

From Mrs. Child's Letters from New York.

Guzikow, the Polish Musician.—Mysterious Music in Pascagoula Bay.

'EVERY flower writes music on the air;' and every tree that grows enshrines a tone within its heart. Do you doubt it? Try the willow and the oak, the elm and the poplar, and see whether each has not its own peculiar sound, waiting only for the master's hand to make them discourse sweet music. One of the most remarkable instruments ever invented gives proof of this. M. Guzikow was a Polish Jew; a shepherd in the service of a nobleman. From earliest childhood, music seemed to pervade his whole being. As he tended his flocks in the loneliness of the fields, he was for ever fashioning flutes and reeds from the trees that grew around him. He soon observed that the tone of the flute varied according to the wood he used; by degrees he came to know every tree by its sound; and the forests stood round him a silent oratorio. The skill with which he played on his rustic flutes attracted attention. The nobility invited him to their houses, and he became a favourite of fortune. Men never grew weary of hearing him. But soon it was perceived that he was pouring forth the fountains of his life in song. Physicians said he must abjure the flute, or die. It was a dreadful sacrifice; for music to him *was* life. His old familiarity with tones of the forest came to his aid. He took four round sticks of wood, and bound them closely together with bands of straw; across these he arranged numerous pieces of round, smooth wood, of different kinds. They were arranged irregularly to the eye, though harmoniously to the ear; for some jutted beyond the straw-bound foundation at one end, and some at the other; in and out, in apparent confusion. The whole was lashed together with twine, as men would fasten a raft. This was laid on a common table, and struck with two small ebony sticks. Rude as the instrument appeared, Guzikow brought from it such rich and liquid melody, that it seemed to take the heart of man on its wings, and bear it aloft to the throne of God. They who have heard it, describe it as far exceeding even the miraculous warblings of Paganini's violin. The emperor of Austria heard it, and forthwith took the Polish peasant into his own especial service. In some of the large cities, he now and then gave a concert, by royal permission; and on such an occasion he was heard by a friend of mine at Hamburg.

The countenance of the musician was very pale and haggard, and his large dark eyes wildly expressive. He covered his head, according to the custom of the Jews; but the small cap of black velvet was not to be distinguished in colour from the jet black hair that fell from under it, and flowed over his shoulders in glossy, natural ringlets. He wore the costume of his people, an ample robe, that fell about him in graceful folds. From head to foot all was black, as his own hair and eyes, relieved only by the burning brilliancy of a diamond on his breast. The butterflies of fashion were of course attracted by the unusual and poetic beauty of his appearance; and ringlets *a la Guzikow* were the order of the day.

Before this singularly gifted being stood a common wooden table, on which reposed his rude-looking invention. He touched it with the ebony sticks. At first you heard a sound as of wood; the orchestra rose higher, till it drowned its voice; then gradually subsiding, the wonderful instrument rose above other sounds, clear-warbling, like a nightingale; the orchestra rose higher, like the coming of the breeze—but above them all, swelled the sweet tones of the magic instrument, rich, liquid, and strong, like a sky-lark piercing the heavens! They who heard it listened in delighted wonder, that the trees could be made to speak thus under the touch of genius.

There is something pleasant to my imagination in the fact that every tree has its own peculiar note, and is a performer in the great concert of the universe, which for ever rises before the throne of Jehovah. But when the idea is applied to *man*, it is painful in the extreme. The emperor of Russia is said to have an imperial band, in which each man is doomed all his life long to sound one note, that he may acquire the greatest possible perfection. The effect of the whole is said to be admirable; but nothing would tempt me to hear this human musical machine. A tree is a unit in creation; though, like everything else, it

stands in relation to all things. But every human soul represents the universe. There is horrible profanation in compelling a living spirit to utter but one note. Theological sects strive to do this continually; for they are sects because they magnify some one attribute of deity, or see but one aspect of the divine government. To me, their fragmentary echoes are most discordant; but doubtless the angels listen to them as a whole, and perhaps they hear a pleasant chorus.

Music, whether I listen to it, or try to analyse it, ever fills me with thoughts which I cannot express—because I cannot sing; for nothing but music can express the emotions to which it gives birth. Language, even the richest flow of metaphor, is too poor to do it. That the universe moves to music, I have no doubt; and could I but penetrate this mystery, where the finite passes into the infinite, I should surely know how the world was created. Pythagoras supposed that the heavenly bodies, in their motion, produced music inaudible to mortal ears. These motions he believed conformed to certain fixed laws, that could be stated in numbers, corresponding to the numbers which express the harmony of sounds. This 'music of the spheres' has been considered an idea altogether fanciful; but the immortal Kepler applied the Pythagorean theory of numbers, and musical intervals, to the distances of the planets; and a long time after, Newton discovered and acknowledged the importance of the application. Said I not that the universe moved to music? The planets dance before Jehovah; and music is the echo of their motions. Surely the ear of Beethoven had listened to it, when he wrote those misnamed 'waltzes' of his, which, as John S. Dwight says, 'remind us of no dance, unless it be the dances of the heavenly systems in their sublime career through space.'

Have you ever seen Retszel's illustration of Schiller's Song of the Bell? If you have, and know how to appreciate its speaking gracefulness, its earnest depth of life, you are richer than Rothchild or Astor; for a vision of beauty is an everlasting inheritance. Perhaps none but a German, would have thus entwined the sound of a bell with the whole of human life; for with them the bell mingles with all of mirth, sorrow, and worship. Almost all the German and Belgian towns are provided with chiming bells, which play at noon and evening. There was such a set of musical bells on the church of St. Nicholas, at Hamburg. The bell-player was a gray-headed man, who had for many years rung forth the sonorous chimes, that told the hours to the busy throng below. When the church was on fire, either from infirmity, or want of thought, the old man remained at his post. In the terrible confusion of the blazing city, no one thought of him, till the high steeple was seen wreathed with flame. As the throng gazed upward, the firm walls of the old church, that had stood for ages, began to shake. At that moment the bells sounded the well-known German Choral, which usually concludes the Protestant service, 'Nun danket alle Gott'—'Now all thank God.' Another moment, and there was an awful crash! The bells, which had spoken into the hearts of so many generations, went silent for ever. They and the old musician sunk together into a fiery grave; but the echo of their chimes goes sounding on through the far eternity.

They have a beautiful custom at Hamburg. At ten o'clock in the morning, when men are hurrying hither and you in the great whirlpool of business, from the high church tower comes down the sound of sacred music, from a large and powerful horn appropriated to that service. It is as if an angel spake from the clouds, reminding them of immortality.

You have doubtless heard of the mysterious music that peals over the bay at West Pascagoula. It has for a long time been one of the greatest wonders of the South-west. Multitudes have heard it, rising as it were from the water, like the drone of a bagpipe, then floating away—away—away—in the distance—soft, plaintive, and fairy-like, as if Eolian harps sounded with richer melody through the liquid element; but none have been able to account for the beautiful phenomenon.

There are several legends touching these mysterious sounds. One of them relates to the extinction of the Pascagoula tribe of Indians; the remnant of which, many years ago, it is said, deliberately entered the waters of the bay and drowned themselves, to escape capture and torture, when attacked by a neighbouring