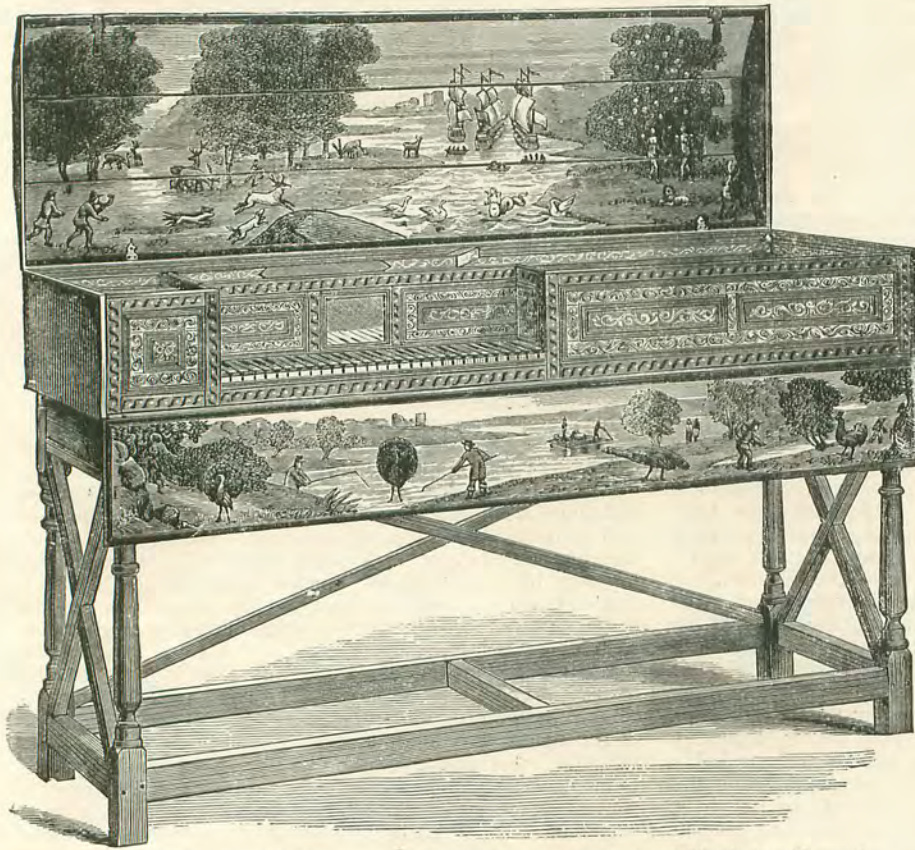


THE HARPSICHORD REVIVAL.

By FREDERICK J. CROWEST.



HARPSICHORD (From the Permanent Collection belonging to the South Kensington Museum).

ONE of the healthiest aspects, perhaps, of the exceedingly fast age in which we live—and there is every prospect of future generations witnessing yet faster progress—is the pause we make, betimes, to look back a little through the vista into the past. This is not invariably a profitless pursuit, for, adequately as our present-day needs are met by the never-failing law of supply and demand, there is constantly breaking out in this one or that one the feeling that the “good old times” of two or three generations ago were infinitely to be preferred to the “hurry-skurry” of present-day existence. Some bold being then sets to work to bring before our eyes a veritable bit of “old original.” It may be a hat, bonnet, ruffle, chatelaine, or a piece of old furniture-carving is lighted upon, of which latter the enthusiastic lover of the antique yearns to make a “rubbing.”

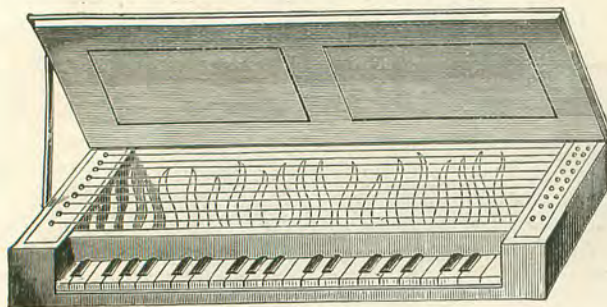
ducted and furnished, particularly in the scenic and “properties” department, that they have at last become vast educational machines. If, for example, we do not get the actual armour and costumes worn on the “Field of the Cloth of Gold,” such close copies of these are used that it is no matter. Only recently there have been pieces produced, in which, to perfect the *ensemble*, an actual harpsichord of last century date and make has been brought upon the stage, with most interesting and artistic effect. That this “actuality,” instead of its offshoot the modern “grand,” should have been produced is not only an indication of the lengths to which managers go to command success, but it gives the audience an opportunity of learning more about the qualities and capacities of the instrument than would the reading of dozens of histories of music or treatises on musical instruments.

The virginal begat the harpsichord, and of the harpsichord came the pianoforte. One of the most ancient musical instruments was the dulcimer, out of which grew the spinet or virginal. The name, derived from the word *virgo*, is supposed to have originated as a compliment to Queen

Sometimes it is the *disjecta membra*—and it is a lucky “find” when it is—of some old family plate-chest; but in any case the antiquarian spirit is there, and is not satisfied until it beholds the past-age pattern brought before our eyes, or reproduced, worn on the person, or exhibited in the shop-window as an antidote to one of the “up-to-date” fashions, some of which may be said to constitute one of the distinguishing blights of the present time.

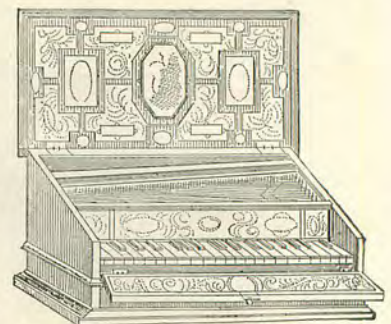
How often does the genuine musical amateur, for instance, delve back into the far past to secure from oblivion and decay the score of some composition—a motet, madrigal, anthem, or suite—which both for harmony and melody he verily believes and declares to be worth more than ten of the best modern Russian or Scandinavian pieces played in our concert-rooms.

The really profitable feature of all this industry is its educational value; and in no direction has this example been brought before us, on a large scale, more thoroughly and realistically, for some years past, than at public entertainments. So different are these now from what they were, so much better are they con-

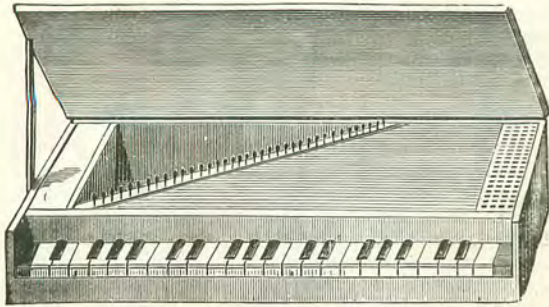


THE TABLE VIRGINAL.

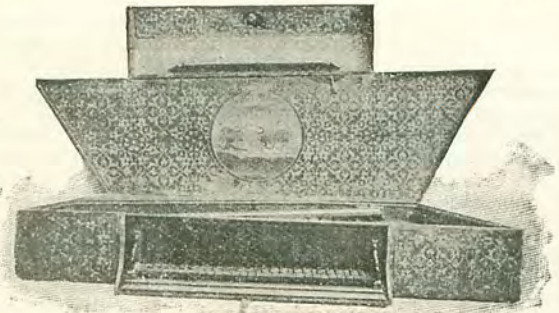
Open and showing the method of fixing the strings.



ANOTHER STYLE OF TABLE VIRGINAL.



CLAVICHORD OR CLARICHORD.
Precursor of the spinet, harpsichord, and pianoforte.



SPINET OR COUCHED HARP.
Similar in construction but smaller than the harpsichord.



THE TABLE SPINET. *Open and showing case decoration.*

The harpsichord* came into vogue towards the close of the sixteenth century; at least it was introduced into this country about the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is difficult, obviously, to fix the first use of the first harpsichord. It may have been in a private family before it appeared in public. The earliest use of it that we can trace in musical history is in the orchestra that accompanied the first opera. When Emilio del Cavaliere produced *L'Anima e Corpo*—the earliest true opera—in 1600, he had in his orchestra a harpsichord, probably for the use of the conductor. Those were the days before the man with the *bâton* conducting music had come into fashion. For many years it retained its place in the orchestra, being superseded by the “grand” pianoforte. When the conductor with his stick appeared, the piano was doomed as a member of the orchestra; nor was it long before it was driven out of the band. The first examples were little more than “magnified” spinets; but early instruments, like

* In Italian *clavicembalo* and *cembalo*; French *clavecin*; German *Flügel*.

Elizabeth; but, as a matter of fact, the virginal, so-called, was in use before her time. That Elizabeth was an excellent performer upon it is beyond doubt, historians and *on dits* of the period bearing out this. The so-called *Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book* (also called the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*) is no very reliable index of the Tudor Queen's playing-powers, as, although some of the pieces* formed part of her studies, many of them are dated at the end of her life, or after her death.

In form like a box, the virginal, without legs or supports, was placed upon a table. It was a keyed instrument of some three octaves in extent. Each note had a single string of metal to itself, and this string was sounded by means of a quill,† whalebone, or metal, in conjunction with “jacks” of wood provided with metal springs. Here, then, was the foundation principle of the Broadwood concert grand.

* Dr. Tye's, for instance.
† Hence the term *spinet*.



DOUBLE SPINET FOR TWO PERFORMERS.
Highly decorated by Hans Ruckers.

modern ones, had a habit of developing themselves very rapidly, and it was not long before the harpsichord became a formidable instrument, in some cases a sort of cross between the organ and pianoforte. Certainly the one-keyboard pattern was very similar in shape to the modern grand piano.

Its notes were produced by the same action or mechanism as that of the spinet, but whether the pressure of the fingers upon the keys was heavy or light, it made no difference in the volume of tone produced. All told, they were "grander" (*i.e.*, nearer approaching the "grand" of to-day) in tone, because where the virginal had but one string to a note, the harpsichord was fitted with two, three, and four strings of brass or steel wires.

But how did matters stand for that all-important element in practical music—variety of tone-power? There were no "loud" and "soft" pedals as in the pianoforte. Well, this was got over by a supply of "stops," by means of which the player could intensify or diminish the tone. These "stops" constituted a mechanical device for moving the key-mechanism off the four wires on to one, and *vice versa*, just as the shifting keyboard of the piano does to-day. In some instruments the lid was so made that it would gradually open and shut, thus producing the "swell" effects in organs. Another plan was to build

harpsichords with two keyboards, the notes of the upper one having only a single string, and therefore much lighter than those of the lower or "great" keyboard.

Of course, no one wishes to see a harpsichord in the place of every pianoforte, even if that were possible. None the less it and its music furnish a delightful field for those lovers of music who feel betimes a longing for an excursion into the far-off musical past.

Composers for the harpsichord proper date from Graziani (1609-1672) down to Haydn's time (1732-1809). There was Lully, Purcell, Scarlatti, Buononcini, the Bachs, Boyce, Handel, and a host of others. Their suites and early sonatas abound with ingenuity, and are a long way off being unlovely. Now that the harpsichord is being revived, it would prove no unprofitable study, historically and musically, for lovers of music, so inclined, to look back into this almost forgotten and certainly neglected field of practice. Of course, most of the harpsichord compositions can be played upon the modern pianoforte; but nothing equals the peculiar touch and tingle of one of the old instruments. Now and then one of these can be bought "for a song," as the saying is, at sale-rooms; and it is possible, for those who can afford it, to get a brand-new copy made of one of the old originals.

GIRL-LIFE, NOW AND TWENTY YEARS AGO.

IN NORWAY.



Do you know anything of girl-life in other lands one must live with the girls, share their daily life, sympathise with their pursuits, and, above all, not ridicule habits and customs simply because they are strange to us. On the other hand, while seeking to learn girl-life in foreign lands, it is not at all

needful to give up one's own national characteristics. On the contrary, for the honour of our country they must be maintained.

Those among us who have lately visited foreign countries with the purpose of studying the character and condition of their women and girls, are struck with the changes wrought by the last twenty years.

In Norway, for example, a change marks the very first hour of a girl's life. The old custom was to wrap the newborn infant in swaddling clothes, whereas now she is put into a loose dress—"a symbol," says a Norwegian lady of the old school, "of her future freedom from all restraint and authority."

During her early years she lives at home, merely going to a kindergarten school for an hour in the morning, but when she reaches the age of six she attends regular day schools for three hours daily.

Boarding schools are almost unknown. There are but one or two in the whole country, and these, as a rule, are frequented only by delicate girls.

The practice of studying some particular branch of knowledge in order to ensure the girl's future independence, even if she be in a good position, is universal, and it is an almost unheard-of occurrence that a girl should stay quietly at home without some object of study or some occupation by which she can earn money for herself.

In the schools themselves a marked change is to be seen. No longer is education simple; on the contrary, it is most complex. Teachers are often in despair, not only at the number of subjects considered necessary for the examinations, but also because of the many new ways of teaching the various sciences.

The tendency towards the establishment of national or board schools has so greatly increased of late that if it should continue at the same rate, we shall find in a few years that the board schools will be used by people both of high and low degree, just as in America.

At present schools are divided into two great divisions, each consisting of five classes—the first five being preparatory, the second five for advanced students, and terminating with a grand examination, the result of which has a great influence on the girl's future success in obtaining a situation as book-keeper or teacher.

Another feature in the education of girls in the present day is the introduction into the schools of daily gymnastics according to the Swedish method.

Religious instruction is, as a rule, systematically given in the schools. Before lessons commence a portion of Scripture is read aloud in class every morning, and once or twice a week a devotional service is held for the pupils by the head master, who also gives Bible lessons to the upper classes and prepares them for Confirmation. This ceremony has always been obligatory to everyone belonging to the Established Church. There are not many Dissenters in Norway.

Of late years Sunday schools have become quite a feature in Norway, and are zealously attended by girls, quite a contrast to years gone by.

In consequence of the great desire for book-learning, the practice of needlework, both plain and artistic, has, in a great measure, gone out of fashion. Neither is it made of any importance in the schools, and it is feared that this important part of a woman's education will gradually pass out of their lives. The feeling has been strong among a certain class of the people that something should be done to preserve its practice in so poor a country as Norway.

A society, therefore, has been called into existence and named "The Friends of Needlework," with a head committee in Christiania, whose object it is to raise the value of woman's work in town and country, and to open out opportunities for obtaining patterns and tuition in the various branches of work, and with an eye to keeping up artistic ornamentation and colour.

The art of weaving from old patterns and pictures is gradually finding favour among the women and girls of Norway, and it is no unusual thing at the present moment