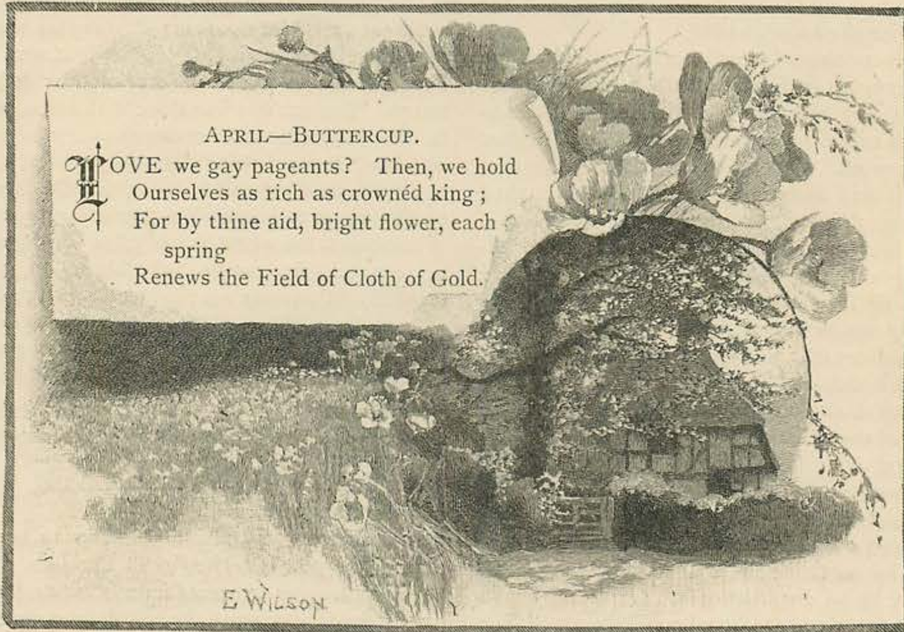
FLOWERS OF THE MONTHS.



PEERING INTO SONG-WORLDS.

O realm of art has wider range than the world of song. One may compass the history of most forms of musical art, and discover the origin of a musical instrument, even if dependence be placed upon mythic stories like that of the inquiring ancient, strolling Nile's banks, and discovering the first lyre in a sun-dried shell, as plucked by the thrice-illustrious Hermes. But song takes us back periods of time. It begins with Nature's first voice, when Sound broke out in its thousand shades and colourings, from the gentle monotone of bees to the terrific roar of monster ocean. All that was before may have been an indescribable stillness or a very madness of noise, but it is this world of sound—Nature's great diapason—which we draw upon when moulding into shape the nursery lullaby, or the more ambitious song or aria which commands the admiration of plebeian and patrician alike.

Man and beast have one characteristic in common: they both can sound monophonic tones; and with primitive man, just as in the savage of to-day, this power would be first employed in the natural cravings of everyday life and existence, and in the imitation of sounds of life around him. Thus the Kamtschatkadales get this succession of tones:—

not from any musical system, but by imitating the tones of the wild duck, and which are only the arpeggio'd forms of our chords $\frac{5}{3}$, $\frac{6}{4}$. The moanings of beasts and the cries of bird and man—these would be imitated for funeral chants, and would account for the scales and tones of savage tribes partaking of the quality of the minor modes. Such would have been the origin of the Egyptian Maneros, which the Greeks called Linos (Λίνος)—a primitive lament which has been traced to Phœnicia, and is the oldest song in the world. The development of man's vocal and imitative capacity would be natural enough. In order to give expression to the wants the voice would be raised or depressed, and in this way recitative, and subsequently melody, had its origin; for after all melody itself is only a species of finished and sustained recitative. A remarkable feature of primitive vocal efforts, seen in all the songs of savages, is their small compass—confined generally to a few notes, and seldom extending

beyond the fifth The Gregorian tones are pitched within this moderate compass; and in Hebrew music, some of it by tradition from the Temple itself, much the same characteristic presents itself:—

"BLESSING OF THE PRIESTS."

The Melos ($\mu\epsilon\lambda o\varsigma$) of the Greeks introduces tune, or song, for the first time to some rightful, though not pre-eminent, place and value. The Greeks had the tetrachord, which they probably borrowed from the Egyptians; but this compass was insufficient to express even their limited use for melody, so they doubled the tetrachord and gave future musical worlds the eight-note scale.

Slow as had been the growth of melodic succession from primitive man to the Greek age, even this classic people regarded tune as a mere accessory in their mathematically considered system, and it was not until Northern Europe took possession of it that music became a new art—with a great element in its melody—far surpassing in breadth, beauty, and realism anything that any one of the nations of antiquity conceived.

The Church stood the first sheltering-place for tune and melody. The Roman scourge destroyed all art-sympathy, and, save as a trumpet-call, melody slept, if we except the old Greek modes and ancient Hebrew airs which the early Christians kept alive. Meanwhile, Northern Europe broke out into harmony, and from Flanders spread the new art of polyphonous music—noble harmonies on which alone flowing melodies could be based, adequately to fulfil the no longer soul-less mission of melody which was opened out to it with the advent of the broadening spirit of the Middle Ages. Ancient melody (homophony) now dropped out for ever. Yet many Netherlanders whose names shine brightly amid the dim light of early musical life—many such came and went before melody soared on silvern wings. It was not till the latter half of the eleventh century that it began to be largely used by the Provençal and other bards, who improvised airs to their mother-tongue, and under the names of troubadours, *jongleurs*, *giullari*, &c., travelled from court to court, receiving food, money, clothes, and arms in reward for their captivating music. Generally of a simple and fascinating character, such improvisations were adapted to poems of religious and historical interest, and afforded such pleasure that not only were minstrels encouraged, but the law gave them an excellent *locus standi*, and kings, as with our own Alfred, did not disdain to be of their company; for, as Schiller perceived:—

> "Singers with kings may wander hand in hand,
> Equal on highest mortal heights they stand."

Taillefer, Norman soldier and minstrel, who enjoyed the front rank of the Conqueror's army at Hastings, and whose song was the "Chanson de Roland," was the father of all such *jongleurs*:—

> "Before the Duke he sang the strain
> Of Roland and of Carlemaine."

Blondel's song, which was instrumental in restoring to England its Richard; another, "L'Autrier per la Matinée," by the troubadour-king of Navarre—a song which graceful Mario used sometimes to sing; these, with the famous satirical song, "Malbrough," in which, as in many others, the French, because they could not kill the great head of the house of Churchill, endeavoured to sing him to death—these all have historical interest, and are the precursors of the national and political ballad which every country boasts.

Another class of songs needing special study, and which as it were grew of themselves, is the folk-songs of Europe, breathing all the national feeling and colouring of the homes and lands from which they have sprung. The field of patriotic songs is large, and it would take too much space to record the origin of "God save the King," composed by Carey; Arne's "Rule, Britannia;" "La Marseillaise" with its thrilling chorus, "Aux armes, citoyens;" Germany's great hymn, the "Wacht am Rheim;" America's "Hail, Columbia," the "Star-spangled Banner," "Yankee-doodle," and "Dixie's Land;" Austria's "God preserve the Emperor;" and a host of similar compositions which sheer love of country has inspired. And if this *amor patriæ* has induced many a melodious outburst that will ever command the enthusiasm of nations as well as of individuals, the same spirit must have prompted Dibdin, Davy, and Braham to sing of the sea and its sailors with the pathos felt in "The Bay of Biscay," "The Anchor's Weighed," and "Tom Bowling;" nor can we value less the tender sentiment and emotion which have led to the expression of such affecting strains as "She wore a Wreath of Roses," "My Mother bids me bind my Hair," "I know a Bank," and many others, appealing to us, as they do irresistibly, from their affinity with some unforgotten circumstance, association, or custom.

Without entering deeply into the growth of song, we look upon the period of the early contrapuntists as the first epoch in modern melodic art. Those Netherlanders, Dufay, Ockenheim, Josquin des Près, Willaert,

ANCIENT CHINESE MELODY IN PRAISE OF THE DEAD, NOT EXCEEDING THE FIVE TONES OF THE OLD CHINESE SCALE: F, THE PATRIARCH OF ALL CHINESE TONES, FORMING THE BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END OF THE MELODY.

and others, flourished from 1300 to 1500, and their aid consisted in adding voice parts to a principal melody (*Cantus firmus*), which the tenor voice sustained—until Palestrina (1514—94) gave it to the soprano. The old French Chanson, composed by Adam de la Hale, who lived at the courts of the Counts of Provence about 1280, illustrates not so much this method of early composition as a kind which preceded it, called *discantus*—a name given to the performances of singers who clothed with extempore harmony the theme or plain song set before them. The example shows the remarkable gift of melody possessed by this early labourer in the art :—

Tant con je vi - - - vrai n'a

- me - - rai au - - - - trui que - - - -

- vous je n'en par - ti - - - - rai.

It was with the burst of music's life in Italy that melody and song spread. The Netherlanders had gone into Italy (1480—1520) and taught its sons all that their hearts held of consonances and dissonances; and ere long the contrapuntal art of the Belgians, comparatively unmelodious, had to yield to the beautiful style of the Italians, which began to reach perfection at the coming in of the seventeenth century. Palestrina, Gabrieli, Monteverde — each should be remembered for the part rendered in beautifying melody ; but it was Carissimi, Scarlatti, Stradella, and Pergolesi of the early Italian school—our second period—who invested melody with the power of reaching the heart of pietist, lover, and assassin alike ; for in the case of Stradella he owed his life to the softening influence of one of his melodies upon the hearts of some desperadoes who had been sent to kill him. In Carissimi the subsequent warmth and grace peculiar to his country's art are perceptible enough. The following air, extracted from a beautiful cantata on Mary Queen of Scots, is simple and pathetic in the extreme, and shows a marked advance upon the severe style which the Palestrina epoch (1500—1650) writers had learned of the Belgians :—

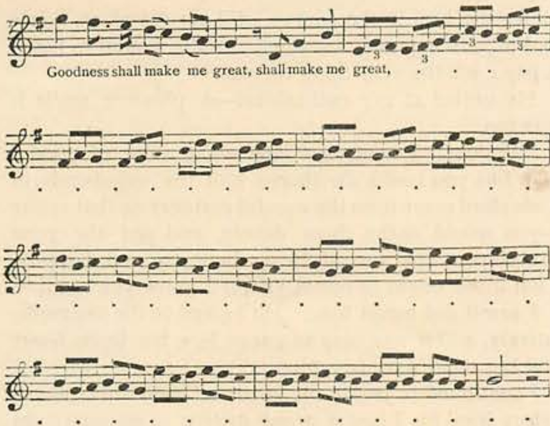
Adagio.

A mo - ri re, à mo - ri re, à mo - ri re,

per ser - bar . . . . . Gius - ti - zia, e Fed - e più non

va . . . . gli-on le co - ro - ne. &c.

A third period in melodic development came of the singer's caprice. Italy had discovered its soil to be peculiar to a truly indigenous fruit—a perfect singer and method of singing. This element transplanted itself in France, Germany, and Italy, bearing all the traditions of its perfect style, and impregnating song-forms especially with its flowing grace and polished turn and expression. It was not that a great race of composers came and wrote scenas and airs unparalleled for their beauty, brilliancy, and florid detail ; but rather that the singing art, having burst into life, proved an agent which the great masters of Italy and Germany were glad to recognise. Thus came a new order of florid song, seen to perfection in the sacred and secular works of Handel, as well as in the magnificent operatic creations of Spontini, Rossini, Mercadante, Donizetti, Bellini, and Verdi. But there came an evil. At the budding of the singing-art, the vocalist rendered what was written for him ; but art and nature broke this bond and improved upon the composer ! At this epoch (1650—1800) the world was enriched by a chain of master-minds—the Titans of music—who, recognising in the trained human voice the medium of highest thought and expression, wrote accordingly. Mozart and Mercadante penned lovely and lavish melodies like "Il mio tesoro intanto," and "In Terra ci divisero ;" yet singers sprang up for whom it was not enough to interpret, in their purity, richly embroidered song and arias with passages like the following in Handel's "Virtue my Soul shall still embrace" :—



—rather a "pumper," seventy-six notes to one vowel—which the redoubtable master himself would have needed a "breath" to accomplish! The singer would do more! Rossini was among others to combat this, and he adopted the plan of writing such florid airs that to interlard them with additional ornament became almost impossible. Thus was reached the *bravura* air, seen to perfection in Rossini's "Songs for All Voices," as well as in the writings of other modern Italian masters. Such vocal pieces constitute the highest summit of solo song—a height better suited to display the singer than to aid the cause of art.

Modern song lies low of the eminence to which the masters of music carried this form. It is essentially, and too often deliberately, an ephemeral production, appealing only for the popularity of the hour. When the story of the Victorian era is written this blot will be seen to have marred our musical-art progress. With few exceptions the tendency has been to cater for the momentary taste of the public, and this is to be deplored. Here and there is a song of noble sentiment and valubale artistic merit, but speaking generally, the song has been tempered to the age, and this leans, so far as music is concerned, towards a sickly and maudlin sentimentality which over-rides the better musical feeling. Where is the successor to the lofty style and fluent archness of Bishop's "Should he upbraid," "Tell me, my Heart," or "Lo! heie the gentle Lark," or the grace of "I've been roaming" (Horn), or "Cherry Ripe," or the purity of Shield's "The Thorn"? These are songs breathing the national character as pointedly and as honestly as a nation's songs can, and it is to be regretted that during the past thirty or forty years they have given place among composers to a style of ballad meagre as music, and unworthy the culture of the age. It is not that we have had no musicians. The bane has been the grasping spirit of the times, culminating in the royalty-fiend, fatal in its effect upon any art-work, of any age or country.

FREDERICK J. CROWEST.

BY MISADVENTURE.

By FRANK BARRETT, Author of "Harlowe's Helpmate," "Hidden Gold," "The Great Hesper," &c.

"Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long, back on itself recoils."—MILTON.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

DR. AWDREY PERSEVERES.

THERE is a wire blind to the window of my office facing the street, so that as I sit at my table I can see what is going on out of doors. This is very convenient to a country lawyer, who sees his clients pull up at his door, and is thus prepared to meet them.

The morning after my last visit to Flexmore House I heard the crunching of wheels in the ice of the gutter, and, glancing through the aforesaid blind, I caught sight of Dr. Awdrey. The old gig had been mended, and he had bought a new nag of the same sober sort as the last. "Ha, ha!" thought I; "he's come to settle about the two thousand a year that Nurse Gertrude is to receive."

It must be remembered that the particulars of the interview between Lynn Yeames and Miss Dalrympie, which I have set down in the last chapter, had not then come to my knowledge.

Dr. Awdrey came in clapping his hands, for, I remember, it was bitterly cold; and, pulling off one of his knitted gloves, he gave me his hand. His nose was red, but his fine kindly eyes sparkled brightly; and he had in his face that expression of virile energy, and vigour, and triumph, which one may see on a man when he has broken the ice to take his morning plunge. But there are difficulties to overcome in carrying out a healthy moral principle, that call for just as much nerve and courage as diving through half an inch of ice; and it has often struck me that if one braved as much personal inconvenience and discomfort in the service of humanity as he will endure for the mere sake of self-glorification, it would be infinitely better for oneself and one's fellow-creatures.