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DECEMBER 10, 1895.

PROF. J. F. BRIDGE, MUS. DOC., VICE-PRESIDENT,
IN THE CHAIR.

THE TREATMENT OF MUSIC BY NOVELISTS.

BY T. L. SOUTHGATE.

IN July last a special meeting of The Musical Association was held to welcome a party of distinguished American musicians who were visiting these shores; and at that meeting we had the pleasure of listening to a paper by Professor Waldo Pratt, of Hartford Theological Seminary. The subject he chose to speak upon was "The Isolation of Music"; no doubt you have now read Professor Pratt's thoughtful and suggestive paper, which appeared in our last volume of *Proceedings*. He complained of the neglect of music in popular and even scholarly thought, and he made an eloquent appeal to those occupying positions of authority in the educational world to accept music as a regular and necessary branch of education; and further, he sought to demonstrate the natural affinities of music with literature. I was unable to accord complete agreement with the picture Professor Pratt drew of "The Isolation of Music," and have given my reasons for this elsewhere. His view was no doubt correct enough so far as the United States are concerned, but in this country a great deal is done for the encouragement of music. The State pays nearly a quarter-of-a-million a year for the tuition of music in our normal public schools, and we have other important agencies at work; but nothing of the kind is yet found in America. Whether we shall ever attain to the wisdom of the old Greek philosophers, who recognised the great value of music as a factor of general education, and indeed carried their theory into actual practice, we cannot tell; but I believe if such should ever be the case, and the subject be properly taught, that then we shall no longer be offended by the way in which music

is too commonly referred to by professional novelists and others, who garnish their writings with allusions to music more or less wrong, and for the most part ridiculous. The novel writer often introduces the regulation gush about music, and eulogises the art in high-flown terms replete with lofty sentiments; and then, proceeding to technical description, he (or she) makes ridiculous mistakes, which show that the writer does not possess sufficient interest in the art to master terms and details which may not unfairly be called commonplace.

Sometimes we are treated to a dissertation on the art which says nothing new, and merely serves to fill space. But the pet achievement of these persons is to show off their knowledge by describing a piece of music or someone's playing, in technical terms. Then they plunge terribly, and supply an amusing illustration of the old aphorism as to a little knowledge being dangerous. They write with an authoritative tone of the construction and employment of instruments of which they evidently know nothing, and they evolve from their inner consciousness details respecting the piece of music they are referring to absolutely wrong, and in some instances of which not even skilled musicians can guess the meaning.

Music is no esoteric mystery with these people, they consider themselves thoroughly equipped to write about the art in any of its phases; and as they take no count of the rapid development of music, and the widening knowledge with which it is regarded by many of their readers, they are doubtless profoundly ignorant of the amusement their dealings with music occasion.

Before I proceed to give you some examples of the treatment of music by novelists, let me say that after I had put together this paper I learnt from one of our members that some twenty years ago Mr. Sutherland Edwards, a writer and accomplished critic on music well known to many of you, wrote a short but caustic article on "The Literary Maltreatment of Music" in *Macmillan's Magazine*. In this he went for the librettists, novelists, newspaper writers, and even professed writers on music, with some of whom he deals severely—for instance, he says that Mr. Haweis in his well-known volume "commits blunders not by the dozen, but by the hundred; the book is a great *répertoire* of moral and musical blunders." I am afraid that, after this, some of the novelists we condemn will retort with a *tu quoque*. Mr. Sutherland Edwards' theme ranges over the whole field of literature, and he certainly has cause for his complaint; at present I must confine myself to the special branch upon which I have chosen to speak to you this afternoon.

I am sure it will be generally recognised that musicians have no desire to prevent novelists from referring to the art. Music itself is imaginative and essentially poetic in its whole nature, and so no true musician can or should take any exception to a general description of music so far as the effect it produces on our feelings is concerned, nor indeed to any poetic or even impassioned language as to its subtle emotional influence on mankind. I would in passing observe that a difference is to be drawn between vocal and instrumental, or, as it is termed, "absolute music." In this latter form the musician can utter in sounds that which words fail to do. He can awake associations, suggest imagery, and touch feelings too deep for verbal expression. In the symphony, the string quartet, sonata, romance, or even a well disposed extemporisation you obtain an etherealised product capable of exciting our imagination so highly, and being so emotionally suggestive, that those who write novels for our *entertainment* and *instruction*, I say, in preference to our *amusement*, very naturally seize on the power of music to enrich their pages. We all understand that, and indeed should be glad and thankful that the might of the art we love so well should thus be popularly recognised. If only the writers would speak of the art in *general* terms they would be safe, but this is not so. They not infrequently write about it in language as extravagant as that employed by the Yankee reporter, written often for fun, choice specimens of which sometimes find their way across the Atlantic; worse still, they drift, and endeavour to describe with a smattering of technical terms something of which they are profoundly ignorant. It is this assumption of a knowledge they do not possess (and which they rarely venture upon in respect of other subjects) that excites the ire of the cultured musician, because it implies a practical indifference as to whether what is set down about music be true or not. And I believe that besides musicians proper, with the wider spread of musical knowledge which marks the period, there are a host of general readers who are amused at the blunders made, blunders still apparent enough, despite the genius of the writer, or the skilful way in which he can wrap up his musical nonsense in an easy flow of language. Of course novels are not intended to teach us music, but depend upon it, when music does become a more general branch of education, this thoughtless maltreatment of music will, to use a sporting term, be more quickly "spotted," and the reputation of the writers will suffer in consequence.

Perhaps I ought for my purpose roughly to divide novels into two classes—viz., those written on an avowedly musical basis, and novels of the ordinary type in which we find occasional references to music. In this country we do not

possess many distinctly musical novels. In Germany they are common, and together with short tales and sketches (the charming series by Elise Polko are an example) they meet with a ready sale. Perhaps some of you may have read Elizabeth Shepherd's "Charles Auchester," published forty years ago, and which was commonly supposed to refer to the early career of Mendelssohn—some maintain of Sterndale Bennett. So far as my memory serves me there was no fault to be found with the treatment of music in the book; a distinct acquaintance with the art was manifest, but the writing was weak. Among modern novels the "Countess Daphne" belongs to this type. It is described as a musical romance, by "Rita," and it purports to be a tale told first by a Strad and then by an Amati violin about the persons who have owned those instruments, and what the supposed animate violins have observed in their several careers. The recitals all relate to the same set of persons, and thus we get a consecutive tale in novel form. So we are in a professedly musical atmosphere; fragments of music are printed at the heading of each chapter, mostly phrases from some well-known violin piece. Yet the book is not musically perfect, though not much fault can be found with it. In a description of the music of the common people of Italy—a description I am unable to agree with so far as my opportunities have permitted me to note—we find such a statement as this: "The fishermen sing to their mandolines and string notes of perfect rhythm and sweetest measure." Again, "The touch of the slender boyish fingers woke such passionate pleadings, such exquisite melody. Certainly it seemed like no instrumental sound, but rather like some lovely wailing voice that thrilled through those vast and crowded rooms, while a silence, hushed and awestruck, fell upon them all." I should say that I propose to offer very few comments on the extracts I shall read to you; the Members of this Association are quite able to assess for themselves the value of these examples. I will only call attention to "notes of perfect rhythm," and say that a violin could not have been mistaken for a voice, the *timbre* of the two are so essentially different. But, on the other hand, let me quote a charming little piece about music in this same novel. "Music is the one pure beautiful thing in a world of sin and vileness. A painter's art may degenerate into sensual bondage, a sculptor's idealise the body and forget the soul that gives it a beauty beyond mere physical perfection. A poet may lead others into ignorant worship of something his passionate praise and glowing verse have immortalized, even in its unworthiness; but music—music alone commits none of these errors. From God it comes direct, to God its highest raptures alone return. Its birthplace is heaven, its life

immortal. To man it gives forgetfulness of all life, and sorrows, and suffering; it raises the soul above its earthly bondage. It makes one forget that need, poverty, hardships exist; it would just give a man his life's best happiness to know that he had poured out his whole soul, being, imagination, mind into one stream so perfect, so great that all who heard should feel its beauty for all time, and could not forget Him, even if they would."

"Doreen, the Story of a Singer," by Edna Lyall, despite its title, has little of music in it, and there are no musical errors to chronicle. The text is entirely taken up with the eternal Irish question, the doings of Fenians, dynamiters, Dublin faction fights, the murder of an agent, and matters appertaining to Home Rule, over which it seems the music of Mendelssohn exercises some influence. Musical agents and critics come in for some slashing, but music is treated neither poetically nor technically; despite its pretentious title, the book possesses only a limited interest to musicians.

In "A Roman Singer," by Marion Crawford, we read of a piano which is termed "a masterpiece of an instrument." "It had five pedals disposed as a harp underneath, but none of them made any impression on the sound, except the middle one, which rang a bell; the sound-board had a crack in it, and two of the notes were dumb." Yet on this strange and unpromising instrument some fine music was discoursed! Although this book has music, or rather the effect of it, for its theme, there are some few mistakes which ought not to have been made. For instance, the opera "La Favorita" is ascribed to Verdi. Of one of the characters, a mysterious old violinist, we read: "His playing was as feverish and murderous as jealousy that is cruel as the grave; sobbing great sobs of a terrible death-song, and screaming in the outrageous frenzy of a furious foe; dancing in horrid madness as the devils dance over some fresh sinner they have gotten themselves for torture; and then, at last, as the strings bent to the commanding bow, finding the triumph of a glorious rest in great, broad chords, splendid in depth and royal harmony, grand, enormous, and massive as the united choirs of heaven."

Then came more wonders from this strange Jew fiddler, who again took up his instrument, "laid his bow over the strings and struck a chord. 'What is that?' he asked, sustaining the same. 'The common chord of A minor,' answered Nino immediately. 'You have a good ear,' said Benoni, still playing the same notes. Then he imitated the sound of a laughing voice, high up above the monotonous chords, softly at first, as though far in the distance; then louder and nearer, the sustaining notes of the minor falling away one after the other and losing themselves."

I must not stay to comment fully on all the nonsense here. But I would protest, and strongly, on the suggestion of any music, unaccompanied by words, being "murderous." Such is impossible, and I shall say something more on this head later on. "The broad chords, splendid in depth and royal harmony," will amuse you; it is to be hoped that the "united choirs of heaven" will sing something more "massive" than can be produced on a solo instrument, which only goes down to fiddle G! If you will bear in mind the tuning of the strings of the fiddle, you will first wonder how the chord of A minor could be laid out? and then, if Mr. Marion Crawford will only whisper how this chord can be *sustained*, I believe that a very handsome *douceur* would be given him by some aspiring violinist for the wonderful secret. Afterwards we come to something quite comic.

The hero, who had to make his *début* on the operatic stage, was prepared for his task by his singing master giving him "blackberry syrup," in order to increase his courage. I can't say what effect this strange Italian confection may have had on his *courage*, but I need scarcely tell this audience what would happen to the aspirant's *voice* under such saccharine treatment. Yet of course he created a *furor* and received an ovation—in fact, "the house became entirely demoralised, and the audience screamed with delight." We are told that "the long, sweet notes sighed themselves to death on his lips, falling and rising magically like a mystic angel song, so pathetic, so heart-breaking, so laden with death and with love, that it was as though all the sorrowing souls in poor Rome breathed in one soft sigh together." "His voice spoke like a clarion call on the day of judgment in its wrath, and murmured more plaintively and sadly in sorrow than ever the poor Peri sighed at the gates of Paradise." Only think what can be done with the aid of "Blackberry Syrup"!

Then we are told that in the well-known air "*Salve dimora*" is a point where the music goes away "to the highest note that anyone can possibly sing." It was easy for the hero, but all the other tenors make it sound like "the squeak of a dying pig." In this case—the parallel happens to other tenors, I will only observe—the wonderful note made a young lady fall in love with the singer.

"The First Violin," by Miss Fothergill, is a novel that enjoyed a considerable amount of popularity. I think it an impossible tale, clumsily told. Two narrators are employed, which produces a mixed effect, and one does not know whether it is a he or a she relating impressions and feelings, for, oddly enough, both love the same person! The book is written by one pretty conversant with music but who is by no means faultless. Before I opened the novel I thought "The First Violin" referred to the usual three-and-

sixpenny article commonly deemed good enough for beginners. Not so. It represents the leader of an orchestra, a Count—a German Count—in disguise, who, though he only seems to have amused himself with the violin when an officer in a regiment, suddenly bursts out into what the Germans term a *Concertmeister*, and is placed at the head of an orchestra. By accident he meets a young English girl who has lost her way in the intricacies of the Cologne railway station, and their fate is settled at once. While waiting for the next train they stroll into the Cathedral and hear Bach's "St. Matthew" Passion, "the melody of which," we are instructed, "is full of the most witchingly sweet high notes, and a breadth and grandeur of low ones." They go together to a small German town where our countrywoman has some training as a singer, and we are introduced to the musical society of the place. One chapter is headed with a fragment from Raff's "Leonora" Symphony, the march theme of which the First Violin is ever humming, and he as constantly buys full scores—a piece of extravagance I was not aware German violinists were accustomed to commit. Naturally there is much playing and singing in this book. The heroine must have been a wonder, for though she had not long begun to learn the pianoforte, we are told she played Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony from *the full score*, two violins and a 'cello who happened to drop in assisting at this odd scratch performance. Of course this *Concertmeister*, despite his no training at all or inexperience, was a phenomenal player. "It was not a violin that he played, it was a spirit that he evoked, and a strange answer it sometimes gave forth to his summons. To-night he had taken it up suddenly and sat playing without book a strange melody which wrung my heart—full of minor cadences, with an infinite wail and weariness in it."

When he improvised, we are told, his music was "wild, strange, melancholy, sometimes sweet, but ever with a ringing note of woe so piercing as to stab, recurring perpetually—such a note as comes throbbing to life now and then in the Sonata Pathétique, or in Raff's Fifth Symphony."

Again, he played at a concert on the spur of the moment, a Chaconne written by the conductor. "It was a minor measure, and one unknown to the public; it was full, not merely of talent, but was replete with the fire of genius, original, strong, terse, and racy, like him who had composed it. It was sad, very sad, but there was a magnificent elevation running all through it which raised it far above a mere complaint, and gave a depth to its tragedy while it pointed at hope." But here I must stop. The fault of the book is exaggeration.

"The Kreutzer Sonata," by Count Tolstoi, is another of the novels apparently founded on a musical basis. I say "apparently," because, despite its title, music really has little to do with the novel. The work is nothing more than the opinions of an unprincipled cynic respecting the inconvenience of the marriage bond, together with the relations between the sexes. The narrator lives so unhappily with his wife, and cultivates jealousy to such an extent that it was inevitable some time or other a tragedy would take place. Towards the end of the book we are introduced to a musician, a violinist who plays duets with the wife, and, among other pieces, Beethoven's "Kreutzer Sonata." The hearing of the *Presto* of this well-known work leads to the wholly unjustifiable and brutal murder of the wife. Of music itself in general, little is said in this volume, except one passage I shall read to you. I should say that the novel is translated from the Russian into English by Mr. Sutherland Edwards, so of course we find nothing wrong in the description of the music or the technical terms employed.

I take exception, first, to the title of the book, and next to the allegation that the hearing of a somewhat indifferent performance of Beethoven's Sonata was the cause of the catastrophe which the book is written to depict. The title of any piece of music would have done just as well, or "The Jealous Husband" would have exactly fitted the tale; I suppose the author appropriated the "Kreutzer" merely for the sake of attracting readers who might have heard of Beethoven's notable work. With regard to the effect pretended to be derived from hearing the lady and the violinist play this, I would have you note that practically this crime was resolved upon prior to the violinist being heard of! Before he arrives on the scene the husband thus expresses himself: "I feel that the dreadful crisis is approaching in which it will be necessary for me either to kill her or to kill myself. I know that it is drawing near." Then a little farther on: "I think of running away from her, of settling in America. I dream of the delight I should have, after getting rid of her, in loving some other woman entirely different from her. I should be free from her if she were to die, or if I were to get a divorce; and I speculate as to how I can obtain a divorce."

Here, I maintain, is revealed the dominant thought which had taken possession of the mind of the murderer. The earlier portion of the book is chiefly occupied with a cynical contempt for married life and a denunciation of women. She is given to "idleness and an empty life, she is without the reasoning power," and so on. It is not difficult to perceive why, with such thoughts and passions as he had, the evil-

mindful husband killed his wife; the desire was there, the music supplied the excuse, and, like most excuses, it was a very mean one so far as our art is concerned. Moralising on music Count Tolstoi writes:—

“In order that men and women may work together at the noblest of all arts—music—a certain intimacy is necessary in which no one can see the least thing to find fault with. Only a jealous fool of a husband can detect anything blameable in it. A husband must not allow himself to entertain such thoughts. He must not, in any case, poke his nose into affairs which in no way concern him. Yet everyone knows that, thanks to their pursuits, above all musical ones, a great number of infidelities are brought about in our society.”

I will not dwell on the contradictory character of this passage, but will only say “everyone knows” is one of those vague generalities in which slovenly persons, with no evidence to support their assertions, constantly take refuge; and “the great number of infidelities” being brought about through “musical pursuits” is a foul slander on which, in this assembly, I need not dwell for one moment. Let me pass on to a description of music and the effect of the fateful “Kreutzer Sonata”:—

“A terrible thing this sonata, above all the opening *presto*! and music is a terrible thing generally. People say that music elevates the soul. Nonsense, falsehood. It neither ennobles nor degrades, it excites. That is why music is so dangerous and acts at times in so terrible a manner. Ought the ‘Kreutzer Sonata,’ with its opening *presto*, to be played in drawing-rooms in the midst of ladies in low-necked dresses, or at concerts, where the piece is finished and applauded and then followed by another piece? To provoke an energy cannot but have injurious effects.”

Farther on the author terms music “the most ultra-refined of sensual delights.” Then he speaks of the playing of a piece, “a piece so passionate that it reached the point of indecency.” I am sure you have heard enough of this book, and I believe you will agree with me in making an *indignant protest* against Tolstoi’s implied degradation of the divine art of music, and likewise against his dictum that “absolute” music can suggest evil thoughts or inspire a crime. It is a foul libel on a pure art.

“The Dominant Seventh,” by Kate Elizabeth Clark, is announced on the title-page to be “A Musical Story.” It contains a few bars from Schumann on its cover, and music enters into it to so considerable an extent that it commences—not with a Preface, but a “Prelude,” this being an extract from Schopenhauer which asserts that life is a continual alternating of desires and gratifications; that its condition is analagous to that of music, “which has but two

leading chords, from which all others are derived. These are the tonic chord (a chord of rest and calmness) and the dominant chord of the seventh (a chord of unrest, of longing and striving)." Here then is set forth the clue to Miss Clark's story. A violinist has disappointed a quartet concert-party, and the master of the house, an American who seems to have owned a splendid collection of valuable stringed and wind instruments, with original scores of Beethoven, Mozart, and Mendelssohn, such as no other collector or museum can boast of, remarks that this makes the *sixth* violinist who has failed them, and that now they ought to get a *dominant seventh*. One of the performers, speaking disdainfully of the absent fiddler, observes, "He could only play that antique obituary canvass sampler, Mendelssohn's 'Resignation.'" Then an amateur present volunteered to take a part in Beethoven's E flat major quartet, which was played with "penetrating sweetness and deep feeling," all except "the syncopations, the delicate trills and the groups of 32nd notes," yet "they ended the work a quarter of a tone off!" The heroine, who played the piano, has such immense hands that "she compassed abnormal stretches and obtained superior orchestral effects." Eventually, Signor Ferranti, a wonderful violinist, was found, and he was the Dominant Seventh and hero of the book. According to the recital, he very often played the "last dominant seventh chord followed by the tonic"—or rather, I should say, *some portion* of those well-known chords, and you who understand music will not be surprised at his doing so. The violin of the hero seems to have had an effect not unusual in novels, and then Cupid appears on the scene. The two played together a Sonata of Rubinstein's, and on coming to "the sorrowing climax of the motive" the young lady at the piano saw a vision of "a fearful woman! she had been bewitched with the violinist's devilish magnetism"; she had a violent attack of the nerves and fainted—though the author says, "the incident seemed perfectly natural to the greater portion of the audience." Perhaps it is in America, where the scene of the story is laid; happily such perfectly natural incidents are not common here. Then the programme was continued by this demon fiddler, and we are told that "notes leaped from the violin like sparks of fire; then a crowd of jostling, bustling gnomes peered above the ground and from behind their rocky homes to mock at the emotions of humanity." It is good for us that such high-class concerts do not take place in London, otherwise, besides the ordinary attendants, we might require the presence of a doctor, professional nurse, fireman, and policeman. Time does not permit to go through the moralising on music we find in this book. The hero, though he adores Rubinstein, Brahms, and Wagner.

and eulogises the unsurpassable genius of the latter writer, is an awful heretic, for he dreams of some great master of a coming age, whose "regular irregularities of form and new rhythmic effects will rule the musical world." This mighty genius is predicted to be born in France, but the authoress of the book, with very natural pride, says "America."

Owing to the jealousy of a member of the quartet party—also in love with Miss Flora of the large hands—the Dominant Seventh is compelled to leave New York. The young lady sees the face of a ghost when she plays with him, and the ghost turns out to be the demented wife of the violinist, still alive, and who has never been out of Italy. However, before he departed, the couple had touched hands, and then we read: "There was no need of words, they knew their souls had met in spiritual union." I will not read you extracts from those golden moments when fair Flora "fluttered above him on heavenly wings"—all that is interesting, no doubt, but has little to do with music proper. Of course the mysterious fiddler came back, and it seems he was a duke—an Italian duke, and he brought with him the family diamonds, so the pair, Flora and Ferranti (Flowers and Iron, if I may venture to translate the names), were united. But not until a dynamite box had been sent to the hero, and was opened by his brother-in-law, who was mortally wounded by its explosion; the dying man begged to hear the chord of the Dominant Seventh. There is a wonderful recital of how this was brought in—"woven together by pathetic chords rolled out in one shining web of melody, a mingling of strains from the great composers"—you will remember that all this took place on a *single* violin. This shining web of melodies mingled together must indeed have been a miraculous performance! The Dominant Seventh then melted into the restful tonic. If F were the basis of the fateful chord, it would of course be resolved on B flat, which key, by the way, someone has unkindly suggested is typical of the marriage tie, inasmuch as its tonic, third, and dominant produces the common chord of *two flats*. I have suggested F, because it seems, according to the music type illustration in the book from Rubinstein's sonata, that the appearance of the ghost, "the shriek of despair" from the violin, and the fainting of the damsel twice occurred when this note was reached. And to this I beg your attention for a moment. The key of the extract given is G. The note F natural, repeated in the four octaves from the fourth line in the bass up to the fourth space above the treble stave is heard alone, nothing accompanies it; I may say it is preceded by the second inversion of the chord of A—that is, E, G, A, C sharp, which seems as if it were going to D minor. But Rubinstein gives F natural and no more. Now certainly this is not the chord of the Dominant Seventh

(unless some brilliant American theorist has propounded a new system which has not yet reached this side of the Atlantic). It looks like a 6-4-2 with the inside left out. If a new edition of this book be ever called for, I would humbly submit the title be altered from "The Dominant Seventh" to one which would be sure to take—viz., "The Eviscerated Chord of the 6-4-2."

So many doings in America astonish us that perhaps I ought not to feel surprised in learning that in that wonderful land they have a bird which can play the piano—at least so I take it from a passage in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," where we read that a person played the pianoforte "with an airy and bird-like touch."

Another book which has found favour both in America and Great Britain is "The Minor Chord: a story of a Prima Donna," by J. Mitchell Chapple. This tells of the life and adventures of a young American singer, and the tale comes to a climax with the sounding of a "Minor chord" at the end of the last chapter. This is how the book concludes: "It was in the early afternoon twilight of a dull December day that my future life was determined. Howard and I sat without a light in the dear old parlour, . . . and Howard took my hands as the first soft bass notes of the prelude came from the next room, under Helen's delicate touch. . . . The crescendo increased as the tempo quickened and then they changed. . . . Minor strains mingled with the major in beautiful symphony as if in benediction; the climax was approaching measure by measure, with impressive chords, on to the high note in which all the accumulated passion of this song was gathered. They had reached the closing retard. . . . My heart almost stood still, and my nerves thrilled and tingled as the singer's last note died away. Helen was about to strike the last chord—

" 'O Helen! Helen!' I screamed—

"The chord was struck."

"Ouida" is a special sinner. She affects a knowledge of music she certainly does not possess. You can judge of this when I mention that she speaks of a *Symphony* being played for the amusement of the guests at a fashionable party, and she describes a lady singing the "Stabat Mater" alone in a wood as producing "glorious harmonie." In "Moths" she drily remarks: "I never let a maid make a dress . . . You might as well want Rubinstein to make the violin (*sic*) he plays on!"

Many of us must have wondered how so observant a writer as Coleridge came to talk about the "loud bassoon" in his "Ancient Mariner." As you know, the bassoon is not a loud, but rather a soft instrument. No fault could have

been found if he had said loud trombone, or cornet, or trumpet—as Mr. Sutherland Edwards has pointed out; but the “loud bassoon” is ridiculous, and betrays ignorance of what he was writing about; one may wonder if he could appreciate the tone of a bassoon, or even recognise the instrument if he saw one. Happily his misnomer has not prevented Mr. John Barnett from writing a charming cantata on the theme.

Even so truly great a man as Lord Beaconsfield gets off the line when he writes about music. In his “Endymion,” speaking of Mrs. Newchatel shut up at Hainault, he says: “And she sighed, and then she flew to her easel, or buried herself in some sublime *cantata* of her favourite master, Beethoven.” Is it possible he means sonata, or was he ignorant of the difference between these two types of music? Ruskin, in his “Laws of Fesole,” alludes to a mahogany (*sic*) Cremona Violin seventy times seven stringed.

In George Meredith’s “Sandra Belloni,” or “Emilia in England,” there are numerous allusions to music. The heroine is a singer, she plays several instruments, but her vocal powers were great. She had “a bold but finely nervous voice, pealing to a brisker measure that would have been joyous but for one fall it had, coming unexpectedly without harshness, and winding up her song in a mighty melancholy.”

When she was asked to play, “she gripped her harp, and her eyelids appeared to quiver as she took the notes. On a sudden, she excited herself to pitch, and gave volume to the note.” Again, “she could pitch any notes, and was clear but alway ornamenting.” The drum is an instrument that “discomfiture cruelly harries; it gives vast internal satisfaction owing to its corpulency.” At a concert, Emilia “thrummed-thrummed on the harp-strings, while another *crooned* a ready accompaniment; the trombone brayed an interminable note, and, like the springing pulse of battle, the drum thumped and thumped.” But I must not quote this clotted nonsense farther, there are pages of it.

In Mr. Hardy’s “Hand of Ethelberta” he makes his hero, a cathedral organist, go out to evening parties and play dance music. Some cathedral towns are deadly dull, and a professional musician finds little lucrative work to do; but just conceive a Mus. Bac. and F.R.C.O. cathedral organist hanging up in his window—“Evening Parties attended”!

Mr. Black must be accounted a popular and successful writer. He causes the “Beautiful Wretch” to make the most serious resolutions affecting her future life on hearing some clap-trap representation of a storm played upon the Fribourg organ—distinctly a weakness in his plot. In his novel, “Three Feathers,” he makes a lady sit down to the pianoforte and play Beethoven’s “Farewell.” One result

of mentioning this apocryphal piece has been to worry unfortunate musicsellers in asking them to supply the *morceau*, sometimes with an openly expressed contempt for their ignorance in not knowing of it. In the same novel, "a perfect accord of descending fifths" is spoken of in glowing terms as a most enjoyable and wonderful passage! Indeed, the term "fifths" would seem to have as much fascination as is accorded to the blessed word Mesopotamia. I am told of a novel on the cover of which is printed a passage of ascending fifths in notes of gold. Why these ignorant persons should pitch upon fifths, I am unable to say.

George Eliot has eulogised these barbarities in a passage which I venture to term "famous." And we cannot help wondering a little at this, for George Eliot was a singularly observant person, gifted with more than a woman's tact and quickness of perception. It can only be ascribed to the conceit of ignorance that so many writers display. The passage is found in "The Mill on the Floss," in the chapter headed "A Duet in Paradise." "The sense of mutual fitness that springs from the two deep notes fulfilling expectation, just at the right moment between the notes of the silvery soprano; from the *perfect accord of descending thirds and fifths*, from the preconcerted loving chase of a fugue, is likely enough to supersede any immediate demand for less impassioned forms of agreement. The contralto will not care to catechise the bass; the tenor will foresee no embarrassing dearth of remark in evenings spent with the lovely soprano. In the provinces, where music was so scarce in that remote time, how could the musical people avoid falling in love with each other?" "The perfect accord of descending thirds and fifths" makes one shiver.

Another amusing example of George Eliot's is to be found in "Daniel Deronda," where we are told that Grandcourt and Gwendolen broke off the conversation and then resumed it as "after a long organ stop"—as if an organ stop meant a pause in an organ performance! Charles Reade, in "The Cloister and the Hearth," ventures on a quotation in musical type with the result that the melody is in one key and the signature belongs to another, whilst the time, which is really three crotchets in a bar, bears the signature 6-8. In "Kilmeny," by Mr. Black, the hero wonders whether Miss Lesley "would only express a faint surprise at hearing Mozart's Sonata in A sharp!" Speaking for myself, I should think the lady would be somewhat terrified by the sight of *ten sharps* in the signature. "A sharp" would seem to be a favourite key with *litterateurs*, for in "A Daughter of Heth" we learn that Leezibeth played Mozart's Sonata in A sharp carefully enough, despite its appalling signature." In "Mr. Barnes of New York" "the heroine's nervous system is kept

at a constant unrelaxing tension that makes it like the *C string* of a highly tuned violin."

To show what little care writers exhibit when referring to music, I am told that in a recent work the author gives an account of a Highlander singing Jacobite songs, and accompanying himself on the bagpipes at the same time! If the writer had said an Irish piper, the feat might have been possible, for, as you know, the wind for the Irish bagpipes (by the way, rarely heard now) is supplied by the arm working a small bellows. But Scotchmen despise such adventitious aid, and use that with which nature has endowed them, lungs and mouth. Even supposing he had filled his bag with wind before beginning to sing, the stored up supply could have lasted only a few seconds for accompanimental purposes; so it is evident that this phenomenal Highlander must have possessed two mouths. I take it that he supplies an interesting object lesson of the Darwinian theory; one mouth must have been his natural one, the other, thanks to the passionate love of his race and yearning to play the bagpipes, must have been evolved and developed for this special purpose.

Let me read you two extracts from Browning, a writer who some may deem a great man, but whose lines require more time to find out their obscure meaning than most of us have at disposal. In "Alt Vogler" he writes:—

Give me the keys, I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor—yes,
And I blunt it with a ninth, and I stand on alien ground
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C major of this life: so now, I will try to sleep.

It is said that Browning knew something of music, but even an educated musician can hardly fathom the meaning of these lines. And here is something more, hardly removed from nonsense. It occurs in "Master Hughes of Saxe-Gotha."

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing profound that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the two on their ways,
Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help;
In strides a Fourth; a Fifth thrusts in his nose.
So the cry's open, the kennels a-yelp,
Argument's hot to the close."

Of course this is meant to describe a fugue. Elizabeth Barret Browning, in the first book of her autobiography-novel-poem "Aurora Leigh," describes an English girl's musical education as follows:—"I learnt much music such as would have been quite impossible in Johnson's day, as still

it might be wished—fine sleights-of-hand, and unimagined fingering, shuffling off the hearer's soul thro' hurricanes of notes, to a noisy Tophet." All of which is not far removed from nonsense.

In marked contrast to most of the productions I have quoted are the allusions to music to be found in some of the works of the late R. L. Stevenson. But then, he was a musician—in his way. He used to play the flageolet, a descendant of the old Recorder, and an easy instrument still popular in France, though not much used here; and he knew enough about music to make arrangements of little pieces for various combinations. In that whimsical novel, "The Wrong Box," written in conjunction with Mr. L. Osbourne, there is some amusing satire about an amateur composer who was trying to write an operetta termed "Orange Pekoe"; he got no farther than the beginning of an air for the tenor in seven sharps, the key being selected on account of its *learned-looking* signature.

The newest and the most startling of modern novels is "The Sorrows of Satan." I do not propose to offer any remarks on this strange production, or even to glance at its psychology. It purports to be "The strange experience of one, Geoffrey Tempest, a millionaire." The wonderful adventures of this person, who appears to be under Satanic influence, occupy the main part of the pages of its author, Marie Corelli, to whom we owe the whitewashing of "Barabbas" and the glorification of "Judas." After a dinner party, given at the house of an earl, Prince Lucio Rimáñez, the mundane incarnation of the devil, and who seems able to do whatever man can desire, was induced to play on the family grand pianoforte. Here are some extracts from the account of the performance :—

"With the first few bars he struck, I half started from my chair in amazement; could a mere pianoforte produce such sounds? or, was there some witchery hidden in the commonplace instrument unguessed by any other performer? The music swelled into passionate cadence; melodies crossed and recrossed each other like rays of light glittering among green leaves; voices of birds and streams and tossing waterfalls chimed in with songs of love and playful merriment; anon came wilder strains of grief and angry clamour; cries of despair were heard echoing through the thunderous noise of some relentless storm; farewells everlastingly shrieked amid sobs of reluctant shuddering agony; and then, as I listened, before my eyes a black mist gathered slowly, and I thought I saw great rocks bursting asunder into flame, and drifting islands in a sea of fire—faces, wonderful, hideous, beautiful, peered at me out of a darkness denser than night, and in the midst of this there

came a tune, complete in sweetness and suggestion—a piercing, sword-like tune that plunged into my very heart, and rankled there. My breath failed me, my senses swam; I felt that I must move, speak, cry out, and implore that this music, this *horribly insidious music*, should cease ere I swooned with the *voluptuous poison of it*, when, with a full chord of splendid harmony that rolled out upon the air like a breaking wave, the intoxicating sounds ebbed away into silence. No one spoke—our hearts were yet beating too wildly with the pulsations roused by that wondrous lyric storm."

Answering for himself, the hero says that something in the music had instilled itself into his blood, and the clinging subtle sweetness moves him to strange emotions neither wise nor worthy of a man. Lady Sibyl declares that the music suggested "crime, and has roused in me evil thoughts of which I am ashamed."

When the player himself is questioned as to where he learnt, he replies, "In Nature's conservatoire, from an amiable nightingale." This gifted bird taught him how to "construct not only a pure roulade, cadenza, and trill—but likewise showed him the most elaborate methods of applying rhythmic tune to the upward and downward rush of the wind, thus teaching him perfect counterpoint." "Chords," he continues, "I learned from old Neptune; and from the swirl of the water among the pebbles and sand, I mastered the secret of playing 'arpeggi.'" Then he finished his strange education in a dream, where he heard one unpronounceable word, subsequently discovered "to be lurking in the scale of sounds." Lucio afterwards sang a song about "A secret closely hid, beneath the coffin lid," in a full, rich, glorious baritone voice, vibrating with power and sweetness, that sent Lady Elton into the throes of a violent convulsion, and which caused her eyes to roll in their sockets like balls of glass; eventually the unfortunate lady had an attack of paralysis.

Here I again strongly protest against the false doctrine insinuated that any music *per se* can suggest "crime." This is one of the many subtle sophistries which are to be found plentifully scattered through Marie Corelli's outrageous pages, pages in many respects worse than the worst of the "penny dreadfuls" which judges, magistrates, and moralists are just now protesting against. I need not repeat what I have already said when examining the "Kreutzer Sonata" in respect to the suggestiveness of purely instrumental music; I will only add that the listener's mind colours the musical impressions made on it with *his own* thoughts and feelings. Neither material images, nor any definite thoughts *can* be presented by the strains of music. If a programme or clue be supplied, then

there may be pointed out to the ordinary listener the direction in which his thoughts are to be turned ; lacking these aids to translation, absolute music says nothing for certain.

It is long since any novel has caught on to the extent of Mr. George du Maurier's "Trilby." The book has had a prodigious circulation in America and the colonies quite as much as in England. All who consider it necessary to show their acquaintance with the novels of the day have read—or at least talk of "Trilby"; enterprising tradesmen who vend feminine articles of dress have seized on the title and identified certain of their wares with the name of Mr. du Maurier's heroine, the successful novel is of course dramatised, and is of course received with the customary enthusiasm. In the United States they seem to have had the Trilby fever badly ; its infection has even penetrated the churches, and we are told that sermons are preached on Trilby ; and, at the opposite pole of civilisation, drinking saloons are called after her name. The writer of this fashionable book is the well-known artist, whose pictures in *Punch* are always clever and charming. Hitherto he has ventured into the realms of literature with but one essay, "Peter Ibbetson," which made no particular stir. His second work has been indeed a surprise, and probably to no one more than to its author himself. "Trilby" has brought him fame and gold not a little. That its author is a man of culture, of education, and of powers of observation exercised not only in England but on the other side of the Channel is indisputable. He has put forth a theory, not perhaps quite new, but one belonging to that mystic type of fiction of which Bulwer Lytton's "The Coming Race" is an example, which always exercises a sort of fascination over certain minds, and is not devoid of interest even to such of us who are too old to be held in thrall by fairy legends, Rosicrucian fancies, or tales of magic. "Trilby" is a tale of music, chiefly based on hypnotism. We must put on one side an examination of its text, in which is found a study of the Bohemian life of Paris of much interest, pass over the psychological probings and Mr. du Maurier's *laissez faire* theology, that stands for a system of future rewards and punishments, and come to the strictly musical side of this novel. It may perhaps be deemed hazardous to ignore the general chorus of adulation with which this very popular three-volume novel has been received, but in truth it possesses an impossible musical plot, and attention may well be directed to its musical diction. "Trilby" furnishes yet another illustration of how confidently persons talk about music who like the art, and possibly have some knowledge of it in its technical aspect, but certainly not enough to venture into print—or, for the matter of that, to chatter about it in drawing-rooms when a little music is going on.

That Mr. du Maurier has a keen sympathy with music is certain enough, in that he has chosen it as the basis on which his story rests; that his book will satisfy musicians is quite another matter. Having said this much we may now glance at the theory put forth and examine the diction in which the musical part of the novel is couched.

Of the plot it is enough to say that Miss Trilby O'Ferrall was the daughter of a shady Irish clergyman, who had deemed it advisable to retire to Paris, where he met an English barmaid, and Trilby was the issue of the union. Her parents died early, and the girl became an assistant in a laundry and later an artist's model. She sat to have her beautiful feet painted and sometimes "for the altogeth'er." In the Quartier Latin she made the acquaintance of three young English students, familiarly termed Little Billy, Taffy, and the Laird. These, more or less in love with Trilby, are her true friends throughout the book. The other acquaintances with whom she was to be in closer communion were Svengali, a German Jew and highly gifted musician, and Gecko his pupil, whom Svengali had taught to play the violin. These two were *also* in love with Trilby. Svengali was a detestable character, but he possessed much skill and had a keen knowledge of music. Eventually he succeeded in getting hold of Trilby, and she remained his dazed slave until his death, though why, when possessing the opportunity, he did not marry her, we are left to wonder about. Trilby is said to have had a rich speaking voice, but was "*absolutely tone-deaf and without ear*; her attempts at singing were simply grotesque." At a sort of free and easy musical evening in the rooms of the three young painters, Svengali and Gecko had performed some music, the former subsequently playing on the piano another piece, "striking wrong notes, and banging out the bass in a different key," a singularly unpleasant operation, and, as Mr. du Maurier puts it as to transposing the bass, a difficult thing to achieve. Little Billy is supposed to be of good birth, and, it may be presumed, had moved in decently good society in England before he went to wicked Paris, and yet, according to the author, "at home he had never heard anything but British provincial home-made music—melodies with variations, 'Annie Laurie,' 'The last Rose of Summer,' 'The Blue Bells of Scotland.'" So Little Billy must have been very unfortunate; the echo of better music ought to have reached even his *locale*. "Then Svengali and Gecko made music together divinely. Little fragmentary things, sometimes consisting of but a few bars, but these bars of *such* beauty and meaning!" Extempore duet performances, though very rare, are not unknown; they show quick ears, sensibility, and gifts granted to few. Further on we meet with something much more astonishing in the

duet way. Svengali played Schubert's "Rosemonde" (*sic*), and this spelling is repeated in an absurd description of what "Rosemonde" was, and of Schubert's pianoforte playing. Perhaps Mr. du Maurier is not aware that the "Rosamunde Music" consists of a number of separate pieces. Did Svengali play the delightful pastoral overture, or the entr'actes, or ballet music, or shepherd's song, or what? Trilby contributed a song she had heard her father sing—the only piece in her *répertoire*. "She sang 'Ben Bolt' in a volume of breathy sound, not loud but immense. She followed more or less the shape of the tune, going up when it rose and down when it fell, but with such immense intervals between the notes as were never dreamed of in any mortal melody." This description would seem to contradict the statement that she was "*absolutely* tone-deaf and without ear." So much for the musical powers of Mr. du Maurier's heroine.

As the evening progressed there was more music. "Svengali played a masterly prelude. It was impressive to hear the complicated richness and volume of the sounds he evoked," which reminds one of a certain wonderful and great Amen, which arose from some "noisy keys" and is never to be heard again on earth. Then he and Gecko played together a simple melody. "They went from one key to another, and fugued, and canoned, and counterpointed, and battledored and shuttlecocked it high and low, soft and loud, in minor, in pizzicato, and in sordino—adagio, andante, allegretto, scherzo—and exhausted all its possibilities of beauty." This was indeed "a wonderful double improvisation," as the enthusiastic author terms it. It is almost a pity to take the edge off this technical account of the performance by a comment. Of course the writer understands the difference between a fugue, canon, and counterpoint; it would have been kind if he had vouchsafed a little further information about playing "in sordino," but the wonder of the whole thing is the fugue. Extemporaneous fugues we know, but a fugue in duet form, made up extempore by the two players as they went on, is indeed a marvel, the impossibility of which one may venture to think even our imaginative author hardly appreciates. Then Svengali calls on Gecko to play him "a little accompaniment in pizzicato. And he pulled out of his pocket a kind of little flexible flageolet (of his own invention), which he screwed together and put to his lips; and on this humble instrument he played 'Ben Bolt,' while Gecko accompanied him, using his fiddle as a guitar." Here indeed is a marvel! The most elementary knowledge of acoustics teaches us that in order to obtain certain and positive notes from tubes we *must* have these of a definite and unvarying length; any deviation from this rigid law

would vary the pitch of the several notes produced, and so a "flexible" flageolet, constantly altering in size and varying the length of the vibrating column of wind, would be an eccentric, uncertain toy, not a practicable musical instrument. Mr. D. J. Blaikley, the eminent authority on "the wind," should forthwith procure a Svengali elastic whistle and exhibit it at one of the meetings of the Musical Association. And this is the description of the performance: "It would be impossible to render in any words the deftness, the distinction, the grace, power, pathos, and passion with which this truly phenomenal artist executed the poor old twopenny tune on this elastic penny whistle; such thrilling, vibrating, piercing tenderness; now loud and full, a shrill scream of anguish; now soft as a whisper, a mere melodic breath, more human almost than the human voice itself." This marvellous penny-whistle music enabled one of the hearers to see "even into eternity itself, beyond the veil."

Svengali had been "the best pianist of his time at the Conservatory in Leipsic," and we learn that though "he gave a peculiar individual charm of his own to any music he played, yet in the highest and best of all he conspicuously failed." So the pianistic standard at Leipsic must have been singularly low during his period of tuition. "He was absolutely without voice beyond the harsh, hoarse, weak raven's croak he used to speak with." To quote again: "He went on for ever singing in his head as probably no human nightingale has ever yet been able to sing out loud. He took the cheapest trivialest tune, and by his magic could transform it into the *rarest beauty* without altering a note." Here again is a wonder! If it means that he produced this magical effect merely by the exhibition of light and shade, phrasing and *tempo rubato*, and no more, all musicians will deny the wild assertion that even such artistic devices could make an inherently vulgar tune one of the rarest beauty. As well pretend that a vulgar speech could be transformed into an eloquent sentence merely by the mode in which its words were pronounced. Quite true that art adorns, but it is certainly powerless to make a vulgar tune into one of "the rarest beauty without altering a note."

"Svengali playing Chopin on the pianoforte, or 'Ben Bolt' on that penny whistle of his was as one of the heavenly host." May one say, without irreverence, then we are very sorry for the heavenly host! In the Apocalypse we read of the harps of gold on which the angels play, and which we are to enjoy hereafter. It would now seem that the Apostle did not reveal to us all the musical glories; there should be added to the harps George du Maurier's "elastic penny whistle."

Mdlle. Honorine, a pupil of Svengali, is a contralto possessing "the deep, low voice that breaks and changes in

the middle and soars all at once into a magnified angelic boy treble. This strange voice seems to pierce the hearts and stir the very vitals. It was indeed a fine voice of the Seraphim type. Even beauty paled before that lovely female voice singing in the *middle* of the note." Then it is declared that this young person "had not the voice of Madame Alboni, nor the art; but it was a beautiful voice of its little kind, always in the very middle of the note." It is something to be instructed that the Seraphim are contraltos; no doubt the Cherubim are the sopranos of the heavenly host. Old and hardened choirmasters will smile over the "angelic boy treble"; but what of "the middle of the note"? That seems like another way of saying that the Seraphim sing out of tune, and for persistence in this some choirmasters have a habit of using an implement now banished from such excellent places as Board Schools.

The friends went to have a little supper at a noted place in the Palais Royal, where a waiter could say "'Boum' in basso profundo *Tiefstimme*—F *moll* below the line—it is phenomenal!" So we should think. One could understand this German waiter speaking on the low F, but why F *moll*? Herr Formes, in Haydn's "sinuous worm," crawled down to C; but even this accomplished musician could only sing the *scale* of F minor or major, like any other scale, *one* note at a time. If Mr. du Maurier would kindly state the difference between the sound of the respective tonics of F *moll* and F *dur* he might possibly save some unfortunates from being plucked over a catch question in an examination paper.

Events run on, and the interesting model and getter up of fine linen—*blanchissage de fin*—disappears; she departs from Paris at the entreaty of Mrs. Bagot, Little Billy's mother, who hurries over to the gay city alarmed at the prospect of her son marrying such a person. Then we are introduced to the new Trilby, known as Madame Svengali. It seems that Svengali once "heard Litolf tell Meyerbeer that she had the most beautiful voice in Europe, but was TONE-DEAF, and could not sing one single note in tune." At the end of the novel we learn from Gecko's confession that when Svengali secured Trilby he and Gecko taught her, working her six hours a day for three years, the elastic penny whistle and Gecko's violin being the means employed. Further than this, Svengali mesmerised her, and placed her under hypnotic influence when she had to sing; in this way she made appearances at all the great opera houses (in a strange variety sort of entertainment), exciting such a furore of adulation and praise never before witnessed. As yet we hardly know what hypnotism is, and the possibilities of what can be done under its influence. But this we do know—viz., that it *cannot alter*

physical conditions, and on these depend the quality of the voice, and likewise the delicate appreciation of sounds. The contour of a person's larynx, soft palate, vocal cords, and throat, together with tone-deafness, could not alter under hypnotism, any more than could one make the dumb speak, or a person lift a weight say of 100 tons. Training should render the voice flexible, &c., and should improve the ear; but this seems not to have been enough for Trilby, and so when she had to appear in public, her master had to place her in a kind of mesmeric trance lest she should relapse into the old way. The idea is absurd. That this distinct surmounting of physical impossibilities is what the author intends us to believe has been accomplished is plain, as we shall see in the final catastrophe in the theatre, where her reputed husband dropped dead, and forthwith she forgot all that had been instilled in her, and shouted "Ben Bolt" as she sang it to the three painters during her early days in the Quartier Latin. This absurdity will not stand examination; we are expected to believe the impossible, for here we are dealing with *sober facts*, and not the licence of a novelist's supernatural mysticism. The improved Trilby could never have forgotten her years of training, and so could not have sung "Ben Bolt" in a volume of breathy sounds, with immense "intervals between the notes." Nor, shortly after this, could she again have sung Chopin's Impromptu so exquisitely, merely as the result of unexpectedly beholding her old master's portrait.

But let us come to the description of her first public appearance at Paris, where her three old friends journeyed from London to hear the now famous singer. According to one of her admirers she had a compass of four octaves, and "*everything* that Paganini could do with his violin, she did with her voice—only better." As Paganini sometimes played sustained chords with a loose-haired bow, this comparison is manifestly impossible—unless, indeed, the wonders of hypnotism include the power of making a singer sing in two, three, or four parts! Trilby was to sing among other pieces "*Un impromptu de Chopin sans paroles.*" But she commenced "with '*Au clair de la lune,*' the second verse being sung with a sort of breathy widening of her voice that made it like a broad heavenly smile of universal motherhood turned into sound." What does this mean? When she sang the verse for the last time "she veiled and darkened her voice, and it was a great and sombre tragedy, . . . the most pathetic of all possible human tragedies, but expressed with no dramatic or histrionic exaggeration of any sort; by mere tone, slight, subtle changes in the quality of the sound—too quick and elusive to be taken count of, but to be felt with, oh, what poignant sympathy!" What an

opening there would be for the writer of this gush on some American general newspaper! In singing Schumann's "Nussbaum," "every separate note was a highly-finished gem of sound, linked to the next by a magic bond." The mere melodic phrase had all but ceased to matter. Her phrasing, consummate as it was, was as simple as a child's." If she could not phrase such a song better than a simple child could do, it did not say much for her voice training and matured artistic experience! Then she sang "Malbrouck s'en va t'en guerre" with various and the most extraordinarily different sentiments. In the course of it, "Quite suddenly, without a *single modulation* or note of warning, down goes the tune a full major third, from E to C." As she was singing to the accompaniment of a full band, it seems very likely that the sudden unmodulated change involved a few consecutive octaves and fifths. But, as Toole says in the play, "Oh! that aint nothink." Then she vocalised Chopin's Impromptu in A flat as few pianists can even play it. "Every phrase is a string of perfect gems of purest ray serene, strung together on a loose golden thread! The higher and shriller she sings, the sweeter it is; higher and shriller than any woman had ever sung before." There are nearly three pages of this ecstatic rhapsodising. It reminds one of some of the long drawn out and extravagant descriptions of Rabelais, only that Mr. du Maurier has more ideality, and does not deal quite so extensively in clotted adjectives.

Chopin's music sung by Trilby has completely ravished the author, as the French say. Here is a further outburst: "Waves of sweet laughter, the freshness of the morning, the ripple of the stream, the click of the mill, the lisp of the wind in the trees, the song of the lark in the cloudless sky, the sun and the dew, the scent of early flowers and summer meadows, the sight of birds and bees and frolicsome young animals at play (&c.). All that is in Trilby's voice as she warbled that wonderful song. A joy there is no telling, a clear crystal stream that gurgles and foams and babbles along over sunlit stones, a wonder, a world's delight. Finally it dies away like the afterglow of fading Bengal fires, ending *pianissimo* on E in alt. Then, darkness and silence."

Perhaps no one would be more astonished to read these esoteric and much mixed qualities of Chopin's favourite piece than the master himself, were he alive. If all this were put into verse, despite its extravagance it might stand as a tribute of poetic homage to the suggestive music; but in elaborated prose, its confused imagery and wild contrasts tend to make the whole thing ridiculous.

Let us now glance at this piece of music. Chopin wrote four Impromptus. Only one of them is in A flat—viz.,

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end. We are thus required to believe that a great and experienced singer, with a perfectly trained and highly cultivated voice and ear, could suddenly forget all she had learnt and sing grotesquely and *out of tune* as in her younger days! All this is as impossible as it would be for a University graduate who had recently taken his degree, and retained his senses, to forget the whole of his accumulated knowledge of years. The only clue we have to the situation is, that on this occasion Svengali did not say "Et maintenant dors ma mignonne"! As has already been said, the putting a person into an hypnotic state cannot alter *physical conditions*, and on these depend singing, certainly not on the mere desire of the will.

But Trilby's extraordinary powers were not yet over. She was taken to some lodging and carefully tended by her devoted friends until her death. Someone sent her from Germany a finely executed portrait of Svengali, and a glance at this made Trilby once more burst out with the Chopin "Impromptu," singing her best. Her voice was ineffably seductive (ineffably, by the way, means that which cannot be spoken about—i.e., *impossible* to be described); but Mr. du Maurier again goes into raptures and says very much. I will only quote: Trilby's voice suggests "sudden exotic warmths, fragrances, tendernesses, graces, depths and breadths; quick changes from grave to gay, from rough to smooth, from great metallic brazen clangours to soft golden suavities." It seems "she was using the essence of her voice—in fact, the pure spirit, the very *cream* of it." It would have been interesting anatomically if the author had told us a little more about the "cream" of the voice. Surely our word "cream" comes from the Latin *cremor*, the thick juice of steeped barley. Shakespeare, in his "Merchant of Venice," says: "There are a sort of men whose visages do *cream* and mantle like a standing pond"; but this was a picturesque expression, Mr. du Maurier's seems something more tangible. It was the swan song, and with the E in alt on her lips poor Trilby died.

Some years after this one of the friends went to Paris and there came across Gecko playing the fiddle at a music hall. He was invited to supper, plied with some choice Chambertin, and, in response to a request to solve the Trilby mystery, he said: "*There were two Trilbys.* There was the Trilby who could not sing one single note in tune, and could not tell one tune from another. Then there was the other; with one look of his eye, with a word, Svengali could turn her into the other Trilby—his Trilby—and make her do whatever he liked . . . you might have run a red-hot needle into her and she would not have felt it. He had but to say '*Dors!*' and she suddenly became an unconscious Trilby,

who could produce wonderful sounds—just the sounds he wanted and nothing else, and think his thoughts, and wish his wishes. When Svengali's Trilby was singing, or seemed to you as if she were singing, *our* Trilby had ceased to exist . . . *our* Trilby was fast asleep . . . in fact, *our* Trilby was *dead*. We took her voice note by note; there was no end to her notes, each more beautiful than the other—velvet and gold, beautiful flowers, pearls, diamonds, rubies, drops of dew and honey, peaches, oranges, and lemons! *en veux-tu en voilà!* all the perfumes and spices of the Garden of Eden. Svengali, with his little flexible flageolet, I with my violin—that is how we taught her to make the sounds, and then how to use them. She could keep on one note and make it go through all the colours of the rainbow, according to the way Svengali looked at her. It was the sweetest, the most touching, the most beautiful note you ever heard—except all the others! and each had as many overtones as the bells in the carillon of Notre Dame. She was the greatest contralto, the greatest soprano the world has ever known!" And here I will take leave of "Trilby" and its musical wonders.

In an interesting short history of the organ at Trinity College, Cambridge, Mr. Gerard Cobb (one of our members) remarks: "Writers of even the highest repute venture (perfectly gratuitously) into the domain of musical terminology without the slightest trace of any misgiving as to the result." I venture to think that I have shown you how true is this condemnation, for you have heard extracts from the works of those who are distinctly representative novelists and are able to judge for yourselves as to their value. I have little time to read novels, but, so far as my acquaintance with them goes, I do not observe that novelists write on drawing, painting, sculpture, engraving, architecture, and other arts and scientific subjects with the air of familiarity and affectation of technical knowledge which they certainly assume towards music. Is this because they are afraid of being more readily found out if they go wrong? or is it that their knowledge of other art matters is in advance of their shallow guesses about music? To a great extent the remedy lies with the reading public. I agree with Professor Waldo Pratt in his appeal, and I will conclude by offering the same advice as was given by a great statesman on an important occasion: Educate, educate, educate! If only musicians would induce more young persons to take a warmer interest in music in their early days, and obtain sufficient knowledge of the art in its general bearings to be able to talk rationally about it, such huge blunders as I have brought before you this afternoon would no longer be rife. Until this riper knowledge becomes more general, may I, borrowing some of

the words from a well-known exhortation, advise novelists to take their manuscript to some learned and discreet person who will give them sound advice, if not comfort, and help them over their musical troubles. No one likes being laughed at for ignorance and conceit. Were the art more widely cultivated and better understood by the bulk of novel readers, the *writers* of these works would either leave music alone or acquire some more accurate knowledge of it than the bulk of them display at present.

DISCUSSION.

PROFESSOR BRIDGE.—A feeling has come over me whilst listening to this paper which I expect has come over all of you. I thought the subject—please excuse the joke—was a novel one, and this Association is always glad to have anything of a new, interesting, or unthreadbare character. I am bound to confess, however, that as the lecturer went on I was astonished, for I never before thought such stuff and twaddle could be written. Mr. Southgate has evoked in my bosom a feeling of disgust and anger, for I think it a perfect disgrace that our art should be so travestied. Mr. Southgate deserves our thanks for exposing these writers who are supposed to be sensible and learned people. Respecting the bagpipes, I might mention that I have seen in Scotland men playing them as well as singing. Of course they might have been the old Irish pipes, but I think that the bags of the Scotch pipes can be filled for a few seconds and played on whilst one is singing. I am glad we do not often find serious musical blunders in the Press, although I remember hearing of a new organ being described in one paper as an intricate arrangement of diapasons and fugues! The novelists seem rather fond of fugues. Such trash and twaddle as is to be found in the books mentioned by Mr. Southgate, especially in "*Trilby*," deserves our condemnation. Perhaps the day will come when novelists will understand something of the art, instead of writing absurdities, which not only make the writers themselves ridiculous, but, in the case of popular authors, must injure the art in the eyes of those readers who know little of it.

MR. GILBERT WEBB.—Perhaps it may serve to soothe the righteous indignation of the Chairman to know that I have recently been asked to edit the references made to music in a forthcoming volume by a well-known novelist, which would seem to indicate an awakening on the part of writers of fiction to a sense of their shortcomings. With regard to the

musical sins of "Ouida," there is a delightful passage in that lady's "Signa" referring to the destruction of the hero's violin, in which we are told that "The wooden shell he could piece together well enough; but the keys were smashed beyond all chance of restoration!"

Dr. MACLEAN referred to a musical novel "Alcestis," which did not contain defects such as those adverted to by the lecturer. The plot dealt with the times of Hasse, 150 years ago in Dresden, and with two young people in love. The hero wrote an opera, "Alcestis," based on the old Greek tragedy of feminine self-sacrifice, but could not get it performed, and was dying. The heroine, unknown to him, married the director of the theatre on condition that he produced the work, and the hero died happy while not conscious of the sacrifice which had been made. The technicalities of the book were well got up, and it was, in fact, free from nonsense. It was published anonymously about twenty years ago by Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.; but was written by the wife of an Eton master, Mrs. Frank Cornish, a lady of much distinction. Dr. Maclean submitted that, in his opinion, this was the best musical novel yet written in English.

Professor BRIDGE said he knew of the book and also knew the lady when he lived at Windsor. He proposed a most cordial vote of thanks to the lecturer for his interesting paper. This was carried unanimously.