

Characters Described by Musical Notes

THE idea of describing characters under the names of Musical Instruments has been already displayed in two most pleasing papers which embellish the *Tatler* written by Addison. He dwells on this idea with uncommon success. It has been applauded for its *originality*; and in the general preface to that work, those papers are distinguished for their felicity of imagination. The following paper was published in the year 1700, in a volume of "Philosophical Transactions and Collections," and the two numbers of Addison in the year 1710. It is probable that the inimitable writer borrowed the seminal hint from this work.

"A conjecture at dispositions front the modulations of the voice.

"Sitting in some company, and having been but a little before musical, I chanced to take notice, that in ordinary discourse *words* were spoken in perfect *notes*; and that some of the company used *eighths*, some *fifths*, some *thirds*; and that his discourse which was most pleasing, his *words*, as to their tone, consisted most of *concord*s, and were of *discord*s of such as made up harmony. The same person was the most affable, pleasant, and best natured in the company. This suggests a rea-

son why many discourses which one *hears* with much pleasure, when they come to be *read* scarcely seem the same things.

"From this difference of MUSIC in SPEECH, we may conjecture that of TEMPERs. We know, the Doric mood sounds gravity and sobriety; the Lydian, buxomness and freedom; the Æolic, sweet stillness and quiet composure; the Phrygian, jollity and youthful levity; the Ionic is a stiller of storms and disturbances arising from passion. And why may not we reasonably suppose, that those whose speech naturally runs into the notes peculiar to any of these moods, are likewise in nature hereunto congenerous? *C Fa ut* may show me to be of an ordinary capacity, though good disposition. *G Sol re ut*, to be peevish and effeminate. *Flats*, a manly or melancholic sadness. He who hath a voice which will in some measure agree with all *clefs*, to be of good parts, and fit for a variety of employments, yet somewhat of an inconstant nature. Likewise from the TIMES: so *semi-briefs* may speak a temper dull and phlegmatic; *minims*, grave and serious; *crotchets*, a prompt wit; *quavers*, vehemency of passion, and scolds use them. *Semi-brief-rest*, may denote one either stupid or fuller of thoughts than he can

utter; *minim-rest*, one that deliberates; *crotchet-rest*, one in a passion. So that from the natural use of MOOD, NOTE, and TIME, we may collect DISPOSITIONS.”