Musical Doctors

Author(s): Henry C. Lunn

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 21, No. 452 (Oct. 1, 1880), pp. 495-496

Published by: Musical Times Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3356392>

Accessed: 20-04-2016 08:01 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*

of ladies. The Duke welcomed me with a few friendly words and introduced me to the gentlemen around him. . . . When the concert was to commence the steward of the household sent a servant to summon the artistes in the order in which their names appeared on the programme. They hereupon entered, with their music or instrument in hand, saluted the company with a profound bow, and began their performances." Of course, the conversation of the company went on as usual, and this annoyed Spohr greatly. "I was exceedingly annoyed by this derogation of art, and still more so with the artists who submitted to be so treated, and I had a great mind not to play at all. When my turn came, therefore, I purposely hesitated so long that the Duke, probably at a sign made by his wife, invited me himself to play. I then requested one of the servants to bring up my violin-case, and I began to play the piece I proposed to myself, without making the customary bows to the company. . . . When I had concluded, the ducal pair and their guests applauded. Now I first expressed my thanks by making a bow. . . . If our having constituted ourselves part of the company had furnished matter for surprise, this was increased when they saw that we stopped to supper, and, during the repast, were treated with great attention by our hosts." Surely all this must have been as a bomb-shell dropped into the palace. Many a "fine old English gentleman," depend upon it, went home in a mood to pinch himself lest he should be dreaming, and to protest, over a bottle of port, that, with "fiddler fellows" at the royal table, the framework of society was dropping to pieces.

On June 18, 1820, Spohr gave a benefit concert at the Argyll Rooms, the success of which was marred only by a shower of stones through the unilluminated windows of the ante-room, King Mob being then rampant concerning the entry into London of Queen Caroline, to stand her trial at the bar of the House of Lords. Directly afterwards the master prepared to go, and it is characteristic of him that his last day was spent as guest at the suburban home of Johanning, who had been servant to Salamon (Haydn's Salamon), and therefore felt a fatherly interest in all musicians. Spohr's description of this visit is much too charming to be passed over, and it throws no little light upon his simple and amiable nature: "On the appointed day he (Johanning) made his appearance dressed as I had never seen him—in a full-dress suit of his deceased master's, with hair powdered, and in white silk stockings. At our door stood a hackney-carriage for four persons, and in which a musician whom he had also invited . . . was already seated. When we had got in, Johanning refused to take the fourth seat, saying that it would be unbecoming of him to do so, although I pointed out to him that he was no longer my servant but my host. He was not to be persuaded, and took his usual place by the coachman's side. On the way our companion related to us many particulars highly creditable to Johanning—how he had shown the most ardent fidelity and attachment to Salamon, and, after his death, had applied the greater part of the money left him to the erection of a memorial to his master in Westminster Abbey, so that we felt penetrated with the highest respect for our recent servant. Upon our arrival he opened the carriage-door and led us into his house—a small house with a small garden, everywhere neat and clean. He led the way up one flight of stairs to his reception room, and did not fail to show us immediately the bell-pull near the mantelpiece, to which he forthwith gave a tug, although he kept no servant whom he could summon with it, since he and his wife were their own servants. We then took a turn

in the little garden and entered the parlour, where the table was laid for three persons. Johanning again refused to take a seat near us at table, this time for the cogent reason that we should have no one to wait on us. Upon this he brought up the dinner, and as master of the house waited on his guests, during which occupation his face beamed with pleasure. The dinner was exceedingly well-dressed, and served on an elegant china service which had belonged to his late master. The excellent Rhenish wine placed before us was, no doubt, from the same source. The dessert—strawberries and cherries—was the produce of his little garden, and this he did not fail to announce to his guests. When dinner was over, he led the way again to the parlour, where we found Mrs. Johanning—who, till then, had been engaged in the kitchen—in full Sunday attire. There at length, though only after repeated pressing, the worthy old couple allowed themselves to be persuaded to sit at the table, on which coffee had already been placed. . . . Towards evening the coach drove up to the door, but Johanning could not be deterred from resuming his place by the side of the coachman to accompany us home and open the carriage-door." The whole of this scene is worthy the author of "Sir Roger de Coverley" or "The Vicar of Wakefield." It is a beautiful picture of old-world manners, free from servility on the one side and offensive condescension on the other. Moreover, the story is told with a simple appreciation that makes it quite a literary success. Under such pleasant circumstances we may leave the narrator for a time.

(To be continued.)

MUSICAL DOCTORS.

BY HENRY C. LUNN.

LEST the heading of our article should lead readers to expect that we intend again to embark in a controversy respecting musical degrees, we may at once say that this subject has nothing whatever to do with our present remarks. The right of certain persons to assume a title either in art or science is well worthy of minute investigation; but, having originally mooted the question in these pages and elicited many truths which might never have been revealed, we are content, at present at least, to let the matter rest. Our interest is now awakened for Musical Doctors, and not for Doctors of Music. The many eminent medical men who are devoting so large a portion of their time to the physiology of the vocal and aural organs, and the causes of those innumerable defects of voice and ear which bar the progress of students, are conferring an inestimable benefit upon the art; and when their invaluable exertions in the cause shall have become more generally known and appreciated, there will be but few musical institutions where their services will not be called into requisition, and few vocal teachers who will not be urged into a more scientific study of the subject than has, until lately, been thought necessary. We are, of course, quite aware of the difficulty which will be at first experienced in convincing people that doctors have anything whatever to do with laying down rules for singers; but it can scarcely be believed that doubt on the matter can exist in the minds of those who have listened to some of the excellent lectures recently delivered by those medical practitioners who have given their special attention to the matter. In the reviewing department of our journal we should be glad indeed if we could do full justice to the many able treatises addressed to vocal teachers and students; but, being compelled to employ our critical faculties so fully upon works to be sung rather than upon the method of singing them, we take the present

opportunity of candidly owning how fast such books accumulate upon our table, and how sincerely we regret our inability to notice them as they deserve. It appears to us in the present day to be a matter of the utmost importance that the Musical Doctor shall be considered not a rival, but a friend of the Musical Teacher; and that in many cases a patient of the former can, with advantage to his or her constitution, become a pupil of the latter. "If I could have my will," said a well-known doctor, "I would place the majority of those who seek my advice for weakness of voice and chest under a good singing-master." Here indeed is a truth which cannot be too earnestly enforced. Everybody who can speak can sing; and that all should be taught at least to take a part in choral music has ever been the opinion of those who do not believe that singing is merely a showy accomplishment only to be acquired by persons whose natural beauty of voice will be certain to ensure them success in society.

The ignorance of the majority of students upon their natural defects is too well known to those engaged in tuition; and the instance of the man who, as well as he could in the intervals of stammering, recommended a fellow-sufferer to place himself under a certain doctor because he had "cured him," is scarcely too strange to be true. Most singing-masters know that before they can teach their pupils to sing they have to teach them to speak, and it is a very rare thing indeed to make aspiring vocalists believe that the proper condition of the voice depends very materially upon the general health. Here then—if he can only make himself heard—the medical man steps in; and Mr. Gordon Holmes, one of the most eminent of those who have written upon the subject, tells us "the hygiene of the voice, in its fullest sense, is the hygiene of the whole animal economy; and the spirit of the well-known proverb, which sets forth how closely is interwoven the integrity of mind and of body, might with equal propriety be applied to the voice in the form of *vox sana in corpore sano*." The same authority has also the following remarks, which for operatic vocalists are of such importance that we cannot resist quoting them: "To the singer nasal breathing is of the utmost moment, in order to maintain the sanity of the throat and the purity of the voice. The exigencies of vocal melody, however, scarcely allow of any exception to the rule that inspiration must always be performed rapidly through the mouth. Nevertheless, this disadvantage of the singer, as contrasted with the orator, is counterbalanced by the fact that, whereas a speech or lecture may entail incessant use of the voice for a couple of hours or more, a song rarely lasts more than a few minutes, and even the most arduous rôle in an opera is composed of detached songs, between which there are usually ample intervals of rest. In such intervals the mucous membrane of the throat has an opportunity to return to its natural state, if it has become in any degree irritable or dry during singing. The vocalist should remember this fact, so that when off the scene or platform he may not engage too much in conversation, especially if he has any throat sensations which indicate irritation of the part."

It will at once be seen, we hope, that our sole desire in drawing attention to this subject is that the medical practitioner who gives to the world his scientific investigations upon the vocal and aural organs shall be placed in his true position before masters and pupils. His object is, and should be, not to teach, but to show the vocal professor the physiological basis upon which his practical results should be founded; and although singers will, of course, be especially benefited by those strictly

medical works and lectures upon the art now becoming so general, there can be no doubt that, by the help of intellectual doctors, we may also acquire much useful knowledge on the best plan of working in other branches of music. A celebrated master, whose pupil assured him that he practised six hours a day, told him to alter his plan by practising only three hours and thinking the other three. This might have been said by a medical man; for it is an incontrovertible fact that by over-exertion of the fingers and under-exertion of the mind, the health of the pupil may become so deteriorated that his study will produce a result by no means commensurate with his well-meant efforts. It is too much the custom to imagine that there should be no such thing as temperance in music; but doctors will tell you that everything tending to strengthen will weaken when carried to excess, and we can see no reason why the practice either of the fingers or the voice should be an exception to this law. Schumann, in his impatience to advance in the *technique* of the pianoforte, disabled his right hand so that he was unable to play at all. "We did indeed err," he says, in a letter to his friend Töpken, "when we thought we could accomplish by capricious mechanism what the peace and leisure of later years would spontaneously bring;" but had Schumann taken some friendly medical counsel before fastening his third finger in a machine and practising only with the others, which most of his friends presumed was the method he employed, he would no doubt have been successfully dissuaded from making the experiment.

The exhausting effect upon young girls of many of our public musical examinations, too, will we trust shortly engage the attention of the medical profession. Within our own knowledge we have several instances of the bad result of so many months of hard study as seem necessary to go through an ordeal only suited for the more vigorous brains of male students. Of course for those who are training for the profession in large institutions an accurate knowledge of the branch of music they are to teach is absolutely essential; but we speak especially of those amateurs who injure their health to pass an examination merely because they see so many of their friends do the same. Doctors of Music may be called in to judge them at their solemn and much dreaded trial; but it would be well, we think, if Musical Doctors were previously called in to judge of their power to endure it.

SHAKESPEARE'S malediction against the person who would seek to disturb his remains must not be taken too literally, for it seems the fate of men of genius that after death they should metaphorically be galvanised into life and action, and become heroes of fictitious adventures for the entertainment of the reading public. Shakespeare himself has not escaped this penalty; and we could cite the names of many great men whose fame has been made the presumed passport to the acceptance of a tale of which, were any ordinary mortal the principal personage, but small notice would be taken. It might have been thought that out of the uneventful life of Beethoven matter could scarcely have been found to form the groundwork of such literature as we have mentioned; but not to dwell upon the many stories in which the maestro is dragged in to awaken an interest which the narratives themselves would be otherwise powerless to do, we have a book called "Furioso," where the young composer is described as conducting a thunderstorm, and afterwards made to say and do things scarcely in accordance with our estimate of his character. But the culminating point has, we hope, been reached by the publication of "Beethoven: a dramatised