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Fairy Music

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and their pianoforte compositions, although undoubtedly classic works, must give way to the diversified, artistic treatment of that instrument by the modern school (!). But their other works, not written for one particular instrument, the operas, symphonies, quartets, &c., will not only continue to live, but will, perhaps, remain unequalled by anything in the present day. *Sapienti pauca!* A pupil should not be kept too long to the study of one method, or of the taste of one nation. What is truly beautiful must not be imitated, but *felt* and assimilated with the individual genius. The only perfect nature is the Divine, and art must not take one man or one nation as a model, for these only afford examples more or less imperfect. In a word, that quality in an artist (who continually learns from what is around him) which excites the wonder of his contemporaries, can only arrive at perfection by and through itself. The cause of his fame, whether in the present or the future, is none other than his own gifted individuality manifested in his works."

Elsner did not counsel Chopin in so many words to decline Kalkbrenner's condition, but the young artist could have had no difficulty in making out the drift of his friend's argument. He could not, however, altogether agree with Elsner's disparagement of virtuosity. "I have to think," he said, "how I can best make my way as a pianist, and so must, for a time, leave in the background the loftier artistic aims of which you spoke. . . . In my opinion the composer who can perform his works himself is best off." Nevertheless, he soon perceived that his position under Kalkbrenner would compromise that he had already gained, and in the result the negotiations were broken off though in a perfectly friendly manner.

Chopin was naturally delighted with the new world of Paris. He wrote* to his friend Titus, who had not fallen before Russian bullets:—

"In Paris you find everything. You can amuse yourself, weary yourself, laugh, weep, and, above all, do what you like without a soul taking any notice of you, because thousands are doing likewise. Everybody goes his own way. I believe there are more pianists, more virtuosi, and more donkeys in Paris than anywhere."

In Paris, too, he formed new friendships at the very outset. Rossini, Cherubini, Bailleu, Hiller, Herz, and Sowinski, to say nothing of vocal artists high in place, took more or less kindly to the young stranger, who lived as though he had reached the seventh heaven by means of the diligence that conveyed him across the Rhine. Soon, however, there came a rude awakening. Paris was of the earth earthy, after all, and the dweller therein needed "filthy lucre" wherewith to pay his way. Of this Chopin had only what his father could spare; nor when he gave his first concert, in February, 1832, were the fates propitious, since expenses were more than receipts. What to do in this emergency? He would emigrate, as other young Poles, driven from their motherland, were doing, hoping to find in the New World some redress of the grievances of the Old. To this step, however, his friends, and especially his parents, strongly opposed themselves; but it appears to have been an accident, rather than their settled purpose, which finally banished the idea of America from Chopin's mind. One day, meeting Prince Valentine Radziwill in the street, Chopin revealed to him his emigration scheme, and the Prince did not attempt to combat it, being satisfied with the artist's promise to attend a *soirée* at Baron Rothschild's the same day. Chopin kept his word, was induced to improvise on the pianoforte,

and fortunately showed himself at his best. That single performance turned the scale of fortune in his favour. The great world of Paris took him up, and in Paris Chopin settled down for good and all.

(To be continued.)

FAIRY MUSIC.

BY HENRY C. LUNN.

CHARLES LAMB, in one of his most delightful essays, tells us that "Credulity is the man's weakness, but the child's strength." Granting the truth of this assertion, let us frankly acknowledge that we cling with fond recollection to the days when the poetical existence we firmly believed in was the only one we knew. The fabulous world around us was reflected in our nursery reading, and tales of wonder were related by our elders which made us not only look up to them in admiration of their knowledge, but love them for their kindness in imparting it. From infancy the fairy is the child's friend; for does he not learn from the numerous stories told to his playmates as well as to himself, that whenever a difficulty in life arises, there is always one of these benevolent little creatures ready to aid him, and place him in ease and affluence? Marrying a Princess covered with jewels is but one of the many states of existence which may be his if he will only obey the fairy's injunctions; and how many little girls have been made happy by dancing in imagination at the ball where Cinderella left her glass slipper, and, through the events which followed this loss, triumphed over her cruel and envious sisters! It is unquestionably true, as Charles Lamb says, time ruthlessly shakes our faith in the reality of fairy godmothers; and the child, even of tender age, begins to ask himself whether fays and goblins really do dance upon mushrooms by moonlight, and even whether fairies sleep in cowslip bells; yet, when this doubt grows into a certainty, poetry takes the place of fact, and fairy-life still entwines itself around our hard, prosaic world.

It is a proof of our affection for the land of fairies when we find that so many eminent writers have devoted their talents to the subject. Spenser's "Faërie Queene," although called by the author "a continued allegory, or darke conceit," is often read apart from the meaning intended to be conveyed, deriving most of its beauty from the supernatural air which surrounds it; and we need scarcely remind our readers how exquisitely Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, and others too numerous to mention, have immortalised by their genius the fanciful life of which we are treating. In more modern literature, too, there are excellent tales, the principal actors in which are those endeared to us in the dream-life of our childhood; and these are of all others the most healthy stories to place before young readers; for it is far better to fall back upon the troubles of fairyland, which they can never experience, than to brood over the troubles of our own social existence.

But if some of our most delightful literature teems with poetical allusions to fairies—and in many books these imaginative beings are mixed up throughout with the men and women we daily see around us—it would be strange indeed were musicians not to feel the influence of fairy-life upon their art. Goethe says that music "requires no material, no subject-matter, whose effect must be deducted." Fairies, then, not being of the earth, must have a language not of the earth; and the "tone-poets" of the world may therefore legitimately claim to know and sympathise with more of their inner life than any of their fellow-men. Does not Weber show us

* Karasowski, vol. ii., p. 231.

that he is one of the chosen mediums of communication between fairies and mortals in his fanciful Opera of "Oberon"? From the moment we hear the charmed horn at the commencement of the overture are we not transported into an unknown land; and when we listen to the exquisite opening chorus, "Light as fairy foot can fall," do we not feel the very fluttering of the wings of the aerial beings before us? When Mendelssohn, as a mere boy, gave to the world a work which, not only for masterly construction, but for then unknown points in harmony, and effects in orchestration surpassing anything of the kind yet written, did he not choose for his subject Shakespeare's play "The Midsummer Night's Dream"? It may be said that, as a youth, he longed to give expression to the love for that fairy-land, a belief in which had brightened his childhood; but that his fondness for the theme did not afterwards weaken is shown by the fact of his willingly yielding to the desire of the King of Prussia, seventeen years after the composition of the Overture, to write music for the play, the intrinsic beauty as well as the appropriateness of which to the varied action of the drama have long been so generally acknowledged that the work of the poet seems now almost incomplete without the addition of the work of the musician. It may be said, too, that fairy life on the stage gives greater scope for scenic display than when the action is carried on by mortals. Fairies live amidst charming surroundings, and evidently in a climate the mildness of which makes the audiences at our metropolitan theatres envious. It would indeed, then, be a matter for regret if the music which colours our fairy dreams were allowed to fall below the standard to which our great composers have raised it. Were pantomime what it should be, we can imagine nothing which more calls for the genius of a fairy musician. True it is that children can perhaps scarcely appreciate the refined and delicate music which we should like to hear as an accompaniment to the gambols of the fays, sprites, and goblins of pantomimic life; but at least they would be infinitely better pleased with it than with the coarse ditties of music-hall singers, to whose peculiar talents our Christmas annual seems now principally intrusted; and, assuredly, those of a maturer age amongst the audience would be delighted with the change.

Of fairy music for our drawing-rooms we have many beautiful specimens; but, like all characteristic compositions, it is so easy to write that inferior works embodying this idea are certain to glut the market. Music to fairy poetry is by no means necessarily fairy music; and it would be well if second-rate composers were to remember that only the greatest masters have succeeded in it. It is a question, however, whether the words of many fairy songs, even with indifferent music, are not generally more acceptable in a domestic concert than those filled with maudlin sentiment, or those which appeal to the lacerated feelings of listeners who may be presumed to seek society rather to forget, than to revive the recollection of, recent losses. Coral caves, mossy groves, and homes in the "deep, deep sea" are at all events agreeable subjects; and we can follow a fairy to her cheerful moonlight haunts with more pleasure than we can follow a mortal into his weary solitude, especially when he is, throughout the song, calling upon one whose heart has been given to "another."

Again, to refer to our opening quotation from the genial "Elia," whether the fondness for fairies be a "strength" or a "weakness," we should cherish that fondness for its unworldliness and purity. Fairies are the beloved of children, and children are the

beloved of their elders. In infancy or age, then, these creatures of the fancy should be ensured a welcome in our hearts; and whilst we have charming fairy tales let us hope that we may have equally charming fairy music.

It has been said that when a fashion dies out in one country, it is usually resuscitated in another. If this really be the case, we sincerely hope that should the American custom of "interviewing" become a thing of the past in the New World, it will not be revived in the Old; for although it may be interesting to know the unsolicited opinions of eminent artists upon the various persons with whom they have from time to time been brought into contact, we care not to force them to this confession on the understanding that it is to be printed and circulated as an advertisement. But "interviewing" has another bad effect, for it brings into prominence many who, although holding fair positions in a profession, have never earned the right to consider that a familiar chat with a stranger especially sent to "draw them out" can have any interest for the general public. A case in point has recently occurred in America. Mr. F. Nicholls Crouch is the composer of a ballad called "Kathleen Mavourneen"; and as he has fallen into reduced circumstances, we lately drew attention to his state, in hopes of aiding him in his attempt to obtain some employment. But a reporter from the *Herald* has "interviewed" him. He rang the bell, and asking for Mr. Crouch, an old gentleman answered, "I am the individual." Then we are told, "the great composer" began the talk by saying, "Two years before the war I went to the City of the Seven Hills to reside permanently. My business was as teacher and professor of vocal and instrumental music, and I was engaged as organist at Dr. Minnigrode's church at 300 dollars a year." He then proceeded to relate the circumstances under which he wrote "Kathleen Mavourneen," and especially prided himself upon retaining the copyright of a song which he composed for Jimmy Lynch, one of the old Sanford Minstrels, called "Hold her while I squeeze her," a work which he said obtained a very wide popularity. Now it is very true that had the "great composer" not been "interviewed," we might never have known the author of "Hold her while I squeeze her"; but was this information really of vital importance to the world of art?

If our recollection fail us not, it was Thackeray who said that the editor's chair always reminded him of the seat which the dentist kindly requested you to take before he proceeded to business. Although no doubt this is a somewhat exaggerated simile, there can be no question that there are very many points of resemblance. In the first place, every morning letters arrive from authors who have not been reviewed with unqualified praise complaining openly of malice, jealousy, and favouritism: and although of course an editor who knows he has done his duty may throw all these communications into the waste-paper basket, he cannot always do so without a certain feeling of sympathy with the writer who fancies himself a martyr. In our case, however, in addition to correspondence concerning the reviewing department, we have constant complaints from those who furnish us with reports of concerts from the country, and whenever, in a fit of generosity, we have given the reasons why they have not been inserted, the explanation has rather added fuel to the flame. Of course no notice can possibly be thrown aside without a very tangible cause. One, for example, gives no date of the concert mentioned, another does not even indicate what part of the world it took place in,