

## No. IX.

## MUZIO CLEMENTI.

**I**N the history of every art or science we meet with many names which, although of deserved, and perhaps even great, celebrity, suggest few, if any, ideas extraneous to themselves and their own immediate works. To chronicle the births, deaths, and performances of such men, is comparatively an easy undertaking; not so the task of compressing into a limited space the life and achievements of those few artists whose names will serve for ages as time-marks to the student, indicating the division of eras, and indissolubly connected with some great revolution or marked improvement. Of the latter class was Clementi: of the piano-forte school, whether we consider him as composer, performer, or instructor, he was the acknowledged patriarch; and in tracing the outlines of his professional life we hardly know on which we ought most to dwell—what he performed himself, or what he instructed or inspired others to perform. Some of the greatest pianists of the present day, while exulting in the reputation of pupils, and even pupils' pupils, of their own, feel a pride and satisfaction in hailing Clementi as their original master, the founder of their school; while men as celebrated as Steibelt, Woelfl, Dussek, and even Beethoven, have acknowledged that they owed to his works what circumstances prevented their deriving from his personal instructions. "Clementi," says Dr. Crotch, in his Lectures lately published, "may be considered as the father of piano-forte music; for he long ago introduced all the beauty of Italian melody into pieces calculated, by their ornamental varieties, to elicit the powers of the instrument, and display the taste as well as the execution of the performer." And in a subsequent passage of

the same work the author mentions the introduction of Clementi's sonatas into our chambers as having, in conjunction with the quartetts and symphonies of Boccherini and Haydn, "stamped a value on modern music which many of the admirers of the ancient school were disposed to acknowledge."

Muzio Clementi was born in the year 1752, in Rome, where his father followed the occupation of a chaser and embosser of silver vases and figures for the church service. He was related also to Buroni, afterwards principal composer at St. Peter's, from whom he received his earliest lessons in music. At six years of age he commenced sol-fa-ing: at seven he was placed under an organist of the name of Cordicelli, for instruction in thorough bass; and proceeded with such rapidity, that at nine years old he passed his examination, and was admitted to an organist's place in his native city. His next masters were Santarelli, who is considered by the Italians the last great master of the vocal school, and Carpini, the deepest contrapuntist of his day in Rome. While studying under Carpini, and as yet little more than twelve years old, young Clementi wrote, without the knowledge of his master, a mass for four voices, which was so much admired by his friends, that at length Carpini desired to hear it: although not much addicted to bestowing praise, even Carpini could not refuse his tribute of applause, adding, however, what was probably very true, that if the youthful composer had consulted his master, "it might have been much better."

About this time young Clementi's proficiency on the harpsichord, which, notwithstanding his other studies, he had assiduously practised, attracted the notice of Mr. Peter Beckford, then on his travels in Italy. Mr. Beckford prevailed on the parents to consign their son's future education to his care, and brought him to his seat in Dorsetshire, where the society and conversation of a family distinguished by literary habits and taste, as much as by wealth and rank, must have contributed in no small degree to inspire that relish for the whole circle of the belles lettres which led Clementi, independent of the study of his own art, to acquire

an uncommon proficiency in both the living and the dead languages, and an extensive acquaintance with literature and science in general. The plan of study adopted by such a man, left in early youth to steer his own course, undirected and almost unassisted, would afford, if completely developed, so many valuable lessons, that we regret our inability to lay more than an outline of it before our readers. The works of Corelli, Alessandro, Scarlatti, Paradies, and Handel, were the sources from which he derived instruction, and the examples on which he formed his taste; while at the same time he was indefatigable in the practice of the instrument to which he had devoted himself. But his ruling principle was, that steady and regular apportionment of every moment of time to its own pre-arranged occupation, which affords the surest promise of success, whatever may be our pursuits; and without which, no great results were ever achieved either in study or in action. To this Clementi, young as he was, adhered strictly; his sleep, his meals, his relaxation, and his studies, had each their appointed time and their fixed duration; and if by the demands of his patron on his society, or his powers of contributing to the amusement of the family or guests, or any other accidental circumstance, the order was broken, and that proportion of time which he had set apart for the study of his own profession curtailed, he drew upon the allotted hours of rest for the arrears; and would rise even in the cheerless cold of mid-winter, to read if he had light at command, or to practise on his harpsichord, if light as well as fire were unattainable. His success was equal to his zeal and assiduity; at eighteen he not only surpassed all his contemporaries in execution, taste, and expression, but had already composed (though it was not published till three years after) his celebrated Opera 2, — a work, which, by the common assent of all musicians, is entitled to the credit of being the basis on which the whole fabric of modern pianoforte sonatas has been founded; and which—though it is now, from the immense progress which manual dexterity has made in the last sixty years, within the powers of even second-

rate performers—was, at the period of its production, the despair of such pianists as J. C. Bach and Schroeter, who were content to admire it, but declined the attempt to play what the latter professor declared could be executed only by its own composer, or by that great performer of all wonders, and conqueror of all difficulties, the Devil.

While thus assiduous in the prosecution of his studies, Clementi was not, as many men of studious habits are, inattentive to his personal health. Aware of the injurious effects of constant sedentary application, he used every means that abstemiousness in diet, and a regular and judicious plan of exercise afforded, to counteract them; and by this plan he found his spirits unfailingly elastic, and his powers of application to study seldom wearied.

The time arranged by his father for his stay with Mr. Beckford was no sooner completed, than his love of independence determined Clementi immediately to quit that gentleman's house, and commence his career in the arena of the metropolis, where he was speedily engaged to preside at the harpsichord, in the orchestra of the King's Theatre; and his reputation increased so rapidly, that he soon received as high remuneration for his lessons or performances as Bach, or any of his most celebrated contemporaries. In 1780, at the suggestion of Pacchierotti, he determined to make a tour on the Continent, whither his compositions and the fame of his executive talents had long preceded him. In Paris, which was the first capital he visited, he remained till the summer of 1781, when he proceeded, by the way of Strasburgh and Munich, to Vienna, enjoying everywhere the patronage of sovereigns, the esteem and admiration of his brother musicians, and the enthusiastic applauses of the public. Accustomed to the measured and somewhat cold plaudits of an English audience, the first burst of Parisian enthusiasm so astonished him, that he frequently afterwards jocosely remarked, he could hardly believe himself the same Clementi in Paris as in London. In Vienna he became acquainted with Haydn, Mozart, Salieri, and many other celebrated musicians, then resident in that city; and played

alternately with Mozart, before the Emperor Joseph II. and the Grand Duke (afterwards Emperor) Paul of Russia and his consort. On one occasion, when the imperial trio alone were present, Clementi and Mozart were desired to play; some question of etiquette arising as to who should make the first display of his powers, the Emperor decided it by motioning Clementi to the instrument, saying at the same time, in allusion to his Roman birth, "tocca all' eglese di dar l'essempio." Clementi having preluded for some time, played a sonata; and was followed by Mozart, who, without any further exordium than striking the chord of the key, also performed a sonata. The Grand Duchess then said, that one of her masters had written some pieces for her which were beyond her powers, but she should very much like to hear their effect; and, producing two, Clementi immediately played one, and Mozart the other, at sight. She next proposed a theme, on which, at her request, these two great masters extemporized alternately, to the astonishment, as well as delight, of their imperial audience. The plan was evidently premeditated, and hardly fair towards the eminent professors, who were thus surprised into an immediate competition and comparison of abilities. The result was equally honourable to them as men, between whom there was no unworthy feeling of jealousy, and creditable to them as artists, on whose talents no demand, however unexpected or unusual, could be too great.

In the course of his tour on the Continent, Clementi had written in Paris his Operas 5 and 6., and in Vienna his Operas 7, 8, 9, and 10. On his return to England, he deemed it necessary to publish his celebrated toccata, with a sonata, Opera 11., a surreptitious and very erroneous copy having been printed without his knowledge in France. About the same time he published his Opera 12., on the fourth sonata of which Dr. Crotch and Mr. S. Wesley afterwards gave public lectures. In 1783, J. B. Cramer, then about fourteen or fifteen years old, and who had previously received some lessons from Schroeter, and was studying counterpoint under Abel, became his pupil, and attended him almost daily, until

Clementi went again, for a short time, to Paris; whence, however, he returned the following year; and from 1784 to 1802 continued in London, pursuing his professional career with increasing reputation as an instructor, composer, and performer. The number of excellent pupils formed by him during this period, proved his superior skill in the art of tuition; the invariable success which attended his public performances attested his pre-eminent talents as a player; and his compositions from Opera 15. to 40. as well as his excellent "Introduction to the Art of Playing the Piano-forte," are a lasting proof of his application and genius.

About the year 1800, upon the failure of the house of Longman and Broderip, by which Mr. Clementi lost considerably, he was induced, by the representations of some eminent mercantile men, to engage in the music publishing and piano-forte manufacturing business. A new firm was quickly formed, at the head of which was Mr. Clementi's name; and from that period he declined taking any more pupils, but dedicated the time which was not demanded by his professional studies or mercantile engagements, to improving the mechanism and construction of the instrument, of which he might be said to have first established the popularity. It was soon after his becoming a partner in the house which bears his name, that he arranged Haydn's Oratorio, "The Creation," for the piano-forte and to English words.

Availing himself of the peace of 1802, Mr. Clementi proceeded in the autumn of that year for the third time to the Continent; where he remained eight years. He set out, accompanied by his favourite pupil, Field, whose early perfection he had equal pride and satisfaction in exhibiting to the audiences of Paris and Vienna. In the latter city, he meant to have left his pupil under the instruction of the celebrated Albrechtsberger, while he himself proceeded to St. Petersburg; but when the moment of parting arrived, Field expressed such deep regret at being separated from his first master, that Clementi, unable to resist his entreaties, took him

on to the Russian metropolis, where he introduced him to all his friends, and laid the foundation of his fortune.

The principal piano-forte player and teacher in St. Petersburg, at the period of Clementi's arrival there, was a young professor named Zeuner, a native of Dresden, who immediately and successfully applied to the great master for instruction and advice in the pursuit of his studies, and became so attached to him, that when Clementi left Russia, Zeuner gave up all his pupils and connections in that capital, and accompanied his master to Berlin, and thence to Dresden, where he remained, prepared by the instructions of Clementi, to acquire the reputation to which he afterwards rose. After parting with Zeuner, Clementi took under his protection a very unassuming, but able young professor of Dresden, named Klen-  
gel, who accompanied him to Vienna, and, the following year, on a tour through Switzerland, and back to Berlin. About this time he also became acquainted with, and contributed in no small degree, by the exhibition of his own powers, to cherish and bring forward the then rising talents of Kalkbrenner.

In Berlin, Clementi married his first wife, and soon after set out with his bride on a tour to Rome and Naples; returning to Berlin only to lose his partner in childbed of that son, whose promising talents and dispositions were the pride of his father's declining years, and whose premature and melancholy fate, by the accidental discharge of his own pistol, must be even yet fresh in the recollection of our readers. To dissipate the sorrow occasioned by the loss of a beloved wife, the widower had recourse to travel: and, accompanied by another promising young pupil, Berger, he set off for Petersburg, where he found his old friend and scholar, Field, in the enjoyment of all that reputation and talent could give him — in fact, the musical idol of the Russian capital. After a short stay in Russia, he again plunged into the bustle and excitement of journeying, and proceeded to Vienna.

The death of his brother now called Mr. Clementi to Rome, to arrange the family affairs; which done, he was anxious to

return immediately to England. This, however, was more easily wished than accomplished. So completely had the war interrupted all communication, that for some time he had not even received remittances from London; and, as he told an intimate friend, had been obliged to live upon the snuff-boxes and rings which had been presented to him in the course of his travels: and the attempt to proceed from any part of the Continent, within his reach, to England, was attended not only with difficulty, but with danger. At length, after making short residences in Milan and other cities, he, in the summer of 1810, found an opportunity, which, though hazardous, he did not hesitate to embrace, and once more landed in safety on the British shores. In the following year he married his second amiable wife, then Miss Gisborne, a lady possessed of considerable talent and many accomplishments.

During the whole period of his residence on the Continent, he had published only a single sonata, Opera 41.: it is not to be supposed, however, that even in the bustle of travelling, either his mind or his pen was suffered to rest unemployed; on the contrary, he composed several symphonies for a full orchestra, and prepared materials for his "Gradus ad Parnassum." His first publication, after his return, was an "Appendix" to his "Introduction to the Art of playing on the Piano-forte." Subsequently he adapted the twelve grand symphonies of Haydn, for piano-fortes, flute, violin, and violoncello; the "Seasons" of Haydn, for voices and piano-forte; Mozarts overture to "Don Giovanni," and various select pieces from the vocal works of the same great master.

In the years 1820 and 1821, he published several original works for the piano-forte; his sonata Op. 46. (dedicated to Kalkbrenner); his capriccios, Op. 47.; a fantasia, Op. 49.; a set of sonatas, Op. 50. (dedicated to Cherubini); and an arrangement of the six symphonies of Mozart, for the piano-forte, with accompaniments. The latest of his original compositions not only exhibit much of the vigour which marked his earlier productions, but prove that he was not resting upon his oars while the tide of taste was floating by him.

In the mean time he also gave the musical world two elementary books, of the highest value; his "Practical Harmony," which was published in four volumes, between 1811 and 1815; and his "Gradus ad Parnassum," in three volumes.

The return of Mr. Clementi to his adopted country, as may be naturally expected, was hailed with expectation as well as delight, both by the profession and by the musical public. Those who remembered his past performances, looked anxiously forward to a renewal of their pleasures; while the young hoped to avail themselves of his instructions, or at least to have an opportunity of studying his manner, and forming or correcting their style by the contemplation of so great a master. All were alike doomed to disappointment: from the moment of his return to England, Clementi determined neither to take pupils nor to play in public; and, we believe, the only two instances in which (out of the bosom of his own family, or the circle of his immediate friends) his fingers have been heard on the keys, were first at one of the Philharmonic Concerts, in which a symphony of Haydn, containing at the end a few bars for the piano-forte solo, was selected for the purpose of enabling the assembled professors to boast that they had once more heard Clementi play; and the second and last at the dinner, to which that profession, some time after, invited their veteran associate.\*

Of the Philharmonic Society Mr. Clementi was one of the original founders, and he generally conducted a concert each season. To this society he presented two of his manuscript symphonies, the first of which was performed the 1st of March, 1819; and a grand overture, performed the 22d of March, 1824. In the same year he conducted also the performance of one of his own symphonies at the "Concert Spirituel."

Clementi had, during many years of his long life, been accustomed to receive all the rewards or praises that sove-

\* Of course we do not include in this statement his nearly annual appearance as conductor of the Philharmonic, but refer to solo playing only.

reigns or the public could bestow on superior talent; a compliment yet remained to be paid him, valuable as it was unsought — honourable as, in this country at least, it was rare. At the suggestion of Messrs. Cramer and Moscheles, it was proposed to call the veteran artist from his retirement to an entertainment, at which all the *élite* of the profession then in London, foreigners as well as English, should assemble to receive and congratulate, on his “frosty but kindly” age, the instructor of many, the admired and looked up to of all. A committee to regulate the arrangements was soon formed, and the entertainment took place at the Albion Tavern on the 17th of December, 1827. After several glees and songs, and after Moscheles had performed one of Clementi’s sonatas, Mr. C. Potter one of his capriccios, and Messrs. J. B. Cramer and Moscheles his duet, Op. 14., in a style worthy of their own talents and the presence of the composer, the toast, “The immortal memory of Handel,” was the signal for the veteran himself to approach the instrument, and, as the chairman, Sir George Smart, announced to the delighted company, “just touch the keys.” Clementi had throughout life been celebrated for his powers of extemporaneous playing; when drawing unpremeditatedly on the resources of his own mind, his fancy seemed as unbounded as his science, his delicacy as polished as his learning was profound. Early in his professional career, Dussek, when asked to play after Clementi had been extemporizing, replied, “To attempt any thing in the same style, would be presumption; and what sonata, what concerto, or what other regular composition, could a man play, that would not be insipid after what we have heard?” In his tours on the Continent, the most learned professors had been delighted by his feeling and invention, as much as they were astonished by his facility and resources. On this occasion he indulged his assembled friends with a last proof that his fancy was unfettered by age, and his finger unpalsied by years. Paying to the giant composer, whose immortal memory had just been drunk, the compliment which some future artist of equal eminence may pay to himself,

Clementi chose a subject from the first organ concerto as the theme of his performance, and then proceeded to extemporize in a style in which those who had been his contemporaries or pupils immediately recognised the undiminished powers of their old friend or instructor; and at which those who for the first time heard the more than septuagenarian artist, could hardly find terms to express their delight and surprise. The plaudits were long, loud, and to their object almost overpowering.

Mr. Clementi was a most amiable and social man, and very liberal and kind to his brother professors. Surrounded by all

“ Which should accompany old age ;  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends ;”

his latter years afforded a bright proof of the respect and reward which, to the last moment of protracted life, will attend upon a youth spent in temperance and virtuous industry, and a manhood guided by honour, and dedicated to laudable ambition.

The death of Mr. Clementi took place at his cottage in the Vale of Evesham, Worcestershire, on the 16th of April, 1832. His remains were consigned to their long repose on the 28th of April, in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, in the neighbourhood of Bartleman, Shield, Williams, and others, who have earned an honourable place in the musical history of their country. It was expected that the united force of the metropolitan choirs, assisted by many volunteers, would give to the musical solemnities an unusual power and grandeur; and this was in a measure realised, though the public demonstration of sympathy and respect, on the part of the musical world, fell far short of what had been anticipated. Among the followers of the corpse were—J. B. Cramer, Moscheles, Novello, Field, Horsley, Kramer, Sir G. Smart, &c. The musical service (with the exception of a composition by Mr. Horsley, to the words “ I heard a voice from Heaven,”) was the same as usual. Never were the mingled pathos and sublimity of the cathedral solemnities more intensely felt — not even when the glare of midnight

torches, the tolling of minute bells, and the measured thunder of artillery have lent their aid, at the obsequies of kings. The cheerful noon-sun shone through the cathedral windows when the procession began to move to that memorable verse, "Man that is born of a woman;" it was the illumination most befitting so clear and natural a spirit as Clementi.

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Principally from "The Harmonicon,"