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ART. I.—*Observations with a view to an Inquiry into the Music of the East.* By WILLIAM DAUNEY, Esq., F.S.A., Scot.

It is well known that the style and character of *melody*, with the tonalities and scales upon which it is composed, differ in different ages and countries to a great extent; and it is obvious that a more perfect acquaintance with these than that which we possess, would be of great consequence to the art of music in various ways. Those forms of melody which are solely recognised as legitimate, according to the modern European system, may possibly be the best which can be adopted; but this can only be known for certain by an extensive comparison with other systems. The furtherance of such inquiries, therefore, may lead to a direct improvement in the cultivation of music, while there can be no doubt that the resources of that art would be immensely enriched by a more complete knowledge of the different styles of melody which prevail in foreign countries, and copious and authentic collections of the airs themselves.

Hitherto it has happened that almost all the persons who have attempted to give us any idea of the scales and melodies of remotely foreign nations, have been quite unqualified by musical knowledge to write down accurately what they have heard¹. The public, generally,

¹ As to those travellers who have confined themselves to general descriptions, there are no bounds to the extravagances into which they have sometimes fallen. Mr. Bowdich, in his mission to Ashantee, speaks of a negro whom he met, from the interior, who had a harp, “the tone of which was full, harmonious, and deep.” He concludes the account of his performance as follows;—“Sometimes he became more collected, and a mournful air succeeded the recitative, without the least connexion, and he would again burst out, with the whole force of his powerful voice, in the notes of the *Hallelujah Chorus of Handel!* To meet with this chorus in the wilds of Africa, and from such a being, had an effect I can scarcely describe; *I was lost in astonishment at the coincidence; there could not be a stronger proof of the nature of Handel, or the powers of the negro!*”

have no idea of the difficulty of putting into correct notation airs that are sung or played by people of various countries, who not only use musical instruments different from ours, but musical intervals to which we are not accustomed. As this is a truth which will be more forcibly impressed by illustration, I will here take the liberty of relating a circumstance which occurred to a French professional musician, one of the suite of Napoleon during his Egyptian expedition. This person had hired an Arabian music-master at Cairo. The lessons consisted in the Arabian's singing the airs which his pupil was to get by heart. The Frenchman began to write to the Arab's dictation; but while so engaged, he observed that his teacher occasionally sang out of tune, and he accordingly took care to correct all his apparent errors, in the notation. When he had finished, he proceeded to sing the air which he had been taught, but the Arab stopped him, and remarked that "he was singing out of tune." Here a dispute arose between the scholar and the master, each maintaining that *his* intonation was quite correct, although neither of them could tolerate the intonation of the other. At last the Frenchman thought that there might be something in this matter deserving further inquiry, and he sent for an Arabian lute. The finger-board of this instrument being divided according to the rules of the Arabian musical scale, showed the Frenchman, to his great surprise, that the elements or tonality of European and Arabian music were quite different; so different, indeed, to what the Frenchman had been accustomed to, that he could not at first catch or execute them, but we are told that at last he was able to do both. A person less skilled in the art would have carried off no true record of the Arabian music.

It would seem, therefore, that in instituting inquiries with respect to the state of music in the East, and in forming collections of foreign music in any quarter of the globe, the very first requisite, without which nothing can be done, is to obtain the assistance of persons properly qualified for the task of taking down in European notation, the notes and passages which they hear sung and played. And these persons must not only be possessed of a good ear, and some practical skill in the noting of music, but their minds should be opened to several considerations which do not occur in the ordinary routine of a musical education.

From the best information that we can collect, it is most likely that the science of harmony or counterpoint is a modern European invention; that it was unknown to the ancients, and that it is equally unknown even in the present day, in all countries to which

European instruction has not extended. The native music of the East, therefore, must be considered as purely melodic, and not intended to be adapted to harmony, in our sense of the term¹. The Hindu scales given by Sir William Jones, any specimens of Chinese music which have reached us, and the descriptions which have been given of the Arabian and Egyptian scales (though, for reasons above alluded to, not to be implicitly relied upon) bear out this supposition. The music of these countries, therefore, must be treated with reference to its capabilities for *melody* only; and this is the more necessary to be kept in view, as many excellent practical musicians are apt to suppose (although there cannot be a greater mistake) that where a foreign melody will not yield to the application of modern European harmony, it must be defective—that there must be something wrong in the manner in which it is performed; and for this reason intractable airs of this kind are often thrown into a modern shape, in order to be adapted to our major and minor scales, with their diatonic and chromatic intervals².

It is of some consequence, therefore, that the minds of the persons employed be divested of all such preconceived notions, and that they be instructed to take down the music with the strictest fidelity, and at all times, when the requisite information can be obtained, with due regard to the peculiar scales, modes, or *Ragas*, in which it happens to be composed. Upon these points, the finger-boards of the stringed instruments, the ventages of the wind instruments, and the *Accordatura*, or mode of tuning, adopted, are calculated to throw light.

It would appear that a great deal of the music of Eastern countries, especially of Arabia and Egypt, consists of *tremolos*, groups of rapid notes, passages of minute intervals, and shades of expression for which we have no signs in our musical notation. This will occasion a difficulty only to be got over by distinct written explanations of the peculiarities when they occur.

¹ With respect to India, Sir William Ouseley has observed, in his *Oriental Collections*, that "Counterpoint seems not to have entered at any time into the system of Indian music. It is not alluded to in the MS. treatises which I have hitherto perused; nor have I discovered that any of our ingenious Orientalists speak of it as being known in Hindustan."

² In No. VII. of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, there are some interesting specimens of Indian airs, some of which bear an extraordinary resemblance to well-known Scottish tunes, such as "The Mill, Mill O," and "Jenny's Bawbie;" whether the above remarks apply to them I cannot say, but my belief in their fidelity is somewhat shaken by a note of the Editor, in which he speaks of their having been *set to music* by one person, and *arranged* by another.

The different kinds of instruments, whether wind, stringed, or pulsatile, should be subjected to a rigid examination, and accurately described. Where specimens of these instruments cannot be had,—indeed in all cases whatever,—it would be desirable to procure drawings, representing with accuracy the number of their strings, holes, &c., and diagrams, showing in European notation their scales and compass. Where there are frets on the finger-boards they should be distinctly marked, and even their relative distances from each other mathematically measured and assigned. The *accordatura*, or mode of tuning, should also be specified.

A full examination of the musical instruments of the East might lead to some interesting results. The peculiar scale and various properties of the *Vina* or *Been*, which is said to be one of the most ancient of Indian instruments, when compared with the present state of the art has been thought to afford something very like evidence of the superiority of the ancient over the modern musicians of India. It has been considered, also, that in Persia music was much more cultivated before the conquest by the Mahometans, in the seventh century; and the harp, though now disused in that country, is mentioned in their poems, and, what is more to the point, distinct representations of it have been found in some of their ancient sculpture. Such circumstances as these, and Bruce's discovery of the Theban harp, show how important it is that representations of musical instruments should be diligently traced out in the ancient sculpture, coins, and monuments, of the East, wherever they can be found.

Discoveries of this nature are often of the greatest utility in determining the early civilization of nations, and their proficiency in other arts besides that of music. The subject of the harp, in particular, has frequently formed the ground of ingenious speculation. It has been even supposed that if the ancient part of its history were fully revealed, it might throw additional glimmerings of light upon that obscure and difficult historical question,—the early migrations and oriental extraction of a large portion of the ancient inhabitants of Europe. At the end of Mr. Gunn's *Inquiry into the Performance on the Harp in the Highlands of Scotland*, p. 107, there will be found the germ of a somewhat fanciful theory, based chiefly upon the progress of this instrument from East to West. The author speaks of a hope which he entertained of tracing a connexion between our harps of Caledonia and those of Egypt and Palestine, and proposes to give a view of "the oriental extraction and ancient history of the Caledonian Scots; demonstrating, from their language, ancient

religion, superstitious rites, their kalendar and festivals, their remarkable traditions, manners and customs, and from other documents and monuments still existing in Asia, France, Great Britain, and Ireland, that they brought the harp, together with the other arts of civilized life, from Armenia, the western coast of Asia, into the southern parts of England, prior to the æra at which our writers commence the history of Great Britain," &c.

In the same prospectus, Mr. Gunn undertakes to prove a connexion between the harp and the ancient religious establishments of Asia, and between the lyre (as contra-distinguished from the harp,) and the bards of ancient Greece. But the work, the outline of which is here chalked out, was never (so far as I have heard) completed, or given to the world; a circumstance the less to be regretted, as the author could not have possessed the requisite *substratum* of facts to bear it out; and it is here only alluded to in order to show the importance which has sometimes been attached to such investigations as relate to musical instruments, the harp in particular; which, in one respect, stands in a peculiar situation.

While it does not clearly appear that an instrument exactly of this nature was in use among the Greeks and Romans, it does appear to have existed in the British isles from the earliest period to which our historical notices extend. The oldest specimen of a British instrument of this construction is perhaps to be found in *Gerbertus de Cantu et Musica Sacra*, where it is given as delineated in a MS. as old as the sixth century, under the name of the *Cithara Anglica*. It is much the same in form with the British and Irish harps of former times, and not unlike the representations which have been given of the ancient harps of Asia and Egypt.

Stringed instruments of another class, which do not seem to have been known to the two great classical nations of antiquity, may very possibly have been derived from the East, where they appear, in our day at least, to be very common. These are such as have necks and finger-boards, and are played with a bow, similar to the crwth and viol, the origin of which in Europe is involved in great obscurity.

With respect to ancient MSS., if it be true, as has been asserted by Orientalists, that the sacred books of the Hindús contain a full exposition of their ancient system of music, with which it is said that the learned natives are acquainted, although its practice is lost, all such treatises should be translated, and made accessible to the English reader.

Burney, in his *History of Music*, vol. ii., pp. 50, 51, and 52, presents us with certain remarkable characters employed at an early period in the Oriental Greek churches for the notation of music. It has been recently stated by Continental writers that these characters belong to the demotic or enchorial writing of the ancient Egyptians, and to their system of musical notation. This is a matter which ought to be elucidated by those who are versed in Egyptian antiquities.

Wherever ancient MSS. of *noted* music can be found, they ought to be procured, and translated, or forwarded to Great Britain for that purpose, along with the necessary keys of interpretation. It is always useful to obtain authentic written evidence of the state of music in former times; for, although the music of a country may not be much intermingled with that of other nations, experience has shown that, in European countries at least, it is apt to undergo certain gradual changes when carried down by tradition, which materially affect its original character.

The translation of such ancient MSS. as treat of the old musical system of India and Persia appears to be the more necessary, as it may lead to the disclosure of some points of interest which have not been hitherto ascertained.

Although a great deal has been written on the subject, the precise nature of the modes or *ragas* has not yet been cleared up, and so vague are the different accounts that have been given of them, more especially with respect to the music of Persia, that we have no means of determining whether they consist of scales, or in other words, of formulæ or successions of intervals, each bearing a fixed relation to a leading or principal note, like the modes of the Roman Church, or of separate and individual melodies. We are told that the Indian *ragas* and *raginis* are appropriated to particular seasons of the year, and times of the night and day, and that they were formerly dedicated to the service of particular deities,—that the term *raga* signifies an affection of the mind,—that each of them is intended to move some particular passion,—that different provinces of India have their peculiar styles of melody,—and that in Persia the modes are denominated, like those of the ancient Greeks, by the names of the different countries and cities where they prevail;—circumstances not only curious in themselves, but which, if distinctly ascertained, may furnish much useful information with respect to the general nature of music and its effects, and explain in the only way in which we can ever expect satisfactorily even to

approximate to the truth, many things connected with the analogous system of the Greek modes,—a problem which musical historians have hitherto been unable to solve.

It is possible, also, that these investigations will be of service in illustrating the early history of the music of Scotland and Ireland, along with that of the Roman Catholic Church, all of which are in some degree connected with each other.

By a comparison lately instituted between the Scottish vocal music and the *Canto fermo*¹, it not only appears that a striking resemblance exists between the two in the succession of their intervals, their closes, cadences, &c., but that the one has been composed as nearly as possible in conformity with the laws by which the other is regulated. Now, although it has been truly said that nothing has a greater influence on the music of a nation than the music of its church, the use of the Catholic Ritual in Scotland cannot altogether account for the predilection which the Scots have never ceased to entertain for their peculiar style of melody; for if such an argument were to be admitted, it might naturally be asked, why the same results have not taken place in Italy, Spain, France, and other countries which were subject to the same regulations, and under the influence of the Roman Church to a greater extent than either Scotland or Ireland. Indeed, the same marked similitude is not to be traced even in the ancient music of England. Another view militates strongly against the adoption of any theory which would ascribe the invention of the Scottish music to the See of Rome, and trace its pedigree to no other source than the Ambrosian Chant, established towards the end of the fourth century, or the Gregorian Chant, introduced about the year 600. A national music is not one of those things which a people is much disposed to receive at second hand, or to put off or on at the bidding, either of their spiritual or their temporal masters. It is among the oldest and the most lasting of their relics. Carried down from father to son, like an heir-loom in a family, it is not likely either to be lost or bartered even for articles of higher quality or value. It bears a *pretium affectionis*, and is prized more because it is our own, and associated with ties of kindred and home, than from any intrinsic excellence in the music itself. It is probable, therefore, that it was *original destination*, rather than *choice*, which assigned to this and

¹ See "Ancient Scottish Melodies, from a manuscript of the reign of King James VI., with an Introductory Inquiry, illustrative of the Music of Scotland," 1838. And particularly An Analysis of Scottish Music, by Mr. Finlay Dun, of Edinburgh, contained in that volume.

other countries their particular style of national music ; and if so, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the peculiar vein of Scottish melody, the origin of which it is so difficult to trace, may have existed amongst the inhabitants of that country previous to the introduction of Christianity, or even the Christian era itself : neither would it be unreasonable to expect, that collections of well-authenticated foreign melodies, showing that in pagan countries where the light of Christianity has never penetrated, and the music of the Catholic Church has never been heard, the very same system of modulation has been adopted, would go a considerable way to support such a conclusion.

What effect such information would have in determining the ancient affinity and intercourse of the different nations among whom the same description of music was found to prevail, would depend upon the nature of the coincidences, which upon a careful analysis might be found to exist, whether they were systematic and regular, or whether they were merely occasional and fortuitous, and other circumstances. This is the view of the subject of too much consequence to be overlooked. The history of music and of musical instruments has been too often regarded as little better than a topic of idle amusement, unbefitting the gravity of the philosopher and the historian ; and yet, from their universality throughout the world, the relation in which they stand to the other arts and sciences, and their immediate connexion with the poetry, literature, manners and customs of nations, it may safely be affirmed that there are no researches which are capable of eliciting a larger body of facts and observations, which may be turned to account in the illustration of periods of history, even the most remote and obscure ; and the more so, as they embrace a field which has been comparatively neglected. Attention has already been drawn to the supposed oriental extraction of the harp which was anciently used in Great Britain and Ireland ; and as, for reasons above adverted to, we cannot very readily suppose that the music of any people would reach our shores without an immigration of the people themselves, we are urged to the prosecution of such inquiries by considerations of more than ordinary importance.

With respect to the music itself, in the very limited state of our actual knowledge, we can only say that the resemblance already known to exist between many of the Chinese and Hindu airs and those of Scotland is such as to render it highly expedient that no time should be lost in entering upon future researches connected with this subject, which, it is hoped, will be conducted upon some

well-organized plan by which accurate data may be obtained. One circumstance should be mentioned to show the remarkable nature of this coincidence, and the reasonableness of such a course of inquiry. The same resemblance to the Scottish melody does not exist in the national music of the neighbouring European nations, neither in that of France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Russia, nor, generally speaking, of the nations which inhabit the north of Europe, the scales and character of which are very different.

It is not for me, in a few cursory observations like the present, to attempt to convey any idea of the mass of materials for the general history of music which might accrue from an extensive and scientific inquiry such as that here proposed. If the chain which connects the music of different ages and nations has (to use an expression of M. Fétis) remained invisible to Martini, Burney, Hawkins, and other writers, this has been, in great measure, owing to the imperfect and desultory manner in which the music of Eastern countries has been hitherto treated. One great and important link we unquestionably possess,—the *Canto fermo* of the Catholic Church, or, to speak more definitely, the Gregorian Chant, and some fragments, real or supposed, of that of St. Ambrose. These, owing to the uniform Liturgy so long kept up by that hierarchy, have retained their original form, unaltered, from the fourth and the sixth century. An intimate relation clearly subsists between them and the music of Scotland. This has been pointed out in the work above referred to (p. 19), and it only remains to analyse and develop those resemblances between the Scottish music and that of the East which, as yet, have been vaguely hinted at by travellers and Orientalists rather than explained, in order to carry that style and system of music back to a period the most remote. Though sometimes described as simply of Greek origin, there is reason to believe that the ancient chants of the Romish Church partake much more of the Oriental than of the Grecian character. They appear to have been first adopted by St. Ambrose, at Milan, from the practice of the church at Antioch, and I find them alluded to by St. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea¹, as having been in use in Egypt, Lybia, Palestine, Arabia, Phœnicia, and Syria, &c. It is little to be wondered at, therefore, if their tones should remind us of the chants of the Jewish synagogues,—that these, again, should correspond with the singing of the Persian dervishes,—and that even the priests of China should, in the performance of their sacred rites, make use of a species of modulation not unlike that of the Church of Rome. But

¹ HAWKINS' *Hist.*, vol. i., p. 285.

why should we remain satisfied with mere scraps of intelligence such as these, often proceeding from persons who are not competent to form a correct judgment of such matters, and too scanty to be of any value to the musical historian, when it would be so easy to make ourselves acquainted with the real state of the fact in all its bearings? Now that the means of communication are so rapid and certain, why should we not immediately be furnished with such an exposition of the musical systems of the East as would admit of our entering into a regular comparison between them, the scales and modes of the *Canto fermo*, and those of modern Europe?

Much good might result from a series of systematic inquiries into this subject, properly arranged, and conducted under the auspices of the Royal Asiatic Society; and if any additional inducement were wanting as an incentive to such an undertaking, it might be found in the circumstance, that its utility would not be bounded by the art of music alone, but extend to the illustration of some of the most interesting and important questions that relate to the ancient inhabitants of Asia and Europe, their civilization and manners, and, generally speaking, the history and the literature of former ages and nations.
