



VOL. II.

RALEIGH, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1850.

NO. 5.

An Interesting Story.

From Sarony's Musical Times.
THE DEAF AND DUMB MUSICIAN.

BY HERMAN S. SARONY.

In the winter of 1841, one evening visited the San Carlo at Naples. The opera performed was that half-sentimental, half-heroic composition of Donizetti's, "Roberto Devereux." I will confess at once that I am not very fond of Donizetti's music, and I had only gone to the theatre to hear Moriani and Strepponi. After having heard these artists, I had plenty of leisure to look about the house, and to reconnoitre the audience. In one of the stalls reserved for strangers, I noticed a young man, who struck me as much by his proud bearing and characteristic face, as by the manner in which he evinced his interest for the performance. He was a man of about middle height, light curly hair, bushy eyebrows, aquiline nose, and small mouth. He had before him a volume of music, evidently the score of the opera, for his eyes were continually wandering from the book to the stage, and sometimes seemed as if riveted on the Strepponi. He kept his mouth wide open, as if he wished to inhale every note that was sung or played. I regarded him for some minutes, with always increasing interest. He turned neither to the right nor to the left, and even when the curtain fell, he gazed upon it as if the performances were still going on, and the gaudy figures of the curtain were things of life. Meantime, some friends had espied me from one of the galleries, and before I was aware of it, they had half dragged, half carried me to their box. I directed their attention to the stranger with the music before him, and they told me, that though he was there almost every evening and excited general interest, no one had been able to find out his name or his profession. I had not seen my friends for several years, and it was therefore quite natural that, instead of listening to the music, they should speak of various events that had happened during our long separation.

When the curtain dropped for the last time, we joined our *bravi* with those of the audience, and having neither bouquets nor doves with us, to offer them to the artists, we concluded to thread our way through the noisy crowd, and to continue our conversation in a neighboring *café*.

There we sat until nearly three o'clock in the morning, and we were just bidding adieu to each other, on the large square before the theatre, when we were startled by a strange, unearthly noise, coming from the principal entrance of the theatre. I shall never forget those sounds. They came upon us like the voices of demons. I could not possibly compare them to anything. They were low, guttural, yet piercing; sounding in one moment like the grunting of a pig, in another, like the snorting of a fiery horse. And then again we would hear sounds like the tramping of a hundred men. The night was pitch dark—not a lantern to be seen.—We suspected some foul play, and, chivalrous as

we generally were, and more particularly so after the several bottles of wine which we had vanquished, we hastened towards the spot whence the sounds came.

On our arrival at the theatre, three men made a hasty exit, while Perozzi, a young Italian painter, and one of our party, stumbled over a human body.

I had a single match in my pocket, and this, once lit, it was just sufficient to let us recognize our stranger with the music book. We thought him dead, but while we were consulting as to what course to pursue, he showed signs of life, and in a few minutes afterwards we succeeded in getting him on his legs. We soon found out that he was deaf and dumb, and not knowing what to do, we thought it best to return to the *café*, and to take our protegee along with us. Perozzi and myself supported him, and the reader can easily imagine the astonishment of our host, when we, after much hard knocking, succeeded in making him open the door, and he recognized his guests who had left him but a short time before.

However, we had no time for explanation, and begged him to reserve his curiosity for a more fit opportunity, and to furnish us with a candle and a few bottles of good wine. The stranger, fully revived by the fiery burgundy, pressed our hands repeatedly, and gave us to understand that he had saved his life. We then escorted him to his residence, which was a mile or more from the theatre, and after making him promise to call on us next day, we gave him our address, and separated for the night.

The next morning, when I was hardly dressed, I heard a knock at my door, and my "come in," not being answered, I rose and opened the door myself. Before me stood our friend of the San Carlo, true to the minute to his appointment. I asked him in, offered him a cigar, and begged him to make himself as comfortable as he could in a bachelor's hall. Our conversation was carried on by means of little ivory tablets and pencil, and his expressive gestures finished what the pencil could not do, or would have required at least much time in doing. I found him exceedingly intelligent, well-informed on all subjects, and often witty. For a long time I restrained my curiosity in regard to last night's adventure, but at last I could no longer bear it, and I asked him how it came that he, a deaf mute, should seem to understand, nay, take pleasure in music.—He smiled sadly, and begged me not to ask an explanation, because it called up in his breast feelings which he wished were buried in the depths of the gulf. "But," continued he, "I owe my life to you, and when we become better friends, I assure you that you shall have my history."

I felt a little vexed for the moment, but afterwards got over my feeling, and proposed a promenade in company with my other friends. To this he gladly assented, and we were not long in hunting up the different actors of last night's drama.—The one was fast asleep when we arrived at his house, and he grumbled not a little when I disturbed his dreams by means of several hard pushes. But no sooner had he seen my companion, than he hurried on his dress, and in a few minutes we were

now three, on the way to the other friends. Perozzi was the only one whom we found awake. He was dressed in a rich *robe de chambre*, and was engaged in filling up a view of the bay of Naples, which a *milord*, as he said, had ordered of him. When I told him of the proposed promenade, he threw pallet and brush away, and dressed quickly.

We were now six in number, and the stranger, who had been a resident of Naples much longer than either of us, offered to be our *cicerone*. To his credit I must say that we could not possibly have wished for a better one. He seemed to know every thing. Every street, every alley, every square, every hut, every palace, every church, every *bas relief*—of every thing he had some anecdote to tell, and he seemed to be as familiar with the history of every painting and its painter as a schoolboy with his A B C, or a priest with his litany. He was evidently an artist, for no mere dilettante could have spoken with such good judgment of the merits of a work. He praised the grouping of one picture, the coloring of another, the tone of a third; he criticised the position of one figure, spoke knowingly of the foreshortening of another, and in a third he explained to us the difference of the modern and ancient school. And every thing he said, or rather wrote, was done with such a modesty, such an absence of all presumption, that with every moment we became more interested in him, and when we parted, we made him promise to repeat his visit soon.

He kept his word. He was almost daily at the studio of one, or the room of the other, and he never went away without leaving the germ of a beautiful thought, or the results of experience in arts by which to remember him. He had told us that he was an artist, that he formerly painted much, but that lately he had hardly touched his pallet, except to finish a picture he had begun five years ago. This made us naturally very curious to see the production which had required so much time, and we begged him to let us enjoy the benefit which the examination of so good a critic's work would undoubtedly confer. But his answer invariably was—

"Be patient; when it is finished you shall see it, and not before."

Thus weeks and weeks passed on. Perozzi had gone to Venice, Hildebrandt had returned to Germany, and the two others were engaged in some Government business which called them away from Naples, when one morning he came to me and informed me that the picture was finished, and if I wished to see it I would have to come soon, because early the next morning he would send it away. I asked him whether the gentleman who had bought it would not permit him to exhibit it. He told me that the picture was not sold, and that he never would sell it.

"But you told me that to-morrow you would send it away."

"And so I will," he replied, "but that does not imply that I have sold it, or that a gentleman has bought it."

This was a reproof of my hasty conclusion, and I apologized immediately; but he said that he was not at all offended, and he only declined an expla-