

with the needle formerly, while some were earning much more. It struck me that I had overlooked the important fact that all the sewing for the public was still to be done by women, even though machines had been invented on which to do it: in our first depression, we had innocently supposed that in future it was to be done by men. It was obvious, then, that our only course was to get machines,—one for my mother, and one for myself. I knew that I should learn quickly, and was sure that I could earn as much as any one else.

My mother entered heartily into the plan, as it held out to us the certainty of continued employment. We explained the case to my father, and he also approved of the project, and agreed to buy us a machine. He thought it better to begin with only one, to see whether we could understand it, and find a sale

for our work, as well as how we liked it. Besides, when these machines were first made, the inventors exacted an exorbitant price for them,—they, too, in this way levying a cruel tax on the sewing-women. The cost at that time was from a hundred and twenty to a hundred and fifty dollars. My father could manage to provide us with one, but the expense of two was more than he could assume. I was then within a few weeks of being eighteen; and it was arranged that I should devote the intervening time to learning how to operate a machine, by attending one of the schools for beginners then opened by lady teachers, and that the new purchase should be my birthday present. So, paying ten dollars for instruction, and agreeing to work eight weeks without wages, I took my position, with more than a dozen others, as a learner at the sewing-machine.

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## NOTES OF A PIANIST.

### I.

THERE is a class of persons to whom art in general is but a fashionable luxury, and music in particular but an agreeable sound, an elegant superfluity serving to relieve the tedium of conversation at a soiree, and fill up the space between sorbets and supper. To such, any philosophical discussion on the æsthetics of art must seem as puerile an occupation as that of the fairy who spent her time weighing grains of dust with a spider's web. Artists, to whom, through a foreign prejudice which dates back to the barbarism of the Middle Ages, they persist in refusing any high place in the social scale, are to them only petty tradesmen dealing in suspicious wares (in most instances unshrewdly, since they rarely get rich, which aggravates their position); while what they call performers

are looked upon by them as mere tricksters or jugglers, who profit by the dexterity of their fingers, as dancers and acrobats by the suppleness of their limbs. The painter whose works decorate their saloons figures in the budget of their expenses on a line with the upholsterer, whose hangings they speak of in the same breath with Church's "Heart of the Andes," and Rosa Bonheur's "Cattle Fair."

It is not for such people that I write; but there are others,—and to these I address myself,—who recognize in the artist the privileged instrument of a moral and civilizing influence; who appreciate art because they derive from it pure and ennobling inspirations; who respect it because it is the highest expression of human thought, aiming at the absolute ideal; and who love it as

we love the friend to whom we confide our joys and sorrows, and in whom we find a faithful response to every movement of the soul.

Lamartine has said, with truth, "Music is the literature of the heart; it commences where speech ends." In fact, music is a psycho-physical phenomenon. In its germ, it is a sensation; in its full development, an ideal. It is sufficient not to be deaf to perceive music, at least, if not to appreciate it. Even idiots and maniacs are subject to its influence. Not being restricted to any precise sense, going beyond the mere letter, and expressing only states of the soul, it has this advantage over literature, that every one can assimilate it to his own passions, and adapt it to the sentiments which rule him. Its power, limited in the intellectual order to the imitative passions, is in that of the imagination unlimited. It responds to an interior, indefinable sense possessed by all, — the ideal.

Literature is always objective: it speaks to the understanding, and determines in us impressions in keeping with the determined sense which it expresses. Music, on the contrary, may be, in turn, objective and subjective, according to the disposition in which we find ourselves at the moment of hearing it. It is objective when, affected only by the purely physical sensation of sound, we listen to it passively, and it suggests to us impressions. A march, a waltz, a flute imitating the nightingale, the chromatic scale imitating the murmuring of the wind in the "Pastoral Symphony," may be taken as examples.

It is subjective when, under the empire of a latent impression, we discover in its general character an accordance with our psychological state, and we assimilate it to ourselves; it is then like a mirror in which we see reflected the movements which agitate us, with a fidelity all the more exact from the fact that, without being conscious of it, we ourselves are the painters of the picture which unrolls itself before our imagination.

Let me explain. Play a melancholy air to a proscript thinking of his distant home; to a deserted lover; to a mother mourning the loss of a child; to a vanquished warrior; — and be assured they will all appropriate to themselves the plaintive harmonies, and fancy they detect in them the accents of their own grief.

The fact of music is still a mystery. We know that it is composed of three principles, — air, vibration, and rhythmic symmetry. Strike an object in an exhausted receiver, and it produces no sound, because no air is there; touch a ringing glass, and the sound stops, because there is no vibration; take away the rhythm of the simplest air by changing the duration of the notes that compose it, and you render it obscure and unrecognizable, because you have destroyed its symmetry.

But why, then, do not several hammers striking in cadence produce music? They certainly comply with the three conditions of air, vibration, and rhythm. Why is the accord of a third so pleasing to the ear? Why is the minor mode so suggestive of sadness? There is the mystery, — there the unexplained phenomenon.

We restrict ourselves to saying that music, which, like speech, is perceived through the medium of the ear, does not, like speech, call upon the brain for an explanation of the sensation produced by the vibration on the nerves; it addresses itself to a mysterious agent within us, which is superior to intelligence, since it is independent of it, and makes us feel that which we can neither conceive nor explain.

Let us examine the various attributes of the musical phenomenon.

1. *Music is a physical agent.* It communicates to the body shocks which agitate the members to their base. In churches the flame of the candles oscillates to the quake of the organ. A powerful orchestra near a sheet of water ruffles its surface. A learned traveller speaks of an iron ring which swings to and fro to the murmur of the Tivoli Falls. In Switzerland I excited at will,

in a poor child afflicted with a frightful nervous malady, hysterical and cataleptic crises, by playing in the minor key of E flat. The celebrated Doctor Bertier asserts that the sound of a drum gives him the colic. Certain medical men state that the notes of the trumpet quicken the pulse and induce slight perspiration. The sound of the bassoon is cold; the notes of the French horn at a distance, and of the harp, are voluptuous. The flute played softly in the middle register calms the nerves. The low notes of the piano frighten children. I once had a dog who would generally sleep on hearing music, but the moment I played in the minor key he would bark piteously. The dog of a celebrated singer whom I knew would moan bitterly, and give signs of violent suffering, the instant that his mistress chanted a chromatic gamut. A certain chord produces on my sense of hearing the same effect as the heliotrope on my sense of smell and the pine-apple on my sense of taste. Rachel's voice delighted the ear by its ring before one had time to seize the sense of what was said, or appreciate the purity of her diction.

We may affirm, then, that musical sound, rhythmical or not, agitates the whole physical economy, — quickens the pulse, incites perspiration, and produces a pleasant momentary irritation of the nervous system.

2. *Music is a moral agent.* Through the medium of the nervous system, the direct interpreter of emotion, it calls into play the higher faculties; its language is that of sentiment. Furthermore, the motives which have presided over particular musical combinations establish links between the composer and the listener. We sigh with Bellini in the finale of *La Somnambula*; we shudder with Weber in the sublime phantasmagoria of *Der Freischütz*; the mystic inspirations of Palestrina, the masses of Mozart, transport us to the celestial regions, toward which they rise like a melodious incense. Music awakens in us reminiscences, souvenirs, associations. When we have wept over a

song, it ever after seems to us bathed in tears.

A celebrated pianist tells me that, in a city where he was giving concerts, he became acquainted with a charming young girl. He was twenty years old, and had all the poetic and generous illusions of that romantic age. She was sixteen. They loved each other without daring to confess it, and perhaps without knowing it themselves. But the hour of separation came: he was passing his last evening at her house. Observed by the family, he could only furtively join hands with her at the moment of parting. The poem was but commenced, to be arrested at the first page: he never saw her again. Disheartened, distracted with grief, he wandered through the dark streets, until at two in the morning he found himself again under her windows. She too was awake. Their thoughts, drawn together by that divine tie which merits the name of love only in the morning of life, met in unison, for she was playing gently in the solitude of her chamber the first notes of a mazurka which they had danced together. "Tears came to my eyes," said my friend, "on hearing this music, which seemed to me sublime; it was the stifled plaint of her heart; it was her grief which exhaled from her fingers; it was the eternal adieu. For years I believed this mazurka to be a marvellous inspiration, and it was not till long after, when age had dispelled my illusions and obliterated the adored image, that I discovered it was only a vulgar and trivial commonplace: the gold was changed to brass."

The old man, chilled by years, may be insensible to the pathetic accents of Rossini, of Mozart: but repeat to him the simple songs of his youth, the present vanishes, and the illusions of the past come back again. I once knew an old Spanish general who detested music. One day I began to play to him my "Siege of Saragossa," in which is introduced the "Marcha Real" (Spanish national air), and he wept like a child. This air recalled to him the immortal defence of the heroic city, be-

hind the falling walls of which he had fought against the French, and sounded to him, he said, like the voice of all the holy affections expressed by the word *home*. The mercenary Swiss troops, when in France and Naples, could not hear the "Ranz des Vaches" (the shepherd song of old and rude Helvetia) without being overcome by it. When from mountain to mountain the signal of revolt summoned to the cause the three insurgent Cantons, the desertions caused by this air became so frequent that the government prohibited it. The reader will remember the comic effect produced upon the French troops in the Crimea by the Highlanders marching to battle to the sound of the bagpipe, whose harsh, piercing notes inspired these brave mountaineers with valor, by recalling to them their country and its heroic legends. Napoleon III. finds himself compelled to allow the Arab troops incorporated into his army their barbarous tam-tam music, lest they revolt. The measured beat of the drum sustains the soldier in long marches which otherwise would be insupportable. The Marseillaise contributed as much toward the republican victories of 1793, when France was invaded, as the genius of General Dumouriez.

3. *Music is a complex agent.* It acts at once on life, on the instinct, the forces, the organism. It has a psychological action. The negroes charm serpents by whistling to them; it is said that fawns are captivated by a melodious voice; the bear is aroused with the fife; canaries and sparrows enjoy the flageolet; in the Antilles, lizards are enticed from their retreats by the whistle; spiders have an affection for fiddlers; in Switzerland, the herdsmen attach to the necks of their handsomest cows a large bell, of which they are so proud, that, while they are allowed to wear it, they march at the head of the herd; in Andalusia, the mules lose their spirit and their power of endurance, if deprived of the numerous bells with which it is customary to deck these intelligent animals; in the mountains of Scotland and Switzerland, the herds pasture best

to the sound of the bagpipe; and in the Oberland, cattle strayed from the herd are recalled by the notes of the trumpet.

Donizetti, a year before his death, had lost all his faculties, in consequence of a softening of the spinal marrow. Every means was resorted to for reviving a spark of that intellect once so vigorous; but all failed. In a single instance only he exhibited a gleam of intelligence; and that was on hearing one of his friends play the septette of his opera of "Lucia." "Poor Donizetti!" said he; "what a pity he should have died so soon!" And this was all.

In 1848, after the terrible insurrection which made of Paris a vast slaughter-house, to conceal my sadness and my disgust I went to the house of one of my friends, who was superintendent of the immense insane asylum in Clermont-sur-Oise. He had a small organ, and was a tolerably good singer. I composed a mass, to the first performance of which we invited a few artists from Paris and several of the most docile inmates of the asylum. I was struck with the bearing of the latter, and asked my friend to repeat the experiment, and extend the number of invitations. The result was so favorable, that we were soon able to form a choir from among the patients, of both sexes, who rehearsed on Saturdays the hymns and chants they were to sing on Sunday at mass. A raving lunatic, a priest, who was getting more and more intractable every day, and who often had to be put in a strait-jacket, noticed the periodical absence of some of the inmates, and exhibited curiosity to know what they were doing. The following Saturday, seeing some of his companions preparing to go to rehearsal, he expressed a desire to go with them. The doctor told him he might go on condition that he would allow himself to be shaved and decently dressed. This was a thorny point, for he would never attend to his person, and became furious when required to dress; but, to our great astonishment, he consented at once. This day he not only listened to the music quietly, but was

detected several times joining his voice with that of the choir. When I left Clermont, my poor old priest was one of the most constant attendants at the rehearsals. He still had his violent periods, but they were less frequent; and when Saturday arrived, he always dressed himself with care, and waited impatiently for the hour to go to chapel.

To resume: Music being a *physical agent*, — that is to say, acting on the individual without the aid of his intelligence; a *moral agent*, — that is to say, reviving his memory, exciting his imagination, developing his sentiment; and a *complex agent*, — that is to say, having a physiological action on the instinct, the organism, the forces, of man, — I deduce from this that it is one of the most powerful means for ennobling the mind, elevating the morals, and, above all, refining the manners. This truth is now so well recognized in Europe that we see choral societies — Orpheons and others — multiplying as by enchantment, under the powerful impulse given them by the state. I speak not simply of Germany, which is a singing nation, whose laborious, peaceful, intelligent people have in all time associated choral music as well with their labors as with their pleasures; but I may cite particularly France, which counts to-day more than eight hundred Orpheon societies, composed of workingmen. How many of these, who formerly dissipated their leisure time at drinking-houses, now find an ennobling recreation in these associations, where the spirit of union and fraternity is engendered and developed! And if we could get at the statistics of crime,

who can doubt that they would show it had diminished in proportion to the increase of these societies? In fact, men are better, the heart is in some sort purified, when impregnated with the noble harmonies of a fine chorus; and it is difficult not to treat as a brother one whose voice has mingled with your own, and whose heart has been united to yours in a community of pure and joyful emotions. If Orpheon societies ever become established in America, be assured that bar-rooms, the plague of the country, will cease, with revolvers' and bowie-knives, to be popular institutions.

Music, when employed in the service of religion, has always been its most powerful auxiliary. The organ did more for Catholicism in the Middle Ages than all its preaching; and Palestrina and Marcello have reclaimed and still reclaim more infidels than all the doctors of the Church.

We enter a house of worship. Still under the empire of the external world, we carry there our worldly thoughts and occupations; a thousand distractions deter us from religious reflection and meditation. The word of the preacher reaches the ear indeed, but only as a vague sound. The sense of what is said is arrested at the surface, without penetrating the heart. But let the grand voice of the organ be heard, and our whole being is moved; the physical world disappears, the eyes of the soul open; we bow the head, we bend the knee, and our thoughts, disengaged from matter, soar to the eternal regions of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True.

## GARNAUT HALL.

HERE or hereafter? In the body here,  
 Or in the soul hereafter do we writhe,  
 Atoning for the malice of our lives?  
 Of the uncounted millions that have died,  
 Not one has slipped the napkin from his chin  
 And loosed the jaw to tell us: even he,  
 The intrepid Captain, who gave life to find  
 A doubtful way through clanging worlds of ice, —  
 A fine inquisitive spirit, you would think,  
 One to cross-question Fate complacently,  
 Less for his own sake than Science's, —  
 Not even he, with his rich gathered lore,  
 Returns from that dark journey down to death.  
 Here or hereafter? Only this I know,  
 That, whatsoever happen afterwards,  
 Some men do penance on this side the grave.  
 Thus Regnald Garnaut for his cruel heart.

Owner and lord was he of Garnaut Hall,  
 A relic of the Norman conquerors, —  
 A quaint, rook-haunted pile of masonry,  
 From whose top battlement, a windy height,  
 Regnald could view his twenty prosperous farms;  
 His creaking mill, that, perched upon a cliff,  
 With outspread wings seemed ever taking flight;  
 The red-roofed cottages, the high-walled park,  
 The noisy aviary, and, nearer by,  
 The snow-white Doric parsonage, — all his own.  
 And all his own were chests of antique plate,  
 Horses and hounds and falcons, curious books,  
 Chain-armor, helmets, Gobelin tapestry,  
 And half a mile of painted ancestors.  
 Lord of these things, he wanted one thing more,  
 Not having which, all else to him was dross.

For Agnes Vail, the curate's only child, —  
 A little Saxon wild-flower that had grown  
 Unheeded into beauty day by day,  
 And much too delicate for this rude world, —  
 With that intuitive wisdom of the pure,  
 Saw that he loved her beauty, not herself,  
 And shrank from him, and when he came to speech  
 Parried his meaning with a woman's wit,  
 Then sobbed an hour when she was all alone.  
 And Regnald's mighty vanity was hurt.  
 "Why, then," snarled he, "if I had asked the Queen  
 To pick me some fair woman from the Court,  
 'T were but the asking. A blind curate's girl,