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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

MAY 1st, 1854.

Music in this Number.

TO THEE, GREAT LORD.

(DAL TUO STELLATO SOGLIO),

The Prayer in "Mosè," Composed by ROSSINI.

EATING-SONGS.

BY LEIGH HUNT.

IN proceeding to make the remarks we spoke of on a subject strangely found wanting in the annals of festivity, the author of these articles takes the opportunity of observing, that although what he has hitherto written in the *Musical Times* has had no directly musical title, he trusts that a certain link of feeling with the art has been visible in all of it; and that he is regularly understood to be addressing himself to musical readers. Links of many such kinds exist among all the arts, and with every genial, nay, with every moral and philosophical exercise of the understanding; and no true critic or composer needs to be told, that the more the perception of this truth is diffused, the more good is done to the powers and enjoyments of all parties concerned. The very word *Music* proclaims the universality of its spirit; for it comes not from the name of the goddess who specially presided over it, but from that of the whole body of the Nine—the *Muses* in general. Poetry in particular claims so obvious a portion in it, that it may be said you cannot quote a verse without quoting music; and we never do quote one without a sense of the musical man's concern in its structure and effect. Besides, in all meetings of the lovers of the art, allowance must be made for the liberty and refreshment of free breathing "between the acts;" and it is observable that no set of companions more freely avail themselves of it, to the indulgence of all sorts of pleasantries; so that even in what might seem pure divergencies from the subject, we would fain be understood as acting with a reference to musical enjoyment. In short, as Steele cautions his readers in the *Tatler* against thinking him "dull" at any time, having, he says, on such occasions, a "design in it," so we beg it to be understood, in these contributions to a musical paper, that if ever we are supposed to be writing with no reference at all to the subject of music, the discordant chance-reader had better take care how he says so; for our intention at that moment is to be particularly harmonious.

There are plenty of love-songs in the world; plenty of drinking-songs; too many war-songs

(except at this particular moment); Venice and Naples have boat-songs, and England has sea-songs; but notwithstanding the universal attractiveness of the subject, there is no class of compositions called eating-songs. The only express things of the kind, as far as we are aware, with the exception of the *Can of Cream from Devon* (if that is to be called a song), are a bantering parody of the love-song, "Gently touch the warbling lyre," which was set to a charming strain from Geminiani;* the good old round, "There lyes a Pudding in the Fire," which is a simple announcement of the pudding's being ready; and our illustrious old friend, "Oh the Roast Beef of old England," which, excellent as it is, is rather a national than a gastronomical song. Eating is of course often alluded to, in a passing way, by the poets, and this with more or less gusto, as it may happen; and here and there may be found among them something expressly on the subject—such as King's *Art of Cookery*, his receipts for making pies and puddings, Gay's *Receipt for Stewing Veal*, and Swift's *Cries* for the sellers of fish and vegetables. But jovial as the eaters of dinners may be, and much as they talk about what they eat, they never sing about it. We have after-dinner songs by hundreds, but (with the exception above noticed) not one on the subject of dinner itself—not one in honor and glorification of what is emphatically called the *Table*. "The Table," thus definitely distinguished, does not mean the table on which we write, or the table round which we converse, or the table at which even we drink,—but the table at which we eat. We have even an express set of pleasures, which exclusively take their name from it—the "pleasures of the table;" and very heartily are such pleasures partaken; often with actual passion. Ladies themselves go so far as to have terms of affection and endearment for the dishes: say they are "fond" of veal; that they "love" pork; and that such and such a piece of beef is "beautiful." And yet these avowed, manifest, universal, loving, enthusiastic, and deeply-devoured pleasures are the only pleasures of which nobody sings. We speak of them with all the rapture and devotion of which prose is capable, but the prose is never moved enough to rise into song.

How is this?

We take the reason to be, that the rapture is always prospective or simultaneous, but never looks back, and could not very well sing if it did. It must clear its throat, and restore itself to a state of activity, with the wine; and by that time it has discovered that it is a rapture no longer,—has no longer any wings,—never had any but those of the goose or duck, and so cannot be borne away except by the wine's help, to which, accordingly, it transfers its gratitude. The feaster

* This Glee shall be included with the music of No. 124, May 15.

discerns, or instinctively feels, that whatever pleasures may attend the necessity of eating, they are all, like the necessity itself, of sheer animal description—able to be taken to their utmost without one particle of sentiment; for the moment you bring in that, eating, as eating, becomes comparatively of little consequence. You are content with half the luxuries which you had before; are willing to share and share alike; to piece out your dinner with bread and cheese; and to sing, not of the salmon and lobster-sauce, but of the pleasures of love and wine, nay, of temperance itself—of friendship and content. With wine you are “elevated;” with turtle you sink down—feel, perhaps, even a difficulty in getting up—are more willing to sleep than to sing.

“How pale each worshipful and reverend guest
Rise from a clergy or a city feast!
What life in all that ample body, say?
What heavenly particle inspires the clay?
The soul *subsides*, and wickedly inclines
To seem but mortal, e'en in sound divines.

Not that right hearty good feeding is to be thought ill of, where appetite calls for it, and health and activity are not injured. On the contrary, it is heartily to be approved, nay, respected, as an indication that all else is right in the treatment of the body. The “intellectual” man, so called, who affects to despise eating because he has a “delicate,” that is to say, in all probability, a foolish and enfeebled digestion, only shows that he is not so intellectual as he fancies himself. Besides, there are intellectual as well as bodily debaucheries: brandy-drinkings of over-reading and writing, which may stimulate the head too much, as the others do the stomach; and the man who indulges in them has no more right to scorn his brother debauchees of the body, than they have to scorn him—nay, not so much; for his books ought to have taught him better. Every natural pleasure is to be respected, in proportion as it is healthily and sociably taken; and one pleasure, so taken, fits us for another. Music recreates us for meditation. Walks invigorate studies. The bird sings best that has his proper amount of food. Human singers are not the most fitted to sing just after meals; but it may be observed that the best of them are generally plump and in good condition. Every pleasurable art tends naturally to every other kind of pleasure, and in reason it is to be allowed a good share of it; though by the same rule it is to be warned against a like tendency to excess. For body can suffocate mind: the brightest light may be drowned in what feeds it. Handel, who grew too fat with good eating, was probably tempted to do so, first by a musician's natural tendency to the pleasurable, and then by nervous excitement, and the hope of allaying the excitement, or enabling it to support itself; but a terrible fit of

illness, attacking mind as well as body, forced the great composer back into moderation. Rossini (so report says) has become “a sight” from the same cause; so at least it is believed, though fat is not always an indication of intemperance. A tendency to it may arise from health itself, or from a natural fitness in the body for being easily nourished. Great feeders are sometimes thin, and poor ones corpulent. But the author of the *Barber of Seville* is not likely to be an ascetic. He can write, however, grand as well as gay things; and therefore we hope will take thought, and not need the warning of his predecessors. Paesiello has written a *Barber of Seville* also, very gay and delightful, and he was not too fat. He seems to have been rather slender than otherwise. Mozart too was always little in person, every way; though from his highly pleasurable tendencies in other respects, we are not to suppose him insensible to the merits of sweets and savouries—and in his letters he often draws his metaphors from the table. Jomelli was very fat; but for one Jomelli or Rossini we take it that there have been twenty musicians of ordinary dimensions. Beethoven was of moderate size. So was Haydn. And there seems reason to believe, from portraits, and other circumstances, that Corelli, Sacchini, Allegri, Pergolese, Palestrina, were all men who, however good their bodily condition, were unencumbered with flesh.

It has been the same with the poets, themselves pleasurable men and lovers of music. It is not a little curious, that, with the exception of Ben Jonson (and he did not speak gravely about it so often), the poet in our own country who has written with the greatest gusto on the subject of eating, is Milton. He omits none of the pleasures of the palate, great or small. In his Latin poems, when young, he speaks of the pears and chestnuts which he used to roast at the fire with his friend Diodati. Junkets and other “country-messes” are not forgotten in his *Allegro*. The simple Temptation in the Wilderness, “Command that these stones be made bread” (which was quite sufficient for a hunger that had fasted “forty days”), is turned, in *Paradise Regained*, with more poetry than propriety, into the set out of a great feast, containing every delicacy in and out of season. The very “names” of the viands, he says, were “exquisite.” And in *Paradise Lost*, Eve is not only described as being skilful in paradisaical cookery (“tempering dulcet creams”), but the angel Raphael is invited to dinner, and helped by his entertainers to a series of tid-bits and contrasted relishes;—

“Taste after taste, upheld with kindest change.”

Nay, fire not having been necessary to the cookeries of Eden, the poet, calling to mind how often he had been prevented from going to his chop by

unthinking visitors, congratulates the blissful party on its having

“No fear lest dinner cool!”

Milton however did not grow burly with eating and drinking, like jovial Ben. He took more care of his delicate person; never passing the bounds of an elegant epicureanism. At the same time the great poet shewed so deep a sense of the attention worth bestowing upon his diet, and of the possible dignity, nay, divineness of the pleasure of feeding, that, during the above blissful dinners in the fifth book of *Paradise Lost*, he enters into an elaborate argument to shew the probability of there being eating and drinking in heaven itself; which is what few persons, we suspect, ever cared to think about, when they hoped to go there—unless it was the poor, hungry Arabs in the desert, to whom Mahomet justly thought it an attraction.

Homer speaks about eating with the natural healthy appetite of a soldier; Horace, in a style between philosopher and epicure, the latter character prevailing in his round little person; Thomson, with poetic luxury; Boileau, with exquisite banter; Pope, with banter also, but you may see that he was fond of it. In the poems of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, is a love-song, addressed to Congreve, which is as much about eating as love, and little to the purpose of either. She talks of lovers meeting over “champagne and chicken, *at last*.” That is her climax of the passion. If this song was ever sung, the words “champagne and chicken” must have sounded ridiculous. Eating can never be properly sung of, except in jest; and the jest, even then, is apt to be dull. The best part of it lies in the turn given to the music; and the best music, jesting or serious, ever bestowed on the subject, or written in connexion with it, is that of the old Street Cries of London, some of which, as many persons may remember of their own knowledge, are truly beautiful; though the “familiarity which breeds contempt” (with the contemptible) may have hindered them from being thought so. Indeed, in all probability, they were the composition, however short as well as sweet, of the greatest old English masters of the catch and glee school, Purcell among them. Some were notoriously harmonized by those masters; and all most likely originated with real musicians. It is a pity they were abolished. The cries of Cherries and Primroses were, to the ear, what sunshine is to the eye: that of Hot Cross Buns might have been tolerated by the most sceptical ears; and we have heard one of Shrimps and Prawns, in winter-time, from an old itinerant vender of fish (“Shrimps as large as Prawns,” was the cry), which, for the manliness and fine turn of its melody, would not have disgraced the lips of Lablache. There was not only “air” in it;—there was *blow*;—the sound of the stormy wind from the coast.

If eating-songs could have been written, as good as those announcements of eatables, we should assuredly have had them from the pens of the like musicians; but, as we have before intimated, it is easier to hail a dish in prospect, than to sing of it at any other time.

Correspondence.

MECHANICAL ORGAN BLOWING.

To the Editor of the “Musical Times.”

SIR,—I had the pleasure some time ago, to state through your journal, that by filling a large windometer with air, by the bellows inside my organ, I had procured a supply of wind for 15 or 20 minutes for my chamber organ of 7 stops in the great organ and 5 in the swell. Since then I have been wishful to obtain a *continuous* supply, so as to prevent the necessity of any blowing by hand whatever. I am happy to say that I have succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations. The plan has been in operation more than 1½ months, and I can play just as long as I feel inclined without any other trouble as to supplying the organ with wind, than by pulling out a draw stop. The plan is this—in the basement story, near the windometer, I have placed a small water wheel, 7 feet 10 in. high, the buckets 8 inches wide; this turns an iron shaft, on which there are three cranks, 2½ inches sweep, divided equally on the shaft; these cranks are connected by a rod to three small feeders, and each feeder makes 22 strokes per minute, and as one and a portion of another, is always going up or down, a constant stream of air is secured, without the unsteady motion of a large feeder. The feeders are connected with the windometer by a trunk, and another trunk through the floor connects the windometer with the organ. The water is supplied from the cistern on the house by a lead pipe, ¾ in. wide. I was surprised at the small quantity of water which I found adequate to turn the wheel and to work the feeders. The size of the pipe, of the water-wheel, and indeed, of the whole affair, was an *experiment*; and as I had nothing to guide me, I had to risk its adaptation, and to prepare to make any alterations dictated by experience; it is singular that I have not had one to make in the arrangements, with one exception, and that simply in the regulation of the water valve. I have placed a water tap about two-thirds up the wheel, which has a T top or handle, about 12 inches long; to one end of the handle the draw stop wire is attached, and to the other a cord which runs over a pulley, at the end of which is a weight; when I draw the stop it opens the tap, and is held there by a common catch, and when the windometer is filled, it acts in rising upon a lever, to the end of which a cord is attached, which is continued to the catch; by this means, when the windometer is full, it liberates the catch and the weight closes the tap instantly. If the wind is nearly exhausted, I have only to pull out the draw stop and the wheel again commences to refill. This gives me a continuous supply for any length of time, as the cistern is supplied by the town's water pipes, and I have made a separate arrangement for this work. In the country, where there is a very small stream of water, or where water could be obtained from a reservoir at a higher level, there would of course be no difficulty or expense in adopting this plan.

We find, to our surprise, that the organ actually keeps in tune longer than formerly. Messrs. Kirtland and Jardine, of this town, have constructed the feeders, as well as windometer, and have done the leather work so well that it stands the damp arising in the winter from a basement story, where usually there is not any fire.

Lately, the Steam Engine has been adopted for this same object for large organs; the expense of such a plan