

THE HOME OF THE GERMAN BAND

In 1902, the Scottish linguist and music lover, George Barnet Gardiner, wrote this article about the German bands which travelled the world to bring high quality music to anyone on the street. The band of Michael Gilcher had been an inspiration to him in his childhood, and he tells of his twenty year search throughout Europe for the music they played. He eventually met Michael Gilcher and some other musicians in Essweiler in their home valley in the Hardt uplands of Bavaria. The wanderings of the musicians across continents and cultures, and Gardiner's own search through the countries of Europe is a wonderful celebration of multiculturalism, before the First World War drove a wedge between the friendship across the nations that Gardiner celebrates.

Bob Askew July 2015.

THE HOME OF THE GERMAN BAND by George B. Gardiner **Article in Blackwood's Magazine, Vol 172. October 1902.**

As far as the writer's memory extends, the golden age of street music in the capital of Scotland covers the seventh and half of the eighth decade of the last century. The piano-organ had not yet been invented to furnish employment for the needy Neapolitan, and din our ears the fleeting frivolities of the London Theatre and Music Hall. The more classic Barrel-organ might occasionally remind us to 'paddle our own canoe'; but the burden of its song was "The Old Hundred", "Auld Robin Gray" and fine operatic melodies like that in Halevy's "La Juive", which has been so exquisitely arranged for piano by Stephen Heller.

The musical field was also occupied by German bands, good, bad and indifferent. At that date five or six would be found in Edinburgh, and a corresponding number in all our large towns. It is with a German band of quite exceptional merit that I am about to deal in the following pages. This is the brass and reed band of the late Herr Gilcher of Essweiler in Rhenish Bavaria, which played in the streets of Edinburgh from 1867 to 1872.

As a boy, I used to follow these players for hours with melomaniac *archarnement*. I observed that the bandsmen were as regular in their courses as the planets; and I got to know their pitches (as they are technically termed) so accurately, that I could track them out at any hour of the day. On Monday morning, emerging with burnished instruments from an obscure lodging, they began their weekly rounds in York Place; on Wednesday evening, after playing before a tobacconist's shop to a smoking parliament, they would serenade Robert Louis Stevenson; then they pitched their stands a little way off in front of the house of Mr (now Sir Alexander C.) Mackenzie; but before beginning their performance they considerately asked if they would not be interrupting him in his work. Late in the summer evenings the band was heard playing to large crowds either in Princes Street or in some street adjoining. The programme which my friends performed at a particular stance commonly numbered three or four pieces- an overture, an operatic selection, a waltz and a polka. Their *repertoire* was remarkable. The list of twenty overtures included not only compositions like the overtures to 'Tancredi', 'Norma' and 'The Barber of Seville', but even Auber's 'Masaniello' and Mozart's 'La Clemenzadi Tito', which are formidable enough to a professional orchestra. The operatic

selections were drawn from the whole range of Italian and the most popular French and German operas.

For nothing or a copper one could enjoy the finest arias from 'Il Traviatore', 'La Traviata', 'Lucrezia Borgia', 'Faust', 'Le Prophete', 'der freischutz', and 'Zauberflote'; but Herr Gilcher went further afield and regaled his patrons with melodies from 'Attila', 'Belasario' and 'Anna Bolena'. Though the thin orchestration, incoherence, and lack of artistic unity which mar the earlier Italian operas have justly driven them from the stage, it is indeed to be regretted that the beautiful melodies which they contain- so well adapted as they are to the sustained notes of the clarinet, the cornet, and the trombone- have given place in the programmes of our military bands to the selections from the comic operas of the hour. As an adjunct to a witty libretto, and set off by pretty faces, costumes, and scenery, this light class of music may perhaps be endured in a theatre, but it really seems a dissipation of energy for thirty grown men to spend their breath in producing sound which yields so little sense.

In the region of dance music Herr Gilcher was no less fastidious. Far from pandering to the vulgar taste, he sought, like Mr Lowe, to educate his masters. Scorning the platitudes and banalities of the English and the French school, he confined himself mainly to the classical waltzes of Lanner, Labitzky, the Strauses, and Gungl, - compositions to which our mothers and grandmothers danced as girls, but which, now neglected on account of their difficulty, are only to be heard in Austria, their original home. The good old waltz is more than an engine to make you dance: having come from the heart, it goes to the heart; and to it may well be applied the saying of Hans Andersen, 'Where words fail, music speaks.' I shall never forget the storm of enthusiasm that burst forth at the last concert which Johann Strauss conducted in Leipzig. As he was laying down his baton, thousands of voices exclaimed, 'Donau,' 'Donau' ('The Blue Danube'), and the *Kapellmeister* was not allowed to quit the platform before he had performed his masterpiece. Another waltz, 'The Schonbrunner' of Lanner has become as dear to the Viennese as 'Auld Lang Syne' to the Scotch; and one may often hear an entire beer-garden join in the swing of the second movement. Lanner was represented by 'Die Kosenden,' Labitsky by 'The Bedford' and 'The Essex,' and Johann Strauss by many of his recent waltzes, and by those exquisite waltzes of an earlier period, 'The Lockvogel,' and 'The Volksanger,' the latter written in the Landler style. In Gungl's compositions Herr Gilcher was a specialist. As a matter of course he played many familiar waltzes, like 'Soldatenlieder,' 'Hydropatanze,' and the 'Amorettenantze,' which experts consider the best instrumented of Gungl's works; but his musical library included not a few earlier waltzes of singular beauty and pathos which, unfortunately, are now almost forgotten. Of these it will suffice to mention 'Terpsichores Schwingen,' 'Fleurs du Fantasie,' 'Immortellen,' composed in memory of Strauss the elder, and 'Wanderlieder,' which is compact with melody from beginning to end.

The little band was eight strong. The instruments comprised two clarionets, a flute, a cornet, a Belgian trombone, two French horns, and a bass. One or two of the players were weak, but the sweet and mellow tones of the B flat clarinet and of the trombone were the envy of many a good player; and the boy who played the flute rose to be flautist in the Boston Orchestra, at

one time conducted by George Henschel. Herr Rumpf performed on the clarinet with much expression 'Roberto, oh tu che adoro,' by Meyerbeer, and 'Ernaani, Ernanai, Involami,' by Verdi, and with the E flat clarinet-player the famous 'Mira, O Norma.' Two favourite pieces of the trombone-player were a cavatina by Gagliardi and 'Tutto e sciolto' from 'La Sonnambula.' The short duet between the clarinet and the trombone in the introduction to Marriot's 'Zora Waltz' could hardly have been surpassed by professional musicians. The *ensemble* too was excellent. With such skill were the pieces reproduced from the score for military bands or adapted from the piano edition, that much of the full effect was preserved.

In 1872 the band suddenly migrated to America, and I was disconsolate. So zealous a votary had I been of my eight Muses, that already I knew by heart their entire *repertoire*; and many a street and many a lamp had for me its musical history. Like a true enthusiast I could not rest content until I discovered the titles of the pieces they played, so as to procure piano arrangements as a personal memorial of the performances of the band. Some of these titles I learned from the men themselves; some I have never found; others I have unearthed with difficulty. Of the trouble I had in the process I shall give you one or two illustrations. Many years later, while comparing notes with a musical friend, I was surprised to find that the first movement of one of my store of waltzes was identical with the Danish Volksleid, 'Necken.' I failed to procure from Copenhagen a waltz based on that theme. Several attempts I made at home were equally unsuccessful. At last a music seller recognised my tune as an English waltz published thirty years before, and by sending to London the first few bars discovered the object of my quest in 'The Watersprite Waltz,' for which Coote had sought and found inspiration in the song of the Sea-god. Another unknown waltz I heard in a theatre, and promptly asking the title from one of the orchestra, received the answer, 'The Petvot Waltz.' With this unpromising title I vainly tried to procure a copy. On hearing the waltz again I asked my informant to write the name down. It proved to be 'The Bedford Waltz,' which his foreign tongue had transformed into Petvot. It was not until 1895 that I chanced upon the title of a striking march which I have heard from no other band than that of Herr Gilcher. Brahms Dances and Liszt's Rhapsodies had developed in me a love for Hungarian music, and love grew to a passion when I heard the marvellous fire and rhythm of the band which with Herr Barcza has so often visited this country. In order to explore Hungarian music I went to Buda Pesth, where, among many Magyar treasures, I bought by chance a collection of five revolutionary marches of the time of Kossuth. In this little book I found, after twenty- three years, my favourite march, the defiant 'Jasz Kun,' from the province of Cumania in Hungary. It is called in German 'Die Sensenmanner,' or 'The scythemen,' from the improvised weapons with which the peasants fought in the revolution of 1848.

Having learned in the summer of 1895 from some Edinburgh *Musikanten* or street musicians that my old bandmaster and Herr Jacob Gilcher, his brother in law, had returned from America and settled in their old home, I resolved to make a pilgrimage to the remnant of the band which had first inspired me with a love of music. From Kaiserslautern in the Palatinate, fifty miles as the crow flies south-west of Mainz, I travelled on a fine September morning to Wolfstein, in the beautiful valley of the Lauter. The Lauter flows through pleasant meadow-land flanked by basaltic

or by sandstone mountains, covered to the summit with forests of pine. Wine is extensively grown on the lower slopes, and a tolerable brand takes its name from the *Musikantenmetropolis*, Wolfstein, which nestles picturesquely at the base of the Konigsberg, 1700 feet in height. The Roman road to Moguntiacum (Mainz) crosses the shoulder of the Konigsberg, and the whole neighbourhood is rich in antiquities, many of which have been removed to the provincial museum at Speyer. Herr Gilcher, then burgomaster of the village of Essweiler, was by arrangement waiting for me at Wilfstein station, and by his expectant look I recognised my friend in a hale old man of over seventy, with snow-white hair, moustache, and Napoleon beard, as erect and imposing as a general. After shaking hands with me, he said, 'I scarcely understand whom I have the honour to entertain as my guest.' I replied, 'I am the boy who, twenty five years ago, followed your band in the streets of Edinburgh. 'Alles was sonnig und wonnig war in meiner Jugend hangt mit der Capelle Gilcher zusammen.' (All that was sunny and happy in my youth is bound up with Gilcher's band.)

We crossed the rails to Schneider's Inn, and over a glass of Wolfsteiner talked of days gone by; and when I sang or whistled old tunes, Herr Gilcher was proud to see that he had not been forgotten in Edinburgh. A weather-beaten countryman in the room, with shaggy black beard and wideawake hat, and all the air of a colonial, addressing me in good English, expressed his surprise at my musical memory. I told him that, though I was no musician, I was at least fond of music.

'Where did you learn English?' I asked.

'In Liverpool, sir.'

'What were you doing there?'

Looking towards the burgomaster, he replied, 'I was fourteen years in Liverpool in the same business as Mr Mayor, sir.' At eleven o'clock, a late hour for dinner in a district where the peasants, to avoid noonday heat, are at work in summer by four in the morning, we had a simple but excellent table d'hot of five courses with wine, for which my host paid 1s. 2d. a-head. There are no cabs in Wolfstein, but with the help of a chair we mounted into a ladder-cart which the burgomaster had thoughtfully provided, took our seats on a plank covered with a railway rug, and moved off in state for Essweiler, my Liverpool friend acting as driver. As we wound up the hillside under the fruit-trees which line the road, my friends pointed now to a croft, now to a shop or inn, in which was invested the little fortune that some *Musikant* or strolling musician had made in the streets of London, Chicago, or Melbourne. At the outskirts of Essweiler we saluted an Edinburgh *Musikant* home on a holiday, who was just then in his shirt-sleeves, lopping the branches of a tree. It now began to dawn on me that I had reached 'the back o' beyont,' the veritable nursery and home of the German band. To get to the burgomaster's house at the farther end of the village of crofters, we had to thread our way with caution through cattle and sheep, cocks and hens, and all the impediments of a farmyard. The burgomaster took me to his office and showed me the archives of Essweiler; we then passed into the 'best room,' where I was introduced to his wife and daughters, simple but kind country-people.

Over our afternoon coffee Herr Gilcher told me something of his history. After playing one season at Geneva in 1855, he was for several years member of a band in the south of France. He there worked hard at his own instrument, the clarinet, learned to play all the brass instruments, and studied the theory of music to so good a purpose that he wrote an opera entitled 'Telemachus.' He had travelled a short time with the band in the north of Spain, and added a little Spanish to his knowledge of French. Southampton was the first English town in which he woke the echoes; and from there he went again and again with a band of his own in the steamers which plied the West Indies. A free passage to Australia was offered to him with the option of returning at once or of permanently settling in the colony. He and his men pitched their camp in Melbourne, where they shared the honours with the English military bands, occasionally making a round of the squatters, who entertained them hospitably, and did not send them away empty-handed.

Herr Gilcher came to Edinburgh in 1867 with fifteen men who he divided into two bands of eight and seven. At first he appeared as an Apollo Musagetes in the larger band, but subsequently remained behind the scenes, training his men and arranging and harmonising fresh music. The work of adapting a single piece would often occupy him the best part of a day. The bandsmen liked Edinburgh and its people, and especially enjoyed the summer evenings, when they played to appreciative and liberal crowds in the rear of Princes Street. During the holiday season they were to be found on board the Crinan and Oban steamer, and gave concerts in the evening at Oban in the garden of the Great Western Hotel. They suffered much during the severe winter of the siege of Paris; and sometimes their instruments froze like the driver's horn in Baron von Munchhausen.

In 1872 Herr Gilcher removed to Boston, where he had as many as thirty men under his command. It was only for a short time that he played in the streets. Before long he had established his position as a musical entrepreneur, supplying bands for balls, garden-parties, excursions and processions. On the 4th of July he used to appear with his entire force in uniform, and by the novel effects he introduced in his marches he quite vanquished his American rivals. 'By God!' said he 'we killed them all.' Two of his pupils rose from *Musikanten* to be *Musiker* or artist- his son, the flute-player, now dead, and another who has played in the orchestra of the Wagner Opera House at Bayreuth. In 1888 he left four of his sons in good positions in Boston, and returned with a competency to Essweiler, accompanied by the trombone-player, his brother in law, Jacob Gilcher, with whom he had travelled for forty years. He bought a house and a small farm, on which he grew his own wine, was made burgo-master of the village, and stood high among the people of the district. Now that he had retired, he felt the *ennui* of leisure and regretted the days of his activity when he was always rising higher. I reminded him that in his busy life he had accomplished much, and was still doing important work in his office of burgo-master.

We paid a visit to Herr Kilian, the proprietor of a small inn, who was said to be the farthest-travelled *Musikant* in the valley. Unfortunately, he had broken his arm, and I could not 'interview' him. He was a wonderful performer on the trombone, and most enterprising and successful as a bandmaster. In 1868 Herr Kilian started with his men from Barcelona for

Madrid, but were compelled to beat a retreat and withdraw from Spain, in consequence of the political troubles which resulted in the expulsion of Queen Isabella. The following year, at the suggestion of some Essweiler emigrants, he went to America to try his fortune. His band was one of the first to cross the Atlantic. One of their early experiences was to accompany a circus during a whole summer on a tour through the States. He was subsequently in Australia, and from there, I was told, he had visited the Chinese ports; and during an outbreak of cholera he and his men had buried a German doctor, a native of Wolfstein. In the service of an American showman he had seen much of India, and his travels had extended to the Afgan frontier. Although I did not see Herr Kilian, I had the good fortune to meet his brother— a man of eighty, with a clear eye and a severe and resolute expression. When the old man heard me speak of Edinburgh with the burgomaster, he said, 'I've been in Scotland too.'

'When were you there?'

'I think I was there before you, sir.'

'When was that?'

'The first time was in 1842.'

'Then I confess you have the advantage of me. I was not in Scotland in the year 1842. What were you doing in Scotland?'

'Year after year I went there with a band of seven men, and I have travelled on foot as far north as Thurso.'

He then named to me accurately the coast towns of north Inverness. He remembered Edinburgh distinctly— the Castle, the Calton Hill, and strange to say, the place of execution. Here the burgomaster interposed, 'In those days I daresay you knew what is meant by *Maulund-Klauenseuche* (foot and mouth disease)?'

'That we did, but we managed to struggle through.'

'Did you make much in Scotland?' I asked.

'Enough for our wants and something for old age.'

'What did you think of the Scotch?'

'Good, pious, upright people.'

'Well if you have so high an opinion of Scotland, will you drink a glass with me?'

'With pleasure.'

'What are you drinking?'

'*Kummel*, sir.'

In my mind *Kummel* was associated with a dear dinner, a small glass, and a big price; and when the hostess demanded for our two glasses the modest sum of 1d., I was disappointed to find that I had paid so cheap a compliment to this interesting musical veteran, so sincere an admirer of my country.

During this conversation Jacob Gilcher passed the window of Kilian's inn on his way home from his work in the fields, and I recognised him at once by his swinging walk. When we went to see him he was chopping wood in a shed. Looking hard at him, I asked 'Do you know me?'

'No.'

'Well it is no wonder, when you have not seen me for twenty three years. Were you ever in Edinburgh?'

'Yes.'

'Can you recall the house of the Austrian consul?'

'Yes.'

He then remembered distinctly how he had once gone into a house a few doors off, trombone in hand, and talked German with the people. Pointing to his house and stable, 'Do you see that?' he said; 'that's what I bought with the money I made abroad.'

After an early supper the burgomaster, lamp in hand, conducted me to my quarters for the night. 'I am sorry', he said, 'I have not a spare room for you, but,' he added in his charmingly archaic dialect, 'you are to stay in the inn kept by my brother-in-law, his daughter, her husband.' Here, I thought, was a puzzle which only some old lady profound in genealogy could solve, but I did at least succeed in grasping the relationship so circuitously described. A large company was gathered to meet me round the plain deal table of the simple inn,— the Gilchers, two *Musikanten* from Edinburgh, the school-master and his two sons, and a young sculptor who had come home for a holiday. Three bottles of *Landwein*, ordered for the good of the house and the benefit of the company, cost the amazing small sum of 2s.6d.

From the young men I gathered much curious information which will presently be recorded. For the moment I was more intent on my musical investigations, so I turned to my neighbour, the trombone player, and besieged him with a potpourri of tunes, including some of his operatic solos. The rest of the company, more intent on the price of potatoes, plums, and wine, were dumfounded at the sight of the foreigner whistling and singing as if he were mad. But the bandmeister was more than gratified by the enthusiasm of his devotee, and when I said, 'Don't you see the accursed Englishman knows the old pieces better than the bandmeister himself?' the good man shook his great sides with laughter.

A refreshing sleep in bed as spotlessly clean as the cleanest in Holland prepared me for my early coffee. When I asked the hostess if she knew English, she answered me in the purest Yankee, acquired in Boston, where she had been brought up. Then her father Jacob appeared and took me to his house to discover for me the names of the pieces which I wanted. From below the bed in the 'best room' he dragged a clothes-basket containing the music-books of the old band, and laid them out on the table. There again were the weather-beaten pages which I had last seen in 1872, blistered by the glaring heat of Melbourne, and battered by the rains of Edinburgh and the snows of America. The edges of one of the books was burned: when I asked the cause, 'Oh,' said Jacob, 'that happened in a railway accident in America when the train went on fire. We saved our books with difficulty.' Despite his forty years' travels and exposure in every clime, he was never ill a day; and he was as lithe, active, and happy at fifty-four as he was in his twenties. While we went on page by page, he hopped about from one book to another, according as the melody was allotted now to this and now to that instrument, until I had identified my tune and jotted down its name. I was surprised to see how rare some of the music was. It would be hard to say how these roving musicians came by their selections from 'Gemma di Vergy' and Mercadante's 'Erode,' the cativana by Gagliardi, or rarities like the Cumanian March and Lanner's waltz 'Die Kosenden.' A band from this quarter actually plays a selection from 'Demophon,' the first opera published by Cherubini in Paris, a work which has appeared in the Peters' edition, but is now never performed either in whole or in part. Possibly such choice pieces were first copied from the music books of the military bands by *Musikanten* serving in the army, and then transmitted from band to band.

I was disappointed to find that Jacob had sold his trombone, and that I was not to have the pleasure of hearing a solo. He was now too busy to think of music.

'Have you never a desire to play?'

'Yes; sometimes the old feeling will rise up again when I am working in the fields, but I must repress it.'

'Well I never can forgive you for selling your instrument: it was a gain to you, it was a loss to every one else.'

A ten o'clock lunch consisting of the Bauer's staple dish, an ocean of ham and eggs with appurtenances, did not whet my appetite for the 'hangman's meal' which awaited me at the burgomaster's an hour later. Here with Homeric hospitality was put before me a repast of five prodigious courses, of which the fourth, the traditional *Zwetschenkuchen*, was of truly titanic dimensions. The whole was washed down with generous draughts of wine of my host's own growing. I survived the dietetic adventure, and after dinner examined photographs of Herr Gilcher in his prime at the head of a band which he took to America, and of the band of a circus with which Jacob had travelled as far as Mexico.

After completing my musical enquiries, and taking leave of the family, in the company of the burgomaster I visited the well-appointed village school, and we then went on to my little inn to rejoin Jacob, who had been copying for me the Kapellmeister's lovely Gemuths-Polka. A distiller's traveller arrived on the scene, and a lively debate ensued between him and Jacob whether he should pay 1 mark 80 or 1 mark 90 for 50 kilos of plums. At last I had to tear myself away from the old man with the promise I would be sure to come and see him when I returned to Germany. He assured me of a welcome, adding pathetically, 'If I live.' I was accompanied to the station by Jacob, Herr Matthias, an Edinburgh *Musikant*, and the sculptor. Before quitting the village Herr Matthias took me into his house, a model of cleanliness, and there was a picture of industry- three or four young women busy with fingers at the sewing machine. They seemed too shy to talk to a foreigner, so I broke the silence. 'You country-people,' I said, 'are always industrious: indoors you make clothes, and in your fields you provide us with meat, corn, vegetables, fruit, wine; without you we couldn't live.' On our way out we met a crowd of people following a cart. 'Is that not a picnic party?' I asked.

'No sir; that is one of our bands returning home. One arrived yesterday from America, and probably this one has come by the same steamer.'

The inhabitants of the north-west Palatinate generally are of a roving disposition. The shoe-hawkers of Pirmasens, the brush-dealers of Romberg, and the showmen and pedlars of Karlsberg, are to be met with all over the valley of the Rhine. But these must yield the palm in numbers and enterprise to the *Musikanten* of the Hardt Mountains who have made the whole world their own. They are not often seen on the continent as they formerly were, but they go to England, the Cape, Australia, the States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, and one band ventured as far as Chili. If anyone ever reaches the North Pole and finds the inevitable Scotchman smoking his pipe on the top, he is sure to be tossing coppers to a German band from the Pfalz. In my experience (and I speak with the authority of a specialist) I have known of only two bands that did not come from this district: the one was from Nassau, the other from Pfortzheim in

Baden. It is computed that there were at one time over 6000 *Musikanten* in the valleys of the Lauter and the Oden, and in the valley of the Glan, which receives the waters of the streams and discharges them above Kreuznach into the Nahe, a tributary of the Rhine. In these three valleys a pedestrian might safely ask his way in English; and in winter, when many of the *Musikanten* are at home, if you meet a promiscuous company of ten in an inn, seven or eight are sure to know at least one foreign language. There are single villages which could muster as many as two hundred players. But even without making a voyage of discovery and establishing the habitat of the *Musikanten* by scientific methods, it would surely not have required extraordinary detective powers to infer their common origin from the identity of much of the music that their bands play. Any one who has kept himself abreast of the street music of this generation, must have in the musical chambers of his memory many simple dance tunes peculiar to German bands and common to them all. These are unpublished compositions by the local bandmasters, or *Meister* as they are called. And they are passed on from one band to the other. One *Meister* of my acquaintance has already reached opus 3000. Apart from these *anecdota* which cannot be cited here, a piece which was invariably included in the *repertoire* of the smaller bands was Gungl's 'Kriegers Marsch'; two other pieces commonly played were an 'Abschieds-Polonaise' by Flotow and the familiar 'Morgenstern' Waltz of the elder Labitzky, which is now a schoolroom classic.

The patient reader will naturally inquire how old this musical industry is, and what led the crofters of the Hardt in particular to pursue it. Though it is not recorded in the 'Germania' of Tacitus among the ancient institutions of the Fatherland, its origin goes back at least beyond the memory of living men, perhaps to the beginning of the last century. The veteran Kilian, born not later than 1815, assured me that peripatetic bands existed long before his day. More than a hundred years ago the Prince of Leiningen, who was the first husband of the mother of Queen Victoria, cleared a forest on his domain, and planting there a community of gypsies, beggars and vagrants, named their village after himself, Karlsberg. The *Matzenberger*, as they are locally called, are known far and wide as pedlars and wandering musicians, and formerly bore a questionable reputation. But larger political and economic causes must have been at work to convert a whole region of crofters into a conservatorium of street music. Rhenish Bavaria, ceded by the treaty of Luneville in 1802, was held by France till 1815. Neglected then by her step-mother, though subsequently reunited to Bavaria, she was so isolated from the rest of the country that she always lagged behind in trade and commerce. Mushroom Ludwigshafen and prosperous Nuestadt and Kaiserslautern attest to the rapidity with which the rest of the Palatinate has advanced since 1870; but the uplands of the Hardt, to which the railway penetrated only eighteen years ago, lay too far apart to participate in the general industrial progress. Still the mountainous home of the tuneful crofters was not so barren as to compel them to seek their bread abroad, for it yielded corn, fruit, wine, and all kinds of farm produce. Perhaps it was the poor field-labourers, dissatisfied with the wage of 10s. they received for a week's hard work (or *Schaffen*, 'creation,' in their own beautiful language), that made the first musical wanderings; and as these proved not only lucrative but interesting and romantic, the sons of even well-to-do farmers devoted themselves to this curious vocation—surely a more reasonable solution of the land question than shooting people behind a hedge.

The *Musikanten* would confine their earliest peregrinations to the neighbouring towns, but in course of time they doubtless extended the sweep of their orbit over Germany, France, Holland, and Belgium, till they reached ports in the North Sea: thence they would be tempted by the fabled wealth of England to cross to our El Dorado, and once there, they were on the highway to the rest of the world.

During the absence of the bandsman his thrifty wife looks after the croft, and her no less thrifty husband regularly sends remittances to eke out her scanty earnings. The event of the day is the arrival of the postman, and the women gather in the street anxiously to await his approach.

‘Good news from your man?’ asks one.

‘Yes; he’s playing in a beer-garden at Helsingfors in Finland, and sends me £2 a-month. He’s coming back in the autumn.’

‘And where is your Heinrich?’

‘He’s in Johannesburg, and is getting on well; for though living is dear there, the people are so free with their money that he hopes to bring with him a little fortune when he comes back next year.’

‘I wish my man were as near home,’ says another. ‘In his letter he tells me he has reached Sydney in safety, but the long voyage from San Francisco has eaten up his savings, and he’ll have to stay a year in Australia to make enough to pay his way home and bring something for me. When he was in America he never sent me less than a pound a-week.’ At times the intelligence is tragic, and on the pastor of the village falls the mournful duty of breaking to a family the news of the death of some bandsman in foreign parts. Three members of a band in Rio Janeiro were once cut off with yellow fever, and the remnant were reduced to such straits that they were compelled to apply to the German consul for assistance to take them home. To provide against sickness and death, friendly societies have been formed in many villages, numbering sometimes more than a hundred members.

As the autumn draws on the *Musikanten* are seized with home-woe – ‘Hoamweh’ (*Heimweh*) they call it. About the time of vintage they return from all the points of the compass to spend the winter in their native valleys; and many a scene of joy or sorrow is enacted on their arrival. In the home-coming of the *Musikant* there is a good deal that recalls the life of the sailors in our small seaports a generation ago. A little boy lays his first earnings in his mother’s lap; a youth has saved enough to wed his ‘bride’ and found a crofter’s home; a father receives from his wife’s arms a new-comer to the world whom he greets for the first time; a son finds his home desolate, for his aged father and mother have died while he was far away. Like seamen too, the bandsmen bring home trophies to adorn their walls- pictures of the cities where they have played, pieces of coral, humming birds with their nests, or strange plants and animals. For the first few weeks they help to complete the harvest, lay in the fuel, and make other preparations for winter; and in the long dark nights they crowd the inns, and over a *Schoppen* or a *Seidel* exchange their curious experiences *aus aller Herren Landern*. One bandsman extols the beauties of Stockholm, where he has been playing all the summer at the Stromparterren. An Essweiler *Meister* tells how every year he goes by Lubeck to Riga and ‘concertises’ in Russia. He buys for the season a pair of horses and a covered wagon, in which he houses his band- herein reviving the practice of the ancient Scythian inhabitants of the country whom the Greeks described as *ayaEoBlol* or wagon dwellers. Or some one may relate the misadventure of a band which landed in Havana and was forbidden to play in the streets: their money was soon exhausted, and it was only the generosity of the German residents that enabled them to cross to Key West and thence to New Orleans.

With the advent of spring the musical valleys are all astir, and the *Meister* set to work to organise and train their forces for the summer campaign. Age, death, military service, incompetence, and other causes, create vacancies in the bands which have to be supplied: if the necessary instrument is not in the band of one village, it must be sought in the next; and if a qualified player is not forthcoming at all, the *Meister* must content himself with some beginner, fresh from the village school, who may at least suggest the part required. The boys learn their instruments as the bandsmen do in our country towns: if there is no one to help them in their own home, they get instruction from a musical neighbour. They must also acquire a few words of English, such as 'Please to help the band,' 'Thank you, sir'; for out of policy the small boys with instruments as big as themselves are sent to collect the money. Once engaged by a *Meister*, they enjoy the advantage of regular instruction; and if possessed of any talent at all, they are assured of permanent employment, with board, lodging, expenses, and a wage rising from 5s. to 18s. a week. It is in this way that the better bands are composed which are to be met with in our large cities and in health-resorts like Southport, where one may hear an excellent band of eighteen men from Hardt under the command of Herr Mersy. His brother from Aschbach, for the last thirty years *Meister* in Edinburgh, at one time employed twenty-four men; and Herr Schneider, who from his wealth is styled the king of the *Musikanten*, and lives in regal splendour at Rossbach, had never less than thirty to forty men in his three bands in London. When the individual players have been tested and the bands duly constituted, ensemble practice begins, and the performances are subjected to the keen but friendly comments of the critics of the neighbourhood. In their repertoires the *Meister* cunningly include pieces especially suited for the countries in which they are to travel. If bound for Russia, they prepare the National Hymn, and such melodies as 'Die Nachtigall,' 'Der Rothe Sarafan,' and 'Schone Minka'; for Sweden they practice, besides the *polksor*, perhaps 'Krystallen den fina,' 'Wermlands Visa,' or 'Mandom mod och morska man'; and they think Scotland and England would not be satisfied without Scottish airs and selections from Sullivan's comic operas.

By March or April all is ready, the ladder-cart is loaded with luggage and instruments, and the bandsmen make their way on foot to the nearest station accompanied by a crowd of kinsfolk, who speed them on their journey with many a blessing and many a cheer. Sometimes a band will take the steamer down the Rhine and defray expenses by entertaining the passengers to the 'Lorelei,' the 'Rheinland,' and other appropriate songs; but the common practice is to travel by train to some seaport. At the time of the annual exodus as many as a hundred *Musikanten* will assemble in one day at Rotterdam ready to invade our coasts. In former times the journey to Holland or Belgium was often made on foot. When Herr Mersy first came to England in 1856, he walked all the way from Aschbach to Ostend, a distance of well nigh three hundred miles. Nowadays this apostolic method of travelling is confined to the smaller and inferior bands, of which I now have something to say.

When all of the better players have been enlisted by the *Meister* for the larger bands which systematically exploit our cities or obtain engagements in health-resorts, the residuum crystallises into smaller companies, which are managed on the joint-stock principle, and move about from place to place. Sometimes the wives and sisters of the bandsmen are called to fill

up the ranks; and one has heard such odd-looking bands sing and play German folk-songs in a manner countrified perhaps, still not displeasing. But the playing of these novices is commonly execrable. Their life, however, is humanly, if not musically, interesting. Though they may earn a little money, they endure much abuse and hardship in the process. The better *Musikanten* have always a home; they are well housed, well fed, and well paid. But the strollers earn less money, live in common lodging-house, and get their meals at irregular times. A conversation I once had with the clarinet-player in an exceptionally cacophonous band may throw some light on their mode of life. Prefacing my questions with a conciliatory sixpence, I asked- 'How long have you been in Edinburgh?'

'Two months.'

'Where were you in the summer?'

'We went as far north as Invergordon.'

'Where do you come from?'

'Our home is near Wolfstein in the Rheinpfalz.'

'By which route did you come to England?'

'We travelled by train to Rotterdam, and crossed to Harwich.'

'How long did it take you to reach Edinburgh?'

'Three months: we zig-zagged through England, playing all the way.'

'How do you get your food when you move about so much?'

'We take a good breakfast in our lodging before starting; at midday we buy some bread and cheese; and we cook some meat in the evening so as to have at least one solid meal a-day.'

'Are you not afraid of being cheated by the men who collect the money?'

'No: we are neighbours at home, and can trust each other; our people are seldom dishonest; but I have heard of bands in which the men suspected each other, and took day about in collecting the money.'

Such is the life of the German bandsmen, - a curious life, but perchance as happy as yours or mine. Think kindly of them when you pass them, and don't grudge a copper for the 'gudewife' at home; and if you should ever be in the Pfalz, don't fail to visit the oldest-fashioned place and the simplest and kindest people on earth. 'Es leben die Musikanten.' 'Frohlich Pfalz, Gott erhalt's.'

GEORGE B. GARDINER