

amusements had caught the general tone, and become noisy, like their avocations. The man who for years has slept soundly night after night in the neighborhood of a foundery, awakens disturbed, if by some accident the hammering ceases : the imprisoned linnet or thrush is excited to emulation by even the screeching of a knife-grinder's wheel, or the din of a copper-smith's shop, and pours out its soul in music. It seems not very improbable that the two principles on which these phenomena hinge — principles as diverse as the phenomena themselves — may have been influential in inducing the peculiar characteristic of Birmingham ; that the noises of the place, grown a part of customary existence to its people, — inwrought, as it were, into the very staple of their lives, — exert over them some such unmarked influence as that exerted on the sleeper by the foundery ; and that, when they relax from their labors, they seek to fill up the void by modulated noises, first caught up, like the song of the bird beside the cutler's wheel or coppersmith's shop, in unconscious rivalry of the clang of their hammers and engines. Be the truth of the theory what it may, there can be little doubt regarding the fact on which it hinges. No town of its size in the empire spends more time and money in concerts and musical festivals than Birmingham ; no small proportion of its people are amateur performers ; almost all are musical critics ; and the organ in its great Hall, the property of the town, is, with scarce the exception of that of York, the largest in the empire, and the finest, it is said, without any exception. But on this last point there hangs a keen controversy.

The Yorkers contend that *their* organ is both the greater and the finer organ of the two ; whereas the Birminghamers assert, on the contrary, that *theirs*, though it may not measure more, plays vastly better. "It is impossible," retort the Yorkers,