

THE COLLECTOR AND THE DENTIST (BEING NO. XXI. OF 'THE COLLECTOR' SERIES).

THE Collector sat in the Dentist's chair. A tooth had for a long time urged that it should be attended to, but the Collector found so many excuses that the tooth at last became exceedingly angry, and issued an ultimatum. So the Collector at last had yielded, and here he was. The Dentist hovered about him in that cheerful fashion that dentists have, and fingered his steel instruments with loving touch.

'I'm afraid we can't save the tooth,' the Dentist remarked in his best 'chair-side' manner. 'You should have come some time about a couple of months ago. Once a tooth begins to decay it is astonishing how rapidly it gets from bad to worse.' The Collector had been told that by the tooth itself, but had ignored the warning.

'Better have gas,' the Dentist suggested. The Collector resigned himself to the inevitable, and gas lent its soothing aid to the extraction. Presently he was gazing, more in sorrow than in anger, on his enemy lying prostrate in the open palm of the Dentist, who with keen professional interest was examining the fangs of the tooth. At last he spoke:-

'Rather a nasty one. Far better it should be out.'

Meanwhile the Collector, not wholly recovered from the gas, heard some heartrending groans from an adjoining apartment.

'Your other patient appears to be having a bad time.'

The Dentist looked up in rather a mystified way. At last he said, comprehending 'Oh, that's no' a patient; it's a piper.'

The Dentist smiled at the Collector's look of inquiry, and it was noticeable that while up to the present he had concealed his North-of-the-Tweed origin in an accent that appertained to the English southern counties, at the mention of his national instrument his native Doric speech was called forth from its hidden recesses.

The Collector pricked up his ears. 'A piper?'

'Yes, a piper. He's a friend of ours and he spends the evening with us now and again. We're rather fond of a pipe tune.' The Collector listened more attentively as the strains of the pipe burst upon his ear again.

'That sounds like "Tullochgoriem." '

The Dentist looked surprised. 'Yes, he often plays that. I should not have thought that you, an Englishman, would have known the tune.'

The Collector rose from the dental chair with some irritation.

'Why,' said he, 'should the fact of my being an Englishman prevent me from knowing Scottish music from A to Z? The worst of you Scotchmen is that you absolutely resent anyone, except of your own nationality, from knowing, or appreciating, the beauties or condemning the faults of the arts of your country. It is not exclusively your fault, I grant, for the Irish have the same feeling.

If a man, an Englishman, dares either to appreciate or to criticize the verses of your national bard you say to him, "You don't understand fully the spirit or the words of Burns," which is quite untrue. Now in regard to your Scottish music, while quite able to value all its beauty and understand it from its own standpoint, I do not, as so many of you Scottish people do, place it on the highest pinnacle of national music to the exclusion of others. Some of its melodies I regard as heaven-born, but there are also heaven-born melodies of England and Ireland, and other countries.'

'You appear,' said the Dentist, in a tone that might imply irony, 'to know a good deal about the subject.'

The Collector was touched on the raw. 'Sir,' he said with dignity, 'if the possession of one of the most complete collections of early Scottish printed music that has ever been got together enables me to speak, I may claim to know a good deal of the subject.' He continued: 'If you and your friend the piper care to examine it you are welcome.'

The Dentist changed his tone as he saw he was talking with a man, though an Englishman, who knew a subject that should properly only belong to one from the North, and his wonder increased as our Collector friend began to reel off the titles of his rarer Scottish works, most of which were quite unknown to the Dentist.

Having accepted the Collector's invitation, the Dentist came one day to look over the library of Scottish music and song that his patient eagerly placed before him.

'Here,' said the Collector, exhibiting a small folio, 'is the first engraved collection of Scottish song united to the music. It is *The Orpheus Caledonius*, the title no doubt suggested by Purcell's *Orpheus Britannicus*. It was published in January, 1725, and the music and songs were collected by one William Thomson, a King's Trumpeter, who was distinguished for his sweetness in singing Scots' songs. He was a hanger-on of the Court, and probable was a singing master to Princess Caroline, wife of George the Second. His second edition, in two octavo volumes, was published in 1733.'

The Collector continued to expound. 'Observe the lengthy list of subscribers commencing with the Royal Princesses; we have handfuls of dukes, duchesses, earls and their ladies, and many another historically known name.'

'I see,' said the Dentist, 'that many of the songs are marked as 'composed by David Rezzio'; he spells the name with an e, not an i. What is your opinion of this claim?'

'Well,' said the Collector thoughtfully, 'although this origin has been laughed at a great deal I am not disposed to dismiss it altogether without some consideration. Rizzio was, as we know, a musician in favour with the unfortunate Queen Mary about the middle of the sixteenth century. An Italian, clever in his art, he must, without doubt, have had great influence on the fashionable music of his time. Now it is to be noticed that the airs which Thomson, and others later, assign to Rizzio, are distinctly 'art' tunes, and have not the character of many simpler tunes united to the early Scots' songs. Thomson marks as by Rizzio some very 'curly' tunes (as "Bush aboon Traguair," "The Bonny Boatman," "An Thou wast My ain thing," and some others that, to me, have a decided Italian flavour. Even the "Scotch snap," in which the strathspey and the reel delight, to be found in many Scottish vocal pieces, is claimed to coincide with a type of music born in Italy.'

'You would not, surely,' laughed the Dentist, 'rob us of the chief characteristic of Scots' music.'

'I desire to rob you of nothing,' said the Collector. 'The "snap" can quite easily be a characteristic of both Italian and of Scottish music. The "snap" gives a crispness to the reel which is essential to the dance. It is a trick of the bow in violin playing which no Scotch fiddler would part with.'

'The English composers of pseudo-Scotch songs, from the end of the seventeenth century to James Hook's time, seized upon the "snap" as their chief point in making up a Scotch song. Hook's "Within a Mile of Edinburgh Town" (1780) and the original "'Twas within a Furlong of Edinburgh Town," which was sung in Purcell's "Mock Marriage," 1696, both have this characteristic syncopation. But to return to Rizzio, I fancy his influence and the influence of Italian music caused many a Scotch tune to become Italianized, and others, which now survive as Scottish songs, to be composed in that style. As in our day we have been led astray from our own native talent by foreign influence, so the early Scottish people of culture were led from their native, simple and very beautiful airs into sophisticated paths.'

The Collector was warming himself up to a further disquisition on this subject when the Dentist, looking at his watch, suddenly remembered that he had an appointment for professional attendance, and so the two parted with a promise of further confabulation.

FRANK KIDSON.