A CONCERT AT CLIFFORD'S INN.

(Since this paper was written the destruction of the old Hall, which then seemed imminent, has been for a time averted. The names still shine, and the old music has again been heard there.)

Another of the old "Inns of Chancery" is doomed to destruction; another bit of Old London, another reposeful nook of ancientry, will soon have vanished from the face of the earth. Clifford's Inn will ere long be carted away, a pathetic heap of rubbish; the ghosts that haunted it evicted without compunction; the Societies that frequented it turned adrift to find an asylum elsewhere. Where now, if anywhere, will be held those "curious feasts" of "The Ancient and Honourable Society of Clifford's Inn," whereat no after-dinner speeches were allowed to interrupt the convivial flow of conversation; where the grace after meat was dumbly symbolised by the Chairman's three times elevating four little loaves united in the form of a cross, which were then sent down the table in token that the remains of the feast were to be given, as customary dole, to certain poor old women who waited in the buttery. Whither now will emigrate "The Art Worker's Guild," the names of whose Presidents shine in gold letters upon panels in the wainscoting of the old Hall, among the rank and file of the Workers who here "took their ease in their Inn"?

How many quiet browsing-places for memory have been ruthlessly swept away by the epidemic of improvements still raging in the City! A stone's throw from St. Dunstan's, Temple Bar has been removed and rusticated by brute force, like the gates of Gaza; and on its site ramps the triumphant Griffin, emblematic of Prosperity and Progress; and now the old Inn must go! It is a place of many memories. Here in the hall, after the fire of London, sat Sir Matthew Hale with a council of Puisne judges, to settle disputes about property and boundaries. Here in chambers resided for a while Sir Edward Coke of legal fame, and John Selden of the shrewd and witty "Table Talk." Here also at No. 13 dwelt George Dyer, the friend of Charles Lamb, whose feet must often have trodden the cobble-stones of these old courts. Here, in more recent times, the "little clan" who love the older forms of music have come to the Dolmetsch Concerts, to delight their souls with hearing the works of composers who filled the spacious times of Tudor and Stuart with sounds which, for "the general" have long ceased to echo still.

The last of these concerts, given on March 23rd 1903, was the ninety-fourth of the Dolmetsch concerts, of which only some of the later series were held at Clifford's Inn. It was a worthy farewell to to the old walls, which will echo no more to to the sweet sounds of voice and lute, viol and harpsichord, discoursing music that seemed to harmonise with the spirit of the place. These ninety-four concerts represent but a small portion of the work Mr. Dolmetsch has done in the cause of old music, to which he has devoted so much of his life and energy.

Before such concerts could be set on foot a vast amount of preliminary labour was necessary: rare old scores had to be picked up here and there; still rarer unpublished manuscripts to be hunted for in libraries, decyphered and copied out; arrangements made from figured basses; curious forms of notation and scoring to be understood and interpreted. Then, to make the dry bones of the music live, it was further necessary to collect and learn the mechanism of each instrument for which it was written; and in all cases to repair and put each of them in order, with due regard to its proper tuning, before it could be played upon. To do all this needed a rare combination of talents and industry, knowledge and skill. Mr. Dolmetsch has proved himself as dexterous in repairing his old instruments as he is in playing them. But, not content with merely repairing, he has actually *made* lutes, clavichords, harpsichords; and, for Cecil Rhodes, a small modern piano, in which the strings are attached to wood, not metal, and of which the *timbre* is much more sympathetic, and combines better with other strings, than that of the cold and blatant "concert grand."

These Dolmetsch Concerts, so pleasant in their unconventionality, are much like what we may imagine the private "chamber music" of the Eighteenth century to have been; when a few musical people came together to entertain themselves with a few choice pieces of music.

The last concert opened with a quaint little piece entitled: "A tune with Divisions for the Virginals:" *divisions* in this sense being a series of melodic passages suggested by a theme:

written by William Byrd, an English composer born about 1538, of whom Henry Peacham in his *Compleat Gentleman* says: "For motets and musike of pietie and devotion, as well for the honour of our nation as the merit of the man, I preferre above all other our phoenix, Mr. William Byrd, whom in that kind I know not whether any may equal." Like his friend Tallis, he was a gentleman of the Chapel Royal and organist to Queen Elizabeth. He wrote much sacred music; among other things "Psalmes, Songs and Sonets, some solemne, others joyful, framed to the life of the words." This last phrase of the title is noteworthy, showing with what care these old composers endeavoured to make their music follow "the life of the words." Byrd's pupil, Thomas Morley, speaks of him as his "loving master, never without reverence to be named of musicians," and tells of his "virtuous contentions" with Alfonso Ferrabosco, the elder, born of Italian parents at Greenwich about 1560, in making "various ways of plain-song upon a *miserere*." He had many of these "virtuous contentions" with Ferrabosco; in one of which the trial of skill was the setting of a song, "The Nightingale so plesant and so gaie." In this, according to Peacham, the Italian had the best of it. "His compositions," he says, "cannot be bettered for sweetness of air and depth of judgment." If it were at all on the level of some of his pieces given by Mr. Dolmetsch at an earlier concert, Ferrabosco's setting must have been hard to beat. At that concert two of his Pavans for five viols, two Trebles, Alto, Tenor, and Viola da Gamba; and a Song

accompanied by the Lute, "Like Hermit Poor," were performed. Nothing more beautiful of their kind than these Pavans could be conceived. They were dance measures full of stately gravity, with the most exquisite contrapuntal writing for the viols, the continuous melody passing through a series of ingenious and delightful transitional cadences leading at last to a full close on the tonic, which having been so long evaded, came with a most satisfying and triumphant effect.

Byrd's divisions were written about 1600. At the Dolmetsch Concert, they were played upon an English spinet; which, like the harpsichord, is merely a more developed form of the Virginals. The mechanism of all three instruments is practically the same. Each, like the more modern piano, is a keyed instrument; but while in the piano, the wire strings are struck by a small wooden hammer with a head padded with felt, in the spinet and harpsichord they are plucked by a small quill, that of a raven being the most suitable. This quill projects about an eighth of an inch from the side of an oblong piece of wood called a "jack," which flies up when the key is pressed by the finger; the quill being released by a simple, but ingenious piece of mechanism after it has plucked the string, which it does not strike again as the jack falls. Byrd's Tune is, like many of these old pieces, vocal and instrumental, in a minor key; and the divisions wander in a sweet and leisurely way over the bass, like a continual reverie on the tune, breathing a gentle melancholy, content with its own quiet sadness and beauty.

Then came "Three Songs accompanied by the Lute and Viola da Gamba;" the words and the music of the first two, by Thomas Campion, (a song-writer well known to collectors of old English lyrics); the date of all three is about 1601. All are in the minor mode, and all are lovely—the last lovliest of all. This, set by Philip Rossiter, is still in manuscript; but the others may be found in a volume of "Twelve Elizabethan Songs," edited by Miss Janet Dodge, and published by A. H. Bullen. Here is a verse of the first:—

> "Though you are yoong and I am olde,
> Though youre vaines hot and my bloud colde.
> Though youth is moist and age is drie,
> Yet embers live when floures doe die."

It is quaintly and simply set and harmonised; the expression of the words being closely followed by the poet in his music. Though in a minor key, he does not allow the hearer to feel that his elderly Lover is opprest by melancholy, much less despair. The sober sadness of his love is tempered by a sturdy hope. There is great reticence in the use of minor harmonies; the chord of the tonic minor being sparingly used, the last cadence introducing a sharpened third in the tonic chord—the "tierce de Picardie" of old organ music. The first verse of the second song goes thus:

> "When to her lute Corinna singes
> Her voice revives the leaden stringes,
> And doth in highest noates appeare

As any challeng'd eccho cleere:
But when she doth of mourning speake,
Ev'n with her sighes, the strings doe breake!"

These songs are simple examples of the method of the old composers in using the minor mode; the ear being pleasantly tantalised by the alternation of major and minor phrases and the sparing use of the tonic minor. This explains that effect of gentle melancholy, so characteristic of these old songs and pieces in minor keys, which are usually made to express a grave tenderness rather than a poignant sadness. It is the melancholy of sunshine mellowed by the green leaves of a woodland glade. In the accompaniments there is a great charm in the contrapuntal treatment of the instruments, each with a valid part of its own, harmonising with the melody, but not repeating it; the lute playing round the vocal part while the *viola da gamba* gives harmonic resonance with occasional full chords.

The lute is the most perfect of the tribe of fretted instruments, in which, as in the guitar, the intervals are marked upon the fingerboard by raised ridges called *frets*, against which the strings are prest by the finger to produce each note. It was much used in the Elizabethan period for accompanying the voice, which it does most sympathetically and modestly without undue self-assertion. It is a beautiful instrument, shaped like half a gradually tapering pear, the smaller end terminating in a long neck which supports the finger-board;

its lines of construction are as fine as those of a racing cutter. Its form suggests the aristocratic culture of its period, when every gentleman was, or strove to be, a skilled poet and musician. It would grace the hands of Sir Philip Sidney himself with its dainty elegance. There are usually eleven or more strings, for in these old intruments the stringing may vary in different specimens.

Amongst other pieces heard on this occasion was "A Fantazie for Three Viols" by John Jenkins, an English composer who lived to a good age, and wrote much music—beautiful music too it must be, if this fantasia be a fair specimen of its quality. But now who remembers his name, or knows his work? All of it, save a few songs, has apparently gone to the world's waste-paper basket, the dustiest shelves of old libraries, from which this forgotten piece was picked by Mr. Dolmetsch, who arranged it from the manuscript for two *viole d'amore* and *viola da gamba*.

The *viola d'amore* well deserves its pretty name; for it sings as sweetly as if the soul of a faithful lover dwelt in its graceful body and spoke through its strings. It is shaped like a more slender violin, with a longer neck, terminating in a cherub's head. It has seven strings played on by the bow, and besides these, running under the bridge and attached to the back of the cherub's head, are seven "sympathetic" strings of wire, which are not played on but vibrate in harmony with the notes drawn from the upper strings by the bow. The effect of their vibration is very pleasing, giving the *viola*

d'amore its peculiar quality of tone, each note seeming to be surrounded by a tender halo of veiled sound, harmonics of the note itself.

The *viola da gamba* is a forerunner of the violoncello, and is played much in the same way, except that the bow is longer and held like that of the *violone*, the largest of the viol tribe, with deep notes something like those of the double bass. It usually has seven strings, sometimes but six; and sometimes also has seven sympathetic strings. It is tuned an octave lower than the usual tuning of the *viola d'amore*. Occasionally both *viola d'amore* and *viola da gamba* are given thirteen sympathetic strings, tuned in a chromatic scale.

In Jenkins's fantasia the effect of the three instruments, each with its separate melody, as they played with each other in counterpoint, was ravishingly beautiful. It was, as Mr. Dolmetsch said, a piece that Carpaccio's angels might play. The workmanlike manner in which the angels in pictures by the early Italian masters handle their viols delights the musician's soul. They know what they are about. Look at their fingers and you can hear the notes they are playing. Take, for instance, Carpaccio's great altarpiece, "The Presentation of Christ in the Temple," now in the Academy at Venice, in which, below the principal personages, three lovely little wingless child angels sit and play—one a curved pipe and one a lute, while the third waits with his viol and bow, ready to come in at the right moment. The one in the middle, raised a step above the others, holds a lute, which looks almost too big

for him, upon his left knee, crossed over his right, to form a perfectly steady support. He grips his large instrument masterfully, and his whole soul is in his work; while his comrade listens with earnest attention for his cue, and the piper plays with an expression of entranced seriousness. You feel that they are all skilled musicians. Burne Jones's decorative figures are as evidently lackadaisical impostors, languidly pretending to play upon instruments the ways of which they do not understand.

"The Golden Sonata" of Purcell, was here played with fine effect on the instruments for which he wrote it, two Violins, Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord. It was composed about 1680, when Purcell was twenty-two. It opens with a short *largo* the *viola da gamba* giving out a graceful theme in the tonic major, a tripping and flowing melody full of grave and stately cheerfulness with variations for the violins, the harpsichord accompanying. It is followed by an *adagio* in the minor, the most remarkable movement of the piece, a slow progression of full chords through most of the flat keys, with many anticipations and suspensions, giving rise to strange discords and resolutions; sounding like a solemn and mysterious dirge, or funeral chant, to which the suspended discords give poignancy. The succeeding *allegro* is in the shape of a free canon, the subject now given out by the first violin; its development giving rise to a brisk and lively movement, in which the instruments follow and play with each other, like dancers through the

mazes of an intricate dance; now taking hands and now separating as the figures change. Then comes a grave and majestic slow movement in the relative minor, short, but exquisitely lovely, and full of a tender melancholy, leading to a finale, *allegro scherzando*, in the tonic. This finale is much like the *scherzo* and *trio* of an early Beethoven sonata except that the subject corresponding to the *trio* arises more directly from the first subject, and ends the piece pleasantly and cheerfully, without repetition of the first part.

A noticeable feature of the Dolmetsch Concerts has been the rendering of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach: amongst others of his "Concerto in C minor, for Two Harpsichords, Two Violins, Viola, Violoncello, and Violone." This splendid piece opens with an *allegretto*, leading to an *adagio*, a fine example of Bach's solid and majestic contrapuntal scoring. This, as given on the old instruments, was specially interesting, because the harpsichord plays a most important part in the general effect, which would have been much marred if the music assigned to it had been arranged for the piano. Bach loved the harpsichord, knew its musical personality as only a lover could, and has written for it music which brings out all its finest qualities of tone and timbre. Anyone who has had an opportunity of hearing his concerted pieces played on the instruments for which they were written, must feel not merely the intellectual greatness of the man, but the emotional side of his nature, and the noble beauty which results from his stern devotion to musical form.

A "Sonata for the Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord accompanied by a second Harpsichord," by J. P. Teleman, written about 1730, affords a good contrast to the Bach Concerto. It is like coming down from the mountain tops to be led through green pastures, and beside still waters. Teleman was a great rival of Bach in his own day; but now an almost unknown composer even in Germany. Yet to judge by this and some other pieces which Mr. Dolmetsch has unearthed, and given at some of these concerts, he well deserves a hearing. This sonata is full of melodic beauty, and scored with much skill and refinement.

Another composition which gains in effect when played on the instrument for which it was written, is Bach's first Prelude and Fugue on the Clavichord, for which his great series of Preludes and Fugues was composed; the Clavichord, not the harpsichord being the "Wohltemperirte Clavier." It was called "well-tempered" by Bach, because the temperament was more equally distributed between the different keys, than was the case in the harpsichord; thus enabling him to make use of the more extreme keys without offending the ear with pieces which if played on the harpsichord, with its less equable temperament, would have sounded distinctly out of tune. The clavichord is the daintiest of keyed instruments, and is strung with wire strings, much after the fashion of the flat oblong piano of the early nineteenth century, which it somewhat resembles in shape. Each note is produced by the contact of the "tangent," a thin blade or lamina of brass, with the string;

which it divides into two segments, one of which is damped, while the other in vibrabting sounds a note of the pitch required. Its sound is faint, but the quality of tone is exquisite, and has in it something so remote and alien from the work-a-day world as to suggest the performance of a fairy musician at the court of Titania. The note continues to sound for some time, if the string be held by the tangent, and something like a swell can be produced by a gently increased pressure of the finger on the key, which makes the note thus held louder and slightly sharper. In Mr. Dolmetsch's performance on a clavichord which he had himself made, the Prelude and Fugue were distinctly heard, every note clear, and with a kind of dewy radiance in its timbre. This pure and delicate timbre, so characteristic of the instrument, gave the pieces a rare distinction.

We have had many collections of old English songs and lyrics, from the dawn of poetry in the earliest ballads down to the courtly verses of the gallants of the Restoration. It is a comparatively easy task to collect even the rarer of these coy flowers of literature, and when collected everyone who can read can enjoy them. But where, except at these concerts, each of which is a piece of carefully selected anthology, can any lover of music hear the works of these fine Old Masters, the men who made the great modern art of music, performed, as nearly as possible as they were written, upon the instruments for which they were composed? A transcript for modern instruments is much like the translation of a beautiful

poem from one language into another, always but a pale suggestion, and often a mutilation or distortion. The colour and aroma are more or less lost in the process. Now this lyrical period of English poetry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries corresponds to the development of the art of music, vocal and instrumental, from its first beginnings in the Latin hymns of the Church and the folk-songs of the European peoples, down to the great seventeenth century composers, Purcell, and Bach, and Handel. Mr. Saintsbury, in the introduction to his charming collection of seventeenth century songs and lyrics, seems to regard the excellence of the song-writing of even the less distinguished poets of the Elizabethan period as something inexplicable; but we should remember that these writers, even if not always skilled musicians, were in the midst of the spring-time of music, and wrote their words for musical setting, either by themselves or someone else. This may partly explain the goodness of their songs. It is true that many poets with no ear for music have written admirable verse, and even poems well adapted for music; but a man who can sing or appreciate singing is more likely to write a good song than a man who cannot. Shakspeare, among the greatest of song-writers, shows in many passages of his works, an intimate acquaintance with the musical art of his time, and never makes a mistake in his allusions to musical forms, or to instruments and their handling. In the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles I., even amateurs who played or sang were skilled musicians, with ears trained by having to

deal with stringed instruments, often difficult even to tune; while they had to fill in parts from figured basses. This involved some knowledge of composition and counterpoint. They could not merely sing at sight, but compose at sight; for musical education was then based upon the firm foundation of of counterpoint, an art:

"Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute;"

as anyone who hears the compositions of the old contrapuntists knows. Its very essence is the development of melody from a germinal phrase, and the setting of melody against melody so as to produce a series of satisfying harmonies.

In these concerts Mr. Dolmetsch has done for the music of this great period of the invention of lovely tunes, as of lovely lyrics, what no mere collector of songs or pieces could do for it, or for a lover of music. He has enabled his audiences to hear, and taught them to delight in, the exquisite effect of the old viols, each with its own distinct timbre, its own musical personality, sometimes in duett, sometimes as a "Chest of Viols" without other instruments, sometimes in combination with flute or harpsichord. Such "consorts of musicke" as these makes one feel the cheerful sanity of the Old Masters, and the liberty they enjoyed within the gradually widening limitations prescribed by the perfect law of contrapuntal form.

JOHN TODHUNTER.