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A Lecture on Spinets, Harpsichords, and Clavichords. Read in the Music Room of the International Inventions Exhibition, October 21 and 23, 1885

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is easily found for Sebastian's seeming ungraciousness. Economy was a necessity in his house, all the more because the laws of hospitality were carefully observed. Rarely, we are told, was the Cantorial residence empty of visitors, while the Cantorial dignity had at all times to be maintained, and the house-father had, therefore, rigidly to supervise the outflow of groschen to the end of mere luxuries. Bach, moreover, recognised the principle of thrift by saving a little cash now and then. The aggregate amount was not much, and as the good-natured master lent it to relatives, the chances are it contributed little to his material enjoyments. On one point he certainly did permit himself a little extravagance. His house was crowded with musical instruments, and contained, when he died, six claviers, not counting four bestowed upon his youngest son, Johann Christian, a lute, two lautenclaviere, viol da gamba, "and violins, violas, and violoncellos in such number that he could supply enough for any of the more simple kinds of concerted music." But this natural weakness for the machinery of his craft seems to have been his only one. For the rest he was a prudent, respectable, and dignified citizen, paying every man his due, looking well after his wife and family, kind-hearted to those of the outside circle who stood in need, and God-fearing, but withal proud, impetuous, tenacious of rights and privileges, insisting upon a return of the respect he paid to others, and always ready to magnify his office and exalt his vocation. Such men have the heroic element in their nature—the "divine relation which, in all times," says Carlyle, "unites a great man to other men" by the ties of sympathy and admiration.

(To be continued.)

A LECTURE ON SPINET, HARPSICORDS, AND CLAVICHORDS

By A. J. HIPKINS.

READ IN THE MUSIC ROOM OF THE INTERNATIONAL INVENTIONS EXHIBITION, OCTOBER 21 AND 23, 1885.

My intention is to describe the keyboard or clavier stringed instruments, instruments that were the precursors of the pianoforte, with particular reference to some that are in the Historic Loan Collection, and I have, by permission of the owners, chosen from that Collection a spinet, two harpsichords, and a clavichord, to illustrate, by the performance of compositions written expressly for them, the qualities of those obsolete instruments. In description and illustration, I propose to follow that historic order which has governed the formation and arrangement of the Loan Collection in its musical instruments, its manuscripts and books.

I wish it to be observed that my aim is to show spinets and clavichords as they were, and not as they may be conceived from the transference of the music composed for them to the piano. To reject, in short, nearly all the marks of expression, and certain alterations introduced in modern piano editions. The necessity for this may be proved by trying to play those editions on the original instruments. I do not intend to imply that the old clavier music had no expression; far from it. I mean to say, the kind of expression was different. I admit that, transferred to the piano, the spinet, clavichord, and also organ compositions must be treated according to piano requirements, and also, that the reading of a good pianist has a high value for the student when thus recorded. There has been a development in pianoforte music, that has gone on step by step with the enlargement of the powers of that instrument. The makers have had their share in this development with the composers and pianists. The enquiry of an

illustrious musician: "Where would the fiddle be without the bow?" elucidates this union of complementary talents, and their common interdependence. Development, however, is not reconcilable with a ruling tradition. The rendering of Bach's Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues, by Beethoven, of which Czerny speaks so highly, and which can have been nothing else than great, must have really been Bach *plus* Beethoven, and the clavichord or harpsichord Bach played upon, *plus* the piano as Beethoven knew it. To talk of tradition where change has been active is to too lightly claim its authority. I believe that manner of performance may reveal itself to the earnest and sympathetic student, but can hardly be correctly handed down through a chain, in which each link has demonstrably altered. Let me specially refer to the performance of M. Dumon on the one-keyed flute, and of M. Jacobs on the viola da gamba, in the Belgian Historic Concerts, which took place in this music room; and to the Dutch Historic Concerts in the Royal Albert Hall, conducted by Mr. Daniel de Lange. The latter consisted of compositions belonging to a school of music, the old Netherlandish, of all others esteemed to be dry and mechanical. Yet, illuminated by the fervour of patriotic sympathy, those dry bones were recalled to life, and Josquin des Près, Obrecht, Orlandus Lassus, and Sweelinck were again within touch. Their dialect might be old and somewhat strange, but its accents still excited our emotions. We cannot pretend to obtain similar results with obsolete keyboard instruments, which, at their best, have little fetching power when compared with the human voice, or even bowed instruments. Their evanescent tone and its small energy tell against them.

Our modern harmonic music and our musical instruments appear to have arrived at definite form and intention in the fifteenth century, in the same century that oil painting and printing from movable types, which was to bring so important a change to the intellectual currents of the world, were introduced. The modern keyboard, with its twelve semitones in the octave—a contrivance an early writer, Virdung, suggests was founded on the study of Boethius, and an attempt to restore the chromatic genus of the old Greeks—also the power of grasping the octave with the hand, were certainly in existence in 1432, when the famous altar-piece at Ghent, the Adoration of the Lamb, painted by the brothers Van Eyck, was completed. The St. Cecilia panel, the original of which is now at Berlin, shows this keyboard applied to a Positive organ, and the player is represented as sounding with two hands the common chord of F. The Holyrood St. Cecilia, by an unknown painter of the Flemish school, formerly at Hampton Court, is of later date, about 1484. Here again is a chromatic keyboard to a Positive organ. The church painted in the picture, in which the organ stood, was the old Trinity Church of Edinburgh, which no longer exists. I will, in passing, mention that the keyboard and arrangement of the pipes bear witness thus early to what organ-builders call a "short octave" or "short measure" bass. The keyboard, or clavier stringed, instruments were in existence in the fifteenth century, and perhaps earlier; but their use could not have been much extended until nearly the end of that period. There is scarcely any contemporary reference to them, but we may assume, whether their keyboards were chromatic or diatonic, that they were identical with those organ manuals in which an octave could be stretched, and that any peculiarities, such as short or incomplete octaves in the one, would be likely to exist, as I have found to be the case, in the other. To the interval between the date (1484) of the Holyrood St.

Cecilia and 1511, I attribute the clavicitherium, or upright spinet, contributed to the Loan Collection by Count Giovanni Correr, of Venice. The style of the remarkable internal decoration is that of the time when rocks and calvaries abounded in painting. It is quite an Albrecht Dürer background; the figures, doubtless once there, have disappeared. The outside case, being later, need not detain attention. The Flamboyant window, which serves for one of the roses in the soundboard, could hardly have been after 1500. I think we have in this remarkable instrument the oldest clavier at present known. A strip of manuscript in the interior proves its Swabian origin, and as Ulm is mentioned, the instrument was very likely made at Augsburg. It is a spinet because it has the usual spinet-jack, or mechanical plectrum, acting on the single string that makes the note for each key; and the setting of the instrument upright, by which it became a clavicitherium, merely needed a simple contrivance for the return of the jack, as we find to be the case. To describe a jack: it is a light wooden upright lifter that carries a centred tongue, also of wood, and a cutting of quill that projects and serves as a plectrum to twang the string. The jack, when raised by the key, causes the sound, and the sound is damped by a small piece of cloth attached to the jack. In Count Correr's instrument the little plectrum was of metal, not quill. Perhaps the use of metal for plectra preceded that of quill. In the eighteenth century the quill was sometimes replaced by leather. Scaliger, who was born in 1484, and was a native of the Venetian States, wrote in after life that he remembered the introduction in his boyhood of the little plectra to clavier instruments; and from these points resembling thorns, the instruments previously called arpicordum and clavicymbalum, but commonly monochords, became known as spinet; that is to say, he derived spinetta, the Italian name, from *spina*, the Latin and Italian name for thorn. But another derivation of the word spinet, although not so taking as Scaliger's, has been lately found. It is that the name came from a Venetian clavier-maker called Spinetti, who, about the year 1500, adapted the clavicymbal, hitherto of irregular angles, into a rectangular case, and from him this new instrument became known as spinetta. Virdung, to whom I have already referred, who was a priest at Basel, and had published, in 1511, a treatise in the German language on musical instruments, knew nothing of spinet; with him the trapeze clavier was a clavicymbalum, and the rectangular one a virginal, a name which had already found recognition in England. Virdung's woodcuts represent the clavicordium, the clavicymbalum, the virginal, and the claviciterium; also the chromatic and diatonic keyboards, the last being already obsolete. I will describe the clavicord later on. The claviciterium, according to Virdung, was an upright virginal with gut strings, and was a new invention. He says he had only seen one. Perhaps the gut strings were an experiment, as Count Correr's upright instrument had certainly metal wires. Virdung cannot pretend to say when the other instruments were invented; he surmises, as we still surmise, that the clavicymbalum was a psaltery, an instrument like a dulcimer, to which a keyboard had been put; and the clavicordium a monochord, or, properly, polychord, similarly treated. The Latin names point to a time when these instruments were only used in monasteries or collegiate establishments; the Italian spinetta and arpicordo occur when their use had extended to the laity, and the claviers began to cope with the lutes and viols, and other favourite instruments of the Renaissance. They thus took their part in the great secular change which came over our

Western civilisation about the year 1500. An Italian named Sagudino, who, as Secretary to an Embassy, visited England in the reign of Henry VIII., has left an interesting account of the cultivation of music in that monarch's family and Court. Little Mary Tudor's precocity astonished him. He names the clavier she played upon, clavicimbanum, a variant of the true name. The late Rawdon Brown in translating Sagudino's letters, rendered this word harpsichord, but adds that he should have used spinet. Rimbault, in his valuable and indispensable work, "The Piano-forte," quotes from Rawdon Brown's translation, but substitutes, without comment, "virginal," wherever harpsichord occurs. He made this change of names to support a theory that has no foundation in fact, by which the clavicitherium, through an imaginary series of keyed-stringed instruments—the clavicord, the virginal, the spinet, and the harpsichord—was supposed to have led up in that order to the pianoforte. I take this opportunity to warn the student against this fallacious pedigree, which has been too generally accepted. In another sense, however, which Rimbault had not grasped, the word "virginal" would be correct. I mean that general understanding of "virginal," as the common name for any clavier with jacks, that prevailed in this country from the reign of Henry VII. to the Commonwealth. Usually a pair of virginals and a pair of clavicords or organs were said, as a pair of steps or stairs is now used, meaning gradation in the old sense of the keys, as steps through the intervals of the scale.

The regal was properly a small reed organ. I attribute to regal from *regula* (a rule), a similar derivation due also to the keyboard. Queen Elizabeth's virginal, in the Historic Tudor Room of the Loan Collection, is really a spinet, being in a trapeze form, and an Italian one; but, as I have said, in her time and later it would, in England, have been called a virginal, the special name, which was at that time foreign, not having come into general use until the Restoration. This interesting instrument is of the same kind, and is very little, if any, later in date, than the beautiful Paduan spinet of 1550, lent by the Royal Conservatoire of Brussels to the Historic Collection. All these trapeze spinets were "short octave" instruments, the lowest B or E keys, as we regard them, sounding G or C. There are two instances in the Loan Collection where the latter names are actually written upon the keys, the Paduan instrument being one of them. We are concerned to know what music was played upon such instruments? It was neither more nor less than voice parts, in the same way as the lute and other favourite instruments, such as the families of viols, flutes, cromornes, schalmeyes, and bombards, and, of course, the organ and regals were also played. Counterpoint was applied to popular dance measures, to the brisk as well as to the stately. There was no accompaniment distinct from the voice parts until recitative and the basso continuo were introduced about the year 1600, but the player had always the license of variations by which he could display fancy and executive proficiency. Wherever there is cultivation of music, melodic or harmonic, in any part of the world, varying a theme is always the musician's resource. We owe discant, and finally the harmonies and rhythmic figuration of our modern music to this natural tendency. The fingering, which at first had been of the rudest, gradually improved, and was nearly settled by J. S. Bach and his sons as we have it now. It has been perfected by the great pianists of this century. It was not till Purcell's time that the use of the thumb came to be understood. It must be borne in mind the touch of the spinet and harpsichord is quite different from that of the clavicord; and spinet, harpsichord, and

clavichord also differ from that of the pianoforte, inasmuch as they demand less impetus of blow. It is difficult to describe the harpsichord touch: it may be *legato* or *mezzo-staccato*, and has affinity to the touch of the organ. The old harpsichord players could not, however, have divined the variety of touch the modern pianoforte could have taught them. The clavichord touch is essentially *legatissimo*, with a very shallow fall or depression of the key. Both instruments require *arpeggio* chords, as chords of simultaneous notes have no satisfactory tone. I will play upon a spinet, one of old Jacob Kirkman's, dated 1755, to illustrate the clavier music of the Elizabethan era, a Pavana entitled "The Earl of Salisbury," a "Galiardo," and an air called "Sellingler's Round," with variations, by William Byrd (1538(?) to 1623), the composer of "Non Nobis Domine"; also, the "Courante Jewel," by Dr. John Bull (1563 to 1628). I would have used the more appropriate Brussels spinet of 1550, which is in playing order, had not the size of the room required an instrument of greater power. There is a fine portrait of Bull in the Loan Collection, lent by the University of Oxford. I have had the spinet tuned according to the temperament or division of the scale that was in vogue when that music was composed, by which the keys with no, or few, sharps or flats had good major thirds. This division is known as the mean tone temperament.

There was another early clavier, to which I have incidentally referred, the arpicordum or arpicordo. I think, notwithstanding the description in Praetorius's "Syntagma," it was the long harp-shaped clavicymbalum and lineal descendant of the "Stromento di Porco," or Pig's-head Psalter. Of this form Virdung seems to have no knowledge; at least, he gives no woodcut or description of it. Known in this country as the harpsichord, with an "s" inserted, it has kept the name of clavicembalo in Italy, the Italian form of clavicymbalum. And, by casting off the final syllables, it became, in France, the clavecin. The French accepted the thorny derivation of the spinetta, changing the word, according to their language, to espinette, later épinette.

We find in the long harpsichord the single string of the spinet increased to two, tuned in unison for each note, the power of twanging both at one time being gained by having two jacks to each key, and so arranging the scale of stringing that the jacks should have their plectra or striking points outwards. By stops similar to those in the organ the two registers of jacks could be shifted so that the player had at command a *forte* of two unisons, or a *piano* by reverting to the single string of the spinet; and by two keyboards, one above the other, again borrowed from the organ, it became possible to contrast the *forte* and *piano*, an advance in the direction of modern expression.

Although the increase and decrease of *crescendo* and *diminuendo* do not belong to the capabilities of the harpsichord and spinet, there is a continually varying quantity of sound heard, as in the organ, owing to the number of parts that may be going on, and their position in the scale, thus redeeming these instruments from utter monotony.

Old records show that harpsichords, or virginals, as they were called, with stops, and possibly double keyboards, were imported into this country in the reign of Henry VIII. The absence of stops in the oldest harpsichord known, the fine Roman clavicembalo of 1521, now in the South Kensington Museum, is not evidence against their having been originally an Italian invention; but, all things considered, I am inclined to attribute this improvement and the double keyboard to the clavier-makers of the Netherlands.

The octave register, with its row of jacks, derived, as we shall see, from the little movable octave spinet, has been long attributed to that great harpsichord and virginal maker, Hans Ruckers, the elder, of Antwerp. It was introduced in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. English harpsichord making does not appear to have begun before that time. The oldest English harpsichords in the Loan Collection are not of earlier date than the end of the seventeenth century. One is by Thomas Hitchcock, a famous spinet-maker, and has four registers, including the "lute." The other, by Francis Coston, also of London, has the unisons and octave without lute, and with the short octave bass. The Italian spinetta traversa, or transverse spinet, was a modification of the spinet due to the harpsichord, the tuning-pins being, as in the latter instrument, immediately above the keyboard. It was a more powerful instrument than the ordinary spinet. A smaller one, tuned an octave higher, which, used in combination with the larger instrument—as may be seen in Messrs. Chappell's combined virginal and movable spinet in the Loan Collection—led to the adoption of the octave register in the harpsichord, was known as the ottavina. The rectangular spinet, or virginal proper, bore in Italy the designation spinetta a tavola, or table spinet. It became a fashion to make these rectangular virginals like the "cassone," or large Italian wedding coffers, and in that form, but with Flemish decoration, they were introduced into this country at the same time as the transverse spinet—from the earliest existing specimens, I should say during the Commonwealth, but it might have been earlier.

There are several fine English virginals of this fashion in the Loan Collection, but they do not appear to have remained long in vogue. The transverse spinet, on the contrary, took firm root in English ground, and our Collection is rich in specimens, dating from 1664 to 1784, or thereabouts. The most noted makers have been Charles Haward, Stephen Keene, and Thomas and John Hitchcock. Samuel Pepys bought a Haward spinet. He says in his Diary:—

"April 4, 1668.—To White Hall. Took Aldgate Street in my way and there called upon one Haward that makes Virginals, and there did like of a little espinette, and will have him finish it for me: for I had a mind to a small harpsichord, but this takes up less room." On July 10 he withdrew from the purchase, to return, however, on the 13th to agree to it. On July 15, Pepys writes: "At noon is brought home the espinette I bought the other day of Haward: costs me £5." There are two Haward spinets in the Loan Collection, one on a triangular stand, resembling the "triangle" which Pepys bought afterwards. Early in the eighteenth century the long harpsichord became more prominent. It was then an instrument with two unisons and an octave, and a lute stop on the upper keyboard, which gained its oboe quality of tone by twanging the strings near the wrestplank bridge. After this addition came the mute or buff stop, and also occasionally one or more rows of jacks with morocco leather plectra. A pedal, the left one, effected an easy combination for the player of the lute, and one of the unisons, the former upon the upper, the latter, which could be muted, on the lower keyboard, making a pleasing contrast. The right pedal brought into operation a swell, the perfection of which was attained when Shudi, in 1769, patented the Venetian swell, since indispensable in the organ, to which it was soon transferred.

Jacob Kirkman and Burkat Shudi (properly Burkhard Tschudi), later Shudi and Broadwood, became in this country the most celebrated makers. Their

instruments in the Loan Collection would form by themselves an exhibition of interest.

I will now play upon two harpsichords (one by Shudi, dated 1771, and one by Shudi and Broadwood, dated 1781) a Prelude, Saraband and Cebell (or Gavotte), composed by Henry Purcell (1658 to 1695); a Menuetto and the air, with variations, known as the "Harmonious Blacksmith," by Handel (1685 to 1759), and a Sonata, by Domenico Scarlatti (1683 to 1757). This selection will show the special characteristics of the harpsichord and its limitations. But it must be remembered that the adornment of shakes, turns, and other graces were more cultivated in the best days of the harpsichord than emphasis, accent, and those ever-varying changes of power that help to make our modern music what it is. I must not omit to say that the belief once prevalent among musicians, and that I find still exists, that Scarlatti's hand-crossings were due to the use of two keyboards, is not justified. Technically the hand-crossings are intentional, and, moreover, double keyboard harpsichords have found little favour in his, or at any time, in Italy.

I come now to the clavichord, the oldest of the clavier family. Derived from the monochord, it must have long been restricted to its original use as the singer's guide and support. Its power of expression was not recognised, and it could hardly compete in other attractions with the brilliant spinet, when once the latter became known. Although improved and gradually extended in size and compass, it remained with its monochord peculiarity of two or more notes produced from the same string, and it was not until the epoch of John Sebastian Bach, that this economical construction was done away with, and each key, having its own strings, became independent of its neighbour. The expressive character of the clavichord has only found due recognition in Germany. In point of fact, it is the most directly expressive and, so to speak, intimate of all the claviers in this directness, even in this respect surpassing the pianoforte. And it was this that endeared it to Bach and his eldersons. Bach's third son, Carl Philip Emmanuel, has left a treatise on clavier playing, in which he speaks of the clavichord with enthusiasm. He says, to quote one passage only, "One can bring out (on the clavichord) all kinds of *forte* and *piano* significantly and clearly, almost more than on any other instrument." The tone of the clavichord is to us weak and ineffective, not as might be supposed as a result of age, for I have heard new clavichords and know from experience that little was gained in power by their newness. The conception of the Bachs in this respect differed from ours. It is a prevalent error to regard the Bachs as having intentionally helped the advance of the pianoforte. There is no passage, even in the last edition of Emmanuel Bach's "Versuch," that can be made to show he had any liking for the pianoforte or that it influenced either his father's or his own compositions.

The sound of the clavichord is produced by a simple tangent or flattened pin of brass, which sets the strings in vibration and makes a bridge for them by one and the same movement when the key goes down. The strip of cloth, woven about the strings beyond the tangents, damp the strings excepting while the tangents are in action. The low price of the German clavichord may have assisted to keep it in use for some years after the pianoforte had become general. Clavichords were made until the beginning of this century. A few years since they were entirely forgotten excepting by some of the oldest German musicians. Carl Engel was the first to bring the clavichord again into notice, acquiring such instruments as he could find. He inspired me with

the desire to give the clavichord its right place beside the spinet and harpsichord.

I will terminate this Lecture by playing on a clavichord the First Prelude, by J. S. Bach (1685 to 1750). It will be the best introduction to the instrument for those who are not yet acquainted with its tone. I will conclude with perhaps the greatest composition ever inspired by it, the Fantasia Chromatica of the same composer. The instrument is by Hass, of Hamburg, and is dated 1743, and the fine harpsichord Mdlle. Ulmann played upon with so much effect in the Belgian Historic Concert was by the same maker. The clavichord is tuned in equal temperament, that division of the scale advocated by the Bachs by which the major thirds are all equally rough or sharp. The Fantasia Chromatica is replete with and owes some of its peculiar charm to chords of the Diminished Seventh, which created, I may say, by Equal Temperament are only endurable when the tuning is according to that system now universally employed for organs and pianofortes.

THE EFFECT OF THE FUGAL IMPULSE UPON MUSIC:

BEING AN EXAMINATION OF THE SPIRIT AND TENDENCY OF CERTAIN PHASES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL FORM

BY JOSEPH GODDARD.

(Continued from page 589).

THE great difference between the fugal writing of Handel and his followers in the sacred field lies in these considerations. In the case of Handel's subject, the idea is expressed completely in the subject itself, which, whilst being original and possessing true melodic form, seldom aims at special melodic beauty, and does not demand special harmonic treatment. It belongs rather to the homophonal style than the harmonic; yet, though not enhanced by harmony, it still acquires a considerably added force from its multiplication and the various forms of presentation involved in its fugal treatment. This is quite a different kind of power from that of special harmony. It is akin to that power which is contained in the *general effect* of natural objects, as in the case of a field of flowers—the power of repetition and multiform presentation, whilst the power unfolded by special harmonic effect is the power of massive incitation. Both powers may conjointly operate both in Music and Nature. Handel thus (we are referring to his fugal constructions) relies not on melodic beauty or special harmony, but on force and truth of character in his themes, and that chasteness of form which lends itself easily to fugal treatment as well as to declamatory effect. On the other hand, Haydn and Mendelssohn were, beyond all things, the inaugurators of new melodic and harmonic idioms; they were not merely great composers, but they opened new paths. But the new spirit which they breathed into the art did not become manifest in fugue. From those portions of their choruses which are fugal to those which are not there is a great leap in pure effect. In the fugal portions a sense of structural effort thrusts itself strongly upon the attention, whilst in the plain portions all is inspiration. In the case of Handel a certain homogeneity embraces the whole; the fugal effect is the effect naturally inspired for consummating the expression. From numerous examples we cite the chorus, "Let us break their bonds asunder."

But the feeling for harmony not only impels the composer of the modern period to set aside the principle of polyphony—*i.e.*, even demonstrativeness of the *parts*—in favour of the principle—the enhance-