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JANUARY 7, 1878.

JOHN STAINER, Esq., Mus. Doc., IN THE CHAIR.

ON THE LAWS OF MUSICAL EXPRESSION, AS
FORMULATED BY M. LUSSY IN HIS '*TRAITE DE
L'EXPRESSION MUSICALE*.'

By J. SPENCER CUEWEN, Esq.

THIS paper is addressed to teachers, rather than to artists. In it I present to you a summary of Lussy's Treatise on Musical Expression—a work published in Paris in 1874, and now in its second edition. I know nothing of the author beyond his own statement, that for twenty years he has been a professor of the pianoforte in Paris. His work is dedicated to M. Gevaert, principal of the Brussels Conservatoire, 'who,' says the author, 'when illustrious theorists and composers declared that a treatise on expression was impossible, encouraged me to proceed and gave me valuable advice.' Musical people all shake their heads at the notion of reducing to rule such an intangible thing as expression. As well, they will say, might we show a person how to love, as how to impart feeling to what he plays. Of course there is much truth in this, but let us try for the moment to allay our prejudices, and hear what M. Lussy has to say.

In these modern times, he remarks, the popularisation of music is wonderful, but expression, which is the soul of music, remains the possession of a few gifted natures. We meet with many clever executants, but few expressive players. The reason of this is evident. Formerly, only persons of musical talent cultivated music, but now society will have everybody to learn, and everybody has not musical feeling. Eminent professors have come to the help of executants who are wanting in musical feeling, and have annotated for expression many of the vocal and instrumental works of the greatest composers. By strict observance of their marks, the least gifted player may arrive at some appearance of artistic performance, but these marks carry him no further than the piece they are applied to. They address the eye, not the intelligence; they tell us *where* we are to give expression, not *why*. What the pupil wants to know is, why he

should play a passage in one way rather than another; *piano* rather than *forte*, *rallentando* rather than *accelerando*, &c. Musicians think it is sufficient if they abandon themselves to caprice, forgetting that even in musical expression all is cause and effect, and that in a truly artistic interpretation no note will be arbitrarily accented. M. Lussy says that the object of his work is to furnish rules which will enable every executant to play with expression. He disclaims being a lawgiver. The rules he mentions are, he says, unconsciously observed by all great masters, and instinctively artists of every sort have conformed to them. His work has been to classify and formulate.

The origin of the book is this. Twenty-years ago, when the author was appointed professor of the pianoforte at one of the great boarding-schools in Paris, the lady principal asked him to give the pupils rules for playing with expression, not this or that piece, learnt with difficulty and soon forgotten, but all pieces; he found, of course, that no such rules existed, and therefore sought by observation to arrive at the facts. For twenty years he listened to the best artists and made notes of their variations in force and speed. After a time he became convinced that in the same passages these artists gave in the main the *same expression*.

We shall understand M. Lussy's position better by an illustration. Suppose I distribute copies of a Sonata that is absolutely new to you all, and which is without any marks of expression. I ask you to indicate the expression by marks of your own. Of course there will be many differences, but will there not be more coincidences? Will not the cutting of the phrases, the emphasis of notes and chords, the points of *crescendo*, *diminuendo*, *rallentando*, &c., be for the most part the same? If you deny that there will be any agreement, M. Lussy will give you up; if you admit it, he will claim you as a colleague.

It may naturally be said by some, 'We admit this general agreement, but every professor understands it, and would insist upon the same outline of expression.' The answer to this is, Do the pupils understand it? Do they as a rule play with expression or without it? and when they leave us are they able to discover for themselves the appropriate reading of a new piece?

Lussy meets also another objection: that if we lay down rules we limit the play of feeling. There will always be plenty of scope, he says, for that magnetic fluid which escapes analysis, and, with a truly French neatness of expression, he reminds us that knowledge is liberty, but ignorance is licence.

The author describes the three elements of modern music as Tonality, Measure, and Rhythm: in other words, the key-relationship of tones, the regular recurrence of accents, and the division of music into phrases. When the performance of any kind of music begins, the ear takes note of the key, the measure, and the shape of the phrases. The memory guides the expectation, and anything which breaks the regularity is noticed. Music is of course full of such irregularities, and it is they that especially

excite feeling. The less a note or phrase is desired by the ear, the more force it should receive, as if only by violence can we make the ear forget its desires and associations, and form new ones. Let the professor draw his pupil's attention to the contexture of the phrases, to the harmonic and melodic changes, to the tonal, modal, metrical, and rhythmic irregularities—in a word, to the exceptional, unexpected notes, the true germs of beauty, which give birth to expression, and which need his special care. In this way he will keep alive the attention of the pupil, develop his musical feeling, and cultivate in him the invaluable habit of observing, comparing, and analysing.

Passing over tonality, the first element of modern music, the author devotes his book to the consideration of accent. This, he says, is of three sorts: metric accent, which addresses the musical instinct, and makes even the uncultured beat time to the music they hear; rhythmic accent, which addresses the musical intelligence, and is to music what punctuation is to speech; and pathetic accent, which addresses the musical feeling. Measure accent is important, but it must give way, when necessary, to phrase accent, and pathetic accent overrides both. The final chapters are devoted to light and shade, and metronomic speed.

Lussy takes Rhythmic accent first. He dwells on the importance of phrasing, and the want of a special sign in music to mark a phrase, the long curved line being used indifferently to express a *legato* or a musical clause. He says that a child should be taught, from the first time he learns, to notice the periodic recurrence of symmetrical phrases, two and two, four and four, or eight and eight measures responding to each other. This is illustrated by quotations from songs, which are marked for phrasing. He divides phrases into regular and irregular. Regular phrases have an even number of measures, irregular phrases have an odd number, and, he says, are really regular, but for effect have been expanded or contracted, or contain a repetition, echo, or melodic sequence. Of course, it is these irregularities which give point to the music, and to omit them destroys its beauty. Lussy's object is only to show that they are departures from strict rule. He explains the similarity between the *phrase* in music and the *line* in poetry. This practical remark is useful, that pupils in going over a difficult passage, when practising, should be taught to take it up at the beginning of the *phrase* to which it belongs, and not at the *bar*, as they generally do.

Within musical phrases there are *subdivisions* or *phraselets*, as one might say, the accentuation of which is important. Every instruction book for the violin, says Lussy, applies this minute study of accent to the most elementary exercises. Pianoforte primers, on the contrary, only give the notes, and young players are content to play in a flat and uniform manner. Here is a passage given by Kalkbrenner, as capable of different readings, according to its place in the music:—

Lussy's notion of the subdivision of phrases, as far as the piano-forte is concerned, is founded on what he calls 'wrist articulation.' Within a phrase which is contained in one long slur indicating *legato*, there are often places where the pianist is obliged to lift his wrist. As often as these wrist articulations occur, so many phrase subdivisions are there. Examples:—

Lussy enters minutely into the rules of phrasing. Many of those which he gives seem to me made for single cases. He ends by saying:—'In quick movements we must not make sub-divisions of the phrases. It is better not to make incisions at all, than to make too many, and so give a halting effect to the music. Feeling, here as everywhere, must be the principal guide. Intelligent practice will so sharpen the taste of the musician, that intuitively he will make incisions which no rule could foresee or prescribe.' For a rule-maker like Lussy, this seems rather an impotent conclusion. But even if phrases be too various and individual to be classified under any set of rules, yet the study of his examples cannot but be useful to the player.

To show what a delicate thing a musical phrase is, and how its

character may be changed by adding or suppressing a note, Lussy quotes the following passage from an air by Mozart:—

This has been set to words by a French editor, and the words being Iambic, require a note to be added at the beginning of the first line, so that each phrase begins on the *lust* of the measure instead of the *first*:—

This upsets the whole character of the phrase. As Lussy says: 'Its pastoral character is gone. We no longer hear the song of the shepherd, but the sobs of an affected lady in a fit of hysterics, sighing for her scent-bottle.'

In a chapter on Musical Prosody, Lussy dwells on the importance of the phrases of music and words, of sound and sense corresponding. His examples are interesting, but as the point is obvious, I pass on.

The rules for the accent of *measures*—I adopt the French word instead of the English 'bar'—are those that every one knows. The first note of a measure has a strong accent. In two-time the second note is weak, in three-time the second and third are weak, in four-time the second and fourth are weak. Then come the exceptions: weak beats become strong if they contain syncopated notes. A single note which carries on the march of the music, while the other parts are postponed, must be strong though it occurs on a weak beat:—

BERTHOVEN.

Repeated notes are always strong:—

WEBER.

Lastly, every note preceded by a silence is strong.

In applying these rules of accent, Lussy speaks of the importance of grouping quavers and semiquavers so as to show the accents. He complains of triplets in common time not being marked, and says that notes should be so arranged that it is impossible for the pupil to confound $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{8}$ time. Referring to *Adagios*, *Largos*, &c., with eight, twelve, sixteen, or twenty-four notes to a beat, Lussy recommends that such measures should be mentally subdivided. The eye cannot take in so large a space, and needs points of repose; much less can the ear preserve the feeling of unity and regularity, when the recurring accents are too distant. As the phrases of waltzes are generally of two measures, that is, of six beats, he recommends counting, beating, and regarding them as if they were in $\frac{3}{4}$ time instead of $\frac{3}{8}$.

We now come to Pathetic Accent. This, says Lussy, might be called Poetic Accent, and to an Englishman the word Poetic better expresses his meaning. It springs from the soul, and is not subject to any regularity. It affects one note or many; it falls anywhere—on the weak beat or the strong, on the initial or final note of a phrase. The essence of its character is defined in one word—‘the unexpected.’ Whatever its place, it provokes the most delicate contrasts and moving alternations. Under its influence the artist, conquered and carried away, translates his emotions not only by redoubled energy and increase of tone, but also by acceleration of speed, necessarily followed by a lassitude, a sort of languishing in the tone and movement, whence spring a thousand charming contrasts and poetic shadings. Pathetic Accent is provoked by the unexpected. Whatever breaks the routine of key, measure, or phrase, and imposes upon the ear new desires, new attractions, requires to be forced upon the mind, which is disturbed and arrested. Our first tendency is to regard these intruding notes as false, but immediately perceiving that they are conformable to law, and only form new centres of attraction, the mind accepts them. The artist gives expression to this struggle by more intense sonority, and by greater animation. A frequent cause of pathetic accent is the Syncopation, which is familiar to all. Another is repeated notes, which demand a *crescendo* :—

When in an answering phrase a group of short notes takes the place of the longer ones, we accent them heavily. You all know

the following air from the 'Daughter of the Regiment.' The first four notes are answered in the fifth measure by seven, and we accent the additional notes heavily:—

DONIZETTI.

When we come upon a measure containing one note to a beat, after measures containing divided beats, these single notes receive an accent:—

DONIZETTI.

Similarly, when we come upon unexpected triplets, these are accented:—

BELLINI.

When we leap to a high note, it bears an accent:—

GOUNOD.

When we leap to a high note and then descend through a series

of notes, we glide to the high note, but detach the descending notes :—

Lussy happily compares this effect to the rebounding of an india-rubber ball when dropped to the floor, each rebound smaller than the last. Here is another example, in which the high note is reached by a run :—

Chromatic notes are always accented :—

Every note or passage which causes a displacement of key or

mode is accented. 'The tonic,' says Lussy, 'is a king who cannot be dethroned without a struggle.' The more remote the transition, the greater the emphasis required :—

AUBER.

Two systems of musical notation for Aubert. The first system is marked *p* (piano) and features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with block chords. The second system is marked *ff* (fortissimo) and includes accents (^) over notes in both staves.

BEETHOVEN.

Three systems of musical notation for Beethoven. The first system is marked *cres.* (crescendo) and includes triplets (3) in the bass staff. The second system is marked *sf* (sforzando), *accel.* (accelerando), and *sf*. The third system is marked *ff* (fortissimo), *rall.* (rallentando), and *ff*. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings throughout.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a violin part with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment with chords. The piano part is marked *mf*. The second system continues the piece, with the violin part marked *ff* and *rall.* (rallentando). The piano part continues with chords. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/8.

Above all, emphasis must be given to *enharmonic changes*, which are the strongest form of modulation.

Lussy then gives examples of chromatic chords receiving accent:—

The musical score is for Weber's piece. It features a violin part with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment with chords. The piano part is marked *f*. The key signature is one sharp (F-sharp), and the time signature is 3/8.

BEETHOVEN.

The musical score is for Beethoven's piece. It features a violin part with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment with chords. The piano part is marked *cres.* (crescendo) and *ff* (fortissimo). The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/8.

Harmonic appoggiaturas are always accented.

BEETHOVEN.

Dissonances of long duration need to receive emphasis. 'The more heterogeneous elements a chord contains,' says Lussy, 'the more dissonant and hard it is, the greater vigour of attack it requires. The ear will not submit to such a dissonance unless it is imposed upon it by something like brute force.' The example is a daring and beautiful dissonance in the *Adagio* of the 'Moonlight Sonata.'

In concluding this chapter, Lussy says that the Pathetic Accent should be wholly avoided in pieces of a quick movement. In those of moderate speed, we must employ it with prudence. Nothing is so pretentious as a simple and uniform piece overcharged with pathetic accent.

The next chapter is on variations of movement as affected by feeling, *accelerando*, *rallentando*, &c. Lussy notices the two schools whose practice is here in conflict. For one school, to play with the regularity and precision of a machine is the height of perfection; for the other, there is nothing disagreeable in the halting execution which varies the movement with each phrase. The one sacrifices detail to unity, the other, unity to detail. For himself, he would conciliate both general interests and particular rights, and keep a happy medium.

First, as to *accelerando*, I quote a few of the examples and rules.

A repeated group of notes, with a bass moving stepwise, up or down, is accelerated:—

We quicken at a phrase accompanied by full chords, following one which is in arpeggio :—

FIELD.

accel.

Among the rules for the *rallentando* is this : we slacken when a high note responds to a low one in an answering phrase :—

AUBER.

rall.

A *rallentando* occurs in a melody ascending stepwise, especially when followed by a leap to a long note :—

BEETHOVEN.

accel.

rall.

This *rallentando* is above all necessary when the highest note is repeated :—

MOZART.

rall.

While some passages excite animation, others, on the contrary, invite calm, sadness, and reverie. Of this sort is the following, where a phrase heard in the major is repeated in the minor :—

ROSSINI.

In such a case we naturally slacken.

The most frequent *rallentando* takes place at the end of a soft and sweet phrase. It is only players of the most mediocre sort who do not employ it there instinctively.

Lussy has a good paragraph on the expression of *ascending* phrases. 'All ascent is struggle; physically as well as mentally, it is to raise one's self to a higher point against the tendencies of nature. The steeper the road, the more energy we must display. The more energy we put forth, the more rapidly does the pulse beat, the more animated do we feel, but withal, the more rapid is our exhaustion. Once at the summit we breathe freely. This comparison furnishes us with a simple explanation of the tendency of musicians to begin an ascending phrase quickly, and slacken towards its end. It also explains to us the disposition to pause or drag upon high notes.' Lussy adds a useful remark, that the soloist can allow himself modifications of movement which in an orchestra are inadmissible. Here each individual must lose himself in the general result, and sacrifice any niceties of expression which may belong to the shape of his own part.

We now come to Shading: the gradual passing from loud to soft, or soft to loud. The effect of this is to poetise the musical picture, by blending the otherwise too startling contrasts of light and shadow.

The first rule is, that ascending passages should be *crescendo*, for the reasons already given. Descending passages should be *diminuendo*. To descend is to relax effort. It is not necessary to illustrate these familiar rules. There are of course exceptions to these two rules. If a descending passage contains modulation or chromatic or dissonant notes that need to be impressed upon the ear, it must be *crescendo*, and on the other hand, cases may be found in which an ascending passage should be *diminuendo*.

The need of *contrast* is so imperious, that before it all else gives way. Even a passage which by its own contexture calls for vehemence, becomes piano if it follows one more vehement still. There is a phrase in the *Adagio* of the 'Sonata Pathétique' which, by its ascending shape and leap to a high note, requires *crescendo*. (See beginning of fifth measure of quotation.) But it is overshadowed by the more commanding passage im-

mediately before, and is therefore played *pianissimo* :—

BEETHOVEN.

The musical score is for a section of Beethoven's Sonata Pathétique. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a piano (left) staff and a right-hand staff. The piano staff features a series of chords and arpeggiated figures, with a large slur over a group of notes. The right-hand staff has a melodic line with a slur. The second system also has a piano and right-hand staff. The piano staff continues the chordal texture, and the right-hand staff has a melodic line. Dynamics are marked as *f* (forte), *rall.* (rallentando), and *pp* (pianissimo). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 2/4.

In practice, Lussy recommends players to study a new piece for themselves—notice the modulations, the shape of the phrases, the rhythmic repetitions. If there is a kind of dialogue, the question and answer should be contrasted in tone. Many musicians, he says, think that in a very soft passage all accent should disappear. This is a mistake. The dynamic proportions must always be preserved.

The last chapter is on Metronomic movement. Lussy complains that the Italian terms which describe speed are wanting in precision. According to those who employ them, these terms have very varied meanings. This fact he proves by giving the metronome marks of four editors of the 'Sonata Pathétique,' which show how various are their interpretations of Beethoven's terms, *grave*, *allegro*, *adagio*, &c.

Every composer should mark the speed of his movements by the metronome, but Lussy goes so far as to doubt if he can be trusted to do this. 'The author,' he says, 'at the moment when he has given birth to his composition, is in a state of excitement, and has a tendency to exaggerate the movement, whether in the direction of slowness or quickness. He may even be mistaken as to the character of his work, and prescribe a

movement inappropriate to it.' This last statement, which Lussy allows to be an astonishing one, is proved by reference to the two pieces known as Weber's Last Waltz, and Beethoven's 'Le Désir.' These are taken from sets of waltzes, yet played in waltz time they would lose all their beauty. The public, says Lussy, has fixed the *true* rate of movement for these compositions as well as for many others.

The general rule for deciding a movement Lussy illustrates by an analogy. Everybody knows, he says, that the fewer and simpler are the lines of a picture, the farther off must we be to judge of it as a whole. While, if its lines are complex and numerous, we must draw near to distinguish them. From this he concludes that the more rich a composition is in expressive elements, the more *slowly* it must be played, while a piece which is *simply* written, and consists mainly of a plain outline, must be played quickly, in order that its scattered elements may be consolidated.

Speaking of movement, Lussy says, 'Beware of white pages ;' by which he means those which are not studded with demisemi-quavers. They are not necessarily easy. 'How often have we heard Weber's "Invitation" played by pupils who need a couple of years more hard work to play it in a satisfactory manner. Why give pupils pieces so much beyond their strength ? Consisting only of crotchets and quavers, these pages look innocent enough ; but if the master only considers the terrible word *Allegro* at the head, he will hesitate before giving them to his pupils. It is *rate of movement*, more than anything, which renders a composition difficult.'

Here, ladies and gentlemen, my summary ends. You may not have agreed in all that Lussy says. I myself do not adopt his opinions in every detail. You may deny that rules of expression are possible, yet you can hardly deny that there is some coincidence in the practice of the best executants. As to the painstaking nature of the work, we must all be agreed. The author proceeds upon the *à priori* method, and every one must feel the value of the systematic study of the best passages in modern music which he encourages. It has been said that our discussions here are too theoretical. The subject of my paper has at least the merit of being practical, and of having a distinct bearing upon our teaching.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Curwen for his excellent paper, and also to Mrs. Curwen, who had so ably illustrated his remarks on the pianoforte. He said the difficulty of dealing with this subject was the enormous ground which it

covered, so that it really required a master mind to bring it into anything like a tabular form.

Mr. W. H. CUMMINGS had listened with great interest to the paper, but he was sorry to say that he was one of the unbelievers in the rules laid down. He believed it would be quite possible to frame rules for anything, but such rules as those they had heard would, he thought, be positively detestable. He could find throughout the whole series of examples which had been given sufficient reason for denying their appositeness in every case, and in each case he could even find an instance for doing exactly the opposite to that recommended. Without going through the whole, he might mention especially one point, the changing from one tonic to another, which, it was said, should be emphasised, but which he thought would be a most cruel thing. He could call to mind an instance when this was done in a very delicate way, and if it were done in any other way it would lose half its charm; he referred to the well-known song in the *Elijah*, 'O rest in the Lord.' After going into a key quite remote from the original, it returned to the key of C, the modulation being given on the cello, and the more softly it was played the more it was liked. Then, to lay down a rule that when you descended it should be either *crescendo* or *diminuendo* would be absurd. He could quite imagine that in every case Rubinstein and Von Bülow would play them in quite different ways. Some of the examples which had been given he had heard played by Mendelssohn and other great masters in quite a different way to that recommended. So again with regard to Weber's 'Last Waltz,' which of course was written by Reissiger. That was a very unfortunate example. It must be remembered that there were two kinds of waltzes, one slow and one quick, and the waltz referred to was of course intended to be played in the old German slow waltz time. It never was meant to be played very quickly. Although it was possible to lay down rules for the guidance of students, and no doubt it would be well to mark the phrases for them, because they were not capable of distinguishing them for themselves, when you came to the matter of expression, that depended on the individual soul. You could say to a pupil, you may do it in this way because it has been so done in old times, but that might not always be appropriate now. He had by him some interesting sets of songs from old oratorios and other sources prepared by the master of Miss Stephens, now the Countess of Essex, and he could only say that the marks of expression there put to the song, 'Angels, ever bright and fair,' if followed now, would make one laugh, instead of exciting sympathy and piety. This only showed that rules laid down at one time, though they might appeal to the feelings of the individuals who had employed them, could not be a safe guide to the feelings of ages to come. You must depend on the soul of the artist for all real expression.

The Rev. THOMAS HELMORE regretted that he had not heard

the whole of the paper, but it struck him, there were a great number of things mentioned that were not in accordance with fact. For instance, when he came in, the remark was being made about the greater difficulty of an ascending than a descending passage, because, it was said, in nature it was harder to ascend than to descend. He should be very sorry to suppose that none of them appreciated the principle of *Excelsior!* or failed to remember that if you held a cork at the bottom of a bucket of water it would rise to the top as soon as you released it, and the same with regard to a balloon. With regard to voices also, it depended very much on the compass of the voice whether it was able to ascend or descend more easily. With regard to the metronomic distinction of time, he had heard Mendelssohn himself say that you could not always keep the same time; all expression should be the outcome of the feeling of the time. With regard to cultivating a proper sentiment of feeling in choral bodies, he suspected that if you could get an intelligent choir it would be far better to leave them without written marks of expression, trusting to their own feeling at the time, with the assistance of the conductor.

Dr. BRIDGE said he could not agree with Mr. Helmore's last remark, and thought you must have expression marks for concerted music. He should be very sorry to have to learn an enormous number of rules, but there was a great convenience in being able to lay down certain rules with regard to expression, and, as had been remarked, the paper was intended rather for teachers than for artists. A great deal of his time was occupied in teaching boys, and of course it was no use saying to a boy of eight or nine, You must sing with expression; you must give him something definite to lay hold of. And if you told him that, as a rule, when a passage ascended it should be *crescendo*, and when it descended *diminuendo*, and so on, such general rules might to some extent be useful. If he remembered rightly, expression was divided into three classes, of which the poetic came last; that was the one in which rules were most wanted, but it was also the one in which it was most difficult to lay them down and apply them. Allusion was made to the harmonic *appoggiatura*, and he presumed if that was part of the harmony of the chord, it was natural it should be lingered on. Some *appoggiaturas* were strangers to the harmony, and therefore were got rid of as quickly as possible. But really, as to laying down rules for poetic expression, he thought it was about as possible as to write a manual for manufacturing melody, though he believed Dr. Stainer had such a work in his library.

Mr. STEPHENS was sorry to differ from Mr. Helmore as to a choir being left to their own discretion.

The Rev. T. HELMORE said he did not mean entirely so, but, generally speaking, a great number of marks were unnecessary. He also made the proviso that they should be intelligent people.

Mr. STEPHENS said, when you were playing on the pianoforte

you saw all the parts of the music at once, but in singing in a choir the performers only saw one part, and so such general rules would not answer the purpose at all, because one part might be singing an upward progression and another a descending, and the whole effect might be intended to be *crescendo*. He could corroborate all that had been said about the difficulty of metronomic marks, for in his humble capacity as a composer he had sometimes endeavoured to mark the time, but found it next to impossible to do so, for if he put by a work and took it up again, he found he could not even agree with himself as to the most proper *tempo*. He did not mean that he appealed from Philip in one condition to Philip in another, but it was an utter impossibility to draw a hard and fast line as to the precise *tempo* most suitable. With regard to marks of *accelerando* because a passage went in a certain direction, and all rules of that class, he would say that you might apply them to a piece of music, mark every phrase in every possible way, study the precise duration of every note, and all the marks of *sforzando*, *accelerando*, *diminuendo*, &c., and might follow every one of the rules laid down, yet play it wholly without expression.

Mr. W. H. CUMMINGS said he must remark in defence of Mr. Helmore, that they had had an example of the truth of what he said with regard to choral singing, for not long since a choir visited London, consisting of about thirty German gentlemen; they were eminently intelligent men, most of them literary men, and so on. They sang at St. James's Hall, and with an immense amount of expression, but their music was wholly without marks, it being all indicated by the conductor.

Mr. BULLEN was rather astonished at the general opinions expressed. He came there with the impression that they would not be able to find words sufficiently eulogistic to mark their appreciation of Lussy's work, and for the express purpose of claiming some of the credit in connection with it for other writers in France. Those who had expressed their disapproval had however stated that they had not read the work; he had been studying the work for a year and had not yet mastered it, and it was evident therefore it was not to be thoroughly understood in some ten minutes' lecture. A great many of the rules to which exception had been taken had only been partially explained, and numerous examples had been omitted, as was inevitably the case on such an occasion. His primary object, however, was to show that this book was in fact only the second portion of Lussy's work, the first portion being published in 1863, under the title of 'A Reform in the mode of teaching the Pianoforte.' This was a work for professors, putting forward an entirely new method of teaching the piano, in which pupils were required to write their own exercises, and it was based almost entirely on a book published in 1844 by Emile Chev many passages being transcribed bodily from it. Another source to which Mr. Lussy was largely indebted was the new

method of teaching music by M. Galin, from which he had transcribed literally some half-dozen pages. Both these latter works, however, were intended for vocal music, whilst Lussy's was essentially for the piano, so that he had a vast amount of original matter appertaining strictly to the instrument of which he was so great a master. The theory of musical expression he divided into three parts—metric, rhythmic, and pathetic. The metric portion was entirely based on Chev and Galin's notation, and Chev's theory of time was the one used throughout the book. In the same way, with regard to rhythmic accent, if he were to ask the meeting what was rhythm, he imagined he should have as many different answers as there were persons present, because it was not defined in any manual, and probably if he asked what was a rhythm they would not understand what he meant. These and all the other terms were used by Lussy, as defined by Chev in 1844. In the same way, when he came to harmonic exceptions, that was entirely based on Chev's harmony applied to the staff notation. In making these remarks he did not wish to depreciate the labours of Lussy or to accuse him of plagiarism, because he had amply acknowledged his indebtedness to these authors, but simply to say that until they accepted the theories of Chev, they could not accept those of Lussy. He might add that twelve months ago he knew that Lussy's work had been translated into English, and the manuscript was in London, so that they might expect soon to hear an English edition announced.

Mr. BARRY said the remark made by Mr. Curwen on the absence of all instruction on phrasing in existing pianoforte primers was, he believed, a just one, except with regard to one lately issued by Mr. Franklin Taylor, in which he went into the subject in a very useful manner, giving by way of illustration one of Mendelssohn's 'Songs without Words,' and put words to it in order to show the analogy between a phrase of music and a line of poetry.

The CHAIRMAN said that there could be no doubt of the difficulty which Mr. Curwen had had in giving any adequate idea of the contents of M. Lussy's work. In all questions connected with expression they had to contend with the unphilosophical way in which the subject was treated. It at once divided itself into two great branches: first of all, what was the individual expression of the performer, and secondly, what was the expression intended by the composer. He did not think it would be out of place to call one *subjective* and the other *objective*. If you had a piece of music put before you, you must suppose the composer intended certain things, and you had to discover whether he wished you to put a strong accent in certain places or not. That was one thing entirely, but the actual expression of the personal feeling of the performer seemed to him a totally different thing. He was afraid that in nearly all works on expression these two things were hopelessly mixed,

because you found a constant alteration from paragraph to paragraph, of marks applicable to the feeling of the player, to those about the expression intended by the composer. It seemed to him that unless you could get a man with a philosophic turn of mind who would fairly divide his subject in that way, it would never be properly treated. First of all, you ought to discover the intentions of the composer in writing his music, and then if you liked to incorporate M. Lussy's generalisations and adapt them to it, well and good, but when you got to the end you might very likely disagree. You might bring forward a sufficient number of good cases to show that an ascending passage should be played *crescendo*, but when you came to real expression the question was, what did you mean by it? The term was often used very carelessly and without a definite meaning. It might mean that the performer had properly represented the composer's meaning, or that he had added to it from sources purely subjective. That was a question very seldom settled, but he thought it ought to be dealt with. Thus, a double form of the question suggested itself, especially in the case of people of real genius. He had heard quite young people give at different times totally different readings of the same piece of music, perhaps owing to their state of health or mind or to the state of the audience; because if a man of genius had a sympathetic audience, all the best parts of his sensitive nature were drawn out, whereas if the audience were cold and critical an opposite effect would be produced. In that way you had the purely subjective form of expression, and as to teaching it, you could only do so by training the emotions, and to do so you must have the natural faculty to begin with. With regard to the meaning intended by the composer, what was really wanted was to find a philosopher and musician who would kindly say, not whether ascending or descending passages required the *crescendo* because they were difficult or easy, but because they were in some subtle way an out-put of the expression of a certain emotion. An ascending passage, even if it were considerably easier than the corresponding descending one, would in nine cases out of ten require some emphasis placed upon it, because the mind was under a different idea with regard to ascent than with regard to descent. If any one had any doubt about this, he would only ask them to take any piece of music and put a cross against the number of descending passages in which a *crescendo* was marked, and he thought they would be very few. With regard to the writing down of marks of expression, you again came to two branches of the subject. In solo music you wanted very few marks, because you could not give expression if the performer had not got it, but as regards concerted music, you must have certain suggestions. Probably the truth would lie between the two extremes: a certain amount of written instruction should be given, and all other detail should be at the discretion of the conductor. He believed, however, that English music lost a great deal through not using English terms. You might just as

well say 'With dignity,' 'With fervour' 'With spirit,' 'With sorrow,' 'Joyfully,' and so on, as use foreign terms; and if these words were written on the music, he thought they would be much more likely to produce the desired effect than writing '*Con moto*,' '*Religioso*,' '*Arioso*,' and so on. But after all, you could only give indications, for if the performer had not got 'joy,' or 'sorrow,' or 'fervour,' he could not use it; still, if you used the corresponding English term for the emotion you wished to produce, it would be a very great advantage. He hoped that any friend of M. Lussy would understand that generally speaking they were ignorant of his work, and could only judge from the short account which Mr. Curwen had given, and for which they were much indebted to him.

Mr. BULLEN said that every objection brought forward to-day was met and provided for in M. Lussy's book.

Mr. CURWEN, in reply, said he was encouraged to hope that he had not wasted the time of the society by bring forward this subject. It seemed to him they had gone in this direction to some extent by the practice of introducing marks of expression, which was quite a modern one. This seemed to indicate there were some rules, and the question was, whether to go on or to go back; were they to abolish those rules already given, or to try and formulate them? He thought they might get some light by the analogy of elocution: in all manuals of elocution you found no end of rules laid down for getting up a recitation from Shakspeare or any other author. No doubt a recitation got up on that principle alone would be a rather dry affair, but the question was, did not the student profit by having his attention directed to the subject of pauses, emphasis, and so on?

Mr. CUMMINGS thought it was a mistake to say that marks of expression were of recent invention, because he could point to works nearly 300 years old on which they appeared.

Mr. CURWEN said they were much more common now.

Mr. STEPHENS said Handel's Harpsichord Lessons were published without any marks of expression.

A vote of thanks was then unanimously passed to Mr. Curwen for his paper, and to Mrs. Curwen for her illustration on the pianoforte.