

A close-up photograph of a violin lying on a thick layer of dry, brown autumn leaves. The violin's body is a warm, reddish-brown color, and its neck and scroll are made of light-colored wood. The leaves are scattered around the instrument, creating a textured, natural background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the details of the violin and the veins on the leaves.

***JOSEPH
PEARCE***

***VIOLINS
AND
VIOLIN
MAKERS***

A photograph of a violin lying on a thick layer of dry, brown autumn leaves. The violin is positioned vertically, with its body at the bottom and its neck extending upwards. The leaves are scattered and overlapping, creating a textured, natural background. The lighting is warm, highlighting the golden-brown tones of the leaves and the wood of the violin.

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Violins and Violin Makers

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PREFACE.

The Violin is an instrument which, though small and of trifling original cost, has yet commanded most extraordinary prices. The reason of the immense difference in the value of these instruments must therefore be a subject possessing strong claims to notice from virtuoso and amateur.

To distinguish by the outward characteristics and peculiarities of tone, that which will be of pecuniary value to the possessor, and yield the utmost delight to the hearer, is an acquirement at once difficult to obtain and very valuable when obtained. To assist the amateur and collector in this pursuit is the object of the present little work. Such a work has long been a desideratum.

Of late years, the History of the Violin and its congeners has received much attention. Elaborate and costly treatises have been published, some of which being written in Foreign tongues, are exceedingly difficult to obtain, and not accessible to many of those who desire to peruse them, on that account. Others are very imperfect and unsatisfying. Others again, are, from their high price, beyond the reach of the greater number of amateurs.

The present work is intended chiefly for the use of those who desire a handy guide to the principal characteristics both of make and tone which mark the chief builders of this most famous instrument. Many persons anxious to possess a good instrument, and led away by the very natural desire to possess an Amati, a Guarnerius, or a Stradiuarius are tempted into purchasing Violins which are presented to them under false and delusive titles, and reject frequently good and genuine instruments of less famous makers, but still valuable because they are good and genuine. Undoubted specimens of the great masters are now very rarely to be had, unless at a very high price. Yet, when we consider that even Stradiuarius himself obtained no more than four pounds for his best instruments, which now command as many hundreds—it is evident that, in the absence of those great productions, the works of his pupils and successors are well worthy the attention of amateurs. There is no doubt, indeed, that many of these, which from being built on his principles are of first-rate quality, have been sold as those of the master himself. It cannot, therefore, be questioned that a knowledge which will lead the amateur to buy an instrument for what it really is, instead of what it professes to be, will at once save him from the unpleasantness of paying too dearly, and in real enjoyment yield all that can be desired.

The author believes he has in this work given the amateur and connoisseur information not easily attainable elsewhere, but as he is fully conscious that there may be imperfections in it still, he will be glad to receive any suggestions or information which may enable him to render it still more complete.

Sheffield, February, 1866.

INTRODUCTION.

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The two most pleasing, expressive, and powerful single instruments of music are the human voice and the violin. The one, the gift of beneficent nature, has from the creation exercised its touching influence on the human soul—the other, the product of the ingenuity of man, has only within the last three centuries attained to perfection, but since that period what delight, what rapture has arisen from so simple a construction, when acted upon by the hand of genius!

While the melodious tones of Grisi and Mario have touched with sympathetic feelings the hearts and imaginations of spell bound listeners, how have the magic tones of Paganini and Ernst wrapped the souls of wondering thousands in an elysium of delight and admiration! What effect cannot be produced by the Violin, (except that of speech,) which the voice can accomplish?

The Violin in the hands of genius can draw tears or create laughter. Whoever has heard the great masters of this extraordinary instrument, has heard all the sweetness of tone, the intensity of feeling, the power of expression that the most gifted sons and daughters of song could possibly produce without the additional aid of speech. The Violin, in fact, in its power of expression far excels those singers, of whom there are too many, who while singing the notes, fail

to make their hearers understand the sense of their songs. If a merry dance is produced by the agile bow, its sympathetic tones at once excite a corresponding feeling. If a plaintive air streams in delicious and heart-touching cadences from the strings, what soul is there so dead to feeling as not to respond?

The perfection of the Violin is that its master, if alive to the subtle and mysterious influences of the imagination, can elicit from it the most perfect and touching "songs without words."

It is besides the only instrument, except the voice, which is perfect. Every shade of expression, every nicety of tone can be produced on it. All other instruments sink into insignificance in comparison with the Violin, because they cannot do this. They are all more or less imperfect; and therefore fail in those subtleties of expression of which the Violin and the voice are such able exponents.

What gratitude do we owe therefore to those great masters of Cremona, more especially the Amati and Stradiuarius, who have succeeded in bringing the Violin to its present state of perfection.

Music has in all ages been a source of the purest delight. The greatest poet and dramatist the world ever knew says that whoever "has not music in his soul is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils." In the present age the cultivation of Music forms one of the most general and the most refined sources of amusement and pleasure. All ranks of people are now privileged to join in its delightful enjoyments.

Even the cottage of the artisan is now often elevated by the elegant practice of music, through the increased facilities for producing instruments at a cheap rate. The consequence

is that in the present age there is a more general study and a finer perception of what is good and beautiful, and their elevating tendencies are doing much for the mental cultivation and refinement of all classes.

A very extraordinary feature of the musical world of the present day is the enormous orchestras which can be produced on special occasions. A chorus of several thousand voices supported by hundreds of instruments may now be heard, rendering the immortal compositions of the greatest masters of the divine Art, in the Peoples' Palace at Sydenham and elsewhere. These Orchestras are chiefly selected from the ranks of the people, of whom the artisan is the chief contributor.

The reduction of the cost of instruments and the adoption of what may be called the joint stock principle are tending still further to enlarge the boundaries of the practical musical world. At any time and for any special purpose it is now easy to secure a band and chorus sufficient in numbers and executive power to render in an efficient and powerful manner, the glorious productions of Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, and other great masters.

In all these transitions, the Violin bears a most important part. It is the leading instrument in these great performances, as it is also, after the voice, the most powerful medium of expression in solo. It is also the peoples' instrument.

The labours of many eminent violin makers who have followed in the steps of the great masters have of late so immensely improved the art, that a good instrument may now be possessed by any one. And it may safely be said that with its improvement, has arisen also the extension and

wide spread practice of music generally. An ear accustomed to the fine tone of a good violin will not now tolerate a bad piano-forte.

The Piano-forte and the Violin are the most general instruments, and they have alike participated in the improvements effected, in becoming cheaper by the advance of science. Every description of machinery has within the last fifty years received the attention of able men, and the mechanical construction of the Piano-forte is one prominent proof of the advantages which can be conferred by science on even the luxuries of life.

The Violin, also, seemingly the most incapable of mechanical application to its manufacture, is said to be now made by a most persevering and enthusiastic lover and follower of the great makers, by mechanical means. Copies of these celebrated makers, are now said to be manufactured by him with an uniformity, a certainty, and a precision impossible except by the aid of scientific improvements. These instruments are therefore understood to require only the ameliorating influences of time and use to become fine in tone and satisfactory in every respect.

Every one interested in the progress of music, must rejoice at the rapid development of its resources and the general spread of its pleasures among the people. We are a profoundly commercial nation, and it is delightful to see that in our greater wealth and prosperity, rational amusements, and more especially music, go on increasing step by step with our more business-like occupations. This class of amusements must exercise a humanising and refining influence on the habits and manners of the people, and they should be, therefore, patronised and encouraged by all those whose means are large and their example powerful.