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Musicians and Poets

BY

ERNEST NEWMAN

I

At some time or other we have all felt inclined to compare certain musicians with certain poets or painters—an exercise all the more enjoyable because of its apparent arbitrariness, no two of us seeming to agree, except on very rare occasions, as to which poet or painter should pair off with a given musician. The usual thing is to liken Mozart to Raphael. Against this practice Mr. Arthur Bles protested in the "Weekly Critical Review" of 5th November, in an article on a Chevillard Concert at which a Mozart symphony had been performed. Mr. Bles contends that the real analogue to Mozart is not Raphael, but Fragonard or Boucher or Watteau, and to a great extent he is right. In the intellectual qualities of his work Mozart does undoubtedly touch these men at a number of points. At the same time one feels that on the more formal side of the art there is a passion for obvious regularity, for pictorial equipose, to find a true comparison with which, we have to go back to the less adventurous of the Italian painters. I fancy that the bracketing of Mozart and Raphael is mostly done by people who have not a very close acquaintance with Italian art as a whole, and who, with a vague general notion of having seen a number of statuesquely-posed figures in an architecturally-conceived *ensemble*—a Virgin and Child in the centre, and so many saints on this side balancing so many saints on that—fasten the whole of their impressions on a more or less fictitious Raphael. He is to them Italian art, just as to the musical man in the street Beethoven is Music, and to the average unliterary being Shakespeare is Drama—none of them really knowing as much of Shakespeare, Beethoven or Raphael as could be expressed in large-hand on the back of a visiting-card. This, I suspect, is the reason for so many people chaining Mozart and