

# THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

MARCH 1st, 1852.

## ENGLISH GLEE & MADRIGAL COMPOSERS.

No. IV.

Contributed by E. HOLMES, Author of the "Life of Mozart."

OF the varieties of madrigal composition, it may be necessary to notice the following given by Morley, in his "Introduction :"—

The Canzone somewhat resembled the madrigal, but was less elaborate. It was seldom in more than three parts. The name, however, was sometimes given to a song for one voice.

The Canzonet was a little or short canzone or song in parts. Luca Marenzio, Giovanni Feretti, and Horatio Vecchi (the favorite composers of old Milton), were all excellent in this species of composition.

The Villanella was a tune of a light and trivial character. It originated with the Neapolitans. Morley speaks of it in a contemptuous strain. It admits "many perfect chords of one kind, and even disallowances at pleasure, suiting a clownish music to a clownish matter."

The Ballet was a tune which might be sung and danced to. Of this species of composition there is a variety called the *Fa la*, first introduced, it is believed, by Gastoldi da Caravaggio, a composer in this lively and airy style, of whose genius some very agreeable specimens still survive. Morley himself published a collection of songs of this kind. The easy transition which they afforded to spirit choruses and other matters suited to the early musical drama, is obvious.

Besides this full music, there was always a plentiful supply of single songs in measures as various as the feet of ancient verse. The lutenist in trunk-hose, cap and feather, and "bearded like a pard," took up a position at the crowded party, in which he evidently expected to be the admired of all observers. Whether he sung songs,

Such as the *starved* lover sings to his proud fair, is doubtful. If his music bore any proportion to those bulbous and massive legs which still attract the eye in his effigies, he must have been a very extraordinary musician indeed. Songs for a single voice, with lute accompaniment, were of Spanish, or, probably, of Eastern origin.\*

Dance music had likewise its influence on the

progress of secular composition. The modern minuet seems to be derived from the *Pavan*, which was a grave stately dance, and took its name from Pavo, a peacock. "It was danced by princes in their mantles, and by ladies in gowns with long trains," whose motion resembled that of a peacock's tail. It was followed by a lighter kind of air, called a Galliard.

The *Passamezzo* was an exhilarating tune. It is thought that Sir John Falstaff had this music in his mind, when he sent for Sneak, the musician, to entertain his company after dinner.

The Coranto, the Jig, the Hornpipe, the Scottish Jig, were all varieties of tune that existed in the memory, and sounded in the ears of men who had no idea of notation. The musical world was constituted, in fact, much as it is at present. Peacham, our first musical traveller, who glories in having received lessons from Horatio Vecchi, and having been intimate with Giovanni Croce and Luca Marenzio, describing a man in his time dejected for want of money, says "that he cannot stand still, but like one of the Tower wild beasts, is still walking from one end of his room to another, humming some new northern tune."

The licenses introduced into music through the madrigal style, had the happiest effect in enlarging the boundaries of the art. Church music *à capella* kept to its own modes and tones, and composers prosecuted their art under the severest restrictions. But though the grave style of the madrigal appears scarcely distinguishable from the music of the church, we are told by Burney that there were very distinct and characteristic rules for composing in both styles. He quotes Pietro Pontio, giving rules for madrigals :—

"The subjects of fuge and imitation in them should be short, and the notes of a quicker kind, and more syncopated than in church music; otherwise they would not be madrigals. The parts, likewise, should frequently move together; but the greatest care should be taken to express the *sense of the words as exactly as musical imitation will allow*, not only by quick and slow passages, or notes ascending and descending occasionally, but by modulation, which, when the sentiment of the poet implies harshness, cruelty, pain, sorrow, or even joy, pleasure, or the like, will assist the expression more than single notes."

Orlando di Lasso was one of the first, who, by a happy introduction of accidental flats and sharps, gave expression to words. Luca Marenzio, his contemporary, went even further, and mention is made of a madrigal in his ninth set, *Solo e pensoso*, in which he ascends from the key-note to the ninth above in a series of semitones, a progression which alone could be rendered pleasing by very curious counterpoint. As madrigal music was, however, made for private hearing, and to gratify amateurs in the chamber while yet neither operas nor public concerts had existence, it was with reason most artfully and carefully elaborated.

The early Flemish composers, the pioneers of

\* The Lute, which some may now require to be told was a kind of guitar, survived to the time of Handel. The Theorbo and Arch-lute were the same instruments, but of enlarged capacity and more strings.

the art, led on by expressive words, had already been aiming at expressive music in the madrigal. Musicians were indebted to poets not only for the various measures of music, but for the modulation which they found necessary to enhance expression and to embellish melody. The following specimen of the commencement of a madrigal by Arkadelt, a disciple of Josquin, though written about 1540, has still charms for the admirers of clearness and simplicity:—



We may perhaps get nearer to the source of music than Arkadelt. Both French and Flemish composers were attracted to Italy as the land of song. But whether they or the Italians first made the pleasant combinations which we still call music, is open to conjecture.

Roland Lattre, born at Mons, but better known by his Italian appellation, Orlando di Lasso, is the greatest ornament of Flemish art. He had a fine voice in childhood, and was on that account three times forcibly taken away from home. At this period it was the custom, as well in England as abroad, to catch musical children like singing birds, and impress them for the service of the choir.\* Of his father, who seems to have been in trade, a story is told not much to his credit. For some kind of tampering with the current coin of the realm, he was condemned to exhibit himself on three several occasions in the pillory. As Orlando grew up, he was patronized by Ferdinand di Gonzaga, Viceroy of Sicily. He travelled to Rome, and at 21 years of age was appointed capell-meister of St. John Lateran.

Soon after 1543, he was for some time in England. His most fixed residence was, however, at Munich, where during many years he was at the head of a large choir, directing daily service, and enjoying magnificent patronage. After the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in which it is said Charles IX. took part, by firing out of the window of his palace on the fugitive Huguenots, the French king, seized with remorse, and alarmed at the approach of death, desired to hear the Penitential Psalms, as set by Orlando di Lasso, directed by the composer. Having obtained permission from his sovereign, Albert of Bavaria, he set out for Paris, but the death of Charles caused his im-

mediate return. He was welcomed at Munich with renewed kindness by his patron, whose death, however, speedily followed. Misfortunes and vexations now quite upset the health of Lasso, who approached his seventieth year. He completely lost his faculties, and at the time of his decease, which it is thought happened about 1593, was unable to recognize any one about him.

Luca Marenzio, born of poor parents at Coccaglia, near Brescia, is justly called by the historian Fétis, one of the greatest composers of the sixteenth century. He was small in person, of a dark complexion, and of an affable obliging disposition. Due praise is given to his invention by Peacham, his acquaintance, who says "that he excelled all other whatsoever, having published more sets than any author else, and *hath not an ill song.*" This opinion has been confirmed by experience. Marenzio was sometime maestro di capella to Cardinal Luigi d'Este, and was patronized by many princes and great personages, among which were the King of Poland, Cardinal Aldobrandini, nephew to Pope Clement VIII., and others. Besides madrigals, he wrote motets and sacred *cantiones* for four, five, six, and seven voices. He wrote also canzonets, to be accompanied by the lute. He was a great master of counterpoint, which he never displayed in pedantry, but embellished by a versatile, melodious, and prolific genius. It is said that his constitution would not endure the rigorous climate of Poland, and returning to Rome, he died in the year 1599, at no very advanced age. It has been also reported that an affair of the heart hastened his dissolution; that he had an attachment to a certain lady, niece of the reigning Pope, and had been sent to fetch her into Poland, but met with such opposition that he could not survive it. This faint tradition, however, rests upon the credit of Peacham, who was perhaps unwilling to omit a romantic story in his book, though the evidence of it was far from satisfactory.

Purcell and Handel are said to have adopted many of the subjects of counterpoint of Luca Marenzio; but all the chief of these subjects have been used again and again. The flowing, natural, easy air of this composer is unrivalled. Burney says of his subjects of fugue and imitation, that—"they are traits of elegant and pleasing melody, which, though they seem selected with the utmost care for the sake of the words they are to express,—yet so artful are the texture and disposition of the parts, that the general harmony and effect of the whole are as complete and unembarrassed as if he had been writing in plain counterpoint without poetry or contrivance."

This is evidently Horace's rule in perfection—the "art which conceals art."

Palestrina, the third in the great triumvirate who all influenced the progress of music at the same time, was a native of Præneste, in the neigh-

\* See poor Tusser's lamentation at being a compelled chorister:—

"The better brest the lesser rest,  
To serve the queere, now there now here;  
For time so spent, I may repent,  
And sorrow make."

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bourhood of Rome, called by Juvenal on account of its numerous springs, and situation among the mountains, "cold Præneste." Here it is that to the present day the inhabitants live a simple, primeval life, scarcely knowing the use of money;—and here are found those fine countenances of the Roman peasantry which artists delight to paint when they would express the aristocracy of nature. Of this type was Palestrina: a composer absorbed in his own ideas of the music of the cathedral, and supporting the walls of the edifice by his simple and majestic strains. He was a monastic musician by preference; he paced cathedrals and cloisters, and walked gowned, perpetually meditating fugues and canons, and never wishing for any other enjoyment or recreation. The old print which represents him kneeling before Pope Julius III., presenting one of his works, with profound respect and deference, may be safely trusted as an illustration of the piety and humility of his character. He lived in friendship with Animuccia, Nanino, and other musicians, who sympathised in the elevated style of art; and hoped to bequeath his powers to his two sons whom he had carefully instructed in music, but they both died before him. In the year of his decease, he published *Madrigali Spirituali*, which he dedicated to the Grand Duchess of Tuscany.

Although the works of these masters were practised and well known in England for many years, no one thought of composing a madrigal. At length Bird wrote one on stanzas of Ariosto; and in 1583, some amateur having adapted English versions to Italian madrigals, so well proved that there was no natural impediment to the music in the nature of our language, that the fashion of English madrigals was effectually set. Younge's *Musica Transalpina* was conspicuous for its adaptations of eminent foreign compositions.

In Morley's account of the ancient usage in madrigal singing, we are told that madrigals in his time were performed in no particular key, but took the pitch of the key employed, from the capacity of the voices. Sometimes these compositions were accompanied by viols, the performer playing and singing his part at the same time; which, however, must have produced a bad effect. This music we may easily conceive to have been more amusing to the performer, than agreeable to the auditor. Even in our own times we hear of societies of instrumentalists, where people play in self-defence, and to divert their listening faculties from too active an exercise.

During the 17th century most of the musical families of England "were in possession of a chest of viols, consisting of two trebles, two tenors, and two basses, with six strings upon each, all tuned alike, by 4ths and 3rds, and the necks fretted."

The compass and *accordatura* of this instrumental family, says Burney, were the following:—

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Treble Viol.' and contains a single melodic line on a five-line staff with a treble clef. The middle staff is labeled 'Bass Viol, or Viol da Gamba.' and contains a single melodic line on a five-line staff with a bass clef. The bottom staff is labeled 'Tenor Viol, or Viol da Braccio.' and contains a single melodic line on a five-line staff with a tenor clef. Each staff shows a series of notes, likely representing the 'accordatura' or tuning of the instrument.

These instruments had but a feeble vibration, and would make no way in a large room. The frets on the necks show how little trust was reposed in the ear of the performer, that the note without their aid could ever be stopped in tune. There existed no knowledge of the bow, no variety, and no accent; yet from such weak and rude beginnings, in accompanying madrigals upon these toneless instruments, the taste for instrumental music took its rise. For now the players found that they could dispense with the voices, and as they got more and more interested in their own progress, they applied themselves to music specially produced for instruments, extending over a larger range of notes than the vocal compositions which they had previously used. A great many *fancies*—thus miscalled for want of a better name—were now produced; and it is much to the credit of the musical discernment of Charles II. that he cordially detested them.

Such a prejudice, however, in favor of the viol, as the instrument of a gentleman, existed in England, that the progress of the violin, notwithstanding its manifest superiority, was most strenuously and obstinately opposed. Antony Wood was one of the first converts to the violin, and one of the ablest players of his time. The following anecdotes collected from his own biography have much interest:—

In the latter end of the year 1657, Davis Mell, the most eminent violinist of London, and clock-maker, being in Oxon, Peter Pitt, Will Bull, Kenelm Digby, and others of All Souls, as also Ant. Wood, did give a very handsome entertainment in the tavern called the Salutation. The company did look on Mr. Mell to have a prodigious hand on the violin, and they thought that no person, as all in London did, could go beyond him.

However, in the course of the next year Mr. Mell's fame was considerably damaged by foreign competition:—

Tho. Baltzar, a Lubecker born, and the most famous artist for the violin that the world had yet produced, was now (1658) in Oxon, and this day, July 24, A. W. was with him, and Mr. Edw. Low, lately Organist of Christ Church, at the house of Will. Ellis. A. W. did then and there to his very great astonishment, hear him play on the violin. He then saw him run up his fingers to the end of the finger-board of the violin, and run them back insensibly, and all with alacrity and in very good tune, which he nor any in England saw the like before.

In less than five years there was also an end of this German prodigy, who, dying, was buried in the cloisters of St. Peter's, at Westminster. A. W.,

notices this event in a quaint apologetic strain. Baltzar was much beloved by all the friends of music—"his company was thereupon desired: and company, especially musical company, delighting in drinking, *made him drink more than ordinary*, which brought him to his grave." Baltzar was clearly a victim, and immolated himself on the altar of boon companionship. Being musical he drank, and drinking he died; and thus the world lost a genius who possessed naturally a disposition towards temperance and all the cardinal virtues: at least so Antony Wood would persuade us. The apparition of Baltzar must have been even more astonishing than that of Paganini in our own day. He surprised our innocent ancestors just when after *sawing* madrigals they fancied that they had been performing instrumental music!

*To be continued.*

#### TAXES ON KNOWLEDGE.

The direct Taxes on the present number of the *Musical Times* amount to—

Duty on Paper, for 6500 copies, at Three-halfpence per lb., with 5 per cent. added	£3	1	6
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besides that the proprietor has to enter into large recognizances to the Queen, and is subject to penalties of £20 and upwards, for omitting any one of the multifarious requirements of the Stamp Act.

This amount, £18 4s. 6d. (were the Taxes repealed), might be spent in improving the work or lowering its price. It is incumbent upon all who desire the extension of EDUCATION, to protest, on every possible opportunity, against the continuance of the Taxes on Knowledge, especially by a Legislature which professes to encourage LEARNING.

#### IMPORTANT POSTAL FACILITY.

POSTAGE ON MUSIC, BOOKS, &c.—A Treasury warrant dated January 29th, has been issued regulating the sending of Books, Music, Publications and Works of Art, through the Post Office.—“Every packet not exceeding 1lb. in weight shall be charged 6d.; not exceeding 2lbs., 1s.; and for every additional pound over 2lbs., an additional 6d.; every additional fraction to be charged as a pound. No packet to exceed in length, breadth, or depth, two feet in dimensions. All such packages to be prepaid by stamps affixed on the outside, near the address. Every such packet to be sent without a cover, open at the ends or sides. Any officer of the Post Office to have the power of delaying the transmission of such packets for the space of 24 hours after the time in which the same ought to be despatched in due course of the post. The warrant not to affect the transmission by post of the votes and proceedings of Parliament, nor British newspapers, nor to extend to places beyond sea. If the packets be sent without postage-stamps, to be charged double postage, or where the stamps are insufficient double

postage for the difference of value. The packets to contain no sealed or unsealed letter or sealed enclosure. If the provisions of the warrant be not complied with, the packet may be opened and forwarded to the address or returned to the sender; the warrant to come into operation on the 1st of March. There will be no restriction as to writing on the pages. These may be covered with marginal notes without offence to the Post Office or obstacle to the transmission of the book.” The *Athenæum* informs us that even more than this will be permitted. “A person will be allowed to send by the book-post any quantity of paper whether printed, written upon (still providing that the writing is not mere epistolary correspondence)—or plain; together with all legitimate mounting, binding, or carving; including also rollers in the case of prints; and, in short, whatever is necessary for safe transmission of literature or artistic matter.”

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Frank will find many varieties of music set to the *Litany* at our *Publisher's*.

Novitius appears already to know more of the little-used term “*mi contra fa*,” than we should be able to tell him. The subject would interest few of our readers.

S. B. G.—Several lozenges are advertised as being a remedy for the sudden hoarseness you describe, but we have no experience to guide us as to which are good or otherwise.

#### Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

MR. NEATE'S CLASSICAL SOIREEs.—Mr. Neate, the distinguished pianist, has commenced a series of classical concerts, in the course of which he purposes to introduce the principal pianoforte compositions and instrumental quartetts of the great masters. The taste and judgment with which the programme of the first concert was selected, are in keeping with the fine talent exhibited by Mr. Neate in the reading and execution of the portion of the programme which fell to his share. He was assisted by Messrs. Sainton, Cooper, Hill, and Piatti. In our next number, we intend to enter more into detail about these interesting and thoroughly classical entertainments.

MR. AGUILAR'S SOIREEs MUSICALES.—The third and last soirée announced by Mr. Aguilar, was held on the 13th of February. The intention of the projector of these entertainments, was to give his patrons and friends an opportunity of hearing Beethoven's works rendered in a manner, which their high character demands. It is not too much to state that the fulfilment of that intention, is the practical result of the experiment. Mr. Aguilar, himself, having devoted his attention generally to the pianoforte works of the great master, was enabled to realize in them many beauties, which before had been less prominently developed.

MR. W. STERNDALÉ BENNETT'S PERFORMANCES OF CLASSICAL PIANOFORTE MUSIC.—The second performance took place at the Hanover Square Rooms, on Tuesday, February the 24th. Mr. Bennett performed with beautiful precision, clearness, and taste, and with a touch that drew out all the finest tones of the pianoforte, Hummel's quintett in E flat minor, pieces by Paradies and Handel, a concerto in A minor by