

ON MUSICAL PARTIES AND HOW TO MANAGE THEM.



E are not supposed to be amusical nation, and yet the love of music seems inherent in us, and nearly every family boasts of at least one member who can contribute, more or less, to its musical pleasures. The results are,

no doubt, that we are now and then called upon to endure some very feeble performances in the course of our lives. But if we abstained from many enjoyments on account of the drawbacks, our pleasures would be few; it is therefore worth while to consider how our musical talents can be best turned to advantage as far as society is concerned.

Of musical parties there are various kinds. In fashionable life, the *prima-donnas* and operatic stars are engaged at fabulous prices, their performances conducted by one of the best musicians of the day, and together they carry out a printed programme either in the afternoon or evening to delighted audiences, who are seated the while on rows of chairs, arranged as they might be in any concert-room; refreshments being offered down-stairs on their arrival, and again at the conclusion of the music. But once ensconced, they remain in their seats from beginning to end.

Something of the same plan is pursued when only amateurs perform; but, as a rule, on these occasions no programme is given to the guests, a few seats are scattered about the room, and the company come and go—if it is in the afternoon, more especially.

During the London season there have been a great many afternoon and evening musical parties given on the following plan:—For afternoon parties, on their arrival the guests are ushered into the dining-room; where are laid out, on a long table specially arranged with flowers, tea and coffee, iced coffee, claret, cider, champagne, moselle, or chablis cup, milk punch, ices, fruits of various kinds, and a variety of cakes, and brown and white bread and butter. Sometimes also there are very small sandwiches cut in the form of a diamond, and made of bread and butter and cheese, with watercress or lettuce chopped up with it, or of potted meats or *pâté de foie gras*, but this is not necessary. I have made a long list of drinkables because all these have been given at different parties; but two kinds or

even one kind of cup is quite enough, and my readers can make their selection. Sherry and plain claret are generally served also. Iced coffee, which is always approved of, is concocted as follows:—Make the coffee as usual, and let it get cold, then add milk and sugar and Wenham Lake ice. For excellent receipts under this head, I would refer my readers to an article on the subject in CASSELL'S FAMILY MAGAZINE, Vol. I., p. 440. The fruit should be nicely arranged, and I find it a good plan to have the strawberries stalked, so that they can be eaten without spoiling delicate gloves. There should be several basins of powdered sugar, and several dishes of cream, which is far nicer frozen. It is prepared thus:—Pound the sugar fine, put it in a basin, and pour the cream on it, whisk the mixture well, and then put the dish in ice.

In the winter, tea and coffee, and cakes, and bread and butter, with some wine cup, is considered sufficient; ornamented cakes and sweetmeats being added, to make the table pretty.

At evening parties, a light supper is served after the music. And where the guests are seated during the music, ices, &c., are handed round between the parts; but this is to be avoided, if possible, as it tends to confusion and noisy interruptions. One of the advantages of afternoon musical parties is, that they carry out a universally felt want, viz., the power of seeing friends without the strain on the purse which English entertaining generally entails.

A mistress of a house does well to remember that much of the success of all party-giving depends on the perfection of the several details, which can only be brought about by forethought and pre-arrangement on her part. She must see that her servants are well trained to their several parts, and the extraneous help too; for one, two, three, or even more waiters will possibly be required, and they should be each told off to separate duties—answering the door, giving the names of the guests, attending to the wine, &c.; women-servants being more generally employed to serve tea, coffee, &c., behind the table.

Where the meeting is less ceremonious, tea and coffee are served in the drawing-room on a small table covered with a white or coloured damask embroidered cloth, these beverages being poured out by the mistress or her daughter.

In the country, for afternoon musical gatherings, refreshments are often served in a tent or at small tables out of doors, which makes a pretty *al fresco* meal of it—peculiarly enjoyable if it be warm weather indoors.

Now with regard to the music. However small your party—if it be a party at all—do not trust to chance, but make out some sort of rough programme beforehand, and be quite sure of a good accompanist. The services of a thoroughly efficient one can be secured for £2 2s. in London, and they are to be had for £1 1s.; but amateur talent ought to be available

where there is only a pleasant sociable gathering; and young ladies should study that very useful art of reading at sight, and accompanying in a sympathetic manner, so as to aid rather than hinder the singer.

It is advisable not to begin the music for half-an-hour, or even an hour, after the time the guests have arrived; this gives them an opportunity of seeing each

they should be printed; otherwise, it is quite enough for the performers each to have one, in order that they may see when their turn comes, and be ready; for long pauses between the music are not advisable, and towards the end they are apt to break up the party; for people construe such pauses into the termination of the performance.



(Drawn by J. M'L. RALSTON.)

A VOCAL DUET.

other and talking, which, by-the-by, should not be allowed while the music is going on: it is disheartening to the singers and players, and a very bad compliment—more particularly where singing is concerned. We all know that a great deal of amateur playing is so indifferent, that it is an incentive rather than otherwise to conversation; but when the music is really good, it deserves a patient hearing. Therefore, where it is possible, it is certainly an advantage to have a garden or adjoining room for such of the guests as really prefer conversation to the music.

If there are programmes given among the company

In making out the programme, alternate as much as you can male and female singers, and instrumental and vocal music; duets and part-songs give a good deal of desirable light and shade. As a rule, reckoning roughly, each song or piece takes seven minutes, and eight items in an hour are about what can be easily accomplished. The more variety you can have the better. Instrumental music always pleases; and some clever amateurs have so mastered the art of whistling to an accompaniment, that it is like a flute, and is always listened to with pleasure.

The programme should begin and end with instru-

mental music, and foreign and English songs should come in with the rest.

For village musical entertainments, remember that songs in a foreign language are a mistake. Nothing takes so well as old ballads and melodies (the words clearly enunciated) from the ladies, and patriotic and naval ditties from the gentlemen.

A great deal of tact is always required in the arrangement of a musical programme. There seems to be more jealousy among musical performers—both amateur and professional—than in any other art, and feelings are more easily hurt. All the personal wishes and idiosyncrasies must be studied, and the talents of each shown to the best advantage.

I have found the giving of musical parties an excuse for a great many sociable gatherings during the dull time of the year, by organising a number of previous meetings for the practice of part-singing.

In the country this is an admirable plan. In our village, we always have an annual concert for a local charity, in the early spring, in which the villagers as well as the gentry take part; and for this we have practising every Wednesday night during the winter.

There are always two performances: the first at the rectory, the second at the schoolroom, which is gaily decorated with evergreens; semicircles of wood being hung up against the wall and covered with scarlet cloth, these holding any number of candles, and producing a brilliant illumination.

Many of the failings of the poor arise from a want of healthy relaxation; and the rustic mind, however untrained, seldom tires of sweet sounds. So music does them a great deal more good than we are, perhaps, able to see and understand at a cursory glance.

In music, as in most things, what is worth doing at all is worth doing well; and I would remind amateurs that, in selecting songs, they should be careful to choose those which fall within the compass of their voices, and to articulate every word clearly. A simple ballad sung in tune and with feeling is better, a thousand times, than any operatic *morceau* only tolerably well sung. Many of the audience—in London, at all events—have an opportunity of hearing such ambitious performances much better rendered by professionals.

ARDERN HOLT.

ART FURNITURE AND DECORATIONS FOR HOME USE.

PART THE SECOND.



WEN JONES, in his "Grammar of Ornament," gives us to understand that Art in its early and more perfect days made use only of the primary colours—red, yellow, and blue—and that the secondaries—purple, green, and orange—in decoration mark decadence of style and treatment.

We of a later day are descending in the scale; and, if we follow the dictates of our modern Renaissance, must use only the russets, olives, and browns of the tertiary series. Certainly the new wall-papers, especially those designed by Mr. Cutler and Dr. Dresser, are unique, and charming in their restful hues. Happy indeed is the tenant to whom his landlord now gives *carte blanche* to re-paper his domicile. No more impossible roses of variegated tints meandering over the wall! *Nous avons change tout cela.* In place of them we have apples and pomegranates, in unripe greens; or the "green diaper," and an artistic dado and frieze. Without drawing any "odious comparison" between the roses and the apples, or their respective merits, we know the dado and frieze are a return to right principles of decoration. I have always considered the walls of Pompeian rooms perfection. Fig. I. illustrates the divisions and style: *a*, the frieze; *b*, the panels; *c*, the dado.

The dado is one-sixth the height of the wall; upon this stand broad pilasters half the width of the dado, dividing the wall into three or more panels. The pilasters are united by a frieze of varying width, about

one-fourth the height of the wall, from the top. In an example in the "House of the Faun," I think, the dado is black; pilasters, red; the frieze, yellow; the panels, blue or white. The gay colouring is open to objection, but the style of decoration is undoubtedly good. The dado should be dark—one of the secondary

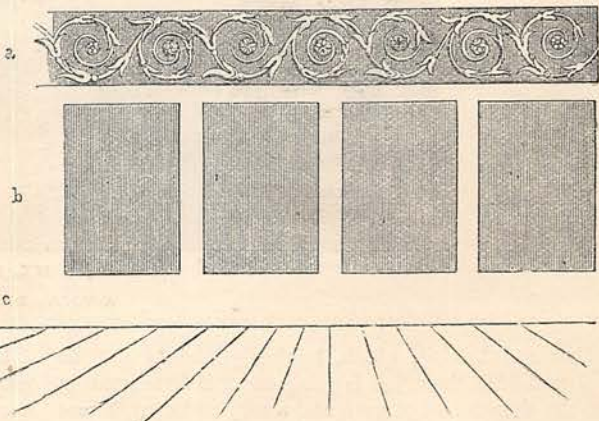


Fig. I.

colours—and the frieze invariably light, representing the sky. The ceilings in Pompeii were sometimes painted in imitation of the firmament, with the moon and stars on a blue ground.

Designs for wall-decoration could always be carried out in stencil, which is cheaper than wall-paper and can be made extremely pretty.