

The Music of Nature.

By A. T. CAMDEN PRATT.



DONKEY BRAYING.

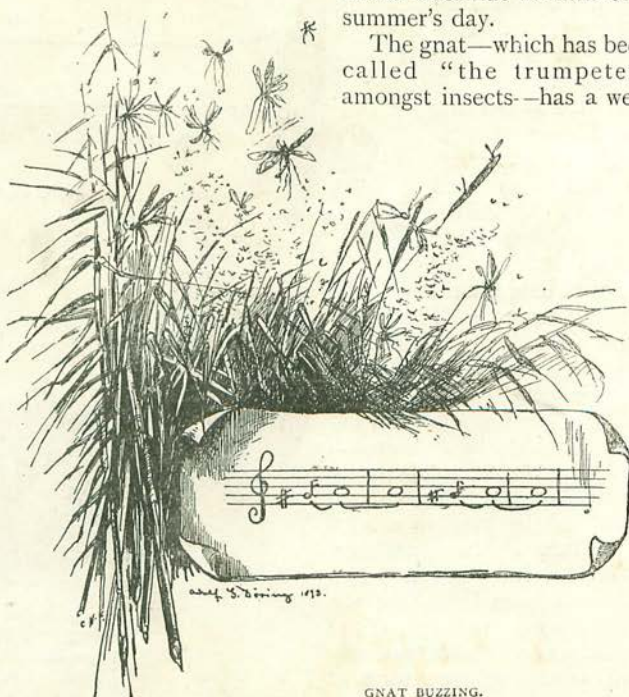
that Beethoven, resting on a stile during a walk in the outskirts of Vienna, caught from Nature those imitative sounds in the "Pastoral Symphony," which, as has been so well remarked, is so beautifully realistic of the soft fluttering stir of the insects—the hum in the noontide warmth of a summer's day.

The gnat—which has been called "the trumpeter" amongst insects—has a well-



It is beyond controversy that music had its origin in the simple and immutable expressions of Nature. Our best musicians owe some of their sweetest effects, not alone to the inspiration due to listening to the songs of the birds, the soft murmur of the vagrant bee, the catchy melodies of the insect world, but to their reproductions of the voices of Nature. Gottschalk introduced much insect-music into his compositions. In Handel one traces the solemn and beautiful, but spirited, melody of the lark. Rossini, Mozart, and Beethoven imitated with pleasing effect the cackling of a chatty brood of barn-door fowls, while Haydn introduced the braying of the ass into his 76th quartette with great success.

It was upon a summer day
Vol. vi.—87.



GNAT BUZZING.



must harmonize. This is embodied in the beautiful lines of Shakespeare :—

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims.

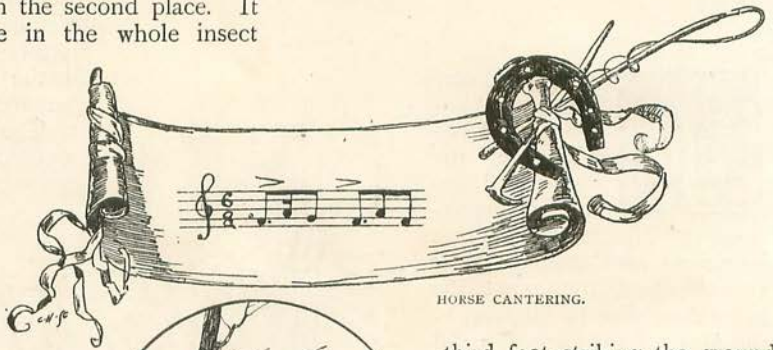


MAN WALKING.

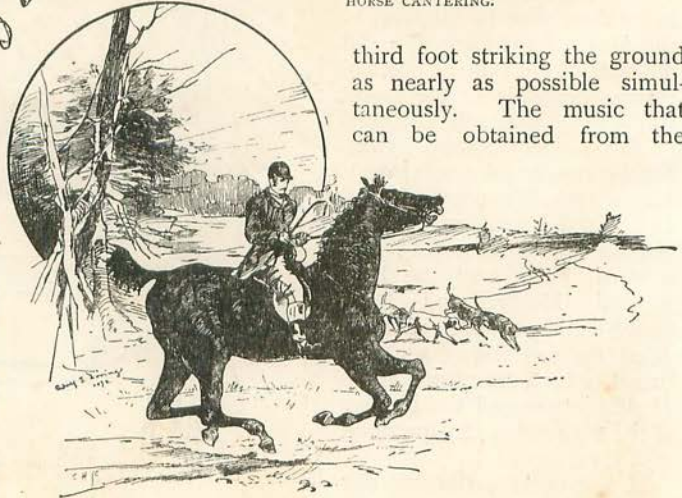
The idea itself is a truly poetic one, but it seems to proceed on the assumption that the recurrence of sounds at regular intervals constitutes the properties of music-time. But accent is necessary to rhythm; and it is difficult to see how that could exist in the "music of the spheres." In the trotting of a horse it is a matter of common knowledge that each alternate step is louder than the other; and the same is the case in the tread of our own feet, throwing the sounds into the order of common time; while the "canter"—so called from the pace which pilgrims went on horseback to Thomas à Becket's tomb—sometimes called the "Canterbury Gallop," was in triple time; every third step was louder than the other two, owing to the first and

defined note on A in the second place. It is the most audible in the whole insect orchestra, and at night may be mistaken for a post-horn at a remote distance.

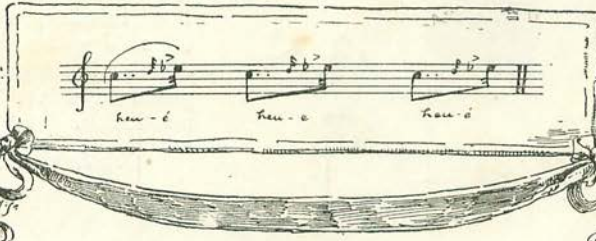
There is nothing in Nature that is not musical. According to old legends, the Principal of Evil alone suffers under the curse of banishment from harmony. The Evil One cannot appreciate music; and Goethe implies this in the curiously discordant jangling of sound in the *Mephistopheles'* speeches in "Faust." Men talk music as well as sing; they walk to a musical rhythm; the sounds of Nature are in accordance with musical rules. The Ancients even held that the mere proper motion of the planets must create sounds; and as the planets move at regular intervals the sounds



HORSE CANTERING.



third foot striking the ground as nearly as possible simultaneously. The music that can be obtained from the



CHILD CRYING.

reiteration of one note is in nothing more beautifully shown than in Dr. Arne's setting of *Ariel's* song in "The Tempest," which closely imitates the call of the owl.

In a previous article I dealt with the Music of the Birds; but Nature has many voices beyond those of our songsters.

The soul of music slumbers in the shell,
Till waked and kindled by the master's
spell!

sang Samuel Rogers a century ago. The same spell has found music in the babbling brook, the cry of the child, the elephant's roar, the barking of a dog; in fact, in every voice of Nature. Though laughter is often said to be musical, one would not expect to find music in a sneeze, a cough, or a yawn; yet Haydn has, in all three. The illustration given of the sneeze is from the minuet of his grand sin-

tonia; and the yawn is from his 57th quartette.

Many will recall, too, the instance of the brawling voices of three persons in a passion introduced by Beethoven in his third trio, Op. 9—a clatter of sounds indicating rage and passion.

For music in the cry of a spoiled child we must turn to Rossini's pensive duet, "Ebbere per mia memoria," in "Gazza Ladra." It is said of Mozart that he had a peevish wife, a lady hard to please, who when in a waspish humour frequently broke in upon his studies; and he has perpetuated her petulance in the overture to the "Zauberflöte." Imitations of the cries of children at play are frequent in the music of our great masters; and it will be remembered that in "Semiramide," Rossini has in a wild movement introduced the



MAN SNEEZING.





MAN YAWNING.

squealings of some little urchins with admirable effect.

Early in the present century William Gardiner, a member of the Academy of St. Cecilia, Rome, wrote a lengthy treatise—which I believe is now out of print—in which he attempted to prove that what is passionate and pleasing in the art of singing, speaking, and performing upon musical instruments is

derived from the sounds of the animated world. There is a great deal that is curious and interesting in this old work. He especially studied the cries of animals. With regard to the dog, he not only argues that the dog indicates his different feelings by different tones of voice—so marked that they are recognised by other animals as expressive of anger or fear—but that they understand the general force of language and the particular meaning of certain words. And again, that although the barking of a dog is an inarticulate sound, yet, if he is brought by the side of a pianoforte while barking, you may distinctly hear the notes upon which his bark is made reflected by the instrument. For instance, the notes of a dog barking from excess of pleasure are reproduced in the following illustration.

(To be continued.)



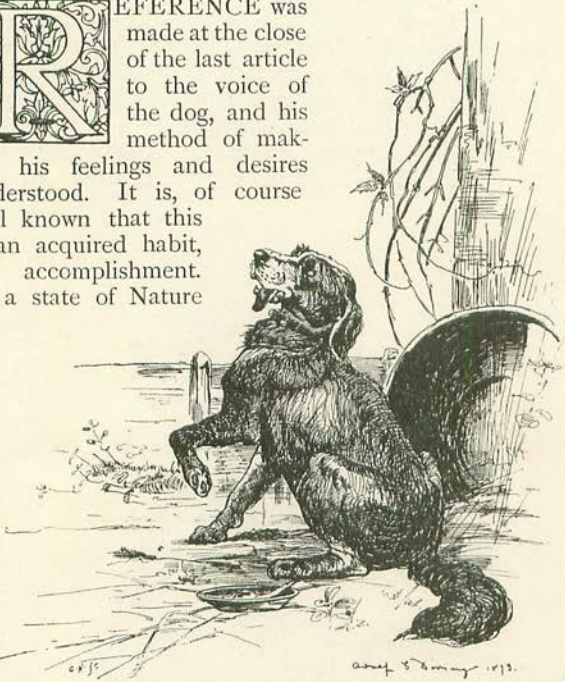
DOG BARKING FOR JOY.

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II.

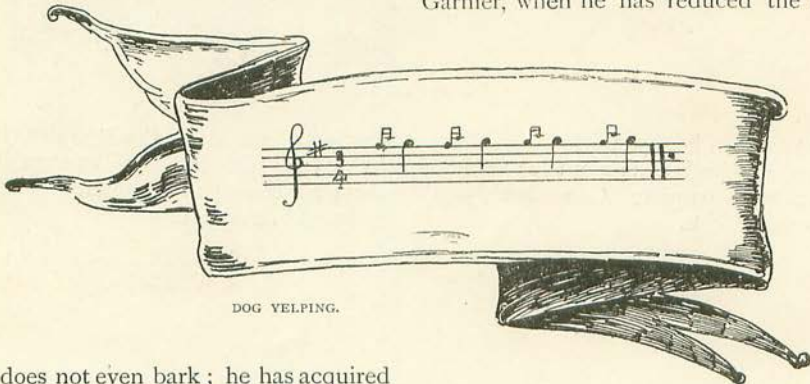
REFERENCE was made at the close of the last article to the voice of the dog, and his method of making his feelings and desires understood. It is, of course well known that this is an acquired habit, or accomplishment. In a state of Nature



quote the argument of Dr. Gardiner : " The dog indicates his different feelings by different tones." The following is his yelp when his foot is trod upon.

Haydn introduces the bark of a dog into the scherzo in his 38th quartette. Indeed, the tones of the "voice" of the dog are so marked, that more than any other of the voices of Nature they have been utilized in music. The merest tyro in the study of dog language can readily distinguish between the bark of joy—the "deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home," as Byron put it—and the angry snarl, the yelp of pain, or the accents of fear. Indeed, according to an assertion in the "Library of Entertaining Knowledge," the horse knows from the bark of a dog when he may expect an attack on his heels. Gardiner suggests that it would be worth while to study the

language of the dog. Perhaps Professor Garnier, when he has reduced the language

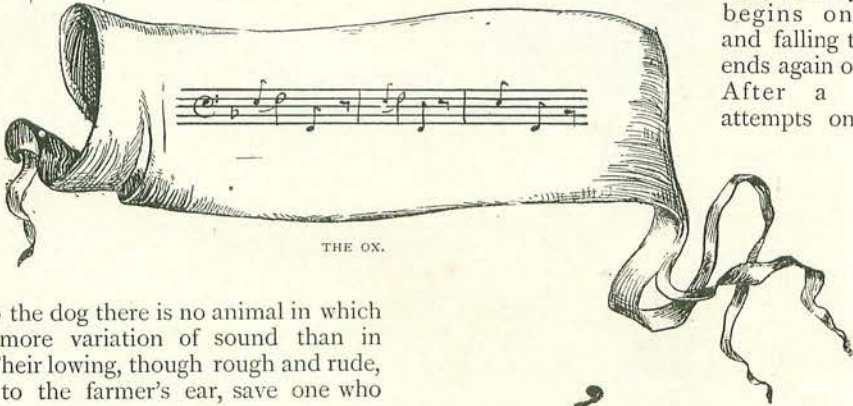


the dog does not even bark ; he has acquired the art or knowledge from his companionship with man. Isaiah compares the blind watchman of Israel to dogs, saying, "They are dumb ; they cannot bark." Again, to

of the monkey to "A,B,C," might feel inclined to take up the matter.

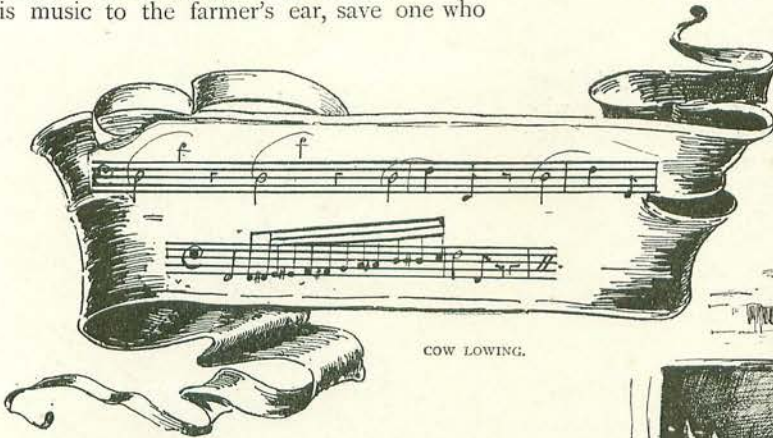


natural effect is greatly aided by the sliding of the finger along the note, especially in the case of the lowing of cattle; but there are other exclamations that are readily reduced to music. Gardiner gives one or two interesting cases, and the common salutation, "How d'ye do?" may be instanced. It usually starts on B natural, and the voice rising to D ends on C; whereas, the reply, "Pretty well, thank you," begins on D, and falling to A, ends again on D. After a few attempts on the



THE OX.

Next to the dog there is no animal in which there is more variation of sound than in oxen: "Their lowing, though rough and rude, is music to the farmer's ear, save one who



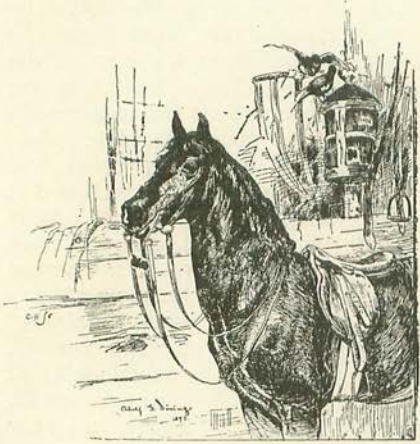
COW LOWING.

piano, the reader will be able readily to form these notes for himself.

moans the loss of her sportive young; with wandering eye and anxious look she grieves the livelong day." It is specially difficult in the case of oxen to suppose that they have a language; but it is impossible to doubt that the variations of their lowing are understood of one another, and serve to express their feelings if not their thoughts.

In the matter of exclamations, one knows how readily these may be imitated upon the violin, or in the case of the deeper or more guttural sounds, on the violoncello. The

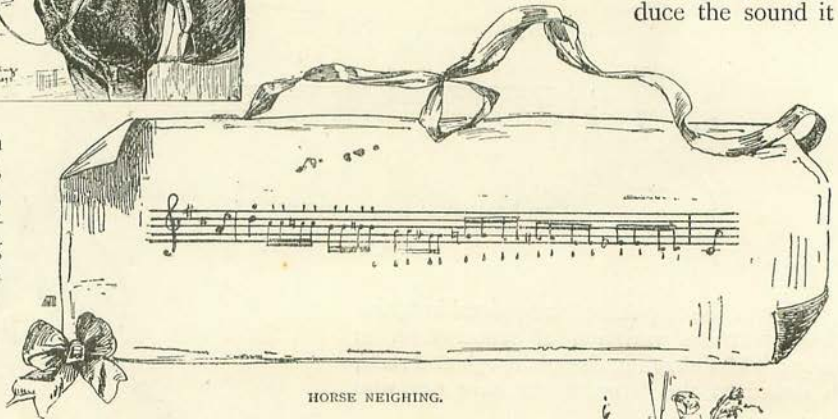




hopper perched on the bridge supplied by its voice the loss of the string and saved the fame of the musician. To this day in Surinam the Dutch call them lyre-players. If there is any truth in the story, the grasshopper then had powers far in advance of his degenerated descendants; for now the grasshopper—like the cricket—has a chirp consisting of three notes in rhythm, always forming a triplet in the key of B.

Gardiner, on the authority of Dr. Primatt, states that, to produce the sound it

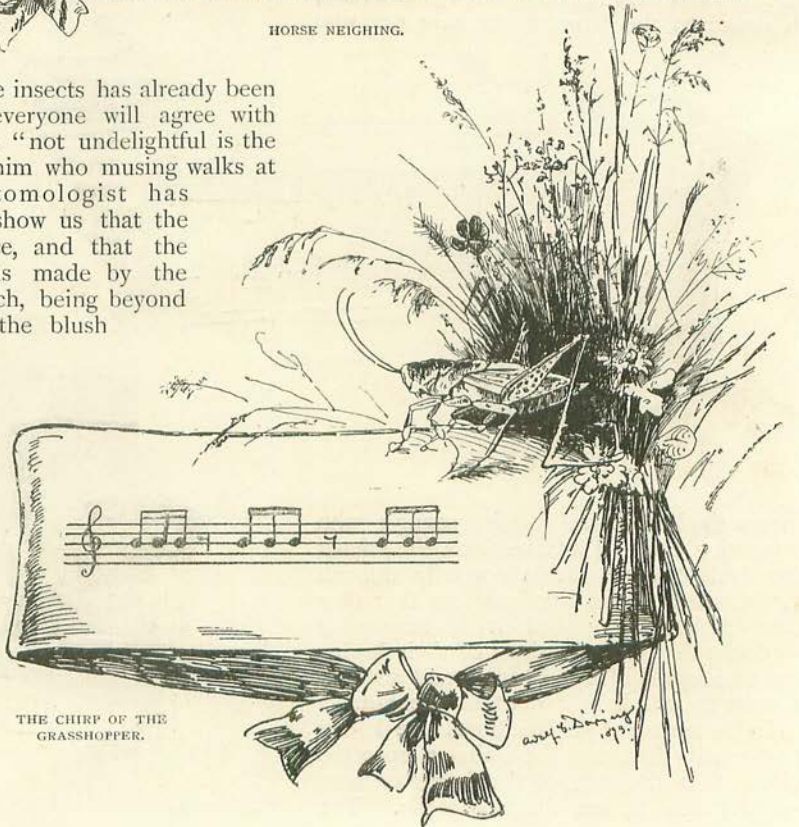
The horse, on the other hand, is rarely heard, and, though having a piercing whinny which passes through every semi-tone of the scale, it is scarcely ever varied.



HORSE NEIGHING.

The music of the insects has already been alluded to, and everyone will agree with Gilbert White that "not undelightful is the ceaseless hum, to him who musing walks at noon." The entomologist has laboured hard to show us that the insect has no voice, and that the "drowsy hum" is made by the wings; a fact which, being beyond all cavil, puts to the blush

the old-world story of Plutarch, who tells us that when Terpander was playing upon the lyre, at the Olympic games, and had enraptured his audience to the highest pitch of enthusiasm a string of his instrument broke, and a cicada or grass-



THE CHIRP OF THE GRASSHOPPER.

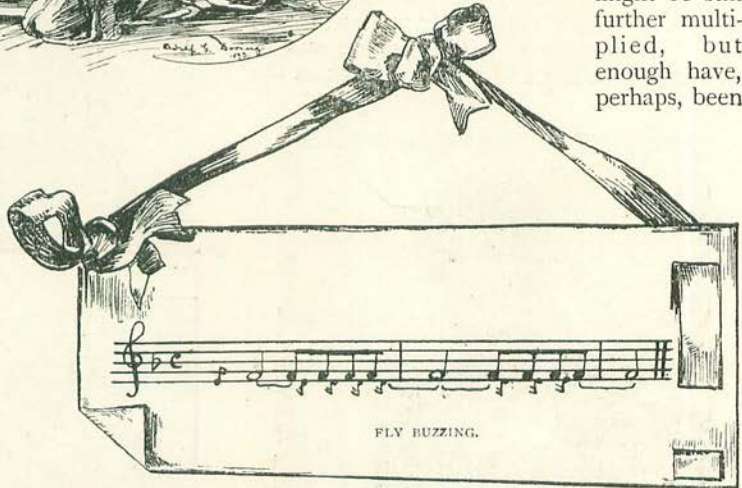


to be heralded by weird sounds; and in the northern seas sailors, always a superstitious race of people, used to be much alarmed by a singular musical effect, which is now well known to be caused by nothing more fearsome than a whale breathing.

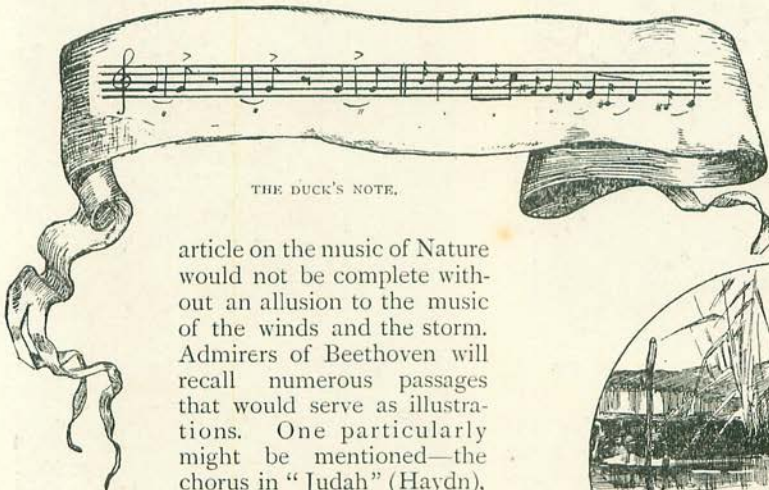
These instances might be still further multiplied, but enough have, perhaps, been

makes, the house-fly must make 320 vibrations of its wings in a second; or nearly 20,000 if it continues on the wing a minute. The sound is invariably on the note F in the first space. The music of a duck's note is given in the annexed score.

In conclusion, an



FLY BUZZING.



THE DUCK'S NOTE.

given to excite some general interest in "the Music of Nature."

article on the music of Nature would not be complete without an allusion to the music of the winds and the storm. Admirers of Beethoven will recall numerous passages that would serve as illustrations. One particularly might be mentioned—the chorus in "Judah" (Haydn), "The Lord devoureth

them all," which is admirably imitative of the reverberations of the cataract and the thundering of mighty waters. The sounds at sea, ominous of shipwreck, will also occur to the minds of some. At Land's End it is not uncommon for storms

