

UNSUSPECTED QUALITIES OF INDIAN
MUSIC

SOME interesting and curious resemblances have been discovered between the aboriginal music of the American Indian and the evolved product of our most advanced composers. Miss Alice Fletcher, working in connection with the national Bureau of Ethnology, has by her researches controverted the idea that the music of the American Indians is, "as is generally supposed, made up of meaningless chants, devoid of sweetness, power, and expression." On the contrary, the Indian is found to be a natural musician. From phonographic records of his songs taken under Miss Fletcher's supervision, it has been found that he instinctively makes use of "the major chords of the over third and under third." This, she asserts, "is one of the most notable characteristics of our modern romantic composers." In *Musical America* (New York, May 16) she says of this characteristic:

"We find more or less of it in Beethoven and Schubert, still more in Schumann and Chopin, most of all in Wagner and Liszt. This fact shows, I believe, that the great romantic writers, in going outside of the accepted harmonic limits, made a genuine discovery of natural harmonic relations. This has long been the belief of a number of musicians, but these Indian songs afford strong confirmation of the justness of the theory, for whatever else they are there can be no question that they are absolutely natural.

"What may be called the opening of the Wa-wan or Pipe of Peace choral reminds one strongly of numerous passages in Wagner. Yet it is perhaps more daring than any of that master's compositions, for it is a twelve-measure song, beginning in B flat and ending in C.

"Surely this composition is worthy of the attention of every student of harmony as well as of the scientist. It seems a bold statement to make, but it is one amply justified, that all melodic and harmonic resources to be found in our music, especially the most modern and advanced, are also to be found in this primitive music among a people who have no musical notation, no musical theories, no systematized scientific knowledge of it.

"Nor is it in harmony alone that this Indian music reminds us of the present-day ultraromanticists as well as older masters.

