

SOUNDS AND SWEET AIRS

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Sounds and Sweet Airs by John Todhunter

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JOHN TODHUNTER

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SWEET AIRS**

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BY

JOHN TODHUNTER

*—laudatus abunde,
Non fastiditus si tibi lector ero*
OVID.

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1905

NOTE.

THESE poems are not meant to be paraphrases in verse of the music that suggested them. They are merely records of a listener's moods, phantasies inspired by the emotional spirit of each composition.

Some of them have already been published: *In a Gondola*, in the "Cornhill," while Thackeray still bound up the sheaves; *A Chest of Viols*, in "The Londoner"; *Irish Melodies*, in the "Monthly"; *Chopin's Nocturnes*, in the "Fortnightly"; and I thank the Editors of these periodicals for permission to reprint. *Lonely Flowers*, *Forest Mystery*, and *The Marseillaise* were included in my own volume, "Forest Songs"; *To Rossini*, in my "Laurella, and other Poems." The others are new.

The poems on "Forest Scenes" were written under a strong impression that Schumann had a deeper intention in composing some pieces in the series than the titles suggest; and, at my request, a friend of Madame Schumann asked her whether this impression was well-founded. She said that it was quite in accord with Schumann's own conception. He then inquired more definitely whether

NOTE

Vogel als Prophet meant simply a bird of good or evil omen for the hunter's chances of sport. "O no!" she replied, "something sad, foreboding—the idea of a murder in some lonely part of the forest. When Rubinstein plays it he only gives the idea of a bird flying merrily up and down; but that is not right, or as I feel it."

The instrument used by the goatherd, whose playing suggested the poem entitled *A Pastoral Pipe*, was not the south Italian bag-pipe, but the short boxwood bell-pipe, in which the notes are produced by the finger in the bell—the pipe which Picco made famous by his brilliant performances many years ago.

Contents

	PAGE
A Chest of Viols	9
On First Hearing Handel's Messiah	13
A Song of Cesti.	21
The Harpsichord	25
Irish Melodies	32
Schubert's Trio in E flat Major.	34
To Rossini.	41
Schumann's "Forest Scenes"	42
Chopin's Nocturnes	50
To Elodie	56
In a Gondola	59
The Marseillaise.	68
The Wounded Tristram	69
A Pastoral Pipe	72
Tchaikovsky's "Symphonie Pathétique"	76
Dvórák's "Dumky" Trio	81
Beethoven's "Sonata Appassionata"	86

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59

60

61

62

63

64

65

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67

68

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A Chest of Viols

Inscribed to Arnold Dolmetsch.

OLD music, and old instruments—and O
The harmony they make,
As touched by Music's magian wand, the bow,
One after one they wake,
Voice after voice, as sister answers brother,
Answering each other.
Sedately as the Muses on their lawn,
Under the pines of Helicon!

A Chest of Viols, every one the dream
Of some old craftsman's heart ;

A CHEST OF VIOLS

And each a well-trimmed argosy doth seem,
Planned by his careful art

Her burden rich to bear of mellow sound
From the profound

Valleys of that lone land where Music dwells
Beside delight's most hidden wells.

Hush ! for her breast athrill, *Treble* proposes
The theme, so sweet, so rare,

It seems an odour breathed from Herrick's roses ;
Then, as in love's despair,

Grave *Tenor* in his amber voice replies,
With tenderer sighs

Alto complains, in resonant barytone,
Viol'-da-Gamba mocks her moan.

Together now, now one the other leads,
Like nightingales in May ;