

smoothed by one sign of satisfaction. In garrison he murmured because of the peace; when campaigning he complained of fatigue; if his knapsack were well filled, it was too heavy; and when it became light, he feared he should never be able again to furnish it; which made his comrades say, that in a regiment of malcontents, Ploquet would infallibly become colonel. However, all laughed at him, even the officers, who pardoned his whims in consideration of his good conduct, his tried courage, and the numberless other good qualities which he possessed in an eminent degree.

It was more particularly during the Russian campaign that this failing of the corporal's developed itself. The long marches over a burnt and desolate country were an inexhaustible source of complaint. "Let this continue as short a time as it may," said he, "we shall have carried our bones to the world's end; and then what shall we be able to make of a wilderness where we may travel a hundred leagues and not find a potato? Still, if we could but refresh ourselves from time to time with a few shots, after the custom of civilized nations—but no!—there is no opportunity of firing even our priming; and here am I with five packets on my back." He insisted much on this point; his cartridges he feared he should never make use of, and they appeared to him to be an insupportable weight.

However, the two nations were not slow in approaching each other. Tired of flying without a blow, the Russians faced about. Two days before the battle of Moscow, at sunrise, the army formed itself in line, the colonel of the 61st ran through the ranks of his regiment, "Boys," exclaimed he, "The Emperor has given to us the glorious task of carrying one of the enemy's redoubts which the enemy have raised to impede the march of the army. *Vive l'Empereur!* and forward!"

This cry was loudly echoed by all but Ploquet, whom I heard muttering to himself,—“Yes, that is the way these fellows endeavour to persuade us that the greatest service they can render us is to get the first of us cut in two by the bullets of the enemy.”

“How, Corporal Ploquet,” said I, “are you not enchanted to see these gallants so near?”

“Near?—yes, when we shall have marched for an hour with our arms on our shoulders under their case-shot. Near! yes, when we are entering their square; but more than half the regiment will be fricaseed before we shall be able to work them!”

“ Still the glory !”

“ Is neither for you nor me, nor for the rest of us : we shall have none of it, while some will have too much—it will all go to those laced-hatted Parisians,—a parcel of coxcombs who have always had their nine bottles and three dinners a day.”

The regiment commenced its march. An hour afterwards it deployed under fire of the redoubt, the bullets from which at each instant brought down whole files. Our battalion suffered severely ; it hesitated for a moment ; some raw recruits, who had never witnessed such a scene, made a half turn without the word of command. Ploquet, who was in the third rank, barred their passage by crossing his bayonet against them, and swearing he would spit, like a lark, the first who retreated. He was speaking, when a bullet struck his cartridge box, and he made the drollest face I ever saw :—“ Five packages of cartridges,” said he, grinding his teeth, “ made two hundred leagues distant, and not one used yet.”

At this instant the whole regiment darted at once on its course. The Russian artillery was silent. This was a solemn moment,—so terrible the silence—the old soldiers bid adieu to their comrades, and some of the officers shook hands with each other. Ploquet was within two paces of me, he convulsively grasped his musket, his eyes glanced fire, his lips murmured. Suddenly a faint bluish light escaped from the redoubt, a frightful explosion shook the earth, and a thick smoke concealed from our view the battle-field which was already strewed with dead bodies. Ploquet was nowhere near me ; I was giving him up for dead, when the wind, clearing off the smoke, permitted me to see the one-half of his corps attempting to enter by an embrasure, and struggling violently to join the other half who were then within the redoubt. I recognised my comrade by the fragment of his cartridge box, which still remained to him, but before I could reach him he had entered, and though I took the same road, I was unable to join him. What passed permitted me but little time to continue my researches. The assault continued ; the example of Ploquet was followed by a host of brave men. Not a trigger could be drawn, but sabres and bayonets gleamed on all sides, and a horrible carnage was the result. Corps after corps were brought up, they rolled in blood and were mingled with the dead and dying. This lasted for twenty minutes ; at length it ceased—cries of victory

rent the air; the redoubt was ours, and our eagle was planted on one of its breaches.

A voice then called upon the drum-major to beat to quarters; there was no drum-major; not even a drummer was there to answer when called upon. Four hundred men only were standing out of a regiment which counted four effective battalions, each consisting of at least eight hundred men.

It was at this moment I discovered Ploquet lying upon the ground and supporting himself upon a cannon wheel; he was stanching with the sleeve of his shirt, the blood which flowed in streams from a wound he had received in the head. I pressed forward to his assistance, and I found that the same blow which had wounded him, had carried away the upper part of his cap.

"Fortunately it was well filled," said I.

"Do you call that fortunate? Two bundles of such cigars as never yet were smoked—how shall I ever find the like again?" and he shewed me a portion of the cigars which the sabre of the enemy had regularly minced.

"But without these cigars, Corporal Ploquet, you yourself would have been hashed."

"Perhaps so."

His wound happened to be but trifling, and Ploquet refused relief from duty except for twenty-four hours. He was inserted in the order of the day for his good conduct, and received the congratulations of the colonel, but without appearing more satisfied than usual.

On the next day a report was spread through the army that the Emperor had received the portrait of his son, and that he had had it placed on the outside of his tent to gratify the curiosity of all. I proposed to Ploquet to go with him to see this portrait, and, not without grumbling, he consented, and we managed to get very near the tent, about which a number of superior officers were crowding. After a few moments we heard the name of Ploquet circulate among the groupe, when the Emperor appeared at the entrance of the tent, and pointing to the individual thus named, who was easily distinguishable on account of his head-dress, which was composed of an oat sack, and over that a bloody handkerchief—he ordered him to come to him. The corporal obeyed without the least embarrassment.

"Ploquet," said the Emperor, "I know you were one of the

first in the redoubt yesterday, I am satisfied that you are a brave man."

"Faith, *mon Empereur*! it is very little that satisfies you."

A look of the Emperor stilled the murmur which this silly reply created, and Napoleon observed, "well let me see, what is it you wish—is it promotion?"

"Pardon me, I want it not, it is quite enough to have the third part of a company to give orders to."

"Is it then this cross—will this which I hold in my hands make us remain good friends?"

Taking off the cross, Napoleon, amid general acclamations, presented it to Ploquet, who took it with one hand, while with the other he performed the military salute. He then attached it very quietly to one of the buttons of his coat, without allowing his countenance to betray the least sign of emotion. Of all the spectators of this scene, without excepting the Emperor, Ploquet was the only one who was not embarrassed, and Napoleon on returning to his tent could not forbear saying, "The old grumbler, how difficult it is to content him."

A few days afterwards, we had read to us the celebrated proclamation commencing with these words:—"Soldiers, behold the battle you have so much desired!"

"Desired!" murmured Ploquet, "but not to fight with an empty stomach."

"You need not be there, corporal, you can withdraw."

"That will be very pleasant, truly, to hear all and see nothing."

He was obliged to do so, however, for during the night he had suffered much from his wound, and he was informed that it might terminate his existence if he were in the least disturbed; and thus, in spite of himself, Ploquet remained inactive during that great journey.

It is well known with what facility Napoleon recognized faces which he had once seen, and how easily he retained proper names. During the retreat from Smolensko, the Emperor in going through the ranks which marched in concert with his guard, knew the old corporal again.

"Poor Ploquet, discontent is now general," said he.

"*Mon Empereur*, I think you ought to be less so than we."

"I should be, my good fellow, if I were certain of having five thousand men like you."

We afterwards came to Beresina ; Ploquet and I had made a third part of our way over the bridge, when carried on by the crowd which came on like an avalanche, we fell into the river. The corporal, who was an excellent swimmer, kept my chin above water with his left arm, and struck out with his right ; and, in spite of the enormous masses of ice which threatened every instant to separate us, we arrived among the first on the other shore which was already swept by the Russian cannon. I wished to rest for a moment, but Ploquet represented to me that if we ceased our march we should be frozen in a quarter of an hour, and he commenced driving me before him. Scarcely, however, had he proceeded a hundred paces, when he fell upon his face in the snow—a bullet had entered his body between the shoulders. I flew to his assistance.

“Go on,” said he.

“Corporal,” was my answer, “you have but just saved my life, I will not abandon you.”

“Go on, I tell you, I am more happy than others, in five minutes I shall no longer be cold.”

It was, perhaps, the first time in his life he had ever manifested contentment, and he expired a few minutes after, pressing to his lips the cross which the Emperor had a short time previously given to him.

K.

## THE SONNET.

Scorn not the Sonnet : Critic ! You have frowned  
 Mindless of its just honours : with this key  
 Shakspeare unlocked his heart ; the melody  
 Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound.  
 A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound ;  
 With it Camœns soothed an exile's grief ;  
 The Sonnet glittered, a gay myrtle leaf  
 Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned  
 His visionary brow : a glow-worm lamp,  
 It cheered mild Spenser, called from fairy land  
 To struggle through dark ways ; and when a damp  
 Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand  
 The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew  
 Soul animating strains—Alas, too few !

## ON THE STUDY OF MUSIC.

[FIRST ARTICLE.]

THERE is probably no species of amusement at once so beguiling, rational, and innocent, as the study and practice of music. It is one fitted for society or solitude, for the city or the bush. It creates cheerfulness without excitement, mirth without riot, and it aids in an unspeakable degree either public or private devotion. It is remarkable that musicians are generally kind and benevolent in their dispositions, from which we may infer that there must be something in music which is calculated to soften the heart and expand the better feelings of our nature. In short

“Music has charms to soothe the savage breast;”

and this is enough for our present purpose without giving it credit for chemical dexterity in “softening rocks,” or mechanical power in “bending the knotted oak.” Indeed, enthusiastic as we have always been, “from our youth up,” in our admiration of sweet sounds, we cannot conscientiously deny, that divers of the powers ascribed to them by poets have ever appeared to our finite imagination something more than problematical. It has been asserted that music and poetry are twin-sisters—if so, they differ materially in their character; the latter being, like the world, abominably given to what Jeremy Bentham calls “mendacity,” but which the vulgar are apt to denominate untruth, and to this little *mechant* propensity we are inclined to attribute the hyperbolic praises bestowed by poesy on her sister. “*Arcades ambo*,” that is “lovely both;” but even at the hazard of being thought Gothic, Vandalish, uncultivated, or unfashionable, our favourite muse is Euterpe. Still we are not so devoid of true knighthood as to seek to raise the reputation of our own “Ladye love” by disparaging the mistress of another; and to tell the truth, there may be a little of the “better part of valour” at the bottom of this forbearance, as we are not quite sure that if the gauntlet were thrown down, some of dame Poesy’s champions might not accept the challenge, and administer to us by way of retaliation, rather more cuffs than would be comfortable. We are in no humour for war; besides, it would be rather unmusical, as well as ungallant, to cultivate discord between sisters, where sweet *consonance* alone should reign. Pope says “all discord is harmony not understood,” which may or may not be true; but in all charity admitting it be veracious to the letter, one thing is clear, that *such harmony* should be avoided till the taste of mankind is sufficiently improved to understand it; for till then, it must continue to be discordant and disagreeable. Therefore, for the several considerations aforesaid, we shall not quarrel with poetry; but be content to sing the praises of that sweet muse to

whom our best affections belong, and whose "charms can even soothe the savage breast." This assertion has been on record for many years, and no one has ventured to contradict it; we consequently assume it to be true.

At the present day, the practice of music is particularly fashionable, and is considered as an essential part of a polite education; but, like most other things, as it has become fashionable, exactly in the same ratio, has it lost its dignity and become ridiculous. A vile demon of discord, yclept "Execution," has been introduced by modern professors, whose career, if not timely checked, will terminate in disarranging the harmony of the spheres, placing poor Euterpe in a mad-house, causing Apollo to consign his lyre to the flames of Vesuvius, and driving Cecilia to commit suicide. It would seem as if the great desideratum, now-a-days, was to produce the greatest number of sounds in given time, the less connected, either rationally, melodiously, or mechanically, the better. In other words, that he, or she, who can play the quickest, is the best musician. Than this, nothing can be more detrimental to expression, or less in accordance with what music ought to be; and, in our very humble judgment, it substitutes the unpleasant for the sweet—sheer nonsense for sober reason. Such compositions are, to us, like the bellowing of a bad actor, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Conversing with some gentlemen, the other day, on this subject, who perfectly coincided in our opinion, one of whom related the following anecdote, by way of illustration. A country clergyman, of the old school, who was a remarkably fine and sweet player upon the violoncello, and admitted to be a first-rate musician, was induced, at the instigation of a friend, to attend a metropolitan concert, one of the leading features of which was a solo on the violoncello, in the modern style, by a fashionable professor. During its performance, which was repeatedly interrupted by tumultuous applause and ejaculations of "wonderful!" "astonishing!" &c., our reverend friend was exceedingly uneasy, which his companion observing, attributed to the effect of the performer's execution. At its conclusion he was asked, what he thought of the solo? His reply was, "Nothing! It conveyed no idea to my mind, but that of a man bestowing infinite labour to produce a series of unmeaning sounds, which render the performer ridiculous, and his instrument contemptible." "But, my dear Sir," said the other, "only consider how few could conquer the difficulty of its performance!" "I have," said he, "that being its only merit, I regretted that it was not ten thousand times more difficult." "Why so?" "Because then, it could *not be performed at all*!"—was the short, but conclusive, reply. The same remarks might be well applied to some of the modern compositions with which the pretty digits of our fair friends are tortured, for the sake of giving them execution. We listen to such a performance, and admire the

dexterity of finger displayed, thus, awarding to the fair performer the applause merited by, and bestowed upon, an adroit conjurer; but, the soul-inspiring satisfaction, derived from the dignified delivery of the classical works of Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Correlli, &c., is entirely wanting, and the fatigued player leaves the instrument without exciting one feeling of sympathy from her audience. To what end, then, has that fair creature laboured, day after day, in the acquisition of this accomplishment? To what end has she been submitted to the rigorous toil of practising, day by day, to conquer difficulties, which afford no satisfaction to herself, or her audience, when conquered? Merely to be looked upon as possessing a sleight of hand, a mechanical dexterity, beyond her compeers; but, which is of no use whatever, as regards true music. She is a wonderful player; but, has she any knowledge of harmony? Oh, no! It was impossible to acquire that, and *execution* too. Can she play from the figured basses of the old masters? Oh, no! She had no time to learn thorough bass; all her practice was devoted to "execution." Does she possess the art of extemporaneous accompaniment? Oh, no! That is beneath the notice of an executionist. Well then, having such execution, can she play at sight? Why not exactly—that is, not at *first* sight; these things are difficult, and require some practice. True, but here is a sonata of Nicholai's, or Haydn's! Why she has never practised those old fashioned things, and must look over them. She does look, but only to confess she cannot play them. In short, it turns out, that this "wonderful player" is little more than an automaton, whose performances are merely mechanical, and got up with immense labour just for show.

Yet to no better purpose is the generality of the musical (!) studies in the modern schools. Whether the pupil be male or female—the instrument, flute, piano, violin, or harp—all that is thought of is execution, *anglicé*, a mechanical rapidity of running over the notes, without regard to any other qualification. Nothing will do now but solos and concertos. One would really imagine that the present rising generation was to be one of *solo* players, if it were not pretty well known that there are but few to whom is given that great command of their instrument, combined with the taste and judgment in its application, which can alone constitute the good concerto player. Let it not, however, be imagined, that we object to the attainment of a reasonable and sufficient execution. Quite the reverse—we consider of the two evils, that of resting content with an imperfect knowledge of the instrument is greater than that of carrying the love of execution to excess. It is perfectly possible, although very rare, for an executionist to be a musician, and to combine great mechanical skill with true feeling and expression; but until the performer has pretty well conquered the mechanical difficulties of his instrument, it is not possible for him to deliver his performance in accordance with



the feelings and sentiments of the composer. When we deprecate the modern style therefore, we are far from advocating a useless, loose or imperfect system of tuition, as regards the practical part of music; but desire to be understood as objecting to the introduction of difficulties, which have nothing but difficulty in their favour. Music is or should be the language of the passions. Its very origin appears to have been in the incompetency of common speech to express the more vivid feelings of the soul. No well-directed mind would designate a series of words strung together in metre or rhyme without regard to sense or meaning—Poetry. The notion would be too absurd to combat. Take a specimen:—

Tall men and shallow rivers seem  
The offspring of life's fitful dream  
Fresh fish and lobsters all agree,  
Are creatures of the raging sea.

Here we have some ideas conveyed to the mind, although they are low, common-place, clearly absurd, and certainly not poetical; but suppose we take

Rosy sunbeam meand'ring sphere  
Pitying lucid transient dear  
Care-worn heavenly sweetest glorious  
Zenith victim nymph victorious.

This is rank nonsense, and if deprived of its rhyme by transposition, would be what the printers would call a mass of "pye." Hence we infer that as any combination of words do not make poetry, so any combination of sounds, which jingle mellifluously on the ear without conveying some idea to the mind, does not constitute music. It may gratify the sense for the moment, but it leaves no impression upon the heart. How much less then do those compositions, which at once convey no meaning or expression to the judgment, while they startle the ear by their unnatural and discordant transitions, merit the name music.

But we have another charge against "execution," and that is, that for its attainment, not only sense but *tone* and feeling, the very soul of music is sacrificed. Perhaps our ideas on this head could not be more clearly, and certainly not more humourously expressed than in the words of poor Snetzler, the organ builder. Having on a certain occasion, (no matter when) completed an organ for a certain church, (no matter where) he was to decide upon the merits of the respective candidates for the situation of organist. The day of trial came. A certain professor (no matter who) took his seat, and played a most "wonderful" voluntary, in which every stop and key of the instrument was used with the rapidity of lightning. Never was key-board more cruelly belaboured, and never was execution more perfectly exhibited, but it was *vox et preterea nihil*. Poor old Snetzler listened for a while in gloomy silence, when suddenly putting his fingers in his ears with every expression of dismay, he danced about the

chancel like a man distracted, exclaiming, "mein Got! who is dish man? he run over de keysh like von cat—I vill hate him every day vile I live—he vill not gif mein pipesh room for to shpeak." A second candidate took his seat, almost hopeless of succeeding against so formidable a rival, but urged by his friends, he commenced, and played a grand sublime and majestic voluntary, concluding with a dignified and feeling performance of the hundredth psalm. Snetzler was again in ecstasies; but they were of a different complexion. As the rich volume of tone swept through the building, the old man's eyes filled with tears—he listened to the sound elicited from his darling pipes in raptures, and as the last strain died upon his ear, exclaimed,—“Ah dat ish goot—dat ish *vera* goot—I vill lofe dish man—he gifsh mein pipesh room for to shpeak.” It is needless to say on whom the election fell. Poor old Snetzler had *music* in his soul, and justly despised the performance in which the deep full tones of his cherished instrument were sacrificed to a mere display of digital agility.

It may perhaps be contended that the organ is not an instrument calculated for display, and therefore is not a fair criterion by which to judge the value of execution. We at once admit the premises, but deny the induction. The rule holds equally good as regards all instruments. Some may be better suited for the delivery of rapid passages than others; but in any, where its intrinsic quality, *tone*, is sacrificed to a degree of rapidity which is inconsistent, or to the production of extraordinary and unnatural transitions of sound, we repeat then, in any instrument such a degree of execution is *in excess*, and therefore bad.

Speaking of rapidity, it may be remarked, although the limits of this essay will not admit of a full discussion of the point, that it can be proved incontestibly upon mathematical principles, that beyond a certain limit, rapidity causes succedaneous sounds to appear so nearly simultaneous to the ear as to produce confusion and even discord, and to this excess many of the *brilliant* passages in modern concertos for the piano-forte, especially if executed in the metronomic time prescribed by the author, would necessarily extend. Nor does the evil end here, for either the delivery of those portions of the piece which are really musical must be so much retarded as to destroy their character and beauty, or the equality of time on the whole be destroyed, by reason of the utter impossibility of all ordinary players, and nine-tenths of extraordinary players, acquiring anything like sufficient agility of finger to give utterance, (we were about to say effect, till we recollected that the passages we allude to are altogether ineffective) to the intention of the writer. Hence it is evident, that while they fail in affording gratification to the ear, or satisfaction to the judgment, as lessons, such pieces in place of being useful are detrimental to the student, as they *force upon him* a habit of disregarding time, and thus produce that inefficiency of