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THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR.

JANUARY 1, 1881.

MR. PEPYS THE MUSICIAN.

BY FRANCIS HUEFFER.

It is proposed in the present paper to consider our dear old friend Mr. Pepys in a somewhat new capacity. We all know him as the most delightful gossip that ever put pen to paper in this or any other language. The value of his information as regards manners, morals, and politics of the Restoration epoch is also generally acknowledged, and students of the history of the drama are apt to look with much leniency on his naïve admiration for Nell Gwyn and other frail heroines of the stage. His relations to the art of music, on the other hand, have hitherto been strangely disregarded, especially by musicians themselves. It is known in a general way that Pepys was fond of singing and playing on various instruments, also that he invented a new method of musical notation, which he, like all inventors of similar systems before and after, considered to be perfect. But as to the almost inexhaustible fund of valuable facts and dates relating to an important period of English musical history, that may be found in his pages, considerable ignorance seems to prevail, to judge at least by the all but total neglect with which the *Diary* has been treated by some of our latest historians of the art. It, therefore, may not be an altogether ungrateful task to point out the wealth of this mine of information. To work it thoroughly and systematically would require more leisure than I have, at present, at my disposal.

Music with Mr. Pepys was a passion, one amongst several it is true, but nevertheless all-engrossing at times. He loved it and he dreaded it. "Played on the vial," he writes, February 17, 1663, evidently after a long interval of virtuous abstinence, "which I have not done this long time before upon any instrument, being fearful of being too much taken with musique for fear of returning to my old dotage thereon, and so neglect my business as I used to do."

Never was vow more seriously meant and more frequently broken. Here is another specimen of remorseful confession, as quaint and as "like human nature" as, perhaps, only Mr. Pepys could have penned. This time the entry is dated March 9, '66, and the reader will perceive that the moral progress made during the three intervening years was of the slenderest description. "Mrs. Knipp coming," he writes, "we spent the noon together very merry. She and I singing, and God forgive me! I do still see that my nature is not to be quite conquered, but will esteem pleasure of all things; though yet in the middle of it, it has reluctance after my business, which is neglected by my following my pleasure. However, musique and women I cannot but give way to, whatever my business is." "Wine," Mr. Pepys might have justly added to complete Luther's celebrated triad of "Wein, Weib und Gesang," to which he also was unflinchingly attached. It must, however, by no means be thought that to him the art was merely the solace of a leisure hour, or a welcome protest for a quiet flirtation. Music, as I said before, was his passion. Under its influence the innermost fibres of his heart were shaken to harmonious vibrations. It acted on him even with physical force, and to this influence he confesses with a naïve simplicity which belongs to his age no less than to his individuality. What clerk to the Admiralty would nowadays venture

to commit, even to the most secret pages of his diary, such a passage as the following:—

"Feb. 27, 1668. With my wife to the King's House to see 'The Virgin Martyr,'* the first time it hath been acted a great while, and it is mighty pleasant; not that the play is worth much, but it is finely acted by Beck Marshall. But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind musique when the angel comes down; which it is so sweet that it ravished me, and indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife; that neither then nor all the evening, going home nor at home, I was able to think of anything, but remained all night transported, so as I could not believe that ever any musique hath that real command over the soul of a man as this did upon me; and makes me resolve to practice wind musique, and to make my wife do the like."

The passage is strikingly illustrative of the man's nature; a curious mixture of unsophisticated, not to say coarse, realism and of the most refined sensibility to the beauties of art and literature. For, be it said parenthetically, that in literature also Mr. Pepys was a sound judge of genuine merit, who, to name but one instance, in an age of studied politeness was able to appreciate the racy force of the old popular ballads of England and Scotland. It was, indeed, on his extensive collection of such treasures that Bishop Percy drew when he published his famous "Reliques," and thus prepared a healthy revolution in English literature against the stiltedness and pomposity of eighteenth century poets.

But, to return to our immediate subject, Mr. Pepys was not only an enthusiastic amateur of the ordinary kind. The collector's turn, developed in him to a degree little short of genius, stood him in good stead in musical as in other matters; and with it he combined that marvellous sense of order which enabled him to put some system into the disgracefully muddled navy accounts of Charles II.'s reign. The impression of perfect order and neatness is forcibly conveyed to one's mind as one enters the room of Magdalen College, Cambridge, where the Pepysian collection is kept. Here the cases are filled with rows of ancient tomes solidly bound and carefully arranged; and so as to make reference to each volume a matter of perfect ease, Mr. Pepys has catalogued, and at a later period recatalogued, his books and music; the different entries being distinguished by the colours of the ink. On the tables there are various curious-looking instruments, some evidently of a musical kind, the nature and uses of which a better mechanical genius than the present writer can boast of might perhaps still discover. Here also is the most precious of Mr. Pepys' treasures, his *Diary*, containing over three thousand pages, carefully written in Rich's system of shorthand, and extending over the first ten years of the Restoration, from January, 1660, to May 31, 1670. On that day the *Diary* closes for the melancholy reason which Mr. Pepys had better state in his own words:—

"Had another meeting with the Duke of York at Whitehall on yesterday's work, and made a good advance, and so being called by my wife, we to the Park, Mary Batelier and a Dutch gentleman, a friend of hers, being with us. Thence to 'The World's End,' a drinking-house by the Park, and there merry, and so home late. And thus ends all that I doubt I shall ever be able to do with my own eyes in the keeping of my Journal, I being not able to do it any longer, having done now so long as to undo my eyes almost every time that I take my pen in hand;

* Massinger's tragedy of that name.

and therefore whatever comes of it I must forbear; and therefore resolve from this time forward to have it kept by my people in long-hand, and must be contented to set down no more than is fit for them and all the world to know, or if there be anything, I must endeavour to keep a margin in my book open to add here and there a note in short-hand with my own hand. And so I betake myself to that course, which is almost as much as to see myself go into my grave, for which, and all the discomforts that will accompany my being blind, the good God prepare me!"

In spite of the ominous name of the drinking-house and the lugubrious tone of the entry, the "world's end" had not yet come for Mr. Pepys. From a humble retainer of the Earl of Sandwich he rose by his own industry and integrity to be Secretary of the Admiralty and one of the Barons of the Cinque Ports, in which capacity he assisted at the coronation of James II. Although at heart a sincere admirer of Cromwell's genius, he was by political opinions and bent of mind a Royalist, and the last two Stuarts held him in high honour. It is said that James was sitting to Sir Godfrey Kneller for a portrait intended as a present to Mr. Pepys, when the news of William's landing in England reached Whitehall. The Revolution deprived Mr. Pepys of his office, but his busy mind found congenial occupation nevertheless. He continued his collections, dabbled in science, and lived to be President of the Royal Society. Neither did he lose that keen eyesight of his, although, unfortunately for us, he was never again able to commit his thoughts and observations, and little peccadilloes, to that trusty confidant of many years, his Diary.

To that Diary we must now refer for the immediate purpose of this article, such reference being fortunately made possible by the careful and, as far as the nature of the materials would allow, complete edition which the Rev. Mynors Bright has recently published. Looking at these volumes, one is almost embarrassed by the wealth of valuable historic fact and amusing anecdote which they offer to the musical historian. One does not know where to commence—where to stop. As a beginning, however, has to be made, it will be best, before coming to personal matters, to look for such information on the general state of music in England as Mr. Pepys vouchsafes. Here we meet at once with a complaint which most likely had been made long before the seventeenth century, and will no doubt be made in the twentieth, the neglect of English music in favour of the foreign article. The old saying of the prophet, despised in his own country, applies to the musician perhaps more than to any other public man—painter, poet, statesman, or preacher; and it is somewhat comforting to find that some of the leading musical nations in the world showed at first the same disbelief in their own art-production of which English musicians so justly complain at present. More especially the upper classes seem everywhere determined to ignore as long as possible any independent movement in the music of their own country. The battle of French music was fought in the Paris of the *ancien régime* by two foreigners—Lulli, an Italian, and Gluck, a German; and perhaps the latter would never have had his operas accepted but for the protection of the royal lady who had been his pupil as the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette. In the struggle between French and Italian music, Rousseau, an aristocrat in taste, although the founder of modern democracy, ardently espoused the cause of the latter. He demonstrated that French music not only did not exist, but never by any chance could exist, the language itself being wholly unfit for the purposes of

the singer. "Le chant français," he winds up his violent diatribe, "n'est qu'un aboyement continuel, insupportable à toute oreille non prévenue; l'harmonie en est brute, sans expression et sentant uniquement son remplissage d'écolier, les airs français ne sont point des airs, le récitatif français n'est point du récitatif." A similar contempt of national music, although never expressed with equal force of language, runs through the history of the rise of the art in Germany. The petty princes had each their court theatre and their court concert, at which Italian singers sang Italian airs, accompanied by French or Italian instrumentalists; the native element, if tolerated at all, being looked at with more or less open contempt. How Mozart, how even Weber, had to suffer from this condition of things is too well known; and it was not till the voice of the people became supreme in matters of art that the great German composers gained the acknowledgment justly due to them.

Under such circumstances it is not a matter for surprise that in the early days of the Restoration, English music was not the art the king delighted to honour. Charles II., when he came to his own again, was to all intents and purposes a foreigner. His tastes, his politics, his vices, and even his virtues and graces were foreign. Moreover, he had that dangerous "little knowledge" of music which enabled him to beat the time correctly during the anthem at church, and to find unreasonable fault with imperfections too fully accounted for by the circumstances. No wonder, therefore, that he seems to have taken an actual delight in humbling English musicians at the expense of their foreign competitors. One of the earliest entries in the Diary (October 14, 1660) refers to a visit of Mr. Pepys to Whitehall Chapel, "where one Dr. Croft made an indifferent sermon, and after it an anthem, ill sung, which made the king laugh." Neither did profane music find favour with Charles II. For a little more than a month after the last entry (November 20) we find that "at a play the king did put a great affront upon Singleton's musique in bidding them stop, and made the French musique play, which, my Lord (Sandwich) says, do much outdo all ours." That the example set by the Court and followed in other classes of society was countenanced by the English musicians returning from abroad, and that Mr. Pepys had sense enough to have his own opinions on the subject is proved by the following extract dated six years after those last quoted:—

"June 18, 1666. To my Lord Bellasis, by invitation; . . . and at dinner there played to us a young boy, lately come from France where he had been learning a year or two on the viallin, and plays finely. But impartially I do not find any goodnesse in their ayres (though very good) beyond ours, when played by the same; I observed in several of Baptiste's (the great composer) and our Bannister's. But it was pretty to see my Lord's daughter loves musique the most that I ever saw creature in my life."

The "Bannister," whom Pepys here compares with Lulli—for he evidently is meant by Baptiste—is the John Banister, well known in the history of English art as the composer of "Choice Ayres and Songs," and the incidental music to several "masques," tragedies, and plays, including Shakespeare's "Tempest." He was, in 1663, appointed first violin to the king, which post he is said to have lost owing to his upholding, within the hearing of His Majesty, the superiority of English over French players. A few months after the above entry, Pepys mentions a rumour that "the king's viallin, Bannister, is mad; that the king hath a Frenchman come to be chief of some part of the king's musique." Fortunately the first part of this information taken in its literal meaning proved in-

correct, or, if true, Bannister must soon have recovered from his insanity, for he lived to start successful concerts in London, "over against the George Tavern, in Whitefriars," and died in 1679, at the age of forty-nine, leaving a son the inheritor of his name and his talent.

There were, it is true, many things to drive a King's fiddler out of his senses in the time of the Merry Monarch, who had not even the good grace to pay his musicians after having insulted them. In a private chat "of the King's family with Mr. Hingston the organist (December 19, 1666)," Mr. Pepys ascertained that "many of the musique are ready to starve, they being five years behindhand for their wages; nay, Evans, the famous man upon the harp, having not his equal in the world, did the other day die for mere want, and was fain to be buried at the almshouse of the parish, and carried to his grave in the dark at night without one link, and that Mr. Hingston met it by chance, and did give 12d. to buy two or three links." On the other hand Tom Killigrew could boast that "he hath gathered our Italians from several courts in Christendom for the King, which he do give 200*l.* a-year a-piece to," an amount which, considering the value of money in those days, would not be despised by many modern players.

(*To be continued.*)

THE GREAT COMPOSERS, SKETCHED BY THEMSELVES.

By JOSEPH BENNETT.

No. IX.—SCHUBERT.

No one acquainted with the facts of Schubert's life is surprised to find that his extant letters—those at least which have been published—are comparatively few in number and unimportant in character, save for the light they throw upon his individuality. He, poor man, was scarcely known outside the walls of Vienna, and had no correspondents among the great, the learned, or the simply curious in distant places and lands; while, within the limits of his native city, he was far too much engaged in the hard struggle of life, or in obeying his wonderful impulse towards artistic creation, for the work of a mere epistolar. Yet such letters of Schubert's as have reached us are by no means to be despised—no scrap of paper ever is, to which a great man confides his thoughts; and in going through them we shall gather some idea, at least, of the man by whose genius all lovers of music set such store.

The series begins characteristically enough, having regard to the master's sad experience of life, with a note addressed by Schubert to his brother, while yet he was a boy-scholar at the Konvikt. The authorities of this educational establishment appear to have been somewhat of the mind of Dickens' Yorkshire schoolmaster concerning the amount of food on which a growing boy can be profitably supported. At any rate, he did not get enough to eat, and the nature within him cried aloud for more. Hence the pitiful letter we are about to quote:—

"I'll come to the point at once, and unburden my heart's secrets, and not detain you by beating about the bush, or circuitous talk. I've been thinking a good long time about my position, and found that it's very well on the whole, but that in some respects it might be improved. You know from experience that one can often enjoy eating a roll and an apple or two, and all the more when one must wait eight hours and a half after a poor dinner for a meagre supper. This wish has haunted me so often and so perseveringly that at last, *nolens volens*, I must make a change. The few groschen my father gave me are

all gone to the devil: what am I to do the rest of the time? 'They that hope in Thee shall not be ashamed!' (Matt. ii. 4.) So I thought. Supposing you advance me monthly a few kreutzers. You would never miss it, whilst I should shut myself up in my cell and be quite happy. As I said, I rely on the words of the Apostle Matthew, who says, 'Let him that hath two coats give one to the poor.' Meanwhile, I trust that you will listen to the voice that unceasingly appeals to you to remember your loving, hoping, poverty-stricken—and once again I repeat poverty-stricken—brother."

The pathos of this appeal must be felt by all, since none can miss seeing that it is no ordinary schoolboy request for pence. Why did Schubert "beat about the bush," as he seems to have done before making up his mind to come to the point? Did he distrust his brother's willingness to help, or was it pride that called for so severe a struggle? We shall be able to answer the question in the light of further study. Meanwhile, the poor boy quoting the promises and injunctions of Scripture, in order to draw a few kreutzers from a brother's pocket, is about as touching an incident as biography can show.

Four years later Schubert began keeping a diary. He may, indeed, have done so earlier, but nothing written before 1816 survives. For this, probably, we have to thank a certain autograph collector in Vienna, who appears to have obtained possession of the entire MSS., and then sold it or gave it away page by page, till Fuchs, accidentally discovering what was left, secured it. Even the remnant is a treasure. Like most gushing young people who keep diaries, Schubert poured his whole soul into his book, and rhapsodised often mistily, but always earnestly, giving us to see the actual man. Here is the first entry:—

"June 13, 1816. This day will haunt me for the rest of my life, as a bright, clear, and lovely one. Gently, and as from a distance, the magic tones of Mozart's music sound in my ears. With what alternate force and tenderness, with what masterly power did Schlesinger's playing of that music impress it deep, deep in my heart! Thus do these sweet impressions, passing into our souls, work beneficently on our inmost being, and no time, no change of circumstance, can obliterate them. In the darkness of this life they show a light, a clear beautiful distance, from which we gather confidence and hope. O Mozart, immortal Mozart! how many and what countless images of a brighter, better world hast thou stamped upon our souls! This quintet may be called one of the greatest among his smaller works. I, too, was moved on this occasion to introduce myself. I played variations by Beethoven, sang Goethe's 'Rastlose Liebe' and Schiller's 'Amalia.' The first met with universal, the second with qualified applause. Although I myself think my 'Rastlose Liebe' more successful than 'Amalia,' yet I cannot deny that to Goethe's genius must be attributed in large measure the applause which greeted the song."

We are bound to admit that Schubert's reflections on the power of music are neither new nor profound. But they serve to show how deeply he had been moved by a quintet of Mozart's at a time when Beethoven, in the full splendour of his genius, was writing works of a character far excelling those of Mozart in the very qualities which distinguish the compositions of Schubert. We all know that Beethoven's influence over his young fellow-townsmen increased as years went on; but in 1816, if there be any truth in Schubert's rhapsody, Mozart was his idol.

On June 14, 1816, the youthful musician wrote:—

"After the lapse of a few months, I took once more an evening walk. There can hardly be anything more