*Sordellina,* a kind of musette invented (see Bagpipe) in Naples in the 17th century, and evidently named after class 2.

1. Under the Italian term *sordini* are comprised the dampers used with stringed instruments, such as the violin, and the dampers of keyboard instruments, all well known, and described with the instruments themselves. As a certain amount of misconception exists concerning the *sordini* (Fr. *sourdines,* Ger. *Dämpfer),* used from the 16th century with the trumpet and later with the horn, they may be briefly described. It would appear that the art has almost been lost of making mutes for trumpets and French horns, which should affect the timbre only, giving it a certain veiled mysterious quality similar to that of the *sons bouchés* or hand­stopped notes, but affecting the pitch not at all. We read that when it is necessary to produce this peculiar timbre on the valve­horn, as for instance in Wagner’s *Rheingold,* the rise of a semi tone in pitch caused by the introduction of the mute or the hand into the bell of the horn must be compensated by means of the second piston which lowers the pitch a semi-tone.@@1

If the sordino used early in the 17th century had had this effect of raising the pitch, the fact would have been stated by such writers as Mersenne and Praetorius; it would, moreover, have rendered the mute useless with instruments on which no sort of com­pensation was possible. H. Domnich @@1 and J. Fröhlich,@@3 however, describe the sordino which leaves the pitch unaffected: it con­sisted of a hollow cone of wood or cardboard, truncated at the apex to allow the air to pass through and escape through a hole in the base. The bore of the instrument thus continued through the cone of the mute was the essential point, and the proportions to be maintained between the diameters of the two bores were also, no doubt, of importance. Domnich expressly states that it was when Hampel substituted a plug of cotton-wool (therefore solid and providing no central passage for the air) for the mute, that he found the pitch of the horn raised a semi-tone. Domnich’s evidence is of value, for his father was a horn-player contemporary with Hampel, and he himself was the intimate friend and colleague of Punto, Hampel’s most celebrated pupil.

2. The *sordun* or *sordoni* family are often confused with the dolcians (Fr. *courtaud,* Eng. *single curtail,* Ger. *Kort* or *Kortholt),* from which, however, they differed radically. This difference Was not understood by Michael Praetorius, who acknowledges his mystification. The contra-bass sordun, he says, hardly half the length of the contra-fagotto, is yet practically of the same pitch, which is astonishing since the bore is only double once upon itself as in the fagotto. The kort likewise is of the same size as the bass sordun, and yet in pitch it is but a tenor. The following description of the construction and acoustic properties of the sordoni will clear up the mystery. The body consisted of a cylinder of wood in which were cut two parallel channels of narrow cylindrical bore, communicating with each other at the bottom through a bend, but not with ambient air. At the top of the cylinder was fitted a double-reed mouthpiece giving access to the column of air at one end of the bore, while the other was vented through a small hole in the side, similar to the finger-holes; in the tenor, bass and contra members of the family, the reed was attached to a curved brass crook similar to that of the fagotto. So far the description would almost apply to the dolcian also, but in the latter there is the radical difference that the bore of the channels is conical, so that it has the acoustic properties of the open pipe. The sordun, however, having a cylindrical bore, has the acoustic properties of the stopped pipe, *i.e.* the sound waves are twice the length of the pipe, so that to produce a sound of any given pitch, for instance for C, the bore need only be half the length, *i.e.* 4 ft. long. Over­blowing, on the sordoni, moreover, produced as first harmonic (the only one required for reed-blown instruments in order to produce the diatonic scale for the second octave), not the octave, but the twelfth, or number 3 of the series. This accounts for the fact that instruments of the fagotto and dolcian type require but 6 or 7 holes to give the diatonic scale throughout the compass, whereas the sordoni require 11 or 12 holes. Praetorius states that those figured by him (Plate XII.) have 12 open holes, and that some speci­mens have in addition two keys; a hole is also bored through the bottom of the instrument to allow the moisture condensed from the breath 'to be shaken out. The 12 holes are stopped by means of fingers and thumbs and by the ball of the hand or the fleshy under­part of the joints of the fingers. The compass of the 5 sizes of sordoni was as follows :—

Two sourdines belonging to the Museum of the Brussels Conserva­toire, said to be facsimiles of some instruments belonging to the emperor Maximilian I.’s band, are reproduced in Captain C. R. Day’s *Descriptive Catalogue of Musical Instruments* (London, 1891). They differ slightly in construction from the Italian instruments described by Praetorius. The straight crook is set in the side of the instru­ment, almost at right angles, the top of the cylinder is surmounted by a cap, and there are but 6 open holes, the rest being covered by brass keys in wooden boxes. The pitch of these instruments lies within a semi-tone of that of the contra-bass and bass of Praetorius.

(K. S.)

**SOREL, AGNES (***c.* 1422-1450), mistress of King Charles VII. of France, was born of a family of the lesser nobility at Fromen- teau in Touraine. While still a girl she was attached to the service of Isabel of Lorraine, queen of Sicily, wife of René of Anjou, the brother-in-law of Charles VII. From 1444 until her death in 1450 she was the acknowledged mistress of the king, the first woman to hold that semi-official position which was to be of so great importance in the subsequent history of the old régime. Her ascendancy dated from the festivals at Nancy in 1444, the first brilliant court of Charles VII. Here her great beauty captivated the king, whose love for her remained constant until her death. He gave her wealth, castles and lands, and secured for her the state and distinction of a queen. This first public recognition of his mistress by a king of France scandal­ized all good people and awakened jealousy and intrigue. Her sudden death from dysentery, shortly after the birth of her fourth child, was accordingly attributed to poison. Burgundian historians even openly accused the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI., of her death, and later the enemies of Jacques Cœur, in their search for crimes to be brought against him, used this rumour to charge him with the one crime most likely to turn the king against him. Her heart was buried in the abbey of Jumièges, her body in the collegiate church of Loches. Contemporary writers all bear witness to her extra­ordinary beauty, but no genuine portraits of her have come down to us.

Legend has made an entirely different character of this first official mistress of the French kings. The date of her birth was placed at about 1409, her liaison with the king dated from 1433. Then, so the story ran, she drew him from his indolence, continuing the work of Joan of Arc, both by nerving the king to warlike enterprises—she did apparently induce him to take part personally in the conquest of Normandy—and by surround­ing him with that band of wise advisers who really adminis­tered France during her ascendancy. Recent investigation has exploded this romantic story by simply showing that Charles VII. had not met her until ten years later than in the legend. Instead of being his sole good angel, she seems rather to have demoralized the king, who, hitherto chaste, henceforth gave himself up to courtesans. Yet she favoured the best advisers of the king, and at least in this deserved the gratitude of the realm. Pierre de Brézé seems especially to have used Agnes to gain his ascendancy over the king.

See A. Vallet de Viriville’s articles in *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* (3rd series, tom. i.) ; and R. Duquesne, *Vie et aventures galantes de la belle Sorel* (1909).

**SOREL, ALBERT** (1842-1906), French historian, was born at Honfleur on the 13th of August 1842. He was of a character­istically Norman type, and remained all his life a lover of his native province and its glories. His father, a rich manufac­turer, would have liked him to succeed to the business, but his literary vocation prevailed. He went to live in Paris, where he studied law, and after a prolonged stay in Germany entered the Foreign Office (1866). He had strongly-developed literary and artistic tastes, was an enthusiastic musician, even composing a little, and wrote both verses and novels, which appeared a little later *(LaGrande Falaise,* 1785-1793, in 1871, *Le Docteur Egra* in 1873); but he did not go much into society. He was anxious to know and understand present as well as past events, but he was above all things a student. In 1870 he was chosen as secretary by Μ. de Chaudordy, who had been sent to Tours as a delegate in charge of the diplomatic side of the problem of national defence; in these affairs he proved himself a most valuable collaborator;

@@@1 See Victor Mahillon, “ Le Cor,” *Instruments à vent,* pt. ii. (Brussels and London, 1907), pp. 34 and 53.

*@@@2 Méthode de premier et de second cor* (Paris, *c.* 1807), pp. 3 and 4.

@@@3 Vollständige theor.-prakt. Musiklehre für alle bei dem Or­chester gebräuchliche Instrumente (Cologne and Bonn, *c.* 1811).