

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SINGER:

AN IMAGINARY PORTRAIT.

THE twelfth of September, 1817, Stendhal made the following entry in his Venetian diary: "Spent the day with Vivarelli, Ultimus Romanorum of Singing, at his country-house on the Brenta. He told us, laughing, that he had been accounted one of the five plainest men of his time. Yet we know that no creature has ever possessed such a magical charm. 'Tis the living allegory of music, born in the days of pigtails and of Voltaire's plays, and, nevertheless, a more poetical art than painting and sculpture, both arisen when the world was picturesque and passionate. Vivarelli's house is furnished in the English style, and he has all the foreign poets in his library. Nowadays people execute notes written down by a composer; in his young days they sang. The difference is immeasurable, although our grandchildren will fail to grasp the distinction. This does not mean that music has not a great future before it. Vivarelli himself is quite without prejudices."

This page of Stendhal's diary was unhappily never printed, and is even suspected of being not altogether genuine. But, as Stendhal himself always passed off other people's works for his own, and his own for the works of others, he may surely be quoted without any inconvenient scruples; and we may therefore inquire merely about whom and what this passage was written, expanding these obscure but suggestive words into a study of a forgotten art, and a portrait of a forgotten artist.

I.

Antonio Vivarelli was born at the village of San Pietro in Vincoli, twelve miles from Ravenna, in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-six, a few months later than Mozart. The world, and Italy in particular, was full of melody and singing. Artistically, as well as chronologically, it was the very heart of the eighteenth century. Modern music, orchestral, complex, descriptive, and passionate, the music culminating with Wagner, was not yet being remotely prepared for in quartet and symphony and comic opera; and the last vestiges of the great harmonic schools of the sixteenth century had died out with Bach and Handel. All periods, when we observe them closely, seem full of contradictory tendencies and conflicting forms of thought or of art, because in every period there must needs

be so much of the one that precedes it, and so much of the one that follows. But at this central moment of the eighteenth century all that was characteristic in its music stood out in wonderful freedom and clearness. Since the beginning, almost, of the seventeenth century, when the notion had first arisen of accompanying dramatic action by modulated and sung words, and when the world had said "enough" to the weavers of cunning harmonic patterns, the vital element of music, the one which required to expand and to triumph, had been melody; and melody, translated from invention to performance, is singing. It had existed indeed during the long reign of the schools of counterpoint, for, in so far as all rhythmical successions of notes are melody, it has existed ever since the beginning of time. But it had existed as, for instance, the element of form, of line, of drawing, in fact, exists in the works of pure colourists, say, in the carpets and enamels of Persia: an inevitable result of the pattern of juxtaposed colour, or simultaneous sounds, but not in itself an object of desire or attention. As, however, new arrangements of harmony, new relations of chord to chord, of dissonance, and preparation and resolution, were perpetually invented, the succession of notes became necessarily bolder, even as the lines of an embroidery become more intricate with each additional colour, until with their growing though unintentional importance, they began to attract for themselves some of the notice hitherto devoted to mere harmonic combinations.

When we think what the pleasure of melody is, and reflect that, to most persons, the sequence of sounds is all that remains in the memory, charming it in silence when the delight of combined notes has long died away from the nerves with the very vibrations, we shall understand how eagerly our ancestors must have caught, in the great choral arrangements of the school of Palestrina, at anything which they could carry away in their minds, and sing or whistle to themselves like the humble little tunes which only street musicians and ballad reciters had hitherto condescended to afford. Thus, although counterpoint, learned arrangements of chords, progressions, and combinations of harmonies and dissonances remained far into the eighteenth century the official study of composers, and the sign of their competence, all the real movement of the art was lavished in the development and perfection of melody. This development was slower than we might think, accustomed as we are to melody full-grown and abundant. The difficulties, real and imagined, of harmonic arrangement, the fear of combinations which might make the hearer wince or the performer sing false, the necessity of expecting only average capacity in voices singing in unison, had kept the melody of the schools of counterpoint in a more rudimentary state. Rhythm had been utterly neglected in compositions where the furling and un-

furling of consonant and dissonant chords, the shuffling of various parts had been sufficient to interest and impress the hearer, and adaptation of the musical phrase to the words had been out of the question where various voices were continually singing different portions of a sentence at the same moment, some in the middle while others were at its beginning or its end, or had even passed on to another portion of the text. Thus on first issuing from the disintegrated fabric of counterpoint, and for many years even after Caccini and Monteverde, melody remained oddly vacillating in its gait and uncertain of its object; phrases clear in the first bars disappearing, as it were, into nothingness. The musicians of the seventeenth century had therefore to accomplish a greater task than can well be paralleled in the history of any other art. So, for a hundred years, while pupils studied wearily how to write fugues and canons, and masters plumed themselves upon their learning in counterpoint, and writers obstinately used *harmony* as synonymous for music, the real interest of the world, the thing which charmed men's minds and moved their hearts, was more and more centred in melody.

And, when the seventeenth century had turned into the eighteenth, melody was perfect, and passed from one variety of perfection to another, till the varieties were exhausted, and music had to become once more—though in a different way from what it had been—an art of combined sounds and concerted performance.

Now, as melody is the sequence of single notes, so the singer is the typical individual isolated performer. The violin, the hautboy, the bassoon, all the instruments that make up our orchestra, are also limited to the performance of single notes. But, whereas each of these instruments has a specific range and equality of sound, varying but little from individual to individual, they need lose nothing by combination with one another: they can be played upon not merely by the hand or breath of the actual performer, but with equal effect by the will of the man who beats time at a desk; and they can be combined—as we see nowadays—into one vast instrument, docile and marvellous as the organ of Browning's Abt Vogler. It is different with the voice. Formed in the throat of an individual man or woman, it is as personal in quality as the face, gesture, and mode of being of its owner. You may classify it as soprano, or contralto, or tenor, and again as light or heavy, or what not, but it remains, nevertheless, as unlike any other member of the same category as one man with a fair skin, aquiline features, and blue eyes is unlike another man of the same denomination, however much you may multiply definitions and classifications. You may group together twenty trebles or twenty basses as you may group together twenty fiddles or twenty flutes, but by so doing you obtain merely a wind instrument possessed of the additional faculty of pronouncing words

you cease to deal with the peculiar instrument, made by nature instead of man, called a voice; for the essential peculiarity of the voice is that it forms part and parcel of an individual human being, is individual and capricious like all organic things, and, above all, that it is the close neighbour of human nerves, mind, and heart. In so far, therefore, as it is a voice, and not the mere tube of a new sort of organ, the voice is a solitary thing. It must move by itself if we would enjoy its individual quality, its curiously personal charm; above all, if we would hear it played upon by the performer residing in the very fibres of its mechanism. Thus the voice, which loses all its special attributes imprisoned in a chord, is the natural ally of that other solitary thing called melody. And, as melody developed chiefly in the musical drama or opera, receiving rhythm from the metre, learning accent and phrasing from the words, and seeking after method of expressiveness in subjection to a definite meaning, so also became daily closer and closer the connection between itself and the voice. For, while the players on strings and reeds, on harpsichords and organs, were left behind to renew the old harmonies or to imitate the voice in the new melodies, only the singer, with his human tongue, his human mind, and feelings, and body, and gestures, could bring music into partnership with words, and carry it out of the church and the chamber into its new field, the stage. Thus as melody became the chief art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the singer became the chief artist; in the language of the times he is, indeed, *the* man of consummate skill, of *virtue*, that is to say, of supreme worth in a supremely valued craft; and the word *musico*, which even nowadays has not returned to its original general meaning, has for Italian writers of a hundred years ago the exclusive meaning of *singer*. Of the extravagant enthusiasm of those days of melody for the men and women who seemed to embody the music that fell from their lips, we shall see something anon. For the moment we must return to Vivarelli, and, the better to see his importance in the intimate history of music, it is necessary to understand that, as I have previously remarked, he came into the world when melody and singing were in their highest glory, the last great harmonists were dead or dying; and the greatness even of Bach and Handel, like that of Marcello, Lotti, and Durante, depended, not upon their skill in counterpoint, but upon the magnificent boldness with which they united to the old element of harmony the new element of melody. The men who were to make violins and harpsichords the singing rivals of the voice, and first to suggest that the orchestra, as a whole, might become a new and wonderful vocal thing, Haydn, Baechirmi, Mozart, and Cherubini, were either children or as yet unborn. The greatest musician in the world was, at that moment, Gluck, who knew no counterpoint and neglected instru-

mentation beyond the habit of his contemporaries. His contemporaries and immediate predecessors, Pergolese, Leo, Hasse, Galuppi, Jommelli, had worked to render the orchestral portion of their works more various, delicate, and expressive, but only in order to banish the last remains of counterpoint from their accompaniments, and to render these more perfectly subservient to the voice; lending an unobtrusive help while it sang, and echoing its effects, or preparing for new ones, whilst it paused in silence; and, with all of them a quartet of strings, with a note or two of hautboy or flute at the very most, was deemed an all-sufficient accompaniment. In the hands of these masters, melody had lost the last indecisions, the awkwardness which had remained even in the works of Scarlatti, of Handel and of Marcello, after its long slavery of the sixteenth century and its long struggles of the seventeenth. It had attained a marvellous perfection of form and of expression, a poignancy of beauty and of pathos; above all, the perfection of a quality difficult to define, the quality of being fit to sing. At this moment, when melody and singing—*song*, as the Italians expressively call both alike—were at their highest, it was fitting that there should be born Mozart, the greatest inventor of melody that the world has known, the man who alone could hand over the musical heritage of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth. And it was natural also, and pleasingly significant, that the same year there should also be born the man whom Stendhal called the *Ultimus Romanorum* of singing. But the work of the singer is fleeting, and with it his fame; and while the melodies of Mozart are in our ears, nay, even those of Gluck, and the melodies of their contemporaries can still be reverently copied from their dusty scores, the way in which Vivarelli sang, and the very fact of his existence are long since and entirely forgotten.

II.

Like all the male singers of his time and country, Antonio Vivarelli was of low birth; and like most of them, he was educated by charity. The boy's intelligence, his incompetence in all the farm-work to which he was set, had suggested the advisability of bringing him up to the priesthood. And his pretty voice and passion for music, soon detected by the village priest in whose church he served at mass and helped to keep things clean, rendered it easy to obtain, gratuitously, the necessary education. So we find him, at ten or eleven, a chorister in the Cathedral of Ravenna, learning reading and writing and Latin in the seminary, and singing and thorough bass at the house of the chapelmaster. This priestly beginning of his life, and the fact that for several years at least the

priesthood, and not music in any shape, had appeared his future vocation, left a deep impression in Vivarelli's nature, which, as befitted perhaps the greatest singer of his day, was singularly unlike that of the rank and file of singers. He had suffered acutely, even as a tiny child, from the coarseness, the higgledy-piggledy slovenliness, the cheerful and cynical materiality of peasant life in the fat Lombard plain. He was too completely a creature of his century to have been impressed as a boy (although he began looking at natural objects, like all his contemporaries, after reading Rousseau) with the charms of his native scenery; and, while he remembered vividly the pistachio-coloured pews, with their painted escutcheons, and the little organ on rollers of his village church, he might as well never have seen (if indeed he ever did see) the pale blue peaks of the distant Apennines, the great poplared fields of corn and hemp and maize, and the sun rising in citron and crimson vapours from above the marshes and the Adriatic. But he was deeply impressed with the cathedral in which he spent so many hours, although that cathedral was a horrible piece of modern plastering and tawdriness, and the impression became deeper and deeper with familiarity, till it became one of the characteristic facts of his nature. For a church, however poor it be as real art, however full of ugly things, is yet the only place where the poor man, or the poor child, can come into free contact with things not for mere usefulness, things rich, refined, and sacred to spiritual purposes. Indeed, far more than by the gilding, the pictures, the lamps and the incense, the boy's mind was affected by the whiteness, the silence, the unhurried life, the dainty purity of the big place. It left with him, as the place associated with his earliest experiences of music, a tendency to look upon his art as something to be kept pure and sacred, to be loved reverently without thought of gain, and that distaste for the shams, the trashinesses of the stage, which, as his friend Dr. Burney afterwards noted, made him sing more willingly and better before one or two intimates than before an enthusiastic crowd. The boy's realisation of fairyland—for all children have, every now and then, a glimpse into something of the sort—was in this church, when, on the eve of certain feast-days, the carpenters climbed up dizzy and elastic ladders, nailing to the pillars the long strips of crimson damask, and slinging from the roof big revolving chandeliers. And when, on the great morning, he stood in his clean surplice in the organ loft, facing the additional stand, upholstered with red and gold, which had been erected for the violins and double-basses and the famous opera singers invited for the occasion, his childish soul was concentrated in a prayer that the coming hour might be infinitely longer than any other hour that ever was, a day, a week, that the music might have time to sink and sop into his whole being.

But even this was tame compared with the terrible rapture of his first opera. Vivarelli was twelve. The opera was Metastasio's *Dido Forsaken*, set to music by the Neapolitan Traetta, and sung by a woman famous for her dramatic mode of singing and impassioned acting, Signora Regina Mingotti, in company with a famous male soprano in the part of Æneas.

Thanks to the habit of engaging opera singers for all the great church festivals, Vivarelli had already heard a certain amount of good singing in his little life; but, excepting a few surreptitiously witnessed performances by wandering players of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, he had seen no acting; and above all, he had heard only church and chamber recitative. It was the recitative, in fact, that put an end to Vivarelli's ecclesiastical career, more than the airs, more than the orchestra, more than the gold and plumes and jewels of the actors, the splendour of the wax-lights, and that theatre-full of grand folk in gala clothes, with the Cardinal-Legate presiding over them in company with his lady-love. . . . For when, at the end of the play, Dido came forth with her great recitative, accompanied by hurrying violins and double-basses, and interrupted by shrieking trumpets and sighing horns, and flung herself with a great imprecation on the high *la* into the ruins of her burning palace, poor little Vivarelli fairly burst into hysterics, and had to be carried to the neighbouring apothecary's, where a tallow candle was lighted and some Carmelite Melissa water administered. And, in his dreams—which were waking as well as sleeping—he always saw the gesture of Signora Mingotti, and heard the last phrase of the recitative. As a result of it all, he spent a portion of a ducat, munificently bestowed upon him by a rich amateur, in buying ten volumes of plays of the Abate Metastasio, published by Bettinelli, at Venice, which he smuggled one by one into the seminary, secreting them under mattresses and in similar places, and devouring them at odd moments. The greater amount of it was quite unintelligible to him, but he enjoyed it nevertheless, and went about with his head full of Tituses, Zenobias, Attilius Reguluses, and similar heroes and heroines, of whom the volumes contained portraits in *paniers* and periwigs and high-heeled shoes, which showed that the painter must really have known all about it, since Dido and Æneas had really, as Vivarelli could now testify, worn garments of that fashion; and *Dido Forsaken* naturally remained his favourite play, and alongside of the *dramatis personæ*, he wrote in his best hand—correcting many times with a pocket-knife—Signora Regina Mingotti—Signor Tommaso Guarducci—music by the illustrious Master Traetta. Indeed, he surprised the professor of Latin, with whom he was going through “*In eodem prato tres boves pascebantur*,” by asking him whether he should soon be able to read about Dido in Virgil, for a big boy had told him he would find all about her

in there. After this great event, likewise, Vivarelli was eaten up with curiosity about opera singers, male and female but particularly female. He asked the chapelmaster, who, having failed in dramatic music, gave him a very brief but very unsatisfactory account of these persons. "They are the ass who carried the relics," said the old gentleman grimly, "who imagined that the crowd was falling down to worship him." From the other boys at the seminary and at the choir school—the other boys always seemed to know so much more about things than he—Vivarelli obtained, on the other hand, much general information and much personal anecdote, as wonderful as anything in the *Flos Sanctorum* of Father Ribadeneira, but by no means equally edifying. Singers amassed immense fortunes, bullied composers, and sometimes kings and empresses, and were made love to by ladies of the highest quality, or, if they were ladies themselves, by princes and cardinals. Signora Gabbrielli, who had sung at Ravenna some years ago, had told the Empress of Muscovy that since she was so stingy, she might make her field-m Marshals sing. Farinello had notoriously been prime minister in Spain during twenty years; it was true, for he now lived at Bologna, and people from Ravenna had seen him; he was all covered over with diamond orders, and wore a long white cloak and spurs when he paid calls. Guadagni, who had been the lover of the Gabbrielli, was a cavalier of St. Mark's at Venice. Caffariello had bought a whole duchy in the kingdom of Naples, and was called Signor Duca; the same Caffariello had been nearly killed by a jealous husband . . . and here followed sundry chapters of a somewhat decameronian order on the social advantages, to put things modestly, possessed by singers.

Vivarelli was never weary of listening to this lore, giving in return unbounded liberalities, shares in the money, sweets and small presents made by admiring amateurs of his pretty voice. And he used to wistfully watch, with fascination mingled with terror, the opera-singers invited to sing at the cathedral on great occasions, as they lolled about the organ loft in their embroidered coats and lace ruffles, or strutted condescendingly about with the canons and the great folk, sticking their bejewelled fingers into their portly waistcoats, and handing about snuff-boxes blazing with brilliants. Were any of them being dogged by the bravos of outraged princes, had they been welcomed by processions of nobles like the Cavaliere Ferri, or were any of them bosom friends of emperors and kings, prime ministers, dukes? The good folk of the eighteenth century, firmly persuaded of the Divine Right of Sovereigns, looked upon the mortal favoured at court with a feeling more than snobbish, simply and adoringly religious. But, more than the thought of kings, queens, emperors, popes, the thought haunted Vivarelli of that wonderful

Dido, of that wonderful recitative, of that gesture, and that high *la* of Madama Mingotti.

Meanwhile, young Vivarelli had become a celebrity. People came to the cathedral whenever he was to sing a solo; ladies sent him sweetmeats; canons and prelates borrowed him to sing at their parties; his voice had suddenly become uncommonly good—"too good by far for the Pope," had decided a certain musical prelate of the illustrious family of the Rasponis. The Rasponis had, for two centuries, inflicted their opinions on city and country by a free use of massacre; now, in the polite eighteenth century, they employed politer, but equally irresistible arguments; and the father and mother of Vivarelli, summoned to Ravenna to decide on their son's vocation, and trembling, in their Sunday clothes, before such very noble patrons, were too delighted that their boy should become a fine gentleman also, and that anyone should relieve them of the expense of his bringing up. Accordingly, one autumn day, Vivarelli was packed into the public coach for Bologna, with a portmanteau containing a black coat and some fine linen, and a letter for one of the greatest singing masters of the day.

It was a long, dreary journey along muddy roads, and when the coach drew up in the great market-place of Bologna, twilight was coming on and it had begun to rain. The battlemented buildings frowned out among the mist, the flicker of lanterns and links was on the wet flags, and close by the fountain where Neptune presided, all brown and dripping, over the sirens squirting water from their breasts, some worn-out horses stood steaming in the drizzle. It was all inexpressibly grand, unfamiliar, and gloomy. But the boy shouldered his portmanteau, asked the way to the "Monkey Inn," and wondered vaguely which of the porticoed palaces that he passed might be the residence of that already legendary Cavaliere Farinello who had sung himself into being the prime minister of two kings of Spain. Vivarelli felt inclined to inform the ostler who showed him the way that he, too, for all his humble stature and childish looks, was a singer, and already a famous one. But he merely remarked, by way of conversation, that he had come to Bologna to study music. "Ah," answered his conductor, "there are so many singers nowadays that the Lord has not voices or brains enough for more than one in a thousand."

III.

Bologna did not contain in the eighteenth century any public establishments, like the Neapolitan ones for boys, and the Venetian ones—hallowed by the thought of Consuelo—for girls, where music was gratuitously taught. But the old university town, with its

memories of the Caracci and academic painting, possessed a school of singing, in the sense of a tradition preserved through a line of great masters, which was acknowledged as the highest of its times. A famous opera singer of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, after losing first one voice, then another in a reckless life of dissipation, Francesco Antonio Pistocchi, had returned to Bologna after many adventures, "feeling himself called upon by God," as old Mancini puts it, "to embrace a religious life among the fathers of the Oratory, and to assist with the most charitable lovingness and with infinite science all the young singers of promise." Pistocchi, composer as well as singer, trained in his monk's cell a dozen of the most scientific and brilliant *virtuosi* of the early eighteenth century, who carried the fame of his school all over the world. One day there presented himself a pupil of a new description, a young man called Bernacchi, ugly and ungainly. He came because he had utterly failed as a singer, because he had been unable to study with any profit, and finally because his voice was weak and bad. The public had refused to listen to him any longer, and his friends had conjured him to take to some other trade. But he had preferred instead to seek the assistance of Pistocchi, persuaded that there was in him some singing genius, and that this man could bring it to the surface. By the time he was thirty, Antonio Bernacchi was one of the greatest singers of his day; and it was this unpromising pupil who, after the death of Pistocchi, continued the glories of the school. In his turn, Bernacchi became the master of half the great singers of the century. Those even who had studied elsewhere, with Porposa and Leo at Naples, Brivio at Milan, Redi at Florence, and Lotti at Venice, came to Bologna to perfect their singing; and the most brilliant of the Neapolitans, the most prodigious singer of his own and perhaps of any time, Carlo Broschi, commonly known as Farinello, in the fulness of his glory, humbly begged to study under the man who had begun life with a bad voice and a worse style. Bernacchi had died a few years before little Vivarelli's arrival at Bologna; and his school had split up among various of his pupils and fellow scholars. But the purest traditions of old Pistocchi's art and of his manner of teaching had remained with Giambattista Zuffi, who, after a brief and brilliant career on the stage, had returned to his native town, and taken the habit of the least rigorous order of Franciscans. That an opera singer should enter a convent, and in that convent train other opera singers, did not shock the easy-going religious notions of the Italian eighteenth century, which afforded actors not only Christian burial, but the society of the most pious clergy; which allowed archbishops and cardinals to have boxes at all the theatres, and priests and monks to write tragedies, comedies, and farces, and, if inclined, to superintend their performance. Pistocchi,

we have already seen, was a priest of the Oratory, and when the famous Gizziello entered a monastery in consequence of the earthquake of Lisbon, he divided his time between ascetic practices and teaching Guadagni, who was later to become Gluck's own Orpheus. Padre Zuffi, as he was now called, inhabited the same monastery as another famous musician, Father Martini, the learned historian and theoretic writer; and it was to this monastery that little Vivarelli hurried every morning from the house of a respectable old widow with whom Monsignor Rasponi had sent him to board, an uncouth colt-like creature, perpetually growing out of the black priestly clothes with which he had been furnished by the munificence of his patron.

Another pupil of Bernacchi, who had left the stage to teach singing to Maria Theresa's Archduchesses, Giambattista Mancini, has left us a delightful book entitled "Practical Reflexions upon the Art of Singing," from which, with the additional help afforded by the earlier treatise of Purfrancesco Tosè, also a Bolognese singer, we obtain as clear an account as can be transmitted on paper of the habits and methods of the Pistocchi school. Father Zuffi, who had once been known on the stage as *Farfallino*, or the Butterfly, an appellation which his present gigantic stoutness rendered somewhat apocryphal, possessed all the qualities which his friend Mancini insists upon in a good singing master. His placid rotundity of figure, and his big, pink, babyish face were calculated to quiet the most nervous pupil. He had a charming mouth, ridiculously out of proportion to his huge treble-chinned face, and which, in its delicate shapeliness, in the decision and neatness of its movement, seemed to sing even when he merely spoke; while, at the same time, his keen eyes, greenish and speckled with little yellowish straws, held his pupil's whole being as the vice holds the piece of metal which the silversmith is twisting and hammering. He was terribly severe with such pupils as showed any slackness or presumptuousness, but with little Vivarelli, who was humble, shy, and nervous, he was always exquisitely patient and tender. He seemed, as he sat at the spinet in his cell, to feel with those keen eyes of his the excessive frailness of the child's character, and with that voice of his, which was like the touch of his supple little fat hands, to manipulate with the least possible movement and the greatest possible gentleness the soul of the creature standing before him.

It was the principle of all the schools of singing of the eighteenth century, and more particularly of the one carried on by the originally voiceless Bernacchi, that voice is not always a gift of heaven, that an original vocal endowment is not necessary to a great singer, and that the man or woman who has a soul for singing can always obtain the physical material of his art; a principle indeed which, as

singing was carried to ever stranger refinements, was exaggerated to the point of actually preferring to deal with an imperfect voice, whose very imperfections would represent only so many triumphs of the art, of science and skill over matter. To make a voice out of nothing at all, or at all events to make a voice into something totally different from the sort of elemental force at which it had begun, was possible to those masters and pupils who virtually knew no limits to time. The necessity of dealing largely with the now obsolete *chairbags* and with a class of singers preserved from mutation of voice had given the singing masters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the habit of taking up their pupils exceedingly young, and teaching steadily on through the long period of vocal development and change, so that we find that the famous tenors and basses (even up to the time of Rubini) had learned most of their business, and indeed sometimes established their reputation, in the preliminary stage of sopranos and contraltos; and that girls of twelve or thirteen had already, like Gluck's niece, had time to become finished performers. The pupil, in Mancini's treatise, is always supposed to be under twenty; most usually he is twelve or thirteen. This early beginning not merely enabled the master to *make* the young voice—watching it and manipulating throughout its growth and changes—instead of merely teaching certain tricks to an already made one, but enabled him to devote months to things now hurried over in as many weeks or days; and if necessary even, as the legend runs of Porposa, to keep the pupil five years on a single page of exercises.

Thus Father Zuffi, regardless of the time spent under the Ravenna chapelmaster, and his local fame as a Cathedral solo singer, simply took back Vivarelli to the most elementary studies. For several months he made him sing but little, and only elementary passages of large notes, to steady the intonation and obtain a pure emission of sound; passing later to other exercises, carefully composed, as the masters then always composed them, to suit the shifting necessities of the individual pupil. And at the same time he began to train the lad how to alternate, first slowly, then rapidly, two adjacent notes, since it was impossible too soon to think about the *shake*, a grace which was not only indispensable as an ornament in all the music of the day, but which had a separate value as type of many other important forms of rapid vocalisation. Father Zuffi never told his pupil till many years later that at his first arrival he had been in danger of losing his voice altogether. The inexperience and indiscretion of the Ravenna chapelmaster, accustomed to use up his choir boys as an Italian carter uses up his horses, had caused a damage in Vivarelli's vocal apparatus, which threatened to cripple it for life; a gap had formed in the middle of his voice, on either side of which there was a difference of strength and of quality amounting to two dif-

ferent voices. To fill up this gap, to bring down some of the quality of the upper tones, to carry up some of the tone of the lower ones, to weld these two separate voices into one, was the labour of years, and of infinite patience and gentleness. The master began to foresee what did indeed happen, that the lad would never have a perfectly sound voice, that it would, on certain notes and in certain circumstances, be husky in the middle notes, and odd, almost evilly acute, in the higher ones. But he foresaw also that the pathetic quality of those middle notes, slightly muffled and as it were smoothed over; of those upper notes, with their hautboy poignancy, might be played up to as to a peculiar charm, provided always that all the other vocal qualities should be so perfect, and the command even over this peculiarity so complete, that it might seem rather a far-fetched grace than an original organic defect.

Father Zuffi understood also at a glance—almost from the mere appearance of this loosely hung, nervous lad, with his great brown eyes and wide, mobile mouth—that he had to deal with a great pathetic singer, a creature who would know by instinct where people could be made to cry because he would feel like crying himself. This also, like any excessive quality, was to be accounted for a possible blessing, but to be feared also as a probable danger; so the excellent master gave all his attention to developing his pupil's capacities for rapid and brilliant execution, and for the neat and graceful phrasing of light and trifling music. For, in the eighteenth century, when every opera was expected to contain an air in each of five different styles for the performer, and when it was expected that every piece should be sung off at first sight, as if it had been previously studied, the mind of a young singer, his musical intuition, had to be made as supple, as free from the tyranny of original endowment, as his voice itself.

To give a notion of the care and science spent by Father Zuffi on the *production*, in the technical and in the literal sense, of his pupil's voice, whole pages, nay chapters of Mancini's treatise would require to be quoted. Sufficient that a voice had to be obtained sufficiently perfect in intonation, united in registers, equal in strength, interesting in tone, and flexible in movement, to be exhibited in an opera containing only one duet, rarely a trio, and where, in a series of solos, it came forward in isolation, and, so to speak, in nakedness, with an orchestral accompaniment that sustained it indeed, but never in the least masked it. But the making of the voice was but the least part of the work of master and pupil, and, indeed, the real science, the art of the eighteenth century, consisted in something different and higher, and which, with the gradual dying away of eighteenth-century traditions, has finally been lost altogether. For voices, even nowadays, are sometimes carefully elaborated; and in

certain cases voices issue from nature's hand so perfect as to need but little elaboration. The eighteenth century did not care to obtain good voices for the mere love of such; the good voice was a mere requisite, without intrinsic value; the real aim of all tuition was how to sing. And to be able to sing meant to be able to use one's breath. The mind decided what ought to be done with certain notes for which the composer had asked, in its peculiar cypher; how to combine, sever, graduate, and accentuate them till they became the phrase which no amount of musical symbols could exactly explain, and which, at that time, no attempts were even made to indicate. The notes of the voice were the material, the paint or clay, in which the mind's conception must be embodied. And that which corresponded to the brush of the painter, laying the colour on in various thicknesses and with different grouping of brush-marks; and still more to the modelling tool or finger of the sculptor, was the breath. It is difficult, nowadays, to realise this central fact of the art of Pistocchi and Porposa, of Farinello and Pacchierotti; for the breath has become little more than the mere vehicle for the voice, and has turned from a brush, a chisel, or an artist's finger, into little more than a shovel. But, in those distant and different days, the management of the breath was the *technique* of an art all the more technical that it gave to the artist the most entire intellectual latitude to conceive and arrange his performance of another man's vague direction. It was by husbanding the breath, and employing it in a hundred different ways, that the singer shaped the component notes into a song; by letting out the breath in various degrees, stopping it, taking it off here, spreading it, smoothing it out there, that he modelled the various phrases, connecting certain notes with one another; dissevering others; giving, as it were, the projections and concavities of the form, making that form, according to the degree of detail, either large and massive or small and delicate; obliterating angularities by a sweep of breath; searching out, fretting, or raising into relief, with one incisive breath or a series of separate short breathings, the details on which the ear and the mind were to dwell. And, when he had thus modelled his song as the sculptor models, or as the painter prepares his cartoon in mere light and shade, it was with the breath again, now no longer a modelling tool, but rather a brush, that by varying and combining the various registers, movable differences in vocal quality, and the various *timbres* of his voice, and by giving different and infinite degrees of loudness and softness, that he put on the high lights, deepened the shadows, and varied the colouring of his marvellous pattern.

For this the old singing masters made their pupils work for years at holding long notes, teaching them to swell and diminish by minutest degrees; at executing those curious passages of repercus-

sion of the same sound, of suspension, without real removal, of the breath in short pauses, and similar beautiful devices, of which the exercises of Leo, of Scarlatti, of Caffaro, of Porposa and Aprile still afford so many instances to students who can understand and appreciate them. For this they exercised them in those gradually lengthened cadences and flourishes, composed first of only a few notes, then of many which had to be executed all in one breath; and, above all, they made them take breath so secretly, that the visible act of breathing became a means of marking the shape of a piece, not a physical necessity of the performer.

These various exercises and studies were spread over a great number of years, but they did not take up many hours of each day. Besides the necessity of giving a growing voice but little work, the masters of the eighteenth century seem to have recognised the fact that in a delicate art like theirs the attention cannot be constrained, and that mechanical exercise is useless or worse than useless when unaccompanied by complete attention. This system left the young singer plenty of time to practise reading at sight, deciphering figured passages and accompanying himself on the harpsichord, and to make a study of musical theory, traditional since the time when singing and composition were still one art, and often united in one artist. Every morning early young Vivarelli trudged along, wrapped in his cloak, and in winter carrying a lantern, through the empty Bolognese porticoes, and clambered up the rickety stairs of a little house propped on huge wooden columns. At the topmost landing he sat down without knocking, waiting till the learned master of counterpoint should spontaneously open the door himself, habited in a wonderful Chinese dressing gown covered with parrots and pagodas, and his wigless head muffled in a silk kerchief . . . The master was very learned, and also excessively crusty; and he had a terrible way, when he was angry, of doing without pen or pencil, dabbing his forefinger into the inkstand and dashing it furiously over his pupil's faulty exercise. Vivarelli always remembered, and often mentioned, in after life, the thrill of terror invariably awakened by this operation. The excellent Father Zuffi went on the principle that an artist should never for a moment forget his art, and seek, in every circumstance of life, for some idea that might be turned to profit. There was a wonderful echo in one of the valleys immediately outside the town, and when his pupils accompanied him for a walk, or when he took the more favoured in the coach occasionally lent him by some musical magnate, this spot was nearly always his goal, for he asserted that no better exercise could be contrived than singing single notes against this echo, whose repetition of the voice at various intervals, discovered like a mirror the smallest lack of proportion.

Fat though he was, and of immense physical laziness, the excellent

master never neglected to take his boys to hear any music, vocal or instrumental, in church or theatre; and when the gout prevented his moving, he insisted upon Vivarelli coming to his cell, and telling him, seated on the ledge of his praying-chair, every minutest detail of any performance he had been alone to hear. Whenever the pupils had a cold, or when their voices were too unsettled for practice, he caused them to play over volumes of songs and recitatives at the harpsichord, indicating to them, or making them indicate, the phrasing of the various readings, and the various embellishments and cadences that might suggest themselves. Of course there were at Father Zuffi's convent a continual coming and going of singers; and when these were men of experience and merit, he always decoyed them into singing, or at all events, talk about singing, before his pupils, with whom singing or conversation was afterwards carefully discussed. The amount of tradition that hung about Father Zuffi's cell was quite marvellous: one would have thought the air quite heavy in dead music. He had collected in the room which then served him as study a number of pictures of musical worthies. Principal among these was a circular portrait of the great founder of the school Pistocchi. He was represented in his black dress of priest of the Oratory, seated in a red arm-chair in front of a harpsichord, over whose keys rested one of his bony, delicate white hands; he was very old and shrunken and withered, his face all in puckers, and his eyes standing out from his head; and, whether involuntarily, or from want of skill, the painter had given his body a caved-in appearance, so that without being a cripple, he looked like one. It was not at all a pretty picture, and the other lads often joked in private over Father Pistocchi, whom their master unconcernedly spoke of, with a wave of his hand towards the portrait, as having been the handsomest man of his day; they also amused themselves by framing a resemblance between this dead ugliness and the living and growing ugliness of poor Vivarelli, which was indeed wholly unlike that of any one else, dead or alive. But for Vivarelli the portrait had an odd charm: the poor old crippled man (for he always thought of him as a cripple, though he was not one) looked so unhappy at his harpsichord; he *knew*, he *felt*, how things ought to be sung, and his voice was gone, and he was straining and straining his soul out to make other folk understand. Vivarelli always felt as if poor old Pistocchi were appealing, in his solitude and wistfulness, to him; and he would so gladly have done his best to give him pleasure. But who could? Then, all round the harpsichord—a very fine one, with a special apparatus for transposing, built by Ruckers of Amsterdam—hung portraits of Pistocchi's predecessors and contemporaries, great pools of black, whence emerged a white hand and ruffle, a roll of note-paper, a pair of white hands on an invisible black breast, and a

dignified severe white face issuing from a half-seen black many-storeyed peruke: dreadfully stately persons, Matteuccio, Lauro Vettori, Siface, Baldassar Ferri, Alessandro Stradella, Niccolino, of whom Addison has written, from the heroic days of singing; when men had longer breaths, and voices that never grew old, when strange and terrible things still happened, sapphire rings presented them by the demon, processions to welcome them; and violent deaths by murder or in brawls. They seemed to smile in cold scorn upon the boys at the harpsichord, vainly attempting to hold their long notes long enough.

Another work of art of Father Zuffi's collection attracted the fancy of his favourite pupil. This was a print, of which copies are not uncommon, after a drawing by Guercino, one of the few really amiable things produced by that painter or his school. It represented a charming young man, in doublet and ruff, beating time to the singing of some delightful boys: a study doubtless, for some choir of angels; but which to Vivarelli's mind represented a singing school, and for a long time typified that of his dear Father Zuffi, in whose immense and shapeless person he imagined he could trace a resemblance to Guercino's archangelic master. This was what singing meant to Vivarelli—to be a sort of angel. But, little by little, as he grew less of a greenhorn and the conversation of the other pupils began to assume occasional meaning even to his wool-gathering mind, he began to perceive, very sadly, that realities were somewhat different.

Besides all the dead worthies, or the imaginary ones, who shed a benign influence on Vivarelli's boyhood and studies, there was one who was real, alive, and who yet left as deep an impression on the lad's fancy. Every now and then a coach would roll into the convent yard, or a solemn, well-groomed horse clatter in, when Father Zuffi—not without a certain flutter—would say: "You can come back when I call for you, boys; I think that must be the Signor Cavaliere"; and the boys ran upstairs to a window overlooking the court. This Cavaliere Broschi, whom the awestricken Vivarelli occasionally met in his master's cell, or saw riding through the streets as he sped along, was no other than that Farinello whom the eighteenth century—which was a judge of singing—held up as the greatest singer of any time. Since his singing days, which had been very brief, tradition said that Farinello ruled Spain for twenty years as the King's chief favourite; a mixture, pleasing to eighteenth century minds, of the "Virtuous Shepherd" and the Emperor Titus, and altogether *deliciæ humani generis*. He was immensely rich, extremely noble (for he had the great Orders of St. Jago and Calatrava), and excessively generous and charitable. He had, people said, been banished from Spain by a wicked queen-

mother; and this only added to his many distinctions. He used to tap Father Zuffi on the shoulder; and once, when Vivarelli was little, he stroked the boy's cheek with his white, beautiful hands; and every now and then Father Zuffi received a gracious invitation to bring two of his pupils to early dinner, when the boys, quailing, had to sing before the old Cavaliere and his aristocratic guests. These periodic and tremendous occasions—when a splendid coach was sent to the convent, and they were received and handed on by a bevy of magnificent footmen—greatly excited Vivarelli's companions; but, after the first dazzling visit, invariably left our friend sad and out of sorts. It was as if he had swallowed a mouthful of sawdust. Of course, Vivarelli never for a moment imagined that *he* was ever going to be a singer like Farinello; even that odious monkey of a Neapolitan counter-tenor, his fellow-pupil and usual companion in these solemnities, would never have soared to such mad ambition. But all the more did Vivarelli feel, on these occasions, that everything is only vanity and vexation of spirit. What! to become a rich old Cavaliere, living in a grand country house, surrounded by kings and queens and emperors and empresses framed in gold on the walls and set in diamonds in snuff-boxes; to pay and receive polite visits from cardinals and senators and milords; was it for this (Vivarelli felt himself a very vulgar boy for thinking such things, but he could not help it) that Farinello had left the stage at thirty? that he, the greatest singer in the world, had become silent for ever? For it was worse than silence to go on singing the same three airs night after night to one listener, although that listener *was* a king. "And why does he *never, never* sing in public now that he no longer has his King of Spain?" he ventured once to ask. For, heaven only knows why, except because no one had ever heard it, that marvellous, divine voice was said to be as marvellous and divine as thirty years ago. But Father Zuffi, who had the proper eighteenth century feelings about kings and queens, was very angry, and asked his pupil whether he was forgetting *for whom* the cavaliere had once had the privilege of singing; which settled the matter.

But one day, after Vivarelli had spent a dreary afternoon, first contemplating across the dinner-table (while the butler mumbled outlandish names of wines, which the lad tossed off in his shyness), the Cavaliere's very nearly royal person, and his even more royal unceasingly gracious smile and unflaggingly courteous manners, and afterwards looking timidly round the drawing-room at the gilt legs of tables or consoles, the shell-like curves of the chair-backs, the stucco ornaments on the walls, the monsters on Chinese vases and screens, and the portraits of Farinello himself in various stages of apotheosis, not to speak of all the kings and queens—one day, after

one of these dreary though delightful ceremonies, there happened an extraordinary event. A Bolognese dowager had come to drink chocolate in the afternoon, bringing her lap-dogs to visit the Cavaliere's lap-dogs, and her little grand-daughter to visit his little grand-niece—a stately business. The old Cavaliere suddenly made the little girls, all stiff in their little hoop petticoats, an exquisite bow, and said with his enchanting courtly smile, as he sat down at a harpsichord: "Would these young ladies enjoy a little singing?" The bystanders thought he was graciously offering to accompany Father Zuffi's pupil. But Vivarelli at once understood, and felt himself grow suddenly white and almost faint, and on the point of dropping the saucer of iced peach which he was holding. Farinello was going to sing.

Every circumstance of that performance remained with Vivarelli to his dying day. Afraid, though needlessly, of its fading from his memory, he would, in later years, go carefully over each trifling detail, closing his eyes and playing inaudibly the accompaniment of that song, which he would never sing himself, lest he should substitute anything of his own for his recollections. The song which the Cavaliere had chosen was one of those with which, it was said, he had charmed the melancholy of the King of Spain as David had charmed Saul's, "*Pallido il sole*"—out of Hasse's opera of *Artaxerxes*, composed some forty years before; and, by a curious chance, it belonged to the part and the voice of another singer, the famous contralto Senesino. The words "*pallido il sole, torbido il cielo, pena minaccia, morte prepara, tutto mi spira rimorso e orrore,*" had always struck Vivarelli as rather grand, but the melody which Hasse had set to them, as too monotonous and smooth to suit them; and he had often tried, but in vain, to make anything of this celebrated air. The Cavaliere, his eyes fixed, a little closed under his straight black brows, and his chin a little disdainfully tilted as in his youthful portraits, began to play rapidly the prelude, with its curious insistence of rhythm and narrowness of modulation, slackening a little, and widening, so to speak, as the monotonous hammering on the same notes turned into a poignant phrase of melody towards the end. Then, with the return of that recurring hammering movement, he slowly, very deliberately and gently set down the first five or six notes of his voice. The voice seemed dull, a well-toned, moderate counter-tenor, and its notes were laid down with the deliberateness of a statement, as if principally with the object of making the words distinct. The next phrase, an echo of the first, and like it, limited and simple in movement, was given like the other; the thing was strange by virtue of its very absence of strangeness. Good Heavens! thought Vivarelli with his usual eagerness, is this the greatest singer of our father's days? Is this all that remains of the most wonderful

voice that ever was? But a second later he had forgotten that silent remark, forgotten everything. The accompaniment still went running over monotonously on the same chords, and the voice laying itself gently, like heavy snow-flakes, upon it; but Vivarelli was aware that these notes, which seemed to settle in their place so slowly, opening gradually out and closing up, as if to show themselves and pass on, were small fractions of a bar and sung quickly; and then, that this voice, singing under its breath, was filling the room and the house. Then, that these big, solemn notes, this scurrying accompaniment, were making his blood run cold, for the accompaniment seemed to ring like a hundred village death knells; and the voice, with those calmly, distinctly pronounced words, to repeat an implacable death sentence. It seemed to him also, as if he were looking down on the round, heaving waves of a sullen sea, immense and obscure and terrible, till suddenly something happened that was like a brief, wide, lurid illumination; and that voice, gigantic, beautiful, and magnificent, rang out in a great dreadful peal. The Cavaliere was singing with that enchanting smile on his lips, and evidently under his breath. "That piece is not really for my voice," said the Cavaliere, as he ended the phrase of accompaniment; "it belonged to Senesino's part; but I took a good deal of trouble to imitate his way of singing, and I thought it would interest this young man to hear how a very great singer of fifty years ago used to sing such a song." So saying, he laid his thin aristocratic hand on Vivarelli's shoulder, and smiled that charming, rather conventional smile. The ice which the lad was holding had melted, flooded the saucer, and gone all over his black satin small-clothes.

IV.

Antonio Vivarelli was nineteen when Father Zuffi nearly crushed him in a pathetic farewell, and sent him forth, a pupil no longer, into the big, sounding, singing world. The ugliness which was to be so famous and so adored, had saved our friend from the often ludicrous *début* of the young singers of a hundred years ago, who, at the age of fifteen or sixteen, were usually employed in women's parts in the theatres at Rome. His engagement was for the great Ascension-tide fair at Padua, where he was to sing a subordinate part in an opera expressly composed by the famous Sarti. The company, recruited at Bologna by a Venetian director, was sent by water, in one of those big boats which sailed slowly from the Reno into the Po, thence into the Lagoon, and inland again up by the Brenta. It was a motley throng, such as Goldoni loved to describe—singers, fiddlers, and sceneshifters, even tailors and copyists, collected from every part of Italy, and jabbering various dialects and corruptions

of the mother tongue, in company with several talking parrots, a monkey, and innumerable lapdogs belonging to the female portion of the caravan. The big flat boat slid slowly along between the poplared banks and into the lagoon, a lazy journey of several days, with people cooking all kinds of messes on deck among the stacked-up properties, eating off tables improvised out of side scenes and trestles, quarrelling, shouting, screaming, playing cards all the live-long day, and making music, and even dancing to the orchestral fiddles when the moon rose at night, and the black hull cut a wake as of quicksilver through the shallow water. The principal male and female performers had been too grand to travel thus; and in the absence of the *first woman*, the various humbler ladies put forth infinite pretensions and infinite seductions, mostly aimed at Vivarelli, whose serious, shy face and priestlike demeanour made him at once a desired capture and an unceasing butt. This was Vivarelli's first entrance into life, for, thanks to his widow hostess, to his Franciscan teacher, and to an odd little society of learned men into which he had worked his way, he had lived his years of apprenticeship at Bologna very much like those previous ones at the Ravenna seminary. And the world, as typified in this boatload of singers and players, of shifty, clever, dissolute men and pretty, sentimental, and brazen women, all surrounded to him with the halo of poetry and music, seemed to him an enchanting place, despite the over-quarrelsome habits of some of his companions, and the detestable ways of the actresses, mothers, parrots, and lapdogs. . . . And when they had got to Padua, and collected in various inns during the time of rehearsal, it still seemed to the young man as if life were that boat-full of Comus' companions, with painted sails spread under an ever-blue sky, sliding along towards a delightful, if second-rate, island of Venus: a singing Wilhelm Meister surrounded by singing Philinas and Serlos.

From this dream of vulgar pleasure Vivarelli was suddenly awakened by the fact that he was famous. The principal singer, under whose ill-bred superiority he was finishing his apprenticeship, suddenly fell ill, and Vivarelli was called upon to take the chief part in the opera. He knew it only from having heard the other man sing it; it was immensely, he thought, beyond his vocal powers; the public was fanatical for its old favourite Manfredini. Manfredini had a loud brilliant voice, a magnificent facility of inventing and executing difficult variations; he was, moreover, accounted a good actor, and so handsome a man that at Milan the ladies had worn, it was said, five miniatures of him at a time, on each bracelet, each shoe-buckle, and on the brooch that fastened their kerchief. Vivarelli's voice had by no means finished developing, his chest was still weak, and, although he had done his very

best to learn acting from a famous lawyer and amateur actor at Bologna, he was a mere stick when he sang his airs. Besides, he was horribly ugly. The public received him coldly, and hissed him off the stage after his first song; once behind the scenes, he burst into tears like a child. The composer of the opera was a young man of spirit. This opera of his had been a success for the first nights; he was determined it should not fail for the want of a singer. From his harpsichord in the orchestra he suddenly addressed the audience, upbraiding it for its stupid unkindness to a lad who was doing his best to serve them: "If," he said, "you will not promise a decent reception to Signor Vivarelli, the play shall be stopped and your money returned at the door." The audience applauded. Vivarelli returned on to the stage, amid a few signs of encouragement in the general ill-humoured silence. He was utterly changed, and like a man ten years older. He did not know the whole of the part, but what he did know he performed with reckless coolness. He went through one air after another, and the audience began to applaud; he sang the duet with the principal woman, and the audience applauded still more. But when he remained alone on the stage with her, for the great scene of accompanied recitative and the principal song known as the *rondò*, the public, who had come to hear their own Manfredini hissed the intruder like one man. Vivarelli waited for them to be silent, and, after a pause, began his scene. Those hisses had lashed him into a sort of madness in which, excited to the utmost, though apparently calm, he perceived only the play and the music, much as if he had been in a trance. The situation—that of a lover giving up his beloved to fulfil a promise—inspired him with a perfect frenzy of passion. He spoke his recitative he knew not how, he moved his body and his arms and hands he knew not why, but minding for the moment only one fact, that he had to give up this woman whom he loved. Then, after the last chord of the recitative, the orchestra began the prelude of the great air. Vivarelli had sung it only once before, that morning; and his mind, one would have thought, must have been full of the reading of it of his predecessor. But, for no reason he could have told, he began it in a totally different spirit. It seemed to him something new, and something that he was making. He sang quick where Manfredini had sung slow and *vice versa* and entirely forgot where the famous singer had made most of his points. He never remembered even the places for inserting the great florid passages, which always brought the house down. The song had been sung hitherto with two expressions, so to speak, interlaced by composer and singer, as a piece half languid and pathetic, half violent and voluble. Vivarelli made the first movement quiet, simple, almost spoken; and the second—but that was

the strangest thing—instead of the great scales and passages of shakes, there came into his head odd intricate flourishes, and into his performance, instead of the mere vehement floridness, a strange mad jubilation, interspersed with sudden pauses of misery. At the end of the piece, as the orchestra stopped for the last time before the final crash, he launched out into a long extemporaneous cadence, melodious, farfetched, rambling away into strange tonalities, and over strange intervals, and ending with two or three simple, long-drawn notes. These notes belonged to the dubious part of his voice, that place upon which Father Zuffi had expended so much time and science. They came out odd, of unearthly sweetness and poignancy, like those of a hautboy. The orchestra banged in its chord. The whole theatre burst into a yell of joy. The poor fellow had to be carried, fainting, behind the scenes, and a doctor jumped up from the pit to let him blood. It was now Vivarelli's turn to have his likeness worn on shoe-buckles and bracelets and brooches, and his partisans proceeded at once to challenge and thrash with cedar poles the partisans of poor Manfredini. Instead of the ladies of the theatrical company, Colombinas and Rosauras of whom Goldoni has left us the portraits, it was ladies of the first quality, what the eighteenth century still called *highborn nymphs*, who now laid siege to the former seminarist's feelings, and from the society of scene-shifters, ballet-dancers, and harlequins, cooking sausages and tomatoes on braziers in attics, the young singer found himself at once promoted to the tables and the coaches of Venetian senators, of princes of the empire, and of cardinals, and, from that evening, when the unwilling public heard for the first time those strange, hautboy notes of his voice, Vivarelli's life was but a series of triumphs. But, scarcely a year after his first success, he suddenly disappeared from the notice of his admirers, and appeared instead, his travelling boots and cape still on, in the cell of Father Giambattista Zuffi. The excellent singing-master's first thought—for his mind ran to romance and he hinted occasionally at past adventures scarce befitting the holiness of a Franciscan—was that his dear Tonino—for so he always called him—was flying before some jealous noble and his hired ruffians; then, having prepared some chocolate on his portable stove, he gravely asked Vivarelli whether he had lost his money at play or whether it had been got out of him by "those accursed sirens."—Vivarelli had indeed, in the first flush of liberty and prosperity, played at *faro* without even knowing the rules; and the Colombinas and Rosauras had received sundry shoe-buckles, fans, combs, patch-boxes, and yards of flowered taffety, which they had usually spurned as quite beneath their acceptance, but accepted none the less; once even a *nymph*, though not a high-born one this time, had insisted on a green parrot in a gilt cage. But Vivarelli had soon ceased

either to play or to purchase toys for sirens; he had regularly supplied money to his family in Romagna; and now he had good clothes, expensive boots, gold in his pockets, and even, he admitted with some shyness to his dear Franciscan, he was possessed of a valet. "Then why, in the name of all the saints, have you come back to Bologna?" cried the master. "Because," answered bashfully the pupil, twirling his cocked-up travelling-hat nervously, "because,—because, dear master, I feel that I don't yet really know how to sing." The excellent fat friar began to cry for tenderness; and raising up towards him the face of the young man, who had knelt down by his armchair, he answered slowly, looking into those eager brown eyes with his own wise, greenish ones, "My son, *that* is what none of us shall ever know on this earth; in the next world there may be more time. For when we are young we have the voice, but not the art; and when we are old we have the art, but not the voice." From the whitewashed wall of the convent cell, from among the music books on the shelves, the portrait of old Pistocchi smiled a bitter acquiescence.

V.

The art of the singer was indeed, in those distant days, too long for a lifetime, or for the life at least of that most mortal portion of man, the voice. The chief interest of music, in Italy at least, lay, as we have said, in melody and song. To realise this one must take down from the dusty archive shelves the score of an opera of that day; or, failing that, a volume of the plays which Metastasio wrote on purpose to be set to music. Into the operas which our Vivarelli sang—their principal songs marked in faded ink—"per il Signor Antonio Vivarelli—Napoli, Londra, Venezia, even Pietroburgo, 1779, or 1782, or so late as 1790"—wind instruments began indeed nearly always to enter. I speak of the operas of his maturer days and by the composers Sacchini, Sarti, Bertoni (of whom a splendid *bravura* air has accidentally remained in Gluck's *Orpheus*), Paisiello and Cimarosa, who were his own contemporaries; for in the works of Jommelli, Piccini, and Galuppi, which he still came in time to sing, there was rarely more than the quartet of strings. If we glance down these full-scored pages we shall see that the parts of the hautboy, clarionet, flute, bassoon, &c., present a large proportion of consecutive empty bars; while the horns and the trumpets, which in those days gave a savour, the first of the supernatural, the second of heroism, merely blare out a few notes three or four times in the whole course of the piece. The permanent part of the accompaniment still consists in violins, and the other instruments are merely additional or incidental. Thus the voice is never covered by the orchestra; nay, the next

remark that we make, in examining these operas of the latter half of the last century, is that the voice is so often moving alone, unaccompanied, and that the songs are full of pauses, of *points d'orgue* but of this more anon. If we pass on to examine the opera act by act—and here, in default of the score, the libretto furnished in any volume of Metastasio will answer the same purpose—we shall find that the plays differ entirely in structure from those of our own century. Except in comic opera, a category only then coming into repute, and in which, even in the great days of Paisiello and Cimarosa, no eminent singer was ever to be heard, there are no concerted pieces whatever, with the exception of one duet between the two principal singers and at the most a trio or a solo with chorus. The business of the piece takes place in recitative (which in Metastasio's plays is invariably blank verse), unaccompanied, that is to say, with no accompaniment except the chords which mark the modulation and keep the singers in time. This *dry* recitative, as it was called, goes on for pages and pages, either turning into a *scene*, or long passage, almost invariably soliloquy, of recitative interrupted and supported by the orchestra, which itself ends in a song; or blossoming out directly and without softer transition into one of those short lyrics of various metres, which, by dint of rearrangement and repetition of words and sentences, is turned into the long melody, preluded, accompanied, and often summed up by the instruments, called an *air*. The air is followed by the instant exit of the singer thereof, for a relapse into dry recitative (as we may notice in Gluck's *Orpheus*) must necessarily be an anti-climax; the air may belong to one of several categories, of each of which each principal part must contain not more than one example. There is provided for in Metastasio's plays, which were written between 1725 and 1750, but set and reset, with many alterations by every composer until the beginning of our own century, an air of vocal execution, *aria di bravura*, usually to words expressive of joy, or upon some metaphor of sea, wind, running water, noises or such like; of this it would be difficult to find a finer instance than the air of Bertoni, "Addio miei sospiri," which has remained incorporated in Gluck's *Orpheus*. Then a graceful air, often a dance, a minuet, or in the time of Handel and Pergolese, who excelled in this measure *a siciliana*. Then an *aria parlante*, or spoken song, a continuation of the previous recitative, addressed to several persons in succession, and always requiring to be acted as well as sung; the various settings of the famous words, "Se cerca, se dice," in the *Olimpiade*, by Leo, Pergolese, Galuppi, Cimarosa, to name only a few, being all of them specimens of the *spoken air*. Besides this, and difficult to define, an air of uncertain character, "mezzo carattere," neither one thing nor another; and finally and most important perhaps, a *pathetic air*. Towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Metastasio's

words were cruelly mangled by the various *poets*, usually starving priests or schoolmasters attached to operatic theatres, in order to obtain a fresh sort of air, at once speaking, pathetic, and brilliant, beginning with a slow movement and ending with a quick one, which was called a *rondò*. In the days of Vivarelli the *rondò* was the crowning glory of everything, affording the singer an opportunity of displaying all his various styles. These five songs, a duet with the chief female performer, and perhaps a trio with someone else, and an enormous amount of *dry recitative*, occasionally relieved by accompanied *scenes*, constituted, until about 1790, when concerted pieces were multiplied, the enormous part of what was then called *the first man*.

We have seen that the voice, even to the very end of the last century, was never encroached upon by the orchestra, and that, in particular, it had never to fight with its triumphantly loud and shrill rivals, the wind instruments. The distribution of parts, and of song and recitative, has further shown us that in every important portion of the performance, in the *scenes* of accompanied recitative and in the *arias*, the singer was invariably isolated; the two voices of the duet even singing each a song and uniting for only a few bars at the third or fifth. This means, taken together, that the singer was exposed alone, uninterrupted, and for an enormous length of time, to the public; that, in other words, an opera, besides a certain amount of good or bad acting, of noted dry recitative, was a series of little concerts given by alternating performers.

But the eighteenth century gave its singers not merely the importance of isolated performance: it allowed them the liberty to create. Its manuscript scores afford none of those marks for loud and soft, for binding and detaching notes, by whose means the composer can convey, in a measure, his notion of how to perform the song he has composed. Even the pace is rarely indicated at the beginning of the piece, or indicated loosely and at random. These omissions will strike the eye of anyone who turns over an old score. In attempting to play or sing one of their airs, another kind of omission becomes noticeable: we feel as we should if someone had taken a sonata or concerto of Haydn and Mozart and put his pen through all the cadences and variations, nay, through every ornament, shake, mordante, group of notes, little scale—in fact, through everything except the essential melody, everything which accentuates, completes, diversifies the piece. In concerted music such things, for fear of confusion, had evidently to be invented and noted by the composer. In instrumental solos the composer, being himself the performer, very probably extemporised a good deal, and then selected and wrote down his embellishments and variations, which every other player on the violin or harpsichord could easily reproduce. But in the case

of singing it was different. The singer, when he first became prominent in the seventeenth century, was also an actor; now, Italian acting has never conformed (and never can) to the French method of studying and then stereotyping a part. The genius of the nation, spontaneous, easily discouraged, requires constant variety and complete freedom; and, until the end of the eighteenth century, the only school of acting which Italy could boast belonged to the old comedy of *Masks*, in which only the outlines of the dialogue were written, and all the detail improvised by the actor.

The habit of free performance, of extempore alteration and addition, was therefore natural in the Italian Opera singer of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and regarded as legitimate by a public accustomed to complete dramatic independence; nor did concerted pieces or subjection to the orchestra, both of which were virtually unknown during a hundred and fifty years, interfere with this liberty by requiring of the singer the pre-arrangement with others, the obedience to a director, habitual to the man who took a part in a quartet, or who sang in a fugue. Such, doubtless, is the chief explanation of that independence of the singer, or rather that interference of the singer with the composer, which surprises and shocks us in the days of Handel, of Pergolese, of Gluck, even of Mozart; for the explanations of things must be sought rather in their accidental causes than in their foreseen effects.

But this state of affairs between singers and composers, although no result of æsthetic preferences, was fortified in its turn by that peculiar development of vocal music to which it had certainly contributed. The Italians—and with them all the nations who listened to and employed Italian singers—of a hundred to two hundred and fifty years ago, wanted not to hear a given piece, and therefore set about finding a performer; they wanted to hear a singer, and therefore hired a composer to write songs for him to sing. No opera was ever composed, as nowadays, without reference to a definite set of performers; on the contrary, once the performers got together a composer was called in to write exclusively for them; for operas were short-lived in those days of constantly altering style, and, instead of being repeated in the same place by different singers, they were carried by their original chief performers from town to town and country to country. So it never occurred to the good people of that time that there was such a thing as an abstract soprano, contralto, or tenor voice for whom songs could be written, ready in every detail and with complete instructions how to perform, as a sonata or a suite might be written for an abstract violin or harpsichord.

And, as we have seen, the great old singing masters never

classified voices or made recipes for various categories, but set about developing to the utmost the individual voice of their pupil, without seeking to define or name it; so that, were it not for the soprano, contralto and tenor clefs (used rather at random) in which the vocal parts were still noted, we should often be in utter ignorance of the voice possessed by the most famous men and women of those days. The old Italian theatrical habit—the habit of the national *commedia dell' arte*—of giving full license to a performer, and the musical circumstances of the times, which isolated each voice in an opera and developed its individual qualities to the utmost, resulted, therefore, in that strange eighteenth century custom of letting the singer not merely give what reading he chose of another man's notes, but of allowing and expecting *him* to introduce all the detail ornament, and to give a *new* presentation of the chief themes in the form of variations and cadences. For this reason, as Mancini explains, every singer must give some years to the study of thorough bass. He did so because, to a certain extent, he was as much a composer as the man who had written out the score, and who sat directing the opera at his harpsichord. But the Italian actors did not merely invent a portion of the words; they also improvised them on the spur of the moment, and to the belief that no two voices are alike was added by the eighteenth century singing-masters the further opinion that no single voice or vocal disposition is identical on two separate occasions. Hence the singer gave to the composer's notes his own reading and his own additions and variations, but he also gave to them a reading and additions and variations which were by no means always the same. Of all the great singers of the eighteenth century, we read that their powers of invention were remarkable. "A perfect judgment of what can be executed" is a necessary quality in the pupil described by Tosè and Mancini, for, without that, there would be danger of his inventing passages and proving unable to carry them out. Such invention and such judgment were cultivated by a special exercise of making extempore variations, a practice probably continued throughout every great singer's career, since it appears that so late as 1824 or thereabouts, the two last singers trained in eighteenth-century habits, Crescentini and Velluti, amused their leisure, after retiring from the stage, by weekly meetings over an apothecary's shop, near the Pergola theatre in Florence, where, with Meyerbeer and Pietro Romani to accompany them, they read and made variations on those exercises of Leo which must have formed the study of their boyhood.

It seems likely that every eminent singer of the last century spent some time every day preparing various readings of his songs in

order to have something to fall back upon or to use as material for new arrangement, when he found himself on the stage. This we are told of Pacchierotti, one of the most inventive singers of his days, and this alone can explain how, in the thirty or forty consecutive representations of a new opera, his rival (and our Vivarelli's), the great bravura singer, Marchesi, could have afforded every night new passages and graces to the curiosity of the persons who took down his performance in shorthand.

Such a habit of varying songs, which did, indeed, late in the eighteenth century, reduce melody to a thread and composers to mere slaves, appears to our mind almost incompatible with anything worth hearing. But, on reflection, we shall find that three-quarters of every violin or harpsichord sonata of that day are nothing save such variations; and that, even in quartets and symphonies, a new development of melody, and alteration in its modulations and rhythms and ornament, constitute, in those days of melodic exuberance, as much of the business of the parts as any changes and complications in the harmony. Neither could it then occur that there was only one right interpretation of a piece, and that one the interpretation intended by its composer. For the rightness of a reading depended not merely upon the subtle relations between the constituent notes of the song, but quite as much upon a relation, even subtler, between the forms suggested by the composer and the sounds and breath actually given by the singer. What should be loud or soft, pointed or blurred, depended, for instance, not merely upon the foregoing portion, but upon the register and quality of the voice which was singing, and the whole scheme of the piece had to be arranged according to the delicate differences in the powers of the performer, powers not merely individual, but excessively variable from hour to hour. The rightness of a reading could not be referred to any preconceived notion of the composer, who was considered incapable, like the dramatic part, of conceiving all the various refinements and graces which would arise from the peculiar physical and intellectual endowment of the performer, from the very fact of performance. And there being thus no abstract standard of right or wrong in the composer's mind, there ceased to be any reason why one reading among several should be better or worse than another. Nay, as voice and vocal disposition were variable, and the perfection of the whole depended upon complete adaptation between notes and performance, it became evident that the number of right readings meant merely the number of beautiful readings, and that that was commensurate only with the richness of the melody and the genius of the singer. When the sense of performance was so strong, and melody was gushing forth on every side, the song, therefore, as noted down

by the composer, was a mere fragment—a mere indication of something that was to exist, not an existing thing, as an octogenarian singing-master, nurtured in classic traditions, would constantly repeat to this unworthy biographer of Vivarelli—it became a whole only during the brief instants of being sung, and in the memory of those who had heard its singing. Such, doubtless, is the meaning of those words with which I have prefaced these pages:—"Nowadays singers perform the notes written down by the composer; in the days of Vivarelli's youth *they sang*."

To *sing*, in this sense, was what Father Zuffi considered too much for a life's efforts. To the end of their *singing* were directed those years and years, from childhood into maturity, of mechanical labour, of placing the voice, and training the breath: those years of counter-point, of reading at sight, of invention of variations, that the singer, constantly able to understand every new form, to execute any passage, to surmount any difficulty, to manage any modulation, should be able, on the spur of the moment, to give not merely the conception of the composer but the fruit of his own feeling and fancy. For in this *singing*, as distinguished from "performing the notes written down by a composer," this constant variety of detail and expression, this changing to suit each change of voice or of mood, this seeming creation of melody on the very lips of the singer, this apparent welling up of pure music from the innermost depths of his nature, lay the marvel and fascination of the old music of Italy.

Such was the art. But what of the artist? In and out of memoirs and letters pass every now and then the singing men and women of the eighteenth century, and personality is made definite by description and anecdote, a vague figure, indicated by a random word, sometimes little more than a name. Of Faustina, the famous wife of Hasse, we know, for instance, that she was a bright, well-mannered lady, the respectable mother of well-brought-up daughters. Another great prima donna, the Mingotti, appears in contemporary accounts accomplished, agreeable, well-bred. While the poor woman, Marianna Bulgarelli, called the Romanina, who is said to have died of grief, or to have put an end to herself, on account of Metastasio's ingratitude, must certainly have been a very remarkable creature. The Gabbrielli, on the other hand, she who bade Catherine of Russia set her field-m Marshals singing, was a capricious, rapacious virago; and behind her, without her wit or her lunacy, extends a procession of singing women more rapacious and capricious than herself. The female singers came of various social conditions, yet, with a few exceptions, they appear not to have been received in respectable society. The men, on the other hand, who were nearly all peasants or thereabouts, and brought up on charity or speculation, were taken

to the bosoms of all persons of quality, endured, flattered, cajoled, carried in triumph, sung by poets who hated them, and courted by ladies of whom they were often not fit to be the lacqueys. A few of these *virtuosi*, alternately carried to heaven and rolled in the mud by the servile though indignant writers of the day, contrived to keep some sense of decorum and modesty, and even to become gentlemen of parts and breeding; thus Santurelli, Rauzzini, the younger Senesino, and Pacchierotti are vouched for by the friendship of well-known men of science, artists, writers, and charming women; while a whole volume of letters addressed to him through many years by Metastasio, shows us Farinelli as an upright, intelligent man, a devoted friend, a fascinating, fine gentleman. But, with such exceptions as these, we must confess that then, as now, the elevating effects of music must be sought rather in those who listen than in those who perform. For the beauty studied by the musician is independent of the realities of life, and its pursuit, instead of bringing in closer contact with the invigorating, chastening sights of nature, the subsidiary feelings of mankind, tends rather to concentrate the faculties upon themselves and their owner; while, in the singer more particularly, dependence upon bodily well-being and the habit of cultivating the expression and excitement of emotion, are apt to develop certain unbeautiful characteristics. Who among us has not, at least once in a lifetime, yearned for a closer knowledge of one of those men and women who seemingly create, give out like perfume the loveliness that goes to our poor heads? And who, therefore, has not among the melancholy litter of trifling disenchantments some little story of a singing man or woman seen too closely?

Such impressions, by a strange coincidence, were shared by our friend Vivarelli, who, though a singer himself, was subdued by the poetry of his own art and sadly rebutted by its prose. In his early youth, indeed, and after that brief taste of Bohemianism, he suffered keenly though silently. He found, indeed, among his fellow-singers, even women who took their art as earnestly, as conscientiously, as himself; but beyond their art they were nullities or worse. A certain fickleness, vulgarity, readiness to snatch at pleasure or advantage, which seems somehow to go with the temper of a performer, whether an actor merely or a singer, an odd superficiality in these creatures for ever expressing emotions they do not feel, or feeling emotions at command, affected Vivarelli more and more, although he was long unsuspecting of the cause of his dreariness and irritation. A sentimental episode, perhaps the most important in his life, but brief and kept in the background, probably made him understand that his comrades were of a different clay. A

Venetian girl, charming, beautiful, and apparently innocent, although not more correct in behaviour than other actresses of her day, attached herself to Vivarelli, and travelled with him from place to place, receiving genius, as Stendhal puts it, from the genius of her master and lover. But one day Vivarelli discovered that if she wanted his affection, or, at all events, his teaching, she wanted also the sequins of a rich old Mæcenæ; and that she had not only conciliated the two requirements in the past, but could see no reason for not conciliating them in the future. . . . Vivarelli was never known to give musical instruction to any more young actresses. This singer and actor, of whom Miss Burney, who knew him intimately, wrote, in her father's memoirs, that he had rather the nature of a poet, experienced, partly from constitution, partly, perhaps, as a result of his priestly education, the reverse of that attraction towards the stage which Goethe has expressed in his great novel. The fact that all was unreal, from the jewels which he wore to the sentiments which he expressed, was odious to him, and he would have longed to have been the priest of some new sort of religion (free from any of the theatricalities which he began to perceive in his own), whose people could sing the things they really felt among real nature or real magnificent architecture, surrounded by fellow-worshippers who took it all as seriously as himself. As it was, he never enjoyed singing better than at a harpsichord, to two or three intimates; and he never sang so divinely as on the death mass of his friend, the composer Bertoni, after which he hid himself, sobbing, behind the altar. As a matter of fact, Vivarelli gradually carried out his own vague plan, attained the object of his wishes, although, like most of us, without knowing it. Experiencing the reverse of what is felt by him who listens to great singing, and who seems to find at last the expression of his highest emotions, the formulæ of his most perfect thoughts, this singer was straining perpetually to get to the realities of life and thought and feeling which music seemed inarticulately to imply and express; seeking that nobility, that perfection, that something that music could hint at but not express. This craving for a worthy reality, a noble source of emotion, in a man who could evoke such dreams, awaken such feelings in others, produced an odd intellectual eagerness, a fervid desire to know the contents of books, to him the presence of men of virtue and intellect. Vivarelli began to study languages and literature with something of the almost rabid eagerness with which he had studied music. He knew his language to perfection, and soon he had added Latin and French; in his spare moments he began to pore over Greek. England was at that time—about 1780—the ideal land; a sort of Eldorado of liberty, magnanimity, and wisdom,

an impossible country whence issued the mythical creatures of perfection, with Rousseau's Lord Edouard Bampton at their head; and Vivarelli's heart beat when he found himself in London, and heard the unintelligible language of these virtuous men all round. The enthusiasm of the singer was so oddly real, and his anxiety to know English so quaint, that Mason, who was then accounted one of our most accomplished poets, came forward to teach him.

Pacchierotti . . . nay, I mean Vivarelli, under such a master, even became able to read and speak fluently, and to write letters, oddly flavoured with Italian inversions, of which one or two are still preserved. Nay, that belief in intellect, which sometimes, despite his penetration and sense of humour, made Vivarelli endure the society of dryasdusts and phrasemongers very much as the ladies and gentlemen of his audience endured the company of oafish singers; that pathetic, childish idea that someone possessed the key of the world of nobility, into which, unconsciously, he was himself transporting his listeners, explains the fact that we meet with Vivarelli mainly in the biographies and correspondence of writers. In his boyhood he had timidly introduced himself, by the help of Father Martini, the learned historian of music, to a family, and then a little group, of learned men, of Bologna. These professors of physics, mathematics and rhetoric, living between the university library and a cheap coffee-house, had taken some time to believe that their society could be sought by a creature at once so low and so fashionable as a singer; but having grasped the reality of the miracle, they began to adore their "dear little Tonino" like some stray dog they had saved, to teach him all that they could, to protect him from the influences that made other young singers profligate and truculent. For years Vivarelli continued writing regularly to these worthy men, until he himself began to grow old, and the last of his dear professors dropped into the grave. But of all people Englishmen had the greatest attraction for him. Already in 1780 we find him riding among the hills about Lucca with Beckford, then young, accomplished, and not yet with the sinister fame of being his own Caliph Vathek: one day they tied their horses to some cyprus boles, and lay on the grass, crushing the myrtle and thyme, and talking till the sun was down and the vapours rose, so that the magistrates of the Republic of Lucca sent a deputation to complain that their singer should take such cold-catching excursions. In England, where Vivarelli spent several years, we find Miss Burney jubilating every time that he came to her father's house, where he was admitted to the friendship of Garrick, of Reynolds, and of "Daddy Crispe," and even allowed timidly to listen to the great Johnson, who loved not music. It is from Miss Burney's Diary, and

from the Memoirs she wrote (in such English) many years later, of her father, that we learn best how Vivarelli struck his contemporaries. He was very tall, thin, sallow, and had a face which would have been delightful in a dog, but was of rare ugliness in a human being; an impossible nose and profile, an immense mouth, and immense brown eyes that swallowed you up. For the rest, proud, hot-tempered, modest, generous, magnanimous, always dissatisfied with himself, always warm in admiration of others; shy, for all the world's fulsome courtesy of him, and usually silent, except when he could be excited about something, when he broke into an odd, rambling way of talking, humorous, full of flights of imagination, of a quaint unexpected poetry, which Miss Burney compared to the cadences and passages which he extemporised when singing. Our Vivarelli's intellectual propensities, leading us to some of his friendships, has made us forestall the impressions written down by her friends, and drop the narration of this singing Wilhelm Meister's inner life. A Wilhelm Meister, that is to say, a soul whose biography is purely artistic; but one reversed; since while the hero of Goethe tended for ever towards form, embodiment, presentment, our singer's years of study and wandering were filled with the craving for what lies, or seems to lie, behind artistic form, towards ideas and feelings, towards a human, intelligible meaning for the melodies with which he made men weep and be happy.

For the pathos of late eighteenth-century music lies merely in the poignancy of its beauty. There are songs of Handel, of Bach, of Pergolese, even of Gluck the Elysian, which are really sad, and sadder as with the suggestion of human grief; and the music of more recent days, from the melancholy of Beethoven and Schubert, to the despair of Wagner, moves us, but more powerfully, like some real or narrated scene of woe. But I venture to affirm that there is no such music to be found in the works of Mozart and his contemporaries, that is to say, the very music with which Vivarelli moved our grandfathers to tears. Alas, the music that Vivarelli sang, even that by Paisiello, Sarti and Cimarosa, is so forgotten, that to make the reader understand I must refer him to the songs in the operas of *Idomeneo*, the *Magic Flute*, *Titus*, and some even in *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro*, by a man too obscure to have the honour of such a singer's interpretation. This music is difficult to define; and most difficult is it to indicate in the least those qualities which rendered it, once upon a time, so potent. In turning over the leaves say of the famous *rondò* in Sarti's *Giulio Sabino*, of similar songs by Cimarosa, Bertoni, and Paisiello (and those who have no old manuscripts or modern re-éditions at hand, may look instead at the songs and duets of Mozart's *Tito*, particularly Sesto's great air): we are

tempted, at first, to wonder how anyone could have brought in contact with them so great a word as *pathetic*. These smoothly flowing adagios, sweet and clear with their little sonata movement accompaniment, these tripping *allegrettos*, with their daintily bound and detached notes, followed through easy, limpid modulations by the crisp violins, the cooing flutes and horns, with here and there a brilliant flash of trumpets; these long *ohs* and *ahs*, and *oh Dios* and *Idolo mios*, isolated from all accompaniment and crowned with their inevitable cadence pause; these quick final movements, where the voice, whirled along on ascending scant arpeggio accompaniments, rises up, rocket-like, to blaze out gradually on high notes, to drop down gently as on spread wings, to rise again by regular intervals, till it rings out in the last crash of the orchestra; all these things, at first sight, strike us as trifling, and the notion of associating them with words of emotion as silly. As to their being pathetic . . . "O, Vivarelli, pathetic Vivarelli," exclaims Arteaga, in his book on the opera; and pathetic, pathetic Vivarelli, echo all the writers on music of the day, Burney, Majer, Mount Edgcumb, Mattei, all the men and women who heard and mentioned him, from Beckford to Stendhal. What, then, moved them all in such pieces; or rather, to what, in pieces like these, could this man apply that exquisite, strange voice, whose separate notes were as poignant as other men's whole performance, and that exquisite, unique poignancy of manner?

Let us, in order to understand, put all thought of modern dramatic singing behind us, of modern harrowing music. Vivarelli never, I repeat, sang a piece that was pathetic in our modern sense: he was not a pathetic singer such as is wanted, for instance, for *Tristan*. The pathos of the music of Mozart's time (remember that Mozart gives the type, in his serious songs, of those of which we speak) has nothing to do with human misery, and depends upon a different sort of emotion. Let us play, or sing it over; and, little by little, although we may not understand, we begin to feel. . . . This music is, above all, exceedingly lovely. That of earlier times is stronger, more majestic, more dramatic; it has, in fact, but little of such qualities. But it is, in the highest degree, lovely; of varied, complicated loveliness, in the sense of the odes of Keats, of the pastorals of Titian and Giorgioni; and its loveliness is so dominant, so essential, that it carries with it, like the impression of some perfect day and landscape, a certain serious, concentrating power, making—which Milton seems to have foreseen as the highest gift of music—"Such a sacred and heartfelt delight, such a sober certainty of waking bliss." Beauty like this is poignant: a little more, and it turns us from cheerful to sad: wherefore? Because our nerves are unaccustomed to the strain of such perfection, or because we crave to fix this

fugitive delight? Such pathos, although recognised, does not suffice for us who have learned to take an interest in suffering, to extract a certain pleasure from its participation. But the eighteenth century was satisfied, for it was still comparatively callous to pain, and what women and men enjoyed was not sympathising but admiring. Call to mind eighteenth century literature, all such, at least, as the eighteenth century appreciated (for it left *Manon Lescaut* to be appreciated by us), and you will find that what stirs people's hearts is the sight of what they called *virtue*; it is not the misfortunes of Clarissa, of Julie, even of Paul and Virginia at which men weep and women faint: it is their virtuous hearts, *their sensibility, their fidelity*, their Lovelace kept at bay, St. Preux reconciled to Wolmar, runaway slaves protected—things that seem commonplace to us, but that were new, exquisite, surprising, after the long hard-hearted period that followed the Middle Ages' moral bankruptcy. The same with Voltaire and Metastasio, whose plays, enormously popular, were a perfect education to cant and sentimentalism, but also to gentleness, constancy, unselfishness, all those virtues which flowered up, and were thrown down, alas, in the Revolution. *Werther* gives already a new note, heralding a new time, speaking of man's weakness, not his glory; dashing already that dream, the dream in every man's breast, of "perfectibility" (with which Condorcet died in prison) of a world full of Alzires, Themistocles, Lusignans, Artaxerxes, and Sir Charles Grandisons. And to this eighteenth-century emotion this last eighteenth-century music answered perfectly: affected, canting, pedantic, call them whatever ill name we may, the men and women for whom Vivarelli sang were, nevertheless, most genuinely lovesick for virtue: this music seemed the voice of the exquisite unreality after which they panted.

Thus much to explain why music that merely delights us could make our grandfathers and grandmothers weep and go mad with emotion. But if we look once more at our old songs, humming them over and trying to imagine them sung, we shall recognise in the music yet another quality, whose emotional potency we can scarcely appreciate to the full: it is in the highest degree vocal. We have almost forgotten, we moderns, that one of the keenest pleasures, nay emotions, that music can give is the perception of the singable quality of a song; the perception, intuitive and instantaneous, that the intervals are easy to intone, that the rhythm coincides with our natural movements, and that the phrases flow out, rise and fall, with the flow, the rise and fall, of our breathing. These words, necessary to explain what it is that makes some songs more singable than others, convey at the same time a very mistaken impression of the pleasure which this singable quality affords. We

do not enjoy from the intellectual perception of fitness coldly telling ourselves that this or the other is well suited to its purpose. Nay, I venture to think that the phrases we might take in a piece well suited to the mechanical necessities of the violin, the organ, or the hautboy would differ entirely from the one we receive from a singable song. For a singable song requires no technical knowledge in order to be recognised. It sings within us, whether we know our notes or not, and however profound our ignorance of registers and modulations. It sings in us, inaudibly, because it moves along with our innermost life, beating with our heart, and breathing with our lungs, and swinging from note to note with the readiest movements of our throat. It sings within us because we should speak with its modulations, pause with its pauses, and walk or run or dance in its measure; because man sings when he is strong and happy, even as the birds twitter when the rain ceases and the sun comes out; and that this is one of the ways in which he could sing at such moments. A special delight attaches therefore to a sort of song, not necessarily lovely or striking in itself, nor expressive of any interesting emotion, by virtue of our pleasure in certain movements as such, which affect us like a bright frost or a spring breeze, and seem, like them, to bring us into contact with the rhythm of the world. To sing such a song is to play with a natural force as an equal. And the truest notion of the play of these notes, thus hurrying on the tide of our life, would be given by the emotion of the strong swimmer or the rider of a swift and supple horse, both borne along, impetuously and willingly, the one playing with the wave, the other with the wind. Now, to hear it sung, is, to all who have a soul for this kind of music, to sing it oneself. Indeed it is in the contagiousness of this vocal emotion that its charm and power resides. We have forgotten much of this, unaccustomed since so very long to music that sings; accustomed to tracking the human voice through the mazes of far-fetched modulations, to noting its disappearance under complicated instrumental currents, and its sometimes painful efforts at reappearance on the surface of this musical whirlpool. And yet, in turning over several old pieces, or strumming them voiceless on our pianos, we are subdued, even we, by this vocal fascination and carried away by this vocal madness.

And when the piece is beautiful—and most of Vivarelli's songs were beautiful—we feel, we see, while we listen to the notes, now hurrying from interval to interval in orderly waves, advancing and falling back, now granulating into long pearlike strings of scales and shivering into the sparkles of rapid trills, the delight of those audiences long laid in the dust, the triumphant smile of the singer breaking out into renewed and vigorous breath. Nay, there are passages

languid and lovely in their half-whispered daintiness; long paused upon notes, left to die out like sighs, which, when we become familiar with their charm, occasionally let us understand, in a flash of appreciation, that men and women may have felt that they *must* hear them again, as long as hear them anyone could, and follow the phrase, the singer, to the ends of the earth.

Antonio Vivarelli continued singing on the stage until the year 1798, when he bought a country-house near Padua, and settled down till his death in 1827. He had long before taken to him the son of one of his brothers, and, in his enthusiasm for English things, brought him up at Harrow; the European war obliged the young man to return, and finish his education at Padua. Besides his nephew, and his nephew's children, Vivarelli maintained a keen interest in many things; he laid out a garden in the English fashion, one of the earliest in Italy; he read much and kept up a large correspondence; he sang also, up to a great age, taking pleasure in getting up at his house many psalms of Marcello and masses by Lotti, and quartets by Haydn and Mozart, and never failing to hear any new composition or singer of promise. He had in his mature age, adopted the vague deistic notions of the late eighteenth century; but although no friend to priests, the charm of the church still affected him, the charm that had seemed so much nobler than that of the stage; and while hiding his religious views as little as was possible under the Austrian reaction, he never missed an opportunity of singing or hearing others sing in a large church.

Strangers who visited him found him a singularly living old man, and compared his warm interests and admirations with the apathy and laudation of the past, of other retired singers. But those who knew him well, knew also that there was, under all his activity and cheerfulness, an odd, unavowed melancholy. The art of singing, carried to excess by singers who refused to work in concert with good composers, and asked only for "two notes and a pause," was now rapidly going to pieces, under the pressure of a more noisy style of composition brought in by Rossini. The latter, as is well known, cut short the liberties of the singer by himself filling his songs with flourishes, often vulgar and always coldly executed. Vivarelli lived long enough to understand that the traditions of the school of Pistocchi, Bernacchi, and Father Zuffi would soon utterly disappear, and that the more and more instrumental and sensational nature of music would render a new school impossible. Yet, while he deplored the loss of his art, he candidly admitted that an art, as great and greater, had taken its place: the instrumental art of Mozart and Beethoven.

"Only there is no place in this Olympus for us poor devils," he added, laughing; and his friends knew that his laugh hid great sorrow. Vivarelli suffered also, like so many men and women of that generation, from the terrible disenchantment of '93, of the first Directory, and the tyrannous illiberality of the Empire; the base betrayal of Venice by Napoleon; and then the terrible reaction after Waterloo made the world gloomy in his eyes. Yet he did not despair of liberty, despite its excesses and despite its reverses, and he brought up his nephew to die, gallantly fighting for freedom on a barricade at Naples in 1820. And when people said some of the cynical, despairing things, then coming into fashion, of man's inherent baseness and necessary slavery, Vivarelli would not speak, but, opening his pianoforte, strike the chords of a certain triumphant psalm of Marcello as all answer.

People often wondered, during his maturity, and even (like Stendhal—"On voit que l'amour a passé par là," wrote the author of *De l'Amour*) in his old age, when he would light up and grow young singing a recitative, what secret romance could underlie that passionate, pathetic, all-subduing song. Yet, though people talked and pointed at various friendships with ladies for whom he would sing, or whose children he would play with, no one could ever bring forward any story or legend, save that early one of the girl he had taught, and who had left him for the rich senator. And thus we do not know to this day what Vivarelli felt while making others feel thus profoundly. Or was the secret of his fascination a very unromantic one: that he was the greatest singer in a day of great singers? Be it as it may, the secret has been buried with him, but a little of the charm has remained.

VERNON LEE.