

THE COLLECTOR ON AUNT CHARLOTTE'S MUSIC BOOKS

(BEING NO. XVII OF 'THE COLLECTOR' SERIES.)

'WHEW!' exclaimed the Musician; as he entered with a large parcel. He cast it down on the floor with a thud and sank exhausted into a chair.

'Give me a reviver. Couldn't get a taxi, or a boy; had to carry the whole blessed load myself.' The Musician gasped and fumbled with his collar. The Collector hastened to supply the restorative, and inquired the cause of it all.

'It's my Great-aunt Charlotte's music books,' and he kicked the parcel that lay at his feet. 'They are for you, old man; aren't you grateful? You store such rubbish for the dustbins of the future, and they will add to the bulk you have lumbered your house with.'

'Thanks, my young friend. Your exertions on behalf of an old man deserve all praise, especially considering the tropical heat of the day. Had your Great-aunt Charlotte taste in music? and how comes it that her music books survive and fall into your hands? Didn't she die some forty years ago?'

'She did, and left her whole blessed possessions to my ordinary Aunt Agnes, her niece. My Aunt Agnes is a hoarder of rubbish like yourself, and the books have lain on the top of my Great-aunt Charlotte's old table piano ever since the poor old lady died. I remember the daily dustings and the thunder they roused in the old piano when one slipped out of the parlour-maid's hands. My Aunt Agnes has viewed my rise in the musical profession with satisfaction, for she first taught me the difference between a crotchet and a quaver, and guided my infant fingers over the yellow keys of Aunt Charlotte's piano. I always vaguely associated the musical crotchet with the endless yards of edging my aunt was for ever crocheting, though I could not for the life of me understand where the connexion came.

'Under my aunt's tuition I reached the early pages of *Hamilton's Pianoforte Instructor*, and the dear old lady seems to believe I have stopped at that state of musical development. To-day she gave me the precious instructor, along with the whole of Aunt Charlotte's musical treasures. At her request I played that insane tune "Trab, Trab" from Hamilton, and she was pleased to say I had improved. She suggested I might now learn the major and minor scales, which, having expectations, I promised to do. She fumbled in her bag, and I verily believe she was going to give me a shilling, as in days of old. Give me a cigarette, old man, and look at my Aunt Charlotte's volumes,' and the Musician sank back into his chair.

The Collector opened the parcel and turned over the couple of volumes it contained.

'Humph, sheet music of the 'thirties and 'forties, bound with all the elegance that green calf and gilt lyres stamped on the back can give - they used to bind music in those days, and take the heavy load to musical evenings. First volume is inscribed in a fine pointed Italian hand "Charlotte Redsdale, September 24, 1838." I notice on the first sheet is written, in a male hand, "To Miss Charlotte Redsdale, with F. M.'s sincere regards. July 24, 1834." There are other musical tokens of F. M.'s regard, I see. Who was F. M., if one may venture into such long-buried sentiment?'

'A fleeting admirer, I suppose,' answered the Musician; 'my Great-aunt Charlotte never married.'

'Well,' continued the Collector, 'let's turn over the contents and see the sort of stuff your Aunt Charlotte considered good. First we get an Italian canzonet - a little older in date of publication, for the singing of Italian songs was dying out in the late 'thirties. Now we get "Love's Ritornella," the much admired air sung by Mr. Wallack in the popular drama of *The Brigand*, written by J. R. Planche, Esq., the music composed by T. Cooke. I can tell you an anecdote about that as narrated in Planche's "Recollections." He had written the drama *The Brigand* (produced about 1829-30), and introduced the song "Love's Ritornella" (commencing "Gentle Zitella"), to which Cooke arranged

the music. The song was an enormous hit, and survived the drama for forty or fifty years. The song was published by Latour, who was then in treaty with Samuel Chappell for the purchase of his (Latour's) business and copyrights. Planche tells us he was informed that Latour got £500 more from Chappell on account of this song, which brought him (Chappell) upwards of a thousand pounds in the first year, and continued a saleable property for many years after. Planche had written the song, and invented the melody which Cooke had harmonized. Cooke got £25 for his arrangement, but Planche never a penny, as it was the custom of the trade not to pay authors of words anything - only the musician, who was nominally responsible for the music, got money. The refusal of both Latour and Chappell to pay any sum to Planche led him to move in the matter and to get things altered.

'Now come three songs by Thomas Moore, Esquire. The esquire was never omitted from Moore's title-pages; and here's a popular song, "Alice Gray," composed by Miss Phillip Millard, and dedicated to Mr. A. Pettet, her publisher, who, by the way, doesn't appear to have published anything except a few songs by the same authoress. I need not tell you how "Alice Gray" is enshrined in literature. How it pathetically runs through Thackeray's "Phillip," and how Dick Swiveller parodies it in regard to his faithless Sophy.

*Yet loved I as man never loved, who hadn't wooden legs,
For my heart, my heart is breaking for the love of Sophy Cheggs.'*

'Ah,' exclaimed the Collector, 'here we have that pretty "cavatina," as it was called by C. E. Horn, "Cherry Ripe." The ninth edition, "sung with most rapturous applause by Madame Vestris in Mr. Poole's popular comedy *Paul Pry*, composed and dedicated to C. Lyon, Esq., by C. E. Horn"; published by Willis about 1830, I should say. Here's another instance of the author of the words never getting the credit. "Cherry Ripe" was by Robert Herrick, and was published in his "Hesperides" in 1648, but nobody seems to know it. Now follows "The Light Guitar," another song that Madame Vestris made popular. It is "the celebrated serenade," and is by John Barnett; the words are by Harry Stoe Van Dyk, who implores us to -

*Leave the gay and festive scenes,
The halls, the halls of dazzling light,*

when the singer will -

*Sing the song of happier days,
And strike the light guitar.*

Minstrels, troubadours, and light guitars were much in evidence in those days.

'John Barnett and Harry Stoe Van Dyk were great on minstrels. I'll show you, afterwards, "Songs of the Minstrels," in which they collaborate, giving their idea of the songs and music of the minstrels of a dozen different nationalities. Miss Charlotte was evidently a budding Madame Vestris, for we find here "The Buy a Broom, Girl's Son," with a portrait of one of those Bavarian girls who used to sell little brooms made of willow shavings in the streets of the different towns in the 'twenties, singing "Lieber Augustine." She is standing in front of the publisher's shop, Mayhew's, in Bond Street, just as in another publication by Goulding, one is depicted at the corner of Soho Square with Goulding and D'Almaine's shop in the middle distance. Alex. Lee worked the "Buy a Broom" song into a pretty piece, and Madame Vestris sang it at the Haymarket.

'Now we come to songs by Thomas Haynes Bayly, the most celebrated of which is "I'd be a Butterfly." It seems it was "sung with the most rapturous applause by Mrs. Waylett, the words and melody by Thomas Haynes Bayly, Esq., and dedicated to Lady Ashtown," with a lithographed vignette of the butterfly itself. It's a pretty song and a pretty tune: though in this age, I suppose, nobody would think so. He wrote it, inspired by the flight of a butterfly in Lady Ashton's garden one morning, and produced it, with the melody, in the evening in the drawing-room. Ever after he was called "Butterfly Bayly."

'Here's another of his popular songs, "We met, 'twas in a crowd." It had an immense run, with a most jerky, unsuitable air, really a Swiss waltz.

Here, too, is another song sung with "rapturous applause" by Mrs. Waylett. It appears as if people who listened to songs were more enthusiastic than to-day. We don't offer "rapturous applause" now. "The Swiss Boy," now generally given with the prefix "Merry."

It has a vignette of the Swiss boy trudging with his pails "to labour away." Over his shoulder he carries the peculiar long horn used by the merry Swiss peasant of the period to call the cattle. This copy of the song is, I see, the "twenty-eighth edition." It was the sole survivor of a collection of "Tyrolese Melodies" arranged by Moscheles from the singing of Tyrolese vocalists who came to London in 1827, and sang their ditties in the Egyptian Hall, with, of course, the "most rapturous applause." The songs were published in two volumes first, but it is a mistake to suppose that they were Tyrolese folk-songs, although it is half hinted they were in the preface. William Ball translated the German words into English verse.

'Miss Charlotte had a healthy sentimentality; here is "Meet me by moonlight alone," also sung by Madame Vestris, written and composed by that ne'er-do-well J. Augustine Wade. It is only an Irishman who would ask a young lady (in thin slippers) to meet him by "moonlight alone, in the grove at the end of the vale" for the purpose of showing "the night flowers their queen."

I see there is a sprinkling of Scotch (more or less Scotch) songs, some sung by Madame Vestris, others by Braham, arranged or composed by Alexander Lee.

Here is "Hurrah! for the Bonnets of Blue," and "Blue Bonnets over the Border." Then there are one or two Scotch songs sung in the Waverley dramas, such as "Scots wha hae wi Wallace bled," sung "with the most enthusiastic applause three times each evening by Mr. Braham at Covent Garden in the opera Guy Mannering."

'Still more of Haynes Bayly; the notable "Oh no, we never mention her," and something here that's rather curious, "Oh, they marched through the town," sung by Madame Vestris at the royal Olympic Theatre, written by Haynes Bayly and composed by S. Nelson. You are not old enough, my young friend, to remember "The Captain with the whiskers took a sly glance at me"; but here it is in its original form, "And the Captain by chance caught a sly glimpse of me." Well do I remember when a lad how everybody knew it! The tune itself was founded upon "The Babes in the Wood," with much of a taste of "The wearing of the Green" incorporated in it.

'Well, we may close your Aunt Charlotte's volumes with reverence. Their contents are perhaps not our style, but they have gladdened the hearts of a generation whose life-works are not to be despised. We are apt to think ourselves mighty clever, but probably, after all, that generation could have shown us a thing or two, and besides - Why, the fellow's asleep.' And the Collector found his young friend in that blissful state, whether by reason of the heat of the day and his toil with Aunt Charlotte's books, or with the Collector's sermon, was not very clear.

FRANK KIDSON.