FEBRUARY 14, 1893.

EBENEZER PROUT, ESQ., VICE-PRESIDENT.

IN THE CHAIR.

A NEW NOTE SYSTEM.*

BY LUDWIG LATTE.

THE object of this system is, without alteration of the ordinary notes, so to simplify the reading of difficult keys, which, as is well-known, require a practised and experienced eye, that anyone possessing only slight musical skill can easily master them. The system is not complicated; it is, on the contrary, so easy of comprehension that its advantages can be made use of at once.

It consists of the same notes which have hitherto been used; the simplification is due to the signs of ♯, ♭, and ♮, &c., being entirely dispensed with, both in the signature and in the course of the music; the necessary raising or lowering of a note from its natural position being in the Latte system indicated by the note itself.

(a.) The semibreves and minims which are to be raised (sharps) have a curve in the upper portion of the head of the note; those which are to be lowered (flats) have this curve in the lower portion—

PRESENT SYSTEM.

LATTE SYSTEM.

(b.) In the crotchets, quavers, &c., the raising or lowering of the tone is expressed by the heads of the notes being only half filled, either in the upper or lower half—

PRESENT SYSTEM.

LATTE SYSTEM.

* Read by the Secretary.

(c.) The form of all notes which are to be played as naturals remains exactly as in the present system.

(d.) Double flats and sharps are indicated in a similar manner to (a) and (b), but by a vertical stroke in place of a curve in the head of a note. The note itself is, however, placed in that position on the staff which it would occupy if enharmonically altered—e.g., G $\times$ is written as if it were A $\flat$, and G $\sharp$ as if it were F $\sharp$.

This new system, which is based on the ordinary one, does not pretend to supplant the latter, but to complete and simplify it. It will permit the lover of music who is not so advanced as others to play with ease the beautiful classical works of our great masters, which are, however, generally written in the more difficult keys. It must be noted that the system is by no means intended for the advanced player who has overcome all difficulties, but is to assist the *dilletante* in learning difficult pieces, and to aid the less experienced in reading at sight. Of course an elementary musical knowledge is necessary.

Let us take a difficult piece of music in our hand. At the very entrance five, six, or even seven grim sentinels meet our gaze, and keep such strict guard that only those may pass who have years of study behind them, and who possess at least a good memory. And these guards—the flats and sharps at the commencement of a movement—present not only this one difficulty; the way becomes more and more uneven, flats and sharps change places, naturals and double sharps and flats follow each other in quick succession and complete the confusion of the player who is not very advanced. These difficulties discourage the *dilletante*; he gives up trying to play classical music himself, and is compelled to hear the same either by good amateurs or in the concert-room. All signs being dispensed with in this system, whether occurring at the beginning or in the course of a movement, the difficulties of the more complicated keys disappear, so that the amateur is in a short time able to enter into the hitherto closed sanctuary of classical music.

It is naturally of importance that the system be applicable to other instruments than the pianoforte. The inventor sees no difficulty in the matter; on the contrary, he considers it well adapted, for example, to military music, small orchestras, and choral societies.

It may be mentioned that several well-known musicians in Berlin have pronounced very favourably upon its merits, especially Professor Breslauer, who has given a lecture upon the system to a musical society in that city.

DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIRMAN.—I may say I have been looking at these specimens of music; but I must confess, perhaps it is because my eyes are getting weak, that they are a great deal harder to read than the Old Notation.

Mr. SOUTHGATE.—I do not believe in this question of alterations. People say it is so difficult to learn our present system as there are so many signs. It sounds a little plausible when you consider the question of sharps or flats, but what would you say to a boy who said he could not learn the twenty-six letters of the alphabet? Why, you would box his ears and tell him to try until he could. Then he gets a little more advanced and has to learn the letters of Greek and, perhaps, German alphabets. The number of signs we have to learn in the musical alphabet is very small.

Mr. BAKER.—One distinction must be kept in mind. The letters of the alphabet are part of our every-day language, and, moreover, are always presented to the eye, whereas sharps and flats, belonging to a less familiar language, have to be carried in the memory.

Mr. SOUTHGATE.—One might say in answer that you have to carry in your mind the pronunciation of the letters and certain vowel sounds such as *a* or *ou*, but still it has to be carried in the memory.

Mr. BAKER.—Personally, I do not think anything can be done to simplify our present system of music. Besides that, it holds the field, and, I believe, will continue to do so.

Mr. BANISTER.—Dr. Hullah always said that any so-called improvement or new system of notation would only serve to make the present existing system more permanent.

Mr. BAKER.—I may say that Herr Latte's system is undoubtedly easy of comprehension, and requires very little practice; but I should imagine it to be rather trying to the eyes.