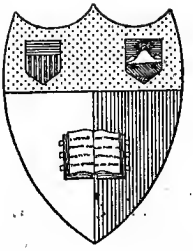
CELEBRATED VIOLINISTS

BY

DR·T·L·PHIPSON



CELEBRATED VIOLINISTS.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

AND

ANECDOTES

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DR. T. L. PHIPSON.

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PREFACE.

A WELL-KNOWN statesman once said that the violin had done as much for civilisation as the steam-engine; and I am certainly not prepared to contradict this assertion. It naturally follows that a great violinist may exercise as beneficial an influence on mankind as a great engineer or a great philosopher. Of this we shall be better able to judge presently.

It is perhaps well to seize upon this opportunity for a few words on the difference between a *violin* and a *fiddle*. It is not at all an unusual thing to hear ignorant or vulgar-minded persons speak of both these instruments as one and the

same production. But the fiddle is a much older instrument than the violin. A kind of fiddle was used in fairs and shows by the Anglo-Saxons as early as the tenth century. Some believe it to have *originated* in England or Wales; whilst the violin came to us from France and Italy *many hundred years later*, and did not attain its full degree of perfection till the seventeenth century. The fiddle of olden times, which was a very coarse kind of musical instrument, has come down to us modified in form, and *now* externally resembles the violin. It can be purchased at the price of a few shillings; but no violin worthy of the name can be had for less than five to ten pounds, and for a *solo* instrument twenty-five to fifty pounds is the least amount that will procure a good instrument. For a fine Cremona violin of one of the old masters (Amati, Stradivarius, Guarnerius), from one hundred to three hundred pounds is by no means an uncommon price. It need scarcely be added that it is the violin of the seven-

teenth century which is referred to at the beginning of this preface.

I feel it almost a duty to my readers to explain why the present work should differ somewhat widely in character from those which have hitherto escaped from my pen.

I have long been a violinist; and though circumstances have caused me to adopt another profession instead of that of music, yet, from early childhood, my mother's assiduous care and untiring energy taught me to make my violin a source of recreation which has amply repaid me for years of toil. To her, whose efforts have been continued by the dear partner of my joys and sorrows, I owe my first successes in the drawing-room and the concert-room, and the power, not only of giving pleasure to thousands, but of obtaining funds for certain charitable purposes which my purse would be totally inadequate to supply. Let me add to this that my father presented me with a fine Stradivarius instrument, when I was little more than twelve years old, and gave me my first music lesson.

I shall never forget the day—nor the astonishment that it caused to my worthy professor M. Henri Standish—when my mother once interrupted us in the middle of a lesson. It was a hot summer day in Brussels, in the year 1852; we were working away, with our coats off as usual, when she entered the room with a roll of music, evidently fresh from the publishers, and proceeded to unfold it without saying a word. Then, placing it before my master, she insisted that he should teach me to play it without delay. It was the seventh Concerto of De Bériot. The piece had been recently played at the annual competition by the older pupils of the Brussels *Conservatoire*, and my excellent professor had obtained the prize. From that moment I became a violinist.

As years rolled on I took deeper interest in those distinguished men who have left behind them well-known names as celebrated performers, and I have endeavoured to give my readers, in the present volume, a sketch of their lives, their characters, and their works.

A violinist, however great, cannot be set up as the most perfect type of humanity, but it will be seen, I trust, in the following pages, that it is chiefly men of high moral and intellectual character that have attained celebrity in this difficult branch of the musical art. In some instances natural genius may have done wonders, but in most cases courage and perseverance have had their share also. CORELLI, TARTINI, VIOTTI, DE BÉRIOT, were men whose lives many of us might envy; their performances and their works have added to the enlightenment of mankind in every country of the world, have tended to refine our thoughts and soften our feelings, by attracting us constantly towards that which is fine and beautiful.

London, 1877.

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INTRODUCTION.

IT seems very evident that, in what may be termed early days, music was systematically cultivated in Italy with a degree of success perfectly astonishing, the influence of which is widely felt now, and extends deeply into modern society. No one can doubt that the most beautiful of all music has sprung from Italy, and that Italian music still exerts its beneficial influence over the whole of the lyric and dramatic world.

This is the less surprising when we consider the enormous efforts made for so many consecutive years, we might almost say centuries, in that favoured clime, to cultivate this and other Fine Arts in which the Italians have excelled in the most admirable manner. Take, for instance, the study of singing as practised in Rome as early as 1690, when all other musical schools were yet either unborn or in a state of embryo; at least, when compared with what they have since become. Angelini, in his *Storia della Musica*, which this eminent singer published in 1695, tells us that, at this early period, the pupils in Roman schools of singing went through the following daily routine:—First, they sang for one hour difficult music, to become accustomed to it; another hour was given to the *cadenza* or shake; another hour for difficult passages; an hour for reading and study, devoted to literature; and another hour for singing exercises to be performed in presence of the professor, and before a mirror, in order to avoid any uncouth or disagreeable attitude or bad expression of the face. Thus were occupied the five hours of the morning. In the afternoon half an hour was devoted to theoretical studies; an-

other half hour to the rules of thorough bass, and copying these rules into their books; then half an hour again to reading and literature. The remainder of the day was devoted to exercises on the harpsichord, to the composition of religious music, motets, or little songs; in fact, to any species of composition for which the pupils themselves showed a predilection. This occurred on days when the school was not allowed to go out. On the days devoted to exercise in the open air, the pupils most frequently went to sing to an echo near the Monte Mario, out of the Angelica gate, so that they might acquire some idea of the sound of their own voices as heard by an audience. They also sang in the various churches, and the evening was generally passed in discussions on style, etc., with the professor.

I have given the passage almost *verbatim*, as it is a very curious one. What art could resist such persevering efforts when seconded by the natural gifts and instincts of the youthful artists themselves! How could they fail to delight and charm the whole civilised world! And with regard to instrumental music, as with singing, painting, sculpture, and architecture, the stu-

dent of the past will find in Italy a constant source of power and beauty, spreading its joyful and refining influence over the whole world.

It is to Italy we must look for the greatest of violin-players as for the greatest violin-makers; and though other nations, especially France and Germany, and even England, have successfully followed in the footsteps of Italian art, we shall have in the present volume ample evidence that to Italy the world owes an enormous debt of melody and inspiration.

It is not often that the French will admit superiority in any other nation; but M. Choron tells us in his well-known work that the Italians have been "the instructors of all Europe in instrumental composition." In violin music their compositions have served as models, and the same may be said with regard to the harpsichord, "all other solo pieces have been constructed on these models," etc.

The very first violin-player of eminence was a certain Giovanni Battista, who lived in 1590, and to whom various old writers allude on account of his clever performances. We know, however, very little of him, and his instrument was very

little cultivated in those days, though history mentions several distinguished players on the *viol* (a much larger kind of instrument) both in France and Italy.

About 1630 there were in France some noted violinists, Constantine, Lazarin, Boccan, Foucard, and probably others, but no record of their lives has come down to us.

In Italy, however, about 1650, an ecclesiastic known as Padre Castrovillari, of Padua, took rank as an eminent violinist and composer. He had a pupil named Bassani, a Venetian, who was afterwards the professor of the celebrated Corelli. The latter instructed, among others, Locatelli, whose studies did much to perfect the talent of Paganini. But it must not be supposed that we can make out a complete *chain* of violinists; many celebrated artistes were contemporary, and belonged to totally different schools. Thus, Paganini and the "classical" Spohr were both born in 1784; Lolli, Nardini, and Pugnani were contemporaries, as were Lulli and Corelli before them.

In 1679 the above-named Bassani published several *sonatas*, and became distinguished by his

excellent style of performance. But even in 1675 we find in Germany, at the Court of Saxony, a very ingenious violinist, Walther, who published some remarkable works showing a great knowledge of the powers and resources of his instrument.

I.

Lulli.

1633—1687.

ONE fine summer day in the year 1646, the Duc de Guise brought back with him, from Florence to Paris, an Italian lad just thirteen years of age. The boy was called Giovanni Battista Lulli, but more frequently answered to the abbreviated appellation of Baptista. His dark eyes, long flowing hair and open countenance, together with his peculiar soft Italian accent, and, above all, his remarkable talent as a violinist, even at that early age, gained him more than one admirer. It appears, from various accounts, that the lad was engaged as a page to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, a niece of Louis XIV., and at first she appears to have been very much pleased with

him. But for some reason or other she got tired of him as a page, and he was made to fill some subordinate place in the kitchen! There appears to be no doubt that Lulli was an excellent cook, and had learned the secret of preparing some very exquisite dishes which none of the French cooks of the period could manage.

That he got into many scrapes in the royal kitchen there can be little doubt, for not only was the head-cook, or *chef*, jealous of the favour bestowed upon her *protégé* by Mademoiselle de Montpensier, but whenever the opportunity occurred he neglected his duties to play some soft Italian melody on his violin, which so enchanted the entire force of the kitchen, that one and all forgot where they were, or what they were doing, and the dinner was more than once completely spoilt. Then again, it is said, that one of his kitchen companions purloined six bottles of wine, which he sold to purchase Lulli a new violin, when the old *chef* had taken his original instrument away. Many a time, indeed, would Lulli's violin have been broken over his head by the infuriated *chef*, but it happened that Louis XIV. had expressed his approval of the *sorbets* and *œufs*

à la neige, which Lulli alone knew how to make. The head-cook himself passed, however, for the inventor of those dishes. Lulli knew it, and had the good sense to allow matters to remain as they were. It protected him from violence.

One day—Lulli was then fifteen and a half years of age—the sun was shining gloriously in the heavens, the kitchen boys were all as gay as larks; it is needless to add, the head-cook was far away, and Lulli, who had taken up his violin, was treating his enraptured companions to some of his very finest music, when the Comte de Nogent suddenly entered the kitchen, and, to the surprise of all present, took away the boy and his violin. Never again was Lulli to behold those greasy walls and pans; in fact, that day proved the commencement of his fortune.

The illustrious Count had heard, from the open windows of his apartment, the sound of Lulli's violin; his curiosity was excited, and he longed to know what inmate of the palace could manage the instrument so skilfully. Having assured himself that the music proceeded from the kitchen, he entered, and telling Lulli not to fear, but to

follow him and bring his violin, he took the boy straightway to the princess, and made him play before her the melodies that were still ringing in the ears of the pot-boys.

We do not know all that passed at that interview; but no doubt Mademoiselle de Montpensier was as surprised and delighted as the worthy Comte de Nogent, for Lulli, who had been only taught the first elements of his art by an Italian friar, was immediately placed by her under a proper master; and, in a comparatively short time, he became a professor in his turn. After a while he was elevated to the rank of Court Musician, and, his reputation as a violinist having spread, the King himself desired to hear him. Lulli was nineteen years of age when he played for the first time before Louis XIV., who was so enchanted with his performance, and with that of some of his pupils, that he engaged their permanent services as *Les petits Violons du Roi.* There had existed, for some time, at the French Court a band of twenty-four violin-players; they were called "The Violins of the Chamber," and had attracted the attention of our Charles II., who endeavoured to imitate this institution in England. It is said that the *petits violons*

soon eclipsed the older band, and Lulli entered more and more into the favour of the King.

He now composed the music for several plays and ballets, in which Louis himself sometimes took a part, as did many of the ladies and gentlemen of the Court; and brilliant *fêtes* and theatrical performances at Versailles were of frequent occurrence. Lulli became at the same time both an able composer and an excellent actor: he not only wrote the music and ballets for several of Molière's plays, but sometimes took a prominent part in the acting of these pieces. His greatest success lay in comic character, for which he had a very decided disposition. When Molière wished to amuse his guests he was wont to exclaim, turning to Lulli: "Come, Baptista, make us laugh."

In the year 1672, the King made Lulli director of the Royal Academy of Music (the French Opera), which, until then, had been submitted to the Abbé Perrin, and from that moment dates the birth of the *Grand Opera* in France. The glory of having created such a splendid institution belongs, however, partly to Philippe Quinault, a member of the French Academy, who wrote the

libretto for most of Lulli's operas. The latter are very numerous: in fifteen years he wrote no less than nineteen grand operas; and whilst he reigned supreme at the Royal Academy, no other composer's works were allowed to see the light. The sarcastic Boileau said to him one day: "You are not only the *first*, but the *only* musician in France!" Lulli appears also to have shown much jealousy towards Corelli when he visited Paris, and did not use any efforts to make his stay there agreeable. *Armide* is considered one of his finest compositions, and with regard to his religious music, Madame de Sévigné writes that "she does not think there is finer music in heaven." Our national anthem has been ascribed to him, but erroneously; having been composed in 1607 by Dr. John Bull, organist to James I., and the words by Ben Jonson: it was sung in England many years before Lulli was born. *Persée* is another of his best-known works.

Lulli's music is occasionally performed in Paris and in London. As late as the year 1856 one of the songs from his *Persée* was sung by Madame Viardot-Garcia at a cheap *Orchestral Concert* at St. Martin's Hall, and was most riotously ap-

plauded. It is true that the singer gave the grand old song with due majesty of declamation and fascination of character; but the truth of the *aria* in itself had something to do with the triumph.

A number of Italian pieces, which he had composed in his leisure moments, were collected and published by one of his sons in 1702, under the title of *Fragments.* From the period that Lulli took the direction of the Grand Opera, passed his time in composing and, to the distress of his wife Madeleine, enjoying the society of convivial friends, he seems to have abandoned altogether his once-delightful violin. "Never," says Moreri, "did any man carry so far the art of violin-playing; and in his hands this instrument was more agreeable than in any others, however clever." Lulli made a considerable number of pupils, among the more remarkable of whom we may name Lalouette, Lalande,* Louis and Jean Louis Lulli,* Colosse,* Marais,* Desmarest,* Gervais,* Verdier, Baptiste, Joubert, and Rebel. Those with an asterisk to their names had some of their music performed at the Opera after the death of Lulli.

In 1686 the King fell dangerously ill, and on his recovery Lulli was ordered to compose a *Te Deum*. On leading this work he accidentally struck his foot with the cane which he was using, and the wound became so serious that he died of it on the 22nd of March, 1687, at the age of fifty-three. He expired singing one of his own airs, "Il faut mourir pecheur." Santeuil composed an epitaph upon him in six Latin lines, the sense of which is:

> "O Death, we knew that thou wert blind,
> But in striking Lulli thou has proved
> To us that thou art deaf."

One of Lulli's best pupils, Lalouette, has left a MS. *Méthode*, or systematic treatise, on the art of violin-playing. In 1836 this MS. was in the possession of the violinist J. B. Cartier; but what has become of it we do not know.

II.

Corelli.

1653—1713.

IN the month of February, 1653, there was born at Fusignano, in the territory of Bologna, a man whose career was destined to have a most prodigious influence upon the art of violin-playing, and whose compositions have come down to us as types of purity and freshness. This man was Archangelo Corelli. His great reputation and the number of pupils he made connect him more or less with all the great violinists who have followed, even down to the present day.

In his youthful days the Church had more hold upon music and musicians than the theatre or the concert-room, and Corelli's first master

was Matteo Simonelli, distinguished for his knowledge of composition, who taught him the first rudiments of the art. But the young artiste soon showed a very decided preference for secular music; so, abandoning his former master, he placed himself under Bassani, whom we have already mentioned in our *Introduction*.

This Bassani was a man of extensive knowledge, and a clever violinist; he had, moreover, composed several successful works for the Church, the theatre, and the chamber. Under his tuition the young Corelli appears to have made very rapid progress, and, as he advanced in years, laboured incessantly in the practice of his instrument. Before Corelli was twenty years of age, he appears to have followed the natural propensity of all artistes, and set out on his travels. It is said that in 1672 he was at Paris, but could not stay there on account of the jealousy of Lulli. In 1679 or 1680, when about twenty-seven years of age, he paid a visit to Germany, and was very well received in several quarters, more especially by the Elector of Bavaria, who not only admired his talent as a violinist, but retained his services for a while. His absence from Italy

was, however, not of long duratiou ; he returned home, and afterwards proceeded to Rome to continue his studies, and there, about 1683, he published his first *Sonatas.*

The result of this assiduous labour was that Corelli became a great violinist, and his fame extended throughout Europe; the number of his pupils increased year by year, and many came from enormous distances to benefit by his instruction. As a solo-player, it is said that his style of performance was learned and elegant, his tone was firm and even; "occasionally," we are told, his playing "was impressed with feeling," but during his performance "his countenance was distorted, his eyes red as fire, and his eye-balls rolled as if he were in agony."

Corelli was appointed leader of the orchestra at the Opera of Rome about the year 1690. He appears to have been the first leader who directed that the bowing of the orchestra should be perfectly uniform ; that is, that the bows should all move up and down together; and at a rehearsal before a concert at which any of his compositions were to be performed, he would invariably stop the orchestra if he saw an irregular bow.

At Rome he had a great and powerful patron in the person of Cardinal Ottoboni. This Cardinal was evidently fond of music, for he had a concert at his residence every Monday evening, and Corelli had the direction of it. When the latter had resided at Rome several years, he published some of the music which he used to perform himself as solos in the various concerts at which he appeared. It was issued as "*Sonate à Violini, etc., Op. 5.*"

It has been said by a distinguished writer, that Corelli, by this and his other publications, laid the basis of the art of playing the violin; but it is difficult to arrive at a true beginning in anything. Corelli, no doubt, profited largely by those who had gone before him, and it would be an injustice to his predecessors not to acknowledge it here.

Some of our readers will remember that it was at the house of the above-mentioned Cardinal that the immortal Handel met Corelli. A curious story is told about this meeting. One of Handel's compositions was to be performed on that particular Monday, and it appears that the Italian violinist was giving to the opening movement a style of his own, when Handel, who had formerly

studied the violin, lost his temper, as usual, and so far forgot himself as to snatch the instrument from the hand of Corelli. The latter is said to have replied with his accustomed mildness, "My dear Saxon, this music is in the French style, which I do not understand!" This little anecdote has been brought forward by Schœlcher and others to prove that Handel knew more of the violin than the greatest *virtuoso* of his time—which is palpably absurd! It merely proves that the Italian musician did not accent his music in the German style, and that Handel happened to know enough of the instrument to be able to show him the proper accent.

When Corelli's reputation had increased to a high degree at Rome, and was already spreading to other important cities, a certain curiosity was everywhere evinced to hear his performance, and he received no less than a royal invitation from the Court of Naples. According to Dubourg this must have been about the year 1708. He did not feel much disposed to go; but, at last, was induced to accept the invitation. However, he took with him his second violin, Matteo, and a violoncellist, in case he should not be well accompanied by the

Neapolitan orchestra. He had no sooner arrived than he was asked to play some of his concertos before the King. This he refused, as the whole of his orchestra was not with him and there was no time for a rehearsal. However, he soon found that the Neapolitan musicians played the orchestral parts of his concertos as well as his own accompanists did after some practice; for having at length consented to play the first of his concertos before the Court, the accompaniment was so good that Corelli is said to have exclaimed to Matteo: "*Si suona a Napoli!*"—"They *do* play at Naples!" This performance being quite successful, he was presented to the King, who afterwards requested him to perform one of his sonatas; but his Majesty found the adagio "so long and so dry, that he got up and *left the room* (!) to the great mortification of the eminent *virtuoso*." As the King had commanded the piece, the least he could have done would have been to have waited till it was finished. "If they play at Naples they are not very polite there," poor Corelli must have thought! Another unfortunate mishap also occurred to him there, if we are to believe the dictum of Geminiani, one of Corelli's pupils, who

had preceded him at Naples: it would appear that in being appointed out of compliment to lead a composition of Scarlatti's, on arriving at an air in C *minor*, Corelli led off in C *major*. "Let us recommence," said the composer good-humouredly; but the same thing occurred again, and Scarlatti was absolutely obliged to point out what was the matter. This, we are told, added to Corelli's mortification so much that he soon after left Naples and returned to Rome. These stories must be taken *cum grano salis* when we remember that they are the *ipse dixit* of another artiste, who, though a pupil, was, to a certain extent, a rival of Corelli's.

That Corelli was a man who knew how to make himself respected we can plainly see in what occurred at Ottoboni's residence one evening, when he observed the worthy Cardinal and others *talking* during the performance of one of his finest solos. On this occasion, to the surprise of every one present, Corelli quietly laid down his violin and stepped off the platform to join the company. On being asked the reason of this singular behaviour, he replied that he was afraid the noise of his music might perhaps interrupt the conversation!

But Corelli had not been long back in Rome before it became the fashion to patronize another clever violinist named Valentini, which is said to have displeased him exceedingly, at least, such is Geminiani's account, who also states that a hautboy-player created some sensation about the same time.

In 1712 the *Concertos* of Corelli were beautifully engraved at Amsterdam; the celebrated composer only survived the publication six weeks, the dedication bearing the date Rome, 3rd December, 1712, and his death occurring on the 18th January, 1713. He was interred at the Pantheon, where a beautiful statue was erected to his memory bearing the inscription:

"*Corelli princeps musicorum,*"

and near to that of Raffaele.

Corelli appears to have been a man of a meek, timid, and gentle nature, but not devoid of humour and pleasantry; remarkable for his modesty and retiring habits not less than for the habitual plainness of his dress. He accumulated a considerable fortune and left a valuable collection of pictures. With regard to his com-

positions, his *Solos* or *Op.* 5, are still looked upon as a classical and valuable work to study; this work cost him three years of arduous labour. His sixth and last work (*the Concertos*) are still performed occasionally in the concert-room. As studies, the Solos of Corelli have been adopted by the most eminent professors. Several of these works are published by Schott & Co., and others by R. Cocks & Co., of London.

Corelli made many excellent pupils; one of the most remarkable of these was Francesco Geminiani, whom we have already mentioned. He was born at Lucca in 1680, studied first under a violinist named Lunati, and then under Corelli. He left Rome for Naples when Corelli was at the zenith of his fame. In 1714 he came over to England and played before George I. Here he published a number of works, which show great perseverance and incessant application; he also arranged some of Corelli's works. He possessed great execution and considerable taste, and his performances became fashionable. Some of his compositions are very elegant, but are not generally considered equal to those of his illustrious master. In 1750 he went to Paris, and resided there some five

years, afterwards to Dublin, where he died on the 17th September, 1762, in his eighty-third year. He left, in the person of Matthew Dubourg, a pupil who attained high rank as a musician, in the time of Handel.

An entire volume would not be sufficient to relate all the facts and adventures connected with the life of Geminiani, could the data in question now be collected. As we have mentioned the great Handel, it may be noted, at the same time, that Geminiani was partly the means of reconciling George I. to the capricious humour and eccentricities of that celebrated composer. The King, who arrived in England in September, 1714, and was crowned at Westminster a month later, was irritated with Handel for having left Germany, where he held the position of Chapel-master to George, when Elector of Brunswick, and still more so by his having composed a *Te Deum* on the Peace of Utrecht, which was not favourably regarded by the Protestant princes of Germany. Baron Kilmanseck, a Hanoverian, and a great admirer of Handel, undertook to bring them together again. Being informed that the King intended to picnic on the

Thames, he requested the composer to write something for the occasion. Thereupon, Handel wrote the twenty-five little concerted pieces known under the title of *Water Music.* They were executed in a barge which followed the royal boat. The orchestra consisted of four violins, one tenor, one violoncello, one double bass, two hautboys, two bassoons, two French horns, two flageolets, one flute, and one trumpet. The King soon recognised the author of the music, and his resentment against Handel began to soften. Shortly after this, Geminiani was requested to play some sonatas of his own composition in the King's private cabinet; but fearing that they would lose much of their effect if they were accompanied in an inferior manner, he expressed the desire that Handel should play the accompaniments. Baron Kilmanseck carried the request to the King, and supported it strongly. The result was that peace was made, and an extra pension of £200 per annum settled upon Handel.

Another most remarkable man with whom Geminiani came in contact some years later, was Philidor, the operatic composer and celebrated chess-player. Geminiani, Philidor, and Signorina

Lanza were to give a series of concerts in Rotterdam in 1745, but the scheme was broken up by the unfortunate death of the lady. André Danican Philidor was born at Drent, near Paris, in 1726. His grandfather was hautboy-player to the court of Louis XIII. (An Italian, named Philidor, was much admired by the King for his superior performance on that instrument, and on his departure for Italy, Louis gave M. Danican the *sobriquet* of Philidor, which was ever after appended to the family name.) His father was leader of the *Concerts Spirituels* to be referred to in the sequel, and several of his relations were eminent musicians in the bands of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. At six years of age, Philidor was admitted into the choir of the Chapel Royal at Versailles (1732), and when eleven years old he composed a *motette*, which was performed in the Chapel, and pleased Louis XV. so much that he gave the child a present of five louis d'or, and encouraged him to go on with his musical studies. In the Chapel Royal at Versailles, there were about eighty musicians daily in attendance, violins, hautboys, violas, double basses, choristers, etc.; and, cards not being allowed, they had a

long table inlaid with a number of chess-boards, with which they amused themselves during their leisure time. When fourteen years of age, Philidor was the best chess-player in the band, and at that time also, several of his musical compositions were performed at the *Concerts Spirituels*. Four years later he played, at Paris, two games at chess, at the same time, without seeing the board, winning both games. In later years he became widely known as a composer of numerous operas that have delighted the French public for many years, and also as one of the greatest chess-players that ever lived. He died in London in 1795, at the age of sixty-nine, and shortly before his death played three chess matches at once, two of them without seeing either of the boards, and the third whilst looking over the table. His first musical drama, *Blaise le Savatier*, was performed at the Opéra Comique in 1759, and met with great success. It was soon followed by several others. Philidor and Geminiani were great friends for many years.

As early as 1699, when Corelli was first violin in the Chapel of the Margrave of Anspach, he had already a pupil named Pisendel, who after-

wards became famous in Germany; he was attached to the Court of Saxony, and opened a violin school at Dresden, where many good pupils were made.

Another name we cannot pass over is that of Pietro Locatelli, born at Bergamo in 1693; he was only sixteen when Corelli died, so that he could not have had many years' training under him. His compositions display boldness and originality, and he has left us the *Arte di nuova modulazione*, a most curious work, which appears to have been studied by Paganini. Locatelli died in Holland in 1764. Little appears to be known of his wandering life.

Lorenzo Somis, another excellent pupil of Corelli, has become noted by the pupils he, in his turn, has made, including such men as Lecler,* Pugnani (the professor of Viotti), and Giardini. Somis was Chapel-master to the King of Sardinia.

Carbonelli, Vivaldi, and several others less

* Jean Marie Lecler, a celebrated pupil of Somis, was born at Lyons in 1697, and assassinated (it is said from jealousy) in the streets of Paris in 1764. He is regarded as the founder of the French school of violin-playing. We shall refer to him again.

known, derived their art from the same illustrious source; and among them we may, perhaps, include Visconti of Cremona, whose counsels greatly assisted Straduarius in the construction of his magnificent instruments.

III.

The Bannisters.

1640—1729.

TWO Englishmen, father and son, named Bannister, made themselves, at this rather remote period, a considerable reputation as violin-players. It is not difficult to account for the younger Bannister being a good musician, for he was taught with assiduous care by his father; but how the latter began his musical career it is rather difficult to imagine. We only know that John Bannister the elder was born of very humble parentage, in the parish of St. Giles, London; but the exact year would be difficult to say. For several generations this family must have been highly gifted as regards music. We are expressly told that John Bannister received the first rudiments of

music from *his* father, who used to play at Christmas-time as one of the *waits* in the parish above-named—a very different place now to what it was in those days, when it had plenty of green fields, hedges, and hay-ricks about it. In the course of a very short time this Bannister made great progress on his instrument, and, marvellous as it may appear, he actually attracted the attention of Charles II., who sent him to France, no slight journey in those days, to improve his musical education; and, on his return, appointed him leader of the Royal Violins—an institution which, as we stated before, King Charles II. was induced to form in imitation of Louis XIV.

The first leader of this band of violins in England was a German from Lubeck, named Baltzar, who possessed considerable execution and a brilliant style of performance, such as had not yet been heard in England, when the best violin-player of the period was an amateur, a clock-maker, named Davis Mell. An old author, whose remarks are sometimes very amusing, states that, "After Baltzar came to England and showed his most wonderful parts on that instrument—the violin—Mell was not so much admired; yet he

played sweeter, was a well-bred gentleman, and not given to excessive drinking, as Baltzar was." In spite of his drinking propensities, Baltzar was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1663; and John Bannister the elder succeeded him as leader of the King's violins.

Bannister is said by his contemporaries to have quite equalled the Italian violinists, and one day he ventured to tell Charles II. that the English violinists were superior to those of France; for which speech he lost his appointment. He then set about giving concerts, and appears to have been *the first* who established in London concerts, in which the audience *paid* for seats. In one of these, given in 1677, the advertisement states that the musical performance will begin "with a parley of instruments composed by Mr. Bannister and performed by eminent masters." This Bannister died in 1679, and was also interred in Westminster Abbey. There was more room there in those days than now. He left a son named after himself, whom he had succeeded in making a clever violinist. The younger Bannister was appointed to King William's band, and was also first violin at Drury Lane for many

years, till succeeded by Carbonelli. He published some works on the violin, in conjunction with a German musician, Godfrey Finger,* and died about 1729.

The elder Bannister was the first Englishman (with the solitary exception of Davis Mell), who distinguished himself on the violin. He is also remarkable historically, as having first attempted something like a public concert in 1672.

In the *Memoirs of Musick*, published by Roger North, who was Attorney-General under James II., we are told that Bannister had "a good theatrical vein; and in composition had a lively style peculiar to himself. He procured a large room in White Fryers, near the Temple back gate, and made a large raised box for the musicians, whose modesty required curtains. The room was rounded with seats and small tables—alehouse fashion. One shilling was the price, and call for what you pleased; there was very

* This artiste was a Silesian, and a voluminous writer of violin-music. In 1685 he was appointed Chapel-master to James II. He afterwards returned to Germany as chamber-musician to the Queen of Prussia in 1702, and Chapel-master to the Court of Gotha in 1717. His style approached that of the Italians Bassani and Torelli.

good music, for Bannister found means to procure the best hands in towne, and some voices to come and perform there; and there wanted no variety of humour, for Bannister himself (*inter alia*) did wonders upon flageolett to thoro' bass, and the severall masters had their solos. This continued full one winter, and more I remember not."

We know, however, that these concerts continued for many years; we have already quoted from an advertisement of one given in 1677, and here is an extract from that which announced the first on the 30th September, 1672:

"These are to give notice that at Mr. John Bannister's house (now called the *Musick-school*), over against *The George Tavern*, in White Fryers, this present Monday, will be musick performed by excellent masters, beginning precisely at four o'clock in the afternoon, and every afternoon for the future precisely at the same hour."*

It was Bannister's son who played occasionally at the house of that eccentric but clever character, Thomas Britton, an excellent account of whom is given by Schœlcher, in his *Life of*

* *London Gazette*, 30th Sept., 1672.

Handel. Thomas Britton "belonged to that class of men whom persons of limited views are accustomed to term the *lower orders* of society, for he gained his daily bread by crying small coal, which he carried about the streets in a sack upon his shoulders." He lived near Clerkenwell Green, a quarter of the town with which fashionable people were scarcely acquainted before he made it illustrious. How he came to play upon the *viola da gamba* is not known; but he played upon it, and he was so much of an artiste that he grouped around him a number of amateurs and professors who were happy to perform concerted music under his direction. Among the distinguished persons who met at his house (Hawkins tells us) there were John Hughes, author of *The Siege of Damascus;* John Bannister, the violinist; Sir Roger l'Estrange, gentleman; Woolaston, the painter; Robe, a justice of the peace; Henry Needler, of the Excise office, and another English violinist named Obadiah Shuttleworth (who also performed on the organ and composed some capital music), Henry Symons, and Abiell Wichello.

At first they admitted their friends only to

their *réunions*, but gradually the circle of auditors increased, until it included some of the most distinguished persons in the town. Britton was the tenant of a stable, which he divided horizontally by a floor. On the ground-floor was his coal-shop; the upper story formed a long and narrow room, in which it was scarcely possible for a tall man to stand upright, and where, when he had escaped the dangers of the little dark winding staircase, the visitor found no sort of convenience. Such was the chamber in which the *first* meetings in the nature of *private concerts* took place in England, and in which instrumental music was regularly performed.

Here it was that, from 1678 to September, 1714, when the worthy Britton died, the itinerant small-coal merchant entertained every week the intelligent *dilettanti* of London. The musical *soirées* were always free to those who received invitations. One of the most remarkable persons who patronised them was the Duchess of Queensbury, a most celebrated Court beauty; her attendance was very regular. All newly-arrived artistes were eager to appear there. Dr. Pepusch and Handel played there; so did Bannister, Shuttle-

worth, and several others, well-known men of their time. Britton acquired so much consideration that he was addressed as "Sir." He had a singular *penchant* for old manuscripts, and purchased as many as his business would allow. Of these he left behind him a very fine collection, duly catalogued, and the catalogue printed; besides several musical instruments, among which was a harpsichord and an organ. Woolaston painted two portraits of his friend Britton, in one of which he is represented in a coal-heaver's hat, a blouse, and a neckerchief knotted like a rope.

We will now bring this section on the Bannisters to a close. Some authors write the name Banister, others with a double n; it is almost impossible to say which is correct. Shuttleworth was a younger contemporary of John Bannister *père*, and afterwards the leader at the *Swan Concerts*, in Cornhill, till 1735. His father was a man of small fortune, acquired in Spitalfields, partly by teaching music, and partly by *copying* Corelli's music for sale, before it was *printed* in England.

IV.

Tartini.

1692—1770.

GIUSEPPE TARTINI was born at Pirano, a seaport town in Istria, in the month of April, 1692. His father had been made a noble, and young Tartini had all the manners and appearance of a gentleman of birth and education when, at the age of twenty-two, he composed his well-known *Sonata,* entitled *Trillo del Diavolo.* He was originally intended for the law, and in 1710, entered as a student at the University of Padua. Whilst still young he showed a great predilection for music, and also for the art of fencing, in which he soon became so proficient that he equalled, if he did not surpass, the master who taught him.

Tartini entered the University of Padua before

he was twenty years of age, and had already received some lessons on the violin from Giulio di Terni, a clever musician, who, strange to relate, in after years took some lessons from his celebrated pupil.

It is difficult to say what might have been the future career of the young student had circumstances permitted him to continue his university studies to the end; but in the midst of them we find a love affair; in fact, a marriage without the consent of the parents, and the young Tartini an outcast from his family, reduced to fly and to wander about in search of a living. After many hardships he found his way to a convent at Assisi, where he was received hospitably by a monk, who was some family connection of his (we are told that Tartini's father received his rank of nobleman for some benefits connected with the Cathedral at Parenza). This good-natured friar, whose name has not come down to us, took pity on the youth's misfortunes, and allowed him to remain in the convent until something could be done for him.

Here it was, thus isolated in the convent at Assisi, that he set to work vigorously with his

violin, and prosecuted a course of study that was to result in the *Sonata del Diavolo*, and other no less remarkable compositions. He performed frequently in the orchestra of the convent, and on a certain occasion, when a great festival was held there, and a high wind was blowing, the curtain which hid the performers from view, according to the fashion of the time, was blown aside, and Tartini was immediately recognised by some townspeople who had come from Padua. This created no little sensation, but led finally to a conciliation with his family; after which he and his wife took up their abode at Venice. The reason why he chose that town was the presence there of a most remarkable performer on the violin, named Francesco Veracini. It has been said that Tartini, when quite a boy, walked all the way from Padua to Venice to hear this Veracini play.

Francesco Veracini was the pupil of his uncle (usually called "Veracini the elder," an eminent artiste in his day), and a great, though very eccentric, musician. At the time of Tartini's visit, he was at the head of the Venetian Academy of Music, founded by the King of Poland. He was nicknamed "capo pazzo," or *mad head*, on account

of his very eccentric manners; and according to Fayolle (who is not always very accurate, however,) he really became mad some time afterwards. Tartini, on the contrary, was a man of a most sensitive and modest disposition; and must have formed a marked contrast to the professor whom he so much admired. Dubourg, in his clever book on the Violin, reproduces a curious story that is told of this Veracini:—"Being at Lucca, at the time of the annual festival, called 'Festa della Croce,' on which occasion it was customary for the principal professors in Italy, both vocal and instrumental, to meet, Veracini put his name down for a violin solo. When he entered the choir he found the principal place already occupied by Laurenti, of Bologna, a well-known and clever soloist, who asked him where he was going. 'To the place of the first violinist,' was the haughty reply. Laurenti calmly explained that he had been engaged to fill that post himself, but that if Veracini wished to play a solo, either at vespers or at high mass, he should have a place assigned to him. It was evident that the last speaker did not recognise Veracini, who, on hearing the explanation, turned indignantly away and

went to the lowest place in the orchestra. When his turn came to play his concerto, he begged that instead of it he might play a solo where he was, accompanied on the violoncello by Lanzetti. This he did in so brilliant and unexpected a manner, that the applause was loud and continued in spite of the sacred nature of the locality, and whenever he was about to make a close, he turned towards Laurenti and called out: 'Cosi se suona per fare il primo violino'—this is the way to play first violin!"

Veracini played upon a fine Steiner violin. The only master he ever had was his uncle Antonio, of Florence, alluded to above; and it was by travelling all over Europe, and by numerous performances in public, that he formed a style of playing peculiar to himself, very similar to what occurred to Paganini and the celebrated De Bériot in later years.

It does not appear certain that Tartini ever took lessons from Veracini; but hearing the latter play in public had no doubt a very great effect upon him, and caused him to devote many years to the careful study of his instrument. Some say that Veracini's performance awakened a vivid

emulation in Tartini, who was already at that time acknowledged to be a very clever musician. However that may be, he had never heard any great player before he went to Venice, and had not conceived it possible that such effect and expression could be obtained by the varied management of the bow. It has been said that a friendship sprang up between these two eminent artistes and another clever man named Alexandro Marcello, and that they devoted much time to the study of the *principles* of violin-playing, particularly to *style*, and to the varied kinds of *bowing*. It appears that this friendship only ceased when Veracini's mind gave way; after which Tartini withdrew to Ancona to devote himself to uninterrupted study; and it was in complete *solitude* that he applied himself to discover the fundamental *principles of the bow*, which principles have since served as the basis of every violin school in the world. He held some small appointment in the orchestra at Ancona, and the remainder of his time was taken up with hard study, not only of the violin as a solo instrument, but with the principles of acoustics, and with mathematics.

It was at this time that Tartini made a very curious discovery, known as the *phenomenon of the third sound*, which created some sensation at the time, and has since given rise to numerous learned discourses, but does not appear to have led to any great practical result. Various memoirs or treatises were written by him, and that in which he develops the nature of the *third sound* is his "*Tratto di Musica secondo la vera scienza dell' Armonia.*" In this, and others of his works, he appears much devoted to *theory*, and endeavours to place all his practical facts upon a thoroughly scientific basis. The effect known as the *third sound* consists in the sympathetic resonance of a third note when the two upper notes of a chord are played in perfect tune. "If you do not hear the bass," Tartini would say to his pupils, "the thirds or sixths which you are playing are not perfect in intonation."

We will not stay here to analyse all the different theories that have been put forth to account for this singular phenomenon. It has arrested the attention more especially of Rameau, and J. B. Cartier, as well as many others. But this is perhaps the place to remark that Tar-

tini's library was full of the most learned works, and that he appears to have devoted much of his time to reading and arduous *scientific* study. Indeed, had he been a philosopher by profession (for in practice he certainly was), many scientific discoveries would doubtless have resulted from his labours, and when we reflect upon the extremely learned and so-called "dry" books that existed on the shelves of his study, it is wonderful that he should have left anything like music to the world.

At Ancona, nevertheless, he attained such eminence as a performer, and as a musician, that it led to his appointment in 1721 to the directorship of the orchestra in the Church of St. Anthony, at Padua. Fétis tells us that he passed the remaining forty-nine years of his life here, "in peace and comfort, solely occupied with labours connected with the art he loved." His great fame as a violinist brought him repeated offers from the greater European cities, even from London and Paris, but he firmly declined them all, and never quitted his native country. Thus it is that those only who visited Italy in his day, could have had an opportunity of hearing Tartini

play. Fortunately for the musical art, he established a Violin School at Padua, in 1728, and made many very excellent pupils who afterwards became known throughout Europe. Of these the most remarkable will be mentioned further on. He established a systematic method of study for the violin, which became so much the vogue, that considerable numbers of young men resorted to Padua from different countries in order to benefit by his instruction.

Tartini's compositions comprise several *Sonatas* and *Trios*, and eighteen *Concertos* for five instruments. His slow movements are remarkably expressive, and his music shows not only a great knowledge of the violin, but also of the laws, or science, of harmony, in which he was a great adept. His bowing is large, fine, and expressive; and some of his Sonatas, even now, are performed in the concert-room, and rarely fail to meet with due appreciation. Schott has published two editions of the well-known *Sonata del Diavolo.*

He left, in published pieces and manuscripts, no less than *one hundred and fifty* different works.

The well-known Sonata termed the *Trillo del*

Diavolo, or "Devil's Sonata," was composed under peculiar circumstances, as he tells us—or, at least, as M. de Lalande tells us he had it from Tartini's own lips; and as Nardini, a pupil of the latter, afterwards confirmed it to Michael Kelly.

"One night in 1713," he says, "I dreamt that I had made a compact with the devil, who promised to be at my service on all occasions. Everything succeeded according to my mind, my wishes were anticipated, and desires always surpassed by the assistance of my new servant. At last I thought I would offer my violin to the devil, in order to discover what kind of a musician he was, when, to my great astonishment, I heard him play a *solo* so singularly beautiful and with such superior taste and precision, that it surpassed all the music I had ever heard or conceived in the whole course of my life. I was so overcome with surprise and delight that I lost my power of breathing, and the violence of this sensation awoke me. Instantly I seized my violin in the hopes of remembering some portion of what I had just heard, but in vain! The work which this dream suggested, and which I wrote at the time, is doubtless the best of all my compositions, and I still

call it the *Sonata del Diavolo;* but it sinks so much into insignificance compared with what I heard, that I would have broken my instrument and abandoned music altogether had I possessed any other means of subsistence."

It might be suggested that the *devil* in Tartini's dream was simply an exaggerated reminiscence of the eccentric Veracini, as he knew him at Venice. Another suggestion is that the name of the piece was given by the young professor (for Tartini was only twenty-two years of age when he composed this *Sonata*) on account of the difficult passage of double shakes that occurs twice in it, and which a French performer might have termed "*diablement difficile.*"

Tartini died at Padua on the 26th February, 1770, and was universally regretted; he had resided nearly fifty years in that town, and was looked upon with pride by every inhabitant of the place; he was of a serious, contemplative, scientific turn of mind, and had long enjoyed the estimation of his fellow-townspeople as a religious man, a philosopher, and a great musician. He used to say himself that he studied very little till after he was thirty years of age; by which we must

understand that he did not appear to make much progress with his instrument till that period; but for a man of his active mind aud learned education, it is impossible to believe that he ever gave himself much rest. It is a curious fact, that at the age of fifty-two, Tartini made a marked alteration in his style of performance, and, instead of displaying his abilities in difficult passages, preferred to yield to grace and expression. His method of executing an *adagio* has been represented by his contemporaries as inimitable, and he appears to have conferred this gift upon one of his favourite pupils, Nardini, who was the finest adagio-player in Italy, and probably in the whole world.

Pietro Nardini was born at Leghorn in 1725; he soon became Tartini's most distinguished pupil, and in after years an old friend and companion. In 1763 he was attached to the chapel of the Duke of Wurtemberg, but in the course of a few years he returned to Leghorn, where he composed almost all his works. In 1769 he went to Padua, and renewed his friendship with Tartini, whom he attended in his last illness with filial attachment. He afterwards entered the service of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and, in 1783, drew forth the

admiration of all who had the good fortune to hear him play. Michael Kelly heard him at Florence in a concert. He says: "I had the gratification of hearing a *Sonata* on the violin, played by the great Nardini. Though very far advanced in years, he played divinely. He spoke with great affection of his favourite pupil, Thomas Linley, who, he said, possessed powerful abilities." Dupaty, a Frenchman, who published some letters on Italy, and who heard him in 1783, says: "His violin is a voice, or possesses one." His music, like his character, was of a serious cast, and the latter doubtless harmonised well with that of his old friend and professor. Nardini died at Florence in 1796; and has left a number of compositions, solos, sonatas, trios, concertos, some trios for flute, and some manuscripts. His style is large, his ideas clear, and the expression natural.*

* Nardini made a remarkable pupil in the person of Francesco Vaccari, born at Modena in 1772, who appeared at Mantua when only thirteen years of age. In 1804 he held for a short time the appointment of violin-solo to the King of Spain; he appeared on two separate occasions in England, and his performance was distinguished for purity of tone, good taste, and elegance of expression. Thomas Linley, Nardini's English pupil, was born at Bath in 1756, and played in public at the

Another pupil whom Tartini held in great affection was Pasquale Bini. He was recommended to him, when only fifteen years old, by Cardinal Olivieri, who afterwards took the young Bini to Rome, where his playing created quite a sensation. Tartini once recommended a pupil to Bini in the following terms: "I recommend him to a pupil of mine who plays better than I do, and I am proud of it, as he (Bini) is an angel in religion and morals."

Among several other very distinguished violinists that have issued from the school founded at Padua by Tartini, and who enjoyed his direct influence, we must name Dominico Ferrari, to whom is attributed the invention of *harmonic sounds*, the French violinists Pagin and La Houssaye, and Mademoiselle de Sirmen.

Madalena Lombardini Sirmen united high accomplishment as a singer with such an eminence

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early age of eight years. While on the Continent he enjoyed the friendship of Mozart, who was about his own age. Linley played concertos of Handel and Geminiani most admirably. He was drowned in 1778, by the upsetting of a pleasure-boat. He was the eldest son of the successful song composer. Nardini was buried at the Chapel of the Holy Cross, the Pantheon of Florence, beside Michael Angelo, Machiavelli, Galileo, and Alfieri.

in violin-playing, that she not only rivalled all the other pupils of Tartini, but acquired a European reputation. Her musical studies commenced at the *Conservatoire* of the *Mendicanti* at Venice. She afterwards became a pupil of Tartini, and devoted herself exclusively to the violin. About the year 1780 she visited France and England, and published a considerable quantity of violin music. Tartini entered into correspondence with this lady, and wrote to her a celebrated letter on the study of the violin; this was translated and published at London by Dr. Burney in 1771. It is given entire in Dubourg's work on the violin.

A contemporary of Tartini, who attained considerable eminence as a violinist, was Antonio Lolli, born at Bergamo in 1728, and who from 1762 to 1773 was concert-master to the Duke of Wurtemberg. He afterwards travelled to Russia and received a splendid violin-bow from the Empress Catherine II., bearing upon it the inscription, "Archet fait par ordre de Catherine II. pour l'incomparable Lolli." In the year 1785 Lolli came to England. A contemporary speaks of him thus: "The celebrated performer on the

violin, Lolli, came to London in 1785; such was his caprice that he was seldom heard, and so eccentric was his style and composition that by many he was regarded as a madman. He was, however, during his lucid intervals, a very great and expressive performer in the serious style." From England he travelled to Spain, and thence to Paris, where he performed at various concerts, and in 1788 returned to Italy. When he entered on his German engagement at Stuttgardt in 1762 he found a superior there in the form of Nardini. He requested the Duke to allow him a year's leave of absence "to travel;" instead of which he retired to a secluded village, where he applied himself most assiduously to the study of his instrument. At the end of the year he returned from his pretended *journey*, and produced such an effect by his playing that Nardini returned to Italy. This anecdote is recorded by Gerber. As a rule, Lolli was rarely inclined to exhibit in an *adagio;* his performance was generally rapid and more or less eccentric. He wrote several sets of solos, and a *Treatise on the Violin.* He also made an eminent pupil in the person of Jarnowick, who reigned supreme at Paris in 1778, and

whose elegant and brilliant performances captivated the public more than any other violinist had hitherto done. From whom Lolli himself received his instruction I have not been able to discover; but in his day the number of eminent musicians in Italy was very considerable. Some say that Locatelli gave him lessons.* According to Valery, the author of *Curiosités et Anecdotes Italiennes*, Tartini was proclaimed by the Italians *il Maestro delle Nazioni*, in other terms, *the finest musician in the world;* the French, alluding to his studies on the management of the bow, have termed him *le législateur de l'archet*—the law-giver of the bow. In the person of Pugnani he had, without doubt, the greatest of all his pupils; but Pugnani had also the advantage of having studied previously under the celebrated Somis, and only took lessons of Tartini when already an artiste of considerable abilities. Thus Pugnani, who formed the immortal Viotti, united in himself the schools of Corelli and Tartini. We shall refer to him again.

* Fetis says that Locatelli did not produce many pupils, but that he had "many imitators, especially Lolli, Fiorillo, and, above all, Paganini." It seems rather probable that Lolli really *was* a pupil of his.

V.

Lecler, Giardini, Pugnani.

1697—1798.

WE know very little about the private or public life of the celebrated Lorenzo Somis, to whom we have alluded before—one of the greatest masters of the violin—except that he was a pupil of Corelli, that he was Chapel-master to the King of Sardinia, that he published at Rome, in 1722, various sonatas or trios, and that he made, among many others, three most remarkable pupils, Lecler, Giardini, and Pugnani.

Lecler (Jean Marie) was born at Lyons in 1697, and first learnt music from his father, who was a musician by profession. Young Lecler was educated as a dancer, and used the violin as a dancing-master. While a youth he

appeared as a dancer at Rouen. But having been engaged as ballet-master at Turin, Somis, who was pleased with Lecler's playing, gave him some lessons, by which he made rapid progress. On leaving this celebrated tutor, he was already a musician of considerable ability, and in his travels seems to have acquired a style peculiar to himself, remarkable more especially for its spirit and energy. He then abandoned dancing, and devoted himself entirely to the violin. The Duc de Grammont, who had some lessons from him, allowed him a pension, and otherwise protected him until he was appointed concert-master to Louis XV. According to Fétis he arrived in Paris in 1729, and was first engaged in the orchestra of the Opera, and afterwards in the King's band. He may be said, by his extraordinary labours, to have created a new school of violin-playing in France; his compositions are difficult, and some are performed occasionally by artistes of the present day. In 1723 he composed a collection of solos, soon followed by others, and then by sonatas, duos, trios, and concertos. The influence of these compositions may be traced in the French violin music of the present period.

Lecler had a bold and dignified style of performance, full of energy, and his powers were remarkable. He appears to have been a man of estimable character, living for the most part a retired life. His end was tragical; he was assassinated while walking in the streets of Paris, on the evening of the 22nd of October, 1764. It is generally supposed that he fell a sacrifice to envy. The violinist, Herr Joachim, played a solo of Lecler's in a concert in London in 1874.

The life of Felici Giardini was a very eventful one, and this celebrated violinist was more distinguished as a performer than by his compositions. Born at Turin in 1716, he studied first at Milan under Paladini, and then at Turin under Somis. His progress was so rapid that at the early age of seventeen he was enabled to travel, visiting various towns in Italy, and finally getting an appointment in the orchestra of the Opera in Naples, then conducted by the well-known Jomelli. In this capacity he remained only for a short time—long enough, however, to have received a remarkable lesson, as Dr. Burney tells us, in Giardini's own language:—Possessing considerable ability upon his instrument, he was

accustomed to embroider, or otherwise change certain passages of the music, much more than any orchestral player was ever heard to do before or since. "One night," says Giardini, "Jomelli, who had composed the opera that was being performed, came into the orchestra and seated himself close by me; I at once determined to give the worthy *maestro* a touch of my taste and execution. In the symphony of a song which was of a pathetic style the opportunity occurred, and I gave loose to my fingers and fancy; for which I was immediately rewarded by the composer with a violent slap in the face! It was about the best lesson I ever received from a great master in my life."

It is satisfactory to be told that ever after this Jomelli treated the young musician, who was quite beneath his position in an orchestra, with great kindness. Somehow or other, Giardini did not, however, get quit of the theatre—indeed it was destined to be the great bane of his life. He managed, nevertheless, to appear occasionally at concerts, and his reputation daily increased; in Berlin he had a very enthusiastic reception, and arrived in London in 1749, where he produced a

great sensation. His first public performance in London was at the little theatre in the Haymarket, where he met with much success, and was soon looked upon as the greatest performer on the violin of his day. He produced quite as great a sensation in that concert as Paganini did eighty years later in the larger Opera House opposite.*

After this, Giardini became "the fashion," and was heard often both in public and in private; his style of playing, his tone, elegant bowing and graceful carriage, met with universal admiration. He soon formed an *Academia*, or morning concert, at his house, at which his pupils performed. In 1754 he became first violin at the Opera. In those days the first violin was the leader of the orchestra, and gave the movements, etc.; there was no other leader, with a *bâton*, as now, so that none but the greatest artistes could hold such a position. In the course of two years he joined Signora Mingotti, the singer, in the management

* We are told that, on this occasion, "Giardini displayed his power in a solo and a concerto, after which the applause was so long and loud that the like of it had rarely or ever before been heard in that well-known house."

of the Opera House, and composed several of the lyric dramas performed there. But this joint management proved a failure, and poor Giardini lost so much money that he was compelled to rely, once more, upon his resources as a violinist. He was then quite unrivalled as a solo-player and as a leader, besides which he had several pupils among the aristocratic and the fashionable. He also composed a number of solos and concertos for the violin. But his playing was far more remarkable than his compositions. A contemporary who heard him in 1774 speaks of "the full and prolonged tones of Giardini's violin."

On this occasion he played a concerto, in which he introduced the then popular air "Come, haste to the wedding," which brought the audience into a state of ecstasy. "He was a fine-figured man, superbly dressed in green and gold; the breadth of the lace upon his coat, with the three large gold buttons on the sleeve, made a rich appearance, which still glitters in my imagination."*

Another artiste, Parke, a hautboy-player, heard him in 1776, and states that "he displayed a

* Account by Mr. Gardiner of a concert at Leicester, at which Giardini performed.

fund of grace and expression, his tone uniting sweetness and power."

"Giardini resided in England," says Dubourg,* "till the year 1784, when he went to Naples under the protection and patronage of Sir William Hamilton. There he continued five years, and then returned to this country; but his reception was not what it had formerly been." Like Henry Phillips, the singer, when he returned in later years from his American trip, he found his place filled up, his fashionable friends deserted him, his powers, when most required, were weaker. Giardini's health was impaired, he was sinking under confirmed dropsy, and "he found himself still doomed to the prosecution of his art when all his former excellence was lost. Instead of leading he now played in public only the tenor in quartets that he had recently composed." After attempting, unsuccessfully, a burletta opera at the little theatre in the Haymarket, he was induced in 1793 to go to St. Petersburg, and afterwards to Moscow, with his burletta performers. "The most cruel disappointment, however, attended him in each of

* George Dubourg, *The Violin*, London, 1852.

these cities, in the latter of which he died at the age of eighty, in a state (as far as it could be discovered) of poverty and wretchedness."

It is some satisfaction after this to know that by his wonderful performances he has left a name in the annals of violin-playing, and that his influence upon the musical world of England, if not of Italy, will still be felt for many years to come. There can be no doubt that Felici Giardini was the greatest violinist that had, up to this period, appeared before an English audience.

Another pupil of Somis, and afterward of Tartini, was the well-known Gaetano Pugnani. He was one of the most brilliant stars that have emanated from the Piedmontese school founded by Somis, and has exercised a great influence on the art by the grandeur of his style, the variety of his bowing, and the improvements he introduced into the form of the concerto. He was born at Turin in 1728, and after studying under the celebrated master of that town, soon became known as a very accomplished violinist. He had already achieved much success as a solo-player at the Court of Sardinia before he went forth on his travels. When he arrived at Paris he had to com-

pete with some of the greatest violinists of the period, among whom were the German *virtuoso* J. Stamitz, and the French artistes Pagin and Gaviniès. Nevertheless, Pugnani met with a very cordial reception at the *Concerts Spirituels*, where he appeared several times; and afterwards visited many European towns, with similar successful results.*

After staying for a considerable time in England, where he composed a great deal of violin

* The *Concerts Spirituels* were established in Paris in March, 1725, as a kind of annex to the Opera, like the "Promenade Concerts" of the present day in London. They were given in one of the rooms at the Palace of the Tuileries, and under the direction of Philidor (father of the great chess-player and composer of numerous pretty operas). The first concert took place on the 18th March, 1725; the programme was as follows: first, a *Series of Airs* for violins, composed by Lalande, followed by a *Caprice* by the same author, and his *Confitebor*. Next came a *Concerto* of Corelli, entitled *Nuit de Noël*, and lastly a cantata, *Domino* and *Motet*, by Lalande. It began at six in the evening and finished at eight, amidst the applause of all present. These concerts were continued in the *Salle des Suisses* at the Tuileries until the Revolution; with the establishment of the Empire they were transferred to the Opera, and continued there till the Revolution of July. They were devoted to sacred music principally; hence their name.

music, Pugnani returned to Italy in 1770, and continued in Turin the direction of the Violin School founded by Somis. He had for pupils the distinguished Viotti, Bruni, Olivieri, Diana, Borra, Molino, Traversa, Borghi, and others. His style of execution is said to have been broad and noble, "characterised by that commanding sweep of the bow, which afterwards formed so grand a feature in the performance of Viotti." Pugnani's compositions are very numerous; they consist of solos, trios, quartets, quintets, overtures, and operas. Of the latter he composed seven or eight, which were all highly successful, and performed in almost every theatre in Italy.

As a violinist he had at Paris a truly formidable rival in Gaviniès, whom Viotti has termed "the French Tartini," and who was appointed, in 1794, Professor of the Violin in the then newly-established *Conservatoire* of Paris; but both as a composer and a performer Pugnani was held in the greatest esteem throughout Europe until the time of his death, which occurred at Turin in 1798.

It is said that in his younger days he had an ardent desire to see and hear Tartini, and

therefore left Paris and proceeded to Padua. Tartini received him kindly, and evinced some curiosity to hear him play. Pugnani took up his instrument and commenced a well-known solo, but he had not played many bars before Tartini suddenly seized his arm, saying "Too loud, my friend, too loud!" The Piedmontese began again, but at the same passage Tartini stopped him again, exclaiming this time, "Too soft, my good friend, too soft!" Pugnani therefore laid down the violin, and begged of Tartini to give him some lessons. He was at once received among his pupils, and, though already an excellent artiste, began his musical education almost entirely anew. Many anecdotes have been foisted upon Pugnani, some evidently the creation of rivals, and not worth repeating. Others, on the contrary, tend to enlighten us upon the character of the man. Thus, when playing, he was so completely absorbed in the music, that he has been known, at a public concert, to walk about the platform during the performance of a favourite *cadenza*, imagining himself alone in the room. Again, at the house of Madame Denis, when requested to play before Voltaire, who had

little or no music in his soul, Pugnani stopped short when the latter had the bad taste to continue his conversation, remarking at the same time: "M. de Voltaire is very clever in making verses, but as regards music he is *devilishly* ignorant!" This was a curious speech in the mouth of a pupil of Tartini!

Some have accused Pugnani of being exceedingly conceited. What great artiste has not in some degree the same failing? Is it not rather legitimate in those who have risen to the highest pinnacles of fame? There is no doubt that during his stay in Paris he excited a considerable amount of jealousy in various quarters; if he had been a Frenchman he would have been lauded to the skies, and perhaps had a monument in the Louvre—but an Italian! The fact is, poor Pugnani was annoyed not a little in the French capital; he received various nicknames, and a young painter, who lived on the same floor, went so far as to take advantage of the somewhat large nose of the Italian violinist. This feature in the face of a *virtuoso* is of less importance, practically speaking, than a large chin, whereby the instrument can be firmly held.

The young painter, whose name has not come down to us, caricatured Pugnani more than once, and in one of his impertinent drawings he represented the Italian artiste leading his orchestra, all the musicians of which were grouped under his vast nasal organ, as under an enormous parasol.

In this section a few words should be devoted to Luigi Boccherini, born at Lucca in 1740, and distinguished more as a *composer* than a *virtuoso*. Indeed, his favourite instrument was the violoncello. He gave great delight in his concerts by playing Nardini's duetts for violin and violoncello, which he executed with Manfredi, a pupil of the latter. To Boccherini is attributed the first successful writing of *trios*, *quartetts*, and *quintetts*, or rather the fixing of the true character of these compositions. Among other curiosities he wrote *quintetts for two violoncellos*. From 1768 to 1806 he wrote no less than ninety-three of these *quintetts* for the two instruments, besides numerous other works. After a while he left Italy and went to reside in Spain, where he is said to have "basked in the sun-

shine of royal favour," and composed nine works annually for the Royal Academy of Madrid, in which town he died in 1806, aged sixty-six. A very clever saying is attributed to him. The King of Spain, Charles IV., was fond of playing with the great composer, and was very ambitious of shining as a great violinist; his cousin, the Emperor of Austria, was also fond of the violin, and played tolerably well. One day the latter asked Boccherini in a rather straightforward manner what difference there was between his playing and that of his cousin Charles IV.

"Sire," replied Boccherini, without hesitating for a moment, "Charles IV. plays like a King, and your Majesty plays like an Emperor."

We hope his Majesty was satisfied!

VI.

Viotti.

1755—1824.

IN the person of the justly celebrated Viotti we find the link which connects the modern school of violin-playing to the schools of the past. Although he had only seven or eight pupils, it was said shortly after his death, that this great artiste must be looked upon as the master of all European violinists. As time rolls on this observation, of course, loses the weight it once possessed, but Viotti's fame is none the less for that. He was universally regarded as the greatest violinist of his time, and the influence he had upon music in general, and violin music in particular, was very considerable. He was one of those rare phenomena in the world of art, in

whom the powers of the *virtuoso* were equalled by those of the composer.

When Viotti made his appearance above the musical horizon as a star of the first magnitude, the *dilettanti* of Europe were under the magic sway of many very clever violinists, and unless he had been a musician of the very finest type, it is probable that, on account of his modest and retiring disposition, we should scarcely have become acquainted with his name. At Paris, where he first attracted public attention, a pupil of Antonio Lolli, named Giornowick, at that time reigned supreme. This Giornowick was a most captivating performer on the violin, though a person of a most eccentric and quarrelsome nature. His *début* was made at the *Concerts Spirituels*, before alluded to, but it was unsuccessful; the style of music performed there did not suit him, though it might possibly have suited the capricious Lolli, his professor. But he soon overcame this first check, and afterwards played in almost every town in Europe with immense success.

Giornowick was born at Palermo in 1745, and died at St. Petersburg in 1804, after a long, and a thoroughly artistic career. His performance

was graceful and elegant throughout, and his tone very pure. He had a happy manner in treating popular airs as *rondos*, "returning ever and anon to his theme after a variety of brilliant excursions, in a way that used to fascinate his hearers." His concertos are agreeable and brilliant, but are considered to lack grandeur.

Michael Kelly heard him at Vienna. "He was a man of a certain age," he tells us, "but in the full vigour of talent: his tone was very powerful, his execution most rapid, and his taste, above all, alluring. No performer, in my remembrance, played such pleasing music."

Dubourg relates that on one occasion when Giornowick had announced a concert at Lyons, he found the people rather retentive of their money, so he postponed the concert to the following evening, reducing the price of the tickets to one-half. A crowded company was the result. But the bird had flown! The artiste had left Lyons without ceremony, together with the receipts from sales of tickets.

In London, where he was frequently heard between 1792 and 1796, he once gave a concert

that was very fully attended, but on the commencement of his solo the company continued their conversation, which was, moreover, intermixed with the clattering of tea-cups, for it was then the custom to serve tea throughout the performances as well as during the intervals. Giornowick turned to the orchestra and stopped it. "These people," he said, "know nothing about music—anything is good enough for drinkers of warm water—I will give them something better suited to their taste!" Whereupon he struck up a very commonplace French air, which had a marvellous success.

When Viotti arrived in Paris, Giornowick set off on his travels; he left about 1780.*

Giovanni Battista Viotti was born in 1755, at Fontaneto, a little village in Piedmont. How he took to violin-playing nobody seems to know, but he studied it so effectually under Pugnani at Turin, that at twenty years of age he was appointed First Violin to the Chapel Royal of that

* Some years later, Viotti and Giornowick were in the same town (at Hamburg) when the latter gave two very successful concerts, and reaped a rich harvest; but Viotti, poor as he was at the time, could not be prevailed upon to appear, though his reputation was then European.

town, where he remained three years. He then travelled as a solo-player, and after meeting with a most flattering reception at Berlin, he continued his course to Paris, where he also made his *début* at the *Concerts Spirituels.*

"The arrival of Viotti in Paris," says Fétis, "produced a sensation difficult to describe. No performer had ever been heard who had attained so high a degree of perfection, no artiste had possessed so fine a tone, such sustained elegance, such fire, and so varied a style. The fancy which was developed in his concertos increased the delight he produced upon his auditory; his compositions for the violin were as superior to those which had been previously heard, as his execution surpassed that of all his predecessors and contemporaries." In Giornowick the public applauded grace and elegance; in Viotti, beauty and grandeur.

It will be seen by the foregoing pages what a number of eminent musicians then thronged Paris, and how much talent and originality it required to draw public attention to any one artiste in particular. Nevertheless, Viotti had not resided very long there before he attracted attention in the very highest quarters. He soon received the

command of Queen Marie Antoinette to play at the Court of Versailles. On one of these occasions a very curious scene occurred, very characteristic of that peculiarly courageous nature of Viotti, which was to be found not only in his compositions and his playing, but in the manner of the man himself, in his every-day life. On the evening referred to, a very brilliant concert had been prepared, and a considerable number of talented musicians engaged for the occasion. Viotti had put himself down for a concerto of his own composition; and no sooner had the first few bars of it commenced than a considerable noise was heard, and the arrogant and conceited Count d'Artois entered with great bustle, in spite of the presence of royalty and a most numerous and brilliant company. All this noise interrupted the performance; but that was not all: no sooner had the violinist recommenced his piece, than the said Count got up in a fidgety manner, walked about the room, and spoke in rather loud tones to several ladies of his acquaintance. This was too much. A flash of fire darted from the dark eyes of the Italian *virtuoso*, as he turned an indignant glance towards the source of this eminently rude

behaviour; then, putting his violin quietly under his arm and taking the music from the reading-desk, he withdrew from the concert-room without further ceremony, "leaving the Concert, Her Majesty, and His Royal Highness, to the reproaches of the audience." This scene, as we find it described by various writers, some of whom may have witnessed it, is an exact *pendant* to that which occurred at the house of Cardinal Ottoboni when Corelli showed how to compel an audience to behave respectfully to him.

It is needless, perhaps, to say that in private circles, both among the aristocracy and in the artistic world, Viotti was often the great charm of the evening: more than once he played at the house of the Count de Balck, where his friend Garat used to sing, and where the magnificent tenor voice and admirable singing of young Orfila, a scientific chemist, attracted a very large share of attention, and caused him to receive numerous solicitations to abandon science for a musical career. But this young Portuguese had come to Paris to study medicine, and was so fascinated with the study of chemistry, more particularly that branch of this vast and useful science that

relates to poisons, that he never deviated from his scientific career except on such occasions as we refer to here.

That Viotti must have had strong political opinions, and perhaps meddled in politics to some extent, appears tolerably evident from one or two circumstances connected with his career. In the first place, we have the anecdote just related, his haughty and independent demeanour in presence of royalty; in the next, his abrupt departure from Paris at the outbreak of the revolution; and again, his expulsion from London for *alleged political reasons.*

The scene at Versailles, above related, seems also to have had considerable effect upon his future career; for, ever afterwards, he evinced the greatest dislike to appear in public as a solo-player; once only he played for a charity; and once again, in the year 1790, when a singular concert was arranged to take place on the fifth story of a house in Paris; the apartment in question being occupied by a member of the Government and an old friend of the violinist. "I will play," said he on being pressed; "but only on one condition, and that is, *that the audience shall*

come up here to us; we have long enough *descended to them,* but times are changed, and *now* we may *compel them to rise to our level;*" or something to that effect. It took place in due course, and was a very brilliant concert indeed. The only ornament was a bust of Jean Jacques Rousseau; a large number of distinguished artistes, both instrumental and vocal, were present, and *a most aristocratic audience.* A good deal of Boccherini's music was performed that evening, and though many of the titled personages had mounted to the fifth floor for the first time in their lives, so complete was the success of the concert, that not one descended without regret, and all were warm in their praise of the performances of the distinguished violinist.

Viotti was, as we have already stated, occasionally to be heard in private, and besides the hotel of the Count de Balck, some privileged friends had frequent opportunities of hearing him at the house of Madame Montegerault at Montmorency. This lady was an amiable and talented pianiste. Sometimes she would seat herself at her instrument and play a brilliant improvisation in the concerto style, when Viotti

would take up his violin, and, catching the spirit of the piece, would join in the performance, and in a series of extemporaneous passages display his immense powers to the delight of all present. These performances were always exceedingly spirited, and produced a magical effect upon the audience. The Italians have always been noted for their skill in *improvisation*. Not very long ago I had a wonderful example of this at my sister's house in the playing of Signor Tito Mattei, the talented pianist. With his left hand upon the piano and his right upon a small harmonium, he produced, for about ten minutes, some of the most charming music I ever heard. He confessed later to me that he had formerly given concerts at Naples, in which he played duetts on the two instruments at once.

As we have already hinted, Viotti was for some unknown reasons obliged to quit Paris, rather abruptly, on the outbreak of the revolution. In 1790 he came over to London, and appeared at Salomon's Concerts, with the same success that had attended his first appearances in Paris. Every one was charmed with his originality, his fine large bowing, his boldness, and

his exquisite taste. After awhile he took some share in the management of the *King's Theatre*, and about 1794—5 became leader of the orchestra there. But, curious to relate, he suddenly received an order from the British Government to quit England without delay.

He then passed over to Holland and took up his residence at Schonfeld, not far from Hamburg, a beautiful and secluded place, where he wrote several of his best compositions, and among others the well-known *Six Duetts* for two violins, which have proved excellent studies in the hands of young professors, initiating them to the secrets of good tone and good taste.

In the course of a few years he found himself at liberty to return to England, and in 1801 he came over to London again, this time not as a violinist, but to establish himself as a *wine merchant!* This undertaking did not prove successful, and poor Viotti lost a considerable sum of money in the speculation—some persons say the whole of his fortune. His friend Garat, one of the most charming singers of that period, relates how he discovered Viotti at London, when none of his French friends knew what had become of

him. In the very zenith of his powers and height of his reputation, the founder of a violin school which remains celebrated to this day, Viotti had quitted Paris suddenly, and since his departure no one had received, either directly or indirectly, any news of him. According to Garat, some vague indications led him to believe that the celebrated violinist had taken up his residence in London, but for a long time after his (Garat's) arrival in the metropolis, all his attempts to find him were fruitless. At last, one morning he went to a large export house for wine. It had a spacious courtyard, filled with numbers of large barrels, among which it was not easy to move towards the office, or counting-house. On entering the latter, the first person who met his gaze was Viotti himself. Viotti, surrounded by a legion of *employés*, and so absorbed in business that he did not notice Garat! At last he raised his head, and, recognising his old friend, seized him by the hand, and led him into an adjoining room, where he gave him a hearty welcome. Garat could not believe his senses, and stood motionless with surprise.

"I see you are astonished at the metamor-

phosis," said Viotti; "it is certainly *drôle*—unexpected; but what *could* you expect? At Paris I was looked upon as a ruined man, lost to all my friends; it was necessary to do something to get a living, and here I am, making my fortune!"

"But," interrupted Garat, "have you taken into consideration all the drawbacks and annoyances of a profession to which you were not brought up, and which must be opposed to your tastes?"

"I perceive," continued Viotti, "that you share the error which so many indulge in. Commercial enterprise is generally considered a most prosaic undertaking, but it has, nevertheless, its seductions, its prestige, its poetical side. I assure you no musician, no poet, ever had an existence more full of interesting and exciting incidents than those which cause the heart of the merchant to throb. His imagination, stimulated by success, carries him forward to new conquests; his clients increase, his fortune augments, the finest dreams of ambition are ever before him."

"But art!" again interrupted his friend; "the art of which you are one of the finest re-

presentatives—you cannot have entirely abandoned it!"

"Art will lose nothing," quietly rejoined Viotti; "and you will find that I can conciliate two things without interfering with either, though *you*, doubtless, imagine them irreconcilable. We will continue this subject another time; at present I must leave you. I have some pressing business to transact this afternoon; but come and dine with me at six o'clock, and be sure you do not disappoint me."

Garat, who relates this conversation, goes on to tell us that he kept the appointment most punctually, and, to his surprise, when he returned to the house, he found all the barrels and waggons that encumbered the courtyard in the morning carefully stowed away, and in their place were to be seen several carriages, a number of footmen and servants. A *laquais* in brilliant livery conducted the visitor to the drawing-room on the first-floor. This apartment, and those adjoining, were most elegantly furnished, and decorated with sparkling mirrors, candelabra, gilt ornaments, handsome furniture, and curiosities. Viotti received him at the head of the staircase, but he

was no longer the careful, industrious man of business that Garat had seen in the morning; it was the type of a *gentleman* of birth and fortune that now stood before him. His friend was again struck dumb with astonishment; but his surprise was increased tenfold when he heard announced the names of the other visitors, who soon flocked into the drawing-room; all eminent and distinguished men. The dinner was exquisite, and after dinner they had some excellent music. A young French lady sang some beautiful songs by Cimarosa, then Viotti played one of his last concertos, and never was his bow more gifted or more sublime. The wine merchant was still the same great artiste he had been in Paris.

After a great deal of trouble, Garat tells us, he induced Viotti to quit London for a short time, and to go over to Paris, where he again delighted the friends of the Comte de Balck and others with his playing. It was once half-past four in the morning when one of these agreeable meetings was brought to a close.

Viotti carried on the wine trade for several years, but, as we have said, it all ended un-

successfully, and, when his fortune was gone, he solicited, through his Parisian friends, some appointment in France, and was eventually nominated Director of the Music at the Grand Opera. It is said that neither his age nor his quiet character were congenial to such an undertaking, and after a while he retired from it, but was then granted a pension. He came again over to England, and chose to reside in London, where he had already made a kind of second home, and where he died on the 24th of March, 1824.

Whilst Viotti held the post of Director of the Music at the Grand Opera in Paris, the following letter was addressed to him by Rossini on the 10th July, 1821; the English translation scarcely does justice to the Italian:

"MOST ESTEEMED SIR,

"You will be surprised at receiving a letter from an individual who has not the honour of your personal acquaintance, but I profit by the liberality of feeling existing between artistes to address these lines to you through our friend Hérold, from whom I have learnt with the

greatest satisfaction, the high, and, I fear, somewhat undeserved opinion you have of me. The oratorio of *Moïse*, composed by me three years ago, appears to our mutual friend susceptible of dramatic adaptation to French words; and I, who have the greatest reliance on Hérold's taste and on his friendship for me, desire nothing more than to render the entire work as perfect as possible, by composing new airs in a more religious style than those which it at present contains, and by endeavouring to the best of my power that the result shall neither disgrace the composer of the partition, nor you, its patron and protector. If M. Viotti, with his great celebrity, will consent to be the Mecænas of my name, he may be assured of the gratitude of his devoted servant,

(*Signed*) "GIOACCHINO ROSSINI."

"P.S.—In a month's time I will forward you the alterations of the drama *Moïse*, in order that you may judge if they are conformable to the operatic style. Should they not be so, you will have the kindness to suggest any others better adapted to the purpose."

Viotti was naturally poetical; M. Eymar says of him, "Never did a man attach so much value to the simplest gifts of nature, and never did a child enjoy them more passionately." This love of nature aided to establish the purity and rectitude of his taste. A simple violet would transport him with joy when he discovered it hidden among the leaves; in the country everything was an object of fresh interest and enjoyment; all nature spoke to his heart, and he yielded himself at once to its emotions. The strictest integrity and honour regulated his transactions as a man of business, and his feelings were kind and benevolent. As a musician he is said never to have been surpassed in any of the highest qualities that belong to violin-playing, and his compositions are models of grandeur, spirit, and variety of expression. The *Concerto*, which began to be much improved in his day, was still further advanced by Viotti, though the execution of those manual difficulties which the violinist of the present day sets so much value upon, were not then the fashion. Paganini had not yet appeared.

Viotti has left us a beautiful picture of a still

afternoon in the mountains of Switzerland. It was there he heard, under peculiar circumstances, and probably for the first time, the plaintive sound of a mountain horn, breathing forth the few notes of a kind of *Ranz des Vaches.*

"The *Ranz des Vaches* which I send you," he says in one of his letters, "is neither that with which our friend Jean Jacques has presented us, nor that of which M. De la Bord speaks in his work on Music. I cannot say whether it is known or not; all I know is that I heard it in Switzerland, and, once heard, I have never forgotten it. I was sauntering along, towards the decline of day, in one of those sequestered spots . . . . flowers, verdure, streamlets, all united to form a picture of perfect harmony. There, without being fatigued, I seated myself mechanically on a fragment of rock, and fell into so profound a *reverie* that I seemed to forget that I was upon earth. While sitting thus, sounds broke on my ear which were sometimes of a hurried, sometimes of a prolonged and sustained character, and were repeated in softened tones by the echoes around. I found they proceeded from a mountain horn; and their effect was heightened

by a plaintive female voice. Struck as if by enchantment, I started from my dreams, listened with breathless attention, and learned, or rather engraved upon my memory, the *Ranz des Vaches* which I send you. In order to understand all its beauties you ought to be transplanted to the scene in which I heard it, and to feel all the enthusiasm that such a moment inspired."

We ourselves have had the good fortune to pass such a moment in the hills of Waldeck, on a fine afternoon in June, when the tinkling of the sheep-bells came from the sides of a neighbouring slope, and gradually approached the spot at which we listened eagerly to those fairy-like sounds. Nothing we have yet met with in music can realise the effect these sounds produced upon us; not even the *Ranz des Vaches* in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, nor the beautiful little composition of Alard, entitled *Souvenir des Pyrénées*, though there is something in both of these that approaches to the magical effect of which we speak, and which is, no doubt, heightened by the scenery.

Ferdinand Langlé has left us the following interesting anecdote of Viotti, and more than

once related it to Adolph Adam, the well-known French composer. The father of the former, Marie Langlé, also an excellent professor of harmony, and formerly one of the instructors of Dalayrac, was an intimate friend of the great violinist. One fine summer evening, Marie Langlé and Viotti were taking a walk along the Champs Elysées, and after a while sat down on one of the benches under the trees to enjoy the fresh air, if possible, without the dust of the foot-path. Night was gradually approaching, and Viotti, who was naturally of a dreamy, thoughtful disposition, had yielded to one of those reveries which isolated him even in the midst of a numerous and brilliant society, whilst Langlé sat thinking over some of the airs in his opera *Corisandre*, which he was then composing. In a few moments they were both rather disagreeably brought back to mother earth and the locality in question, by some harsh discordant sounds, so terribly false that they made the musicians almost start from their seats. They both suddenly turned their astonished features toward each other as much as to say, "What on earth is that?" Viotti was the first to speak:

"It can't be a violin," he said, "and yet there is some resemblance to one."

"Nor a clarionet," suggested Langlé, "though it is something like it."

The easiest manner of solving the problem was to go and see what it was. They approached the spot whence the extraordinary tones issued, and saw a poor blind man standing near a miserable-looking candle and playing upon a violin—but the latter was an instrument made of tin-plate.

"Fancy!" exclaimed Viotti, "it *is* a violin, but a violin of tin-plate! Did you ever dream of such a curiosity?" and after listening a while, he added, "I say, Langlé, I must possess that instrument; go and ask the old blind man what he will sell it for."

Langlé approached and asked the question, but the old man was disinclined to part with it.

"But we will give you enough for it to enable you to purchase a better," he added; "and why is not your violin like others?"

The aged fiddler explained, that, when he got old and found himself still poor, not being able to work, but still able to scrape a few airs upon a violin, he had endeavoured to procure one, but in

vain. At last his good kind nephew Eustache, who was apprenticed to a tinker, had made him one of tin-plate. "And an excellent one too," he added; "and my poor boy Eustache brings me here in the morning when he goes to work, and fetches me away again in the evening as he returns, and the receipts are not so bad sometimes —once, when he was out of work, it was I who kept the house going!"

"Well," said Viotti, "I will give you twenty francs for your violin. You can buy a much better one for that price; but let me try it a little?"

He took the violin into his hands. Its singular tone amused him, and he produced some extraordinary effects upon it. Indeed, so much was he absorbed by his playing that he did not perceive a considerable crowd had gathered round, and were listening with curiosity and astonishment to this most extraordinary performance. Langlé seized upon the opportunity, and passed round the old man's hat. A goodly number of two-sous-pieces, and even some silver-bits, was the immediate response; and these were handed to the astonished beggar, whilst Viotti prepared to give him the twenty francs.

"Stay a moment," said the blind man, recovering a little from his surprise; "just now I said I would sell the violin for twenty francs, but I did not know it was so good. I ought to have at least the double for it."

Viotti had never received a more genuine compliment, and he did not hesitate to give the old man two pieces of gold instead of one, and then immediately retired from the spot, passing through the crowd with the tin-plate instrument under his arm. He had scarcely gone forty yards when he felt some one pulling at his sleeve; it was a workman, who politely took off his cap and said:

"Sir, you have paid too dear for that violin; and if you are an amateur, as it was I who made it, I can supply you with as many as you like at six francs each."

This was Eustache; he had just come in time to hear the conclusion of the bargain, and little dreaming that he was so clever a violin-maker, wished to continue a trade that had begun so successfully. However, Viotti was quite satisfied with the one sample he had bought. He never parted with that instrument, and had it with him when he came to reside in London.

It appears that this extraordinary instrument was sold at London with other effects of the great violinist, after his death, and realised a few shillings only. An amateur of curiosities offered a large price to the purchaser of it, if he, or any one else, could inform him how such a mysterious piece of workmanship happened to be in the possession of the celebrated Viotti.

We have stated above that Viotti had few pupils, but they all became very superior artistes. Rode, Robrechts, Cartier, Mademoiselle Gerbini, Aldoy, Labarre, Pixis, Mori, Madame Paravicini, Vacher: such are the principal names of those who owed their talent directly to his teaching; but Viotti gave advice and encouragement to many others, and his influence appears to have been beneficially felt even by those who ranked as great artistes in his own day.

Pierre Rode, probably the most eminent of these, both as a performer and composer, was born at Bordeaux in 1774, and showed a very marked disposition for music when very young. At thirteen years of age, he was sent to Paris and placed under Viotti. His first appearance in public occurred in 1790, when he was sixteen. At this

concert he played one of Viotti's concertos. He then played second violin at the *Théâtre Feydeau*, and, when opportunity occurred, he performed in concerts. In 1796 he took to professional travelling in Holland and Germany, and on the way to France from Hamburg by sea, he was shipwrecked on the English coast. Viotti was then in London, and Rode did not succeed before an English audience. Moreover, like Viotti, he soon got notice to quit from the Government, *on the suspicion* merely of being a democrat! On returning to Paris he was successful, and got an appointment as Professor at the *Conservatoire*, and in 1800, that of Violin-Solo to the Emperor Napoleon (then Premier Consul).

In 1803 he obtained a similar appointment in Russia, and remained there five years, after which he travelled again to various European towns till, in 1829, he was struck with paralysis, of which he died in the year following. His performance was very elegant, like his compositions. His well-known *Air Varié*, and his *Concertos*, have become classical. According to Fétis, he was "a model of perfection in his performance," and his compositions lead us to believe that this

is not an exaggerated estimate. The French called Rode the "*Correggio of the Violin.*"

Mademoiselle Gerbini appears to have had considerable execution, a fair share of good taste, but was rather devoid of feeling. She played a great deal in Spain and Portugal, and also appeared in London. The other lady, Madame Paravicini, at one time a teacher of music to the Beauharnais family, and patronised by the Empress Josephine, was, later in life, compelled to take to the violin as a means of livelihood. She appeared with considerable success in Milan, Bologna, Vienna, etc.

Nicholas Mori deserves also more than a passing notice. He was born in London in 1796, and began the violin very early in life, some say when he was three years of age. The fact is, that at eight he was brought out as a youthful prodigy, and performed a concerto by his teacher, Barthélemon. He afterwards became one of the best pupils of Viotti, and as a lad played in the orchestra of the Opera. When arrived at the maturer age of twenty, he was made leader of the ballet, so that his career thus far foreshadowed somewhat that of the late Alfred

Mellon, an excellent violinist and conductor born in Birmingham, and whose London career has been most successful.

In 1813, when the Philharmonic Concerts opened a new field for violinists, Mori, aided by his distinguished professor Viotti, took rank as an eminent performer, and this led to his being appointed Professor of the Violin at the *Royal Academy of Music*. He was now an established favourite with the English public, and played with considerable success in numbers of concerts of all kinds. His performance was remarkable for the facility with which he executed difficult passages, more than for taste and refinement. He died in June, 1839, leaving a name that will be long remembered among English lovers of the violin. Dubourg has said of his performance: "Mori's playing was admirably suited to the apprehension and desires of a fashionable audience. It was showy, but not profound; striking, but not moving, full of artificial neatness, with little of natural grace. . . . . Admirable as it was in some points, it sufficiently showed why he could not hope to distinguish himself in composition." He made many good pupils, among whom were

Oury, Richards, Musgrove, Patey, etc.; the former, who afterwards took lessons of nearly all the eminent artistes in Europe, and who married a distinguished French pianiste, Mdlle. Belleville, ran through a most successful artistic career, more especially in Italy and other continental countries. George Macfarren, Sterndale Bennett, and Earl Falmouth were, in their younger days, pupils of Oury.

This is also the place to allude to the two distinguished violinists Kreutzer and Baillot, who have formed many able pupils, and were for many years professors at the Paris *Conservatoire*. Rodolphe Kreutzer, born at Versailles in 1766, a son of one of the Court musicians, had for master a German violinist of much fame, Stamitz, the founder of a violin school in his native country; but his style and finish were chiefly owing to the instruction he received later in life from Gaviniès, and from the effect produced upon him by hearing the performances of Viotti. After this Kreutzer's method became broader, more brilliant, and exceedingly bold.

Baillot was more remarkable for poetic feeling; he was a pupil of Pollani (one of Nardini's pupils),

and was born near Paris, about 1770. He was a great *solo*-player, but shone still more in the *quartetts* of Haydn, Boccherini, Mozart, and Beethoven. At the Opera, where he was engaged to play the solos for dancing, "he was only the shadow of himself," says Fétis. Baillot not only ranks as a great violinist, but stands forth as a great composer in the midst of a galaxy of talent and genius. He was succeeded by Habeneck, one of his ablest pupils, to whom the French *Conservatoire* owes its present able teacher Alard, the composer of some very brilliant modern *Fantasias.*

Lafont was another great violinist whose talent can be directly connected with the school of Viotti. No performer, perhaps, ever gave greater pleasure or excited more enthusiasm in the concert-room. Charles Phillipe Lafont, who styled himself *Violon solo aux Cours de France et de Russie,* must be looked upon as one of the finest violinists that ever lived. Though his compositions have been surpassed by those of Ernst and De Bériot, there is a peculiar elegance and a freshness about them even now, that class them among the more admirable productions for

the violin. His own performance was characterised by sweetness, purity of tone, and exquisite finish, with a considerable amount of execution and a rapid, distinct *staccato* and *détaché* bowing. In fact he was a perfect master of his instrument, and exhibited the most exquisite taste in ornament. Lafont began his musical career as a singer, and in 1794 he occasionally sang in concerts at Paris and other towns. He studied music in its various branches under several distinguished professors; but when he took finally to the violin, he completed his studies under Rode, to whose school he adhered very closely, following all the great characteristics of that admirable master. Whilst he resided in Russia he was "First Violin to the Emperor" at St. Petersburg; but in 1806 he returned to Paris, and held the appointment of leader at the King's chapel. His two *Fantasias* on Auber's *Domino Noir*, and on *La Muette*, and his charming *Romance Valse* are some of his most characteristic compositions.

Germany, having had so many fine composers of her own, has been, perhaps, somewhat less in-

fluenced by the talent and genius of Viotti, but this is the only place in the present volume that we can take a glance at some of the greatest violinists produced on German soil.

We have already alluded to Stamitz, the son of a Bohemian schoolmaster, as the founder of a violin school in Germany; his name and reputation were extended by his eldest son Charles, born at Manheim in 1746, who made many able pupils. There was also Benda, a contemporary of the elder Stamitz, and, like the latter, born in Bohemia, in 1709, being ten years older than the schoolmaster's musical son. Benda while a child was *sopranist* in the choir of St. Nicholas at Prague; whilst still a boy he took a fancy for the violin, and after awhile ran away with a company of itinerant musicians. A blind Jew, named Lœbel, a very clever performer on the instrument—some say a perfect *virtuoso*—gave him his first serious instruction, and rendered him capable of profiting by the lessons of others at Prague and Vienna, until he became a very great solo-player, and made an immense reputation.

Here, too, we must mention Leopold Mozart,

the father of the celebrated composer, an excellent violinist, and author of a "*Method*," or Book of Instruction for the Violin. He was born in 1719, and, after filling several honourable posts, died at Salzburg in 1787. Much of his life was spent in travelling with his immortal son, and his daughter, with whom he visited all the Courts of Europe, and, finally, returned to Salzburg, rich in hopes centred on his son, but poor in purse, the long journeys having nearly exhausted his pecuniary resources. It is difficult to conceive a Mozart in such a position. But such was the fact, rendered all the more distressing from continual suffering, produced by repeated attacks of gout. He had, however, a worthy patron in the Prince Bishop of Salzburg. His "Instruction Book for the Violin" was considered, for more than fifty years, the best work of its kind, and is still advertised by music-sellers.

Then we have the well-known name of William Cramer, a violinist of no mean order, born at Mannheim in 1730, patronised by Prince Maximilian, but who did not succeed in Germany, and so came to England, where he was esteemed

the first violinist of his day. He was a bad economist, and the embarrassment he sustained in his affairs, coupled with the transference of the leadership of the Opera orchestra to Viotti, combined to hasten his death, which occurred in 1799. His son, François Cramer, fully sustained his father's reputation as a violinist; though he never had much importance as a *solo*-player. He made an excellent leader of the *Antient Concerts*, and became remarkable by his reading of Handel's music. His brother, John Cramer, made quite as great a name as a pianiste.

Nor can we pass over the name of John Peter Salomon, the originator of the celebrated "Salomon's Concerts," in London. He was born at Bonn, on the Rhine, in 1745, and educated for the law. His love of music and enterprising spirit led him to London, where he organised concerts in 1791, at which many distinguished artistes, including the violinist Yaniewïtz and the great Viotti, made their first appearance before an English audience.

To Germany also the musical world owes the two cousins Romberg, one a violinist, and the

other a violoncellist, both distinguished performers and composers of merit.

Fesca, the great *adagio*-player, patronised by Jerome Bonaparte, was born at Magdeburg in 1789, where he performed a concerto in public when only eleven years of age. He has left us some meritorious compositions.

Kiesewetter, the son of a violinist of Anspach, was born in 1777, and became leader of the orchestra at the Court of Hanover, where he was so poor that he could not support his wife and eight children. In 1821 he came to London, and his performances at the *Philharmonic Concerts* were much admired. He died here in September, 1827, "receiving unremitted attention at the close of his career from his pupil, Oury," whom we have already alluded to.

A player much in the same style was Mayseder, who for many years stood high in the world of music, both as a *solo*-player and a composer. His brilliant music was much appreciated at Vienna, where he resided most of his life.

But the greatest celebrity among German violinists of the first half of the nineteenth century, whether considered as a composer or a performer,

is without doubt Louis Spohr, the author of the well-known *Violin School*, through which so many of our English *dilettanti* have been made to toil. It is a curious circumstance that he was born in 1784—the same year as the immortal Paganini.

Spohr has written his own biography, and a most delightful book it is, though tinged with that peculiar melancholy which seems to be inherent to the ambitious German mind. He was born at Seesen, in Brunswick, the son of a physician in tolerable practice, who, no doubt, was not a person calculated to foster a youthful love for music. However, Spohr found an important patron in the Duke of Brunswick, who was himself a performer on the violin, and who enabled him to take lessons from Francis Eck, leader of the concerts at the Court of Munich. With Eck, the young Spohr made a musical tour in Russia, but it was only after he returned to Germany that he applied himself most assiduously to the study of his instrument, in order to overcome its immense difficulties. In the year 1805 he was offered, and accepted, the post of Concert-master to the Duke of Saxe-Gotha, a

very moderate appointment, but delightful to him in many respects, as the readers of his charming *Autobiography* will soon perceive. After a while, however, it seemed advisable to give it up, and to travel through the various cities of Europe as a concert-player. In 1817 he thus visited Italy, and was heard in Venice by Paganini himself, who spoke of Spohr's finished execution and broad style with the greatest warmth and unfeigned admiration. Indeed, it may safely be asserted that Spohr could do that which Paganini could not, whilst Paganini could likewise perform music that Spohr could have no idea of. In Spohr we have an example of strenuous hard work, based upon sound and well-known principles, and with a moderate amount of natural talent. In Paganini we have unlimited natural talent, comparatively little work, and immense originality. For some time Spohr held the post of leader at the theatre of Frankfort-on-the-Maine, when he was succeeded by Guhr, a great admirer of Paganini, and the author of a treatise on *Harmonics*, etc.

Spohr made several visits to England, and played in 1820 at the *Philharmonic Concerts*.

He also led the Norwich Musical Festival in the year 1839. He was, perhaps, even more distinguished as a leader and composer than as a violinist; and his life, being one of continuous labour, the number of works—operas, oratorios, concertos, etc.—that have issued from his most fertile brain is very considerable. Refined taste and prodigious execution characterised his performance, in which he was often much assisted by the great talent of his wife as an accompanist and duettist, and for whom he wrote several brilliant concerted pieces. Among his operas we should mention *Jessonda* and *Faust;* but a complete list of his compositions would fill several of our pages. In his performance he had a peculiar horror of harmonic notes and pizzicato, and, in fact, of all those little peculiarities which characterised his great Italian rival. On the other hand he shows great partiality for chromatic passages, which constitute one of the greatest difficulties in violin performances. In the month of October, 1821, Spohr arrived with his family in Dresden, chiefly for the purpose of engaging the services of Miksch as a teacher of singing for his eldest daughter. Weber, who had

declined the directorship of the Opera at Cassel, was at this time written to by Feige, the lessee, to beg him to point out the most worthy man for this position. The celebrated composer at once recommended Spohr, who to the end of his life filled the post with honour. For further details of the career of this bold yet amiable character —for such indeed was Spohr—we must refer our readers to his *Autobiography*, of which there exists an English translation; and we will conclude this section of our work by quoting a portion of his admirable address to young artistes, inserted at the end of his excellent *Violin School*:

"MY DEAR YOUNG FELLOW-ARTISTE,

"You have now surmounted the greatest difficulties in your ascent up the steep path of art. In prosecuting your journey, great and increasing enjoyments await you at every step. Courageously press forward. Do not tarry! Standing still will be but the precursor to going backwards. You have chosen the most difficult of all instruments; and one upon which it is only possible to make progress—or, indeed, to retain

in after years what you have already acquired—by constant daily practice. Your instrument is, however, the most perfect of any, as well as that which most amply repays the labours of study; but not until the player has attained the full command of it.

"Strive at all times after that which is most noble in Art, and disdain all kinds of charlatanism. He who seeks only to please the multitude will sink lower and lower. Be, then, considerate in your choice of music, and perform only the finest and best of every kind. . . . . Lastly, when you have attained the highest point of perfection as a violinist and musician which your particular talent will admit of, think kindly on him who has endeavoured to smooth your difficult path and facilitate your career as an Artiste."

The influence of Spohr, both as a composer and teacher, has been very great, more especially in Germany and England. A well-known English violinist, Blagrove, was one of his favourite pupils; and many others equally talented, among whom we may reckon the distinguished Ferdi-

nand David, have derived ardour and impetus from his works, and advantage from meditating on such lives as those to which we have just referred.

VII.

Nicolo Paganini.

1784—1840.

AT the beginning of this century the mother of Paganini had a dream, which she related to her young child in these terms: "My son, you will be a great musician. An angel, radiant with beauty, appeared to me during the night, and promised to accomplish any wish that I might make. I asked that you should become *the greatest of all violinists,* and the angel granted that my desire should be fulfilled!"

Whether this little speech was imagined for the sake of encouraging her son to work, and to enable him to bear the cruel treatment of his father; or whether it was a real dream, a sort of instinctive foreshadowing of the boy's future

career; it is certain that the "angel radiant with beauty" did keep the promise in the most perfect manner possible.

Nicolo Paganini, the most wonderful violinist of the nineteenth century, was born at Genoa on the night of the 18th February, 1784. His father, Antonio Paganini, was a ship-broker, who was passionately fond of music and played upon the mandoline. We know very little about him, except that he soon perceived his child's talents, and caused him to study so early and so severely that he not only affected his constitution, perhaps naturally rather delicate, but he actually forced him to become a tolerable violin-player at six years of age! That the young Paganini gave evidence of very precocious skill, and that, very early in life, his instinct and natural genius led him to attempt extraordinary effects upon his instrument cannot be doubted. It is no less true that his father's knowledge of music was of a very meagre kind, and not sufficient to enable him to do more than give his son the roughest elements of the art. For a short period the leader of the Genoese theatre, Signor Cervetto, undertook to instruct him; but when eight years

of age, the young Paganini was placed under the care of Giacomo Costa, an excellent violinist, and director of church music in that town. At this time, also, he was encouraged and helped in his endeavours to master the art and science of music by the composer Gnecco, who was most kind to him.

It is stated by some of his biographers that, even at this early period—between the age of eight and nine—the youthful Paganini composed his first piece, a kind of sonata, now lost, like many others of his productions. Costa gave him lessons for about six months, during which time Nicolo played in the churches, where the music was under his professor's direction.

It was when nine years of age that he made his first appearance in a concert given at the theatre by two well-known singers, who afterwards sang for *his* benefit in a second concert. On both occasions he performed some variations he had composed upon a French air, and met with a most enthusiastic reception. It was now considered necessary to place the boy under some first-rate professor, and Alessandro Rolla, of Parma, was fixed upon. Paganini was then

twelve years of age, and it is said that when he and his father arrived at Rolla's residence, the learned professor was ill, and not at all inclined to receive them. Being shown into a room adjoining the invalid's bedroom, they saw upon the table a violin and a piece of music in MS., which the father requested his son to try over while they waited. This he performed so well, that Rolla inquired what artiste had come into his house; and, on learning that it was young Paganini who had come to solicit lessons, declared he could teach him nothing but what the lad knew already. However, he appears to have given him lessons for some months, during which time the boy studied composition under Ghiretti, and obtained the friendship and help of Paër, his pupil (afterwards a celebrated composer), whilst he stayed at Parma. Paër was exceedingly kind to him.

In 1797, when thirteen years of age, Paganini was brought back to Genoa by his father, and began to write his first compositions for the violin. He wrote his music so difficult that it required all his energy to master it, and he was occasionally seen to try the same passage

in a hundred different ways until he had discovered the best means of performing it; so that at the end of the day he used to fall in a state of complete exhaustion upon a couch, where he would lie motionless for a considerable time. In this year his father determined upon taking him a professional tour through the principal towns of Lombardy, which appears not only to have proved very successful, but to have created a notion in the young artiste's brain that he could just as well make such a tour alone, and so escape from his father's tyranny. An opportunity for realising this dream occurred very soon afterwards: it was at the annual festival of Lucca that, in his fourteenth year, Paganini, not without much difficulty, obtained the consent of his father to appear in the concerts. He was to be accompanied there by his elder brother. At Lucca he was received with so much enthusiasm that he vowed he never would return to the paternal roof, and at once set off to fulfil engagements at concerts in Pisa and other towns. In vain did the mortified parent endeavour to induce him to return; in vain did he claim the moneys earned by the performances of his young son. Nicolo sent

his father a portion of them, but retained the remainder, and continued his romantic style of life.

Unfortunately—and yet for Paganini somewhat fortunately—gambling was at this period a very prevalent vice in Italy. The young musician, for he was barely sixteen, fell several times a victim to this passion, which seemed to increase with his success; and often deprived him, in one short evening, of the proceeds of several concerts. In fact, so far did he allow himself to be enslaved by this vicious tendency that more than once he had to borrow money upon his violin — the source of his livelihood — in order to pay his gambling debts. However, even in these sad straits the good angel that appeared in his mother's dream seems to have kept watch over him. One day at Leghorn, having lost all his money and his violin into the bargain, he made bold to request the loan of an instrument in order to perform at a concert for which he was engaged. In this instance he applied to a French gentleman, M. Livron, a merchant at Leghorn, who was a distinguished amateur performer, and possessed a very fine Guarnerius violin. The musical world

of this period of history, and in fact of all periods, must be considered highly indebted to this noble and kind-hearted Frenchman. After the concert when Paganini returned the instrument to M. Livron, the latter, who had been to hear him, exclaimed, "Never will I profane the strings which your fingers have touched! that instrument is yours." The astonishment and delight of the young artiste may be more easily imagined than described. It was upon this violin that Paganini afterwards performed in all his concerts, and the great *virtuoso* left it to the town of Genoa, where it is now preserved in a glass case in the Museum; an excellent engraving of it, from a photograph, was published in 1875, in George Hart's book on *The Violin*.

At this period of his life, between the ages of seventeen and twenty, Nicolo Paganini was surrounded by numerous admirers, and led into all kinds of dissipation. He was a tall, slim youth, with dark eyes, and long dark hair which, later in life, he allowed to fall in curls upon his shoulders; he was naturally amiable, and witty in conversation, though he has been reproached with selfishness. There can be no doubt that he

was, at this period, constantly under the combined influences of flattery and unbounded ambition; nevertheless, in spite of all his successful performances at concerts the style of life he was leading kept him so poor that he frequently took in hand all kinds of musical work to supply the wants of the moment. It is a curious coincidence that the fine violin which was presented to him by M. Livron, as we have just seen, was the cause of his abandoning, after a while, most completely the allurements of the gaming-tables. Paganini tells us himself that a certain nobleman was anxious to possess this instrument, and had offered for it a sum equivalent to about £80 English money; but the artiste would not sell it even if £200 had been offered for it, although he was, at this juncture, in great need of funds to pay off a debt of honour, and sorely tempted to accept the proffered amount. Just at this point Paganini received an invitation to a friend's house where gambling was the order of the day. "All my capital," he says,*

* Fétis' *Hist. of the Violin;* also Schottky and Vinela. The three authors give precisely the same anecdote in Paganini's own words.

"consisted of thirty francs, as I had disposed of my jewels, watch, rings, etc.; I nevertheless resolved on risking this last resource, and, if fortune proved fickle, to sell my violin and proceed to St. Petersburg, without instrument or baggage, with the view of re-establishing my affairs. My thirty francs were soon reduced to three, and I already fancied myself on the road to Russia, when my luck took a sudden turn, and I won one hundred and sixty francs. This saved my violin, and completely set me up. From that day forward I gradually gave up gambling, becoming more and more convinced that a gambler is an object of contempt to all well-regulated minds."

But love-making was not given up, if the card-table was abandoned. For it is at this period of the young artiste's life that occurs a most curious episode extending over three whole years. All we know respecting this gap in the career of the violinist is that, during the interval in question, he resided in the country with a friend who had conceived a great admiration for his talent, a Tuscan lady of position, who was a great performer on the guitar. During these three years Paganini appears to have abandoned the violin

and taken to the guitar, upon which he soon became an extraordinary player; he also composed, during this interval, twelve sonatas for violin and guitar, some of which have been preserved. Our information on this period of Paganini's life is extremely meagre.

In 1804 he returned to Genoa, and devoted some considerable time to composition; he was twenty years of age, and wrote here four grand quartetts for violin, tenor, violoncello, and guitar, and also some bravura variations for violin with guitar accompaniment. At this period he gave lessons to a young girl of Genoa, Catherine Calcagno, about seven years of age; eight years later, when only fifteen years old, this young lady astonished Italian audiences by the boldness of her style; she continued her artistic career till the year 1816, when she had attained the age of twenty-one, and all traces of her in the musical world appear to be lost; doubtless, at this period she found a husband, and retired completely from public life.

In 1805 Paganini accepted the position of director of music and conductor of the Opera orchestra at Lucca, under the immediate patron-

age of the Princess Elisa, sister of Napoleon I. and wife of Prince Bacciochi. The prince took lessons from him on the violin. Here he was made much of, though the emoluments were small; and it was at the numerous concerts given at the Court of Lucca that Paganini for the first time essayed many of those curious effects, such as performances on *one string*, *harmonic* and *pizzicato* passages, which, in after years, became so characteristic of his style of playing.

However, this fixed position was not of long duration. In 1808 he recommenced, and from that time forward continued, his wandering career, giving concerts at the various towns of northern Italy, and amassing considerable sums of money. He could always obtain a theatre by offering the manager half the receipts; and at this time Paganini seems to have become more economical, or less extravagant, and to have begun to realise the value of money.

Some curious adventures belong to this period of his artistic existence. Thus at a concert in Leghorn, where he was not so well received as he had been seven years previously, he came on to the platform limping from the effects of a

wound in his foot. This created a roar of laughter. Then, just as he began his performance, the candles fell out of his desk, which created another uproar. But the magic accents of his violin soon turned the laughter into enthusiastic applause.

At the little town of Ferrare things did not end so smoothly. In those days the common people of the suburbs of that town considered the residents of the town itself as a set of asses! hence any countryman, a resident of the suburbs, if asked where he came from, or where he was going, never replied "from Ferrare," but put up his head and began braying like an ass! Now, unluckily, Paganini could imitate the braying of an ass upon his violin. This being stated, let us relate, in a few words, what happened. Arrangements for the concert having been made, and Signora Marcolini having agreed to sing, it was found, at the last moment, that this lady was unable or refused to do so. Thereupon Paganini sought the assistance of Madame Pallerini, the principal dancer of the theatre, who possessed a most agreeable voice. After much solicitation she acceded to his request, and duly appeared

at the concert. Though exceedingly nervous, she sang well enough to elicit a considerable amount of applause; nevertheless, just as she retired, encouraged by those marks of approval, a shrill whistle was heard (in England a dissatisfied audience *hiss* and *groan*, but on the continent the *whistle* is usually resorted to). Paganini was furious, and vowed he would punish the man who had proffered this insult to his lady friend. He waited till the end of the concert. When about to perform his last piece, he came forward to the front of the platform, and amidst much laughter he imitated the chirping of birds, the crowing of a cock, the mewing of a cat, etc.; and, after all, whilst making the most inimitable performance of the braying of a donkey, he exclaimed, "*This is for the man who whistled!*"—imagining, no doubt, that it would turn the laugh against that individual, and so punish him for his impertinent behaviour. The effect produced was magical, but not at all what Paganini had anticipated: the audience took it *as an allusion to themselves*, in accordance with what we have stated above. They rose to a man, hooting, vociferating, and rushing towards the platform; and would probably have

strangled the eminent violinist had he not sought safety in a precipitous retreat. When safely housed, he was told the cause of this fearful tumult. Paganini never visited the town again.

Wherever Paganini appeared, the sensation produced by his wonderful performances daily increased; and as his fame became greater so did jealousy and ill-feeling increase in divers quarters. Reports more or less scandalous, and perfectly untrue, were spread about, referring to his dissipated life, asserting that he had made a compact with the devil, and other like nonsense. Similar stories were published in the papers, one of which asserted that he had acquired his dexterity on the fourth string from having been incarcerated in prison for eight years, during which time all his strings had broken except the fourth, upon which he practised during the whole time of his imprisonment. This is totally untrue. Paganini never was in prison for an hour: it was Guarnerius, the maker of his violin, who was for some time locked up for political offences, being a man of turbulent character, and who, while in prison, managed to construct several excellent instruments, which, on account of the roughness of their

finish, have been long known as the "*prison Guarneri*" violins, and are now becoming so rare that they fetch large sums of money.

As he approached his thirtieth year Paganini's delicate and highly nervous constitution began to give way; he was troubled at intervals by attacks of internal inflammation, which his mode of life, and exceedingly moderate repasts, somewhat aggravated, by keeping him, even whilst in health, in a state of abnormal weakness.

His reputation, as one of the most extraordinary performers on the violin that the world ever saw, had by this time begun to spread beyond the confines of his native country.

It was at Milan in 1813, when twenty-nine years of age, that he composed his variations called *Le Streghe* ("The Witches"), in which he introduced many of his most remarkable effects. The air of this piece was taken from a ballet by Sussmayer, called *Il noce de Benevento,* the scenes of which were arranged by Virgano. It was the air at which the witches appeared in this piece, as performed at the theatre of *La Scala.* On the 29th October, 1813, he gave his first concert in that theatre, and was received with unbounded

enthusiasm. This was one of his greatest successes, and he ever afterwards had a kind of predilection for the city of Milan, where he gave numerous concerts before he extended his travels out of Italy. Here it was, also, that occurred a very interesting feature in his life. In March, 1816, Paganini, being then at Genoa, heard that the celebrated French violinist, Lafont, was at Milan, and he left for that town at once to hear him play. "His performance," says Paganini, "pleased me exceedingly."

A week later, the Italian *virtuoso* gave a concert himself at *La Scala,* at which Lafont was present; and the next day the latter proposed that they should both play in the same concert. "I excused myself," says the Italian, "alleging that such experiments were impolitic, as the public invariably looked upon these matters as duels, in which there must be a victim, and that it would be so in this case; for, as he was acknowledged to be the best violinist in France, so the public indulgently considered me the best of Italian violinists. Lafont not looking at it in this light, I was obliged to accept the challenge. I allowed him to arrange the programme. We

each played a concerto of our own composition, after which we played together a *duo concertante* by Kreutzer. In this I did not deviate in the least from the composer's text whilst we played together, but in the *solo* parts I yielded freely to my own imagination, and introduced several novelties, which seemed to annoy my adversary. Then followed a *Russian Air*, with variations, by Lafont, and I finished the concert with my variations called *Le Streghe*. Lafont probably surpassed me in tone; but the applause which followed my efforts convinced me that I did not suffer by comparison."

We have perused several versions of this affair, and have come to the conclusion that Paganini's is the most truthful and the most modest of them all. In other cases we have not been able to admit so implicitly the assertions of the "wily Italian," a term that has been frequently applied to him.

A few years later Paganini played with the eminent Polish violinist, Lipinski; this was at Placentia, in 1818; the two artistes were great friends, and one of Lipinski's works (*Tre Capricci*) is dedicated to Paganini. Mayseder, also,

dedicated a work to Paganini; and Lafont arranged one of his *Rondos* that had been set for piano by Herz. This shows that he was appreciated and esteemed by the greatest of his fellow-artistes quite as much as he was admired by the general public.

In the year 1817 Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Paganini were at Rome during Carnival time. It was on this occasion that Rossini produced his clever part song, *Carnavale, Carnavale*—"We are poor beggars," etc., well-known in England—which the three eminent composers sang in the streets, having disguised themselves for the purpose. It was also during this Carnival that Rossini produced his *Cenerentola,* and that Paganini gave several concerts which excited the greatest enthusiasm.

A little later, at Naples, his health gave way again, and it got reported that he was consumptive. This had such an effect upon the landlord of the house in which he was staying—as consumption was considered to be infectious—that he actually turned poor Paganini out into the street. Fortunately at this moment a violoncello-player, Ciandelli, who knew Paganini well, came

to his rescue, and his anger was so great when he saw what had happened to the great violinist that he belaboured the barbarous landlord unmercifully with a stick, and conveyed the invalid to a comfortable lodging where he was carefully attended to.

Some time afterwards Paganini had an opportunity of repaying this kindness, for he gave Ciandelli some valuable instruction, which enabled him in the course of a few days to become transformed from a very indifferent performer into an artiste of considerable eminence.

At the age of thirty-six Paganini again found himself at Milan, and there organised a society of musical amateurs, called *Gli Orfei*. He conducted several of their concerts. But either the love of a roving life, or the necessity of wandering in order to fill his exchequer, kept him constantly on the move; and though, during these travels, he is said to have met with many extraordinary adventures, very little reliance can be placed upon the accounts that have come down to us, the more so when we consider that Paganini's mode of life was, as we shall see presently, become by this time extremely sober. It was

not until he was forty-four years of age that he at last quitted Italy, to make himself better known in foreign countries; and on the 29th March, 1828, he made his first appearance at Vienna. The reception he met with was described as "a paroxysm of enthusiasm." He gave a great number of concerts there, including one for the benefit of the poor, and he was very soon the most popular man of the day. The shopkeepers called their goods after him; there were cravats *à la Paganini*, canes *à la Paganini*, etc.; a good stroke at billiards was termed *un coup à la Paganini*. It was at Vienna that, after some considerable solicitation, a cabman obtained from the illustrious violinist (who scarcely knew what he granted) the permission to print, in large letters, on his cab the words, "*Cabriolet de Paganini*"—it was indeed a conveyance that had once been hired by the *virtuoso* during a heavy shower. The man by this cunning device soon made enough money to enable him to rent a large house and start as an hotel-keeper, in which capacity Paganini found him on his next visit to that city.

One day, as he was walking along the streets

of Vienna, Paganini saw a poor little Italian boy scraping some Neapolitan songs before the windows of a large house. A celebrated composer who accompanied the artiste remarked to him, "There is one of your compatriots." Upon which Paganini evinced a desire to speak to the lad, and went across the street to him for that purpose. After ascertaining that he was a poor beggar-boy from the other side of the Alps, and that he supported his sick mother, his only relative, by his playing, the great violinist appeared touched. He literally emptied his pockets into the boy's hand, and taking the violin and bow from him, began the most grotesque and extraordinary performance possible. A crowd soon collected, the great *virtuoso* was as soon recognised by the bystanders, and when he brought the performance to an end, amidst the cheers and shouts of all assembled, he handed round the boy's hat, and made a considerable collection of coin, in which silver pieces were very conspicuous. He then handed the sum to the young Italian, saying, "Take that to your mother," and rejoining his companion, walked off with him, saying, "I

hope I've done a good turn to that little animal."

At Berlin, where he soon afterwards astonished his crowded audiences by his miraculous playing, the same fanatical enthusiasm ensued; and with the exception of Palermo, Naples (where he seems to have had many detractors), and Prague, his visits to the various cities of Europe were one continued triumph. People tried in vain to explain his method of playing, professors criticised him, and pamphlets were published which endeavoured to make him out a quack or a charlatan. It was all to no purpose. Libels even, as we have seen, were published on him in the papers. But nothing could arrest his onward course; triumph succeeded triumph wherever he appeared; and, though no one could understand him, every one admired him, and he had only to touch his violin to enchant thousands.

A rather curious scene occurred at Berlin, at a musical evening party to which Paganini was invited. A young and presumptuous professor of the violin performed there several pieces with very little effect; he was not aware of the presence of the Genoese giant, whom he did not

know even by sight. As many people in the room *did* know him, however, it was not long before he was requested to favour the company with a specimen of his talent. After endeavouring for some time to be excused, he was compelled to take the violin into his hand, when he played a few variations in such a dreadfully bad style that several persons could not control their laughter. The young professor then came forward and played another piece in the most conceited manner possible, and with an evident sneer at the illustrious *maestro*. Paganini took up the instrument a second time and played a short piece with such deep feeling and astonishing execution, that the audience sat as if petrified, and at the concluding cadence burst forth into such a thunder of applause that it was quite deafening. During the tumult the young professor escaped unnoticed, and was never again seen in the house at which he had received so severe a lesson.

The celebrated artiste gave his first concert in Paris, at the Opera-house, on the 9th March, 1831; he was then forty-seven years of age, and was described by Castil Blaze as being nearly

six feet in height, with a long pale face, large nose, brilliant little eyes like those of an eagle, long curling black hair which fell upon the collar of his coat, extremely thin and cadaverous looking, altogether a gaunt, wiry, but delicate being, in some respects only the shadow of a man. But his eyes sparkled with genius, his wrist and his long bony fingers were so flexible that they "could only be compared to a handkerchief tied to the end of a stick." It would be impossible to describe the enthusiasm his first concert created. Fétis has spoken of it as an "universal frenzy." His great fame had preceded him to Paris, and artistes as well as the general public were full of curiosity to hear him. Here, as at other European cities, he invariably performed his own compositions (and, indeed, his reputation as a composer, though only few of his compositions were then known, was very considerable). When asked the reason of this he has been known to reply, "that if he played other compositions than his own, he was obliged to arrange them to suit his peculiar style, and it was less trouble to write a piece of his own." Although he occasionally indulged in *quartetts* of Beethoven with amateurs

at Milan (and at Paris, in order to please his French audience, once played a concerto by Rode), he could produce little effect by such manifestations of his talent.

All his concerts in Paris in 1831, and again when he returned (after his English trip) in 1834, were as successful as his first appearance there. He soon established himself an universal favourite. The journals spoke of this tall, thin artiste, so delicate, so admired, so covered with applause, as the least pretentious, the most naïve, and the simplest-mannered of men. Nevertheless, he had his full share of eccentricity.

One day a Court concert was announced at the Tuileries; Paganini was asked to play. He consented, and went to inspect the room the day before. Finding that the curtains were too numerous, and hung so that they would greatly interfere with the sound, he requested the superintendent to see to this, and get things properly arranged. It appears that this self-sufficient official paid no attention to his demands, and Paganini was so offended by his manners that he resolved not to play. The hour of the concert

arrived—but no Paganini! The Court was all seated—murmurs arose. At last an official was despatched to the hotel where the illustrious *virtuoso* was staying—he was told that *the great violinist had not gone out, but that he went to bed very early.* . . .

The success of Paganini at Paris surpassed the most sanguine expectations; and a similar fate awaited him at London.

His first concert in London was given at the *King's Theatre,* on the 3rd June, 1831. All kinds of rumours had heralded his appearance in England, and numerous were the stories told of his eccentricities. The capacious area of the Opera-house was scarcely large enough to hold the crowd that flocked to hear him, in spite of the fact that the prices of admission had been raised by the parties who engaged him—a circumstance that gave rise to much feeling of discontent, and raised a storm of opposition, by which, we are informed, this attempt (erroneously attributed to Paganini's selfishness) was finally frustrated.

No musical performance has ever been attended with more enthusiasm than that which accom-

panied this first appearance of the illustrious Genoese in London.

The concert opened with Beethoven's *Second Symphony*, admirably performed by the orchestra of the *Philharmonic Society*, after which Lablache sang Rossini's *Largo al factotum* with much applause, and was *encored*. "A breathless silence then ensued," says Mr. Gardner (an amateur of Leicester, who, as he tells us, had, at the risk of his ribs, placed himself at the opera doors two and a half hours before they were opened), "and every eye watched the action of this extraordinary violinist as he glided from the side scenes to the front of the stage. An involuntary cheering burst, at this moment, from every part of the house, many persons rising from their seats to view the *spectre* during the thunder of this unprecedented cheering—his gaunt and extraordinary appearance being more like that of a devotee about to suffer martyrdom than one to delight you with his art. With the tip of his bow he set off the orchestra in a grand military movement, with a force and vivacity as surprising as it was new. At the termination of this introduction he commenced with a

soft streamy note of celestial quality; and with three or four whips of his bow elicited points of sound that mounted to the third heaven, and as bright as the stars. . . . Immediately an execution followed which was equally indescribable. A scream of astonishment and delight burst from the audience at the novelty of this effect. . . ." etc.

This unsophisticated account may serve to give some slight idea of the impression produced by Paganini at his concerts. At this, his first appearance before an English public, he performed four pieces: the first was a concerto of a most florid character; the second a composition in the minor key; the third was a military rondo for the fourth string, in which he introduced the air *Non più andrai* of Mozart; the last was his Introduction and variations on *Nel cor più non mi sento*, with its curious *pizzicato* and rich *arpeggio* passages.

"Nothing can be more intense in feeling," says a contemporary critic, "than his conception and delivery of an *adagio* passage. His tone is not perhaps so full and round as that of Baillot or De Bériot, for example: it is delicate rather than

strong; but this delicacy was probably never possessed equally by any other player."

"There is no trick in his playing," says another; "it is all fair, scientific execution, opening to us a new order of sounds . . . all his passages seem free and unpremeditated, as if conceived on the instant. One has no impression of their having cost him either forethought or labour. . . . The word difficulty has no place in his vocabulary. . . . " etc.

The same excitement produced by this first display of his wonderful performance in London, was fully sustained in subsequent concerts, both here and in the numerous provincial towns which he visited shortly afterwards.

The shocking stories that were circulated so freely about Paganini during the time of his European tour, had preceded his arrival in England, and gave a kind of mysterious celebrity to his name. No doubt he considered them well calculated to ensure him a certain amount of notoriety, and it was only when they assumed the most libellous proportions that he condescended to contradict them by printing a few letters in the newspapers. Notwithstanding these contradic-

tions, thousands of people must have still continued under the spell of these tales, and felt a morbid curiosity to see the man who was accused of murder and imprisonment, and of having sold himself to the Evil Spirit! His marvellous performance was quite on a par with the wild exaggeration of these libellous reports, and the effects of the latter were annihilated in the enthusiastic admiration of the great artiste as a musician.

Paganini had gained a great deal of money by his artistic wanderings, more especially by his tour through England; and when, in 1834, after an absence of six years, he returned to his native country, he seems to have thought of settling down quietly in some retired locality, and of devoting his time to publishing his compositions. He purchased several properties, and, among others, a charming country house, called *Villa Gajona*, near Parma, where he decided on residing. At this period, and for some time previously, many music-sellers attempted to purchase the copyright of his works. But Paganini set such a high price upon them that no one could treat with him. It is probable that this was done purposely; for he once proposed that some of his

music should be set for the piano, and would not allow it to go out of his hands as violin music, as he had not yet decided upon giving up playing in public. He was just as anxious to keep his music to himself as other violinists were anxious to see it in print; and now that some of his pieces are printed, how few can perform them!

After his return to Italy, Paganini gave several most successful concerts. Among others, one for the poor at Placentia, on the 14th November, 1834, and another at the Court of the Duchess of Parma, in the December following. But his health was already giving way most visibly. Phthisis of the larynx, or consumption, which rendered him a mere shadow of his former self, and sometimes almost deprived him of speech, had been gaining ground since his return to his native climate. In 1836, however, he was better, and some unscrupulous Parisian speculators induced him to lend his name to a joint-stock undertaking, a sort of gambling-room and concert hall, which they called the *Casino Paganini*. This was duly opened in a fashionable part of Paris in 1837; but, as the Government would not

allow the establishment to be used as a gambling-house, and the concerts did not pay the expenses, it became a great failure, and the illustrious artiste actually suffered by it to the extent of £2,000.

One of his last, if not his very last concert, was given with the guitar-player, Signor Legnani, at Turin, on the 9th June, 1837, for the benefit of the poor. He was then on his way to fulfil his engagements at the fatal Parisian *Casino,* which opened with much splendour in the November following. But his health had again broken down, and the fatigue of the journey had told upon him so much that he was unable to appear at the *Casino.* When the enterprise was found to be a failure, a rascally lawsuit was carried on against him, and, according to Fétis, who is very explicit on this subject, the French judges condemned him to pay the aforesaid £2,000, and to be deprived of his liberty until that amount was paid—all this without hearing his defence!

The career of the greatest of violinists was at this critical period fast drawing to a close. His medical advisers recommended him to return at

once to the South, fearing that the winter would kill him in Paris. He died at Nice, on the 27th May, 1840, at the age of fifty-six. He left to his legitimised and only son Achilles, the fruit of his *liaison* with the cantatrice Antonia Bianchi, of Como, a considerable fortune of some £80,000, and the title of Baron, which he had acquired in Germany. His will was dated the 27th April, 1837; it was read on the 1st June, 1840; by it he also left two legacies, of about £2000 each, to his two sisters, and an annuity of £60 a year to his once beloved Antonia. His beautiful violin he bequeathed to the town of Genoa. As he left no money to the Church, moreover as he died without receiving the Sacrament, difficulties were raised with regard to his funeral, and the authorities at Rome had to be consulted on the subject! His biographers have fully described this disgraceful proceeding. After an enormous amount of trouble, anxiety, and expense, the young Baron Paganini had a solemn service to the memory of his father performed at Parma (where he had, not many years previously, received the Order of St. George from the hands of the Duchess herself), at the church of the

Steccata, after which permission was obtained from the Bishop of Parma to have the body interred in the village churchyard near the *Villa Gajona*. Thus it was that the last homage paid to the illustrious artiste could only be effected in May, 1845—five years after his decease! All this time the remains of Nicolo Paganini were for some period at the Hospital of Nice, and afterwards interred at a country place belonging to the family, at Polcevera, near Genoa, where they were taken by sea. Reports got abroad that piteous noises were heard there at night, and it was to put an end to these rumours that young Baron Paganini determined to make a final effort for permission to have a funeral service, and the interment at the village church above named.

There are several excellent portraits of Paganini, and the Florentine sculptor, Bartolini, executed a bust of him in 1809, when the already great violinist was twenty-five years of age. The French have manifested much jealous feeling with regard to the illustrious *virtuoso;* they were vexed that he was not a Frenchman; they wish, even now, to have their school for the

violin considered the best in the world, just as they wish to place French opera above Italian opera! It was in the French papers that Paganini was obliged to contradict the libellous reports published about him, and many French writings and anecdotes connected with the illustrious musician are of the most flippant and untruthful nature. With the exception of the German anecdotes by Harris and Professor Schottky, of Prague, and the biographical notice by Fétis, late chapel-master to the King of the Belgians, it is to Italian accounts only that we can refer with safety for details of Paganini's wonderful career, more particularly to the admirable work of Signor Conestabile.

In his early years Paganini devoted himself to the most severe study, in order to acquire the prodigious execution that characterised his performance. Later in life he studied rarely or ever; he used to say he had worked hard enough when young, and could afford to repose. It must not be forgotten that he, in a great measure, created the difficulties he performed; and studied to vary the effects and increase the resources of his instrument. "Having played

the music of the old masters," says Fétis, "particularly that of Pugnani, Viotti, and also that of Kreutzer, he felt that he could never attain great fame if he followed in their path. Chance brought under his notice the ninth work of Locatelli, entitled *L'Arte di Nuova Modulazione*, and he at once saw a new world of ideas and facts. This work, on its first appearance, was unsuccessful, on account of its excessive difficulty, and perhaps because it was in advance of the period when "*classic*" forms could be departed from."

Moreover, the necessity for innovation was at its zenith in Paganini's time, and this circumstance was favourable to him.

"In adopting the ideas of his predecessors," continues the same author, "in resuscitating forgotten effects, in superadding what his genius and perseverance gave birth to, he arrived at that distinctive character of performance which contributed to his ultimate greatness. The diversity of sounds, the different methods of tuning his instrument, the frequent employment of *harmonics* both single and double, the simultaneous *pizzicato* and bow passages, the various *staccato*,

the use of double and even triple notes, a prodigious facility in executing wide intervals with unerring precision, together with an extraordinary variety of styles of bowing, such were the principal features of Paganini's talent, rendered all the more perfect by his great execution, his exquisite nervous sensibility, and his deep musical feeling."

Let us add to all this his perfect knowledge of harmony and composition, which may be judged of by the few of his works which have come down to us. Nothing can surpass the breadth and feeling of his *cantabile* passages, nothing has ever superseded the elegance of his ornament nor the boldness of his rapid passages, nothing can be finer than the harmony of his accompaniments.

At his concerts he gave out to the members of the orchestra the various parts of the accompaniment, but they rarely saw the *solo* part which he performed, for, in most cases, he played from memory. He was exceedingly particular at rehearsal, and was roused to anger if the slightest detail of the accompaniment was neglected or badly executed. When, on the contrary, the orchestral parts were well rendered, he would

exclaim, "*Bravissimi! Siete tutti virtuosi!*"—"You are all artistes!"

After his death his MS. works were collected by his son, and a list of them forwarded to one of his biographers, but, unfortunately, many were found to be incomplete. Some ten or twelve pieces have, however, come down to us, including his celebrated composition, *Le Streghe,* his variations on *Le Carnaval de Venise,* and some *Sonatas* and *Concertos;* among the latter, his Second Concerto, which contains the famous *Rondo de la Clochette,* so often performed by Camillo Sivori, who is said to have had some lessons from Paganini. This *Rondo* was played by Paganini throughout Europe with enormous success. This and the fantasia called *Le Streghe* may be looked upon as the most characteristic of his compositions, and as perfect illustrations of his style of performance and writing. The *adagio* parts are very beautiful; the rapid passages are marvels of dramatic feeling, and in his hands were wonderfully effective. Very early in life Paganini had published Twenty-four *Caprices,* or studies for the violin, which have lately been re-issued

in England,* but they had attracted little attention until his name became popular; even then, no one, save Ole Bull, appears to have been able to make anything of them. That the performances of Paganini produced an enormous influence upon the art of violin-playing cannot be doubted for a moment. This influence is most strikingly apparent in the performances and compositions of artistes who have succeeded to him when compared to those of Rode, Viotti, and others, who immediately preceded the Genoese genius. We have only to study the compositions of De Bériot, Alard, Sivori, Ernst, Ghys, etc., to at once appreciate the enormous extent of the influence to which we allude.

Paganini, indeed, was the first to develop the full resources of the violin as a solo instrument, and his successors have largely profited by his labours. It is evident that this effect has been produced by his playing alone, on account of the vast number of concerts which he gave, and the thousands who heard him, and criticised his performance. But since 1851 his music, or that

* By George Hart of Prince's Street, Leicester Square, the author of a work on *Violins, and Violin-makers.*

part of it which has been preserved complete, has been published by Schott & Co., and our more modern artistes, who have not had the advantage of hearing Paganini, can now form a good idea of his admirable playing, by a careful study of some of his principal compositions.

His private life may interest some readers less than his artistic career, nevertheless we must endeavour to complete our sketch of this most remarkable character, and find place for one or two more anecdotes.

Paganini has been often accused of selfishness and miserly habits, but he knew also how to be generous when occasion offered. He was of great service to several fellow-artistes, and frequently gave concerts for the poor. But when we reflect upon his neglected education—save as regards music—his utter ignorance of almost everything that was not directly related to his art, and the wretched associates of his youth, it is wonderful that his character should have remained so naïve and so good as it certainly was. That he was a man of peculiarly eccentric manners no one can doubt; in fact, some may well have fancied him slightly crazed. His very appearance gave

strength to this notion; his entrance upon the platform of the concert-room was more than once greeted with an outburst of laughter, so singularly eccentric was his every movement and entire demeanour. He had also a habit of speaking aloud to himself, when alone; and if at such moments a stranger approached, he greeted him with a ghastly smile that was peculiar to him, and occasionally lit up his features for a moment when he was cheered after his performance in public. In society he was naturally taciturn, but could be high-spirited and full of anecdotes when among intimate friends. His natural irritability was much increased by constant inflammation of the intestines, to which he was subject, more or less, all his life, and which he increased tenfold by having frequent recourse to a quack medicine, then in vogue, in which he was unfortunate enough, like many others, to place implicit confidence. Whether the continual use of this vile drug hastened his death by accelerating the consumption which was devouring his constitution, or not, we have no proof, but there can be little doubt of it.

He was exceedingly polite to artistes. They

visited him in considerable numbers, often with the hope of eliciting some information as to his wonderful performances. In this respect they were invariably disappointed. George Harris, an Englishman attached to the Court of Hanover, accompanied Paganini for a whole year in the capacity of secretary, and was with him during his English tour. He tells us in his little German pamphlet, published at Brunswick in 1830, that the great artiste was never seen to practise a single note of music in private. His marvellous dexterity seems to have been kept up entirely by the numerous concerts which he gave, and by his exceedingly nervous and delicate temperament.

With regard to his knowledge of music an anecdote is related which confirms the opinion that, to Paganini, the most difficult music of his day was mere child's play. An eminent painter at Parma, named Pasini, also a clever violinist, disbelieved the prodigious faculty imputed to Paganini, of playing the most difficult music at first sight. This gentleman possessed a valuable Stradivarius violin, and offered to present it to the celebrated *virtuoso* if he could perform,

straight off, a manuscript concerto which he placed before him. "This instrument shall be yours," he said, "if you can play, in a masterly manner, that concerto at first sight." The Genoese took the violin in his hand, saying, "In that case, my friend, you may bid adieu to it at once," and he immediatey threw Pasini into ecstatic admiration by his performance of the piece. There is little doubt that this is the Stradivarius instrument left by Paganini to his son, and valued at about £600 English money.

Of Antonia Bianchi, the mother of his son Achilles, Paganini tells us that after many years of a most devoted life, the lady's temper became so violent that a separation was necessary. "Antonia was constantly tormented," he says, "by the most fearful jealousy; one day she happened to be behind my chair when I was writing some lines in the album of a great pianiste, and when she read the few amiable words I had composed in honour of the artiste to whom the book belonged, she tore it from my hands, demolished it on the spot, and, so fearful was her rage, that she would have assassinated me."

He was very fond of his little son Achilles. A French gentleman tells us that he called once to take Paganini to dine with him. He found the artiste's room in great disorder. A violin on the table with manuscript music, another upon a chair, a snuffbox on the bed along with his child's toys; music, money, letters, articles of dress, all *pêle-mêle;* nor were the tables and chairs in their proper places. Everything was in the most conspicuous confusion. The child was out of temper; something had vexed him; he had been told to wash his hands; and, whilst the little one gave vent to the most violent bursts of temper, the father stood as calm and quiet as the most accomplished of nurses. He merely turned quietly to his visitor, and said in melancholy accents: "The poor child is cross, I do not know what to do to amuse him; I have played with him ever since morning, and I cannot stand it any longer."

"It was rather amusing," says the same writer, "to see Paganini in his slippers doing battle with his child, who came about up to his knees. The little one advanced boldly with his wooden sword, whilst the father retired, crying out,

'Enough! enough! I'm already wounded!' But it was not enough; the young Achilles was never satisfied until his father, completely vanquished, fell heavily upon the bed."

Travelling, such as it was in those days, must have been an arduous undertaking to a person so delicate and suffering as Paganini. Nevertheless he was cheerful enough in the post-chaise, and told numerous anecdotes as long as his voice did not fail him. He had, according to Harris, the habit of getting out whenever the horses were changed, and then walked about to stretch his legs after the long ride. In some cases he extended these promenades so far that he did not return till long after the fresh horses were harnessed, much to the annoyance of the driver. On one of these occasions, when going from London to Birmingham to fulfil an engagement, the coachman vowed that, if it occurred again, he would drive on without him. It did occur at the very next change of horses, and, Mr. Harris being asleep, the surly driver continued the journey, leaving Paganini behind. This gave rise to considerable trouble, and to the despatch of a post-chaise from the next station in

search of the violinist, who, in a towering passion, refused to pay the expense of it. The case went before the Birmingham magistrates, and Paganini was compelled to pay for his eccentricity.

His luggage was of the simplest description: a very dilapidated box, which contained his valuable Cremona violin, and served also as a portmanteau to pack his jewellery, his linen, and various other small objects; to this was added a carpet-bag and a hat-box. He carried invariably upon his person a little red pocket-book, in which he kept all his accounts; and in this wonderful little book (which was found under his pillow after his death) were seen, in a handwriting that none but himself could decipher, the financial results of his concerts at Vienna, Carlsruhe Frankfort, Leipzig, Paris, Berlin, etc., together with his washing-accounts, his investments, his receipts and expenses and other memoranda; all of which he could make out at a glance.

Harris also tells us that as regards his repasts, Paganini was the essence of frugality; he rarely indulged at table, well knowing the internal irritation that was sure to be produced thereby; and this result was heightened by the constant

use of a fashionable medicine. In other respects he was thoroughly Italian; and among many *traits* peculiar to the Italian "gentleman" he manifested considerable disdain for the lower classes. When one of the latter happened to address him, he would turn his back upon him, and inquire of his companion, "What does this *animal* want with me?" When he was contented with a postillion, or a coachman, he would say, "That *animal* drives well." He was perfectly indifferent to ordinary comforts and luxuries, and was contented with anything that was offered him at his hotels; he never complained of his room or his bed, however plain, provided there was no noise. Like all men of highly-nervous constitution he slept well, and enjoyed lengthened repose; when the atmosphere was highly charged with electricity, or when a thunderstorm arose, he became very excitable; his irritability was then excessive, and he would remain silent for hours together, whilst his eyes rolled and his limbs twitched with nervous convulsive movements.

It is, perhaps, needless, to add that a man of Paganini's celebrity enjoyed the personal friend-

ship of many of his great contemporaries; Lord Byron, Sir Clifford Constable, Lord Holland, Rossini, Ugo Foscolo, Monti, the Princess Elisa, and a number of distinguished painters and musicians were on terms of great intimacy with him. The name of Lord Byron, whom Paganini most admired, is intimately connected with the last moments of the great violinist. Under the blue sky of Nice, in a warm, bright atmosphere, and surrounded by a circle of intimate friends, Paganini sat at his bedroom window, whilst the sun sank towards the horizon, bathing the clouds, the earth, and the sea in tints of the richest purple and gold. A soft, tepid breeze flowed into the room, bringing with it the perfumes of a thousand flowers; the birds were singing joyously in the green boughs around, whilst a crowd of gay promenaders were enjoying the cool evening upon the shore. After having examined for some time these animated groups of pleasure-seekers, the eyes of the great artiste suddenly turned to a portrait of Lord Byron that hung near his bed. A flash of animation spread over his features, whilst he took up his violin, and illustrated the career of the great

poet, his genius, his troubles, his success, by one of the most beautiful musical poems that the illustrious *virtuoso* ever invented. In this brilliant improvisation he followed the English bard through all the details of his stormy career; there were the accents of doubt, of irony, of despair, just as they come to us from the pages of "Manfred," of "Lara," of "The Giaour," then came the cry of liberty, exciting Greece to break her chains, and the tumult of triumph. . . . . Paganini had scarcely finished the last phrase of this magnificent drama when his bow remained, as if petrified, in his icy fingers. The shock of this moral effort had proved too great for him, and from that moment he never quitted his bed.

The day before his death he seemed a little better, and requested his servant to purchase a pigeon for him: "Giulietta," he said, "I fancy I could eat a pigeon." On the last night of his existence he appeared unusually tranquil; he had slept a little, and when he awoke he requested that the curtains of his bed should be drawn aside that he might contemplate the full moon. But the musical effort just referred to had ex-

hausted his little remaining strength, and it may be said that he sent to heaven with the last sounds of his enchanted violin, the last sigh of a life which had been all melody.

VIII.

De Bériot.

1802—1870.

THE most worthy contemporary, and at the same time successor, of the great Genoese artiste that has yet appeared above the musical horizon is, without doubt, Charles Auguste De Bériot. A new school for the violin was formed some years ago in Brussels, with De Bériot at its head; and it already numbers a host of heroes. It comes down to us of the present day in the familiar names of De Bériot, Vieuxtemps, Leonard, Artot, Monastério, Coenen, Standish, Colyns, Prume, Beumer, etc., etc., all distinguished violinists and able professors in their turn.

Even before the revolution of 1830, Brussels was the city of Flanders where the best music

was heard, and no continental town has had a more successful *Conservatoire*, more particularly as regards the violin, the violoncello, and the piano. As a school for singing it has been much less successful; though it has given our opera-houses Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Mdlle. Artot, and a few others. Who can ever forget the fine military music performed by the band of *Les Guides* (the Horse Guards of Belgium)? and who has not been charmed by the splendid orchestra of the Opera under the direction of Singelée, the clever violinist (whose daughter enchanted us so recently at the Italian Opera in London), now, alas! just passed away from his brother-artistes, who respected and admired him? This orchestra, one of the finest for stringed instruments in Europe, was chiefly composed of young artistes from the *Conservatoire de Bruxelles.*

It was the direction of the violin school of this important institution that, in the full zenith of his powers as a *virtuoso* and a composer, De Bériot was called upon to take; and a good fortune it has been for all those who have left that excellent school to gain their livelihood by musical art, in whatever form.

De Bériot was born at Louvain in 1802; his parents were of noble extraction, but he had the misfortune to be left an orphan at the early age of nine years. It appears pretty certain that he was left entirely without fortune, for at this tender age he was very kindly taken in hand by M. Tiby, a professor of music in that town, who had observed the child's precocious love of the art, and who became not only a tutor but a second father to him. Under M. Tiby's daily instruction he soon became tolerably skilful on the violin. While still very young he was able to play one of Viotti's concertos in a manner that elicited the unanimous applause of his hearers.

The young De Bériot was a lad of a high moral character and contemplative mind, and his whole life at this early period seems to have been bent upon improving his musical education, and striving to attain the beautiful in art. Besides his worthy tutor and friend, he had no model to imitate, and he scarcely knew where to look for further instruction. At that time the Belgian violin school had turned its attention to a text-book, called *Jacotot's Method,* as being an easy and rapid system for acquiring proficiency on the

violin. The young De Bériot purchased the work, in order to see what he could do with it; and afterwards called upon the author to solicit further help. From this *Method* and the conversation in question with M. Jacotot himself, De Bériot learnt little more than two things, namely, that *perseverance triumphs over all obstacles*, and that, in general, *we are not willing to do all that we are able to do.* That these two precepts guided this celebrated violinist through life, we have ample evidence, his own *violin school*, his numerous compositions, and his charming performances, are a proof of it.

In 1821, when Charles Auguste De Bériot had attained the age of nineteen years, it was determined that he should quit his native town, where so few facilities were afforded him, in order to improve his musical talent. He was then a handsome youth, with a strongly-knit frame, slightly above the middle height, with fine dark eyes and hair, a rather florid complexion, and very gentlemanly appearance. After a short residence at Brussels he found his way to Paris, with a letter of introduction to the great Viotti, then Director of Music at the Opera. De Bériot's

greatest ambition at this time was to be heard by Viotti, and, after playing before him, the old master gave him the following piece of advice, which the young Belgian never forgot:

"You have a fine style," he said, "give yourself up to the business of perfecting it; hear all men of talent; profit by everything, but imitate nothing." There was at this time in Brussels a violinist named Robrechts, a former pupil of Viotti, and one of the last artistes who derived instruction directly from the celebrated Italian. Andreas Robrechts was born at Brussels on the 18th December, 1797, and made rapid progress as a musician under Planken—a professor who, like the late M. Wéry, who succeeded him, formed many excellent pupils. He then entered himself at the *Conservatoire* of Paris in 1814, where he received some private lessons from Baillot, whilst the institution itself was closed during the occupation by the allied armies.

Viotti, hearing the young Robrechts play, was so struck with his magnificent tone and broad style, that he undertook to give him finishing lessons, with the approbation of Baillot. This was soon arranged, and for many years the two

violinists were inseparable. He even accompanied Viotti in his journey to London, where they were heard more than once in duetts. The illustrious Italian had recognised in Robrechts the pupil who most closely adhered to his style of playing, and one of the few who were likely to diffuse it in after years.

In 1820 Robrechts returned to Brussels, where he was elected first violin solo to the King Wilhelm I. It was shortly after this that De Bériot took lessons from him, and he it was who gave him the letter of introduction to Viotti. The same excellent professor also gave instructions to the young Artot. He died in 1860, the last *direct* representative of the great Viotti school.

It will now be seen where De Bériot acquired the first principles of that large, bold, and exquisitely charming style, that in after-life characterised both his performances and his compositions.

Arriving at Paris, eager for progress, and probably thinking that the classical style of the master he had just left would not lead him on quickly enough, or far enough, he sought Viotti, as we have seen, and then entered himself at the

Conservatoire, with the view of taking lessons from Baillot. We have often wondered whether, at this period of his life, 1821 to 1824, or thereabouts, De Bériot was in any way influenced by the enormous success of Lafont and of Paganini as wandering artistes, and concert-players. Most of our readers will admit it; for the reputation of the great Genoese violinist had then begun to spread beyond the boundaries of his native country, and as for Lafont, his name had been long popular throughout Europe. However that may be, the young Belgian artiste did not remain more than a few months at the Paris *Conservatoire*, but applied himself most assiduously to the study of his instrument, relying entirely upon his own resources, and seeking aid from no one. Perhaps this was what Viotti meant, when he gave him those well-remembered words of advice. At this time De Bériot possessed a very fine violin by Paolo Giovanni Magini, a celebrated maker, who worked at Brescia, where he was born in 1590, and died in 1640, a pupil of the celebrated Gaspar di Salo. The violins of this maker are rare and valuable. How De Bériot got it we do not know, but that its peculiar

plaintive quality and fine tone well suited his performance we can easily believe. Very soon afterwards he appeared in several concerts, and always with a brilliant success. Like Paganini, he appeared before the public for the first time in compositions of his own. These were some of his first *Airs variés*, consisting of an introduction, a theme, followed by three or four variations and a brilliant finale. They won him universal applause, by their freshness and originality as much as by his finished execution and large style of *cantabile*.

In 1826 he went direct to London from Paris, *preceding Paganini by some years*, and met with the same success that had attended his efforts in France. His style was new, his performance most exquisite, and the enthusiasm with which he was greeted everywhere, both in London and the provinces, established for him a lasting reputation.

The circumstance of De Bériot having appeared in England about five years *before* Paganini, must be looked upon as a piece of that good fortune which frequently attends the efforts of earnest, striving men. Had he tarried in his studies and

arrived here after the marvellous Italian, how different the result might have been! Not that De Bériot had not wonderful qualities of his own, which would have enabled him to meet with considerable success in any country, but who can doubt that the impression he produced here would have been much diminished? Indeed, in 1834, long before the bewitching influence of Paganini's concerts had died away, there came over a Florentine violinist, Masoni, whose powers of execution were perhaps even greater than those of De Bériot, and had *he* not been preceded by the great Genoese, his playing would have been considered most wonderful. Masoni soon left for America and India; so Europe lost sight of him altogether.

However, there was a peculiar charm in De Bériot's performance that was perhaps never possessed by any violinist of this century; and thus early in his career his playing was characterised by most refined taste, a rich and charming tone, and wonderful execution.

After travelling for several years, and meeting everywhere with the most enthusiastic receptions, he returned to Belgium, and had the honour of

being presented to King Wilhelm. The latter, though exceedingly fond of pictures, knew little or nothing of music; nevertheless, he was a warm patron of Art in any form, and he understood that it was necessary to ensure the independence of a young artiste who gave promise of becoming a great ornament to his country. He therefore bestowed upon him a pension of two thousand florins per annum (about £160) and the title of First Violin Solo to His Majesty.

He had not long enjoyed this most gratifying position, when the Revolution of 1830, which separated Belgium from Holland, broke out, and deprived him of it. It was at this critical period that he formed the acquaintance of the celebrated singer, Madame Malibran, whom he afterwards married. Their friendship arose in Paris, in 1830, where she was singing in Italian Opera.

The short though glorious career of this gifted singer shines like a beautiful meteor through the firmament of Art; her influence upon the great violinist must have been most marked. Maria Felicia Garcia, afterwards Madame Malibran, belonged to a family of most distinguished

musicians. She was educated by her father, the tenor Garcia, of world-wide reputation, and in her earliest youth gave evidence of the most surprising talent that was ever heard of. At the age of thirteen she was a professed musician, and at fifteen, when she came with her parents to London, she obtained a complete triumph by accidentally performing in Rossini's *Il Barbiere,* to supply the place of a *prima donna* who was unable to appear.

We cannot tarry here to enter into the details of her poetic existence. Her father having taken her to America, where she fulfilled a number of engagements with an increasing success, she finally espoused there a rich merchant named Malibran, much older than herself. It was a most ill-advised marriage; and, to make matters worse, the merchant failed very soon afterwards. Some go so far as to say that he foresaw this catastrophe before he contracted his marriage, in the hopes of regaining his fortune by the proceeds of the singer's career. However that may be, a separation took place, and Madame Malibran returned to Paris in 1827. Her singing in Italian Opera was everywhere a

source of the most enthusiastic ovation, and as she rose like a star of the first magnitude in the world of song, so the young De Bériot was fast earning his laurels as one of the greatest violinists of the day. Moreover, as we have seen, he was a very handsome man. In 1830 an indissoluble friendship united these two kindred spirits, and in 1832 De Bériot, Lablache, and Madame Malibran set out for a tour in Italy, where the latter had operatic engagements at Milan, Rome, and Naples, and where they all three appeared in concerts with the most *éclatant* success—as may well be imagined.

At Bologna, in 1834, it is difficult to say whether the *cantatrice*, or the violinist, or the inestimable *basso*, produced the greatest sensation; but her bust in marble was, there and then, placed under the peristyle of the Opera-House.

Henceforward De Bériot never quitted her, and their affection seems to have increased as time wore on. In the year following she appeared in London, where she gave forty representations at Drury Lane, performing in *La Sonnambula*, *The Maid of Artois*, etc., etc., for which she received the sum of £3200. We fear

this is more than De Bériot, with all his talent, would have made in one year by his violin!

Another journey to Italy, more concerts, more operatic successes, a return to Paris, and finally, in 1836, the proper divorce having been obtained, La Malibran and De Bériot were married. But, alas! the joys of this union were destined to be of short duration. After only nine days' illness, the celebrated singer died at Manchester, where she had gone, with her husband, to fulfil an engagement. During these nine fearful days, De Bériot only once quitted his wife's side—and it was at her special request—to perform at a concert for which he was engaged. When the day arrived she manifested, as she had always done, the greatest anxiety for his success; and when, in reply to her constant inquiries, her friends informed her of the applause that had greeted his performance, a soft angelic smile lit up her pale features, which all her suffering could not repress.

Bellini died, at the age of twenty-eight, on the 23rd of September, 1835; Malibran followed him, at the same age, on the 23rd of September, 1836. Her premature death was the result of an acci-

dent while riding, an exercise of which she was passionately fond. When all was over, De Bériot, usually so calm and so severe, was driven frantic. The adorable mother of his only child was taken suddenly away from him; all his hopes were shattered; he was inconsolable.

The news of this great misfortune spread like wildfire through the country, and De Bériot had to fly to Paris before his wife's funeral took place, in order to secure the fortune of his child—young Charles De Bériot, afterwards so distinguished a pianist. No one knew the motives of this sudden disappearance, and in England he was freely accused of villainy and cruelty. It is scarcely necessary to add that this accusation was most unjust. De Bériot was the slave of circumstances—the woman he loved was dead, his entire thoughts centred on the future of her son. The funeral service was performed at Manchester, on the 1st of October, 1836, and the remains of the immortal songstress were interred at the Collegiate Church of that town. The following simple inscription marked her resting-place:

Maria Felicia De Bériot,

DIED 23rd SEP. 1836,

AT THE AGE OF 28 YEARS.

Some time afterwards De Bériot obtained permission to remove the mortal remains of his beloved wife to Laeken, near Brussels. Over her tomb in that beautiful churchyard of Laeken stands the magnificent marble statue by Geefs—the greatest of Belgian sculptors—a *chef d'œuvre* of art, and a fit memorial to such talent and such beauty.

More than a year elpased before De Bériot could recover from this fearful shock. On the 15th December, 1837, Malibran's celebrated sister Pauline Garcia (afterwards Madame Viardot) made her first public appearance in a concert at Brussels for the benefit of the poor; and on this occasion De Bériot made his first appearance after the death of his wife. The King and Queen, the Prince de Ligne, the members of the *Corps diplomatique*, and many persons of celebrity were present.

Miss Clayton, the talented authoress of the

Queens of Song, tells us that after this concert, which was most successful, the *Société Philharmonique* caused two medals to be struck for De Bériot and Mdlle. Garcia, the moulds of which were immediately destroyed.

After some other performances equally brilliant, Pauline Garcia quitted Belgium for Germany with her mother and De Bériot. In the summer of 1838, they returned to Brussels, and then proceeded to Paris, where, on the 15th December—the anniversary of the Brussels concert—the great singer and De Bériot appeared at the *Théâtre de la Renaissance* to a crowded and enthusiastic audience. Among other splendid pieces performed on this occasion we note the grand *duo* for voice and violin by Panseron, "Le Songe de Tartini." In this she accompanied herself on the piano with infinite grace and skill.

On the 18th April, 1840, Pauline Garcia married M. Viardot, the Director of the Italian Opera at Paris, and in the following August, De Bériot espoused Mdlle. Huber at the Church of Laeken before mentioned. She was a young German

lady, daughter of a magistrate of Vienna, and, being left an orphan at an early age, had been adopted by Prince Dietrischten Preskau.

On his return to Brussels, De Bériot became Director of the Violin School of the *Conservatoire Royale de Musique*, and resided in a beautiful house on the external *Boulevard de l'Observatoire*, just behind that astronomical institution, rendered celebrated by the works of Quetlet, Houzeau, and others. He devoted his time to composition, and to the education of his son; in whose features were reflected those of the immortal Malibran, and whose early talent for music gave great promise. The writer was for some years his schoolfellow, and observed his constant progress upon the piano, and in composition, to which his afternoons were almost solely devoted. But, as young Charles De Bériot inherited an ample fortune, he was never obliged to appear as an artiste, though, whenever he did so, the applause was unanimous; and his compositions for the piano are full of poetic grace and brilliancy. Had he been obliged to resort to an artistic career, he would have done honour to his country,

and have ranked among the greatest musicians of this century. For many years we have lost sight of him, as he went to reside in Paris only shortly before we left that city for London; but our friends tell us that his musical evenings are frequented by the most celebrated artistes and literary characters in Paris, and are a great treat to all who go there.

Though occasionally heard in private, De Bériot ceased giving public concerts after his return to Brussels as director of the classes at the *Conservatoire.* He made many excellent pupils, among whom are Lauterbach, Beumer (at present first violin solo at the Opera), Monastério, Standish, Mdlle. Fréry, and many others, all exquisite artistes.

We do not remember whether the celebrated sisters Milanollo, two of the finest performers on the violin the musical world ever heard, were pupils of De Bériot or not; we rather think that they studied under Léonard, the second professor of the Brussels *Conservatoire,* and a most able teacher.

About the year 1829 De Bériot was struck

with the precocious talent of young Henri Vieuxtemps, and gave him gratuitous lessons for some time.

By his numerous and exceedingly beautiful compositions, De Bériot has left behind him an imperishable name. In his *Violin School*, now published in every language, he has truly smoothed the difficult path of the student who aims at the higher branches of his profession, and cultivates taste and poetic feeling. His numerous duetts for violin and piano, gradually increasing in difficulty, and founded on the most beautiful of operatic selections, are well calculated to animate the beginner, and to cause him to persevere until he can perform the later productions of this talented master. For artistes he has written his *École transcendante*, his *Caprices*, his *Études caractéristiques*, a great number of *Airs variés*, and his well-known *Concertos*, ten or eleven in number, besides a considerable number of *Fantasias* and concert-pieces. What can be more charming than his well-known *Air Montagnard?* what freshness! what feeling! Or where can we find music more grandiose, or more dramatic than his seventh

Concerto? or his *Andante et Rondo Russe*, from the second Concerto? Then, again, how original are his *Trois Études*, his *Tourbillon*, his *Sylphide*, etc! There is no striving after effect; all comes naturally to the truly inspired composer; his cadences are beautiful; his chords, types of pure harmony; and his ornaments both graceful and effective. In his *valse* movements he is less successful, but his *Boléros* and *Polaccas* are perfect models of lively melody.

No artiste that has not true musical feeling, and knows not how to *charm* as well as to astonish, need attempt De Bériot's music. A player without *soul* might perform his original *Tremolo*, a caprice on a theme by Beethoven, or his *Fantasia on Russian Airs*, perhaps, but he could never do justice to most of this admirable composer's music. De Bériot's aim (and his gift) was to *charm*, rather than to astonish; but his concert music requires considerable study and can only be performed by violinists of the very first water.

During his life at Brussels, as well as in his numerous journeys, he enjoyed the society of the most distinguished men of his day. To his

friend the Prince de Chimay, a great patron of art, he owed many opportunities of enchanting the most select of audiences; and one of his finest works is dedicated to the Princess. His splendid first Concerto is dedicated to King Leopold I., and his ninth to the Russian Princess Youssoupoff, whose husband was De Bériot's particular friend and a distinguished amateur violinist. Late in life the eminent composer's eyesight began to fail him, and the malady increased so much that some time before his death he became totally blind. It was during one of his visits to the residence of his friend Prince Youssoupoff, at St. Petersburg, that his last illness overtook him. He died April 13, 1870, aged sixty-eight.

Having composed so much music upon operatic airs, and listening constantly to the divine singing of his first wife, it is not surprising that slight reminiscences of these crop up occasionally in some of De Bériot's works. Thus in his first Concerto we have a passage that reminds us forcibly of the march in Bellini's *Norma;* and again in the ninth a few bars occur which are a reproduction of the burden of the exquisite tenor song

in Auber's *La Sirène.* But such instances are rare; and for originality no composer of late years, save Paganini himself, can be compared to Charles Auguste De Bériot.

IX.

Ole Bull.

1810—1875.

IN the course of our various reading we met, very recently, with an account of a "Norwegian Musical Festival." This we found in young Mr. Rae's book of travel, entitled *The Land of the North Wind;* and, as the account is short, we give it in his own words; he was then sailing along the coast of Norway, and he says:

"At Bodö there came on board a minstrel—though that word, when applied to him, is mere foolishness. He was a collection of minstrels—a band—*a Norwegian Musical Festival.* With his mouth he played the Pandean pipes, attached round his neck by a scarf; with his right hand he turned a barrel organ, with his left he played

a pair of castanets; his left foot moved a cord, which ran under his arm and put a drumstick in motion—on his back was slung a drum; with his right knee he manœuvred a pair of cymbals hanging from the organ; to his hat was attached a rod, which struck a triangle when he nodded his head; and somewhere about him was a tambourine. When we saw him we were struck with a great awe, and felt that this was no ordinary being. Was this the familiar god Pan? Was this the Genius of Music turned loose upon the Earth? Was this Orphée aux Enfers? We looked at him, speaking in hushed whispers, and waiting for his first note. When he began to play, all doubt was laid aside; he was Orphée, and we were aux Enfers!"

The Norwegian musician we are going to write about was a very different character, though he has had attributed to him the power of becoming a "Norwegian musical festival" with his violin alone, and if he could not perform a *quartett* on one string, he could do so on four. Not only was Olaus Bull, or Ole Bull, as he is generally called, one of the most gifted performers of this century,

but his life has been one of extraordinary adventure.

He was born in the old town of Bergen, on the 5th of February, 1810. His parents belonged to the leading families of that resort of merchants, shippers, timber-dealers, and herring-fishers. His grandmother on his father's side was sister to the poet, Edward Storm, the author of the *Sinclair Lay*, an epic poem on the Scottish colonel Sinclair, who, with a thousand volunteers, made a descent on Norway, and was killed, together with his men, by the peasants, who hurled rocks upon them in the fearful pass known as the Guldbrands-dahl, a valley since become universally admired in the celebrated picture by Marcus Larsen.

His father, John Storm Bull, was a chemist, a pupil of the celebrated chemist, Professor Tromsdorff. His mother came of the good old Dutch family Gelmuyden, and she had four brothers, two of whom were captains in the army, one a captain in the navy, and one a merchant, who afterwards became editor of the only newspaper printed in Bergen. All the members of the family were exceedingly fond of music, and the

editor had occasional *quartett* parties at his house, sometimes as often as twice a week, when the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven came to the front. Generally speaking, these musical evenings coincided with a dinner-party, and young Ole would often creep in, though it was already time for bed, and imbibe the sweet or discordant sounds, as the case might be, with a more than infantine curiosity.

Having been long accustomed to listen with intense interest to the fairy tales of his grandmother, to the stories about the mysterious *Huldra*, and the *Fossekal*, or Spirit of the Waterfall, the child Ole used to imagine that it was the instruments alone that sent forth all those wonderful sounds; he could not conceive that the music was anything else than the singing of the violins themselves. This was a queer notion; but Ole was a most poetic child, and a story is told of him when he was about six years old, standing in a field before a group of bluebells, fancying he heard them ring, and pretending to accompany their music with two pieces of wood, which, in imitation of his uncle, he held as a violin and bow. After a while the worthy uncle

gave little Ole a violin, upon which the young lad worked his way alone so successfully that he was soon able to take part in the *quartetts* at the house of the newspaper editor.

Like all artistes who have risen to great eminence, Ole Bull, at a very early age, thus gave proofs of great natural talent: and, as is usually the case in similar circumstances, his mother perceived it at once, and determined that his love of music should be encouraged and cultivated.

Now at this time there was at Bergen one professor of music, and he was a violinist. His name was Poulsen; he had originally come to the town from Denmark, on business; but he found there so many jovial companions—for Bergen has long had a reputation for conviviality, and even musicians sipped their brandy whilst they played—that the Danish professor postponed his departure, from week to week, until he was some sixty years old.

This Poulsen was a true artiste, he was exquisitely sensitive to the beauties of art, had a good knowledge of its rules, and, we are told, "would show his perseverance in playing as long as there remained a drop in the brandy

bottle set before him." When his dress was threadbare, his friends would give him a new suit, and at intervals he would give a concert that would yield him a profit of some ten pounds.

Such was the professor to whom, in his tender years, Ole Bull was submitted for instruction. It appears that the latter made such rapid progress that the old professor being unable to do more for him, and thinking, perhaps, that his future prospects in life were now certainly cut off in Bergen, left the town for ever.

The boy now resorted to taking promiscuous lessons, chiefly from Danish artistes who visited Bergen to give concerts; he was nearly twelve years old, and in spite of the progress he had already made into the *arcana* of musical art, his father seems to have set his mind upon making him a clergyman, and with that view engaged for him a private tutor named Musæus—a most appropriate name for the teacher of the young musical genius. This tutor soon discovered where Ole Bull's taste lay, for he was a clever man, though somewhat cruel. He forbade him to play upon his violin at all, and exhorted him to attend

solely to his classical studies. Thus under restraint, Bull's love of art became a passion, and having muffled his violin by means of a *sourdine*, or mute, he practised away at night, when all was still, and nothing was heard at Bergen save the dashing of the northern ocean upon the rocky shore and the wild strains of the lad's half-silenced violin.

So the time wore on, Ole being occupied by day with his tutor and the classical authors, and at night with his dearest companion still, the little violin that his uncle had given him. Being naturally quick at learning, a boy of keen intellect, and wonderful perseverance, he managed to satisfy his father, and his tutor, that he was making fair progress; and when he had reached his eighteenth year, he was despatched to Christiania, to pass an examination and enter the University.

His love for his father was so great that, absorbed as he was by his violin studies, he listened with true filial affection to his entreaties to abandon music altogether, and went on his way, firmly resolved to abide by his parent's instructions.

But circumstances were too much for him. He had scarcely arrived at Christiania, after a long and tedious journey, than he met some companions from Bergen, also students at the University, who begged him to play at a concert to be given that very night for the benefit of the poor.

Ole begged to be excused: he was tired, the journey had fatigued him; and, moreover, his father had forbidden him to play.

"But it's an act of charity," they exclaimed.

"Well, that alters the case somewhat," replied Ole; "perhaps my governor would not mind that."

And so he played at the concert. He also managed to ease his conscience enough to play again at a *quartett* party the next evening; and the day after he went up for his examination, and was most decidedly rejected, or "plucked."

This was his first real grief—how many others had to follow before his name became familiar throughout the world! With ill-suppressed tears he found himself before one of the young professors, at whose house he had played the previous night.

"It is the best thing that could have happened to you," said the latter, by way of consolation.

"How so?" inquired Ole.

"My dear fellow, do you believe that you are a fit man for a curacy in Finmarken, or a mission among the Laps? Nature has made you a musician; stick to your violin, and you will never regret it."

"But, my father!" the young man sobbed.

"Your father will never regret it either," rejoined the professor.

In this sad plight his jovial friends did not desert him, and the leader of the *Philharmonic Society* of Christiania being then very ill, Ole Bull was appointed to fill his place *pro tem.* He managed this business so well that some weeks later, when the leader died, Ole had the position offered to him, and accepted it. As this rendered him independent of his father's purse, the old gentleman, somewhat reluctantly, pardoned his failure to enter the University.

In the summer of 1829, when nineteen years of age, Ole Bull managed to take a holiday trip into Germany, where he heard Spohr, then Director of the Music at the Opera of Cassel. He

afterwards heard Maurer, a German violinist, known as an excellent teacher and to have attained the most complete mastery over the mechanical difficulties of his instrument. A little later he heard Wiele, at Nordhausen, another clever performer on the violin; but Ole expected most encouragement from the veteran Louis Spohr.

"From this excursion," says one of his friends, "Ole Bull returned completely disappointed. He had fancied that a violin-player like Spohr must be a man who, by his personal appearance, by the poetic character of his performance, by the flash of genius, would enchant and overwhelm his hearers; instead of this, he found in Spohr a correct teacher, exacting from the young Norwegian the same cool precision which characterised his own performance, and quite unable to appreciate the wild, strange melodies he brought from the land of the North."

On his way home Ole fell in with some students who were going to a concert at Minden, and was induced to accompany them. It happened that the violinist of the evening was indisposed, and could not appear—it is said he had

got drunk. The young Norwegian was asked to supply his place, and did so, being rewarded by very enthusiastic applause. A warm reception followed the next day in the shape of a challenge from the violinist who had devoted himself to beer the evening before, and whom Ole Bull fought and slightly wounded; upon which he was advised to quit the locality as soon as possible. He went straight away back to Christiania, "feeling," as he says in one of his letters, "as if the very soil of Europe repelled him." He was somewhat repaid by the exceedingly kind reception that awaited him on arriving among his old friends, who had already begun to idolise him.

He managed to stay a year and a half, or two years, in his native land, when the same restless spirit which formed an inherent part of his character, induced him again to leave Norway and to try his fortune in the South. It was in the year 1831 when Ole Bull was scarcely twenty-one years of age, and when the cholera was raging in Paris, that the Norwegian musician, full of confidence in his own powers, first set foot in that Capital. The diligence deposited him in the

yard of the hotel, friendless, homeless, and with an exceedingly light purse. His only resource was his violin; and his only hope that of an opportunity to make himself heard. Crowded audiences were then attracted by Malibran and Paganini; and Ole Bull's first impulse was to hear these great artistes. One night he returned late to his lodgings, after being charmed by Malibran's singing; he went to bed late, and on awaking the next morning he discovered, to his utter dismay, that his landlord had absconded with all his household furniture. He had taken with him the musician's clothes and his violin—all of which were contained in one moderate-sized box! One of his biographers says that the poor youth wandered about for three entire days in Paris, a prey to want and despair, and ended by throwing himself into the Seine, in the hope that death would relieve him from his sufferings. Another account says that, after being robbed of his clothes and his violin, he had still enough money to pay for *one week's* accommodation in a miserable boarding-house; and it was during the last dinner for which he was able to pay, that he made the acquaintance

there of a well-known and very remarkable character.

Ole Bull confided his miseries to this stranger, who appeared interested in his sad story. After a moment's silence the latter said abruptly:

"Well, I will do something for you, if you have courage and five francs."

"I have both."

"Then go to-night to Frascati's, at ten o'clock; pass through the first room, enter the second, where they play *rouge et noir*, and when a new *taille* begins put your five francs on *rouge* and leave them there."

Bull's love of adventure, and the confidence inspired by the stranger's manner, determined him to do exactly what this peculiar individual told him. At ten o'clock precisely, he stood at Frascati's before the table where *rouge et noir* was being played. In a few minutes he threw his five francs on *red;* the card was drawn; red wins—the five francs were ten francs. Following most scrupulously his instruction, Bull left his ten francs on *rouge*—in another minute they had become twenty francs—still the young Norwegian left his money on the winning colour, and in the

course of less than half an hour a considerable pile of gold lay on the table before him, and belonged to him. He had only to stretch forth his arm and clutch it.

The only question was, had he left his money long enough? Was *red* going to pass any longer?

In relating this adventure to a friend, he said, "I was in a fever—I acted as if possessed by a spirit not my own; no one can understand my feelings who has not been so tried—left alone in the world as if on the extreme verge of existence, with the abyss yawning beneath, and at the same time feeling something within that might merit a saving hand at the last moment."

Whilst he hesitated to withdraw his money, a fair white hand stretched forward towards it, and covered it. In a moment the iron grasp of the young Norwegian had seized it by the wrist—the owner uttered a piercing shriek, and cries of "Turn her out" were raised; but a dark spare figure standing near, whom Ole Bull at once recognised as his friend of a few hours previously, said in a clear calm voice, "Madame, leave this gold alone;" and turning to Bull, "Sir, take your

money, if you please." Following this advice the musician took up a sum of about four hundred francs—but he still stood riveted to the spot, and saw *red* come up to the end of the *taille*, so that had he persevered somewhat longer he would have been a comparatively wealthy man that very evening.

On arriving at his miserable lodging he counted out his gains; he could hardly believe it was not a dream. "What a hideous joy I felt," he says, in a letter to one of his friends; "what a horrible pleasure it was to have saved one's own soul by the spoil of others!"

The strange personage who had thus befriended Ole Bull was the detective Vidocq, already an European celebrity. He never met him again.

The next thing to be done was, without waste of time, to replace the lost violin. With this object in view, he set out to purchase one; and, in doing so, accidentally made the acquaintance of an individual named Lahout, who imagined he had discovered a method of imitating the old Cremona varnish, by means of a compound of asafœtida, which he smeared over modern-made instruments in the hopes of improving their tone.

This eccentric inventor thought Bull a likely person to bring out the merits of his discovery; so he got him invited to play at a house where the Duke and Duchess de Montebello were present. His performance created a sensation, and the Duke took him at once under his patronage. The result of this was that Ole Bull was soon enabled to give a concert in Paris. This was not artistically so successful as it might have been; but who could listen at that time to any but Paganini? However, through the kind patronage of the Duke, a large number of tickets were sold, and after paying all expenses, the violinist found himself possessed of a profit of 1200 francs (about £48 English).

A curious accident occurred to him again at this period (June, 1832); his landlord and landlady both died from cholera, and he was obliged to seek for new lodgings. One of his companions intimated that a lady, the Comtesse de Faye, who resided near, had lately lost her son, and would probably let his room for a time. He applied there, and was shown into a room where three ladies, dressed in deep mourning, were sitting. The elder one, on hearing his errand,

briefly declined to let him a room, when one of her daughters exclaimed: "Look at him, mother!"

Bull was surprised at this. The old lady put on her spectacles, and, as she riveted her eyes upon him, her countenance changed suddenly. She had found in him such a resemblance to the son she had lost, that she at once consented to his residing in her house. Some time afterwards Ole Bull indeed became her son, having married the fascinating girl who had exclaimed, "Look at him, mother!"

With the little money he had now earned he determined to go to Italy, provided with some letters of introduction; and gave his first Italian concert at Milan, in 1834. Applause was not wanting, but his performance was rather severely criticised in the papers. The following paragraph reproduced from an Italian musical periodical, published shortly after this concert, probably represents very truly the state of his talent at that period:

"M. Ole Bull plays the music of Spohr, Mayseder, Pugnani, and others, without knowing the true character of the music he plays, and partly

spoils it by adding a colour of his own. It is manifest that this colour of his own proceeds from an original, poetical, and musical individuality; but of this originality he is himself unconscious. He has not formed himself; in fact, he has no style; he is an uneducated musician. *Whether he is a diamond or not is uncertain; but certain it is that the diamond is not polished.*"

In a short time Ole Bull discovered that it was necessary to cultivate, more than he had done, his *cantabile* — this was his weakest point, and a most important one. In Italy he found persons who enabled him to develop this great quality of the violin, and from that moment his career as an artiste was established. The next concert of any consequence that he played in was at Bologna, under peculiar circumstances; and his reputation as a great violinist appears to date from that concert:—De Bériot and Malibran were then idolised at Bologna, and just as Ole Bull arrived in that ancient town, De Bériot was about to fulfil an engagement to play at a concert given by the celebrated *Philharmonic Society* there. The engagement

had been made by the Marquis Zampieri, who had also managed to hurt the susceptibilities of the great Belgian artiste, and, consequently, when the day arrived De Bériot *had a sore finger*, and, to the disappointment of all, could not play.

Now, Bull had a small lodging off one of the principal streets, where he intended to wait until circumstances enabled him to find an audience. He was practising in his room upstairs, his window being open, and the sounds caught the ear of Madame Rossini, first wife of the illustrious composer, and no other than the once delicious Isabella Colbrand, *prima donna* of the San Carlo Theatre at Naples. If any one in the world could judge of the tone of a violin, she could.

Madame Rossini hastened to the disappointed Marquis, and informed him that she had discovered a violinist quite capable of performing in the place of De Bériot.

"Who is it?" inquired the Marquis.

"I do not know," said the celebrated *cantatrice.*

"You are joking, then?"

"Not at all; but I have assured myself that a

genius has arrived in this town. He lodges close here," she added, pointing to Ole Bull's apartments; "*take your net, and catch your bird before he has flown away.*"

In a few hours Ole Bull was performing before a distinguished audience in the concert-room of the *Philharmonic Society.* He played two pieces; one of which was his famous *Quartett for One Violin.* His success was considerable. The applause was most enthusiastic, and he was escorted home by a number of *dilettanti* in procession by torchlight.

This was Ole Bull's first great success. He had played in Germany, Switzerland, and at Milan, but he had never created so much enthusiasm before. Malibran was, of course, rather annoyed, but so far was jealousy, or anything of the kind, from her amiable character, and from that of De Bériot, that shortly afterwards, when Bull was introduced to them, he was treated with the utmost kindness. At this concert, also, he made the acquaintance of Prince Poniatowski and the amiable Princess, who promised him first-rate introductions if he went to Florence.

In 1835 he played with similar success at

Naples, at Rome, and afterwards in Paris, at the Opera-House. During the ensuing year he gave concerts in other towns in France; and from the middle of 1836 to the first half of 1837 he played in London and the provincial towns of England.

In England Ole Bull gave no less than two hundred and eighty concerts in the space of sixteen months. After this he visited successively almost every town of importance in Europe, and in 1843 set out for the first time to America. He returned again to Europe in 1846, continued his roving artistic life in France, Spain, Holland, etc., until 1851, when he returned home—if it could still be called so—to Norway, where he endeavoured to establish a national Norwegian theatre.

Up to that time the Danish language only had been heard on the Norse stage. Ole Bull's desire was to see the true Scandinavian language substituted for the Danish. It was at Bergen that Bull established the first *Norwegian* theatre; and a story is told how he got an old fiddler, Thorgeir Andunson, a celebrated player of dance music, such as Neil Gow was in Scotland, to come and play some real national dance music in

the orchestra, and caused the worthy old man to gain about £400 for his pains, which, of course, set him up for ever.

The years 1852 to 1857 were again passed in America, whilst from 1857 to 1861 he was again devoting himself to his Norwegian theatre. In 1862 he was heard in England for the last time.

There can be no doubt that *descriptive music* was that which Ole Bull endeavoured to make his speciality. Imbued, as his poetic mind was, with the legends and fairy tales of the North, it was not unnatural that he should endeavour to realise them in his performance. He has avowed that when he played he wished *to raise a curtain* for his audience, so that they might see what was passing in his own mind. It was the *Huldra*, the legends of the North, that he endeavoured to reproduce by the wild strains of his violin; it was a stream of fairy melody, mixed with the harsh, discordant sounds of the surging elements.

"Opinions are not agreed," says a critic, "as to the extent to which Ole Bull is to be considered an imitator of Paganini. It appears certain that the example of the latter urged him to attempt the more strange and remote difficulties of the in-

strument." At the outset of his career, we certainly find him doing so, at the expense of song and fine tone, the essence of violin music. Had he adhered to this primitive course, he would never have risen to the height he has, as a performer and a composer. With regard to his compositions, we know very little of them, save that they procured him an enthusiastic reception wherever he played them. We have already alluded to his *Quartett for One Violin.* Another piece of his was called *Et Gaeterbesög,* in which he endeavoured to tell his audience what he saw and experienced in a visit to a cow-keeper's cottage on the mountain. A grander production was his *Battle of Kringelen,* a musical reproduction of the epic poem, the *Sinclair Lay,* by his great-uncle. In others of his compositions he was remarkable for his rich *arpeggios,* his double stops, and shakes, and a rapid and exact *staccato.*

As a proof of the wonderful execution of Ole Bull we may mention that he played the whole of Paganini's *Twenty-four Capricci,** by heart.

* *Ventiquattri Capricci per Violino Solo. Op.* I. (Published by Hart, in London.)

This fact we have from a friend who knew him well.

On his last visit to England Ole Bull was a tall, powerfully-built man, with a round, expressive northern face, and thick, short hair as white as snow. He possessed a valuable *Guarnerius* violin, which he sold, and, when in London, purchased a Nicholas *Amati* of 1679, formerly the property of Sir W. Curtis, a well-known collector of valuable instruments, and this instrument was considered to be the finest *Amati* in the world.

During his wanderings, Bull made many and valuable friends, and in 1838 had the honour of being presented to the King of Sweden, Carl Johan (Bernadotte). It is well known that Bernadotte had a strong feeling against Norwegians, as they had obstinately refused to be united with Sweden under his despotic rule. At the interview in question His Majesty let fall some expressions that wounded the pride of the great violinist, who was an ardent patriot.

"Sire," said Ole Bull, drawing himself up to his full height, and looking the King straight in the face, "I have the honour to be a Norwegian!"

The King was somewhat startled, and for a moment returned the artiste's fierce glance, his eagle eyes beaming with anger. Then, suddenly relaxing his features, he allowed a pleasant smile to curl his lips as he replied:

"Well, well, I know you damned sturdy fellows!" He afterwards bestowed upon Bull the Order of *Vasa*.

To an able Norwegian writer who knew him well we are indebted for a portion of Ole Bull's career as a politician in North America. It appears that, during his first stay in that country, he conceived the idea that those of his countrymen who had emigrated to the United States might thrive better if protected and provided for by one of their own countrymen. He, therefore, went out again in 1852, and purchased 125,000 acres of land on the banks of the Susquehannah, to which hundreds of emigrated Norwegians hastily flocked.

"Timber was felled, ground cleared, cottages, churches, and schoolhouses built, and all went on smoothly, when, one fine morning, Ole Bull was informed that the *real owner* of the land wished to see him: he had purchased the land

of a company that proved to be not the rightful owners; and thus had transferred the bulk of his fortune into the pockets of swindlers. Moreover, he had trespassed on the property of Mr. George Stewardson, a worthy Quaker, who, though both honest and forbearing, could not consent to lose what was his. Bull brought an action against the swindlers, but the lawsuit became a vulture that fed on his life's-blood. He had to take up his violin and play for costs, whilst his opponents fought him with his own money."

Consumed by fever and anxiety, he travelled from town to town, from New York to San Francisco, playing almost every night; and on the last night of his engagement he was struck down by yellow fever. His powerful Norwegian frame and excellent constitution, which he owed to his very temperate habits throughout his chequered existence, bore him through this trial; and, with a truly indomitable energy, he at last recovered some thousands of dollars, and fulfilled his responsibility towards his countrymen.

Having thus got over his difficult and tedious scheme of colonisation, he returned to Europe

and was for many years in the habit of spending the summer at a beautiful little estate he had purchased in one of the islands on the western coast of Norway; migrating in winter towards the south, and devoting himself to art to the last. He passed away from the world of music here below at the beginning of the year 1875.

X.

Contemporary Violinists.

IT will be perceived by many of my readers that in the foregoing pages I have confined myself to those celebrated men who have not only made themselves known to their contemporaries by their brilliant performances, but by their compositions—and, in many instances, by their exemplary lives—have exercised a considerable influence upon the Art of Music, and upon mankind in general.

Several violinists who shone as great celebrities in their day, but whose influence has extended less widely, have been referred to also; but many of the latter have, of necessity, in a work of this kind, been passed over in silence. It has been my endeavour to seek for the

greatest, but many who have been great have been left behind. In the French and German schools more especially, had I been compiling a dictionary of musicians, it would have been my duty to have written of Leduc, Sénaillé, the "accomplished but volatile" Chevalier de St. George, Gossec, his friend Paissible—who, like Nourrit, the singer, died by his own hand—Panorfka, the Belgian violinist Hauman, the Viennese Hauser; and, among our own countrymen, Bream Thom, Henry Cooper, C. F. Hall, Dando, Loder, and some others; all fine performers upon the violin and good musicians, and some of whom might doubtless deserve the epithet of "celebrated" in more than one sense.

Another French violinist of great *notoriety*, even in the days of Paganini's greatest glory, was Alexandre Boucher, who bore so great a resemblance to Napoleon I. that the Russian Emperor Alexander induced him one day to dress himself as Napoleon, in order that his Majesty's mother might see what the French Emperor looked like. The illusion, we are told, was perfect. In 1821 Boucher performed at a concert

with Weber, at Berlin. He was put down to play some variations on a Norwegian air, composed by the great German *maestro*. But, to the astonishment of the composer (who accompanied him), and the audience, the eccentric violinist suddenly broke off from this piece, and, with a series of tremolos, pizzicatos, and shakes, followed by the trumpet notes which announce the entrance of Zamiel, plunged into a wild olla podrida of melodies from *Der Freischütz*, in which he finally bewildered and lost himself altogether. Then, throwing down his violin, he sprang upon Weber at the piano, embraced the struggling composer before all the spectators, and, whilst apparently choking with emotion, he exclaimed, "*Ah! grand maître! que je t'aime! que je t'admire!*" The Berlin public accepted this eccentricity with favour, and received it with a storm of applause, mingled with cries of "Long live Weber!"

Boucher, one of the cleverest of violinists, was indeed a celebrated man in his day—but not exactly celebrated in the sense we attach to our title-page.

Then, who has not heard of Spagnoletti? The

real name of this talented artiste is said to have been Paolo Diana. At the early age of twelve years the young Spagnoletti was introduced at the *Conservatoire* of Naples as a very promising performer on the violin. On that occasion we are told the Director of Music placed before the young aspirant a very difficult and elaborate composition, which he requested him to play at sight, by way of putting his boasted powers to the test. "Spagnoletti, nothing daunted, glanced slightly over the pages, and turning them upside down, played the piece throughout, to the great delight and admiration of his numerous hearers." We next find him performing with great *éclat* at Milan, from which place he was brought to London by Viganoni, the celebrated tenor, about the period of Madame Banti's last season at the King's Theatre. Here he was engaged for several years as the second violin, and in 1817 became the leader of that orchestra which he conducted so long with satisfaction to the musical world. He led the Oratorios, the great Provincial Meetings, the Ancient and Philharmonic Concerts, and at the Grand Musical Festival in Westminster Abbey.

We are told by one who knew him well that Spagnoletti perpetrated an excellent joke on the occasion of a concert given for a charitable purpose. On that occasion he was requested to play in a difficult composition, two of the principal performers looking over the same desk. Before the piece began he remarked that it was rather too bad not to have shown him the music earlier, that he might have tried it over, at the same time turning over leaf by leaf and pointing out sundry difficult passages. At this moment the *bâton* of the conductor sounded to begin, and before the other musicians at his desk could realise their situation "Spagnoletti had turned the music upside down, and was playing away as hard as any of them, leaving his two fellow-artistes in perfect dismay."

When leader at the King's Theatre he used to speak of his first viola-player as being "both as a man and a musician, a most praiseworthy character: as a man, by the tenor of his conduct, and as a musician, by the conduct of his tenor."

Spagnoletti was a composer of some eminence several of his concertos played in public by himself are considered compositions of great merit.

He always evinced an ardent love of his art, and on all occasions private feeling gave way to public interests in its exercise. His life is, indeed, distinguished by few of those amusing particulars which often diversify relations of this description; but it presents to us a good man and a man of undoubted genius, labouring honourably and successfully to advance himself to the highest post in his branch of art. Signor Spagnoletti was for years in a very delicate state of health, having suffered from two severe attacks of paralysis; the third attack proved fatal. From the moment he was last seized he was deprived of speech, and also of the use of one side of his body. A few hours previous to his death he appeared most anxious about something, but could not make himself understood to those around him. His son, however, fancying that his anxiety might be to see his favourite violin once more, brought it to him; it appeared to satisfy and delight him to have it once more in his hand. This excellent and eminent musician died in his sixty-first year. His remains were placed beside those of Madame Spagnoletti, in Brompton Churchyard.

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And now, to draw the present work to a close, I have only to add a few words on some violinists of our own time—words of simple congratulation and admiration; for, as most of these distinguished artistes are still living, it is not for me, but for posterity, to write the history of their lives. I conclude my book, then, merely with a few observations upon those whom I have had the good fortune to know something of *personally*.

Among the distinguished artistes who have lately passed from among us, I will mention in the first place Heinrich Ernst. This truly celebrated violinist has produced, during a career prematurely ended by a nervous affliction which undermined his health, a series of most beautiful compositions, which will live for many years to come. His *Carnaval de Venise* is preferred by many to that of Paganini; his *Élégie* is a model of fine composition that has never been surpassed. Besides these, he has left some *Nocturnes*, a Fantasia on *Il Pirata*, another on *Otello*, his *Airs hongroises*, and some *Duetts*. His performance depended in a great measure upon the state of his delicate health; but when in good health and

spirits, nothing could be finer. Pure tone, wonderful execution, and most poetic feeling characterised his playing.

His compatriot, Herr Joachim, who is at present such a favourite with us, possesses the same charming qualities, with the advantage, moreover, of robust health. He was a pupil of Ferdinand David, and Moschéles, the pianiste, in his autobiography, speaks of the boy Joachim, when eight years of age, playing with success in a concert at Leipzig, before a most critical audience. In *trios* and *quartetts* he is said by a person well competent to judge to be "absolute perfection;" and as a soloist, he performs the most difficult music of the old masters and that of modern composers with equal facility.

Henri Vieuxtemps, born at Verviers, in Belgium, in 1820, made *his* first appearance, also, at the age of eight, and we possess a lithographic print of him as he then appeared, with a violin nearly as large as himself. After taking lessons from Ledoux and De Bériot, he started at once on his successful artistic career, playing in almost every town in Europe, and taking lessons on the violin and in composition whilst on his travels.

In 1843 he made a trip to America; before which he had played with great success in Russia, and had, while there, perfected himself considerably in the science of composition. His most remarkable compositions are his *Fantaisie Caprice, Airs variés,* and *Concertos,* and his writings for the instrument are tolerably numerous. At the death of De Bériot, Henri Vieuxtemps was offered the post of Director of Violin Music at the *Conservatoire* of Brussels, which he held for a short time only; he retired to Paris, and we regret to learn has suffered from paralysis in the arm. His playing was remarkable for extraordinary execution, and Vieuxtemps was always one of those players who sought to astonish as well as to charm.

Wieniawski, the Polish violinist, has succeeded to the post at the Brussels *Conservatoire,* left vacant by the retirement of M. Vieuxtemps. This artiste has, on several occasions, been heard in England, and is justly ranked as one of the greatest performers of the present day. His compositions show to what a great extent he has also studied the art of composition. They are both original and effective.

Kontski and Wilhelmj, compatriots of the latter, the former, brother of the well-known pianist, and the latter a beautiful player who has often delighted London audiences, are good examples of talent produced upon the soil of Hungary and Bohemia.

Joseph Artot, born at Brussels in 1815, and father of the well-known *prima donna*, has given us several excellent compositions. Of his performance we cannot speak, but it must have been very remarkable, since he played a concerto by Viotti when quite a child. He studied under Professor Snel at Brussels, and afterwards at the Paris *Conservatoire* under Kreutzer.

D. Alard, at present at the head of the violin school at Paris, is a fertile composer and an excellent professor. He has produced a great number of pupils, and his brilliant *Fantasias* have proved most successful. He has edited a collection of music by the old masters. C. Dancla, who is attached to the same institution, also claims notice as a careful professor and a voluminous writer of violin music of every kind.

H. Léonard, who retired too soon from the

Brussels school to reside in Paris, is one of the most distinguished violinists born on Belgian soil. His compositions are eminently scientific. For many years he was second professor at the Brussels *Conservatoire.* He is one of those artistes whose fame has spread through Europe as much by his writings as by his performances.

A. Bazzini, the Neapolitan violinist, has also given us a great number of most tasteful compositions. He performed at London many years ago, but does not appear to have travelled much. His writings show a complete mastery of the instrument, and perfect knowledge of harmony. Some of them are very original; for instance, his *Ronde des Lutins,* his *Élégie,* etc., and his *Fantasias* are brilliant and effective.

Camillo Sivori, another Italian violinist, whose name has been, and justly so, a "household word" for many years past, made his appearance in England for the first time, as a solo-player, in Jullien's concerts. It was reported that he was a pupil of Paganini, and one of the very few persons to whom the illustrious Genoese gave lessons. With regard to this, there is an anecdote which the writer heard quite recently:

At a musical party where several eminent artistes were assembled, and at which Sivori had played, and produced, as usual, a great sensation, he was addressed by a very indifferent musician, somewhat to the following effect:

"Signor Sivori, you are supposed to be a pupil of Paganini's; well, I claim also to have had lessons from that great violinist."

"Indeed!" said the other; "this is something new."

"It is perfectly true."

"As I never heard of it before, perhaps you will explain. . . . ."

"Just so; well, I was very young; it was at Carlsruhe; my father, who played the tenor in the orchestra there, said to me one morning, 'Jahn, my boy, the great Paganini gives a concert here to-morrow, and I intend that you shall hear him. The price of the places is so high that I can't get any free tickets, and, therefore, you must come into the orchestra with me; you will play the *triangle,* for which you will get your two dollars, and you will have the advantage of hearing the great man at the same time.' Well, at rehearsal, shortly afterwards, I felt de-

termined to show the celebrated Italian that I was as enthusiastic a musician as he was; so, when the bell comes in the *Rondo de la Clochette, ping—ping—ping* went my *triangle,* and echoed again and again through the empty concert-room.

"Paganini's eyes turned in my direction, and flashed fire: '*Troppo forte! troppo forte!*' he exclaimed.

"'*Andate ancora — sempre piano!*' We began again; but the second time was no better; the clear *ping* of *triangle* rang out so loud that the *harmonic* notes of the violin which echoed it were nowhere. At this the illustrious Italian paced up and down the platform, seemingly in a paroxysm of rage, and muttering some such words as '*Corpo di Bacco! e cattivissimo! troppo forte!!*' then, laying down his violin, he sprang into the orchestra, and seizing upon the *triangle,* he tore it from my hands, and holding it in the air, gave it three delicate little touches, making me distinctly understand the kind of sound he wished elicited from it. This was my first and *only* lesson from Paganini. Thus, you see, I also am a pupil of your great compatriot!"

An article in the *Quarterly Review* some few years ago did full justice to the influence exercised by M. Jullien upon music in England. To his efforts we are indebted for the introduction to this country of many fine artistes; Madame Jullien, who died recently in London, was mainly instrumental in enticing here one of the greatest singers, our incomparable *prima donna*, Madlle. Tietjens, and her husband introduced us to one of the greatest violinists that ever lived, in the person of Camillo Sivori. In England Signor Sivori has played a great deal at the *Musical Union*, directed by the well-known Professor Ella; and also at the *Philharmonic Concerts*.

Many years ago the author heard Sivori perform the celebrated *Rondo de la Clochette* of Paganini at the *Théâtre de St. Hubert*, at Brussels; the effect was magical. Nothing could be finer than his magnificent tone, the complete mastery of the most intricate passages, and the peculiar beauty of his double notes.

At the same theatre, a short time afterwards, we heard another violinist, of a rather different style. This was the well-known St. Léon, the *maître de ballet* for many years at Paris and

London, and the husband of Madlle. Cérito. Arthur St. Léon died suddenly in Paris on that notable day, Sept. 4, 1870, in the *Café du Divan*, from apoplexy or heart disease. He was one of the most charming violinists we ever heard. His tone was peculiarly sweet, his *cadenzas* and scales were round and perfectly even, and his taste most refined. When I mentioned to a very celebrated violinist the pleasure that St. Léon's performance had given me, he shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed, "*Oui, mais il n'a pas de style.* . . . . That accusation was unjust. It is not probable that St. Léon would have shone in the performance of a "classical" concerto, or in a *Sonata* of Beethoven; but nothing could be more beautiful than his playing. His execution was considerable, and his expression perfectly natural. He was also exceedingly clever in imitating the various noises of a farmyard, which he introduced in one of his pastoral compositions. I shall never forget the beauty of his playing in a ballet entitled "*Le Violon du Diable*," in which he performed a series of *fantasias* to the dancing of Madlle. Plunkett. The story of the ballet is simply this: A poor village

musician, who plays only the most wretched dance-music—which, nevertheless, delights the peasantry of his village, with whom he is a great favourite—by some freak of fortune meets with his satanic majesty, who presents him with a violin. This turns out to be a truly marvellous instrument. When he plays it, the peasants cannot dance to the music now, but stand as if petrified, looking on with astonishment, whilst a fairy form is called into existence each time the enchanted instrument is touched, and dances to the delicious music that it pours forth. Nothing could be more charming than this combination of the exquisite playing of M. St. Léon and the no less exquisite dancing of Madlle. Plunkett. The music was chiefly written by St. Léon himself.

Henri Standish, of Brussels, son of an English Professor of Mathematics, rose rapidly as a violinist of great power; competing successfully as a *virtuoso* and a teacher with Vieuxtemps, Léonard, Steveniers, Artot, and others. Unfortunately for the musical art, shortly after taking the *first prize* in De Bériot's class at the *Conservatoire*, Standish obtained the Gold Medal of the *Academy of Painting*, and finding the latter

accomplishment a more lucrative profession, has adhered more to it than to music.

A violinist who has been long among us, the talented M. Prosper Sainton, was born at Boulogne in 1814, he was educated for the law, and took his B.A. degree in France; but his love of music was so great that, while pursuing his legal studies at Paris, he became enrolled among the pupils of the *Conservatoire*, and in 1834 took the *first prize* in the violin class there. This decided him to adopt an artistic career rather than a legal one, and he set out at once on his travels, playing with considerable success in the various towns of Europe. In 1844 he arrived in London, and played at the concerts of the *Philharmonic Society*, and afterwards obtained the appointment of Professor at the *Royal Academy of Music*. He was also appointed first violin to the Italian Opera, and *Violin Solo* in her Majesty's state band. He married the well-known contralto singer, Miss Dolby. His playing is much admired for neatness of execution and pure tone. He has written a number of effective compositions for his instrument. He was a pupil of Habeneck whilst at the Paris *Conservatoire*, and

has since that time made many excellent pupils himself.

Mr. Carrodus, a native of Keighley, in Yorkshire, has risen to eminence with us as a violin-player of very considerable abilities. He was a favourite pupil of the late Bernhard Molique—one of the best violinists Germany ever produced. The playing of Molique was solid and masterly, but his extremely modest and retiring disposition hindered his success with the general public, though he was always most highly esteemed by musicians. His solos for the violin are very well written. It was with one of these, the *Concerto in D minor*, that Mr. Carrodus made his *début* at the *Musical Society of London*, after being known for some time as an excellent orchestral player. This realised for him a triumphant success, which has been confirmed at every subsequent appearance. His tone is pure and liquid, and his execution irreproachable, enabling him to surmount all mechanical difficulties with perfect ease. He has several distinguished pupils.

America, both North and South, possesses some admirable violinists, whose names scarcely ever reach us on this side of the Atlantic. Of these

we recently had an isolated specimen in the person of M. Careno Sauret, who came here with his talented wife, a magnificent pianist, and astonished us for a short time by his fine performances. At the *Promenade Concerts* at Covent Garden, M. Careno Sauret performed Paganini's famous variations, called *Le Streghe*, with enthusiastic success, and that alone would stamp him as a violinist of no ordinary merit. A little later, at Hanover Square Rooms, he performed with his wife the duo in "The Huguenots," by De Bériot and Thalberg, a *Tarantella* by Wieniawski, and other remarkable pieces, including Ernst's *Airs hongroises*. M. Careno Sauret's performance is characterised by pure tone, perfect intonation, wonderful execution, and a thorough command of *harmonic* notes; added to this, his *staccato* is most perfect.

Since my younger days, when the sisters Milanollo and the sisters Ferny delighted many audiences in various towns of Europe, we have had a number of very distinguished lady violinists among us. Besides Madame Norman Neruda, who has become an established favourite here, we have Mademoiselle Castellan, Madame Boulanger,

Mademoiselle de Bono, and others, who show what delicacy and power ladies can attain on this instrument, which requires so much physical strength to master it. Mademoiselle Frery, formerly a pupil of De Bériot, and an exceedingly handsome woman, disappeared from Brussels when she obtained the first prize at the *Conservatoire*, and has not been heard of since in Europe; she is one of the fine artistes lost to us in America. Mademoiselle Singelli, who has had so successful a career as a vocalist, was in her more youthful days a very clever violinist. Many years ago the great singer Madame Mara charmed crowded audiences by her violin-playing; and in musical works will be found accounts of many distinguished lady violinists from the time of Queen Elizabeth to our own.

In these days, when every orchestral player is a true artiste, it would occupy considerably more space than I have at my disposal, to attempt to exhaust the list of all the eminent violinists that are more or less known to me at the present day. I have already passed over many eminent professors of former days, such as Campagnoli, of Dresden, Fiorillo, whose charming studies are so

much admired, and those excellent artistes who charm Londoners almost every night, Viotti Collins, Burnett, Blagrove, Wiener, Politzer, Ludwig, Riess, Strauss, Ch. Fletcher, of Lymington, and others, whose names I am reluctantly compelled to omit, show to what perfection the art of violin-playing is brought at present, thanks to the great men, sketches of whose lives form the sections of the present work.

A charming English violinist of the "classical" type is Henry Holmes; one of our best artistes. Another most distinguished performer was Remenyi, of whose career many extraordinary stories have been told. Like the young Sasserno, who once gave great promise, we have lost sight of him of late years. Remenyi styled himself *violin solo* to her Majesty.

Alfred Mellon, himself a very clever violinist, a native of Birmingham, and an excellent leader, introduced not a few good artistes to our London audiences; and among the more eccentric characters, judging from his performance, is Levey, the brother of the well-known composer of *Fanchette* and the charming song *Esmeralda*. This violinist has been accused, perhaps unjustly, of playing

tricks with his violin, or of singing at the same time; but of this I am not able to judge. He has performed at various places under the name of *Paganini redivivus,* and, according to the newspapers, has met with more success in Italy than in England. Unfortunately, I can only speak of this person's performance from hearsay, and I am told he is very clever.

In Queen Anne's reign there was a man whose name was Clench, a native of Barnet, that made his appearance in London. He performed at the corner of Bartholomew Lane, behind the Royal Exchange. His price for admission was one shilling each person. His advertisement stated that "he imitated the horses, the huntsmen, and a pack of hounds, a sham doctor, an old woman, a drunken man, the bells, the flute, the double-bass, and the organ with three stops, by his own natural voice, to the greatest perfection."

This genius had a rival, however, who was called the "whistling man." His excellence consisted in counterfeiting the notes of all kinds of singing birds. The same performance has been since imitated by many others; by none, perhaps,

with greater success than a person who named himself Rossignol, and who was associated with Breslaw, the juggler. This "Rossignol, the bird-tutor," appeared at Covent Garden Theatre, many years ago, where, in addition to his imitation of the birds, *he executed a concerto on a violin without strings;* that is, he made the notes in a wonderful manner *with his voice*, and represented the bowing by drawing a small stick backwards and forwards over a stringless instrument. His performance was received with great applause, and the success he met with produced several competitors, but none of them equalled him. It was afterwards discovered that the sounds were produced by an instrument contrived for the purpose, concealed in the mouth.

Having now brought my account of violinists down to that "celebrated" individual who played upon a violin without any strings at all, my readers will think it is evidently time that I should bring this volume to a close.

But I must allude, in a few words, to a most important subject. Why do we make so wide a distinction between the remuneration of singers and that of instrumentalists? Why do we pay a

prima donna or a *primo tenore* (often of very limited musical education) by hundreds of pounds when the orchestral player—often a highly-educated musician—is obliged to content himself with a guinea a night. When we see artistes like Carrodus, Viotti Collins, Burnett, etc., step out of the orchestra and play a fine Concerto or Fantasia solo, we perceive at once of what first-rate artistes such an orchestra is composed. It is evident that these performers are as much undervalued—judging from their emoluments—as our *soprani* and *tenori* are overvalued.

We cannot but hope that the time is not far distant when this most unjust state of things will be rectified. It is true that now and then a Paganini arises, and takes a glorious revenge; but that is not exactly the point in question. Without an orchestra there can be no opera, and if we wish to keep up our orchestra to a high pitch of perfection, we must give our young musicians proper encouragement, and something to look forward to.

That the state of things to which I allude urgently needs to be greatly reformed is the more evident when we consider that it is not every

orchestral player who can, as in those exceptional cases above-mentioned, shine forth as a solo player, and so derive greater benefits from his profession. The education is different after a certain point of perfection has been attained; and the qualities admired in the one are different from those we applaud in the other. The orchestral player is trained to sacrifice himself for the *ensemble*, whilst the solo player is educated to bring forth all his *individuality* or originality. Hence two classes of musicians, that can rarely take each other's places. Many an excellent artiste shirks the idea of giving lessons all day, and playing in the orchestra all night; few, indeed, have strength to do this long, and thus some capital performers are lost to our operas. A higher scale of appointments would secure their services, and render them to a great extent independent of the drudgery of giving lessons during the day.

Let us note here the impetus now given to violin-playing in England, and to the musical art in general, by the encouragement it receives from so eminent a *dilettante* as H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, as well as by some excellent musical

societies such as that of the *Wandering Minstrels* and others. But, as the present work is exclusively devoted to those who have made violin-playing their profession, we can only stay to remark that the art of the *amateur* ranks much higher in England than many persons appear to suppose; we could mention several ladies and gentlemen whose finished performance upon the violin is very fascinating and invariably meets with the appreciation that it deserves.

* * * * *

We must not conclude this section on contemporary artistes without alluding to a violinist whose name we are not at liberty to mention; we can vouch for the truth of the anecdote. It was some years ago—but the story is none the worse for that—the writer was sauntering down the *Montagne de la Cour* at Brussels, about ten o'clock on a hot evening in September, when the sounds of a violin struck his ear. Brussels was always a great place for the violin. We stopped to listen. There was a certain sweetness and fulness of tone that attracted our attention, and proved that the player, whoever he might be, possessed the complete control of his instrument.

The sounds appeared to proceed from an *Estaminet* (a kind of *Café*) called the *Pot d'Or*. We entered, and, sure enough, there was a dark-haired, bronze-faced youth playing upon an excellent violin, which we should have thought to be an *Amati*, judging by the sweetness of the tones he drew from it. He was surrounded by a circle of Flemish admirers in blouses, whom he had just delighted with his performance of the popular air, *Au claire de la Lune*, finishing off with a brilliant *finale* of his own composition. Some of these went so far as to assert to us that Paganini himself could have been nothing in comparison with this marvellous instrumentalist! "In fact," said one, in a curious mixture of French and Flemish, and approaching us confidentially, with his glass of *faro* in his hand, "in fact, he can play a note that neither Bériot, nor Singelée—no, nor even Paganini himself—had any notion of."

We soon got into conversation with the violinist and examined his instrument, which was a very good one indeed to be in the hands of an itinerant musician. He was not long, either, in showing us, by way of return for some little

civility, the celebrated note that none of the great violinists, who had preceded *him*, knew anything of. He executed a single scale, beginning at the lowest note of the violin and running up to the highest. This was played with tolerable accuracy, and all the notes came out full and clear. "Now, Messieurs," said he, "that is the whole of the violin as Paganini knew it; but I know *one note more*—listen!" He now repeated the scale as before, but, after reaching the highest note attainable by orthodox means, he completed his performance with a still higher one, which he produced, in perfect intonation, by causing his left hand to glide rapidly along the back of the instrument: the note was produced by the rapid friction of the hand over the varnish on the back of the violin! It could, of course, have been produced just as well upon a polished mahogany table. We were all perfectly satisfied that Paganini was *not* acquainted with that note!

We endeavoured to watch the career of this clever violinist, for such indeed he was. At the time we met him, he was a pupil of the *Conservatoire*, but so very poor that, unknown to his professors and to his fellow-students, he played about

at night in different *Estaminets*, and so secured a meal or two for the next day. After a time he obtained a prize at the *Conservatoire*, and in April, 1856, we heard him at one of the *matinées* of the Prince de V. . . . where he performed in a *trio* of Mozart's, and afterwards a *Fantasia* by Artot, and was very well received. Although still very young he was already styled "the professor." After this we lost sight of him altogether, as we left the town ourselves; but we understand that he has attained an honourable position in his profession, which many years ago enabled him to support his mother and to educate a younger brother. That this violinist had the stamp of the true artiste upon him we were thoroughly convinced the night we met him for the first time in the *Estaminet au Pot d'Or*.

XI.

Fräulein Schmöhling.

AS a kind of appendix to the present work we present our readers with a short sketch of the career of a most extraordinary musician, whose romantic existence extended from the year 1747 to 1831. No place could conveniently be found for her in the chronological series of remarkable characters before alluded to; the more so, as her enormous success in the world of art was mainly owing to her own efforts, being the pupil of no great master. Nor was she all her life a violinist, but achieved celebrity, principally, during her career as a *prima donna*, having abandoned her violin shortly before she became Madame MARA.

Herr Schmöhling, her father, was a poor musi-

cian of Cassel. Fortune had never smiled upon him, and his suffering appears to have reached its climax when his charming young wife Anna died, a few days after the birth of their first child, the subject of this memoir.

Poor before, he was now wretchedly miserable, and no efforts could enable him to emerge from the obscurity by which he was surrounded in the small town of Cassel. The little child became the living image of the unfortunate mother, and the sight of her roused Schmöhling to fresh exertion, though his life had lost all its charms, and misery of every kind weighed heavily upon him. His lodging on the second floor of a little house near the entrance of the town was of the poorest description, and now sadness and distress added their mournful tints to the picture. Whilst absent from home—if such a denomination can be properly applied to such a miserable abode—the poor child was left entirely alone, attached to an old arm-chair; and as Schmöhling was obliged to go out nearly every day to earn his scanty living by giving a few lessons, or by any other musical work that happened to present itself, the infant was constantly left in this precarious posi-

tion. The effect of this was that the child became delicate, and at three years old she could not walk. In the meantime she had been christened Elizabeth Gertrude.

As the poor father was only too glad to do any kind of work that would enable him to supply his daily wants, he sometimes undertook to repair the instruments of the musicians of the Cassel orchestra, and one day his little daughter, then four years old, was found playing with one of these violins that lay upon a table near her, In imitation of her father, she drew the bow across the strings, and placing her tiny fingers upon the neck of the instrument, she produced one or two notes, so round and distinct, that he was lost in surprise.

It was Dr. Johnson, we believe, who said that "there is nothing in which the power of art is shown so much as in playing on the violin. In all other things," he remarked, "we can do something *at first;* any man will forge a bar of iron if you give him a hammer; not so well as a smith, but tolerably. A man will saw a piece of wood, and make a box, though a clumsy one; but give him a violin and a bow, and *he can do nothing.*"

Doubtless Herr Schmöhling knew this better than Dr. Johnson did; and we may easily judge of his surprise when he heard the child play several notes of the scale most distinctly, before she had been told how to do it; and at the time she was only just four years old!

A flash of light—call it instinct, or what you will—seems to have shone through the musician's brain at the moment. From that day he began systematically to teach his daughter music; and in the course of twelve short months she could already play some little airs upon the violin with such marvellous skill that the precocious child became the talk of the town.

One thing is very certain, namely, that this drew around him a number of speculators and curiosity-mongers, several of whom made him propositions with the view to exhibit his child; for musical phenomena were rare in Cassel in those days, and, for that matter, in many other places also. For some time Schmöhling held firm to his own opinions, and refused to listen to his would-be friends, preferring to wait until his daughter's talent should be more fully developed.

At last, however, he gave way, for fear of exasperating certain notabilities of the place upon whom his livelihood more or less entirely depended; and on the 16th November, 1753, a large room was hired, and the little Elizabeth, then in her sixth year, made her first appearance in public. It seems almost incredible; but, fortunately, the whole affair is well known to those who occupy themselves with musical matters.

The day had been looked forward to with the utmost impatience. The audience was numerous and select. As the poor child could not walk, being still in very delicate health, her father carried her into the concert-room, placed her on a chair upon the platform, and put into her hands his best violin.

At the first sound of the instrument a profound silence reigned throughout the room; but in a short time it was interrupted by murmurs of astonishment and approbation, and at the conclusion of her first performance the applause was like thunder. The pretty child, as she was lifted from the chair, was embraced over and over again, and large tears of joy rolled down the

cheeks of Herr Schmöhling, as he carried his darling prodigy into the artistes' room, and confided her to a circle of admiring friends.

From simple curiosity the sale of tickets had been considerable, and for the first time for many years the poor musician felt that he had some money in his pocket.

The French have a saying: *Un bonheur n'arrive jamais seul,* which we English translate: *It never rains but it pours.* The day after the concert, Schmöhling received an anonymous letter; but *such* a letter! It is still extant, and here it is, in its English dress:

"DEAR HERR SCHMÖHLING,

"I was one of those who experienced, yesterday, the greatest satisfaction on perceiving the precocious talent of your charming little daughter. It would be infinitely regrettable that so brilliant an organisation should not receive every development of which it is susceptible. As a rich man and a friend of art, I am decided upon defraying the expenses of her education. I beg to enclose a first instalment of two hundred florins; you will proceed at once to Frankfort,

where she will be recommended by me to the best professors, and you will receive every month a similar sum for the next ten years. In the above-mentioned town I have a friend, a surgeon of great experience, who will attend to your daughter's ailments; and I have no doubt that in a very short time she will be able to walk as well as you or I.

"I should be glad if you would start to-morrow. Do not endeavour to find out either my name or my address; any attempt of that sort would be quite superfluous."

The letter was signed "An Amateur."

However much Schmöhling would have liked to have wrung the hand of this magnanimous benefactor, all efforts to discover him were fruitless, and he could only abide by his instructions, which he carried out to the letter. He proceeded at once to Frankfort-on-the-Maine, where the medical skill alluded to in the letter was brought to bear with considerable success upon the little Elizabeth's affliction. The paralytic affection of her legs disappeared in due course, and at nine years of age she was as beautiful a blond German

girl as could have been found in the whole kingdom. Her talent as a violinist increased as rapidly as her other charms, and wherever she played she was the object of universal admiration. Music had now become a serious study with her, and her mysterious benefactor, by the regularity of his remittances, enabled her father to dispense with anxiety as to the future. For five years she continued her studies and her medical treatment at Frankfort; after which it was decided to proceed to Vienna, with the view of obtaining better instruction, and, if possible, of giving some concerts.

Arrived at Vienna in her twelfth year, arrangements were at once made for a series of concerts, at which she performed with the greatest success, and was looked upon by the *dilettanti* of that sparkling town as the greatest musical phenomenon ever known. Her extreme youth, her beauty, and her wonderful and elegant performance produced universal enthusiasm. Among her more ardent admirers at this period was the English ambassador, who prevailed upon her father to take her to England, and gave him numerous letters of introduction. In 1760

Schmöhling and his admired daughter set out for London, where they were received most kindly. After performing at Court, with the greatest success, Elizabeth Schmöhling was heard in a number of concerts; and every drawing-room of any importance was graced by her presence. The attention she received from the nobility, and the universal admiration in which she was held, both for her musical talent and her graceful manners and charming appearance, especially by the gentlemen, excited among the ladies something besides admiration. A feeling akin to jealousy was aroused in certain quarters by all these ovations; it was openly asserted that the violin was an improper instrument for a woman, and various equally nonsensical notions got propagated so viciously that poor Fräulein Schmöhling found herself more than once received rather coldly, and became plainly convinced that the dazzling star of her fortune was not glittering so brightly as before. Although little more than thirteen years of age, this systematic persecution preyed upon her mind, and suddenly decided her to abandon the violin, and to cultivate her voice, which was powerful, sweet, and flexible, and only

wanted a little training to rival that of the first singers of the day.

At this time there was, in London, a young professor of singing, named Paradisi, and Herr Schmöhling determined to place his daughter under his care. He discovered that she had a voice of great extent and extreme flexibility, together with exquisite feeling and marvellous dramatic instinct. Nothing could be more certain, in his opinion, than her ultimate success as a *cantatrice*, and he devoted all his energies to this wonderfully promising pupil. She, on her part, responded most completely to his efforts, and in the course of a comparatively short time, she was enabled to appear as a public singer in London with considerable success. Indeed this success was so great, for so young a person, that it gave rise to much envious feeling among her fellow-artistes, and Fräulein Schmöhling found herself the object of intrigues of so invidious a nature that all her talent and perseverance could not conquer them.

Disgusted with everybody and everything, her father decided upon returning to his native town, where he hoped to obtain some permanent en-

gagement for his talented daughter. But this was a vain hope; Cassel presented no opening for her; and she was but coldly received.

The poor father was sadly disconcerted by these unexpected freaks of fortune, but the child had already begun to think for herself; her perseverance knew no bounds, and her ambition determined her to vie with the very greatest in art. She had heard that a talented musician named Hiller had founded a musical school at Leipzig in 1766, that had already gained some celebrity, and he had acquired the reputation of possessing the finest method for singing in Germany. To this institution Fräulein Schmöhling was determined to go; and she studied hard there till the year 1771, when she was twenty-two years of age. At this period her voice was one of the finest ever heard, and (with the exception of Henrietta Sontag) she was the greatest singer Germany has ever produced. She used to say that had she a daughter to whom singing was to be taught, this daughter should first study the violin; and she attributed in great measure to her violin training that wonderful facility in vocal execution

which surprised her hearers while it enchanted them.

She made her *début* at Dresden in an opera by Hasse, and every one present at once perceived what a brilliant career lay before her. The success which attended this performance was renewed at all her appearances, and her extraordinary talent as a singer and as a dramatist shone forth principally in the operas of Jomelli, Porpora, Sacchini, Hasse, Piccini, and Glück.

The news of her success—perhaps some of her previous history—got to the ears of the Great Frederick; but as he had given up playing on the flute, musical matters had less interest for him than usual. He had become melancholy, and was advised by his personal friends to hear the brilliant artiste who conferred such honour on his country. He heard her, in an opera of Sacchini's, performed expressly for the occasion, at Potsdam, and was enraptured.

From this moment Fräulein Schmöhling was the most popular *cantatrice* in Germany. We cannot follow her here through all her triumphs. Besides her operatic engagments she was appointed Court musician at a salary of three thou-

sand florins; her poor father was made completely happy, and, as one of her contemporaries informs us, at every opera in which she appeared, bouquets, wreaths, sonnets, and compliments of every description were showered upon the stage.

At this period there existed at Potsdam a musician of the name of Mara. He was a clever professor upon the violoncello, and was engaged as such in the Royal orchestra. This man was by no means handsome, his face was covered with marks left by small-pox, besides which he was very quarrelsome, accustomed to use strong language, and, worse than all, addicted to strong drink. His love of the bottle caused him more than once to be excluded from good society.

Such was the individual who fell desperately in love with the fair *cantatrice*, and, marvellous to relate, she returned his affection! When he offered her marriage he was accepted. The news of this affair caused a sort of stupefaction among the lady's numerous admirers, and it is said that even Frederick himself attempted to prevent the marriage. However, it took place in due

course; and in about a week Madame Mara found out her mistake. After a series of scenes a separation was agreed upon.

It is said that a reconciliation was brought about somewhat later, by the extraordinary conduct of the King. His Majesty would not hear of the songstress leaving Berlin; she was for some time a complete prisoner, and the position was perfectly unendurable to her. It was a long time before the Great Frederick could be made to see the ridiculousness of his conduct in this respect. After various attempts to escape, planned and carried out by her husband, but frustrated by the King, Mara and his wife at last received an authority to quit Prussia. This story is doubtful.

It was in 1780, after having devoted a little time to restore her health, shattered to some extent by the constant annoyances and troubles that cropped up during her engagement at the Court of Berlin, Madame Mara made her appearance at the Vienna Opera-House. Her success there was not so great as we could have imagined, for, at that time, *Opera buffa,* in which she did not shine so brilliantly as in more serious

productions (in which all her energy and fire could display themselves), was alone in vogue. But it was in Vienna that she gained the good graces of the Empress Maria Theresa, to which she owed the patronage of Marie Antoinette, who invited her to sing at the palace of Versailles. Here her pure, elegant, expressive, and dramatic singing won the hearts of every one. At the French Opera she had only one rival, Signora Todi, a lady who had numerous friends and supporters, and the well-known conflicts between the "Todistes" and the "Maratistes" lasted some time before the palm was finally awarded to Madame Mara.

In London, her singing in the Handel Festival music was the talk of the day for a lengthened period. Here she appeared at the Opera with the celebrated Mrs. Billington and the captivating Brigitta Banti, and was universally acknowledged as the greatest artiste that Germany had ever sent to our shores. After singing in various towns in Italy, Madame Mara returned again to London in 1790, and never quitted our capital till the year 1801, when she gave her farewell representation, at the age of fifty-five,

and was received with great enthusiasm. The receipts were over £1000.

In spite of her husband's vices Madame Mara settled a pension on him after their separation, and she still regarded him with affection and even admiration. When one of her friends expressed surprise at her generosity towards such an unprincipled ruffian, she remarked with the utmost *naïveté:* "But you must allow that he is the handsomest man ever seen!"

Jean Mara died at *Schiedam* in Holland (of all places in the world!) in the year 1808, having devoted some years to the practice of smuggling. Four years previously Madame Mara had gone to St. Petersburg, and afterwards, in 1806, to Moscow, where she remained till that town was burnt, losing thus some property she had purchased there. Finding herself at liberty by the death of her husband, she married the talented flute-player Florio.

When Moscow was destroyed she went to Revel, where she supported herself by giving lessons in music. She endeavoured to sing again in London in 1820, when in her seventy-second year; but her wonderful powers, of course, had

flown : and the year following poor Mara returned to her native town of Cassel, where she was idolised. But she appears to have had a larger connection at Revel, her last resting-place on this earth, where she died in January 1833.

In spite of her numerous successes, which crowned a life of untiring energy, Madame Mara never realised a large fortune; she sang and gave lessons as long as a spark of energy remained in her. What with her first husband's dissipated habits, her own good-nature, blind confidence, and horror of business, it may easily be supposed that this great artiste saved little or nothing from the honorariums of a life of toil crowned by triumph.

On the celebration of her eighty-third birthday—the 23rd February, 1831—the great poet Goethe addressed some verses to her.

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