor on March 25, Howe and the other trustees

³⁹"Our Music Department," Sartain's Magazine, VIII (January, 1851), 70.

⁴⁰January 2, 1851, p. 1.

sold out to the publisher. Dwight hung on ever more precariously until about the time Wright was removed, on June 16.

Most of Dwight's work for the Commonwealth reads like the more routine and undistinguished musical notices in the Harbinger. The most interesting item is the only non-musical article he wrote, a full-column review of Mile Notes of a Howadjil, by George William Curtis.⁴¹ He rediscovered a kindred spirit, "a poet," in the effusive and whimsical writing of his old friend, and was inspired to find some momentary satisfaction in his own unsettled life. "Depend on it, O utilitarian reader, some who float about the world without an object or profession, are not without an object in God's plan . . ."⁴²

Dwight was never in better spirits than when he wrote this review. "God's plan" for him was beginning to unfold. He was not to "float about" much longer.

The combined income from Sartain's and the Commonwealth may have been nearer a living wage than any amount Dwight had earned since he left Northampton. At any rate he felt that he had place enough in the world to take a step long delayed. On February 12, 1851, he and Mary Hullard were married in a ceremony conducted by William Henry Channing at the house of Anna Parsons.⁴³ As bachelor and maid, the couple had lived at this last out-post of Association for more than a year,

⁴¹Commonwealth, March 25, 1851, p. 1.

⁴²Loc. cit.

⁴³Cooke, p. 143.

and here they remained as man and wife for some time. Afterwards, they lived for several years in a house on Charles Street near Cambridge Street.⁴⁴

None of the unavoidable gaps in this essay is so regrettable as that caused by the extremely scarce material on Mary Bullard Dwight. At this point one wishes that her husband were as important a literary figure as Shakespeare or Goethe, to whose biography years of patient research by many hands could reasonably be devoted. But beyond the vivid memories of John Codman and the facts of her marriage and untimely death it is impossible to go very far with the means available to this study. Cooke quotes "A Brook Farmer" as saying that

"she was vivacious, quick, and sprightly; was fond of conversation, but, no matter how trivial the subject of discourse, it grew into earnestness in her mind, unless she was wholly playful."⁴⁵

The rest of Cooke's paragraph on her is this:

At the farm she was known as "the Nightingale," because of her gifts as a singer. By this name Ripley mentions her in his letters to Dwight, and by that of "die lieblichste." One of her intimate friends has written of her: "Mary was a lovely person for a housemate. She was frank, outspoken, but always just and harmonious." William H. Channing said that, without being morbid, she was the most thoroughly conscientious person he ever knew.⁴⁶

Dwight himself may have tried to destroy all mundane, tangible reminders of Mary. Not a word written by her is to be found in the group of papers which includes, for instance,

⁴⁴Cooke, pp. 143-144.

⁴⁵page 144.

⁴⁶Loc. cit.

the letters from Almira Barlow. He was almost thirty-eight when he was married. Less than ten years later he was a widower, and he remained one for over thirty years, until he died. How little he actually enjoyed being without a family of his own is certainly well established, but he may have preferred to keep the dream of marriage which finally came true in the same state as those dreams which never materialized. This, of course, is only one of several conjectures that could be made on no firmer basis than lack of evidence to the contrary. We have no reason for believing that John and Mary Dwight were not at least reasonably happy.

For John, marriage did not in the long run do much to alter his modes of thinking and living. It had its frustrating aspects. It came a little late in life, after a courtship prolonged at least three⁴⁷ and possibly five years by social and financial insecurity. It was cut off after nine years by Mary's death in 1860.⁴⁸ And, perhaps most important, there were no children. Frustration, however, was nothing new in Dwight's experience. Whether his marriage contributed very strongly to his reticence and inertia, we do not know.

Surely it is not pure coincidence that after his marriage, Dwight moved swiftly toward the end of the long detour. The positions with Sartain's and the Commonwealth, like so many

⁴⁷In a letter from Cincinnati, dated April 27, 1848, John Allen linked Mary's name automatically with Dwight's in suggesting that they might find happiness together in the Middle West. (A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.)

⁴⁸See below, pp. 213-215.

"arrangements" before them, were only temporary; but in the spring of 1852, he began a project, Dwight's Journal of Music, that was to last for almost thirty years.

2.

Marriage was not the only steadying and directing influence on Dwight's life in the interim between Brook Farm and the Journal of Music. When he was preparing his essay for Elizabeth Peabody, he may well have picked up "On Music," his oldest manuscript inspired by the "truant occupation." There he may have read with some surprise a beautiful statement of the "principle of Association."

Love, striving to amalgamate with all--devotion, reaching forward to eternity--all that mysterious part of our nature, which binds us to one another, to the beauty of the world, to God and to an here-after,--require a different language from that common sense or intellect, which looks coldly upon the outward world, only to dissect it, and which occasions separations, instead of harmony, in human hearts.⁴⁹

He may have wondered why he had taken the rough road through the ministry and through Association to discover a principle which had been so clear to him even before he graduated from divinity school.

There had been many good reasons, of course. For good literary amateurism, "On Music" had too much that was borrowed and too much that was "divined." In 1841, Dwight had reluctantly embraced Association because the practical means for developing a widespread musical culture, and thus making a

⁴⁹See above, pp. 34-36.

permanent place for the literary amateur in society, were still not available. But the principle of Association had been the basis of his thinking long before Ripley moved out to Brook Farm. It was something about which the success or failure of Brook Farm and co-operative houses proved nothing. It was one form of the transcendentalist ideal, and Dwight always felt that at least one transcendentalist should fill his book with illustrations of this ideal in terms of music. In 1849, the means were not yet actually in hand, but the preliminary steps had been slowly taken. While letting Association die from neglect and derision, Boston had supported since 1841 eight consecutive seasons of symphonic and operatic music. A humble place for the literary amateur was in the making.

"Music" for Aesthetic Papers is really a restatement of the old faith. In spite of persistent Fourierist echoes, Dwight expands his statement, made near the end of the Harbinger, that feeling for musical tonality is an "aesthetic, not a scientific experience."⁵⁰ What remains of Fourier is the poetry, not the formula or the experiment. In the following key passage, Dwight shows that his faith still rests in a "Religion of Beauty."

Music is both body and soul, like the man who delights in it. Its body is beauty in the sphere of sound,--audible beauty. But in this very word beauty is implied a soul, a moral end, a meaning of some sort, a something which makes it of interest to the inner life of man, which relates it to our

⁵⁰Harbinger, VIII (December 30, 1848), 70.

invisible and real self. This beauty, like all other, results from the marriage of a spiritual fact with a material form, from the rendering external, and an object of sense, what lives in essence only in the soul. Here the material part, which is measured sound, is the embodiment and sensible representative, as well as the re-acting cause, of that which we call impulse, sentiment, feeling, the spring of all our action and expression.⁵¹

This is generalization, abstraction, but it is not improvisation, not the indefinite mistaken for the infinite. When he was in divinity school and Northampton, Dwight had music in his imagination. When he wrote for Aesthetic Papers, he had music in his ears. "The whole soul of a Beethoven," he says, "thrills through your soul, when you have actually heard one of his great symphonies."⁵² Ten years before, Dwight could not speak as one who had "actually heard." Now he not only insists on the generalization that "music is the language of the heart,"⁵³ but also points out, in concrete terms, the characteristics distinguishing music from the other arts.

Sound is generated by motion; rhythm is measured motion; and this is what distinguishes music from every other art of expression. Painting, sculpture, architecture, are all quiescent: they address us in still contemplation. But music is all motion, and it is nothing else.

And so in its effects. It does not rest, that we may contemplate it; but it hurries us away with it. Our very first intimation of its presence is, that we are moved by it. Its thrilling finger presses down some secret spring within us, and instantly the

⁵¹"Music," p. 27.

⁵²Ibid., p. 29.

⁵³Ibid., p. 27.

soul is on its feet with an emotion. Painting and sculpture rather give the idea of an emotion, than directly move us; and, if speech can raise or quell a passion, it is because there is kneaded into all speech a certain leaven of the divine fire called music. The same words and sentences convey new impressions with every honest change of tone and modulation in the speaker's voice; and, when he rises to any thing like eloquence, there is a certain bouyant rhythmical substratum of pure tone on which his words ride, as the ship rides on the ocean, borrowing its chief eloquence from that. Take out the consonants which break up his speech, and the vowels flow on musically. How often will the murmur of a devout prayer overcome a remote hearer with more of a religious feeling, than any apprehension of the distinct words could, if he stood nearer!⁵⁴

The balloon was as high as ever in 1849, but the ground cables were much larger and stronger, and communication was much improved.

Appearing in the same year, the column in the Chronotype was to be the last considerable volume of non-musical writing Dwight did. The immediate reasons for its ineffectiveness we have seen above. It added nothing to Dwight's stature as a writer, not only because he found himself in a philosophical dilemma, but also because he simply could not keep his mind focused on social reform for very long. Here we find the innately sociable and conservative Dwight just as we found him in the Fourierist days, trying with his left hand to make transcendentalism into progressive socialism, while tacitly admitting that society, as it is, is too enjoyable to disrupt.

The real continuation of Dwight's best work for the Harbinger was not in the Chronotype, but in Aesthetic Papers

⁵⁴"Music," p. 28.

and Sartain's Magazine. At several points where they provide direct continuation and resolution of ideas developing in the Harbinger, the Sartain's articles have been quoted in the previous chapter. In general they show some of the characteristics of "Music"--a residue of the Fourieristic "scientific" jargon (notably in "The Musical Trinity"),⁵⁵ and a restatement of the essentially moral and religious character of music.⁵⁶ Nothing so mature as the above quotations from "Music" appears. Aesthetic Papers was an attempt to revive the spirit of the Dial; Sartain's went to readers who liked things "light and sprightly."

Dwight did not make many concessions directly, but he gracefully introduced one attractive line of thought that would have been out of place in the Harbinger or Aesthetic Papers, a genuine pride in America. He despised Yankee Doodle patriotism. Direct emotional appeals to American nationalistic sentiments are very rare in his writing. We have seen one mild example in his review of Griswold's poetry anthology,⁵⁷ but the Harbinger was too self-consciously Associationist to tolerate such a device. In the relaxed atmosphere of Sartain's Dwight again used this propaganda technique in a very inoffensive form. It is not nearly so ridiculous as the Associationist mania for despising everything

⁵⁵VIII (May, 1851), 343-344.

⁵⁶"Sacred Music," IX (September, 1851), 235-236. Compare "Music," pp. 30-31.

⁵⁷See above, pp. 94-95.

"civilized," a part of the ritual that Dwight could never completely swallow anyway. In the introductory essay, he confessed to feeling

a grandeur in the very consciousness of membership in such a large and various commonwealth of character; there is an exaltation in the American feeling thus viewed, which borders on the unitary sentiment, and seeks a rhythmical expression.⁵⁸

He admits that Americans are still too much occupied with politics and "enterprise," but

There is a wide new world before us, and a glorious ideal floats above us in the motto and the Constitution of our Union; schools, and churches, and material enterprise do much; but we inherit from the past some old wrongs which are now a bone of discord; these are sustained with a convulsive grasp by interest; while on the other hand reform is loud, and stern, and harsh, and anarchy is ever threatening.⁵⁹

This was not sop for the Sartain's subscribers. It is directly in line with Dwight's basic moral and social thinking. America does not need aggressive social reform, he thought:

. . . we need the tone and sentiment of unity, so that character shall keep us cordially united, where interests, and politics, and even creeds divide. . . . The spirit of art pervading a community insures at once a loyal and a generous disposition. It is as conservative as it is large, free, and progressive. It tempers these raw energies of ours to gentler methods of approaching ends, with a fond patience for each slow step of a natural transition. It imbues us with a moral principle which operates by habit, beautifully and surely, like the resolution of discords in music.⁶⁰

In the six months before he founded the Journal of Music, Dwight returned to many of his favorite themes which he had

⁵⁸VIII (January, 1851), 70.

⁵⁹Loc. cit.

⁶⁰Loc. cit.

neglected in the busy days of the Harbinger and Association. The last article for Sartain's was on Handel, although he discussed Israel in Egypt instead of the Messiah.⁶¹ While the Journal was in the final talking stages, he rewrote and expanded for Graham's Magazine the essay on which he had spent the best of his powers and enthusiasm in 1842-1843, the critique of Mozart's Don Juan.⁶² The later version does not add much that is significant. Even more comprehensive than the earlier one, it is built around a long, detailed analysis of the opera itself,⁶³ with the biographical material on Mozart omitted. Dwight may have given the score more study in the intervening years, but in the following sentence the verb formation at the end betrays the fact that the opera in performance was still largely imaginary with him.

The gay gallant, magnetic disturber of every woman's peace that comes within his sphere, is not intended for that vulgar sensualist, that swaggering street rake, which caricatures the part in most performances we may have seen.⁶⁴

To find the end of Dwight's long search for a satisfactory Don Juan, we must look forward into the early volumes of the Journal of Music, where he reprinted this article along with many translations from the remarks of Oulibicheff and Hoffman. Early in 1855 he was still complaining that he had

⁶¹X (January, 1852), 63-68.

⁶²XL (February, 1852), 150-159.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 152-159.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 150.

never heard an adequate production.⁶⁵ For this he was to wait until his trip to Europe. At Covent Garden he finally heard, on August 2, 1861, a Don Juan that "seemed a consistent whole," with the prodigy "little Patti" as Zerlina.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, in 1852 Dwight was still inspired by the transcendental moral strength of the Juan, and the Mozart and the J. S. Dwight, who came alive in the piano score and in the writings of E. T. A. Hoffman.

Here, on the one side, is this bold, generous passion-life, with its innate gospel of joy, and transport, and glorious liberty; how well could Mozart understand it, and how eloquently preach it in that safe, universal dialect of MUSIC, which utters only the heart-truth, and not the vulgar perversion of any sentiment! Here, on the other hand, is the stern Morality of being, frowning in conflict with the blind indulgence of the first. The first is false by its excess, by losing Order out of sight; while Order, sacred principle, in its common administration between men, in its turn is false, through its blind method of suppression and restraint, blaspheming and ignoring the divine springs of passion, which it should accept and regulate. The music is the heavenly and prophetic mediator that resolves the strife.

.....

Do we defy the moral of the matter, when we feel a certain thrill of admiration as Don Juan boldly takes the statue's hand, still strong in his life creed, however he may have missed the heavenly method in its carrying out, and somehow inspired with the conviction that this judicial consummation is not, after all, the end of it; but that the soul's capacity for joy and harmony is of that god-like and asbestos quality that no hells can consume it?⁶⁷

⁶⁵Journal of Music, VI (February 3, 1855), 142-143.

⁶⁶Journal of Music, XIX (September 14, 1861), 188-190.

⁶⁷Graham's Magazine, XL (February, 1852), 159.

We have now followed Dwight through most of the "hells" he was to encounter. We have found that his asbestos was inflammable and very thin in spots, which is the same as saying that he was not god-like, or grandly heroic, or childishly invulnerable. Transcendentalism swung him around in circles on high, and earthly, human desires pulled him down again. His promising creative impulse was turned to the modest pursuits of criticism and interpretation. We have heard him boast, effervesce, sing, whine, beg, curse, reason coolly, and ramble. Some of his space he filled with almost great creative writing, and some with routine translation or undigested borrowings. No matter what happened, however, no matter how narrow his strip of earth became, he never went very long without exploring that space above his head. Up there he could always find something that made his earthly labor essentially Christian, morally inspiring, ideally indestructible.

As he entered his fortieth year, he reached the end of the long detour. Regardless of how many better routes to the same point we may find, we must admit that Dwight, with all his peculiarities and limitations, made the journey like a disciple of whom the "major" transcendentalists could be proud. Beside the Walden and Representative Men of P. O. Matthiessen's "American Renaissance," Dwight's Journal of Music does not look insignificant.

PART TWO

THE ESTABLISHED CAREER

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

A superficial way of describing Dwight's career is to say that he really had two careers, the first as a transcendentalist and the second as a music critic. How false a distinction this is appears readily from the preceding pages, where we have seen the steady development of his critical powers interwoven with his various transcendental experiments and speculations until the object of his life became the propagation of great music for transcendental reasons. His transcendentalism and his devotion to music began at the same time. His lifelong faith was a combination of the two, a feeling that the two were inseparable.

Dwight's influence on the development of musical culture in America between 1850 and 1880 could not be properly shown without covering a huge canvas on which his personality and the flavor of his writing would be too often lost sight of. At the risk of making him look smaller than he actually was, Part Two is focused on the man and his thoughts, as distinct from his "life and times." With the establishment of the Journal of Music he also established himself, concentrated his literary efforts, and produced a large volume of writing which is much more of a piece than the records of his miscellaneous experiments in the early days. Yet he built his new structure squarely on the old foundations. Through any further periods of doubt and uncertainty, the lessons learned

in the long apprenticeship were adequate guides. His final, private compact with the elusive spirit of transcendentalism lay quietly, signed and sealed, in the back of his mind, to be evoked occasionally for the rest of his life. The old faith continued to provide Dwight with inspiration, but it no longer confused or frustrated him very often. When, as the autocrat of Boston Music, he came up against the totally unideal problems of the real world, he showed that the "force" which so surprised James Kay was far from exhausted. Finally, the later music criticism reflects nothing so consistently as the opinions and modes of expression we have already encountered.

The ensuing pages, then, serve the purpose of this study as a kind of extended epilogue. The outlines and a few details of Dwight's later life are given primarily to establish the atmosphere rather than the facts of his last forty years. In the treatment of the Journal of Music and his other writings of this period, chronology and development are sometimes subordinated to classification and discussion of leading ideas. A tempting sub-title for Part Two would be "The Triumph of the Truant Occupation." Belated, limited, and anti-climactic as the triumph may appear to the student of transcendentalism, it had some brilliant moments and many satisfying ones. Even though the range of his experiments and speculations became rather narrow, Dwight was a "living man" for all of his eighty years.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND FORTY YEARS: 1852-1893

1.

The foundation of the Journal of Music in the spring of 1852 did not establish itself as a turning point in Dwight's career until the event was several years in the past. It could easily have been just another experiment. The history of other such ventures in Boston was anything but encouraging. One of the Journal's most successful predecessors, Hach's Musical Magazine, had given up the struggle ten years before after a life of three years,¹ and it had never been respectably superseded.

Dwight did not so much believe as hope that the time had come for such a publication. In his opening editorial he made as much as he could of the idea with which he had introduced the Sartain's articles a year earlier. Musical culture was now so widely spread, he thought, that Americans could feel the need of being "rhythmically educated in the whole tone and tempo of their daily life . . . in order to be fit for freedom."² Admitting that he was not a trained musician, "either in theory or practice," the literary amateur who felt the deep significance of great music proposed to conduct "a

¹See the last issue, III (April 24, 1842), 415.

²Journal of Music, I (April 10, 1852), 4.

regular bulletin of progress; something to represent the movement, and at the same time help to guide it to the true end."³

In a letter to Granch he spoke in very different terms. He described the Journal as a "last, desperate (no very confident) grand coup d'etat to try and get a living."⁴ To many of his other reliable old friends he wrote for advice and contributions of copy. Longfellow suggested a name, "Musical Journal," but reported that he no longer wrote poems short enough for publication in such a periodical.⁵ George William Curtis, whose prediction about the "centre" of Dwight's life was proving ever more accurate, warned against anything that "smells" transcendentalism or any other supposed clique, and suggested the name "Dwight's Musical Journal," with the addition, "sotto voce, 'a paper of Art and Literature'."⁶ We shall see later that Dwight used the sub-title exactly as Curtis' "sotto voce" implied he would.

Against the good judgment of Ripley, Dwight took the publication, editing, and a large part of the writing all on himself. He followed Ripley's financial advice, however, and presented his plan at the annual meeting of the Harvard

³Journal of Music, I (April 10, 1852), 4.

⁴Quoted in Cooke, p. 149, without date.

⁵A.L.S. of March 25, 1852, in the Yale University Library.

⁶Letter of March 19, 1852. Early Letters of Curtis to Dwight, p. 280.

Musical Association in February, 1852, where he secured a guarantee against loss.⁷

The vital statistics on the Journal of Music do not make exciting reading, but they are an important element in the atmosphere of Dwight's life at this time. For the first six years he was responsible for everything except the mechanics of printing. This, in theory, he liked. But, although he was a natural "sole editor," he was not nearly so natural a "sole proprietor." The drudgery of getting copy ready every week, and of handling all financial and business matters besides, was very odious to him.⁸ Nevertheless, he held on. After four months he reported "nearly a thousand subscribers."⁹ At the beginning of 1853 he claimed a "moderate" success, without much "immediate remuneration."¹⁰ He continually reminded the subscribers that if each would pay up his own subscription and send in a new one, the Journal would be in excellent shape.¹¹ In October of 1854 the volume of advertising

⁷See part of a letter from Ripley, quoted in Cooke, p. 146, without date. The action of the Harvard Musical Association is recorded by Charles R. Nutter in Library of the Harvard Musical Association, Bulletin No. 8 (January, 1939), p.[10]. (Pages unnumbered. Hereinafter referred to as HMA Library.)

⁸See a letter to Charles T. Brooks of March, 1856, quoted in Cooke, pp. 158-159, without exact date. See also an editorial in Journal of Music, XII (March 13, 1858), 397.

⁹Journal of Music, I (August 7, 1852), 142.

¹⁰Journal of Music, II (January 1, 1853), 101.

¹¹Loc. cit. See also Journal of Music, IV (April 1, 1854), 205.

became so great that he had to raise the rates to keep his reading matter from being crowded out.¹² The Journal gradually exhibited an amazing staying power. When he had to, Dwight could work hard and steadily at something in which he could see a large measure of his own handiwork.

2.

As he drifted away from the ruins of Association back into the "civilized" world, Dwight gradually assumed a respectable if not important position in congenial and stimulating circles. For about eight months of the year, his activities in Boston were limited by concert-going and by the continuous and unprofitable work on the Journal. He and Mary frequently found time, however, to visit the Howes in South Boston,¹³ and to become intimate with the Holmeses, who lived just a few doors down Charles Street.¹⁴ In the summer they went often to North Conway, New Hampshire. These vacations inspired rapturous prose for the Journal of Music, with their setting of "breezy mountains and . . . meadows green and musical with waters and with 'wood notes wild'."¹⁵

Much as he liked to get away, Dwight seems to have had an Augustan love for the city as a permanent home. In the

¹²Journal of Music, VI (October 7, 1854), 1.

¹³See Julia Ward Howe, Reminiscences, p. 436.

¹⁴See O. W. Holmes' account of his neighborly attentions to Mary Dwight during her last illness, in a letter to Dwight of November 11, 1860, quoted in Cooke, pp. 169-174.

¹⁵Journal of Music, V (August 5, 1854), 141.

middle 'fifties he was one of the four or five including Emerson and E. P. Whipple who fell into the habit of dining occasionally in Horatio Woodman's room at the old Parker House. Thus he became a prenatal member of the famous Saturday Club.¹⁶ For years he was "always smilingly present,"¹⁷ although he sat a little below the salt and did not contribute much to the conversation of Agassiz, Emerson, Lowell, Dana, and the other illustrious members. Dwight was not quick-witted, and he did, after all, try to make his living in journalism, respectable but eternally bourgeois.¹⁸

The feeling that Dwight was something of a child in this man's world was still prevalent among his friends. When Horatio Woodman introduced a mushroom to the august Saturday Club, Dwight was unanimously elected to taste the odd delicacy first. "It tastes like the roof of a house,"¹⁹ he said, in his only recorded speech before the club. One wonders if the natural "fall guy" performed as expected.

A "nature most musically sweet,"²⁰ he was reputedly led gently through earthly routines by his loving wife.²¹ The

¹⁶See Bliss Perry's biographical sketch of Dwight in E. W. Emerson, Early Years of the Saturday Club, pp. 46-52.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁸See Charles Francis Adams, Richard Henry Dana (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1890), II, 166.

¹⁹Emerson, Early Years of the Saturday Club, p. 126.

²⁰William Dean Howells' phrase, quoted by Perry in Early Years of the Saturday Club, p. 46.

²¹Cooke, p. 266.

concern of his influential friends over his precarious financial status showed itself in various ways. Three specific items from the year 1854 will serve as examples. In April he apologized for the quality of the Journal's first issue in volume five by citing "the pressure of a thousand cares, both . . . business . . . and personal,"²² and announced a concert for the benefit of the Journal, the first of several such charitable compliments he was to receive in the next twenty-five years. In the following issue he reported the success of the concert, but hastened to add that

the Journal did not absolutely need it; more and more it had come to feel itself on a firm footing, though its emoluments would fall far short of satisfying a fast man of the nineteenth century.²³

In spite of this protestation of independence, both Lowell and Emerson made concrete suggestions toward helping Dwight about this time. At a small dinner at the Albion, Emerson ventured the opinion that Charles Reade's Christie Johnstone was better than Jane Eyre, and advised Dwight to print it as a commercial speculation.²⁴ But the Journal of Music was surely absorbing all the enterprising and speculative spirit he could muster.

Lowell's affection for Dwight was unquestionably sincere. They had been friends for ten or twelve years, and in the

²²April 8, 1854, p. 5.

²³v (April 15, 1854), 13-14.

²⁴P. B. Sanborn and William T. Harris, A. Bronson Alcott, His Life and Philosophy (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1893), p. 491.

Fable for Critics Dwight had been paid a compliment almost over-graceful.

When Nature was shaping him [Hawthorne], clay was
 not granted
 For making so full-sized a man as she wanted.
 So, to fill out her model, a little she spared
 From some finer-grained stuff for a woman prepared;
 And she could not have hit a more excellent plan
 For making him fully and perfectly man.
 The success of her scheme gave her so much delight
 That she tried it again, shortly after, in Dwight:
 Only, while she was kneading and shaping the clay,
 She sang to her work in her sweet childish way,
 And found, when she'd put the last touch to his soul,
 That the music had somehow got mixed with the whole.²⁵

What, then, of the following letter?

My dear Dwight,

It has occurred to some of your friends that you might find your account in establishing something of this sort--a Bureau for governesses. Don't you see? There is a great and constant demand for them, and they are as constantly asking to be taken; but neither wanters nor wantees get to hear of each other. Now the kindly office I propose for you is to take these wandering hooks and unite them with the forlorn eyes that somewhere await them.

Applications are constantly made to teachers by both hooks and eyes, but, owing to want of responsibility and system, everything is at loose ends. You could . . . act as broker--receiving a proper commission. You could advertise at first in other journals, but by degrees could make your own paper the exclusive bulletin for such matters.

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I am in an immense hurry just now, but will only add that character and everything of that sort make you just the man. If you could see my sister Mrs. Lowell at No. 4 Winter Place before 2 o'clock some morning before Thursday she could make it all clear.²⁶

²⁵Complete Poetical Works (Cambridge ed.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1897, 1917), p. 135.

²⁶A.L.S. of June 20, 1854, in the Yale University Library.

A jest, is our immediate reaction. Some of the phrases are particularly suspicious. But we cannot be sure. If it was a jest, it was a tasteless one. Whether Lowell's intentions were serious or flippant, he sorely misjudged Dwight, who puzzled over how to reply for two or three days. He finally decided the suggestion was serious, and in answering Lowell pointed out his surprise both that such a service was not already available, and that anyone should think he was fitted for it.

I am altogether too easily bored (sensitive, selfish, touch-me-not that I am), to wish to be any more of an intelligence office than I already involuntarily am, as part of the penalty of editing a musical paper. I hate so much of the personal go-betweenism even of the musical world, and would like (if possible) to deal with the world more at arm's length, instead of having to personally meet so many of the music teachers and the applicants for such. If it came to governesses, what should I do?²⁷

The atmosphere of this little incident is fascinating, but how enlightening, we should hesitate to say. Dwight's sensitiveness and naivete had long been highly magnified by his friends. He himself seems to have felt sometimes that he was less well adapted to the real world than he actually was. The self-portrait in the above letter may represent a defense mechanism, thrown up in one of the dark moods to correspond with what Dwight knew Lowell thought in the first place. Business transactions may have "bored" him in the early days of the Journal, but we must not forget the Dwight who sold Association in New York in 1846, and who later

²⁷A.L.S. of June 24, 1854, in the Yale University Library.

managed nearly all the various functions of the Harvard Musical Association. Established wits can be very cruel at times, and while the Journal of Music was still struggling, the smiling, non-Brahmin Dwight must have often felt uncomfortable at the Saturday Club.

3.

In musical circles, Dwight was in more sympathetic, if less sparkling company. In April of 1856, he had the Harvard Musical Association and the Mendelssohn Quintette Club to thank for another Journal of Music benefit concert.²⁸ The season of 1855-1856 had been a happy and inspiring one, although Carl Zerrahn had played his severely classical programs to half empty houses in the new Music Hall, which Dwight and the Journal had helped to build. On March 1, Thomas Crawford's statue of Beethoven had been unveiled there, and the day was a high peak in Dwight's career.²⁹

At the beginning of the next season Boston had no orchestra, and Dwight's spirits fell. Cranch wrote from Paris to try to cheer him up again, saying there should be a luxurious university chair for Dwight somewhere, and suggesting what Dwight would never be able to carry out--a removal from Boston to greener pastures.³⁰ The concerts began again after the first of the year, and Dwight described the great

²⁸Journal of Music, IX (April 5, 1856), 5.

²⁹See Journal of Music, VIII (March 8, 1856), 181-183.

³⁰A.L.S. of December 30, 1856, in the Yale University Library.

music festival in May as the "grandest, the most important and most genuine musical or artistic occasion that has yet occurred on this continent."³¹ In spite of its financial failure, Dwight thought the festival had saved music in Boston, hence the Journal too, from extinction.³²

In July, the great Class of 1832 celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, and Dwight experienced the comfortable feeling of having finally done something to help the class live up to its promise. In the Journal of Music he wrote proudly:

The class of '32 has furnished its fair share of shining lights in church and state, in literature and science; and these have not shut out from their sympathies and recognition one, who, turning aside from all these paths, has come unconsciously and irresistibly to be preoccupied with so secular a life-task as that of striving to make Music recognized as one of the essential "humanities" and "classics" of true education, as an important element in social life (especially in free republics,) and in the culture of the true Christian gentlemen.³³

By the next year, 1858, Dwight had brought his resilient little periodical to a point where its artistic and commercial stability was finally recognized. Beginning with volume thirteen, Oliver Ditson and Company took over the publishing and financing of the Journal, and settled upon Dwight the salary of \$1200 a year as editor.³⁴ This arrangement endured

³¹Journal of Music, XI (May 30, 1857), 65.

³²Ibid., p. 70.

³³XI, (July 18, 1857), 126.

³⁴See Dwight's announcement in Journal of Music, XII (March 13, 1858), 397.

for twenty years. Financially and professionally, Dwight never rose any higher. He founded no permanent business and acquired no property. In this period his musical activities bore their greatest fruit, and continued until they were outdated and superseded. The literary amateur created this one place for himself in the world, and lived to resign it only after it had ceased to exist.

4.

The arrangement with Oliver Ditson did not materially affect the Journal itself, but two years after the pressure of weekly financing and publishing was released, Dwight had the means and the energy to finally leave Boston for a belated "grand tour." In May, 1860, he was in New York "on business not entirely musical," visiting the Ripleys and other old friends, and listening nostalgically to the Ninth Symphony, which had first thrilled him there fifteen years before.³⁵ On July 7, he sailed for Europe.

The "Editorial Correspondence" in the Journal of Music, where letters from Dwight began appearing late in August, records in detail the early stages of the trip, beginning with a philosophic acceptance of sea-sickness and Dwightian poetry about the "good hours" when,

as one watches the motion and the color of the waves in all their glory, and their moody changes, how the music that he loves, with shifting dreams of other music like it, mingles with their motion; how memories of home and friends, of all the tender, deep, or

³⁵Journal of Music, XVII (May 5, 1860), 5.

earnest passages of life, how one's life-plans and aspirations sing themselves, in strains remembered or imagined, to that else voiceless rhythm of wild waves!³⁶

Five days after his arrival in Southampton, Dwight wrote his first letter from Paris, where he stayed about a month beginning July 22 or 23.³⁷ The third letter, a rather dull discussion of the Conservatoire and the French Church, appeared in the Journal for September 15,³⁸ just below a short account of the funeral of Mary Bullard Dwight, who had died on September 6 of typhoid fever.³⁹ For a month, a grim tragic irony produced by the slow transatlantic communication of the day hovers over "Editorial Correspondence." We read of Dwight's surprise at the thriving condition of the opera and other artistic endeavors under despotic government,⁴⁰ and later of his trip through Switzerland on his way to Germany.⁴¹ Not until October did the publishable correspondence break off.

The news reached Dwight at Frankfort on October 7, in a packet of seven delayed letters, all confined to the same

³⁶Journal of Music, XVII (August 25, 1860), 173.

³⁷The letter is dated July 23, 1860, reprinted in Journal of Music, XVII (August 25, 1860), 172-174.

³⁸XVII, 198-199.

³⁹XVII, 198. See also Chandler, History of the Town of Shirley, Massachusetts, p. 392.

⁴⁰Journal of Music, XVII (September 8, 1860), 188-190, and (September 22, 1860), 205-206.

⁴¹Journal of Music, XVII (September 29, 1860), 213-214, and XVIII (October 13, 1860), 230-231.

subject. He immediately acknowledged a "true brother's letter" from Benjamin Franklin, then an architect in Boston.⁴² He "wrote in tears, in a little dark, cold room." During one interval of sunshine on an otherwise "rainy, gloomy, cold day," he walked completely around the old city, letting the trees drop their nuts and leaves upon him.⁴³ That night he had "only grief and sleep" as companions--"no human soul to talk or sit with; no light; no eyes to read or write with."⁴⁴

The next morning he started down the Rhine to Bonn, where he found Alexander Thayer, frequent contributor to the Journal who was working on his life of Beethoven. Here Dwight could talk and tell all, shake off the "sense of cold and rain," and write to his brother that he had decided to stay in Europe. He regretted deeply that the home in Charles Street had to be broken up. One or two of Mary's sisters had lived there with the Dwights, but they were needed elsewhere. He trusted Frank's management of his "affairs" to the point that he made only one request: the piano should go to Grace Hooper, who needed one badly.⁴⁵

In November he was in Berlin, after taking up the shock by traveling on down the Rhine and visiting in Switzerland

⁴²Quoted in Cooke, pp. 168-169. Dwight's description of this day is in a second letter to his brother, written October 11, quoted in Cooke, pp. 174-178.

⁴³Letter of October 11, 1860. Cooke, p. 174.

⁴⁴Ibid., Cooke, p. 176.

⁴⁵Ibid., Cooke, pp. 176-177.

again. Here he received a beautiful, detailed account of Mary's last days from Oliver Wendell Holmes,⁴⁶ and wrote to Cranch on the twenty-second that the exaltation of the brilliant winter musical season had braced him temporarily.⁴⁷ He still could not work, and this he had to do soon. It was his "only solid hope of cheerfulness; in living earnestly for high ends to which I know her spirit calls me, singing to me still."⁴⁸ In remarking that Thayer should write his book on Beethoven immediately without waiting to learn everything, Dwight expressed feelings that may have governed his own future attitude on biography, especially autobiography. "It was never intended in God's plan that any man should be too closely known. I doubt not God himself uses the divine faculty of not seeing, and of forgetting, . . ."⁴⁹

A "New Series" of "Editorial Correspondence" began in December, inspired by the spirit of Mary and the music she loved. "God's sun still shines," wrote Dwight in his first letter,

life still goes on. Nature is beautiful and still speaks to the soul, and so do Art and Music, still divine and true to our deepest needs, even when sorrow shakes the whole bright and wondrous fabric of this life, till life and time appear unreal.⁵⁰

⁴⁶Letter of November 11, 1860. Quoted in Cooke, pp. 169-174.

⁴⁷quoted in Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, p. 248.

⁴⁸Loc. cit.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 250.

⁵⁰Journal of Music, XVIII (December 29, 1860), 316.

Although Berlin was Dwight's headquarters for about four months in the winter of 1860-1861, the highlight of the season for him was a week's visit to Dresden, the description of which filled his column in the Journal for a month.⁵¹ He had intimate contacts with Clara Schumann, her father Friedrich Wieck, and the violinist Joseph Joachim. The concerts of Clara Schumann and Joachim he found intensely moving, and with the latter he discussed not only Bach and Beethoven, but also Emerson and the destiny of America.⁵²

Of the winter season in Berlin, Dwight thought the Christmas celebration especially colorful,⁵³ the Prussian cigar smoke a column's-worth abominable,⁵⁴ and the orchestra so efficient that he realized he had "taken the will for the deed at home, and not a very united will at that."⁵⁵ He found the leading musicians a little hard to approach,⁵⁶ although he was once in the company of Liszt and the von Büllows, talking intimately of art and artists.⁵⁷ In Berlin, as in Paris, he was struck by the great musical opportunities provided both artists and the public by a despotic government.

⁵¹Beginning XVIII (February 2, 1861), 357-358.

⁵²Loc. cit.

⁵³Journal of Music, XVIII (January 26, 1861), 349-350.

⁵⁴Journal of Music, XVIII (March 23, 1861), 412.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 413.

⁵⁶Letter quoted in Cooke, pp. 179-180, without addressee or date.

⁵⁷Journal of Music, XXXV (August 7, 1875), 70.

In praising Berlin's "Symphonies for the People," he made patriotic reservations which represent his resolution of this perplexing observation.

Truly in this respect the Berliners are a favored people, although they lack some great advantages of our free land too precious to be exchanged even for Art and Music,--advantages, however, of which we ourselves shall never know the real value, and never be quite secured in their continuance, until they shall go hand in hand with these.⁵⁸

After all, Dwight was essentially a New England Yankee on a sight-seeing and music-hearing tour. If he was not a Yankee of the shrewd, dollar-wise variety, he certainly was not a citizen of the world. Nothing shows his provincialism so clearly, and indeed delightfully, as a letter he addressed to Senator Charles Sumner on New Year's Day, 1861, urging the appointment of Thayer to the post of Secretary to the Legation at Berlin. He says Ambassador Wright is acceptable, although "illiterate and a Democrat, and withal a Methodist exhorter."⁵⁹ In discussing the trouble brewing between North and South, Dwight recommends the firmest measures. "If any states go out, let only what is left be sound, even if it be reduced down to little poor New England, and I believe the glorious destiny of America is saved."⁶⁰

In the spring he went down through Vienna to Italy, and "Editorial Correspondence" faltered again. Henry Ware, the

⁵⁸Journal of Music, XIX (April 13, 1861), 14.

⁵⁹A.L.S. in the Harvard College Library.

⁶⁰Loc. cit.

Journal editor pro tem, suspected that Dwight had "eaten of the Lotus and relapsed into silence in the charmed air."⁶¹ From private letters, Ware pieced together an account of a somewhat lonely and uncomfortable experience in northern Italy, harassed by threats of war and crowded with Austrian soldiers, who depressed Dwight. From Venice through Padua, Milan, Turin, and Genoa, his movement was fast. He was delighted with the Italian people, and thrilled by a glimpse of Cavour in Turin. He visited Parker's tomb in Florence, but had too little time for all the city offered before going on to Rome, where, in the studio of W. W. Story, he could relax and feel at home again.⁶² In Rome he enjoyed a flattering intimacy with the Brownings, heard Hans Christian Andersen read his stories, and hunted out the sights with Samuel Longfellow.⁶³

Dwight spent about ten weeks of the summer in London, whence he wrote regularly without reporting anything especially exciting.⁶⁴ The greatest adventure was yet to come. He sailed for home on the new Great Eastern on September 10. With a green crew aboard, the ship hit a storm, lost her rudder head, and finally limped into Queenstown three days later.⁶⁵

⁶¹Journal of Music, XIX (June 8, 1861), 79.

⁶²Journal of Music, XIX (July 6, 1861), 110-111.

⁶³Letter of June 2, 1861, quoted in Cooke, pp. 181-182, without addressee.

⁶⁴See the letters from London beginning in "Editorial Correspondence," Journal of Music, XIX (July 13, 1861), 117-118.

⁶⁵Journal of Music, XX (October 12, 1861), 222.

He felt "strangely confused" about going home anyway.⁶⁶ Only something like an ultimatum from Oliver Ditson had forced him to change his mind about staying on in Europe.⁶⁷ His reactions during the storm, recorded brilliantly for the Journal as "The Book of Leviathan,"⁶⁸ were so mixed and calm that he felt almost like a disinterested spectator. With his feet braced and his head bolstered on the corner of a sofa, he tried to read, of all things, the candid, worldly diary of Samuel Pepys.⁶⁹ He studied the people about him, imagining how "many a mind was occupied with swift last thoughts, of home, of friends, of all that makes life dear, as if suddenly summoned to the final leave-taking--and perhaps, O joy! to the rejoining of dear ones who await us in the world of spirits."⁷⁰ He wrote a little like a preacher in speaking of "a heavenly inspiration of hope, of trust, of calmness,"⁷¹ but much oftener he sounds like the middle-aged Dwight whom some people knew as a "quiddle,"⁷² and whom we know as a very human, very normally uncomfortable, moody,

⁶⁶Letter of October 30, 1861, quoted in Cooke, p. 184, without addressee.

⁶⁷Letter to Cranch, of November 1, 1861, quoted in Cooke, pp. 184-185.

⁶⁸XX (October 26, 1861), 236-238, and (November 2, 1861) 245-247.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 237 and 246.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 238.

⁷¹Loc. cit.

⁷²Swift, Brogok Farm, p. 159.

fidgety person made from the same mould as the rest of us. The defensive self-portrait we found in the answer to Lowell appears here in his description of "the habitually timid, . . . sensitive . . . nervous natures, . . . who worry themselves with fears of possible dangers, who cannot get the better of a thousand petty everyday annoyances, yet find themselves calm, exalted even, when great trials come!"⁷³ Dwight prided himself on his grasp of the realities of the situation. The sea was indeed a

heaving, boiling, tumultuous [sic] surface; but nonsense all that about waves running "mountains high"--that is mere common-place of poets and novel writers who have never been to sea.⁷⁴

The thoroughly baptized traveler finally arrived home aboard the Niagara on November 21, 1861. He found it hard to realize that his country was at war, "fighting the fight, perhaps the final one, of Civilization against a treacherous and arrogant pro-Slavery rebellion, with all its backward and Barbarian proclivities . . ."⁷⁵ In his first editorial he devoted a full column to apologizing for enjoying so much the Mendelssohn Quintette Club and the reunion with old friends. But why not?

Our fight is for Civilization; and we do well therefore to keep up all the civilizing elements and influences, and let all the sweet flowers blow, and wholesome fruits ripen, that we can, amid the storm.⁷⁶

⁷³"The Book of Leviathan," p. 238.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 246.

⁷⁵Journal of Music, XX (November 30, 1861), 278.

⁷⁶Loc. cit.

Quoted outside the context of Dwight's personal feelings at this time, the above statement would sound insipid. Actually it covers rather awkwardly what must have been a deep feeling of loneliness and aimlessness, relieved only by the author's established place in the musical life of Boston. In immediate retrospect the trip to Europe probably seemed to Dwight a muddled combination of fair dream and nightmare. Inspiring and enjoyable as it had been, all the inspiration and, especially, the enjoyment had been partially irreverent, distracted, ill-timed, perhaps unpatriotic.

The bad timing was not all due to the tragic events of 1860-1861. The journey came at an awkward stage in Dwight's life. He was too old, too far away from his proficient college German,⁷⁷ to make his "grand tour" an integral part of his education. He was too far along in his career to go as a seeker of men and ideas, as Emerson had in 1833. At the age when he should have been raising his children and buttressing his place in society, he found himself traveling, often nervously and too fast, trying to make up too much too late. Again one of his happy hours assumes the note of tragedy.

5.

In the 'sixties and 'seventies Dwight displayed a healthy tendency to live in the present. The tenuous, sometimes painful associations with the past he handled reverently but

⁷⁷See the opening passage of the letter from Berlin quoted by Cooke, p. 179.

realistically. He lived for several years in the Studio Building at 76 Tremont Street, close to his work. Later he shared temporary homes with his mother, his sister Frances, and his brother, until the Harvard Musical Association established permanent quarters at 12 Pemberton Square, where Dwight found his logical, if undomestic residence in 1873, three years before his mother died.⁷⁸

Soon after his return from Europe he received a touching letter from George Ripley, imploring him to visit Brooklyn. Sophia Ripley had died exactly five months after Mary Dwight, and Ripley wrote "without reserve," like a broken man.⁷⁹ We do not know whether Dwight answered this call. He had little means or taste for such expeditions. When Ripley died in July of 1860, Dwight wrote that he had lost the best friend he ever had. But they had not seen each other for "some years," and Dwight could not accept the invitation to be a pall-bearer. He passed the hour of the funeral at his piano, playing chorals from Bach's St. Matthew Passion.⁸⁰

Christopher Pearse Cranch had become a wanderer, but he and Dwight never quite drifted apart. As early as March, 1848, Cranch had written a long, newsy letter from Rome on a sudden impulse, showing they were not very close any more.⁸¹ They

⁷⁸Cooke, p. 186.

⁷⁹A.L.S. of December 4, 1861, in the Boston Public Library.

⁸⁰Letter to (the second) Mrs. Ripley, quoted in Cooke, pp. 282-284, without date.

⁸¹A.L.S. of March 14, 1848, in the Boston Public Library.

must have met in Europe. At this time Cranch was so short of funds that he had to ask the traditionally impecunious Dwight to pay postage on a very interesting letter from Paris to Berlin, which should have been well worth the charges.⁸² Dwight's description of the shipwreck prompted another note on July 4, 1862.⁸³ So it went until their personal friendship was renewed when Cranch returned to Cambridge in 1873.

Many of the old personal contacts in Boston and Cambridge became perfunctory. In the 'seventies and 'eighties the Saturday Club grew large and unwieldy.⁸⁴ The corporate spirit of the Class of 1832 seems to have lapsed after the twenty-fifth reunion. Dwight stirred it up again during an informal discussion at the Harvard alumni dinner in 1866, and the class dinners were resumed on October 31 of that year at the Parker House.⁸⁵ About this time Dwight became secretary of the class, but he recorded almost nothing in the Class Book. In tearing out the three pages of his autobiography, he removed more than he ever put in. He apparently could be counted on, however, to arrange a good dinner each year.

With latter-day outcroppings of transcendentalism, Dwight seems to have had little to do. He is not mentioned in direct

⁸²A.L.S. of January 1, 1861, in the Boston Public Library.

⁸³Scott, Life and Letters of C. P. Cranch, pp. 251-252.

⁸⁴See the list of more than seventy members in George F. Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), I, 424-425.

⁸⁵Class Book of the Class of 1832, in the Harvard Archives.

connection with the Free Religious Association or its successor, the Radical Club, although he lectured under the auspices of the former in 1870.⁸⁶ It seems unlikely that he would have been left out of a group including Holmes, Clarke, W. H. Channing, Col. Higginson, Cyrus Bartol, Emerson, Alcott, and Julia Ward Howe.⁸⁷ Perhaps he was "smilingly," silently present. He is also omitted from Frank Sanborn's detailed account of the Concord School of Philosophy (1878-1888),⁸⁸ and a note in one of his letters shows definitely that he was content to remain outside this experiment.⁸⁹

Although he did not desert idealism, Dwight became more and more a specialist as he found himself directing the fortunes of Boston music. His friendship for the Howes remained intimate after Mary's death largely because Julia Ward shared his musical tastes exactly, and because he delighted in being a sort of musical uncle to the Howe children.⁹⁰ He danced so gaily at Florence Howe's wedding that he sprawled on the floor, creating a story that went all the way to Otto Dresel in Leipzig.⁹¹ The Howes had their seats with him for the concerts

⁸⁶G. W. Cooke, "The Free Religious Association," New England Magazine, XXVIII (n.s., June, 1903), 493.

⁸⁷See Laura E. Richards and Maude Howe Elliott, Julia Ward Howe (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1915), I, 286.

⁸⁸Recollections of Seventy Years, II, 485 ff.

⁸⁹To Edith Andrew, August 28, 1887. A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

⁹⁰J. W. Howe, Reminiscences, p. 437.

⁹¹See a letter from Dresel to Dwight of March 1, 1872. A.L.S. in the Harvard Musical Association.

in the Music Hall.⁹² He and Julia Ward could talk endlessly about the kind of music they both loved; but Julia, being free from professional obligations, avoided performances where new, controversial numbers were played.⁹³ With the many activities of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, Dwight was sympathetic enough to become a trustee of the Perkins Institute in 1875.⁹⁴ He is not mentioned, however, in Dr. Howe's published Letters and Journals,⁹⁵ or very often, for that matter, in Mrs. Howe's Reminiscences.

Dwight never enjoyed for very long the feeling of being indispensable to the intimate, private life of anyone. His last chance for domestic happiness having disappeared, he more or less drifted into the public domain, renouncing private sovereignty to cultivate for the sake of music in Boston the acquaintance of whoever might help and whoever needed help. Among Boston musicians, he idolized the crusty and conservative Otto Dresel, whose prolonged influence on Dwight's musical thinking went back to the first year of the Journal. Dwight compared Dresel's first concert in Boston, on December 22, 1852, to "the communing of the early Christians

⁹²Maud Howe Elliott, "The Old Rosewood Desk," in Days and Ways in Old Boston, ed. by William S. Rossiter (Boston: R. H. Stearns, 1915), p. 75.

⁹³Richards and Elliott, Julia Ward Howe, II, 156-157.

⁹⁴The certificate of Dwight's trusteeship is in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁹⁵Edited by Laura E. Richards (Boston: Dana Estes, 1906).

'in an upper chamber'."⁹⁶ The many letters from Dresel to Dwight in the Boston Public Library and the Harvard Musical Association contain interesting details about Dresel and Boston music, but little about the addressee. Dresel knew Dwight well enough to tease him and criticize him severely, but the acquaintance was still an essentially professional one.

In the same way, most of the many other letters written to Dwight in these years are disappointing. Very few reveal a personal relationship between the correspondents close enough to make us feel a contact with Dwight as a person as distinct from Dwight as a sort of Secretary for Boston Music. His was a name to be addressed by musicians happy and musicians angry, by anxious mothers ("I appeal to you as the truest friend of 'Music' . . . to defend my daughter in her performance last evening . . ."⁹⁷ by people wanting choice tickets to concerts. The list of persons he helped, and of those who honored him with their admiration and attention, would be long and impressive, but without much significance here.⁹⁸ Although Dwight undoubtedly wrote more letters in this period than have come to light, their contents probably would not enlarge this study very much. Among many friends, admirers, and not a few disciples, he lived, in a sense, alone and silent.

⁹⁶Boston Evening Transcript, October 4, 1890, p. 7.

⁹⁷From Mrs. J. Rametti. Undated A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

⁹⁸See Cooke, pp. 223-225.

6.

The ten or twelve years following the Civil War were the period of greatest triumph for the "truant occupation," a triumph made possible by alumni of the Pierian Sodality, the organization which had made Dwight the truant of them all. The Harvard Musical Association supported the Journal of Music from the beginning, and sponsored the series of concerts which made Dwight the leading musical impresario and critic of Boston between 1865 and 1880. After 1873, it even provided Dwight with a home.

From the time of its formation through and beyond the period of its greatest public service, the Harvard Musical Association had no more loyal and active member than John S. Dwight. At the meeting of the "Honorary and Immediate Members of the Pierian Sodality" on August 30, 1837, Dwight read the committee report formally stating the purpose of the new organization.⁹⁹ At that time, the association dedicated itself to collecting a musical library and to promoting music at Harvard even to the point of recommending that music be made a part of the curriculum.¹⁰⁰ Dwight served on the committee to draft a constitution and by-laws, and was elected the first vice-president in 1838. He held this office for

⁹⁹Report Made at a Meeting of the Honorary and Immediate Members of the Pierian Sodality . . . Cambridge, August 30, 1837, with a Record of the Meeting (Cambridge: Folsom, Wells and Thurston, 1837). Reprinted in the Boston Musical Gazette, I (June 27, 1838), 33-34, and (July 11, 1838) 42.

¹⁰⁰Boston Musical Gazette, I (July 11, 1838), 42. See also HMA Library, Bulletin No. 6 (December, 1936), p. [11].

two further terms between 1842 and 1844. In the years corresponding roughly to his "associationist" period, he was not particularly active, but in 1851 he was a member of the important committee on recommendations for the new Music Hall.¹⁰¹ In 1853, he was elected vice-president again, and two years later he began an eighteen-year tenure in that office. He had been chairman of the library committee almost continually, and was official Librarian from 1871 on.¹⁰² In 1873 he became, in effect, president-for-life, general factotum, and resident omniarch of the association. That such a man as Dwight was free to create and assume such a position was an accident giving a unique stability and color both to the association and to symphonic music in Boston.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹HMA Library, Bulletin No. 6 (December, 1936), p. [7].

¹⁰²HMA Library, Bulletin No. 10 (February, 1941), p. [15].

¹⁰³sitting in the present library of the Harvard Musical Association on July 14, 1950, the author, a rank intruder, found the spirit of Dwight so strong as to set him staring into the past. Dwight's portrait, almost life-sized, looks cheerfully down from a central place of honor. Many of the books and scores he added to the library still sit on the shelves. Late in the afternoon, while the author was reading in Dwight's own hand the report of the fourth season of orchestra concerts sponsored by the association (1868-1869), a current member began, in an upstairs room, a somewhat halting but relaxed reading of the familiar Trio from the third movement of the Sonata, op. 31., No. 3, by Beethoven.



To him who had spent many months trying to imagine how Dwight's own renditions of Beethoven sounded, the experience was almost eerie.

The most influential position Dwight ever held was the perennial chairmanship of the concert committee for the Harvard Musical Association orchestra concerts under Carl Zerrahn, which occupied seventeen seasons with their rise, success, and fall between 1865 and 1882.¹⁰⁴ He dictated most of the programs, negotiated with orchestra members and soloists, and even did some of the ticket-selling and accounting.¹⁰⁵ As the most powerful person in Boston musical circles, he showed diplomatic and administrative, as well as critical and artistic abilities. Surrounded and supported by a court of old Pierians, he became the benevolent despot who took the control of Boston music away from the "capricious mood of the public," placed it "in the right hands," and offered "pure programmes" to the "right kind of audience."¹⁰⁶ Twenty-five years after he had called for such action in the Dial and in the address before this same organization, Dwight finally found himself in full possession of the means to act. His administration was completely autocratic. When he was in the chair, no motion of which he disapproved ever came to a vote.¹⁰⁷

At the end of the first season of six concerts, Dwight reported a clear and unequivocal success. \$300.00 worth of

¹⁰⁴HMA Library, Bulletin No. 5 (April, 1936), pp. [2-14].

¹⁰⁵See the various MSS in the Harvard Musical Association, including Dwight's reports for each season, letters to him, etc.

¹⁰⁶Dwight's report of the first season (1865-1866). MS in the Harvard Musical Association.

¹⁰⁷From a reminiscence of William Aptrorp, quoted by Cooke, p. 277.

music was added to the library, and a surplus of \$1385.00 cash was in the concert fund. The concerts gave a "great deal of refined pleasure, instruction, and good to all concerned," and proved that no stooping to "popular" taste was necessary if "the true audience" were properly "organized." The association took on a new life. As "an organization of men of culture," it was now in the act of lifting music up and placing "its true professors, or rather ministers, on an equal footing with men engaged in other liberal and honored professions.¹⁰⁸ In other words, the old Pierian Sodality made a respectable place in the world for one member who never could shake the spell.

Through eight seasons the concerts showed a consistent surplus and were the staple fare of Boston music.¹⁰⁹ For nine seasons more they continued, with a deficit every year paid out of profits of the good days, until after the Boston Symphony was formed in 1881.

Competition in various forms appeared early, however. In 1869, Dwight tangled for the first time with Patrick Gilmore, strong believer in massive spectacles and in catering to the "popular taste" which Dwight thought needed restraint and reform. As a comparison of the Journal of Music with Gilmore's jaunty History of the National Peace Jubilee¹¹⁰ will show,

¹⁰⁸Report of the first season.

¹⁰⁹HMA Library, Bulletin No. 5 (April, 1936), p. [12].

¹¹⁰Boston: published by the author, 1871.

Dwight was more than a match for the Irish trumpeter. Just before the first "Peace Jubilee" he printed a list of the music played by the Harvard orchestra in the last two, very successful seasons, and pointed out that Gilmore had wisely chosen a city where the public taste had already been healthfully nurtured.¹¹¹ Gilmore made comic opera of an interview he had with Dwight,¹¹² but if he hoped Dwight would make himself ridiculous in blind, raging opposition, he was disappointed. In the Journal, Gilmore was credited with sanity, modesty, and great success,¹¹³ although Dwight regarded the result as better than the original plan and the success as partly accidental.¹¹⁴ He thought Gilmore simply allowed quality to speak for itself in the classical program and in the children's festival, along with his flamboyant quantity (an orchestra of 1000 and a chorus of 10,000), "and his own peculiar element of 'Anvil Choruses' . . ."¹¹⁵ Dwight was absent on only one of the five strenuous days in 1869, but he did not pay much attention to the doubly monstrous repetition (orchestra of 2000, chorus of 20,000) in 1872. In preaching "The Lesson of the Former Jubilee," he took a defensible poke at Gilmore's "maudlin, rancid, sentimental rhetoric, . . ."¹¹⁶

¹¹¹Journal of Music, XXIX (June 5, 1869), 46-47.

¹¹²History of the National Peace Jubilee, pp. 53-58.

¹¹³XXIX (July 3, 1869), 60.

¹¹⁴XXIX (July 17, 1869), 71.

¹¹⁵Journal of Music, XXIX (July 3, 1869), 60.

¹¹⁶Journal of Music, XXXII (June 29, 1872), 262.

and displayed not only impatience but a touch of snobbishness in describing the second jubilee as "a piece of modern Irish-American clap trap,"¹¹⁷ springing not "from the historical, refined, quiet Boston," but from "the bursting young business Boston."¹¹⁸

At the end of 1869 arrived a competitor much more formidable than Gilmore. Dwight recognized immediately that Theodore Thomas and his traveling orchestra offered a standard of performance far above anything Boston had heard before. At first, he rejoiced in Thomas' coming, confident that programs of "new" music, especially Wagner, were simply a harmless antidote to the Harvard orchestra's stringently classical repertoire.¹¹⁹ He even detected an immediate improvement in the local group, produced by "careful drill and a renewed ambition . . ."¹²⁰ Otto Dressel, in Europe at the time and in constant communication with Dwight, knew better. On the matter of program making he usually sided with Dwight against the younger and less conservative members of the committee,¹²¹ but even before Thomas appeared he found one of Dwight's programs "a little heavy generally."¹²² Writing

¹¹⁷Journal of Music, XXXII (June 29, 1872), 259.

¹¹⁸Journal of Music, XXXII (July 13, 1872), 270.

¹¹⁹Journal of Music, XXIX (November 6, 1869), 134-135.

¹²⁰Journal of Music, XXIX (December 4, 1869), 150.

¹²¹See the interesting remarks of Arthur Foote, one of the younger members, in HMA Library, Bulletin No. 4 (December, 1935), pp. [3-5].

¹²²A.L.S. of November 15, 1869, in the Harvard Musical Association.

in the summer of 1870 and asking Dwight not to broadcast his "various saucy remarks," he said quite frankly that the Harvard orchestra under "the big Z" made most of its progress in the columns of Dwight's paper, and warned that as long as Zerrahn had Boston bewitched, Boston music would stand still.¹²³

This heresy, which struck directly at Dwight as well as Zerrahn, was an early and accurate prediction that a slow descent had already begun. As Dwight's social and musical influence expanded to its greatest breadth, his hands became gradually tied and the space above his head was almost shut off. The Harvard orchestra was a vested interest to which he had pledged all his abilities. The Journal of Music became the orchestra's house organ. Dwight was far from becoming mercenary or unusually short-sighted in this situation. He simply was not "free" in the transcendental sense, not the "living" man Alcott had singled out many years before. As we have seen many times already, such freedom was not entirely congenial to Dwight. During the long apprenticeship, we found him striving to maintain it with one hand, and grubbing for a place to bury it with the other. But in the long years before he got his place in the world, when freedom was periodically forced upon him, he always found an ideal to carry him along--in the poetry of Goethe, in Association, in the music of Beethoven and Mozart. One could worship Beethoven and condemn Wagner in idealist terms, on something like transcendental

¹²³A.L.S. of August 10-12, 1870, in the Harvard Musical Association.

grounds. But the transcendentalist is far afield in the position of defending Carl Zerrahn as a performer against Theodore Thomas as a performer, particularly if the transcendentalist concerned is dictating what Zerrahn shall perform.

How Dwight handled himself in this equivocal position will be seen when we discuss the music criticism of these years in a later section. Tragedy and frustration are here felt only faintly, if at all. Dwight rode off in many directions during his career, but on one journey where he cut the path for himself he reached his destination, defended his newly won position manfully, and retired with the respect and gratitude of all. To lament the loss of a "living man" and philosopher at this point would be quixotic indeed.

7.

Although the Journal of Music was gradually reduced from guiding and representing a broad musical "movement" to pleading specially for a single organization, it probably could never have lived such a long, healthy, useful life otherwise. In 1863 it was changed from a weekly to a semi-monthly publication. During the first eight or ten years of the Harvard concerts it enjoyed relatively smooth sailing, reaching a circulation of 2500¹²⁴ and probably 10,000 readers. In the late 'seventies it declined with its clique. At the end of 1878 Oliver Ditson stopped publishing it because Dwight would not agree to certain proposed renovations. Longfellow and

¹²⁴Wott, History of American Magazines, III, 196.

and others succeeded in securing a guarantee fund and a new publisher, Houghton, Osgood and Company.¹²⁵ The "Prospectus for 1879" promised a better Journal than ever, with impartial, independent criticisms; new, musically educated contributors like William Apthorp; and a more general coverage of art and literature.¹²⁶

But this was merely the opening cadence of the coda. Such a paper could no longer be supported. Trained music critics began taking over the assignments formerly given to any reporter not otherwise occupied in the Journal's palmy days.¹²⁷ Two months before the Harvard orchestra began its fifteenth season in December of 1879, an upstart "Boston Philharmonic Orchestra" gave its first concert under the able Bernard Listeman.¹²⁸ A year later another and final benefit for the old Journal was in order. It was to be called a "Testimonial Concert" this time, and the fifty influential lovers of music who signed the proposal addressed to Dwight¹²⁹ must have known that they were organizing last rites. Dwight

¹²⁵Cooke, p. 200. Oddly enough, Dwight has been quoted as saying that Longfellow's influence on music was "pernicious" because "he was always ready to head an invitation addressed to any new performer, however mediocre, who was asked to favor the public with a concert." (Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Old Cambridge [New York: Macmillan, 1899], p. 137.)

¹²⁶Journal of Music, XXXVIII (October 26, 1878), 326.

¹²⁷Louis C. Elson, The History of American Music (Revised ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 322.

¹²⁸Journal of Music, XXXIX (November 6, 1879), 181-182.

¹²⁹Reprinted in Journal of Music, XL (December 4, 1880).
192.

accepted the testimonial as a reviver of "hope and motive," encouraging "yet further and--let us hope--better work."¹³⁰ But he knew that very little more work was to be left to him.

He wrote:

What you would honor in me is simply the high purpose, the honesty and the consistent perseverance of my course; to this, and to nothing more, can I lay claim. When my work began, music was esteemed at its true worth by very few among us. I simply preached the faith that was in me. Now we are almost a musical people; those who come forward now learn music as it should be learned, learn to speak of it with knowledge (the knowledge that comes of practice), and will readily outstrip me. What more could I desire?¹³¹

Musically and socially, no event ever gave Dwight more pleasure. It was accompanied by many expressions of admiration and willingness to cooperate with him in anything he might undertake. He was realist enough to suspect, however, that he was being gently dusted off only to be set back farther on the shelf. "Everybody seemed full of the bright idea that had struck somebody 'just in the nick of time'," he wrote. "We never knew we had so many friends; . . ."¹³²

Privately, Dwight confessed that the concert produced only about half what he expected. Of the net proceeds, some \$1360, he settled \$500 on relatives partly dependent on him and deposited \$800 with his publisher (now Houghton, Mifflin and Company) as a new guarantee. In addition, a separate

¹³⁰Journal of Music, XL (December 4, 1880), 192.

¹³¹Loc. cit.

¹³²Journal of Music, XL (December 18, 1880), 206.

fund was set up for him which would pay \$1000 a year for five or six years.¹³³ What he wanted more than anything--a greatly enlarged subscription list to the Journal--was not forthcoming.

For a time he chose to gamble that his editor's salary would yield enough more than the forfeiture out of the \$800 to allow him to hang on. At the beginning of 1881 he bravely announced "A New Lease of Life."¹³⁴ Life, however, had gone out of the Journal's excuse for existence. The music of Boston was proceeding without Dwight, Zerrahn, and the Harvard orchestra. On the formation of the Boston Philharmonic Society with John Knowles Paine as president, Dwight was not consulted. In reporting its first concert in March, with Listemann conducting, Dwight described the society as a "shrewd business scheme . . . born apparently out of a curious fermentation and pot-boiling of the petty local politics and jealousies of music . . ."¹³⁵ Two weeks later, when he reported H. L. Higginson's endowment of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, he seemed a little stunned. He wished the new orchestra success, but thought it ought to have an organization behind it.¹³⁶ Again he was not consulted, although he was

¹³³See Dwight's letter to C. H. Brittan of June 2, 1881, printed in Brittan's "John S. Dwight as I Knew Him," Music, X (July, 1896), 230-231.

¹³⁴Journal of Music, XLI (January 29, 1881), 20.

¹³⁵Journal of Music, XLI (March 26, 1881), 51-52.

¹³⁶Journal of Music, XLI (April 9, 1881), 58-59.

the only person mentioned by name in Higginson's announcement as a leader in forming musical taste. He was not forgotten, but was definitely retired.

The last regular issue of the Journal, number 1050, appeared on July 16, 1881. On September 3, Dwight issued a farewell number. His "Valedictory" was manly, straight to the point, a little weary perhaps, but more a re-affirmation of faith, an almost joyous trip in his long neglected balloon.

We have long realized that we were not made for the competitive, sharp enterprise of modern journalism. That turn of mind which looks at the ideal rather than the practicable, and the native indolence of temperament which sometimes goes with it, have made our movements slow. Hurry who will, we rather wait and take our chance. The work which could not be done at leisure, and in disregard of all immediate effect, we have been too apt to feel was hardly worth the doing. To be the first in the field with an announcement, or a criticism, or an idea, was no part of our ambition. How can one recognize competitors, or enter into competition, and at the same time keep his eye upon truth? If one have anything worth saying, will it not be as good tomorrow as today?¹³⁷

Typically transcendentalist as this passage is, the reader of this study should immediately recognize it as another example of the apparently candid half-truth upon which far too much of the existing commentary on Dwight is based. The person portrayed here might have written Walden, but he never could have been responsible for forty-one volumes of the Journal of Music and seventeen seasons of symphony concerts, keeping one eye on truth perhaps, but the other on the balance in the concert fund and the likes of Patrick Gilmore.

¹³⁷Journal of Music, XLI (September 3, 1881), 123.

8.

Six months after he closed the Journal forever, Dwight wrote to his old friend George William Curtis that laziness was agreeing with him "too well." He was enjoying retirement. "And if I were not so very, very old," he continued,

if it were not my fate to have been sent into the world so long before my time, I verily believe I should confess myself over head and ears in love. At any rate, I love life. Yet nearly all my old friends seem to be dead or dying, . . . When I write you again, I hope to be able to say that I am well at work again; but how? on what? Thank God, I am not a "critic"!138

Speculation on certain enigmatic statements in this letter will make themes for later sections. Here we are interested primarily in the relaxed but far from moribund atmosphere of Dwight's last years.

Of his many friends, the oldest were some of the best. In Cambridge he liked to visit John Holmes, a classmate of '32, and especially Christopher Pearse Cranch, who for over fifty years had periodically revived Dwight's spirits with eloquent words from a fellow-idealist, often in narrow straights. Dwight must have reveled in such memories as Cranch set down in a letter of May 13, 1883.

Can you believe it--we have known each other fifty years! The whirligig of time with its ceaseless revolution and changes, absences from each other, differences of occupation, and so on--has not, I think, worn away in the least our old friendship. We were drawn together from the first by intellectual sympathies, by our studies in the Divinity School; by our tendencies toward freer, fresher, more ideal views of literature and life; in aspirations of the

138 quoted in Cooke, p. 213, without exact date.

true, the good and the beautiful; and not least, by our common love of music. We were youths then--are we older now? Wiser, let us hope--but both young at the core of our hearts.¹³⁹

The annual dinner of the Harvard Musical Association in January, 1884, was a proud moment involving both Cranch and his sister Caroline. The latter had just finished her large painting of Dwight, which was unveiled on this occasion. Christopher Pearse made a short speech and read two sonnets on "Music" and "Poetry."¹⁴⁰ Six years later, Cranch gave an exclusive party for himself on his birthday, when he opened a bottle of rare old wine for Dwight, John Holmes, and Francis Scott, the composer and critic. After dinner the "four old fellows . . . finished off the evening with punch, cigars, and quips and cranks, and wreathed smiles."¹⁴¹

Dwight made an ideal "grand old man." Always short and slender, he probably presented a neutral and unprepossessing appearance until old age added a distinguished white to his beard and receded hair, setting off genial, regular features. He thoroughly enjoyed the twelve years left to him after the long struggle with the Journal of Music and the Harvard orchestra was over. He regularly attended the concerts of the new Boston Symphony. "Orchestra admirable, programmes might be better," he wrote in 1892.¹⁴² He arranged dinners

¹³⁹Scott, Life and Letters of C. F. Cranch, p. 344.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 348.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 370.

¹⁴²Letter "to a young friend," of November 21, 1892, quoted in Cooke, p. 293.

for the Saturday Club and the Class of '32, loafed at the St. Botolph Club, and indulged his passion for friendship and companionship with old and young. There was now time for long letters to such feminine admirers as Edith Andrew, daughter of Governor John Andrew, with whose widow and children Dwight was intimately acquainted. For her he described in detail a summer visit to Laura Howe Richards in Gardiner, Maine, where Julia Ward Howe's grandchildren fascinated him and melted his heart just as her children had a generation earlier.¹⁴³ On August 11, 1886, soon after he moved with the Harvard Musical Association to 11 Park Square, he took time to answer Edith's questions on English prosody, Hermes Trismegistos, and finally himself.

One day with me is like another. I commonly sleep well, get down before nine; once in a while, too seldom, as this blessed morning, find a letter; then go over to Vercelli's and get a frugal breakfast, sitting in a front window, where I overlook the garden and the swan boats, and the children, and read the Advertiser or the Herald, . . . then a few steps further, to good Saint Botolph's Club, where I read more papers; and, thus oriented and put en rapport with the world and the day, I come back to my room and pretend to give some hours to work or study. . . .

I also work some on the Library, receive callers (a very few, oftener ladies than men; and I read, much of the time lying on the sofa, having been sick and weak since I got back from Gardiner. What have I read? Well a number of Stevenson's wild stories: "Treasure Island," "New Arabian Nights," and the latest, "Kidnapped," which is very exciting. Also Moliere. Also I am engaged now on a most interesting volume (in German) of Schumann's "Jugendbriefe," published by his widow. They are

¹⁴³A.L.S. of July 24, 1886, and August 13, 1886, in the Boston Public Library.

delightful reading; . . . I have also read a little of "Il Paradiso."--This brings me to dinner. Then the Transcript--more sofa and lazy reading. Then in the cool I sit in the Garden, or take a horse-car ride, or go to Cambridge and see John Holmes, or (rarely) make a call, . . . After the ride or the call I get around to the old Parker House . . . and get back to my room before midnight, gaze out on the square a while, and drag my weary limbs up to bed.¹⁴⁴

A year later, "Best of Editha" was reading that Dwight had caught cold in the Music Hall, sprained his ankle jumping puddles on the way home, and spent a week so lacking in social and intellectual stimulation that he seemed to be drying up. But he was not too feeble to struggle with a translation of a difficult German poem and read "a number of bad French novels."¹⁴⁵

No doubt Dwight could easily tolerate and sometimes enjoy the tendency of his friends, particularly women, to regard him as a sort of bodiless, angelic spirit. At Julia Ward Howe's seventieth birthday breakfast in 1889, he read a "delightful poem" in response to a toast that would make most persons shudder a little: "Sweetness and light, your name is Dwight."¹⁴⁶ But even in the last, comfortable years, his vitality rose up periodically to belie such characterization. In 1890 he published two pieces of work that he had had in hand for several years. One, the essay "Common Sense,"¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.

¹⁴⁵A.L.S. of August 28, 1887, in the Boston Public Library.

¹⁴⁶Richards and Elliott, Julia Ward Howe, II, 150.

¹⁴⁷Unitarian Review, XXXIII (May, 1890), 385-415.

was a clear and refreshing statement of transcendental faith. The other was drudgery, but a drudgery requiring much of Dwight's learning--the musical definitions for Webster's International Dictionary. In October of the same year he bravely took over the musical column of the Boston Transcript. Here, for seven months,¹⁴⁸ he reported Boston music fully and sympathetically, infusing just enough reminiscence and personal opinion to make the work unmistakably his own.

Few people have ever been more alive at seventy-eight. On January 18, 1892, he wrote to Mrs. Otto Dresel that he was "much depressed by loss of working days," being laid up with a cough and the gout.¹⁴⁹ The following November he and the Association moved again, this time to the present quarters at Cedar and Chestnut Streets.¹⁵⁰ Such an operation was more than Dwight would have contracted for willingly. When it was successfully got through, however, it produced a lively letter picturing a lively old man, happy to have people bustling around him, putting up his books, hanging his pictures, making his bed.¹⁵¹ The new committee, he said without malice, was sacrificing his old order of books in the library to "their acoustical hobby,"¹⁵² but they selected

¹⁴⁸October 11, 1890, to May 16, 1891.

¹⁴⁹quoted in Cooke, p. 293.

¹⁵⁰The address was originally 1 West Cedar Street; now it is 57a Chestnut Street.

¹⁵¹Letter of November 21, 1892, "to a young friend," quoted in Cooke, p. 292.

¹⁵²Loc. cit.

an excellent program of Beethoven and Bach for the opening musicale. "I could not have chosen better myself," he declared.¹⁵³

On his eightieth birthday, May 13, 1893, the Harvard Musical Association gave Dwight a party. Morning, afternoon, and evening were filled with telegrams, flowers, and visits of friends.¹⁵⁴ Four months later much the same group again filled the Association library to hear a service described by someone as "less like a funeral than a meeting of friends to bid him Godspeed."¹⁵⁵ The religious ceremony was conducted by Rev. E. A. Horton, songs of Bach and Mendelssohn were sung, and Julia Ward Howe read eight quatrains of poetic tribute.¹⁵⁶ Song, Christianity, and poetry were all combined in a felicitous sentence whispered to Mrs. Howe by Oliver Wendell Holmes: "Mrs. Howe, if we could see everything that is, don't you think we would see about that casket a group of angels very much like those who sang a certain morning in Judea?"¹⁵⁷ This meeting was three days after Dwight's death on September 5, 1893.

¹⁵³Letter of November 21, 1892, in Cooke, p. 293.

¹⁵⁴Cooke, p. 294.

¹⁵⁵Cooke, p. 295.

¹⁵⁶Cooke, pp. 296-297.

¹⁵⁷Cooke, p. 296.

CHAPTER VII

CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN LITERATURE: 1852-1893

1.

The Journal of Music is Dwight's magnum opus, and, difficult as it is to describe and evaluate such a publication, we must make the attempt. It is the kind of work one could wish Dwight had moved beyond, with volumes of poetry and essays perhaps. But the Harbinger and the Journal contain most of what he had to say, and he never supplemented these inevitably dated and ephemeral writings with any considerable volume of more enduring work. No claim of hidden immortality for the Journal can be made. Because it represents the kind of work Dwight did longest and best, a study of it helps us to know Dwight better. If we do not discover a "better" Dwight, a genius heretofore unrecognized, we shall find that his bulkiest contribution to American letters is not insignificant.

On well over a thousand separate occasions, spaced first one and later two weeks apart, Dwight was responsible for filling the eight quarto pages of the Journal with copy. According to his original "Prospectus," some space was to be given to each of the following kinds of writing:

1. Critical reviews of Concerts, Oratorios, Operas; with timely analyses of the notable works performed, accounts of their composers, &c.

2. Notices of new music published at home and abroad.

3. A summary of the significant Musical News from all parts, gathered from English, German, French, as well as American papers.

4. Correspondence from musical persons and places.

5. Essays on musical styles, schools, periods, authors, compositions, instruments, theories; on musical education; on Music in its moral, social, and religious bearings; on Music in the Church, the Concert-room, the Theatre, the Chamber, and the Street;&c.

6. Translations from the best German and French writers upon Music and Art.

7. Occasional notices of Sculpture, Painting, Architecture, Poetry, aesthetic Books, the Drama,&c.

8. Original and selected Poems, short Tales, Anecdotes,&c.¹

Such a prospectus would have been ambitious enough for a well-staffed, prosperous publication. Actually Dwight was under no illusions. "Be not startled at my prospectus," he wrote to Cranch, "but try to get me ten names upon it."² More surprising than the scope of the prospectus is the way Dwight lived up to it. In its lifetime the Journal provided its readers with an extensive selection of original poetry, translations and reprints from European books and periodicals, and musical news from beyond Boston--all in addition to Dwight's own editorials and reviews. Advertising ordinarily occupied only the back page. A typical issue in the early years was made up thus:

¹Journal of Music, I (April 10, 1852), 1.

²Quoted in Cooke, p. 148, without date.

"The Musical Scale," by "E. H."--three columns, or one page.

(One of a series of articles on the theory of music.)

"The Overture to Mozart's 'Magic Flute',"--three columns.

(A translation by Dwight from Oulibicheff.)

"Acoustic Architecture," by "U."--three columns.

"From My Diary. No. VIII," by "our diarist," Alexander Thayer, a frequent contributor--two columns.

"The Boston Music Hall--Its Rise and Progress," and "First Concert of Madame Sontag."--six columns.
(Dwight's editorial and concert review.)

"Musical Intelligence."--two columns.

(News and notices from Boston and New York.)

Advertisements--four columns.³

This table of contents contains all the kinds of writing found consistently in the Journal except poetry, which appeared often enough to strengthen considerably the literary quality of the paper. Christopher Pearse Cranch contributed more than a dozen original poems in the early years. Fanny Raymond, later Fanny Raymond Ritter, made many appearances. R. H. Stoddard, Bryant, Jones Very, Longfellow, Rose Terry Cooke, Bayard Taylor, Sidney Lanier, and many others are represented. Dwight and Charles T. Brooks provided many translations, some old and some new, nearly all from German lyrics.

Nevertheless, the sub-title, "A Paper of Art and Literature," remained largely sotto voce. The Journal had a high literary quality indeed, but the subject matter was very

³Journal of Music, II (November 13, 1852), 41-48.

seldom far removed from music. The clientele of the Journal was limited to readers interested in the "musical movement" which Dwight pledged himself to record and direct; and because of the scanty resources at his disposal, he was forced to depend directly upon himself for about half of what he printed. The Journal's literary excellence was due almost entirely to the fact that Dwight was a good writer, a good translator, and a better-than-average literary critic. Its excellence has faded because the editor was necessarily governed by considerations more pressing than trying to achieve literary immortality.

Dwight put his ability as a translator to good use in the Journal. His selections from Goulibicheff's Mozart appeared irregularly for several years. Just which of the many other translations are his own work is hard to determine, but he was certainly responsible for a large number of them, including Liszt's articles on Chopin, selections from such writers as Berlioz, Schumann, and E. T. A. Hoffman, and many columns from French and German periodicals.

For purely literary criticism, the Journal editor had little time or space. The promising beginnings he had made along this line in the Harbinger were left almost undeveloped after 1850. One notable exception is interesting enough to make us regret a little that Dwight had to specialize so rigidly. In the summer of 1854 he went to New Hampshire for his vacation with a pre-publication copy of Walden in his pocket. He always wrote buoyant prose from the north woods anyway, and in such

appropriate surroundings he honored Thoreau's masterpiece with one of its most sympathetic, enthusiastic criticisms, which is probably the first review of the book ever published.⁴

He found Walden

full of information, full of wisdom, full of wholesome bracing moral atmosphere, full of beauty, poetry and entertainment. . . . It is the most thoroughly original book that has been produced these many days. Its literary style is admirably clear and terse and elegant; the pictures wonderfully graphic; for the writer is a poet and a scholar as well as a tough wrestler with the first economical problems of nature, and a winner of good cheer and of free glorious leisure out of what men call the "hard realities" of life. Walden pond, a half mile in diameter, in Concord town, becomes henceforth as classical as any lake of Windermere. And we doubt not, men are beginning to look to transcendentalists for the soberest reports of good hard common-sense, as well as for the models of the clearest writing.⁵

"Common sense" from a transcendentalist poet! We shall see later that this paradox was not idly constructed.

Dwight was especially proud of his pioneering in the history of American music. For our purposes, his later music criticism, to be discussed in the final chapter, is more important than his contributions to musical history. But we cannot fail to note the value of the Journal as a primary source of purely historical information, recorded in the readable prose of an editor who knew what he wanted to happen,

⁴Journal of Music, V (August 12, 1854), 150. Dwight's letter is dated August 8. Walden was announced by G. P. Putnam on August 9, and offered for sale on the tenth. Horace Greeley had published extensive selections in the New York Tribune on July 29. (See Henry Seidel Canby, Thoreau [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939], p. 289.)

⁵Loc. cit.

and saw his wishes fulfilled often enough to make him reasonably clear-sighted on what actually happened. In spite of the limitations automatically imposed on the Journal by Dwight's private opinions and the sponsorship of the Harvard Musical Association, the reader can, if he remains always slightly on his guard, enjoy the feeling of being "in" on important events and developments. Near the beginning of the second volume is the editor's enthusiastic description of his first visit to the new Music Hall.⁶ In the last, half-sized volume is recorded the endowment of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.⁷ Between these two accounts, symbolizing the limits of the Journal's own position in the history of music, are many exciting moments. One does not need a very strong antiquarian spirit to relish Dwight's notice of Adelina Patti in the very first season of her operatic career.⁸ Six months of agitation in the Journal build up to the historic appointment of John Knowles Paine as Instructor in Music at Harvard, a consummation of one of the Harvard Musical Association's original projects.⁹ From the Journal could be extracted an enlightening series of essays on the history of the Bostonians' taste in music. Like the accounts of Gilmore, Theodore Thomas,

⁶(November 27, 1852), pp. 61-63.

⁷XLI (April 9, 1881), 58.

⁸Journal of Music, XVI (January 7, 1860), 326-327.

⁹See HMA Library, Bulletin No. 6 (December, 1936), p. [14]; and Journal of Music, XX (March 22, 1862), 407, et passim.

and Carl Zerrahn, these are valuable contributions to American musicology, although they serve this study better as illustrations of Dwight's own reactions to such phenomena.

Turning over the leaves of the Journal today, volume after volume, one is much more conscious than were Dwight's contemporaries of the immense labor the paper represents. Dwight often professed an extreme dislike for such drudgery, speaking of his "miserable Journal,"¹⁰ "the 'old paper,' which I would too willingly stop if I could, without stopping at the same time the bread and butter."¹¹ By 1881 he was "tired of writing," and bore a strong "grudge toward the everlasting pen."¹² But such statements are often made by the writer who accomplishes most when he is uncomfortably busy and complaining the loudest. The Journal and the Harvard concerts kept Dwight alive, mentally and physically, just as surely as he kept them alive. Never a great talker, never a diarist or raconteur, he thought best with pen in hand and the personal masthead, "Dwight's Journal of Music," waiting for copy. William Apthorp, who often dined with Dwight in the 'sixties and 'seventies, could remember nothing of their conversations. "I really don't think we talked about much of anything in

¹⁰Letter of March, 1856, quoted in Cooke, p. 159, without exact date.

¹¹Letter to Otto Dresel, of July 12, 1863, quoted in Cooke, p. 187.

¹²Letter to C. H. Brittan of June 2, 1881, quoted in Brittan, "John S. Dwight as I Knew Him," Music, X (July, 1896), 230.

particular," Apthorp says. "He never talked as he wrote."¹³ Like many of Dwight's other acquaintances, Apthorp got the impression that a "dolce far niente . . . made up a good part of his life."¹⁴ Any lonely, single man creates such an illusion if he is not a herculean worker and does not talk shop in his leisure hours; but the "force" which amazed James Kay and strengthened the Harbinger in 1846 was always available to the Journal. In the very strenuous year of 1869, Otto Dresel had to revise his estimate of Dwight. "I am truly amazed at your capacity for work," he wrote from Germany, "when it has to be done, or when you do feel like it! In such cases you are able to perform as much as anybody, and a great deal more and better too!"¹⁵

No doubt Dwight loved good food, good company, cigars and punch, "quips and cranks," the sight and smell of flowers--all kinds of passive idleness. But he had a lot to say, and he did not dispense it by folding his legs at the club and having his talk out. He did not have the flow of words or the self-confidence to command attention in conversation, to make a book for a Boswell. The Journal of Music was not only his bread and butter, but also his pulpit and microphone.

In spite of the curses he sometimes hurled at his paper, Dwight was proud of its bulk, its quality, and its success.

¹³Quoted in Cooke, p. 277.

¹⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁵A.L.S. of September 26, 1869, in the Boston Public Library.

In announcing the contract with Oliver Ditson, he wrote a confident blurb for the twelve volumes already finished.

Consider how much of the best literature of musical and other Art . . . is now concentrated in these six volumes! [The volumes are bound in pairs.] . . . where can be found so full a contemporary history of music, . . . for the six years past? . . . We do not see how any intelligent musician or amateur, how any library, can well afford to be without a complete set of the JOURNAL OF MUSIC.¹⁶

The "high purpose," "honesty," and "consistent perseverance" with which Dwight credited himself in 1880 have already been noted.¹⁷ Seven years later he was still proud enough to refer to the Journal in print as "the first attempt, both serious and persistent, at instructive musical journalism in Boston."¹⁸ As Dwight himself recognized, the Journal was not designed to reach a large audience, nor was it addressed to posterity. Extensive reading in it could not be recommended today except to specialists. But if, along with the history of music in Boston, the personality and thought of a man like Dwight are worthy of attention, the old Journal has life in it yet.

2.

Although Dwight's bibliography after 1852, aside from the Journal, is not large, Cooke's suggestion that financial

¹⁶Journal of Music, XII (March 27, 1858), 412.

¹⁷Journal of Music, XL (December 4, 1881), 192. (See above, p. 236.)

¹⁸History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Mass. (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1883-1893), I, 153.

security and more extensive education would have made him a writer of the first rank,¹⁹ is as easily refuted as defended. His reputation as a translator, musicologist, and essayist gave him more opportunities than he could take advantage of; but the Journal itself created the opportunities, kept Dwight's talents alive, and even served as an invaluable notebook from which the editor could draw material for supplementary writing.

The connection with Oliver Ditson led to a modest amount of profitable translation and other skilled literary labor. The most familiar words Dwight ever wrote are the English text for Adolph Adam's Cantique de Noel:

O holy night!
The stars are brightly shining.²⁰

Modern collections still contain some of his other song translations, like those from Heine's Buch der Lieder adapted to Schumann's Dichterliebe and miscellaneous German lyrics set to the music of Robert Franz.²¹ He was often called upon to make translations for such special occasions as the Sänger-Fest at Providence in 1866.²² One of the labors of 1869 which "amazed" Otto Dresel was Dwight's English version of the text

¹⁹page 236.

²⁰(Boston: Oliver Ditson, [ca. 1863]).

²¹For example, "I'll Not Complain," from Heine's "Ich grolle nicht," with music by Schumann (Op. 48, No. 7), in One Hundred Songs by Ten Masters (Philadelphia: Oliver Ditson, distributed by Theodore Presser, [1917]), I, 80-82; and "His Coming," from Rückert's "Er ist gekommen," with music by Franz (Op. 4, No. 7), ibid., pp. 89-92.

²²Journal of Music, XXVI (July 21, 1866), 275, and (August 18, 1866) 289.

to Bach's St. Matthew Passion, published by Oliver Ditson and finally performed, after many postponements and much prodding in the Journal, by the Handel and Haydn Society in the spring of 1874.²³

As a literate musicologist Dwight was well enough established in the early 'sixties to contribute "many of the articles" on "Musical Science and Art" to the 1865 edition of Webster's American Dictionary.²⁴ Oddly enough, he was here supplementing the work of Lowell Mason, who was the chief musical authority. In 1890, the revision of all the musical articles was entrusted to him.²⁵ A comparison of the musical definitions in the International Dictionary with the definitions in the earlier editions shows that the "sound" of Dwight could come through even when he was a harmless drudge. Fugue, for example, was defined in the old "Unabridged" as follows: "A musical composition in contrapuntal style, in which a subject is proposed by one part, and then responded to by the others, according to certain rules."²⁶ Dwight expanded the definition thus:

A polyphonic composition, developed from a given theme or themes, according to strict contrapuntal rules. The theme is first given out by one voice or part, and then, while that pursues its way, it is

²³Journal of Music, XXIX (August 28, 1869), 94-95; XXX (May 7, 1870), 238; XXXIV (May 30, 1874), 238-239.

²⁴See the "Preface" to An American Dictionary of the English Language (Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam, 1865), p. iv.

²⁵See a letter from L. J. Campbell to Dwight of October 13, 1890, congratulating Dwight on "so much excellent and satisfactory work." (A.L.S. in the Boston Public Library.)

²⁶American Dictionary, p. 548.

repeated by another at the interval of a fifth or fourth, and so on, until all the parts have answered one by one, continuing their several melodies and interweaving them in one complex progressive whole, in which the theme is often lost and re-appears.²⁷

The phrases "while that pursues its way" and "interweaving them in one complex progressive whole" have Dwight's trademark on them.

From sources in the Journal of Music and his own long experience, Dwight compiled in his later years three conspicuous articles on the history of music in Boston and Cambridge. The earliest of these, "The Pierian Sodality," for the Harvard Book, has already been tapped for its interesting personal reminiscences. "The History of Music in Boston" was Dwight's chapter in The Memorial History of Boston,²⁸ with the writing of which he was "completely absorbed and eaten up" in the hectic summer of 1881.²⁹ Finally, in retirement, he agreed to continue Charles Perkins' History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of which he completed twelve chapters, published in 1887.³⁰ Dwight had little taste for research or antiquarianism, and the latter two publications added nothing significant to the files of the Journal.

²⁷Webster's International Dictionary . . . (Springfield, Mass: G. and C. Merriam, 1891), p. 601.

²⁸Edited by Justin Winsor (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1881), IV, 415-464.

²⁹Letter to Brittan in "John S. Dwight as I Knew Him," p. 231.

³⁰I, 149-518.

3.

The pages of the Atlantic Monthly were certainly open to Dwight during the editorships of Lowell, Fields, and Howells,³¹ but he did not submit any copy until after the very successful lecture, "Music in Relation to Culture and the Religious Sentiment," delivered in the Sunday afternoon series sponsored by the Free Religious Association. Given originally on March 26, 1870, the lecture was repeated on May 6 at the written request of Holmes, Lowell, and others.³² Again by urgent request,³³ two parts of the lecture were reprinted in the Atlantic as "Music a Means of Culture,"³⁴ and "The Intellectual Influence of Music."³⁵

As the reader might suspect from their titles, these essays do not contain any ideas we have not encountered before, some of them many times, in Dwight's earlier writing. But they are still interesting as products of Dwight's very busiest and most successful period, when his audience was largest, most influential, and most respectful. Few readers of the Atlantic were well acquainted with the divinity school dissertation, the Harbinger, Aesthetic Papers, or even the

³¹See Howells' request for memoirs of Brook Farm, quoted above, p. 120, n. 65.

³²Cooke, p. 198.

³³See a letter to Dwight "from one of the leaders of musical interest in Boston," quoted in Cooke, pp. 198-199, without date.

³⁴XXVI (September, 1870), 321-331.

³⁵XXVI (November, 1870), 614-625.

Journal of Music. Dwight took this opportunity to remind a younger generation that

the interest here felt in Beethoven began at the same moment with the interest in Emerson, and notably in the same minds who found such quickening in his free and bracing utterance. It was to a great extent the young souls drawn to "Transcendentalism" (as it was nicknamed), to escape spiritual starvation, who were most drawn also to the great, deep music which we began to hear at that time.³⁶

For us, the most important thing Dwight does here is reveal the underlying unity and consistency he felt in his own life. If, in the creation and maintenance of his place in the world, he was not always guided immediately by idealism, he could, as these essays show, return periodically to the old faith and reconcile his thoughts and actions with it as if he had never encountered a problem more serious than the articulation of his transcendentalism. For the intellectuals of the "realistic" 'seventies, Dwight restated with all his old enthusiasm the basic value of a "musical atmosphere" to democracy and to the individual. Whether one's faith leans toward the collective idealism of Association, or toward the old "heresy" of individual salvation in Emerson, music should be a basic part of his culture.³⁷ "If the best of all society is musical society, we go further and say: The sweetest of all solitude is when one is alone with music."³⁸ Dwight the aging widower, the lonely but highly respectable and respected

³⁶"Music as a Means of Culture," p. 322.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 325-330.

³⁸Ibid., p. 330.

member of Boston society, found at his piano nourishment that "feeds the hidden springs of hope and love and faith; renews the old conviction of life's springtime."³⁹ Music enabled him to go forth "in the spirit of reconciliation and of patience," feeling he was a member of "the harmonic and anointed bodyguard of peace, fraternity, and good-will."⁴⁰

"The Intellectual Influence of Music" is likewise filled with echoes of Goethe, Emerson, Fourier, and especially Dwight of the earlier days. The principal theme is Dwight's familiar defense of "pure" music as the highest type of scientific and philosophic activity, with fundamental "correspondence" to the laws of man and nature. Particularly interesting is his insistence that great musicians show great intellectual power not only in such forms as the fugue and the symphony, but also in their written words, in their conversation, and even in their facial expressions.⁴¹ As examples of the literacy and intellectuality of musicians, Dwight refers to the letters and published writings of Mendelssohn, Gluck, Wagner, Weber, Hiller, Berlioz, Liszt, and others.⁴² All of these had appeared in the Journal of Music. The literary amateur never reached the point of resigning either his literary or his amateur status. He was careful to let the readers of the

³⁹"Music as a Means of Culture," p. 330.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 331.

⁴¹"The Intellectual Influence of Music," p. 615.

⁴²Ibid., p. 616.

Atlantic know that he appeared before them not as a guest specialist, but as the editor of "A Paper of Art and Literature."

A third essay from the lecture of 1870, on music and religion, was proposed but did not appear. In the 'eighties, Dwight contributed three more articles to the Atlantic, but they are without significance. "Our Dark Age in Music,"⁴³ the story of Puritan psalmody, is taken from "The History of Music in Boston." Articles on "Bach"⁴⁴ and "Handel"⁴⁵ are routine bi-centennial notices.

The essay left unwritten in 1870 was not dropped and forgotten, however. In the last ten years of his life, Dwight seems to have given much thought to a re-examination of the problem he attacked at the beginning of his career--the relationship of music and religion. "Common Sense," written about 1885⁴⁶ and finally published in 1890,⁴⁷ completes the cycle of his many experiments and speculations. It is the return of the unfrocked but never unbelieving Christian transcendentalist to his point of departure. For fifty years he had preached an ideal that from the beginning had made him feel close to truth and God, but had led him along a narrow, unfrequented path. The opening phrase of "Common Sense" is

⁴³L (December, 1882), 813-823.

⁴⁴LV (May, 1885), 649-652.

⁴⁵LV (April, 1885), 495-507.

⁴⁶Cooke, p. 291.

⁴⁷Unitarian Review, XXXIII (May, 1890), 385-415.

weary and disappointing. "A few thoughts on this commonplace and ancient topic--"⁴⁸ sounds as if, sometime during the long struggle which often led him so far afield, he had lost his grip on the old synthesis. But between his transcendental definition of "common sense" and the "concluding scene and benediction" from the second part of Faust,⁴⁹ the poetry and faith of American transcendentalism come to life once more in the garish light of the Gay 'Nineties.

"Common Sense," says Dwight, in a definition quoted many pages back,

is the sum total--say the vital harmony--of all those innate, universal, unavoidable convictions, prepossession, which lie at the bottom of every soul. It is the instinct of complete humanity.⁵⁰

This instinct leads man to realize that true religion is a free, private, secret communion between the individual and God. Common Sense, and Music, respect this secret, by going behind words, creeds, and thought, to the "third heaven where speech leaves off."⁵¹

In passing from the individual to society, Dwight shows he has not forsaken the old principle of Association.

I do believe that only in some enlightened form of Socialism, some scientific principle and plan of associated instead of competitive industry, can

⁴⁸Unitarian Review, XXXIII (May, 1890), 385.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 414.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 392.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 397-399.

Society ever become worthy of the name, or true to its Christian profession.⁵²

The aged "poet" devotes several pages to denouncing the tyranny of polite society. But the Associationist contempt for "civilization," which, as we have seen, Dwight never shared wholeheartedly, is repudiated and replaced by orthodox Brahmin logic. He admits that truly "polite" society has maintained a valuable "conservatory of gentle manners."⁵³ Most of the trouble can be traced to the nouveaux riches.

The really respectable, long settled, quiet portion of Society, those whose birth, breeding, and established character bring into it an atmosphere of temperate true refinement, might perhaps vindicate it against many of our charges, were it not for these interlopers who boost themselves up into its windows by their wealth.⁵⁴

Just as surely as he struggled all his life for artistic and philosophic ideals, Dwight climbed slowly for the position from which he could make such a statement sincerely. We must always remember that to a transcendentalist, such incongruities contain their own resolutions.

Almost like a person reviewing his life in reverse during his last hours, Dwight moves from the social question back still farther in his experience, back to the stimulus of Goethe and Carlyle.

And now let us consult some of the most brilliant fixed stars scattered through the dark blue firmament of human history. Let us cite the evidence

⁵²"Common Sense," p. 402.

⁵³Ibid., p. 406.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 407.

of Genius,--Genius, the star-gazer, who fell into the pit, to the amusement and triumph of the vulgar Common Sense that kept its eyes abjectly fastened on the path before it. In spite of the fable, genius and common sense are one. . . .

Were it not for the refreshing advent, now and then, of genius in the world, there might be some ground for the sneer with which vulgar common sense rebukes idealists, . . .

The practical great poet-thinker, Goethe, shall furnish the concluding scene and benediction. . . . The soul of Faust . . . is at last caught up into the higher life amid saints and prophets . . ., the consummation of the divine life and destiny of man made one with God . . .⁵⁵

That this essay is almost coeval with Main-Travelled Roads and Maggie: A Girl of the Streets is, to the modern literary historian, a temptingly uncharitable reflection. Crane and Garland would have sneered with many others; they would have said that Dwight had preserved his venerable head by embalming it in sand. But being in phase with the Zeitgeist has not been proved the only intellectual virtue. It is hoped that the reader of these pages will more readily cheer than sneer when he finds Dwight enjoying a last, well-earned ascent in his balloon.

4.

In modern anthologies and histories of American literature, Dwight is almost entirely neglected except in specialized collections like Cooke's The Poets of Transcendentalism⁵⁶ and

⁵⁵"Common Sense," pp. 412-415.

⁵⁶see above, p. 96.

Perry Miller's The Transcendentalists.⁵⁷ In the history of American music, he is unavoidable; but the tendency here is to treat him with some condescension as a rare avis, extinct since the limited pioneering period when literary amateurism was a vital force.⁵⁸ One of the few modern studies of Dwight contains this facile description of his unique artistic abilities: "Characteristic of Dwight's journalism . . . was that his reviews seem written by a musician, and his musical criticism by a poet."⁵⁹

The point is too obvious to labor, but it must be stated simply that Dwight always expressed himself, for public consumption at least, in the English language. There is no evidence that he ever composed a note of music or made any pretensions as a performer of music. Between calling him a musician and calling him a litterateur there is no choice at all, unless the term musician is expanded far beyond its normal limits to include the literary amateur. That he sometimes wrote like a poet inspired by the emotional and philosophical stimulus of music is a more accurate, if less striking statement.

To elucidate the obvious a bit further, the poetic quality of Dwight's prose is a rhetorical phenomenon, not at all a

⁵⁷(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 410-414. (Biographical note and selection from "Music" for Aesthetic Papers.)

⁵⁸See Elson, The History of American Music, pp. 312-314; John Tasker Howard, Our American Music (3rd ed.; New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, [1946]), pp. 214, 218-218, et passim.

⁵⁹Thomas, "John Sullivan Dwight . . .," p. 438.

musical one except in the loosest, metaphorical sense. His literary eloquence has in it a poet's feeling for rhythm, balance, and sound. His writing shows facility, if not genius, in image-making and in communicating emotion as well as fact. In reading prose characteristic of him, we are always conscious of how he feels and of how he wants us to feel, as well as of what he knows and wants us to know. Occasionally he preaches to us outright, but at his best he lets his poetic sensitivity speak for itself. His healthy, refreshing fluency, reflecting both an inborn instinct to teach and a pure joy in articulate self-expression, produced writing always more than adequate, and often inspiring.

The above description of Dwight's writing as that of a poet-musician was prompted by his frequent use of terms from the vocabulary of musical commentary in the early essays and literary reviews. In "The Religion of Beauty," he describes Nature as "the apt accompaniment to the silent song of the beholder's heart." Soon after he speaks of "this perfect accord of sights, sounds, motions, and fragrance, all tuned to one harmony, out of which run melodies inexhaustible of every mood and measure."⁶⁰

Actually, Dwight did not use this device nearly so much as might be expected from a man upon whom the impacts of Beethoven, Handel, Goethe, Wordsworth, and Emerson had all been so strong. More characteristic of his writing as a whole

⁶⁰Dial, I (July, 1840), 17-18.

is the use of poetic images from Nature in the music criticism.

Once, for him, the sound of a choir

seemed all-pervading like the slowly lifted wind among pine groves, as it feels its way from leaf to leaf, testing the responsive quality of each, till the ever-growing, deep, sublime low murmur becomes universal, and they are all found true.⁶¹

Of two Italian prima donnas, "The one is a soft light on smooth water; the other more like the countless flashing diamonds of Niagara, just as the great sheet breaks in its fall beneath a noon-day sun."⁶² "Niagara" was a favorite image, or, more precisely, a favorite word with Dwight. We wonder about the exact meaning it had for him when we read, with the preceding quotation in mind, his description of Handel's music as "a balanced, integral activity, calm as the descent of Niagara, or as the movement of the planets."⁶³ After "seeking in the natural world a type for the great choruses of 'Israel in Egypt'," he found a more suitable analogue in

the solemn, tranquil grandeur of our own "White Mountains." It is almost exclusively a mountain chain of immense choruses, connected by some rugged passes of recitative, and a very few green vales of song, into which we are permitted to peep.⁶⁴

For an example from the middle years of the Journal, we have the following description of a Joachim violin concerto: "Like

⁶¹Harbinger, I (August 9, 1845), 139.

⁶²Harbinger, V (June 19, 1847), 26.

⁶³"The Sentiment of Various Musical Composers," Sartain's Magazine, VIII (February, 1851), 132.

⁶⁴Sartain's Magazine, X (January, 1852), 63.

a swift mountain stream it now smoothly glides, now shoots a precipice, now foams and frets over the rocks and pebbles, but keeps up ever the continuous flow . . .⁶⁵

The "sound of Dwight," however, does not depend so much upon figures of speech as upon a leisurely, expansive, somewhat windy but almost never pompous rhetorical structure. As he gradually found the place in the world which Theodore Parker had urged him to seek, he also gradually improved the power of communication that Parker had found defective; but he never pruned away the verbiage to deliver the hammer blows of a hardened logician or over-eager specialist. He trusted his readers to follow the stream of his thought once in a while through an exhaustive catalogue of his impressions, often in unlikely places. What could have been a routine transition in a notice of the opera at Castle Garden turned out like this:

From the orchestra, then, which is the foundation of the whole musical superstructure; which spreads out, as it were, the musical field before us, on which the singing persons move; from the orchestra, which bridges over the gulf between our actual, every-day consciousness and the ideal musical sphere, in which characters sing instead of speaking prose, and which therefore, is fitly placed between the singers and the audience, we turn well satisfied to the chorus.⁶⁶

On a more appropriate occasion, when he was faced with the problem of describing his first sight of the new organ in the Music Hall, Dwight deliberately sacrificed pungency and force

⁶⁵Journal of Music, XXVIII (December 19, 1868), 367.

⁶⁶Sartain's Magazine, IX (October, 1851), 316.

to the immediate impression, however vague.

For a few moments, it is hard to distinguish what we see from what we feel, the cause from the emotion (or in philosopher lingo, object from subject), just as to the new-born babe, or to couched eyes, all objects press upon the retina. What everyone has felt on entering the Hall, undoubtedly we feel; a strange shock of surprise and wonder, mingled with a certain awe, at the massive grandeur, the great width and height, the boldness, the sombre shadowiness and glimmering brightness, mingled with an instantaneous sense of the symmetry, and a vague comprehension of the richness in detail, of something nearly filling the whole stage end of the Hall and completely filling us.⁶⁷

Charles Nutter remarks that Dwight was "one of two personalities when it came to writing.

Depending upon the subject, the conditions, and the purpose, he could be general or specific, theoretical or practical, abstract or concrete. Unfortunately, when he became theoretical or abstract it was not always easy to see where his feet were planted.⁶⁸

This categorical distinction seems to hold only in a comparison of such extremes as the address before the Harvard Musical Association in 1841 (the topic of Nutter's paragraph) and the annual reports on the Harvard concerts. As we have seen, Dwight's feet were not planted anywhere, materially or intellectually, in August of 1841. In later, successful years he could not only marshal straight facts for his reports, but also combine a poet's enthusiasm and confidence with concrete, expert observation to produce a satisfying, full-bodied effect. The following passage is very typical of the Dwight who not only had his feet well planted, but did not have to stoop or

⁶⁷Journal of Music, XXIII (October 17, 1863), 118.

⁶⁸HMA Library, Bulletin No. 7 (December, 1937), p. [5].

look down to keep his balance. He is speaking of the Leonora Overture No. 3 by Beethoven.

. . . what a unity of deepest sentiment burns throughout the whole! What intense and concentrated passion! Was ever instrumental music so dramatic? What a sense of utter, weary loneliness, as of an imprisoned soul, in those slowly sinking first notes, and that sighing crescendo, like a great ground-swell from the ocean depths of the heart, which follows! How wonderfully suggestive that restless, yearning motive, which stretches itself by successive efforts into the leading theme, the longing for love and liberty! What marvellous presentiment in those wild, sweet out-streamings of the horn tones, and in those expectant, cautious, tip-toe little phrases, (of the flute, &c.) so characteristic of this master when he approaches the grand development, and climaxes of his thought! And what climaxes! The greatest that where, when the storm of emotion is at its height, we suddenly hear the distant trumpet announcing deliverance; (the trumpet, unfortunately, shut up too closely in a back room, sounded flat to listeners in the hall.) And then that immense crescendo of the violins before the close;--in no work of musical Art is great expectation more greatly answered from the beginning to the end. The performance was in the main effective, with the exception of that invisible trumpet, and of the want of a much greater mass of strings.⁶⁹

In reading large batches of Dwight's essays and reviews in a space of a few days or weeks, one certainly is conscious of monotony and repetition. In an editorial pinch he often reprinted old articles, or used old sentences and paragraphs in new contexts. One concert or composition after another was "noble," "deep," "inspiring," "telling," "chaste," "earnest," "genial." The Fifth Symphony, year after year, was "beautiful," "grand," "glorious," and later "old" in the most reverential sense. But the Journal was not written to

⁶⁹Journal of Music, VIII (December 15, 1855), 86.

be read from cover to cover. Furthermore, as we shall see in the next chapter, repetition was one of the devices by which Dwight could best present his basic thought in these years.

Nevertheless, Dwight had one or two variations in his caisson which, although used sparingly, are delightful enough to keep a reader turning the pages of the Harbinger and the Journal in anticipation of finding an example of them. His command of humor was not extensive. He never lost his taste for the lowly pun; "I am a fearful delay-tante," he wrote to a friend in 1881.⁷⁰ The Journal of Music is not witty or sparkling very often. But the "sweet, angelic" Dwight could get impatient and angry. When he did, he was capable of invective, name-calling, and sometimes spicy irony. He often looks rather small on such occasions, and we must admit that the pleasure we find in them is somewhat different from the effect he wanted to produce. They reveal an irritable man, alive and kicking. Without the passages of this kind already quoted from the Harbinger and the articles on Gilmore, Dwight might appear more saintly, but much less interesting. One further example, complete with pun, must suffice here. The igniting agent was a proposal to found a five-million-dollar college of music with Richard Wagner as head. The explosion was long and deceptively playful.

⁷⁰Letter to Brittan of June 2, 1881, in "John S. Dwight as I Knew Him," p. 230.

There must be cool streams in which the Rhein Daughters may practice their swimming exercises, without getting seasick while they sing, as it is said they do when the "Rheingold" is performed in Germany. There must be fine swings and hobby horses in a true blue celestial cloudland, where the Walkurie maidens, fateful equestrians, may learn to ride on air. There must be a theatre for spelling matches, where the young Meister-speller may practice to their hearts' content hard words out of the Master's most original librettos. Then there must be picturesque mediaeval shores, where all the devout young pupils and candidates for "Art work in the Future," may longingly await the Swan of their idolatory [sic], the delivering knight in silver armor.⁷¹

And so on through many more specifications.

For years Dwight's prose was far better than the musical performances he reported so charitably. We have seen how such judges as Emerson, Carlyle, Alcott, and Lowell recognized his ability and promise. Even the skeptical and unmusical Parker remarked of the Don Juan critique, "To think of a man being able to make all that out of an opera!"⁷² Parker recognized that Dwight had learned his lesson in expression very well, but thought he put it to use on an unworthy subject. Later, when the subject became undeniably worthy and was handled entirely by experts, the unique work of the literary amateur was superseded and consigned to partial oblivion. But as they pointed out Dwight's minimal knowledge of music and the sharp bias of his opinions, the experts themselves

⁷¹Journal of Music, XXXV (July 10, 1875), 54.

⁷²A statement variously quoted. This form is in William Apthorp, "John Sullivan Dwight," Music, IV (October, 1893), 631. Cf. Elson, History of American Music, p. 313.

granted his poetic sensitivity and fluency. William Apthorp said his "specific literary faculty was as fine as that of any born American who ever wrote; his style was at once brilliant, solid and impeccable."⁷³ Thoreau, Hawthorne, and many others could be cited in refutation of such encomium, but subject matter accidentally more permanent has kept alive writers less readable than Dwight.

⁷³"John Sullivan Dwight," p. 631.

CHAPTER VIII

LEITMOTIFS FROM THE MUSIC CRITICISM: 1852-1893

1.

Fortunately we are not concerned with searching for permanent, absolute musical values in Dwight's later music criticism. He himself liked to think that his relationship to music was much like Thoreau's relationship to natural science, or Ruskin's relationship to painting. But he found in his prime that Boston did not have the physical means for performing the music he had learned to love by divination and indirectly through German romantic criticism. He could not discuss his "subject" in a work like Walden because neither he nor his readers had become well enough acquainted with the subject at first hand by hearing great music adequately performed. This is partly what Dwight meant when he wrote to Curtis that he had been born before his time.

It is unfair and unrealistic, therefore, to compare the musical opinions of the literary amateur with criticisms and interpretations written by literary musicians. Actually Dwight recorded the struggles of an idealist to bring his subject into actual existence, to make it morally and aesthetically respectable, and to make it "pay" in the sense of making it command enough material wealth to insure its permanence. Dwight's writing after 1852 is really a mixture of personal history, cultural history, propaganda, and idealistic

poetry. How he produced all this in treating the subject of music is the theme of our story, which now turns to a sampling of his mature comments on music to complete his portrait. As we have seen, it is easy for musicologists to minimize his musical attainments, to make of him a quaint, lovable piece of bric-a-brac. It would even be possible to argue that his entire literary output was a net loss to the progress of true musical culture. But our purpose will be served here if the transcendentalist literary amateur simply speaks for himself.

Dwight was not only conscious that he lacked technical knowledge of music, but a little proud of the fact. "Thank God I am not a 'critic'!" did not mean simply that the Journal of Music was finally finished, but that the retired editor deliberately did not aspire to the office of "critic." He did not consider it a part of his mission to teach, perform, or compose music, or to express musically expert opinions in his writing. As late as 1890 he maintained that analytical program notes were words wasted. He still preferred description of music "through the medium of a poet's mind," in which he saw no place for technical analysis.¹ He could read notes well enough to peck through scores at his piano,² a modest accomplishment of immense value, not because it qualified him as a musician, but because it made him a more articulate

¹Boston Evening Transcript, October 11, 1890, p. 4.

²William F. Apthorp, "John Sullivan Dwight," Music, IV (October, 1893), 629.

amateur. At the Brook Farm piano he learned to "hear ideal instruments, a more perfect orchestra of the mind."³ In the days of the Harvard orchestra he also attended rehearsals in preparation for his reviewing.⁴ His ear was apparently about as good as he wanted it to be, for he could hear a trumpet a little flat at one time and totally disregard multitudes of technical deficiencies at another. The most important part of his otherwise scanty education in music was his intimate knowledge of the musical vocabulary, including the vocabulary of harmony and counterpoint. After many years of slow development, he became so fluent in the use of musical terms that his readers assumed he was a trained musician. He was referred to as a "composer and critic," and Emerson seems to have conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Music.⁵ As we rehearse cold fact however, we must remember that this highly irregular procedure was nearly enough justified to make Dwight one of the very few "amateurs" among the contributors to Webster's International Dictionary.

Although he was fully aware of his limitations, Dwight did, in the years of authority, often act and write as if these limitations were negligible. For many years his knowledge of music was so far beyond that of his associates, and his standards of programming and performance so much more

³Harbinger, III (September 12, 1846), 218.

⁴W. S. B. Mathews, "John Sullivan Dwight, Editor, Critic, and Man," Music, XV (Mar. 1877), 250.

⁵"Historical Notes . . . , Complete Works, X, 363.

high-toned than what he actually heard, that when the music of Boston finally caught up with him, he was not at all ready to be passed by, or to share his authority with those who would inevitably supersede him.

As we have already seen in the Harbinger, Dwight's enthusiasm about the musical destiny of America, about the great prophetic power of music for some future golden age, was combined with the rigidly conservative idea that the prototypes of "great" music were already established, for all time, in the masterpieces of Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven. Compared with the other arts, Dwight admitted, music developed very late, but he thought its development had been completed by the German classicists. For him, the "music of the future" would be these immortal works performed often and well for an audience educated to appreciate them. His mission was clearly defined. He dedicated himself to organizing adequate performance, and to recruiting and inspiring the proper audience "through the medium of a poet's mind."

The paradoxes and inconsistencies of transcendentalism had led the young Dwight through many years of uncertainty and insecurity. Like any normally unheroic, sociable human being, he was glad to find a "subject" on which he could close his mind, and by the exposition of which he could find social acceptance, self-confidence, and a modest material security. For peace of mind and happiness he had to have a set of values which were absolute and immutable, not open to question or doubt. His mature musical values fulfilled these requirements,

and regardless of their musical or rational or philosophical limitations, they portray accurately the stature, the charm, the positive merits of the man.

Why, indeed, should he have entertained from any "floor" whatsoever any motion which he could not support? In the light of his sincere feelings about himself and his opinions, such a motion could not help being absolutely mistaken, a waste of time. Such problems as the arrangement of a good program and a decision on whether a work is worth performing could not be handled by parliamentary procedure. In 1870, one of his very best years, Dwight called upon his colleagues in the Harvard Musical Association to "consult, approve, or criticize," largely because the occasion would be jolly and sociable. "With such an interesting bone to pick, the pack perhaps would rally."⁶ But he reminded "the pack" that

programme-making is itself a work of art, involving such a multitude of considerations, that it cannot be determined in a general meeting, and must of necessity be left to a small committee, and to a great extent to a "Committee of One," . . .⁷

The extent of Dwight's intolerance and intransigence in musical matters is not obvious to the casual reader of the Journal of Music. We must remember that his most influential readers were also his associates in the Harvard Musical Association, and one or two glimpses behind the scenes give us an accurate picture of what these associates read between

⁶"Fifth Annual Report of the Concert Committee," MS in the Harvard Musical Association.

⁷Loc. cit.

the lines of the Journal. Otto Dresel's perception of Dwight's special pleading for the Harvard orchestra has already been noted. Dresel usually agreed with Dwight on programming and esthetic values, but other members of the Association sometimes squirmed convulsively under Dwight's tyranny. In the summer of 1868, Henry Ware, who had edited the Journal during Dwight's trip to Europe, read "with immense disgust" the latter's comments on a letter Ware had written to the Journal.⁸ Under the heading "Not for the Journal of Music," Ware warned Dwight in strong terms against alienating people by speaking ex cathedra on music he knew nothing about, by slavishly following Dresel's instructions, and by doggedly insisting on his own moral and esthetic values.⁹ On another occasion, probably later, Robert E. Apthorp was greatly aroused by Dwight's preparations to print a committee report that did not represent Apthorp's minority opinion at all. Apthorp asked Dwight point blank:

Is it quite loyal and generous . . . to flout your associates and friends, who so cheerfully concede you almost despotic power in the Association, with their sincere differences of taste and opinion? Perhaps no other than myself would tell you how much you offended a few (I know not how many) the other night, who had too much delicacy to reprove you to your face. I regret this intolerance of yours, for it seems no part of your nature or logical result of your training . . .¹⁰

Apthorp's diplomacy seems to outweigh his judgment in the end,

⁸See Journal of Music, XXVIII (May 23, 1868), 247-248.

⁹A.L.S. of June 1, 1868, in the Boston Public Library.

¹⁰A.L.S., undated, in the Harvard Musical Association.

although he may well have suspected that Dwight's "nature" and "training" were actually very logically represented by his attitude. The young Dudley Buck described this attitude thus in 1871: "Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Weber, Chopin,--Lord, it is enough. Now lettest thy servant depart in peace."¹¹

Unquestionably, Dwight revealed his musical prejudices more forcibly off the record than in print, but the following discussion of a Mozart symphony from a late volume of the Journal probably illustrates what Buck had in mind.

You do not have to ask yourself whether you understand it, or whether you really like it, as you do after almost every recent work. There it stands, positive and perfect, which is only saying that it is by Mozart; . . . what he composes is beyond criticism; only sympathy, appreciation, are in place while he is on the stage . . .¹²

The tenets of a closed mind do not promise exciting investigation, and yet we cannot cut Dwight off without letting him reveal the extent and the quality of what he had enclosed after so many years of struggle and experiment. By 1870, when he had risen as high as he was to go with the success of the Harvard orchestra, the lectures, and the Atlantic

¹¹Quoted in W. S. B. Mathews, "John Sullivan Dwight," Music, IV (September, 1893), 556. Dwight did, nevertheless, get Buck's Overture to an Unpublished Cantata on the Harvard program in 1874, and praised it as a successful experiment. The despot remarked, however, that Buck did not write the composition "for the Harvard Concert, or he would have essayed, perhaps, a higher and more serious flight." (Journal of Music, XXXIII February 7, 1874, 174.)

¹²Journal of Music, XL (January 17, 1880), 13.

articles, Dwight is to be found steadily and determinedly closing the gates against threatening newnesses. He was permanently certain that great music could be concerned with nothing less than presenting the Ideal to the world.¹³ In the stir and bustle of the Gilded Age, he offered music as a quiet, wholesome, temperate antidote, to be loved "for the great life that is in it."¹⁴ The kind of music he offered was naturally the music he had learned to love when idealism took permanent possession of his mind. Great music was, for him, no more subject to changes in form and fashion than true idealism. Even so mild a program number as Goldmark's Sakuntala Overture seemed to Dwight to spring from "ambition," not from genius. "Genius stays at home," he wrote, "producing in old forms such miracles of beauty as these bold adventurers have never yet been able to bring back."¹⁵ In Beethoven, as in Goethe and Shakespeare, Dwight felt that the

immortal element rises superior to the gloomy subject, . . . We cannot but regard that as false Art, which seeks new fields for originality in giving unredeemed and cheerless, fruitless utterance to those gloomy moods, which, . . . have really no right to public expression, but belong by every modest instinct of propriety, to strictest privacy, at least until the discord is resolved.¹⁶

¹³Journal of Music, XXVII (June 22, 1867), 54; and XXX (January 14, 1871), 382.

¹⁴"Music a Means of Culture," Atlantic Monthly, XXVI (September, 1870), 325.

¹⁵Journal of Music, XXX (January 14, 1871), 382.

¹⁶Journal of Music, XXX (November 5, 1870), 342.

Much as he owed to romantic concepts then, Dwight never accepted the "satanic" school. Music, he thought, should not reflect morbid introspection or individualistic experimentation. To him, concepts like "form," "harmony," and "discord" were all absolute. Great music was an unchanging, indestructible source "of faith and hope, however dark the world around. . . ."17 A truly artistic concert gave Dwight "an hour or two of sweet, ideal life, enjoyed in quiet sympathy by many sitting in a charmed sphere, the cares and discords of the world shut out."18

No wonder then that he exhibited suspicion and impatience in dealing with the world he could not always "shut out," and in trying to decide whether any new music could really be admitted to the "charmed sphere." He actually began to write the Valedictory for the Journal in the middle 'seventies, when the new generation of music critics began seriously to question his authority. In an acrid contretemps with Benjamin Woolf,¹⁹ a trained musician with a sharp tongue, Dwight readily defined the limits imposed on the Journal by his philosophical conservatism and the idealistic mission he had set out upon years before.

We have defended the musical conservatism, as it was our duty to do, since we believed in it. We have advocated the Harvard Concerts, as it was our duty to do, since we had helped to organize them for the

¹⁷Journal of Music, XXXI (October 21, 1871), 119.

¹⁸Journal of Music, XXXI (November 18, 1871), 134.

¹⁹See Elson, History of American Music, pp. 322-323.

same express end for which we had already founded this Journal of Music,--namely to help to keep musical taste up to the purest and highest classical standard; . . .²⁰

He brushed aside, once and for all, Woolf's challenge to a competitive examination, admitting Woolf's superiority in musical analysis, and deploring his tasteless delving into personalities.

1. We have never pretended to technical musicianship at all; . . . although we could not analyze it or construct it for ourselves any more than we could the friend we love, . . . it would seem impossible that we should not have learned something.

2. To judge rightly of a work of art it is not necessary to be an artist . . . Many artists miss the vital point, the aesthetic effect, . . . the genius of a composition, . . . as many miss the beauty of a composition in performance, by watching after false notes, instead of surrendering themselves to its spirit.²¹

Dwight's peroration to this long article belongs in our collection of quotable passages from his most readable prose.

For this, then, must a life-long love and advocacy of what is most pure and noble in our Art be scoffed at and arraigned as worse than worthless, as an evil and a crime against the real cause of culture and of progress! For this must musical criticism and appreciation be reduced henceforth to technical analysis and grammar, as in the old times when it was only that and only pedants read it! For this the Harvard concerts are to be discouraged and destroyed, till Boston, in its opportunities of instrumental music, sink to the level of Portland, or any small provincial town, dependent on chance visits of a traveling orchestra and the sovereign pleasure and convenience of concert speculators! For this our Boston must be "weaned" from such babes' milk as Beethoven and Mozart, to be suckled henceforth in the wilderness of "progress"

²⁰Journal of Music, XXXV (January 22, 1876), 165.

²¹Ibid., p. 166.

by the hungry dry nurse (on harsher milk) of Romulus and Remus,—founders of a race far more distinguished for literal stern prose and the capacity for fight, than for ideal qualities! And for this must we be dragged into controversy, which from our heart of hearts we hate!

For such a quarrel we have no time nor taste; matters more vital and more interesting claim our thought. Here, therefore, once for all, and whether he return to the attack or not, the matter ends on our part. Can he suppose that we will waste in quarrel with the like of him another hour which could be spent in hearing or remembering Beethoven?²²

2.

The phrase "hearing and remembering" is a key to much of Dwight's later musical experience. The sound, the atmosphere, the inspiration of great music were qualities so fixed in his mind that if he did not hear what he remembered as great and inspiring, he had no recourse but to describe what he heard as something less than great. He held doggedly to his old distinction between the "music of effect," and the "pure spontaneous process of creative genius" in the music of the German masters.²³ As we have seen above, the name of Mozart or Beethoven on a program was enough to convince Dwight that he was hearing great music. The story that Louis Gottschalk lured Dwight into praising Gottschalk's composition and condemning Beethoven's by deliberately transposing names on a program²⁴ may easily be true, but also true is the fact that

²²Journal of Music, XXXV (January 22, 1876), 167.

²³Journal of Music, XIV (December 25, 1858), 310.

²⁴Mathews, "John Sullivan Dwight, Editor, Critic, and Man," p. 537.

Gottschalk's style of piano-playing is less alive today than Dwight's music criticism. In some respects Dwight's hearing and remembering has even enjoyed a quiet last laugh.

Regardless of how often Dwight could be fooled, William Apthorp's statements that he had an "inveterate instinct for culture," and that he was "wholly uninfluenced by merely artificial standards,"²⁵ are at least as accurate as any equally extreme judgments to the contrary. Music that sounded "new" or "modern" immediately and automatically made Dwight uncomfortable; but his fixed standards need not be described as artificial, and the nous verrons he accorded Verdi in the Harbinger days never fell out of his vocabulary. For instance, he did not like Liszt's Les Preludes at all the first time he heard it, but he later admitted that the work was "full of striking, original, sometimes exquisite effects. . . ." ²⁶ After ten years he still found it "interesting in its details."²⁷ "But," he asked, "what ideal treasure does it leave behind to haunt the soul, or what new germ of higher life has it implanted?"²⁸ This was the rub in all "music of effect." Tasso and Die Ideale Dwight condemned to oblivion;²⁹ Les Preludes he admitted was the "most reasonable" of the

²⁵"John Sullivan Dwight," Music, IV (October, 1893), 627.

²⁶Journal of Music, XVI (December 10, 1859), 295.

²⁷Journal of Music, XXX (November 5, 1870), 343.

²⁸Loc. cit.

²⁹Loc. cit.

symphonic poems.³⁰ This judgment is so close to the general feeling about these works today as to be strikingly prophetic. Indeed the time may come, if it has not already arrived, when many of Dwight's judgments will, like the literary opinions of Dr. Johnson, look considerably saner than the enthusiasms of his immediate detractors and successors. As we shall see later, his antipathy toward Wagner is not to be written off as the snap judgment of a closed mind. His tastes seem much less unreasonable today than they did in the 'eighties and 'nineties.

Another healthy aspect of Dwight's musical opinions is that he was even less an antiquarian than he was a "modern" or "progressive." When he was in Europe he announced that he had made the trip principally to become acquainted with the music of Bach and Gluck. He has little to say about Gluck, but he found a "Bach craze" in Leipzig and Berlin, and was deeply impressed with the way Bach's music "testifies to the profound religious nature of the man . . ."³¹ A Bach sonata performed by Joachim and Clara Schumann he described as "one of the newest, freshest things, which one can hear in these barren days of virtuoso-dom and 'Zukunft's' music."³² His labors with the St. Matthew Passion have already been mentioned. However little his opinions of Bach were backed

³⁰Journal of Music, XXX (December 3, 1870), 358.

³¹Journal of Music, XIX (May 18, 1861), 53-54.

³²Journal of Music, XVIII (February 9, 1861), 366.

by any expert understanding of Bach's technique, he was surely recording a direct and sincere impression when he spoke of the Toccatà in F as "full of hearty, healthy life . . .," giving "a sense of generous, exhaustless power . . ."³³ Of the compositions of Palestrina, however, Dwight did not know what to think, and admitted it. ". . . we must feel," he wrote,

that what we have here only in germ . . . had yet to reach the freedom and glory of pure Art as such, in the high poetic and imaginative, creative sense, in the far richer and not less religious Art of Bach and Handel, and the whole line of their illustrious followers.³⁴

One of the earliest editorials in the Journal of Music was appropriately devoted to the "Old Church Modes or 'Tones',"³⁵ but the editor had no training or taste for discussing music which was interesting because of its great age, but which lay outside his personal experience of "hearing and remembering."

In addition to the works of Bach, Dwight admitted a few other compositions to his list of favorites in the early days of the Journal. He developed a taste for certain works of Schumann, partly because he was so impressed with some of Schumann's music criticism. The first volume of the Journal featured translations of Schumann's maxims, which, Dwight thought, "should engrave themselves upon the mind of everyone

³³Journal of Music, XXVII (April 13, 1867), 14.

³⁴Journal of Music, XXXVIII (April 27, 1878), 223.

³⁵I (April 24, 1852), 20-21, and (May 1, 1852) 29-30.

who means to make himself an artist in the sphere of sound."³⁶ He liked the Fourth Symphony in 1857, and expressed ironic surprise that the audience seemed to agree with him, in spite of a complete lack of "clap-trap."³⁷ The Manfred Overture left him wondering, but Schumann was safely in the fold, and Dwight found nothing in the first hearing "to lessen the respect with which we have thus far listened to everything of Schumann's that has been produced here."³⁸ This scarcely convincing impression was, of course, greatly strengthened on the European tour. Referring to frequent hearings in Berlin, Dwight wrote a long favorable review of the Rhenish Symphony in 1869.³⁹ Three years later he declared he could listen to the Genoveva Overture many times and find it "always new and always appetizing."⁴⁰ Here, we must grant, is embarrassing proof that Dwight's unique appetite could be satisfied at times by music in which the "germ of higher life" is hard to find. On the other hand, his unqualified praise of Schubert's C-major Symphony was still a minority opinion in 1857.⁴¹ Here his instinct looks sure again, as he distinguishes between the "sublime flight" of the C-major Symphony⁴² and

³⁶Journal of Music, I (June 19, 1852), 82.

³⁷Journal of Music, X (February 14, 1857), 158.

³⁸Journal of Music, X (February 28, 1857), 173.

³⁹Journal of Music, XXVIII (February 13, 1869), 398-399.

⁴⁰Journal of Music, XXXI (January 13, 1872), 166.

⁴¹Journal of Music, X (March 14, 1857), 190-191.

⁴²Journal of Music, XXVII (February 1, 1868), 182.

the "sentimental and dramatic" charm of the Symphony in B-minor (the "Unfinished.").⁴³

Better known than his latter-day enthusiasms, although not so exclusively typical as one might think, are the attractively crusty and unprofessional pet peeves Dwight developed in the years of entrenchment. Surely whatever drag he imposed upon the forward progress of music in America is at least partially offset, for instance, by the literary and personal charm of his dogged minority opinion of the later Verdi. Il Trovatore left him cold, and its haunting melodies were like bad dreams compared to the "perennial flowers of music implanted" by Don Giovanni and William Tell.⁴⁴ To La Traviata he preferred even Donizetti's Elixir of Love,

a very enjoyable little opera, at least to one who does not crave tragical intensities and horrors, or care to be stormed and startled by the effective climaxes of the fashionable Verdi school. . . . Any true lover of Art . . . will be sure to learn . . . that the most playful freaks, the lightest fancies of real imaginative genius, are worth more than the most serious sentimentality wedded to the most intensely tragic plots of third-rate minds. And sometimes a man will develop sparks of genius, of true inventiveness, in sport, who cannot get beyond sentimental common-place, or over-strained and false effects, when he devotes himself to the illustration of a serious subject.⁴⁵

Fifteen years after he wrote this astounding passage, Dwight still thought Rossini's La Gazza Ladra was "worth a

⁴³Journal of Music, XXVIII (March 28, 1868), 214-215.

⁴⁴Journal of Music, VII (June 2, 1855), 70.

⁴⁵Journal of Music, XI (June 27, 1857), 101-102.

hundred Trovatores and thousands of Bohemian Girls."46 When he first heard Aida in 1874, he was too sleepy from three straight nights of opera to get much out of it. He gallantly reserved judgment, having detected some things more "thoughtful" and "refined" than usual in Verdi. But he still found plenty of "coarseness," and remained true to his old favorites.47 Similarly, the First Symphony of Brahms led Dwight to the brink of temptation in 1878, with its inspiring, heroic last movement. But he found much of the work "sick,"48 and an expert performance by the Thomas orchestra naturally did not convince him.49 In 1890, the Second Symphony seemed the epitome of decadence in modern music. Here he felt only ingenuity, at best, without inspiration or genius, expressing "heaviness, cloudiness, drowsiness, . . . groping in chromatic gloom."50

These reactions are amusing today, but they are nevertheless consistent with Dwight's lifelong distrust of music which he felt was too obviously sentimental. He was perhaps afraid of being moved easily and directly. Light music, as such, did not repel him, but he wanted such diversions to brush him lightly. He could enjoy both the Elixir of Love and H.M.S.

⁴⁶Journal of Music, XXXI (January 27, 1872), 175.

⁴⁷Journal of Music, XXXIII (February 21, 1874), 182.

⁴⁸Journal of Music, XXXVII (January 19, 1878), 166-167.

⁴⁹Journal of Music, XXXVII (February 2, 1878), 174.

⁵⁰Boston Evening Transcript, October 20, 1890, p. 6.

Pinafore,⁵¹ but he did not want his "hour or two of sweet, ideal life" to be disturbing.

It would be hard to say which annoyed Dwight most, the sophisticated "newness" of Brahms, Wagner, and Liszt, or the cheap, popular music of the day, performed usually by brass bands. In the summer of 1856, for example, he seems to have suffered more acutely than usual from the blare of cornets and trombones. The music at the Harvard commencement was perennially the low point of the season for him. He always felt

a sense of incongruity, in moving in procession on Commencement day, through the calm Academic shades of Harvard, to the hoarse, martial sound of brass, smothered by drums and cymbals.⁵²

"The Heavens are as Brass," he cried again after commencement in 1868. The "cornet solo business," characterized by sentimental songs with variations and "chowders of national airs (very rank with onion)," was "positively rancid" to him.⁵³ His peace-loving nature rebelled at the martial, war-like spirit of the band music on the Common, and for twenty years he pleaded for non-military, concert bands, playing not so "Puritanically early" in the evening.⁵⁴

Basically aristocratic in his musical tastes, however, Dwight never expressed any very profound or progressive ideas

⁵¹See Journal of Music, XXXIX (July 19, 1879), 118-119.

⁵²Journal of Music, IX (July 19, 1856), 127.

⁵³Journal of Music, XXVIII (August 1, 1868), 286-287.

⁵⁴Journal of Music, III (June 25, 1853), 94-95.

about how popular taste should be reformed. Although he would have denied it himself, he had a deep conviction that "great" music could never be "popular." He was never so much concerned about bringing Beethoven to the masses as he was about launching some Beethoven into the air to produce "atmospheric culture." He came to realize that if democratic people were to enjoy "hearing and remembering" great music, they would have to submit themselves to a basically undemocratic process. "To soothe this acrid restlessness of a competitive democracy, . . . to round off the sharp corners of the Yankee character and manners," should be the function of music.⁵⁵ In "Music a Means of Culture," he wrote:

Think what unconscious culture, what refining influence, the people of a city might breathe in with the common breath of life from concerts in the open air, from military bands, and, better still, from civic bands, if only our king and lord, the people aforesaid in its corporate capacity, would make enlightened provision for these things, and institute a competent commission, or commissioner, a "Philostrate, master of the revels," of real taste and judgment, to see to it that the bands be good ones, the programmes of a kind to elevate and civilize, and not demoralize by brutal bray of everlasting brass; and that the repertoire be made up of models of enduring beauty, instead of specimens of every foolish reigning fashion in its turn. Such an office should be of high honor, of careful appointment, and safe tenure, like a judgeship.⁵⁶

The logical candidate for this judgeship, completely versed in the eternal laws of good taste and well acquainted with all the "models of enduring beauty," would not have been hard to find.

⁵⁵ Journal of Music, XXVII (June 8, 1867), 46.

⁵⁶ Pages 326-327.

3.

The story of Dwight's mature musical opinions has been told thus far with only casual reference to the two principal characters, Beethoven and Wagner. Dwight had so much to say on the two German masters that his remarks on them are best considered apart from his other music criticism, not only for the sake of clarity, but also because a direct comparison of his passion for Beethoven with his persistent rejection of Wagner makes an excellent summary of his musical thought. For him, Beethoven contained all the highest musical virtues, and Wagner exhibited all the qualities of decadence. His unreserved admiration for the one and unmitigated distrust of the other make up a colorful and even slightly legendary chapter in Boston music history. With the musicological aspects of this, the firmest enclosure in Dwight's mind, we shall not be much concerned, but we need the color for our portrait.

Significantly enough, we must go back to the Harbinger for most of Dwight's original reactions to Beethoven, but many of these early criticisms became his final judgments and were often reprinted without revision in the Journal of Music. At the beginning of "Music a Means of Culture," Dwight explicitly set forth, in a series of reminiscences about Brook Farm and transcendentalism, the basic reason why the music of Beethoven became the principal source of unmixed pleasure and excitement whenever Dwight indulged in "hearing and remembering." For him, as for Margaret Fuller, James

Freeman Clarke, and others, the music of Beethoven was the esthetic and emotional complement of the words of Emerson, Goethe, and Carlyle.⁵⁷ The name of Beethoven on a program was enough to make Dwight relive the whole gamut of artistic and philosophic ideals which formed the basic principles of his life. To review his reactions to Beethoven in the 'forties is to show both where his concept of great music began and where it ended, and to indicate, as we have suggested before, the essential unity and consistency of Dwight's career as a literary amateur.

Like a true transcendentalist, Dwight did not hesitate to make sweeping prophecies and all-embracing generalizations about what he felt was absolute truth. Echoing Margaret Fuller's enthusiastic statements in the Dial, he proclaimed at the beginning of his career that Beethoven speaks to "the one spirit which is in us all," which "wells up from the bottom of every mind."⁵⁸ In 1845 he predicted that part of America's great destiny would be to love Beethoven. So "spiritually and essentially" was Beethoven's music prophetic of America's future that even a child could feel the shock

⁵⁷"Music a Means of Culture," p. 323. See also Margaret Fuller, "Lives of the Great Composers, Haydn, Mozart, Handel, Bach, Beethoven," Dial, II (October, 1841), 148-203; James Freeman Clarke, Autobiography, Diary, and Correspondence, ed. by Edward Everett Hale (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1891), p. 140; Christopher Pearse Cranch, "Address, delivered before the Harvard Musical Association, . . . August 28, 1845," Harbinger, II (January 17, 1846), 88-90, (January 24, 1846) 109-110, (January 31, 1846) 121-122.

⁵⁸Pioneer, I (January, 1843), 26.

of his genius, and unmusical Americans could appreciate him better than the Viennese who were his contemporaries and first audience.⁵⁹ In the Sartain's articles of 1851, the immediate prelude to the Journal of Music, he reiterated the same concept, with the implication that where Brook Farm and Fourierism had failed, Beethoven would succeed. Although the "progressive spirit of this age" refused to accept radical social reform, it would accept Beethoven "by a strange sympathy."⁶⁰ Twenty years later, Dwight was convinced that these ideas had conquered, that great music was "leavening, refining, humanizing our too crude and swaggering young democratic civilization."⁶¹

The chief glory of Beethoven for Dwight was the plenitude of "meaning" in his music, and the lack of "programme," the almost complete absence of imitation, description, or any artificial, extra-musical effect.⁶² His was the greatest of great music. After worshipping Beethoven for thirty years, Dwight still insisted that no explication or expert analysis could supplant the basic instinct of those Beethoven admirers who find such music "great, deep, true, making itself felt as such," who love the music "for the great life that is in

⁵⁹Harbinger, I (August 16, 1845), 154-155.

⁶⁰Sartain's Magazine, VIII (February, 1851), 133.

⁶¹"Music a Means of Culture," p. 323.

⁶²Harbinger, III (July 4, 1846), 58-59.

it. Let the emphasis fall on the word great,--great music,--
 . . ."63 The literary amateur came to believe that one magic
 adjective, properly intoned, would dispel all doubts, ignorance,
 and indifference.

Always with due caution and reservation, Dwight did try
 at various times to "interpret" the works of Beethoven for
 his readers. One of his very early attempts was a billowy,
 bodiless impression of the Second Symphony, a striking example
 of criticism by "divination" not supplemented by "hearing
 and remembering." He described the symphony as an attempt of
 genius "to give expression to its sense of the depth and the
 richness of life, to proclaim the thrilling communion which
 it feels with all heaven and earth and boundless realms
 invisible."⁶⁴ In the "Adagio" he heard "countless streams of
 life . . . rolling their waves together . . . and all the
 elements, and all the life and beauty and majesty of nature
 . . . gathered into the intensity of the moment."⁶⁵ The
 apprentice critic was still depending more on feeling than
 hearing when the Egmont Overture convinced him that Beethoven
 "felt" the drama "till it became assimilated with his own
 essence, till it became fluid again, and he could create it
 anew in a form of music."⁶⁶

⁶³"Music a Means of Culture," p. 325.

⁶⁴Pioneer, I (January, 1843), 27.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁶⁶Harbinger, I (August 9, 1845), 140.

The grand and glorious Fifth Symphony was for Dwight the absolute zenith of musical art. We cannot be sure that he heard the historic first performance of the symphony by the old Academy of Music in 1841. He was in Northampton at the time, and the fact that he often referred to the event as if he had been present is not conclusive. At any rate, his first commentary on the symphony appeared in 1845, and seems to have been preceded by several hearings, a reading of Beethoven's own comments on the work, and perhaps some study of the score at the Brook Farm piano.

Whenever Dwight heard anything by Beethoven, the inspiration of the Fifth Symphony was reborn. He accepted the "great life-struggle" as the unifying theme, and found philosophic "meaning" in each movement, culminating in the joyous, complete victory of the finale.⁶⁷ With the long series of crashing chords at the end ringing in his ears, he wrote: "the impression which Beethoven always leaves upon us is that there is more, more! A boundless striving to produce the unutterable. . . ." ⁶⁸ Actually, his abiding love was for the sound of the symphony itself, together with the memories it revived, rather than for any "interpretation" that might stem from it. As early as 1847 he called it "a good old friend, . . . really . . . domesticated in Boston."⁶⁹ In 1858 "its most familiar strains

⁶⁷Harbinger, I (August 16, 1845), 156-157. Reprinted in Journal of Music, IV (October 8, 1853), 1-2.

⁶⁸Harbinger, I (August 16, 1845), 157.

⁶⁹Harbinger, IV (March 27, 1847), 251.

were still found pregnant with new beauties," and Dwight could do no more than marvel once again at the "perfect unity and power and progress of the whole . . ."70

Indeed, Dwight's comments on the Fifth Symphony are disappointing. In its presence he was almost speechless, as if description of its full impact on him were beyond his literary powers. Perhaps this feeling led him to pronounce the Seventh Symphony his favorite in 1847, not because it was greater than the Fifth, but because it was easier to talk about in communicative terms. He thought the D-major section in the trio of the third movement, where "the violins hold out an A with a sort of trumpet note" was "perhaps the sublimest thing in the whole range of instrumental music."71 "Thank God! the Seventh Symphony is not senescent," he wrote in 1891, after asking one more time why so many people wanted "new" music.72

All of Dwight's remarks on Beethoven are tempting, but we can pause only on the long history of his excitement over the Ninth Symphony. Nothing illustrates more strikingly what he meant by the phrase "hearing and remembering," for his memories of the symphony took him back a decade beyond the first hearing, back to his earliest published work, the translation of Schiller's "Hymn to Joy." When he was making a

⁷⁰Journal of Music, XII (March 6, 1858), 389.

⁷¹Harbinger, IV (February 27, 1847), 186.

⁷²Boston Evening Transcript, February 16, 1891, p. 6.

promising start as a literary critic and translator, and his knowledge of Beethoven was limited almost entirely to the article in the old Universal Lexicon der Tonkunst,⁷³ he "divined" that

The boundless yearning, which is the foundation of our being, and which is nothing less than a yearning to embrace the whole, has found its natural language in music. It is an interesting fact, and one which gives us a glimpse into the deepest philosophy of the Arts, that Beethoven, the most spiritual of composers, should have landed, after one of his sublimest adventurous flights on the ocean of sounds, in this song "To Joy." The feelings which revelled in pure harmony, grew weary of their very freedom; they would return to the human; they would have an articulate voice; and they found it in this ode of Schiller's.⁷⁴

Finally, in May of 1846, just after the tragedy of the Brook Farm fire and the triumph of the New York lectures, a letter from George William Curtis urging Dwight to attend the first American performance of the Ninth Symphony at Castle Garden inspired glowing anticipation in Dwight's Harbinger column. Speaking of the "influences of great minds" in terms of the transcendentalists' favorite "circles," Dwight saw Beethoven as one of the "smaller circles, setting out, . . . destined to encircle the whole ocean of Humanity."⁷⁵ He got to New York for the great day, May 20, and three weeks later the Harbinger carried eight columns of revelation and exultation,

⁷³ed. by Gustav Schilling (Stuttgart: Franz Heinrich Kähler, 1835). See especially Schilling's "Vorbericht," pp. iii-xii.

⁷⁴Select Minor Poems, p. 436.

⁷⁵Harbinger, II (May 16, 1846), 362.

combined with convincing, perceptive reporting. Never were the transcendentalist and the sensitive literary amateur in better balance. Dwight was not so cloud-borne that he did not notice the bad acoustics and the distracting social chit-chat at the final rehearsal. His eyes were opened by the fine balance of the orchestra, the first he had heard in which there were enough strings to balance the wind instruments. He admitted that the symphony would require many hearings to make his "haunting impression" articulate. The choral finale left him speechless. "Nothing but the grandest thought which has yet visited the human mind," he wrote, "is adequate to the explanation of such music." Such a thought he tried to phrase in a combination of terms from Fourier and Schiller, saying that only one with a "religious reverence for Attraction and for Joy" could appreciate the symphony.⁷⁶

The Ninth Symphony was not so easily domesticated in Boston as the glorious Fifth. In the 'fifties Dwight had to shout its praises over the negation of impatient audiences and inadequate performances.⁷⁷ Finally, in 1868, the Handel and Haydn Society gave Dwight a reading which he could call the acme of performance. On this occasion, thirty years after he had first "divined" the greatness of the symphony, Dwight's effusions still were so voluminous that the printer had to cut him off.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Harbinger, III (June 13, 1846), 9-11.

⁷⁷See, for example, Journal of Music, II (February 12, 1853), 150-151; and XV (April 9, 1859), 14-15.

⁷⁸Journal of Music, XXVIII (June 6, 1868), 254.

Appropriately enough, Dwight dedicated the Harvard orchestra's finest season, that of 1870-1871, to celebrating the centennial of Beethoven's birth.⁷⁹ This was the triumphant time of "hearing and remembering."

4.

In any discussion of Dwight's reaction to Richard Wagner, a few simple facts are all-important. Before 1855, Dwight had heard nothing of Wagner but the Overture to Tannhäuser. In the middle 'seventies, when complete Wagnerian operas first began to be produced in Boston, Dwight remembered hearing Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, and Der Fliegende Holländer in Europe,⁸⁰ but not until his career was nearly over did he have any chance to study even these early works. He did not refuse the challenge when it finally came, but after thirty years of hearing and remembering music he knew was great, he was no more capable of altering his concept of greatness than he was capable of stepping gracefully aside to let younger critics expound a new concept.

Actually we can make little more than a curious coincidence of the fact that Dwight and Wagner were born in exactly the same spring month of the year 1813. Dwight's antipathy to Wagner was such a colorful part of the Dwight legend after 1875 that he came to be regarded as a spirit divinely appointed to fight Wagnerism, born just a week earlier to get a good start, perhaps.

⁷⁹Journal of Music, XXX (November 19, 1870), 350.

⁸⁰Journal of Music, XXXIV (June 27, 1874), 254.

In the first place, however, the early volumes of the Journal of Music completely belie the idea that Dwight was born disliking Wagner. In its first year, the Journal carried four long articles on Wagner,⁸¹ followed by a series of translations from Oper und Drama.⁸² Dwight was well acquainted with Wagner literature and criticism, if not with the music itself. In the opening article, he suggested that Wagner's theories seemed "in fact a denial of what we have supposed to be the essential nature of Music, as a distinct art of language from all others;"⁸³ but a week later he dropped the French critic Fetis as a guide because Fetis was too dogmatically opposed to Wagner, and quoted Oper und Drama without taking a stand on either side.⁸⁴ Near the end of the series he restated accurately Wagner's theory that music should be a "co-factor with Poetry in the living and perfect Drama." Admitting that Wagner's practice might be better than his theory, Dwight said simply that the "theory hardly chimes with musical experience," and restated his conviction that "great" music expresses feelings too deep for words.⁸⁵

⁸¹II (December 4, 1852), 69-70; II (December 11, 1852), 76-78; II (February 26, 1853), 165-166; II (March 5, 1853), 173-174.

⁸²II (March 19, 1853), 185-186; II (March 26, 1853), 193-194; II (April 2, 1853), 201.

⁸³Journal of Music, II (December 4, 1852), 70.

⁸⁴Journal of Music, II (December 11, 1852), 77-78.

⁸⁵Journal of Music, II (February 26, 1853), 165-166.

Five months later he proudly reprinted a flattering "Open Letter to Mr. J. S. Dwight" from the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik.⁸⁶ The letter complimented Boston's musical tastes, represented by Dwight's listing of music played in the season of 1852-1853,⁸⁷ by saying that Boston should be ready for Wagner. Dwight replied that he was prepared to receive the new school, and prayed "for a long life on this earth, or in conscious communication with it, that we may hear and hail the MUSIC OF THE FUTURE!"⁸⁸ At the end of 1853, after hearing the famous Germania orchestra play the Overture to Tannhauser, Dwight hailed Wagner as a "great creative genius in the sphere of instrumental music."⁸⁹ Liszt's articles on Tannhauser from Journal des Debats ran for a month.⁹⁰ Charles C. Perkins became so alarmed over Dwight's Wagner fever that he wrote from Leipzig warning Dwight not to take up with the new school.⁹¹ But in December of 1854, Dwight went so far as to say that he was

of Richard Wagner's faith, that the true lyric drama, the Opera of the future, must be that in which both Poetry and Music shall be alike worthy of each other, and inseparable parts of one creative act of genius.⁹²

⁸⁶Journal of Music, III (July 30, 1853), 133-134.

⁸⁷See Journal of Music, III (April 30, 1853), 30-31.

⁸⁸Journal of Music, III (July 30, 1853), 133.

⁸⁹Journal of Music, IV (October 29, 1853), 28.

⁹⁰Beginning Journal of Music, IV (November 19, 1853), 49-50.

⁹¹See Journal of Music, IV (January 21, 1854), 125-126.

⁹²Journal of Music, VI (December 2, 1854), 69.

Incidentally, it is important to note that Dwight speaks here of the "Opera of the future," not the "Music of the Future."

All this does not prove that Dwight would have become a Wagnerite if he could have moved beyond the Overture to Tannhauser in the early days of the Journal. Surely, however, it is legitimate to speculate momentarily on what might have happened if Franz Lizst, instead of Otto Dresel, had come to Boston in 1852. What actually happened was that Wagner began to be generally accepted and performed twenty years too late for Dwight. When the Neue Zeitschrift suggested hopefully in 1859 that America was giving Wagner the appreciation he could not gain in Europe, Dwight denied the hope emphatically.⁹³ He still had a moderate faith in Wagner's genius, however, which, he thought, would show itself in time in spite of experiments and innovations, not because of them.⁹⁴

A decade later, in the great days of the Harvard orchestra, Wagner had not fulfilled the promise Dwight had granted him. The Overture to Tannhauser was wearing very thin, and did not have the power to "charm . . . quite so much as it did once."⁹⁵ Somehow, a superlative performance by the Thomas orchestra "was Wagner exposed; robbed of his glamor, if he ever had any, by setting him in so strong a light, so mercilessly truthful."⁹⁶

⁹³Journal of Music, XV (June 11, 1859), 85-87.

⁹⁴Journal of Music, XVII (May 19, 1860), 62-63.

⁹⁵Journal of Music, XXIX (March 27, 1869), 6.

⁹⁶Journal of Music, XXIX (November 6, 1869), 134.

Of course, we may be pardoned for wondering what Dwight would have said if Theodore Thomas had been sponsored by the Harvard Musical Association.

With the decline of the Tannhauser overture, the familiar music from Lohengrin interceded to prevent Dwight from erasing Wagner altogether. He liked the "Bridal Chorus" in 1863,⁹⁷ and seven years later found the "Prelude" as beautiful and poetic as anything of Wagner's known to him.⁹⁸ But he also found a way to describe the shortcomings of even this music. It was devoid of true passion, "cold and clear as a crystal, a purely intellectual fancy," to be enjoyed briefly only when it was followed by the "deep, significant, intense, soul-stirring" Overture to Egmont.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Dwight enjoyed Lohengrin as an opera more than any of the others of Wagner. He studied the score carefully, and found a "loftiness of purpose, a purity of aspiration which commands respect . . ."100 In 1875 he even found himself listening "with interest and amazement" to "Wotan's Farewell" from Die Walküre.¹⁰¹ But he would not now submit even to the popular sections of Wagner without reminding himself and his readers that partial acceptance of Wagner really reflected

⁹⁷Journal of Music, XXII (January 17, 1863), 335.

⁹⁸Journal of Music, XXX (October 8, 1870), 326.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 326-327.

¹⁰⁰Journal of Music, XXXVII (April 14, 1877), 6.

¹⁰¹Journal of Music, XXXIV (February 6, 1875), 382.

a serious blunting and demoralization of the musical sense, the "ear," in the young generation born into this strange phase of what its disciples call musical "progress." The sensitiveness to discord, to ugliness in tone-combinations, seems to be growing less and less. The young fanatico per la Musica is "iron-clad."¹⁰²

According to Mrs. Howe, Dwight also maintained that playing Wagner so "perverted the tone" of orchestral instruments that both strings and brasses needed some time afterwards for recuperation.¹⁰³

"How long, O Lord?" he cried after hearing Theodore Thomas play the "Prelude and Love Death" from Tristan.¹⁰⁴ Yet Dwight made a heroic ritual of studying the Tristan score for the next fifteen years,¹⁰⁵ and in 1891 sat respectfully attentive through Henry Krehbiel's lecture on the opera.¹⁰⁶ In 1877 he endured a solid week of Wagnerian opera, including Die Walküre. By this time he was armed with nine reasons why Wagner was not here to stay.

1. The mythological character of the plots.
2. The "subordination of Music to Poetry"--"the latest form of infidelity" in music.
3. The "long spun recitative," and the "infinite . . . melody."

¹⁰²Journal of Music, XXXVII (April 14, 1877), 6.

¹⁰³Reminiscences, p. 437.

¹⁰⁴Journal of Music, XXXIV (January 9, 1875), 367.

¹⁰⁵See, for example, Journal of Music, XXXVII (March 30, 1878), 207.

¹⁰⁶See Krehbiel's letter of appreciation to Dwight, A.L.S. of January 20, 1891, in the Boston Public Library.

4. The "paucity and poverty of musical ideas."
5. The leitmotifs. "Exasperating bores, the pack of them!"
6. "Want of repose."
7. "Strange, wild, brilliant" effects, without inspiration.
8. "Cacophony in general." "Lack of real beauty."
9. The lavish and expensive scenic outlay.¹⁰⁷

By far the most important of these was the lack of repose, the "ceaseless restlessness," the "going on and on" without development or "growing to a conclusion."¹⁰⁸ This objection itself shows Dwight listened to Wagner attentively, if not sympathetically. In Wagner was to be found no "hour or two of sweet, ideal life," only "struggling, squirming, restless knots of little phrases and melodic figures."¹⁰⁹ Beethoven, he declared, was

the most restless of men, and urged by aspirations uncontainable, [never] violated that principal of repose, which critics celebrate in all the perfect models of all Arts, but toward which Wagner is the Macbeth that murders sleep.¹¹⁰

In Wagner, the aging transcendentalist heard far too much of the world he thought music should shut out, the "rapid transit, the impatient meddling with electricity, the

¹⁰⁷Journal of Music, XXXVII (April 28, 1877), 15.

¹⁰⁸Journal of Music, XXXIV (March 20, 1875), 406.

¹⁰⁹Boston Evening Transcript, April 13, 1891, p. 6.

¹¹⁰Journal of Music, XXXVII (April 28, 1877), 15.

building skyward."¹¹¹ The Overture to Die Meistersinger was

a kind of music which does not treat you fairly, but bullies you, as it were, by its superior noise or bulk, as physically big men are prone to do who can so easily displace you on the sidewalk.¹¹²

In 1891, when he was confronted not only by a triumphant Wagner, but also by such "monotonous, weary, depressing" music as Tchaikowsky's Romeo and Juliet, he still believed that "the soul of man enjoys a sweeter consciousness in leading a more simple, quiet, temperate, abstemious, intellectual, self-respecting, mutually helpful life."¹¹³

For this strongly subjective feeling, Dwight had an objective, aesthetic defense. The writer who recently found Dwight's entire music criticism based on the Ton-Dichtkunst of German Romanticism should have been more disturbed than he was by the import of this note near the end of his article:

Since no composer during Dwight's lifetime better illustrated in his works the union of the arts for which Dwight strove, than did Wagner, it is especially noteworthy that the New England critic was unable to appreciate the composer.¹¹⁴

Such a fact is certainly "noteworthy," if Dwight did indeed strive for a union of poetry and music. But the evidence provided by the bulk of Dwight's later music criticism shows that after he began to hear music instead of to read and dream about it, he moved directly away from Wagner's version of the

¹¹¹Boston Evening Transcript, April 13, 1891, p. 6.

¹¹²Journal of Music, XXXI (December 30, 1871), 158.

¹¹³Boston Evening Transcript, April 13, 1891, p. 6.

¹¹⁴Thomas, "John Sullivan Dwight," p. 441, n. 34.

Ton-Dichtkunst theory. In the early 'fifties, when he could, momentarily at least, agree with Wagner on the "Opera of the Future," he never admitted that such an opera would be the highest form of art. Vocal music and instrumental music early became separate entities in Dwight's thinking, and the more symphonic music he heard, the less he cared for music with a text. He did not love the great Choral Symphony so much because he loved the other symphonies less. The evidence is strong that he loved the Fifth and Seventh more.¹¹⁵ At the height of his critical powers he recognized that his whole musical development had been a progression toward a taste for pure instrumental music¹¹⁶ and quoted with approval Richard Grant White's dictum that mind and body cannot receive "an impression from two mediums of expression at once . . ."¹¹⁷ Great music might be approached "through the medium of a poet's mind," but this did not mean that great music should be subject to poetic, literal "translation," or that the composer-poet should make an orchestral instrument of the human voice and poetry-speaking voices of the instruments. In Dwight's final concept, the poet was to serve as intermediary pro tem until the listener could catch directly the wordless, thoughtless "meaning" of the music. He once defined music as "the audible breath" of that "full silence" which our deeper moods

¹¹⁵See Journal of Music, II (February 26, 1853), 165-166.

¹¹⁶Journal of Music, XXXIV (July 11, 1874), 263.

¹¹⁷Loc. cit.

love.¹¹⁸ Perhaps this is as logical a conclusion to the Ton-Dichtkunst theory as any other. It may not advance Dwight's standing as a critic very much; but it is implicit in his writing as far back as the divinity school dissertation, and it does not sound nearly so stuffy today as it did to the avant-garde in 1890.

5.

When he described Theodore Thomas' reading of the Tannhäuser Overture as "mercilessly truthful," Dwight revealed that one of his earliest critical principles was still very much alive, however personal and unprofessional. We must recall how his wrists and fingers suffered when he tried to play Beethoven at Brook Farm, and how he felt that such difficulties of execution actually helped the listener understand Beethoven better. To Dwight, flawless performance was not only unimportant, but even undesirable in some respects. The genial and sociable literary amateur liked to feel a personal contact with the performer as well as with the music and its composer. If he did not sense that the human limitations of the performer were at some points not quite equal to the superhuman demands of great music, he suspected either that the performer was a well-trained machine, something less than human, or that the music was something less than great.

If this curious principle served Dwight too well in the days of Thomas' challenge to Zerrahn and the Harvard orchestra,

¹¹⁸Journal of Music, II (February 26, 1853), 166.

we must acknowledge that it was formulated long before Dwight became a propagandist for concerts he arranged himself. In the Harbinger, he noted with disapproval "some very clever musical criticisms" confined to the "mere externals of the art,"¹¹⁹ and deliberately disassociated himself from those critics who did little but look for flaws in execution. No matter how indifferent the performance, he thought, "a true work of art will plant its meaning in you."¹²⁰

From this position, and from his early dislike for virtuosodom, Dwight had an easy step to describing the Thomas orchestra as a big virtuoso,¹²¹ playing miscellaneous programs so well that both audience and orchestra suffered.¹²² "In the very finish and perfection of such playing," Dwight felt

at last a something cloying, a certain drowsy, dreamy, lotus-like sensation; so that the music, with all its beauty, seems to lack life and reality. This one felt particularly sometimes in the renderings of Beethoven; it seemed as if the thing had got to be done more by heroic acts of faith, the victory to be achieved in spite of one's own imperfections and rude means, by doing greater and better than one commonly knows how. Such great work, to have life and force in it, perhaps, ought not to be done too easily. In the very automatic perfection of the execution, grown to be a habit, the intention of the music may be lost; or strike home to the hearer's heart less vividly; if the picture be too finished, the spirit will elude us.¹²³

¹¹⁹III (November 21, 1846), 380.

¹²⁰Harbinger, V (October 16, 1847), 299.

¹²¹Journal of Music, XXX (April 23, 1870), 230.

¹²²Journal of Music, XXXV (June 26, 1875), 46-47.

¹²³Journal of Music, XXX (October 22, 1870), 335. Compare Dwight's description of a performance of the Ninth Symphony as "perhaps . . . too perfect, leaving nothing to the imagination of the hearer." (Journal of Music, XXXIV [January 9, 1875], 367.)

When the Handel and Haydn Society performed his translation of Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Dwight was not deaf to "manifold and serious imperfections in the actual performance." But citing Boston's experience with Beethoven and Mozart, he defended the rendition as a positive good, an inspiring challenge to the hearer. "To the smoothest model rendering," he declared, "one is apt to yield himself in a mood so idle and so passive . . . that the celestial harmonies go in at one ear and out the other."¹²⁴ In his later years Dwight never played or sang a note in public, but his own "unaided bungling readings" often led him to "a deeper feeling and perception of the Beethoven Sonatas" than he could have got from hearing them played by even such an artist as Anton Rubenstein.¹²⁵

Thus we find how misleading is the common statement that Dwight was deaf to bad performance if the music and the occasion were right. Dwight never tolerated truly bad performance, and he was very capable of recognizing various degrees of technical proficiency. But he was always suspicious of what seemed to be merely mechanical ingenuity and facility in composition, performance, or criticism itself. In his musical "remembering" was the transcendentalist's impatience with low-level, "mercilessly truthful," mathematical perfection. That Dwight utilized this principle in special pleading for the music and musicians he sponsored is not to be denied, and

¹²⁴Journal of Music, XXXIV (May 30, 1874), 238.

¹²⁵Loc. cit.

if conviction on such a charge removes him from the list of true critics, he would be the first to applaud the decision.

As a transcendentalist, Dwight refused to chart his course by the rules of logic or the tyranny of specialized learning. Yet he was equally incapable of guiding himself by pure idealism. He did not want his hour or two of music to shut out the whole world, but only that part he did not like. When he declared his love for great music because of the "great life" that was in it, he meant by "life" not so much a transcendental abstraction, but living persons whom he could love and whom he would have love him. His worship of Beethoven and Mozart was strongly tinged with simple anthropomorphism, based not only on their music, but on what little he could read or "divine" about the personalities of the composers. What a glorious confirmation of his latter-day prejudices he could have enjoyed if he had known some details of Wagner's life! Of course, he found Brahms and Tschaikowsky equally as decadent, but we must not expose ourselves to the charge of harboring hobgoblins.

Dwight had little chance to become personally acquainted with composers of great music, but many of his happiest moments came from contacts, often brief and tenuous, with the personalities of the performers he heard and the audiences he sat in. In an early number of the Journal he reminded his readers that genial comes from the same Latin stem as genius.¹²⁶

¹²⁶Journal of Music, VII (July 14, 1855), 118.

A work of genius should therefore reflect a genial creator, and present an ideal inspiring joy and human love. Likewise, a performer of real genius would also be genial and lovable personally. The reader will recall Dwight's admiration for Ole Bull, whose musical shortcomings Dwight blamed on the audiences Bull sought to please. Later, the oboe soloist with the notoriously showy Jullien orchestra¹²⁷ charmed Dwight completely, "looking like a Pan with half-closed eyes, and reeling jolly figure, half-drunk with the delight of his own music. Verily he was born with a reed in his mouth."¹²⁸

The boundless enthusiasm Dwight expressed for the singing and personality of Jenny Lind may be partially accounted for by the fact that he first heard her just about the time he was married to Mary Bullard. He was excited enough to credit Jenny Lind with doing what he later believed could not be done. "She has popularized the artistic ideal," he wrote.

Her singing has been of the same spirit, part and parcel of the same living essence, with the musical creations of the great German composers and tone-prophets. She has been a true interpreter, her song a true embodiment, of the spirit of Handel, Haydn, Weber, Mendelssohn . . .¹²⁹

One Mozart aria sung by Jenny Lind was, for Dwight, "the birth of a new ideal and a new faith in a man's head and heart."¹³⁰

¹²⁷For an account of this organization, see John Tasker Howard, Our American Music, pp. 219-225.

¹²⁸Journal of Music, IV (October 29, 1853), 29.

¹²⁹Sartain's Magazine, VIII (March, 1851), 214.

¹³⁰Journal of Music, I (May 22, 1852), 54.

After meeting her personally, he found "those upper notes of hers . . . but an outward correspondence of her soul's sure reliance in all high endeavor;--the higher, the surer."¹³¹

Many years later he was bewitched again by Christine Nilsson,¹³² and was struck by the "glowing musical expression" on the face of Anna Mehlig, the German pianiste, whose "genuine artist nature" was revealed as much by her person as by her playing.¹³³ Incidentally, Otto Dresel could account for this last enthusiasm only by lumping Dwight and all other Americans together with the French as "somewhat between dancing masters and frogs," with his "friend John S. Dwight, Esq." as the "chief frog!!!"¹³⁴ Actually this shows, to our satisfaction, that Dwight did not always stop to consider what Dresel would think, but trusted his own reactions and impressions.

Since he was neither composer nor performer, Dwight was probably more interested in the personality of the audience than any other music critic before or since. To him it was as important that the audience be "right" as that the music be "great." As early as 1851, one of his proudest boasts was that Boston had "a large, permanent audience of quiet lovers of the deepest and best works of the great composers."¹³⁵

¹³¹Journal of Music, I (May 29, 1852), 61.

¹³²Journal of Music, XXX (November 19, 1870), 351.

¹³³Journal of Music, XXIX (March 12, 1870), 206.

¹³⁴Dresel to Dwight, A.L.S. of April 15, 1870, in the Boston Public Library.

¹³⁵Gartain's Magazine, VIII (June, 1851), 406.

He rejoiced at seeing "the cold city of the Puritans, weary, as it were, of being considered the intellectual brain and literary 'Athens' of America," become a center of musical culture.¹³⁶

When he became impresario for the Harvard concerts, Dwight was as much concerned with organizing the proper audience as with arranging good programs and recruiting a proficient orchestra. At one all-Beethoven concert, he was extremely pleased to find "an audience remarkable for culture, taste, and weight of character . . ."¹³⁷ In answering the challenge of the Thomas orchestra, he proclaimed that the Harvard concerts were "more purely feats of Art." They were more imbued with "the impression, . . . the spirit, influence, and (so to speak) religion of true Art." The "motive of the occasion" counted most with Dwight. He implied that an orchestra which played miscellaneous programs designed to please at some point anyone who had the price of admission was not as important an instrument of culture as an orchestra which tried "to consolidate and vitalize a certain central force of public taste and true Art feeling, keeping it, amid all the babel of tongues and novelties, undissipated, undistracted."¹³⁸

¹³⁶Sartain's Magazine, VIII (June, 1851), 406.

¹³⁷Journal of Music, XXIX (January 1, 1870), 167.

¹³⁸Journal of Music, XXX (April 23, 1870), 230.

This was the atmosphere of the "place" Dwight sought in the world, and for a few years beginning about 1868 he seems to have felt that his orchestra, his music, and his audience were permanently consolidated and vitalized. In 1872 he easily condescended to describe as "pleasing" and "instructive" a program compounded of Beethoven, Haydn, Liszt, Weber, and Rubenstein, saying that "a Boston audience can now be trusted to know wheat from chaff . . ."139 As late as 1877, when the transience of his place had already become apparent, Dwight could still maintain that the Harvard concerts "were designed for permanence," and were consequently made up of the "elements of permanence . . ."140 But in the same year, when Il Trovatore played three times to one for Fidelio, Dwight blamed the "truly musical" audience directly for neglecting the best music and forcing the opera management to appeal "to the half musical, to the popular crowd . . ."141 A few weeks later he was almost in the position of lamenting that he had performed his life's work too well. The concert business had become so highly competitive in Boston that Dwight felt "a less truly musical state of things, less of a sincere, pure musical spirit and devotion than there was before we had won the fatal reputation of being a musical city!"142

139 Journal of Music, XXXI (February 10, 1872), 182.

140 Journal of Music, XXXVII (April 14, 1877), 7.

141 Journal of Music, XXXVII (November 10, 1877), 126.

142 Journal of Music, XXXVII (February 2, 1878), 175.

By the time of the great testimonial concert in 1880, Dwight knew that his delightful little world, like all worlds, was crumbling away. Yet this concert must have been the finest moment of hearing and remembering he ever experienced. Every person in the audience and every player in the orchestra knew him and respected him. Beethoven, Schubert, Bach, Schumann, and Mendelssohn were on the program. In the Fifth Symphony, Dwight heard the key-note of his whole life, but not in terms of "circles" or "attraction" or the "great life-struggle." He simply waited anxiously for the opening four notes, whereupon "the old miracle revived with a new charm and freshness . . ." ¹⁴³ The "old miracle" for Dwight was a compound of the many elements which made up his "hour or two of sweet, ideal life"--the anticipation of a long-loved melody, the satisfaction of friendship and social respectability, the inspiration of transcendentalism. Many people in the distinguished audience might have suspected that his heart was full and his thoughts wandering, but few could have realized that a significant part of the "old miracle" was in the sound of the little cadenza for oboe "played so charmingly by Mr. de Ribas, in the middle of the first movement; did it not sound precisely as it did when he played it the first time in 1841, and as he has played it ever since?" ¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³Journal of Music, XL (December 18, 1880), 206.

¹⁴⁴Loc. cit.

Beethoven's cadenza and the voice of the oboe are surely miraculous, divine, immortal. But to reconstruct Dwight's miracle we must add living men like Mr. di Ribas and Dwight himself, who for half a century devoted modest talents to keeping Beethoven's music alive, "undissipated, undistracted." If such miracles have not lost their power to inspire, the legend of Dwight also has some modest claim to immortality.

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