

**DUBOURG
GEORGE**

THE VIOLIN

George Dubourg

The Violin

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The Violin / Some Account of That Leading Instrument and Its Most Eminent Professors, from Its Earliest Date to the Present Time; with Hints to Amateurs, Anecdotes, etc.:

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**PREFACE TO THE
PRESENT EDITION**

After a lapse of nearly sixteen years since this little work first appeared in print, I have been called upon to prepare it anew for the press, incorporating with it the additional matter necessary for the extension of the subject to the present time.

My new readers may like to know, at the outset, what is the intended scope of the following pages. This is soon explained. My object has been to present to the cultivators of the Violin, whether students or proficients, such a sketch (however

slight) of the rise and progress of that instrument, accompanied with particulars concerning its more prominent professors, and with incidental anecdotes, as might help to enliven their interest in it, and a little to enlarge what may be called their *circumstantial* acquaintance with it. This humble object has not been altogether, I trust, without its accomplishment; – and here, while commending my renovated manual to the indulgent notice of the now happily increasing community of violin votaries, I would not forget to acknowledge, gratefully, the liberal and generous appreciation with which, when it first ventured forth, it was met by the public press, and introduced into musical society.

G. D.

Brighton, August, 1852.

CHAPTER I

ORIGINAL AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE VIOLIN

First seat him somewhere, and derive his race. —
Dryden.

The Fiddle Family, like other tribes that have succeeded in making a noise in the world, has given exercise to the ingenuity of learned theorists and time-seekers, who have laboured to discover for it an origin as remote from our own era, as it is, I fear, from any kind of truth. It has probably been conceived that the Fiddle, associated as he has been, from generation to generation, with jigs, country-dances, fairs, junketings and other rusticities, had descended too low in the scale of society – that he had rendered himself, as Shakspeare for a while did his own genius, “stale and cheap to vulgar company” – and that he required to be reminded of his primitive dignity, and of his very high ancestral derivation – if he *had any*. This latter point was of course to be first established; but, as your zealous antiquary is a wholesale dealer in time, and is never at a loss for a few centuries to link his conjectures to, the matter was easy enough; indeed, the more doubtful, the better, since doubt is the very life of theory. Accordingly, we have been invited to fall back upon “the

ancients,” and to recognize the *Epigonion* as the dignified and classic prototype of our merry and somewhat lax little friend, the Fiddle. To certain ancient Greek tablets relative to music, which have been somewhere brought to light, Professor Murchard has minutely assigned the date of 709 years before the Christian era; and the following passage, Englished from his translation, is stoutly alleged by the antiquarian advocates of the glories of the violin race: – “But Pherekydes began the contest, and sat himself down before all the people, and played the *Epigonion*; – for he had improved the same; and he stretched four strings over a small piece of wood, and played on them with a smooth stick. But the strings sounded so, that the people shouted with joy.”

This is plausible enough, but far from conclusive. It is but the outline of a description, and admits of various modes of filling up. *If* the instrument partook *at all* of the violin character, it might seem, from the reference which its name bears to the *knees*, to have been the rude progenitor of either the double-bass or the violoncello, which have both, as is well known, their official post between the knees: but then, the prefix of ἐπί would denote that it was played *upon* the knees of the artist. “Very well,” says the antiquarian; “it was a fiddle *reversed*.” “Nay, Dr. Dryasdust, if you yourself *overturn* what you are about, I have no need to say more.” *Au reste*, let any body stretch four strings over a small piece of wood, and play on them with a smooth stick, and then take account of what it comes to. No, no; whatever the *Epigonion* may have been to the Greeks, he is nothing to *us*: he

may have been a respectable individual of the musical genus of *his* day, when people blew a shell or a reed, and called it music; but we cannot for a moment receive him as the patriarch of the Fiddle Family. As soon should we think of setting up Pherekydes against Paganini.

Dismissing the Epigonion, we come to the *Semicon*, another pretender of Greek origin. This also, we are farther told, was a *kind of violin*: but we deny that he was father to the *violin kind*. The *Semicon* is said to have been played on with a bow; and yet a learned German (Koch), in the fulness of his determination to have *strings* enough to his bow, has claimed no less than thirty-five, as the complement of the *Semicon*. How could any bow pay its devoirs distinctly to thirty-five strings? Here, then, the dilemma is this: either to translate the thing in question into a *bow* is to *traduce* the term, or else the *strings* are an impertinence. *Utrum horum mavis, accipe.*

If the word *plectrum* could, by any ingenuity, be established to mean *a bow*, quotations enough might be accumulated to prove that instruments played with bows had their origin in a very remote period. But the translation of the word into *a bow, or such like thing*, as we find it in the Dictionaries, arises simply from the want of a known equivalent – a deficiency which makes it necessary to adopt any term that offers even the shadow of a synonym.

It has been stated, on the authority of a passage from Euphorion's book on the Isthmian Games, that there was an

ancient instrument called *magadis*, which was surrounded by strings; that it was placed upon a pivot, upon which it turned, whilst the performer touched it with *the bow* (or, at least, the *plectrum*); and that this instrument afterwards received the name of *sambuce*.

The hieroglyphics of Peter Valerian, page 628, chap. 4, present the figure of a muse, holding, in her right hand, a kind of bass or contra-violin, the form of which is not *very* unlike that of our violins or basses.

Philostratus, moreover, who taught at Athens, during the reign of Nero, gives a description of the lyre, which has been thus translated: —

“Orpheus,” he says, “supported the lyre against his left leg, whilst he beat time by striking his foot upon the ground; in his right hand he held *the bow*, which he drew across the strings, turning his wrist slightly inwards. He touched the strings with the fingers of his left hand, keeping the knuckles perfectly straight.”

From this description (if *bow* it could be called, which bow was none), it would appear as if the lyre to which Philostratus alludes were, forsooth, the same instrument which the moderns call the *contra-violin*, or *viola di gamba*! To settle the matter thus, however, would be *indeed* to beg the question.

As before observed, the word *plectrum* is, in the dictionaries, translated by *bow*; but, even if this were a warranted rendering of the word, it remains to be ascertained not only whether the bows of the ancients were of a form and nature corresponding with

ours, but also whether they were used in the modern *way*. Did the ancients strike their bow upon the strings of the instrument – or did they draw forth the sound by means of friction? These questions are still undecided; but opinions preponderate greatly in favor of the belief that the plectrum was an implement of *percussion*, and therefore not at all a bow, in our sense.

A recent French writer, Monsieur C. Desmarais, in an ingenious inquiry into the Archology of the Violin, takes us back to the ancient Egyptians, to whom he assigns the primitive violin, under the name of the *chélys*, and suggests that its *form* must have resulted from a studious inspection of one of the heavenly constellations!

M. Baillet, in his Introduction to the *Méthode de Violon du Conservatoire*, speculating on the origin of the instrument, has a passage which, in English, runs thus: —

“It is presumed to have been known from the remotest times. On ancient medals, we behold Apollo represented as playing upon an instrument with three strings, similar to the violin. Whether it be to the God of Harmony that we should attribute the invention of this instrument, or whether it claim some other origin, we cannot deny to it somewhat that is divine.

“The form of the violin bears a considerable affinity to that of the lyre, and thus favors the impression of its being no other than a lyre brought to perfection, so as to unite, with the facilities of modulation, the important advantage of expressing prolonged sounds – an advantage which was not possessed by the lyre.”

This is pretty and fanciful, but far too vague to be at all satisfactory. Apollo might appear to play on an instrument, in which antiquarian ingenuity might discover some latent resemblance to the violin; but where was his *bow*? M. Baillot has not ventured to assert that he had one – and we may safely conclude that he had *not*, if we except the bow that was his admitted attribute. As for the affinity to the lyre, it is indeed as faint as the most determined genealogist, studious of an exercise, could wish.

It has been remarked, by some curious observer, that, among the range of statues at the head of the canal at Versailles, an Orpheus is seen (known by the three-headed dog that barks between his legs), to whom the sculptor has given *a violin*, upon which he appears scraping away with all the furor of a blind itinerant. But is the statue, or its original, an antique? We may rest in safe assurance that it is a modern-antique; as much so, as the ingenious figment of Nero's *fiddling* a capriccio to the roaring accompaniment of the flames of Rome!

As for the *fidicula* of the Romans (or rather, of the Latin Dictionary), it is evidently, as far as it has been made to apply to the fiddle, no legitimate family name. The *violin* very positively disowns all relationship with it, and leaves it to settle its claims with the *guitar*.

As far as the *mere name* goes, however, it is not impossible that a connection may exist, and that the word-hunting Skinner may be right in deriving the Anglo-Saxon word *fithete* from the

older German *vedel*, and thence from the Latin *fidicula*, which, it is hardly necessary to state, was any thing but a fiddle, and therefore “had no business” to lend its appellation in the way here noticed.

On the whole, as regards the pretensions alleged on the side of the ancients for the honor of having had the violin in existence among them, it may be safely remarked, that, if nothing like the *bow*, which is obviously connected most essentially with the expression and character of the violin, can be traced to their days, the violin itself, *à fortiori*, cannot be said to have belonged to them; and all those questionable shapes which have been speculatively put forward as possible fiddles, must be thrown back again into the field of antiquarian conjecture, to await some other appropriation. The following remarks by Dr. Burney may be taken as a fair summary of all that needs to be observed on this head:

“The ancients seem to have been wholly unacquainted with one of the principal expedients for producing sound from the strings of modern instruments: this is the *bow*. It has long been a dispute among the learned whether the violin, or any instrument of that kind, as now played with a *bow*, was known to the ancients. The little figure of Apollo, playing on a kind of violin, with something *like* a bow, in the Grand Duke’s *Tribuna* at Florence, which Mr. Addison and others supposed to be antique, has been proved to be *modern* by the Abbé Winkelmann and Mr. Mings: so that, as this was the only piece of sculpture reputed

ancient, in which any thing like a bow could be found, nothing more remains to be discussed relative to that point.” – (*Hist. of Music*, 4to. vol. i, p. 494.)

The Welch, who are notoriously obstinate genealogists, have not failed to mark the Fiddle for *their* own, and to assign him an origin, at some very distant date, among their native mountains. In support of this pretension, they bring forward a very ugly and clownish-looking fellow, with the uncouth name of *crwth*. This creature certainly belongs to them, and is so old as to have sometimes succeeded in being mistaken, in this country, for the father of the violin tribe – a mistake to which the old English terms of *crowd* for fiddle, and *crowder* for fiddler, seem to have lent some countenance. A little investigation, however, shows us that it was merely the name, and not the object itself, that we borrowed, for a time, from our Welch neighbours; and that, by a metonymy, more free than complimentary, we fastened the appellation of *crowd* upon the *violin*, already current among us by transmission from the continent. The confusion thence arising has occasioned considerable misapprehension: nor has the effect of it been limited to our own island boundaries; for a French writer, M. Fétis, in one of his Letters on the State of Music in England, reports the error, without any apparent consciousness of its being such. Let us quote his passage in English:

“The *cruth* is a bowed instrument, which is thought to have been the origin of the viola and violin. Its form is that of an *oblong square*, the lower part of which forms the body of the

instrument. It is mounted with four strings, and played on like a violin, but is more difficult in the treatment, because, not being hollowed out at the side, there is no free play for the action of the bow.”

“What!” exclaims the enquiring virtuoso, “is this box of a thing, this piece of base carpentry, this formal oblong square, to be supposed the foundation of that neat form and those graceful inflections which make up the ‘*complement externe*’ of what men call the violin? Can dulness engender fancy – and can straight lines and right angles have for their lineal descendant the ‘*line of beauty*?’” The soberest person would answer, this is quite unlikely; the man of taste would deny it to be in the nature of things. No, no; our Cambrian codger *may* have been a tolerable subject in his way – a good fellow for rough work among the mountains, and instrumental enough in the amusement of capering rusticity – but he must not be allowed, bad musician though we freely admit he may have been, to give himself *false airs*, and to assume honors to which his form and physiognomy give the lie. Let him be satisfied to be considered “*sui generis*,” unless he would rashly prefer illustrious illegitimacy, and be styled the *base violin*.¹

If we were disposed, in England proper, to get up a claim for the first local habitation afforded to the violin, we might put together a much better case for the instrument that was familiar to the Anglo-Saxon gleemen, as early as the 10th century, than can be shown in behalf of the candidate just dismissed. We

could produce an individual that should display a far better face, and should appear with, at least, no great disgrace to the Fiddle Family, though bearing about him none of the refinements of fashion. It may be as well to exhibit him at once: —

In this representation (borrowed from “Strutt’s Sports and Pastimes of the People of England”) we discern something which it is possible to call a fiddle, without much violence to our notions “de rerum natura.” There is grotesqueness, but not deformity: there is much of the general character of the true violin, though some of its most particular beauties are wanting. It is true that the sound-holes look as if no notes save *circulars* were to be permitted to issue through them — that the tail-piece seems forced to do duty for a bridge — that the sides have no indented middle, or waist, to give the aspect of elegance, and accommodate the play of the bow over the two extreme strings — that the finger-board is non-existent — and that the scroll, that crowning charm of the fiddle’s form, is but poorly made amends for by the excrescent oddity substituted at the end of the neck. With all this, however, there *is* visible warrant for calling it a *sort* of fiddle. Though even a forty-antiquary power might fail to prove it the origin of the stock, it has claims to be regarded as exhibiting no very remote analogy to the violin; and thus far, therefore, it may defy the competition of the *Crwth*. Whether it was really born in Saxon England, however, or introduced from Germany, might be a point for nice speculation, were it worth while to agitate the enquiry.

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Whither, then, are we to turn, after all, for the solution of this problem in musical genealogy? That the violin is of a respectable age, though not so old as what is commonly called antiquity, is a fact apparent to the least laborious of enquirers;

and it seems to have been the practice, with those who have had occasion to touch on this point, either to announce the said fact simply, and leave the reader to make the most of it, or to mix up with it, by way of elucidation, some general remark about the absence of light on the matter. "The origin of the violin," observes one of these authorities, "like that of most of the several musical instruments, is involved in obscurity. As a species of that genus which comprehends the viola, violoncello, and violone, or double-bass, *it must be very ancient.*" Similarly indefinite are the conclusions of others who have approached the subject; so that it becomes necessary to dispense with such embarrassing aid, and to *help oneself* to the truth, if it is, peradventure, to be gathered. To me, much meditating on this matter (if I may borrow Lord Brougham's classic form of speech), there seems reason to fix on Italy as the quarter to which we must look for the "unde derivatur" required. Say, thou soft "Ausonia tellus," mother of inventions and nurse of the arts, say, soft and sunny Italy, is it not to *thee* that belongs the too modest merit of having produced and cherished the infancy, even as thou hast confessedly supported and developed the after-growth and advancement, of the interesting musical being whose history, in its more secret passages, we are here exploring? Is it a world (as Sir Toby feelingly asks), is it a world to hide virtues in? Well, if we cannot obtain *direct* satisfaction, let us pursue the investigation of our point a little more circuitously.

The perfect instrument which we now delight to honor by

the name of the violin – the instrument complete in form and qualities – “totum in se teres atque rotundum” – appears to have been the result of a highly interesting series of improvements in the art of producing musical sounds from strings. How long a duration of time was occupied by the elaboration of these improvements respectively, is not readily to be ascertained, nor, perhaps, would the enquiry repay the trouble – but the general order of progression in the improvements themselves, is as clear as it is agreeable to contemplate. The first great advancement consisted in the *sounding-board*, by means of which invention a tone was produced, through the vibration of the wood, that was incomparably better and fuller than what was previously procured, through the mere vibration of the strings. As the human voice is evolved from the mouth under a concave roof, which serves it as a sounding-board, and gives additional grace and vigour to its inflections, so does the upper shell of the violin add a power of its own to the language of the strings. The next improvement in the instrument, thus extended in capability, was the *neck* or *finger-board*, which increased the range and variety of the sounds, by giving to each string the power of producing a series of notes. The *bow* was the next great step of advancement; and this, like other important inventions, has provoked much learned dispute as to the time and place of its origin, which however we shall not here more particularly revert to, for indeed, “non nostrum tantas componere lites.” With all these additions and appliances, we come not yet to the instrument

par excellence, the true violin; for an intermediate and inferior state remains to be gone through. The consideration of that state brings us to the regular construction of the several instruments known by the general name of *viol* (for we pass by the *rebec*, as being only a spurious or illegitimate kind of fiddle), that were in the most common use during the 16th, and till about the middle of the 17th, century. These were similar to each other in form, but in size were distinguished into the treble-viol, tenor-viol, and bass-viol. They had six strings, and a finger-board marked with frets, like that of the lute or guitar². Finally, as the crowning change, the glorious consummation, came the conversion of the *viol* into the *violin*, effected by a diminution of size, a reduction of strings, from six to four, and the abolition of those impediments to smoothness, and helps to irritation, the *frets*. The same reformation attended the other instruments of the *viol* tribe, which now became, *mutato nomine*, the viola and the violoncello.

In former days, we had the *viol* in,
'Ere the *true* instrument had come about:
But now we say, since *this* all ears doth win,
The *violin* hath put the *viol* out.

Thus, through a considerable tract of indefinite time, and a succession of definite changes, we reach the matured and accomplished instrument, the *Violin proper*; and then, if we recur to the question, to *whom* does it belong? the answer becomes

less difficult. It is to this instrument, this perfected production, that the Italians may, I think, exultingly point as their own; and, in doing so, they may well afford to be indifferent to all disputes about the title to those earlier apparitions, those crude and half-made-up resemblances to the fiddle, that were but as the abortions which, in human experience, sometimes precede a perfect birth. It is of sufficient notoriety that the earliest instruments *of excellence*, bearing the name of Violin, as well as the earliest players of eminence, were Italian. The Cremona fiddles of Hieronymus Amati (to go no farther back) were sent into this breathing world about two centuries and a half ago; and Baltazarini, the earliest great player of the genuine Violin on record, is known to have been imported as a curiosity from Italy, by Catherine de Medicis, in 1577. It is tolerably clear, too, that, as a *court* favourite, the Violin began its career in Italy – its progress, in that capacity, having been, as Burney observes, from Italy to France, and from France to England.

But the tie of Italian connection may be drawn more closely than this. Galilei, in his Dialogues (p. 147), states that both the Violin and the Violoncello were *invented* by the Italians; and he suggests more precisely the Neapolitans, as the rightful claimants of this honor. Dr. Burney, who does not attempt to settle the point, quotes the passage, to the above effect, from Galilei, and admits his own inability to confute it. Montaigne, whose travels brought him to Verona in 1580, has recorded, that there were *Violins* as well as organs there, to accompany the mass in the

great Church. Corelli's Violin, an instrument specially Italian, which afterwards passed into the possession of Giardini, was made in 1578, and its case was decorated by the master-hand of Annibale Caracci, probably several years *after* the instrument was finished; as Caracci at that date had numbered but eight of his own years.

Towards the end of the 16th century, the Violin is found indicated in some Italian scores, thus: —*piccoli Violini alla Francese*; which circumstance has been sometimes alleged as rendering it probable, that the reduction of the old viol or viola to the present dimensions of the Violin took place in *France*, rather than in Italy: but the fact does not seem to offer a sufficient basis for the conjecture, when it is considered that no instruments of French construction, corresponding with the Violin in its present form, and of as early a date as those which can be produced of Italian make, are known to exist. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that these *piccoli Violini*, or little Violins, were not identical with the Violin proper; — although Mr. Hogarth³ (from whose respectable authority I am rather loth to differ) quotes the phrase as one tending to the support of the French claim. The term in question, which occurs, particularly, in Monteverdi's Opera of *Orfeo*, printed at Venice in 1615, seems to me to imply merely some French modification of the already invented Italian model — a modification applying to the size, and possibly also to some minor details in the form.

The French writer, Mersennus, who designates all instruments

of the violin and viol class under the term *barbiton*, describes one of them, the least of the tribe, as the *lesser barbiton*. This latter was a small violin invented for the use of the dancing-masters of France, and of such form and dimensions as to be capable of being carried in a case or sheath in the pocket. It is the origin of the instrument which in England is called a *Kit*, and which is now made in the form of a violin. – Is it too great a stretch of conjecture, to hint, that this may, possibly, have been the kind of thing intended by the term above quoted?

That curious enquirer, Mr. Gardiner, in his “Music of Nature,” assigns to Italy the local origin of the Violin, but without placing the date as near to exactness as it might have been. He makes it to have been “about the year 1600.” He might safely have gone thirty or forty years farther back, at least, notwithstanding that the shape of the instrument, towards the end of the 16th century, has been supposed, by Hawkins, to have been rather vague and undetermined⁴. The transition from the old shapes to the new *had* occurred, though it was as yet far from universal. It is sufficient that the change had commenced.

Admitting the genuine and perfect violin to be rightfully assignable to the Italians, it may be of some interest, now, to present a few more records relating, principally, to the instrument in its *imperfect* character, when it bore only that sort of analogy to the true instrument, that the ‘satyr’ is said to have borne to ‘Hyperion.’

The “Musurgia, seu Praxis Musicæ,” of the Benedictine Monk

Luscinius, published in 1542, represents (coarsely cut in wood) as the bowed instruments then in use, the *rebec*, or three-stringed violin, and the *viol di gamba*. The instruments of the viol tribe, however, which are supposed to have been those that led more immediately to the construction of the true violin, considerably precede the above period in their date of origin. *Violars*, or performers on the viol, whose business it was to accompany the Troubadours in their singing of the Provençal poetry⁵, were common in the 12th century; and, in a treatise on music, written by Jerome of Westphalia in the 13th century, there is particular mention made of the instrument known by the name of viol.

Under various modifications of the term *fiddle*, there are to be found many very early allusions to an instrument, such as it was, bearing some resemblance to the violin. *Fidle* is a Saxon word of considerable antiquity; and from the old Gothic are traced the derivations of

1. Middle High German. *Videl* (noun), *Videlære* (noun personal), *Videln* (verb, to fiddle), *Videl-boge* (fiddle bow).
2. Icelandic. *Fidla*.
3. Danish. *Fedel*.

Then we have *Vedel*, *Veel*, *Viool* (Dutch); *Vedel*, *Vedele* (Flemish), *Fiedel*, *Fidel*, *Geige* (Modern German).

Fythele, *Fithete*, – and *Fythelers* (fiddlers) are alluded to in the Old English Romances. In the legendary life of St. Christopher, written about the year 1200, is this passage: —

...Cristofre hym served longe;
The Kynge loved melodye of *fithete* and of songe.

The poet Lidgate, at the beginning of the 15th century, writes of

Instrumentys that did excelle,
Many moo than I kan telle:
Harpys, *Fythales*, and eke Rotys, &c.

Chaucer, in his “Canterbury Tales,” says of the Oxford Clerk, that he was so fond of books and study, as to have loved Aristotle better

Than robes rich, or *fidel*, or sautrie —

and his Absolon, the Parish-Clerk, a genius of a different cast, and exquisitely described, is a spruce little fellow, who sang, danced, and played on the species of fiddle then known. An instrument remotely allied to the fiddle – the *ribible*, a diminutive of *rebec*, a small viol with three strings – is also alluded to by Chaucer. Referring to a later period, there is evidence to show that an instrument of the violin kind was used in England before the dissolution of monasteries, in the time of our eighth Henry, in the fact that something similar to it in shape is seen depicted upon a glass window of the chancel of Dronfield church, in the county of Derby; an edifice which was erected early in the sixteenth

century.

At what period the *legitimate* violin may have found its way from Italy into this country, it would, I fear, be very difficult to ascertain with exactness; but it is easy to suppose that, when once that event had occurred, the neater shape and superior qualities exhibited by the new comer, would speedily render him the model for imitation, and lead to the multiplication of his species here, and to the displacement of the baser resemblances to him. The true instrument, however, was for a long while among us, ere its merits came into just appreciation. Until the period of the Restoration, it was held, for the most part, in very low esteem, and seldom found in less humble hands than those of fiddlers at fairs, and such like itinerant caterers of melody for the populace⁶. Its grand attribute, the superior power of expressing almost all that a human voice can produce, except the articulation of words, was at first so utterly unknown, that it was not considered a gentleman's instrument, or worthy of being admitted into "good company." The lute⁷, the harp, the viol, and theorbo, were in full possession of the public ear, and the poetic pen; nor has this latter authority ever been thoroughly propitiated by the later-born child of Melos, whose first screams on coming into the world may perhaps have irrecoverably alarmed the sensitive sons of Apollo. Moreover, poetry is ever apt to prefer the old to the new, and often recoils with distaste from what is modern. "Though the violin surpasses the lute," says a recent ingenious writer, "as much as the musket surpasses the bow and arrow, yet Cupid has

not yet learned to wound his votaries with a bullet, nor have our poets begun to write odes or stanzas to their violins.”

In the 39th Queen Elizabeth, a statute was passed by which “Ministrels, wandering abroad,” were included among “rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars,” and were adjudged to be punished as such. “This act,” says Percy, in his *Reliques of English Poetry*, “seems to have put an end to the profession.” That writer suggests, however, that although the character ceased to exist, the appellation might be continued, and applied to fiddlers, or other common musicians; and in this sense, he adds, it is used in an ordinance in the time of Cromwell (1656), wherein it is enacted that if any of the “persons commonly called *Fiddlers* or *Minstrels* shall at any time be taken playing, fiddling, and making music in any inn, alehouse, or tavern, or shall be taken proffering themselves, or desiring or intreating any ... to hear them play or make music in any of the places aforesaid,” they are to be “adjudged and declared to be rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars⁸.” By a similar change or declension, according to Mr. Percy, John of Gaunt’s *King of the Minstrels* came, at length, to be called, like the *Roi des Violons* in France, *King of the Fiddles*—it being always to be borne in mind, nevertheless, that it was only as yet a baser kind of instrument which brought its professors into such *scrapes*⁹.

The term *crowd*, as well as that of *fiddle*, was commonly used in England before the appearance of the perfect Violin, but appears to have been soon disused (along with the barbarous

instrument it designated) after that period. Butler, in his “Hudibras,” employs both terms indiscriminately, and seems to find enjoyment in linking them with mean and ludicrous associations – a tendency which must be allowed to have been quite in keeping with the feeling of the times he describes. His motley rabble, whom he puts in the way of the knight and his squire, were special affecters of the instrument he delights to dishonour,

And to *crack'd fiddle*, and hoarse tabor,
In merriment did drudge and labor.

He makes contemptuous allusion, also, to certain persons

That keep their consciences in cases,
As fiddlers do their *crowds* and bases.

Crowdero, the fiddle-noted agent in the story, is made to cut, on the whole, a very sorry figure. Thus, as to his instrument, and his manner of calling it into exercise:

A *squeaking engine* he applied
Unto his neck, on north-east side,
Just where the hangman does dispose,
To special friends, the knot of noose.

When the knight, in the outset of his career, meets the

aforesaid rabble, with the aggravating accompaniment of the bear and fiddler, and counsels them to peace and dispersion, he says

But, to that purpose, first surrender
he prime offender!

It is true that the mettle put forth by Crowdero, in the ensuing general fight, raises him a little out of the mire of meanness: but then, the weapon with which he batters the cranium of the prostrate Hudibras – to wit, his own wooden leg – has the effect of disturbing the small dignity which his gleam of valour might have shed over him; and, besides, he is speedily exhibited in reverse, being vanquished in turn by Ralpho the Squire, and forced into the ignominious confinement of the stocks; while Ralpho exultingly says to Hudibras, the fiddle is your *trophy*,

And, by your doom, must be allow'd
To be, or be no more, a crowd.

In France, certain ancient and respectable monuments, and particularly a figure on the portico of the venerable Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, representing King Chilperic with a sort of Violin in his hand, have been referred to as proofs that an instrument of this nature was very early held in esteem in that country; and the minstrels in the highest estimation with the public, were at all times the best *Violists* of their age. Among

the instruments represented in the beautiful illuminations of the splendid copy of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, in the Bodleian library at Oxford, are Viols with three strings, played upon with a clumsy bow.

In Italy, as in France, the viol appears to have enjoyed earlier favour than in England, where the fiddle or *crowd* (the descendant, probably, of the Welsh instrument *crwth*) was its predecessor. The instruments chiefly used by the ladies and gentlemen in the Decameron, are the lute and the viol – upon which latter some of the *ladies* are represented as performing.

An ingenious Piedmontese, Michele Todini, published a pamphlet at Rome, 1676, wherein are described various musical inventions of his own, “of special merit, though of little note.” Amongst them were two Violins, the pitch of one of which could, by an adroit mechanical contrivance, be at once heightened a whole tone, a third, or even a fifth; while the other, under the usual strings, had a second set of strings, like those of a kit, tuned in the octave above, and was so contrived that the Violin and kit might either be played separately, or both together, at the pleasure of the performer. In the 23rd Chapter of this little tract is a description of a *Viola di gamba*, so constructed, that, without shifting the neck, all the four kinds of Violins, namely, the treble Violin, the contralto (or *Viola bastarda*), and the tenor and bass viol, could be played upon it. Todini had originally given the bass of this instrument an unusual depth; but he abandoned that, when he invented the *double bass*, – which instrument he was the first

to introduce and play upon in oratorios, concerts, and serenades.

The arms and seal of the town of Alzei, in the neighbourhood of Worms, consist of a crowned lion rampant, holding a *fiddle* in his paws. The *fiddle* alone appears to have been the original bearing; for the palatine lion was first joined to the *fiddle* when Duke Conrad of Hohenstauffen was enfeoffed by the Emperor Frederick I with the Palatinate of the Rhine. His son-in-law, the Palsgrave Henry, calls the Steward (*Trucksess*) of Alzei, his vassal, in a bill of feoffment, dated in 1209, and in another document, 1211. This Steward, however, and Winter of Alzei, bore the *fiddle* as their arms. On account of these arms, the inhabitants of Alzei are mockingly called *fiddlers* by their neighbours¹⁰.

Connected with the history of the instrument in England, there is a curious old custom, now “invisible, or dimly seen,” and I know not when commenced, which is thus described in Hone’s Table Book: —

“The concluding dance at a country wake, or other general meeting, is the ‘Cushion Dance;’ and if it be not called for, when the company are tired with dancing, the *fiddler*, who has an interest in it, which will be seen hereafter, frequently plays the tune to remind them of it. A young man of the company leaves the room, the poor young women, uninformed of the plot against them, suspecting nothing; but he no sooner returns, bearing a cushion in one hand and a pewter pot in the other, than they are aware of the mischief intended, and would certainly make

their escape, had not the bearer of cushion and pot, aware of the invincible aversion which young women have to be saluted by young men, prevented their flight by locking the door, and putting the key in his pocket. The dance then begins.

“The young man advances to the fiddler, drops a penny in the pot, and gives it to one of his companions. Cushion then dances round the room, followed by pot, and when they again reach the fiddler, the cushion says, in a sort of recitative, accompanied by the music, ‘This dance it will no farther go.’

“The fiddler, in return, sings or says (for it partakes of both), ‘I pray, kind Sir, why say you so?’

“The answer is, ‘Because Joan Sanderson won’t come to.’

“‘But,’ replies the fiddler, ‘she must come to, and she *shall* come to, whether she will or no.’

“The young man, thus armed with the authority of the village musician, recommences his dance round the room, but stops when he comes to the girl he likes best, and drops the cushion at her feet. She puts her penny in the pewter pot, and kneels down with the young man on the cushion; and he salutes her.

“When they rise, the woman takes up the cushion, and leads the dance, the man following, and holding the skirt of her gown; and, having made the circuit of the room, they stop near the fiddler, and the same dialogue is repeated, except that, as it is now the woman who speaks, it is *John* Sanderson who won’t come to, and the fiddler’s mandate is issued to *him*, not to her.

“The woman drops the cushion at the feet of her favourite

man: the same ceremony and the same dance are repeated, till every man and woman (the pot-bearer last) have been taken out, and all have danced round the room in a file. The *pence* are the perquisite of the *fiddler*. There is a description of this dance in Miss Hutton's 'Oakwood Hall.'"

Then follows, in Hone's Book, a further illustration of this curious custom, in "numerous verse" – but the prose account is here sufficient.

The dialogue in the old puppet dramas (says Strutt) were mere jumbles of absurdity and nonsense, intermixed with low immoral discourses passing between Punch and the fiddler, for the orchestra rarely admitted of more than one minstrel; and these flashes of merriment were made offensive to decency by the actions of the puppet. In the reign of James II, there was a noted merry-andrew named Philips; "This man," says Granger, "was some time fiddler to a puppet-show; in which capacity he held many a dialogue with Punch, in much the same strain as he did afterwards with the mountebank doctor, his master upon the stage. This zany, being regularly educated, had confessedly the advantage of his brethren."

The following may be seen in volume the 1st of Purcell's Catches, on two persons of the name of Young, father and son, who lived in St. Paul's Churchyard – The one was an excellent instrument-maker, and the other an excellent performer on the fiddle.

You scrapers that want a good fiddle, well strung,
You must go to the man that is old, while he's Young; 27
But if this same fiddle you fain would play bold,
You must go to his son, who'll be Young when he's old.
There's old Young and young Young, both men of renown,
Old sells, and Young plays, the best fiddle in town;
Young and old live together, and may they live long,
Young, to play an old fiddle; old, sell a new song!

The zealous, ingenious, minute and gossiping Anthony Wood, to whose journalizing propensity we are indebted for a free insight into the state of music at Oxford, during the time of the Civil War (when musical sounds were scarcely any where else to be heard in the kingdom), was an ardent admirer of the violin, while its admirers were yet scarce; and has left us, in his life, written by himself, some particulars relating to the instrument, that are too pleasant, as well as curious, to be here passed by. Let me introduce this quaint worthy, speaking of himself in the third person, and under the abridged designation of A. W.

In 1651, "he began to exercise his natural and insatiable genie to music. He exercised his hand on the violin, and, having a good eare to take any tune at first hearing, he could quickly draw it out from the violin, but not with the same tuning of the strings that others used. He wanted understanding, friends and money, to pick him out a good master; otherwise he might have equalled in that instrument, and in singing, any person then in the University. He had some companions that were musical, but they wanted

instruction as well as he.”

The next year, being obliged to go into the country, for change of air and exercise, with a view to rid himself of an ague, he states that “while he continued there, he followed the plow on *well*-days, and sometimes plowed: and, having had, from his most tender years, an extraordinary ravishing delight in music, he practised there, without the help of an instructor, to play on the Violin. It was then that he tuned his strings in fourths, and *not* fifths, according to the manner; and having a good eare, and being ready to sing any tune upon hearing it once or twice, he could play it also in a short time, with the said way of tuning, which was never knowne before.

“After he had spent the summer in a lonish and retired condition, he returned to Oxon; and, being advised by some persons, he entertained a Master of Musick to teach him the usual way of playing on the violin, that is, by having every string tuned *five* notes lower than the one going before. The master was Charles Griffith, one of the musicians belonging to the City of Oxon, whom he then thought to be a most excellent artist: but when A. W. improved himself on that instrument, he found he was not so. He gave him 2s. 6d. entrance, *and so quarterly*. This person, after he had extremely wondered how he could play so many tunes as he did by *fourths*, without a director or guide, tuned his violin by *fifths*, and gave him instructions how to proceed, leaving then a lesson with him to practice against his next coming.

“Having, by 1654, obtained a proficiency in musick, he and his companions were not without silly frolicks, not now to be maintained.” – What should these frolics be, but to disguise themselves in poor habits, and, like country fiddlers, scrape for their livings! After strolling about to Farringdon Fair, and other places, and gaining money, victuals and drink for their trouble, they were overtaken, in returning home, by certain soldiers, who forced them to play in the open field, and then left them

But if this same fiddle you fain would play bold,
You must go to his son, who'll be Young when he's old.
There's old Young and young Young, both men of renown,
Old sells, and Young plays, the best fiddle in town;
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three or four and twenty yeares of age. He was much admired at the meetings, and exceedingly pitied by all the facultie for his loss.”

“A. W. was now advised to entertain one William James, a dancing-master, to instruct him on the violin, who, by some, was accounted excellent on that instrument, and the rather because it was said that he had obtained his knowledge in dancing and music in France. He spent, in all, half a yeare with him, and gained some improvement; yet at length he found him not a compleat master of his facultie, as Griffith and Parker were not: and, to say the truth, there was no compleat master in Oxon for that instrument, because *it had not been hitherto used in consort* among gentlemen, only by common musitians, who played but two parts. The gentlemen in private meetings, which A. W. frequented, played three, four, and five parts with viols¹²— as treble-viol, tenor, counter-tenor, and bass, with an organ, virginal, or harpsicon joined with them; and they esteemed *a violin* to be an instrument only belonging to a *common fiddler*, and could not endure that it should come among them, for feare of making their meetings to be vain and fiddling. But, before the restoration of King Charles II, and *especially after*, viols began to be out of fashion, and only violins used, as treble violin, tenor, and base violin; and the King, according to the French mode, would have *twenty-four violins* playing before him while he was at meals, as being more airie and brisk than *viols*.”

Under the year 1658, he tells us that “Tho. Baltzar, a Lubecker borne, and the most famous artist for the violin that the world had yet produced (!), was now in Oxon, and this day, July 24, A. W. was with him, and Mr. Ed. Lowe, at the house of Will. Ellis. A. W. did then and there, to his very great astonishment, heare him play on the violin. He then saw him run up his fingers to the end of the finger-board of the violin, and run them back insensibly; and all with alacrity and *very good tune*, which he nor any in England saw the like before. A. W. entertained him and Mr. Low with what the house could then afford, and afterwards he invited them to the taverne; but they being engaged to goe to other company, he could no more heare him play or see him play at that time. Afterwards he came to one of the weekly meetings at Mr. Ellis’s house, and he played to the wonder of all the auditory, and exercising his finger and instrument several wayes to the utmost of his power. Wilson thereupon, the public Professor, the greatest judge of musick that ever was, did, after his humoursome way, stoope downe to Baltzar’s feet, to see whether he had a huff (hoof) on, that is to say, to see whether he was a devil or not, because he acted beyond the parts of man.”

“About this time it was that Dr. John Wilkins, warden of Wadham, the greatest *curioso* of his time, invited him (Baltzar) and some of the musitians to his lodgings in that Coll. purposely to have a consort, and to see and heare him play. The instruments and books were carried thither, but none could be persuaded there to play against him in consort on the violin. At length the

company perceiving A. W. standing behind in a corner neare the dore, they haled him in among them, and play, forsooth, he must against him. Whereupon he, being not able to avoid it, took up a violin, as poor Troylus did against Achilles¹³. He abashed at it, yet honour he got by playing with and against such a grand master as Baltzar was.”

The restoration of monarchy and episcopacy in England (observes Dr. Burney) seems to have been not only favorable to sacred music, but to secular; for it may be ascribed to the particular pleasure which Charles II received from the gay and sprightly sound of the violin, that this instrument was introduced at Court, and the houses of the nobility and gentry, for any other purpose than country-dances, and festive mirth. Hitherto there seem to have been no public concerts; and, in the music of the chamber, in the performance of *Fancies* on instruments, which had taken place of vocal madrigals and motets, the violin had no admission, the whole business having been done by *viols*. Charles II, who, during the usurpation, had spent a considerable time on the continent, where he heard nothing but French music – upon his return to England, in imitation of Louis XIV, established a band of violins, tenors and bases, instead of the viols, lutes and cornets, of which the Court Band used to consist. Soon after the establishment of this band, Matthew Lock held the appointment of master to it; and the same title was conferred, about 1673, on Cambert, a French musician, who had preceded Lulli in composing for, and superintending, the Opera at Paris, and who

came over to England after Lulli had obtained the transfer of his patent.

From this time, the Violin Family began to rise in reputation among the English, and had an honorable place assigned them, in the music of the Court, the theatres and the chamber; while the succession of performers and compositions, with which the nation was afterwards supplied from Italy and elsewhere, stimulated the practice and established the character of this class of instruments, which have ever since been universally acknowledged to be the pillars of a well-ordered orchestra, and more capable of perfect intonation, expression, brilliancy, and effect, than any other that have ever been invented. It should be observed, however, that, although the revival of the theatres at the Restoration was followed by the introduction of what were termed *act-tunes* (short compositions played betwixt the acts of the drama), whereby the public services of the violin were brought into requisition, yet the state of dramatic music was, for some years, too low to admit of those services being very important. The music of the drama had attained scarcely any separate development, but was still confounded with that of the church, to the disadvantage of both. All the most noted composers for the theatre, for several years after the Restoration, were members of cathedral and collegiate churches – a circumstance which encouraged a jester, Tom Brown, to remark that “men of the musical profession hung betwixt the church and the play-house, like Mahomet’s tomb betwixt two

load-stones.”

A general passion for the violin, and for pieces expressly composed for it, as well as a taste for Italian music, seem to have been excited in this country about the *end* of Charles the Second's reign, when French music and French politics became equally odious to a great part of the nation. The hon. Mr. North, who listened attentively to every species of performance, says that “the decay of French music, and favor of the Italian, came on by degrees. Its beginning was accidental, and occasioned by the arrival of *Nicola Matteis*; he was an excellent musician; performed wonderfully on the violin. His manner was singular; but he excelled, in one respect, all that had been heard in England before: his *arcata*, or manner of bowing, his shakes, divisions, and indeed his whole style of performance, was surprising, and every *stroke of his bow* was a *mouthful*. When he first came hither, he was very poor; but not so poor as proud, which prevented his being heard, or making useful acquaintance, for a long time, except among a few merchants in the City, who patronized him; and, setting a high value on his condescension, he made them indemnify him for the want of more general favor. By degrees, however, he was more noticed, and was introduced to perform at Court. But his demeanor did not please, and he was thought capricious and troublesome, as he took offence if any one whispered while he played; which was a kind of attention which had not been much *in fashion* at our Court. It was said that the Duke of Richmond would have settled a

pension upon him, though he wished him to change his manner of playing, and would needs have one of his pages show him a better. Matteis, for the sake of the jest, condescended to take lessons of the page; but learned so fast, that he soon outran him in his own way. But he continued so outrageous in his demands, particularly for his *solos*, that few would comply with them, and he remained in narrow circumstances and obscurity a long while; nor would his superior talents ever have contributed to better his fortune, had it not been for the zeal and friendly offices of two or three dilettanti, his admirers. These, becoming acquainted with him, and courting him in his own way, had an opportunity of describing to him the temper of the English, who, if humoured, would be liberal; but, if uncivilly treated, would be sulky, and despise him and his talents; assuring him that, by a little complaisance, he would neither want employment nor money. By advice so reasonable, they at length brought him into such good temper, that he became generally esteemed and sought after; and, having many scholars, though on moderate terms, his purse filled apace, which confirmed his conversion. After this, he discovered a way of acquiring money which was then perfectly *new* in this country: for, observing how much his scholars admired the lessons he composed for them (which were all *duos*), and that most musical gentlemen who heard them wished to have copies of them, he was at the expense of having them neatly engraved on copper plates, in oblong octavo, which was the beginning of engraving music in England; and these he

presented, well bound, to lovers of the art and admirers of his talents, for which he often received three, four and five guineas. And so great were his encouragement and profits in this species of traffic, that he printed four several books of *Ayres for the Violin*, in the same form and size.”

Of the jealousy which attended the progress of the violin in public favor among the English, there occurs some amusing evidence in the “*Musick’s Monument*” of that rich, exuberant and right pleasant egotist, Thomas Mace, published in 1676. This worthy, who exalted the lute and viol, his own peculiar instruments, looked with distrust on the growing importance and credit of that which had been before so imperfectly understood and insufficiently employed. In speaking of the instruments till then in chief use, and the propriety of balancing their relative proportions of sound in concerted pieces, he remarks, complainingly – “*the scoulding violins will out-top them all.*” In a sort of dialogue, in rhyme, between the author and his lamenting lute, he makes the latter exclaim: —

The world is grown so slight! full of new fangles,
And takes its chief delight in jingle-jangles,
With *fiddle-noises*, &c.

CHAPTER II

THE ITALIAN SCHOOL

“Oh! known the earliest, and esteemed the most”

Byron.

Having shown, on such evidence as I have been able to adduce, that the Italians are, most probably, the rightful claimants of the distinction which attaches to the *invention* of the modern or *true* violin, it is now to be considered by what bright array of names, by what successive efforts of skill and genius, they have likewise become entitled to the greater distinction of having been the first to develop the wonderful powers of the instrument, and the chief agents through whom its charming dominion in the realms of music was diffused, ere the great German composers, in more recent days, applied their powers to the extension and enrichment of the field for stringed instruments.

In casting a glance over the catalogue of bright Italian names, we find two, that demand to be especially noted for their great influence in advancing the progress of the “leading instrument,” and that serve indeed to mark two main epochs in its history. These are Corelli and Viotti – the first constituting the head of the old school, the last that of the modern; and each (it may be parenthetically said) almost as interesting to contemplate in personal character, as in professional eminence.

The intermediate names, most entitled to attention, are Tartini, Geminiani and Giardini. These, with others of considerable celebrity, though of less effective influence in the formation of what we have designated the Italian School, will be here noticed critically and biographically, according to their several pretensions and proceedings. Before we come to Corelli, however, there are some few to be treated of in the character of his predecessors, and as having prepared the way for his more dignified and important career.

Baltazarini has been already designated as the earliest violin-player of real eminence that the annals of music present to notice. His celebrity was much extended by the transplanting of his talent into France, where he acquired the new appellation of De Beaujoyeux, by virtue of the delight he afforded to a people whose natural gaiety of temperament could not but assort happily with the lighter range of sounds so readily evoked from the violin. It was in 1577, that Baltazarini, with *a band of violins*, was sent from Piedmont by Marshal Brissac to Queen Catherine de Medicis, who appointed him her “Premier Valet de Chambre,” and Master of her Band. France has reason to be grateful to his memory, and Italy may fairly be proud of it.

Giuseppe Guami, organist of Lucca Cathedral, who published, in 1586, some voluminous compositions belonging to the class of *cantiones sacræ*, or motetts, is cited by Draudius, in his “Bibliotheca Classica,” as an excellent performer on the violin.

Another early violinist, Agostino Aggazzari, born of a noble family at Siena, and a scholar of Viadana, appears to have been the first who introduced instrumental Concertos into the Church; though Dr. Burney supposes that these Concertos must only be understood in the very qualified sense of *Salmi Concertati*, or psalms accompanied with violins; and he adds, that Concertos *merely* instrumental, either for the church or chamber, seem to have had no existence till about the time of Corelli.

Carlo Farina, of Mantua, who published, in 1628, a Collection of "Pavans and Sonatas" for the violin, is recorded by Walther (in his Musical Lexicon), as having figured in the service of the Elector of Saxony, as a celebrated performer on the instrument.

Michael Angelo Rossi, a composer, as well as an able violinist, signalized himself somewhat oddly at Rome, in 1632, by performing the part of Apollo, in a musical drama, with the violin as the expressive symbol and exponent of his melodial powers, *instead* of the classically attributed lyre. The strangeness of the anomaly was doubtless lost sight of amidst the enjoyment it was the means of conferring: nor would the example, were it taken up in our own times, by a competent artist, be likely to fail in producing a similar subserviency of taste to pleasure.

If, in *these* days, the man who plays Apollo
Like charms could conjure from the fiddle's hollow,
We, too, should find the heaven-descended lyre
Omitted "by particular desire!"
And Phœbus, fitted with a fiddle so,

Would dart fresh wonders from his newer *bow*!

Though there was only one violin employed (observes Dr. Burney) in the first operas by Jacopo Peri and Monteverdi, yet, as the musical drama improved, and the orchestra was augmented, the superiority of that instrument was soon discovered by its effects, not only in the theatre, but in private performances; and the most eminent masters, without knowing much of its peculiar genius or powers, thought it *no degradation* to compose pieces expressly for the use of its votaries. Among the most early of these productions, may be ranked the *Suonate per Chiesa* of Legrenzi, published at Venice, 1655; *Suonate da Chiesa e Camera*, 1656; *Una Muta di Suonate* (a Variety of Sonatas), 1664; and *Suonate a due Violini e Violone*, 1677.

The next individual of eminence in connexion with the instrument is Giambattista Bassani, of Bologna, whose name derives additional lustre from his having been the violin-master of Corelli. Bassani was a man of extensive knowledge and abilities in his art, having been a successful composer for the church, the theatre and the chamber, between the years 1680 and 1703, as well as an excellent performer on the violin. His sonatas for that instrument, and his accompaniments for it to his masses, motetts, psalms and cantatas, manifest a knowledge of the finger-board and the bow, which appears in the works of no other composer anterior to Corelli; and the lovers of the pure harmony and simple melody of that admirable master, would still

receive great pleasure from the performance of Bassani's sonatas for violins and a bass. Specimens of Bassani's music may be found in Latrobe's and Stephens's Selections.

The names of Torelli, Valentini, and the elder Veracini, may be dismissed with a brief mention; because, though of eminence in their day, they are not connected with any very marked influence on the art; and the published works which they have given to the world have long since attained a dormant state. It should be observed, however, as illustrating the very capricious nature of *fashion*, that Valentini for a while eclipsed Corelli himself in popularity.

Arcangelo Corelli, under whose able direction the violin may be said to have first acquired the definite character and regulated honors of *a school*,¹⁴ was a native of Fusignano, a town situated near Imola, in the territory of Bologna, and was born in the month of February, 1653. His first instructor was Matteo Simonelli, by whom he was taught the rudiments of music, and the art of practical composition; but, the genius of Corelli leading him to prefer secular to ecclesiastical music, he afterwards became a disciple of Bassani.

Corelli entertained an early propensity for the violin, and, as he advanced in years, laboured incessantly in the practice of it. It has been said, though without authority, that, in the year 1672, he went to Paris, and was driven thence by the jealousy and violence of Lully, who could not brook so formidable a rival.

In 1680, he visited Germany, and met with a reception suitable

to his merit, from most of the German princes, but particularly from the Elector of Bavaria, in whose service he was retained, and continued for some time. After a few years' residence abroad, he returned to Rome, and there pursued his studies with assiduity. It was at Rome that he published (about 1683) his first *twelve Sonatas*. In 1685, the second set appeared, under the title of *Balletti da Camera*. In 1690, he gave to the press the third "Opera" of his Sonatas; and in 1694, the fourth, which, consisting of movements fit for *dancing*, like the second, he called *Balletti da Camera*. This species of instrumental composition, the sonata, first imagined in the course of the 17th century, has been fixed, in many respects, by Corelli.

The proficiency of Corelli on his favourite instrument became so great, that his fame was extended throughout Europe, and the number of his pupils grew very considerable; for, not only his own countrymen, but even persons from distant kingdoms, resorted to him for instruction, as the greatest master of the violin that had, at that period, been heard of in the world. It does not appear, indeed, that he had attained a power of *execution* in any degree comparable to that of later professors. The style of his performance was, however, learned, elegant, and occasionally impressed with feeling; while his *tone* was firm and even. Geminiani, who was well acquainted with it, used expressively to compare it with that of a sweet trumpet. One of those who heard him perform, has stated that, during the whole time, his countenance was distorted, his eyes were as red as fire,

and his eye-balls rolled as if he were in agony. This was the enthusiasm of genius – the influence of the “*præsens divus*,” Apollo – the exalted state so well characterized by the poet’s exclamation,

“*Est Deus in nobis – agitante calescimus illo!*”

About the year 1690, the Opera had arrived at a flourishing state in Rome, and Corelli led the band as principal Violin¹⁵. It was not till ten years after this date, that he published his *Solos*,¹⁶ the work by which he acquired the greatest reputation during his life-time, and to which, in its established character of a text-book for students, the largest share of attention on the whole has been directed. It was the fifth in the series of his publications, and was issued at Rome under the following title: – “*Sonate a Violini e Violone o Cimbalo: Opera Quinta, Parte prima, Parte seconda: Preludii, Allemande, Correnti, Gighe, Sarabande, Gavotte, e Follia.*” This work was dedicated to Sophia Charlotte, Electress of Brandenburg; and it was these Solo Sonatas that the author himself was accustomed to perform on particular occasions.

Corelli’s great patron at Rome was Cardinal Ottoboni, the distinguished encourager of learning and the polite arts, to whom, in 1694, he dedicated his *Opera Quarta*,¹⁷ and in whose palace he constantly resided, “*col spezioso carrattere d’attuale Servitore*” of his Eminence, as he expresses himself in the dedication – with more of the humility of gratitude, by the

by, than of the independence of genius. Crescembini, speaking of the splendid and majestic “Academia,” or Concert, held at Cardinal Ottoboni’s every Monday evening, observes that the performance was regulated by Arcangelo Corelli, that most celebrated professor of the violin – “famosissimo professore di violino.” Another title, expressive of the high consideration in which he was held by his contemporaries, is that applied to him by Francesco Gasparini, who calls him “Virtuosissimo di violino, e vero *Orfeo* di nostro tempo.”

It was at Cardinal Ottoboni’s that Corelli became acquainted with Handel, of whom the following anecdote is related. On one of the musical evenings given there, a Serenata, written by the latter, entitled *Il Trionfo del Tempo*, was ordered to be performed, out of compliment to this great composer. Whether the style of the overture was new to Corelli, or whether he attempted to modify it according to his taste and fancy, does not appear¹⁸; but Handel, giving way to his natural impetuosity of temper, snatched the violin from his hand. Corelli, with that gentleness which always marked his character, simply replied: – “Mio caro Sassone, questa musica è nello stile Francese, di che io non m’intendo.” – “My dear Saxon, this music is in the French style, with which I am not acquainted.”

The biography of Corelli has received the accession of several interesting anecdotes, through one of his most illustrious pupils, Geminiani, who was himself an eye and an ear witness of the matters he has related. These may find a fitting place here.

At the time when Corelli was at the zenith of his reputation, a royal invitation reached him from the Court of Naples, where a great curiosity prevailed to hear his performance. The unobtrusive *Maestro*, not a little loth, was at length induced to accept the invitation; but, lest he should not be well accompanied, he took with him his own second violin and violoncello players. At Naples he found Alessandro Scarlatti and several other masters¹⁹, who entreated him to play some of his concertos before the king. This he, for a while, declined, on account of his whole band not being with him, and there was no time, he said, for a rehearsal. At length, however, he consented, and, in great fear, performed the first of them. His astonishment was very great to find that the Neapolitan band executed his concertos almost as accurately at sight as his own band after repeated rehearsals, and when they had almost got them by heart. “*Si suona* (said he to Matteo, his second violin) *a Napoli!*” – “They play, at Naples!”

After this, he being again admitted into his Majesty's presence, and desired to perform one of his sonatas, the king found the adagio so long and dry, that, being tired of it, he *quitted the room*, to the great mortification of Corelli. Afterwards, he was desired to lead, in the performance of a masque composed by Scarlatti, which was to be executed before the king. This he undertook, but, owing to Scarlatti's very limited acquaintance with the violin, Corelli's part was somewhat awkward and difficult; in one place it went up to F, and when they came

to that passage, Corelli failed, and could not execute it; but he was astonished, beyond measure, to hear Petrillo, the Neopolitan leader, and the other violins, perform with ease that which had baffled his utmost skill. A song succeeded this, in C minor, which Corelli led off in C major. "*Ricominciamo*" (let us begin again), said Scarlatti, good-naturedly. Still, Corelli persisted in the major key, till Scarlatti was obliged to call out to him, and set him right. So mortified was poor Corelli with this disgrace, and the deplorable figure which he imagined he had made at Naples, that he stole back to Rome, in silence. Soon after this, a hautboy-player (whose name Geminiani could not recollect) acquired such applause at Rome, that Corelli, disgusted, would never again play in public. All these mortifications, superadded to the success of Valentini, whose Concertos and performance, though infinitely inferior to those of Corelli, were become fashionable, threw him into such a state of melancholy and chagrin, as was thought to have hastened his death.

The account thus furnished by Geminiani, of Corelli's journey to Naples, is something beyond mere personal anecdote; for, as Dr. Burney fitly observes, it throws light upon the comparative state of music at Naples and at Rome in Corelli's time, and exhibits a curious contrast, between the fiery genius of the Neapolitans, and the meek, timid and gentle character of Corelli, so analogous to the style of his music. To this reflection it might have been added, that the latter part of the narrative forms a painful contribution to the catalogue of instances in which public

caprice has done the work of ingratitude, and consigned the man of genius to a neglect which his sensitive nature must render the worst of cruelties.

In 1712, the *Concertos* of Corelli were beautifully engraved, at Amsterdam, by Etienne Roger, and Michael Charles La Cène, and dedicated to John William, Prince Palatine of the Rhine. The author survived the publication of this admirable work but six weeks; the Dedication bearing date at Rome, the 3rd of December, 1712, and he dying on the 18th of January, 1713.

Corelli was interred in the church of the Rotunda, otherwise called the Pantheon, in the first chapel on the left hand of the entrance of that beautiful temple. Over the place of his interment, there is a sepulchral monument with a marble bust, erected to his memory, at the expense of Philip William, Count Palatine of the Rhine, under the direction of Cardinal Ottoboni. The monument bears an inscription in tributary Latin, and the bust represents him with a music-paper in his hand, on which are engraved a few bars of that celebrated air, the *Giga*, in his 5th Sonata. It is worthy of remark, that this monument is contiguous to that of the greatest of painters, Raffaele²⁰.

During many years after Corelli's decease, a solemn service, consisting of selections from his own works, was performed in the Pantheon by a numerous band, on the anniversary of his funeral. This custom was not discontinued, until there were no longer any of his immediate scholars surviving to conduct the performance. Sir John Hawkins and Dr. Burney, who have both

cited testimony as to this practice, concur in representing, that the works of the great master used to be performed, on this occasion, in a slow, firm and distinct manner, just as they were written, without changing the passages in the way of embellishment: and this, it is probable, was the manner in which he himself was wont to play them.

Of the private life and moral character of this celebrated musician, no new information is now likely to be obtained; but the most favorable impression on this head is derived from analogy, in addition to what we possess of fact. If we may judge of his natural disposition and equanimity by the mildness, sweetness and even tenor of his musical ideas, the conclusion must be that his temper and his talents had pretty equal share in the office of endearing him to all his acquaintance. It appears, moreover, that his facile habit did not always render him insensible of that respect which was due to his character as well as to his skill. It is said that, when he was once playing a solo at Cardinal Ottoboni's house, he observed the Cardinal and another person in discourse, on which he laid down his instrument; and, being asked the reason, answered that he "feared the music interrupted the conversation" – a reply in which modesty and dignity were nicely blended. He is related, also, to have been a man of humour and pleasantry. Some who were acquainted with him have censured him for parsimonious habits, but on no better ground than his accustomed plainness of dress, and his disinclination to the use of a carriage.

His taste, which was not limited to the circle of his own art, evinced itself enthusiastically in favor of pictures; and he lived in habits of intimacy with Carlo Cignani and Carlo Maratti. It seems that he had accumulated a sum equal to £6000. The account that is given of his having bequeathed the whole of this amount, besides a valuable collection of pictures, to his patron, Cardinal Ottoboni, has been observed to savour more of vanity than of true generosity; and, indeed, the Cardinal evinced the most considerate appreciation of the bequest, by reserving only the pictures, and distributing the remainder of Corelli's effects among his indigent relations.

In regard to the peculiar merits of Corelli's productions, it may be briefly said, that his Solos (or *Opera Quinta*), as a classical book for forming the hand of a young practitioner on the violin, has ever been regarded, by the most eminent masters of the instrument, as a truly valuable work; and it is said, of this elaborate work (on which all good systems for the instrument have since been founded), that it cost him three years to revise and correct it. Indeed, all his compositions are said to have been written with great deliberation, to have been corrected by him at many different times, and to have been submitted to the inspection of the most skilful musicians of his day. Of his Solos, the second, third, fifth, and sixth are admirable; as are the ninth, tenth, and, for the elegant sweetness of its second movement, the eleventh. The ninth is probably the most perfect, as a whole; and the Solos, generally, seem to have been drawn from the

author's native resources, more extensively than any of his other productions. The most emphatic evidence of the value of these Solos lies in the fact of their adoption by the highest instructors. Tartini formed all his scholars on them; and it was the declaration of Giardini, that, of any two pupils of equal age and abilities, if the one were to begin his studies by Corelli, and the other by Geminiani, or any other eminent master whatever, the first would become the better performer. Let it be observed, however, that it is not from Corelli, that the niceties and dexterities of *bowing*, which characterize the modern state of the art, are derived. The qualities he is capable of imparting are tone and time: or, in other words, he teaches the full extraction of sound, and the utmost steadiness of hand.

The *Concertos* of Corelli (the sixth and last of his works) appear to have withstood the attacks of time and fashion with more firmness than any of his other productions. The harmony is so pure; the parts are so clearly, judiciously, and ingeniously disposed; and the effect of the whole, from a large band, is so majestic, solemn and sublime, that they nearly preclude all criticism, and make us forget that there is any other music of the same kind existing. They are still performed, now and then, at the Philharmonic Concerts. Though composed at a time when the faculties of the author might be supposed to have been on the decline, they exhibit the strongest proof of the contrary. To speak more definitely of their merits, nothing can exceed, in dignity and majesty, the opening of the First Concerto, nor, for its plaintive

sweetness, the whole of the Third; and that person must have no feeling of the power of harmony, or the effects of modulation, who can listen to the Eighth without rapture.

The following further comments on them are from the pen of a sensible anonymous writer in a periodical work: – “Though they are no longer calculated to show off the bow and fingers of the principal violin-player, yet their effect, as symphonies for a numerous orchestra, is excellent, and never fails to delight the audience. Their melody is flowing and simple, and of a kind which is independent of the changes of fashion: the harmony is pure and rich, and the disposition of the parts judicious and skilful. The Eighth of these Concertos, composed for the purpose of being performed on Christmas Eve, has probably had more celebrity than any piece of music that ever was written. It is exquisitely beautiful, and seems destined to bid defiance to the attacks of time. The whole is full of profound religious feeling; and the pastoral sweetness of the movement descriptive of the ‘Shepherds abiding in the fields,’ has never been surpassed – not even by Handel’s movement of the same kind in the ‘Messiah.’ If ever this music is thrown aside and forgotten, it will be the most unequivocal sign of the corruption of taste, and the decay of music, in England.”

The compositions of Corelli, taken altogether, are celebrated for the harmony resulting from the union of all the parts; but the fineness of the airs is another distinguishing characteristic of them. The Allemande, in the Tenth Solo, is as remarkable

for spirit and force, as that in the Eleventh is for its charming delicacy. His *jigs* are in a style peculiarly his own; and that in the Fifth Solo was, perhaps, never equalled. In the gavot movements, in the Second and Fourth Operas, the melody is distributed, with great judgment, among the several parts. In his Minuets alone, he seems to fail; Bononcini, Handel, Haydn, Martini and others, have excelled him in this kind of air.

The music of Corelli is, generally speaking, the language of nature. It is equally intelligible to the learned and to the unlearned. Amidst the numerous innovations which the love of change had introduced, it still continued to be performed, and was heard with delight in churches, in theatres, and at public solemnities and festivals, in all the cities of Europe, for nearly forty years. Persons remembered and would refer to passages of it, as to a classic author; and, even at this day, the masters of the science do not hesitate to pronounce, of the compositions of Corelli, that, for correct harmony, and for elegant modulation, they are scarcely to be exceeded. Yet there is one deficiency, that should not be passed over in a review of the compositions of this master: and it is one that may suggest itself from what has been already said of him. They want that stirring quality of passion, which ministers so importantly to the life of a production, whether in the world of music, of poetry, or of painting. They lose, through this omission, nearly all the benefits of the principle of contrast, on which effect, in so material a degree, depends. Their beauties, wanting this relief, are scarcely able, sometimes,

to escape the charge of insipidity. The absence of intensity in the works of Corelli, seems to be partly a consequence of the natural character of the man: but it is doubtless also partly owing to the state of musical taste at that period. There was little or no melody in instrumental music before his time; and although, considering how much slow and solemn movements abound in his works, they display but a slender portion of the true pathetic, yet has he considerably more grace and elegance in his *Cantilena*, more vocality of expression, than his predecessors. Indeed, when we recollect that some of his productions are more than a hundred and fifty years old, we must regard, with some admiration and astonishment, the healthy longevity of his fame, which can only be accounted for on the principle of the ease and simplicity that belong characteristically to his works.

The following summary of the character of Corelli's music has been given by Geminiani. Dr. Burney's remark, that it seems very just, may be very fairly assented to. – "His merit was not depth of learning, like that of his contemporary, Alessandro Scarlatti; nor great fancy, nor a rich *invention* in melody or harmony; but a nice ear, and most delicate taste, which led him to select the most *pleasing* melodies and harmonies, and to construct the parts so as to produce the most delightful effect upon the ear."

An extensive and rapidly diffused impression in favor of the Violin, and the larger homogeneous instruments, was produced in Europe by the publication of the works of Corelli, who indeed must be considered as the author of the greatest

improvements which music, simply instrumental, underwent at the commencement of the 18th century. As a consequence of the impulse thus communicated, there was scarcely a town in Italy, about that period, where some distinguished performer on the violin did not reside. Dr. Burney enumerates about a dozen of these, in one paragraph; but the apparent similarity of their merits, which does not encourage any circumstantial commemoration, may serve to bring to the mind of the classical reader the “*fortemque Gyan fortemque Cloanthum*” of Virgil. One of these locally great individuals, Nicola Cosimo, who came to England about 1702, has derived some little accession of fame, from the fact of his portrait having been painted by Kneller, and *coppered* by Smith. It is probable, that he is now more known to print-collectors than to musicians, although his *Twelve Solos*, published in this country, possess considerable merit, for the time – a merit not free, however, from pretty large obligations to Corelli.

Don Antonio Vivaldi, Chapel-master of the *Conservatorio della Pietà*, at Venice, seems to have enjoyed, in his day, a popularity of the most animated and unhesitating kind, both as composer and performer. Besides a number of dramatic compositions, in the form of Opera, he published eleven instrumental works, exclusively of his pieces called *Stravaganze*, which, among flashy players, whose chief merit was the novelty of rapid execution, occupied the highest place of favor. To be loud and brisk, appears to have been the chief ambition of

this exhibitor; no bad method of ensuring a predominance of applause in all “mixed company.” His *Cuckoo Concerto* was once the wonder and delight of all frequenters of English country concerts; and Woodcock, one of the Hereford *Waits*, was sent for, far and near, to perform it. If Vivaldi’s musical fame were to rest on this production, it would figure but poorly; for the thing, though reprinted in London a few years ago, is indeed, when put to the test, “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” It is just of the order of stuff that might serve to agitate the orchestral elbows in a pantomime. Doubtless, it found a fitting exponent in “Mr. Woodcock, of the Hereford Waits:” Vivaldi’s *own* playing must have been too good for it. Of the pieces styled his *Solos*, it has been critically remarked, that they are extremely tame and vapid, while the characteristic of his *Concertos* is a singular wildness and irregularity, in which he oftentimes transgresses the bounds both of melody and modulation. Though, in some of his compositions, the harmony and the artful contexture of the parts are their least merit, there is one (the eleventh of his first twelve concertos) which is esteemed a solid and masterly composition, and is an evidence that the writer possessed a greater portion of skill and learning than his works in general discover. To account for the singularity of Vivaldi’s style, it should be observed that he had been witness to the dull *imitations* of Corelli that prevailed among the masters of his time; and that, for the sake of variety, he unfortunately adopted a style which had little but novelty to recommend it, and could serve for little else but “to please the

itching vein of idle-headed fashionists.”

The title of Don, prefixed to Vivaldi's name, was derived from the *clerical* character which belonged to him; and he must, indisputably, have been one of the most lively of priests. Mr. Wright, in his “Travels through Italy, from 1720 to 1722,” has a passage indicative of this union of the clerical and musical functions: – “It is very usual to see priests play in the orchestra. The famous Vivaldi, whom they call the *Prete Rosso*, very well known among us for his concertos, was a topping man among them at Venice.”

Vivaldi, together with Albinoni, Alberti, and Tessa rini, is to be classed among the light and irregular troops. For the more disciplined and efficient forces, we must look to the Roman school, formed by Corelli, in which were produced the greatest composers and performers for the violin that Italy could boast, during the first half of the 18th century.

Francesco Geminiani, the ablest of Corelli's scholars, and who forms one of the brightest parts in the chain of Violinists was born at Lucca, about the year 1680²¹. His first instructions in music were derived from Alessandro Scarlatti; and his study of the violin was commenced under Lunati (surnamed Il Gobbo), and completed under the great archetype, Corelli.

“In linked sweetness long drawn out,”

On leaving Rome, where Corelli was then flourishing,

Geminiani went to Naples, preceded by a degree of fame which secured his most favorable reception, and placed him at the head of the orchestra. If, however, we are to credit Barbella, the impetuosity of his feelings, and the fire of his genius, too ardent for his judgment, rendered him, at this period, so vague and unsteady a *timeist*, that, instead of guiding, combining, and giving concinnity to the performers under his direction, he disordered their motions, embarrassed their execution, and, in a word, threw the whole band into confusion.

In the year 1714, he came to England, where his exquisite powers, as a solo performer, commanded universal admiration, and excited, among the nobility and gentry, a contention for the honor of patronising such rare abilities. The German Baron, Kilmansegge, was then chamberlain to George the First, as Elector of Hanover, and a great favorite of the King. To that nobleman Geminiani particularly attached himself, and, accordingly, dedicated to him his first work – a set of Twelve Sonatas, published in 1716. The style of these pieces was peculiarly elegant; but many of the passages were so florid, elaborate and difficult of execution, that few persons were adequate to their performance; yet all allowed their extraordinary merit, and many pronounced them superior to those of Corelli. They had, indeed, such an effect, that it became a point of eager debate, whether skill in execution, or taste in composition, constituted the predominant excellence of Geminiani; and so high was the esteem he enjoyed, among the lovers of instrumental

music, that it is difficult to say, had he duly regarded his interest, to what extent he might not have availed himself of public and private favor. Kilmansegge, anxious to procure him a more effective patronage than his own, represented his merits to the notice of the King, who, looking over his works, became desirous to hear some of the pieces performed by their author; and soon after, accompanied, at his own earnest request, by Handel on the harpsichord, Geminiani so acquitted himself, as at once to delight his royal auditor, and to give new confirmation of the superiority of the violin over all other stringed instruments.

In 1726, he arranged Corelli's first six *Solos*, as *Concertos*; and, soon after, the last six, but with a success by no means equal to that which attended the first. He also similarly treated six of the same composer's *Sonatas*, and, in some additional *parts*, imitated their style with an exactitude that at once manifested his flexible ingenuity, and his judicious reverence for his originals. Encouraged, however, as he might be considered, by the success of this undertaking, to proceed in the exercise of his powers, six years elapsed before another work appeared – when he produced his own first set of *Concertos*; these were soon followed by a second set; and the merits of these two productions established his character as an eminent master in that species of composition. The opening Concerto in the first of these two sets is distinguished for the charming minuet with which it closes; and the last Concerto in the second set is esteemed one of the finest compositions known of its kind.

His second set of Solos (admired more than practised, and practised more than performed) was printed in 1739: and his third set of Concertos (laboured, difficult and fantastic), in the year 1741. Soon after this, he published his long-promised, and once impatiently-expected work, entitled "*Lo Dizionario Armonico.*" In this work, after giving due commendation to Lully, Corelli and Bononcini, as having been the first improvers of instrumental music, he endeavours to refute the idea, that the vast foundations of universal harmony can be established upon the narrow and confined modulation of these authors; and makes many remarks on the uniformity of modulation apparent in the compositions that had appeared in different parts of Europe for several years previously.

This didactic production possessed many recommendatory qualities; many combinations, modulations and cadences, calculated to create, and to advance the science and taste of a *tyro*; but it appeared too late. Indolence had suffered the influence of his name to diminish, and his style and ideas (new as, in some respects, they were) to be superseded by the more fashionable manner, and more novel conceptions, of fresh candidates for favour and fame.

This work was succeeded by his "*Treatise on Good Taste,*" and his "*Rules for playing in Good Taste;*" and, in 1748, he brought forward his "*Art of Playing on the Violin;*" at that time a highly useful work, and superior to any similar publication extant. It contained the most minute directions for holding the instrument,

and for the use of the bow; as well as the graces, the various shifts of the hand, and a great number of applicable examples.

About 1756, Geminiani was struck with a most curious and fantastic idea; that of a piece, the performance of which should represent to the imagination all the events in the episode of the thirteenth book of Tasso's Jerusalem. It is needless to say, that the chimera was too extravagant, of attempting to narrate and instruct, describe and inform, by the vague medium of instrumental sounds. Musical sounds may possibly, according to a conjecture sometimes entertained, constitute the language of heaven; but as we, on earth, are possessed of no *key* to their meaning in that capacity, we must be content to employ, for our purposes of intercommunion, the *articulate*, which alone is, to us, the *definite*.

In 1750, Geminiani went to Paris, where he continued about five years; after which, he returned to England, and published a new edition of his first two sets of Concertos. In 1761, he visited Ireland, in order to spend some time with his favourite and much-attached scholar, Dubourg, master of the King's band in Dublin. Geminiani had spent many years in compiling an elaborate Treatise on Music, which he designed for publication; but, soon after his arrival in Dublin, by the treachery of a female servant (who, it has been said, was recommended to him for no other purpose than that she might steal it), the manuscript was purloined out of his chamber, and could never afterwards be recovered. The magnitude of this loss, and his inability to repair

it, made a deep impression on his mind, and seemed to hasten fast his dissolution. He died at Dublin on the 17th of September, 1762, in the eighty-third year of his age.²²

Endowed with feeling, a respectable master of the laws of harmony, and acquainted with *some* of the secrets of fine composition, Geminiani can hardly be said to have been unqualified either to move the soul, or to gratify the sense: yet truth, after being just to his real deserts, will affirm that his bass is not uniformly the most select; that his melody is frequently irregular in its phrase and measure; and that, on the whole, he is decidedly inferior to Corelli, with whom, by his admirers, he has been too frequently and too fondly compared.

For what was deficient in his compositions, as well as for what was unfavourable in his fortune, the unsettled habits of his life, and his inherent inclination for rambling, may perhaps partly account. His fondness for pictures (a taste very strongly developed in him) was less discreetly exercised than it had been by his prototype, Corelli. On the contrary, to gratify this propensity, he not only suspended his studies, and neglected his profession, but oftentimes involved himself in pecuniary embarrassments, which a little prudence and foresight would have enabled him to avoid. To gratify his taste, he bought pictures; and, to supply his wants, he sold them. The consequence of this kind of traffic was loss, and its concomitant, necessity. Under such circumstances, the concentration of thought, requisite for giving to his productions the utmost value

derivable from the natural powers of his mind, was almost impossible.

A trait creditable to his character, on a graver score, presents itself in the following transaction. The place of Master and Composer of the state-music in Ireland became vacant in the year 1727, and the Earl of Essex obtained from Sir Robert Walpole, the minister, a promise of it. He then told Geminiani that his difficulties were at an end, as he had provided for him a place suited to his profession, which would afford him an ample provision for life. On enquiry into the conditions of the office, Geminiani found that it was not tenable by a member of the Romish communion. He therefore declined accepting, assigning this as a reason, and at the same time observing that, although he had never made any great pretensions to religion, yet to renounce that faith in which he had been first baptized, for the *sake* of temporal advantages, was what he could in no way answer for to his conscience. The post was given to Matthew Dubourg, who had formerly been the pupil of Geminiani, and whose merits were not excluded by similar grounds for rejection.

Lorenzo Somis, chapel-master to the King of Sardinia, was recorded in Italy as an imitator of Corelli, but in a style somewhat modernized, after the model of Vivaldi.

He printed, at Rome, in 1722, his "*Opera Prima di Sonate à Violino e Violoncello, o Cembalo,*" the pieces contained in which are much in Corelli's manner; some of them with double-stopped fugues, like those of his model, and some without. Somis was

one of the greatest masters of the violin of his time; but his chief professional honour, – “the pith and marrow of his attribute,” – is the having formed, among his scholars, such a performer as Giardini.

Stefano Carbonelli, who had studied the violin under Corelli, was one of the Italian Artists who contributed to diffuse the celebrity of the instrument in this country. About the year 1720, he was induced by the Duke of Rutland to come to England, and was received into the house of that nobleman. During his residence there, he published *Twelve Solos for a Violin and Bass*, which he frequently played in public with great applause. In each of the first six of these, there is a double-stopped fugue; and the rest, it has been observed, have pleasing melodies, with correct and judicious counterpoint. In the progress of his success in England, Carbonelli was placed at the head of the opera band, and soon became celebrated for his excellent performance.

About the year 1725, he quitted the opera orchestra for an employment in Drury Lane Theatre, where he also led, and frequently played select concert pieces between the acts. After continuing there some time, he engaged himself with Handel, as a performer in his oratorios. For several years, he played at the rehearsal and performance at St. Paul’s, for the benefit of the Sons of the Clergy.

In the latter part of his life, he in a great measure neglected the profession of music, having become a merchant, and an importer of wine from France and Germany. He obtained the

place of one of the purveyors of wine to the King; and died in that employment in the year 1772.

At the time of Carbonelli's relaxing in his homage to Apollo, for the sake of becoming a minister of Bacchus, the following lines (which have been admirably set, for two voices, by Dr. Cooke) were made up for the occasion: —

Let Rubinelli charm the ear,
And sing, as erst, with voice divine, —
To Carbonelli I adhere;
Instead of music, give me wine!
But yet, perhaps, with wine combin'd,
Soft music may our joys improve;
Let both together, then, be join'd,
And feast we like the gods above!²³

Pietro Locatelli, another of Corelli's pupils, but one who made the boldest innovations upon the manner of that great master, and deviated, exploringly, into remarkable paths of his own, was born at Bergamo, about 1693. Being still a youth, at the time of Corelli's decease, and full of ardent impulses in relation to the art he had embraced, Locatelli gave way to these, and soon became conspicuous for a boldness and originality which, even in our own days, would not pass unacknowledged. He developed new combinations, and made free use of arpeggios and harmonic sounds. The compositions of this master, as well as those of Mestrino, who flourished somewhat later, and was the more

graceful of the two in his style of playing, are supposed to have furnished hints of no small profit to the penetrating genius of Paganini.

Locatelli died in Holland, in 1764. The crabbed passages in which he delighted to display his force, are to be found in his work entitled “Arte di nuova Modulazione,” or, as it is termed in the French editions, “Caprices Énigmatiques.”

We now approach one of those names on which the biographer may fairly delight to dwell, for its association not only with the great and beautiful in art, but with the interesting in personal character, and the romantic in incident.

Giuseppe Tartini, of Padua, the last great improver (save Viotti) of the practice of the violin, was born in April, 1692, at Pirano, a sea-port town in Istria. His father had been ennobled, in recompense of certain substantial benefactions, exercised towards the Cathedral Church at Parenza. Giuseppe was originally intended for the law; but, mixing the more seductive study of music with the other objects of his education, it soon gained the ascendant over the whole circle of the sister sciences. This is not so surprising as another strong propensity, which, during his youth, much fascinated him. This was the love of fencing – an art not likely to become necessary to the safety or honor of one possessed of the pious and pacific disposition that belonged to him, and one engaged, too, in a civil employment: yet he is said, even in this art, to have equalled the master from whom he received instructions. In 1710, he was sent to the University

of Padua, to pursue his studies as a civilian; but, before he was twenty, having committed the sin of sacrificing prudence to love, in a match which he entered into without the parental *fiat*, he was forsaken, in return, and reduced to wander about in search of an asylum. This, after many hardships, he found in a convent at Assisi, where he was received by a monk, his relative, who, commiserating his misfortunes, let him remain there till something better might be done for him. While thus secluded and sorrowful, he took up the violin, to “manage it against despairing thoughts” – an expedient which the devotion of his soul to music must have lent some efficacy to. Not only his solace, but, by a singular turn of fortune, his rescue also, was connected with his violin. On a certain great festival, when he was in the orchestra of the convent, he was discovered, through the accident of a remarkably high wind, which, forcing open the doors of the church, blew aside the orchestral curtain, and exposed all the performers to the sight of the congregation. His recognition, under these circumstances, by a Paduan acquaintance, led to the accommodation of differences; and he then settled with his wife, for some time, at Venice²⁴. This lady proved to be of that particular race which has never been wholly extinct since the time of Xantippe; but as, fortunately, poor Tartini was more than commonly Socratic in wisdom, virtue and patience, her reign was unmolested by any domestic war, or useless opposition to her supremacy.

His residence at Venice was rendered memorable to him,

by the arrival of the celebrated Veracini (the younger) in that city. The performance of this “homme marquant” awakened a vivid emulation in Tartini, who, though he was acknowledged to have a powerful hand, had never heard a great player before, nor conceived it possible for the *bow* to possess such varied capabilities for energy and expression. Under this feeling, he quitted Venice with prompt decision, and proceeded to Ancona, in order to study the use of the bow in greater tranquillity and with more convenience than at Venice, as he had a place assigned him in the operatic orchestra, of that city. In the same year (1714), his studious application enabled him to make a discovery – that of the phenomenon of the *third sound*– which created a great sensation in the musical world, both in his own time and long afterwards, though it has led to no important practical results. This phenomenon of the third sound is the sympathetic resonance of a third note, when the two upper notes of a chord are sounded. Thus, if two parts are sung in thirds, a sensitive ear will feel the simultaneous impression of a bass or lower part. This effect may be more distinctly heard, if a series of consecutive thirds be played on the violin perfectly in tune. “If you do not hear the bass,” said Tartini to his pupils, “the thirds or sixths which you are playing are not perfect in the intonation²⁵.” This mysterious sympathy, by which sound is enabled to call up a fellowship of sound, may be fancifully expressed in a line from the old poet, Drayton: —

“One echo makes another to rejoice!”

His diligence and exemplary devotion to his art, while at Ancona, led also to another prominent occurrence in his career – the appointment, in 1721, to the distinguished place of first violin, and master of the band, to the church of St. Anthony, of Padua. To St. Anthony, as his patron saint, he consecrated himself and his instrument, with a species and a constancy of attachment, that may find not only their excuse, but their credit, in the nature and sentiment of the times he lived in. His extending fame brought him repeated offers from Paris and London, to visit those capitals; but, holding to his conscientious allegiance, he uniformly declined entering into any other service, and was, like St. Anthony himself, a pattern of resistance to temptation.

By the year 1728, he had made many excellent scholars, and established a system of practice, for students on the violin, that was celebrated all over Europe, and increased in reputation to the end of his life. Great numbers of young men resorted to Padua from different countries, in order to receive instruction from him in music, but chiefly in the practice of the violin.

In the early part of his life, he published “*Sonate a Violino e Violoncello, o Cembalo, Opera Prima.*” This, and his *Opera Seconda*, of *Six Sonatas* or *Solos* for the same instrument, and another work entitled “*XVIII Concerti a cinque Stromenti,*” were all published by Le Cène, of Amsterdam, and prove him to have been a truly excellent composer. Such, however, was the

ascendancy of Corelli's name, and so ambitious was Tartini of being thought a follower of the precepts and principles of that master, that, during the zenith of his own reputation, he refused to teach any other music to his pupils, till they had studied the *Opera Quinta*, or *Solos*, of Corelli; and the excellence of this foundation was made manifest by the result. His favorite pupils were Bini and Nardini. These, as well as others of Tartini's *élèves*, formed, in their turn, scholars of great abilities, who contributed to spread his reputation and manner of playing all over Europe.

Tartini's own first master was an obscure musician, of the name of Giulio di Terni, who afterwards made a fitting change of position, and descended into the pupil of his own scholar – a circumstance related by Tartini himself, who used to say that he had studied very little till after he was thirty years of age²⁶. At the age of fifty-two, Tartini made a marked alteration in his style of playing, from extreme difficulty (or what was *then* so considered) to grace and expression. His method of executing an adagio has been represented by his contemporaries as inimitable, and was almost, in their idea, supernatural – an impression to which the idea of the patron saint must have not a little conduced.

The particulars that have been preserved respecting his scholar, Pasquale Bini, are not without interest. Recommended to him at the age of fifteen, by Cardinal Olivieri, Tartini found him a youth after his own heart, possessing excellent moral dispositions, as well as musical; and he accordingly cherished a very marked regard for him. This young musician practised

with such assiduity, that, in three or four years, he vanquished the most difficult of Tartini's compositions, and executed them with greater force than the author himself. When he had finished his studies, his patron, Cardinal Olivieri, took him to Rome, where he astonished all the Professors by his performance, — particularly Montagnari, at that time the principal violinist there; and it is generally believed, that Montagnari was so mortified by the superiority, as to have died of grief! When informed that Tartini had changed his style and taste in playing, Bini returned to Padua, and placed himself for another year under that excellent and worthy master; at the end of which period, so intense had been his application, that he played with a degree of certainty and expression truly wonderful.

“Nil actum reputans, si quid superesset agendum,” —

On a certain occasion, in recommending a scholar to him, after his return to Rome, Tartini expressed his sense of Bini's powers and character, and gave evidence of his own modest and ingenuous disposition, in the following words: — “Io lo mando a un mio scolare chi suona più di me; e me ne glorio, per essere un angelo di costume, e religioso.” — “I recommend him (the applicant) to a scholar of mine, who plays better than myself; and I am proud of it, as he is an angel in religion and morals.” Such praise has its value enhanced by the source whence it proceeds; for it was truly “*laudari a laudato viro.*”

The death of Tartini occurred at Padua, on the 26th of February, 1770, to the general regret of the people of that city, where he had resided nearly fifty years, and not only was regarded as its most attractive ornament, but, owing to the serious and contemplative turn of his mind, had attained the estimation of being a saint and a philosopher.

Of the general character of Tartini's compositions, Dr. Burney, who appears to have studied them closely, has given the following judgment: – "Though he made Corelli his model in the purity of his harmony and simplicity of his modulation, he greatly surpassed that composer in the fertility and originality of his invention; not only in the subjects of his melodies, but in the truly *cantabile* manner of treating them. Many of his adagios want nothing but *words*, to be excellent pathetic operas. His allegros are sometimes difficult; but the passages fairly belong to the instrument for which they were composed, and were suggested by his consummate knowledge of the finger-board, and the powers of the bow. As a harmonist, he was perhaps more truly scientific than any other composer of his time, in the clearness, character and precision of his bases, which were never casual, or the effect of habit or auricular prejudice and expectation, but learned, judicious and certain. And yet I must, in justice to others, own that, though the adagio and solo playing, in general, of his scholars are exquisitely polished and expressive, yet it seems as if that energy, fire, and freedom of bow, which modern symphonies and orchestra-playing require,

were wanting.”

The applicability of the latter remark is, of course, considerably greater in these days than in the Doctor’s time. Another and more recent critical opinion is subjoined: —

“Tartini’s compositions, with all the correctness and polish of Corelli’s, are bolder and more impassioned. His slow movements, in particular, are remarkably vocal and expressive; and his music shows a knowledge of the violin, both in regard to the bow and the finger-board, which Corelli had not been able to attain. His works, therefore, though no longer heard in public, are still prized by the best musicians; a proof of which is, that some of them have been recently reprinted for the use of the *Conservatoire* of Paris. He has frequently injured their effect, to modern ears, by the introduction of trills and other ornaments, which, like the flounces and furbelows of the female dress of his day, have become old-fashioned; but, at the same time, his compositions are full of beauties, which, belonging to the musical language of nature and feeling, are independent of the influence of time.”

Few of my readers have failed, probably, to hear or read of “The Devil’s Sonata,” that forms so singular a “passage” in the experience of this remarkable man, and is to be met with in Records, Musical, Literary, and Pictorial. Monsieur De Lalande informs us that he had, from Tartini’s own mouth, the following singular anecdote, which conveys an account of it, and shows to what a degree his imagination was inflamed by the genius of composition. “He dreamed, one night, in the year 1713, that

he had made a compact with the Devil, who promised to be at his service on all occasions; and, during this vision, every thing succeeded according to his mind; his wishes were anticipated, and his desires always surpassed, by the assistance of his new servant. At length, he imagined that he presented to the Devil his violin, in order to discover what kind of a musician he was; when, to his great astonishment, he heard him play a *solo*, so singularly beautiful, and executed with such superior taste and precision, that it surpassed all the music he had ever heard or conceived in his life! So great was his surprise, and so exquisite his delight, upon this occasion, as to deprive him of the power of breathing. He awoke with the violence of his sensations, and instantly seized his instrument, in hopes of expressing what he had just heard; but in vain. He, however, then composed a piece, which is, perhaps, the best of all his works, and called it the *Devil's Sonata*; but it was so inferior to what his sleep had produced, that he declared he would have broken his instrument, and abandoned music for ever, if he could have subsisted by any other means."

This remarkable legend, under its obvious associations with the fearful and the grotesque, is so inviting for poetic treatment, that I have ventured on the following attempt: —

TARTINI'S DREAM

Grim-visag'd Satan on the Artist's bed

Sat – and a cloud of sounds mirific spread!
Wild flow'd those notes, as from enchantment's range,
“Wild, sweet, but incommunicably strange!”
Soft Luna, curious, as her sex beseems,
Shot through the casement her enquiring beams,
Which, entering, paler grew, yet half illum'd
The shade so deep that round the Arch-One gloomed:
And listening Night her pinions furled – for lo!
The Devil's Soul, O!²⁷ breathed beneath that bow!
Tranquil as death Tartini's form reclin'd,
And sealing sleep was strong his eyes to bind;
But the wild music of the nether spheres
Was in a key that did unlock his ears.
Squat, like a toad or tailor, sat the Fiend,
And forward, to his task, his body leaned.
His griffin fingers, with their horny ends,
Hammer the stops; the bow submissive bends:
His lengthy chin, descending, forms a vice
With his sharp collar-bone, contrariwise,
To grasp the conscious instrument, held on
With 'scapeless gripe; – and, ever and anon,
As flows the strain, now quaint, and now sublime,
He marks, with beatings of his tail, the time!
Snakes gird his head; but, in that music's bliss,
Enchanted, lose the discord of their hiss,
And twine in chords harmonic, though all mute,
As if they owned the sway of Orpheus' lute.
Satan hath joy – for round his lips awhile
Creeps a sharp-set, sulphuric-acid smile;

And, at the mystic notes, successive sped,
Pleas'd, winketh he those eyes of flickering red,
And shakes the grizzly horrors of that head!
List! what a change! Soft wailings fill the air:
Plaintive and touching grows the demon-play'r.
Doth Satan mourn, with meltings all too late,
The sin and sorrow of his own sad state?

* * * * *

Night flies – the dream is past – and, pale and wan,
Starts from his spell-freed couch the anxious man.
Is it a marvel greater than his might,
Those winged sounds to summon back from flight?
To clutch them *whole*, in vain fond Hope inclin'd,
For Memory, overburthen'd, lagged behind,
Partly the strain fell 'neath Oblivion's pall,
But it had partly “an *un*-dying fall;”
And, in that state defective, to the light
Brought forth – it lives – a relic of that night!

The next name for notice, in connexion with the Italian School of the instrument, is that of Francesco Maria Veracini (the younger), a great, but somewhat eccentric performer, who was born at Florence, at the close of the 17th century. Unlike his contemporary, Tartini, whose sensitive and modest disposition

led him to court obscurity, Veracini was vain, ostentatious, and haughty. Various stories have been current in Italy about his arrogance and fantastic tricks, which obtained for him the designation of *Capo pazzo*. The following anecdote is sufficiently characteristic of him.

Being at Lucca at the time of the annual “Festa della Croce,” on which occasion it was customary for the principal professors of Italy, vocal and instrumental, to meet, Veracini put down his name for a Solo Concerto. When he entered the choir, to take possession of the principal place, he found it already occupied by the Padre Girolamo Laurenti,²⁸ of Bologna, who, not knowing him, as he had been some years absent, asked him whither he was going? “To the place of first violin,” was the impetuous answer. Laurenti then explained that *he* had been always engaged to fill that post himself; but that if he wished to play a concerto, either at vespers or during high mass, he should have a place assigned to him. Veracini turned on his heel with contempt, and went to the lowest place in the orchestra. When he was called upon to play his concerto, he desired that the hoary old father would allow him, instead of it, to play a solo at the bottom of the choir, accompanied on the violoncello by Lanzetti. He played this in so brilliant and masterly a manner as to extort an *e viva!* in the public church; and, whenever he was about to make a close, he turned to Laurenti, and called out, *Così si suona per fare il primo violino*— “This is the way to play the first fiddle!”

Another characteristic story respecting this performer is the

following: —

Pisendel, a native of Carlsburg, and one of the best violinists of the early part of the eighteenth century, piqued at the pride and hauteur of Veracini, who thought too highly of his own powers not to disdain a comparison of them with those of any performer then existing, determined, if possible, to mortify his conceit and self-consequence. For this purpose, while both were at Dresden, he composed a very difficult concerto, and engaged a *ripienist*, or inferior performer, to practise it till he had conceived the whole, and rendered the most intricate passages as familiar to his bow and finger as the more obvious and easy parts of the composition. He then took occasion, the practitioner being present, to request Veracini to perform it. The great executant condescended to comply; but did not get through the task without calling into requisition all his powers. When he had concluded, the *ripienist*, agreeably to his previous instructions, stepped up to the desk, and began to perform the same piece; upon which Veracini, in a passion, tore him away, and would have punished on the spot his perilous presumption, had not Pisendel actively interfered, and persuaded him, were it only for the jest of the thing, to “let the vain creature expose himself.” Veracini became pacified, the *ripienist* began again, and executed the whole even more perfectly than his precursor, who stamped on the floor with rage, swore he would never forgive Pisendel, and, scarcely less abashed than tormented, immediately quitted Dresden.

Veracini would give lessons to no one, except a nephew, who

died young. The only master he himself had was his uncle, Antonio Veracini, of Florence; but, by travelling all over Europe, he formed a style of playing peculiar to himself. Besides being in the service of the King of Poland, he was for a considerable time at the various courts of Germany, and twice in England, where he composed several *operas*, and where Dr. Burney had the opportunity of witnessing and commenting on the bold and masterly character of his violin performance. Soon after his being here (about 1745), he was shipwrecked, and lost his two famous Steiner violins, reputed the best in the world, and all his effects. In his usual light style of discourse, he used to call one of these instruments St. Peter, and the other St. Paul.

As a composer, he had certainly a great share of whim and caprice; but he built his freaks on a good foundation, being an excellent contrapuntist; and indeed it is probable enough that these very freaks, if tested by a contact with some of the fiddle *capriccios* and *pots-pourris* of our own day, would fall very much in the measure of extravagance, and leave us to wonder at what constituted a wonder in the more sober musical times of Burney and Hawkins. The peculiarities in his performance were his bow-hand, his shake, his learned arpeggios, and a tone so loud and clear that it could be distinctly heard through the most numerous band of a church or theatre²⁹.

Pietro Nardini, a noted Tuscan Violinist, was born at Leghorn, in 1725. Instructed by Tartini, he soon became his most distinguished pupil; – nor as such only was he regarded by that

great master, who, besides loving and admiring his rising genius, found in him a congeniality of character and sentiment, that served to establish a firm mutual friendship. In this instance, as in that of his other favourite pupil, Bini, we may remark the exemption of Tartini's mind from that sordid spot of jealousy, that too often dims the lustre of professional talent. Attached, in 1763, to the Chapel of the Duke of Wirtemberg, Nardini soon evinced abilities that made him conspicuous. On the reduction or suppression of that establishment, a few years afterwards, he returned to Leghorn, where he composed almost all his works. In 1769, he went to Padua, to revisit Tartini, whom he attended in his last illness, with attachment truly filial. On his return to Leghorn, the generous offers of the Grand Duke of Tuscany determined him to quit that city, and enter the Duke's service. Joseph the Second, when he visited Italy, was greatly struck with the execution of this distinguished virtuoso, and made a curious gold snuff-box the memorial of his admiration. In 1783, the president, Dupaty, being in Italy, listened to him with a rapture which occasioned his exclaiming, "His violin is a voice, or possesses one. It has made the fibres of my ear to tremulate as they never did before. To what a degree of tenuity Nardini divides the air! How exquisitely he touches the strings of his instrument! With what art he modulates and purifies their tones!"

Michael Kelly makes reference to this distinguished artist, in speaking of a private concert at Florence. "There," observes he, "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 scholar, Thomas Linley, who, he said, possessed powerful abilities.” – Kelly adds, that Nardini, when appealed to on that occasion, as to the truth of the anecdote about Tartini and the Devil’s Sonata, gave distinct confirmation of it, as a thing he had frequently heard the relation of from Tartini himself.

Like some other masters of the old school, Nardini exhibited his powers to most advantage in the performance of *adagios*; and a high tribute to his capacity for expression is conveyed in what has been recorded of the magic of his bow – that it elicited sounds, which, when the performer was concealed from view, appeared rather those of the human voice than of a violin. Of his Sonatas, now almost consigned to oblivion, the style is ably sustained, the ideas are clear, the motive well treated, and the expression natural, though of a serious cast, as was the character of the composer.

Nardini died at Florence, in 1796, or, according to others, in 1793. Among the compositions of this pupil of Tartini, are to be reckoned six concertos for the violin; six solos for the same instrument (*opera seconda*); six trios for the flute; six other solos for the violin; six quartetts, six duetts; and, in manuscript, many concertos for the same instrument.

Luigi Boccherini, a composer of distinguished talents, to whom, and to Corelli, stands assigned the honour of being considered the fathers of *chamber-music* for stringed

instruments, was a native of Lucca, and born in the year 1740. His first lessons in music and on the violoncello were imparted by the Abbate Vanucci. His disposition for music was early and strong; and his father, himself an ingenious musician, after attending with care to the cultivation of his son's talent, sent him to Rome, where he soon acquired a high reputation for the originality and variety of his productions. Returning, a few years afterwards, to Lucca, he gave there the first public performance of his Sonatas. It chanced that another Lucchese, Manfredi, a pupil of Nardini's, was also present at the time of Boccherini's return from Rome; and they executed together, with great public success, the Sonatas of the latter for violin and violoncello – his seventh work. The two professors, becoming further associated in friendship, as well as in the musical art, quitted Italy together for Spain, where they met with such encouragement as determined Boccherini to establish himself in that country. Basking in the sunshine of royal favour, the only condition required of Boccherini for the continuance of its rays, was that he should work enough to produce, annually, nine pieces of his composition, for the use of the Royal Academy at Madrid; and he adhered faithfully to the engagement. He appears to have passed through life smoothly, as well as with honour. His death occurred at Madrid, in 1806, at the age of 66.

The compositions of this master, which have been of marked importance in connection with the progress of stringed instruments, are characterized by a noble sweetness, a genuine

pathos, deep science and great nicety of art. It belongs to him, as a distinction, to have first fixed (about 1768) the character of three several classes of instrumental composition – the *trio*, the *quartett*, and the *quintett*. In the trio, he was followed by Fiorillo, Cramer, Giardini, Pugnani, and Viotti; and in the quartett, by Giardini, Cambini, Pugnani, and, in another style, by Pleyel, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven; while, in his quintetts for *two* violoncellos, he may be said to have no successor but Onslow. His productions of this last species, of which he has left no fewer than ninety-three – for he was little inferior to Haydn in fecundity of genius – are particularly deserving of study; and it was the remark of Dr. Burney, that he had supplied the performers on bowed instruments, and the lovers of music in general, with more excellent compositions than any other master belonging to that time, except Haydn. His manner, as the same writer adds, “is at once bold, masterly and elegant; and there are movements in his works of every style, and in the true genius of the instruments for which he wrote, that place him high in rank among the greatest masters who have ever written for the violin or violoncello.”

“As in the symphonies of Haydn,” says a writer in the *Harmonicon*, “so in the quintetts of Boccherini, we observe the genuine stamp of genius, differing in the manner, but alike in the essence. Boccherini had studied, profoundly and thoroughly, the nature and capabilities of the *violoncello*. He composed nearly the whole of his music for this instrument, and was the first who wrote quintetts for two violoncellos. Striving to impart to

these productions the sweet, pathetic, and, if the expression may be allowed, the religious character which distinguished most of his works, he conceived the idea of giving the *leading* part to the *violoncello*, and of throwing the harmony into the violin, alto and bass; the second violoncello, in the mean time, sometimes accompanying the first, and occasionally playing the air in concert with it.”

The beautiful style of his quintetts, and the exquisite manner in which, in some of them, he has thus combined the two violoncellos, constrained an impassioned amateur to compare them to the music of the angels. Boccherini’s first work was published at Paris, where it excited the highest admiration: his *Stabat Mater* is worthy of being placed by the side of that of Pergolesi, of Durante, or of Haydn; and to his genius for composition he added so much executive skill on the violin, violoncello and pianoforte, that a musical enthusiast said (with a rapture probably too honest to be regarded as altogether profane), “If God chose to speak to man, he would employ the music of Haydn; but, if he desired to hear an earthly musician, he would select Boccherini:” – and Puppo, the celebrated violinist, has described him thus: – “The tender Boccherini is the softer second self of Haydn.” It is said, indeed, that Boccherini kept up a regular correspondence with Haydn, – these two great musicians endeavouring to enlighten each other respecting their compositions.

Felici Giardini, by the novel powers and grace of his

execution, appears to have made, in England, almost as great a sensation as that created, eighty years later, by Paganini, with whom, also, he may be placed in competition, on the score of a capricious and difficult temper. He was born at Turin, in 1716; his musical education was received, at Milan, under Paladini, and subsequently, for the violin in particular, at Turin, under Somis, one of the best scholars of Corelli. At the age of 17, animated by the hope of fame, he went to Rome, and afterwards to Naples. At the latter city, he obtained, by the recommendation of Jomelli, a post far too humble for his large ambition – that of one of the *ripieni*, or make-weights, in the opera orchestra. Here his talents, nevertheless, began to appear, and he was accustomed to flourish and change passages, much more frequently than he ought to have done. “However,” said he himself, in relating the circumstance to Dr. Burney, “I acquired great reputation among the ignorant for my impertinence; till, one night, during the opera, Jomelli, who had composed it, came into the orchestra, and seated himself close by me, when I determined to give the *Maestro di Capella* a touch of my taste and execution. In the symphony of the next song, which was in a pathetic style, I gave loose to my fingers and fancy; for which I was rewarded by the composer with – a violent slap in the face; which (added Giardini) was the best lesson I ever received from a great master in my life.” Jomelli, after this, was very kind, in a different and less indirect way, to this young and wonderful musician.

After a short continuance at Naples, followed by visits

professional to the principal theatres in Italy, and by an enthusiastic reception at Berlin, Giardini came to England, and arrived in London in the year 1750. Here his performance on the violin, in which, at that time, he was considered to excel every other master in Europe, was heard, both in public and in private, with the most rapturous applause. His first public performance in London afforded a scene memorable among the triumphs of art. It was at a benefit Concert for old Cuzzoni, who sang in it with a thin, cracked voice, which almost frightened out of the little Theatre in the Haymarket the sons of those who had, perhaps, heard her, at the Great Theatre of the same street, with ecstasy supreme. But when Giardini came forward, and made a display of his powers in a solo and concerto, the applause was so long, loud and furious, as nothing but that bestowed on Garrick had probably ever equalled. His tone, bowing, execution, and graceful carriage of himself and his instrument, formed a combination that filled with astonishment the English public, unaccustomed to hear better performers than Festing, Brown and Collett.

Such was the estimation accruing to Giardini from his talents, that, in 1754, he was placed at the head of the opera orchestra. Two years afterwards, he joined the female singer Mingotti in attempting that labyrinth of disaster, the management of the Italian Opera; but, although they acquired much fame, their management was not attended with success. During this time, Giardini composed several of the dramas that were performed. In leading the Opera band, he had the merit of introducing

improved discipline, and a new style of playing, much finer in itself, and more congenial with the poetry and music of Italy, than the level and languid manner of his predecessor, Festing, who had succeeded Castrucci (Hogarth's "Enraged Musician"), and had since, with inadequate powers, continued to maintain the post, with the exception of one or two seasons, during which Veracini had been in the ascendant.

Fashion, in the folly of its excess, has not often been seen to cut so extravagant a figure as on the occasion of the associated performances in private by Giardini and Mingotti, during the "high and palmy state" of their credit. The absolutism of Mrs. Fox Lane (afterwards Lady Bingley) over the fashionable world, as the enthusiastic patroness of these two artists, is a thing that satire might feast on. Rank, wealth, manhood, and beauty, prostrate before the domination of this "pollens matrona," were content (lest, forsooth! they should have "argued themselves unknown") to pay tax and tribute to her two favourites, and take a passport to the notice of "the town," in the shape of a benefit-ticket. At such scenes, it is not using too strong a figure to say that Folly must have clapped her hands, displayed her broadest grin, and given an extra jingle to the bells on her cap. To all who reflect, it scarcely needs to be observed that the false raptures and artificial stimulus, belonging to a system like this, are nearly as injurious as they are absurd; that to pamper thus the artist, is not only to spoil him, but to injure the interests of the art, by making it the object of popular ridicule or disgust.

The contrast afforded by the close of Giardini's career with the brilliancy of its middle course, makes one think of Johnson's bitter association of "the patron and the jail." Those were, truly, the days when patronage was a thing of rank luxuriance, that sometimes overgrew and choked the flowers of genius to which it fastened itself. The case is now, happily, become somewhat different – the free and fostering breath of general opinion being the air in which talent has learned to seek and attain its full growth; and a more limited resort being had to the forcing influence of the aristocratic temperature.³⁰

The losses that Giardini had sustained on that ready road to ruin, the Italian Opera, drove him back to the resources of his own particular talent; and he entered upon the occupation of teaching in families of rank and fashion, at the same time continuing unrivalled as a leader, a solo-player, and a composer for his favourite instrument.

Mr. Gardiner, of Leicester, has made the following record concerning him, in his "*Music and Friends*," on the occasion of a concert at the above town, in 1774: – "There I heard the full and prolonged tones of Giardini's violin. He played a concerto, in which he introduced the then popular air "Come, haste to the wedding," which moved the audience to a state of ecstasy, but now would disgust every one by its vulgarity. 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 on my

imagination.”

Giardini resided in England until 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. Fashion is a goddess of so gay a turn as cannot assort with infirmity; and an old favourite is but too likely to find that favour easily gets a divorce from age. The health of the Italian was greatly impaired, and sinking fast under a confirmed dropsy. With a dimmer eye, a feebler hand, and doubtless an aching heart, he found himself still doomed to the prosecution of his calling, when all his former excellence was lost. Instead of *leading* in all the most difficult parts, he now played in public only the tenor in quartetts that he had recently composed. After attempting, unsuccessfully, a burletta opera at the little Theatre in the Haymarket, he was at length (in 1793) induced to go to St. Petersburg, and afterwards to Moscow, with his burletta performers. The most cruel disappointment, however, attended him in each of these cities; in the latter of which, he died, at the age of 80, in a state (as far as it could be discovered) of poverty and wretchedness.

It is certain that the wayward and splenetic character evinced by this brilliant artist, was his bane through the greater part of his life. To enquire how much of that character was indigenous to the man, and how much the evil fruit of the private-patronage system, were, perhaps, to consider too curiously. That he was

careless of his own interest, and that he quarrelled with some of his most valuable friends, can excite little surprise, when we note the furor of favoritism, the perversity of petting, that were thrust upon him. We must not expect, in the *morale* of the musician that “sterner stuff,” which we look for in the philosopher.

“Made drunk with honor, and debauch’d with praise,”

As a composer for the instrument on which he shone, Giardini is not entitled to rank very high. His Solos and Concertos, numerous, pleasing and of neat effect, were not of so marked a character as to ensure any great duration to their popularity; nor did they admit of any severe analysis as to science in their structure. It is from his *playing* that his high reputation is derived; and he confirmed into triumph, by more than thirty years of brilliant performance, the previously growing favour of the instrument in England, where indeed he may be said to have completely reformed the Violin system. A living testimony to the excellence of his playing, with a few words as to its manner, has been given, not long since, by Parke, the oboist, who heard him in 1776, and states that he displayed a fund of grace and expression – that his tone united sweetness with power – and (an odd addendum) that he made use of strings so large as to give rise to the idea that his fingers must have been blistered by the necessary pressure he gave them.

Antonio Lolli, born at Bergamo, in 1728, attained eminence

in his own country, and afterwards (from 1762 to 1773) became Concert-Master to the Duke of Wurtemberg. Subsequently he went to Russia, where he obtained, from the Empress, Catherine II, a signal token of her admiration, in the shape of a violin-bow, made for him by her order, and bearing on it an inscription in her own potential autograph: – “*Archet fait par ordre de Catherine II, pour l’incomparable Lolli.*” In 1785, he visited England, whence he proceeded to Spain, and thence to Paris, where he performed at the *Spirituel* and other Concerts. In 1788, he returned to Italy, where he glorified his own name with the title of Concert-Master to the Empress of Russia; and in 1794, he was at Vienna, ascribing himself under the same character to the King of Naples. He died, after a lingering illness, at Naples, in 1802. His excellence in practice was chiefly evinced in quick movements: he was rarely inclined to exhibit in an adagio.³¹ An anecdote in proof of his professional assiduity is recorded by Gerber. When he entered on his engagement at Stuttgart, in 1762, he found a superior there, in the person of Nardini. This circumstance roused all his energies, which speedily took a settled purpose. He requested the Duke to allow him a year’s leave of absence, to travel; instead of which, he retired, diligent, but disingenuous, to a secluded village, and applied himself indefatigably to his instrument. At the end of the accorded absence, he returned from his pretended journey, “*clarior è tenebris,*” and shone forth with such effect, that Nardini gave up the contest, and returned to Italy.

With regard to the compositions of Lolli, it is known that he never wrote more than the theme, and obtained from other hands the bass, or the parts for the several instruments: yet it is curious to note that he gives difficult passages, of considerable compass, to be executed on the *fourth string* only. There are extant various sets of his Solos, a Preceptive Treatise on the Violin, &c.

Gaetano Pugnani, first violinist to the King of Sardinia, was born at Turin, in the year 1728. At a very early age, he began to practise the instrument on which he was destined to excel. His first tutor was Somis, his countryman, already named as one of the most distinguished scholars of Corelli. After displaying his extraordinary abilities at the Sardinian Court, Pugnani went to Paris, and received the highest applause at the *Concert Spirituel*, as an admitted rival of J. Stamitz, Gavinies, and Pagin.

Pugnani afterwards visited many parts of Europe, and remained a considerable time in England. It was here that he composed a great portion of his violin music. In 1770, he returned to Italy; and, at Turin, founded a school for violinists, as Corelli had at Rome, and Tartini at Padua. From this practical academy issued the first performers of the latter part of the eighteenth century; among whom were Viotti, Bruni and Oliveri. Pugnani's style of execution is recorded to have been broad and noble, and characterized by that commanding sweep of the bow which afterwards formed so grand a feature in the performance of Viotti; the germs of whose high qualities are clearly traceable to his master. It has been remarked, that all

the pupils of Pugnani proved excellent leaders. To lead well, was his most distinguishing excellence; and he possessed the art of transmitting it to others. In the orchestra, says Rangoni, he commanded like a general in the midst of his soldiers. His bow was the baton of authority, which every performer obeyed with the most scrupulous exactitude. With a single stroke of this bow, he could correct the erroneous, or animate the lethargic. He even indicated to the *actors* the tone and sentiment in which they ought to deliver, their respective melodies, and brought every thing to that harmony of expression, without which the operatic scene fails of its most powerful charm. His strong and acute mind possessed with the great object to which every leader ought to attend, he promptly and powerfully seized all the grand points, the character, the style and taste of the composition, and impressed it upon the feelings of the performers, both vocal and instrumental.

Pugnani, in addition to the display of brilliant and powerful abilities as a performer, gave, in his compositions, evidence of a free and elegant imagination. His several instrumental pieces, which consist of solos, trios, quartetts, quintetts and overtures, were published variously, in London, Amsterdam and Paris. On the Continent, they are still in some request, but are become very scarce. They display an eloquence of melody, and an animated and nervous manner. The ideas are natural, both in themselves and in their succession; and, however pointed and striking, never desert the style of the *motivo*. The operas of this distinguished

master, seven or eight in number, were all highly successful; and there is scarcely a theatre in Italy, at which some of them have not been performed.

Amongst the anecdotes that have been related of Pugnani, are the following. In his early youth, but when already much advanced on the violin, feeling far from satisfied with the degree of excellence he had attained, he resolved to quit Paris for Padua, in order to see Tartini, to consult him on his playing, and to improve himself under his instruction. Desired by that great master to give him a specimen of his performance, he requested of him, beforehand, to express frankly his opinion of his style and manner. Before he had played many bars, Tartini suddenly seized his arm, saying, "Too loud, my good friend; too loud!" Pugnani began afresh; when, arriving at the same passage, his auditor again stopped him short, exclaiming, "Too soft, my good friend; too soft!" He immediately laid down his instrument, and solicited Tartini to admit him among his scholars. His request was granted; and, excellent violinist as he really already was, he began his practice *de novo*, and, under the guidance of his new instructor, soon became one of the first performers of his time. Not long after this, at the house of Madame Denis, Pugnani heard Voltaire recite a poetical composition, in a style that enchanted him; and he, in his turn, at the lady's request, began to perform on his violin; when, vexed at the interruption and ill-breeding of Voltaire's loud conversation,³² he suddenly stopped, and put his violin into the case, saying, "M. Voltaire fait très-bien

les vers, mais, quant à la musique, il n'y entend pas le diable." Once, in performing a concerto before a numerous company, he became so excited, on arriving at an *ad libitum* passage, and so lost in attention to his playing, that, thinking himself alone, he walked about the room, "turbine raptus ingenii," till he had finished his very beautiful cadence.

Pugnani died at the city of his birth, in 1798. The violinist, Cartier, has written his eulogium in few words, but of strong import: – "He was the master of Viotti."

Giovanni Mane Giornovich (or Giarnovick, or Jarnowick, as he has been variously called) was born at Palermo, in 1745, and had Antonio Lolli for his preceptor. Resorting to Paris for his first public display, he appeared at the *Concert Spirituel*, with indifferent success, but, by perseverance, soon turned the scale of opinion in his favour so effectually, that, during a space of ten years, the style of Giornovich was in fashion in the French capital. His sway there was terminated by the superior power of Viotti, and he quitted France about the year 1780, proceeding to Prussia, where, in 1782, he was engaged as first violin in the Royal Chapel of Potsdam. He was, subsequently, for some time in Russia.³³ Between the years 1792 and 1796, he was in high vogue in various parts of England, but lost his popularity through a dispute with an eminent professor, in which the sense of the public went against him. A residence of some years in Hamburgh, a shorter stay at Berlin, and then a change to St. Petersburg, brought him to the end of his career. He died of

apoplexy, in 1804.

The eccentricity which marked the character of this artist, is shown in various anecdotes that have been current respecting him. On one occasion, at Lyons, he announced a concert, at six francs a ticket, but failed to collect an audience. Finding the Lyonnese so retentive of their money, he postponed his performance to the following evening, with the temptation of tickets at half the price. A crowded company was the result; but their expectations were suddenly let down by the discovery that “the advertiser” had quitted the town *sans cérémonie*. At another time, being in the music-shop of Bailleux, he accidentally broke a pane of glass.

“Those who break windows must pay for them,” said Bailleux. “Right,” replied the other; “how much is it?” “Thirty sous.” “Well, there’s a three-franc piece.” “But I have no small change.” “Never mind that,” Giornovich replied; “we are now quits!” and immediately dashed his cane through a second square – thus taking *double panes* to make himself disagreeable.

The authoress of the “Memoirs of the Empress Josephine” has furnished an anecdote connected with his sojourn in London. He gave a concert, which was very fully attended. On the commencement of a concerto which he had to perform, the company continued conversing together, while their whispering was intermingled with the clattering of tea-cups and saucers – for it was then customary to serve the company with tea throughout the evening, during the performance as well as in the intervening

pauses. Giornovich turned to the orchestra, and desired the performers to stop. "These people," said he, "know nothing about music. I will give them something better suited to their taste. Any thing is good enough for *drinkers of warm water*." So saying, he immediately struck up the air, "J'ai du bon tabac." The best of the matter was, he was overwhelmed with applause; the second piece was listened to with great attention, and the circulation of the tea-cups was actually suspended until its conclusion.

"Giornovick," says Michael Kelly, again, in his "Reminiscences," "was a desperate duellist, quarrelled with Shaw, the leader of the Drury Lane orchestra, at an oratorio, and challenged him. I strove all in my power to make peace between them. Giornovick could not speak a word of English³⁴, and Shaw could not speak a word of French. They both agreed that I should be the mediator between them. I translated what they said to each other, most faithfully; but, unfortunately, Shaw, in reply to one of Giornovick's accusations, said, "Pooh! pooh!" – "Sacre!" said Giornovick, "what is the meaning of dat 'pooh! pooh?' I will not hear a word until you translate me 'pooh! pooh!'" My good wishes to produce harmony between them, for some time, were frustrated, because I really did not know how to translate 'pooh! pooh!' into French or Italian. I, however, at last succeeded in making them friends; but the whole scene was truly ludicrous."³⁵

The mettlesome *vivacity* of this strange being was further shown in his intercourse with the Chevalier St. George, who was expert at the sword, as well as the *bow*. Giornovich often

disagreed with this formidable master of fence, and, one day, in the heat of a dispute, dealt him a box on the ear. Instead of resenting it, however, by means of his “so potent art,” St. George turned round, with laudable self-restraint, to a person who was present, and said, “*J’aime trop son talent pour me battre avec lui!*” (“I am too fond of his talent, to fight him.”)

“Jarnowick,” says a recent critic, “was a sort of erratic star or meteor, which cannot be brought into the system of the regular planets of the violin. Slightly educated, and shallow as a musician, his native talent, and the facility with which he was able to conquer mechanical difficulties, rendered him so brilliant and powerful a player, that, for a time, he was quite the rage, both in France and England. We have been told, by a gentleman who knew him well,” adds this writer, “that he has seen him, with his violin in his hand, walking about his room, and groping about on the strings for basses to the melodies he was composing. His concertos are agreeable and brilliant, but destitute of profundity and grandeur, and are, therefore, totally thrown aside. His performance was graceful and elegant, and his tone was pure. He was remarkably happy in his manner of treating simple and 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. But, both as a composer and a performer, the effect he produced was ephemeral, and has left no trace behind it. He contributed nothing either to the progress of music, or to that of the instrument which he cultivated.”

In giving the reverse side of the picture, there appears to be here a little exaggeration of its defects. That so eminent a performer should have contributed *nothing* to the progress of his instrument, is scarcely to be held probable. The crowds he drew, and the admiration he excited, must surely have been the means of diffusing some increased regard for the instrument of whose single powers he made such brilliant exhibition. To the steady advancement of the art, through the formation of pupils, he might contribute nothing; but he must have added something to its success, by stimulating the public disposition to encourage it. To create admirers, is of less importance than to make proficient; and yet it is an achievement of *some* value, inasmuch as it promotes the *demand* for proficient. Even when the public, for personal reasons, withdrew their patronage from Giornovich, they only transferred, in favor of others, the admiration for violin solo-playing, which he had been one of the agents to instil into them: and thus it is that no performer of great abilities, unless, by introducing a vicious style, he corrupts taste (which has not been charged upon Giornovich), can be justly said to be destitute of advantageous influence upon his art.

Giovanni Battista Viotti, the first violinist of his age, and the enlightened originator of the modern order of violin-playing, was born in 1755, at Fontaneto, a small village in Piedmont. Possessing the happiest dispositions for his art, the progress he made under Pugnani was so rapid, that, at the age of twenty, he was chosen to fill the situation of first violinist to the

Royal Chapel of Turin. After about three years' residence there, he proceeded on his travels, having already attained maturity of excellence. From Berlin, he directed his course towards Paris, where he displayed his talents in the *Concert Spirituel*, and speedily obliged Giornovichi, who was then figuring as a star of the first pretensions, to "pale his ineffectual fire." The concertos of Giornovichi, agreeable and brilliant as they were, and supported by his graceful and elegant playing, lost their attraction when brought into rivalry with the beauty and grandeur of Viotti's compositions, aided by the noble and powerful manner in which he executed them.

Viotti's fame very soon drew on him the notice of the French Court; and he was sent for to Versailles by Marie Antoinette. A new concerto of his own composition, to be performed at a courtly festival, was to afford a treat worthy of Royalty; and every one of the privileged was impatient to hear him. At the appointed hour, a thousand lights illumined the magnificent musical saloon of the Queen; the most distinguished symphonists of the chapel-royal, and of the theatres (ordered for the service of their Majesties) were seated at the desks where the parts of the music were distributed. The Queen, the Princes, the ladies of the royal family, and all the persons belonging to their Court, having arrived, the concert commenced. The performers, in the midst of whom Viotti was distinguished, received from him their impulse, and appeared to be animated by the same spirit. The symphony proceeded with all the fire and all the expression

of him who conceived and directed it. At the expiration of the *tutti*, the enthusiasm was at its height; but etiquette forbade applause; the orchestra was silent. In the saloon, it seemed as if every one present was forewarned by this very silence to breathe more softly, in order to hear more perfectly the *solo* which he was about to commence. The strings, trembling under the lofty and brilliant bow of Viotti, had already sent forth some prelusive sounds, when suddenly a great noise was heard from the next apartment. *Place à Monseigneur le Comte d'Artois!* His Highness entered, preceded by servants carrying flambeaux, and accompanied by a numerous train of bustling attendants. The folding-doors were thrown open, and the concert was interrupted. A moment after, the symphony began again; "Silence! Viotti is going to play." In the meantime, the *Comte d'Artois* cannot remain quietly seated: he rises, and walks about the room, addressing his discourse loudly to several ladies. Viotti looks round with indignant surprise at the interruption, puts his violin under his arm, takes the music from the stand, and walks off, leaving the concert, her Majesty and his Royal Highness, to the reproaches of all the audience – and leaving his biographers, afterwards, in some doubt whether a just independence of spirit, or a petulance beyond the occasion, should be regarded as the motive to this premature *finale*. Of those who read the anecdote, some may associate it with the story of "the *bear* and fiddle," while others, siding with Viotti, may consider the interruption that provoked him as something parallel to Beranger's ironical

summons of

Bas, bas!

Chapeau bas!

Place au Marquis de Carabas!

It has never been satisfactorily discovered what were the reasons which induced Viotti, at an early period of his life, to relinquish all idea of ever performing in public. Some have referred to the incident above narrated, as the cause of this; but they who pretended to be well acquainted with his character, have asserted that he disdained the applause of the multitude, because it was afforded, almost indiscriminately, to superiority of talent, *and* to presumptuous mediocrity. It is well known that he rejected the solicitations of people who were termed of the great world, because he would have no other judges than such as were worthy of appreciating him; and that, notwithstanding the pretensions asserted by the great and fashionable persons of his day, on the score of knowing every thing, and of being the supreme arbiters of arts, of artists, and of taste, he observed that it was very rare to find among them men capable of a profound sentiment, or who could discover in others any thing beyond their exterior, and judge of things otherwise than by the same superficial admeasurement. He, however, yielded again to the eagerness which was evinced for hearing him, – but on two occasions only; of which the one did honour to his heart; and the other, as it serves to acquaint us more intimately with his

character, may be here related.

On the fifth story, in a little street in Paris, not far from the *Place de la Révolution*, in the year 1790, lodged a deputy of the Constituent Assembly, an intimate and trusty friend of Viotti's. The conformity of their opinions, the same love of the arts and of liberty, an equal admiration of the genius and works of Rousseau, had formed this connection between two men who thenceforward became inseparable. It was during the exciting times of enthusiasm and of hope, that the ardent heart of Viotti could not remain indifferent to sentiments which affected all great and generous minds. He shared them with his friend. This person solicited him strongly to comply with the desire which some of the first personages in the kingdom expressed to hear him – if only for once. Viotti at last consented, but upon one condition – namely, that the concert should be given in the modest and humble retreat of *the fifth floor! La fortune passe par tout*– ‘We have,’ said he, ‘long enough descended to *them*: but the times are changed; they must now mount, in order to raise themselves to *us*.’ This project was no sooner thought of, than prepared for execution. Viotti and his friend invited the most celebrated artists of the day to grace this novel festival: – Garat, whom nature had endowed with a splendid voice, and a talent of expression still more admirable – Herman, Steibelt, Rode (the pupil of Viotti). To Puppo was confided the direction of the orchestra; and to Bréval, the office of seconding Viotti. Among the great female *artistes* of the day, were Madame

Davrigny, with Mandini, Viganoni, and Morichelli, a lady as celebrated for her talents as for her charms. On the appointed day, all the friends arrived. The bust of Rousseau, encircled with garlands of flowers, was uncovered, and formed the only ornament of this novel music-saloon. It was there that Princes, notwithstanding the pride of rank; great ladies, despite the vanity of titles; pretty women, and superannuated fops, clambered for the first time up to the *fifth story*, to hear the almost celestial music of Boccherini, performed by Viotti; and, that nothing might be wanting to complete the triumph of the artist, there was not one of these persons who, after the concert, descended without regret, although it was the lot of some of them to return to sumptuous palaces, and into the midst of etiquette, luxury and splendour.

Among those friends who enjoyed the envied privilege of hearing this great artist in private, was Madame Montgerault, who had a country-house in the valley of Montmorency. Some of his most brilliant ideas had their access in the society of this amiable and gifted woman, in whom he found an enthusiasm for the art equal to his own. She would frequently seat herself at the piano, and begin a Concerto *all'improvviso*; while Viotti, catching in an instant the spirit of the *motivo*, would accompany her extemporaneous effusions, and display all the magic of his skill.

The spirit and honesty of Viotti's character are not ill shewn in the following anecdote. Giuseppe Puppo, who possessed

no mean command over the violin, and whose talents were acknowledged by Viotti with the readiest candour, cherished the more than foolish vanity of boasting himself a scholar of the great Tartini, which was known to be an untruth, or, as a French term leniently expresses such deviations, “une inexactitude.” On some public occasion, when M. Lahoussaye chanced to be present (who was really a disciple, and an enthusiastic one, of Tartini’s), Viotti begged him, as a favor, to give him a specimen of Tartini’s manner of playing. “And now,” said he, in a tone loud enough to be heard by all the company – “now, Signor Puppo, listen to my friend, Monsieur Lahoussaye, and you will be enabled to form an idea as to how Tartini played!”

Viotti’s stay in Paris was abruptly terminated by the bursting of the revolutionary storm in 1790, which drove him to England. His debüt in London, at the memorable concerts under the management of Salomon, was as brightly marked as it had been in Paris. The connoisseurs were delighted by his originality and felicitous boldness, tempered as these qualities were by a pure and exalted taste. In the years 1794 and 1795, he had some share in the management of the King’s Theatre, and subsequently became leader of the band in that Temple of (occasional) Concord. But, as an ancient author has said, success is a thing of glass, and, just when it begins to wear its brightest looks, it provokingly meets with a fracture. The quiet and blameless habits of life of the great musician had not sufficed to exempt him from the officious visitations of political

suspicion, prompted, it has been supposed, by some whispering tale of slander, from professional envy. The result was, that poor Viotti suddenly received an order from the Government to leave England immediately. By what subtle ingenuity of apprehension, the proceedings of a violin-player came to be associated, at the Home-Office, with the Revolutions of Empires, is as yet a mystery more dark than Delphos. Possibly some future D’Israeli, enquiring for “farther particulars within,” may find the means of enlightening the world on this transaction, which certainly does seem, at present, to afford scantier material for the historian than for the epigrammatist.

Thus expelled from the country which had evinced towards others so many generous proofs of hospitality, Viotti passed over to Holland, and subsequently fixed himself in the seclusion of a beautiful spot near Hamburgh, named Schönfeld. Here he gave up his mind to the cares of composition, as most likely to displace or diminish those more painful ones which harassed his sensitive mind, on account of the treatment he had been subjected to. Some of his best works were the product of this retreat; including his celebrated *Six Duets Concertante*, for two violins; in the preface to which, he touches on the circumstance that was still affecting him: – “Cet ouvrage est le fruit du loisir que le malheur me procure. Quelques morceaux ont été dictés par la peine, d’autres par l’espoir;” – and indeed it has been justly remarked that it would be difficult to find any musical work that should seem to have proceeded more directly from a feeling

heart, than these exquisite Duetts.

In Hamburgh, he met with his former competitor, Giornovich, who, like himself, had been compelled to fly from Paris, the scene of his pristine glories. The latter gave two concerts in this place, attended with the meed of money, as well as that of praise; but the graver-minded Viotti could not be persuaded to appear in public, and imitate his example.

In 1801, Viotti found himself at liberty to return to London. Having determined to relinquish the musical profession, he devoted his resources, like Carbonelli of foregone fame, to the ministry of Bacchus, and associated himself with a respectable member of the wine-trade. Disappointment was the issue, however, of this undertaking; and, after years of endeavour, he discovered that his whole fortune was gone. Thus reduced, he prevailed with his own struggling spirit to solicit some appointment from the French Court, and received, from Louis XVIII, the nomination to the management of the Grand Opera. Impelled anew by what Byron calls he proceeded to Paris, and entered upon the office; but neither his age, nor his quiet character, was congenial with the temper of such a scene; and he retired, unsuccessful, but with the grant of a pension. He then came over to end his days in England, loving rather to be an *habitué* of London, than a citizen of the world; for he had become closely familiarized with the ways and habits of our metropolis, and seemed to have cherished an almost Johnsonian attachment to it. His previous cares and misfortunes, however, had left him

little power to continue the race of life, already a protracted one; and, after visibly declining for some time, he died on the 3rd of March, 1824.

“The various joltings of life’s hackney coach,”

Viotti’s long retirement from the profession of that art on which his fame was built, had not impaired his love of it, nor his inclination to support it. On the institution of the Philharmonic Society, that “decus et tutamen” of instrumental music in this country, he was one of the original members, and, as an honorary performer, not only led the band in turn with Salomon, F. Cramer, Yaniewicz, Spagnoletti and Vaccari, but, like them, interchanged direction and submission, by taking his seat, on the other nights, among the *ripieni*; thus assisting to form an orchestral phalanx that certainly never was witnessed before, and is little likely to be surpassed.

Viotti was a person of feelings and sentiments far less artificial than are commonly produced in men whose intercourse with society is fostered by their powers of contributing to its amusement. Mixing, of necessity, a great deal with the world, he seems, nevertheless, in a remarkable degree, to have preserved himself from its corrupting influence; and though, as just remarked, he loved London much, there is very interesting evidence to shew that he loved nature more. The purity and rectitude of his taste – its association with the poetic and the

true – stand thus recorded by one who had good opportunities of appreciating him: – “Never did a man attach so much value (says M. Eymar) to the simplest gifts of nature; and never did a child enjoy them more passionately. A simple violet, discovered in its lowly bed among the grass, would transport him with the liveliest joy; a pear, a plum, gathered fresh by his own hands, would, for the moment, make him the happiest of mortals. The perfume of the one had always something new to him, and the taste of the other something more delicious than before. His organs, all delicacy and sensibility, seemed to have preserved, undiminished, their youthful purity. In the country, everything was, to this extraordinary man, an object of fresh interest and enjoyment. The slightest impression seemed communicated to all his senses at once. Every thing affected his imagination; every thing spoke to his heart, and he yielded himself at once to its emotions.”

The natural bias of his character receives further illustration in the sketch which he himself has given, descriptive of his picking up one of the varieties of the popular *Ranz des Vaches*, among the mountains of Switzerland.

“The *Ranz des Vaches* which I send you,” says he to a friend, “is neither that with which our friend Jean Jacques has presented us, nor that of which M. de la Borde speaks, in his work upon 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 since.

“I was sauntering alone, towards the decline of day, in one of those sequestered spots where we never feel a desire to open our lips. The weather was mild and serene; the wind (which I detest) was hushed; all was calm – all was unison with my feelings, and tended to lull me into that melancholy mood which, ever since I can remember, I have been accustomed to feel at the hour of twilight.

“My thoughts wandered at random, and my footsteps were equally undirected. My imagination was not occupied with any particular object, and my heart lay open to every impression of pensive delight. I walked forward; I descended the valleys, and traversed the heights. At length, chance conducted me to a certain valley, which, on rousing myself from my waking dream, I discovered to abound with beauties. It reminded me of one of those delicious retreats so beautifully described by Gesner: 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 again fell into that kind of profound reverie, which so totally absorbed all my faculties, that I seemed to forget whether I was upon earth.

“While sitting thus, wrapped in this slumber of the soul, sounds broke upon 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 lethargy, 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.”

This susceptibility of pure and simple emotions, which it is delightful to recognize as one of the attributes of real genius, was in Viotti associated with a clear and cultivated intellect. He passed much of his life in the society of the accomplished, the literary, and the scientific; and his active mind gathered strength and refinement from the intercourse. If the Horatian dictum be right, that it may be added to the sum of Viotti’s personal merits, that he gained the respect and esteem of the great, with whom he mixed on proper terms, not forgetful of their rank as persons of birth and fortune, nor of his own, as a man of rare talent. The strictest integrity and honour regulated his transactions; and his feelings were kind and benevolent. Thus it may be seen that his character, as a man, was calculated to give increased dignity and influence to his name as a musician.

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