



# Familiar Features

OF

# Musical London

BY HUGH A. SCOTT.



COMMON objects of the London concert-room in fact.

What concert-goer does not know the sort of thing referred to?

There is that famous bust of Beethoven, for instance, which figures so

bravely in front of the platform at all of the Philharmonic Society's concerts. This bust—or its original rather, for it is only a cast which is used at the concerts—has an interesting history. Modelled by the famous Viennese sculptor, F. Schaller, in 1826, for one Carl Holz, an intimate friend of the master, it was purchased on his death by Frau Linzbauer, by whom, in turn, it was presented to the Philharmonic Society of London, who had assisted Beethoven so generously during his last illness. The likeness of the bust—to carry which to England Sir (then Mr.) William Cusins made a special journey to Buda-Pesth—was pronounced by all acquainted with its great original to be extraordinarily good. Is it necessary to say how carefully it is treasured by its present possessors?

Another bust which does duty in this way is that of Richard Wagner, which is always displayed by Mr. Schulz-Curtius on the occasion of his excellent orchestral concerts

at the Queen's Hall. And here again the likeness of the departed master is said to be one of the best in existence. This bust, which is in bronze, is from the chisel of Professor Schafer of Berlin.

At the "Pops," no less famous than the Philharmonics, there are no busts. But year after year one sees there countenances which seem to change hardly more.

There is Mr. Saunders for instance. "Who is Mr. Saunders?" What a question to ask! Compendiously speaking, Mr. Saunders is the "Pops" and the "Pops" are Mr. Saunders. All our eminent instrumentalists take part in the proceedings from time to time, and their services are welcomed. But at a pinch they can be dispensed with. Not so with those of Mr. Saunders. These are indispensable. In the case of the "Pops" there is a necessary man and his name is Saunders.

The "Pops" without Mr. Saunders—imagination staggers at the thought! It is dismal to think of the fate which must befall these famous concerts when Mr. Saunders retires. "He turned over music for thirty years without making one mistake!" What nobler testimony to human skill could man desire than this? Yet it is, or might be, Mr. Saunders' boast. What music this man has heard! What players he has listened to!



PROFESSOR SCHAFER'S BUST OF WAGNER.  
(Drawn by Ernest Stomp.)



What comical little slips and blunders on the part of these great ones he has witnessed from time to time in the thirty years and more that he has been connected with the "Pops."



(From a photo by Hawkins, Brighton.)

MR. SAUNDERS.

There was that notable occasion, for instance—and it must have been very long ago, for Sir Julius Benedict was playing the pianoforte—when Dr. Joachim forgot his part and could not for the life of him recollect how to continue his solo.

It was in a

Handel sonata. Joachim was playing without music, and without the least difficulty, until this particular passage was reached, when his memory for the moment completely failed him. Twice he tried to go on but twice in vain; then at the third attempt he got on the rails again and proceeded without further mishap. What cheering there must have been at the close! There is nothing like an accident of this sort to arouse the enthusiasm of your British audience.

Then there was that amusing episode in which Piatti, Janotha, and a gentleman unknown were the principal actors. Mendelssohn's "Tema con Variazioni" for 'cello and pianoforte was the piece on this occasion. Miss Janotha had brought the music with her. S-s-sh! The music has begun. Yes! No!—They have stopped. What is the matter? Cannot Piatti manage his part? Seemingly not. He has returned it to Miss Janotha. Then the reason became apparent. It was the violin instead of the 'cello arrangement which had been brought by mistake. There was nothing for it. The sonata must be abandoned, and Piatti accordingly was conducting his colleague down the steps again. When lo! A miracle! From on high, precipitated as by unseen hands, there descended the very score which was wanted.

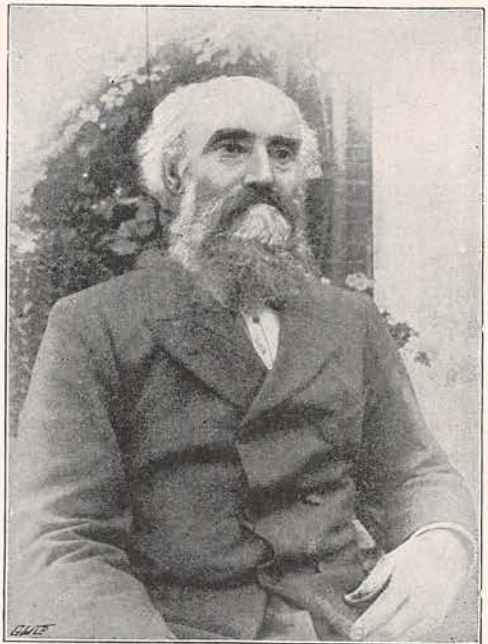
Of course the gentleman in the balcony was warmly thanked, and the performance completed by the aid of his music. But you

should hear Mr. Saunders tell the story to appreciate it.

To watch Mr. Saunders turning over—sometimes attending to the needs of two or more performers at one and the same time—is a priceless lesson in a delicate art, which is deserving of much more recognition than it usually receives. An iron nerve, unerring judgment, the deftest of fingers, and a complete grasp of the intricacies of musical form—with these attributes you may perchance become in time a successful practitioner of the craft; but it is more probable you never will. The great turner-over is born, not made. Mr. Saunders was born.

Then there is Mr. Newton. Monday after Monday during each recurring season sees Mr. Newton—whose face is as familiar to every "Poppite" as Joachim's or Piatti's—in his accustomed place on the right-hand side of the orchestra, as you face the platform; and there he has sat for more than twenty years.

"There is an impression," writes this most inveterate of "Pop."-goers, "that I was cradled in St. James's Hall, and that I have never left its precincts; that I am in



MR. GEORGE E. NEWTON.

some way a sort of fixture, removed only for dusting and then replaced again; and that the days of my dwelling there stretch back to



some apocryphal period, say the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert. In reality I am only a thing of yesterday, my attendances not yet having reached a quarter of a century. I first became a resident in London in 1873, and during the intervening twenty-three seasons—i.e., up to Christmas 1895—471 Monday "Pops" have been given, of which I have attended all save some five or six, when my absence was enforced by illness or some other cause."

Like Mr. Saunders, Mr. Newton recalls his "incidents." There was that time, for example, when Zerbini, accompanying Lady Hallé, overlooked a "repeat" and blundered

delighted his rapt listeners by his wondrous powers? I have heard all the great players of the last twenty-five years but I have never realised the grandeur, the pathos, the poetry of certain compositions as I have when listening to his interpretation of them. No; as there is only one Lady Hallé, so also is there only one Joachim, and they are both peerless. Still the Olympian triumvirate is incomplete and lacks the name of Piatti—Piatti the inimitable! Vain effort to describe the undescribable, for he and his instrument speak a language whose surpassing sweetness is known to no other, and were I in such a strait, his would be the



From a copyright photo by]

THE ALBERT HALL, SOUTH KENSINGTON.

[P. Frith, Reigate.

gaily on for several bars till pulled up by an imperious tap from Lady Hallé's bow—or such at least is Mr. Newton's account of the episode. Another version, be it said in justice to the memory of Zerbini, ascribes the fault to Lady Hallé.

And what an enthusiast he is. "Is there room," he writes, "for two opinions as to the unapproachable merits of our quartet party, whether under the leadership of Joachim or Lady Hallé? The grace, the modesty, the dignity of the woman, the ineffable charm of her playing, her perfect sympathy with the composers she interprets, giving every smallest *nuance* with a grace and conscientiousness beautiful beyond words! And Joachim! How shall one speak adequately of one who for so many years has

strained I would choose to charm back my lost Eurydice."

And Mr. Newton is only one of many such devoted attendants time after time to be witnessed at the "Pops." As he himself puts it, "It is surprising how few of the familiar countenances of twenty-three years ago are absent to-day. Earl Dudley, Sir Alexander Cockburn—the little cloaked figure so familiar to all—Robert Browning, G. H. Lewes, George Eliot, Lady Revelstoke, Mr. Freer, and other once regular listeners at these concerts have passed away, but the blanks which time has made are so few that the audiences still are almost as they then were."

From the "Pop." *habitués* and players to some of the instruments used by the latter is an easy transition. It is a striking fact that



all of the string instruments in regular use at the "Pops" are Strads.

Lady Hallé's fiddle, dated 1709, is an



From a photo by]

MR. LOUIS RIES.

[Russell.

instrument which formerly belonged to Ernst, the famous virtuoso. Ernst's widow sold it for £500. It came into Lady Hallé's hands as a gift from the Duke of Edinburgh, the late Earl of Dudley, and the late Lord Hardwicke, who, charmed by her playing on it, clubbed together to make her a present of the instrument.

Joachim, as becomes the king of violinists, has no less than four of these precious creations. One he lends to Señor Arbos; one, dated 1715, was presented to him by his English admirers on the occasion of his jubilee; and the remaining two, his favourites—one of which came from Buda-Pesth and the other from the well-known connoisseur, Mr. Daniel Mayer—he carries about in a double case of special construction and plays on regularly.

Piatti's 'cello—which has been dubbed by some the "red 'cello," by reason of its ruddy varnish—dates from the year 1720. Here again, as in Lady Hallé's case, the instrument was received by the great player as a gift from an admirer, General Oliver, who gave £350 for it. To-day it is said it

would fetch nearer £1050 if it came into the market. Not that this fate is likely to befall it for some time, for Piatti has not the least intention of selling an instrument for which he possesses an affection and displays a solicitude only to be described as parental.

Of the other regular "Pop." players, Mr. Gibson some time ago became the possessor of an exceedingly fine viola, dated 1728, which he obtained from Mr. Hart; while Mr. Louis Ries (whose position as the actual *doyen* of Mr. Chappell's artists is sometimes overlooked) also plays on an instrument (186 years old) from the workshop of the greatest of all the old Cremona masters. It may be mentioned here, by the way, that Mr. Ries has only been absent on two occasions—on Monday, November 27, 1893, and on the following Saturday—when influenza claimed him for its own—since the founding of the Popular Concerts. A truly remarkable record.

Paderewski's piano is another famous instrument which may be mentioned here. It may not be generally known that this great player always uses the same piano—in England at least. This is an Erard, the case and decorations of which, in the style of Louis XVI, would alone swallow up the cost of half a dozen ordinary pianos. The instrument is said to be by a long way the most expensive ever used for concert purposes. Internally, of course, it is no different from the best of Messrs. Erard's other grands.

Paderewski, it may be added, not only has his own piano but his own special tuner, in the person of Mr. Honey, who enjoys more-over the further distinction of being the

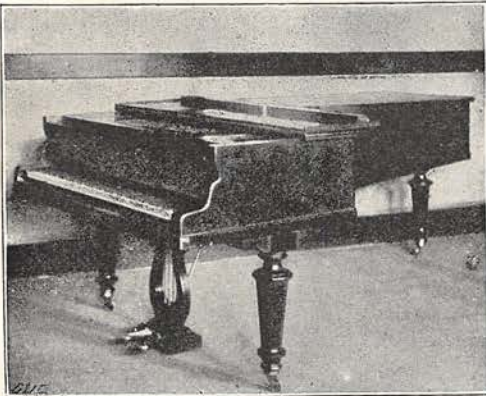


M. PADEREWSKI'S GRAND PIANOFORTE.

tuner who is always despatched by Messrs. Erard to attend to the Queen's pianos. Every time he plays, Paderewski has his



piano tuned beforehand, and Mr. Honey always does it. The seat Paderewski uses is hardly less remarkable than his piano. Its



From a photo by]

[Russell.

THE LATE ANTON RUBINSTEIN'S PIANOFORTE.

chief characteristics are its extraordinary weight, solidity, and lowness. Paderewski sits lower at the piano than any other well-known player, the exact height of his seat from the ground being  $16\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Further, unlike many of his rivals, Paderewski never shifts his seat a fraction of an inch after he has once begun playing. The piano on which Rubinstein played during his appearance in London in 1857 is also in Messrs. Erard's possession.

At the Albert Hall there is one feature which is safe to attract the attention of every visitor—the gigantic velarium or canvas canopy which hangs from the roof.

Were it absent the acoustic properties of the hall would be very different from what they are, though, as it happens, it had no place in the original design of the building. When the hall was first tested after its completion, but before the scaffolding had been removed from the interior, its acoustic properties were generally agreed to be perfect. Afterwards, however, when the scaffolding had been taken down, the result was very different. The reverberations were terrible, while when any percussive instruments were used the rattling of the glass roofs overhead—there are two of them—made matters still worse. So the architect—the late Gen. H. D. Scott, R.E.—the late Sir Henry Cole, Mr. R. Wentworth Cole, and others put their heads together and the present velarium was constructed. The wires which have been stretched across the interior of the hall from side to side were the suggestion of Mr. E. Power, who put them up at his own expense, the same idea having been previously applied in the case of Gloucester Cathedral, where the stretching of some stout worsted across the nave from window to window effected similar improvements in the acoustic properties.



THE INTERIOR OF THE ALBERT HALL.