



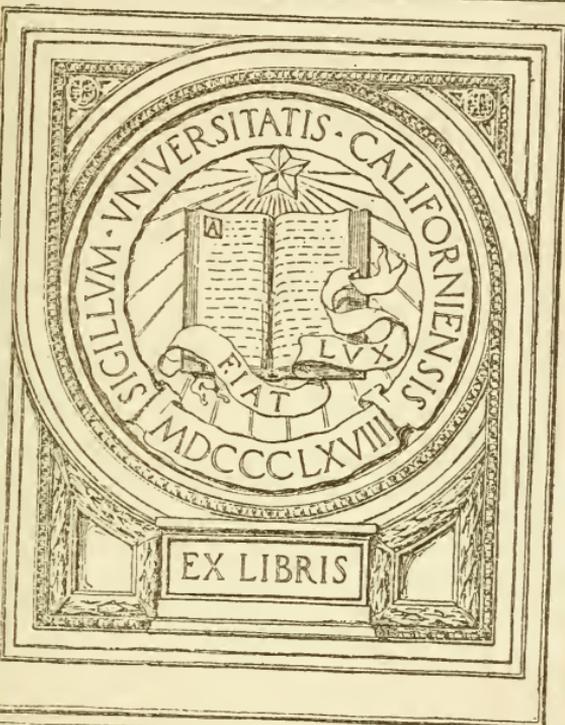
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Voice and Violin

Sketches, Anecdotes, and
Reminiscences

By

Dr. T. L. Phipson

Formerly President and Violin Solo to the Bohemian
Orchestral Society

Author of "Scenes from the Reign of Louis XVI."
"Famous Violinists and Fine Violins," etc.

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IN MEMORIAM

Professor J. Henry Senger

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Dedication

TO

SENORA ISIDORA MARTINEZ

*Formerly of the Italian Operas, London, Berlin, New York, &c.
Professor of Singing at Los Angeles, U.S.*

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED IN REMEMBRANCE OF MANY HAPPY DAYS
AND BRILLIANT CONCERT EVENINGS, BY HER
AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND ADMIRER

THE AUTHOR



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P R E F A C E

THE chief objects of the present little work are to amuse and instruct. It is a collection of episodes and personal reminiscences for which I had not space in my "Famous Violinists and Fine Violins." In addition to what has been given in that work, I have recorded here a few details connected with my own career as a violinist, because I believe that it will tend to facilitate the labours of those whose livelihood depends upon their music, and of all amateurs who desire to rise to the rank of artists.

In the present day, for the sake of novelty, there are many vain attempts to wander from the romantic and poetic sides of the musical art, and to sacrifice this art to what is termed the *science* of music—to write what pleases the eye and conforms to theory, rather than what pleases the ear and touches the feelings. In other words, there is considerable negligence of melody and *cantabile* (with its fine phrasing and graceful ornaments), and the production of much noise and cacophonia, which can never prove practically acceptable to

the world at large, however much it may be congenial to individuals of pedantic dispositions.

The little sketches, anecdotes, and reminiscences in this volume, may, I trust, counteract to some extent this undesirable state of things, and bring to the minds of my young fellow-artists many thoughts which will carry them in the right direction and help them on the road to success.

CASA MIA, PUTNEY, S.W.

November 1898.

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INTRODUCTION

THE great German poet, Wolfgang von Goethe, has told us that "where men sing, there you may enter without fear." This is very true. Even the drunken brawlers in the streets at night are much less dangerous when they sing than the surly, silent, quarrelsome brutes who have no music in them. You have only to join in their song to be made one of them at once—if such should be your desire.

It is needless to repeat here what I have so often said before about the refining influence of music upon men's thoughts and doings. Some people think we have already enough music in the world; others say, "Perhaps too much"; but I have long been of opinion that its influence for good is so great, the more we have, the better for every one.

It is, no doubt, a mistake to let the study of music interfere with the labour demanded by other professions on which the livelihood and welfare of a family depend; but a great amount of pleasure may be obtained from a moderate proficiency in the art, without allowing it to impinge too much upon the

daily routine of business. There are two mistakes often made in this respect. The first is the endeavour to force one's children to become musicians, because music and singing happen to be looked upon as fashionable accomplishments, when they have not the slightest gift or disposition in that direction. The other is the labour undertaken by many amateurs in order to vie with professional musicians, whose entire lives are devoted to the cultivation of their art.

It is well for an amateur to be ambitious, and strive to excel either in painting or music ; and it should never be forgotten that an amateur possesses advantages which the hard-worked professional can never hope to realise : to the latter music is often a drudge, whilst to the former it is a pleasure. An artist must play, or teach, often when he would rather do anything else ; whereas the amateur only plays when he or she feels inclined to do so, and never knows the drudgery of teaching.

Between these two conditions there is all the difference which exists between pleasure and pain.

In my younger days, with the exception of a few simple ballads for the voice, and some elementary pieces for the piano or violin, there were no effective compositions, save such as could only be performed by artists. Now things have entirely changed in this respect, and musical composition has attained such a degree of perfection that pieces of every

grade of difficulty, most of them good enough for performance in the concert-room, are to be obtained everywhere. There is no longer any reason for the amateur to sacrifice his time upon the most elaborate compositions, which he can rarely or ever conquer, when we find artists themselves performing in public certain pieces which the composer intended chiefly for the amateur.

Good music is one of the greatest blessings which the Almighty has placed at our disposal ; it will always charm if delivered in proper style ; but with bad music the finest style can do nothing.

This question of style is at the root of everything in music ; it applies not only to composition, but still more, perhaps, to the performance. Style is almost everything, and in many cases it is the most difficult thing to acquire. Let us take an example. Listen to the same song as heard in the street and in the drawing-room ; or to an operatic air as sung by a *prima donna* before the footlights, and in the school-room by a young lady just finishing her education.

I remember one evening in Brussels when my mother had asked a few friends for a little music, and among them was a young girl who had just arrived from London, where Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore* was being given for the first time. In due course the young lady sat down to the piano and sang a song. When it was concluded, my good

mother went forward to thank her, saying, "I suppose that is the last new English ballad?" "Oh! dear no," replied the girl, "that is *Or che la morte*, from the new opera, *Il Trovatore*, now playing in London."

An operatic *tenor* song sung by a girl—and taken for a new English ballad! Could anything have been more ridiculous?

The best way for young people to acquire a good style is, perhaps, to attend performances of Italian Opera as often as possible, those of Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, &c.; and if such be not possible, to frequent concerts where good artists are engaged.

As a youth I owed a great deal to Marietta Alboni (she was my great model), also to Camillo Sivori and Arthur St. Léon, for the violin. They supplied what my music master and my books of studies could not supply.

As a rule, young musicians do not pay sufficient attention to the *p* and *f* marks printed upon the music before them. They look only at the notes, then they endeavour to get the *time*; but as for *accent*, *rhythm*, or *expression*, they rarely or ever give them a thought. Only the other day I stood near a young performer on the piano who never once took the slightest notice of the marks *p* and *f* under the notes, and so the piece was played at one dead-level of *mezzo-forte* all the way through. The notes

were all there, and the time was pretty well kept, but the *piano* and *forte* passages, the *staccato*, and *slurs*, and *crescendo*, &c., were all played exactly alike!

The *monotony* of such playing can only be compared to that of a piano-organ in the street.

In orchestral playing strict attention to these things is most essential; and the *crescendo* in a fine orchestra is one of the grandest of musical effects.

I remember the conductor of an orchestra with which I was connected for a few years losing his temper because the performers neglected the preliminary *piano* passages, so that the *crescendo* was a complete failure. "Now, my friends," he said, when his anger had cooled down a little; "now, my dear friends, if you do not begin *piano*, how on earth can you ever produce the *forte*—unless you can manage to play *fifty*, which nobody ever could."

The distinguished French violinist Habeneck was once accused of something of the same kind by Berlioz.

"Now, Habeneck," said the latter, as they were about to separate, "when will you give us that passage of Beethoven as the composer intended it?"

"Never, as long as I live!" exclaimed the violinist, irritated at the question.

"Ah, well, then we must wait," rejoined the other, "but don't let it be long."

A bad-tempered person will rarely be a good musician ; so much depends on the mind of the performer (and the same applies equally well to composers). The greatest artists I have ever known were all persons of considerable mental culture, fond of poetry, history, and often of natural history. They were so good-natured that many have suffered from extravagant generosity. My father used to speak of Malibran as one of the most good-natured young women he ever knew, and though she might well be proud of her accomplishments, she was quite devoid of anything approaching to ostentation. She was one of the few great singers in whom jealousy of the success of others could never be detected.

However, I have not taken up my pen to write a didactic treatise upon the study of music, but simply to produce a few pages in which I shall endeavour to combine amusement and instruction for musicians in particular, and for the public in general. In doing so I have experienced the pleasure of recalling to my mind the events of many happy years, during which musical notes and memoranda have accumulated around me. Some of these I now place before my readers, with the conviction that they also will derive pleasure in perusing them, trusting that the present work may form an acceptable companion-volume to my "Famous Violinists," published a short time ago.

Voice and Violin

I

ANTOINETTE CLAVEL

I HAVE shown in my "Scenes from the Reign of Louis XVI." how marvellously some musicians escaped from the deadly shafts of the French Revolution. The guillotine that mowed down lawyers, bankers, politicians, men of science, authors, and even harmless poets and women, appears to have respected musicians.

Though some, like the illustrious Cherubini, suffered both physically and morally during this terrible period, the theatre and the concert-room do not figure much in the bloody annals of the Communists. No doubt, many professional musicians perished in the wholesale massacres at Paris, Nantes, Lyons, and Marseilles, yet all the great composers and lyric artists managed to elude the fearful havoc.

A curious scene occurred when Phillis, the well-known guitar player, father of the fascinating

Madlle. Phillis who, enchanted the audiences of the opera by her singing of Grétry's music, was brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal as a suspected character, to be tried by these self-appointed judges.

"What is your real name?" he was asked.

"Phillis," replied the musician.

"What do you do?"

"I play the guitar."

"What did you do under the tyrant?" (this was an allusion to the poor king, who had just been executed).

"I played the guitar."

"What are you going to do for the Republic?"

"I shall play the guitar."

The inquiry did not proceed any further. It was absolutely impossible to find this man guilty or dangerous, so he was allowed to go.

But some four years before the actual Revolution broke out, a truly marvellous occurrence took place at Marseilles, on the 15th August 1785, when Antoinette Clavel, then known as Madame St. Huberty, the celebrated singer, visited that city. Numerous ladies escorted her in a gondola to a pavilion, which was surrounded by at least two hundred little boats crowded with persons of all classes. She was saluted by a salvo of artillery, as if she had been some distinguished general. The Greek ladies of Marseilles presented

her with a magnificent costume, which she wore at this fête. After witnessing a water tournament, she was escorted to the pavilion, which was illuminated and decorated for the occasion, where a little allegorical piece, written in her honour, was performed. Then followed a ball, after which there was a display of fireworks and a grand supper.

Antoinette Clavel was born, of French parents, at the little German town of Toul, in 1756. Her father had been a soldier, but being a good musician, had embraced the musical profession, and had succeeded in becoming superintendent of rehearsals to a French opera company in the service of the Elector Palatine.

Whilst she was still a mere child, it was observed that little Antoinette had a delicious voice. But that was all she possessed. It did not appear that she was likely to become a handsome woman; though her countenance was full of intellectual warmth, and her manners were refined.

She was sixteen years of age when she began to sing in public; and though the German public applauded her efforts, no one would have imagined that a brilliant future was in store for her. At Manheim, in 1770, her father, with the troupe to which he belonged, formed an engagement for the opera at Warsaw, in which town the leader of the orchestra, M. Lemoyne, gave

Antoinette Clavel singing lessons during the four years that they stayed there, and afterwards brought her out as a *prima donna* in a little opera of his own. She next sang at Berlin, and then for three years at Strasburg. At last she reached Paris, and in September 1777 appeared for the first time on the French stage in the *Armide* of Glück, but only in a minor character.

She had now ceased to sing under her own name, and adopted that of "Madame St. Huberty." Nevertheless, at Paris she was scarcely noticed. She could obtain only secondary characters, her salary was extremely small, and she lived in a room at the top of a large house in the Rue du Mail, the whole of her furniture consisting of a little bed, and a trunk, which was used as a chair.

In person Antoinette was very different from her namesake upon the French throne. She was small, delicate-looking, and fair; her features were not finely formed, she had rather a large mouth, but her countenance was expressive. Her singing was marred by a hard German accent, and she was very nervous, both as a singer and an actress.

She attended rehearsal every day most punctually, generally attired in an old, shabby black dress, whilst the other singers flaunted around in silks, laces, and jewellery. They looked down upon the unfortunate young woman, made fun of the fine theatrical name she had adopted, and nicknamed

her "Madame la Ressource," in allusion to a thrifty personage in a play by Regnard.

Glück, the great composer and friend of Marie Antoinette, had alone observed the superiority of Antoinette Clavel's style of singing. He alone foresaw that she would outstrip all those dazzling butterflies of mediocre musical talent who never allowed her the chance of a good part. He alone encouraged her arduous endeavours to gain a livelihood by the only means in her power.

One day, in the presence of Glück, a pert actress, seeing Antoinette enter the theatre, exclaimed, "Oh! here comes Madame la Ressource."

This nickname stuck to her for a long time.

"Yes," said Glück, "you may well call her 'Madame la Ressource,' for the day will come when this girl will be the sole resource of the Opera House."

His words proved prophetic. She made the name of Madame St. Huberty celebrated.

Her first undoubted success was on the 12th May 1778, when she appeared as Angélique in Piccini's opera of *Roland*. She gained another triumph in 1880 in one of Gossec's operas; and again in 1782, when a contemporary declared that "never had the expression of tenderness and passion been so exquisitely delineated on the French stage."

I must not omit to mention here a little anec-

dote which brings out the true character of the composer Glück. It will be remembered that at this epoch the war between the "Glückists and Piccinists" was at its height—both composers had their ardent partisans and admirers. It is not generally known that the above-mentioned opera of *Roland* by Piccini was composed at a time when Glück was setting to music the same subject. But when the latter heard that the poem given to Piccini was much the finest, he destroyed what he had already composed of his new opera.

His friends accused him of folly. "Why should you thus destroy a work which might bring you both fame and fortune?" they protested.

"It is a matter of no importance," replied Glück.

"But what should you say if Piccini's *Roland* happened to prove a failure?"

"I should feel extremely sorry."

"And suppose it obtained a striking success."

"Ah! then I would take up the subject and treat it in my manner."

Six years before the outbreak of the Revolution, Antoinette Clavel, now universally known as the celebrated Madame St. Huberty, achieved one of her greatest triumphs as Didon, in the opera of that name by Marmontel and Piccini. During the rehearsals some persons remarked to the composer that they feared for the success of the

work, upon which Piccini replied, "Gentlemen, pray do not judge Didon till she appears;" and, indeed, when Madame St. Huberty performed that character the success was enormous; and the worthy Louis XVI., who did not care very much for any opera, had it twice performed at Fontainebleau, and awarded to the talented singer a pension of 1500 francs from the State, adding 500 francs more from his private purse.

Up to the year 1790, when she retired from the stage to marry a diplomatist, Count d'Entraigues, the career of Antoinette Clavel was one continued success.

Her married life was no less romantic than her artistic career. The Count d'Entraigues had served in the French army, and was formerly a member of the Constituent Assembly. He had known the charming singer for some time, and was married to her on the 29th December 1790. But the marriage was kept a profound secret for seven years afterwards, during which time we completely lose sight of her. No one knows what horrors she may have witnessed, what anxieties and hardships she may have experienced.

Her lover, or husband, was a diplomatist and a nobleman; therefore his life was not safe for a moment. In 1790, after their marriage, he emigrated, none too soon. He went to Lausanne, where his wife joined him, and soon afterwards he

was appointed Secretary to the French Embassy at Madrid, and later still, to that of St. Petersburg.

One day, on his way to Vienna, he was arrested at Trieste, by the orders of young Buonaparte; his papers were seized, and he was forced from his devoted wife, to be thrown into prison in the citadel of Milan, on a charge of connivance in the intrigues of General Pichegru.¹ By means which I have no space to relate here, his wife managed to procure his escape, and he then (1797), for the first time, made public his marriage with Antoinette Clavel.

The end of this talented woman, like that of her illustrious contemporary, Queen Marie Antoinette, was tragical.

After his escape from Milan the Count entered into the political service of Russia. He was entrusted with secret missions, which brought him in large sums of money, both from the Court of St. Petersburg and from the English Government, under the ministry of Canning. The Count and Countess d'Entraigues finally came to reside in England at Barn Elms,² on the Thames, at Putney. They were on very intimate terms with many members of the Government.

This fact attracted the attention of some of Fouché's agents, and one of the latter bribed

¹ See Thiers' "History of the French Revolution," ed. Chatto & Windus, p. 729 (ii.).

² Now the Ranelagh Club.

a Piedmontese valet of the Count to purloin some despatches and forward them to Paris. The theft was discovered almost immediately, and Lorenzo, the valet, who appears to have been half-witted, was so grieved at having betrayed such a kind master that he completely lost his reason. In a fit of insanity he stabbed the Count as he was coming downstairs, on the 22nd July 1812, and on meeting the Countess as he rushed upstairs, he stabbed her also. He then shot himself. All three died.

Thus ended the days of one of the most delightful of operatic singers, and a most praiseworthy character.

II

THE MUSIC OF THE "MARSEILLAISE"

A NOTORIOUSLY eccentric French violinist, Alexandre Boucher, claimed to be the composer of the music of the national air known as the "Marseillaise," and this claim seems to be admitted by several French writers.

Although I never admired either the words or the music of this great national "hymn," the circumstances under which it was produced are so exceedingly curious that they appear to me well worth reporting.

Some authors have stated that Rouget de l'Isle, an officer of the artillery, was the writer, not only of the words, but of the music, of the "Marseillaise." It has now been proved that he did not compose the music, nor did he write the last verse. The seventh and last verse, commonly known as "le strophe des enfants," was by another hand. For a long time it was attributed to the talented young poet André Chénier, who perished on the scaffold, and somewhat later it was supposed to be written by another poet named Louis François Dubois.

One day, during the Reign of Terror, the report spread that a priest, who had refused to take the oath to the Republic, had been caught in the act of solemnising a religious marriage, and was to be brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal that same afternoon.

He was known as the Abbé Pessoneaux, and the fact of his arrest created a great sensation, so that the court was crowded.

It was a large room, at the upper end of which stood an oblong table covered with a black cloth. Seated around it were seven self-constituted judges. Besides the tricolour scarfs round their waists, they wore, suspended by a ribbon from their necks, a small silver axe. As a rule there was very little speechifying : " *la mort sans phrases* " —death without any words—had become the fashion since the execution of the innocent but weak Louis XVI.

An eye-witness has told us that on this occasion half-a-dozen prisoners were brought in, and taken away, without arousing the slightest excitement in court. After having listened to a case, the judges either extended their hands on the table or put them to their foreheads. The first movement meant acquittal and liberation ; the second, death—not always by the guillotine, for that instrument did not work quickly enough to satisfy these blood-thirsty rascals.

Suddenly the priest was brought in, and a death-like silence prevailed through the whole building. He was not a very old man, though his hair was quite white.

“Who are you?” asked the President of the Tribunal.

The prisoner drew himself up to his full height, and replied calmly, “I am the Abbé Pessoneaux, formerly a tutor in the town of Vienne, and the author of the last strophe of the ‘Marseillaise.’”

An electric impression was caused by these words, every one seemed stunned, and the silence in the crowded court became so oppressive, it is said, that you could hear the people breathing. The President did not say another word; the reply of the Abbé had apparently stunned him also. Soldiers, gaolers, and armed ruffians, all stood as if petrified; every eye was directed towards the table, watching for the movement of the judges’ hands.

Slowly and deliberately they stretched their hands forth upon the black table, and at the same moment a deafening cheer rang through the room.

On the 30th July 1792, the volunteers of Marseilles, invited by Barbaroux, at the instance of the celebrated and unfortunate Madame Roland, marched to Paris, singing this song, which so enchanted the Parisians that they called it the

"Hymne des Marseillais." On their way to Paris, to be present at the taking of the Tuilleries on the 10th August, these "horrid red men" had stopped at the town of Vienne to celebrate the fête of the Federation, and on the eve of their arrival the Abbé Pessoneaux had composed the verse alluded to above. Had he not been arrested, as just related, the authorship of this last verse of the "Marseillaise" would have always remained a matter of conjecture, for we are assured that Rouget de l'Isle would never have acknowledged his indebtedness.

The artillery officer did not write a note of the music. This was composed by the then celebrated violinist Alexandre Boucher, in 1790, in the drawing-room of Madame de Mortaigne, and at the request of a colonel whom the violinist never met before, and never saw again. That officer was about to start with his regiment for Marseilles, and pressed Boucher to write him a new march. Rouget de l'Isle, during the time that he was imprisoned in 1791 for having refused to take a second oath to the Constitution, heard this march from his cell, and, at the instance of his goaler, adapted to it the words of a patriotic song he was then writing.

The violinist Boucher was a short, stout man, and so ridiculously like Napoleon Buonaparte that he was once induced by the Emperor of Russia to dress himself as Napoleon I., in order that the

Russian sovereign might show his mother what that French Emperor was like.

Alexandre Boucher was certainly a clever musician, and when Paganini, who was very fond of the highest notes of the violin, came to Paris, Boucher accused him of stealing his "little birds." It may be well imagined with what surprise Boucher heard the "Marseillaise" sung everywhere, when he recognised it as his own music, though it had been very slightly altered to suit the words.

A good many years afterwards the violinist met Rouget de l'Isle at a dinner party in Paris. He had never seen him before, and he took this opportunity of complimenting him upon his *poem* of the "Marseillaise."

"You do not say a word about the *music*," remarked the officer, "and yet, being an eminent violinist, it ought to interest you—do you not like it?"

"Oh! very much indeed!" exclaimed Boucher, smiling.

"Well, I will be frank with you," added the other, "the music is not mine; it is that of a military march which came Heaven only knows whence, and which they kept on playing at Marseilles during the Reign of Terror whilst I was a prisoner in the fortress St. Jean. I made a few alterations to suit the words, that was all."

Boucher then hummed the march as he had originally written it.

"Tiens, tiens! how did you come by it?" inquired the astonished author of the words; and when Boucher told him how it was he himself who had composed the march, Rouget de l'Isle threw his arms round the neck of the violinist and said to him, "Your music and my words go so well together that if I were to proclaim to the world my indebtedness to you I should never be believed."

"Keep it, keep it, by all means," said Boucher, moved by the other's candour; "without your genius my march would be quite forgotten ere now. It shall be yours for ever!"

This scene, although related by Boucher himself, is believed in France to be a perfectly accurate account; and I am of opinion that we must look upon it as historical.

The artillery officer, Rouget de l'Isle, must have written his poem with the din of the march constantly ringing in his ears, and finally noted down this very music to which his words were afterwards sung. He was evidently somewhat of a musician, and up to the year 1860 he was generally credited with the *words and the music* of the "Marseillaise."

Anyhow, the words, though rather sanguinary, are perhaps worth more than the music, which is certainly a very mediocre piece of composition,

much less beautiful and spirited than the "Marche aux Flambeaux" of the Rev. Scotson Clark, or the beautiful "Hope March" of Guido Papini, which are so often performed by modern violinists, and so dear to the members of string orchestras and military bands.

III

BRIGITTA BANTI, THE "QUEEN OF SONG"

BETWEEN Milan and that long branch of the Lago di Como on which is situated the little town of Lecco, lies the smiling district known to Italians as La Brianza, consisting mainly of a series of hills, the subsidence, as it were, of the vast mountain waves that rear their rugged crests above the little town just named. In October, when the sun is still hot, but when the heat is no longer oppressive, every cottage of this district displays the splendour of the golden maize, hung out upon the walls between the gnarled black stems, and broad green leaves of the trellised vine, and the mulberry, forming a picturesque foreground to the glorious view which extends over the plain of Lombardy.

The peasants of La Brianza are no less picturesque. They are a fine, handsome, industrious, and thriving race. They are adepts in the cultivation of the mulberry and the rearing of the silk-worm. The women display the type of beauty depicted by the great masters of the Lombard school—

light brown hair, oval faces, and wide foreheads ; they have an ease and grace of attitude, mingled with simplicity and dignity, which seem to be innate. The head is either shaded by a wide-bordered straw hat, very becoming to the face beneath it, or the hair is gathered into a coil at the back of the head and secured by a number of large-knobbed hairpins arranged in a semicircle. The feet are usually bare, and the short-skirted dress is made of a delicious red colour.

In the midst of this sunny, smiling, fruit-laden district lies the village of Monticello. It is placed on a high ridge of ground commanding grand panoramic views. At present the road rises to it from the little railway station at Usmate, situated some four or five miles away, down in the plain, where flourish thickets of acacia and chestnut trees, which seem like mere tufts of verdure in the distance. From the broad flat terrace, on which stands the church of Monticello, the view spreads over the vast plain of Lombardy, with its exquisite gradations of colour, its villas and gardens appearing like toy houses on a tray of flowers. Here and there the distant gleam of a small town shows like a handful of white pebbles scattered on that particular spot. On the side of a neighbouring slope, tinged with a delicate purple bloom, a tall campanile, or bell tower, rings out the hours to the sunny land around, chronicling with its changeless

tone the passing day, whilst the light breeze wafts with the sound the scent of a thousand flowers.

The indescribable delicacy of tint bestowed by the Italian atmosphere is as charming to the eye as is an exquisite melody to the ear. Whilst the sun declines and the shadows lengthen, the gaze wanders over the immensity of the distant plain, where everything is softened into a delicious harmony that awakens in our hearts a feeling of infinite sadness and infinite tenderness. As the shadows lengthen, and the lights glow with a mellower golden hue, whilst the great hills in the distance assume the delicate blush of the rose, the vast plain darkens into a deeper blue, and the little white winding roads which intersect the country in all directions grow fainter in the short-lived twilight, and soon disappear.

Such was the birthplace of Brigitta Banti, one of the greatest singers Europe has ever known. It was also, some years later, that of the celebrated composer Donizetti, whose delicious music has added new charms to our earthly existence.

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But we must now change the scene and carry our thoughts to Paris, at a time when the unfortunate Louis XVI. had been upon the throne just four years—at a time when literature, music, and the fine arts made that city the most brilliant capital of Europe—when the youthful and beautiful

Queen Marie Antoinette was admired by all classes of society, and when the greatest of all social convulsions was preparing in the fair land of France, as a natural consequence of the excessive corruption which had characterised the reigns of the previous three monarchs.

Ten years before the fatal outbreak, on a fine evening in July 1778, the peaceful citizens strolling along the streets, or seated before the little white marble tables placed in front of a café at the corner of the Rue de la Michodière which forms an angle with the Boulevard, were astonished by the magnificent voice of an itinerant musician—a handsome Italian girl, who accompanied herself upon an old guitar.

The effect she produced upon her miscellaneous audience was most remarkable. People stopped in their evening stroll, and stood in compact masses to listen to the plaintive melody and delicately executed *cadenza*; even the carriages of the aristocracy drew up for the same purpose, and children climbed upon the trunks of the trees to see what was going on.

A tall, dark, elegant girl, apparently not yet twenty years of age, was the cause of all this wonder. She had an old guitar, soiled, battered, and scratched, swung from her well-formed shoulders, and she sang to its soft accompaniment, and in exquisite style, the most beautiful and brilliant airs of the operatic *répertoire*.

Her performance elicited thunders of applause, at which she smiled and bowed gracefully in acknowledgment as she held out her hand to receive the proffered coin. Her receipts for that evening alone might have been envied by more than one accomplished artist of the minor theatres.

The girl's face was bronzed and handsome ; her hair black as jet, as were her large expressive eyes; her hands were soft and delicate as those of a princess. But the greatest wonder of all was her luscious voice. It was of enormous compass, sonorous, flexible, and of exquisite sweetness.

Bravura airs, love songs, humorous ditties, and rich *fioritura* flowed forth successively, to the inexpressible delight of the listeners. Never before had the loungers on the Boulevards experienced such an unexpected treat ; and many well-known connoisseurs did not hesitate to assert loudly that they had never heard such singing as this.

There were several great singers conspicuous in the Parisian world at that time, and, among others, the celebrated Grassini ; whilst some who were greater still, such as the charming and accomplished Gabrielli, yet lived in the recollection of the public. The vocalisation of the tall, dark-eyed Italian girl must therefore have been very extraordinary to have attracted so much attention, and to have elicited such decided opinions from *dilettanti* of all classes.

With equal ease and success this naturally gifted musician gave her audiences the Spanish *boléro* and the rapid Italian *tarantella*; but her singing was, if possible, still more effective in the pathetic *cavatina*, intermingled with elaborate and graceful *fioritura*. In the latter the listeners recognised and thoroughly appreciated the true Italian style, the romantic school *par excellence*, with its broad, graceful phrasing, and exquisite expression. No music ever reached the heart like this; and whilst the pure, fresh, silvery tones of the girl's voice rose in the still evening air, the faces of the bystanders were alternately suffused with tears or lit up by smiles as the song proceeded; not a person moved lest a single note of the sublime melody should be lost, and at the conclusion of the final *cadenza* long and loud applause echoed through the streets.

When the young singer had finished her songs in that locality and was about to retire, whilst the carriages began to move on, and the loungers resumed their promenade, a gentleman of about fifty years of age, who, with his arms fixed motionless upon one of the little marble tables of the café, and his eyes riveted upon the girl, had listened with astonishment and delight to her performance, beckoned to her to approach, and slipped a gold piece into her hand.

“What is your name?” he inquired.

“Brigitta,” replied the girl.

“How old are you?”

“Nineteen, Monsieur.”

“Who taught you music?”

“My father.”

“How long did you learn?”

“Two months.”

“But two months could not have enabled you to learn all those songs!”

“No, but I can sing what I hear sung. I repeat the airs until I know them myself.”

After some further conversation of the same kind he added—

“But would you not like to become a singer at the Opera? You seem very fond of music—you feel what you sing—would it not be better to study for the operatic stage than to sing about in the streets as you do?”

At these words the girl’s eyes filled with tears; and as they trickled down her finely sculptured features, she replied in bitter tones—

“How is it possible, Monsieur, that a poor girl like me, without education, without a friend in the whole world, can ever hope for such a thing as you speak of! No, Monsieur; my destiny, alas! is to live and die a poor itinerant musician—a miserable street singer!”

The man who had thus entered into conversation with the girl was no other than M. Devismes,

who had been for many years manager of the French Opera, but had then retired from that position. But he still retained a certain amount of influence in the musical world; he was recognised as a person of tact and of considerable experience, besides being a man of kind disposition and good taste. In this handsome Italian girl he imagined that he had discovered a real treasure for the lyric drama; and he was profoundly grieved when he found that his remarks had wounded her pride; for she was evidently ambitious by nature, and, like many Italians, extremely sensitive.

He seized her hand as he said, "Listen, my young friend, I had no intention whatever of hurting your feelings; on the contrary, I am so pleased with what I have heard of your singing that I will see whether something cannot be done for you."

Then taking a card from his pocket-book, he added: "This is my address. If you will call at my house to-morrow at mid-day, you shall meet some gentlemen who may feel disposed to take an interest in your affairs, and thus enable you to embrace a better career."

The girl nodded assent, and withdrew. Her heart was too full to speak.

Next day Devismes awaited her arrival with no small amount of impatience. She knocked at the

door of his residence at the appointed hour. Several musicians of note were already there. The conversation of the preceding evening was repeated to them, and the young singer added to what she had already said, that her name was Brigitta Banti, that she was born in the little Italian village of Monticello d'Ongina above mentioned, where her father was formerly a minstrel, a violin player, and found it very difficult to support his family by the exercise of his profession. A premature death had carried him off, leaving his widow totally unprovided for. Brigitta, who possessed a fine voice, had wandered from village to village, from town to town, singing for her daily bread.

To the gentlemen assembled at M. Devismes' house she sang some of her best songs ; and they could not disguise their admiration. One of them played a *cavatina* by Sacchini to test her capabilities, and after hearing it played twice, she sang it perfectly. An air of Glück's composition was then tried in the same manner, and she was no less successful in this second attempt.

It was there and then decided that her education should be provided for, the services of proper instructors engaged, and that Brigitta Banti should be, with as little delay as possible, transformed into an educated *prima donna*.

In a very few months she gave her masters the

most astonishing promise of future excellence ; and shortly, indeed, she did become, as all musicians are aware, one of the finest singers in the world.

After meeting with unexampled success at the various Opera Houses of Italy, France, Austria, and Germany, she eventually came to London, where she remained a favourite *prima donna* for no less than ten years (1792–1802), giving constant delight to her audiences, and where she was asked to marry the son of a well-known nobleman. But this offer she refused, in a very amiable but firm manner, on the plea of the difference in their social positions. She was forty-six years of age when the son of Lord North offered her marriage.

At Florence, in 1782, the composer Guglielmi wrote two operas for her, which were performed with the greatest success, and on this occasion the townspeople of Florence surnamed Brigitta Banti, *La Regina del Canto*—"The Queen of Song."

A touching scene is related of her visit to the little village of Monticello, where she was born. In the course of her artistic travels through Italy she decided upon making this visit. She had not been there for many years. When she left the lovely country I have so incompletely described, she was a poor, forlorn girl in rags. At the period of her visit she was rich, celebrated, and universally admired. Her heart, no doubt, throbbed

loudly as she approached the well-known, still-loved hills and valleys of La Brianza. Her desire to see once more her former home was intense.

In vain, however, did she seek for the familiar form of her poor father's cottage, with its little green slope, and the large trees in front of it. Alas! they had all disappeared to enlarge the entrance to a lordly park in the neighbourhood, the Palazzo Nava, now in its turn transformed into an hotel and public pleasure grounds.

Neither did she recognise a single face she met in the street of the little village.

The renowned songstress was just about to withdraw from this desolate scene, with an aching heart and moistened eyelids, when she perceived, at a little distance along the winding road, a poor beggar in rags, whose countenance was wrinkled with care and suffering, though he was still comparatively young.

As he approached and begged for alms, there was something in his gait and voice that struck her.

"Where do you come from?" she asked.

"From Monticello d'Ongina," said the beggar.

"Do you live with your parents?" inquired the *prima donna*, more than ever interested in the appearance of the miserable object before her.

"I have no parents," replied the mendicant.

A sudden shock seemed to convulse the singer as she said—

“How long is it since your father died?”

“It was about eight years ago,” he answered.

“Have you no sister younger than yourself?”

“I had one once, but I do not know what has become of her—she left us long ago. All she had with her when she quitted the village was an old guitar that belonged to my poor mother. Ah! Signora, she was a fine, handsome girl, fit to be a lady, and a voice like what they say you hear at the Opera, only sweeter——”

“Is not your name Antonio Banti?” inquired the singer, interrupting him.

At these words the beggar raised his eyes in astonishment. He approached a step or two, threw back his shabby felt hat, and looked steadfastly into her face as he exclaimed—

“How in the name of Heaven do you know that?”

Brigitta could not reply. She threw herself into the arms of her brother, whilst tears of joy streamed down her handsome features.

IV

BELLINI AND HIS OPERA "LA SONNAMBULA"

A YOUNG Englishman, in a letter to his mother, which is dated from Venice, the 19th November 1827, says—

"The Grand Opera at Milan is most charming, and indeed the second in Italy, yielding only to Naples. The night before we came away a new opera was produced called the 'Pirate,' written by a young man of the name of Bellini, a Sicilian, only five-and-twenty, but of most astonishing genius. This was his first opera, and met with a most brilliant success.

"It was a most interesting thing to be present at, as the composer is obliged to preside in the orchestra the first three nights, and have the satisfaction, or horror, of hearing his opera cheered or damned. On this occasion it must have been most gratifying, as the poor, pale, trembling composer was had out and cheered ten or twelve times during the evening."

This letter was written by Charles Mathews (the younger), the well-known actor, and in his

diary, which has been published, we find jotted down at this period the following memorandum :—

“ *Milan, Oct. 27th.*—Went to the opera. *Il Pirata* first night. By a young man of the name of Bellini, who conducted, and had to bow his acknowledgments about a dozen times. Opera very interesting and very successful. Rubini, Tamburini, and Madame Méric Lalande, all admirable.”

The opera of *Il Pirata* was produced at La Scala, Milan, on Saturday the 27th October 1827 ; and, on the 29th, Bellini wrote to his parents—

“ Let all my friends rejoice ! We have had the good fortune of obtaining such a success with our opera that we do not know how to express our joy. Neither you nor any of my family, nor myself, could have hoped for such a result . . .” and much more to the same effect ; but the reader may be spared the remainder of this boyish enthusiasm on the occasion of a first great success, thoroughly well deserved.

The family of Bellini had been musicians for several generations. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, a young music master, born in the Abruzzo, came and established himself in the little town of Catania, at the foot of Mount Etna, where he married while still very young. He had studied in the Royal College of Music at Naples, then directed by the well-known composer Piccini.

His name, like that of the immortal author of *La Sonnambula*, his grandson, was Vincenzo Bellini. He had several sons, one of whom, Rosario, also adopted music as his profession.

Rosario Bellini likewise married, at an early age, an amiable and accomplished girl, Agata Ferlito, by whom he had four sons and three daughters. The eldest son, born at Catania on the 1st November 1801, was christened Vincenzo, after his distinguished grandfather.

This lad gave evidence of extraordinary musical gifts almost from birth: he was scarcely twelve months old when he was noticed to beat time to an air that was being played on the piano by his grandfather, and at eighteen months the child hummed a tune of Fioravanti's most accurately.

Some anecdotes of this early manifestation of musical genius have been recorded; among others, that at the age of seven he composed music to several religious pieces, the text of which had been explained to him, and one of these compositions was actually performed at the Church of St. Michael. His grandfather, more especially, encouraged him in these early efforts.

Vincenzo Bellini, at this period of his life, was a fair-haired, rosy-cheeked boy, with light-blue eyes, a rather striking contrast to the ordinary complexions of Southern Italy. He had a slim,

elegant figure, was highly intelligent, and very affectionate. But there was a slight tinge of melancholy in his character, which increased as he advanced in age. His parents were anxious about his education, and besides his music, he was made to study Italian literature, and follow some classes at the university.

When it became decided that music was to be his profession, his father began to feel incapable of teaching him the higher branches of the art, and used all his influence to get his talented son sent, at the expense of the Government, to the Naples Conservatorio. He succeeded in obtaining this appointment for him on the 5th May 1819, when the youth was between seventeen and eighteen years of age.

It was a sad parting, in spite of the joy evoked by the reception of the good news. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, and grandfather embraced him over and over again, with mingled tears of joy and grief, as he bade them adieu and started on his journey to Naples. A long adieu, that was to last no less than six years—six years of incessant study, far away from all that was dear to him.

At Naples, Bellini studied under the veteran professor Zingarelli. He entered the Conservatorio as a student just as Mercadante was leaving it. For some time he applied himself to the study of

singing, and to various musical instruments, without attracting any particular attention. In course of time he passed his first examination and acquired the grade of *maestrino* or assistant-professor; and a little later that of *primo maestrino*, when he had to superintend the studies of the other pupils. His affectionate character caused him to make many friends; and the celebrated composer, Zingarelli himself, though he must have been about seventy years of age, acquired a great fondness for his talented young pupil. After a while he made friends of men already pretty well known in the musical world; among others, Pacini and Donizetti, and the latter prevailed upon him one day to try his hand at an opera.

Following this advice, he looked about for a subject, and at length decided upon a little poem called *Adelson e Salvini*, which had already been put to music by Fioravanti. Upon this poem Bellini wrote what he termed a *pasticcioni*—that is, a little work in which all the music was not exactly original—and had it performed with some success on the school stage of the Conservatorio at the beginning of the year 1825. Two of the airs were afterwards incorporated into his *I Capuletti* ("Oh! Quante volte") and *La Straniera* ("Meco tu vieni").

This first private success led to the choice falling upon Bellini to write a cantata for the Gala

performance at the San Carlo Theatre that same year, and it is said that nothing finer had been heard for a long time on such an occasion. The King of Naples was present and applauded the work of the young composer. From that day the career of Bellini was assured in Italy.

In the midst of these musical triumphs a very beautiful young lady had fallen in love with him, and he was no less affectionately attached to her. Madalena Fumaroli had parents, however, who were inflexible. When Bellini, with her consent, demanded her hand, they resolutely refused to unite their daughter to a young artist who had no position, and was, in fact, only just out of school. Neither supplications on the one side nor tears upon the other could be made to prevail, and Bellini was compelled to retire, almost broken-hearted, without the slightest spark of hope.

When the youth arrived at Naples to study, he had brought with him several letters of introduction, and among them, one to the Duke Di Noja, Governor of the Conservatorio, and Superintendent of the Royal Theatres. The Duke, like every one else, was pleased with his young protégé, and appears to have done all he could to befriend him. At the moment of bitter disappointment just referred to, he used his influence with the noted Barbaja, the *impresario* of the San Carlo, then the finest opera house in Europe, and induced him

to solicit a work from the pen of Bellini—not a simple cantata, but a regular lyric drama or opera.

This advantageous offer came at a most appropriate time ; it was eagerly accepted, and in order to stifle the grief caused by his unfortunate love affair, and to work in perfect quiet, Bellini sought refuge in the home of his parents at Catania. This was in August 1825. The poem confided to him was Giraldoni's *Bianca e Gernando*. The music was ready for the performance at the San Carlo Theatre in May 1826 ; the principal parts being allotted to Signora Tosi (soprano), Lablache (basso), and Rubini (tenor). It was so far successful as to draw down a large amount of applause, and attracted public attention to the composer, but not so much as to induce Barbaja to make any further offers. Bellini received about £150 for his work ; and shortly after its appearance at Naples the manager of the Milan Opera engaged his services for a work to be produced at La Scala. This was, perhaps, the most important period of Bellini's career.

He started at once for Milan on the 5th April 1827, with Rubini as a companion, and taking with him many valuable letters of introduction. On arriving in Milan he got from Ernesto Tosi, the brother of the distinguished *prima donna* just mentioned, an introduction to the poet Romani, the author of many beautiful works, and hence-

forth destined by good fortune to write the *libretto* to most of Bellini's compositions.

The beautiful words of this distinguished lyric poet no doubt exerted considerable influence upon the young composer, and we are largely indebted to them for the exquisite music which he wrote over them. Both men were born poets; they understood each other, their poetical thoughts blended together, and their sublime efforts culminated in that *chef d'œuvre* of poetry and music, *La Sonnambula*, the most beautiful by far of all lyric dramas.

Only once did Bellini seriously fall out with his poet. Romani was in love this time, and wrote carelessly. It was for the opera of *Zaira*. Both music and words were poor, and the work was a failure.

On another occasion the young *maestro* was not quite contented with the words of a *finale* in the opera of *La Straniera*.

Romani wrote a fresh verse, but it was no better than the first. At last Bellini sat down to the piano.

"Listen," he said, "this is what I want—I want something like this," and he played for some time a brilliant improvisation. When he had concluded he turned to his companion; "There," he said, "that is the style of thing I want words for."

"And there *are* your words," interrupted Ro-

mani, flinging him a rough copy of verses which he had written whilst Bellini was playing. The result was the well-known air, "Or sei pago o ciel tremendo," in the *Straniera*.

A few months after his arrival in Milan the first joint work of Bellini and Romani, *Il Pirata*, was brought out with the success alluded to above. It was soon afterwards performed in many other houses, among them at the Vienna Opera, where it created a great impression, and spread the reputation of the young composer far and wide.

The success of *Il Pirata* having thoroughly established his reputation as a dramatic composer, Bellini responded to other engagements; wrote his *La Straniera* for Milan, his unfortunate *Zaira* for Parma (which was shortly afterwards more or less incorporated into his not very successful opera *I Capuletti ed i Montecchi*, played at Venice, with Madame Grisi in the part of Juliet), and then returned to Milan, where he produced *La Sonnambula* and *Norma*.

The first of these appeared on the 6th March 1831, with Madame Pasta, Rubini, and Mariani, and created, perhaps, the greatest sensation that ever was produced upon the lyric stage.

When Bellini returned to Milan to write this *Sonnambula* music he was already poisoned by the same Venetian miasma that had just prostrated Pacini in that silent city of palaces, gondolas, and

contaminated water. For a short time his life was despaired of by the physicians who attended. But a well-known pianist, Pollini, took him to his house, and nursed him as if he had been his own child.

As soon as he had recovered he turned his attention to Romani's poem *La Sonnambula*. Some of his friends had then retired to a beautiful villa on the Lago di Como, about fifty miles from the city, and he was invited to spend his time with them whilst writing his new opera. Signora Pasta, then at the zenith of her fame, was also a guest there.

The villa Moltrasio, whither Bellini proceeded to take advantage of the kind hospitality offered to him, is on the left bank of the lake, in a splendid site inundated with sunshine, and remarkable for the extreme purity of its atmosphere. There is a charming valley, bathed and refreshed by the waters of a fine cascade. In the neighbourhood stands the majestic villa of the Count Lucini Passalacqua, with its tall cypress-trees and lovely gardens reaching down to the waters of the lake.

Here it was that Bellini composed those luscious *cavatinas* and splendid *bravura* airs of his *Sonnambula*.

Too delicate to take long walks, he enjoyed boating trips on the water from one side of the lake to the other, from one villa to another, where

he would familiarise himself with the habits and innocent pleasures of the *contadini*, and listen to their melodious songs as they were rowed across the lake on returning from the labours of the day.

Besides Madame Pasta, who was a constant guest at the villa, several distinguished artists came there almost daily, so that the drawing-room was often full of delightful society, and there was splendid music almost every evening. Bellini had ample opportunity of appreciating the great dramatic and lyric gifts of this celebrated *prima donna*, for whom he was writing the part of Amina in his *Sonnambula*. He studied with minute attention her handsome person, her tastes, the character of her voice, and the exceptional nature of her talent with all its wonderful resources. She was one of the finest singers in Europe; her splendid voice extended from the low A below the lines to C or D above, nearly two and a half octaves, and was a brilliant mezzo-soprano in quality. Her dramatic power was equal to her magnificent singing, and, with the exception of the great basso Lablache, she was probably the finest lyric artist of that day. Well, indeed, may she have inspired Bellini to write some of the most beautiful music ever composed.

The part of Elvino was written for Rubini, another constant guest at the villa, well named the "king of tenors"—formerly a choir boy, with a

luscious voice and economical habits, destined to leave a fortune of £90,000, which was £10,000 more than the no less celebrated and equally economical Paganini, his contemporary, left in his will.

One morning that Rubini, whose mind was much given to "embroidery" or ornament, at the expense, sometimes, of the dramatic situation and true expression of the song, came to rehearse with Bellini at the villa. On this occasion the latter was not satisfied with his singing. After making the same observation several times, but without the desired result, he rose disgusted from the piano.

"Well! you are an idiot!" he exclaimed. "You do not put into that passage one-half the expression of which you are capable; and instead of rendering it in such a manner as would bring down the whole house, you are *stupidly* cold and languid! For Heaven's sake throw a little passion into it! Have you never been in love?"

Rubini was thunderstruck. He had never heard such language on the delicate lips of his affectionate companion. Nevertheless, he took the hint in a quiet, good-natured way, and ended by electrifying his audience on the night of the first performance.

The baritone part was given to Mariani, an excellent singer and actor; and with these three

superb artists the opera of *La Sonnambula* was performed at the Carcano Theatre, Milan, on the 6th March 1831. Its success, to use the language of the Italian newspapers, was "colossal."

What could be more thrilling than the entrance of Amina with the recitative *Care compagne e voi tenere amici*, followed by the delicious air *Come per me sereno*, and the brilliant bravura allegro, *Sopra il sen la man mi posa?*"¹ This single production would have been sufficient of itself to stamp any composer as one of the greatest musicians the world has ever known.

Then, what could surpass the exquisite duet *Prendi l'anel ti dono*; and where can we find greater breadth and charm than in the superb baritone cavatina *Vi ravviso o luoghi ameni*, and the allegro *Tu non sai*, with which it concludes?

Again, how appropriate is the music to the words in the mysterious story told by the chorus, *A fosco cielo, a notte bruna!* How beautiful the recitative and duet between Elvino and Amina which follows, and the quintet *D'un pensiero e d'un accento*, and the celebrated tenor air *Tutto é sciolto*—the scene and prayer *Ah! non credea* by Amina, and her magnificent bravura finale, *Ah! non giunge!*

But why should I stay to examine all these sublime beauties, with which the whole world is,

¹ Many artists now replace the three first words by *Sull mio cor*.

or should be, familiar? I might as well be expected to eulogise the poems of Dante or the plays of Shakespeare. And as for attempting to give any idea of them to those who have not heard the opera, it is simply impossible.

The popularity of *La Sonnambula* is greater than that of any other lyric composition. No Italian opera has been performed so often, or was ever so enthusiastically applauded. Every young songstress who is capable of singing the music (or thinks she is) chooses it for her *début*, and the greatest singers never fail to make choice of it when they are anxious to produce an extraordinary sensation.

Bellini once began an opera on the subject of *Ernani*, but it was forbidden by the authorities of the day, and some of its music was incorporated into *La Sonnambula*, which was entirely written between the 11th January and 6th March 1831. In a letter to Ricordi, the well-known publisher, he wrote: "I did, indeed, write the *Sonnambula* from the 11th January to the 6th March; but that was an accident, as I had the reminiscences of my *Ernani*, which had been forbidden."

It has been the fashion of late years to find fault with the meagreness of Bellini's orchestration and the poverty of his accompaniments; but such criticism has been silenced for ever by the immortal words of the great Cherubini: when such an observation was made to him, he merely

shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "You could place no other accompaniments under *his* melodies."

What a fund of truth is contained in those few words!¹

¹ For more details than I can give here concerning the career of this remarkable man, see my little pamphlet "Bellini" (London: Wertheimer, Lea & Co., Circus Place, E.C., 1880).

V

THE VIOLINIST OF THE BOULEVARDS

SOME of my readers who have visited Paris in the days of the Emperor Napoleon III. may have noticed, on passing along the Boulevard des Capucines, a little woman about forty years of age, with two wooden legs and a violin, sitting in front of the confectioner's shop at the corner of the Rue de la Paix, selling prints and music.

In 1848, when Prince Louis Napoleon was canvassing for his election as President of the Second Republic, she was a very pretty girl, and dressed rather coquettishly.

At that period of her history she used to sit a little higher up on the Boulevard, in front of the wall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and behind her, on this wall, were exposed for sale a certain number of cheap engravings, often subjects of rather questionable taste, and some songs, the airs of which she played with much expression on her violin.

In those days "lady violinists" were very rare, so rare, indeed, that the mere fact of a girl playing

upon such an instrument in the streets of Paris was quite enough to attract the attention of passers-by.

This young person was, then, not only pretty, but she played remarkably well, and upon an instrument that looked clean and well cared for ; and it had a remarkably sweet tone.

I could never discover how it was that, when I knew her under the Second Empire, she happened to have two wooden legs. It was probably the result of some street accident ; for she seems never to have left Paris. Possibly, she may have been injured during the firing in the streets at the time of the *coup d'état*, when the soldiers were instructed to fire low, and many innocent persons were shot down by the troops. It was a rascally business, as every one knows.

The sweet tones of her violin attracted the attention of the public ; people turned to look at her. Her pretty, intelligent face did the rest, and she seems to have made a comfortable living by the sale of her songs and engravings. She was even able to save money, to get married, and to bring up a daughter as quite a fashionable young lady. But I am anticipating.

Let us go back to the time when the little violinist was a pretty girl of about eighteen years of age, sitting all day long before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has now disappeared, to make room for the large shops of M. Giroux.

Often a circle of inquisitive people would gather around her, and after listening awhile to her music, some would enter into conversation with her, asking her the name of the song she had just played, when she would at once point with her bow to one of the pieces of music hanging upon the wall, intimating, at the same time, that the price was ten sous.

Prince Louis Napoleon had then left London, and was living in Paris, where he hoped to be elected President of the new Republic. There were six other candidates: Cavaignac, Lamartine, Ledru Rollin, Raspail, Changarnier, and the Prince de Joinville.

The first and the last named of these had the best chances, and indeed got a very large number of votes; but the Napoleonic idea was then pervading all classes of society. One writer called this "a fond remembrance of the glorious past, rather than a hope of its renewal under the rule of the nephew." It was doubted by the greater number of the most ardent admirers of the first Napoleon, whether his nephew was sufficiently popular to obtain an appreciable following; and those who did not doubt this were mostly very poor men. Money was painfully scarce with the Prince candidate, who was then staying at the Hôtel du Rhin, in the Place Vendôme.

It was known to many that Louis Napoleon and

his little knot of partisans were then reduced to their own personal resources. Miss Howard, afterwards Princess de Beauregard, and the Princess Mathilde, we are told, had given all they could ; a small loan was obtained from M. Fould, and some scanty supplies had been forthcoming from England. It has been asserted in some quarters that Lord Palmerston and Lord Malmsbury contributed a few thousands of pounds.

But the printing of millions of handbills and posters, and their distribution, the expenses of canvassers and electioneering agents of all kinds, made such havoc with the funds that a stray remittance of a thousand francs or so, from some unexpected quarter, or from some anonymous sympathiser, was, as they used to say, "like a drop of water in a hot frying-pan."

It will thus be seen that, at the moment of which I am writing, Louis Napoleon was quite as miserably poor as his famous Corsican uncle, Napoleon Buonaparte, before his turn of fortune came. Often he was reduced to his last five-franc piece, and when nothing was left he promised to pay.

Nevertheless, whenever he went from his hotel to the Boulevard des Capucines, which was very frequently the case, he never passed the girl violinist, with her songs and engravings, without giving her something. This was so notorious that in the course of a short time she came to look

upon these contributions as a regular part of her small income.

Never was a man more easily attracted by the charms of a pretty face than was Prince Louis ; but music appears to have been almost entirely absent from his soul. At Compiègne, the noted hunting resort, after he had been made Emperor, he once turned a piano-organ—they had no other instrument, it appears, at the château for their carpet dances in the evening—but no one could dance to it.

It was not, therefore, the sweet tones of the girl's violin, nor the songs and engravings she sold, which attracted the attention of the future Emperor of the French, but her pretty face and coquettish manners.

She knew perfectly well who he was, and seems also to have had a very clear idea of his ambition. But what is more curious, she was evidently well acquainted with the low state of his finances.

In this respect the following little anecdote may be related here :—

One evening, after thanking him for his usual gift, she added—

“Prince, I should like to say a word to you.”

“Speak,” said Louis Napoleon.

“They tell me,” said the little violinist, “that you are very hard up at the present moment. I have three bank-notes of a thousand francs each

at home, where they are doing nothing. Will you permit me to offer them to you? You can return them to me when you are Emperor."

It is not difficult to imagine the effect that little speech must have made upon Louis Napoleon, who was not yet even President of the Republic!

He did not accept the money; but he was one of those men who never forget a kindness, and when he did become Emperor he offered the "Violinist of the Boulevards" a small annuity.

The answer which she returned to him on this occasion is highly characteristic.

"Tell the Emperor," she said to the Aide-de-Camp who brought her the information—"tell the Emperor that it is very good of him to remember me, but that I cannot accept his offer. If he had accepted the money I offered him it might have been different."

This is almost incredible, though some have vouched for the accuracy of the words. I feel convinced that she did accept the annuity after all; for I have been informed that the "Violinist of the Boulevards" was still to be found in the old place as late as 1887, selling her prints and songs as usual. But my informant also says that he has heard more than once that she owns one or two houses in the Avenue de l'Opera—one of the most expensive quarters of Paris—and that she gave a considerable marriage-portion to her

daughter, on the condition that she would emigrate to Australia.

From all this, it is evident that some mystery attaches to this interesting personality, which our historians have not yet been able to solve completely.

VI

GIORGI

THE well-known painter Gallait, one of the greatest representatives of the modern Flemish school, once horrified the public by the exhibition of his terrible historic picture of the Counts d'Egmont and De Hornes immediately after their execution at Brussels by orders of the Spanish Duke of Alva. It is one of the frightful episodes of the sixteenth century. But he is more popularly admired for his charming composition *Art and Liberty*: an Alpine shepherd-boy, with slouched felt hat and bright intelligent face, a thick coarse cloak thrown over one shoulder, and a violin, on which he is playing, pressed against the other; whilst on the white-washed wall which forms the background of the picture is scrawled in bold characters the word "Maria."

Another picture, less widely known, but no less beautiful and of a sadder nature, is called *Douleur oubliée* (forgotten grief). It represents an episode in the life of the celebrated Hungarian violinist Giorgi.

The title of this splendid picture scarcely ex-

plains the subject. A young itinerant musician, seated upon a bank at the roadside, has just finished a performance on his violin, whilst a lovely girl at his side has sunk down exhausted, with her head upon his shoulders, her tambourine, still held in her delicate hand, touching the ground. The girl, wearied by her labours, has fainted and fallen against him, apparently in a deep sleep, but pale as death, and the sad expression upon the bronzed features of the young violinist as he contemplates the calm, angelic face of his beautiful companion, thus suddenly struck down by fatigue and misery, is very touching.

To those who know the history of Giorgi it is still more affecting. Anyhow, this picture by Gallait is another *chef d'œuvre*.

Towards the latter end of the last century, or, to be more precise as regards our narrative, in the earliest years of the present one, there stood a small farm in the wild country at a certain unknown distance from Buda-Pesth.

It consisted of a few thatched wooden sheds, where the cows were sheltered from the rain, and the corn and fodder stored for the winter. One of these structures, rather larger and somewhat less coarse, served as a dwelling for four persons—a father, a mother, and two young children. It was the home of the farmer Giorgi, an honest, hard-working man, who had formerly been a

member of a Hungarian gipsy band, and was the fortunate possessor of a fine violin made by the great Eberle of Prague.

After his marriage he had settled down in this little farm, which existed since 1740 or thereabouts, and when his young son was about eight years of age he taught him to play the sparkling gipsy dance music with which he himself was so well acquainted.

The heat of the summer ripened the corn, the rain and the mists from the Danube raised splendid pasturage, the cattle thrived, the cows yielded abundance of milk, and poultry multiplied wonderfully.

During the dark winter months the sound of the Eberle violin enlivened the small household, and an occasional visitor or two, who had ventured on a stroll of five or six miles from the nearest village for the sake of a little gossip, a pipe of Giorgi's tobacco, and a glass of his beer.

When he was nine or ten years of age, little Giorgi's playing was commented on by some of these stray visitors, and the young lad gained quite a reputation for his dash and boldness. His little sister was younger by two years, and used often to join in these performances by a kind of extempore accompaniment on the tambourine.

The girl was eleven, and the boy thirteen, when one night in autumn there arose a storm of wind,

during which the farm caught fire. Before they could escape, both father and mother perished in the smoke and flames, and in an incredibly short space of time everything was destroyed.

The two children, by a wonderful miracle, were saved. They rushed from the burning building, instinctively carrying with them the violin and tambourine on which they had been playing that same evening. Of the whole property nothing else escaped destruction—a violin and a tambourine, with a few articles of clothing, represented all that was left of that happy little homestead!

After a period of intense grief and misery, which I shall not attempt to describe, the two poor children wandered from village to village, gaining their daily bread, and sometimes a night's lodging, by their music.

The Hungarian dances and military marches, vigorously performed by the lad, and cleverly accompanied by his pretty sister, who was a very handsome child, though somewhat frail, appeared everywhere to give great pleasure to those who heard them. But it was a hard and very precarious livelihood.

Giorgi, who was powerfully built, and enjoyed robust health, would have been equal to any amount of fatigue and privations; but his delicate sister Liza suffered much, and misery soon told its unvarnished tale upon those pallid features,

even when they were lit up by a momentary smile.

Two or three long years thus roll by, the young wandering musicians still earning a scanty living along the banks of the Danube ; and finally, when the charming Liza was fourteen and Giorgi about sixteen or seventeen, they found themselves one day on the outskirts of Vienna, where the sad episode of Gallait's splendid picture occurred. Alas ! the lovely girl had not merely fainted ; she had indeed fallen into a deep sleep—but it was the sleep of death !

By this severe blow Giorgi was for a time deprived of reason, and had to be taken in charge by the authorities of Vienna. Months of seclusion followed before his ravings ceased and sanity again declared itself. His naturally strong constitution finally overcame this fearful shock, and to earn his bread he again took up his violin—now, alas ! without the accompanying tambourine and the bewitching beauty of his beloved sister.

His lot was harder than before, and misery combined with grief well-nigh destroyed all that remained of his physical and mental powers.

It happened that one day, during some military manœuvres, he was delighting a group of Austrian soldiers by his playing, when the firm, round tones of his Eberle violin reached the ears of some

officers, and of the Archduke Charles, who was present. He ordered the young violinist to be brought to his tent, where he played several pieces, and among them a national hymn, in such a remarkably fine manner that all the officers present were struck with astonishment.

When the Archduke heard his history he was touched by it, and then and there determined upon providing for the proper education of a musician who gave evidence of such innate talent.

Under these august auspices Giorgi soon rose to the foremost ranks of *virtuosi*. He travelled through all the principal cities of Europe, and was everywhere applauded to the skies.

It is curious to note that in after life he wandered as a distinguished artist through many of the towns where formerly he had strolled as a beggar minstrel, and where he was now received as one of the finest of Hungarian violinists.

VII

MADemoISELLE FRÉRY

It is interesting to record, from personal notes and reminiscences, facts which have not yet found their way into musical dictionaries, and to make known a few traits, if not the complete life-history, of some of the finest violinists the world has ever known.

Alas! it is now more than forty years ago that I made the acquaintance, for a brief moment, of a most beautiful and accomplished lady violin-player in the person of Mademoiselle Fréry, a favourite pupil of the great De Bériot.

A short time previously I had known slightly Teresa Milanollo, had attended one or two of her concerts, and once, during the brief interval of a dance, had received from her own lips many interesting observations relating to her musical career. After studying in Italy and at Paris, she became a pupil of Léonard, in Brussels, towards the middle of the present century. She was clever and interesting rather than beautiful, of somewhat diminutive stature and rather cold manner, bearing, even at the

early age of twenty-three, conspicuous evidence of severe training. She had also been stricken down by grief after the premature death of her younger and highly gifted sister Maria, with whom she had achieved so many successes in the concert-room. Léonard composed an *Élégie* in remembrance of this sad event.

In Mademoiselle Fréry we had not only a fine violinist, but one of the most beautiful girls ever seen in Brussels during the middle years of this century.

At eighteen years of age, when about to compete for the first prize in the violin class of the Conservatoire de Musique, she was a very attractive young person indeed: rather above medium height, with a profusion of lustrous dark hair, large expressive eyes, regular and handsome features, and of that modest, retiring disposition which frequently accompanies decided talent.

Few of the youth of Brussels knew her even by sight, for she devoted herself assiduously to her studies; but those who did happen to know her, it is needless to say, were all enraptured.

She resided not very far from the Conservatoire, of which she attended the classes regularly. How long she had been in working her way up to De Bériot's class (the highest class of the Conservatoire), I cannot say; but my music master, Henri Standish, was the *répétiteur* of that class, and, of

course, had Mademoiselle Fréry, with others, under his charge.

Some short time previously Standish had himself taken the first prize in De Bériot's class, and it was now this young lady's turn to compete for the same honour. There were four or five other competitors, all men, whose names I have now forgotten, except that of Beumer, who was afterwards for many years the first violin in the orchestra of the Brussel's Opera.

A little while before, I had attended the competition of the singing class, in which Mademoiselle Sherrington (afterwards Madame Lemmens-Sherrington) had obtained a first prize, and now I was about to witness a still greater triumph, when Mademoiselle Fréry came out victorious.

The great concert hall of the Grande Harmonie was crammed; for these competitions are open to the public. Many students of the University, and pupils of the *École Militaire*, stood against the wall of the balcony, or gallery round the floor, and the body of the hall was filled with an enthusiastic audience. De Bériot led the small string orchestra in front of the stage or platform; and Fétis occupied the chair, with his committee of judges, all seated at a table covered with green baize, placed in a corner of the room, to the left of the orchestra.

In front of Monsieur Fétis was his glass of water,

and his little hand-bell, which he rang violently whenever any applause arose among the public. The bell was, however, quite ineffectual to suppress it. On such occasions he usually displayed a good deal of temper, and when silence at length ensued, the irritable little man would rise to his feet and say—

“Ladies and gentlemen, you are aware that any expression of feeling is strictly forbidden at these public competitions, and if any such occurs again, I solemnly declare to you that *I will give orders to the police to clear the room!*”

Generally, this speech, which was repeated from time to time in almost the same words, was received with a few well-marked groans, and that added so much to the old gentleman's irritability, that more than once I feared we should really have been ushered into the street by the armed police force in attendance.

The piece chosen for the competition on this occasion was the *Andante et Rondo Russe* from De Bériot's Second Concerto, perhaps the most beautiful of all his compositions.

Just before the proceedings began, my worthy professor came into the balcony and asked me if I would like to be introduced to Mademoiselle Fréry.

Of course I should—I was then, also, about eighteen years of age, and was studying the same piece of music.

He took me to the back of the stage, where the charming young girl and her mother were seated. She had her violin upon her lap, waiting till her turn should come to be called upon for the trying ordeal. She wore a plain, white, short-skirted dress, which contrasted with her jet-black hair; whilst a pretty pink sash round her delicate waist vied with the crimson flush of excitement upon her cheeks.

Although she appeared quite calm and collected, she assured me that she felt very nervous and uneasy. I did what I could to tranquillise her; but my efforts in this respect were evidently unavailing, for when afterwards her name was called she did not appear!

It was an anxious moment.

At the last minute her courage had completely failed, and she declared that she would not compete.

This message was communicated to the judges.

For a few minutes utter consternation reigned, especially among the students, and indeed in the entire audience. Inquiring glances were shot across the room and from face to face. Low murmurs were heard here and there, and a feeling of intense disappointment prevailed, mingled with the alarm that the beautiful girl artist might not be well.

Four or five young violinists had already played

the piece above named, with more or less success, and Mademoiselle Fréry's turn came last. Why was this? Probably because the professors knew that she could eclipse them all, and that the others would not be patiently listened to after her playing. And now she refused to appear!

After a short interval of suspense and anxiety the celebrated De Bériot was seen to lay down his violin. He rose slowly from his seat in the orchestra, and springing upon the platform, went behind the stage. In the course of a few minutes he reappeared, leading the bashful girl by the hand, and evidently encouraging her by kind words.

A storm of applause then arose, amidst which the little bell of Monsieur Fétis was not heard at all. We could only see that he was ringing furiously, his face getting red with anger.

When De Bériot had resumed his seat, and the performance began, all was hushed; and as the first notes of the exquisite *Andante* streamed forth you could have heard a pin drop.

The performance was in all respects equal to the looks of the handsome young violinist who played; her full and luscious tone, refined expression, and elegant execution, created a sensation that will, probably, never be forgotten by any who were present. At the conclusion there was an outburst of applause such as I have rarely

heard ; and in spite of the strict regulations, the little speeches with allusions to the police, and the perfectly inaudible bell of Monsieur Fétis, it was long and loud.

Another ovation, however, was immediately forthcoming.

After a rather lengthy deliberation on the part of the jury, it was decided that the first prize should be divided between Monsieur Beumer and Mademoiselle Fréry ; the second prize and accessits being awarded to some of the other students.

This decision was, of course, received with great cheering. But the uproar reached its climax when M. Beumer and Mademoiselle Fréry, both radiant with smiles, came forward, hand in hand, to the front of the stage to receive the award of the jury. The applause was then quite deafening, and I never witnessed a greater display of enthusiasm.

The following Sunday, according to custom, Mademoiselle Fréry played her prize piece again at the hall of The Augustines, at the usual concert of the pupils of the Conservatoire, when her success was just as great, and she had to repeat the last part of the *Rondo*.

My readers will doubtless like to know what became of these two interesting young persons who came forward, hand in hand, to receive their divided prize, amidst the enthusiasm of a distin-

guished audience. Were their hands to remain clasped together for ever—was such a lovely girl to become an *extra prize* to the hard-working and highly meritorious Beumer? No, indeed; fate had destined that they were to be separated for ever afterwards.

A year or so later M. Beumer was engaged, not to be married, but among the first violins of the Opera, where he afterwards took the position of leader and solo violin; and Mademoiselle Fréry was engaged—and married!—to a pianist, and proceeded to the United States. I never learnt the name of her husband, nor did I ever hear again of this lovely girl, who was certainly one of the very finest violinists of her day.

Some little time after these occurrences, about 1853 or 1854, the two sisters Ferny made their appearance on the stage of the Brussels Opera as solo violinists. They were pupils of Artot, and played his music to perfection. Their name remained popular for some time, and being somewhat like that of Fréry, caused the latter to be forgotten by many who suffered from short memories.

It was just at this time that, as a result, probably, of the effect that had been produced in their concerts by the sisters Milanollo, young girls began to take up the violin as a means of livelihood; and Standish one day mentioned to

me, *as a curiosity*, that he had *two* lady pupils who were adopting music as a profession.

But, as I have shown in another place,¹ the musical world had enjoyed the phenomenon of a "girl-violinist" long before the time of Paganini.

¹ "Famous Violinists," &c. (London : Chatto & Windus, 1896), pp. 150-169.

VIII

A LESSON IN COMPOSITION

OUR English composer Balfe, some of whose melodies have always been extremely popular, got his inspiration chiefly from Bellini, and a few other Italian composers of the same school. In like manner Bellini was often inspired by the popular airs of Naples, the city in which he studied. That lovely song *Finestra che lucevi* (given in Ricordi's collection, *Eco di Napoli*, vol. i. p. 16) has its "echo" in one of the most telling passages of *La Sonnambula*. We could fancy Bellini wished to recall to the minds of his hearers the sad words of those verses so familiar to the people in order to emphasise the situation of the disconsolate Elvino. Whether he wished it or not, he has done so, or I should not be able to mention the fact.

In some of the most effective violin music of De Bériot we meet with like reminiscences of Bellini's *Norma* (First Concerto), of Auber's *La Sirène* (Ninth Concerto), of Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* (Sixteenth Étude mélodique), and many other instances.

When I was a very young boy, and was just beginning to play some of these delightful Italian melodies upon my violin, I used to listen with rapture to the playing of my paternal uncle upon the flute. He was a man whose soul was devoted to melody, and I shall never forget a little speech he made to me when he paid us a visit one summer in Brussels. Alluding to the study of composition, he remarked, "My dear nephew, as you advance in life you will find that the most difficult thing in the world is to compose an original air."

We have, indeed, such a number of beautiful songs in the world that some of the greatest composers have not been able to avoid reminiscences of previous compositions, which are often very striking to those who hear them for the first time. It is, however, a thing to be carefully avoided in producing a new work.

When you have an original melody the harmony will take care of itself; it is not very difficult to supply the latter, and it should not be so complicated or pedantic as to injure the theme—a fault that is rather conspicuous in many modern compositions.

After such men as Zingarelli, Mercadante, Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini, and others of the modern Italian school (often spoken of as the "romantic school," in contrast to the "classical school" of Bach, Handel, Haydn, &c.), it is

almost impossible to hit upon a decidedly new air fit for the lyric stage. Of late years the only musician who has thoroughly succeeded in this respect is the veteran composer Verdi ; and some of his melodies in *I Lombardi*, *Il Trovatore*, *Ernani*, and *Rigoletto*, have consequently become extremely popular.

As I have cultivated this so-called "romantic school" all my life, without in any way despising the other (for, like Rossini, I only recognise two kinds of music : "that which is good, and that which is bad"), I have convinced myself that young composers whose livelihood depends upon the success of their compositions, cannot do better, after familiarising themselves with Mozart and Cimarosa, for instance, as a preliminary training, than make a very careful study of the three operas *L'Elisire d'Amore*, by Donizetti ; *Il Barbiere*, by Rossini ; and *La Sonnambula*, by Bellini ; more especially the first-named.

If the complete score is not within their reach, let them take the partition for voice and piano of the *Elisire d'Amore* ; and, first, carefully study the *Italian words* (not the translations into French, English, or German, which are often very defective), and then the music, bar by bar, from beginning to end. It is one of the best lessons in composition that I can recommend ; and it will be all the more useful if they have been fortunate

enough to have seen the opera performed once or twice before they study it from the composer's point of view.

To produce an effective opera the greatest care should be given to secure a well-written poem or *libretto*. A silly plot, or one that is too elaborate, are equally to be discarded.

Spontini's *La Véstale* had to be considerably cut down before it could be declared successful, fine as the music was. When Lesueur, the composer whom Napoleon I. patronised, was asked his opinion upon it by the young Italian composer, he did not hesitate to declare that it was a very fine work, indeed—in fact, that *it had only one fault*.

“What is that?” anxiously inquired the composer.

“It is too long,” replied Lesueur.

The greatest composers have had numerous failures ; young musicians should remember that, and never be disheartened. Out of the forty operas written by Rossini, twelve only were performed with great success. Out of the sixty-six composed by Donizetti, nine only have met with popularity ; and out of ten operas composed by Bellini (who died at the early age of thirty-four), five only were received with enthusiasm.

Tartini, the celebrated Florentine violinist, who, at twenty-four years of age, composed his well-known *Sonata del Diavolo*, left a remarkable letter

to his pupil Madame Sirman,¹ on the study of the violin, to which I have referred in a former work. Bellini also has left a letter upon his method of composition, of which I will here give an exact translation for the benefit of my younger readers. He says—

“Since I have decided upon writing a certain number of operas—never more than one a year—I have also determined upon throwing all my efforts into the task. Being thoroughly persuaded that a great portion of their ultimate success depends upon the choice of an interesting subject, upon the contrast of the passions, the harmony of the verses, and the warmth of expression in their recital, quite as much as upon dramatic situations, it was necessary for me, in the first place, to meet with some writer who had experience in this style of composition, and this I have done in choosing Romani, a powerful genius, evidently born for musical drama.

“As soon as his poem is finished, I study most attentively the characters of the various personages, in order to become familiar with the predominant passions of each, and the sentiments which animate them.

“Once well penetrated with all this, I put myself in their places, and I endeavour to feel, and to express my feelings, as they would feel and act if

¹ Signorina Lombardini.

real living personages. Just as music is the result of a variety of sounds, so men's passions are revealed also, in language, by means of diversely modified tones, and I endeavour, by incessant observation, to accomplish with my art the exact manifestation of these various sentiments.

"Enclosed securely in my room, I begin by reciting the part of each personage in the drama with all the passionate ardour which I can bring to bear upon it. I note, as much as possible, the rising and falling of my voice as I do this, the accelerated or slackened diction, and, finally, the accent, and tone of expression, which Nature gives to man when a prey to his passions; and I find thus the airs and musical rhythm which are necessary to convey these impressions to an audience by means of harmony.

"I immediately note this down on paper, then I try it over on the piano, and when I feel a corresponding emotion to that which I desire to represent, I conclude that I have succeeded. In the contrary case, I recommence, and persevere in my work until I have realised my object."

The greatest of modern Italian composers, Giuseppe Verdi (born 1813), who wrote his *Falstaff* at the age of eighty-two, had no special professor: he educated himself by studying the works of his contemporaries, and imitating them. At first his work showed much inexperience; but his natural

gifts soon raised him to the very highest rank of dramatic composers.

Rossini's method of study was to take either the bass or the treble of a well-known composer, and fill up the one or the other in his own manner. This method is used in the Paris Conservatoire, and is considered one of the best exercises for students, after they have acquired the technics of modulation, melodic ornamentation, fugue, &c., or what is called the "grammar of music."

For the encouragement of young composers who may have met with disappointments, I will report here the translation of a portion of a letter which Bellini wrote to his friend Florimo—the author of so many sweet Italian melodies, and for many years keeper of the Archives at the Naples Conservatorio—on the occasion of the failure of his opera of *Norma* at its first representation:—

"MILAN, 26th December 1831.

"DEAREST FLORIMO,—I write under the impression of grief—a deep, bitter grief which I cannot express, but which you will understand. I come this moment from La Scala, where my *Norma* has just been performed for the first time. Will you believe it? *fiasco! fiasco! solemn fiasco!*"

These words will bring a smile to the lips of any one who may have heard Grisi sing the cavatina *Casta diva*, &c.

IX

TOMARISSEN AND THE BEY OF TUNIS

TOWARDS the latter part of the eighteenth century, when the great qualities of the Amati violins were beginning to be highly appreciated, a certain rich Bey of Tunis, named Muftareddin, was well known to be a great amateur of music. He had an orchestra composed of the finest artists he could collect. His agents travelled all over Europe and Asia, and along the coast of Africa, to engage any musician of extraordinary merit whom they might happen to meet.

The orchestra was required more especially to play the sprightly dance music of that day—horn-pipes, jigs, Oriental ditties, vales, &c.—which were performed every evening in the open air after dinner, when the heat of the sun had subsided, and the Bey, with his counsellors and friends, lounged upon a capacious balcony, smoking their chibooks, and enjoying the soft, cool breezes which set in about that hour from the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

One morning, shortly after daybreak, an agent of the Bey was ushered into his private apartment, and informed him that in his travels in Sicily he had met

with a violinist of marvellous talent, compared to whom the best performers in the orchestra of his palace were a mere nothing. The name of this wonderful artist was Tomarissen. He was a young man of Arabian origin, born at Palermo, and a great favourite in his native town.

The agent said he had used every endeavour to induce this violinist to visit Tunis, in order to delight the Bey by his playing, but that he had completely failed to procure his services.

The fact was, nothing could induce Tomarissen to travel. Not only was he the first musician in Palermo, and made much of by all the inhabitants of that ancient city, but he was affianced to a beautiful girl of nineteen years of age, named Roxelana, whom he intended to marry as soon as he had saved a little money.

But Tomarissen was very poor. His reputation was great, but his purse was small—and often empty. As he was very generous, his performances were frequently given away in aid of charities, or for other purposes, and he had only a few pupils. Nevertheless, he earned sufficient to live respectably, paid his rent and his taxes regularly, and enjoying as he did the fond affection of Roxelana, he lived at Palermo very contentedly.

When the Bey of Tunis was made acquainted with the news, he determined at any cost to have this wonderful violin-player. He could not sleep

at night for thinking of all that his agent had told him, or maybe it was because he slept so much in the daytime. Anyhow, he insisted on despatching his agent in a special boat to Palermo, instructing him to offer the Sicilian *virtuoso* magnificent presents of money and jewels, which he felt thoroughly convinced no violinist could fail to accept.

But when Tomarissen received this very liberal offer, he firmly refused to depart with the officer of the Bey, and the latter was obliged to return alone to Tunis. As soon as this functionary had departed, Tomarissen wrote a gracious letter of thanks to the Bey, in which he promised that his Serene Highness should soon hear him play if he would meanwhile send him a small gift of money, some of which he would require for the journey, and the remainder for the support of his family during his absence.

It should be understood that his music contributed rather largely towards the maintenance of his aged parents, not to mention all the little presents that he purchased and bestowed upon the beautiful Roxelana. However much Tomarissen would have liked to play before such a distinguished individual as his Serene Highness the Bey of Tunis, he felt certain that if he ventured to visit him he would be kept a prisoner for an indefinite length of time, perhaps for ever, and such a thing did not at all suit his tastes.

Meanwhile the Bey, in answer to the letter, sent

a handsome sum of money and some valuable presents to the violinist of Palermo, on the strength of his promise to pay him a visit and play to him, which his Highness felt assured would be strictly kept, for he knew by experience that a true artist never breaks his word.

A short time afterwards, indeed, Tomarrisen prepared to start on this little adventure. He packed up his beautiful violin, an Antonio Amati ; bade a fond farewell to Roxelana, promising to return very soon ; hired a stout fishing-boat and five men to sail to Tunis, and to await him there until he was ready to return ; disguised himself thoroughly as a wandering minstrel, and arrived at the palace just as the Bey and his attendants were enjoying the usual evening concert.

He repaired to the great hall, and giving his name as Glutini, a favourite pupil of the renowned Tomarissen, requested, as a favour, that he might be allowed to play before the Bey and his Court.

The Bey of Tunis was highly pleased at this announcement, and at once dismissing the members of his orchestra, he had the strange violinist summoned to his presence.

The latter soon found himself in a large apartment where the Bey and the whole of his companions were lounging in a vast circle upon luxurious sofas, sipping their coffee and smoking their fragrant chibooks.

After making several low bows and salutations in the Eastern fashion, the foreign artist was requested to step upon a small raised platform, where, after a few kind words from the Bey, he drew forth his beautiful Amati violin and his bow, and at once commenced his performance.

At the first sounds of the instrument every person in the room was very much delighted. No one in that country had ever heard such music.

It began by an allegro movement, which attracted keen attention, and decidedly raised the spirits of the audience. Every one was enchanted, and applauded heartily. Presently there came some *pizzicato* and harmonic passages, which caused the Bey and his companions to smile ; then with these were intermingled some imitations of the crowing of a cock and the braying of an ass, which were at once responded to by some animals belonging to the Bey, the sounds having reached them through the open windows, and this caused great laughter. Finally came the most inimitable mewing of a cat, the bellowing of a bull, and the warbling of little birds, like canaries, so natural as to be easily mistaken for real birds ; and the whole concluded in a brilliant and fantastic display of execution of so comical a character that the whole audience was convulsed with laughter ; the Bey held his sides, and the courtiers rolled one against the other in uncontrollable fits of hilarity, mingled with a loud

clapping of hands whilst the violinist bowed his acknowledgments.

Then the music changed to a soft, plaintive melody of the most tender and expressive kind, the long, luscious notes of the violin being evidently listened to with rapture.

Soon the features of the audience betokened emotion, signs of sadness appeared, and tears were actually seen to rise in the usually ferocious eyes of the Bey of Tunis. In a short time, indeed, there was not a dry eye in the whole room. Every one was completely enchanted; all listened with the most profound attention to this truly marvellous playing.

When this had lasted for a few minutes, the Sicilian violinist continued his performance with a succession of vigorous chords and arpeggios mingled with brisk staccato passages. The music took such a martial complexion that not only were the tears of the audience soon dried up, but every one felt inclined to rise and march.

Some beat time with their feet or their hands, their heads swayed to and fro with the rhythm of the music, and a general state of excitement and restlessness prevailed. The Bey raised his arms and flourished them above his head, keeping time with the music, and in this he was imitated by numbers of his favourites. Thunders of applause and deafening cheers followed this part of the performance.

Once again the character of the music changed ; this time to a lovely *berceuse* or lullaby, so calm and quiet, and so intensely soothing, that before many minutes elapsed the entire audience was reclining with half-closed eyelids upon the capacious cushions of the sofas ; an uncontrollable drowsiness overcame first one, then another, until the whole assembly, including the ferocious Bey himself, had gone off into a deep slumber, whilst the violinist continuing, *piano*, *pianissimo*, and at the same time withdrawing himself gradually from the hall, passed out of the large folding doors, leaving the Bey and his companions fast asleep !

When outside the palace the Sicilian made his way quickly towards the coast, where he found his boatmen awaiting him. They set sail and departed without delay.

On arriving at home Tomarissen wrote another letter to the Bey of Tunis, explaining that he had duly kept his promise of performing in his august presence. He added that the money he had received had enabled him not only to defray the expenses of the journey, but to marry his charming Roxelana.

The Bey was wrapped in utter amazement when he received that letter. For many months he could talk of nothing but the wonderful playing of the violinist of Palermo ; and he made the latter profuse offers to come and reside at Tunis.

But now that he was married, and had made some provision for his parents, Tomarissen decided to travel in another direction ; “for,” he surmised, “if my violin-playing proves such an attraction to the Bey, what might he think of Roxelana ?”

So he made a prolonged tour in Southern Europe, and whilst the Bey of Tunis continued to listen as before to the dance music of his evening orchestra, Tomarissen enraptured still more powerful potentates, until one of them created him a nobleman, which pleased Roxelana immensely, but lost to the world both the name and the performances of this truly wonderful violinist.

In the little cemetery near the fine old cathedral of Montreale, about five miles from Palermo, his native city, is a modest stone upon which are inscribed the words—

IL CONTE DI RUBATELLO,

and the date 1842. That is the last resting-place of this extraordinary man. He lies in ground that has been consecrated for no less than seven hundred years.

Just as I am writing these lines the sad news reaches me from Genoa that the Italian stage has lost one of its brightest ornaments by the death of the famous tenor, Roberto Stagno, who has just died at the birthplace of Paganini.

Stagno was a very handsome man, with a most delicious voice, and still retained the greater part of his manly beauty though sixty years of age. His favourite operas were the *Elisire d'Amore*, of Donizetti, and *Rigoletto*, of Verdi. He was, also, a native of Palermo, but meeting with great success at Madrid, he sang there for seven consecutive seasons. In Italy he once had the honour of singing a duet with her Majesty Queen Margheritta.

X

NEW FEATURES IN THE LIFE OF PAGANINI

TO the numerous anecdotes related of Paganini, most of which I have given in my two former works,¹ new facts now and then crop up, which must be added, as they throw light upon the career of that celebrated violinist. One of the most astounding revelations regarding the life of "the illustrious Genoese," as he is sometimes called, has been recently recorded in the "Life and Letters" of the late Sir Charles Hallé, the celebrated pianist and conductor, which was published in London in 1896. This excellent work may be consulted advantageously for many interesting traits connected with the noted musicians who were Charles Hallé's contemporaries; it is a volume which bears the impress of truth and honest conviction on every page, and with the recent works of the same kind by Arditì and Kuhe, forms a valuable addition to the musical literature of this century.

Like many hard-working and poor artists who have had to cut out their career entirely by them-

¹ "Biographical Sketches of Celebrated Violinists" (1877), and "Famous Violinists and Fine Violins" (1896).

selves, Paganini has been generally looked upon as a man of mean habits. Many have accused him of selfishness, and of driving hard bargains. On the other hand, he has been known to do several generous actions. He is said to have presented to Sivori the fine Vuillaume violin upon which the latter produced such marvellous effects in his concerts; he has been known occasionally to give concerts for charitable purposes; and a few other liberal acts have been attributed to him, such as the way in which he transformed Ciandelli, a violoncellist, from a second-rate performer into an artist of the first rank, in return for kindness done to himself.

Nevertheless, Paganini has been generally regarded by his contemporaries, and by those who have studied his career, as a man who was both taciturn and stingy.

Suddenly he acquired the reputation of being one of the most generous men that ever lived!

At a time when Berlioz was struggling to keep misery from his door, it was reported that his friend and fellow-musician, Paganini, had made him a present of 10,000 francs (£400). This trait of generosity was talked about all over Europe at the time, and had the effect of drawing attention to the works of Berlioz. Up to the present time this anecdote has been considered as absolutely correct.

Alas! it is not true. It is absolutely incorrect,

both as regards the sum mentioned and the donor. Thanks to Hallé, the true facts have at last come to light.

The money that was presented to Berlioz at the time in question was not 10,000 francs, but 20,000 (£800); and the actual donor was certainly Paganini, but *the money was that of another man* who induced the great violinist to hand it over to Berlioz as if it were a gift from himself.

Why all this mystery? We shall see.

Berlioz, the well-known composer and conductor, was, about 1834 to 1837, in very poor circumstances; his compositions did not please the public; his engagements were few and far between. Like many other men of his class, he found it, no doubt, very difficult to keep money in his pocket, when he happened to have any, and he was eking out a precarious living by writing musical articles for the *Journal des Débats*.

The proprietor of that influential newspaper was M. Armand Bertin, a very wealthy man, and, it appears, not devoid of generosity. He had a high regard for Berlioz, and knew of all his struggles, which he, Bertin, was anxious to lighten, and he resolved to make him a present of 20,000 francs. In order to enhance the moral effect of this gift, according to Charles Hallé, he persuaded Paganini to appear as the donor of the money.

That Bertin had judged well was proved immedi-

ately afterwards. "What would have been a simple *gracieuseté* from a rich and powerful editor towards one of his staff," says Hallé, "became a significant tribute from one genius to another, and had a colossal *rétablissement*. The secret was well kept, and was never divulged to Berlioz. It was known, I believe, to but two of Bertin's friends besides myself, one of whom is Mottez, the celebrated painter. I learned it about seven years later, when I had become an intimate friend of the house, and Madame Armand Bertin had been for years one of my best pupils."

This throws a very different light upon the affair than that in which musical writers have hitherto viewed it; and I believe that it is confirmed by a passage in the "Memoirs of Berlioz," a work which I have not yet seen.

Another matter which has more than once attracted attention, and given rise to a large amount of criticism, is the so-called "duel" between Paganini and Lafont.

There can be no doubt that the well-known French violinist Lafont, never committed a more rash action than when he challenged Paganini on his own native soil, at Milan, to compete with him as a *virtuoso*.

The natural gifts of Paganini as a violinist were so great that, could the most eminent artists of the present day undergo with him the same ordeal, they

would most assuredly come out "second best." Whatever drawbacks may attach to the private character of Paganini, as a professional violinist he was an artist such as this world will probably never see again.

It has been my good fortune to converse with men who have heard Paganini, and were thus able to compare him with the best of our modern violinists, and though some preferred the grander style of De Bériot, as regarded mere execution their verdict was always unanimous, and to the effect that, with the sole exception of Camillo Sivori, no one has ever approached him, and that in Sivori's case it was only an approach.

Few indeed now remain who have attended the concerts of Nicolo Paganini, and they are mostly well over eighty years of age. But they are all agreed that in his case it was not a matter of vogue or fashion, or unscrupulous puffing for trade purposes (though there was some of that), but he actually realised what no other human being could do. It was the peculiar nervous organisation of the man which was the chief cause of all ; and in this respect no two men are exactly alike. Every artist must be content with his own style. Imitate nobody, as Viotti said to De Bériot, but endeavour to perfect your own talent as far as Nature will allow you to do so.

Let it also be clearly understood that in music,

as in painting and poetry, there is no single leader whose style and manner should alone be imitated. As soon as a certain level of excellence has been attained, it becomes a simple matter of taste as to who should be considered the first, and *de gustibus non est disputandum*, said the ancients.

Some people may prefer one violinist to another, but when it is a question of artists of the first rank it is rather absurd to speak of any individual as the "king of violinists." There is no king, it is a republic now. There never was a king but once, and then only for a few years, and his name was Paganini.

At the present day, when such an array of talent is before the world as was never previously known, the expressed preference for any great violinist is like declaring that you prefer an apple or a pear to a peach or a plum. They are all perfect in their particular manner.

Young violinists will do well to remember this, and not to imitate any one in particular, but endeavour to derive instruction from all, while perfecting their own individual styles. No two contemporaries ever reached the pinnacle of fame by more different routes than Spohr and Paganini; yet they both rose as high as it is allotted to an artist to rise in this world.

The celebrated "duel" came about in the following manner: In March 1816, Paganini, being then

in his native town, Genoa, heard accidentally that the French violinist Lafont was at Milan; and being very curious to hear him play, he left at once for that city, a much longer journey in those days than it is now.

“His performance,” says the Italian *virtuoso*, “pleased me exceedingly.”

A week later Paganini himself announced a concert at the opera-house La Scala, on which occasion Lafont was present. The day after the concert, Paganini received a letter from the latter, in which it was proposed that they should *both* play in the same concert.

“I excused myself,” said Paganini, “alleging that such experiments were highly impolitical, as the public invariably looked upon these matters as *duels*, and that it would be so in this case; for as he was acknowledged to be the best violinist in France, so the public indulgently considered me the best of Italian violinists. Lafont, not looking at it in this light, I was obliged to accept the challenge. I allowed him to arrange the programme.

“We each played a concerto of our own composition; after which we played together a duet by Kreutzer. In this I did not deviate in the least from the composer’s text whilst we played together; but in the *solo* parts I yielded freely to my own imagination, and introduced several novelties, which seemed to annoy my adversary. Then followed a Russian

air with variations, by Lafont, and I finished the concert with my variations called *Le Streghe*.

“Lafont probably surpassed me in tone, but the applause which followed my efforts convinced me that I did not suffer by comparison.”

This appears to be the most modest, and at the same time the most truthful account of this affair, many singular versions of which were published in the French and Italian newspapers.

It is well to note that on this memorable occasion both violinists played upon instruments by the same maker, Joseph Guarnerius, of Cremona. It has been long known that Paganini's violin was by that maker ; indeed, it was his playing that brought forward the name of Guarnerius. It has been recently shown by Mr. John Day, the senior member of her Majesty's private band, and a distinguished pupil of De Bériot, that Lafont also played upon a violin by that maker.

Mr. Day also informs us that the instrument on which Lafont played at Milan in 1816 was, after his death, purchased for the sum of £300 by J. B. Vuillaume, of Paris.

XI

“ FRA DIAVOLO ” AT BRUSSELS

As a lad I went to the Opera whenever opportunity occurred. It occurred in various ways. Perhaps my father gave me five francs, and hinted that some of it should be spent in that manner, or he took me himself; or sometimes my music master had got two tickets, and kindly asked me to accompany him; or, again, some English friends on a visit to Brussels, to whom French was not very familiar, requested me to accept a seat in their box.

So, for some five or six years, during which the Italian and French operas were particularly good in the Belgian capital, I suppose I must have gone to the Théâtre Italien or the Théâtre de la Monnaie about three times a week on the average.

It sometimes grieves me to think that in England we rarely have a chance of hearing the beautiful music in which we revelled in those days—that is to say, between 1849 and 1859. In the first place, the same operas are never on the bills; or, when some of them do happen to be announced, the prices are quite forbidding. We should be ruined,

unless we only went to the Opera when tickets are given away ; and that kind of present, somehow, always comes at most inconvenient moments, just when it is quite impossible to go to the theatre without sacrificing some other important engagement.

During the period mentioned I was fortunate enough to hear the best productions of the modern Italian and French composers. Rossini's *Il Barbiere* was the first opera I ever saw, then his *Gazza Ladra*, *Mathilda di Sabran*, and *William Tell* ; Donizetti's *Elisire d'Amore*, *Anna Bolena*, *La Favorita*, and *Lucia di Lamermoor* ; Bellini's *Sonnambula* and *Il Pirata* ; Hérold's *Zampa* and *Pré aux Clercs* ; Auber's *La Muette de Portici*, *Diamants de la Couronne*, and *Fra Diavolo* ; Mozart's *Il Seraglio* ; Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto* ; Adolf Adam's *La Poupée de Nuremberg* ; and, after a little while, Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, *Le Prophète*, and *L'Étoile du Nord* ; Verdi's *I Lombardi* and *Il Trovatore* ; Gaveaux' *Le Bouffe et le Tailleur* ; Halevy's *Mousquetaires de la Reine*, and many other pieces.

The orchestras in the Park, or in the concert hall of La Grande Harmonie, distinguished themselves by their performances of the overtures to Rossini's *William Tell* and Weber's *Oberon*, which they played in magnificent style. I have heard a good deal of symphonic music since then, but, candidly, nothing to equal these compositions, or even to approach them.

One night I went with a fellow-student to see *Fra Diavolo* for the third time. It was on the occasion of the part of the "Englishman" being played by an actor from Paris, and I was fortunate enough to witness the most ludicrous scene that ever occurred on any stage in Europe.

The house was crammed. The white and gold decorations of the boxes, the handsome chandelier, and the elegant drop-scene were delightful to look upon. The ladies' toilettes in the balcony were most elegant, and among their white dresses, bedecked with flowers and jewels, were seen, here and there, a few military uniforms, and the dark blue coats of the pupils of the *École Militaire*, which contrasted with the monotonous black evening-dress of the men.

The orchestra played the brilliant overture with much dash and expression. We could fancy we saw troops of brigands marching mysteriously over the distant mountains depicted on the drop-scene, whilst the opening bars were being played with all the delicacy and charm of which those excellent musicians were capable.

All went well—exceedingly well—until the scene where the English Milord is informed by the little captain of the *gens d'armes* that the brigands are in the immediate neighbourhood.

The scene is *on the first floor* of an hotel; a window at the back of the stage is wide open (for it is a

warm summer night in the South), and through it is seen the *top of the spire* of the little village church.

Milord, who is excruciatingly comic, is in a dressing-gown and red slippers, and when told about the brigands he is terribly frightened ; he is so terrified that he starts backward, alarmed, and throwing out his arms. In the “business” of the piece, Lord Allcash, in his highly terrified condition, has to retire suddenly backwards towards the open window and *nearly* fall out, saving himself from such an accident by spreading out both his arms, which invariably creates much laughter.

But in the present case the window on the Brussels stage was rather wider than that on the Paris theatre, where the actor had previously played, and instead of saving himself by striking the backs of his hands on the sides of the window-case, his hands never reached the sides at all, and he fell clean out, backwards, leaving nothing exposed to the audience but his red slippers and the lower parts of his legs poking up at the open window, and having for a background the top of the spire of the village church !

An uproar of laughter such as is seldom heard, greeted this singular accident—it was the most ludicrous sight imaginable, though it might have proved serious to the actor. The orchestra stopped playing ; the second tenor (the little captain) rushed to his friend’s assistance and pulled him back on to

the stage by his arms, whilst the whole house was convulsed. The "Englishman" came up looking ghastly pale and evidently half stunned. For some moments it was feared that the opera could not be continued, but after a few signs from the two actors the piece was resumed amidst the continuous uncontrollable laughter of the public.

Every now and then in the course of the evening a recollection of this incident would spring up, here and there, in various parts of the house, and a titter would arise, which soon spread with marvellous rapidity throughout the theatre, the artists on the stage and the members of the orchestra themselves joining in the general hilarity. It was singular to observe the magnetic influence of a slight titter thus begun and at once spreading over the whole house. This occurred three or four times at intervals before the piece was ended. Next day, every one I met in the streets complained of sore ribs or painful sides, as an effect of excessive laughing the previous night. One man said he had never in the whole course of his life laughed so much, or suffered such pain in consequence; he had not had a wink of sleep all night. I am glad to say that, except for a severe contusion at the back of the head, the artist who played the part of Lord Allcash did not suffer, apparently, from any serious after-effects.

Another rather ludicrous thing occurred at the same theatre some months afterwards. It was at

the conclusion of *Robert le Diable*, when Robert and Bertram were singing their final duet. The tenor, wishing to sing his part with exceptional effect, found the bass getting rather too slow for him, so he stamped with his foot to accentuate the time. The men underneath the stage took this for the sign to lower the trap-door on which the duet is sung, and at once began to let down the two singers before they had concluded their parts, which caused them to stagger into each other's arms, and to disappear amidst a blaze of blue fire several moments before the song was ended, creating considerable amusement, and the opera ended with roars of laughter.

XII

THE VOICE AND THE STRINGS

AT the University of Brussels there was once a fine old professor of Comparative Anatomy, Dr. Meisser, who was very fond of seeing foreigners in his class. He himself had studied at Padua as a foreigner, and afterwards he awarded to his own foreign pupils the same kindness and attention which he had formerly received at the old Italian University.

It was my good fortune as a young man to study for some years under this worthy old professor, who became in time a valuable friend as well as a master.

One day, as the examinations were approaching, I met this learned old gentleman in the street. He stopped and spoke.

"I heard this morning," he said, "that you were singing last night at Madame van der Maaren's."

"Yes, sir," I replied, "I sang one song; but pray do not think I go out often; I am working hard for my examination—it was quite by accident that I was at Madame van der Maaren's, and I shall accept no other invitations between this and the examination time——"

“It’s not that, it’s not that,” he interrupted; “but I thought you were a violinist.”

“Yes, sir, I am studying the violin.”

“Well, my dear pupil,” said the worthy doctor, “you must drop one or the other;” and then, after a slight pause, he added, “If you sing, it will take you away from your instrument, and if you play the violin it will destroy your voice; so you must give up one or the other if you wish to excel in either.”

As years rolled by I have often thought of those remarks, and, moreover, I have had ample proof of their truth.

In time I fancied I had discovered the reason.

Dr. Meisser assured me that hard practice on the violin or the piano (and probably on any other instrument) would eventually ruin the best of voices. Only exceptionally strong constitutions may, here and there, be found capable of undergoing the double study, after the preliminary period of the *solfeggio* is passed.

The reason of this appears to be that in playing an instrument the nerves which govern the vocal chords are incited, so that the person who plays sings inwardly, more or less, the whole time.

A person in good health, possessing a tolerably fine quality of voice, who attempts to sing a song after playing upon an instrument, will find his voice very much fatigued, his notes will be thin and

harsh or husky, and less under control; besides which, there will be a feeling of powerlessness, especially in the lower register.

It is evident that this results from a strain upon the nerves of the vocal organs during the performance of the instrumental music; and if such a practice were continued for any length of time, it would end by injuring the quality of the voice.

Another reason why a would-be violin or piano *virtuoso* should never attempt to shine as a vocalist at the same time, resides in the fact that the public—the “ungrateful public”—will never give any one credit for being proficient in both. We have known more than one lady who has sometimes appeared in concerts both as a solo pianist and as a vocalist on the same evening, and very clever she undoubtedly may be; but people say, “Considering how well she plays, she sings wonderfully;” or, “Considering how well she sings, she plays wonderfully;” which is, at best, “damning with faint praise,” as the saying goes.

It is a well-known fact that people will never admit that the same person can acquire great eminence in any two branches of virtuosity, and nothing will ever induce the public to change its opinion—*vox populi vox Dei!*

A curious fact occurs to me with regard to singing inwardly whilst playing. I have more than once noticed violinists of eminence who, on coming

off the platform after performing a concerto, spoke to their friends in quite a husky voice, very different from their usually clear speech. This is not simply due to the excitement and fatigue of the moment, but to the fact that their *vocal organs* had undergone a severe nervous strain whilst playing.

It is perhaps more pronounced in the case of violin-playing than with any other instrument, as the tone and expression of the violin more nearly resemble those of the voice, and exert a more intense sympathetic action upon the nervous system of the vocal organs.

Another curious fact also comes to my recollection. I know a lady, the wife of an accomplished violinist. She always had a luscious mezzo-soprano voice, and sang a few ballads with taste and expression. For many years she has played the accompaniments to her husband's brilliant violin pieces, but practised her singing very little indeed since she left school. Occasionally she might be heard humming snatches of the violin music, but that was all. Nevertheless, in the course of a few years she became a very fine singer ; not only her style improved wonderfully, but her powers of execution and expression increased in a very remarkable manner. I can only explain this by admitting that all the time she was engaged in playing the accompaniments to the violin she was singing inwardly ; and a very little practice of the scales

in her leisure moments has sufficed to make her a most charming vocalist.

The great *prima donna* Madame Mara, who shone before the time of Paganini, began life as a wonderfully clever child-violinist,¹ as many another eminent songstress has done, among whom we may mention Sembrich, Singelée, and Isidora Martinez, and she used to recommend a preliminary training on the violin as being of the greatest advantage to a singer. But there is a great difference between a preliminary training and the constant practice of the instrument and the voice at the same time. It may be true that a few years devoted to it in early life, before a course of vocal study is entered upon, would prove in many cases highly advantageous ; but when once the voice has been chosen for cultivation the violin must not be allowed to interfere with it. On the other hand, the student of the violin must likewise go through a course of solfeggio before he begins the violin, if he wishes to become a perfect musician.

¹ See my "Famous Violinists," &c. (London, 1896).

XIII

A VIOLIN BY BERTOLINI

WITH regard to violins, it is unfair to "narrow our minds to three or four makers," as Charles Reade expressed it. Let us frankly admit and honour merit where it really exists. Stradivari himself was not always absolutely the same ; Nicolo Amati varies in quality, and so does every member of the Guarneri family.

Sebastian Kloz (pronounced *Klotz*, the *z* of the Tyrol being articulated as in Italian) is, perhaps, the only maker who ever equalled, or even surpassed, the great Stradivarius ; and whilst some of his violins have been sold for hundreds of pounds sterling, and occasionally as Stradivari instruments, other members of his family rarely fetch more than £10 to £20.

The tone of the violins made during the first half of this century by Pressenda, Rocca, and Vuillaume has caused their prices to rise of late years by leaps and bounds ; and in Great Britain the instruments of Maucotel, Chanot, and Withers, and other contemporary makers, are rising in esteem more and more.

It is a fact that age tells upon a well-made instrument and improves it, especially when it is in constant use ; but a badly constructed violin, supposing it could have been found in the Egyptian Pyramids, would always remain as bad as it originally was.

Travelling in Waldeck some years ago, the worthy Burgomaster of Bergfreiheit, near Wildungen, lent me for a month an old violin which he told me had belonged to his "blessed father" (an expression of affection used by the Germans when alluding to lost parents), which instrument, on close inspection, was proved to date back at least one hundred and fifty years. Yet it had nothing in the way of tone or appearance to indicate that it was ever intended to be used otherwise than for the music of the village dances—those exhilarating exhibitions of terpsichorean art which break out occasionally about three o'clock in the afternoon, to finish at nine P.M., and do not much interfere with the agricultural or mining labours of the following day.

It is generally thought that whilst the bow has improved, the violin has deteriorated in manufacture ; but I believe in progress, even in violin-making. The utterly bad modern instruments are easily accounted for : they are manufactured wholesale at ridiculous prices, and are only intended for village orchestras or toys ; and as far as solo-playing is concerned, they might as well be used for lighting

the fires on cold winter mornings when faggots happen to be scarce.

But I am going to write a few lines on a violin by Bertolini. Who was Bertolini? An Italian, doubtless, by the name. But when did he live—where did he work—how did I find him out?

I will endeavour to explain all this.

Not very long ago a worthy matron residing in London, having given her companion six months' holiday, advertised for a young French lady to fill the vacant place. In due course there came to reside with her a handsome girl of nineteen years of age, from Paris, who played a little on the violin, and who brought her instrument with her to England.

I made her acquaintance by mere accident, and shortly afterwards invited the two ladies to a little musical evening at Casa Mia. The young Parisian was kind enough to bring her violin, and played two or three pieces. She also sang one of Gounod's songs, accompanying herself upon the violin. It was a very clever performance, and gave great satisfaction to all present.

Had I been a sensitive young man—but, alas! I have arrived at that time of life when, as Byron says, "all passions cease, or mellow into virtues." It was not the handsome young lady, whose elegant figure, dark tresses, and expressive eyes were worthy of the greatest admiration, but the violin,

which fascinated me ! The tone of that instrument was so beautiful, even in the hands of a very inexperienced performer, that I at once asked permission to examine it, inquiring at the same time if she knew the name of the maker.

“Oh yes,” she said, “it is by Bertolini.”

Bertolini ! That name was quite new to me. Yet the instrument appeared to be a good age.

“It was not made yesterday,” remarked a friend who was standing near.

Nevertheless, it was in very good preservation. Let me try to describe it.

The model was flat, and the sound-holes neatly cut, but in no way remarkable ; the wood not particularly handsome—rather plain, on the contrary ; but, like most old instruments, this violin was very light.

“As light as a feather,” said another lady, who held it for a moment in her hand. This is a common symptom of age in a well-made violin. The back and table were each in two pieces ; the peg-box and scroll good, but not remarkable at all ; there were no cracks visible ; the varnish was very thin, and even (which is one of the characteristics of old Cremona violins) of a pale reddish-brown tint, rather dull. But this dulness may have been due to the fact that the surface of the violin, back and front, was decidedly dirty. I did not mention this to the young lady ; but it was like

a child that had not had its face washed for a fortnight.

Extending in a broad expanse from the bridge to the right shoulder, was a rather thick layer of black rosin—the accumulation of ages—black as coal, which totally hid the varnish, and showed not only that this instrument had been played upon for a great number of years, and that the performer had never wiped away the rosin dust as it accumulated, but that this performer, whoever he may have been, must have been self-taught, or, at least, must have held the violin in some peculiar fashion, to have caused the deposit of rosin to have spread in such an extraordinary manner, all on one side of the instrument.

Some days later I paid a return visit to these ladies ; we had some music, and perhaps a little innocent flirtation. I played a piece on this Bertolini violin.

Of course, if I were to say that it was equal to a fine Stradivarius, I should not be believed, and I should be accused of being interested in the beautiful young lady, as well as in the violin ; but, in point of fact, it was quite as rich in tone as the best Cremona violins I have ever heard, though less powerful.

The name of the maker of the instrument was only just visible in the inside. It was printed in characters nearly one-eighth of an inch in size, in

an oval horizontal form, not apparently upon a label, but impressed upon the wood ; it was very faint, and the underpart of the oval, on which would have been the address of the maker and the date, was quite obliterated and invisible.

Since I had seen this violin for the first time, I had ransacked all my books and catalogues, with the view of discovering who this Bertolini could be. But the labour was in vain. I passed over hundreds of violin-makers and bow-makers, but no such name came up to refresh my weary sight.

I can only conclude, from the general appearance of this instrument, that it probably dates from the latter part of the eighteenth, or very early years of the present century.

The next point I endeavoured to elucidate was how my handsome dark-eyed friend became possessed of this precious violin. I gleaned in the course of our conversation that she had a music master in Paris, who had given her a modern instrument that had cost sixty francs (about £2, 10s.), which she informed me was "horrible," and I believed her.

One day, as this music master was coming to give his lesson, he heard an itinerant violinist playing near the church of La Madeleine. He was struck by the fine tone of the instrument, and asked the man if he would part with it. The latter replied that any violin was good enough for his outdoor

work, and he readily consented to take the young lady's sixty-franc "horrible" violin and two gold pieces in exchange for his.

That is how my young French friend became possessed of one of the finest-toned violins I ever heard ; and that violin was made by an unknown man, named Bertolini !

I may add to this that one evening, whilst on my way to dinner in the Palais Royal, I heard an itinerant violinist playing in a courtyard the air of *Ange si pure* from *La Favorite*, and taking a separate bow to each note. The tone of his violin struck me as being the finest I ever heard in Paris ; but I did not stop to inquire who may have been the maker of the instrument—I suppose I must have been hungry—perhaps it was this very violin by Bertolini !

XIV

GIOVANNI BOTTESINI AND HIS LAST CONCERT

ONE of the most interesting and profitable things in musical history is to inquire carefully into the beginnings of the careers of men who have become celebrated, to ascertain how they came to enter into a course of life which has proved so successful, and how it happened that they adopted music as a profession. In some cases the latter result is due to quite accidental circumstances, but in most cases it will be found that these specially distinguished men have been born, so to say, to the profession, and have inherited a decided gift in this respect from one or both of their parents.

Such was evidently the case with the immortal Bottesini, the greatest contra-bassist that ever lived, not excepting the renowned Dragonetti (born 1796, died 1845), who may perhaps have served him to a certain extent as a model ; but we have no proof that he ever heard the sounds of Dragonetti's famous Gasparo instrument.

I am indebted to that gifted violinist and composer, Guido Papini, for a few manuscript notes

on his celebrated friend Giovanni Bottesini, which I make use of in this chapter.

The greatest performer on the contra-basso—"the Paganini of the big violin"—Giovanni Bottesini, was born at Crema, in Lombardy, in the year 1822.

It can be very cold at Crema in the winter, and it was on a chilly night in December that this marvellous musician came into the world. There is a small theatre in that old town, in the orchestra of which his father played the clarionet.

Who could ever have dreamt that the son of a clarionetist in the theatre of the modest little town of Crema should become in after years a European celebrity?

Yet such was destined to be his lot, and the successful career of this extraordinary genius was certainly due in great measure to his own plodding, industrious nature, his naturally amiable, warm-hearted disposition, and his great love of music.

Bottesini was not what could be called a handsome man, neither tall nor of a commanding figure; but his features bore the expression of intelligence and generosity, in spite of the hard lines and wrinkles indicative of strenuous labour and deep thought. There is an admirable portrait of him as a young man in Arditi's recently published volume of musical reminiscences.

How his young days were passed may be best imagined by those who happen to know the surroundings of the children of members of an orchestra in any small provincial theatre. Probably he went to some day-school, and in the intervals of his lessons played in the broiling sunshine on the pavement of the Crema streets, or made juvenile excursions among the vines and olive orchards in the neighbourhood, with, no doubt, occasional free visits to the theatre.

His father, who has the reputation of being a very superior clarionetist, probably taught him the elements of music, and got him into the choir; employed him to copy his parts of the various scores used at the theatre, or gave him other useful occupation in the house. We only know with certainty that, about the age of seventeen, he seems to have made up his mind to follow a musical career, and left his native town for Milan, not so far distant now, but in 1839 a long and tiresome coach journey.

When he presented himself to the principal of the Conservatorio of that city, with a request to be admitted to a free place in the singing classes, he was informed that the only vacant place in this celebrated Milanese school of music was one in the class of contra-basso! Rather than return home, and thus sacrifice this opportunity of securing a good musical education, Bottesini determined

to accept this offer—an offer which perhaps not one man in a thousand would have accepted.

He soon proved such an ardent student that at the end of three years his professor did not know what more he could possibly teach him.

The distinguished violoncellist, Signor Piatti, was at that time also a pupil at the Conservatorio of Milan, and he once told Papini that Bottesini never played better than he did after these three years' tuition ; but, of course, he had not then developed all the marvellous resources of his instrument.

The playing of the young contra-bassist soon began to attract attention. He appeared in many concerts between 1840 and 1846 ; and when twenty-three years of age he was offered the directorship of the orchestra at the Opera of Havana, which he accepted, and during his residence in that city he wrote the music of a little Spanish opera, *Christopher Columbus*, which was played with success. For Bottesini devoted himself to the science as well as to the art of music.

He afterwards travelled through the United States and Mexico, and, on his return to Europe, visited Great Britain, being received with enthusiastic applause wherever he appeared. In 1855 he accepted the position of conductor of the orchestra at the Théâtre des Italiens, in Paris, which he held for two years, and in 1856 produced there his opera *Assedio di Firenze*, which was favourably received

by the French public. During the years 1857 and 1858 he gave concerts in Germany, Holland, France, and England, always arousing enthusiasm and astonishment. In 1859 he returned to Italy, and produced there his opera buffa, *Il Diavolo della Notte*.

He possessed at this time a very valuable instrument—a small pattern double-bass by Testore, of Cremona; and he not only used very thin strings, which enabled him to produce the most surprising harmonic notes, but he usually strung them up a note higher than the pitch of the orchestra, in order to get the requisite brilliancy.

His reputation as a great musician as well as a *virtuoso* caused him to figure for eight years as conductor of the Opera at Cairo and Constantine, where several of his own operas were performed with success. It was during his engagement in this capacity that Verdi's opera of *Aida* was brought out for the first time, Bottesini having studied this fine composition with the celebrated *maestro* himself, at Santa Agata, the villa residence where Verdi spends most of his time.

He wrote a number of pieces for his favourite instrument—solos, airs with variations, fantasias, and concertos. He always won great applause with his fantasia on *La Sonnambula*, and his variations on the *Carnaval de Venise*. His D minor quartet for strings is spoken of as a very fine work; his

Concerto for contra-basso and his *Tarantella* are among the most remarkable works ever written ; in his hands they invariably produced an immense effect. He published also a *Méthode Complète de Contre-basse*. For Guido Papini he wrote his celebrated *Duo pour Violon et Contre-basse*. These two distinguished men were on the point of organising a monster tour together, when death carried off the illustrious Bottesini, at the age of sixty-six years, in 1889, not long after he had been appointed Principal of the Academy of Music at Parma. "It was in that ancient city that he died, a city always noted for its love of music, and whose opera-house is capable of holding 1200 people. He left, unfinished, a grand oratorio."

The last concert he gave in England was one of the finest on record. It was a *double* concert, where the chief attraction was the double-bass, and took place on the morning and evening of the 17th June 1884, at Princes Hall, Piccadilly. On this occasion he announced himself as "Signor Bottesini, Composer and Solo Contra-basso." Some songs of his were sung at these two concerts ; the programme included the wonderful duet for violin and double-bass, and he played his *Tarantella* and *Carnevale* with immense success, besides several other pieces.

How prophetic is the announcement on the first page of the programme ! ". . . His only appearance this season before *his final departure*. . ."

How little did any one present realise the sad truth of the words I have printed in italics.

It is interesting to refer here to this last concert given by the illustrious Bottesini in England, for since the time when John Bannister first inaugurated public concerts in the reign of Charles II., up to the present time, this is one of the finest that have ever been given in Great Britain.

The "morning" concert began at 2.30 in the afternoon, and the evening performance at 8 o'clock. The distinguished artists who contributed the results of their talent to the brilliant programmes, comprised some of the most eminent in the world of song and instrumental music; and there was one amateur, Lord Bennet, whose name was included as an attraction in the evening programme. No less than sixteen singers were announced; four solo violinists, three of whom were ladies; four solo pianists, a 'cello, a harp, and nine conductors.

The singers included Mdlle. Elly Warnots, Mdlle. Carlotta Leria, Mdlle. Schow-Rosing, Madame Sanderini, Mdlle. Fernande Carini, Mdlle. Delphine Le Brun, Mdlle. Lydia Vigert, and Madame Rose-Hersée (sopranos); Madame Bentham-Fernandez and Madame Lablache (contraltos); Signor V. de Monaco and Signor Ria (tenors); Mr. Barrington Foote, Lord Bennet, Signor Monari Rocca, Signor Zoboli, and Signor Foli (basses and

baritones). The pianists were : Tito Mattei, Carlo Albanesi, Carlo Ducci, and Carlo Ducci, junior.

The solo violinists included Signor Guido Papini, Mdlle. Anna Lang, Mdlle. Isabella Levallois, and Miss Adelina Dinelli. The violoncello solo was M. J. Hollman ; and the harp solo, Signor Felice Lebano. The conductors, some of whom accompanied their own compositions, were : Arditi, Denza, Ducci, Tosti, Rotoli, Gelli, Costa, Emmanuel Nelson, and Li Calsi ; and at the head of the programme figured the name of the immortal Bottesini, the giver of this splendid concert.

With regard to the prices, the stalls were half-a-guinea ; reserved seats, five shillings ; balcony, half-a-crown ; and admission, one shilling.

That the room was crammed at both morning and evening concerts may be taken for granted. The first concert began at 2.30 P.M., with a wonderful quartette for two pianos, entitled *Military Fantasia*, by the talented Adolfo Fumagalli, the first pianist, I believe, who introduced solos for one hand. This piece of his is dedicated to General Garibaldi. It includes four movements : (a) *Night Patrol*, (b) *A Night in Camp* (both by Fumagalli), (c) *Engagements* (by Bellini), and (d) *Hymn of Triumph* (by Rossini). It was performed most brilliantly by Tito Mattei, Carlo Albanesi, Carlo Ducci, and Carlo Ducci, junior, and this was the first time it was given in London.

This spirited performance was followed by two beautiful songs, the *Alleluja d'Amore* (Faure), and valse, *La Farfalla* (Gelli), accompanied by Signor Gelli (husband of the talented Sidonia van der Beck, formerly of the Italian Operas at Paris and Madrid), and sung with excellent effect by Madame Julie Schow-Rosing, of the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen.

The third piece on the programme consisted of two solos for the contra-basso, composed, and executed with his accustomed skill, by Signor Bottesini: (a) *Elegia No. 1*, and (b) *Tarantella*. It was a most surprising performance. This was followed by Hérold's *Air d'Isabelle*, from his opera *Le Pré aux Clercs*, sung by Mdlle. Carini with *violino obbligato* by Mdlle. Levallois.

Then came a violin solo, (a) *Cavatina* (Raff), (b) *Hungarian Dance* (Joachim), played with success by Miss Adelina Dinelli.

The next piece was another composition by Bottesini, a canzone called *Il Contrabbandiere*, accompanied on the piano by the composer, and sung by Signor Monari Rocca, the author of the words.

Then came three short solos for the harp: (a) *Grand Adagio* (Alvars), (b) *Tableau Moresque* (Lebano), and (c) *Air de Ballet* (Ketten), played by Signor Felice Lebano.

Mr. Barrington Foote next sang *Te fossi Dio del*

Mar, by Manzocchi; Madame Rose Hersée gave *Una Voce* (Rossini), and the first part of the morning concert concluded by the *Trio for Violins* known as *Sérénade Humoristique* (Léonard), admirably performed by Mdles. Isabelle Levallois, Anna Lang, and Miss Adelina Dinelli.

A new song, *For Evermore*, by Carlo Ducci, accompanied by the composer, and sung by Signor V. de Monaco, opened the second part of the programme, and this was followed by two brilliant piano solos, composed and played by Signor Tito Mattei, (a) *Espoir, Mélodie*, and (b) *Fête Champêtre*.

Madame Bentham-Fernandez next gave the fine *Recitativo* and *Aria* from Mercadante's opera *Il Giuramento*: "Ah! si mie care," &c., and Mdle. Levallois played for her violin solo, Wieniawski's *Airs Russes*. Denza's new song *Like to Like* (accompanied by the composer) was then sung by Mdle. Le Brun, and Signor Foli followed with the fine bass song *Il Monaco* (Meyerbeer).

Two bracketed solos for violoncello, *Ave Maria* (Schubert) and *Arlequin* (Popper), were played effectively by M. Hollman, after which Mdle. Carini and Signor V. de Monaco sang the lovely duet by Lucantoni, *Una Notte a Venezia*.

Then came one of the most striking features of this splendid concert in the shape of a *Grand Duet for Violin and Contra-basso*, played by Signor Papini and Signor Bottesini (composed by the

latter), which created a great sensation. It was followed by another song of Denza, *Tu manchi o fiore!* sung by Madame Sanderini, accompanied by the composer, and with harp *obbligato* played by Signor Lebano; and the second part of the morning programme was concluded by a most beautiful and astonishing *fantasia* on airs from Bellini's *Puritani*, arranged and played with wonderful effect by Signor Bottesini.

The evening concert began with the *Trio for Violins* already mentioned, followed by an *aria* composed by Bottesini, *Cosa è Dio*, and a *chanson* by Schubert, *Marguerite*, sung by Mdlle. Carlotta Leria. Then the marvellous Bottesini gave his solos for contra-basso, (a) *Elegia No. 2*, and (b) *Nel cor piu* (Paesiello), which were followed by a sweet tenor song by Caracciolo, *Ritorno ch'io t'amo*, sung by Signor Ria, and a song composed by Rotoli, *Fior che langue*, sung beautifully by Madame Bentham-Fernandez, and accompanied by the composer. Lord Bennet's song should have come next, but both he and Madame Lablache were prevented from appearing. Then came the well-known Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria*, sung by Mdlle. Vigert, with violin (Mdlle. Anna Lang), piano (Signor Ducci), and organ (Mr. Emmanuel Nelson), one of the gems of the concert; after which Anna Lang played for her violin solo, *Andante and Polonaise* (Vieuxtemps).

Tito Mattei's song *Il Farfallone* was next sung by Signor Zoboli, accompanied by the composer, and Lebano played two short harp solos, (a) *Tristesse* (Lebano) and (b) *Prière de Moïse* (Alvars). Gounod's valse-song from the opera of *Mireille* followed, sung by Mdlle. Elly Warnots, after which Bottesini and Papini again gave the wonderful *Duet for Violin and Contra-basso* which they had played in the afternoon. This concluded the first part of the evening concert.

The second part began by a repetition of Rossini's *Una voce poco fa*, but sung this time, by Mdlle. Carlotta Leria ; after which Carlo Ducci played a piano solo, *Rondo capriccioso* (Mendelssohn), and Madame Bentham-Fernandez sang Hope Temple's *Memory* and Tosti's *Good-bye*, accompanied by the composer.

Bottesini's fine song *Il Contrabbandiere* was again sung by Monari Rocca, and the grand quartet for two pianos which opened the morning concert was repeated here in the evening. Mdlle. Elly Warnots then sang Donizetti's *O luce de quest' anima* ; which was followed by a violin solo by Papini, (a) *Pensée fugitive* (dedicated to Dr. T. L. Phipson) and (b) *Feufollet*, played by the composer with the most charming effect. Mdlle. Delphine Le Brun followed with Ducci's song '*Twas not to be*, and Hollman gave three short 'cello solos, (a) *Elégie*, (b) *Romance*, and

(c) *Mazurka*, his own compositions. These were followed by the spirited song *Billet de loterie* by Nicolo, sung by Mdlle. Carlotta Leria, and Bottesini brought the concert to a close by his wonderful solo *Carnevale di Venezia*, which astonished all present.

Every one went away wondering how so great perfection could possibly be attained upon such an awkward, uncouth instrument, and delighted with the entire concert. It was indeed a treat such as may occur only once in a man's lifetime, and certainly deserves to be put on record as one of the most striking musical features of our day.

XV

THE ART OF PLAYING IN TUNE

AT one of the rehearsals of a new opera by Rossini, a violinist of his orchestra persisted in playing *F sharp* instead of *F*, whereupon the sarcastic composer remarked—

“ I would prefer to hear the *F* there, my friend. Your *F sharp*, it is true, is also very beautiful, and no doubt we can find a place for it elsewhere in the opera.”

Nothing is easier than to accuse a violinist of playing out of tune. It is the last resource of certain critics when nothing else can be said, and there are cases where the criticism happens to be true !

The piano, flute, clarinet, organ, guitar, mandoline, &c., have the notes, so to speak, ready made ; whereas on the violin you must make the note yourself by the position in which the finger happens to fall upon the strings.

Now, for this purpose the violin-player must have a perfect ear, like the singer ; and as with the finest singers the very best of ears will not always insure perfect accuracy, so with the violinist the habit of

letting the fingers drop always exactly into the right places can only be acquired by long practice, and may be affected at any time, as with the singer, by fatigue or nervousness.

The very greatest violinists have been known occasionally to play a little "alongside the note," as the French term it. It is, undoubtedly, one of the weakest points of the violin, whether considered as a solo instrument or as an element of the orchestra, and too much attention cannot be given to it.

In former years the first flute was the leading instrument in the opera orchestra, but nowadays it is the first violin. All the wood-wind instruments have a tendency to rise in pitch as the evening wears on, especially when the weather is hot and moist. At the same time the strings tend to become flat, and sink rather below the pitch.

When we add to this that the strings themselves may be defective, and give *imperfect fifths*, &c., it will be easily perceived how many "temptations" there are for playing out of tune.

Laziness on the part of the performer is another cause.

Indeed, when we consider calmly and successively all these things, it is quite wonderful how perfect is the intonation of most violinists, even in very elaborate passages.

But such a fortunate state of things can only exist in perfection for those who have the instru-

ment constantly in their hands, and who play always upon the same violin. With them the latter becomes, as it were, a part of themselves. Their fingers drop naturally upon the notes as the result of long familiarity—habit is second nature—and even when a string has sunk a little in pitch, an acute ear will still enable perfect intonation to be attained.

A well-known orchestral conductor was once much annoyed by the constant tuning which continued long after the musicians were at their desks, and he remarked rather sharply to a novice—

“My dear fellow, do please stop all that tuning! You ought to be able to play in tune when the strings are not exactly correct.”

A clever orchestral artist may, indeed, be able to do so; but with a solo-player it is different, or, at least, not so easy. De Bériot, who was well aware of the tendency of the strings to become flat, whilst the wood-wind becomes much too sharp, always paid the greatest attention to the tuning of his violin. Before performing a long piece with orchestral accompaniment, he invariably took his A about a quarter of a tone higher than that of the orchestra. With a piano accompaniment such a thing is not necessary.

Of course, it is essential to use good strings, which yield perfect *fifths*; and I am glad to say that the manufacture of violin strings has improved

immensely during the last thirty years, and there is now no longer the difficulty in procuring good and true strings which was formerly the case. It is, therefore, needless to say more on this point; but I will add a few words on violin music.

Our composers for the opera and symphonic concerts have generally made a sufficient study of the violin to enable them to avoid useless difficulties, such as extraordinary keys and impossible chords, or writing long passages that can only be performed in the *second* or *fourth* positions. A good composer will never be guilty of such faults. In some of the bad music for the violin which falls into the hands of the amateur, the score is simply copied from piano, flute, or clarinet pieces; and sometimes we see elementary music announced as "for flute or violin," which is often quite unworthy the attention of a violinist, except as a pastime, or amusement for the moment.

Young violinists, after five or six years' good practice, will play admirably in tune in the *first* and *third* positions, in good compositions; but when they come to make use of the *second* or *fourth* position the intonation will be often false, because these are, so to say, unnatural positions of the left hand, based on theory rather than on practice.

It is essential that those who write for the violin as a solo instrument should study the works left us by Rode, Spohr, Ernst, Paganini, and De Bériot.

The last-named is, perhaps, the best model in this respect. What may be termed the awkward keys and the unnatural positions are avoided as much as possible in the music of Paganini and De Bériot; and it may be safely put down as an axiom, that any who fail in this particular are bad composers. No writer of orchestral music can hope to achieve success, unless he has made a careful study of the various instruments, and more especially of the violin.

Much of the faulty intonation experienced at the present time is due to bad writing, to the careless transcription of piano music (or of music originally intended for the voice or for other instruments) to the violin.

Another subject which affects amateur orchestras, now rather numerous in England, is well worthy of consideration. I allude to the necessity of having a piano part. It is an immense resource, and tends to keep the other instruments well in tune. A faulty double-bass or 'cello will pull down the best of amateur violinists; but the notes of the piano, being fixed and invariable throughout the evening, tend to perfect the performance, and it is a great improvement to any orchestra.

In the Italian opera the piano has always had its place in the orchestra, and on the production of a new opera the composer himself usually presides at the piano, thus fixing the beat (*tempo*) and the

intonation. During the four years that I had the honour of acting as violin solo to the Bohemian Orchestral Society my clever wife always presided at the piano, and I am perfectly convinced she contributed immensely to the remarkable success of that orchestra, of which I will say more presently.

I am also of opinion that De Bériot made an important step in the right direction when he wrote piano accompaniments to his studies for young violinists. It was a great improvement on the second-violin accompaniment, and enhances the value of his *Études Mélodiques* very considerably.

In studying scales, and double-stopping alone, that is, without an accompaniment, frequent use should be made of the open strings *as a test* of exact intonation; and the *daily* practice of the principal scales, *taken rather slowly*, will go far towards making perfect intonation the general rule.

In double-stopping, as Tartini pointed out to his pupils, the notes are not perfectly exact unless you hear the "third sound." Some violins give this effect better than others, but in all good instruments it is more or less appreciable. Octaves are much easier to get well in tune in rapid passages, as we find in the *finale* to Vieuxtemps' *Fantaisie Caprice*, for instance, than in slow, *sostenuto* passages, such as that which terminates Papini's exquisite romance *A une Fleur!* One of the best exercises for acquiring true intonation in playing

octaves is Kreutzer's study No. 23. The middle fingers should always be kept down in performing octaves, so that you have three fingers down on the higher string, and one finger on the lower, and the latter is the note which, with most players, guides the ear, or, rather, that the ear guides.

Passages of tenths are not common in violin music, and when they are met with, as in De Bériot's *Second Concerto* and *Ninth Air Varié*, Paganini's *Rondo de la Clochette*, &c., it is rare, indeed, that they are ever played in tune throughout. Some violinists transpose them to thirds, but the effect is not so brilliant.

Octaves, thirds, and sixths are doubtless great beauties in violin-playing, and should be diligently practised as early as possible by young violinists. Some composers display much greater talent than others in writing effectively such passages as I allude to, and too much attention cannot be given in this respect to the choice of a piece of music which it is intended to perform in public.

XVI

A RIVAL OF STRADIVARIUS

AMONG the great violin-makers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Kloz family deserve special notice. It appears to have been a large family; but that is rather doubtful, the name of Kloz (pronounced, and often spelt, *Klotz*) having been placed, with many kinds of surnames, upon spurious violin labels, often bearing impossible dates.

An elder member of this family, who can be traced back to the middle of the seventeenth century, was an apprentice of the celebrated Stainer, at Absom, near Insbrück, and one or more of the Kloz family, like Stainer himself, went to Cremona for a time. Their workshop was at Mittenwald, on the Iser, a small town on the borders of the Austrian Tyrol.

It was Tyrolean timber that supplied them with the wood of which their instruments are made, and they had the bad habit, according to George Hart, of cutting the trees at the wrong season; or rather, we should say, they purchased wood that had been

cut, doubtless through ignorance, at the wrong time of the year. The consequence has been that much of this wood, having been taken when full of sap, has, sooner or later, become worm-eaten, especially the maple used for the backs.

Of this noted family of violin and violoncello makers, Sebastian Kloz is now known to have been the greatest. His violins are extremely rare and of considerable value. To my knowledge they have been more than once sold as instruments by Stradivarius, and at very high prices. In 1824 a splendid violin by Sebastian Kloz was sold in England as a Stradivarius, the price being one hundred guineas, even in those early days. A few years later the leader of the orchestra at the Haymarket Theatre, as we are told by Pearce, the author of a book on old violins, was offered by a noble lord more than £300 for such a violin, but he would not accept the offer.

In much later times, about 1880 or 1881, a dealer in London sold a Sebastian Kloz violin to a gentleman in Oxford for £210. It was also sold as a Stradivarius, but as the genuine violins of the latter were, when in good condition, selling easily at about double that amount, probably the vendor knew who was the real maker of this instrument. I may add that I have seen it, and played upon it, and that it is as fine a violin as any one could ever hope to possess.

As regards tone the violins by Sebastian Kloz are quite as fine as the finest violins of Cremona. They are very like the Stradivarius instruments of 1709 to 1720, but slightly flatter, and to my taste rather more elegant in appearance, but they have not quite the same delicate finish, although there is a very close approach to it. Those I have seen were covered with the most beautiful cherry-red over a golden yellow varnish, the former tint having become more or less mahogany-coloured by age and the action of light, which gives them a most charming appearance, like that of a luscious ripe fruit. The outline and model is that of Stradivarius at his best period, but with a slightly flatter back. The sound-holes are exactly those of Stradivarius, and the same may be said of the whole outline of the table.

Sebastian Kloz is the only member of his family, as far as I am aware, that has produced violins of the very finest quality. The other makers of this name often made upon quite a different pattern (that of Stainer or that of Amati), and the quality of their instruments is very variable, though generally good.

It need scarcely be added that the name of Kloz, like that of other great makers, has been frequently forged and placed on labels in all kinds of violins, so that great numbers of decidedly inferior instruments have, over and over again, been sold as Kloz violins.

Sebastian Kloz had a curious manner of marking his violins, in the inside, with his initials, S. K., which seems to have escaped the notice of all dealers, or at least of all writers, up to the present time. The violin by this maker alluded to as having been purchased in 1824, had been inherited by the Rev. Mr. Wren, then of Stafford, a relation of the great architect of St. Paul's Cathedral. At the time of its purchase it had been lying untouched in his house for nearly half a century, and the back was terribly worm-eaten. It had always passed as a Stradivarius instrument, and was valued accordingly. The late Mr. George Hart, a well-known London expert, and author of a book on violins, saw this violin, and felt convinced that it was by Lorenzo Guadagnini, the most celebrated of all the workmen of Stradivarius, with whom he laboured for thirty-five years, and whose violins, during the remaining five years of his career, and ever since, have been all dealt with as Stradivarius instruments. It was in this violin that I discovered the initials S. K., which could belong to no other maker than Sebastian Kloz.

Very little is known of the life of the celebrated Antonio Stradivarius, or of his sons, Francesco and Omobono, who carried on his business after 1737. Still less is known of the Kloz family. One of the older members of the latter worked with Jacob Stainer, and followed his patterns more or less exclusively; and many of these violins have doubtless

been dealt with as Stainer instruments. But Stainer, we know, was for some time at Cremona; and it is also on record that many German violin-makers were present in that ancient city in the days of Stradivarius, and probably long before that.

When we consider how little is known about the Kloz family, it is quite possible that Sebastian Kloz may also have been at Cremona; his father, Mathäus Kloz, is admitted to have worked there for several years.

Anyhow, they must all have been very superior makers, for their name has remained popular down to the present time. On account of their great reputation in olden times, many indifferent instruments have been foisted upon the public with spurious labels of these makers, so that years ago, when I was a student on the Continent, the term "Kloz" was applied to a violin in Belgium or France as a sarcastic manner of condemning it!

The period at which Sebastian Kloz worked was probably from 1720 to 1760 or thereabouts; he was for a great number of years a contemporary of Stradivarius; and the day will come when his violins will be much better known than they are at present.

This is how I make out the pedigree of the Kloz family, with the approximate date of their periods:—

MATHÄUS KLOZ

1670-1709.

Went to Cremona about 167- to 1680; then at Mittenwald an der Iser.

ÆGIDIUS KLOZ

1675- —

Worked with Stainer at Absom, about 1660; then at Mittenwald with his brother Mathäus.

SEBASTIAN KLOZ

(son and nephew of the above).

1700-1760.

Worked at Mittenwald.

Mathäus Kloz, the father of Sebastian (sometimes mentioned as "Sebastian George Kloz"), worked at Cremona for several years, and then settled in the little town of Mittenwald on the Iser, which he determined to transform into a second Cremona, with the aid of his brother Ægidius and his son Sebastian, the greatest maker of the whole family.

A real Sebastian Kloz violin is now worth to a player, as prices go, about £500 sterling; but *I have never known one, a really genuine one, that was not sold as a Stradivarius violin.*

In the Exhibition of Violins at South Kensington Museum in 1872, several instruments shown as volins by Stradivarius were evidently by Sebastian Kloz. I could recognise them at once by the flatness of the backs as compared with violins by the former maker; otherwise there was no very marked difference either as regards outline, colour, or finish.

The violins of Stradivarius are so extremely rare that not only hundreds but over a thousand pounds

have been more than once paid for such an instrument. The genuine violins of Sebastian Kloz are still more rare and very little known, as he produced a much smaller number ; and the day may come when they will be valued at a higher figure than those of Stradivarius or Guarnerius.

XVII

MARIETTA ALBONI

THE first time I heard Alboni was one evening in Brussels, about 1850, when she appeared as Rosina in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. I had been told that she was a remarkably large woman to appear in the character of a girl of eighteen ; but so clever was her costume, and so exquisite her singing and acting, that in less than five minutes after her entrance, I may safely say, every young man in the theatre was in love with her.

What splendid sparkling dark eyes ! what arch expression and cunning girlish manners ! and what a luscious voice ! *Una voce poco fa*—who can ever forget it ! And the sly manner in which she hands her little billet-doux to the barber (when he asks, on leaving, if she has nothing for him), by holding it out behind her, whilst she turns her back upon him, repudiating the very idea of such a thing !

I heard Alboni *in the same opera* in Brussels, and, a few weeks later, in Paris ; and I noticed the different manner in which she comported herself on these two occasions. The difference was very

marked. She was much superior—in everything but the voice—in Brussels. There she doubtless felt that she was a queen, far above the princesses of the Opera with whom the Belgian public had been thoroughly contented hitherto. It was the first time that the Brussels public had ever heard a great Italian *prima donna*, for Italian Opera had not long been established there, and she was delightful ; she felt quite at home, and acted admirably.

It seemed as if Rossini had written his *Il Barbiere* specially for her, for her voice and her style.

The audience was most enthusiastic. I was seated in the *parquet*, or back rows of the stalls, and quite early in the evening, during the applause, a gentleman who sat in front of me, whom I had never seen before in my life, turned round, clapping his hands, and said to me, “Quelle belle musique, n’est ce pas, Monsieur !”

In Paris, a short time afterwards, she was much more reserved ; the difference was striking. The Paris orchestra played the overture far too fast ; they “rattled through it,” as an English friend observed ; it was not nearly so good a performance as that of the Brussels orchestra. Alboni was slightly nervous ; she acted and sang rigorously according to the book ; no little novelties were introduced, no extra traits of vocalisation, with which she had enchanted her more homely Bel-

gian audience. It was altogether a colder performance, but, nevertheless, very fine and successful. In the lesson scene, of course, she gave as her *encore* the famous Brindisi from Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, in which she was unsurpassable.

Her voice had the ordinary compass of the violin in Corelli's time, from G to E *in alt.*; and her scale, from the low B to the high B (two octaves), was probably the richest in tone and quality that was ever heard upon the lyric stage. Though her figure was rather large, her movements were very graceful, and her face, full of intelligence, sparkled with good-humour. Her singing was described at this period as combining the "light, florid vocalisation of Persiani with the resonance, pomp, and amplitude of Pisaroni"; but no words can convey an idea of its exquisite purity and luscious quality, nor of the sentiment, perfect taste, and inimitable method with which she sang. It was in the music of Rossini that she was most frequently heard, and delighted the whole musical world.

Marietta Alboni was the daughter of a custom-house officer at Casena, a small town in the Romagna, where she was born on the 10th March 1822. He had several children, and bestowed a good education on all of them. The little Marietta having manifested great fondness for music, her father placed her under Signor Bagioli, a music master in that place, and at twelve years of age

she was able to read music correctly at first sight. Afterwards she studied singing under Madame Bertolotti, at Bologna, where she was fortunate enough to be introduced to Rossini, who also gave her some lessons. He was a very good singer himself.

One day, when Rossini was asked his opinion about her, he replied, "At present her voice is like that of a street singer, but before another year is out she will have all the town at her feet."

From the time she made her first appearance in Donizetti's opera of *Lucrezia Borgia*, at Bologna, in 1842, to her retirement in 1863, she was universally considered as one of the greatest lyric artists the world had ever known. This remarkable woman died in the Villa Cenerentola, at Ville d'Avray, near Versailles, on the 23rd June 1894, aged seventy years, having a town house in Paris, at 22a Cours la Reine, and leaving a considerable fortune, which she bequeathed to her husband (Captain Zieger), her brothers, sisters, nieces, servants, and various charities.

Since 1847 she had taken up her residence in Paris, having purchased the house in the Cours la Reine, and installed therein her brothers and sisters. The brothers afterwards fought under Garibaldi for the unity of Italy.

Alboni was probably the greatest representative of the Italian school. Just as she was about to

retire into private life, it was said of her in an English paper that "no living singer is more thoroughly imbued with the traditions of the splendid school to which she belongs."

At the time of her death she was the wife of Charles Denis Zieger, and her name is written on her will as "Maria Anna Marzia Alboni Zieger." In this document she has written: "I established myself in France, at Paris, in 1847, and in all circumstances I have found in this adorable country the most sympathetic reception and the most perfect courtesy as a woman and an artist."

In consideration of this, she left to the city of Paris 10,000 francs of 3 per cent. Rente, "which will go to form forty savings bank books of 250 francs each. These books are to be inscribed and distributed annually, by way of encouragement to work, to the pupils of both sexes having attained the age of thirteen years (without distinction of nationality or religion) who attend the classes of the public and gratuitous schools maintained by the city of Paris, at the rate of two books for each district, one for the boys, and one for the girls."

She also bequeathed to Ville d'Avray and Marnes la Coquette a yearly sum of 200 francs, to form four savings bank books of 50 francs each; and to the Charity Department of Paris 100,000 francs, "to found and maintain in perpetuity in my name Alboni, in one of the hospitals of the city of Paris,

two beds (or more if the sum will permit), which shall be set apart exclusively for persons of Italian nationality, without distinction of occupation or religion."

Subject to these and other dispositions, Madame Alboni appointed her husband, Charles Denis Zieger, universal legatee, and her will concludes with these words :—

"It is by singing and by following that supreme, and, above all others, consoling art, that I have acquired all the fortune which I possess, and I shall quit this life with the sweet thought of having disposed of the same in such a manner as to encourage and console."

Madame Alboni was twice married : first to the Marquis Pepoli, and secondly to Captain Zieger, who survives her. She realised a considerable fortune, and her generosity to her fellow-artists and others was notable.

She is universally acknowledged to have been the greatest contralto of her time, succeeding in London to that fine singer Marietta Brambilla, who retired a year or two before Alboni appeared here in 1846. It was in Rossini's opera of *Semiramide*, with Madame Grisi as the Assyrian Queen, and Signor Tamburini as *Assur*. The part of *Arsace*, which is said to be Rossini's last great part for contralto, was assigned to Madame Alboni, then quite unknown in London. But the first few bars of her recitative,

Eccomi alfin in Babilonia, called forth the applause of the whole house. "A softer, sweeter, richer, more powerful voice, or more expressive delivery, had never been heard," says a contemporary who was present; and from that moment Alboni was accepted as a great artist.

After she retired from the Opera she sang, now and then, at private concerts, or in public for charitable purposes, and, thanks to excellent tuition and a perfect style, she retained her beautiful voice almost to the last.

Though she had been ailing for some months, the announcement of her death in June 1894 took Paris by surprise. Until a few months previously her house in the Cours la Reine was one of the pleasantest centres of artistic society. She retained the delightful freshness of her voice, but not its strength; it was a charming and distant echo of that once matchless organ. The year before she took part in a *soirée musicale* at her own house, when she sang in the delightful quartet in *La Cenerentola*, one of the operas in which she achieved her greatest success in Paris.

Up to an advanced age she retained also her comely features and her genial smile, and was as great a favourite in the social circle as she had been in the days of her youth among the thousands whom she delighted by her singing of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Italian song.

XVIII

ST. LÉON AND THE "VIOLON DU DIABLE"

ON the Boulevard des Italiens in Paris, on the right-hand side going from the Rue de Richelieu to the Madeleine, and not far from the Opera House, is the Café du Divan, where many theatrical celebrities were, and maybe still are, accustomed to pass some part of the day when not engaged at rehearsals. It differed from all the other cafés in Paris by being provided inside with a most luxurious lounge or sofa, which extended round the room, and was upholstered with soft crimson velvet. It was from this circumstance that it took its name of Café du Divan.

It was on this red velvet couch that died, suddenly, on the 4th September 1870, along with the French Empire, the remarkable violinist and dancer so widely known throughout Europe as Arthur St. Léon. At the time of his death he must have been little more than fifty years of age.

Arthur St. Léon was *maître de ballet* at Paris and at London for a considerable number of years. His real name was Michelet; he was the son of the

perruquier to the Opera, and was born at Versailles. It would appear that his grandfather, as well as his father, was wig-maker to the Opera Comique, for when Cherubini was about to bring out his opera of *Lodoiska* at that theatre the following ludicrous incident occurred : The principal rôle was given to the well-known singer Martin, who was so fastidious with regard to his costumes that the piece was more than two months in rehearsal. At last it was printed in the bills ; but on arriving that same morning at the Opera, Cherubini learnt that Martin could not appear, and that, in consequence, the piece could not be given that evening.

Bitterly disappointed, Cherubini went to Martin's quarters, where he found him with three or four other persons, who appeared to be tailors. A quantity of costumes lay about on the table and chairs—shawls, tunics, turbans, and a considerable number of wigs and beards. As he entered the room Martin exclaimed—

"Ah ! my dear sir, I am very glad to see you !"

"I have come," said Cherubini, "to know whether you had been suddenly taken ill, as they say you cannot sing this evening ; but you look quite well—what is the matter ? It seems that my opera has been postponed without any motive !"

"What do you mean ?" asked Martin—"without any motive ! Are you not aware that I have not yet completed my costume ? I have, certainly, the

greater part of it ready, but the most essential part is still wanting."

"What is that?"

"My beard."

"But I should imagine you had plenty of choice," and Cherubini pointed to a table whereon a pile of wigs and beards lay in a confused mass.

"Well, there are fifteen beards that Michelet has sent for me to try, but there is not one of the right colour," ejaculated Martin; and he gave the composer to understand that unless he could procure a beard of the proper tint, his part in the new opera would be a failure.

It was in vain that Cherubini exhausted his arguments upon the obstinate singer; eight days elapsed before Martin appeared in *Lodoiska*, with a beard that was in accordance with his tastes.

Believing that it would be useless to appear under his own name of Michelet, our ballet-dancer violinist changed it to Arthur St. Léon, by which he has been known ever since. How he rose in his career, or where he was taught music and dancing, I do not know; but this I do know, that he was the most charming violinist I ever heard. When at the zenith of his reputation, he was a man of about medium height, thin, but muscular, of good figure, with a long, oval, serious face, bronzed features and dark hair, but not particularly handsome. The principal characteristic in his

dancing appeared to me to consist in great leaps or bounds; he did not impress me much as a dancer, but as a violinist, in his own inimitable style, he was unrivalled.

Curious to relate, I heard him for the first time at the Theatre St. Hubert, at Brussels, on the very stage where, shortly before, I heard Camillo Sivori, as described in my "Famous Violinists," &c., p. 90. I was so delighted with St. Léon's playing that I not only induced my violin master to go with me on the next occasion, but I mentioned the fact to Vieuxtemps. The latter seemed rather displeased at the effect which this music had made upon me, and when I spoke of it rather enthusiastically, the great violinist shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Oui, il joue bien, mais il n'a pas de style!" Nevertheless St. Léon had what Vieuxtemps never possessed—the faculty of touching the hearts of his audience. The great Belgian violinist astonished and pleased, but St. Léon charmed.

He appeared in Brussels (in the fifties) in two ballets, in which the violin solo took the principal part, and, as far as he was concerned, the dancing only a very secondary part. One of these was called *Le Lutin de la Vallée*, and the other, *Le Violon du Diable*, both very much alike. The latter is supposed to be written (or arranged?) by Pugny; but from the reminiscences of well-known English airs which occur in it (picked up, probably, during

his engagements in London), I believe the music is chiefly, if not all, composed by St. Léon himself. The story is this:—

A poor old village musician, who plays only the most commonplace dance music upon a wretched, scrapy instrument—which, nevertheless, delights the peasants, with whom he is a great favourite—by some freak of fortune, is visited by the devil in his ordinary, everyday (ballet) dress—horns, and tail, and cloven feet—holding in his hand a violin, which, after a rather exciting scene, he finally presents to the old village fiddler.

The latter at once becomes younger ; he is no longer bent with age, but stands upright, and is lost in admiration at the gift. He is supposed to have sold his soul for the Guarnerius violin. Soon he draws the bow across the strings, and the most luscious tones stream forth. But, alas ! the poor peasants can now no longer dance to his music. It is something quite different to what they have been accustomed. The long expressive notes, the sweet swelling tones, combined with the most miraculous execution (which, with due apologies to the shade of our illustrious friend Vieuxtemps, is decidedly of the Paganini stamp), cause them to stand still, as if petrified with astonishment, and listening as if spellbound by some new form of enchantment.

Whilst a delicious melody, with ballet rhythm, is

thus poured forth, an exquisite fairy form, or angel, is called into existence, and approaches with measured steps from the back of the stage, suddenly disappearing the moment the music ceases. This occurs each time that the marvellous instrument—"Violon du Diable"—is played upon.

Nothing could be more poetic than the charming performance of St. Léon thus combined with the exquisite dancing of Mademoiselle Plunkett (sister of the celebrated actress Madame Doche), who appeared in this ballet. In previous years the part was played by Cerito, another most celebrated dancer, who afterwards married St. Léon.

This charming star of the ballet having died at a comparatively early age, St. Léon married again, and left a widow, who resided for many years at Neuilly.

After the performance of the *Violon du Diable* at Brussels, I induced Katto, the music-seller in the Gallérie St. Hubert, to inquire whether any of this lovely music was procurable. The reply which M. St. Léon sent me was that none of it had yet been printed, but that he hoped soon to publish some of it. Ten years later my dear mother discovered a piece by St. Léon, which has proved of great service to me on many occasions, and some years afterwards I met with his solo called *Le Rève* (arpeggios), and his romance *La Voix d'outre Tombe*, also his *Ne m'oubliez pas* (moto perpetuo), which are all clever, expressive, and effective compositions.

In his ballet *Le Lutin de la Vallée* he kept his audience for some time highly amused by his inimitable reproductions of the noises of quadrupeds and birds in a farmyard. The loud crowing of the "early morning cock" near at hand, and its answer by cocks in the far distance, in other keys, was astonishing.

I have been told that St. Léon played upon a Joseph Guarnerius violin, which is now known in trade circles as the "Violon du Diable," from the title of the ballet to which I have just alluded.

I noticed that the violin given to him, in the said ballet, by his Satanic Majesty, over which there is a good deal of excitement and jumping about, is adroitly changed at the wings for the artist's own instrument.

Those who have witnessed the exquisite dancing of such an artist as Mademoiselle Plunkett, especially in the slow movements, accompanied by such beautiful violin music, will easily realise the immense impression made upon an enthusiastic audience on the occasions to which I have referred. I may add that the Theatre St. Hubert, in Brussels, is excellent from an acoustic point of view, the softest *pianissimo* passages can be heard in every part of the house. I noticed that Arthur St. Léon was slightly nervous when he appeared there for the first time; probably he was aware that he was playing in presence of very superior artists in

the orchestra, and a highly critical audience, for Brussels is a city where the cultivation of the violin has long been very much in vogue. Thunders of applause followed all his performances, and he soon established himself as a favourite.

During his engagement the receipts were very high, and great disappointment was experienced one night when, on account of sudden indisposition, he was unable to appear. The manager of the theatre would not believe the doctor's certificate which was sent to him on this occasion, and brought an action against the violinist for breach of contract. Wonderful to relate, the Belgian law courts, which have long had the reputation of doing scant justice to foreigners, gave their verdict in this case in favour of Arthur St. Léon.

XIX

“SUNRISE ON THE RIGHT”

SHORTLY after the great pianist and composer Henri Litolff had married Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucault, I had the honour of taking the bride into dinner at the house of the celebrated Belgian painter Eeckhout, then residing in Paris, and I was to have played a solo on the violin after dinner. But becoming seriously indisposed, either from fatigue or the heat of the weather, I was compelled to leave the table and go straight off to bed. Next day Litolff and the younger Eeckhout came to see me, bringing Offenbach with them. I was much better, and the latter told us the following extraordinary story whilst we smoked our cigars on the balcony :—

From the picturesque little village of Ungerwald, in the Tyrol, there came to London at the beginning of the present century a contra-bassist who might have rivalled the immortal Bottesini, who followed him, or the renowned Dragonetti, who preceded him by a few years. But though he knew neither of these distinguished men, and though his name is,

probably, quite unknown to most people, his career was in some respects as interesting as theirs.

The name of the contra-bassist was Orazio Maboni, and his maternal uncle and guardian was a distinguished violinist and conductor at Milan. As a youth he got a position for a short time in the old town of Botzen, where he gave lessons in music, and performed on the contra-basso in occasional orchestral concerts, returning to his native village of Ungerwald in the summer, where his formidable instrument was in frequent requisition for the peasants' balls.

He played pretty well on the violin also, and could teach it; but his special gift seemed to lie in composition, for which he had a great predilection.

He was rather tall, gaunt, and thin, though possessed of a powerfully knit frame, and his dark eyes and bronzed features were fiery and expressive.

When he arrived in London he had not yet produced anything, and one day he found himself wandering about the streets of the West End in the following circumstances. He had only five shillings in his pocket, and all the worldly goods he possessed were upon his person in the shape of an ordinary suit of clothes, with the exception of a fine Stainer violin which he had brought with him from Ungerwald.

He had three pupils in various parts of the great metropolis, and he occasionally found an afternoon

or evening engagement, either as second violin or contra-basso, in some concert hall or orchestra, and so kept his larder stocked for a few days.

In this unenviable plight he had managed to get himself engaged to an English girl, the only child of Mrs. Blythe, widow of a courageous colonel who had died for his country in India. This lady enjoyed a small pension, but had no other means of subsistence. She was the daughter of a great singer, and had observed that her own daughter possessed a musical gift, which, she thought, the girl should make a source of livelihood. For this purpose she had engaged the services of Maboni, whom she knew to be a representative of the fine old Italian school. As a child she had studied the works of Palestrina, Handel, Sacchini, Paesiello, Porpora, and other men of genius, who have laid the foundation of all that is fine and noble in modern musical composition.

It was Mrs. Blythe's intention to make her daughter a violinist. There were very few, if any, lady violinists in those days, and it must be admitted that Mary Blythe gave promise of becoming in a few years' time a very accomplished artist. She was a fair girl, nearly nineteen years of age, with clear blue eyes, an open, frank countenance, gay spirits, and lady-like manners. To say she was beautiful would be an exaggeration ; but there was something so charming in her well-proportioned figure, her in-

telligent features, and her pretty smile, that we may easily believe she had more than one admirer.

It was Maboni's greatest ambition to make this fair English girl his wife ; and the matter was no secret, for she admired him, and the widowed mother was well aware of the attachment ; but, of course, in their precarious circumstances, she could not encourage it.

Orazio Maboni was an orphan, who had been brought up by his uncle, one of the violinists of the Opera at Milan, and Capel Meister to the Grand Duke of Lombardy. After attending to the education of his nephew, he had given him two seasons in the orchestra, and then sent him on his travels ; for, it must be mentioned, this uncle had no special affection for the child of a turbulent and dissipated brother-in-law.

Orazio had worked his way, not without many severe privations, through various towns and cities of Europe—Botzen, Ancona, Pavia, Parma, Vienna, Paris, Brussels, &c. When he arrived at Brussels he was a very good violinist, an excellent contra-bassist, and more or less of a composer.

At last he found himself in England, but, excepting Mrs. Blythe, without friends or protection of any kind. He occupied a room near the small house she inhabited, not far from Onslow Square, and through her kindness he had obtained two young men as pupils, besides her own daughter.

Orazio now determined to make his fortune, or at least a respectable position, by his compositions. Up to that time he had written out a few orchestral parts, and had introduced into them, here and there, some slight alterations or additions ; but his efforts had not extended much further. Now, however, he decided upon making composition the chief object of his labours.

His favourite author for the violin was Campagnoli ; and one fine evening that he had performed a beautiful prelude by that master, Mary Blythe said to him—

“Orazio, only make me play like that, and I will make your fortune as well as my own.”

“My dear Marietta,” replied the young professor, “I assure you it would not be so easy as you imagine ; there is so much jealousy in the profession, especially among the critics, who cannot play themselves. But I have composed a symphony upon which I count a good deal.”

“A symphony ! What is it called ?”

“Sunrise.”

“Oh ! that is not enough ; it is too much like ‘Moonshine,’ and you know what that means in English. Call it ‘Sunrise on the Righi’ ; or should it not be, ‘Sunrise on the Righi : a Souvenir of the Alps’ ?”

“Ah ! perhaps that would be better—to be followed immediately by ‘Moonshine on the Bosphorus : an Oriental Fantasia,’” said Orazio, laughing.

Well, this symphony, "Sunrise on the Righi," was no laughing matter. It had cost the young composer a considerable amount of labour ; but then it was to bring in great results.

He had transcribed it for the violin alone, and the effect, when he played it, was truly marvellous. Miss Blythe said it was finer than anything by John Sebastian Bach. However, when he showed it to various publishers and conductors of orchestras, although they were not parsimonious in their praises of the composition, they made various excuses for not producing it.

This reiterated failure quite soured the naturally sweet temper of the young professor, who was one of the kindest of men and most indulgent of critics. Now his mind was disturbed ; now he became irritable, and openly condemned the works of others, which hitherto he had been only too ready to praise.

Maboni lived in days when it was generally considered that fortune was the constant companion of renown. If he could only make a name, he thought, opulency would be sure to follow. He little heeded how many great names have belonged to poor men who, like the immortal Mozart, have never enjoyed a competence, much less a fortune! Neither did Orazio Maboni know that great reputations can be bought, and that it is far more truthful to say that renown and notoriety are the constant companions of fortune. The only consolation we have is that

bought laurels soon fade. If Homer had purchased his celebrity we should never have heard of him.

But, after all, what good is a great reputation unless it brings in money ?

In his new disposition of mind Orazio made no friends, but, on the contrary, several bitter enemies.

One evening a man knocked at the door of his room, and walked in before it was opened to him.

“My name is Curwen — Jacob Curwen,” he shouted, with fire flashing from his eyes. “I am the composer of the ballet music at Sadler’s Wells Theatre, and I understand that you go about scandalising my compositions !”

“I am quite at your disposal,” replied Maboni calmly ; “but surely we live in a country where criticism is not forbidden——”

“It is all very well to criticise, sir,” retorted the irate musician, “but before you criticise you should be able to produce.”

“Listen !” interrupted Orazio, taking up his violin.

And after a beautiful passage or two by way of prelude, he performed the transcription of his new symphony “Sunrise.”

Curwen thought at first he was in the presence of a madman, but before the piece was half ended he was absolutely enraptured by the music. When it concluded he exclaimed—

“But that is superb—splendid! It is the finest thing I ever heard!”

“I thought you would like it,” said Maboni. “I know it is good.”

“Good!—my dear sir, I tell you it is the finest thing I ever heard on the violin—it is equal to our very finest compositions, or, I may say, it surpasses them!”

“Anyhow, you hear I can produce, as you say; and yet I can find no one to take up my work, and I am nearly starving for want of a little generous patronage.”

“Leave that to me, sir,” said the other, with a curious wink of his left eye. “Leave that to me; you will soon find it all right.” And he soon after took his leave in a very different mood from that in which he had arrived.

Next morning Orazio received another visit, from a person who sent in his card, with the name “Theophilus Barton,” over which was written in pencil, “Introduced by Professor Curwen.”

“Mr. Maboni, I believe,” said the stranger as he entered.

“At your service,” said Orazio, bowing.

“I have just heard from my friend Professor Curwen of your magnificent composition—your symphony, ‘Sunrise.’”

“‘Sunrise on the Righi,’” said Maboni.

“Yes, ‘Sunrise on the Righi’; and if any one

knows good music from bad, it is my friend Professor Curwen. Now, sir, there is a great future in store for you; for if the well-known composer Curwen pronounces anything good, it *is* good, and there's an end to it. Of course, you are aware how scarce good compositions are; of course, you know the value of a copyright; and I may take it for granted you will produce as many similar compositions as you may have orders for?"

"Certainly," replied Orazio. "I have a second piece already in my mind, 'Moonshine on the Bosphorus.'"

"Ah! just so. Well, you may consider yourself a millionaire, or nearly so. You must leave it to me, my dear sir, and you will see——"

"I should have no objection to become rich," interrupted Orazio. "I am engaged to be married," he added, smiling, "and I should very much like to buy a handsome ring for my fiancée."

"Just so, just so," put in Mr. Barton. "You just give me *carte-blanche* to act as I like, and in a few days you will see what I will do."

At the music lesson an hour or so later, Orazio said to Miss Blythe—

"We shall not have to wait very long, Marietta dear; I have had a visit from a man who tells me I may consider myself a millionaire, or nearly so."

"What on earth do you mean, Orazio?"

“Why, the symphony ‘Sunrise on the Righi’ is to make our fortunes!”

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On the ground-floor of a large building in the city, not very far from the Bank of England, there was a spacious room, in the centre of which stood a long table covered with a dark-green baize cloth, and having before each of the chairs which stood along the sides of the table a large glass inkstand, some quill pens, and a few sheets of foolscap.

Some days after the events just related, the chair at the end of the table was occupied by Mr. Theophilus Barton, a short, stout, pompous individual, whose bloated features were covered with numerous eruptive tokens of improper diet or bad living.

The other seats were filled by eight or ten individuals whom it would be difficult to describe. In the passage or anteroom were a few pegs, on which these persons had hung their hats and umbrellas. In the hall stood a porter, in plush knee-breeches, white stockings, buckled shoes, and a brown coat with brass buttons, whose duty it was to usher newcomers into the room as they arrived.

On the door of the hall was a large brass plate on which were clearly engraved the words, “Theophilus Barton & Co.”

The various individuals conversed in undertones among themselves, and one of them passed the time by drawing impossible houses and trees on a sheet

of the white foolscap before him, another seemed to be studying the stock and share lists of a newspaper, and a third was chatting familiarly with the chairman.

The latter belonged to that class of people who have discovered an infallible means of extracting money from the "ignorant public"; and as the so-called "ignorant public" form about nine-tenths of the entire population of the globe, they have almost the whole world at their disposal. And the means are so simple!

A sensational prospectus is issued and distributed by thousands of copies. The cost of this amounts to, perhaps, a couple of hundred pounds; and within a fortnight subscriptions for shares come in amounting to more than a couple of thousands. Of this sum about fifteen hundred go straight into the pockets of the Company promoters as the "price of the business," or "patents," or "good-will," and with the remaining five hundred some show of business is kept up for a few months—perhaps a year or two—until the Company, on the advice of their solicitors, goes quietly into liquidation,—all strictly according to law! Poor, ignorant public, how we pity you!

"Gentlemen," said the chairman, "I have called you here to consider what I believe to be one of the grandest undertakings of the present day. We have among us, in London, a musical genius, one of the rarest of rare phenomena in this metropolis."

“I have heard some such statement before,” suggested a rough-looking man, addressed as Lord Thomson.

“Pray, gentlemen, hear me out before hazarding any conjectures,” continued Mr. Barton. “Here we have a violinist, contra-bassist, and composer of extraordinary talent, who has actually entranced no less a man than my friend Professor Curwen, whose word is law in musical matters. Well, this marvellous genius is willing to place at the disposal of our Company the whole of his copyrights. We are to be the sole publishers and producers of his works, to trade in them, to barter and reprint them, to supply them to the whole musical world——”

“Is not music somewhat at a discount?” inquired a Mr. Brown. “What is the name of this new musical genius?”

“Orazi Maboni,” said Mr. Barton. “His name may be unknown to you, but I can assure you that in a short time it will be more popular than that of the great Rossini himself.”

“My wife adores Rossini’s music,” put in the individual who was drawing landscapes.

“The ladies will, no doubt, be great patrons of our new Company,” suggested Mr. Barton. Then, after a slight pause, he added—

“All I have to ask of you at present is to kindly give your attention to the prospectus which I have drawn up, the first article of which enacts that we

become the sole proprietors of the valuable compositions of this composer, which the Company will acquire by raising the paltry sum of £20,000."

"How many compositions may there be?" inquired another director in prospective.

"An unlimited number!" exclaimed Mr. Barton, "for he makes over all his past, present, and future copyrights. His only work just at present is called 'Sunrise,' which, you see, is an appropriate name for the origin of such a glorious enterprise."

"Twenty thousand pounds for one musical composition is rather a large sum, I fancy," said Mr. Jones (a retired butcher), who had not before spoken at all.

"My wife never gives more than two shillings for a piece of music," said the individual who was covering his paper with landscapes.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" said Mr. Barton, waving his hands, and paying no attention to these remarks, "the prospectus of the Company states that the shares shall be five pounds each, and that Signor Maboni and the Company take in equal parts one-half of these, say £10,000; the balance to be distributed as follows — £5000 to be invested at 10 per cent. in debentures of the Company, to be held by the said Maboni as a retaining fee, without depriving him of the right of investing in the Company's ordinary shares to whatever extent he may deem advisable, and to deal with the same in the

market, thus stimulating him to fresh efforts ; and £5000 to defray the current expenses of printing and publication, and directors' fees.”

“Hear, hear,” said a voice at the end of the table, as the chairman threw some emphasis on the last two words.

“For my part, as your chairman and managing director,” continued Barton, “I shall content myself with watching scrupulously over the interests of the concern for the moderate remuneration of £200 per annum.”

This magnanimous proposal was received with loud applause from all present.

The various articles of association were then duly read, and agreed to unanimously. There was not a single dissenting voice, until it came to the question as to how many shares the new directors would subscribe for, on the spot, in order to start the business. Then a good many objections were raised. At last, after half-an-hour spent in rather hot discussions, ten of the persons present agreed to take one share each, and with these fifty pounds the printing and posting of the prospectus was to be put in hand at once.

When the clock struck 4 P.M. they all departed, with the view of meeting again that day week.

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When Mr. Theophilus Barton next visited Signor Maboni he found him engaged in reading over the

answer he had just written to a letter received from Milan. The composition of this answer had given him almost as much pleasure, and far less labour, than that of his "Sunrise on the Righi."

As soon as he was informed of the result of the meeting in the city, Maboni explained the nature of the letter from Italy. It was from the well-known firm of solicitors, Signori Farfolli & Notari, and ran as follows :—

"PIAZZA SANTA MARIA, MILANO,
" 25 *Maggio* 184—.

" ESTEEMED SIR,—After having, with great difficulty, obtained your address from our London correspondents, we hasten to inform you, with sincere sympathy and regret, of your uncle's demise, which occurred on the 10th of last month. As his executors, it is our duty to apprise you, as his next of kin, that he has left a considerable amount of property, which all comes to you by right. We strongly advise your presence in Milan as soon as possible, to facilitate the winding-up of the affairs."

There was more in the letter than it is necessary to reproduce here ; let it suffice to say that when Mr. Barton heard this read out to him, his face assumed a very curious aspect, but before he had time to say anything Maboni exclaimed—

"I am going to be married without delay, and Mrs. Blythe will go to Italy with us. I will send

you a copy of ‘Sunrise on the Righi,’ and before the end of the year I hope you may hear of my other piece, ‘Moonshine on the Bosphorus.’”

“Confound it all,” muttered Mr. Barton, as he jumped into a cab that was standing near Onslow Square and drove off to the city.

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In 1865 I was at a concert at Frankfort-on-the-Main. There was an admirable quartet, and one of the most remarkable pieces I ever heard was performed on this occasion. It was called “Sunrise on the Righi,” and was truly magnificent. The gradual spreading of the rays of morning through the still, misty atmosphere, the distant tinkling of the sheep-bells, the magnificent panorama that unfolded itself as the white mist rose and dissolved in the clear air—all was sublimely represented. There was a most effective tremolo crescendo, commencing in the minor key, and terminating, in the major, with the grandest possible chorus of awakened nature, gladdening in the glorious light of day.

It was perfectly astonishing; Rossini himself never wrote anything more superb.

Offenbach knew Maboni well, and he told us that this splendid composition had never been published, but that a transcription of it for the piano by Van den Abeelen, a clever Flemish pianist, who was for some time professor in England, had been issued in London by the house of Williams in Paternoster

Row ; and it appears that Henri Litolff had played this wonderful piece after the dinner given to him at Paris in honour of his marriage with Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucault, to which I alluded at the commencement of this chapter.

I have been assured, however, by Henri van den Abeelen himself, that his piece is entirely original, and that he had never seen or heard that of Orazio Maboni.

XX

VOICE AND VIOLIN

OF all the compositions suited for the drawing-room—and even for the concert-hall—some of the most beautiful are those written for voice and violin, with piano accompaniment. But very good pieces of this kind are exceedingly rare. I have been always fond of this class of composition.

My wife was the first in England to sing the now celebrated *Serenata* of Gaetano Braga, with *violino obbligato*. Long before it was at all known—in fact, immediately after it was written—we performed it in several concerts and drawing-rooms, and it was universally admired. It made such an impression on one lady, who was a distinguished singer, that she went next morning to Schott's and purchased a copy, hoping to be able to sing it *without a violin part!* She was not aware that Braga wrote this beautiful composition to show off his own 'cello playing, the voice taking the second part almost throughout. It was afterwards transcribed for voice and violin. It is quite unnecessary to use a muted violin (unless the instrument is very loud and coarse) in performing this piece.

Braga's other compositions of the same kind, *L'Esule* (the Exile) and *Les Trois Marguerites*, are also very clever and melodious.

Two other pieces for voice and violin, with which my wife always made the greatest effect, were the *Romanza* of Guido Papini (originally written for Madame Christine Nillson), and the *Non ti Scordar* of Robaudi, the author of the well-known *Stella Confidente*. She has also had great success with Guercia's *Il Sospiro* and Gounod's *Ave Maria*, for voice, violin, and piano, and with a spirited valse-song by Gumbert, entitled *Vive la Danse*, to which I adapted a violin part.

There is an opening for really good music of this description, especially for the drawing-room, and I am glad to see that it is likely to be taken advantage of; though, up to the present time, excepting the pieces I have mentioned, and the dramatic *Air d'Isabelle*, from Hérold's *Pré aux Clercs*, which has been occasionally sung at the Promenade Concerts, there are very few which rank higher than the old series of plaintive German *lieder*, with rather poor violin parts. An exception in this respect is *Der blinder Geiger*, by Proch, a really fine and effective piece, and his song *Ye stars mildly beaming*, which is pretty and well harmonised.

A very long time ago Panseron wrote a piece for voice, violin, and piano, called *Songe de Tartini*. It used to be sung by Pauline Garcia (Madame Viardot-

Garcia), sister of Malibran (wife of De Bériot), after the early death of the latter, with De Bériot's *obbligato* violin, and created great enthusiasm. It is decidedly dramatic.

The edition of Gordignani's *Caro mio ben*, for voice, violin, and piano, by Guido Papini, is also very effective, and well within the reach of any amateur who possesses a fine voice and good style.

With regard to *solo violin* music with piano accompaniment, my *répertoire* comprises at the present time upwards of 280 compositions ; but I could not recommend more than a third of this number. When Papini one day looked over the whole list, he exclaimed, " Mais, mon Dieu, je ne connais pas la moitié de cela ! "

Not to go back to the days of Viotti and Rode, and music of a still more ancient type which is now considered more curious than beautiful, it is evident that with the colossal success of Paganini there arose a new and romantic style of violin-playing which has eclipsed all that had gone before. His contemporary, Louis Spohr, held the classical reins, and his other contemporary, Charles Auguste de Bériot, the greatest of the three (as far as the violin is concerned), cultivated both styles with success.

Excellent studies for the violin have been written by Kreutzer, Spohr, De Bériot, Campagnoli, Fiorillo,

Wéry, and Papini. There are many others ; but I can recommend any of those mentioned, of which alone I have any experience.

For solos with piano accompaniment or with orchestral accompaniment, should be specially mentioned Paganini's works ; those of De Bériot, Bazzini, and Artot ; many pieces by Papini ; to which we should add some compositions by Ernst, Wieniawski, Panofka, Dancla, Alard, and Léonard, all excellent in their respective styles. Singelée, formerly leader for many years at the Brussels Opera, has written a number of little fantasias, on operatic airs, for amateurs ; they are mostly brilliant and pleasing. Similar compositions by H. Farmer, who was professor for a long time at Harrow, are very cleverly written. A very fine and effective piece is Vieuxtemp's *Fantaisie Caprice* ; Ernst's *Carnaval de Venise* is another. De Bériot's *Sixth Concerto*, Papini's *Barcarolle*, Artot's *Souvenirs de Bellini*, some of Wieniawski's *Mazurkas*, and Bazzini's *Carillon d'Arras* are all well deserving of attention on the part of those who have completed their studies.

With regard to study, a student should devote his morning hours to exercises, and in the evening an hour or so to pieces with piano accompaniment. The time he or she can devote to the violin will depend, of course, upon circumstances. There is one golden rule which applies to both professors and amateurs : Never play when fatigued.

When opportunity occurs, it is advantageous to join a good orchestral society; nothing conduces more to becoming proficient in time and rhythm, and all young players should strive to attend the practices of such a society for at least two or three years.

When the violin as a solo instrument has once been conquered, and middle age has arrived, it will be found by those who are not daily engaged in orchestral work, or teaching, that an hour a day on the average is generally sufficient to keep a player in what is commonly termed "good form."

It may be useful if I conclude this chapter with a few observations on some pieces of my own *répertoire* :—

PAGANINI : Unfortunately many pianos are now tuned to what is termed "philharmonic" pitch, which is half a tone above that of the Opera. To avoid unnecessary strain upon the strings in such pieces as *Le Stregghe*, my clever wife transposed the piano accompaniment to my copy, and the same was done with some of his other compositions. The *Rondo de la Clochette* and *Carnaval*, the *Andantino Variato*, another *Rondo* (arranged by Lafont), and the *Canto Spianato* (Chano't's edition) do not require it.

SIVORI : *Tarantella*, a beautiful and effective piece, but I have had the piano part simplified by Henri van den Abeelen.

DE BÉRIOT : *1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 9th, and 10th Concertos*, all splendid, but require a very good pianist. They are most effective with orchestral accompaniment. *Scène de Ballet; Andante varié*; two fantasias on Russian airs; *Les Echos*; *Élégie* (a magnificent work in B minor); *Valse de Concert*; *Les Trois Bouquets*; *Airs variés* (2nd, 6th,

8th, 9th, and 11th most effective); duets for violin and piano on *Guillaume Tell*, *Gazza Ladra*, and *Il Barbiere* (with Osborn), are superb compositions.

BAZZINI: *The Muleteer*; the *Carillon d'Arras*; *Absence (mélodie)*; *Ronde des Lutins*; *Nocturne*; *Ballade*; *Danse des Gnomes*—all very original and effective; *La Straniera*, a brilliant operatic fantasia.

BRAGA: *Il Corricolo* (originally written for 'cello; a descriptive piece which, when properly explained on the programme, is certain to produce a good effect).

ARTOT: *Lucrezia Borgia*; *Souvenirs de Bellini*; *Romance de Field*; *Le Rêve*; *Serenade*—all excellent.

WIENIAWSKI: *Polonaise* (the 1st); *2nd Mazurka*; *Légende*.

VIEUXTEMPS: *Fantaisie Caprice*; *Tarentelle*.

SASSERNO: *Andante religioso*. BERSIKIRSKI: *Souvenirs de Varsovie* (two mazurkas).

PANOFKA: *Dom Sebastien*. HAUSER: *Adieu à Varsovie* (a nocturne, large, fine style, like that of De Bériot).

RAFF: *Cavatina* (I was the first to play this well-known solo in England; it had only been once played (at Paris) by Sivori when I gave it at a concert in London a few weeks later).

PAPINI: *Caprice alla Tarantella*; *Souvenir de Sorrento*; *Feu follet*; *Barcarolle*; *Pensée fugitive* (dedicated to the writer); *Un Soir à Portici*; *Il Guarany*; *Don Carlos*; *Capriccio alla Calabrese*; *Maritana*; *A une Fleur!* *Berceuse Orientale*; *Mazurka* (op. 60); five romances; three concert waltzes, and many others—all beautiful compositions.

ERNST: *Élégie*; *Carnaval de Venise*; *Inquiétude* (duet with piano); *Rondo Gracioso (idem)*; *Feuille d'Album (idem)*; *Il Pirata* (a splendid and very effective composition); *Air Allemand varié*; *Airs Hongroises*.

ALARD: *Aragonesa* (a brilliant Spanish waltz, one of Alard's best compositions); *Styrienne* (there are two editions of this). DANCLA: *Valse de Concert*; *Le Roi des*

Ziganes; Délassements de l'Étude. LA TANCHE: *Czardàs.* SINGELÉE: *I Lombardi; Lucie de Lamermoor, &c.,* (effective pieces for amateurs). LÉONARD: *Tristesse; Polonaise* (both these are very fine and effective compositions, and his *Echos, Fantaisie pastorale,* is even finer, but very difficult). VIVIEN: *Caprice Valse.* BÖHM: *Moto perpetuo.*

I have many other pieces, including compositions by Tartini, Locatelli, Viotti, Rode, Spohr, Kreutzer, and J. S. Bach; but though some of them form good studies, I cannot advise my young fellow-artists to cultivate them as concert pieces. They belong to a bygone age, and our modern audiences do not appreciate their beauties; besides which the art of solo-violin playing has made much progress since they were written. The modern catalogues of Schott, Chanot, Laudy, Patey & Willis, Augener, &c., contain numbers of brilliant and well-written works, many of which are highly effective and pleasing without presenting extraordinary technical difficulties.

Nothing is easier than to write difficult music for the violin. When it is difficult and *good* there may be some excuse for so doing, but when it is difficult and bad it is simply ridiculous. Many of our modern composers of violin music are striving to avoid useless difficulties, and the vast numbers of amateurs who now cultivate the violin will reward them for their efforts in this direction.

To acquire a good style and effective *cantabile,*

young violinists cannot do better than play De Bériot's 36 *Études mélodiques*. They are of as great value to the violinist as are, to the songstress, the 12 *Nouvelles Vocalises pour Contralto et Mezzo-Soprano* by the celebrated Marco Bordogni.

XXI

SPAGNOLETTI'S VIOLIN

IN 1817 Paolo Diana Spagnoletti was engaged at the King's Theatre, London, as leader of the orchestra, having already played second violin there for some years. In Italy he had previously distinguished himself as a very able musician. He was taught at the Conservatorio of Naples, where he entered at the early age of twelve ; and it is related of him that on the occasion of a piece of music being placed before him to read at sight as a test of his abilities, *he turned it upside down*, and played it off from beginning to end, to the utter astonishment of the professors and all present. Poor Spagnoletti ! he was never half appreciated, except by those who happened to know him intimately. He lies buried by the side of his wife in Brompton Cemetery. His violin was a Joseph Guarnerius instrument of considerable value. It came into possession, many years ago, of a timber merchant in the city, and finally belonged to my friend, Sir Howard Elphinstone, V.C., Comptroller of the Household to H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, and a very able amateur violinist.

One evening that I was about to play at a concert in the Assembly Rooms, Putney, given for the benefit of the Hambro' Orphanage, the timber merchant called upon me in the artists' room, with the violin in question, and all the documents or "title-deeds" relating to it.

I took it up and looked at it. There was scarcely any varnish left upon it, and it was of a dirty brown colour; but it showed the well-known form of sound-hole, and other characteristics of a Joseph Guarnerius violin, very unmistakably. I could not try it, as I was just going to play; so I told the owner that if he would wait till the concert was over I should be happy to play a piece upon it that would show off its qualities to some friends of mine, who would remain in the room when the audience had retired.

This was done, and they all declared it a very fine instrument indeed, though less luscious in tone than my own violin, on which I had just previously played. Moreover, I found that it possessed that peculiar dry quality on the G string which characterises all the Guarnerius violins I have ever seen.

When all but ourselves and my new friend had departed, the latter informed me privately that the price of the Spagnoletti "Joseph" was £400, but that if I felt inclined to purchase it, or if any friend of mine bought it, there would be a commission of

10 per cent., or £40, for myself. I thanked him for his offer, but could hold out little hope of business.

Some months later, happening to spend a few days in the neighbourhood of Southampton, I was informed by the sister of Sir Howard Elphinstone, at whose house I was staying, that her brother was in search of a good violin, and I mentioned the Spagnoletti Guarnerius to her.

In course of a little time I received from Sir Howard Elphinstone, whom I did not then know personally, though we had corresponded, a short note requesting me to receive a visit from him at eight o'clock in the evening of the following day. I at once replied that I should be at home at the hour mentioned, and quite at his service.

He drove from Buckingham Palace in a hansom cab, and arrived punctually, bringing with him *two violins*, and we spent a short time together very pleasantly. He said he was commissioned to purchase a violin for "a friend" of his, and that he had the choice of two very fine instruments, but could not decide *which was the best*, and he was anxious to hear me play upon both, that he might be enabled to judge.

When the boxes were opened, to my surprise I at once recognised in one of them the Guarnerius of the timber merchant—the Spagnoletti violin!

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "I know this violin already; I played some pieces upon it at the Assembly

Rooms here not long ago. It is a superb instrument."

Sir Howard was rather reticent; he merely remarked, "Oh! indeed;" and renewed his request that I should play him some short piece on both violins in succession.

"What shall it be?" I asked, as my wife took her seat at the piano.

"Do you know Beethoven's *Romance*?" he inquired.

"No," I replied. "Besides, if I did, I should not take music written by a *pianist* in order to try the quality of a *violin*!"

This remark seemed rather to displease him; and I was not surprised at that when I suddenly remembered having heard from his sister that he was very partial to Beethoven, and that he played one, or both, of the *Romances* of that composer remarkably well. For my own part, having as a lad played the *Sonatas* of Beethoven for piano and violin as a kind of task, I have cordially detested his *violin* music ever since.

It was finally agreed that I should play a *Study in B flat* by De Bériot, and an *Adagio* by Sasserò, as test pieces, and they certainly answered very well indeed. Sir Howard Elphinstone was delighted with *both* violins. He still hesitated as much as ever in his choice. At last, turning to me, he said—

"This is rather a difficult matter; my friend relies implicitly upon my judgment, and I really do not know how to decide. . . . Now, which do you, yourself, prefer?"

I should mention that the other violin was said to be a Stradivarius, and looked like a genuine instrument by that great master.

"Well, Sir Howard," I replied, "although I have an interest in that Guarnerius, if purchased by any friend of mine, I cannot help telling you that I prefer the other."

The diplomatist made no direct reply. He merely thanked me profusely for the trouble I had taken, complimented my wife and myself on our playing, and after a few more commonplace remarks he packed up his two instruments in their boxes and prepared to take his departure.

During the final words of our interview I inquired casually if his "friend" were an artist or an amateur; to which he replied, in a rather hesitating manner, that he was "not at liberty to say anything about him."

That remark, of course, led me to guess correctly for whom one of these violins was intended—but which one? and who was to get the other? were still unsolved problems.

It was about a month, or perhaps six weeks, later that I was purchasing some violin strings in a well-known street running out of Leicester Square, at the

establishment of the late Mr. George Hart, and in conversation with him, I happened to mention the visit I had received from Sir Howard Elphinstone and the trial of the two violins. He seemed pleased when I told him I had given my verdict in favour of the Stradivarius, and said, "Yes, he bought it from me for the Duke of Edinburgh."

But the history of the Spagnoletti violin is not yet quite finished. More than two years, I fancy, must have elapsed since the occurrences just related, when an exhibition of old violins was announced to be opened at South Kensington in 1872. I went to see that wonderful collection, and among the "Josephs" I recognised again the violin of Spagnoletti! There was a neatly printed label before it in the glass case, and on this label I read the following words—

"The property of Sir Howard Elphinstone, V.C."

Where was the timber merchant—where were my forty guineas? I never inquired.

Another more interesting question suggests itself: Where is now the violin of Spagnoletti since the sad death at sea of Sir Howard Elphinstone, deplored by every one? That is also a question which I am unable to answer at present.

XXII

SUCCESS BY AN AMATEUR

IT is only at the expense of much time and labour that an amateur singer or violinist can hope to achieve marked success in the world of music. He may be a favourite in his own district, after having given pleasure for many years by his performances; and it may happen that some day he will be told, as I was told by one of my friends in London, that "you get as much applause when you *go on* as most others get when they *come off*!" But the real test is when he makes a public appearance in some locality where he is totally unknown, and is surrounded by artists of great merit.

In a book devoted partly to personal reminiscences, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be useful, or even interesting, to others, unless it be at the expense of modesty; but I have endeavoured throughout to avoid, as much as possible, anything that might shock the feelings of the most sensitive in this respect.

I well remember the day when I made my first appearance in public; it was at the Kursaal, at

Ostend, in 1850, and I played there, to my mother's accompaniment, the *Andante* and *Rondo* of De Bériot's Second Concerto. This was my first success, and it gained for me the acquaintance and friendship of several distinguished musicians, among others, Madame Dreyfuss (sister of Sir Julius Benedict), Riciardi (tenor of Italian Opera at Odessa), Henri Vieuxtemps (the violinist), &c.

For twenty-five years afterwards my violin was often rather neglected, except that I played occasionally at Brussels and Paris in private houses, and for a very short time joined an orchestra in the latter city. At one of these *soirées musicales* in Brussels I played in the same room as M. Lemmens, the great organist and initiator of harmonium music, who afterwards married Miss Sherington. On this occasion I performed the whole of the Sixth Concerto of De Bériot, also with my mother's accompaniment.

At Paris it was Madame Beaucé, the mother of the celebrated *prima donna* Madame Ugalde, who played with me on several occasions, and also Céléstine Van der Beek, a fine pianist, at whose house I met the great guitarist Zani de Ferranti, and M. Bagier, *impresario* of the Italian Operas of Paris and Madrid, where one of her sisters was engaged. There also I met Mademoiselle Singelée, daughter of the conductor of the Opera Orchestra at Brussels. She was a clever violinist,

but had adopted the opera stage as her profession (and I afterwards heard her sing in London with Titiens at the Italian Opera, Drury Lane, in *Il Flauto magico* of Mozart).

After my marriage in 1865, when residing in England, my wife, who had taken excellent singing lessons in Brussels from Dauchet, now turned her attention to the piano, in order to play the accompaniments to my violin pieces. But wishing that she should still cultivate her beautiful voice, I encouraged her to sing many songs with an *obbligato* violin part, and I also chose for my solos pieces with as light an accompaniment as possible. Nevertheless, she became, as she now is, not only an excellent pianist, but one of the very best accompanists it is possible to find. To her great talent in this respect I owe, almost entirely, whatever success I may have achieved in numerous concerts and musical evenings in London and various provincial towns. She it was who organised the Bohemian Orchestral Society, whose brilliant concerts did so much to pay off the debts and resuscitate the Hambro' Orphanage, at Roehampton, and find money for the Royal Ladies' Homes and other charitable institutions in various parts of England.

For the last thirty years, with our duets for voice and violin, and violin solos, we have met with constant success; and it has done much to

lighten the burdens, and cause us to forget for a time the miseries and sorrows, of this earthly existence.

Among the many happy occasions of this kind, I will mention one in particular, as it will certainly interest many amateur musicians.

It was on the 3rd September 1892, at Southsea, when we played in two concerts (afternoon and evening) on the same day, given by the excellent string band of the Royal Marine Artillery. They were the last concerts of the season ; and as Madame Agnes Larkom, a noted mezzo-soprano, was to appear, my good-natured wife could not be persuaded to sing, but she played my accompaniments. It came about in the following manner :—

Whilst staying at the house of my sister-in-law, in the country near Portsmouth, a piano-tuner connected with these concerts informed me that Mr. Carrodus, who was to have appeared, had been summoned back suddenly to London, and I offered to play in his place. This was told to the committee, and I was duly announced on the bills, having been granted the use of the Portland Hall concert-room and a good piano to rehearse my pieces. The concerts were given at the new pier. There were eight hundred persons present at three o'clock, and twelve hundred at the evening concert. I was down for *four* pieces, two in each concert, but I had to play *eight times* ; and I remember that

when it was all over, we enjoyed our frugal supper very much indeed.

At the eight o'clock concert, having no evening costume, I went on, as in the afternoon, in morning dress ; but the cut of my coat happening to be very similar to that of the dark blue tunics of the artillerymen, barring the stripes and medals, it appears to have passed muster very well, for the notices in the newspapers did not allude to the circumstance, whilst they gave most flattering accounts of the double concert.¹

¹ Perhaps I may be permitted to quote the following lines from *The Evening News*, 5th September 1892 : " There were crowded audiences at the concerts on the South Parade Pier on Saturday. Here the principal attraction was Dr. T. L. Phipson, President of the Bohemian Orchestral Society, London, whose masterly playing of the violin carried his hearers by storm. He was several times encored. Madame Agnes Larkom, the popular soprano, and Mr. Henry Pope, basso, were the vocalists, and their songs were warmly applauded. The string band of the Royal Marine Artillery also performed."

I have a collection of a large number of similar notices from various London newspapers and musical journals, which I sometimes refer to when I feel low-spirited.

XXIII

THE VIOLIN-MAKER TO THE EMPEROR

AFTER the great Stradivari, no violin-maker has been more imitated than Stainer, though Amati and Guarneri have had their share of copyists. But so popular have become, during the present century, the names of Stainer and Kloz, that no one will accuse me of exaggeration when I assert that their labels have been placed in many thousands of violins which they never made.

Jacobus Stainer was born at Absom, near In-sprück, in the Tyrol, about the year 1620, and lived to the age of sixty-three. Whilst still a mere boy he went to Cremona, and found employment in the workshop of Nicolo Amati (the greatest of the makers of that name), of whom he was destined to become a noted rival, not only in his native land, but throughout the whole world ; and his name at the present time is as familiar to violinists of every country as is that of the great Amati himself.

Stainer must, by all accounts, have been a handsome man, of engaging manners, but bold and head-

strong in comportment, especially favoured by the fair sex, and an exceedingly talented workman.

Books treating of the old master luthists record a good deal of detail (mostly imaginary) on the obscure life of Jacob Stainer, his love affairs, his miseries, and his celebrity as a violin-maker. But very few have given us much information on the structure or model of his instruments, which differ considerably from those of all other makers.

At the present day the most ordinary violins are occasionally to be found in *bric-à-brac* shops and pawnbroker's establishments, bearing a *printed* label representing these instruments to be the work of Jacobus Stainer, of Absom. Not long ago I saw a "Stainer" of this kind sold for £20. It was a very fair instrument, and worth the money given for it; but a genuine Stainer would probably be worth £200 to £300 as prices go.

The best authorities agree in stating that no genuine Stainer violin ever had a *printed label*. The real Stainer labels are all hand-written, and in that coarse, uncouth, barely legible scrawl which also characterises the written labels of Stradivari and many other workmen, whose hands were more accustomed to the manipulation of the chisel, the file, and the glue-pot, than to that of the pen.

Nevertheless, Stainer's handwriting was somewhat better than that of Stradivari, and the latter often used printed labels. Many facsimiles of the

written labels of these noted men have been carefully reproduced of late years ; and these reproductions appear, as far as we can judge, to be very faithful representations of the originals. What awful scrawls some of them are ! Many a school-boy would have his ears boxed for an orthography twice as good or half as bad.

So much for the labels of Stainer. Now let us, in a very few words, examine his model and other characteristics.

I may state at once that his violins are far less numerous than those of Stradivari, who lived more than thirty years longer. A genuine Stainer is certainly one of the rarest curiosities in the world. Imitations by Dutch, English, and German makers we have in plenty ; but the genuine article is rarely or ever seen.

Among the violins which, during my long musical career, have on various occasions been presented to me by kind, enthusiastic, and far too indulgent friends, there was one Stainer.

I was a young man at the time I received that gift, and knew very little of the celebrated makers of violins ; and it must be confessed that a real Stainer is yet almost an unknown quantity—an *x*—to the greater number of violinists.

Some people write his name "Steiner," which is evidently incorrect. But there was a time, not more than three-quarters of a century ago, when such

men as the enthusiastic Abbé Sibire, in France, and Otto, the luthist, in Germany, had in their hands, and under their chins, instruments which were *genuine* Stainer violins.

The history of mine may be very briefly told.

One hot day in June I met at a railway station in London a gentleman who had a delicious tenor voice, and was probably one of the finest English tenors ever born. He had sung with great success the previous night at a concert in which I had played, and on coming off the little stage I had found him at the wings, where he had been listening—which I considered a very great compliment. He told me that he had an old Stainer violin which had lain by among members of his family for many long years ; it had finally become his property, and he wished to make me a present of it !

I implored him to seek among his other friends for some one who really wanted a good violin, as I was already well provided for in that respect. But nothing would prevail upon him to change his mind ; he insisted upon giving the instrument to me, saying I might do what I liked with it.

It was certainly an excellent violin ; very old, but in good condition, with rather a bright yellow varnish, mostly covered with one almost black with age. It had a somewhat thin quality of tone, but a tone that was exceedingly brilliant and sweet, especially so on the first string—a characteristic of

Stainer. Its pattern was small, and its model much raised, more on the table than the back—another characteristic—and it was altogether a very charming instrument.

Alas ! in a moment of generosity I soon afterwards gave it, or lent it, to a friend who was sadly in want of a good violin ; and the last I heard of this valuable instrument was that it had been swopped in Scotland for two bottles of whisky ! Heaven alone knows where it now is.

There is something extremely interesting in the life of Jacob Stainer as being connected, on the one hand, with Cremona, through Nicolo Amati—to whose daughter he made furious love and should have married—and the famous Tyrolean school, on the other, in which he was succeeded by one of the Kloz family and by Albani, his workmen for the time. He thus figures as a brilliant link connecting the Cremonese and Tyrolean schools of violin-making. Moreover, he appears to have been assisted to some extent by his brother, Marcus Stainer, a monk, who was also a very clever maker of violins, and perhaps the author of the so-called “Elector-Stainers,” made, as it was asserted, “in a monastery,” and about which such glowing accounts have been written.

It has been gravely asserted that “after the death of his wife” (who outlived him) “he retired to a monastery, where he passed the remainder of his

life," and constructed "violins of super-eminent beauty and quality," with yellow varnish of a golden hue. There were sixteen, one of which was presented to each of the twelve Electors, and the remaining four to the Emperor."

"Unfortunately," says Pearce, "thirteen of these appear to have been lost, and the remainder have all been in royal hands, the Empress Maria Theresa, the Duke of Orleans (grandfather of King Louis Philippe), and Frederick William of Prussia, and been presented by them (except the last) to eminent violinists."

I am sorry to say that some German writers at present look upon that romantic story as a myth. But the life of the monk, Marcus Stainer, is worth looking into. Nothing, or scarcely anything, is known about him at present.

Otto, the German violin-maker, and author of a little treatise on the subject, assures us that Stainer's violins were quite equal in elegance, finish, and tone to those of the greatest makers of Cremona. They, naturally enough, have the most resemblance to those of Nicolo Amati, his master, but they are somewhat more raised in the table. The purfling is beautifully executed, narrow, and placed very near the borders; the sound-holes are shorter and not so elegant as those of Stradivari.

All those who have played upon a genuine

Stainer instrument are enthusiastic in their praises. The tone is described as sweet, powerful, round as that of a flute, and especially brilliant and sparkling on the first string. The pattern of these violins is somewhat smaller than those of most Cremona instruments, and the scroll is marvellously well cut; in some of his violins it terminates in the head of a lion, most beautifully carved. The wood is also handsome and well chosen. Otto says, "The colour of the varnish is reddish yellow; but some have the back and sides dark brown, and the table yellow."

It is wonderful to relate that poor Jacob Stainer often could not obtain more than about *twelve shillings* for one of these excellent instruments! Nevertheless, his fame as a violin-maker gained for him the distinguished title of "Violin-maker to the Emperor."

On the 7th October 1645, Stainer married, none too soon, a village belle of Absom, named Marguerite Holzhammer. This occurred when he was twenty-four years of age, so that he could not have been more than a few years at Cremona. His family increased quite as rapidly as his renown.

On the 29th October 1658 he was appointed "Court Violin-maker to the Archduke Leopold" of Austria, and on 9th of July 1669, "Violin-maker to the Emperor."

But misery overtook him in spite of everything,

and he was compelled to hawk his violins about the country to procure food for his poverty-stricken family. He was imprisoned for debt for six months, and on his liberation his business grew smaller and smaller, and his debts greater; so much so, that he was unable to pay the dues levied on all Court tradesmen; and when he petitioned the Emperor to be forgiven the sum—as was, now and then, done to others in misfortune—his application was, for some reason, unheeded. Finally, he died, a raving lunatic, in the year 1683.

Stainer had only one son, born in 1657, who died the following year. His beautiful wife and eight daughters survived him.

During my long residence abroad I met many French ecclesiastics who played the violin or violoncello remarkably well. They were the successors of the well-known and enthusiastic Abbé Sibire, who, in the early years of this century, penned the following lines about his Stainer violin:—

“When in the course of a laborious day a desire for dissipation compels me to interrupt my useful work, I turn to my violins, and I must confess that in the presence of a glorious sunshine I play, by preference, and with greater delight, upon an excellent Cremona, which for me, as for you, will always possess inexpressible charms. But when

in the dark silence of a night devoid of clouds, everything is quiescent around me, and people are plunged in sleep—when the canopy of heaven spreads in magnificent profusion its innumerable and dazzling riches in the immensity of space, irresistibly attracting my gaze—I salute silently through my open window this vast expanse of the firmament, and fall into mute contemplation. To deliver myself from an ecstasy which overwhelms and crushes my thoughts, I take up a brilliant Stainer. Its silvery tone flies out towards the stars which shine afar ; I imagine that these distant orbs can hear me, and I feel proud at having for an audience those millions of worlds suspended in infinite space. Such is the empire which the irresistible magic of an enchanting and heavenly toned violin exerts on my bewildered soul.”

XXIV

TAMBURINI'S COW

TAMBURINI was the most gentlemanly and handsomest person upon the Italian stage, not even excepting that great favourite Mario (Count de Candia). He was, as every one knows, one of the finest baritone singers, holding the same position in Italian Opera that our great baritone Henry Phillips held on the English stage. But what every one does not know is that he was delicate, and required a great deal of milk.

How my violin got me to become acquainted with Tamburini's cow forms a curious series of coincidences, which I will relate in as few words as possible. I had long wished to see him, or, at least, his portrait, having heard so much about him—of his magnificent voice, and his refined appearance and manners. I had never had an opportunity of hearing him, as he had retired into private life long before I went to reside in Paris.

Viotti, who was one of the greatest of violinists, had long haunted my mind. He died in 1824; and I have been accustomed to ask all my musical

friends where I could see a good portrait of him. It was many years before my desire in this respect was satisfied, and I need not describe the delight I experienced when a portrait of that celebrated artist appeared in *The Strad* a short time ago—a face full of intelligence and good-humour, which, once seen, can never be forgotten.

Well, as regards Tamburini, I have never yet been thus satisfied. Hence, when in Paris, I wished, if possible, to make his acquaintance. At last the vision of a chance appeared to loom above the horizon. My friend M. De Sussex had married Mdlle. Beaucé, sister of Madame Ugalde, the celebrated *prima donna* (who created quite a *furor* in the opera of *Les Montinégrins* and *Fra Diavolo*, &c.), and he had a charming residence on the banks of the Seine, at Bellevue, near Paris, overlooking the river and the Pont de St. Cloud. He was a man who was very fond of music, and especially of the violin.

Often, on a Sunday, I was in the habit of dining with him, *en famille*, and returning to my solitary quarters in Paris by a late train in the evening.

On these occasions I sometimes met Madame Ugalde, a dark-complexioned brunette, with highly intelligent features, fine eyes, slim figure, and lady-like manners, but not beautiful ; and I once attended a special religious service in which she sang magnificently. She had then retired for a year from the

operatic stage. Her mother, Madame Beaucé, was an excellent pianist, and often played with me the accompaniment to De Bériot's *Seventh Concerto* and other pieces, though she must have been considerably over sixty years of age, and her hair was as white as snow.¹

Then there was another and younger Madame Beaucé, a tall, handsome woman, with fair hair and blue eyes, daughter-in-law of the lady just named, who had a remarkably fine voice. I shall never forget one Sunday evening, just before sunset, that we all went out in a boat and had a little concert on the river. The younger Madame Beaucé sang some beautiful French songs to an improvised *pizzicato* accompaniment on the violin, and they were vociferously applauded by a group of pleasure-seekers on the bank of the river. Her husband, who was a stockbroker, and, like herself, a good amateur singer, sang a duet with his wife, the notes of which were wafted far down the stream by the soft summer breeze; and I finished the concert by a solo on the fourth string, and some arpeggios of my own invention.

It was in this charming company that, one afternoon, the conversation turned upon the career of

¹ Long afterwards in London, at the residence of Lady Emily Grey, in Putney, I heard the late Mrs. Lubbock sing *Qui la voce (I Puritani)*, and a Scotch ballad, with a voice as fresh as that of a girl of eighteen, though her hair was also as "white as snow." She was one of the finest amateur singers I ever heard, and on this occasion she created a great sensation.

Tamburini, whose villa was the next property to that of my friend De Sussex. I intimated how much I should like to know him, how much I had heard about him, and my host replied by asking me if my father was not looking out for a house in the suburbs of Paris. I said that was so.

“Eh, bien !” continued De Sussex, “here is an excellent opportunity ; and you can make the acquaintance of Tamburini at the same time.”

“What do you mean ?” I inquired.

“Why, his villa is to let.”

“Is he, then, leaving Paris ?”

“Yes ; the doctors say he must not pass another winter here ; he must return to Italy.”

“If the villa is to be let, I should certainly like to see it.”

“Will you come now ? Finish your cigar, and I will take you.”

In a few minutes afterwards we were strolling through the front gates of Tamburini's villa.

Between the gates and the house there was a circular lawn of rather coarse grass, upon which a beautiful Alderney cow was quietly grazing. I stood for a few moments to admire it.

“It is an English cow from the Channel Islands,” said De Sussex ; “Signor Tamburini is ordered to take good milk, and the cow was presented to him by some of his friends and admirers.”

The lawn was surrounded by a shrubbery, with a

few large trees. Some pretty flower-beds graced the entrance, running along the base of the house, and sending up a climbing rose and a jasmine, which partly covered the walls and encircled the upper windows. There was a suite of small rooms on the ground floor, and another, very similar, above.

The front door was open, but nobody was visible inside. We rang and knocked; but, for a long time, nobody came. At last a kind of valet made his appearance, and inquired what our "pleasure" was; an English servant would have asked us what our "business" was.

"Signor Tamburini?"

"Il est parti depuis hier, Monsieur."

"He has, then, already left for Italy?"

"Yes, sir; he will be at Marseilles to-night, where he can sing the old song, you know—

'Quando la notte viene
Non ho riposo, O Nice,
Son misero e infelice
Essèr lontan da te!'

And to-morrow he will be at Nice."

"I have heard that the villa is to let."

"C'est vrai, Monsieur; here is the address of the agents in Paris. It is to be let furnished, just as it is. I follow Signor Tamburini in a few days, when the remainder of his things are packed. Then, to

see the villa, which will be closed, you will have to get an order from the agents ; but perhaps you would like to see it now."

We looked over some of the rooms, simply but neatly furnished, and the little garden at the back, looking over the river, returning soon afterwards to our friends.

So it happened that all I ever saw of the great Italian baritone was Tamburini's cow, and his valet (who had also a baritone voice). With regard to the villa, it was impossible to treat for it ; it was too small and too dear, besides which it was only to be let furnished.

Poor Tamburini never returned from Italy ; neither the rich milk of the Alderney cow nor the tepid breezes of the sunny south could save him from the consumption which deprived the artistic world of this amiable and talented musician.

We were told that when the cow happened to low late in the evening, or in early morning, while Signor Tamburini was enjoying a little sweet repose, he would awake suddenly, under the impression that it was the voice of Lablache, and that it was his time to join in the famous duet of the *Puritani*. But seeing no one near him, and being in that peculiar state which lies exactly half-way between being fast asleep and wide awake, he would refer the sound to some notes of the contra-basso in the orchestra, and wonder when the player would finish his

tuning. Then realising the true state of affairs, and centralising his thoughts on the beautiful cow which his friends had presented to him, he would ring and order his *café au lait*.

A very able contemporary of Tamburini says he was "a singer of great brilliancy and power; his voice was a fine baritone, well defined, round, rich, clear, and of wonderful flexibility. He was an accomplished actor, full of spirit and gaiety; he was handsome, his figure was manly, and his air noble and prepossessing."

He played the part of Don Giovanni in Mozart's opera of that name. He sang magnificently in *I Puritani* and other operas of Bellini, Donizetti, and Rossini; was an excellent Figaro in *Il Barbiere*, splendid in *La Gazza Ladra*, &c. In 1835 *I Puritani* was performed (in Paris) for the first time with Madame Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, and Lablache—said to be the finest quartette ever heard on any stage. In this opera the duet *Suona la tromba*, sung by Tamburini and Lablache, brought down thunders of applause. Rossini, who had a fair touch of jealousy in his composition, however much he may have befriended the young Bellini, wrote from Paris to a friend in Milan: "I need not describe the duet for the two basses; you must have heard it where you are!"

XXV

THE BOHEMIAN ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY

THE organisation of a good orchestra is an undertaking not devoid of difficulties, even when it is formed only of professional musicians of high standing. But with amateur musicians it is still more difficult, formed, as it then is, of men whose daily occupations often interfere with their musical labours.

In the latter case there are two classes of individuals to be dealt with : those whose livelihood depends upon work other than musical, and whose evenings are not always their own ; and those who are independent, men of fortune, whose time is wholly at their own disposal.

Of these, the former class is, perhaps, the most conducive to success ; for, being accustomed to methodical work, and having little time for music, one of their greatest pleasures consists in attending the meetings of the orchestra ; whilst men of independent means who can take up their instruments at any moment they please, are often found to have made other engagements when they should be at practices or rehearsals.

There can be no doubt that amateur orchestras, advantageous as they may be (under a good conductor) from an educational point of view, are to a great extent a "delusion and a snare" as regards the attainment of anything approaching to perfection. They are generally doomed to a short existence, unless the places vacated by those who depart to pursue their respective callings are constantly filled by other performers equally good. Now, that is practically impossible in any given locality, except large centres like the metropolis; but even in the case of the Bohemian Orchestral Society, which for four years held its own with the best orchestras in London, its existence was doomed to cease at the expiration of that time.

Nevertheless, it was a source of so much pleasure and profit, that in a work like the present a few lines devoted to it may, perhaps, be acceptable; and they will show what can be done by a woman of energy, whose powers of persuasion and method vanquished all difficulties.

The Bohemian Orchestral Society was founded by Mrs. T. L. Phipson, who organised the meetings and the concerts, and chose the first members—a mere handful of musicians—as a nucleus, which soon spread to considerable dimensions. The conductor was Mr. R. H. Gould, who was educated in Germany as a musician, and held for some time the position of Capel-meister at Boppard, on the

Rhine. He had a very extensive knowledge of modern, and even ancient music, was a good violinist, and a very capable conductor. Under his guidance during these four years, were grouped eight first violins, eight second violins, two altos, two violoncellos, one double-bass, two cornets, two clarionets, one flute, two hautbois, and a piano, as follows :—

Conductor : Mr. R. H. Gould.

First violins : T. L. Phipson (leader), G. C. Bower, C. Archer, W. Butler, W. F. Oliphant, S. Addington, G. A. Briant, and G. Ross.

Second violins : H. Silverlock (leader), D. Worger, P. Bryant, G. Adams, H. Dickens, J. Klopp, A. Nicholson, and H. Barnard.

Violas : E. Heron-Allen, J. Dacie.

Violoncellos : Walter Barnard, Rev. W. Tidmarsh.

Contra-basso : W. Riches, John Evans (occasionally Alfred Adams).

Clarionets : Herbert Adams, G. Wood. *Flute* : A. Adams.

Hautbois : W. Spencer, B. Watkin.

Piano : Mrs. T. L. Phipson.

Honorary members : Mrs. Bramwell Davis (contralto), Miss Winifred Smith (mezzo-soprano), Mrs. H. Rutter (soprano),¹ Miss Buckland (contralto), Miss Lusher (soprano), Ch. Haigh (baritone), Sidney Adams (basso), Walter Allen (tenor), John Williams (tenor), M. Hazard (comic reciter), Messrs. G. and H. Watts (reciters), Miss Osborn (piano),

¹ My sister, a friend of Ch. Gounod. It was she who induced him to write *The Redemption*; without her strenuous arguments he would never have given to the world that important work. I dedicated to her my little work on *Bellini*.

Miss Alice Edwards (piano), Mrs. Tidmarsh (piano), Miss Mary Taylor (member of the committee).

Some of the honorary members always took part in the concerts.

Door-keepers: Messrs. Pain and W. Pain. There were four other servants and a constable, always in attendance at the concerts.

The orchestra met for practice every Friday evening in my drawing-room (which was regularly cleared out for the occasion), punctually at eight o'clock, and at a quarter-past ten, coffee and refreshments were served in the dining-room. At eleven, every one was turned out.

The rules respecting practices, rehearsals, and concerts were printed, and strictly adhered to. The annual subscription of each member was £1, or 5s. payable quarterly in advance. The meetings took place every week for ten months of the year. If the annual subscription did not suffice to pay the conductor's salary and music, &c., the deficiency was easily made up from the proceeds of the concerts. As to the music, various members, and sometimes the conductor himself, presented now and then a new piece to the society.

This was no great burden, as orchestral music is purchased at very small cost.

The parts were loosely bound into *thin* volumes, so that the pages were *easy to turn*, and would, when open, *lie quite flat* upon the desks—a matter of more importance than most people would imagine. They

were under the charge of Mr. A. Adams (flute solo). The accounts were kept by W. Spencer (hautbois) and John Adams (member of the committee).

It was my endeavour never to allow any piece to be performed in public unless there had been *four full rehearsals*, and to take on to the concert platform only music of which every member knew his part thoroughly.

This was no easy task, as many of the younger members were often very desirous of performing compositions that were much beyond their powers ; and they fancied that if they managed to scramble through them at the practices, they might play them in public. However, by adhering strictly to this determination we were rewarded by success. Indeed one evening Mr J. G. Callcott said, alluding to the Bohemian Orchestral Society, "It is the smallest, but one of the best orchestras in London ;" and something similar was said by another no less eminent musician. That we managed, even on the coldest nights in winter, to rouse our audience to enthusiasm, may be realised when I note that at the New Town Hall, Wandsworth, and at the Assembly Rooms, Putney, three of our orchestral pieces were encored—the overture to *Il Flauto magico* (Mozart), *Le Moulinet* (Joseph Strauss), and *March in Tannhauser* (Wagner). I need scarcely add that it is very rarely indeed that an *orchestral* performance is re-demanded by the audience. I do not allude to

encores obtained by pieces for cornet or clarinet solo with orchestral accompaniment, which were frequently re-demanded.

With regard to our *répertoire*, it comprised a great number of compositions, about sixty in all, and it is really astonishing how much work we managed to get through in four years. Of these I give the names of some eight-and-twenty, which include most of those we took for our concerts, as the list may prove useful for other societies:—

- Overture, *Le Ménétrier de St. Waast*, A. Herman (with violin solo).
- Fantasia, *Loreley*, Nesvadra and Zoeller (very effective).
- Overture, *Cléopatra*, Blancheteau.
- Overture, *Crown Diamonds*, Auber.
- Overture, *Masaniello*, Auber.
- Overture, *Il Flauto magico*, Mozart (re-demanded at our third concert).
- Overture, *Calif de Bagdad*, Boieldieu.
- Symphony in G minor, Haydn (performed at our first concert).
- Gavotte, *Rosalind*, J. Barnard (easy and pretty).
- Gavotte in F, Reyloff.
- Overture, *Diadème*, A. Herman (easy and very effective).
- Overture, *Le Chevalier Bréton*, Herman (*idem*).
- Overture, *Zampa*, Hérold (extremely brilliant ; requires much practice).
- Minuet, Boccherini (an old favourite in many orchestras).
- Ave Maria*, Zoeller (cornet solo with orchestral accompaniment).
- Pas des Patineurs*, Glinka (very brilliant).
- Overture, *William Tell*, Rossini (difficult).
- Polka, *Les Folies*, Waldteufel (with cornet solo, highly effective).
- Valse, *La Manolo*, Waldteufel.
- Romance sans Paroles, *La Mélancholie*, Barret (for hautbois solo).

- Polka Mazurka, *My Love*, Métra (very pretty and effective).
Sérénade, Valse Espagnole, Métra.
Invitation à la Valse, Weber (Rivière's edition ; but there is an easier edition now published).
 Moulinet Polka, Joseph Strauss (encored at our concerts whenever played).
 March, *Tannhauser*, Wagner (encored at one of our concerts).
Les Sauterelles (The Grasshoppers), by G. and A. Delbrück (very successful).
Danse des Czechs, by Kottaun (Bohemian dance ; often performed).
Souvenir de Cadix, Boléro, by Bosisio (rather difficult).
 Overture, *Esméralda*, Alphonse Herman (easy and brilliant).
L'Italie, Valse, by Métra (very beautiful).

There were many other compositions, by Auber, Ad. Adam, Rossini, &c., but those above named, with the exception of the overtures to *William Tell* and *Masaniello* (which were being studied when the orchestra was broken up), were those we relied upon for our performances in public.

As the concert-rooms at our disposal were not extremely large, the rooms seating only from 300 to 500 people, and the tickets always cheap (half-a-crown and one shilling), we considered ourselves lucky when the proceeds of the concerts brought in £20 to £30, which they usually did. The lowest result was £19, 18s.

We gave the name of "Bohemian" to this society because all the members of it, with the exception of three or four, were, in many respects, thorough Bohemians, even the ladies.

Besides his salary, our conductor received a fee of two guineas for each concert.

These pleasant meetings had occasional drawbacks, to which it is necessary to allude. The conductor, residing at a considerable distance from the place of meeting, was sometimes late, and sometimes did not attend at all, in which case one of the first violins or the hautbois had to conduct, and the practice resolved itself into mere amusement.

Another difficulty consisted in preventing certain members of our orchestra giving their services to other orchestral societies and thereby neglecting our practices and rehearsals. The *esprit de corps* which should have held our members firmly together, considering the great success of our concerts, was sadly deficient. Times were when I imagined that there existed no little jealousy of the success of our leading violinist as a soloist; and there was a marked disinclination to take advantage of his long experience in matters of style or taste. For my part I was not sorry when I ceased to be hampered with these rough Bohemians. As president of the society my word was law; but I was dealing with a set of men who were, to a great extent, lawless, and to whom it was constantly necessary to deal out kindness and pity.

The final break-up was due to several causes: first, the illness of my dear father, and the consequent failure of my own, usually robust, health;

next, the withdrawal of some members, difficult to replace, who were going abroad, and the death of one of our able 'cellists, the Rev. W. Tidmarsh. Lastly, my wife had found that she could obtain more funds for the various charities in which she was (and still is) interested—the Hambro Orphanage, the Royal Ladies' Homes, and the Waifs and Strays—by other means less fatiguing than orchestral concerts.

I had also come to the conclusion that a really good orchestra, composed of amateurs, though it may shine brilliantly for a short time, cannot last long, and entails an immense amount of labour and anxiety to keep it in a thoroughly efficient condition.

Still, with all these drawbacks, such societies should be promoted and patronised, *provided they are conducted by first-rate musicians*. They facilitate study, conduce to correctness of reading and the acquirement of good style. In many respects an orchestra is superior to the string quartet, which is more suitable for chamber music. I had a good opportunity of judging of this one evening that I heard the same composition performed as a quartet after it had been played by the orchestra: the quartet, though perfectly performed, sounded very thin and poor indeed. The difference was striking.

After the Bohemian Orchestral Society ceased to exist I lost my father, and did not appear in public for many years.

At last, one night I was prevailed upon to play at the Kensington Town Hall. On this occasion a ludicrous thing occurred. A friend of mine related that he sat in the body of the hall, just behind two ladies, one of whom said to the other—

“Who is this Dr. Phipson? How is it we have never heard of him before?”

To which the other replied—

“I do not exactly know; but I believe his father was a celebrated violinist.”

My poor father! a landed proprietor and gentleman of fortune; one of the most intelligent, most benevolent, and respected of men! I had been absent from the concert-room for about five years, and now I was confused with my excellent and most worthy father!

It was more complimentary to me than to him.

XXVI

BIBLIOGRAPHIC GOSSIP

TO persons fond of music—and that means almost all the world—there can be few greater treats than the perusal of certain works devoted to those whose lives have been consecrated to that delightful art. Were I asked whether most interest attaches to the life of a great general or to that of a great composer, I should not hesitate to declare that I derive more pleasure (and probably as much profit) in reading the life of Rossini than that of Napoleon—the first is full of poetry and amusement; the second full of brutality and horrors.

The culture of music, which now pervades all classes of society more than it ever did, seems to be a measure of progress in civilisation. In order to “love one another,” we must sing and play to subdue the brutal instincts of our nature, which are ever ready to predominate.

The pleasure derived from certain works induces me to mention here those which I have found particularly interesting.

Many years ago I read two small volumes of Henry Phillips’ musical recollections, an amusing

book full of anecdotes, with a sketch of the career of this celebrated baritone. It is written in very bad English, and though a little vulgar at times, is truthful, amusing, and instructive. Among other curious things, he tells us how Madame Malibran wanted Balfe to transfer to her part the beautiful song *The Light of Other Days*. But Phillips pleaded hard to retain it, as it was the only song in the opera with which he was sure of making his effect, and he had studied it with great care. At last Malibran gave way, laughing, but keenly regretting the loss, and he made a great impression with it on the first night of its production.

That same night all the singers went to sup with Balfe at his rooms in Regent Street ; but Phillips arrived late, and when the servant opened the door a gust of wind extinguished the candle she held in her hand. As the staircase leading to the supper-room was narrow and awkward to mount, Phillips stumbled, and called out to some of the artists to open the door, that he might see where he was. When Malibran heard his voice she exclaimed, "Oh dear, just fancy, the light of other days coming up in the dark !"

He also tells a story of Lindley, the celebrated violoncellist, who was afflicted with nervous stammering, and had a great fondness for parrots, bargaining with a boy in the Strand who had one of these birds for sale. When, stammering and stutter-

ing, he asked the lad if the bird could speak, "Yes," he replied, "a good deal better than you can, or I would cut its head off!"

An admirable and important work is Sutherland Edwards' "Life of Rossini." The library of no musician should be without it. Some of the stories told of this wonderfully gifted composer since that work appeared are very curious. My friends in Paris vouch for the truth of the following:—

With great difficulty the Italian *maestro* was once induced to go and hear an opera by Richard Wagner. I think it was *Lohengrin*. Next day several persons rushed into his room to learn what he thought of it.

"Oh, my friends," said Rossini, "it is a lengthy work, of considerable importance, upon which it would be difficult to give an opinion after a first hearing only—but, as far as I am concerned, I shall not give it a second!"

Shortly after this, Wagner and some companions called upon him. Hearing them on the stairs, Rossini hastily placed the score of *Lohengrin* on the piano, and when the German composer entered, he said, pointing to it—

"You see, illustrious *maestro*, I am studying your work."

"But the score is upside down!" exclaimed the other, seeing how the book was placed.

"Yes," returned Rossini calmly; "the fact is, I have had it the right way up for some time, but could

make nothing of it ;” and then all present began to laugh, including Wagner himself.

The manner in which Auber got the poem or libretto of *Gustavus* is rather singular. Rossini had composed nothing since 1829, when his *Guillaume Tell*, written for the Paris Opera, was produced with such enormous success. Nothing interfered with this triumph until Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* came out ; and people say that Rossini was not a little annoyed at the effect it made upon the Parisian public. At the same time the poem of *Gustavus* was offered to him, but he refused it abruptly.

“No, thank you,” he said dryly, “I shall do nothing more for you French fellows ; I am going to Italy for two years ; I may, perhaps, return *when the Sabbath of the Jews is over.*”

This was an allusion to Meyerbeer, who was a man of Jewish extraction, and to the success of *Robert le Diable*.

The libretto of *Gustavus* was then offered to Auber, who accepted it.

One afternoon in Paris, after a hard day's work, I was enjoying a cup of coffee and a cigar at the Café du Divan ; an organ-grinder was murdering an air from *La Cenerentola* when Rossini and a friend happened to pass. He stepped off the Boulevard, went up to the man, seized the handle of the organ and turned it to the proper time the air should be played. Then slipping a five-franc piece into the

man's hand, he told him never to forget to play that air slowly, just as he had heard it.

A most charming singer in French Opera at Brussels in the fifties was Aujac, second tenor at the Théâtre de la Monnaie. I heard him in *Guillaume Tell*, *Fra Diavolo*, and several other operas. His voice was very sweet and round, and he was an excellent musician and actor. It was a very great treat to hear him sing the opening song (with chorus) in *Guillaume Tell*, the fisherman's song—

“ Accours dans ma nacelle
Timide jouvencelle,”

standing right at the back of the stage, and giving his whole voice to the swell on the A, which was about the highest chest note he could reach. He was a handsome man upon the stage, and a great favourite with the audience.

At the Italian Opera in the same city, and at the same time, we had Signor Luchesi, a most charming tenor, and in spite of his lameness a capital actor. After singing a little in London, he retired to his native place in Italy as a professor of singing, where, I regret to say, he died a few years ago. He sang exquisitely in *L'Elisire d'Amore* of Donizetti; but the *Anna Bolena* of the same composer did not suit him so well. He was most excellent as Almaviva in Rossini's *Il Barbiere*. In this character I preferred him to Mario, on account of the clear and distinct manner of his scales and

vocalisation. There was always something of the amateur in Mario's scales; they were generally taken somewhat nervously, and too rapidly to be sufficiently distinct. But I did not hear Mario until Verdi's *Il Trovatore* was brought out about 1856, and some people said his voice was not then what it used to be. However, he was certainly magnificent in that opera, with Madame Frezzolini (soprano) and Graziani (baritone), for both of whom it was written, and Madame Alboni as Azucena the gipsy. At a very short interval I heard both Mario and Luchesi in Rossini's *Il Barbiere*, so that I had a fair opportunity of comparing these two admirable tenors.

To return to our books. Another very interesting volume is Lumley's "Reminiscences of the Opera"; Mapleson also wrote a similar work, and every one should read Walter Maynard's (Willaert Beale) more recent volume, "The Light of Other Days." Miss Clayton's "Queens of Song," in two volumes, though not always quite accurate, is an extremely interesting and clever series of biographies.

Santley's memoirs, issued not long ago, give us a most instructive picture of the miseries of a modern English student of music in Italy; it is also a very entertaining book.

Of recent years we have had Kuhe's memoirs, the work of the late well-known Viennese pianist,

long resident at Brighton, and Arditi's reminiscences, containing excellent portraits of Adelina Patti, Bottesini, and himself. He tells us how he sold the now celebrated song *Il Bacio*, with two other small compositions, for a five-pound note!

Still more recently has appeared Sir Charles Hallé's "Life and Letters," an uncompleted diary, but a conscientious and truthful work, with excellent pictures of German musical life.

Two other great works which appeared long ago are Spohr's "Autobiography," especially interesting to violinists, and Victor Schoelcher's "Life of Handel," which he wrote in London, not being able to live in Paris under Napoleon III. on account of his ultra-republican politics.

The two volumes of the memoirs of Michael Kelly, now become extremely rare, give a very interesting account of the life and adventures of an Irish singer on the operatic stage in Italy at the beginning of this century.

I should also mention the "Life and Works of Cherubini," by Bellasis (London, 1874), as a very meritorious work, abounding with musical examples of his compositions, but rather pedantic. Nevertheless, it contains some amusing anecdotes, and shows Cherubini to have been almost as fond of botany as of music.

Another recent work is Sims Reeves' "Life and Recollections," which is well worth reading, and

highly instructive to all who desire to follow the great tenor's career.

I have nothing to say of Adelina Patti's memoirs, a small volume by one of her lady friends, except that I read it with much interest, but it is very incomplete as a biography.

A new book by the veteran Lavignac, of the Paris Conservatoire, entitled *La Musique et les Musiciens*, appeared in 1896. Though too ambitious, it is a capital book, very instructive and interesting, but not in the least amusing. I can heartily recommend it to all who are making musical composition their profession. The articles on modulation and counterpoint are particularly good.

It may be that few of my readers ever heard of a remarkable experiment once made by Méhul, the great French composer, and friend of Glück. Having taken for his opera of *Uthal* the story of an ancient Scottish bard, he thought that in order to preserve what is termed the "local colour" he would suppress the violins in the orchestra, and give all the accompaniments to the altos and 'cellos. In this way he imagined that he would obtain the necessary sad and melancholy character which his work required. This innovation was a complete failure; it produced a heaviness and monotony which fatigued the whole audience.

As the distinguished Flemish composer, Grétry,

left the theatre on the night of this performance, he said to a friend, "It is, no doubt, very fine, but I would have given a gold piece to have heard a few squeaks on a violin."

There are times, however, when one may get too much, even of the violin; so I will conclude this little work by an anecdote which is told of an eccentric French artist who, like some of our contemporaries, was fond of introducing long cadenzas into the concluding bars of his piece. On one occasion, when the room was hot and small, and his last turn came near the end of a very lengthy programme, he quite lost himself in a long cadenza, introducing fragments of all the melodies played or sung during the evening.

It was, certainly, very clever; but whilst he was wrapped up in his performance, and the external world non-existent for him, the audience withdrew to the last man, and when he had concluded with a few final chords, he found himself in presence of the door-keeper with a key in his hand.

"I am sorry to interrupt Monsieur in his practice," said the latter, showing him the key of the room; "but when Monsieur has quite finished, perhaps he will be kind enough to lock the door."

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