

# Edward MacDowell eBook

## Edward MacDowell by Lawrence Gilman

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## PREFACE

This is not merely an appreciation of Edward MacDowell as a man and a composer, but a study of the influences and natural endowments that combined to produce his style, a comparison of his work with that of others who achieved fame in other branches of the fine arts, all of which he felt were closely allied and supplemental, and a glance at his ideals and their evolution at Peterboro.

Most of his compositions are written around some poetic idea and are so suggestive and appealing to the imagination that in studying them the native poetic fancy is easily aroused; but the full effect is lost to the casual hearer who is not familiar with the theme. The accompanying poems are interpretations of some of his best-known piano numbers, based upon the briefly indicated poetic idea upon which they are founded, reinforced by a careful intellectual study of each composition and its appeal to the individual creative faculty of the author.

The sonnet to MacDowell was written at the beginning of the two darkened years preceding his death, when he forgot that there was such a thing as music.

"A.D. 1620" and "Song" are from the "Sea Pieces." The former describes the sailing of the galleon bearing the Pilgrim Fathers to America. The "Song," which is distinctly Irish in its melody, seems to me to be sung by a lad on board the galleon, who sings and whistles to keep up the courage of his fellow-pilgrims, thereby forgetting his own pain.

The "Shadow Dance" is written three notes to two, and this difficult musical form is represented by the three shadows dancing before two people. "A Deserted Farm" is a lyric description of the now beautiful "Hill Crest" as he found it. "The Spirit Call" is suggested by the Celtic vein of mystery and haunting sadness pervading most of the MacDowell music.

The sonnet "To a Wild Rose" was inspired by a rumor from the musician's sick room that his night had passed and he would recover; but this was a false hope, and it was not long until he was sleeping on a green hill-side at Peterboro, his resting-place, in the grandeur of its simplicity, suggesting the modest, child-hearted, nature-loving man who had passed on beyond earth's discord.

The other poems in this little collection speak for themselves, and all are offered as a handful of rosemary to one who ever harkened to the simplest strain.—E.F.P.

## EDWARD MACDOWELL

### HIS WORK AND IDEALS



*"Late explorers say they have found some nations that have no God; but I have not read of any that had no music." "Music means harmony, harmony means love, love means—God."—Sidney Lanier.*

"Music is love in search of a word," said the same poet-musician. He was born full of the music and the love, and so was enabled to find and transmit to the world the undying word.

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One cannot be a true poet, it seems to me, without at least an abiding love and sympathetic appreciation of the finest in music, or a great musician without a love of poetry and a responsiveness to its witchery. The two arts are interdependent and well nigh inseparable. A great musician may compose a song without words, but sooner or later there will be born a poet-soul who, hearing the song, will be irresistibly impelled to supply the words. On the other hand, many of the greatest musical compositions we have were inspired, like most of MacDowell's, by some poet's lines, a single figure, sentence or stanza furnishing the theme of oratorio, cantata, opera or ballad. Schubert's genius could be fired at any time, even under the most adverse conditions, by a beautiful poem, and many writers have received the inspiration for their masterpieces under the influence of music.

In some compositions combining both words and music, one will be very much the inferior of the other, and the thoughtful student or listener can but regret the discrepancy. Perhaps the words will be imposing and the musical setting trivial, or the music rich and full of color, but the words meaningless and inadequate. MacDowell's songs are satisfying. In his work he reminds one very forcibly of Sidney Lanier, whose genius was perfectly balanced. His music was full of poetry and his poetry ran over with music. His was an harmonious nature and no amount of external discord could cause him to lose his keynote. Applying his own beautiful words to himself:

“His song was only living aloud,  
His work a singing with his hands.”

Lanier played beautifully upon a silver flute, which he lovingly describes as “a petal on a harmony.” He was a member of the Peabody Symphony orchestra of Baltimore, and Asger Hamerik, his director for six years, says of him: “In his hands the flute no longer remained a mere material instrument, but was transformed into a voice that set heavenly harmonies into vibration. Its tones developed colors, warmth and a low sweetness of unspeakable poetry. His conception of music was not reached by an analytic study of note by note, but was intuitive and spontaneous, like a woman's reason.” In 1878 he played a flute concerto at a symphony concert, and the director said of him: “His tall, handsome, manly presence, his flute breathing noble sorrows, noble joys, the orchestra softly responding. The audience was spellbound. Such distinction, such refinement! He stood the master, the genius.”

In studying MacDowell, one is reminded at every turn of this dual genius. Like Lanier, his message is being better understood every year, and now that he is gone, “fulfillment is dropping on a come-true dream.”

MacDowell had great advantages over Lanier in his early life in freedom from financial worry. In his youth he was privileged to travel and search until he found his own real masters, in the Frankfort Conservatory, where he studied piano with Heymann and composition with Raff. At Weimar he met Liszt, who recognized his ability and accorded



him such unstinted praise that he was invited to play his first piano suite before the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musik-Verein at its nineteenth annual convention, held at Zurich in July, 1882. Both the composition and his rendition of it won enthusiastic appreciation and applause.

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Lanier had a hard, brave struggle to maintain his ideals in the face of a continually thwarting fate that would have caused many a man, stronger physically than he, to become discouraged, despairing. Ill health, poverty and lack of appreciation of his life work had not the power to destroy his optimism. He bravely waged an unequal combat with the three, when many a man would have fallen on his own sword to end the bitter struggle with either one of them. From out the gloom he sang thus:

“The dark hath many dear avails,  
The dark distils divinest dews;  
The dark is rich with nightingales,  
With dreams and with the heavenly Muse.”

Just at the awakening of public appreciation of his work and recognition of his right to rank as America’s greatest composer of music, MacDowell died to the world of men through a mental collapse brought on by over-work, and for two years, forgetting that there was such a thing as music, the great tone-poet dwelt in a soundless world. Sorrow for such a fate at the zenith of a career of so much promise was world-wide, and many hoped that he would emerge from the dark, after a time, with his genius enriched by long subjective communion with the “heavenly Muse”; but he had dwelt too long in the abstract world of sound and had heard the music of the spheres until earth tones became fainter and fainter and finally ceased altogether.

Then, after having admitted his greatness during those two shadowed years, when the hand of death rang down the curtain on his earth-drama, his contemporaries began to examine more critically into the why and wherefore of the decision that accorded him leadership.

A well-known critic calls him the American Grieg, but while applauding the fanciful style of the Norwegian, one often hears MacDowell accused of being merely capricious. But what is caprice?

Bishop Trench reminds us in his famous treatise that the word is derived from *capra*, “a goat,” and represents, in a picturesque manner, a mental movement as unaccountable, as little to be calculated on beforehand, as the springs and bounds of that whimsical animal.

The work of MacDowell certainly has the characteristic vigor and vividness, the unstudied activity, the unexpected leaps and springs that the derivation of the word “caprice” suggests. And, if one cares for mysticism, it is interesting to know that according to the teachings of the ancient science of astrology, which is having a considerable revival at present, the composer is entitled to unconventional methods and an unusual combination of qualities, as he was born on the cusp between the zodiacal signs of Sagittarius and Capricornus. The latter sign produces people who will work well independently, but are very restless when under orders or hampered by rules and

regulations. They love freedom, are fine entertainers, have little self-esteem, are inclined to be either on the heights

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or in the depths, are excellent musicians and lovers of harmony and beauty. They are often victims of over-work because of the determination to make a brilliant success of what they undertake and of their lack of judgment in regard to their powers of endurance. Sagittarius people are characterized by directness of speech and act. They are of varied talents, very musical and turn naturally to the spiritual side of life. They belong to the prophetic realm and see wonderful visions, but are no idle dreamers, being always mentally and physically active. Whatever there may be in the science of astrology, one who is familiar with the life and character of Edward MacDowell cannot fail to be impressed by the correctness of this delineation, so far as it goes.

But his style of composition is not, to my mind, capricious. It is the result of many interesting influences of heredity, culture and individual temperament and application. When he went to Paris, at fifteen, he was a pupil of Marmontel in piano and of Savard in theory and composition; but young as he was, the French school did not satisfy him. He heard Nicholas Rubinstein play while in Paris, and became fired with enthusiasm by his style and impressed with the idea that in Germany he would find his own. His father was of Quaker extraction and had decided artistic ability, but his pious parents would not permit him to indulge even the thought of cultivating or pursuing so trivial a calling. Edward inherited his father's talent, and while in the French capital, during a period of despondency over his slow progress with the language, he made a caricature of the teacher of his French class on a leaf of his exercise book. In some way it fell under the tutor's eye, and it was of such excellence that it aroused new interest in the gifted hoy instead of indignation. The teacher showed it to one of the leading artists in Paris, who implored young MacDowell to leave off music and study art, assuring him that he had unusual ability. But the lad also had a well-developed discriminative faculty. He had chosen his ideal and could not be persuaded to forsake it, preferring tone-pictures to those made with brushes and palette.

Besides the Quaker strain, with its tendency toward dignity, simplicity and openness to the leadings of spirit, he owes to his Celtic lineage the mystic, poetic, dashing, unsophisticated vein that might be easily mistaken for caprice, and to his American birth is due, no doubt, many of the more solid, practical characteristics that combined to produce the proper balance.

Naturally, he was deeply influenced by his foreign teachers and also by his favorites among the great masters whose works he studied. He is said to have adored Wagner, with Tschaikowsky and Grieg for lesser musical loves. To what extent he drew upon Wagner no one can say, but that he did so, either unconsciously or with that imitation that is sincerest flattery is very evident. Many passages suggest Wagner, and one can easily imagine the ardent young American worshipping the great German master, as he in turn had adored Beethoven.

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Liszt used to say: "I only value people by what they are to Wagner." There is no estimating the value of Wagner to those who came after him. He was not satisfied, we are told, with either the melody of the Italians or the rhetorical excesses of the French. The music of Beethoven was his ideal, and the dramas of Shakespeare, whose work, to his mind, compared with the early Greek plays, was like a scene in nature in comparison with a piece of architecture. *Mme. de Stael* called beautiful architecture "frozen music." It was just this architectural, frozen, congealed condition that Wagner wished to overcome, without running into any frivolities. He was in every sense a living, breathing *man*, and his work is pervaded by this virile, life-like quality. In his first youthful attempt at drama, forty-two persons perished in the development of the plot and most of them had to be brought back as ghosts to enable him to complete the piece. Now, however, one is haunted by the faithfulness to life of his creations, not by the ghosts of his slaughtered victims, and an aspiring young composer who adored him could not help imbibing some of his power.

Wagner thought that the musician should write his own lines in opera or song, and conceived and mastered a new form, taking poetry into music just as Sidney Lanier took music into poetry in his "Science of English Verse." Wagner also thought that because of the exactness of musical science, a composer became practically the actor of each of his parts, while the dramatic author could never be sure what meaning would be read into his lines.

The native poetic temperament of MacDowell and his almost invariable use of lines, figures or stanzas of poetry as inspiration in composition leads one to believe that he would have attempted opera when he had grown to it. This was one of the few musical forms that he did not essay. Perhaps he was of the opinion of Beethoven, as Wagner conceived him, who said when speaking of opera: "The man who created a *true* musical drama would be looked upon as a fool—and would *be* one in very truth if he did not keep such a thing to himself, but wanted to bring it before the public."

MacDowell is frequently called a mystic, and most of his efforts breathe the Celtic spirit, which is full of melancholy, romance and tenderness. Ghosts creep through their pages and wandering, restless spirits call from his most characteristic harmonies. Wagner was a mystic at sixteen, dwelling largely in the abstract, but grew out of this, through varied experience, into an active philosopher, with every objective faculty on the alert, and thus escaped, perhaps, the fate of MacDowell.



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The literary loves of MacDowell, who supplied him with such a wealth of inspiration, were Goethe, Heine, Shakespeare, Tennyson and Keats, and he was himself a poet of no mean ability. Lawrence Gilman says, in his thorough analysis of his work, that, writing as he usually does from some poetic theme, the effect is lost if the hearer does not know the idea around which the composition is woven. For instance, one is apt to take "A.D. 1620" for a funeral dirge, just to hear it without knowledge of the subject, as it somewhat resembles the Chopin Funeral March; but the title suggests something historic, and knowing the lines that inspired it, one can easily distinguish the waves and the majestic movement of a great ship putting out to sea.

Naturally, MacDowell drew heavily upon the German poets, Goethe and Heine, in his earlier works, as he began his serious study of composition in Germany. Equally naturally did he turn to Tennyson, as they are alike in psychic development and in their powers of interpretation of nature. Recently, in Lincoln, England, a new statue of Tennyson was unveiled. It is by Watts, and represents the poet clad in a cape overcoat, with slouch hat in hand and his dog at his side. He and his dumb friend have been strolling in the woods and his head is bent over an uprooted flower held lovingly in his hand. Underneath are the lines which inspired the striking pose:

"Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand.  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is."

It is a beautiful conception, the big, tall man contemplating thus reverently, with bared head, the tender epitome of life. The dog, with head upraised, points a comprehending nose in the direction of his poet-master's find, and looks as if he longed to help him unravel the mystery. MacDowell would adore this piece of sculpture, for he sought the secret of life in flower and brook and landscape, in mountain and vale and sea.

Gilman compares the "Sea Pieces" to Walt Whitman and Swinburne. Like Whitman, MacDowell is no strict adherent to set forms, placing inspiration ahead of tradition. Some of his most beautiful compositions are very brief. Poe claims that there is no such thing in existence as a "long poem." Since a poem only deserves the name in proportion to its power to excite and elevate the soul, and a sustained condition of soul excitement and elevation is a psychic impossibility, the oft-used phrase is a contradiction in terms. Applying this idea to the familiar piano compositions of MacDowell, they have every right to be called "tone poems." Poetry is the color-work of the mind, as distinguished from its sculpture and architecture, which represent mere form. There is more than form in the compositions under consideration; the tinge of color is everywhere,

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the wave of poetry that produces soul excitement and elevation, from signature to final chord. While he handles a subject broadly, as an impressionist, accomplishing striking effects with a few bold, characteristic strokes, MacDowell still works out his tone picture with considerable detail, carefully indicating the results he wishes to achieve. He reminds one in his methods of Corot, the great landscape painter. He will tell you to play a passage “very tenderly,” or “somewhat savagely,” or “daintily and joyously,” not being content with the usual color terms. When he is loud, he is very, very loud, and in the same composition will have a passage marked with four p’s. He likes contrasts and uses them very effectively. His music has the charm of infinite variety, but there is an insistent note of sombreness pervading most of it that is heard even above the majesty of the “Sea Pieces,” the beauty of the “Woodland Sketches” and the humor of the “Marionettes.” In the “New England Idyls” there is a plaintive little wail, “From a Log Cabin,” the rustic retreat in the woods at Peterboro, his “house of dreams untold,” where MacDowell did most of his later composition. It speaks of solitude, isolation and a moan of the wind is heard in the tree tops, with an answering moan from the heart of a man who may have had some premonition of his fate.

He is the first composer of world-note since Brahms who did his best work for the piano. Others have used that instrument as a means merely, reserving their crowning efforts for the orchestra, where it is, of course, far less difficult to achieve fine effects. While he wrote successful orchestral suites, he dignified the single instrument by devoting his first thought to piano literature.

His humorous suite, “The Marionettes,” very strongly suggests Jerome K. Jerome’s “Stageland,” in which the villain is represented as an individual who always wears a clean collar and smokes a cigarette. The hero approaches the heroine from the rear and “breathes his attachment down her back,” and the poor heroine is pursued by the relentless storm, while on the other side of the street the sun is shining. MacDowell portrays the coquettish “Soubrette,” the longing “Lover,” the strong-charactered “Witch,” the gay “Clown,” the sinister “Villain” and the simple, tender “Sweetheart,” with a Prologue indicating “sturdy good humor” and an Epilogue to be rendered “musingly, with deep feeling.” The suite is very attractive and in sharp contrast to his romantic, heroic and lyric work.

Another potent factor in the formation of MacDowell’s style of composition was his love of nature. No one has put truer brooks, birds, flowers, trees, meadows or sea into tone. Whenever he “loafed and invited his soul,” the tired, city-worn world reaped the benefit. His lesser piano compositions may be, in a sense, considered in the light of a diary. We are with him in a fisherman’s hut, in deep woods, on a deserted farm, in the haunted house, by the lily pond, in mid-ocean, by a meadow brook, by smoldering embers, always seeing the picture, hearing the voices or feeling the atmosphere that appealed to

his artist mind. The charm of common things, the ever-present beauty and harmony in all forms of life, supplied him with endless inspiration.



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In portraying nature, he is in no sense a copyist. He does not describe a scene, an occasion or an object, but suggests it, being an adept in the use of musical metaphor. Robert Louis Stevenson says that the one art in literature is to omit. "If I knew how to omit," says he, "I should ask no other knowledge." Painters tell us that the highest evidence of skill in transferring nature to canvas is to avoid too much detail, and they squint up their eyes in order not to see too much. These standards prove MacDowell the artist. He does not make the mistake that so many preachers and public teachers do of presuming upon the ignorance or stupidity of his hearers, but leaves something to their imagination and inner artistic senses.

There is a reverence of nature, a depth of love that amounts almost to sadness, in this man's work that stamps him the pantheist in the highest sense. This is, I think, a common characteristic of the mystic. Their consciousness of the oneness of all life is so perfect that God is seen even in its lowest forms. Sermons are read in stones and books in the running brooks. This suggests MacDowell's kinship to Shakespeare, Ruskin, Emerson and Thoreau; but it is a limitless analogy. All genius, in the end, is of one blood, and MacDowell is unquestionably a genius.

When one is entering upon a literary career, the first injunction is to "acquire a style." "But how?" asks the aspirant. Some say by becoming familiar with the forms of expression of the best authors, and such advise that you read without stint. Others bid you write, write incessantly about everything under the sun, until by long practice you evolve a style of your own, unhampered in its originality by the memory of the achievements of others resulting from much reading. There are still others who advise an equal division of time between study of the classics and self-expression. The latter is the most natural and common method and leads in time to the goal. Perhaps the same is true of musical style. Technical skill, accuracy, interpretation and appreciation come from studying and performing the works of others; then if one aspires to original work, let him compose, essaying any and everything until his own peculiar bent is discovered, unless it forces itself upon him with the insistence of destiny from the outset.

While the critics have admitted the freshness, originality and general excellence of MacDowell's work and marveled over his versatility, his shorter piano pieces and songs are as yet most popular in the making of programmes. However, Henry T. Finck says of his sonatas: "As regards the sonatas, I ought to bear MacDowell a decided grudge. After I had written and argued a hundred times that the sonata form was 'played out,' he went to work and wrote four sonatas to confute me. To be sure, I might have my revenge and say they are 'not sonatas'; but they are no more unorthodox than the sonatas of Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Grieg, though they have a freedom of their own which is captivating. They are brimful of individuality and charm; they will be heard often in the concert halls of the future."

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The “Sonata Tragica” might have been written of the composer himself, and “The Heroica” could easily have been inspired by his wife, instead of by the Arthur legends, for she is a knightly soul, combining to a most unusual degree the artistic temperament, womanly tenderness and charm, with a chivalrous sort of courage, suggesting Tennyson’s lines:

“My woman-soldier, gallant Kate,  
As pure and true as blades of steel.”

These are busy days for her at Peterboro, where she is daily striving to put the MacDowell ideals into permanent and practical effect. The plan is most appealing and can, perhaps, be better understood by contrast, if a little insight is given into a state of things, the amelioration of which is the purpose of the project.

You are invited, then, to step into a neat and attractive modern apartment kitchen, say three years ago. The grocery boy had just left. Everything was there, and of unusually good quality—crisp lettuce, golden oranges, the inevitable loaf of whole wheat bread, the sugar and lemons—and as the housekeeper compared the articles with the grocer’s book which she held in her hand, she gave a start. Some one across the way was playing “To a Wild Rose.” Yes, it was Wednesday, and a glance at the kitchen clock revealed the fact that in ninety minutes the MacDowell Club would be called to order, and she had promised a poem for the programme. Shades of Sappho! What was to be done? There had been no time in the two weeks since the last meeting, between housekeeping, mending, grinding out of pot-boilers and countless interruptions, to give the matter a thought, and she had never been known to forget such a promise.

Pegasus neighed reassuringly, and seizing the stub of a pencil attached to the grocer’s book, after a moment of concentration, in which she closed her eyes to shut out the material vision before her, she scribbled rapidly on a few blank pages in the back of the plebeian record. After several readings of the lines and sundry interlined revisions, she tore out the sheets, blessed Pegasus for coming in under the wire so nobly, and hurried away to dress. At the appointed time, sheepishly trying to conceal her unpoetic manuscript, which there had been no time to copy, behind a lace fan, she arose, flushed but sustaining her reputation for reliability as a programme feature.

’Twas for like-conditioned people, aspiring to work out their dreams in words, tones, color or clay in congenial surroundings, undisturbed by any domestic or other distraction or inharmony, that Edward MacDowell conceived the idea now being carried out at Peterboro, New Hampshire.

The plan was not to provide a rest-cure or moderate-priced summer home for broken-down musicians, artists and writers, as many seem to think, but to give those at the very height of their productiveness a chance for undisturbed work, under the inspiration of

nature in her most alluring guise, and association, after work hours, with such rare souls as could arouse higher aspiration by thought interchange and comparison of ideals.

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Ask the average workman along any artistic line what he would rather have than anything else and he is very sure to tell you, "Leisure for work!" And after that, the strongest desire is for the companionship of some one who really understands what he is trying to do.

His good angel must have led Edward MacDowell to Peterboro. I can imagine no other setting so perfect for the last act of his life, with its shifting scenes. Whatever else the great power back of the universe may be, He is the Master Artist, and in the making of this village of enchantment He seems to have gathered together all His most beautiful materials and combined them with lavish hand. Quaint and picturesque houses are sprinkled over the foot-hills of the Monadnock Mountains. Green fields go down to meet clear streams of placid water, where trailing vines and overhanging boughs make charming shadows. The sun sparkles against great gray boulders, lichen-grown, and upon yellow sand dunes. There are pines, larches, firs, spruces and all their sturdy kinspeople, scattered freely that the eye may at any season be gladdened by the sight of living green, and interspersed with these are deciduous trees of every kind, to make a fantastic tracery of bare branches against the wintry sky and furnish a series of beautiful contrasts, from the earliest tender bud to the last sere autumn leaf. And the ferns! Did the Great Artist have any left after planting the fence-corners, roadsides and deep woods of Peterboro? Overarch these features with a fair dome of fleece-scattered blue and waft abroad throughout the place a succession of mountain breezes, ozone charged, and you have a place to live and work and grow young in.

MacDowell thought that the fine arts were supplemental, each of the other, and wished to include them all in his scheme, so well-built rustic studios, equipped to suit the needs of the occupant, are being placed at intervals on advantageous sites in the woods, tree-screened and far enough apart to insure quiet and privacy, but sufficiently near to give that comfortable sense of human comradeship and safety. There is a common domicile at the foot of "Hill Crest," called "The Lower House," presided over by a capable housekeeper, where the workers sleep, breakfast, dine and recreate in the evening; but after breakfast, provided with a simple lunch, each hies away happily to his own studio to spend the day in alternate working and waiting on the Muses in blissful solitude. This routine is broken sufficiently by cups of tea with Mrs. MacDowell at "Hill Crest," rambles in garden and wood, drives over the picturesque mountain roads and tramps to the village, to prevent Jack from having any chance of becoming a dull boy.

The departed musician's own log cabin, already referred to as the place where most of his later works were composed, was the first of the studios to be built, and it would be difficult to imagine a more perfect retreat for his purpose.

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“It looks out over the whispering treetops,  
And faces the setting sun,”

which glints on the bark roof, now covered with a thick shower of fragrant brown pine needles, giving the appearance of a pre-designed thatch.

Within, the personality of the absent composer lingers perceptibly, and the two names —“Edward—Marian-1899”—written in his bold chirography in the damp cement, when the cabin hearth was laid before the open fireplace, tell a touching story of a union so real as to make no plan complete, no realization of a long-cherished hope perfect, that did not openly include his wife.

These two were married in New York in 1884. A gifted South Carolina aunt, who went to New York after the war and soon made her way to the front rank of metropolitan teachers, gave to Marian Nevins, a country-bred girl of York State, the only musical training she ever had until she went abroad in 1880 to pursue her studies. Edward MacDowell was at that time in high favor with his masters, Heymann and Raff, at the Frankfort Conservatory, and she became his pupil. Her industry and ambition aroused his interest in the development of her talent, and he put her through a long season of severe drill and study, imparting to her all his original methods and personal ideals, as well as those acquired from his masters. It was hard work between the gifted teacher and his promising pupil, with no idea of romance; but with her preparations for her return to America, at the expiration of three years, came the revelation to each of the meaning of the impending separation, and in a twelvemonth after her departure he went to New York and returned to Germany with his bride, settling at Wiesbaden, where they spent some ideal years. While he began his career as a composer in that inspiring atmosphere and won a hearing and a verdict that opened the way to fame, it was after his return to America that he did his best work, when he freed himself from the chance of unconscious imitation and reflection and gave rein to individuality and imagination in the Peterboro retreat. Weber says: “To be a true artist you must be a true man.” This tribute has been paid MacDowell by his associates: they say he was a true man. Nobleness has been called the chief characteristic alike of himself and his music, with a simplicity that is ever the accompaniment of real nobility. In playing, he had certain little tricks of using his fingers that produced certain effects, but he did not teach these to his pupils, preferring that they should use their own ingenuity, explaining: “You might find a better way than mine,” showing a modest willingness to be taught, even by his own pupils, instead of always posing as master. He never forced his personality, as a man or as a musician, upon any one, choosing rather to encourage and foster originality.

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Much is said and written about an American national music. I am reminded of a colored mammy who was left in charge of “Marse John” and the house while “Miss Mary an’ de chillun” were away at the springs. When the larder needed replenishing she would break the news to her employer like this: “Marse John?” “Yes, Mammy!” “You know the flour?” “Yes, Mammy!” “Well, *there ain’t none!*” It is even so with our national music—“there ain’t none.”

Arthur Farwell, president of the American Music Society, thinks differently. He says: “One must make a very broad study of the works of eighty or one hundred American composers before he will begin to perceive the indisputable American qualities arising in our music. The endeavor not to repeat, parrot-like, the formulae of the Old World has driven many American composers to seek out new inventions and has led to a freshness, in a considerable mass of American work, as in MacDowell’s, which may be said to be directly a product of American conditions.”

Music is seldom a thing of nationality or locality. Early opera in Germany was Italian and the French grand opera school was founded by a Florentine. The style of music that appeals most keenly to the people of a country or community influences largely the method and manner of its native composers. Authors, musical and literary, write more often to fill a demand, subjectively felt perhaps, than to create one or to establish a form representative of their nation or section, though occasionally, when the author is a genius and fearlessly gives expression to his own divinity, regardless of precedent, he finds himself responsible for a new order, though in that case the individuality of the author is the leaven that leaveneth the lump, and not the locality.

We are only beginning, as a nation, to recognize music as an essential to general culture. A new country must become familiar with and learn to appreciate what has already been done along artistic lines before it is capable of evolving its own type in any permanent, living fashion. We have no people’s music. “Give me, oh give me, the man who sings at his work,” said Carlyle, and I often think when I hear an American laborer singing at his task that if dear old Carlyle were only alive and I *could* give him the unmelodious disturber of the public peace, the pleasure would be *all mine*. American music, the music of the people, is built upon the Puritan hymn tunes and savors of the persecution that made the Pilgrim Fathers fly to the new land.

Some think that the negro melodies should form the basis of our American music; but why? The negro is an importation, not a native, and if we want the real thing, it seems to me that we will have to find it in the Indian melodies, but it will take artistic handling to develop them from aboriginal simplicity to the intricacy necessary to represent in any sense present-day, cosmopolitan America.

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Universality is just now the philosophical ideal, and it seems to me that America, the composite nation, is the proper center from which such a spirit should emanate. Why try to foster the limited local idea with regard to music, or any artistic or intellectual pursuit? Why encourage the production of distinctive American music in a country in which there is not even a distinctive type of face or mode of speech? Here is a Virginian, descended from an American Indian and an English colonist, living next door to a Plymouth Rock Yankee whose husband is a French Canadian. Across the street is a German-American born in the Middle West, who is married to a Californian of Spanish lineage. My cook is an African, yours is Chinese and perhaps your housemaid is Scandinavian, your chauffeur Irish, and so on. Music, to be effective in such a patchwork civilization as this, would have to be *simply music*—universal, composite, international.

MacDowell has created a typical music, typical of *himself*, not of any locality, and he wished it to be judged as *music*, not as *American* music, and the justice of his desire cannot be gainsaid. Recalling all of the influences of inherited and natural temperament, education, foreign environment and American experience, jealous as we are of his genius, we must admit that he caught in his productions the complexity of his time. His music is universal and reflects the genius of his contemporaries, as well as that of the older masters, impregnated with his individual creativeness. He had seeing eyes and hearing ears, and realizing the eternal principle of rhythm and the universality of tone, he caught the keynote of everything related to him in the outer world, with its corresponding relation in the inner or unseen realms, producing compositions that are complete in form, accurate in intellectual grasp and spiritually prophetic.

He fashioned his own wreath of immortelles,  
With matchless skill.  
Tones lent themselves with subtle eagerness  
To do his will.  
Repeat them as his genius did design,  
His pow'r devise;  
No higher tribute to his name and fame  
From us could rise.

## POETICAL INTERPRETATIONS

By ELIZABETH FRY PAGE

### TO MACDOWELL

Now, in the darkness, mute, from hour to hour,  
Sits one who lov'd all life, and from the strings



Of well-tuned harp brought sounds of common things,  
And sang of sea and wood and tree and flow'r.  
His task all done, fled usefulness and pow'r,  
Through the deep shade his uncurbed fancy wings,  
While with his fame his proud land loudly rings,  
And praise falls on his work in lavish show'r.

The rosemary we bring, and no rude hand  
The laurel would withhold, the plaudits stay.  
For him is seen the magic circled wand  
That to creative genius points the way.  
His music's bold, true note Time's test will stand.  
His age in art begins with cloudless day.



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### A.D. 1620

Exiled from home, for sake of faith held dear,  
To distant shores the Pilgrim Fathers turned.  
Their grief-stung hearts for Freedom's blessing yearned,  
Where persecution's lash they need not fear.  
In stately ships they sailed the ocean drear,  
And more of trial and of hardship learned;  
But in their loyal bosoms still there burned  
Religious zeal that lent heroic cheer.

One hundred souls from Mother England came,  
And many days fared on a storm-tossed sea,  
Men, women, children, to be known to Fame  
For braving death for sacred Liberty.  
To our bleak, shelt'ring port they gave a name,  
And marked an epoch in our history.

### SONG

A merry song the pilgrim sang  
To check the sigh of pain,  
At thought of leaving his dear home  
He ne'er might see again.  
'Twas o-ho-ho and ah-ha-ha,  
He laughed and sang away;  
When comrades' eyes were filled with tears,  
Or sad heads turned away.

A cheery song, a merry song,  
As o'er Life's sea we sail,  
Will send a thrill of courage new  
To hearts about to fail.  
So sound a note, oh singer brave,  
Whate'er your own soul's pain;  
When time repeats its echo sweet,  
'Twill bless your life again.

### IN DEEP WOODS

A solitary soul, I walk at eve  
Without the village walls, and in the deep  
And sacred hush of woods, where fairies sleep,



Calm Nature soothes my senses, and I live  
In realms that only creatures can conceive,  
Who with their holy guardian spirits keep  
Firm faith, and into loving arms I creep,  
And mundane cares no more my spirit grieve.

Cool breezes blow about me, and I hear  
The mellow bells of distant churches chime.  
I wander on, with never thought of fear,  
Secure as in some peaceful heav'nly clime.  
Majestic, mystic things seem close and clear,  
And all my soul is wrapt in thoughts sublime.

## SHADOW DANCE

We two sat watching the shadows dance,  
(Long years had passed since we were young),  
And o'er the days that had fled there hung  
A mist of sorrow and sad romance.

From out the gloom of an old stone wall,  
The moon drew creatures of wondrous shape,  
And none of our lost dreams could escape,  
A cruel magic revealed them all.

They bowed and swayed with a mocking grace,  
And held our gaze as they flitted by;  
Our deep-drawn breaths were our sole reply,  
As one by one we beheld each face.

A dream of Wealth and a dream of Fame,  
And Love's dream, these were the foremost three,  
Each with its shadowy train, till we  
Could greet the phantoms of youth by name.

Our faces paled and we trembled there,  
Watching the shadows dance on the wall;  
Wealth, Fame and Love—we had missed them all,  
And Sorrow's chalice had been our share.



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But there was hope and we still had life,  
And hearts are brave that the years have tried;  
We looked in each other's eyes and sighed,  
Sad, pain-filled eyes, but free of strife.

Dance on, gaunt shadows, beside the wall,  
We shrink from you in your cruel mirth;  
But what are *you* and the dreams of Earth?  
Our hard-won peace is worth them all.

### AT AN OLD TRYSTING-PLACE

Where, dearest, fare thy feet this summer eve?  
Hast found a pasture green in which to tread,  
Beside refreshing waters art thou led,  
Content beyond my powers to conceive?  
Does overflowing cup thy thirst relieve,  
With princely feast hast thou thy hunger fed,  
Uplifted high is thine anointed head,  
Among thy kind dost thou esteem receive?

I pray 'tis so; and evermore shall be,  
That year by year thy honors may increase,  
No shadow darken thy prosperity,  
Nor treach'rous pitfall mar thy way of peace.  
My loving eyes would always joy to see  
Thy path lie fair until thy journey cease.

### TO A WATER LILY

This is her bed!  
Dip the oars lightly,  
Guide the craft rightly,  
Where her sweet head  
Nestles so calmly.

What says her heart,  
Fragrant and golden?  
In its depths holden,  
With maiden art,  
Whose image hath she?



Dare I disturb  
Fancies so tender,  
E'en to surrender?  
Better to curb  
Self for her peace.

Dream on, my flow'r!  
Eyes have caressed thee,  
I have confessed me,  
In this still hour.  
Will she requite me?

### **TOLD AT SUNSET**

Upon the mountain's top we pensive stood,  
The day was waning and the sun drooped low;  
Long shadows fell across the vale below,  
And deepened as they reached the distant wood.  
The sky seemed in arm's reach: in holy mood,  
The trees stretched forth their boughs as to bestow  
A vesper blessing, ere we turned to go.  
Like feathered mother hovering her brood,  
Gray twilight o'er the landscape spread her wings.  
I looked into your eyes: in their clear glow,  
There dwelt the light that altar candles throw  
On imaged saint and penitent who clings  
To God, whose likeness such pure beings show.  
The strength'ning peace that contemplation brings,  
Obliterating trace of earthly things,  
Wrapt you in radiant aura, safe from woe.  
The path became a long cathedral aisle,  
The sinking sun, the Host to bow before  
With folded hands and rev'rently adore,  
The zephyrs wafting incense sweet the while.  
There was a far-off priest, with gentle smile,  
Whose parting benediction seemed to pour  
Upon us, from the verge of some blest shore,  
To which our ling'ring steps he would beguile.

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An organ pealed from somewhere in the heights  
Above us, and a sweet-voiced chorus rang  
A "Nunc Dimittis," and from caverns sang  
In echo all the list'ning mountain wights.  
Uniting fervently in their "amen,"  
We stood a moment in the dark'ning gray;  
In silence, as the knowing only may,  
And then, refreshed, turned to our tasks again.

### TO A WILD ROSE

Awake, wild rose, lift up your lovely face  
And smile a welcome sweet to one whose days  
Were spent of yore in rose-embowered ways,  
Where lovingly he marveled at your grace  
And found in music lore for you a place,  
Telling in tones the world heard with amaze,  
How fair you were to his inspired gaze.  
A grieving people lost him for a space,  
And 'round his darkened home there hung a band  
Of messengers, half-dreading, day by day,  
Lest they should bear sad tidings o'er the land.  
But now, as Nature wakes, joy hath full sway.  
MacDowell lives! Grim death could not withstand  
The tide of loving thought that flowed his way.

### THE SPIRIT CALL

*(Celtic myth: "The ghosts of Fathers, they say, call away the souls of their race, while they behold them lonely in the midst of woe." "Erin's clouds are hung 'round with ghosts."—OSSIAN.)*

I go: my father's spirit calls!  
From his gray cloud beholding,  
He sees how thickly sorrow falls,  
My lonely path enfolding.

So near he comes: I see him well:  
He beckons, smiling, pleading!



I cannot in this sad world dwell,  
When he is drawing, leading.

My heart is sore, he loves me dear,  
My soul is weary, weary!  
Father, I come, naught holds me here:  
Thou lov'st, and life is dreary!

Bend lower, cloud, his spirit's home,  
My helpless form to cover!  
A gasp, a sigh, one faint, low breath,  
And all life's woes are over.

## A DESERTED FARM

Seeking a lodge remote from men,  
A place for rest and labor,  
Where I might inspiration gain,  
Dame Nature for close neighbor,

I came on a deserted farm,  
By forest deep surrounded;  
'Twas mine, by ev'ry subtle charm,  
I saw, with joy unbounded.

I wandered through its empty halls,  
And 'mong its spreading acres,  
Where birds and bees and frisky squirrels  
Were undisturbed caretakers.

What sturdy youth and maid demure  
Within that garden olden,  
Their vows of love and constancy  
Pledged in the sunset golden?

What lady hands in lilac hedge  
Or tansy bed went gleaning?  
Who placed that rusty flintlock there,  
Against the stone fence leaning?

The very nails within your walls  
Handwrought, with skill, proclaim you  
A relic of colonial days,  
And home of comfort name you.



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The spinning-wheels, in attic hid,  
Tell me of busy fingers;  
And 'round the farm, long tenantless,  
An air of home still lingers.

Of bygone days you speak to me,  
With all your ling'ring treasures;  
You summon musings of the past,  
And promise future pleasures.

My Sleeping Beauty, I'm your Prince,  
At my kiss you will waken  
To fuller life than e'er you knew,  
Before you were forsaken.

The great of earth will gather here,  
'Twill be the home of Muses;  
Thy beauty and thy peacefulness  
A wondrous charm diffuses.

I have a dream that years ahead,  
From out your humble portals  
Will issue music, art and song,  
To bless aspiring mortals.

And mayhap when the eyes of men  
Turn toward you lovingly,  
Some gentle heart will breathe a prayer,  
Or sing a song for me.

### IN MEMORIAM

Out of the night and the silence,  
That held him in pitiless thrall,  
Came a gleam and a song of glory,  
And his spirit answered the call.

January 23, 1908