

## ENTERTAINMENTS OF THE PAST WINTER.

WHAT would the Puritan fathers say, if they could see our bill of fare here in Boston for the winter? The concerts, the opera dancing, which have taken place of their hundred-headed sermons, how would they endure? How the endless disquisitions wherever a few can be gathered together, on every branch of human learning, every folly of human speculation? Yet, perhaps, they have elsewhere already learnt what these changes are calculated to teach; that their action, noble as it was, exhibited but one side of nature, and was but a reaction. That the desire for amusement, no less than instruction, is irrepressible in the human breast; that the love of the beautiful, for its own sake simply, is no more to be stifled than the propensity of the earth to put forth flowers in spring; and that the Power, which, in its life and love, lavishes such loveliness around us, meant that all beings able to receive and feel should, with recreative energy, keep up the pulse of life and sing the joy it is to be, — to grow.

Their fullness of faith and uncompromising spirit show but faint sparks among us now, yet the prejudices with which these were connected from the circumstances of the time, still cast their shadows over us. The poetical side of existence, (and here I do not speak of poetry in its import or ethical significance, but in its essential being, as a recreative spirit that sings to sing, and models for the sake of drawing from the clay the elements of beauty, the poetical side of existence is tolerated rather than revered, and the lovers of beauty are regarded rather as frivolous voluptuaries than the consecrated servants of the divine Urania. Such is the tendency of the general mind. There is indeed, an under current more and more powerful every day; but the aesthetic side has not yet found an advocate of sufficiently commanding eloquence to give it due place in the councils of the people. But, as this feeling ripens, it will form to itself an appropriate language.

We have been tempted to regret that the better part of the community should have been induced to look so coldly on theatrical exhibitions. No doubt these have been made the instrument of pollution and injury, as has been represented. Still, means of amusement like these, accessible, pliant, various, will never be dispensed with in a city where natural causes must create the class who wish such entertainments for their leisure hours. Till men shall carry Shakspeare and Moliere within their own minds, they will wish to see their works represented. To those in whom life is still faint, and who yet have leisure to feel their need of being enlivened, the stimulus of genius is necessary, and, if they do not find this, they will take refuge in mere variety, such as the buffoon and juggler can offer, and thus their tastes be corrupted each day by the means that ought to exalt and refine them. The Shakspearean drama cannot now be sustained in Boston; but amusements of a lower order can, to which the youth who were to be protected by frowning down the theatre go and find entertainment which produces none of the good effects that would be received from a noble performance, with all the injury that has been so much deprecated.

The genius of the time might not favor the enterprise, for in other countries, where the stage is maintained at that point from which it can bestow a genial and elevating benefit, this is done by the private patronage of the most cultivated classes, and oftentimes by the favor of a single person, who has the advantage of being at once a man of taste and a prince, yet we cannot but feel that an enlarged view of human nature would rather have dictated to men of wisdom and philanthropy, to form themselves into committees of direction for the theatre, than to use their

influence to put it down without providing something to take its place more fully than the lecture room. There is, however, not so much reason to regret this, as the drama seems dead, and the histrionic art is dying with it. The last centuries carried this to a glorious height, but Garrick, Kemble, Talma, Kean are gone.

“The great depart;  
And none rise up to take their vacant seats.”

At least none who are the peers of the departed. Now, an inclination for the art seems to be the impression left by a great past, and even Miss Kemble, Miss Tree, and Macready are too ill-seconded, and address audiences too unprepared, fully to possess or enjoy the exercise of their great powers. Now and then appears a wonder, as Mademoiselle Rachel in France lately, worthy to deck again the ancient drama with its diadem and train, but it is said by those who have seen her, that the scene sinks the moment she leaves the stage, and the fustian and farce are seen of an entertainment no longer congenial with the character of those who witness it.

The drama blossomed out in Germany, like other productions of the last century there, a genuine growth. The need of lofty sentiment and a free, widely ranging existence spoke there unrepented. On the stage was seen faithfully represented the attainment, still more, the longing of the popular mind. Upon the stage a Carlos could meet a Posa, and the iron hand of Goetz receive the clasp of the modern Arminius. But the black eagles have shrieked into silence these great voices, for the drama cannot live where man cannot walk in the freedom of a hero. That sense of individual greatness which, in Greece, poured its wine through the life blood of whole races, which consecrated the involuntary crimes of *Œdipus*, and made possible the simple grandeur of *Antigone*, filling the stage with God-like forms which no spectator felt to be necessarily mere ideals, which made the shadow of Shakspeare's Talbot more commanding than the substance of the hero of one of Knowles's dramas, and gave the buskins of Corneille a legalized dignity, — where is it now? Man believes in the race, but not in his fellow, and religious thinkers separate thought from action. No man is important enough to fill the scene and sustain the feeling; let us read novels in our sleepy hours, but never hope, in the society of our contemporaries, to see before us a Prometheus, or a Cid realizing the hope, nay, the *belief* of all present.

No; the drama is not for us, and vainly do young geniuses pilfer and filter all history and romance for heroes; vainly break up their soliloquies into speeches to be recited by various persons, or cramp into a five act lameness, the random expressions of modern life. It cannot be. Let them ask themselves, Do the men walk and talk before them so in their solitary hours? Did these forms advance from the green solitudes of the wood, or the dark corners of the chamber, and give themselves to the bard as delegates from the Muse of the age? Did you, as you walked the streets meet the demand for these beings from every restless, eager eye? Not so. Then let be the dead form of a traditional drama. Life is living, though this be dead. Wait the form that grows from the spirit of the time.

Life is living, and art, European art, lives in the opera and ballet. For us we have nothing of our own, for the same reason that in literature, a few pale buds is all that we yet can boast of native growth, because we have no national character of sufficient fulness and simplicity to demand it. There is nothing particular to be said, as yet, but everything to be done and observed.

Why should we be babbling? let us see, let us help the plant to grow; when it is once grown, then paint it, then describe it. We earn our brown bread, but we beg our cake; yet we want some, for we are children still.

If New England thinks, it is about money, social reform, and theology. If she has a way of speaking peculiarly her own, it is the lecture. But the lecture, though of such banyan growth among us, seems not to bespeak any deep or permanent tendency. Intellectual curiosity and sharpness are the natural traits of a colony overrun with things to be done, to be seen, to be known from a parent country possessing a rich and accumulating treasure from centuries of civilized life. Lectures upon every possible topic are the short business way taken by a business people to find out what there is to be known, but to know in such ways cannot be hoped, unless the suggestions thus received are followed up by private study, thought, conversation. This, no doubt, is done in some degree, but chiefly by the young, not yet immersed in the stream of things. Let any one listen in an omnibus, or at a boarding house, to the conversation suggested by last night's lecture, see the composure with which the greatest blunders and most unfounded assertions are heard and assented to, and he will be well convinced how little the subject has occupied the minds of the smart and curious audience, and feel less admiration at the air of devout attention which pervades an Odeon assembly. Not that it is unmeaning, something they learn; but it is to be feared just enough to satisfy, not stimulate the mind. It is an entertainment which leaves the hearer too passive. One that appealed to the emotions would enter far more deeply and pervasively into the life, than these addressed to the understanding, a faculty already developed out of all proportion among this people.

There is always a great pleasure in any entertainment truly national. In Catlin's book on the Indians, in Borrow's book on the Gipsies, we read with this pleasure of the various dances and amusements, because, barbarous though they be, they grow out of, correspond with the character of the people, as much as the gladiatorial games, and shows of wild beasts, the tournament of the middle ages, the Spanish bull-fights, the boxing and racing matches of England express peculiar traits in the character and habits of the nations who enjoy or have enjoyed them. We must not then quarrel with the lecture, the only entertainment we have truly expressive of New England as it is in its transition state, cavilling, questioning, beginning to seek, all-knowing, if with little heart-knowledge, meaning to be just, and turning at last, though often with a sour face, to see all sides, for men of sense will see at last it is not of any use to nail the weathercock the pleasantest way; better leave it free, and see the way the wind does blow, if it will be so foolish as to blow in an injudicious direction. The lectures answer well to what we see in the streets. Yet it would be scarce worthwhile to begin to speak of them, as the Dial affords no room for the encyclopedia of Entertaining Knowledge. Only a few words of two foreign lecturers, who, in very different ways, have been objects of much interest here.

Mr. Giles has been everywhere a truly popular lecturer. His dramatic feeling of his subjects, comic power in narration, great fluency and bright genial talent have endeared him to all classes of hearers. Indeed his narrative passages, such as the story of the fight on Vinegar Hill, and the peasant's recollections of Cromwell, are nearest dramatic representation, in the kind and degree of pleasure communicated, of anything we have had. He is no orator; his style of speaking wants repose, wants light and shade. His voice, a little strained from the very beginning, gets into a broken, hysterical tone in the more animated parts, that jars the nerves. He

hurries his declamations far too much. But in these very faults his excitable temperament and youthful heart display themselves and conciliate the affections where they dissatisfy the taste of the hearer.

Mr. Lyell. A very large audience waited on the teachings of this celebrated geologist, and their uniform attention and warm interest in his lectures were scarcely less honorable to them than to him. We understand he had been very little in the habit of lecturing, and never to mixed audiences like this, but only to classes of students, or persons prepared, in some measure, for what he had to say, and able to follow him, gleaning his facts as they could, without expecting or demanding the neat and popular arrangement to which our lecturers are trained, and which often inclines to praise on leaving the lecture-room, in the technics of the shop. "A neat article, sir, a good article." His gesticulation and manner were unprepossessing, for though his whole air was that of the gentleman and intellectual man, yet he had not that full-eyed, unembarrassed air in addressing an audience, which draws it at once to the speaker, and prepares to listen without ennui or reserve. Neither had he the power of arrangement, gradually to wind a stronger thread, to elucidate, to round out, to perfect the design. But for a time the hearer strained after his purpose, then he had forgotten something, flew back to get it, put it out of place, then in again, and it was only at the end of the lecture that one could be sure of having ascertained its scope, thus robbing us of that pleasurable mixture of animation and repose, as in a chariot driven by a skilful Jehu through a beautiful country, which attend on the following a mind which combines with richness in fact and illustration a self-possessed grace and the power of design. Yet it was well observed, by a discriminating hearer, that the presence of great facts amply made up for these deficiencies, the sense of Mr. Lyell's extensive knowledge, patience, and philosophical habits of investigation, with his simple and earnest manner of approaching his subject made his lectures not only interesting but charming to his audience, and it is to be questioned if the difficulty which they sometimes felt in following him did not even make his lectures of more value, the mind being stimulated to an effort which gave it a glow of real interest, and induced it to follow out the path thus entered. Wherever we went, there was Lyell's Geology on the table, and many of the suggestions made by these lectures lingered in conversation through the winter. Goethe's conclusion at the end of his scores of years was, "It makes this world interesting and pleasant to know something about it," and we must add as corollary, "It makes a man interesting and pleasant to know something about this world," whatever the Byron school may think, or the so supersensual as to be antisensuous school may think. A fact is a germ of life, from that may spring light, which the gloom of passion or the grey twilight of contemplation never saw, the rosy light of a perpetual day-spring, of a myriad birth.

But to come to some of the more beautiful, if less simply intellectual entertainments we had in view from the beginning. Of the pleasures, the entertainments of Boston, we can give but an imperfect account. We have not visited the Museum, have not seen "Love in all shapes," nor the Indians, real or supposed, nor the lady who advertises "a hundred illusions in one evening," not an offer to be slighted of a December afternoon. Also these and many more as alluring from a distance *should* be seen duly to appreciate what the real state of feeling is on such subjects. But our time was limited, being not "an intelligent traveller," but a busy citizen, and we shall venture only to speak of what we have seen in music and dancing.

We are beggars in these respects, as I said. Our only national melody, Yankee Doodle, is shrewdly suspected to be a scion from British art. All symptoms of invention are confined to the African race, who, like the German literati, are relieved by their position from the cares of government. "Jump Jim Crow," is a dance native to this country, and one which we plead guilty to seeing with pleasure, not on the stage, where we have not seen it, but as danced by children of an ebon hue in the street. Such of the African melodies as we have heard are beautiful. But the Caucasian race have yet their rail-roads to make, and all we shall learn from a survey of exhibitions in the arts which exhilarate our social life, is how far, studying and copying Europe as we do, we are able to receive and enjoy her gifts in this kind. Though music is not a plant native to this soil, it is one that there has always been a desire to cultivate. Churches which possess no other means of aiding the intellect through the senses, crave the more the organ and the choir. The piano and flute have long been domesticated, and of late the harp and guitar, though it is rarely that we find a tolerable performer on either. Ballad-singing, in a limited range, is really loved. Italian songs are tolerated. Psalmody in country villages is a favorite and pleasing amusement of family and social circles, and has certainly a tendency to cultivate the more pure and graceful feelings, though as to music, the exclusive care for time and tune thus cultivated is hostile to any free acceptance of the art in its more grand and creative movements.

Music is the great living, growing art, and great lives are not yet exhausted in the heaping up this column of glory. We look out through this art into infinity; its triumphs are but begun, and no comparison need be thought of with Greece or any other past life. Here will the inward spiritual movement of our time find its asylum, find its voice, and in this temple worship be paid to that religion whose form is beauty, and whose soul is love. All that has spoken such divine words in the other arts, rushes here in great tides of soul; and heart, and mind, and life are melted equally to feed one incense-breathing flame.

With a congenial power, the rhythm of the poet, the harmonious design of the painter, and the light that floods the marble, enrapture us, raise us on their strong wings to seek our native home. But music not only raises but fills us, and hope and thought have ceased to be, for all is now.

The oratorio and opera have taken place of the drama. Of the opera we know little; yet the intoxication of feeling with which the *Somnambula* was received, shows what it would be to us. The *Somnambula* is a very imperfect work, but the pathetic melody which flows through it is of purest sweetness, and the accords which resume the theme at every pause, vibrate on our heart-strings. It is, like *Romeo and Juliet*, though of a very different order of greatness, all one thought of love, and spring, and grief.

In the oratorio we have had this winter an opportunity to hear two of the masterpieces of genius, the *Creation* and the *Messiah*, not indeed entire, or with full effect; but with Braham's solos and excellent performance of the choruses, from these mighty works what thoughts of cheer were drawn, what clues did they afford into the mysteries of being! Yet the *Creation* does not seem so much a revelation of the primal efforts of a fashioning mind as an intellectual survey of historical facts. It is great, commanding, but elsewhere we have felt far more what is told in the history of *Genesis*. The first lighting up of this present earth after days of dull rain has told it more. The dawn of a thought in the face of man has brought us nearer, when light has been made, fresh from the very fount of inspiration, and half-moulded clay has been transfused into a

harmonious world of infinite expression. The impression made by Haydn's Creation is uniform, but not single and profound. We receive it in detail as a great, a commanding, a manly mood. The imitative strains in it are so child-like, so truly thoughts, not attempts, that they do not displease, but they engage the thoughts too sensibly. In the exquisite passages

“With verdure clad,” &c.  
 “In splendor bright,”

we appreciate the peculiar genius of the composer. In the passage

“Here shoots the healing plant,”

a strain of prolific sweetness seemed to open long avenues into the best hopes of human kind. This healing plant, as brought to light in the music, was the true Nepenthe, the anti-Circean, all healing, the white root, which man demands, easily bewildered as he is in the forest of his own inventions. No poison flower of passion could open unscathed near this "healing plant." The young voice that sung this, insipid from its want of expression in parts that demand a range of powers and experience of feeling, was admirable here from its virgin, silvery tone.

“In splendor bright.”

This Brahms gave in a grand, sustained style. The sun is nobly expressed, the moon not beautiful enough, but the strain which announces the stars is of sufficient perspective and nobleness to raise the thoughts, as they do, seen on a sudden.

“In native worth and honor clad.”

Having heard of this and been filled with expectation ever since childhood, we thought we should hear it from Brahms, but, if we did, Haydn fell short of Milton, who falls short of what we know how to expect. An Adam and Eve we hardly hoped to see, for even Michel Angelo's while they transcend our demand, only stimulate, not satisfy our thoughts. But could not all-promising music tell us more of the proper grandeur of our race? The words promise well.

“In native worth and honor clad, with beauty, courage, strength adorned, to heaven erect and tall he stands a man, the lord and king of nature all. The large and arched front sublime, of wisdom deep declares the seat, and in his eyes with brightness shines the soul, the breath and image of his God. With fondness leans upon his breast the partner for him formed, a woman fair, and graceful spouse. Her softly smiling virgin looks, of flowery spring the mirror, bespeak him love, and joy, and bliss.”

Here is theme enough. All that can be known or thought or felt might be concentrated here. Little was told. It seemed characteristic of the genius of the artist that the passage that impressed most was,

“The large arched front sublime.”

Those were grand moments in which we heard this work. They did not swell the heart, nor break it with a painful sense of beauty, but all was calm, confident, and commanding, obstructions gently gliding from the onward view.

But the Messiah seems like another region, sublimer, deeper, sweeter, stronger. This is one of the revelations, for here ages of thought crystallize at last into one diamond. There is nothing fit to be said about it. It is its own word. Sectarians, religionists, rise into men before such a grand interpretation of the universal truth, which, though like a city set on a hill, was unseen, for they had eyes but they saw not. But Handel was a disciple. Handel is a primitive Christian, and in the sublime strain,

“Behold I tell you a mystery,”

His genius seems to announce itself.

The mind capable to see the Madonna as Raphael did, shrinks away from the bedizened lady of Loretto, and though it pardons the worshippers who in their humility have lost sight of the beauty of this great type of woman, yet it cannot kneel with them. The heart that would yield itself wholly before the pure might of Jesus, stands aside from the door of churches which purport to be his, yet which are built on dogmas that he would have shaken as dust from his sandals. But as the lordly crest of Handel stoops like the lion to the lamb, the world falls prostrate with him, and it seems as if there was not a corner of the earth that would not resound to the chorus of “Wonderful! Counsellor! the mighty God! the Prince of Peace!”

The movement of the whole oratorio, with its profound flow of feeling, its soaring onward impulse, its sweetness of inspiration, its ripeness of experience, fills the ear, the heart, the hope. The moral element, which is the one first and easiest deduced from the thought of Jesus, is not the one most favorable to the free development of genius in its grander forms. The Madonna, the Pieta, the saints and martyrs, the infant Jesus, have inspired devotion not unworthy, and the fruits have been full and fair. But the bards have failed before the theme of Jesus, the Redeemer, the Messiah. The artists have rarely gone beyond the grace and tenderness of his outward apparition, or his sufferings. One artist has shown him transfigured, the same unequalled soul that has given form to the “Weep not for me,” — and the other no less significant command, “Feed my lambs.” With that attainment by which he conveys to us a realizing sense of the presence of a Son of God, Handel may vie in the degree to which he has made manifest a Redeemer, the Messiah of the world.

To the sublime chorus, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. He is the King of Glory.” Handel has a right. These are not words from him, or rather they are true words, not traditional, but from the fulness of the soul. Yet he seems to have had no impatience of the multitude who speak with such imperfect feeling as he expresses in the chorus, “The Lord gave the word, great was the company of the preachers.”

We owe to Handel's Messiah a life-long debt, and that is all that is worth being said, since the whole could not unless by a life.<sup>1</sup>

Here first we truly heard Braham. We had no idea of him before, but after once hearing the grandeur of his recitative in some parts of the Messiah, we know how to appreciate his genius and allow for his inequalities. In "Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like his sorrow," the profoundly human simplicity of tenderness was almost inconceivable in one whom we had heard addressing himself to such vulgar and shallow states of mind. In "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," were justified the wonders we had heard of his voice. Such power, such perfectly rounded production of tone is not to be believed till it is heard. Each note flew to its mark with the precision of a dart, and filled the air like thunder.

We had afterwards opportunity to admire the range of Mr. Braham's powers at a concert where he did equal justice to the delicate, dreamy graces of "My mother bids me bind my hair," to the playful melody of Ally Croker, and to such songs as "Scots who hoe," and "No, no, he shall not perish." But his excellencies have already been characterized with feeling and discrimination by a writer in Number Four of the Dial. Nowhere can he be heard to so much advantage as in this great oratorio music, where the choruses may represent the history of the world, while the solos are free to declare the inmost religious secret of a single soul, as in "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Spohr's Last Judgment we heard only once, and without receiving any decided impression from it. Madame Spohr Zahn gave us the pleasure of a fine style of singing, and those who heard her more frequently spoke highly of her powers of expression. She did not give us the idea of high power, but often it requires time to catch the secret of a new voice, a new instrument, or a new mind.

In instrumental music we have been so rich that it has seemed one continuous musical life, passing from one sweet disclosure to another in the enchanted realms of sound. As for the pianists, we must confess to little pleasure them, and do not wonder the great in genius sneered at them as "harpsichord knights." Miss Sloman excited great interest here from her youth, naive manner, and a performance wonderful at her age, or indeed at any, but it seemed to us unjust to compare her with Rakemann, who was the first to introduce to our knowledge the wonderful feats now so common in Europe. His performance has an airy elegance, an easy command and thorough finish, which Miss Sloman rarely approached and never equaled.

That little world, the piano, is certainly invaluable as the means of study and private pleasure. But for rich and varied compositions, it has not adequate fulness and exquisiteness of tone. Compositions which would take us to heaven, if heard from the full orchestra, leave us cold in this miniature representation. It is like an ink outline of one of Titian's pictures, in the effect on the mind, enough for the thoughts, but not enough for the feelings. Sensuously it fails to effect because the sound is but a thread in the rooms where we are assembled to hear it. If we are to hear so much attempted without the aid of the orchestra, let it be in smaller rooms. But we do not like the music that is offered us upon it. With the exception of two or three pieces, (Lizzt's Chromatic Galope is one,) it leaves not a trace behind, in the memory, in the soul. It is very well that dexterity should be carried so far, and very pretty, just at the time, to hear the sparks struck out, and fairy footsteps, and rivulets of notes gushing all over the instrument, but this should never take place of the real thing, or a handmaid talent appear to our thoughts as the great winged music itself.

It was pleasant to hear the piano with the full orchestra. There as the solo triumphs were achieved and the instruments swelled in at each close with bursts of triumphant sound, it was like some delicate young girl, advancing from a crowd of more beautiful but older companions to show her grace and agility in the dance unsustained, while ever and anon, as she achieves a more difficult step, they advance, surround, and crown her with garlands, making their child their queen, and more stately for their graceful deference.

Of the violin we have heard much, of its marvelous richness and pathos, and have heard it played well enough to recognise the power of this most difficult instrument. From our own violinists we had learned how truly this master of ceremonies on the gayest occasions, is called also the tearful violin. The able performers whom we have heard this winter have added to our knowledge. Herrwig was the favorite of the audience from his frank and simple manners and his freedom from trick and stage-effect. But Nagel's hand seemed in itself a mind, so educated and adroit was its every motion, which his violin obeyed as gently as a reed whispers with the wind. The instrument is worthy of the hand of genius, would be worthy to be its companion in its hours of most impassioned utterance. It must tempt to a voluptuous sadness. De Beriot's compositions have been compared to garlands, and Paganini seems to have made his instrument wail, and proclaim, and fascinate, like a volcanic country in its various moods and fury, of desolation, of perfidious slumberous beauty.

Still a higher pleasure have we derived from the violoncello. This instrument we had never heard so played as to give us an adequate idea of its powers. The wonderful union of deep and grave passion with soft aerial vanishing notes, in the two parts, the slides of such easy transition made the instrument impressive as a spiritual presence in itself, apart from the music played upon it. Often it seemed that the deep searching emotions of life were answered and elevated by an angel's voice. When hearing these aerial notes echoing one another, then vanishing till the last in its remoteness, though still precise and perfect, seemed but the shadow of a sound, one present, not prone to glowing emotion, said, "I hear the farewell of a disembodied spirit." Another, when the deep tones were again heard, calm as with a treasure of repressed feeling, said, "Then it is both male and female." Some wept, and were unwilling to have so much told of those depths of life which words can never speak.

And surely it was a true artist that had so tamed the spirit and confined it in this heavy machine. The quiet security, dignity, and grace of his performance was such that, for a great while, we never thought of it. We went to hear Mr. Knoop almost every time he played during his prolonged stay in Boston, and it was only in the last times that we observed himself. So truly was he the musician and the artist that the soul he loved spoke for him and took his place. When we did think particularly of himself, there seemed something impressive in the perfect repose of his manner, in harmony with the great effects he produced. He had none of that air of seeking popular favor which seems to please audiences here. If the music did not speak to them, why should *he*? He respected himself and his art too much to dream of it. In his eye and gesture there was calm self-assurance; the eloquence came from his instrument. Sometimes we fancied that larger audiences or a more intelligent sympathy would have kindled him to do still more for us, for his performance was of a level and sufficient beauty throughout. He never surpassed though he never disappointed the expectation formed from first hearing him. We hope he knew how much he conferred on his limited but faithful audience. To his first concerts large numbers went

from mere curiosity, but, afterward, only the few attended who rejoiced to give themselves to hear this noble and tender instrument, as to learn a new mode of life, and those were confirmed and charmed every night in a way that they cannot forget, for this music is “not remembered but a part of memory,” so true and home felt was the joy it gave.

But, of all these musical festivals, none conferred so solid a benefit as the concerts given by the Academy of Music throughout the winter where an excellent orchestra, under the guidance of an able leader, gradually acquainted themselves, and made a constant audience familiar with the beauty of several of the really great compositions. Concerts given for immediate gain must, with a public not yet raised to the high standard which exists among a people by nature gifted with a sense for an art, and continually educated by new geniuses following out and fulfilling one another, be made up of uncongenial ingredients, really beautiful music alternating with pieces intended only to catch the ear and prevent those of the hearers, who have not an earnest interest, from being tired. Thus, just as you have risen to a poetic feeling and are engaged in a pleasing flow of thought, you are jarred and let down by flat and unmeaning trifles, or by some even vulgar performance. In this way the taste of the many will never be improved, for the performer goes down to them, instead of drawing them up to him. We think they should never do so, and that the need of money is not an excuse. Compromise, always so degrading, is especially so with those beautiful arts which we expect to lift us above everything low and mercenary, and give us light by which to see the harmony destined to subsist between nature and the soul of man, when mutually purified, perfected and sustained.

These concerts of the Academy were really adapted to form an audience that will require what is good instead of merely tolerating it and have in their department begun the same work as the Athenaeum Galleries in cherishing and refining a love for the other arts.

Several fine overtures were performed during the winter, and often enough for us to become quite familiar with them. But the great pleasure, and one never to be forgotten by those who had the happiness to share it, was the performance of two Symphonies of Beethoven, the Pastoral and Fifth Symphony.

The Pastoral is one of the most famous compositions of this master, indeed it might be styled a popular composition. It does not require a depth in the life of the hearer, but only simplicity to feel its beauties. The bounding and extatic emotions with which the child traverses the enameled fields on a day of bluest blue sky, of perfect verdure, bloom, and fragrance, the excitement of the peasant's dance, with its joyous whirl, hastily pattering feet, and light flashes across of movements of breezy lightness, the joy and plaints of the birds, the approach and burst of the thunder shower, its refreshing haste and vehement bounty, and the renovated lustre of life that succeeds, all these perfections are not unknown to any eye that has ever opened on life, — all these glorious gifts nature makes to every man, each “green and bowery summertime.” Beethoven's was one of those souls that prevent nature from being too weary, as she sometimes must incline to become of her prodigal love, for he was great enough to receive her into his heart, great enough to paint a picture of their meeting. But it is only one hour of his true life.

But in the Fifth Symphony we seem to have a something offered us, not only more, but different, and not only different from another work of his, but different from anything we know in the clearness with which we are drawn to the creative soul, not of art or artist, but of universal life. Here with force, and ardent, yet deliberate approach, manifold spirits demand the crisis of

their existence. Nor is the questioning heard in vain, but, in wide blaze of light and high heroic movement, more power flows forth than was hoped, than was asked. With bolder joy, with a sorrow more majestic, life again demands and meets a yet more god-like reply. New swells of triumph precede powers still profounder, worthy to precede the birth of worlds. These are followed by still sublimer wave and crash of sound smiting upon the centre, then pouring its full tides along. Wide wings wave, and nothing is forgot, all lies revealed, expanded, but *below*. Human loves flow like silver threads amid the solemn mountains and fair vales, and a divine intelligence showers down the sun and shadow from an equal height.

What the Sibyls and Prophets of Michel Angelo demand, is in this majestic work made present to us. The sudden uprise of more and more sublimed spirits through Dante's Heaven is before us, and there are no other names amid the prophetic geniuses that called for this congenial and perfected manifestation of themselves, as wide, as deep, as simply grand, and of a more rapturous flood of soul and more full-grown pinions. The effect of the symphony on memory is an intimation of that love with its kindred energy, beyond faith as much as beyond sight, for all is present now, and the secret of creation is read. This, not Haydn's, is "*the Creation*."

He said "the limits were not yet erected" that man could not surpass, nor never will be, — shall we forget it? when in hours like these, we have flown upborne on these strong wings into the future, not of lives but of eternities. How can that race be sufficiently revered which gave birth to such a man? How be disdained or lost the meanest form that bears lineaments that show a similar design?

But enough. To be worthy to speak of men like these we also must live into manly stature, and incarnate the word. What they give is beyond analogies, or memory; it has become a part of life. Let it animate all the rest. Grateful Pœans from expanded natures should answer the trumpet call of such a genius. It is said that he was animated in this composition by Schiller's divine truth,

Be embraced, millions;  
This kiss to the whole world,

and with like incredulity of injustice, each note declares

And if there be one who cannot call  
A soul his own, on Earth-round,  
Let him steal weeping from this bond.

And of this soul, as of the two others I have named, this all-triumphant soul, we know he had nothing but his art; — no frail prop of outward happiness, and human affections. That wand was all he had to reveal the treasures of the earth, and point his way to heaven.

But enough, since nothing worthy could be said if we wrote forever, and all the gain is in the relief of a tribute of gratitude.

We hope those symphonies will never again be divided in the performance. One part modulates naturally into the other, prepares the mind to expect it, and it is most painful to have an interval of talk and bustle, disturbing, almost destroying the effect of a work as a whole. We are sure that any persons, who can enjoy this music at all, would rather have the whole evening's

entertainment shortened by the loss of some other piece, than have a break in the middle of a beautiful work which, to be seen truly, must be seen as a whole.

The Academy concerts were almost wholly good. The assistance which they occasionally received from other performers was of value in itself and arranged in harmony with their own design, only in one instance the introduction of an ordinary vocalist, who attempted, too, music beyond his powers, marred in some degree, the evening. We received much pleasure from the Oboe of Ribas. This sweet pastoral instrument whose “reedy” sound recalls gentle streams and green meadows, came in sweetly between pieces of full harmony, and was played with a delicacy and unpretending grace, in unison with its character.

“Time presses,” but we cannot close without some account of the talent which fascinated so many in Fanny Ellsler, and which was witnessed by the majority, though prejudice or opinion declared against it. It would be well if the point could be thoroughly discussed and *settled* by each one in his own way, on what grounds he attends an exhibition of art. Is it to form a friendship with the artist as a man, as a woman, or to witness the results of a distinguished and highly cultivated talent? In what degree is private character to influence us in buying a book, in ordering a portrait, in listening to a song?

Some carry these notions farther. We have not heard of any who would not employ a great lawyer, because they did not approve his moral character, or even exclude him, on that account, from their private acquaintance. But we have known persons so consistent in demanding that the whole man should be worthy their approval, as to canvass the propriety of continuing to employ their shoemaker because they heard he was an infidel. “Infidels then cannot make good shoes?” — Looks of high moral indignation were the only reply.

Yet each one should settle it distinctly for himself whether he who goes to see the actress or dancer on the stage, or he only who calls upon her to make her personal acquaintance, expresses his approbation of her as a private individual. For now, when there is so clear understanding on these points, people sin a great deal, some in going from curiosity, where they do not think it right to go, and as many, or more, in blaming their neighbors for doing so, without ascertaining their mode of reasoning on the subject.

Then, is opera dancing to be tolerated at all? This, too, should be settled, and after full consideration of the subject, not merely answered in the negative because the exhibition is offensive to those not accustomed to it. The pros and cons should be well written out somewhere, and glimpses of the theory of aesthetics might thus be gained by those who now stand on lower ground. We shall merely observe that, no doubt, opera dancing must have a demoralizing effect where it is looked upon in any way but as an art, and those who criticize the dancer as they would their neighbor should not witness the ballet. But it has risen to the dignity of an art in Europe, will send its most admired professors wherever, on these shores, wealth and luxury have formed that circle which bestows a golden harvest. It is for thinking persons to consider whether they will form the breakwater against this inevitable fact, or whether they may not by raising the standard of thought on the subject, and altering the point of view, disarm it of its power to injure. Let them recollect that the same objections have been urged against exhibitions of statuary, and yielded, that everything tends in the civilized world to a reinstatement of the body in the rights of which it has been defrauded, as an object of care and the vehicle of expression, and that the rope-dancer, the opera-dancer, the gymnast, Mr. Sheridan's boxing-school, and Du Crow, are only the

comments on the books on physiology which they keep on their parlor tables and lend to their pale-faced, low statured friends. So much has, for a long time, the intellect had the upper hand, that we wonder all this shrunken and suffering generation do not snatch the ball and hoop from their children's hands and give their days to restoring to the body its native vigor and pliancy; nor should we wonder at the pleasure in opera-dancing, if it were merely a display of feats of agility and muscular power.

But great as is the pleasure received from the sight of a perfect discipline of limb and motion, till they are so pliant to the will that the body seems but thickened soul, and the subtlest emotion is seen at the fingers' ends and this undoubtedly is the true state of man, and his body, if not thus transparent, is no better than a soul case, or rude but in which he lives, this is the lesser half. The range of pantomime is as great as the world, and the rapidity and fulness in the motions of the ballet give it an advantage, on its side, perhaps commensurate with those derived by the drama from the beauty of poetic rhythm, and the elaborate and detailed expression of thoughts by means of words.

In seeing those ballets which were mostly of a light and graceful character, it was easy to perceive that their range might include the loftier emotions, and that it only required a suitable genius in the performer to make Medea a suitable subject for performance.

The charms of M'lle. Elssler are of a naive sportive character, it is as the young girl, sparkling with life and joy, new to all the varied impulses of the heart, half coquettish, more than half conscious of her captivations, that she delights us. She was bewitching in the arch Cracovienne, and in the impassioned feeling of life in her beautiful Spanish dances. The castanets seem invented by that ardent people to count the pulses of a life of ecstasy, to keep time with the movements of an existence incapable of a dull or heavy moment. Blossoming orange groves, perfumed breezes, and melting moonlight fill the thoughts, and the scene seems to have no darker background.

The Gipsy is of the same fascinating and luxurious character. It is beautiful, but, lately, in reading Borrow's book upon the Spanish Gipsies, and recalling this ballet, we could not but feel of how much more romantic a character the composition was susceptible. It is but a French Gitana, however graceful and fascinating, that appears in this ballet.

La Sylphide seems to require a different order of genius from that of M'lle. Elssler. She is sweetly childlike in her, happy play, and evasions of her lover's curiosity. The light hovering motions of the piece, however, suggest an order of grace more refined and poetic than hers, such as is ascribed to Taglioni.

In Natalie we saw her to most advantage, and here she appeared to us perfect. The coquettish play of the little peasant queen among her mates, her infantine enchantment as she examines the furniture in the splendid apartment to which she has been conveyed in her sleep, her look when she first surveys herself in a full length mirror, the beautiful awkwardness that steals over her as she prinks and stiffens herself before it, and then the dizzy rapture of the little dance into which she flutters, her timid motions towards the supposed statue, the perfect grace of her weariness as she sits down tired with dancing before it, and the whole tissue of the emotions she exhibits after it comes down and reveals itself, all this is lovely *à ravir*, for only with French vivacity could one feel or speak about it.

That perfect innocence of gesture which a young child exhibits when it has to ask for some little favor which it hopes to obtain from your overweening fondness, or the attitude in which one “tired of play” suddenly sinks down leaning on some favorite companion with an entire abandonment, — these rare graces were displayed by the hacknied artiste with a perfection that must be seen to be believed, so truer than life were they!

We do not know that the effect she produces can be attested better than by saying that one beautiful afternoon when the trees were all in blossom and the fields in golden green, looking from a wooded cliff across the fields, across the river, was heard from a house opposite at a great distance, played upon a violin, the first movement with which the *pas de deux* commences in Natalie, and it was easy, it was appropriate to see her form advancing upon the velvet meads, with the same air as on the stage, full of life, full of joy, the impersonation of spring. That must be beautiful and true which will bear being thus called to mind and mingled with the free loveliness of Nature.

In this *pas de deux* was sufficiently obvious the need of genius to make a dancer, and the impossibility that good taste and education, here or elsewhere, should alone suffice to fill the scene. Her partner, Sylvain, was a light and graceful dancer and understood his part, yet whenever, after her part was done, she retired with timid gentle step and an air that seemed to say, “see how beautiful he will look now. He will show himself worthy of my hand,” the light all vanished from the scene, the poetry stopped on the wing, and we saw Sylvain and his steps and thought of the meaning of the dance, distinctly. We wanted to see the prince with the princess, but she was escorted by a gentlemanly chamberlain.

And this is only one kind of beauty, of genius of which the ballet is susceptible. Taglioni's is of an entirely distinct character. We will insert here an account of a ballet composed for her which gives an idea of her style and powers. It is from the *Revue de Paris*, extracted from a letter dated St. Petersburg, 1839.

*L'Ombre, ballet in three acts, given 1839 at the Imperial Theatre of St. Petersburg.*

The expense of giving this ballet must have been enormous, but we must confess it was not without its due results. The costumes were of a surpassing magnificence; as to the decorations, both for quantity and quality, they seemed possible only to fairy-land. The four changes of scene in the very first act might astonish eyes habituated to every variety of luxurious display. The second act exhibits only one scene, but it would be pity indeed that it should be changed, so beautiful and novel is it. It is a park and garden of the most enchanting beauty; how unlike those pitiful landscapes usually exhibited by a few twisted trees at the side scenes. This is a true piece of nature, still fresh with the dew of morning, spacious parterres of flowers and verdure stretching out to the very front of the scene, with shrubberies that seem to catch the breeze, and a clear and limpid stream in the background.

The next time the curtain rises, we see a saloon decorated with the utmost taste and splendor. The tapestries and curtains are masterpieces, of themselves; the arabesques copied from Raphael with a religious precision. By sixty steps they descend into this sumptuous apartment, where three hundred and fifty persons could dance with ease. Look! Would you not think these colossal proportions betokened the remains of some Babylonian palace? The palace totters in fact, and all these riches fall into a heap of ruins. But reassure yourself. With the next stroke of the wand, you will witness a yet more glorious transformation. This place where your ear already presaged the lugubrious notes of the owl, is become the site of an eternal dwelling, and you, still living, find yourself in Elysium.

What then is the picture which requires so sumptuous a frame? you cry. — Patience, and you shall hear.

After all the different creations filled out by M<sup>lle</sup>. Taglioni, you may conceive that the choregraphists have been somewhat at a loss to invent for her any new occasion. What new style could they discover for her who had been an Oriental in “La Revolte an Serail,” a Greek divinity in “Le Pas de Diane,” a water nymph in “La Fille du Danube,” an aerial being, almost an angel in “La Sylphide,” an ardent Spaniard, almost a courtesan in “La Gitana.” Has not Taglioni taken possession of all the realms, the air, the water, and the earth? — Her empire reaches from the sea to the stars; in every region we encounter the perfumed and luminous track left by that white wing. And Taglioni belongs to the family of indefatigable artists, urged without cessation towards the ideal by a secret and noble ardor, those laborious geniuses for whom every conquered obstacle is an incentive to seek new obstacles to conquer, and who cannot traverse the same path twice. If you feel this and recall the title of the new ballet, you will not need to have me tell you that the *scene* is placed in the *invisible*, and that the heroine of the ballet is but a lovely phantom, the gracious and serene shade of a poor young girl, who died of love.

Without wishing to deprive Mons. Taglioni of the merit of inventing this beautiful work, I think he is not the originator of the idea. The writer, who in all France, perhaps, possesses in the highest degree, the artistical instinct and sentiment, he whose pen among all the critics of the drama, has been most delicately inspired by M<sup>lle</sup>. Taglioni, M. Jules Janin, addressed to her the ravishing and melodious “Adieu, *ombre dansante!*” when the Sylphide, in 1857, took her flight towards St. Petersburg. *Une ombre dansante* is in fact the theme of our new ballet A pure young girl appears at first, fair and pale, her heart full of love and singing hopes; she has in her hand a bouquet of flowers.

This fair child begins to dance; she knows not that death is so near her. Why does she so often press those flowers to her lips? She thinks she breathes from them the love of him whom she loves, but a jealous hand has concealed poison there. Alas! already it circulates in her veins; her light foot totters, a veil spreads over her eyes; she falls; she is dead; let us weep. — Not yet, for see she returns into our world, poor ghost who cannot forget a living lover. She glides through the air like a floating cloud, through the tremulous foliage of the willow, over the green grass, or the glittering surface of lakes and rivers, seeking everywhere him whose image she has carried away in a corner of her white shroud. She finds him again at last, after many melancholy hoverings and floatings, between heaven and earth, but what avails it? Can the living arms embrace a shade? But Heaven pities them, and the union of these lovers is soon to be realized in a better world.

The dance with which M<sup>lle</sup>. Taglioni began in the first act is called *Le pas du bouquet*. You may divine its character from the situation I have delineated to you. It is not yet the dancing shade, not yet the mysterious vision, which will by and by leave its luminous furrow in space like the passage of a sunbeam. No! it is the modest and blushing betrothed, whose brow expands, whose eye sparkles with a timid ecstasy, whose innocent bosom heaves above a palpitating heart. Do you not read in the noble attitudes of this young girl, how much she loves; in her gay bounding motions, that she is happy as the bird who sings upon the flowering shrub? But also does not something in her air inform you that her last hour is nigh? See from time to time she shows signs of pain and faintness, bending like a half unfolded rose of May, whose lovely stem is touched by the frost. Ah, can it be that death will not relent at sight of so many charms? Will fate be inexorable in cutting short a life so pure and so innocent? Will no angel descend from heaven to save this virgin so full of graces? Useless prayers, vain hope! M<sup>lle</sup>. Taglioni was especially applauded in this *Pas du bouquet*, for the qualities which have shone in her so many times, yet seem always new each time they are displayed, her noble demeanor, the elegance of her motions, the ease of her gestures at the most difficult moments, the enchanting delicacy of her pantomime, the exquisite precision of her performance always and everywhere.

But the incomparable part, that in which she surpassed herself, and reached the height of a creation, which might with justice be styled supernatural, is the dance of the second act. You remember the beautiful garden, whose delights I was describing; — in this garden Taglioni freed from her terrestrial form, gives full play to her sweet inspirations. I do not know of what material the flowers are composed, but you see the divine dancer pass over camelias, lilies, jonquils, without their so much as trembling at her touch. You remember M<sup>lle</sup>. Taglioni in the *Fille du Danube*, and the *Sylphide*; you thought then like everybody else, that it was not possible for the human body to attain a greater lightness, yet this miracle is now accomplished. It is no more a nymph, a sylph who dances, but a shade, a soul and the white feather that the wind wafts away, as it falls from the neck of the swan, would scarcely do it justice by the comparison. Nothing that approaches the least in the world to reality, can give an idea of this wonder. Imagine, if you can, a shadowy form, who withdrawing slowly from the scene where she has hovered long without touching the earth, vanishes at last on the horizon like a celestial being, passing over the water as she goes. This spectacle affects one like a dream. Have you sometimes remarked in a clear and calm night, those long threads of gold that go and come on the tops of the trees, which play capriciously, rapid, and impalpable on the dark front of some silent church, these may give you some idea of the unmaterial dance invented on this occasion, by M<sup>lle</sup>. Taglioni. I say nothing of the *Pas de Trois*, where she dances in the last act, and during which she cannot be seized by her lover, to whose eyes only she is perceptible. This dance is of the same kind as those preceding, and executed with the same perfection.

The next day the emperor, in token of his satisfaction, sent M. Taglioni a fine ring, and a magnificent set of diamonds and turquoises to M<sup>lle</sup>. Taglioni. The dilettanti of St. Petersburg know now where they shall pass the greater number of their evenings this winter.  
Dec. 1839.

And now. to wind up with a word to the scorner in the style of a moral to one of Pilpay's fables. Does any one look on beauty with the bodily eye alone? that degrades; it is the lust of the eye, brings sin and death. But to him who looks with the eye of the soul also, every form in which beauty appears is religious, and casts some flower upon the altar of intelligence.

We wish to refer here to the last of a course of lectures on the Natural History of Man, by that free and generous thinker, Alexander Kinmont, who, if he had lived, would have cast broad lights on the course of things in this age and country, for excellent views on the subject of amusement. We make a brief extract which refers to the present time.

“I speak of the new state of society to which we are tending, as characterized and to be marked more with the features of stern and uncompromising truth, light, and positive assurance, than any that have preceded it; but, although I believe and see that such a condition of things will not admit of those peculiar kinds of romantic pleasures, derived from poetry and the fine arts, which have before existed, yet I by no means think that there are not other sources of rational and pure delight, of an analogous kind, still in reserve for mankind. Mankind cannot exist, the sweet *charities* of society cannot be maintained, without some such enjoyments; but what I maintain is that new fountains of poetry and art must be *unsealed*, which are to correspond with this new state of our social condition. I say they *must be unsealed*, for that they have not been opened yet in this nation, is certain. But I doubt not these fountains of feeling are to be found. O when will the magician go out with his divining rod, and find them, that they may gush forth, and refresh the parched land; for I believe that the souls of the people want song and poetry, or what is analogous thereto, they need a healthy excitement, — a nation cannot live without excitement. Good music, good songs, good paintings, which were all new, and truly native, would do more to cure the fanaticism, and intemperance of the land, than all those artificial societies instituted for such purposes.

There is a blank in the public mind, which requires to be filled up. Would society burst forth so frequently into those superstitious ebullitions called Revivals, if the chords of genuine feeling were struck in the human heart, — if the pure tones of devotion were regularly, and calmly, and sweetly elicited by the divine touch of art, whether the poetical, the musical, or the graphical? They should be as original, and native, and as consistent with the genius of the new era, as were the political acts of the worthies of the Revolution, — the ends, the thoughts and expressions of a Hamilton, a Jefferson, and a Madison.”

Injustice is done by giving a single extract, for Kinmont is not one of those who shine in detached thoughts or finished passages, but a large and living tract of thought, which needs to be seen as a whole, for any part to be seen as it ought. But his enthusiasm on this subject, or any other, was no sudden gleam from a vaporous atmosphere, but the glow of a fire built on a broad hearth, and fed with the growths of ancient forests. His mind was still immature when he left us, for it was one of those plenteous urns that filter its waters slowly, but it was a mind capable of severe training, and great leadings.

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Author's Notes:

1. See for a good account of the plan of the Messiah, translated from the German of Rochlitz, Hach's Musical Magazine.

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Source: *The Dial*, Vol. III, No. I. July 1842, pp. 46-72