Æolian Music (Concluded)

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"Tancredi" would be pronounced very old-fashioned now, if it were revived, and many a shaft of ridicule would fly at it. Yet the opera, in 1813, and in Italy, was a distinct advance upon anything previously known, and may have excited misgivings among the obstinately nonprogressive. Here, in fact, Rossini started upon his career as a reformer of the Italian lyric stage—a character not generally discerned in him, but which was his nevertheless, as we shall soon have occasion to find. If it be asked what particular reform the master effected in "Tancredi," the answer is not difficult. He applied to recitative in *opera seria* the mode of treatment it had long enjoyed in *opera buffa*, and once for all abolished the dreary tirades which made serious opera a desert of talk, dotted with here and there an oasis of song. Rossini saw no reason why recitative should be musically uninteresting, and therefore caused his artists to declaim to the accompaniment of orchestral melody. The whole opera thus became tuneful. There was no more sandy waste, but grass and flowers from beginning to end. We talk of Gluck as a reformer of the lyric stage, and so he was; but honour also to Rossini, whose recitative marked the beginning of a change in Italian opera which has received, let us hope, its full development in Verdi's "Aida." *A propos* to "Tancredi," some facts may here be stated on the best and most recent authority. "Di tanti palpiti" is often called the "rice air," because of a tradition that Rossini composed it in the few minutes required to boil his rice. We are assured that the whole story is purely and simply an invention. "The celebrated air of 'Tancredi' was written, like all the others, very rapidly, but without rice of any kind." It is sometimes said, too, that the theme was borrowed from a litany of the Greek Church. As to this, Azevedo remarks: "They have made of it, since its appearance at the theatre and in the world, a *cantique* for the Catholic church, as they do of all popular airs. But litany before or cantique after, this is not at all the same thing, as one readily understands."

After the brilliant success of "Tancredi," the composer rested awhile; writing nothing during the early part of 1814. When tired of idleness he produced "L'Italiana in Algeri" for the San Benedetto Theatre of Venice; in this work laying his reforming hand upon *opera buffa* as he had previously done upon *opera seria*. Here he refined the style, and replaced by elegance and sweetness a good deal of the vulgarity thought to be essential by his predecessors and contemporaries. For "L'Italiana," the master received £28, but he demanded and obtained £32 for its successor "L'Aureliano in Palmira." It was a rising market to which he brought his wares, and £32 seemed no doubt, a considerable sum. But we have changed all that. A popular song-composer would, nowadays, demand more for a ballad, and deserves to have it, when he can get it. Still if one were offered the choice of being Rossini in 1813, or a popular song-composer in 1882, the decision would hardly, we think, be difficult. After "L'Aureliano" came "Il Turco in Italia," produced at the Milan Scala with a somewhat doubtful result. This is attributed by certain biographers to Milanese jealousy of Venetian opinion. Amateurs on the Adriatic had acclaimed "L'Italiana," and therefore it would never do for the Lombardians to echo their cry *in re* "Il Turco." They must show themselves superior and independent; they must criticise and find fault; they must play the rôle of high and haughty; all which they did with a spirit worthy of a better cause. But if they thought to daunt Rossini, they were much mistaken. He knew exactly the true significance of their attitude, and thought it, to

him, of no significance at all. His next opera, "Sigismonde" was a dead failure, and deserved its fate. Then the master became really angry—with himself.

(To be continued.)

ÆOLIAN MUSIC

By CARL ENGEL.

(Concluded from page 436.)

OUR ÆOLIAN HARP.

SOME of the old traditions indicating a remote antiquity of the Æolian harp are very suggestive. For instance, if a certain record respecting a kind of Æolian harp of the Singhalese is authentic, the instrument must have been known in Ceylon at a time anterior to our Christian era; and, if it was known in Ceylon, there can hardly be a doubt that it was known also in Hindustan. Considering the ancient traditions, it appears highly probable that the Egyptians, Greeks, and other nations of antiquity constructed some kind of Æolian harp; and the conjecture is supported by the fact of similar contrivances being found at the present day among nations whose stage of progress in the art of music is far below that to which those ancient nations had attained. In proof of this assertion the reader may be referred to the Æolian bamboos of the natives of Malacca, and to the Æolian kites of the Stiëns in Siam, and to those of the Chinese.

Almost all our musical instruments appear to have originated in Asia. Indeed, with many of them it is not difficult to trace their Eastern origin, and to discover their prototypes in Asia. Nevertheless, it would be hazardous to conclude from such circumstantial evidence that our Æolian harp is of Eastern origin. At any rate, the Indians in Demerara, South America, construct an instrument of this kind. A specimen which was brought to London consists of a cane about five feet in length, and of a very light weight, the surface of which has been cut on one side into four strips, which, towards one end of the cane, are raised by four little bridges, on which they loosely rest. If properly exposed to the wind, these strips will vibrate so as to emit higher or lower tones, according to the force. Similar contrivances are probably known to other extra-European nations without their having been hitherto observed by European travellers.

Our common Æolian harp is made of various shapes and dimensions. The following construction, which is very simple, is most usually adopted, and answers the purpose better than most others. It consists of an oblong square case, about four feet in length, eight inches broad, and six inches deep, made of pine wood about a quarter of an inch in thickness. The upper side contains the soundboard, and the opposite side is either covered or is left open. Towards each end of the soundboard is glued a bridge, about half-an-inch high, upon which the strings rest. The strings are fastened behind one of the bridges by being looped on metal pins, and behind the other bridge by being wound round screws. The strings are of catgut, and are all of equal thickness, which is nearly the same as that of the A string on the violin. They are tuned in unison, and must be screwed but slightly, so that they are rather slack, but sufficiently stretched to produce a distinct tone. In order to elicit the sound, the Æolian harp is placed in a window partly open, so that the air can sweep over its strings. To obtain a sufficient draught, it is generally necessary to open a door or another window, opposite to tha

in which the instrument is placed. To direct more exactly the passage of the air against the strings, a thin board may be affixed about three inches above the soundboard. The instrument is generally fastened to the window with a string to prevent its being thrown down by the stream of air. It requires some little experience to ascertain its most favourable position for ensuring the greatest variety in the combinations of sound. According to the swell of the air, the tones—running through the harmonics of the fundamental tone, in a compass occasionally extending to six octaves—will increase and decrease in loudness and in rapidity of succession, with a variety of effects astonishing and charming. As the harmonics become distinctly audible, chords are produced as musically as acoustically interesting. Whenever the power of the current of air abates, the wonderful music subsides into a murmuring unison of all the strings from which it arose.

Heinrich Koch, the author of some well-known works on the theory of music, ascertained that the effect of the Æolian harp was greatly enhanced by the substitution of a few strings covered with wire for the usual ones. The covered strings he tuned an octave lower than the others, which were in unison. The result thereby obtained he compares to that produced by the employment of the pedal in an organ. The covered strings he placed in front, so that they were most exposed to the wind. He likewise succeeded in obtaining new and fine effects by the introduction of some very thin strings tuned an octave above those commonly adopted.

The invention of the Æolian harp is by some writers attributed to Athanasius Kircher, a monk who lived in Rome during the seventeenth century, and who was much interested in making acoustic experiments. Athanasius Kircher is well-known to musicians as the author of "*Musurgia Universalis*," which appeared in Rome in the year 1650. He contrived, no doubt, an improved Æolian harp, as some others have done, who might with the same right claim to be considered as its inventors. Most probably it was known in Asia long before the Christian era. Some old traditions indicate a high antiquity of the instrument. Sir William Jones ("*On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India*"; "*Asiatic Researches*," vol. i.; Calcutta, 1788) mentions that, in the poem entitled "*Magha*," the invention of the *vina*, a stringed instrument of the Hindus, is thus alluded to: "*Nareda sat watching, from time to time, his large vina, which by the impulse of the breeze yielded tones that pierced successively the regions of the ear, and proceeded by musical intervals.*" The god Nareda was the inventor of the *vina*, the principal national instrument of Hindustan.

Again, according to Rabbinic tradition, King David's harp sounded at midnight, its strings being vibrated by the north wind; and he was in the habit of suspending his harp, during the night, over his couch. This so-called harp, the Hebrew *kinnor*, was probably a species of lyre, small and easily portable. Incredible as it may appear that King David should have had a current of air over his couch strong enough to cause his *kinnor* to sound, the tradition is nevertheless noteworthy, inasmuch as it indicates an early acquaintance in the East with the phenomenon exhibited by the Æolian harps. As this remark has already been made in the "*Descriptive Catalogue of the Musical Instruments in the South Kensington Museum*," it would have been omitted here, were it not of some importance in evidence of the opinion previously advanced.

Furthermore, Sir James Emerson Tennent ("*Ceylon: an Account of the Island, Physical and Topographical*"; London, 1859) cites a passage from the *Mahavanso*, a sacred and historical book of the Singha-

lese, which is as follows: "The King Prakrama built a palace at the city of Pollanarrua, and the stone-works were carved in the shape of flowers and creeping plants, with golden networks which gave harmonious [euphonious?] sounds, as if they were moved by the wind."

These records will suffice to convince the reader that, at any rate, the phenomenon which originally suggested the construction of our Æolian harp was not unknown to the nations of antiquity.

Howbeit, in the seventeenth century the instrument seems to have almost fallen into oblivion on the Continent, since Athanasius Kircher speaks of it as a new invention in his "*Neue Hall-und Ton-Kunst*" (Nördlingen, 1684), a work containing explanations of various acoustic experiments elucidated by a number of curious engravings. His Æolian harp consisted of a square box mounted with fifteen thin catgut strings.

According to some English writers, Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, about the middle of the tenth century, invented the Æolian harp. At all events, he constructed a stringed instrument which he hung against a crevice in the wall, to cause the wind passing the crevice to vibrate the strings. The soft and gentle sounds thus emitted by an instrument untouched by human hand so greatly astonished and awed the ignorant people that they accused Dunstan of sorcery. If this tradition may be relied upon, the Æolian harp must have been unknown in England before the tenth century; or, if it had been previously known, it must have fallen into oblivion, just as was the case in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Alexander Pope, the famous poet, brought it anew before the English nation.

While translating Homer, he occasionally consulted the Commentary upon the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* written by Eustathius, in the twelfth century. In this work he happened to come upon a passage in which Eustathius remarks that the wind sweeping over extended strings produces harmonious sounds; which suggested to Pope to make the experiment. He communicated his intention to Mr. Oswald, a professional musician, who consequently endeavoured to cause an old lute to sound by exposing its slackened strings to the wind. The experiment proved, however, entirely unsuccessful, and Oswald was disposed to regard the statement of Eustathius as a myth, until an incident of which he became cognisant put him on the right track. Having learnt by chance that a poor harper, who obtained his living by playing on one of the pleasure boats on the Thames, had observed one stormy day that the wind blowing over the water caused the strings of his harp to sound, Oswald took a hint therefrom, and tried to secure a strong current of air for his lute strings by placing the instrument in an open sash-window. The attempt was successful, and may be regarded as the reinvention of the Æolian harp in England. This happened about the year 1720.

Among the ancient Irish, on the decease of a hero, the harps of his bards emitted, according to popular belief, mournful sounds. J. C. Walker ("*Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*"; London, 1786, p. 100), in alluding to this tradition, remarks: "This is very probable, for the bards, while sorrowing for their patron, usually suspended to trees their neglected harps, from whose loosened strings the passing gales might brush soft plaintive tones. Here we have the origin of the *Benshi*, an invisible being, which is alleged to be still heard in Ireland and in the Highlands of Scotland, crying most piteously on the death of the descendant of an ancient house." The custom of the Celtic bards of suspending their harps on the trees on occasions of mourning appears also to have

been an ancient custom in the East, as may be inferred from Psalm cxxxvi.: "By the river of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." If the Irish harp suspended emitted sounds, the same was probably the case with the *kinnor* of the Jews alluded to in the Psalms.

THE RIESENHARFE.

In the year 1787, Captain Haas, in Basle, Switzerland, set up in his garden a gigantic Æolian harp, which suggested itself to him by accident. He was in the habit of shooting with a crossbow at a target which stood in his garden. During rainy weather he not unfrequently amused himself with shooting from his room through an open window which faced the target. To avoid the inconvenience of going to fetch back the discharged arrow, he fixed an iron wire to it, by means of which he could withdraw it at will. Perceiving that when the arrow stuck in the target the wire emitted a distinct sound, he conceived the idea of stretching in his garden fifteen wire strings, from one to two lines in diameter, and three hundred and twenty feet in length, which he placed at a distance of two inches from each other. Their tension was effected by a curious apparatus made on purpose by a friend of the captain. The strings were placed from north to south, and inclined from twenty to thirty degrees. At every change of weather they emitted a variety of sounds, which are described as resembling sometimes the sound of a glass harmonica; sometimes that of water when in a state of ebullition; sometimes that of distant chimes, and, again, sometimes that of an organ. The effect was supposed to be owing to electro-magnetic action. On account of the character of the sound being altered by a change of the weather, the apparatus became known by the name of *Wetterharfe* ("weather-harp"), as well as by that of *Riesenhharfe* ("giant-harp"). Some remarks on the acoustic hints derived from it, by the eminent Professor G. C. Lichtenberg, are published in "Göttinger Taschenkalender," anno 1789.

A somewhat similar contrivance is the *armonica meteorologica*, which the Abbate Gattoni in Milan constructed in the year 1785—two years before Captain Haas made his *Riesenhharfe* or *Wetterharfe*. The *armonica meteorologica* is also known by the names of *meteorological harp* and *harpe gigantesque*. The ordinary Æolian harp suggested to Abbate Gattoni to expand fifteen wire strings, differing in thickness, from the top of a tower ninety feet high to his dwelling house about two hundred and seventy feet distant. He tuned them, however, not in unison, or in octaves, as those of the Æolian harp are generally tuned; but he adopted a regular diatonic order of intervals. Having ascertained that, owing to atmospheric vicissitudes and other uncontrollable causes, his contrivance proved musically rather unsatisfactory, Gattoni used it only for meteorologic observations, since it predicted by its various sounds the different changes of the atmosphere. Through the invention of the telegraph the phenomenon exhibited by the *meteorological harp* has become more generally known; at any rate, the sounds of the telegraph wires must be familiar to many persons who are unacquainted with those previous experiments.

INVENTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Although the Æolian harp is not used in our performances of musical compositions, it nevertheless deserves the attention of practical musicians, not only on account of its fascinating sound, but also

because its peculiarities have suggested the invention of certain curious musical instruments. The most noteworthy of these contrivances is by Johann Jacob Schnell, a native of Wirtemberg in Germany, living in Paris in the year 1789. He called it *anemo-corde*. It has a keyboard like the pianoforte. Its strings are of wire, those of the highest three octaves being covered with silk. Each tone has three strings tuned in unison. The compass of the instrument embraces five octaves. The dimensions of the case are: length, seven feet; depth, five feet six inches; height of the stand on which it rests, two feet. The strings are vibrated by a current of air produced by means of two pairs of bellows. The mechanism for conveying the wind to the strings is rather complicated, and remained a secret with the inventor. The brass tubes of the mechanism alone weigh three hundred pounds. By means of two pedals, *crescendo* and *decrescendo* can be produced. The quality of sound obtained is described as being remarkably fine, impressive, and especially suited for compositions in a slow movement, and for *legato* passages. The *anemo-corde* (also called *animo-corde* and *anemo-chord*) created a sensation in Paris. Queen Marie-Antoinette, if history may be trusted, so greatly admired the instrument that she offered J. J. Schnell 150,000 livres for it, which he declined. He sold it, however, in the year 1803, for a large sum to an Englishman, Mr. Robertson, who took it to London, where perhaps remains of it may still be extant. The *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, vol. i., p. 39 (Leipzig, 1798), contains a description of the *anemo-corde*, with an illustration, and with some biographical notices of its inventor. It is stated that he employed eight assistants during four years to complete the instrument.

The *piano-æolien*, manufactured by Henri Herz in Paris about the middle of the present century, is not a new invention, though, no doubt, an improvement upon the *anemo-corde* made by J. J. Schnell. It exhibits one of the means which in the present century have occasionally been resorted to for prolonging the sound of stringed instruments provided with a keyboard. The sound of the *piano-æolien* is sustained by the application of a current of air to the strings.

The "Pianoforte with Æolian Attachment," invented by Obed Mitchell Coleman, and patented by him in London in the year 1844, contains reeds acted upon by wind. The reeds are placed at the bottom of the case of a pianoforte. The action of the pianoforte can be withdrawn and replaced at pleasure. This is not the place to notice the numerous Æolian instruments with vibrating reeds, a description of which would require much space, and appears unnecessary, considering that every musician is familiar with some members of the large harmonium family.

Another so-called invention, which is noteworthy in the present survey, is the *Æolian Monochord*, patented by F. J. Julyan in London in the year 1854. This instrument is described as follows: "After making a variety of experiments relating to the effect of wind upon musical strings, Mr. F. J. Julyan discovered a very simple and practicable means of causing strings and wires in a state of tension to vibrate without the agency of either percussion or friction—in fact, without touching them. The motive-power employed is a small current of air, either from the human mouth or from a wind-chest, being made to impinge upon the string and into a narrow slit or groove immediately under it, the groove being quite parallel to the string and extending one-tenth along the length of it, leaving nine-tenths of the string available for fingering or attaching to it a sound-board, the rapid alternate rarefaction and condensation of the air at the slit or mouthpiece performing a part

equivalent to the bow of a violin, and sustaining the sound as long as the wind continues to act upon it. We have seen it applied to a soundboard and organ-pipes; and we have seen and heard an *Æolian Monochord* which has one bass string fifteen inches long, one end of which is fixed over a mouthpiece one and a half inches long, in the manner described above. It is held in the same position as a flute, and is blown with the breath. Three chromatic octaves can be produced on this very simple instrument. The tones are of a peculiar kind, and of excellent quality." See also the description given in "Patents for Inventions: Abridgments of Specifications relating to Music and Musical Instruments; A.D. 1694-1861. Printed by order of the Commissioners of Patents" (London, 1864), p. 205.

This contrivance may be regarded as an offspring of the *Æolian* harp. Would it not be possible to construct a really useful stringed instrument blown through a mouth-tube? If such a combination of a stringed and wind instrument contained the diatonic and chromatic intervals, and permitted the production of chords, we might have compositions written for it with special regard to the characteristics exhibited by the *Æolian* harp.

Attention must now be drawn to a discovery which is likely to lead to the invention of an instrument of great importance in the musical performances of future generations. In the beginning of the year 1875 Mr. Baillie-Hamilton communicated to the Musical Association in London his experiments on the application of wind on stringed instruments, in which he advocated the expedient of using the tongue of a so-called free reed in connection with a string. By way of introduction to his explanations, he remarked: "There seems to have been a feeling in all times that the combination of wind and string in music would afford some strangely beautiful result. The very words themselves suggest many pleasing ideas, and these are to a great measure embodied in the string of the *Æolian* harp. There we have a string excited by a natural draught of air, which is sufficient to stir it without restraining those vibrations which afford the sweet but fitful series of *Æolian* sounds. But all efforts that have been made to secure and confine these sounds have destroyed their sweetness with the very means that destroyed their freedom; and so this string became almost the symbol of what is most beautiful and most uncontrollable."

The previous efforts alluded to aimed chiefly at concentrating an artificial draught of air upon the whole or part of a string. Generally the string so exposed was flattened to increase the "bite" of the wind, and the flattened portion was set over a corresponding slit. In connecting the tongue of a "free reed" with a string, the former does not necessarily interfere with the vibration of the latter, and the string thus moved can be controlled by "stopping," as in a violin.

It would require too much space here to notice the further development which this interesting discovery has experienced since the time when the above communication was made. The details are hardly requisite for a short survey. On the other hand, some description must be given at least of one playable instrument which in its construction and its quality of tone reminds us of *Æolian* music, occasioned by the wind blowing sideways against a crevice in a rock, or against a hole in a tree.

In the year 1816, Wilhelm Engel, in Berlin (not a relation of the present writer), constructed a musical instrument which he called *Flaschenorgel*, and which contained as many empty glass bottles as are requisite for the production of a chromatic succession of tones

extending through five and a-half octaves. Two pairs of bellows, situated at the right side of the instrument, were worked by means of a pedal, which produced a current of air through a tube over the mouths of the bottles. The *Flaschenorgel* had the shape of a pianoforte, and was provided with a keyboard. Its sound is said to have been pure, agreeable, and flute-like. Rapid passages—nay, even shakes and other embellishments—could be executed on the instrument with great precision and distinctness. Its compass was:—

Perhaps it may be conjectured that the manner in which the Pandean pipe and the German flute are blown suggested the invention of the *Flaschenorgel*. However, it admits of no doubt that also those instruments exhibit a principle traceable in the *Æolian* music of nature, which existed before the ingenuity of man contrived the instruments. An *Æolian* tube similar to the *bulu-pârindu* of the Malaysians is unknown in European countries. The howling and screaming of the wind through the crevices of a dilapidated building, or through a loosely shut window and ill-fitting door, represents its effects in the most primitive state, and the remembrance of discomfort with which such concerts are often associated sufficiently accounts for there being no instance on record of attempts to develop them artistically. Still, there are occasionally pure and musically effective sounds discernible in this chaos of wild music.

Again, the noise of the wind blowing through a bed of reeds, or through the branches of trees, is not unfrequently very soothing, and intermixed with flute-like and fascinating tones. Perhaps it originally suggested the construction of the most primitive *Æolian* musical instrument. If this conjecture is well-founded, the mysterious sounds of the Wild Huntsman, so famous in Teutonic mythology, might not improperly be regarded as the earliest *Æolian* music of nature.

Perhaps some ingenious adept in acoustics will one day separate all the musically effective sounds adverted to from the chaos which encumbers them, and will construct a room for them at a distance from the dwelling-house, in a garden or park, where they may be listened to without one's running the risk of catching a cold. If the tones of the *bulu-pârindu* are so organ-like as they are said to be, we might take a hint from the Malaysians in the construction of this music-room, and combine the *Æolian* organ with the *Æolian* harp. However, some instruments of percussion ought likewise to be made use of to complete this orchestra of nature. The purity and sustained sound peculiar to some instruments of percussion constructed by Asiatic nations from a metallic compound resembling our bell metal are very remarkable and deserving of attention. Little bells, similar to those which adorn the roofs of the Buddhist temples, might be suspended in rows in a large frame, each row producing a distinct chord. There would be no difficulty in arranging the frame in such a manner that a single row of bells was always exposed to the influence of the wind. This could easily be accomplished by means of a pivot and a vane, which, as we have seen, is the expedient resorted to by the Malaysians in constructing a certain *Æolian* wind instrument. Nay, the Malayan invention might be adopted, and further perfected so as to yield sweet harmony, and its chords might be regulated in confor-

imity with the attuned bells, and thus advantageously form part of the extraordinary orchestra in question. Whenever the wind changed, or veered from one direction to another, different chords would be heard in more or less rapid succession. The chords, in combination with the sounds of a number of Æolian harps, perhaps supported by the fundamental-bass tones of a genuine *Riesenharfe* extending a long distance through an open place near the building, would produce an effect which might be compared to that which is derived from the beautiful designs and colours displayed by the kaleidoscope. The want of a musical composition would be in some measure atoned for by the exquisite delicacy and fascinating quality of sound obtained.

Furthermore, we might have Æolian concerts in the clouds, and far better ones than those which the Chinese produce with their kites. Perhaps we may enjoy such treats when the construction and management of the balloon shall have attained to the degree of perfection which renders the vehicle serviceable for travelling through the air instead of by land or water. The announcement by Æolian music of the arrival or departure of a passenger balloon would certainly be preferable to the signals by the steam-whistle of a railway train. If such aerial music, dying away in the skies, in any degree resembles that of the harp of Orpheus ascending to heaven, described in Spenser's "Ruins of Time," it must be delightful indeed. In depicting a vision, Spenser says :—

I saw an harp strung all with silver twine,
And made of gold and costly ivory ;
At length out of the river it was rear'd,
And borne above the clouds to be divined ;
Whilst all the way most heavenly noise was heard
Of the strings stirred with the warbling wind.

This highly poetical and beautiful conception, which forms the conclusion of the present discussion, will compensate the reader, it is hoped, for the shortcomings which no doubt he has discovered in some of the previous statements, explanations, and conjectures.

THE close of the London Season gives us an opportunity of recalling several of those unostentatious appeals to music-lovers which the constant strain upon our critical staff compels us at the time either to recognise with a few kindly words or, most reluctantly, to pass over altogether. We trust therefore it will not be considered that we at all under-rate the efforts of the many artists who have given concerts or Recitals of classical music, because they have not received that attention from us which they assuredly deserve ; but the fact is that public musical performances of much interest are growing so rapidly that it is impossible even for journals solely devoted to the art to keep pace with them ; and an assurance of our sympathy with the cause so practically advocated must be accepted therefore in lieu of separate notices of the individual talent displayed. One Association, however, demands more than a mere record of its name, not only on account of the creative talent evinced at its concerts, but because it is established solely for the purpose of bringing forward new compositions which, but for its aid, might never be heard. We allude to the "Musical Artists' Society," under the presidency of his Grace the Duke of Beaufort, the meetings of which are held in the concert-room of the Royal Academy of Music. At the concerts of this Association the activity of our English composers is unmistakably shown by the performance of original works of such undoubted merit, as to make us wonder why they should not find a place in the programmes of some of the many Chamber Concerts given during the season. Even admitting the difficulty of a man becoming a prophet

in his own country, there can be no reason why his countrymen should refuse to hear what he has to say ; and if the "Musical Artists' Society" can help to show the public how much excellent music is ignored from mere blind prejudice, it will do good work in the cause, and deserve the thanks of all well-wishers to the progress of healthy art.

Now that the idea of supplying musical entertainments to the working classes at merely nominal rates of admission has assumed so practical a form, there can be little doubt that, side by side with this movement, the project of giving choral instruction at an equally cheap rate will take root and flourish. Already it has been decided that halls shall be rented for giving People's Concerts ; but, in addition to this, choral classes are rapidly being established, in order, as it is said, "not only to encourage the people to find recreation in hearing music, but to find an added pleasure in its actual performance." This is, indeed, one more—and a highly important—step in the right direction ; but it has occurred to us that those who have the cause at heart, and spare neither money nor trouble to aid it, have still something worthy of engaging their attention, which may lead to excellent results. It is, of course, good to form choral classes for the working people, but it ought to be recollected that each member must be provided with the compositions to sing from ; and the next charitable act, therefore, should be to organise a musical library in connection with the classes, and under the control of a committee, where members may obtain the loan of works, either gratuitously or at an extremely moderate charge. To carry out this project, the public should be requested not only to purchase and present compositions for the use of the classes, but to forward surplus copies of any works they may possess, which will be available for the intended purpose. In clearing out an accumulation of choral music which may no longer be of any service to the owner, it is good to know that a place is in existence where these pieces will be cordially welcomed ; and if a musical library such as we propose were once to be established, we feel convinced that but a short time would elapse before most of the standard works would be freely placed at the disposal of the committee.

THE letter respecting the pitch of a tenor note when written with the treble clef, to which we recently replied, is only one of many on the same subject constantly forwarded to us. It may be a convenience to amateurs that the C clefs should be dispensed with in modern music ; but there can be no question that writing all vocal parts with only the treble and bass clefs causes much confusion, especially amongst those who have not received a sound education in the art. Four-part music, it is true, usually appears with an intimation that the tenor part is an octave lower ; but the habit of singing songs written in the treble staff makes unthinking tenor vocalists believe that the notes before them are actually sounded. A knowledge of the great staff of eleven lines, with the true places of the various clefs, would unquestionably obviate this difficulty, and we are glad, therefore, to find that in most of the elementary examinations of the present day questions upon this subject are invariably included. That there should be any doubt on the matter (even with amateur vocalists), however, appears extraordinary ; for assuredly no tenor can imagine that the *ut de poitrine* with which operatic singers astonish an audience is the same note as that sung in the high part of the register by a soprano. An accurate knowledge of the pitch of the C clef, wherever it may be placed in the staff, cannot be too strongly urged