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HISTORY

OF

THE OPERA,

from its Origin in Italy to the present Time.

WITH ANECDOTES
OF THE MOST CELEBRATED COMPOSERS AND VOCALISTS OF EUROPE.

BY
SUTHERLAND EDWARDS,
AUTHOR OF "RUSSIANS AT HOME," ETC.

"QUIS TAM DULCIS SONUS QUI MEAS COMPLET AURES?"
"WHAT IS ALL THIS NOISE ABOUT?"

VOL. I.

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HISTORY OF THE OPERA.

CHAPTER I.

PREFACE, PRELUDE, PROLOGUE, INTRODUCTION, OVERTURE, ETC.—THE ORIGIN OF THE OPERA IN ITALY, AND ITS INTRODUCTION INTO GERMANY.—ITS HISTORY IN EUROPE; DIVISION OF THE SUBJECT.

It has often been said, and notably, by J. J. Rousseau, and after him, with characteristic exaggeration, by R. Wagner, that "Opera" does not mean so much a musical work, as a musical, poetical, and spectacular work all at once; that "Opera" in fact, is "the work," *par excellence*, to the production of which all the arts are necessary.[1] The very titles of the earliest operas prove this notion to be incorrect. The earliest Italian plays of a mixed character, not being constructed according to the ancient rules of tragedy and comedy, were called by the general name of "Opera," the nature of the "work" being more particularly indicated by some such epithet or epithets as *regia*, *comica*, *tragica*, *scenica*, *sacra*, *esemplare*, *regia ed esemplare*, *&c.*; and in the case of a lyrical drama, the words *per musica*, *scenica per musica*, *regia ed esemplare per musica*, were added, or the production was styled *opera musicale* alone. In time the mixed plays (which were imitated from the Spanish) fell into disrepute in Italy, while the title of "Opera" was still applied to lyrical dramas, but not without "musicale," or "in musica" after it. This was sufficiently vague, but people soon found it troublesome, or thought it useless, to say *opera musicale*, when opera by itself conveyed, if it did not express, their meaning, and thus dramatic works in music came to be called "Operas." Algarotte's work on the Opera (translated into French, and entitled *Essai sur l'Opéra*) is called in the original *Saggio sopra l'Opera in musica*. "Opera in music" would in the present day sound like a pleonasm, but it is as well to consider the true meaning of words, when we find them not merely perverted, but in their perverted sense made the foundation of ridiculous theories.

THE FIRST OPERA

The Opera proceeds from the sacred musical plays of the 15th century as the modern drama proceeds from the mediæval mysteries. Ménestrier, however, the Jesuit father, assigns to it a far greater antiquity, and considers the Song of Solomon to be the earliest Opera on record, founding his opinion on these words of St. Jérôme, translated from Origen:—*Epithalamium, libellus, id est nuptiale carmen, in modum mihi videtur dramatis a Solomone conscriptus quem cecinit instar nubentis sponsæ.*[2]

Others see the first specimens of opera in the Greek plays; but the earliest musical dramas of modern Italy, from which the Opera of the present day is descended directly, and in an unbroken line, are "mysteries" differing only from the dramatic mysteries in so far that the dialogue in them was sung instead of being spoken. "The Conversion of St. Paul" was played in music, at Rome, in 1440. The first profane subject treated operatically, was the descent of Orpheus into hell; the music of this *Orfeo*, which was produced also at Rome, in 1480, was by Angelo Poliziano, the libretto by Cardinal Riario, nephew of Sixtus IV. The popes kept up an excellent theatre, and Clement IX. was himself the author of seven *libretti*.

At this time the great attraction in operatic representations was the scenery—a sign of infancy then, as it is a sign of decadence now. At the very beginning of the sixteenth century, Balthazar Peruzzi, the decorator of the papal theatre, had carried his art to such perfection, that the greatest painters of the day were astonished at his performances. His representations of architecture and the illusions of height and distance which his knowledge of perspective enabled him to produce, were especially admired. Vasari has told us how Titian, at the Palace of la Farnesina, was so struck by the appearance of solidity given by Peruzzi to his designs in profile, that he was not satisfied, until he had ascended a ladder and touched them, that they were not actually in relief. "One can scarcely conceive," says the historian of the painters, in speaking of Peruzzi's scenic decorations, "with what ability, in so limited a space, he represented such a number of houses, palaces, porticoes, entablatures, profiles, and all with such an aspect of reality that the spectator fancied himself transported into the middle of a public square, to such a point was the illusion carried. Moreover, Balthazar, the better to produce these results, understood, in an admirable manner the disposition of light as well as all the machinery connected with theatrical changes and effects."

DAFNE.

In 1574, Claudio Merulo, organist at St. Mark's, of Venice, composed the music of a drama by Cornelio Frangipani, which was performed in the Venetian Council Chamber in presence of Henry III. of France. The music of the operatic works of this period appears to have possessed but little if any dramatic character, and to have consisted almost exclusively of choruses in the madrigal style, which was so successfully cultivated about the same time in England. Emilio del Cavaliere, a celebrated musician of Rome, made an attempt to introduce appropriateness of expression into these choruses, and his reform, however incomplete, attracted the attention of Giovanni Bardi, Count of Vernio. This nobleman used to assemble in his palace all the most distinguished musicians of Florence, among whom were Mei, Caccini, and Vincent Galileo, the father of the astronomer. Vincent Galileo was himself a discoverer, and helped, at the Count of Vernio's musical meetings, to invent recitative—an invention of comparative insignificance, but which in the system of modern opera plays as important a part, perhaps, as the rotation of the earth does in that of the celestial spheres.

Two other Florentine noblemen, Pietro Strozzi and Giacomo Corsi, encouraged by the example of Bardi, and determined to give the musical drama its fullest development in the new form that it had assumed, engaged Ottavio Rinuccini, one of the first poets of the period, with Peri and Caccini, two of the best musicians, to compose an opera which was entitled *Dafne*, and was performed for the first time in the Corsi Palace, at Florence, in 1597.

Dafne appears to have been the first complete opera. It was considered a masterpiece both from the beauty of the music and from the interest of the drama; and on its model the same authors composed their opera of *Euridice*, which was represented publicly at Florence on the occasion of the marriage of Henry IV. of France, with Marie de Medicis, in 1600. Each of the five acts of *Euridice* concludes with a chorus, the dialogue is in recitative, and one of the characters, "Tircis," sings an air which is introduced by an instrumental prelude.

New music was composed to the libretto of *Dafne* by Gagliano in 1608, when the opera thus rearranged was performed at Mantua; and in 1627 the same piece was translated by Opitz, "the father of the lyric stage in Germany," as he is called, set to music by Schutz, and represented at Dresden on the occasion of the marriage of the Landgrave of Hesse with the sister of John-George I., Elector of Saxony. It was not, however, until 1692 that Keiser appeared and perfected the forms of the German Opera. Keiser was scarcely nineteen years of age when he produced at the

Court of Wolfenbüttel, *Ismene* and *Basilius*, the former styled a Pastoral, the latter an opera. It is said reproachfully, and as if facetiously, of a common-place German musician in the present day, that he is "of the Wolfenbüttel school," just as it is considered comic in France to taunt a singer or player with having come from Carpentras. It is curious that Wolfenbüttel in Germany, and Carpentras in France (as I shall show in the next chapter), were the cradles of Opera in their respective countries.

MONTEVERDE, AND HIS ORCHESTRA.

To return to the Opera in Italy. The earliest musical drama, then, with choruses, recitatives, airs, and instrumental preludes was *Dafne*, by Rinuccini as librettist, and Caccini and Peri as composers; but the orchestra which accompanied this work consisted only of a harpsichord, a species of guitar called a chitarone, a lyre, and a lute. When Monteverde appeared, he introduced the modern scale, and changed the whole harmonic system of his predecessors. He at the same time gave far greater importance in his operas to the accompaniments, and increased to a remarkable extent the number of musicians in the orchestra, which under his arrangement included every kind of instrument known at the time. Many of Monteverde's instruments are now obsolete. This composer, the unacknowledged prototype of our modern cultivators of orchestral effects, made use of a separate combination of instruments to announce the entry and return of each personage in his operas; a dramatic means employed afterwards by Hoffmann in his *Undine*,[3] and in the present day with pretended novelty by Richard Wagner. This newest orchestral device is also the oldest. The score of Monteverde's *Orfeo*, produced in 1608, contains parts for two harpsichords, two lyres or violas with thirteen strings, ten violas, three bass violas, two double basses, a double harp (with two rows of strings), two French violins, besides guitars, organs, a flute, clarions, and even trombones. The bass violas accompanied Orpheus, the violas Eurydice, the trombones Pluto, the small organ Apollo; Charon, strangely enough, sang to the music of the guitar.

Monteverde, having become chapel master at the church of St. Mark, produced at Venice *Arianna*, of which *Rinuccini* had written the libretto. This was followed by other works of the same kind, which were produced with great magnificence, until the fame of the Venetian operas spread throughout Italy, and by the middle of the seventeenth century the new entertainment was established at Venice, Bologna, Rome, Turin, Naples, and Messina. Popes, cardinals and the most illustrious nobles took the Opera under their protection, and the dukes of Mantua and Modena distinguished themselves by the munificence of their patronage.

Among the most celebrated of the female singers of this period were Catarina Martinella of Rome, Archilei, Francesca Caccini (daughter of the composer of that name and herself the author of an operatic score), Adriana Baroni, of Mantua, and her daughter Leonora Baroni, whose praises have been sung by Milton in his three Latin poems "Ad Leonoram Romæ canentem."

THE ITALIAN OPERA ABROAD.

The Italian opera, as we shall afterwards see, was introduced into France under the auspices of Cardinal Mazarin, who as the Abbé Mazarini, had visited all the principal theatres of Italy by the express command of Richelieu, and had studied their system with a view to the more perfect representation of the cardinal-minister's tragedies. The Italian Opera he introduced on his own account, and it was, on the whole, very inhospitably received. Indeed, from the establishment of the French Opera under Cambert and his successor Lulli, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, until the end of the eighteenth, the French were unable to understand or unwilling to acknowledge the immense superiority of the Italians in everything pertaining to music. In 1752 Pergolese's *Serva Padrona* was the cause of the celebrated dispute between the partisans of French and Italian Opera, and the end of it was that *La Serva Padrona* was hissed, and the two singers who appeared in it driven from Paris.

In England the Italian Opera was introduced in the first years of the eighteenth century, and under Handel, who arrived in London in 1710, attained the greatest perfection. Since the production of Handel's last dramatic work, in 1740, the Italian Opera has continued to be represented in London with scarcely noticeable intervals until the present day, and, on the whole, with remarkable excellence.

Of English Opera a far less satisfactory account can be given. Its traditions exist by no means in an unbroken line. Purcell wrote English operas, and was far in advance of all the composers of his time, except, no doubt, those of Italy, who, we must remember were his masters, though he did not slavishly copy them. Since then, we have had composers (for the stage, I mean) who have utterly failed; composers, like Dr. Arne, who have written Anglo-Italian operas; composers of "ballad operas," which are not operas at all; composers of imitation-operas of all kinds; and lastly, the composers of the present day, by whom the long wished-for English Opera will perhaps at last be established.

In Germany, which, since the time of Handel and Hasse, has produced an abundance of great composers for the stage, the national opera until Gluck (including Gluck's earlier works), was imitated almost entirely from that of Italy; and the Italian method of singing being the true and only method has always prevailed.

Throughout the eighteenth century, we find the great Italian singers travelling to all parts of Europe and carrying with them the operas of the best Italian masters. In each of the countries where the opera has been cultivated, it has had a different history, but from the beginning until the end of the eighteenth century, the Italian Opera flourished in Italy, and also in Germany and in England; whereas France persisted in rejecting the musical teaching of a foreign land until the utter insufficiency of her own operatic system became too evident to be any longer denied. She remained separated from the rest of Europe in a musical sense until the time of the Revolution, as she has since and from very different reasons been separated from it politically.

OPERA IN FRANCE.

Nevertheless, the history of the Opera in France is of great interest, like the history of every other art in that country which has engaged the attention of its ingenious amateurs and critics. Only, for a considerable period it must be treated apart.

In the course of this narrative sketch, which does not claim to be a scientific history, I shall pursue, as far as possible, the chronological method; but it is one which the necessities of the subject will often cause me to depart from.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCTION OF THE OPERA INTO FRANCE AND ENGLAND.

French Opera not founded by Lulli.—Lulli's elevation from the kitchen to the orchestra.—Lulli, M. de Pourceaugnac, and Louis XIV.—Buffoonery rewarded.—A disreputable tenor.—Virtuous precaution of a *prima donna*.—Orthography of a stage Queen.—A cure for love.—Mademoiselle de Maupin.—A composer of sacred music.—Food for cattle.—Cambert in England.—The first English Opera.—Music under Cromwell.—Music under Charles II.—Grabut and Dryden.—Purcell.

ORFEO AND DON GIOVANNI.

In a general view of the history of the Opera, the central figures would be Gluck and Mozart. Before Gluck's time the operatic art was in its infancy, and since the death of Mozart, no operas have been produced equal to that composer's masterpieces. Mozart must have commenced his *Idomeneo*, the first of his celebrated works, the very year that Gluck retired to Vienna, after giving to the Parisians his *Iphigénie en Tauride*; but, though contemporaries in the strict sense of the word, Gluck and Mozart can scarcely be looked upon as belonging to the same musical epoch. The compositions of the former, however immortal, have at least an antique cast. Those of the latter have quite a modern air; and it must appear to the audiences of the present day that far more than twenty-three years separate *Orfeo* from *Don Giovanni*, though that is the precise interval which elapsed between the production of the opera by which Gluck, and of the one by which Mozart, is best known in this country. Gluck, after a century and a half of opera, so far surpassed all his predecessors that no work by a composer anterior to him is ever performed. Lulli wrote an *Armide*, which was followed by Rameau's *Armide*, which was followed by Gluck's *Armide*; and Monteverde wrote an *Orfeo* a hundred and fifty years before Gluck produced the *Orfeo* which was played only the other night at the Royal Italian Opera. The *Orfeo*, then, of our existing operatic repertory takes us back through its subject to the earliest of regular Italian operas, and similarly Gluck, through his *Armide* appears as the successor of Rameau, who was the successor of Lulli, who usually passes for the founder of the Opera in France, a country where it is particularly interesting to trace the progress of that entertainment, inasmuch as it can be observed at one establishment, which has existed continuously for two hundred years, and which, under the title of Académie Royale, Académie Nationale, and Académie Impériale (it has now gone by each of those names twice), has witnessed the production of more operatic masterpieces than any other theatre in any city in the world. To convince the reader of the truth of this latter assertion I need only remind him of the works produced at the Académie Royale by Gluck and Piccinni immediately before the Revolution; and of the *Masaniello* of Auber, the *William Tell* of Rossini, and the *Robert the Devil* of Meyerbeer,—all written for the said Académie within sixteen years of the termination of the Napoleonic wars. Neither Naples, nor Milan, nor Prague, nor Vienna, nor Munich, nor Dresden, nor Berlin, has individually seen the birth of so many great operatic works by different masters, though, of course, if judged by the number of great composers to whom they have given birth, both Germany and Italy must be ranked infinitely higher than France. Indeed, if we compare France with our own country, we find, it is true, that an opera in the national language was established there earlier than here, though in the first instance only as a private entertainment; but, on the other hand, the French, until Gluck's time, had never any composers, native or adopted, at all comparable to our Purcell, who produced his *King Arthur* as far back as 1691.

Lulli is generally said to have introduced Opera into France, and, indeed, is represented in a picture, well known to Parisian opera-goers, receiving a privilege from the hands of Louis XIV. as a reward and encouragement for his services in that respect. This privilege, however, was neither deserved nor obtained in the manner supposed. Cardinal Mazarin introduced Italian Opera into Paris in 1645, when Lulli was only twelve years of age; and the first French Opera, entitled Akébar, Roi de Mogol, words and music by the Abbé Mailly, was brought out the year following in the Episcopal Palace of Carpentras, under the direction of Cardinal Bichi, Urban the Eighth's legate. Clement VII. had already appeared as a librettist, and it has been said that Urban VIII. himself recommended the importation of the Opera into France; so that the real father of the lyric stage in that country was certainly not a scullion, and may have been a Pope.

THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

The second French Opera was *La Pastorale en musique*, words by Perrin, music by Cambert, which was privately represented at Issy; and the third *Pomone*, also by Perrin and Cambert, which was publicly performed in Paris in 1671—the year in which was produced, at the same theatre, *Psyché*, a *tragédie-ballet*, by the two greatest dramatic poets France has ever produced, Molière and Corneille. *Pomone* was the first French Opera heard by the Parisian public, and it was to the Abbé Perrin, its author, and not to Lulli, that the patent of the Royal Academy of Music was granted. A privilege for establishing an Academy of Music had been conceded a hundred years before by Charles IX. to Antoine de Baif,—the word "*Académie*" being used as an equivalent for "*Accademia*," the Italian for concert. Perrin's license appears to have been a renewal, as to form, of de Baif's, and thus originated the eminently absurd title which the chief operatic theatre of Paris has retained ever since. The Academy of Music is of course an academy in the sense in which the Théâtre Français is a college of declamation, and the Palais Royal Theatre a school of morality; but no one need seek to justify its title because it is known to owe its existence to a confusion of terms.

Six French operas had been performed before Lulli, supported by Madame de Montespan, succeeded in depriving Perrin of his "privilege," and securing it for himself—at the very moment when Perrin and Cambert were about to bring out their *Ariane*, of which the representation was stopped. The success of Lulli's intrigue drove Cambert to London, where he was received with much favour by Charles II., and appointed director of the Court music, an office which he retained until his death. Lulli's first opera, written in conjunction with Quinault, being the seventh produced on the French stage, was *Cadmus and Hermione* (1673).

LULLI'S DISGRACE.

The life of the fortunate, unscrupulous, but really talented scullion, to whom is falsely attributed the honour of having founded the Opera in France, has often been narrated, and for the most part very inaccurately. Every one knows that he arrived from Italy to enter the service of Mademoiselle de Montpensier as page, and that he was degraded by that lady to the back kitchen: but it is not so generally known that he was only saved through the influence of Madame de Montespan from a shameful and horrible death on the Place de Grève, where his accomplice was actually burned and his ashes thrown to the winds. Mademoiselle de Montpensier, in one of her letters, speaks of Lulli asking for his congé; but it is quite certain that he was dismissed, though it would be as impossible to give a complete account of the causes of his dismissal as to publish the original of the needlessly elaborate reply attributed to a certain French general at Waterloo.[4] We may mention, however, that Lulli had composed a song which was a good deal sung at the court, and

at which the Princess had every right to be offended. A French dramatist has made this affair of the song the subject of a very ingenious little piece, which was represented in English some years since at the Adelphi Theatre, but in which the exact nature of the objectionable composition is of course not indicated. Suffice it to say, that Lulli was discharged, and that Louis XIV., hearing the libellous air, and finding it to his taste, showed so little regard for Mademoiselle de Montpensier's feelings, as to take the young musician into his own service. There were no vacancies in the king's band, and it was, moreover, a point of etiquette that the court-fiddlers should buy their places; so to save trouble, and, perhaps, from a suspicion that his ordinary players were a set of impostors, his majesty commissioned Lulli to form a band of his own, to which the name of "*Les petits violons du roi*" was given. The little fiddles soon became more expert musicians than the big ones, and Louis was so pleased with the little fiddle-in-chief, that he entrusted him with the superintendence of the music of his ballets. These ballets, which corresponded closely enough to our English masques, were entertainments not of dancing only, but also of vocal and instrumental music; the name was apparently derived from the Italian *ballata*, the parent of our own "ballad."

Lulli also composed music for the interludes and songs in Molière's comedies, in which he sometimes appeared himself as a singer, and even as a burlesque actor. Once, when the musical arrangements were not quite ready for a ballet, in which the king was to play four parts—the House of France, Pluto, Mars and the Sun—he replied, on receiving a command to proceed with the piece—"*Le roi est le maitre; il peut attendre tant qu'il lui plaira.*" His majesty did not, as I have seen it stated, laugh at the facetious impertinence of his musician. On the contrary, he was seriously offended; and great was Lulli's alarm when he found that neither the House of France, nor Pluto, nor Mars, nor the Sun, would smile at the pleasantries with which, as the performance went on, he endeavoured to atone for his unbecoming speech. The wrath of the Great Monarch was not to be appeased, and Lulli's enemies already began to rejoice at his threatened downfall.

LULLI A BUFFOON.

Fortunately, Molière was at Versailles. Lulli asked him at the conclusion of the ballet to announce a performance of *M. de Pourceaugnac*, a piece which never failed to divert Louis; and it was arranged that just before the rise of the curtain Molière should excuse himself, on the score of a sudden indisposition, from appearing in the principal character. When there seemed to be no chance of *M. de Pourceaugnac* being played, Lulli, that the king might not be disappointed, nobly volunteered to undertake the part of the hero, and exerted himself in an unprecedented manner to do it justice. But his majesty, who generally found the troubles of the Limousin gentleman so amusing, on this occasion did not even smile. The great scene was about to begin; the scene in which the apothecaries, armed with their terrible weapons, attack M. de Pourceaugnac and chase him round the stage. Louis looked graver than ever. Then the comedian, as a last hope, rushed from the back of the stage to the foot lights, sprang into the orchestra, alighted on the harpsichord, and smashed it into a thousand pieces. "By this fall he rose." Probably he hurt himself, but no matter; on looking round he saw the Great Monarch in convulsions of laughter. Encouraged by his success, he climbed back through the prompter's box on to the stage; the royal mirth increased, and Lulli was now once more reinstated in the good graces of his sovereign.

Molière had a high opinion of Lulli's facetious powers. "*Fais nous rire, Baptiste*," he would say, and it cannot have been any sort of joke that would have excited the laughter of the greatest of comic writers. Nevertheless, he fell out with Lulli when the latter attained the "privilege" of the Opera, and, profiting by the monopoly which it secured to him, forbade the author of *Tartuffe* to introduce more than two singers in his interludes, or to employ more than six violins in his orchestra. Accordingly, Molière entrusted the composition of the music for the *Malade Imaginaire*, to Charpentier. The songs and symphonies of all his other pieces, with the exception of *Mélicerte*, were composed by Lulli.

The story of Lulli's obtaining letters of nobility through the excellence of his buffoonery in the part of the Muphti, in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* has often been told. This was in 1670, but once a noble, and director of the Royal Academy of Music, he showed but little disposition to contribute to the diversion of others, even by the exercise of his legitimate art. Not only did he refuse to play the violin, but he would not even have one in his house. To overcome Lulli's repugnance in this respect, Marshal de Gramont hit upon a very ingenious plan. He used to make one of his servants who possessed the gift of converting music into noise, play the violin in Lulli's presence. Upon this, the highly susceptible musician would snatch the instrument from the valet's hands, and restore the murdered melody to life and beauty; then, excited by the pleasure of producing music, he forgot all around him, and continued to play to the great delight of the marshal.

Many curious stories are told of Lafontaine's want of success as a librettist; Lulli refused three of his operas, one after the other, *Daphné*, *Astrée*, and *Acis et Galathée*—the *Acis et Galathée* set to music by Lulli being the work of Campistron. At the first representation of *Astrée*, of which the music had been written by Colasse (a composer who imitated and often plagiarised from Lulli), Lafontaine was present in a box behind some ladies who did not know him. He kept exclaiming every moment, "Detestable! detestable!"

LAFONTAINE'S IMPARTIALITY.

Tired of hearing the same thing repeated so many times, the ladies at last turned round and said, "It is really not so bad. The author is a man of considerable wit; it is written by M. de la Fontaine."

"*Cela ne vaut pas le diable*," replied the *librettist*, "and this Lafontaine of whom you speak is an ass. I am Lafontaine, and ought to know."

After the first act he left the theatre and went into the Café Marion, where he fell asleep. One of his friends came in, and surprised to see him, said—"M. de la Fontaine! How is this? Ought you not to be at the first performance of your opera?"

The author awoke, and said, with a yawn—"I've been; and the first act was so dull that I had not the courage to wait for the other. I admire the patience of these Parisians!"

Compare this with the similar conduct of an English humourist, Charles Lamb, who, meeting with no greater success as a dramatist than Lafontaine, was equally astonished at the patience of the public, and remained in the pit to hiss his own farce.

Colasse, Lafontaine's composer, and Campistron, one of Lulli's librettists—when Quinault was not in the way—

occasionally worked together, and with no very favourable result. Hence, mutual reproaches, each attributing the failure of the opera to the stupidity of the other. This suggested the following epigram, which, under similar circumstances, has been often imitated:—

"Entre Campistron et Colasse,
Grand débat s'émeut au Parnasse,
Sur ce que l'opéra n'a pas un sort heureux.
De son mauvais succès nul ne se croit coupable.
L'un dit que la musique est plate et misérable,
L'autre que la conduite et les vers sont affreux;
Et le grand Apollon, toujours juge équitable,
Trouve qu'ils ont raison tous deux."

Quinault was by far the most successful of Lulli's librettists, in spite of the contempt with which his verses were always treated by Boileau. Boileau liked Lulli's music, but when he entered the Opera, and was asked where he would sit, he used to reply, "Put me in some place where I shall not be able to hear the words."

THE FIDDLE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Lulli must have had sad trouble with his orchestra, for in his time a violinist was looked upon as merely an adjunct to a dancing-master. There was a king of the fiddles, without whose permission no cat-gut could be scraped; and in selling his licenses to dancing-masters and the musicians of ball-rooms, the ruler of the bows does not appear to have required any proof of capacity from his clients. Even the simple expedient of shifting was unknown to Lulli's violinists, and for years after his death, to reach the C above the line was a notable feat. The pit quite understood the difficulty, and when the dreaded *démanchement* had to be accomplished, would indulge in sarcastic shouts of "*gare l'ut! gare l'ut!*"

The violin was not in much repute in the 17th, and still less in the 16th, century. The lute was a classical instrument; the harp was the instrument of the Troubadours; but the fiddle was fit only for servants, and fiddlers and servants were classed together.

"Such a one," says Malherbe, "who seeks for his ancestors among heroes is the son of a lacquey or a fiddler."

Brantôme, relating the death of Mademoiselle de Limeuil, one of the Queen's maids of honour, who expired, poor girl, to a violin accompaniment, expresses himself as follows:—

"When the hour of her death had arrived, she sent for her valet, such as all the maids of honour have; and he was called Julien, and played very well on the violin. 'Julien,' said she, 'take your violin and play to me continually, until you see me dead, the *Defeat of the Swiss*,[5] as well as you are able; and when you are at the passage *All is lost*, sound it four or five times as piteously as you can; which the other did, while she herself assisted him with her voice. She recited it twice, and then turning on the other side of her pillow said to her companions, 'All is lost this time, as well I know,' and thus died."

These musical valets were as much slaves as the ancient flute players of the Roman nobles, and were bought, sold, and exchanged like horses and dogs. When their services were not required at home, masters and mistresses who were generously inclined would allow their fiddlers to go out and play in the streets on their own account.

Strange tales are told of the members of Lulli's company. Duménil, the tenor, used to steal jewellery from the soprano and contralto of the troop, and get intoxicated with the baritone. This eccentric virtuoso is said to have drunk six bottles of champagne every night he performed, and to have improved gradually until about the fifth. Duménil, after one of his voyages to England, which he visited several times, lost his voice. Then, seeing no reason why he should moderate his intemperance at all, he gave himself up unrestrainedly to drinking, and died.

OPERATIC ORTHOGRAPHY.

Mdlle. Desmâtins, the original representative of *Armide* was chiefly celebrated for her beauty, her love of good living, her corpulence, and her bad grammar. She it was who wrote the celebrated letter communicating to a friend the death of her child, "*Notre anfan ai maure, vien de boneure, le mien ai de te voire.*" Mlle. Desmâtins took so much pleasure in representing royal personages that she assumed the (theatrical) costume and demeanour of a queen in her own household, sat on a throne, and made her attendants serve her on their knees. Another vocalist, Marthe le Rochois, accused of grave flirtation with a bassoon, justified herself by showing a promise of marriage, which the gallant instrumentalist had written on the back of an ace of spades.

The Opera singers of this period were not particularly well paid, and history relates that Mlles. Aubry and Verdier, being engaged for the same line of business, had to live in the same room and sleep in the same bed.

Marthe Le Rochois was fond of giving advice to her companions. "Inspire yourself with the situation," she said to Desmâtins, who had to represent Medea abandoned by Jason; "fancy yourself in the poor woman's place. If you were deserted by a lover, whom you adored," added Marthe, thinking, no doubt, of the bassoon, "what should you do?" "I should look out for another," replied the ingenuous girl.

But by far the most distinguished operatic actress of this period was Mlle. de Maupin, now better known through Théophile Gauthier's scandalous, but brilliant and vigorously written romance, than by her actual adventures and exploits, which, however, were sufficiently remarkable. Among the most amusing of her escapades, were her assaults upon Duménil and Thévenard, the before-mentioned tenor and baritone of the Academie. Dressed in male attire she went up to the former one night in the Place des Victoires, caned him, deprived him of his watch and snuff-box, and the next day produced the trophies at the theatre just as the plundered vocalist was boasting that he had been attacked by three robbers, and had put them all to flight. She is said to have terrified the latter to such a degree that he remained three weeks hiding from her in the Palais Royal.

Mlle. de Maupin was in many respects the Lola Montes of her day, but with more beauty, more talent, more power, and more daring. When she appeared as Minerva, in Lulli's *Cadmus*, and taking off her helmet to the public, showed all her beautiful light brown hair, which hung in luxuriant tresses over her shoulders, the audience were in ecstacies of delight. With less talent, and less powers of fascination, she would infallibly have been executed for the numerous fatal duels in which she was engaged, and might even have been burnt alive for invading the sanctity of a convent at Avignon, to say nothing of her attempting to set fire to it. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that Lola Montes was the Mlle. Maupin of *her* day; a Maupin of a century which is moderate in its passions and its vices

as in other things.

A COMPOSER OF SACRED MUSIC.

Moreau, the successor of Lulli, is chiefly known as having written the music for the choruses of Racine's *Esther*, (1689). These choruses, re-arranged by Perne, were performed in 1821, at the Conservatoire of Paris, and were much applauded. Racine, in his preface to *Esther*, says, "I cannot finish this preface without rendering justice to the author of the music, and confessing frankly that his (choral) songs formed one of the greatest attractions of the piece. All connoisseurs are agreed that for a long time no airs have been heard more touching, or more suitable to the words." Nevertheless, Madame de Maintenon's special composer was not eminently religious in his habits. The musician whose hymns were sung by the daughters of Sion and of St. Cyr sought his inspiration at a tavern in the Rue St. Jacques, in company with the poet Lainez and with most of the singers and dancers of the period. No member of the Opera rode past the Cabaret de la Barre Royale without tying his horse up in the yard and going in for a moment to have a word and a glass with Moreau. Sometimes the moment became an hour, sometimes several. The horses of Létang and Favier, dancers at the Académie, after being left eight hours in the court-yard without food, gnawed through their bridles, and, looking no doubt for the stable, found their way into a bed-room, where they devoured the contents of a dilapidated straw mattrass. "We must all live," said Lainez, when he saw a mattrass charged for among the items of the repast, and he hastened to offer the unfortunate animals a ration of wine.

FRENCH MUSIC IN ENGLAND.

When Cambert arrived in London he found Charles II. and his Court fully disposed to patronise any sort of importation from France. Naturally, then, the founder of French Opera was well received. Even Lock, in many of his pieces, had imitated the French style; and though he had been employed to compose the music for the public entry of Charles II., at the Restoration, and was afterwards appointed composer in ordinary to His Majesty, Cambert, immediately on his arrival, was made master of the king's band; and two years afterwards an English version of his *Ariadne* was produced. "You knew Cambert," says de Vizé, in *Le Mercure Galant*; "he has just died in London (1677), where he received many favours from the King of England and from the greatest noblemen of his Court, who had a high opinion of his genius. What they have seen of his works has not belied the reputation he had acquired in France. It is to him we owe the establishment of the operas that are now represented. The music of those of *Pomona*, and of the *Pains and Pleasures of Love*, is by him, and since that time we have had no recitative in France that has appeared new." In several English books, Grabut, who accompanied Cambert to England, is said to have arranged the music of *Ariadne*, and even to have composed it; but this is manifestly an error. This same Grabut wrote the music to Dryden's celebrated political opera *Albion and Albanius*, which was performed at the Duke's Theatre in 1685, and of which the representations were stopped by the news of Monmouth's invasion. Purcell, who was only fifteen years of age when *Ariadne* was produced, was now twenty-six, and had written a great deal of admirable dramatic music. Probably the public thought that to him, and not to the Frenchman, might have been confided the task of setting *Albion and Albanius*, for in the preface to that work Dryden says, as if apologetically, that "during the rehearsal the king had publicly declared more than once, that the composition and choruses were more just and more beautiful than any he had heard in England." Then after a warm commendation of Grabut Dryden adds, "This I say, not to flatter him, but to do him right; because among some English musicians, and their scholars, who are sure to judge after them, the imputation of being a Frenchman is enough to make a party who maliciously endeavour to decry him. But the knowledge of Latin and Italian poets, both of which he possesses, besides his skill in music, and his being acquainted with all the performances of the French operas, adding to these the good sense to which he is born, have raised him to a degree above any man who shall pretend to be his rival on our stage. When any of our countrymen excel him, I shall be glad, for the sake of Old England, to be shown my error: in the meantime, let virtue be commended, though in the person of a stranger."

Neither Grabut nor Cambert was the first composer who produced a complete opera in England. During the Commonwealth, in 1656, Sir William Davenant had obtained permission to open a theatre for the performance of operas, in a large room, at the back of Rutland House, in the upper end of Aldersgate Street; and, long before, the splendid court masques of James I. and Charles I. had given opportunities for the development of recitative, which was first composed in England by an Italian, named Laniere, an eminent musician, painter and engraver. The Opera had been established in Italy since the beginning of the century, and we have seen that in 1607, Monteverde wrote his *Orfeo* for the court of Mantua. But it was still known in England and France only through the accounts, respectively, of Evelyn and of St. Evrémond.

THE FIRST ENGLISH OPERA.

The first English opera produced at Sir William Davenant's theatre, the year of its opening, was *The Siege of Rhodes*, "made a representation by the art of perspective in scenes, and the story sung in recitative music." There were five changes of scene, according to the ancient dramatic distinctions made for time, and there were seven performers. The part of "Solyman" was taken by Captain Henry Cook, that of "Ianthe" by Mrs. Coleman, who appears to have been the first actress on the English stage—in the sense in which Heine was the first poet of his century (having been born on the 1st of January, 1800)[6] and Beaumarchais the first poet in Paris (to a person entering the city from the Porte St. Antoine).[7] The remaining five parts were "doubled." That of the "Admiral" was taken by Mr. Peter Rymon, and Matthew Lock, the future composer of the music to *Macbeth*; that of "Mustapha," by Mr. Thomas Blagrave, and Henry Purcell, the father of the composer of *King Arthur*, and himself an accomplished musician. The vocal music of the first and fifth "entries" or acts, was composed by Henry Lawes; that of the second and third, by Captain Henry Cook, afterwards master of the children of the Chapel Royal; that of the fourth, by Lock. The instrumental music was by Dr. Charles Coleman and George Hudson, and was performed by an orchestra of six musicians.

The first English opera then was produced, ten years later than the first French opera; but the *Siege of Rhodes* was performed publicly, whereas, it was not until fifteen years afterwards (1671) that the first public performance of a French opera (Cambert's *Pomone*) took place. Ordinances for the suppression of stage plays had been in force in England since 1642, and in 1643, a tract was printed under the title of *The Actor's Remonstrance*, showing to what distress the musicians of the theatre had been already reduced. The writer says, "But musike that was held so

delectable and precious that they scorned to come to a tavern under twenty shillings salary for two hours, now wander with their instruments under their cloaks (I mean such as have any) to all houses of good fellowship, saluting every room where there is company with 'will you have any musike, gentlemen.'" In 1648, moreover, a provost-marshal was appointed with power to seize upon all ballad singers, and to suppress stage plays.

Nevertheless, Oliver Cromwell was a great lover of music. He is said to have "entertained the most skilful in that science in his pay and family;" and it is known that he engaged Hingston, a celebrated musician, formerly in the service of Charles, at a salary of one hundred a-year—the Hingston, at whose house Sir Roger l'Estrange was playing, and continued to play when Oliver entered the room, which gained for this *virtuoso* the title of "Oliver's fiddler." Antony à Wood, also tells a story of Cromwell's love of music. James Quin, one of the senior students of Christ Church, with a bass voice, "very strong and exceeding trouling," had been turned out of his place by the visitors, but, "being well acquainted with some great men of those times that loved music, they introduced him into the company of Oliver Cromwell, the Protector, who loved a good voice and instrumental music well. He heard him sing with great delight, liquored him with sack, and in conclusion, said, 'Mr. Quin, you have done well, what shall I do for you?' To which Quin made answer, 'That your highness would be pleased to restore me to my student's place,' which he did accordingly." But the best proof that can be given of Oliver Cromwell's love for music is the simple fact that, under his government, and with his special permission, the Opera was founded in this country.

CROMWELL'S LOVE OF MUSIC.

We have seen that in Charles II's reign, the court reserved its patronage almost exclusively for French music, or music in the French style. When Cambert arrived in London, our Great Purcell (born, 1659) was still a child. He produced his first opera, *Dido and Æneas*, the year of Cambert's death (1677); but, although, in the meanwhile, he wrote a quantity of vocal and instrumental music of all kinds, and especially for the stage, it was not until after the death of Charles that he associated himself with Dryden in the production of those musical dramas (not operas in the proper sense of the word) by which he is chiefly known.

In 1690, Purcell composed music for *The Tempest*, altered and shamefully disfigured by Dryden and Davenant.

PURCELL.

In 1691, *King Arthur*, which contains Purcell's finest music, was produced with immense success. The war-song of the Britons, *Come if you Dare*, and the concluding duet and chorus, *Britons strike Home*, have survived the rest of the work. The former piece in particular is well known to concert-goers of the present day, from the excellent singing of Mr. Sims Reeves. Purcell died at the age of thirty-six, the age at which Mozart and Raphael were lost to the world, and has not yet found a successor. He was not only the most original, and the most dramatic, but also the most thoroughly English of our native composers. In the dedication of the music of the *Prophetess* to the Duke of Somerset, Purcell himself says, "Music is yet but in its nonage, a forward child, which gives hope of what it may be hereafter in England, when the masters of it shall find more encouragement. 'Tis now learning Italian, which is its best master, and studying a little of the French air to give it somewhat more of gaiety and fashion." Here Purcell spoke in all modesty, for though his style may have been formed in some measure on French models, "there is," says Dr. Burney, "a latent power and force in his expression of English words, whatever be the subject, that will make an unprejudiced native of this island feel more than all the elegance, grace and refinement of modern music, less happily applied, can do; and this pleasure is communicated to us, not by the symmetry or rhythm of modern melody, but by his having tuned to the true accents of our mother tongue, those notes of passion which an inhabitant of this island would breathe in such situations as the words describe. And these indigenous expressions of passion Purcell had the power to enforce by the energy of modulation, which, on some occasions, was bold, affecting and sublime. Handel," he adds, "who flourished in a less barbarous age for his art, has been acknowledged Purcell's superior in many particulars; but in none more than the art and grandeur of his choruses, the harmony and texture of his organ fugues, as well as his great style of concertos; the ingenuity of his accompaniments to his songs and choruses; and even in the general melody of the airs themselves; yet, in the accent, passion and expression of *English words*, the vocal music of Purcell is, sometimes, to my feelings, as superior to Handel's as an original poem to a translation."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE NATURE OF THE OPERA, AND ITS MERITS AS COMPARED WITH OTHER FORMS OF THE DRAMA.

Opera admired for its unintelligibility.—The use of words in opera.—An inquisitive amateur.—New version of a chorus in Robert le Diable.—Strange readings of the *Credo* by two chapel masters.—Dramatic situations and effects peculiar to the Opera.—Pleasantries directed against the Opera; their antiquity and harmlessness.—*Les Opéras* by St. Evrémond.—Beaumarchais's *mot*.—Addison on the Italian Opera in England.—Swift's epigram.—Béranger on the decline of the drama.—What may be seen at the Opera.

UNINTELLIGIBILITY OF OPERA.

When Sir William Davenant obtained permission from Cromwell to open his theatre for the performance of operas, Antony à Wood wrote that, "Though Oliver Cromwell had now prohibited all other theatrical representations, he allowed of this because being in an unknown language it could not corrupt the morals of the people." Thereupon it has been imagined that Antony à Wood must have supposed Sir William Davenant's performances to have been in the Italian tongue, as if he could not have regarded music as an unknown language, and have concluded that a drama conducted in music would for that reason be unintelligible. Nevertheless, in the present day we have a censor who refuses to permit the representation of *La Dame aux Camélias* in English, or even in French,[8] but who tolerates the performance of *La Traviata*, (which, I need hardly say, is the *Dame aux Camélias* set to music) in Italian, and, I believe, even in English; thinking, no doubt, like Antony à Wood, that in an operatic form it cannot be understood, and therefore cannot corrupt the morals of the people. Since Antony à Wood's time a good deal of stupid, unmeaning verse has been written in operas, and sometimes when the words have not been of themselves unintelligible, they have been rendered nearly so by the manner in which they have been set to music, to say nothing of the final obscurity given to them by the imperfect enunciation of the singers. The mere fact, however, of a dramatic piece being performed in music does not make it unintelligible, but, on the contrary, increases the sphere of its intelligibility, giving it a more universal interest and rendering it an entertainment appreciable by persons of all

countries. This in itself is not much to boast of, for the entertainment of the *ballet* is independent of language to a still greater extent; and *La Gitana* or *Esmeralda* can be as well understood by an Englishman at the Opera House of Berlin or of Moscow as at Her Majesty's Theatre in London; while perhaps the most universally intelligible drama ever performed is that of Punch, even when the brief dialogue which adorns its pantomime is inaudible.

Opera is *music in a dramatic form*; and people go to the theatre and listen to it as if it were so much prose. They have even been known to complain during or after the performance that they could not hear the words, as if it were through the mere logical meaning of the words that the composer proposed to excite the emotion of the audience. The only pity is that it is necessary in an opera to have words at all, but it is evident that a singer could not enter into the spirit of a dramatic situation if he had a mere string of meaningless syllables or any sort of inappropriate nonsense to utter. He must first produce an illusion on himself, or he will produce none on the audience, and he must, therefore, fully inspire himself with the sentiment, logical as well as musical, of what he has to sing. Otherwise, all we want to know about the words of *Casta diva* (to take examples from the most popular, as also one of the very finest of Italian operas) is that it is a prayer to a goddess; of the Druids' chorus, that it is chorus of Druids; of the trio, that "Norma" having confronted "Pollio" with "Adalgisa," is reproaching him indignantly and passionately with his perfidy; of the duet that "Norma" is confiding her children to "Adalgisa's" care; of the scene with "Pollio," that "Norma" is again reproaching him, but in a different spirit, with sadness and bitterness, and with the compressed sorrow of a woman who is wounded to the heart and must soon die. I may be in error, however, for though I have seen *Norma* fifty times, I have never examined the *libretto*, and of the whole piece know scarcely more than the two words which I have already paraded before the public—"*Casta Diva.*"

WONDERFUL INSTANCE OF CURIOSITY.

One night, at the Royal Italian Opera, when Mario was playing the part of the "Duke of Mantua" in *Rigoletto*, and was singing the commencement of the duet with "Gilda," a man dressed in black and white like every one else, said to me gravely, "I do not understand Italian. Can you tell me what he is saying to her?"

"He is telling her that he loves her," I answered briefly.

"What is he saying now?" asked this inquisitive amateur two minutes afterwards.

"He is telling her that he loves her," I repeated.

"Why, he said that before!" objected this person who had apparently come to the opera with the view of gaining some kind of valuable information from the performers. Poor Bosio was the "Gilda," but my horny-eared neighbour wondered none the less that the Duke could not say "I love you," in three words.

"He will say it again," I answered, "and then she will say it, and then they will say it together; indeed, they will say nothing else for the next five minutes, and when you hear them exclaim 'addio' with one voice, and go on repeating it, it will still mean the same thing."

What benighted amateur was this who wanted to know the words of a beautiful duet; and is there much difference between such a one and the man who would look at the texture of a canvas to see what the painting on it was worth?

Let it be admitted that as a rule no opera is intelligible without a libretto; but is a drama always intelligible without a play-bill? A libretto, for general use, need really be no larger than an ordinary programme; and it would be a positive advantage if it contained merely a sketch of the plot with the subject, and perhaps the first line of all the principal songs.

IMITATIVE MUSIC.

Then the foolish amateur would not run the risk of having his attention diverted from the music by the words, and would be more likely to give himself up to the enjoyment of the opera in a rational and legitimate manner. Another advantage of keeping the words from the public would be, that composers, full of the grossest prose, but priding themselves on their fancy, would at last see the inutility as well as the pettiness of picking out one particular word in a line, and "illustrating" it: thus imitating a sound when their aim should be to depict a sentiment. Even the illustrious Purcell has sinned in this respect, and Meyerbeer, innumerable times, though always displaying remarkable ingenuity, and as much good taste as is compatible with an error against both taste and reason. It is a pity that great musicians should descend to such anti-poetical, and, indeed, nonsensical trivialities; but when inferior ones are unable to let a singer wish she were a bird, without imitating a bird's chirruping on the piccolo, or allude in the most distant manner to the trumpet's sound, without taking it as a hint to introduce a short flourish on that instrument, I cannot help thinking of those literal-minded pictorial illustrators who follow a precisely analogous process, and who, for example, in picturing the scene in which "Macbeth" exclaims—"Throw physic to the dogs," would represent a man throwing bottles of medicine to a pack of hounds. What a treat, by the way, it would be to hear a setting of Othello's farewell to war by a determined composer of imitative picturesque music! How "ear-piercing" would be his fifes! How "spirit-stirring" his drums.

The words of an opera ought to be good, and yet need not of necessity be heard. They should be poetical that they may inspire first the composer and afterwards the singer; and they should be ryhthmical and sonorous in order that the latter may be able to sing them with due effect. Above all they ought not to be ridiculous, lest the public should hear them and laugh at the music, just where it was intended that it should affect them to tears. Everything ought to be good at the opera down to the rosin of the fiddlers, and including the words of the libretto. Even the chorus should have tolerable verses to sing, though no one would be likely ever to hear them. Indeed, it is said that at the Grand Opera of Paris, by a tradition now thirty years old, the opening chorus in *Robert le Diable* is always sung to those touching lines—which I confess I never heard on the other side of the orchestra:—

La sou-| pe aux choux | se fait dans la mar |-mite
Dans la | marmi-|-te on fait la soupe aux | choux.

I have said nothing about the duty of the composer in selecting his libretto and setting it to music, but of course if he be a man of taste he will not willingly accept a collection of nonsense verses. English composers, however, have not much choice in this respect, and all we can ask of them is that they will do their best with what they have been able to obtain; not indulging in too many repetitions, and not tiring the singer and provoking such of the audience as may wish to "catch" the words by setting more than half a dozen notes to the same monosyllable especially if the monosyllable occurs in the middle of a line, and the vowel e, or worse still, i, in the middle of the monosyllable. One

of our most eminent composers, Mr. Vincent Wallace, has given us a striking example of the fault I am speaking of in his well-known trio—"Turn on old Time thy hour-glass" (*Maritana*) in which, according to the music, the scanning of the first half line is as follows:—

Tŭrn ōn | ŏld Tī | ĭ-ī || ĭ-ĭ-ĭ—ime | &c.

WORDS FOR MUSIC.

To be sure Time is infinite, but seven sounds do not convey the notion of infinity; and even if they did, it would not be any the more pleasant for a singer to have to take a five note leap, and then execute five other notes on a vowel which cannot be uttered without closing the throat. If I had been in Mr. Vincent Wallace's place, I should, at all events, have insisted on Mr. Fitzball making one change. Instead of "Old Time," he should have inserted "Old Parr."

Tŭrn ōn | ŏld Pā-| ă-ā || ă-ă-ă-arr | &c.,

would not have been more intelligible to the audience than—"Turn on old Ti-i-i-i-i-i-ime, &c., and it would have been a thousand times easier to sing. Nor in spite of the little importance I attach to the phraseology of the libretto when listening to "music in a dramatic form," would I, if I were a composer, accept such a line as—

"When the proud land of Poland was ploughed by the hoof,"

with a suspension of sense after the word hoof. No; the librettist might take his hoof elsewhere. It should not appear in *my* Opera; at least, not in lieu of a plough. Mr. Balfe should tell such poets to keep such ploughs for themselves.

Sic vos *pro* vobis fertis aratra boves,

he might say to them.

The singer ought certainly to understand what he is singing, and still more certainly should the composer understand what he is composing; but the sight of Latin reminds me that both have sometimes failed to do so, and from no one's fault but their own. Jomelli used to tell a story of an Italian chapel-master, who gave to one of his solo singers the phrase *Genitum non factum*, to which the chorus had to reply *Factum non genitum*. This transposition seemed ingenious and picturesque to the composer, and suited a contrast of rhythm which he had taken great pains to produce. It was probably due only to the bad enunciation of the choristers that he was not burned alive.

Porpora, too, narrowly escaped the terrors of the inquisition; and but for his avowed and clearly-proved ignorance of Latin would have made a bad end of it, for a similar, though not quite so ludicrous a blunder as the one perpetrated by Jomelli's friend. He had been accustomed to add *non* and *si* to the verses of his libretto when the music required it, and in setting the creed found it convenient to introduce a *non*. This novel version of the Belief commenced—*Credo, non credo, non credo in Deum*, and it was well for Porpora that he was able to convince the inquisitors of his inability to understand it.

UNNATURALNESS OF OPERA.

Another chapel-master of more recent times is said, in composing a mass, to have given a delightfully pastoral character to his "Agnus Dei." To him "a little learning" had indeed proved "a dangerous thing." He had, somehow, ascertained that "agnus" meant "lamb," and had forthwith gone to work with pipe and cornemuse to give appropriate "picturesqueness" to his accompaniments.

Besides accusations of unintelligibility and of *contra-sense* (as for instance when a girl sentenced to death sings in a lively strain), the Opera has been attacked as essentially absurd, and it is satisfactory to know that these attacks date from its first introduction into England and France. To some it appears monstrous that men and women should be represented on the stage singing, when it is notorious that in actual life they communicate in the speaking voice. Opera was declared to be unnatural as compared with drama. In other words, it was thought natural that Desdemona should express her grief in melodious verse, but unnatural that she should do so in pure melody. (For the sake of the comparison I must suppose Rossini's *Otello* to have been written long before its time). Persons, with any pretence to reason, have long ceased to urge such futile objections against a delightful entertainment which, as I shall endeavour to show, is in some respects the finest form the drama has assumed. Gresset answered these music-haters well in his *Discours sur l'harmonie*.—"After all," he says, "if we study nature do we not find more fidelity to appropriateness at the Opera than on the tragic stage where the hero speaks the language of declamatory poetry? Has not harmony always been much better able than simple declamation to imitate the true tones of the passions, deep sighs, sobs, bursts of grief, languishing tenderness, interjections of despair, the inflexions of pathos, and all the energy of the heart?"

For the sake of enjoying the pleasures of music and of the drama in combination, we must adopt certain conventions, and must assume that song is the natural language of the men and women that we propose to show in our operas; as we assume in tragedy that they all talk in verse, in comedy that they are all witty and yet are perpetually giving one another opportunities for repartee; in the ballet that they all dance and are unable to speak at all. The form is nothing. Give us the true expression of natural emotion and all the rest will seem natural enough. Only it would be as well to introduce as many dancing characters and dancing situations as possible in the *ballet*—and to remember in particular that Roman soldiers could not with propriety figure in one; for a ballet on the subject of "Les Horaces" was once actually produced in France, in which the Horatii and the Curiatii danced a double *pas de trois*; and so in the tragedy the chief passages ought not to be London coal-heavers or Parisian water-carriers; and similarly in the Opera, scenes and situations should be avoided which in no way suggest singing.

THE OPERATIC CHORUS.

And let me now inform the ignorant opponents of the Opera, that there are certain grand dramatic effects attainable on the lyric stage, which, without the aid of music, could not possibly be produced. Music has often been defined; here is a new definition of it. It is *the language of masses*—the only language that masses can speak and be understood. On the old stage a crowd could not cry "Down with the tyrant!" or "We will!" or even "Yes," and "No," with any intelligibility. There is some distance between this state of things and the "Blessing of the daggers" in the *Huguenots*, or the prayer of the Israelites in *Moses*. On the old stage we could neither have had the prayer (unless it were recited by a single voice, which would be worse than nothing) before the passage, nor the thanksgiving, which, in the Opera, is sung immediately after the Red Sea has been crossed; but above all we could not obtain the sublime effect produced by

the contrast between the two songs; the same song, and yet how different! the difference between minor and major, between a psalm of humble supplication and a hymn of jubilant gratitude. This is the change of key at which, according to Stendhal, the women of Rome fainted in such numbers. It cannot be heard without emotion, even in England, and we do not think any one, even a professed enemy of Opera, would ask himself during the performance of the prayer in *Mosé*, whether it was natural or not that the Israelites should sing either before or after crossing the Red Sea.

Again, how could the animation of the market scene in *Masaniello* be rendered so well as by means of music? In concerted pieces, moreover, the Opera possesses a means of dramatic effect quite as powerful and as peculiar to itself as its choruses. The finest situation in *Rigoletto* (to take an example from one of the best known operas of the day) is that in which the quartet occurs. Here, three persons express simultaneously the different feelings which are excited in the breast of each by the presence of a fourth in the house of an assassin, while the cause of all this emotion is gracefully making love to one of the three, who is the assassin's sister. The amorous fervour of the "Duke," the careless gaiety of "Maddalena," the despair of "Gilda," the vengeful rage of "Rigoletto," are all told most dramatically in the combined songs of the four personages named, while the spectator derives an additional pleasure from the art by which these four different songs are blended into harmony. A magnificent quartet, of which, however, the model existed long before in *Don Giovanni*.

All this is, of course, very unnatural. It would be so much more natural that the "Duke of Mantua" should first make a long speech to "Maddalena;" that "Maddalena" should then answer him; that afterwards both should remain silent while "Gilda," of whose presence outside the tavern they are unaware, sobs forth her lamentations at the perfidy of her betrayer; and that finally the "Duke," "Maddalena," and "Gilda," by some inexplicable agreement, should not say a word while "Rigoletto" is congratulating himself on the prospect of being speedily revenged on the libertine who has robbed him of his daughter. In the old drama, perfect sympathy between two lovers can scarcely be expressed (or rather symbolized) so vividly as through the "*ensemble*" of the duet, where the two voices are joined so as to form but one harmony. We are sometimes inclined to think that even the balcony duet between "Romeo" and "Juliet" ought to be in music; and certainly no living dramatist could render the duet in music between "Valentine and Raoul" adequately into either prose or verse. Talk of music destroying the drama,—why it is from love of the drama that so many persons go to the opera every night.

EXPLODED PLEASANTRIES.

But is it not absurd to hear a man say, "Good morning," "How do you do?" in music? Most decidedly; and therefore ordinary, common-place, and trivial remarks should be excluded from operas, as from poetical dramas and from poetry of all kinds except comic and burlesque verse. It was not reserved for the unmusical critics of the present day to discover that it would be grotesque to utter such a phrase as "Give me my boots," in recitative, and that such a line as "Waiter, a cutlet nicely browned," could not be advantageously set to music. All this sort of humour was exhausted long ago by Hauteroche, in his *Crispin Musicien*, which was brought out in Paris three years after the establishment of the Académie Royale de Musique, and revived in the time of Rameau (1735) by Palaprat, in his *Concert Ridicule* and *Ballet Extravagant* (1689-90), of which the author afterwards said that they were "the source of all the badinage that had since been applauded in more than twenty comedies; that is to say, the interminable pleasantries on the subject of the Opera;" and by St. Evrémond, in his comedy entitled *Les Opéras*, which he wrote during his residence in London.

In St. Evrémond's piece, which was published but not played, "Chrisotine" is, so to speak, opera-struck. She thinks of nothing but Lulli, or "Baptiste," as she affectionately calls him, after the manner of Louis XVI. and his Court; sings all day long, and in fact has altogether abandoned speech for song. "Perrette," the servant, tells "Chrisotine" that her father wishes to see her. "Why disturb me at my songs," replies the young lady, singing all the time. The attendant complains to the father, that "Chrisotine" will not answer her in ordinary spoken language, and that she sings about the house all day long. "Chrisotine" corroborates "Perrette's" statement, by addressing a little *cavatina* to her parent, in which she protests against the harshness of those who would hinder her from singing the tender loves of "Hermione" and "Cadmus."

"Speak like other people, Chrisotine," exclaims old "Chrisard," or I will issue such an edict against operas that they shall never be spoken of again where I have any authority."

"My father, Baptiste; opera, my duty to my parents; how am I to decide between you?" exclaims the young girl, with a tragic indecision as painful as that of Arnold, the son of Tell, hesitating between his Matilda and his native land.

"You hesitate between Baptiste and your father," cries the old gentleman. "*O tempora! O mores!*" (only in French).

ST. EVREMOND'S BURLESQUE.

"Tender mother! Cruel father! and you, O Cadmus! Unhappy Cadmus! I shall see you no more," sings "Chrisotine;" and soon afterwards she adds, still singing, that she "would rather die than speak like the vulgar. It is a new fashion at the court (she continues), and since the last opera no one speaks otherwise than in song. When one gentleman meets another in the morning, it would be grossly impolite not to sing to him:—'*Monsieur comment vous portez vous?*' to which the other would reply—'*Je me porte à votre service.*'

"First Gentleman.—'*Après diner, que ferons nous?*'

"Second Gentleman.—'*Allons voir la belle Clarisse.*'

"The most ordinary things are sung in this manner, and in polite society people don't know what it means to speak otherwise than in music."

Chrisard.—"Do people of quality sing when they are with ladies?"

Chrisotine.—"Sing! sing! I should like to see a man of the world endeavour to entertain company with mere talk in the old style. He would be looked upon as one of a by-gone period. The servants would laugh at him."

Chrisard.—"And in the town?"

Chrisotine.—"All persons of any importance imitate the court. It is only in the Rue St. Denis and St. Honoré and on the Bridge of Notre Dame that the old custom is still kept up. There people buy and sell without singing. But at Gauthier's, at the Orangery; at all the shops where the ladies of the court buy dresses, ornaments and jewels, all business is carried on in music, and if the dealers did not sing their goods would be confiscated. People say that a severe edict has been issued to that effect. They appoint no Provost of Trade now unless he is a musician, and until

M. Lulli has examined him to see whether he is capable of understanding and enforcing the rules of harmony."

The above scene, be it observed, is not the work of an ignorant detractor of opera, of a brute insensible to the charms of music, but is the production of St. Evrémond, one of the very first men, on our side of the Alps, who called attention to the beauties of the new musical drama, just established in Italy, and which, when he first wrote on the subject, had not yet been introduced into France. St. Evrémond had too much sense to decry the Opera on account of such improbabilities as must inevitably belong to every form of the drama—which is the expression of life, but which need not for that reason be restricted exclusively to the language of speech, any more than tragedy need be confined to the diction of prose, or comedy to the inane platitudes of ordinary conversation. At all events, there is no novelty, and above all no wit, in repeating seriously the pleasantries of St. Evrémond, which, we repeat, were those of a man who really loved the object of his good-natured and agreeable raillery.

Indeed, most of the men who have written things against the Opera that are still remembered have liked the Opera, and have even been the authors of operas themselves. "*Aujourd'hui ce qui ne vaut pas la peine d'être dit on le chante*," is said by the Figaro of Beaumarchais—of Beaumarchais, who gave lessons in singing and on the harpsichord to Louis XV.'s daughters, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Gluck's operas, and who wrote specially for that composer the libretto of *Tarare*, which, however, was not set to music by him, but by Salieri, Gluck's favourite pupil. Beaumarchais knew well enough—and *Tarare* in a negative manner proves it—that not only "what is not worth the trouble of saying" cannot be sung, but that very often such trivialities as can with propriety be spoken in a drama would, set to music, produce a ludicrous effect. Witness the lines in St. Evrémond's *Les Opéras*—

"*Monsieur comment vous portez vous?*"
"*Je me porte à votre service*"—

which might form part of a comedy, but which in an opera would be absurd, and would therefore not be introduced into one, except by a foolish librettist, (who would for a certainty get hissed), or by a wit like St. Evrémond, wishing to amuse himself by exaggerating to a ridiculous point the latest fashionable mania of the day.

Addison's admirably humorous articles on Italian Opera in the *Spectator* are often spoken of by musicians as ill-natured and unjust, and are ascribed—unjustly and even meanly, as it seems to me—to the author's annoyance at the failure of his *Rosamond*, which had been set to music by an incapable person named Clayton. Addison could afford to laugh at the ill-success of his *Rosamond*, as La Fontaine laughed at that of *Astrée*; and to assert that his excellent pleasantries on the subject of Italian Opera, then newly established in London, had for their origin the base motives usually imputed to him by musicians, is to give any one the right to say of *them* that this one abuses modern Italian music, which the public applaud, because his own English music has never been tolerated or that that one expresses the highest opinion of English composers because he himself composes and is an Englishman. To impute such motives would be to assume, as is assumed in the case of Addison, that no one blames except in revenge for some personal loss, or praises except in the hope of some personal gain. And after all, what *has* Addison said against the Opera, an entertainment which he certainly enjoyed, or he would not have attended it so often or have devoted so many excellent papers to it? Let us turn to the *Spectator* and see.

Italian Opera was introduced into England at the beginning of the 18th century, the first work performed entirely in the Italian language being *Almahide*, of which the music is attributed to Buononcini, and which was produced in 1710, with Valentini, Nicolini, Margarita de l'Epine, Cassani and "Signora Isabella," in the principal parts. Previously, for about three years, it had been the custom for Italian and English vocalists to sing each in their own language. "The king,[9] or hero of the play," says Addison, "generally spoke in Italian, and his slaves answered him in English; the lover frequently made his court, and gained the heart of his princess in a language which she did not understand. One would have thought it very difficult to have carried on dialogues in this manner without an interpreter between the persons that conversed together; but this was the state of the English stage for about three years.

"At length, the audience got tired of understanding half the opera, and, therefore, to ease themselves entirely of the fatigue of thinking, have so ordered it at present, that the whole opera is performed in an unknown tongue. We no longer understand the language of our own stage, insomuch, that I have often been afraid, when I have seen our Italian performers chattering in the vehemence of action, that they have been calling us names and abusing us among themselves; but I hope, since we do put such entire confidence in them, they will not talk against us before our faces, though they may do it with the same safety as if it were behind our backs. In the meantime, I cannot forbear thinking how naturally an historian who writes two or three hundred years hence, and does not know the taste of his wise forefathers, will make the following reflection:—In the beginning of the 18th century, the Italian tongue was so well understood in England, that operas were acted on the public stage in that language.

"One scarce knows how to be serious in the confutation of an absurdity that shows itself at the first sight. It does not want any great measure of sense to see the ridicule of this monstrous practice; but what makes it the more astonishing, it is not the taste of the rabble, but of persons of the greatest politeness, which has established it.

"If the Italians have a genius for music above the English, the English have a genius for other performances of a much higher nature, and capable of giving the mind a much nobler entertainment. Would one think it was possible (at a time when an author lived that was able to write the *Phedra and Hippolitus*) for a people to be so stupidly fond of the Italian opera as scarce to give a third day's hearing to that admirable tragedy? Music is, certainly, a very agreeable entertainment; but if it would take entire possession of our ears, if it would make us incapable of hearing sense, if it would exclude arts that have much greater tendency to the refinement of human nature, I must confess I would allow it no better quarter than Plato has done, who banishes it out of his commonwealth.

"At present, our notions of music are so very uncertain, that we do not know what it is we like; only, in general, we are transported with anything that is not English; so it be of foreign growth, let it be Italian, French, or High Dutch, it is the same thing. In short, our English music is quite rooted out, and nothing yet planted in its stead."

The *Spectator* was written from day to day, and was certainly not intended for *our* entertainment; yet, who can fail to be amused at the description of the stage king "who spoke in Italian and his slaves answered him in English;"

and of the lover who "frequently made his court and gained the heart of his princess in a language which she did not understand?" What, too, in this style of humour, can be better than the notion of the audience getting tired of understanding half the opera, and, to ease themselves of the trouble of thinking, so ordering it that the whole opera is performed in an unknown tongue; or of the performers who, for all the audience knew to the contrary, might be calling them names and abusing them among themselves; or of the probable reflection of the future historian, that "in the beginning of the 18th century the Italian tongue was so well understood in England that operas were acted on the public stage in that language?" On the other hand, we have not, it is true, heard yet of any historian publishing the remark suggested by Addison; probably, because those historians who go to the opera—and who does not?—are quite aware that to understand an Italian opera, it is not at all necessary to have a knowledge of the Italian language. The Italian singers might abuse us at their ease, especially in concerted pieces, and in grand finales; but they might in the same way, and equally, without fear of detection, abuse their own countrymen. Our English vocalists, too, might indulge in the same gratification in England, and have I not mentioned that at the Grand Opera of Paris—

'*La soupe aux choux se fait dans la marmite.*'

has been sung in place of Scribe's words in the opening chorus of *Robert le Diable*; and if *La soupe*, &c., why not anything else? But it is a great mistake to inquire too closely into the foundation on which a joke stands, when the joke itself is good; and I am almost ashamed, as it is, of having said so much on the subject of Addison's pleasantries, when the pleasantries spoke so well for themselves. One might almost as well write an essay to prove seriously that language was *not* given to man "to conceal his thoughts."

MUSIC AS AN ART.

The only portion of the paper from which I have extracted the above observations that can be treated in perfect seriousness, is that which begins—"If the Italians have a genius for music, &c.," and ends—"I would allow it no better quarter than Plato has done," &c. Now the recent political condition of Italy sufficiently proves that music could not save a country from national degradation; but neither could painting nor an admirable poetic literature. It is also better, no doubt, that a man should learn his duty to God and to his neighbour, than that he should cultivate a taste for harmony, but why not do both; and above all, why compare like with unlike? The "performances of a much higher nature" than music undeniably exist, but they do not answer the same end. The more general science on which that of astronomy rests may be a nobler study than music, but there is nothing consoling or *per se* elevating in mathematics. Poetry, again, would by most persons be classed higher than music, though the effect of half poetry, and of imaginative literature generally, is to place the reader in a state of reverie such as music induces more immediately and more perfectly. The enjoyment of art—by which we do not mean its production, or its critical examination, but the pure enjoyment of the artistic result—has nothing strictly intellectual in it; no man could grow wise by looking at Raphael or listening to Mozart. Nor does he derive any important intellectual ideas from many of our most beautiful poems, but simply emotion, of an elevated kind, such as is given by fine music. Music is evidently not didactic, and painting can only teach, in the ordinary sense of the word, what every one already knows; though, of course, a painter may depict certain aspects of nature and of the human face, previously unobserved and unimagined, just as the composer, in giving a musical expression to certain sentiments and passions, can rouse in us emotions previously dormant, or never experienced before with so much intensity. But the fine arts cannot communicate abstract truths—from which it chiefly follows that no right-minded artist ever uses them with such an aim; though there is no saying what some wild enthusiasts will not endeavour to express, and other enthusiasts equally wild pretend to see, in symphonies and in big symbolical pictures. If Addison meant to insinuate that *Phædra and Hippolytus* was a much higher performance than any possible opera, he was decidedly in error. But he had not heard *Don Juan*, *William Tell*, and *Der Freischütz*; to which no one in the present day, unless musically deaf, could prefer an English translation of *Phèdre*. It would be unfair to lay too much stress on the fact that the music of Handel still lives, and with no declining life, whereas the tragedies of Racine, resuscitated by Mademoiselle Rachel, have not been heard of since the death of that admirable actress; Addison was only acquainted with the earliest of Handel's operas, and these *are* forgotten, as indeed are most of his others, with the exception, here and there, of a few detached airs.

OPERA AND DRAMA.

In the sentence commencing "Music is certainly a very agreeable entertainment, but," &c., Addison says what every one, who would care to see one of Shakespeare's plays properly acted (not much cared for, however, in Addison's time), must feel now. Let us have perfect representations of Opera by all means; but it is a sad and a disgraceful thing, that in his own native country the works of the greatest dramatist who ever lived should be utterly neglected as far as their stage representation is concerned. It is absurd to pretend that the Opera is the sole cause of this. Operas, magnificently put upon the stage, are played in England, at least at one theatre, with remarkable *completeness* of excellence, and, at more than one, with admirable singers in the principal and even in the minor parts. Shakespeare's dramas, when they are played at all, are thrown on to the stage anyhow. This would not matter so much, but our players, even in *Hamlet*, where they are especially cautioned against it, have neither the sense nor the good taste to avoid exaggeration and rant, to which, they maintain, the public are now so accustomed, that a tragedian acting naturally would make no impression. Their conventionality, moreover, makes them keep to certain stage "traditions," which are frequently absurd, while their vanity is so egregious that one who imagines himself a first-rate actor (in a day when there are no first-rate actors) will not take what he is pleased to consider a second-rate part. Our stage has no tragedian who could embody the jealousy of "Otello," as Ronconi embodies that of "Chevreuse" in *Maria di Rohan*, nor could half a dozen actors of equal reputation be persuaded in any piece to appear in half a dozen parts of various degrees of prominence, though this is what constantly takes place at the Opera.

In Addison's time, Nicolini was a far greater actor than any who was in the habit of appearing on the English stage; indeed, this alone can account for the success of the ridiculous opera of *Hydaspes*, in which Nicolini played the principal part, and of which I shall give some account in the proper place. Doubtless also, it had much to do with the success of Italian Opera generally, which, when Addison commenced writing about it in the *Spectator*, was supported by no great composer, and was constructed on such frameworks as one would imagine could only have been imagined by a lunatic or by a pantomime writer struck serious. If Addison had not been fond of music, and moreover a very just critic, he would have dismissed the Italian Opera, such as it existed during the first days of the *Spectator*, as a hopeless mass of absurdity.

STAGE DECORATION.

Every one must in particular admit the justness of Addison's views respecting the incongruity of operatic scenery; indeed, his observations on that subject might with advantage be republished now and then in the present day. "What a field of raillery," he says, "would they [the wits of King Charles's time] have been let into had they been entertained with painted dragons spitting wildfire, enchanted chariots drawn by Flanders mares, and real cascades in artificial landscapes! A little skill in criticism would inform us, that shadows and realities ought not to be mixed together in the same piece; and that the scenes which are designed as the representations of nature should be filled with resemblances, and not with the things themselves. If one would represent a wide champaign country, filled with herds and flocks, it would be ridiculous to draw the country only upon the scenes, and to crowd several parts of the stage with sheep and oxen. This is joining together inconsistencies, and making the decoration partly real and partly imaginary. I would recommend what I have here said to the directors as well as the admirers, of our modern opera."

In the matter of stage decoration we have "learned nothing and forgotten nothing" since the beginning of the 18th century. Servandoni, at the theatre of the Tuileries, which contained some seven thousand persons, introduced as elaborate and successful mechanical devices as any that have been known since his time; but then as now the real and artificial were mixed together, by which the general picture is necessarily rendered absurd, or rather no general picture is produced. Independently of the fact that the reality of the natural objects makes the artificiality of the manufactured ones unnecessarily evident as when the branches of real trees are agitated by a gust of wind, while those of pasteboard trees remain fixed—it is difficult in making use of natural objects on the stage to observe with any accuracy the laws of proportion and perspective, so that to the eye the realities of which the manager is so proud, are, after all, strikingly unreal. The peculiar conditions too, under which theatrical scenery is viewed, should always be taken into account. Thus, "real water," which used at one time to be announced as such a great attraction at some of our minor playhouses, does not look like water on the stage, but has a dull, black, inky, appearance, quite sufficient to render it improbable that any despondent heroine, whatever her misfortune, would consent to drown herself in it.

The most contemptuous thing ever written against the Opera, or rather against music in general, is Swift's celebrated epigram on the Handel and Buononcini disputes:—

"Some say that Signor Buononcini
Compared to Handel is a ninny;
While others say that to him, Handel
Is hardly fit to hold a candle.
Strange that such difference should be,
'Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

Capital, telling lines, no doubt, though is it not equally strange that there should be such a difference between one piece of painted canvas and another, or between a statue by Michael Angelo and the figure of a Scotchman outside a tobacconist's shop? These differences exist, and it proves nothing against art that savages and certain exceptional natures among civilized men are unable to perceive them. We wonder how the Dean of St. Patrick's would have got on with the Abbé Arnauld, who was so impressed with the sublimity of one of the pieces in Gluck's *Iphigénie*, that he exclaimed, "With that air one might found a new religion!"

BERANGER ON THE DECLINE OF THE DRAMA.

One of the wittiest poems written against our modern love of music (cultivated, it must be admitted, to a painful extent by many incapable amateurs) is the lament by Béranger, in which the poet, after complaining that the convivial song is despised as not sufficiently artistic, and that in the presence of the opera the drama itself is fast disappearing, exclaims:

Si nous t'enterrons
Bel art dramatique,
Pour toi nous dirons
La messe en musique.

Without falling into the same error as those who have accused Addison of a selfish and interested animosity towards the Opera, I may remark that song-writers have often very little sympathy for any kind of music except that which can be easily subjected to words, as in narrative ballads, and to a certain extent ballads of all kinds. When a man says "I don't care much for music, but I like a good song," we may generally infer that he does not care for music at all. So play-wrights have a liking for music when it can be introduced as an ornament into their pieces, but not when it is made the most important element in the drama—indeed, the drama itself.

Favart, the author of numerous opera-books, has left a good satirical description in verse of French opera. It ends as follows:—

Quiconque voudra
Faire un opéra,
Emprunte à Pluton,
Son peuple démon;
Qu'il tire des cieux
Un couple de dieux,
Qu'il y joigne un héros
Tendre jusqu' aux os.
Lardez votre sujet,
D'un éternel ballet.
Amenez au milieu d'une fête
La tempête,
Une bête,
Que quelqu'un tûra
Dès qu'il la verra.
Quiconque voudra faire un opéra
Fuira de la raison
Le triste poison.

Il fera chanter
Concerter et sauter
Et puis le reste ira,
Tout comme il pourra.

PANARD ON THE OPERA.

This, from a man whose operas did not fail, but on the contrary, were highly successful, is rather too bad. But the author of the ill-fated "Rosamond" himself visited the French Opera, and has left an account of it, which corresponds closely enough to Favart's poetical description. "I have seen a couple of rivers," he says, (No. 29 of the *Spectator*) "appear in red stockings, and Alpheus, instead of having his head covered with sedge and bulrushes, making love in a fair, full-bottomed, periwig, and a plume of feathers, but with a voice so full of shakes and quavers that I should have thought the murmurs of a country brook the much more agreeable music. I remember the last opera I saw in that merry nation was the "Rape of Proserpine," where Pluto, to make the more tempting figure, puts himself in a French equipage, and brings Ascalaphus along with him as his *valet de chambre*." This is what we call folly and impertinence, but what the French look upon as gay and polite."

Addison's account agrees with Favart's song and also with one by Panard, which contains this stanza:—

"J'ai vu le soleil et la lune
Qui faissient des discours en l'air
J'ai vu le terrible Neptune
Sortir tout frisé de la mer."

Panard's song, which occurs at the end of a vaudeville produced in 1733, entitled *Le départ de l'Opéra*, refers to scenes behind as well as before the curtain. It could not be translated with any effect, but I may offer the reader the following modernized imitation of it, and so conclude the present chapter.

WHAT MAY BE SEEN AT THE OPERA.

I've seen Semiramis, the queen;
I've seen the Mysteries of Isis;
A lady full of health I've seen
Die in her dressing-gown, of phthisis.

I've seen a wretched lover sigh,
"*Fra poco*" he a corpse would be,
Transfix himself, and then—not die,
But coolly sing an air in D.

I've seen a father lose his child,
Nor seek the robbers' flight to stay;
But, in a voice extremely mild,
Kneel down upon the stage and pray.

I've seen "Otello" stab his wife;
The "Count di Luna" fight his brother;
"Lucrezia" take her own son's life;
And "John of Leyden" cut his mother.

I've seen a churchyard yield its dead,
And lifeless nuns in life rejoice;
I've seen a statue bow its head,
And listened to its trombone voice.

I've seen a herald sound alarms,
Without evincing any fright:
Have seen an army cry "To arms"
For half an hour, and never fight.

I've seen a naiad drinking beer;
I've seen a goddess fined a crown;
And pirate bands, who knew no fear,
By the stage manager put down;

Seen angels in an awful rage,
And slaves receive more court than queens,
And huntresses upon the stage
Themselves pursued behind the scenes.

I've seen a maid despond in A,
Fly the perfidious one in B,
Come back to see her wedding day,
And perish in a minor key.

I've seen the realm of bliss eternal,
(The songs accompanied by harps);
I've seen the land of pains infernal,
With demons shouting in six sharps!

PANARD AT THE OPERA.

CHAPTER IV.

INTRODUCTION AND PROGRESS OF THE BALLET.

The Ballets of Versailles.—Louis XIV. astonished at his own importance.—Louis retires from the stage; congratulations addressed to him on the subject; he re-appears.—Privileges of Opera dancers and singers.—Manners and customs of the Parisian public.—The Opera under the regency.—Four ways of presenting a petition.—Law and the financial scheme.—Charon and paper money.—The Duke of Orleans as a composer.—An orchestra in a court of justice.—Handel in Paris.—Madame Sallé; her reform in the Ballet, and her first appearance in London.

A CORPS OF NOBLES.

After the Opera comes the Ballet. Indeed, the two are so intimately mixed together that it would be impossible in giving the history of the one to omit all mention of the other. The Ballet, as the name sufficiently denotes, comes to us from the French, and in the sense of an entertainment exclusively in dancing, dates from the foundation of the Académie Royale de Musique, or soon afterwards. During the first half of the 17th century, and even earlier, ballets were performed at the French court, under the direction of an Italian, who, abandoning his real name of Baltasarini, had adopted that of Beaujoyeux. He it was who in 1581 produced the "*Ballet Comique de la Royne*," to celebrate the marriage of the Duc de Joyeuse. This piece, which was magnificently appointed, and of which the representation is said to have cost 3,600,000 francs, was an entertainment consisting of songs, dances, and spoken dialogue, and appears to have been the model of the masques which were afterwards until the middle of the 17th century represented in England, and of most of the ballets performed in France until about the same period. There were dancers engaged at the French Opera from its very commencement, but it was difficult to obtain them in any numbers, and, worst of all, there were no female dancers to be found. The company of vocalists could easily be recruited from the numerous cathedral choirs; for the Ballet there were only the dancing-masters of the capital to select from, the profession of dancing-mistress not having yet been invented. Nymphs, dryads, and shepherdesses were for some time represented by young boys, who, like the fauns, satyrs, and all the rest of the dancing troop wore masks. At last, however, in 1681, Terpsichore was worthily represented by dancers of her own sex, and an aristocratic corps de ballet was formed, with Madame la Dauphine, the Princess de Conti, and Mdlle. de Nantes as principal dancers, supported by the Dauphin, the Prince de Conti and the Duke de Vermandois. They appeared in the *Triomphe de l'Amour*, and the astounding exhibition was fully appreciated. Previously, the ladies of the court, when they appeared in ballets, had confined themselves to reciting verses, which sometimes, moreover, were said for them by an orator engaged for the purpose. To see a court lady dancing on the stage was quite a novelty; hence, no doubt, the success of that spectacle.

QUADRILLES AND COUNTRY DANCES.

The first celebrated *ballerina* at the French Opera was Mademoiselle La Fontaine, styled *la reine de la danse*—a title of which the value was somewhat diminished by the fact that there were only three other professional danseuses in Paris. Lulli, however, paid great attention to the ballet, and under his direction it soon gained importance. To Lulli, who occasionally officiated as ballet-master, is due the introduction of rapid style of dancing, which must have contrasted strongly with the stately solemn steps that were alone in favour at the Court during the early days of Louis XIV's reign. The minuet-loving Louis had notoriously an aversion for gay brilliant music. Thus he failed altogether to appreciate the talent of "little Baptiste" not Lulli, but Anet, a pupil of Corelli, who is said to have played the sonatas of his master very gracefully, and with an "agility" which at that time was considered prodigious. The Great Monarch preferred the heavy monotonous strains of his own Baptiste, the director of the Opera. It may here be not out of place to mention that Lulli's introduction of a lively mode of dancing into France (it was only in his purely operatic music that he was so lugubriously serious) took place simultaneously with the importation from England of the country-dance—and corrupted into *contre-danse*, which is now the French for quadrille. Moreover, when the French took our country-dance, a name which some etymologists would curiously enough derive from its meaningless corruption—we adopted their minuet which was first executed in England by the Marquis de Flamarens, at the Court of Charles II. The passion of our English noblemen for country-dances is recorded as follows in the memoirs of the Count de Grammont:—"Russel was one of the most vigorous dancers in England, I mean for country-dances (*contre-danses*). He had a collection of two or three hundred arranged in tables, which he danced from the book; and to prove that he was not old, he sometimes danced till he was exhausted. His dancing was a good deal like his clothes; it had been out of fashion twenty years."

Every one knows that Louis XIV. was a great actor; and even his mother, Anne of Austria, appeared on the stage at the Court of Madrid to the astonishment and indignation of the Spaniards, who said that she was lost for them, and that it was not as Infanta of Spain, but as Queen of France, that she had performed.

On the occasion of Louis XIV.'s marriage with Marie Therèse, the celebrated expression *Il n'y plus de Pyrenées* was illustrated by a ballet, in which a French nymph and a Spanish nymph sang a duet while half the dancers were dressed in the French and half in the Spanish costume.

Like other illustrious stars, Louis XIV. took his farewell of the stage more than once before he finally left it. His Histrionic Majesty was in the habit both of singing and dancing in the court ballets, and took great pleasure in reciting such graceful compliments to himself as the following:—

"Plus brilliant et mieux fait que tous les dieux ensemble
La terre ni le ciel n'ont rien qui me ressemble."
(*Thétis et Pélée.*—Benserade. 1654),

"Il n'est rien de si grand dans toute la nature
Selon l'âme et le cœur au point où je me vois;
De la terre et de moi qui prendra la mesure
Trouvera que la terre est moins grande que moi."
(*L'Impatience.*—Benserade. 1661).

On the 15th February, 1669, Louis XIV. sustained his favourite character of the Sun, in *Flora*, the eighteenth ballet in which he had played a part—and the next day solemnly announced that his dancing days were over, and that he would exhibit himself no more. The king had not only given his royal word, but for nine months had kept it, when Racine produced his *Britannicus*, in which the following lines are spoken by "Narcisse" in reference to Nero's performances in the amphitheatre.

Pour toute ambition pour vertu singulière
Il excelle à conduire un char dans la carrière;
A disputer des prix indignes des ses mains,
A se donner lui-même en spectacle aux Romains,
A venir prodiguer sa voix sur un théâtre
A réciter des chants qu'il veut qu'on idolâtre;
Tandis que des soldats, de moments en moments,
Vont arracher pour lui des applaudissements.

LOUIS RETURNS TO THE STAGE.

The above lines have often been quoted as an example of virtuous audacity on the part of Racine, who, however, did not write them until the monarch who at one time did not hesitate to "*se donner lui même en spectacle*, &c.," had confessed his fault and vowed never to repeat it; so that instead of a lofty rebuke, the verses were in fact an indirect compliment neatly and skilfully conveyed. So far from profiting by Racine's condemnation of Nero's frivolity and shamelessness, and retiring conscience-stricken from the stage (of which he had already taken a theatrical farewell) Louis XIV. reappeared the year afterwards, in *Les amants magnifiques*, a *Comédie-ballet*, composed by Molière and himself, in which the king figured and was applauded as author, ballet-master, dancer, mime, singer, and performer on the flute and guitar. He had taken lessons on the latter instrument from the celebrated Francisco Corbetta, who afterwards made a great sensation in England at the Court of Charles II.

If Louis XIV. did not scruple to assume the part of an actor himself, neither did he think it unbecoming that his nobles should do the same, even in presence of the general public and on the stage of the Grand Opera. "We wish, and it pleases us," he says in the letters patent granted to the Abbé Perrin, the first director of the Académie Royale de Musique (1669) "that all gentlemen (*gentilshommes*) and ladies may sing in the said pieces and representations of our Royal Academy without being considered for that reason to derogate from their titles of nobility, or from their privileges, rights and immunities." Among the nobles who profited by this permission and appeared either as singers, or as dancers at the Opera, were the Seigneur du Porceau, and Messieurs de Chasré and Borel de Miracle; and Mesdemoiselles de Castilly, de Saint Christophe, and de Camargo. Another privilege accorded to the Opera was of such an infamous nature that were it not for positive proof we could scarcely believe it to have existed. It had full control, then, over all persons whose names were once inscribed on its books; and if a young girl went of her own accord, or was persuaded into presenting herself at the Opera, or was led away from her parents and her name entered on the lists by her seducer—then in neither case had her family any further power over her. *Lettres de cachet* even were issued, commanding the persons named therein to join the Opera; and thus the Count de Melun got possession of both the Camargos. The Duke de Fronsac was enabled to perpetrate a similar act of villany. He it is who is alluded to in the following lines by Gilbert:—

"Qu'on la séduise! Il dit: ses eunuques discrets,
Philosophes abbés, philosophes valets,
Intriguent, sèment l'or, trompent les yeux d'un père,
Elle cède, on l'enlève; en vain gémit sa mère.
Echue à l'Opéra par un rapt solennel,
Sa honte la dérobe au pouvoir paternel."

INVENTION OF THE BALLET.

As for men they were sent to the Opera as they were sent to the Bastille. Several amateurs, abbés and others, the beauty of whose voices had been remarked, were arrested by virtue of *lettres de cachet*, and forced to appear at the Académie Royale de Musique, which had its conscription like the army and navy. On the other hand, we have seen that the pupils and associates of the Académie enjoyed certain privileges, such as freedom from parental restraint and the right of being immoral; to which was afterwards added that of setting creditors at defiance. The pensions of singers, dancers, and musicians belonging to the Opera were exempted from all liability to seizure for debt.

The dramatic ballet, or *ballet d'action*, was invented by the Duchess du Maine. We soon afterwards imported it into England as, in Opera, we imported the chorus, which was also a French invention, and one for which the musical drama can scarcely be too grateful. The dramatic *ballet*, however, has never been naturalized in this country. It still crosses over to us occasionally, and when we are tired of it goes back again to its native land; but even as an exotic, it has never fairly taken root in English soil.

The Duchess du Maine was celebrated for her *Nuits de Sceaux*, or *Nuits Blanches*, as they were called, which the nobles of Louis XIV.'s Court found as delightful as they found Versailles dull. The Duchess used to get up lotteries among her most favoured guests, in which the prizes were so many permissions to give a magnificent entertainment. The letters of the alphabet were placed in a box, and the one who drew O had to get up an opera; C stood for a comedy; B for a ballet; and so on. The hostess of Sceaux had not only a passion for theatrical performances, but also a great love of literature, and the idea occurred to her of realising on the stage of her own theatre something like one of those pantomimes of antiquity of which she had read the descriptions with so much pleasure. Accordingly, she took the fourth act of *Les Horaces*, had it set to music by Mouret, just as if it were to be sung, and caused this music to be executed by the orchestra alone, while Balon and Mademoiselle Prévost, who were celebrated as dancers, but had never attempted pantomime before, played in dumb show the part of the last Horatius, and of Camilla, the sister of the Curiatii. The actor and actress entered completely into the spirit of the new drama, and performed with such truthfulness and warmth of emotion as to affect the spectators to tears.

Mouret, the musical director of *Les Nuits Blanches*, composed several operas and *ballets* for the Académie; but when the establishment at Sceaux was broken up, after the discovery of the Spanish conspiracy, in which the Duchess du Maine was implicated, he considered himself ruined, went mad and died at Charenton in the lunatic asylum.

THE FREE LIST.

"Long live the Regent, who would rather go to the Opera than to the Mass," was the cry when on the death of Louis XIV., the reins of government were assumed by the Duke of Orleans. At this time the whole expenses of the Opera, including chorus, ballet, musicians, scene painters, decorators, &c.—from the prima donna to the bill-sticker—amounted only to 67,000 francs

a year, being considerably less than half what is given now to a first-rate soprano alone. The first act of the Regent in connexion with the Opera was to take its direction out of the hands of musicians, and appoint the Duc d'Antin manager. The new *impresario*, wishing to reward Thévanard, who was at that time the best singer in France, offered him the sum of 600 francs. Thévanard indignantly refused it, saying "that it was a suitable present, at most, for his valet," upon which d'Antin proposed to imprison the singer for his insolence, but abstained from doing so, for fear of irritating the public with whom Thévanard was a prodigious favourite. He, however, resigned the direction of the Opera, saying that he "wished to have nothing more to do with such *canaille*."

The next operatic edict of the Regent had reference to the admission of authors, who hitherto had enjoyed the privilege of free entry to the pit. In 1718 the Regent raised them to the amphitheatre—not as a mark of respect, but in order that they might be the more readily detected and expelled in case of their forming cabals to hiss the productions of their rivals, which, standing up in the pit in the midst of a dense crowd, they had been able to do with impunity. Even to the present day, when authors exchange applause much more freely than hisses, the regulations of the French theatre do not admit them to the pit, though they have free access to every other part of the house.

At the commencement of the 18th century, the Opera was the scene of frequent disturbances. The Count de Talleyrand, MM. de Montmorency, Gineste, and others, endeavouring to force their way into the theatre during a rehearsal, were repulsed by the guard, and Gineste killed. The Abbés Hourlier and Barentin insulted M. Fieubet; they were about to come to blows when the guard separated them and carried off the obstreperous ecclesiastics to For l'Evèque, where they were confined for a fortnight. On their release Hourlier and Barentin, accompanied by a third abbé, took their places in the balcony over the stage, and began to sing, louder even than the actors, maintaining, when called to order, that the Opera was established for no other purpose, and that if they had a right to sing anywhere, it was at the Académie de Musique.

PETER THE GREAT AT THE OPERA.

A balustrade separated the stage balconies from the stage, but continual attempts were made to get over it, and even to break into the actresses' dressing rooms, which were guarded by sentinels. At this period about a third of the *habitués* used to make their appearance in a state of intoxication, the example being set by the Regent himself, who could proceed direct from his residence in the Palais Royal to the Opera, which adjoined it. To the first of the Regent's masked balls the Councillor of State, Rouillé, is said to have gone drunk from personal inclination, and the Duke de Noailles in the same condition, out of compliment to the administrator of the kingdom.

When Peter the Great visited the French Opera, in 1717, he does not appear to have been intoxicated, but he went to sleep. When he was asked whether the performance had wearied him, he is said to have replied, that on the contrary he liked it to excess, and had gone to sleep from motives of prudence. This story, however, does not quite accord with the fact that Peter introduced public theatrical performances into Russia, and encouraged his nobles to attend them.

Nothing illustrates better the heartless selfishness of Louis XV. than his conduct, not at the Opera, but at his own theatre in the Louvre, immediately after the occurrence of a terrible and fatal accident. The Chevalier de Fénélon, an ensign in the palace guard, in endeavouring to climb from one box to another, lost his fooling, and fell headlong on to a spiked balustrade, where he remained transfixed through the neck. The theatre was stained with blood in a horrible manner, and the unfortunate chevalier was removed from the balustrade a dead man. Just then, the Very Christian king made his appearance. He gave the signal for the performance to commence, and the orchestra struck up as if nothing had happened.

Some idea of the morality of the French stage during the regency and the reign of Louis XV., may be formed from the fact that, in spite of the great license accorded to the members of the Académie, or at least, tolerated and encouraged by the law, it was found absolutely necessary in 1734 to expel the *prima donna* Mademoiselle Pélissier, who had shocked even the management of the Opera. She was, however, received with open arms in London. Let us not be too hard on our neighbours.

Soon afterwards, Mademoiselle Petit, a dancer, was exiled for negligence of attire and indiscretion behind the scenes. I must add that this negligence was extreme. The most curious part of the affair, was that the Abbé de la Marre, author of several *libretti*, undertook the young lady's defence, and published a pamphlet in justification of her conduct, which is to be found among his *Œuvres diverses*.

Another *danseuse*, however, named Mariette, ruled at the Opera like a little autocrat. "The Princess," as she was named, from the regard the Prince de Carignan, titular director of the academy, was known to entertain for her, applied to the actual managers, Lecomte and Lebœuf, for a payment of salary which she had already received, and which they naturally refused to give twice. Upon this they were not only dismissed from their places (which they had purchased) but were exiled by *lettres de cachet*.

PELISSIER AT TABLE.

The prodigality of favourite and favoured actresses under the regency was extreme. The before-mentioned Mademoiselle Pélissier and her friend Mademoiselle Deschamps, both gluttonous to excess, were noted for their contempt of all ordinary food, and of everything that happened to be nearly in season, or at all accessible, not merely to vulgar citizens, but to the generality of opulent sensualists. It is not said that they aspired to the dissolution of pearls in their sauces, but if green peas were served to them when the price of the dish was less than sixty francs, they sent them away in disdain. Mademoiselle Pélissier was in the receipt of 4,000 francs (£160) a year from the Opera. Mademoiselle Deschamps, who was only a figurante, contrived to get on with a salary of only sixteen pounds. And yet we have seen that they were neither of them economical.

One of the most facetious members of the Académie under the regency, was Tribou, a performer, who seems to have been qualified for every branch of the histrionic profession, and to have possessed a certain literary talent besides. This humourist had some favour to ask of the Duke of Orleans. He presented a petition to him, and after the regent had read it, said gravely—

"If your Highness would like to read it again, here is the same thing in verse."

"Let me see it," said the Duke.

Tribou presented his petition in verse, and afterwards expressed his readiness to sing it. He sang, and no sooner had he finished, than he added—

"If *mon Seigneur* will permit me, I shall be happy to dance it."

"Dance it?" exclaimed the regent; "by all means!"

When Tribou had concluded his *pas*, the duke confessed that he had never before heard of a petition being either danced or sung, and for the love of novelty, granted the actor his request.

During the regency, wax was substituted for tallow in the candelabra of the Opera. This improvement was due to Law, who gave a large sum of money to the Académie for that special purpose. On the other hand, Mademoiselle Mazé, one of the prettiest dancers at the Opera, was ruined three years afterwards by the failure of this operatic benefactor's financial scheme. The poor girl put on her rouge, her mouches, and her silk stockings, and in her gayest attire, drowned herself publicly in the middle of the day at La Grenouillière.

HOW TO CROSS THE STYX.

After the break up of Law's system, the regent, terrified by the murmurs and imprecations of the Parisians, endeavoured to turn the whole current of popular hatred against the minister, by dismissing him from the administration of the finances. When Law presented himself at the Palais Royal, the regent refused to receive him; but the same evening, he admitted him by a private door, apologized to him, and tried to console him. Two days afterwards, he accompanied Law to the Opera; but to preserve him from the fury of the people, he was obliged to have him conducted home by a party of the Swiss guard.

In the fourth act of Lulli's *Alceste*, Charon admits into his bark those shades who are able to pay their passage across the Styx, and sends back those who have no money.

"Give him some bank notes," exclaimed a man in the pit to one of these penniless shades. The audience took up the cry, and the scene between Charon and the shades was, at subsequent representations, the cause of so much tumult, that it was found necessary to withdraw the piece.

The Duke of Orleans appears to have had a sincere love of music, for he composed an opera himself, entitled *Panthée*, of which the words were written by the Marquis de La Fare. *Panthée* was produced at the Duke's private theatre. After the performance, the musician, Campra, said to the composer,

"The music, your Highness, is excellent, but the poem is detestable."

The regent called La Fare.

"Ask Campra," he said, "what he thinks of the Opera; I am sure he will tell you that the poem is admirable, and the music worthless. We must conclude that the whole affair is as bad as it can be."

The Duke of Orleans had written a motet for five voices, which he wished to send to the Emperor Leopold, but before doing so, entrusted it for revision to Bernier, the composer. Bernier handed the manuscript to the Abbé de la Croix, whom the regent found examining it while Bernier himself was in the next room regaling himself with his friends. The immediate consequences of this discovery were a box on the ear for Bernier, and ten louis for de La Croix.

The Regent also devoted some attention to the study of antiquity. He occupied himself in particular with inquiries into the nature of the music of the Greeks, and with the construction of an instrument which was to resemble their lyre.

MUSIC IN COURT.

To the same prince was due the excellent idea of engaging the celebrated Italian Opera Company of London, at that time under the direction of Handel, to give a series of performances at the Académie. A treaty was actually signed in presence of M. de Maurepas, the minister, by which Buononcini the conductor, Francesca Cuzzoni, Margarita Durastanti, Francesco Bernardi, surnamed *Senesino*, Gaetano Bernesta, and Guiseppe Boschi were to come to Paris in 1723, and give twelve representations of one or two Italian Operas, as they thought fit. Francine, the director of the Académie, engaged to pay them 35,000 francs, and to furnish new dresses to the principal performers. This treaty was not executed, probably through some obstacle interposed by Francine; for the manager signed it against his will, and on the 2nd of December following, the regent, with whom it had originated, died. The absurd privileges secured to the Académie Royale, and the consequent impossibility of giving satisfactory performances of Italian Opera elsewhere than at the chief lyrical theatre must have done much to check the progress of dramatic music in France. From time to time Italian singers were suffered to make their appearance at the Grand Opera; but at the regular Italian Theatre established in Paris, as at the Comédie Française, singing was only permitted under prescribed conditions, and the orchestra was strictly limited, by severe penalties, rigidly enforced, to a certain number of instruments, of which not more than six could be violins, or of the violin family.

At the Comédie Italienne an ass appeared on the stage, and began to bray.

"Silence," exclaimed Arlechinno, "music is forbidden here."

Among the distinguished amateurs of the period of the regency was M. de Saint Montant, who played admirably on the viola, and had taught his sons and daughters to do the same. Being concerned in a law suit, which had to be tried at Nimes, he went with his family of musicians to visit the judges, laid his case before them, one after the other, and by way of peroration, gave them each a concert, with which they were so delighted that they decided unanimously in favour of M. de Saint Montant.

A law suit had previously been decided somewhat in the same manner, but much more logically, in favour of Joseph Campra, brother of the composer of that name, who was the conductor of the orchestra at the Opera of Marseilles. The manager refused to pay the musicians on the ground that they did not play well enough. In consequence, he was summoned by the entire band, who, when they appeared in court, begged through Campra that they might be allowed to plead their own cause. The judges granted the desired permission, upon which the instrumentalists drew themselves up in orchestral order and under the direction of Campra commenced an overture of Lulli's. The execution of this piece so delighted the tribunal that with one voice it condemned the director to pay the sum demanded of him.

A still more curious dispute between a violinist and a dancer was settled in a satisfactory way for both parties. The dancer was on the stage rehearsing a new step. The violinist was in the orchestra performing the necessary musical accompaniment.

"Your scraping is enough to drive a man mad," said the dancer.

"Very likely," said the musician, "and your jumping is only worthy of a clown. Perhaps as you have such a very

delicate ear," he added, "and nature has refused you the slightest grace, you would like to take my place in the orchestra?"

LA CAMARGO.

"Your awkwardness with the bow makes me doubt whether your most useful limbs may not be your legs," replied the dancer. "You will never do any good where you are. Why do you not try your fortune in the ballet? Give me your violin," he continued, "and come up on to the stage. I know the scale already. You can teach me to play minuets, and I will show you how to dance them."

The proposed interchange of good offices took place, and with the happiest results. The unmusical fiddler, whose name was Dupré, acquired great celebrity in the ballet, and Léclair, the awkward dancer, became the chief of the French school of violin playing.

Marie-Anne Cupis de Camargo did not lose so much time in discovering her true vocation. She gave evidence of her genius for the ballet while she was still in the cradle, and was scarcely six months old when the variety of her gestures, the grace of her movements, and the precision with which she marked the rhythm of the tunes her father played on the violin led all who saw her to believe that she would one day be a great dancer. The young Camargo, who belonged to a noble family of Spanish origin, made her *début* at the Académie in 1726, and at once achieved a decided success. People used to fight at the doors to obtain admittance the nights she performed; all the new fashions were introduced under her name, and in a very short space of time her shoemaker made his fortune. All the ladies of the court insisted on wearing shoes *à la Camargo*. But the triumph of one dancer is the despair of another. Mademoiselle Prévost, who was the queen of the ballet until Mademoiselle de Camargo appeared was not prepared to be dethroned by a *débutante*. She was so alarmed by the young girl's success that she did her utmost to keep her in the background, and contrived before long to get her placed among the *figurantes*. But in spite of this loss of rank, Mademoiselle de Camargo soon found an opportunity of distinguishing herself. In a certain ballet, she formed one of a group of demons, and was standing on the stage waiting for Dumoulin, who had to dance a *pas seul*, when the orchestra began the soloist's air and continued to play it, though still no Dumoulin appeared. Mademoiselle de Camargo was seized with a sudden inspiration. She left the demoniac ranks, improvised a step in the place of the one that should have been danced by Dumoulin and executed it with so much grace and spirit that the audience were in raptures. Mademoiselle Prévost, who had previously given lessons to young Camargo, now refused to have anything to do with her, and the two *danseuses* were understood to be rivals both by the public and by one another. The chief characteristics of Camargo's dancing were grace, gaiety, and above all prodigious lightness, which was the more remarkable at this period from the fact that the mode chiefly cultivated at the Opera was one of solemn dignity. However, she had not been long on the stage before she learned to adopt from her masters and from the other dancers whatever good points their particular styles presented, and thus formed a style of her own which was pronounced perfection.

STAGE COSTUME.

Mademoiselle de Camargo, in spite of her charming vivacity when dancing, was of a melancholy mood off the stage. She was not remarkably pretty, but her face was highly expressive, her figure exquisite, her hands and feet of the most delicate proportions, and she possessed considerable wit. Dupré, the ex-violinist, who had leaped at a bound from the orchestra to the stage, was in the habit of dancing with Camargo, and also with Mademoiselle Sallé, another celebrity of this epoch, who afterwards visited London, where she produced the first complete *ballet d'action* ever represented, and at the same time introduced an important reform in theatrical costume.

The art of stage decoration had made considerable progress, even before the Opera was founded, but it was not until long after Mademoiselle Sallé had given the example in London that any reasonable principles were observed in the selection and design of theatrical dresses. In 1730, warriors of all kinds, Greek, Roman, and Assyrian, used to appear on the French stage in tunics belaced and beribboned, in cuirasses, and in powdered wigs bearing tails a yard long, surmounted by helmets with plumes of prodigious height. The tails, of which there were four, two in front and two behind, were neatly plaited and richly pomatumed, and when the warrior became animated, and waved his arm or shook his head, a cloud of hair powder escaped from his wig. It appeared to Mademoiselle Sallé, who, besides being an admirable dancer, was a woman of taste in all matters of art, that this sort of thing was absurd; but the reforms she suggested were looked upon as ridiculous innovations, and nearly half a century elapsed before they were adopted in France.

This ingenious *ballerina* enjoyed the friendship and regard of many of the most distinguished writers of her time. Voltaire celebrated her in verse, and when she went to London she took with her a letter of introduction from Fontenelle to Montesquieu, who was then ambassador at the English Court. Another danseuse, Mademoiselle Subligny came to England with letters of introduction from Thiriot and the Abbé Dubois to Locke. The illustrious metaphysician had no great appreciation of Mademoiselle de Subligny's talent, but he was civil and attentive to her out of regard to his friends, who were also hers, and, in the words of Fontenelle, constituted himself her "*homme d'affaires*."

PHILOSOPHERS AND ACTRESSES.

Mademoiselle Sallé was not only esteemed by literature, she was adored by finance, and Samuel Bernard, the Court banker and money lender, gave her a hundred golden louis for dancing before the guests at the marriage of his daughter with the President Molé. The same opulent amateur sent a thousand francs to Mademoiselle Lemaure, by way of thanking her for resuming the part of "Délie," in the "Les Fêtes Grecques et Romaines," on the occasion of the Duchess de Mirepoix's marriage. I must mention that at this period it was not the custom in good society for young ladies to appear at the Opera before their marriage. Their mothers were determined either to keep their daughters out of harm's way, or to escape a dangerous rivalry as long as possible; but once attached to a husband the newly-married girl could show herself at the Opera as often as she pleased, and it was a point of etiquette that through the Opera she should make her entrance into fashionable life. These *débutantes* of the audience department presented themselves to the public in their richest attire, in their most brilliant diamonds; and if the effect was good the gentlemen in the pit testified their approbation by clapping their hands.

But to return to Mademoiselle Sallé. What she proposed to introduce then, and did introduce into London, in addition to her own admirable dancing, were complete dramatic ballets, with the personages attired in the costumes of the country and time to which the subject belonged. To give some notion of the absurdity of stage costumes at this period we may mention that forty-two years afterwards, when Mademoiselle Sallé's reform had still had no effect in

France, the "Galathea," in Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, wore a damask dress, made in the Polish style, over a basket hoop, and on her head on enormous *pouf*, surmounted by three ostrich feathers!

In her own *Pygmalion*, Mademoiselle Sallé carried out her new principle by appearing, not in a Polish costume, nor in a Louis Quinze dress, but in drapery imitated as closely as possible from the statues of antiquity. Of her performance, and of *Pygmalion* generally, a good account is given in the following letter, written by a correspondent in London, under the date of March 15th, 1734, to the "Mercure de France." In the style we do not recognise the author of the "Essay on the Decadence of the Romans," and of the "Spirit of Laws," but it is just possible that M. de Montesquieu may have responded to M. de Fontenelle's letter of introduction, by writing a favourable criticism of the bearer's performance, for the "influential journal" in which the notice actually appeared.

"Mdlle. Sallé," says the London correspondent, "without considering the embarrassing position in which she places me, desires me to give you an account of her success. I have to tell you in what manner she has rendered the fable of Pygmalion, and that of Ariadne and Bacchus; and of the applause with which these two ballets of her composition have been received by the Court of England.

"Pygmalion has now been represented for nearly two months, and the public is never tired of it. The subject is developed in the following manner.

MADEMOISELLE SALLE.

"Pygmalion comes into his studio with his pupils, who perform a characteristic dance, chisel and mallet in hand. Pygmalion tells them to draw aside a curtain at the back of the studio, which, like the front is adorned with statues. The one in the middle above all the others attracts the looks and admiration of every one. Pygmalion gazes at it and sighs; he touches its feet, presses its waist, adorns its arms with precious bracelets, and covers its neck with diamonds, and, kissing the hands of his dear statue, shows that he is passionately in love with it. The amorous sculptor expresses his distress in pantomime, falls into a state of reverie, and then throwing himself at the feet of a statue of Venus, prays to the goddess to animate his beloved figure.

"The goddess answers his prayer. Three flashes of light are seen, and to an appropriate symphony the marble beauty emerges by degrees from her state of insensibility. To the surprise of Pygmalion and his pupils she becomes animated, and evinces her astonishment at her new existence, and at the objects by which she is surrounded. The delighted Pygmalion extends his hand to her; she feels, so to speak, the ground beneath her with her feet, and takes some timid steps in the most elegant attitudes that sculpture could suggest. Pygmalion dances before her, as if to instruct her; she repeats her master's steps, from the easiest to the most difficult. He endeavours to inspire her with the tenderness he feels himself, and succeeds in making her share that sentiment. You can understand, sir, what all the passages of this action become, executed and danced with the fine and delicate grace of Mdlle. Sallé. She ventured to appear without basket, without skirt, without a dress, in her natural hair, and with no ornament on her head. She wore nothing, in addition to her boddice and under-petticoat, but a simple robe of muslin, arranged in drapery after the model of a Greek statue.

"You cannot doubt, sir, of the prodigious success this ingenious ballet, so well executed, obtained. At the request of the king, the queen, the royal family, and all the court, it will be performed on the occasion of Mademoiselle Sallé's benefit, for which all the boxes and places in the theatre and amphitheatre have been taken for a month past. The benefit takes place on the first of April.

"Do not expect that I can describe to you Ariadne like Pygmalion: its beauties are more noble and more difficult to relate; the expressions and sentiments are those of the profoundest grief, despair, rage and utter dejection; in a word all the great passions perfectly declaimed by means of dances, attitudes and gestures suggested by the position of a woman who is abandoned by the man she loves. You may announce, sir, that Mademoiselle Sallé becomes in this piece the rival of the Journets, the Duclos, and the Lecouvreurs. The English, who preserve so tender a recollection of their famous Oldfield, whom they have just laid in Westminster Abbey among their great statesmen (!) look upon her as resuscitated in Mademoiselle Sallé when she represents Ariadne.

"P. S. The first of this month the Prince of Orange, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cumberland and the Princesses, went to Covent Garden Theatre [Théâtre du *Commun Jardin* the French newspaper has it] to see the tragedy of King Henry IV., when there was a numerous assembly; and all the receipts of the representation were for the benefit of Mademoiselle Sallé."

MADEMOISELLE SALLE.

A PROFITABLE PERFORMANCE.

M. Castil Blaze, who publishes the whole of the above letter, with the exception of the postscript, in his history of the Académie Royale, is wrong in concluding from Mademoiselle Sallé having appeared at Covent Garden, that she was engaged to dance there by Handel, who was at that time director of the Queen's Theatre (reign of Anne) in the Haymarket. M. Victor Schœlcher may also be in error when, in speaking of the absurd fable that Handel being in Paris heard a canticle by Lulli,[10] and coming back to England gave it to the English, as God Save the King, he assures us that Handel never set foot in Paris at all. It is certain that Handel went to Italy to engage new singers in 1733, and it is by no means improbable that he passed through Paris on his way. At all events, M. Castil Blaze assures us that in that year he visited the Académie Royale de Musique, and that "while lavishing sarcasms and raillery on our French Opera," he appreciated the talent of Mademoiselle Sallé. "A thousand crowns (three thousand francs) was the sum," he continues, "that the *virtuose* asked for composing two ballets and dancing in them at London *during the carnival* of 1734. The director of a rival enterprise watched for her arrival in that city, and offered her three thousand guineas instead of the three thousand crowns which she had agreed to accept from Handel; adding that nothing prevented her from making this change, inasmuch as she had signed no engagement. 'And my word,' answered the amiable dancer; 'is my word to count for nothing?' This reply, applauded and circulated from mouth to mouth, prepared Mademoiselle Sallé's success, and had the most fortunate influence on the representation given for her benefit. All the London journals gave magnificent accounts of the triumphs of Marie Taglioni, and of the marks of admiration and gratitude that she received. Equally flattering descriptions reached us from the icy banks of the Neva. Mere trifles, *niaiseries, debolleze*! This *furore*, this enthusiasm, this fanaticism, this royal, imperial liberality was very little, or rather was nothing, in comparison with the homage which the sons of Albion offered to and lavished upon the divine Sallé. History tells us that at the representation given for her benefit people fought at the doors of the theatre; that an infinity of amateurs were obliged to conquer at the point of the sword, or at least with their fists, the places which had been sold to them by auction, and at exorbitant prices. As Mademoiselle Sallé made her last curtsey and smiled upon the pit with the most

charming grace, furious applause burst forth from all parts and seemed to shake the theatre to its foundation. While the whirlwind howled, while the thunder roared, a hailstorm of purses, full of gold, fell upon the stage, and a shower of bonbons followed in the same direction. These bonbons, manufactured at London, were of a singular kind; guineas—not like the doubloons, the louis d'or in paste, that are exhibited in the shop-windows of our confectioners, but good, genuine guineas in metal of Peru, well and solidly bound together—formed the sweetmeat; the *papillote* was a bank-note. Projectiles a thousand times, and again a thousand times precious. Arguments which sounded still when the fugitive tempest of applause was at an end. Our favourite *virtuoses* place now on their heads, after pressing them for a moment to their hearts, the wreaths thrown to them by an electrified public. Mademoiselle Sallé put the proofs of gratitude offered by her host of admirers into her pockets or rather into bags. The light and playful troop of little Loves who hovered around the new dancer, picked up the precious sugar-plums as they fell, and eight dancing satyrs carried away in cadence the improvised treasures. This performance brought Mademoiselle Sallé more than two hundred thousand francs."

What M. Castil Blaze tells us about the bonbons of guineas and bank-notes may or may not be true—I have no means of judging—but it is not very likely that eight dancing satyrs appeared on the stage at Mademoiselle Sallé's benefit, inasmuch as the ballet given on that occasion was not *Bacchus and Ariadne*, as M. Castil Blaze evidently supposes, but *Pygmalion*. The London correspondent of the *Mercure de France* has mentioned that *Pygmalion* was to be performed by desire of "the king and the queen, the royal family, and all the court," and naturally that was the piece selected. According to the letter in the *Mercure* the benefit was fixed for the first of April; indeed, the writer in his postscript speaks of it as having taken place on that day, but he says nothing about purses of gold, nor does he speak of guineas wrapped up in bank-notes.

It appears from the *Daily Journal* that Mademoiselle Sallé took her benefit on the 21st of March (which would be April 1, New Style), when the first piece was *Henry IV., with the humours of Sir John Falstaff*, and the second *Pigmalion* (with a *Pig*). It was announced that on this occasion "servants would be permitted to keep places on the stage," whereas in most of the Covent Garden play bills of the period the following paragraph appears:—"It is desired that no person will take it ill their not being admitted behind the scenes, it being impossible to perform the entertainment unless these passages are kept clear."

MADEMOISELLE SALLE AND HANDEL.

At this time Handel was at the Queen's Theatre, and it was not until the next year, long after Mademoiselle Sallé had left England, that he moved to Covent Garden. The rival who is represented as having offered such magnificent terms to Mademoiselle Sallé with the view of tempting her from her allegiance to Handel, must have been, if any one, Porpora; though if M. Castil Blaze could have identified him as that celebrated composer he would certainly have mentioned the name. Porpora, who arrived in England in 1733, was in 1734 director of the "Nobility's Theatre" in Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

The following is the announcement of Mademoiselle Sallé's first appearance in England:—

"At the THEATRE ROYAL Covent Garden, On Monday, 11th March, will be performed a Comedy, called "*The* Way *of the* World, by the late Mr. Congreve, with entertainments of dancing, particularly the Scottish dance by Mr. Glover and Mrs. Laguerre, Mr. le Sac, and Miss Boston, M. de la Garde and Mrs. Ogden.

"The French Sailor and his Lass, by Mademoiselle Sallé and Mr. Malter.

"The Nassau, by Mr. Glover and Miss Rogers, Mr. Pelling and Miss Nona, Mr. Le Sac and Mrs. Ogden, Mr. de la Garde and Miss Batson.

"With a new dance, called *Pigmalion*, performed by Mr. Malter and Mademoiselle Sallé, M. Dupré, Mr. Pelling, Mr. Duke, Mr. le Sac, Mr. Newhouse, and M. de la Garde.

"No servants will be permitted to keep places on the stage."

It appears that at the King's Theatre on the night of Mademoiselle Sallé's benefit, at Covent Garden, there was "an assembly." "Two tickets," says the advertisement, "will be delivered to every subscriber, this day, at White's Chocholate House, in St. James's Street, paying the subscription-money; and if any tickets remain more than are subscribed for, they will be delivered the same day at the Opera office in the Haymarket, at six and twenty shillings each.

"Every ticket will admit either one gentleman or two ladies.

"N. B.—Five different doors will be opened at twelve for the company to go out, where chairs will easily be had.

N. B.—To prevent a crowd there will be but 700 tickets printed."

I find from the collection of old newspapers before me, that Handel, whose *Ariadne* was first produced and whose *Pastor Fido* was revived in 1734, is called in the playbills of the King's Theatre "Mr. Handell." The following is the announcement of the performance given at that establishment on the 4th June, 1734, "being the last time of performing till after the holidays."

MR. HANDELL.

"At the KING'S THEATRE in the Haymarket, on Tuesday next, being the 4th day of June will be performed an Opera called

PASTOR FIDO,

Composed by Mr. Handell, intermixed with Choruses.

The Scenery after a particular manner.

Pit and Boxes will be put together, and no persons to be admitted without tickets, which will be delivered that day at the Office of the Haymarket, at half a guinea each.

GALLERY Five Shillings.

By His Majesty's COMMAND.

No persons whatever to be admitted behind the scenes.

To begin at half an hour after six o'clock."

Handel had now been twenty-four years in London where he had raised the Italian Opera to a pitch of excellence unequalled elsewhere in Europe, except perhaps at Dresden, which during the first half of the 18th century was universally celebrated for the perfection of its operatic performances at the Court Theatre directed by

Hasse. But of the introduction of Italian Opera into England, and especially of the arrival of Handel, his operatic enterprises, his successes and his failures, I must speak in another chapter.

CHAPTER V.

INTRODUCTION OF ITALIAN OPERA INTO ENGLAND.

Operatic Feuds.—Objections to Nose-pulling.—Arsinoe.—Camilla and the Boar.—Steele on insanity.—Handel and Clayton.—Nicolini and the lion.—Rinaldo and the sparrows.—Hamlet set to music.—Three enraged musicians.—Three charming singers.

It was not until the close of the 17th century that England was visited by any Italian singers of note, among the first of whom was the well-known Margarita de l'Epine. This vocalist's name frequently occurs in the current literature of the period, and Swift in his "Journal to Stella" speaks in his own graceful way of having heard "Margarita and her sister and another drab, and a parcel of fiddlers at Windsor." This was in 1711, nineteen years after her arrival in England—a proof that even then Italian singers, who had once obtained the favour of the English public, were determined to profit by it as long as possible. Margarita was an excellent musician, and a virtuous and amiable woman; but she was ugly and was called Hecate by her husband, who had married her for her money.

OPERATIC FEUDS.

The history of the Opera in England is, more than in any other country, the history of feuds and rivalries between theatres and singers. The rival of Margarita de l'Epine was Mrs. Tofts, who in 1703 was singing English and Italian songs at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Instead of enjoying the talent of both, the London public began to dispute as to which was the best; and what was still more absurd, to create disturbances at the very theatres where they sang, so that the English party prevented Margarita de l'Epine from being heard, while the Italians drowned the voice of Mrs. Tofts.[11] Once, when the amiable Margarita was singing at Drury Lane, she was not only hissed and hooted, but an orange was thrown at her by a woman who was recognised as being or having been in the service of the English vocalist. Hence considerable scandal and the following public statement which appeared in the *Daily Courant* of February 8th, 1704.

"Ann Barwick having occasioned a disturbance at the Theatre Royal on Saturday last, the 5th of February, and being thereupon taken into custody, Mrs. Tofts, in vindication of her innocencey, sent a letter to Mr. Rich, master of the said Theatre, which is as followeth:—'Sir, I was very much surprised when I was informed that Ann Barwick, who was lately my servant, had committed a rudeness last night at the playhouse by throwing of oranges and hissing when Mrs. L'Epine, the Italian gentlewoman, sang. I hope no one will think it was in the least with my privity, as I assure you it was not. I abhor such practices, and I hope you will cause her to be prosecuted that she may be punished as she deserves. I am, sir, your humble servant, Katharine Tofts.'"

ARSINOE.

At this period the unruly critics of the pit behaved with as little ceremony to those who differed from them among the audience as to those performers whom they disliked on the stage. In proof of this, we may quote a portion of the very amusing letter written by a linen-draper named Heywood (under the signature of James Easy), to the *Spectator*,[12] on the subject of nose-pulling. "A friend of mine, the other night, applauding what a graceful exit Mr. Wilkes made," says Mr. Easy, "one of these nose-wringers overhearing him, pulled him by the nose. I was in the pit the other night," he adds, "when it was very crowded. A gentleman leaning upon me, and very heavily, I civilly requested him to remove his hand; for which he pulled me by the nose. I would not resent it in so public a place, because I was unwilling to create a disturbance; but have since reflected upon it as a thing that is unmanly and disingenuous, renders the nose-puller odious, and makes the person pulled by the nose look little and contemptible. This grievance I humbly request you will endeavour to redress."

Fifty years later, at the Grand Opera of Paris, a gentleman in the pit applauded the dancing of Mademoiselle Asselin. "*Il faut être bien bête pour applaudir une telle sauteuse*," said his neighbour, upon which a challenge was given and received, the two amateurs went out and fought, when the aggressor fell mortally wounded.

In the letters of Frenchmen and Englishmen from Italy, describing the Italian theatres of the eighteenth century, we read neither of pelting with oranges, nor of nose-pulling, nor of duelling. One of the most remarkable things in the demeanour of the audience appears to have been the unceremonious manner in which the aristocratic occupants of the boxes behaved towards the people in the pit. The nobles, who were somewhat given to expectoration, thought nothing of spitting down into the parterre, and "what is still more extraordinary," says Baretti, who notices this curious habit, "those who received it on their faces and heads, did not seem to resent it much." We are told, however, that "they made the most curious grimaces in the world."

But to return to the rival singers of London. In 1705, then, Mrs. Tofts and Margarita were both engaged at Drury Lane; the former taking the principal part in *Arsinoe*, which was performed in English, the latter singing Italian songs before and after the Opera. *Arsinoe* ("the first Opera," says the *Spectator*, "that gave us a taste for Italian music") was the composition of Clayton, the *maestro* who afterwards wrote music for Addison's unfortunate *Rosamond*, and who described the purpose and character of his first work in the following words:—"The design of this entertainment being to introduce the Italian manner of singing to the English stage, which has not been before attempted, I was obliged to have an Italian Opera translated, in which the words, however mean in several places, suited much better with that manner of music than others more poetical would do. The style of this music is to express the passions, which is the soul of music, and though the voices are not equal to the Italian, yet I have engaged the best that were to be found in England; and I have not been wanting, to the utmost of my diligence, in the instructing of them. The music, being recitative, may not at first meet with that general acceptation, as is to be hoped for, from the audience's being better acquainted with it; but if this attempt shall be a means of bringing this manner of music to be used in my native country, I shall think my study and pains very well employed."

CAMILLA AND THE BOAR

Mr. Hogarth, in his interesting "Memoirs of the Opera," remarks that "though *Arsinoe* is utterly unworthy of criticism, yet there is something amusing in the folly of the composer. The very first song may be taken as a specimen. The words are—

Queen of Darkness, sable night,
Ease a wandering lover's pain;
Guide me, lead me
Where the nymph whom I adore,
Sleeping, dreaming,
Thinks of love and me no more.

The first two lines are spoken in a meagre sort of recitative. Then there is a miserable air, the first part of which consists of the next two lines, and concludes with a perfect close. The second part of the air is on the last two lines; after which, there is, as usual, a *da capo*, and the first part is repeated; the song finishing in the middle of a sentence,—

"Guide me, lead me
Where the nymph whom I adore"—

which, I venture to say, has not been beaten by Bunn, or Fitzball, or any of our worst librettists at their worst moments.

The music of *Camilla*, the second opera in the Italian style, performed in England, was by Marco Antonio Buononcini, the brother of Handel's future rival. The work was produced at the original Opera House, erected by Sir John Vanburgh, on the site of the present building, in 1705.[13] It was sung half in English and half in Italian. Mrs. Tofts played the part of "Camilla," and kept to *her* mother tongue. Valentini played that of the hero, and kept to his. Both the Buononcinis were composers of high ability and the music of *Camilla* is said to have been very beautiful. The melodies given to the two principal singers were original, expressive, and well harmonized. Mrs. Tofts' impersonation of the Amazonian lady was much admired by persons of taste, and there was a part for a pig which threw the vulgar into ecstacies.

"Mr. Spectator," wrote a correspondent, "your having been so humble as to take notice of the epistles of the animal, embolden me, who am the wild boar that was killed by Mrs. Tofts, to represent to you that I think I was hardly used in not having the part of the lion in Hydaspes given to me. It would have been but a natural step for me to have personated that noble creature, after having behaved myself to satisfaction in the part above mentioned; but that of a lion is too great a character for one that never trode the stage before but upon two legs. As for the little resistance I made, I hope it may be excused when it is considered that the dart was thrown at me by so fair a hand. I must confess I had but just put on my brutality; and Camilla's charms were such, that beholding her erect mien, hearing her charming voice, and astonished with her graceful motion, I could not keep up to my assumed fierceness, but died like a man."

STEELE ON INSANITY.

Mrs. Tofts quitted the stage in 1709, in consequence of mental derangement. We have seen Mademoiselle Desmâtins, half fancying in her excessive, vanity that she was really the queen or princess she had been representing the same night on the stage, and ordering the servants, on her return home, to prepare her throne and serve her on their bended knees. Poor Mrs. Tofts laboured under a similar delusion; only, in her case, it was not a moral malady, but the hallucination of a diseased intellect. "In the meridian of her beauty," says Hawkins, in his History of Music, "and possessed of a large sum of money, which she had acquired by singing, Mrs. Tofts quitted the stage, and was married to Mr. Joseph Smith, a gentleman, who being appointed consul for the English nation, at Venice, she went thither with him. Mr. Smith was a great collector of books, and patron of the arts. He lived in great state and magnificence; but the disorder of his wife returning, she dwelt sequestered from the world, in a remote part of the house, and had a large garden to range in, in which she would frequently walk, singing and giving way to that innocent frenzy which had seized her in the early part of her life."

The terrible affliction, which had fallen upon the favourite operatic vocalist, is touched upon by Steele, with singular want of feeling, of taste, and even of common decency, in No. 20 of the *Tatler*. "The theatre," he says, "is breaking, and there is a great desolation among the gentlemen and ladies who were the ornaments of the town, and used to shine in plumes and diadems, the heroes being most of them pressed, and the queens beating hemp." Then with more brutality than humour he adds, "The great revolutions of this nature bring to my mind the distress of the unfortunate 'Camilla,' who has had the ill luck to break before her voice, and to disappear at a time when her beauty was in the height of its bloom. This lady entered so thoroughly into the great characters she acted, that when she had finished her part she could not think of retrenching her equipage, but would appear in her own lodgings with the same magnificence as she did upon the stage. This greatness of soul has reduced that unhappy princess to a voluntary retirement, where she now passes her time among the woods and forests, thinking on the crowns and sceptres she has lost, and often humming over in her solitude:—

'I was born of royal race,
Yet must wander in disgrace, &c.'

"But for fear of being overheard, and her quality known, she usually sings it in Italian:—

'Nacqui al regno, nacqui al trono,
E pur sono,
Sventatura pastorella.'"

STEELE AND DRURY LANE.

It is "the Christian soldier" who wrote this; who rejoiced in this anti-christian and cowardly spirit at the dark calamity which had befallen an amiable and charming vocalist, whose only fault was that she had aided the fortunes of a theatre abhorred by Steele. And what cause had Steele for detesting the Italian Opera with the unreasonable and really stupid hatred which he displayed towards it? Addison, as it seems to me, has been most unfairly attacked for his strictures on the operatic performances of his day. They were often just, they were never ill-natured, and they were always enveloped in such a delightful garb of humour, that there is not a sentence, certainly not a whole paper, and scarcely even a phrase,[14] in all he has published about the Opera, that a musician, unless already "enraged," would wish unwritten. It is unreasonable and unworthy to connect Addison's pleasantries on the subject of *Arsinoe*, *Camilla*, *Hydaspes*, and *Rinaldo*, with the failure of his *Rosamond*, which, as the reader is aware, was set to music by the ignorant impostor

called Clayton. Addison, it is true, did not write any of his admirably humorous papers about the Italian Opera until after the production of *Rosamond*, but it was not until some time afterwards that the *Spectator* first appeared. St. Evrémond, who was a great lover of the Opera, wrote much more against it than Addison. In fact, the new entertainment was the subject of the day. It was full of incongruities, and naturally recommended itself to the attention of wits; and we all know that, as a rule, wits do not deal in praise. All that *Rosamond* proves is, that Addison liked the Opera or he would never have written it.

But about this Christian Soldier who endeavours to convince his readers that music is a thing to be despised because it does not appeal to the understanding, and who laughs at the misfortunes of a poor lunatic because she is no longer able to attract the public by her singing from the dramatic theatre in which he took so deep an interest, and of which he afterwards became patentee?[15]

HANDEL V. AMBROSE PHILLIPS.

Of course, if music appealed only to the understanding, mad Saul would have found no solace in the tones of David's harp, and it would be hideously irreverent to imagine the angels of heaven singing hymns to their Creator. Steele, of course, knew this, and also that the pleasure given by music is not a mere physical sensation, to be enjoyed as an Angora cat enjoys the smell of flowers, but he seems to have thought it was his duty (as it afterwards became his interest) to write up the drama and write down the Opera at all hazards. Powerful penmanship it must have been, however, that would have put down Handel, or that would have kept up Mr. Ambrose Phillips. It would have been easier, at least it would have been more successful, to have gone upon the other tack. We all know Handel, and (if the expression be permitted) he becomes more immortal every day. Steele, it is true, did not hold his music in any esteem, but Mozart, a competent judge in such matters, *did*, and reckoned it an honour to write additional accompaniments to the elder master's greatest work. And who was this Ambrose Phillips? some reader, not necessarily ignorant of his country's literature, may ask. He was Racine's thief. He stole *Andromaque*, and gave it to the English as his own, calling it prosaically and stupidly "The Distrest Mother," which is as if we should call "Abel" "The Uncivil Brother," or "Philoctetes" "The Man with the Bad Foot," or "Prometheus," "The Gentleman with the Liver Complaint." Steele wrote a paper[16] on the reading of this new tragedy, in which he declares that "the style of the play is such as becomes those of the first education, and the sentiments worthy of those of the highest figure." He also says, "I congratulate the age that they are at last to see truth and human life represented in the incidents which concern heroes and heroines."

Translated Racine was very popular just then with writers who regarded Shakespeare as a dealer in the false sublime. "Would one think it was possible," asks Addison, "at a time when an author lived that was able to write the *Phedra and Hippolytus* (translate *Phèdre*, that is to say), for a people to be so stupidly fond of the Italian Opera as scarce to give a third day's hearing to that admirable tragedy."

Sensible people! It seems quite possible to us in the present day that they should have preferred Handel's music to Racine's rhymed prose, rendered into English rhymes by a man who had nothing of the poetical spirit which Racine, though writing in an unpoetical language, certainly possessed.

The triumphant success of Handel's *Rinaldo* was felt deeply by Steele and by the *Spectator's* favourite composer Clayton, a bad musician, and apart from the practice of his art, as base a scoundrel as ever libelled a great man. But of course critics who besides expatiating on the blemishes of Shakespeare dwelt on the beauties of Racine as improved by Phillips, would be sure to enjoy the cacophony of Clayton;

"Qui Bavium non odit amet tua carmina Mævi."

NICOLINI AND THE LION.

However we must leave the chivalrous Steele and his faithful minstrel for the present. We have done with the writer's triumphant gloating over the insanity of the poor *prima donna*. We shall presently see the musician publishing impudent falsehoods, under the auspices of his literary patron, concerning Handel and his genius, and endeavouring, always with the same protection, to form a cabal for the avowed purpose of driving him from the country which he was so greatly benefiting.

Before Handel's arrival in England Steele had not only insulted operatic singers, but in recording the success of Scarlatti's *Pyrrhus and Demetrius*, had openly proclaimed his chagrin thereat. "This intelligence," he says, "is not very agreeable to our friends of the theatre."

Pyrrhus and Demetrius, in which the celebrated Nicolini made his first appearance, was the last opera performed partly in English and partly in Italian.

In 1710, *Almahide*, of which the music is attributed to Buononcini, was played entirely in the Italian language, with Valentine, Nicolini, Margarita de l'Epine, Cassani, and "Signora Isabella" (Isabella Girardean), in the principal parts. The same year *Hydaspes* was produced. This marvellous work, which is not likely to be forgotten by readers of the *Spectator*, was brought out under the direction of Nicolini, the sopranist, who performed the part of the hero. The other singers were those included in the cast of *Almahide*, with the addition of Lawrence, an English tenor, who was in the habit of singing in Italian operas, and of whom it was humourously said by Addison, in his proposition for an opera in Greek, that he "could learn to speak the language as well as he does Italian in a fortnight's time." "Hydaspes" is a sort of profane Daniel, who being thrown into an amphitheatre to be devoured by a lion, is saved not by faith, but by love; the presence of his mistress among the spectators inspiring him with such courage, that after appealing to the monster in a minor key, and telling him that he may tear his bosom but cannot touch his heart, he attacks him in the relative major, and strangles him.

NICOLINI AND THE LION.

"There is nothing of late years," says Addison, in one of the most amusing of his papers on the Opera, "that has afforded matter of greater amusement to the town than Signior Nicolini's combat with a lion in the Haymarket, which has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain." Upon the first rumour of this intended combat, it was confidently affirmed, and is still believed by many in both galleries, that there would be a tame lion sent from the tower every Opera night, in order to be killed by Hydaspes; this report, though altogether so universally prevalent in the upper regions of the play-house, that some of the most refined politicians in those parts of the audience gave it out in whisper, that the lion was a cousin-german of the tiger who

made his appearance in King William's days, and that the stage would be supplied with lions at the public expense, during the whole session. Many likewise were the conjectures of the treatment which this lion was to meet with from the hands of Signior Nicolini; some supposed that he was to subdue him in recitative, as Orpheus used to serve the wild beasts in his time, and afterwards to knock him on the head; some fancied that the lion would not pretend to lay his paws upon the hero, by reason of the received opinion, that a lion will not hurt a virgin. Several who pretended to have seen the Opera in Italy, had informed their friends, that the lion was to act a part in high Dutch, and roar twice or thrice to a thorough bass, before he fell at the feet of Hydaspes. To clear up a matter that was so variously reported, I have made it my business to examine whether this pretended lion is really the savage he appears to be, or only a counterfeit.

"But before I communicate my discoveries, I must acquaint the reader that upon my walking behind the scenes last winter, as I was thinking on something else, I accidentally justled against a monstrous animal that extremely startled me, and upon my nearer survey much surprised, told me in a gentle voice that I might come by him if I pleased, 'for,' says he, 'I do not intend to hurt any body.' I thanked him very kindly, and passed by him; and in a little time after saw him leap upon the stage, and act his part with very great applause. It has been observed by several, that the lion has changed his manner of acting twice or thrice since his first appearance; which will not seem strange, when I acquaint my reader that the lion has been changed upon the audience three several times. The first lion was a candle-snuffer, who being a fellow of a testy choleric temper, overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so easily as he ought to have done; besides, it was observed of him, that he grew more surly every time he came out of the lion; and having dropped some words in ordinary conversation, as if he had not fought his best, and that he suffered himself to be thrown upon his back in the scuffle, and that he would wrestle with Mr. Nicolini for what he pleased, out of his lion's skin, it was thought proper to discard him; and it is verily believed to this day, that had he been brought upon the stage another time, he would certainly have done mischief. Besides, it was objected against the first lion, that he reared himself so high upon his hinder paws, and walked in so erect a posture, that he looked more like an old man than a lion.

NICOLINI AND THE LION.

"The second lion was a tailor by trade, who belonged to the play-house, and had the character of a mild and peaceable man in his profession. If the former was too furious, this was too sheepish for his part; insomuch that after a short modest walk upon the stage, he would fall at the first touch of Hydaspes, without grappling with him, and giving him an opportunity of showing his variety of Italian trips. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh colour doublet; but this was only to make work for himself, in his private character of a tailor. I must not omit that it was this second lion who treated me with so much humanity behind the scenes. The acting lion at present is, as I am informed, a country gentleman who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed. He says, very handsomely, in his own excuse, that he does not act for gain; that he indulges an innocent pleasure in it; and that it is better to pass away an evening in this manner, than in gaming and drinking; but at the same time says, with a very agreeable raillery upon himself, and that if his name should be known, the ill-natured world might call him 'the ass in the lion's skin.' This gentleman's temper is made out of such a happy mixture of the mild and the choleric, that he outdoes both his predecessors, and has drawn together greater audiences than have been known in the memory of man.

"I must not conclude my narrative without taking notice of a groundless report that has been raised to a gentleman's disadvantage, of whom I must declare myself an admirer; namely, that Signior Nicolini and the lion have been sitting peaceably by one another, and smoking a pipe together, behind the scenes; by which their enemies would insinuate, it is but a sham combat which they represent upon the stage; but upon enquiry I find, that if any such correspondence has passed between them, it was not till the combat was over, when the lion was to be looked upon as dead, according to the received rules of the drama. Besides, this is what is practised every day in Westminster Hall, where nothing is more usual than to see a couple of lawyers, who have been tearing each other to pieces in the court, embracing one another.

"I would not be thought, in any part of this relation, to reflect upon Signior Nicolini, who, in acting this part, only complies with the wretched taste of his audience; he knows very well that the lion has many more admirers than himself; as they say of the famous equestrian statue on the Pont Neuf at Paris, that more people go to see the horse than the king who sits upon it. On the contrary, it gives me a just indignation to see a person whose action gives new majesty to kings, resolution to heroes, and softness to lovers, thus sinking from the greatness of his behaviour, and degraded into the character of a London 'prentice. I have often wished that our tragedians would copy after this great master in action. Could they make the same use of their arms and legs, and inform their faces with as significant looks and passions, how glorious would an English tragedy appear with that action which is capable of giving dignity to the forced thoughts, cold conceits, and unnatural expressions of an Italian Opera! In the meantime, I have related this combat of the lion, to show what are at present the reigning entertainments of the politer part of Great Britain."

RINALDO AND THE SPARROWS.

But the operatic year of 1710 is remarkable for something more than the production of Almahide and Hydaspes; for in 1710 Handel arrived in England, and the year after brought out his Rinaldo, the first of the thirty-five operas which he gave to the English stage. For Handel we are indebted to Hanover. It was at Hanover that the English noblemen who invited him to London first met the great composer; and it was the Elector of Hanover, afterwards George I., who granted him permission to come, and who when he in his turn arrived in England to assume the crown, added considerably to the pension which Queen Anne had already granted to the former chapel-master of the Hanoverian court. In 1710 the director of the theatre in the Haymarket was Aaron Hill, who no sooner heard of Handel's arrival in London than he went to him, and requested him to compose an opera for his establishment. Handel consented, and Hill furnished him with a plan, sketched out by himself, on the subject of *Rinaldo and Armida* in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, the writing of the *libretto* being entrusted to an Italian poet of some note named Rossi. In the advertisements of this opera Handel's name does not appear; not at least in that which calls attention to its first representation and which simply sets forth that "at the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket will be performed a new opera called *Rinaldo*."

It was in *Rinaldo* that the celebrated operatic sparrows made their first appearance on the stage—with what success may be gathered from the following notice of their performance, which I extract from No. 5 of the *Spectator*.

"As I was walking in the streets about a fortnight ago," says Addison, "I saw an ordinary fellow carrying a cage

full of little birds upon his shoulder; and as I was wondering with myself what use he would put them to, he was met very luckily by an acquaintance, who had the same curiosity. Upon his asking him what he had upon his shoulder, he told him that he had been buying sparrows for the opera. 'Sparrows, for the opera,' says his friend, licking his lips, 'What! are they to be roasted?' 'No, no,' says the other, 'they are to enter towards the end of the first act, and to fly about the stage.'

RINALDO AND THE SPARROWS.

"This strange dialogue wakened my curiosity so far that I immediately bought the opera, by which means I perceived the sparrows were to act the part of singing birds in a delightful grove, though upon a nearer inquiry I found the sparrows put the same trick upon the audience that Sir Martin Mar-all practised upon his mistress; for though they flew in sight, the music proceeded from a concert of flageolets and bird-calls, which were planted behind the scenes. At the same time I made this discovery, I found by the discourse of the actors, that there were great designs on foot for the improvement of the Opera; that it had been proposed to break down a part of the wall, and to surprise the audience with a party of a hundred horse; and that there was actually a project of bringing the New River into the house, to be employed in jetteaus and waterworks. This project, as I have since heard, is postponed till the summer season, when it is thought that the coolness which proceeds from fountains and cascades will be more acceptable and refreshing to people of quality. In the meantime, to find out a more agreeable entertainment for the winter season, the opera of *Rinaldo* is filled with thunder and lightning, illuminations, and fireworks; which the audience may look upon without catching cold, and indeed without much danger of being burnt; for there are several engines filled with water, and ready to play at a minute's warning, in case any such accident should happen. However, as I have a very great friendship for the owner of this theatre, I hope that he has been wise enough to insure his house before he would let this opera be acted in it.

"But to return to the sparrows. There have been so many flights of them let loose in this opera, that it is feared the house will never get rid of them; and that in other plays they may make their entrance in very wrong and improper scenes, so as to be seen flying in a lady's bedchamber, or perching upon a king's throne; besides the inconveniences which the heads of the audience may sometimes suffer from them. I am credibly informed, that there was once a design of casting into an opera the story of 'Whittington and his Cat,' and that in order to it there had been set together a great quantity of mice, but Mr. Rich, the proprietor of the playhouse, very prudently considered that it would be impossible for the cat to kill them all, and that consequently the princes of the stage might be as much infested with mice as the prince of the island was before the cat's arrival upon it, for which reason he would not permit it to be acted in his house. And, indeed, I cannot blame him; for as he said very well upon that occasion, 'I do not hear that any of the performers in our opera pretend to equal the famous pied piper who made all the mice of a great town in Germany follow his music, and by that means cleared the place of those noxious little animals.'

"Before I dismiss this paper, I must inform my reader that I hear that there is a treaty on foot between London and Wise,[17] (who will be appointed gardeners of the playhouse) to furnish the opera of *Rinaldo and Armida* with an orange grove; and that the next time it is acted the singing birds will be impersonated by tom tits: the undertakers being resolved to spare neither pains nor money for the gratification of their audience."

HAMLET SET TO MUSIC.

Steele, in No. 14 of the *Spectator*, tells us that—"The sparrows and chaffinches at the Haymarket fly, as yet, very irregularly over the stage; and instead of perching on the trees and performing their parts, these young actors either get into the galleries or put out the candles," for which and other reasons equally good, he decides that Mr. Powell's Puppet-show is preferable as a place of entertainment to the Opera, and that Handel's *Rinaldo* is inferior as a production of art to a puppet-show drama. Indeed, though Steele, in the *Tatler*, and Addison in the *Spectator*, have said very civil things about Nicolini, neither of them appears to have been impressed in the slightest degree by Handel's music, nor does it even seem to have occurred to them that the composer's share in producing an opera was by any means considerable. Steele, thought the Opera a decidedly "unintellectual" entertainment (how much purely intellectual enjoyment is there, we wonder, in the pleasure derived from the contemplation of a virgin, by Raphael, and what is the meaning in criticising art of looking at it merely in its intellectual aspect?); but he at the same time bears testimony to the high (æsthetic) gratification he derived from the performance of Nicolini, who "by the grace and propriety of his action and gesture, does honour to the human figure," and who "sets off the character he bears in an opera by his action as much as he does the words of it by his voice."[18]

In 1711, in addition to Handel's *Rinaldo*, *Antiochus*, an opera, by Apostolo Zeno and Gasparini, was performed, and about the same time, or soon afterwards, *Ambleto*, by the same author and composer, was brought out. If we smile at Signor Verdi for attempting to turn *Macbeth* into an opera, what are we to say to Zeno's and Gasparini's experiment with the far more unsuitable tragedy of *Hamlet*? In *Macbeth*, the songs and choruses of witches, the banquet with the apparition of the murdered Banquo, and above all, the sleep-walking scene might well inspire a composer of genius; but a "Hamlet" without philosophy, or, worse still, a "Hamlet" who searches his own soul to orchestral accompaniments—this must indeed be absurd. I learn from Dr. Burney, that *Ambleto* was written for Venice, that it was represented at the Queen's Theatre, in London, and that "the overture had four movements ending with a jig!" An overture to *Hamlet* "ending with a jig!" To think that this was tolerated, and that we are shocked in the present day by burlesques put forth as such! The *Spectator*, while apparently keeping a sharp look out for all that is ridiculous, or that can be represented as ridiculous in the operatic performances of the day, has not a word to say against *Ambleto*. But it must be remembered that since Milton's time, "Nature's sweetest child" had ceased to be appreciated in England even by the most esteemed writers—who, however, for the most part, if they were not good critics, could claim no literary merit beyond that of style. In a paper on Milton, one of whose noblest sonnets is in praise of Shakespeare, Addison, after showing how, by certain verbal expedients, bathos may be avoided and sublimity attained, calmly points to the works of Lee and Shakespeare as affording instances of the false sublime[19], adding coolly that, "*in these authors* the affectation of greatness often hurts the perspicuity of the style."

THREE ENRAGED MUSICIANS.

I have spoken of Steele's and Clayton's consternation, at the success of *Rinaldo*. Some months after the production of that work, the despicable Clayton, supported by two musicians named Nicolino Haym, and Charles Dieupart, (who were becomingly indignant at a foreigner like Handel presuming to entertain a British audience), wrote a letter to the *Spectator*, which Steele published in No. 258 of that journal, introducing it by a preface, full of wisdom, in which it is set forth that "pleasure and recreation of one kind or other are absolutely necessary to relieve our minds and bodies

from too constant attention and labour," and that, "where public diversions are tolerated, it behoves persons of distinction, with their power and example, to preside over them in such a manner as to check anything that tends to the corruption of manners, or which is too mean or trivial for the entertainment of reasonable creatures." The letter from the "enraged musicians" is described as coming "from three persons who, as soon as named, will be thought capable of advancing the present state of music"—that is to say, of superseding Handel. But the same perverse public, which in spite of the *Spectator's* remonstrances, preferred *Rinaldo* to translated Racine, persisted in admiring Handel's music, and in paying no heed whatever to the cacophony of Clayton. Here is the letter from the three miserable musicasters to their patron and fellow-conspirator.

"We, whose names are subscribed, think you the properest person to signify what we have to offer the town in behalf of ourselves, and the art which we profess,—music. We conceive hopes of your favour from the speculations on the mistakes which the town run into with regard to their pleasure of this kind; and believing your method of judging is, that you consider music only valuable, as it is agreeable to and heightens the purpose of poetry, we consent that it is not only the true way of relishing that pleasure, but also that without it a composure of music is the same thing as a poem, where all the rules of poetical numbers are observed, though the words have no sense or meaning; to say it shorter, mere musical sounds in our art are no other than nonsense-verses are in poetry." [A beautiful melody then, apart from words, said no more to these musicians, and to the patron whose idiotic theory they are so proud to have adopted than a set of nonsense-verses!] "Music, therefore, is to aggravate what is intended by poetry; it must always have some passion or sentiment to express, or else violins, voices, or any other organs of sound, afford an entertainment very little above the rattles of children. It was from this opinion of the matter, that when Mr. Clayton had finished his studies in Italy, and brought over the Opera of *Arsinoe*, that Mr. Haym and Mr. Dieupart, who had the honour to be well-known and received among the nobility and gentry, were zealously inclined to assist, by their solicitations, in introducing so elegant an entertainment, as the Italian music grafted upon English poetry." [Such poetry, for instance, as

"Guide me, lead me,
Where the nymph whom I adore

THREE ENRAGED MUSICIANS.

which occurred in Clayton's *Arsinoe*—Haym, it may be remembered, was the ingenious musician who arranged *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* for the Anglo-Italian stage, when half of the music was sung in one language, and half in the other.] "For this end," continue the precious trio, "Mr. Dieupart and Mr. Haym, according to their several opportunities, promoted the introduction of *Arsinoe*, and did it to the best advantage so great a novelty would allow. It is not proper to trouble you with particulars of the just complaints we all of us have to make; but so it is that without regard to our obliging pains, we are all equally set aside in the present opera. Our application, therefore, to you is only to insert this letter in your paper, that the town may know we have all three joined together to make entertainments of music for the future at Mr. Clayton's house, in York Buildings. What we promise ourselves is, to make a subscription of two guineas, for eight times, and that the entertainment, with the names of the authors of the poetry, may be printed, to be sold in the house, with an account of the several authors of the vocal as well as the instrumental music for each night; the money to be paid at the receipt of the tickets, at Mr. Charles Lulli's. It will, we hope, sir, be easily allowed that we are capable of undertaking to exhibit, by our joint force and different qualifications, all that can be done in music" [how charmingly modest!] "but lest you should think so dry a thing as an account of our proposal should be a matter unworthy of your paper, which generally contains something of public use, give us leave to say, that favouring our design is no less than reviving an art, which runs to ruin by the utmost barbarism under an affectation of knowledge. We aim at establishing some settled notion of what is music, at recovering from neglect and want very many families who depend upon it, at making all foreigners who pretend to succeed in England to learn the language of it as we ourselves have done, and not be so insolent as to expect a whole nation, a refined and learned nation, should submit to learn theirs. In a word, Mr. Spectator, with all deference and humility, we hope to behave ourselves in this undertaking in such a manner, that all Englishmen who have any skill in music may be furthered in it for their profit or diversion by what new things we shall produce; never pretending to surpass others, or asserting that anything which is a science is not attainable by all men of all nations who have proper genius for it. We say, sir, what we hope for, it is not expected will arrive to us by contemning others, but through the utmost diligence recommending ourselves."

Poor Clayton seems, here and there, to have really fancied that it was his mission to put down Handel, and stuck to him for some time in most pertinacious style. One is reminded of the writer who endeavoured to turn Wilhelm Meister into ridicule, and of the epigram which that attempt suggested to Goethe, ending:—

"Hat doch die Wallfisch seine Laus."

But Clayton was really a creator, and proposed nothing less than "to revive an art which was running to ruin by the utmost barbarism under an affectation of knowledge." One would have thought that this was going a little too far. Handel affecting knowledge—Handel a barbarian? Surely Steele in giving the sanction of his name to such assertions as these, puts himself in a lower position even than Voltaire uttering his celebrated dictum about the genius of Shakespeare; for after all, Voltaire was the first Frenchman to discover any beauties in Shakespeare at all, and it was in defending him against the stupid prejudices of Laharpe that he made use of the unfortunate expression with which he has so often been reproached, and which he put forward in the form of a concession to his adversary.

THREE ENRAGED MUSICIANS.

Clayton and his second fiddles returned to the attack a few weeks afterwards (January 18th, 1712). "It is industriously insinuated," they complained, "that our intention is to destroy operas in general, but we beg of you (that is to say, the *Spectator*, as represented by Steele, who signs the number with his T) to insert this explanation of ourselves in your paper. Our purpose is only to improve our circumstances by improving the art which we profess" [the knaves are getting candid]. "We see it utterly destroyed at present, and as we were the persons who introduced operas, we think it a groundless imputation that we should set up against the Opera itself," &c., &c.

What became of Clayton, Haym, and Dieupart, and their speculation, I do not know, nor do I think that any one can care. At all events, even with the assistance of Steele and the *Spectator* they did not extinguish Handel.

The most celebrated vocalist at the theatre in the Haymarket, from the arrival of Handel in England until after the formation of the Royal Academy of Music, in 1720, was Anastasia Robinson, a *contralto*, who was remarkable as

much for her graceful acting as for her expressive singing. She made her first appearance in a *pasticcio* called *Creso*, in 1714, and continued singing in the operas of Handel and other composers until 1724, when she contracted a private marriage with the Earl of Peterborough and retired from the stage. Lady Delany, an intimate friend of Lady Peterborough, communicated the following account of her marriage and the circumstances under which it was made, to Dr. Burney, who publishes it in his "History of Music."

ANASTASIA ROBINSON.

"Mrs. Anastasia Robinson was of middling stature, not handsome, but of a pleasing, modest countenance, with large blue eyes. Her deportment was easy, unaffected, and graceful. Her manner and address very engaging, and her behaviour on all occasions that of a gentlewoman, with perfect propriety. She was not only liked by all her acquaintance, but loved and caressed by persons of the highest rank, with whom she appeared always equal, without assuming. Her father's house, in Golden Square was frequented by all the men of genius and refined taste of the times. Among the number of persons of distinction who frequented Mr. Robinson's house, and seemed to distinguish his daughter in a particular manner, were the Earl of Peterborough and General H—. The latter had shown a long attachment to her, and his attentions were so remarkable that they seemed more than the effects of common politeness; and as he was a very agreeable man, and in good circumstances, he was favourably received, not doubting but that his intentions were honourable. A declaration of a very contrary nature was treated with the contempt it deserved, though Mrs. Robinson was very much prepossessed in his favour.

"Soon after this, Lord Peterborough endeavoured to convince her of his partial regard for her; but, agreeable and artful as he was, she remained very much upon her guard, which rather increased than diminished his admiration and passion for her. Yet still his pride struggled with his inclination, for all this time she was engaged to sing in public, a circumstance very grievous to her; but, urged by the best of motives, she submitted to it, in order to assist her parents, whose fortune was much reduced by Mr. Robinson's loss of sight, which deprived him of the benefit of his profession as a painter.

"At length Lord Peterborough made his declaration to her on honourable terms. He found it would be in vain to make proposals on any other, and as he omitted no circumstance that could engage her esteem and gratitude, she accepted them. He earnestly requested her keeping it a secret till a more convenient time for him to make it known, to which she readily consented, having a perfect confidence in his honour.

"Mrs. A. Robinson had a sister, a very pretty accomplished woman, who married D'Arbuthnot's brother. After the death of Mr. Robinson, Lord Peterborough took a house near Fulham, in the neighbourhood of his own villa at Parson's-green, where he settled Mrs. Robinson and her mother. They never lived under the same roof, till the earl, being seized with a violent fit of illness, solicited her to attend him at Mount Bevis, near Southampton, which she refused with firmness, but upon condition that, though still denied to take his name, she might be permitted to wear her wedding-ring; to which, finding her inexorable, he at length consented.

ANASTASIA ROBINSON.

"His haughty spirit was still reluctant to the making a declaration that would have done justice to so worthy a character as the person to whom he was now united; and indeed his uncontrollable temper and high opinion of his own actions made him a very awful husband, ill suited to Lady Peterborough's good sense, amiable temper, and delicate sentiments. She was a Roman Catholic, but never gave offence to those of a contrary opinion, though very strict in what she thought her duty. Her excellent principles and fortitude of mind supported her through many severe trials in her conjugal state. But at last he prevailed on himself to do her justice, instigated, it is supposed by his bad state of health, which obliged him to seek another climate, and she absolutely refused to go with him unless he declared his marriage. Her attendance on him in this illness nearly cost her her life.

"He appointed a day for all his nearest relations to meet him at the apartment over the gateway of St. James's palace, belonging to Mr. Poyntz, who was married to Lord Peterborough's niece, and at that time preceptor of Prince William, afterwards Duke of Cumberland. He also appointed Lady Peterborough to be there at the same time. When they were all assembled, he began a most eloquent oration, enumerating all the virtues and perfections of Mrs. A. Robinson, and the rectitude of her conduct during his long acquaintance with her, for which he acknowledged his great obligation and sincere attachment, declaring he was determined to do her that justice which he ought to have done long ago, which was presenting her to all his family as his wife. He spoke this harangue with so much energy, and in parts so pathetically, that Lady Peterborough, not being apprised of his intentions, was so affected that she fainted away in the midst of the company.

"After Lord Peterborough's death, she lived a very retired life, chiefly at Mount Bevis, and was seldom prevailed on to leave that habitation but by the Duchess of Portland, who was always happy to have her company at Bulstrode, when she could obtain it, and often visited her at her own house.

"Among Lord Peterborough's papers, she found his memoirs, written by himself, in which he declared he had been guilty of such actions as would have reflected very much upon his character, for which reason she burnt them. This, however, contributed to complete the excellency of her principles, though it did not fail giving offence to the curious inquirers after anecdotes of so remarkable a character as that of the Earl of Peterborough."

DUCAL CONNOISSEURS.

The deserved good fortune of Anastasia Robinson reminds me of the careers of two other vocalists of this period, one of them owed her elevation to a fortunate accident; while the third, though she entered upon the same possible road to the peerage as the second, yet never attained it. "The Duke of Bolton," says Swift, in one of his letters, "has run away with Polly Peachum, having settled four hundred a year on her during pleasure, and upon disagreement, two hundred more." This was the charming Lavinia Fenton, the original Polly of the Beggars' Opera, between whom and the Duke the disagreement anticipated by the amiable Swift never took place. Twenty-three years after the elopement, the Duke's wife died, and Lavinia then became the Duchess of Bolton. She was, according to the account given of her by Dr. Joseph Warton, "a very accomplished and most agreeable companion; had much wit, good strong sense, and a just taste in polite literature.

Her person was agreeable and well made," continues Dr. Warton, "though I think she never could be called a beauty. I have had the pleasure of being at table with her, when her conversation was much admired by the first character of the age, particularly by old Lord Bathurst and Lord Granville."

The beautiful Miss Campion, who was singing about the same time as Mrs. Tofts, and who died in 1706, when she was only eighteen, did *not* become the Duchess of Devonshire; but the heart-broken old Duke, who appears to

have been most fervently attached to her, buried her in his family vault in the church of Latimers, Buckinghamshire, and placed a Latin inscription on her monument, testifying that she was wise beyond her years, and bountiful to the poor even beyond her abilities; and at the theatre, where she had some times acted, modest and pure; but being seized with a hectic fever, she had submitted to her fate with a firm confidence and Christian piety; and that William, Duke of Devonshire, had, upon her beloved remains, erected this tomb as sacred to her memory.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ITALIAN OPERA UNDER HANDEL.

Handel at Hamburgh.—Handel in London.—The Queen's Theatre.—The Royal Academy of Music.—Operatic Feuds.—Porpora and the Nobility's Opera.

THE great dates of Handel's career as an operatic composer and director are:—

1711, when he produced *Rinaldo*, his first opera, at the Queen's Theatre, in the Haymarket;

1720, when the Royal Academy of Music was established under his management at the same theatre, (which, with the accession of George I., had become "the King's");

1734, when in commencing the season at the King's Theatre with a new company, he had to contend against the "Nobility's Opera" just opened at the Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, under the direction of Porpora;

1735, when he moved to Covent Garden, Porpora and "la nobilita Britannica" going at the same time to the King's Theatre.

Both operas failed in 1737, and Handel then went back to the King's Theatre, for which he wrote his last opera *Deidamia* in 1740.

HANDEL AT HAMBURGH.

Of Handel's arrival in England, and of the manner in which his first opera was received, I have spoken in the preceding chapter. Of his previous life in Germany but little is recorded; indeed, he left that country at the age of twenty-five. It is known, however, that he was for some time engaged at the Hamburgh theatre, where operas had been performed in the German language since 1678. Rinuccini's *Dafne*, set to music by Schutz, was represented, as has been already mentioned, at Dresden in 1627, (or according to other accounts 1630); but this was a private affair in honour of a court marriage, and the first opera produced in Germany in public, and in the German language, was Thiele's *Adam and Eve*, which was given at Hamburgh in 1678. The reputation of Keiser at the court of Wolfenbüttel caused the directors of the Hamburgh Theatre, towards the close of the century, to send and offer him an engagement; he accepted it, and in the course of twenty-seven years produced as many as one hundred and sixty operas. Mattheson states that both Handel and Hasse (who was afterwards director of the celebrated Dresden Opera) formed their styles on that of Keiser.[20] Mattheson, himself a composer, succeeded Keiser as conductor of the orchestra at the Hamburgh Theatre, holding that post, however, conjointly with Handel, whose quarrel and duel with Mattheson have often been related. Handel was presiding in the orchestra while Mattheson was on the stage performing in an opera of his own composition. The opera being concluded, Mattheson proposed to take Handel's place at the harpsichord, which the latter refused to give up. The rival conductors quarrelled as they were leaving the theatre. The quarrel led to a blow and the blow to a fight with swords in the market place, which was terminated by Mattheson breaking the point of his sword on one of his antagonist's buttons, or as others have it, on the score of his own opera, which Handel carried beneath his coat.

Handel went from Hamburgh to Hanover, where, as we have seen, he received an invitation from some English noblemen to visit London, and, with the permission and encouragement of the Elector, accepted it.

HANDEL AT HAMBURGH.

Handel's *Rinaldo* was followed at the King's Theatre by his *Il Pastor Fido* (1712), his *Teseo* (1713), and his *Amadigi* (1715). Soon after the production of *Amadigi*, the performances at the King's Theatre seem to have ceased until 1720, when the "Royal Academy of Music" was formed. This so-called "Academy" was the result of a project to establish a permanent Italian opera in London. It was supported by a number of the nobility, with George I. at their head, and a fund of £50,000 was raised among the subscribers, to which the king contributed £1,000. The management of the "Academy" was entrusted to a governor, a deputy governor, and twenty directors, (why not to a head master and assistants?) and for the first year the Duke of Newcastle was appointed governor; Lord Bingley, deputy governor; while among the directors were the Dukes of Portland and Queensberry, the Earls of Burlington, Stair and Waldegrave, Lords Chetwynd and Stanhope, Sir John Vanburgh, (architect of the theatre), Generals Dormer, Wade, and Hunter, &c. The worse than unmeaning title given to the new opera was of course imitated from the French; the governor, deputy governor, and directors being doubtless unacquainted with the circumstances under which the French Opera received the misnomer which it still retains.[21] They might have known, however, that the "Académie Royale" of Paris, at that time under the direction of Rameau, was held in very little esteem, except by the French themselves, as an operatic theatre, and moreover, that Italian music was never performed there at all. Indeed, for half a century afterwards, the French execrated Italian music and would not listen to Italian singers—which gives us some notion of what musical taste in France must have been at the time of our Royal Academy being founded. The title would have been absurd even if the French Opera had been the finest in Europe; as it was nothing of the kind, and as it was, moreover, sworn to its own native psalmody, to give such a title to an Italian theatre, supported by musicians and singers of the greatest excellence, was a triple absurdity. Strangely enough, even in the present day, the Americans, as ingenious as the English of George I.'s reign, call their magnificent Italian Opera House at New York the Academy of Music. As a matter of association, it would be far more reasonable to call it the "St. Charles's Theatre," or the "Scale Theatre."

The musical direction of our Royal Academy of Music was confided to Handel, who, besides composing for the theatre himself, engaged Buononcini and Ariosti to write for it. He also proceeded to Dresden, already celebrated throughout Europe for the excellence of its Italian Opera, and engaged Senesino, Berenstadt, Boschi, and Signora Durastanti.

Handel's first opera at the Royal Academy of Music was *Radamisto*, which was hailed on its production as its

composer's masterpiece. "It seems," says Dr. Burney, "as if he was not insensible of its worth, as he dedicated a book of the words to the king, George I., subscribing himself his Majesty's 'most faithful subject,' which, as he was neither a Hanoverian by birth, nor a native of England, seems to imply his having been naturalised here by a bill in Parliament."

ACADEMIES OF MUSIC.

Buononcini, (who, compared with Handel, was a ninny, though others said that to him Handel was scarcely fit to hold a candle, &c.) produced his first opera also in 1720. It was received with much favour, and by the Buononcinists with enthusiasm.

The next opera was *Muzio Scevola*, composed by Handel, Buononcini, and Ariosti together. It is said that the task of joint production was imposed upon the three musicians by the masters of the Academy, by way of competitive examination, and with a view to test the abilities of each in a decisive manner. If there were any grounds for believing the story, it might be asked, who among the directors were thought, or thought themselves qualified to act as judges in so difficult and delicate a matter.

In the meanwhile the opera of the three composers did but little good to the theatre, which, in spite of its admirable company, was found a losing speculation, after a little more than a year, to the extent of £15,000. Thirty-five thousand pounds remained to be paid up, but the rest of the subscription money was not forthcoming, and the directors were unable to obtain it until after they had advertised in the newspapers that defaulters would be proceeded against "with the utmost rigour of the law."

A new mode of subscription was then devised, by which tickets were granted for the season of fifty performances on receipt of ten guineas down, and an engagement to pay five guineas more on the 1st of February, and a second five guineas on the 1st of May. Thus originated the operatic subscription list which has been continued with certain modifications, and with a few short intervals, up to the present day.

Buononcini's *Griselda*, which passes for his best opera, was produced in 1722, with Anastasia Robinson in the part of the heroine. Handel's *Ottone* and *Flavio* were brought out in 1723; his *Giulio Cesare* and *Tamerlano* in 1724; his *Rodelinda* in 1725; his *Scipione* and *Alessandro* in 1726; his *Admeto* and *Ricardo* in 1727; his *Siroe* and *Tolomeo* in 1728—when the Royal Academy of Music, which had been carried on with varying success, and on the whole with considerable ill success, finally closed.

FAILURE OF ITALIAN OPERA IN LONDON.

Buononcini's last opera, *Astyanax,* was produced in 1727, after which the Duchess of Marlborough, his constant patroness, gave the composer a pension of five hundred a year. A few years afterwards, however, he stole a madrigal, the invention of a Venetian named Lotti, and the theft having been discovered and clearly proved, Buononcini left the country in disgrace. Similar thefts are practised in the present day, but with discretion and with ingeniously worded title pages. Buononcini should have simply called his plagiarism a "Venetian Madrigal, dedicated to the Duchess of Marlborough by G. Buononcini." This unfortunate composer, whom Swift had certainly described in a prophetic spirit as "a ninny," left England in 1733, with an Italian Count whose title appears to have been about as authentic as Buononcini's madrigal, and who pretended to possess the art of making gold, but abstained from practising it otherwise than by swindling. Buononcini was for a time the dupe of this impostor. In the meanwhile he continued the exercise of his profession, at Paris, where we lose sight of him. In 1748, however, he went to Vienna, and by command of the Emperor composed the music for the festivities given in celebration of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. Thence he proceeded with Montecelli, the composer, to Venice, where the affair of the madrigal was probably by this time forgotten. At all events, no importance was attached to it, and Buononcini was engaged to write an opera for the Carnival. He was at this time nearly ninety years of age. The date of his death is not recorded, but Dr. Burney tells us that he is supposed to have lived till nearly a hundred.

THE BEGGARS' OPERA.

Besides the annual subscriptions, to the Royal Academy of Music the whole of the original capital of £50,000 was spent in seven years. In spite, then, of the admirable works produced by Handel, the unrivalled company by which they were executed, and the immense sums of money lavished upon the entertainment generally, the Italian Opera in London proved in 1728 what it had proved twelve years before, a positive and unmistakable failure. This could scarcely have been owing, as has been surmised, to the violence of the disputes concerning the merits of Handel and Buononcini, the composers, or of Faustina and Cuzzoni, the singers, for the natural effect of such contests would have been to keep up an interest in the performances. Probably few at that time had any real love for Italian music. A certain number, no doubt, attended the Italian Opera for the sake of fashion, but the greater majority of the theatre-going public were quite indifferent to its charms. Dr. Arbuthnot, one of the few literary men of the day who seems to have really cared for music, writes as follows, in the *London Journal*, under the date of March 23rd, 1728:—"As there is nothing which surprises all true lovers of music more than the neglect into which the Italian operas are at present fallen, so I cannot but think it a very extraordinary instance of the fickle and inconstant temper of the English nation, a failing which they have always been endeavouring to cast upon their neighbours in France, but to which they themselves have just as good a title, as will appear to any one who will take the trouble to consult our historians." He points out that after adopting the Italian Opera with eagerness, we began, as soon as we had obtained it in perfection, to make it a pretext for disputes instead of enjoying it, and concludes that it was supported among us for a time, not from genuine taste, but simply from fashion. He observes that *The Beggars' Opera*, then just produced, was "a touchstone to try British taste on," and that it has "proved effectual in discovering our true inclinations, which, however artfully they may have been disguised for a while, will one time or another, start up and disclose themselves. Æsop's story of the cat, who, at the petition of her lover, was changed into a fine woman, is pretty well known, notwithstanding which alteration, we find that upon the appearance of a mouse, she could not resist the temptation of springing out of her husband's arms to pursue it, though it was on the very wedding night. Our English audience have been for some time returning to their cattish nature, of which some particular sounds from the gallery have given us sufficient warning. And since they have so openly declared themselves, I must only desire that they will not think they can put on the fine woman again just when they please, but content themselves with their skill in caterwauling. For my own part, I cannot think it would be any loss to real lovers of music, if all those false friends who have made pretensions to it only in compliance with the fashion, would separate themselves from them; provided our Italian Opera could be brought under such regulations as to go on without them. We might then be able to sit and enjoy an entertainment of this sort, free from those disturbances which are frequent in English theatres, without any regard, not only to performers, but even to the presence of Majesty itself. In short, my comfort is, that though so great a

desertion may force us so to contract the expenses of our operas, as would put an end to our having them in as great perfection as at present, yet we shall be able at least to hear them without interruption."

The Faustina and Cuzzoni disputes, to which Arbuthnot alludes, where he speaks of "those disturbances which are frequent in English theatres," appear to have been quite as violent as those with which the names of Handel and Buononcini are associated. Most of this musical party-warfare (of which the most notorious examples are those just mentioned, the Gluck and Piccinni contests in Paris, and the quarrels between the admirers of Madame Mara and Madame Todi in the same city) has been confined to England and France, though a very pretty quarrel was once got up at the Dresden Theatre, between the followers of Faustina, at that time the wife of Hasse the composer, and Mingotti. The Italians have shown themselves changeable and capricious, and have often hissed one night those whom they have applauded the night afterwards; but, in the Italian Theatres, we find no instances of systematic partisanship maintained obstinately and stolidly for years, and I fancy that it is only among unmusical nations, or in an unmusical age, that anything of the kind takes place. The ardour and duration of such disputes are naturally in proportion to the ignorance and folly of the disputants. In science, or even in art, where the principles of art are well understood, they are next to impossible. Self-styled connoisseurs, however, with neither taste nor knowledge can go on squabbling about composers and singers, especially if they never listen to them, to all eternity.

FAUSTINA AND CUZZONI.

Faustina and Cuzzoni were both admirable vocalists, and in entirely different styles, so that there was not even the shadow of a pretext for praising one at the expense of the other. Tosi, their contemporary, in his *Osservazzioni sopra il Canto Figurato*,[22] thus compares them: "The one," he says (meaning Faustina), "is inimitable for a privileged gift of singing and enchanting the world with an astonishing felicity in executing difficulties with a brilliancy I know not whether derived from nature or art, which pleases to excess. The delightful soothing cantabile of the other, joined to the sweetness of a fine voice, a perfect intonation, strictness of time, and the rarest productions of genius in her embellishments, are qualifications as peculiar and uncommon as they are difficult to be imitated. The pathos of the one and the rapidity of the other are distinctly characteristic. What a beautiful mixture it would be, if the excellences of these two angelic beings could be united in a single individual!"

Quantz, the celebrated flute-player, and teacher of that instrument to Frederic the Great, came to London in 1727, and heard Handel's *Admeto* executed to perfection at the Royal Academy of Music. The principal parts were filled by Senesino, Cuzzoni and Faustina, and Quantz's account of the two latter agrees, with that given by Signor Tosi. Cuzzoni had a soft limpid voice, a pure intonation, a perfect shake. Her style was simple, noble and touching. In allegro movements, her rapidity of execution was not remarkable, &c., &c. Her acting was cold, and though she was very beautiful, her beauty produced no effect on the stage. Faustina, on the other hand, was passionate and full of expression, as an actress, while as a vocalist she was remarkable for the fluency and brilliancy of her articulation, and could sing with ease what would have been considered difficult passages for the violin. Her rapid repetition of the same note—(the violin "*tremolo*") was one of her most surprising feats. This artifice was afterwards imitated with the greatest success by Farinelli, Monticelli, Visconti, and the charming Mingotti, and at a later period, Madame Catalani produced some of her greatest effects in the same style.

Faustina and Cuzzoni made their first appearance together at Venice in 1719. In 1725, Faustina went to Vienna, and met with an enthusiastic reception from the habitués of the Court Theatre. She left Vienna the same year for London, where she arrived when Cuzzoni's reputation was at its height.

FAUSTINA AND CUZZONI.

Cuzzoni made her first appearance in London in 1723, and was a member of Handel's company when the singers were engaged, at the suggestion of the regent, to give a series of performances in Paris; this engagement, which was due in the first instance to the solicitations of the Marchioness de Prie, was, as I have already mentioned, never carried out. Whether the Faustina and Cuzzoni disputes originated with a cabal against the singer in possession of the public favour, or whether the admirers of the accepted favorite felt it their duty to support her by attacking all new comers, is not by any means clear; but Faustina had scarcely arrived when the feud commenced. Quanta tells us that as soon as one began to sing, the partisans of the other began to hiss. The Cuzzoni party, which was headed by the Countess of Pembroke, made a point of hissing whenever Faustina appeared. Faustina, who if not better-looking, was more agreeable than Cuzzoni, had most of the men on her side. Her patronesses were the Countess of Burlington and Lady Delawar.

The most remarkable of the many disturbances caused by the rivalry between these two singers (forced upon them as it was) took place in June 1727. The *London Journal* of June 10th in that year, tells us in its description of the affair, that "the contention at first was only carried on by hissing on one side and clapping on the other, but proceeded at length to the melodious use of cat-calls and other accompaniments which manifested the zeal and politeness of that illustrious assembly." We are further informed that the Princess Catherine was there, but neither her Royal Highness's presence, nor the laws of decorum could restrain the glorious ardour of the combatants. The appearance of Faustina appears to have been the signal for the commencement of this disgraceful riot, to judge from the following epigram on the proceedings of the night.

"Old poets sing that beasts did dance,
 Whenever Orpheus played;
So to Faustina's charming voice
 Wise Pembroke's asses brayed."

Cuzzoni had also her poet, and her departure from England was the occasion of the following pretty but silly lines, addressed to her by Ambrose Phillips:—

"Little Syren of the stage,
 Charmer of an idle age,
Empty warbler, breathing lyre,
 Wanton gale of fond desire;
Bane of every manly art,
 Sweet enfeebler of the heart,
O, too pleasing is thy strain,
 Hence to Southern climes again!
Tuneful mischief, vocal spell,
 To this island bid farewell;

Leave us as we ought to be,
Leave the Britons rough and free."

The Britons had shown themselves sufficiently "rough and free," while Cuzzoni was singing to them. The circumstances of this vocalist's leaving London were rather curious, and show to what an extent the Faustina and Cuzzoni disputes must have disgusted the directors of the Academy; the caprice of one of them must also have irritated Handel considerably, for it is related that once when Cuzzoni, at a rehearsal, positively refused to sing an air that Handel had written for her, she could only be convinced of the necessity of doing so by the composer threatening to throw her out of the window. It was known that each was about to sign a new contract, and Cuzzoni's patronesses made her take an oath not to accept lower terms than Faustina. The directors ingeniously and politely took advantage of this, and offered her exactly one guinea less.

Cuzzoni made her retreat, and Faustina remained in possession of the field of battle.

FAUSTINA AND CUZZONI.

However, Faustina, after the failure of the Academy in the following year, herself returned to Italy, and met her rival at Venice in 1729, and again, in 1730. Cuzzoni returned to London in 1734, and sang at the Opera in Lincoln's-Inn Fields, established under the direction of Porpora, in opposition to Handel. She visited London a third time in 1750, when a concert was given for her benefit; but the poor little syren was now old and infirm; she had lost her voice, and even the enemies of Faustina would not come to applaud her. This stage queen had a most melancholy end. From England she went to Holland, where she was imprisoned for debt, being allowed, however, to go out in the evenings (doubtless under the guardianship of a jailer) and sing at the theatres, by which means she gained enough money to obtain her liberation. Having quite lost her voice, she is said to have maintained herself for some time at Bologna by button-making. The manner of her death is not known; but probably she had the same end as those stage-queens mentioned by the dramatic critic in *Candide*: "*On les adore quand elles sont belles, on les jette a la voirie quand elles sont mortes*."

The career of Faustina on the other hand did not belie her auspicious name. In 1727, at Venice, she met Hasse, whose music owed much of its success to her admirable singing. The composer fell in love with this charming vocalist, married her, and in 1730 accepted an offer from Augustus, King of Poland, and Elector of Saxony, to direct the Opera of Dresden. Here Faustina renewed her successes, and for fifteen years reigned with undisputed supremacy at the Court Theatre. Then, however, a new Cuzzoni appeared in the person of Signora Mingotti.

MINGOTTI.

Regina Valentini, a pupil and domestic at the Convent of the Ursulines, possessed a beautiful voice, but so little taste for household work, that to avoid its drudgery and the ridicule to which her inability to go through it exposed her, she resolved to make what profit she could out of her singing. Old Mingotti, the manager, was willing enough to aid her in this laudable enterprise; and accordingly married her and put her under the tuition of Porpora, the future opponent of Handel, and actual rival of Hasse. In due time Mingotti made her first appearance at the Dresden Opera, when her singing called forth almost unanimous applause; we say "almost," because Hasse and some of his personal friends persisted in denying her talent. The successful *débutante* was offered a lucrative engagement at Naples, where she created the greatest enthusiasm by her performance of the part of *Aristea* in the *Olimpiade*, with music by Galuppi. Mingotti was now the great singer of the day; she received propositions from managers in all parts of Europe, but decided to return to the scene of her earnest triumphs at Dresden. This was in 1748.

Haase was then composing his *Demofonte*. He knew well enough the strong, and thought he had remarked the weak, points in Mingotti's voice; and, in order to show the latter to the greatest possible disadvantage, provided the unsuspecting singer with an adagio which rose and fell upon the very notes which he considered the most doubtful in her unusually perfect organ. To render the vocalist's deficiencies as apparent as possible, he did the next thing to making her sing the insidious *adagio* without accompaniment; for the only accompaniment he wrote for it was a *pizzicato* of violins. Regina at the very first rehearsal, understood the snare, said nothing about it, but studied her *adagio* till she sang it with such perfection that what had been intended to discover her weakness only served in the most striking manner to exhibit her strength. The air which was to have ruined Mingotti's reputation brought her the greatest success she had ever obtained. Her execution was so faultless that Faustina herself could find nothing to say against it. A story is told of Sir Charles Williams, the English Minister at the Court of Dresden, who had taken a prominent part in the Hasse and Faustina cabal, and had been in the habit of saying that Mingotti was doubtless a brilliant singer, but that in the expressive style and in passages of sustained notes she was heard to disadvantage—a story is told of this candid and gentlemanly critic going to Mingotti after she had sung her treacherous solo, and apologizing to her publicly for ever having entertained a doubt as to the completeness of her talent.

Hasse remained thirty-three years in the service of the Elector and made the Dresden Opera the first in Europe; but in 1763 the troubles of unhappy Poland having begun, he retired with Faustina on a small pension to Vienna and thence to Venice, where they both died in the year 1783, Hasse being then eighty-four years of age and his wife ninety.

The most celebrated of the other singers at the Royal Academy of Music were Durastanti and Senesino, both of whom were engaged by Handel at Dresden, and appeared in London at the opening of the new establishment. In 1723, however, Cuzzoni arrived, and Durastanti, acknowledging the superior merit of that singer, took her departure. At least the acknowledgment was made for her in a song written by Pope, which she addressed to the audience at her farewell performance, and which ended with this couplet:—

"But let old charmers yield to new;
Happy soil, adieu, adieu!"

SENESINO.

Either singers were very different then from what they are now, or Durastanti could not have understood these lines, which, strangely enough, are said to have been written by Pope at the desire of her patron, the Earl of Peterborough. Surely Anastasia Robinson, the future Countess, would not have thanked the earl for such a compliment, in however perfect a style it might have been expressed. Madame Durastanti appears to have been much esteemed in England, and I read in the *Evening Post* of March 7th, 1721, that "Last Thursday, His Majesty was pleased to stand godfather, and the Princess and the Lady Bruce godmothers, to a daughter of Mrs. Durastanti, chief singer in the opera house. The Marquis Visconti for

the king, and the Lady Lichfield for the princess."

Senesino, successor to Nicolini, and the second of the noble order of sopranists who appeared in England, was the principal contralto singer ("*modo vir, modo fœmina*") in Handel's operas, until 1726, when the state of his health compelled him to return to Italy. He came back to England in 1730, and resumed his position at the King's Theatre, under Handel. In 1733, when the rival company was formed at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, Senesino joined it, but retired after the appearance of Farinelli, who at once eclipsed all other singers.

Steele's journal, *The Theatre*, entertains us with a brief account of the vanity of one Signor Beneditti, who appears to have performed principal parts, at least for a time, at the Opera in 1720. The paper, which is written by Sir Richard Steele's coadjutor, Sir John Edgar, commences with a furious onslaught on a company of French actors, who were at that time performing in London, and of whose opening representation we are told that "if we are any longer to march on two legs, and not be quite prone, and on all four like the other animals" we must "assume manhood and humane indignation against so barbarous an affront. But I foresee," continues Sir John,[23] "that the theatre is to be utterly destroyed, and sensation is to banish reflection as sound is to beat down sense. The head and the heart are to be moved no more, but the basest parts of the body to be hereafter the sole instruments of human delight. A regular, orderly, and well-governed company of actors, that lived in reputation and credit and under decent settlement are to be torn to pieces and made vagabond, to make room for even foreign vagrants, who deserved no reception but in Bridewell, even before they affronted the assembly, composed of British nobility and gentry, with representations that could introduce nothing of even French except, &c. ....Though the French are so boisterous and void of all moderation or temper in their conduct, the Italians are a more tractable and elegant nation. If the French players have laid aside all shame, the Italian singers are as eminently nice and delicate, which the reader will observe from the following account I have received from the Haymarket.

CAPRICES OF SINGERS.

"'Sir,—

"'It happened in casting parts for the new opera, Signor Beneditti conceived he had been greatly injured, and applied to the board of directors for redress. He set forth in the recitative tone, the nearest approaching to ordinary speech, that he had never acted anything in any other opera below the character of a sovereign, and now he was to be appointed to be captain of a guard. On these representations, we directed that he should make love to Zenobia, with proper limitations. The chairman signified to him that the board had made him a lover, but he must be content to be an unfortunate one, and be rejected by his mistress. He expressed himself very easy under this, and seemed to rejoice that, considering the inconstancy of women, he could only feign, not pursue the passion to extremity. He muttered very much against making him only the guard to the character he had formerly appeared in,'" &c.

A small and not uninteresting volume might be written about the caprices of singers and their behaviour under real or imaginary slights. One of the best stories of the kind is told of Crescentini, who, three-quarters of a century later, at the first representation of *Gli Orazi e Curiazi*, observed immediately before the commencement of the performance, that the costume of *Orazio* was more magnificent than his own. He sent for the stage manager, and burning with rage, addressed him as follows:—

"*Perche*," he commenced, "avez vous donné *oun* habit blanc à ce *mossiou*; et *che* vous m'en avez gratifié *d'oun* vert?"

It was explained to the singer that there was a tradition at the Comédie Francaise by which the costume of the principal Horatius was white and that of the chief of the Curiatii, green.

"*Perché* la *bordoure rouze* à un *primo tenore*, el la *bordoure* noire à *oun primo virtuoso*?" continued the incensed sopranist.

"No one was thinking," replied the stage manager, "of your positions as singers; our only object was to make the costumes as correct as possible."

"Votre *ousaze* et votre *ezatitoude* sont des imbéciles," exclaimed Crescentini; "*zé mé lagnérai* de votre condouite envers moi. Quant à vous, *mossiou* Brizzi *fate-mi il piacere* dé vous déshabiller *subito* et dé mé fairé passer *questo vestito in baratto dou* mien qué zé vais vous envoyer. *Per Bacco!* non *si dirà qu'oun tenore* aura *parou miou vétou qu'oun primo oumo, surtout* quand ce *primo virtuoso* est Girolamo Crescentini d'Urbino."

An exchange took place on the spot, and throughout the evening a Curiatius, six feet high, was seen wearing a little Roman costume, which looked as if it would burst with each movement of the singer, while a diminutive Horatius was attired in a long Alban tunic, of which the skirt trailed along the ground.

HANDEL AND HEIDEGGER.

But the singers are taking us away from the Opera. Let us return to Handel, all of whose vocalists together, admirable as they were, could not save the Royal Academy of Music from ruin. After the final failure of that enterprise in 1728, the directors entered into an arrangement with Heidegger for opening the King's Theatre under their joint management. Handel went to Italy to engage new singers, but did not make a very brilliant selection. Heidegger, nevertheless, did his duty as a manager, and introduced the principal members of the new company to public notice in the following "puff direct," which, for cool unadorned impudence, has not been surpassed even in the present day. "Mr. Handel, who is just returned from Italy, has contracted with the following persons to perform in the Italian Operas, Signor Bernacchi, who is esteemed the best singer in Italy; Signora Merighi, a woman of a very fine presence, an excellent actress, and a very good singer, with a counter-tenor voice; Signora Strada, who hath a very fine treble voice, a person of singular merit; Signor Annibale Pio Fabri, a most excellent tenor, and a fine voice; his wife, who performs a man's part well; Signora Bertoldi, who has a very fine treble voice, she is also a very genteel actress, both in men and women's parts; a bass voice, from Hamburgh, there being none worth engaging in Italy."

I fancy this was an attempt to carry on Italian Opera at a reduced expenditure, for as soon as the speculation began to fail, the popular Senesino was again engaged. Handel had had a serious quarrel with this singer, but when a manager is in want of a star, and a star is tempted with a lucrative engagement, personal feelings are not taken into account. They ought to have been, however, in this particular case, at least by Handel, for the breach between the composer and the singer was renewed, and Senesino left the King's Theatre to join the company which was being

formed at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, under the direction of Porpora.

Handel now set out once more for Italy, but again failed to engage any singers of celebrity, with the exception of Carestini, whom he heard at Bologna at the same time as Farinelli. That he should have preferred the former to the latter seems unaccountable, for by the common consent of musicians, critics, and the public, Farinelli, wherever he sang, was pronounced the greatest singer of his time, and it appears certain that no singer ever affected an audience in so powerful a manner. The passionate (and slightly blasphemous) exclamation of the entranced Englishwoman, "One God and one Farinelli," together with the almost magical effect of Farinelli's voice in tranquilising the half demented Ferdinand VI., seems to show that his singing must have been something like the music of patriarchal times; which charmed serpents, and which in a later age throws highly impressionable women into convulsions.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.

I have already mentioned that in going or returning to Italy this last time, Handel appears to have passed through Paris, and to have paid a contemptuous sort of attention to French music. It is then, if ever, that he should be accused of having stolen for our national anthem, an air left by Lulli—which *he* did not, and which Lulli *could* not have composed. The ridiculous story which would make our English patriotic hymn an adaptation from the French, is told for the first time I believe in the Duchess of Perth's letters. But instead of "*God save the Queen*" being translated from a canticle sung by the Ladies of St. Cyr, the pretended canticle is a translation of "God save the Queen." Here is the French version—

"Grand Dieu, sauvez le Roi!
Grand Dieu, vengez le Roi!
Vive le Roi!
Que toujours glorieux
Louis victorieux
Voie ses ennemis
Toujours soumis.

If it could be proved that this "canticle" was sung by the Ladies of St. Cyr, England could no longer claim the authorship of "*God save the Queen*," as far, at least, as the words are concerned; and it is evident that the words, which are scarcely readable as poetry, though excellent for singing, were written either for or with the music. M. Castil Blaze, however (in *Molière Musicien*, Vol. I., page 501), points out that "*si l'on ignorait que la musique de cet air est, non pas de Handel, comme plusieurs l'ont assuré mais de Henri Carey la version Française prouverait du moins que cette melódie, scandée en sdruccioli ne peut appartenir au siècle de Louis XIV.; nos vers à glissades etaient parfaitement inconnus de Quinault et de Lulli, de Bernard et de Rameau.*"

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.

Mr. Schœlcher, like many other writers, attributes "*God save the King*" to Dr. John Bull, but Mr. W. Chappell, in his "Popular Music of the Olden Time," has shown that Dr. John Bull did not compose it in its present form, and that in all probability Henry Carey did, and that words and music together, as we know it in the present day, our national anthem dates only from 1740. Lulli did not compose it, but it was not composed before his time, nor before Handel's either. The air has been so altered, or rather, developed, by the various composers who have handled it since a simple chant on the four words "God save the King" was harmonised by Dr. John Bull, and afterwards converted from an indifferent tune into an admirable one (through the fortunate blundering of a copyist, as it has been surmised), that it may almost be said to have grown. What an interesting thing to be able to establish the fact of its gradual formation, like the political system of that nation to whose triumphs it has long been an indispensable accompaniment! But how humiliating to find that somebody marked in Dr. Bull's manuscript a sharp where there should have been no sharp, and that our glorious anthem owes its existence to a mistake! Mr. Chappell prints three or four ballads and part songs in his work, beginning at the reign of James I., either or all of which may have been the foundation of "*God save the King*," but it appears certain that our national hymn in its present form was first sung, and almost note for note as it is sung now, by H. Carey, in 1740, in celebration of the taking of Portobello by Admiral Vernon.[24]

Handel did not compose "*God save the King*;" but he had good reason for singing it, considering the steady and liberal patronage he received from our three first Georges. When, after the expiration of his contract with Heidegger, he removed to Covent Garden, in 1735, still carrying on the war against Porpora (who removed at the same time to the King's Theatre), George II. subscribed £1,000 towards the expenses of Handel's management, and it was the support of the King and the Royal Family that enabled him to combat the influence that was brought to bear against him by the aristocracy. Handel, according to Arbuthnot, owed his failure, in a great measure, the first time, to the *Beggars' Opera*. The second time, on the other hand, it was the *Nobility's* Opera that ruined him. Handel, as we have seen, had only Carestini to depend upon. Porpora, his rival, had secured two established favourites, Cuzzoni and Senesino (both members of Handel's old company at the Academy), and had, moreover, engaged Farinelli, by far the greatest singer of the epoch. Nevertheless, Porpora failed almost at the same time as Handel, and at the end of the year 1737, there was no Italian Opera at all in London.

Handel joined Heidegger once more in 1738, at the King's Theatre. In two years he wrote four operas, of which the fourth, *Deidamia*, was the last he ever produced. After this he abandoned dramatic music, and, as a composer of Oratorios, entered upon what was to him a far higher career. Handel was at this time fifty-six years of age, and since his arrival in England, in 1711, he had written no less than thirty-five Italian operas.

CAPABILITIES OF MUSIC.

Handel's Italian operas, as such, are now quite obsolete. The air from *Admeto* is occasionally heard at a concert, and Handel is known to have introduced some of his operatic melodies into his Oratorios, but there is no chance of any one of his operas ever being reproduced in a complete form. They were never known out of England, and in this country were soon laid aside after their composer had fairly retired from theatrical management. I think Mr. Hogarth[25] is only speaking with his usual judiciousness, when he observes, that "whatever pleasure they must have given to the audiences of that age, they would fail to do so now.... The music of the principal parts," he continues, "were written for a class of voices which no longer exists,[26] and for these parts no performers could now be found. A series of recitatives and airs, with only an occasional duet, and a concluding chorus of the slightest kind, would appear meagre and dull to ears accustomed to the brilliant concerted pieces and finales of the modern stage; and Handel's accompaniments would appear thin and poor amidst the richness and variety of the modern orchestra. The vocal parts, too, are to a great extent, in an obsolete taste. Many of the airs are mere strings of dry, formal divisions and unmeaning passages

of execution, calculated to show off the powers of the fashionable singers; and many others, admirable in their design, and containing the finest traits of melody and expression, are spun out a wearisome length, and deformed by the cumbrous trappings with which they are loaded. Musical phrases, too, when Handel used them, had the charm of novelty, have become familiar and common through repetition by his successors."

Among the airs which Handel has taken from his Operas and introduced into his Oratorios, may be mentioned *Rendi l' sereno al ciglio*, from *Sosarme*, now known as *Lord, remember David*, and *Dove sei amato bene*, in *Rodelinda*, which has been converted into *Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty*. That these changes have been made with perfect success, proves, if any proof were still wanted by those who have ever given a minute's consideration to the subject, that there is no such thing as absolute definite expression in music. The music of an impassioned love song will seem equally appropriate as that of a fervent prayer, except to those who have already associated it intimately in their memories with the words to which it has first been written. A positive feeling of joy, or of grief, of exultation, or of depression, of liveliness, or of solemnity, can be expressed by musical means without the assistance of words, but not mixed feelings, into which several shades of sentiment enter—at least not with definiteness; though once indicated by the words, they will obtain from music the most admirable colours which will even appear to have been invented expressly and solely for them. Gluck arranged old music to suit new verses quite as much, or more, than Handel—even Gluck who maintained that music ought to convey the precise signification, not only of a dramatic situation, but of the very words of a song, phrase by phrase, if not word by word.

HANDEL AND OUR ITALIAN OPERA.

During the period of Handel's presidency over our Italian Opera, works not only by Handel and his colleagues, but also by Scarlatti, Hasse, Porpora, Vinci, Veracini, and other composers were produced at the King's Theatre, at Covent Garden, and at Porpora's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. After Handel's retirement, operas by Galuppi, Pergolese, Jomelli, Gluck, and Piccinni, were performed, and the most distinguished singers in Europe continued to visit London. In 1741, when the Earl of Middlesex undertook the management of the King's Theatre, Galuppi was engaged as composer, and produced several operas: among others, *Penelope*, *Scipione*, and *Enrico*. In 1742, the *Olimpiade*, with music by Pergolese (a pupil of Hasse, and the future composer of the celebrated *Serva Padrona*) was brought out. After Galuppi's return to Italy, in 1744, the best of his new operas continued to be produced in London. His *Mondo della Luna* was represented in 1760, when the English public were delighted with the gaiety of the music, and with the charming acting and singing of Signora Paganini. The year afterwards a still greater success was achieved with the same composer's *Filosofo di Campagna*, which, says Dr. Burney, "surpassed in musical merit all the comic operas that were performed in England till the *Buona Figliola*." Not only were Gluck's earlier and comparatively unimportant works performed in London soon after their first production at Vienna, but his *Orfeo*, the first of those great works written in the style which we always associate with Gluck's name, was represented in London in 1770, four years before Gluck went to Paris. Indeed, ever since the arrival of Handel in this country, London has been celebrated for its Italian Opera, whereas the French had no regular continuous performances of Italian Opera until nearly a hundred years afterwards. Handel did much to create a taste for this species of entertainment, and by the excellent execution which he took care every opera produced under his direction should receive, he set an example to his successors of which the value can scarcely be over-estimated, and which it must be admitted has, on the whole, been followed with intelligence and enterprise.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE OPERA IN EUROPE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY UNTIL THE APPEARANCE OF GLUCK.

Great Italian Singers.—Ferri in Sweden.—Opera in Vienna.—Scenic decorations.—Singers of the Eighteenth Century.—Singers' nicknames.—Farinelli's one note.

QUEEN CHRISTINA AND FERRI.

Handel, by his great musical genius, conferred a two-fold benefit on the country of his adoption. He endowed it with a series of Oratorios which stand alone in their grandeur, for which the English of the present day are deeply grateful, and for which ages to come will honour his name; and before writing a note of his great sacred works, during the thirty years which he devoted to the production and superintendence of Italian Opera in England, he raised that entertainment to a pitch of excellence unequalled elsewhere, except perhaps at the magnificent Dresden Theatre, which, for upwards of a quarter of a century was directed by the celebrated Hasse, and where Augustus, of Saxony, took care that the finest musicians and singers in Europe should be engaged.

Rousseau, in the *Dictionnaire Musicale*, under the head of "Orchestra," writing in 1754[27], says:—

"The first orchestra in Europe in respect to the number and science of the symphonists, is that of Naples. But the orchestra of the opera of the King of Poland, at Dresden, directed by the illustrious Hasse, is better distributed, and forms a better *ensemble*."

Most of Handel's and Porpora's best vocalists were engaged from the Dresden Theatre, but the great Italian singers had already become citizens of the world, and settled or established themselves temporarily as their interests dictated in Germany, England, Spain, or elsewhere, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century there were Italian Operas at Naples, Turin, Dresden, Vienna, London, Madrid, and even Algiers—everywhere but in France, which, as has already been pointed out, did not accept the musical civilisation of Italy until it had been adopted by every other country in Europe, including Russia. The great composers, and above all, the great singers who abounded in this fortunate century, went to and fro in Europe, from south to north, from east to west, and were welcomed everywhere but in Paris, where, until a few years before the Revolution, it seemed to form part of the national honour to despise Italian music.

As far back as 1645, Queen Christina of Sweden sent a vessel of war to Italy, to bring to her Court Balthazar

Ferri, the most distinguished singer of his day. Ferri, as Rousseau, quoting from Mancini, tells us in his "Musical Dictionary," could without taking breath ascend and descend two octaves of the chromatic scale, performing a shake on every note unaccompanied, and with such precision that if at any time the note on which the singer was shaking was verified by an instrument, it was found to be perfectly in tune.

Ferri was in the service of three kings of Poland and two emperors of Germany. At Venice he was decorated with the Order of St. Mark; at Vienna he was crowned King of Musicians; at London, while he was singing in a masque, he was presented by an unknown hand with a superb emerald; and the Florentines, when he was about to visit their city, went in thousands to meet him, at three leagues distance from the gates.

OPERA IN VIENNA.

The Italian Opera was established in Vienna under the Emperor Leopold I., with great magnificence, so much so indeed, that for many years afterwards it was far more celebrated as a spectacle than as a musical entertainment. Nevertheless, Leopold was a most devoted lover of music, and remained so until his death, as the history of his last moments sufficiently shows. We have seen a French maid of honour die to the fiddling of her page; the Emperor of Germany expired to the accompaniment of a full orchestra. Feeling that his end was approaching he sent for his musicians, and ordered them to commence a symphony, which they went on playing until he died.

Apostolo Zeno, whom Rousseau calls the Corneille, and Metastasio, whom he terms the Racine of the Opera, both resided for many years at Vienna, and wrote many of their best pieces for its theatre. Several of Zeno's, and a great number of Metastasio's works have been set to music over and over again, but when they were first brought out at Vienna, many of them appear to have obtained success more as grand dramatic spectacles than as operas. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, Vienna witnessed the production of some of the greatest master-pieces of the musical drama (for instance, the *Orpheus*, *Alcestis*, &c., of Gluck, and the *Marriage of Figaro*, of Mozart); but when Handel was in England directing the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, and when the Dresden Opera was in full musical glory (before as well as after the arrival of Hasse), the Court Theatre of Vienna was above all remarkable for its immense size, for the splendour of its decorations, and for the general costliness and magnificence of its spectacles. Lady Mary Wortley Montague visited the Opera, at Vienna, in 1716, and sent the following account of it to Pope.

"I have been last Sunday at the Opera, which was performed in the garden of the Favorita; and I was so much pleased with it, I have not yet repented my seeing it. Nothing of the kind was ever more magnificent, and I can easily believe what I am told, that the decorations and habits cost the Emperor thirty thousand pounds sterling. The stage was built over a very large canal, and at the beginning of the second act divided into two parts, discovering the water, on which there immediately came, from different parts, two fleets of little gilded vessels that gave the representation of a naval fight. It is not easy to imagine the beauty of this scene, which I took particular notice of. But all the rest were perfectly fine in their kind. The story of the Opera is the enchantment of Alcina, which gives opportunities for a great variety of machines, and changes of scenes which are performed with surprising swiftness. The theatre is so large that it is hard to carry the eye to the end of it, and the habits in the utmost magnificence to the number of one hundred and eight. No house could hold such large decorations; but the ladies all sitting in the open air exposes them to great inconveniences, for there is but one canopy for the Imperial Family, and the first night it was represented, a shower of rain happening, the opera was broken off, and the company crowded away in such confusion that I was almost squeezed to death."

SCENIC DECORATIONS.

One of these open air theatres, though doubtless on a much smaller scale than that of Vienna, stood in the garden of the Tuileries, at Paris, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was embowered in trees and covered with creeping plants, and the performances took place there in the day-time. These garden theatres were known to the Romans, witness the following lines of Ovid:—

"Illic quas tulerant nemorosa palatia, frondes
Simpliciter positæ; scena sine arte fuit."
De Arte Amandi, Liber I., v. 105.

I myself saw a little theatre of the kind, in 1856, at Flensburgh, in Denmark. There was a pleasure-ground in front, with benches and chairs for the audience. The stage door at the back opened into a cabbage garden. The performances, which consisted of a comedy and farce took place in the afternoon, and ended at dusk.

I have already spoken of the magnificence and perfection of the scenic pictures exhibited at the Italian theatres in the very first days of the Opera. In the early part of the seventeenth century immense theatres were constructed so as to admit of the most elaborate spectacular displays. The Farnesino Theatre, at Parma, built for dramas, tournaments, and spectacles of all kinds, and which is now a ruin, contained at least fifty thousand spectators.[28]

In the 18th century the Italians seem to have thought more of the music of their operas, and to have left the vanities of theatrical decorations to the Germans.

Servandoni, for some time scene painter and decorator at the Académie Royale of Paris not finding that theatre sufficiently vast for his designs, sought a new field for his ambition at the Opera-House of Dresden, where Augustus of Poland engaged him to superintend the arrangement of the stage. Servandoni painted a number of admirable scenes for this theatre, in the midst of which four hundred mounted horsemen were able to manœuvre with ease.

In 1760 the Court of the Duke of Wurtemburg, at Stuttgardt, was the most brilliant in Europe, owing partly, no doubt, to the enormous subsidies received by the Duke from France for a body of ten thousand men, which he maintained at the service of that power. The Duke had a French theatre, and two Italian theatres, one for Opera Seria, and the other for Opera Buffa. The celebrated Noverre was his ballet-master, and there were a hundred dancers in the *corps de ballet*, besides twenty principal ones, each of whom had been first dancer at one of the chief theatres of Italy. Jomelli was chapel-master and director of the Opera at Stuttgardt from 1754 until 1773.

SCENIC DECORATIONS.

In the way of stage decorations, theatrical effects, and the various other spectacular devices by which managers still seek to attract to their Operas those who are unable to appreciate good music, we have made no progress since the 17th century. We have, to be sure, gas and the electric light, which were not known to our forefathers; but St. Evrémond tells us that in Louis the

XIV.'s time the sun and moon were so well represented at the Académie Royale, that the Ambassador of Guinea, assisting at one of its performances, leant forward in his box, when those orbs appeared and religiously saluted them. To be sure, this anecdote may be classed with one I have heard in Russia, of an actor who, playing the part of a bear in a grand melodrama, in which a storm was introduced, crossed himself devoutly at each clap of thunder; but the stories of Servandoni's and Bernino's decorations are no fables. Like the other great masters of stage effect in Italy, Bernino was an architect, a sculptor and a painter. His sunsets are said to have been marvellous; and in a spectacular piece of his composition, entitled *The Inundation of the Tiber*, a mass of water was seen to come in from the back of the stage, gradually approaching the orchestra and washing down everything that impeded its onward course, until at last the audience, believing the inundation to be real, rose in terror and were about to rush from the theatre. Traps, however, were ready to be opened in all parts of the stage. The Neptune of the troubled theatrical waves gave the word,

——"*et dicto citiùs tumida æquora placat*."

But in Italy, even at the time when such wonders were being effected in the way of stage decorations, the music of an opera was still its prime attraction; indeed, there were theatres for operas and theatres for spectacular dramas, and it is a mistake to attempt the union of the two in any great excellence, inasmuch as the one naturally interferes with and diverts attention from the other.

Of Venice and its music, in the days when grand hunts, charges of cavalry, triumphal processions in which hundreds of horsemen took part, and ships traversing the ocean, and proceeding full sail to the discovery of America were introduced on to the stage;[29] of Venice and its music even at this highly decorative period, St. Evrémond has given us a brief but very satisfactory account in the following doggrel:—

"A Venise rien n'est égal:
Sept opéras, le carneval;
Et la merveille, l'excellence,
Point de chœurs et jamais de danse,
Dans les maisons, souvent concert,
Où tout se chante à livre ouvert."

The operatic chorus, as has already been observed, is an invention claimed by the French[30]; on the other hand, from the very foundation of the Académie Royale, the French rendered their Operas ridiculous by introducing *ballets* into the middle of them. We shall find Rousseau calling attention to this absurd custom which still prevails at the Académie, where if even *Fidelio* was to be produced, it would be considered necessary to "enliven" one or more of the scenes with a *divertissement*—so unchanging and unchangeable are the revolutionary French in all that is futile.

THE OPERA AT VIENNA.

We have seen that in the first years of the 18th century, the Opera at Vienna was chiefly remarkable for its size, and the splendour and magnificence of its scenery. But it soon became a first-rate musical theatre; and it was there, as every one who takes an interest in music knows, that nearly all the masterpieces of Gluck and Mozart[31] were produced. The French sometimes speak of Gluck's great works as if they belonged exclusively to the repertory of their Académie. I have already mentioned that four years before Gluck went to Paris (1774), his *Orfeo* was played in London. This opera was brought out at Vienna in 1764, when it was performed twenty-eight times in succession. The success of *Alceste* was still greater; and after its production in 1768, no other opera was played for two years. At this period, the imperial family did not confine the interest they took in the Opera to mere patronage; four Austrian archduchesses, sisters of the Emperor Charles VII., themselves appeared on the stage, and performed, among other pieces, in the *Egeria* of Metastasio and Hasse, and even in Gluck's works. Charles VII. himself played on the harpsichord and the violoncello; and the Empress mother, then seventy years of age, once said, in conversing with Faustina (Hasse's widow at that time), "I am the oldest dramatic singer in Europe; I made my *début* when I was five years old." Charles VI. too, Leopold's successor, if not a musician, had, at least, considerable taste in music; and Farinelli informed Dr. Burney that he was much indebted to this sovereign for an admonition he once received from him. The Emperor told the singer that his performance was surprising, and, indeed, prodigious; but that all was unavailing as long as he did not succeed in touching the heart. It would appear that at this time Farinelli's style was wanting in simplicity and expressiveness; but an artist of the intelligence and taste which his correspondence with Metastasio proves him to have possessed, would be sure to correct himself of any such failings the moment his attention was called to them.

SINGERS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

The 18th century produced a multitude of great singers. Their voices have gone with them; but we know from the music they sang, from the embellishments and cadences which have been noted down, and which are as good evidence now as when they were first executed, that those *virtuosi* had brought the vocal art to a perfection of which, in these later days, we meet with only the rarest examples. Is music to be written for the sake of singers, or are singers to learn to sing for the sake of music? Of the two propositions, I decidedly prefer the latter; but it must, at the same time, be remarked, that unless the executive qualities of the singer be studied to a considerable extent, the singer will soon cease to pay much attention to his execution. Continue to give him singable music, however difficult, and he will continue to learn to sing, counting the difficulties to be overcome only as so many opportunities for new triumphs; but if the music given to him is such as can, perhaps even *must*, be shouted, it is to be expected that he will soon cease to study the intricacies and delicacies of his art; and in time, if music truly vocal be put before him, he will be unable to sing.

The great singers of the 17th century, to judge from the cantilenas of Caccini's, Peri's, and Monteverde's operas, must have cultivated expression rather than ornamentation; though what Mancini tells us about the singing of Balthazar Ferri, and the manner in which it was received, proves that the florid, highly-adorned style was also in vogue. These early Italian *virtuosi* (a name which they adopted at the beginning of the 17th century to distinguish themselves from mere actors) not only possessed great acquirements as singers, but were also excellent musicians; and many of them displayed great ability in matters quite unconnected with their profession. Stradella, the only vocalist of whom it is recorded that his singing saved his life, composed an opera, *La Forza dell Amor paterno*, of which the manifold beauties caused him to be proclaimed "beyond comparison the first Apollo of music:" the

following inscription being stamped by authority on the published score—"*Bastando il dirti, che il concerto di si perfetta melodia sia valore d'un Alessandro, civè del Signor Stradella, riconoscinto senza contrasto per il primo Apollo della musica.*" Atto, an Italian tenor, who came to Paris with Leonora Baroni, and who had apartments given him in Cardinal Mazarin's palace, was afterwards entrusted by that minister with a political mission to the court of Bavaria, which, however, it must be remembered, was just then presided over, not by an elector, but by an electoress. Farinelli became the confidential adviser, if not the actual minister (as has been often stated, but without foundation) of the king of Spain. In the present day, the only *virtuoso* I know of (the name has now a more general signification) who has been entrusted with *quasi*-diplomatic functions is Vivier, the first horn player, and, in his own way, the first humorist of the age; I believe it is no secret that this facetious *virtuoso* fills the office of secretary to his Excellency Vely Pasha.

SINGERS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Bontempi, in his *Historia Musica*, gives the following account of the school of singing directed by Mazzocchi, at Rome, in 1620: "At the schools of Rome, the pupils were obliged to give up one hour every day to the singing of difficult passages till they were well acquainted with them; another to the practice of the shake; another to feats of agility;[32] another to the study of letters; another to vocal exercises, under the direction of a master, and before a looking-glass, so that they might be certain they were making no disagreeable movement of the muscles of the face, of the forehead, of the eyes, or of the mouth. So much for the occupation of the morning. In the afternoon, half-an-hour was devoted to the theory of singing; another half-hour to counterpoint; an hour to hearing the rules of composition, and putting them in practice on their tablets; another to the study of letters; and the rest of the day to practising the harpsichord, to the composition of some psalm, motet, canzonetta, or any other piece according to the scholar's own ideas.

"Such were the ordinary exercises of the school in days when the scholars did not leave the house. When they went out, they often walked towards Monte Mario, and sang where they could hear the echo of their notes, so that each might judge by the response of the justness of his execution. They, moreover, sang at all the musical solemnities of the Roman Churches; following, and observing with attention the manner and style of an infinity of great singers who lived under the pontificate of Urban VIII., so that they could afterwards render an account of their observations to the master, who, the better to impress the result of these studies on the minds of his pupils, added whatever remarks and cautions he thought necessary."

With such a system as the above, it would have been impossible, supposing the students to have possessed any natural disposition for singing, not to have produced good singers. We have spoken already of some of the best vocalists of the 18th century; of Faustina, Cuzzoni, and Mingotti; of Nicolini, Senesino, and Farinelli. Of Farinelli's life, however (which was so interesting that it has afforded to a German composer the subject of one opera, to M. M. Scribe and Auber, that of another, *La part du Diable*, and to M. Scribe the plan of "*Carlo Broschi*," a tale), I must give a few more particulars; and this will also be a convenient opportunity for sketching the careers of some two or three others of the great Italian singers of this epoch, such as Caffarelli, Gabrielli, Guadagni, &c.

First, as to his name. It is generally said that Carlo Broschi owed his appellation of Farinelli to the circumstance of his father having been a miller, or a flour merchant. This, however, is pure conjecture. No one knows or cares who Carlo Broschi's father was, but he was called "Farinelli," because he was the recognised *protégé* of the Farina family; just as another singer, who was known to be one of Porpora's favorite pupils, was named "Porporino."

SINGERS' NICKNAMES.

Descriptive nicknames were given to the celebrated musicians as well as to the celebrated painters of Italy. Numerous composers and singers owed their sobriquets

To their Native Country; as—

Il Sassone (Hasse), born at Bergendorf, in Saxony;

Portogallo (Simao);

Lo Spagnuolo (Vincent Martin);

L'Inglesina (Cecilia Davies);

La Francesina (Elizabeth Duparc), who, after singing for some years with success in Italy and at London, was engaged by Handel in 1745, to take the principal soprano parts in his oratorios:

To their Native Town; as—

Buranello, of Burano (Galuppi);

Pergolese, of Pergola (Jesi);

La Ferrarese, of Ferrara (Francesca Gabrielli);

Senesino, of Sienna (Bernardi):

To the Profession of their Parents; as—

La Cochetta (Catarina), whose father was cook to Prince Gabrielli, at Rome:

To the Place they Inhabited; as—

Checca della Laguna, (Francesca of the Lagune):

To the Name of their Master; as—

Caffarelli (Majorano), pupil of Caffaro;

Gizziello (Conti), pupil of Gizzi;

Porporino (Hubert), pupil of Porpora:

To the Name of their Patron; as—

Farinelli (Carlo Broschi), protected by the Farinas, of Naples;

Gabrielli (Catarina), protected by Prince Gabrielli;

Cusanimo (Carestini), protected by the Cusani family of Milan:

To the Part in which they had Particularly Distinguished themselves; as—

Siface (Grossi), who had obtained a triumphant success, as that personage, in Scarlatti's *Mitridate*.

But the most astonishing of all these nicknames was that given to Lucrezia Aguiari, who, being a natural child, was called publicly, in the playbills and in the newspapers, *La Bastardina*, or *La Bastardella*.

Catarina, called Gabrielli, a singer to be ranked with the Faustinas and Cuzzonis, naturally became disgusted with her appellation of *la cocchetta* (little cook) as soon as she had acquired a little celebrity. She accordingly assumed the name of Prince Gabrielli, her patron; Francesca Gabrielli, who was in no way related to the celebrated Catarina, keeping to that of *Ferrarese*, or *Gabriellina*, as she was sometimes called.

But to return to my short anecdotal biographies of a few of these singers.[33] Carlo Broschi, then, called "Farinelli," first distinguished himself, at the age of seventeen, in a bravura with an *obligato* trumpet accompaniment, which Porpora, his master, wrote expressly for him, and for a German trumpet-player whose skill on that instrument was prodigious. The air commenced with a sustained note, given by the trumpet. This note was then taken up by the vocalist, who held it with consummate art for such a length of time that the audience fell into raptures with the beauty and fulness of his voice. The note was then attacked, and held successively by the player and the singer, *pianissimo*, *crescendo*, *forte*, *fortissimo*, *diminuendo*, *smorzando*, *perdendosi*—of which the effect may be imagined from the delirious transports of the lady who, on hearing this one note several times repeated, hastened to proclaim in the same breath the unity of the Deity and the uniqueness of Farinelli. This trumpet song occurs originally in Porpora's *Eomene*; and Farinelli sang it for the first time at Rome, in 1722. In London, in 1734, he introduced it in Hasse's *Artaserse*, the opera in which he made his *début*, at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, under the direction of Porpora, his old preceptor.

FARINELLI'S ONE NOTE.

I, who have heard a good many fine singers, and one or two whose voices I shall not easily forget, must confess myself unable to understand the enthusiasm caused by Farinelli's one note, however wonderful the art that produced it, however exquisite the gradations of sound which gave it colour, and perhaps a certain appearance of life; for one musical sound is, after all, not music. Bilboquet, in Dumersan and Varin's admirable burlesque comedy of *Les Saltimbanques*, would, perhaps, have understood it; and, really, when I read of the effect Farinelli produced by keeping to one note, I cannot help thinking of the directions given by the old humorist and scoundrel to an incompetent *débutant* on the trombone. The amateur has the instrument put into his hands, and, with great difficulty, succeeds in bringing out one note; but, to save his life, he could not produce two. "Never mind," says Bilboquet, "one note is enough. Keep on playing it, and people who are fond of that note will be delighted." How little the authors of *Les Saltimbanques* knew that one note had delighted and enchanted thousands! Not only is truth stranger than fiction, but reality is more grotesque even than a burlesque fancy.

Farinelli visited Paris in 1737, and sang before Louis XV., who, according to Riccoboni, was delighted, though His Majesty cared very little for music, and least of all for Italian music. It is also said that, on the whole, Farinelli was by no means satisfied with his reception in Paris, nor with the general distaste of the French for the music of his country; and some writers go so far as to maintain that the ill-will he always showed to France during his residence, in a confidential position, at the Court of Madrid, was attributable to his irritating recollections of his visit to the French capital. In 1752, the Duke de Duras was charged with a secret mission to the Spanish Court (concerning an alliance with France), which is supposed to have miscarried through the influence of Farinelli; but there were plenty of good reasons, independently of any personal dislike he may have had for the French, for advising Ferdinand VI. to maintain his good understanding with the cabinets of Vienna, London, and Turin.

FARINELLI AT MADRID.

Ferdinand's favourite singer remained ten years in his service; soothing and consoling him with his songs, and, after a time, giving him valuable political advice. Farinelli's quasi-ministerial functions did not prevent him from continuing to sing every day. Every day, for ten years, the same thing! Or rather, the same things, for His Majesty's particular collection included as many as four different airs. Two of them were by Hasse, *Pallido il sole* and *Per questo dulce amplesso*. The third was a minuet, on which Farinelli improvised variations. It has been calculated that during the ten years he sang the same airs, and never anything else, about three thousand six hundred times. If Ferdinand VI. had not, in the first instance, been half insane, surely this would have driven him mad.

Caffarelli, hearing of Farinelli's success at Madrid, is said to have made this curious observation: "He deserves to be Prime Minister; he has an admirable voice."

AN OPERATIC DUEL.

Caffarelli was regarded as Farinelli's rival; and some critics, including Porpora, who had taught both, considered him the greatest singer of the two. This sopranist was notorious for his intolerable insolence, of which numerous anecdotes are told. He would affect indisposition, when persons of great importance were anxious to hear him sing, and had engaged him for that purpose. "Omnibus hoc vitium cantoribus;" but it may be said Caffarelli was capricious and overbearing to an unusual extent. Metastasio, in one of his letters, tells us that at a rehearsal which had been ordered at the Opera of Vienna, all the performers obeyed the summons except Caffarelli; he appeared, however, at the end of the rehearsal, and asked the company with a very disdainful air, "What was the use of these rehearsals?" The conductor answered, in a voice of authority, "that no one was called upon to account to him for what was done; that he ought to be glad that his failure in attendance had been suffered; that his presence or absence was of little consequence to the success of the opera; but that whatever he chose to do himself, he ought, at least, to let others do their duty." Caffarelli, in a great rage, exclaimed "that he who had ordered such a rehearsal was a solemn coxcomb." At this, all the patience and dignity of the poet forsook him; "and getting into a towering passion, he honoured the singer with all those glorious titles which Caffarelli had earned in various parts of Europe, and slightly touched, but in lively colours, some of the most memorable particulars of his life; nor was he likely soon to come to a close; but the hero of the panegyric, cutting the thread of his own praise, boldly called out to his eulogist: 'Follow me, if thou hast courage, to a place where there is none to assist thee, * * * * * The bystanders tremble; each calls on his tutelar saint, expecting every moment to see poetical and vocal blood besprinkle the harpsichords and double basses. But at length the Signora Tesi, rising from under her canopy, where, till now, she had remained a most tranquil spectator, walked with a slow and stately step towards the combatants; when, O sovereign power of beauty! the frantic Caffarelli, even in the fiercest paroxysm of his wrath, captivated and appeased by this unexpected tenderness, runs with rapture to meet her; lays his sword at her feet; begs pardon for his error; and generously sacrificing to her his vengeance, seals, with a thousand kisses upon her hand, his protestations of obedience, respect and humility. The nymph signifies her forgiveness by a nod; the poet sheathes his sword; the spectators begin to breathe again; and

the tumultuous assembly breaks up amid the joyous sounds of laughter."

Of Caffarelli a curious, and as it seems to me fabulous, story is told to the effect that for five years Porpora allowed him to sing nothing but a series of scales and exercises, all of which were written down on one sheet of paper. According to this anecdote, Caffarelli, with a patience which did not distinguish him in after life, asked seriously after his five years' scale practice, when he was likely to get beyond the rudiments of his art,—upon which Porpora suddenly exclaimed:—"Young man you have nothing more to learn, you are the greatest singer in the world." In London, however, coming after Farinelli, Caffarelli did not meet with anything like the same success.

At Turin, when the Prince of Savoy told Caffarelli, after praising him greatly, that the princess thought it hardly possible any singer could please after Farinelli, "To night," exclaimed the sopranist, in the fulness of his vanity, "she shall hear two Farinellis."

What would the English lady have said to this, who maintained that there was but "*one* Farinelli?"

At sixty-five years of age, Caffarelli was still singing; but he had made an enormous fortune—had purchased nothing less than a dukedom for his nephew, and had built himself a superb palace, over the entrance of which he placed the following modest inscription:—

"Amphion THEBAS, ego domum."

"Ille eum, sine tu!"

wrote a commentator beneath it.

Guadagni was the "creator" of the parts of *Telemacco* and *Orfeo*, in the operas by Gluck, bearing those names. He sang in London in 1766, at Venice the year afterwards, when he was made a Knight of St. Mark; at Potsdam before the King of Prussia, in 1776, &c. Guadagni amassed a large fortune, though he was at the same time noted for his generosity. He has the credit of having lent large sums of money to men of good family, who had ruined themselves. One of these impoverished gentlemen said, after borrowing the sum of a hundred sequins from him—

"I only want it as a loan, I shall repay you."

"That is not my intention," replied the singer; "if I wanted to have it back, I should not lend it to you."

GABRIELLI.

Gabrielli (Catarina) is described by Brydone, in his tour through Sicily, in a letter, dated Palermo, July 27, 1770. She was at this time upwards of thirty, but on the stage appeared to be scarcely eighteen; and Brydone considers her to have been "the most dangerous syren of modern times," adding, that she has made more conquests than any woman living. "She was wonderfully capricious," he continues, "and neither interest nor flattery, nor threats, nor punishment, had any power to control her. Instead of singing her airs as other actresses do, for the most part she hums them over *a mezza voce*, and no art whatever is capable of making her sing when she does not choose it. The most successful expedient has ever been found to prevail on her favourite lover (for she always has one) to place himself in the centre of the pit or the front box, and if they are on good terms, which is seldom the case, she will address her tender airs to him, and exert herself to the utmost. Her present inamorato promised to give us this specimen of his power over her. He took his seat accordingly, but Gabrielli, probably suspecting the connivance, would take no notice of him, so that even this expedient does not always succeed. The viceroy, who is fond of music, has tried every method with her to no purpose. Some time ago he gave a great dinner, and sent an invitation to Gabrielli to be of the party. Every other person came at the hour of invitation. The viceroy ordered dinner to be put back, and sent to let her know that the company had all arrived. The messenger found her reading in bed. She said she was sorry for having made the company wait, and begged he would make her apology, but really she had entirely forgotten her engagement. The viceroy would have forgiven this piece of insolence, but when the company went to the Opera, Gabrielli repeated her part with the utmost negligence and indifference, and sang all her airs in what they call *sotto voce*, that is, so low that they can scarcely be heard. The viceroy was offended; but as he is a good tempered man, he was loth to enforce his authority; but at last, by a perseverance in this insolent stubbornness, she obliged him to threaten her with punishment in case she any longer refused to sing. On this she grew more obstinate than ever, declaring that force and authority would never succeed with her; that he might make her cry, but never could make her sing. The viceroy then sent her to prison, where she remained twelve days; during which time she gave magnificent entertainments every day, paid the debts of all the poor prisoners, and distributed large sums in charity. The viceroy was obliged to give up struggling with her, and she was at last set at liberty amidst the acclamations of the poor."

GABRIELLI.

Gabrielli said at this time that she should never dare to appear in England, alleging as her reason that if, in a fit of caprice, which might at any time attack her, she refused to sing, or lost her temper and insulted the audience, they were said to be so ferocious that they would probably murder her. She asserted, however, and, doubtless, with truth, that it was not always caprice which prevented her singing, and that she was often really indisposed and unable to sing, when the public imagined that she absented herself from the theatre from caprice alone.

Mingotti used to say that the London public would admit that any one might have a cold, a head-ache, or a fever, except a singer. In the present day, our audiences often show the most unjustifiable anger because, while half the people in a concert room are coughing and sneezing, some favourite vocalist, with an exceptionally delicate larynx, is unable to sing an air, of which the execution would be sure to fatigue the voice even in its healthiest condition.

To Brydone's anecdotes of Gabrielli we may add another. The ambassador of France at the court of Vienna was violently in love with our capricious and ungovernable vocalist. In a fit of jealousy, he attempted to stab her, and Gabrielli was only saved from transfixion by the whalebone of her stays. As it was, she was slightly wounded. The ambassador threw himself at the singer's feet and obtained her forgiveness, on condition of giving up his sword, on which the offended *prima donna* proposed to engrave the following words:—"*The sword of——, who on such a day in such a year, dared to strike La Gabrielli.*" Metastasio, however, succeeded in persuading her to abandon this intention.

In 1767 Gabrielli went to Parma, but wearied by the attentions of the Infant, Don Philip ("her accursed hunch back"—*gobbo maladetto*—as she called him), she escaped in secret the following year to St. Petersburgh, where Catherine II. had invited her some time before. When the empress enquired what terms the celebrated singer expected, the sum of five thousand ducats was named.

"Five thousand ducats," replied Catherine; "not one of my field marshals receives so much."

"Her majesty had better ask her field marshals to sing," said Gabrielli.

Catherine gave the five thousand ducats. "Whether the great Souvaroff's jealousy was excited, is not recorded.

At this time the composer Galuppi was musical director at the Russian court. He went to St. Petersburgh in 1766, and had just returned when Dr. Burney saw him at Venice. Among the other great composers who visited Russia in Catherine's reign were Cimarosa and Paisiello, the latter of whom produced his *Barbiere di Siviglia*, at St. Petersburgh, in 1780.

Most of the celebrated Italian vocalists of the 18th century visited Vienna, Dresden, London and Madrid, as well as the principal cities of their own country, and sometimes even Paris, where both Farinelli and Caffarelli sang, but only at concerts. "I had hoped," says Rousseau, "that Caffarelli would give us at the 'Concert Spirituel' some specimen of grand recitative, and of the pathetic style of singing, that pretended connoisseurs might hear once for all what they have so often pronounced an opinion upon; but from his reasons for doing nothing of the kind I found that he understood his audience better than I did."

THE OPERA IN PRUSSIA AND RUSSIA.

It was not until the accession of Frederick the Great, warrior, flute player, and severe protector of the arts in general, that the Italian Opera was established in Berlin; and it had been reserved for Catherine the Great to introduce it into St. Petersburgh. In proportion as the Opera grew in Prussia and Russia it faded in Poland, and its decay at the court of the Elector of Saxony was followed shortly afterwards by the first signs of the infamous partition.

Frederick the Great's favourite composers were Hasse, Agricola, and Graun, the last of whom wrote a great number of Italian operas for the Berlin Theatre. When Dr. Burney was at Berlin, in 1772, there were fifty performers in the orchestra. There was a large chorus, and a numerous ballet, and several principal singers of great merit. The king defrayed the expenses of the whole establishment. He also officiated as general conductor, standing in the pit behind the chef d'orchestre, so as to have a view of the score, and drilling his musical troops in true military fashion. We are told that if any mistake was committed on the stage, or in the orchestra, the king stopped the offender, and admonished him; and it is really satisfactory to know, that if a singer ventured to alter a single passage in his part (which almost every singer does in the present day) His Majesty severely reprimanded him, and ordered him to keep to the notes written by the composer. It was not the Opera of Paris, nor of London, nor of New York that should have been called the Academy, but evidently that of Berlin.

The celebrated Madame Mara sang for many years at the Berlin Opera. When her father Herr Schmaling first endeavoured to get her engaged by the king of Prussia, Frederick sent his principal singer Morelli to hear her and report upon her merits.

AN OPERATIC MARTINET.

"She sings like a German," said the prejudiced Morelli, and the king, who declared that he should as soon expect to receive pleasure from the neighing of his horse as from a German singer, paid no further attention to Schmaling's application. The daughter, however, had heard of the king's sarcasm, and was determined to prove how ill-founded it was. Mademoiselle Schmaling made her *début* with great success at Dresden, and afterwards, in 1771, went to Berlin. The king, when the young vocalist was presented to him, after a few uncourteous observations, asked her if she could sing at sight, and placed before her a very difficult bravura song. Mademoiselle Schmaling executed it to perfection, upon which Frederick paid her a multitude of compliments, made her a handsome present, and appointed her *prima donna* of his company.

When Madame Mara in 1780 wished to visit England with her husband, (who was a dissipated violoncellist, belonging to the Berlin orchestra) the king positively prohibited their departure, and on their escaping to Vienna, sent a despatch to the Emperor Joseph II., requesting him to arrest the fugitives and send them back. The emperor, however, merely gave them a hint that they had better get out of Vienna as soon as possible, when he would inform the king that his messenger had arrived too late. Afterwards, as soon as it was thought she could do so with safety, Madame Mara made her appearance at the Viennese Opera and sang there with great success for nearly two years.

According to another version of Madame Mara's flight, she was arrested before she had passed the Prussian frontier, and separated from her husband, who was shut up in a fortress, and instead of performing on the violoncello in the orchestra of the Opera, was made to play the drum at the head of a regiment. The tears of the singer had no effect upon the inflexible monarch, and it was only by giving up a portion of her salary (so at least runs this anecdote of dubious authenticity) that she could obtain M. Mara's liberation. In any case it is certain that the position of this "*prima donna*" by no means "*assoluta*," at the court of a very absolute king, was by no means an agreeable one, and that she had not occupied it many years before she endeavoured to liberate herself from it by every device in her power, including such disobedience of orders as she hoped would entail her prompt dismissal. On one occasion, when the Cæsarevitch, afterwards Paul I., was at Berlin, and Madame Mara was to take the principal part in an opera given specially in his honour, she pretended to be ill, and sent word to the theatre that she would be unable to appear. The king informed her on the morning of the day fixed for the performance that she had better get well, for that well or ill she would have to sing. Nevertheless Madame Mara remained at home and in bed. Two hours before the time fixed for the commencement of the opera, a carriage, escorted by a few dragoons, stopped at her door, and an officer entered her room to announce that he had orders from His Majesty to bring her alive or dead to the theatre.

"But you see I am in bed, and cannot get up," remonstrated the vocalist.

"In that case I must take the bed too," was the reply.

It was impossible not to obey. Bathed in tears she allowed herself to be taken to her dressing room, put on her costume, but resolved at the same time to sing in such a manner that the king should repent of his violence. She conformed to her determination throughout the first act, but it then occurred to her that the Russian grand duke would carry away a most unworthy opinion of her talent. She quite changed her tactics, sang with all possible

brilliancy, and is reported in particular to have sustained a shake for such a length of time and with such wonderful modulations of voice, that his Imperial Highness was enchanted, and applauded the singer enthusiastically.

THE MARATISTES AND TODISTES.

In Paris Madame Mara was received with enthusiasm, and founded the celebrated party of the Maratistes, to which was opposed the almost equally distinguished sect of the Todistes. Madame Todi was a Portuguese, and she and Madame Mara were the chief, though contending, attractions at the Concert Spirituel of Paris, in 1782. These rivalries between singers have occasioned, in various countries and at various times, a good many foolish verses and *mots*. The Mara and Todi disputes, however, inspired one really good stanza, which is as follows:—

"Todi par sa voix touchante,
De doux pleurs mouille mes yeux;
Mara plus vive, plus brillante,
M'étonne, me transporte aux cieux.
L'une ravit et l'autre enchante,
Mais celle qui plait le mieux,
Est toujours celle qui chante."

Of Madame Mara's performances in London, where she obtained her greatest and most enduring triumphs, I shall speak in another chapter.

A good notion of the weak points in the Opera in Italy during the early part of the 18th century is given, that is to say, is conveyed ironically, in the celebrated satire by Marcello, entitled *Teatro a la Moda, &c., &c.*[34]

MARCELLO'S SATIRE.

The author begins by telling the poet, that "there is no occasion for his reading, or having read, the old Greek and Latin authors: for this good reason, that the ancients never read any of the works of the moderns. He will not ask any questions about the ability of the performers, but will rather inquire whether the theatre is provided with a good bear, a good lion, a good nightingale, good thunder, lightning and earthquakes. He will introduce a magnificent show in his last scene, and conclude with the usual chorus in honour of the sun, the moon or the manager. In dedicating his libretto to some great personage, he will select him for his riches rather than his learning, and will give a share of the gratuity to his patron's cook, or maître d'hôtel, from whom he will obtain all his titles, that he may blazon them on his title pages with an &c., &c. He will exalt the great man's family and ancestors; make an abundant use of such phrases as liberality and generosity of soul; and if he can find any subject of eulogy (as is often the case), he will say, that he is silent through fear of hurting his patron's modesty; but that fame, with her hundred brazen trumpets, will spread his immortal name from pole to pole. He will do well to protest to the reader that his opera was composed in his youth, and may add that it was written in a few days: by this he will show that he is a true modern, and has a proper contempt for the antiquated precept, *nonumque prematur in annum*. He may add, too, that he became a poet solely for his amusement, and to divert his mind from graver occupations; but that he had published his work by the advice of his friends and the command of his patrons, and by no means from any love of praise or desire of profit. He will take care not to neglect the usual explanation of the three great points of every drama, the place, time, and action; the place, signifying in such and such a theatre; the time, from eight to twelve o'clock at night; the action, the ruin of the manager. The incidents of the piece should consist of dungeons, daggers, poison, boar-hunts, earthquakes, sacrifices, madness, and so forth; because the people are always greatly moved by such unexpected things. A good *modern* poet ought to know nothing about music, because the ancients, according to Strabo, Pliny, &c., thought this knowledge necessary. At the rehearsals he should never tell his meaning to any of the performers, wisely reflecting that they always want to do everything in their own way. If a husband and wife are discovered in prison, and one of them is led away to die, it is indispensable that the other remain to sing an air, which should be to lively words, to relieve the feelings of the audience, and make them understand that the whole affair is a joke. If two of the characters make love, or plot a conspiracy, it should always be in the presence of servants and attendants. The part of a father or tyrant, when it is the principal character, should always be given to a soprano; reserving the tenors and basses for captains of the guard, confidants, shepherds, messengers, and so forth.

MARCELLO'S SATIRE.

"The modern composer is told that there is no occasion for his being master of the principles of composition, a little practice being all that is necessary. He need not know anything of poetry, or give himself any trouble about the meaning of the words, or even the quantities of the syllables. Neither is it necessary that he should study the properties of the stringed or wind instruments; if he can play on the harpsichord, it will do very well. It will, however, be not amiss for him to have been for some years a violin-player, or music-copier for some celebrated composer, whose original scenes he may treasure up, and thus supply himself with subjects for his airs, recitations, or choruses. He will by no means think of reading the opera through, but will compose it line by line; using for the airs, *motivi* which he has lying by him; and if the words do not go well below the notes, he will torment the poet till they are altered to his mind. When the singer comes to a cadence, the composer will make all the instruments stop, leaving it to the singer to do whatever he pleases. He will serve the manager on very low terms, considering the thousands of crowns that the singers cost him:—he will, therefore, content himself with an inferior salary to the lowest of these, provided that he is not wronged by the bear, the attendants or the scene-shifters being put above him. When he is walking with the singers, he will always give them the wall, keep his hat in his hand, and remain a step in the rear; considering that the lowest of them, on the stage, is at least a general, a captain of the guards, or some such personage. All the airs should be formed of the same materials—long divisions, holding notes, and repetitions of insignificant words, as amore, amore, impero, impero, Europa, Europa, furori, furori, orgoglio, orgoglio, &c.; and therefore the composer should have before him a memorandum of the things necessary for the termination of every air. This will enable him to eschew variety, which is no longer in use. After ending a recitative in a flat key, he will suddenly begin an air in three or four sharps; and this by way of novelty. If the modern composer wishes to write in four parts, two of them must proceed in unison or octave, only taking care that there shall be a diversity of movement; so that if the one part proceeds by minims or crotchets, the other will be in quavers or semiquavers. He will charm the audience with airs, accompanied by the stringed instruments *pizzicati* or *con sordini*, trumpets, and other effective contrivances. He will not compose airs with a simple bass accompaniment, because this is no longer the custom; and, besides, he would take as much time to compose one of these as a dozen with the orchestra. The modern composer will oblige the manager to furnish

him with a large orchestra of violins, oboes, horns, &c., saving him rather the expense of double basses, of which there is no occasion to make any use, except in tuning at the outset. The overture will be a movement in the French style, or a prestissimo in semiquavers in a major key, to which will succeed a *piano* in the minor; concluding with a minuet, gavot or jig, again in the major key. In this manner the composer will avoid all fugues, syncopations, and treatment of subjects, as being antiquated contrivances, quite banished from modern music. The modern composer will be most attentive to all the ladies of the theatre, supplying them with plenty of old songs transposed to suit their voices, and telling each of them that the Opera is supported by her talent alone. He will bring every night some of his friends, and seat them in the orchestra; giving the double bass or violoncello (as being the most useless instruments) leave of absence to make room for them.

MARCELLO'S SATIRE.

"The singer is informed that there is no occasion for having practised the solfeggio; because he would thus be in danger of acquiring a firm voice, just intonation, and the power of singing in tune; things wholly useless in modern music. Nor is it very necessary that he should be able to read or write, know how to pronounce the words or understand their meaning, provided he can run divisions, make shakes, cadences, &c. He will always complain of his part, saying that it is not in his way, that the airs are not in his style, and so on; and he will sing an air by some other composer, protesting that at such a court, or in the presence of such a great personage, that air carried away all the applause, and he was obliged to repeat it a dozen times in an evening. At the rehearsals he will merely hum his airs, and will insist on having the time in his own way. He will stand with one hand in his waistcoat and the other in his breeches' pocket, and take care not to allow a syllable to be heard. He will always keep his hat on his head, though a person of quality should speak to him, in order to avoid catching cold; and he will not bow his head to anybody, remembering the kings, princes, and emperors whom he is in the habit of personating. On the stage he will sing with shut teeth, doing all he can to prevent a word he says from being understood, and, in the recitatives, paying no respect either to commas or periods. While another performer is reciting a soliloquy or singing an air, he will be saluting the company in the boxes, or listening with musicians in the orchestra, or the attendants; because the audience knows very well that he is Signor So-and-so, the *musico*, and not Prince Zoroastro, whom he is representing. A modern virtuoso will be hard to prevail on to sing at a private party. When he arrives he will walk up to the mirror, settle his wig, draw down his ruffles, and pull up his cravat to show his diamond brooch. He will then touch the harpsichord very carelessly, and begin his air three or four times, as if he could not recollect it. Having granted this great favour, he will begin talking (by way of gathering applause) with some lady, telling her stories about his travels, correspondence and professional intrigues; all the while ogling his companion with passionate glances, and throwing back the curls of his peruke, sometimes on one shoulder, sometimes on the other. He will every minute offer the lady snuff in a different box, in one of which he will point out his own portrait; and will show her some magnificent diamond, the gift of a distinguished patron, saying that he would offer it for her acceptance were it not for delicacy. Thus he will, perhaps, make an impression on her heart, and, at all events, make a great figure in the eyes of the company. In the society of the literary men, however eminent, he will always take precedence, because, with most people, the singer has the credit of being an artist, while the literary man has no consideration at all. He will even advise them to embrace his profession, as the singer has plenty of money as well as fame, while the man of letters is very apt to die of hunger. If the singer is a bass, he should constantly sing tenor passages as high as he can. If a tenor, he ought to go as low as he can in the scale of the bass, or get up, with a falsetto voice, into the regions of the contralto, without minding whether he sings through his nose or his throat. He will pay his court to all the principal *cantatrici* and their protectors; and need not despair, by means of his talent and exemplary modesty, to acquire the title of a count, marquis, or chevalier.

"The *prima donna* receives ample instructions in her duties both on and off the stage. She is taught how to make engagements and to screw the manager up to exorbitant terms; how to obtain the "protection" of rash amateurs, who are to attend her at all times, pay her expenses, make her presents, and submit to her caprices. She is taught to be careless at rehearsals, to be insolent to the other performers, and to perform all manner of musical absurdities on the stage. She must have a music-master to teach her variations, passages and embellishments to her airs; and some familiar friend, an advocate or a doctor, to teach her how to move her arms, turn her head, and use her handkerchief, without telling her why, for that would only confuse her head. She is to endeavour to vary her airs every night; and though the variations may be at cross purposes with the bass, or the violin part, or the harmony of the accompaniments, that matters little, as a modern conductor is deaf and dumb. In her airs and recitatives, in action, she will take care every night to use the same motions of her hand, her head, her fan, and her handkerchief. If she orders a character to be put in chains, and addresses him in an air of rage or disdain, during the symphony she should talk and laugh with him, point out to him people in the boxes, and show how very little she is in earnest. She will get hold of a new passage in rapid triplets, and introduce it in all her airs, quick, slow, lively, or sad; and the higher she can rise in the scale, the surer she will be of having all the principal parts allotted her," &c., &c.

Enough, however, of this excellent but somewhat fatiguing irony; and let me conclude this chapter with a few words about the librettists of the 18th century. The best *libretti* of Apostolo Zeno, Calsabigi and Metastasio, such as the *Demofonte*, the *Artaserse*, the *Didone*, and above all the *Olimpiade*, have been set to music by dozens of composers. Piccinni, and Sacchini each composed music twice to the *Olimpiade*; Jomelli set *Didone* twice and *Demofonte* twice; Hasse wrote two operas on the *libretto* of the *Nittetti*, two on that of *Artemisia*, two on *Artaserse*, and three on *Arminio*. The excellence of these opera-books in a dramatic point of view is sufficiently shown by the fact that many of them, including Metastasio's *Didone*, *Issipile* and *Artaserse* have been translated into French, and played with success as tragedies. The *Clemenza di Tito*, by the same author (which in a modified form became the *libretto* of Mozart's last opera) was translated into Russian and performed at the Moscow Theatre during the reign of the Empress Elizabeth.

In the present day, several of Scribe's best comic operas have been converted into comic dramas for the English stage, while others by the same author have been made the groundwork of Italian *libretti*. Thus *Le Philtre* and *La Somnambule* are the originals of Donizetti's *Elisir d'amore* and Bellini's *Sonnambula*. Several of Victor Hugo's admirably constructed dramas have also been laid under contribution by the Italian librettists of the present day. Donizetti's *Lucrezia* is founded on *Lucrèce Borgia*; Verdi's *Ernani* on *Hernani*, his *Rigoletto* on *Le Roi s'amuse*.

LIBRETTI.

Our English writers of *libretti* are about as original as the rest of our dramatists. *The Bohemian Girl* is not only identical in subject with *La Gitana*, but is a translation of an unpublished opera founded on that *ballet* and written by M. St. George. The English

version is evidently called *The Bohemian Girl* from M. St. George having entitled his manuscript opera *La Bohémienne*, and from Mr. Bunn having mistaken the meaning of the word. It is less astonishing that the manager of a theatre should commit such an error than that no one should hitherto have pointed it out. The heroine of the opera is not a Bohemian, but a gipsey; and Bohemia has nothing to do with the piece, the action taking place in some portion of the "fair land of Poland," which, as the librettist informs us, was "trod by the hoof;" though whether in Russian, in Austrian or in Prussian Poland we are not informed. *La Zingara* has often been played at Vienna, and I have seen *La Gitana* at Moscow. Probably the Austrians lay the scene of the drama in the Russian, and the Russians in the Austrian, dominions. Fortunately, Mr. Balfe has given no particular colour to the music of his *Bohemian Girl*, which, as far as can be judged from the melodies sung by her, is as much (and as little) a Bohemian girl as a gipsey girl, or a Polish girl, or indeed any other girl. The *libretti* of Mr. Balfe's *Satanella*, *Rose of Castille*, *Maid of Honour*, *Bondsman*, &c., are all founded on French pieces. Mr. Wallace's *Maritana*, is, I need hardly say, founded on the French drama of *Don Cæsar de Bazan*. But there is unmistakeable originality in the *libretto* of this composer's *Lurline*, though the chief incidents are, of course, taken from the well-known German legend on which Mendelsohn commenced writing his opera of *Loreley*.

NATIONAL STYLES.

One of the very few good original *libretti* in the English language is that of *Robin Hood*, by Mr. Oxenford. The best of all English libretti, in point of literary merit, being probably Dryden's *Albion and Albanius*, while the best French libretto in all respects is decidedly Victor Hugo's *Esmeralda*. Mr. Macfarren has, in many places, given quite an English character to the music of *Robin Hood*, though, in doing so, he has not (as has been asserted) founded a national style of operatic music; for the same style applied to subjects not English might be found as inappropriate as the music of *The Barber of Seville* would be adapted to *Tom and Jerry*. A great deal can be written and very little decided about this question of nationality of style in music. If Auber's style is French, (instead of being his own, as I should say) what was that of Rameau? If "The Marseillaise" is such a thoroughly French air (as every one admits), how is it that it happens to be an importation from Germany? The Royalist song of "Pauvre Jacques" passed for French, but it was Dibdin's "Poor Jack." How is it that "Malbrook" sounds so French, and "We won't go home till morning" so English—an attempt, by the way, having been made to show that the airs common to both these songs were sung originally by the Spanish Moors? I fancy the great point, after all, is to write good music; and if it be written to good English words, full of English rhythm and cadence, it will, from that alone, derive a sufficiently English character.

Handel appears to me to have done far greater service to English Opera than Arne or any of our English and pseudo-English operatic composers whose works are now utterly forgotten, except by musical antiquaries; for Handel established Italian Opera among us on a grand artistic scale, and since then, at Her Majesty's Theatre, and subsequently at the comparatively new Royal Italian Opera, all the finest works, whether of the Italian, the German, or the French school, have been brought out as fast as they have been produced abroad, and, on the whole, in very excellent style. English Opera has no history, no unbroken line of traditions; it has no regular sequence of operatic weeks by native composers; but at our Italian Opera Houses, the whole history of dramatic music has been exemplified, and from Gluck to Verdi is still exemplified in the present day. We take no note, it is true, of the old French composers,—Lulli, who begat Rameau, and Rameau, who begat no one—and for the reason just indicated. There are plenty of amusing stories about the *Académie Royale* from its very foundation, but the true history of dramatic music in France dates from the arrival of Gluck in Paris in 1774.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRENCH OPERA FROM LULLI TO THE DEATH OF RAMEAU.

Ramists and Lullists.—Rameau's Letters of nobility.—His death.—Affairs of honour and love.—Sophie Arnould.—Madame Favart.—Charles Edward at the Académie.

Lulli died in Paris, March 22nd, 1687, at the age of fifty-four. In beating time with his walking stick during the performance of a *Te Deum* which he had composed to celebrate the convalescence of Louis XIV., he struck his foot, and with so much violence that he died from the effects of the blow. It is said[35] that this *Te Deum* produced a great sensation, and that Lulli died satisfied, like a general expiring on the battle field immediately after a victory.

All Lulli's operas are in five acts, but they are very short. "The drama," says M. Halévy, "comprises but a small number of scenes; the pieces are of a briefness to be envied; it is music summarized; two phrases make an air. The task of the composer then was far from being what it is now. The secret had not yet been discovered of those pieces, those finales which have since been so admirably developed, linking together in one well-conceived whole, a variety of situations which assist the inspiration of the composer and sometimes call it forth. There is certainly more music in one of the finales of a modern work than in the five acts of an opera of Lulli's. We may add that the art of instrumentation, since carried to such a high degree of brilliancy, was then confined within very narrow limits, or rather this art did not exist. The violins, violas, bass viols, hautboys, which at first formed the entire arsenal of the composer, seldom did more than follow the voices. Lulli, moreover, wrote only the vocal part and the bass of his compositions. His pupils, Lalouette and Colasse, who were conductors (*chefs d'orchestre*, or, as was said at that time, *batteurs de mesure*) under his orders, filled up the orchestral parts in accordance with his indications. This explains how, in the midst of all the details with which he had to occupy himself, he could write such a great number of works; but it does not diminish the idea one must form of his facility, his intelligence, and his genius, for these works, rapidly as they were composed, kept possession of the stage for more than a century."

The next great composer, in France, to Lulli, in point of time, was Rameau. "Rameau" (in the words of the author from whom I have just quoted, and whose opinion on such a subject cannot be too highly valued) "elevated and strengthened the art; his harmonies were more solidly woven, his orchestra was richer, his instrumentation more skilful, his colouring more decided."

Dr. Burney, however, in his account of the French Opera of his period (when Rameau's works were constantly being performed) speaks of the music as monotonous in the extreme and without ryhthm or expression. Indeed, he found nothing at the French Opera to admire but the dancing and the decorations, and these alone (he tells us)

seemed to give pleasure to the audience. Nevertheless, the French journals of the middle of the 18th century constantly informed their readers that Rameau was the first musician in Europe, "though," as Grimm remarked, "Europe scarcely knew the name of her first musician, knew none of his operas, and could not have tolerated them on her stages."

RAMISTS AND LULLISTS.

Jean Phillippe Rameau was born the 25th September, 1683, at Dijon. He studied music under the direction of his father, Jean Rameau, an organist, and afterwards visited Italy, but does not appear to have appreciated Italian music. On his return to France he wrote the music of an opera founded on the *Phèdre* of Racine, and entitled *Hippolyte et Aricie*. This work, which was produced in 1733, was received with much applause and a good deal of hissing, but on the whole it obtained a great success which was not diminished in the end by having been contested in the first instance. Rameau had soon so many admirers of his own, and met with so much opposition from the admirers of Lulli that two parties of Lullists and of Ramists were formed. This was the first of those foolish musical feuds of which Paris has witnessed so many, though scarcely more than London. Indeed, London had already seen the disputes between the partisans of Mrs. Tofts, the English singer, and Margarita l'Epine, the Italian, as well as the more celebrated Handel and Buononcini contests, and the quarrels between the friends of Faustina and Cuzzoni. However, when Rameau produced his *Castor and Pollux*, in 1737, he was generally admitted by his compatriots to be the greatest composer of the day, not only in France, but in all Europe—which, as Grimm observed, was not acquainted with him. Gluck, however, is said[36] to have expressed his admiration of the chorus, *Que tout gémisse*, and M. Castil Blaze assures us, that "the fine things which this work (*Castor and Pollux*) contains, would please in the present day."

Great honours were paid to Rameau by Louis XV., who granted him letters of nobility, and that only to render him worthy of a still higher mark of favour, the order of St. Michael. The composer on receiving his patent did not take the trouble to register it, upon which the king, thinking Rameau was afraid of the expense, offered to defray all the necessary charges himself. "Let me have the money, your Majesty," said Rameau, "and I will apply it to some more useful purpose. Letters of nobility to me? *Castor* and *Dardanus* gave them to me long ago!"

RAMEAU'S LETTERS OF NOBILITY.

Rameau's letters of nobility were invalidated by not being registered, but the order of St. Michael was given to him all the same.

The badge of the same order was refused unconditionally by Beaumarchais, when it was offered to him by the Baron de Breteuil, minister of Louis XVI., the author of the *Marriage of Figaro* observing that men whose merit was acknowledged had no need of decorations.

Thus, too, Tintoretto refused knighthood at the hands of Henry III. of France (of what value, by the way, was the barren compliment to Sir Antony Vandyke, whom every one knows as a painter, and no one, scarcely, as a knight)? Thus, the celebrated singer, Forst, of Mies, in Bohemia, refused letters of nobility from Joseph I., Emperor of Germany, but accepted a pension of three hundred florins, which was offered to him in its place; and thus Beethoven being asked by the Prince von Hatzfeld, Prussian ambassador at Vienna, whether he would rather have a subscription of fifty ducats, which was due to him,[37] or the cross of some order, replied briefly, with all readiness of determination—"Fifty ducats!"

Besides being a very successful operatic composer, (he wrote thirty-six works for the stage, of which twenty-two were represented at the Académie Royale), Rameau was an admirable performer on the organ and harpsichord, and wrote a great deal of excellent music for those two instruments. He, moreover, distinguished himself by his important discoveries in the science of harmony, which he published, defended, and explained, in twenty works, more or less copious.

"Rameau's music," says M. Castil Blaze, "marks (in France) a progress. Not that this master improved the taste of our nation: he possessed none himself. Although he had visited the north of Italy, he had no idea that it was possible to sing better than the hack-vocalists of our Opera. Rameau never understood anything of Italian music; accordingly he did not bring the forms of melody to perfection among us. The success of Rameau was due to the fact, that he gave more life, warmth, and movement, to our dramatic music. His ryhthmical airs (when the irregularity of the words did not trouble him too much), the free, energetic, and even daring character of his choruses, the richness of his orchestra, raised this master at last to the highest rank, which he maintained until his death. All this, however, is relative, comparative. I must tell you in confidence, that these choruses, this orchestra, were very badly constructed, and often incorrect in point of harmony. Observe, too, if you please, that I do not go beyond our own frontiers, lest I should meet a Scarlatti, a Handel, a Jomelli, a Pergolese, a Sebastian Bach, and twenty other rivals, too formidable for our compatriot, as regards operas, religious dramas, cantatas, and symphonies."

DEATH OF RAMEAU.

Rameau died in 1764. The Opera undertook the direction of his funeral, and caused a service for the repose of his soul to be celebrated in the church of the Oratory. Several pieces from *Castor* and *Pollux*, and other of his lyrical works, had been arranged for the ceremony, and were introduced into the mass. The music was executed by the orchestra and chorus of the Opera, both of which were doubled for the occasion. In 1766, on the second anniversary of Rameau's death, a mortuary mass, written by Philidor, the celebrated chess player and composer (but one of those minor composers of whose works it does not enter into our limited plan to speak), was performed in the same church.

The chief singers of the Académie during the greater portion of Rameau's career as a composer, were Jéliotte, Chassé, and Mademoiselle de Fel. Jéliotte retired in 1775, and for nine years the French Opera was without a respectable tenor. Chassé (baritone), and Mademoiselle de Fel, were replaced, about the same time, by Larrivée, and the celebrated Sophie Arnould, both of whom appeared afterwards in Gluck's operas.

Claude Louis de Chassé, Seigneur de Ponceau, a gentleman of a good Breton family, gave up a commission in the army in 1721, to join the Opera. He succeeded equally as a singer and as an actor, and also distinguished himself by his skill in arranging tableaux. He it was who first introduced on to the French stage immense masses of men, and taught them to manœuvre with precision. Louis XV. was so pleased with the evolutions of Chassé's theatrical troops in an opera represented at Fontainbleau, that he afterwards addressed him always as "General." In 1738, Chassé left the Académie on the pretext that the histrionic profession was not suited to a man of gentle birth.[38] But the true reason is said to have been that having saved a considerable sum of money, he found he could afford to throw up his engagement. However, he invested the greater part of his fortune in a speculation which failed, and was obliged to return to the stage a few years after he had declared his intention of abandoning it for ever. On his reappearance,

the "gentlemanliness" of Chassé's execution was noticed, but in a sarcastic, not a complimentary spirit.

"Ce n'est plus cette voix tonnante
Ce ne sont plus ses grands éclats;
C'est un gentilhomme qui chante
Et qui ne se fatigue pas—"

were lines circulated on the occasion of the Seigneur du Ponceau's return to the Académie, where, however, he continued to sing with success for a dozen years afterwards.

AFFAIRS OF HONOUR AND LOVE.

Jéliotte was one of the great favourites of fashionable Parisian society (at least, among the women); but Chassé (also among the women) was one of the most admired men in France. Among other triumphs of the same kind, he had the honour of causing a duel between a Polish and a French lady, who fought with pistols in the Bois de Boulogne. The latter was wounded rather seriously, and on her recovery, was confined in a convent, while her adversary was ordered to quit France. During the little trouble which this affair caused in the polite world, Chassé remained at home, reclining on a sofa after the manner of a delicate, sensitive woman who has had the misfortune to see two of her adorers risk their lives for her. In this style he received the visits of all who came to compliment him on his good luck. Louis XV. thought it worth while to send the Duke de Richelieu to tell him to put an end to his affectation.

"Explain to his Majesty," said Chassé to the Duke, "that it is not my fault, but that of Providence, which has made me the most popular man in the kingdom."

"Let me tell you, coxcomb, that you are only the third," said the Duke. "I come next to the king."

It was indeed a fact that Madame de Polignac, and Madame de Nesle had already fought for the affection of the Duke de Richelieu, when Madame de Nesle received a wound in the shoulder.[39]

Sophie Arnould was a discovery made by the Princess of Modena at the Val de Grâce, whither her royal highness had retired, according to the fashion of the time, to atone, during a portion of Lent, for the sins she had committed during the Carnival, and where she chanced to hear the young girl singing a vesper hymn. The Princess spoke of Mademoiselle Arnould's talents at the court, and, in spite of her mother's opposition, (the parents kept a lodging house somewhere in Paris) she was inscribed on the list of choristers at the king's chapel. Madame de Pompadour, already struck by the beauty of her eyes, which are said to have been enchantingly expressive, exclaimed when she heard her sing, "*Il y a là, de quoi faire une princesse.*"

SOPHIE ARNOULD.

Sophie Arnould (a charming name, which the bearer thereof owed in part to her own good taste, and in no way to her godfathers and godmothers, who christened her Anne-Madeleine) made her *début* in the year 1757, at the age of thirteen. She wore a lilac dress, embroidered in silver. Her talent, combined with her wonderful beauty, ensured her immediate success, and before she had been on the stage a fortnight, all Paris was in love with her. When she was announced to sing, the doors of the Opera were besieged by such crowds that Fréron declared he scarcely thought persons would give themselves so much trouble to enter into paradise. The fascinating Sophie was as witty as she was beautiful, and her *mots* (the most striking of which are quoted by M. A. Houssaye in his *Galerie du 18me. Siècle*), were repeated by all the fashionable poets and philosophers of Paris. Her suppers soon became celebrated, but her life of pleasure did not cause her to forget the Opera. She is said to have sung with "a limpid and melodious voice," and to have acted with "all the grace and sentiment of a practiced comédienne."[40] Garrick saw her when he was in Paris, and declared that she was the only actress on the French stage who had really touched his heart.[41]

As an instance of the effect her singing had upon the public, I may mention that in 1772, Mademoiselle Arnould refused to perform one evening, and made her appearance among the audience, saying that she had come to take a lesson of her rival, Mademoiselle Beaumesnil; that the minister, de la Vrillière, instead of sending the capricious and facetious vocalist to For-l'Evèque, in accordance with the request of the directors, contented himself with reprimanding her; that a party was formed to hiss her violently the next night of her appearance, as a punishment for her impertinence; but that directly Sophie Arnould began to sing, the conspirators were disarmed, and instead of hissing, applauded her.

On the 1st of April, 1778, the day of Voltaire's coronation at the Comédie Française, all the most celebrated actresses in Paris went to compliment him. He returned their visits directly afterwards, and his conversation with Sophie Arnould at the opera, is said to have been a speaking duet of the most marvellous lightness and brilliancy.

When poor Sophie was getting old she continued to sing, and the Abbé Galiani said of her voice that it was "the finest asthma he had ever heard." This remark, however, belongs to the list of sharp things said during the Gluck and Piccinni contests, described at some length in the next chapter but one, and in which Sophie Arnould played an important part.

Mademoiselle Arnould's *mots* seem to me, for the most part, not very susceptible of satisfactory translation. I will quote a few of them in Sophie's own language.

SOPHIE ARNOULD.

Of the celebrated dancer, Madeleine Guimard, concerning whom I shall have something to say a few pages further on, Sophie Arnould, reflecting on Madeleine's remarkable thinness, observed "*ce petit ver à soie devrait être plus gras, elle ronge une si bonne feuille.*"[42]

Sophie was born in the room where Admiral Coligny was assassinated, and where the Duchess de Montbazon lived for some time. "*Je suis venue au monde par une porte célèbre*," she said.

One day, when a very dull work, Rameau's *Zoroastre*, was going to be played at the Académie, Beaumarchais, whose tedious drama *Les deux amis* had just been brought out at the Comédie Française, remarked to Sophie Arnould that there would be no people at the opera that evening,

"*Je vous demande pardon*," was the reply, "*vos deux amis nous en enverront.*"

Seeing the portraits of Sully and Choiseul on the same snuff-box, she exclaimed, "*C'est la recette et la dépense.*"

To a lady, whose beauty was her only recommendation, and who complained that so many men made love to

her, she said, "*Eh ma chère il vous est si facile des les éloigner; vous n'avez qu'à parler.*"

Sophie's affection for the Count de Lauragais, the most celebrated and, seemingly, the most agreeable of her admirers, is said to have lasted four years. This constancy was mutual, and the historians of the French Opera speak of it as something not only unique but inexplicable and almost miraculous. At last Mademoiselle Arnould, unwilling, perhaps, to appear too original, determined to break with the Count; the mode, however, of the rupture was by no means devoid of originality. One day, by Mademoiselle Arnould's orders, a carriage was sent to the Hotel de Lauragais, containing lace, ornaments, boxes of jewellery—and two children; everything in fact that she owed to the Count. The Countess was even more generous than Sophie. She accepted the children, and sent back the lace, the jewellery, and the carriage.

A little while afterwards the Count de Lauragais fell in love with a very pretty *débutante* in the ballet department of the Opera. Sophie Arnould asked him how he was getting on with his new passion. The Count confessed that he had not made much progress in her affections, and complained that he always found a certain knight of Malta in her apartments when he called upon her.

"You may well fear him," said Sophie, "*Il est là pour chasser les infidèles.*"

SOPHIE ARNOULD.

This certainly looks like a direct reproach of inconstancy, and from Sophie's sending the Count back all his presents, it is tolerably clear that she felt herself aggrieved. He was of a violently jealous disposition, though he had no cause for jealousy as far as Sophie was concerned. Indeed, she appears naturally to have been of a romantic disposition, and a tendency to romance though it may mislead a girl yet does not deprave her.

We shall meet with the charming Sophie again during the Gluck and Piccinni period, and once again when the revolution had invaded the Opera, and had ruined some of the chief operatic celebrities. During her last illness, in telling her confessor the unedifying story of her life, she had to speak of the jealous fury of the Count de Lauragais, whom she had really loved.[43]

"My poor child, how much you have suffered!" said the kind priest.

"*Ah! c'était le bon temps! j'était si malheureuse!*" exclaimed Sophie.

Sophie Arnould's rival and successor at the Opera was Mademoiselle Laguerre, who, if she had not the wit of Sophie, had considerably more than her prudence, and who died, leaving a fortune of about £180,000.

Among the celebrated French singers of the 18th century, Madame Favart must not be forgotten. This vocalist was for many years the glory and the chief support of the Opéra Comique, which, in 1762, combined with the Comédie Italienne to form but one establishment. There was so much similarity in the styles of the performances at these two operatic theatres, that for seven years before the union was effected, the favourite piece at the one house was *La Serva Padrona*, at the other, *La Servante Maitresse*, that is to say, Pergolese's favourite work translated into French.

MADAME FAVART.

The history of the Opera in France during the latter half of the 18th century abounds in excellent anecdotes; and several very interesting ones are told of Marshal Saxe. This brave man was much loved by the beautiful women of his day. In M. Scribe's admirable play of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, Maurice de Saxe is made to say, that whatever celebrity he may attain, his name will never be mentioned without recalling that of Adrienne Lecouvreur. Some genealogist, without affectation, ought to tell us how many persons illustrious in the arts are descendants of Marshal Saxe, or of Adrienne Lecouvreur, or of both. It would be an interesting list, at the head of which the names of George Sand, and of Francœur the mathematician, might figure. But I was about to say, that the mention of the great Maurice de Saxe recalled to me not only Adrienne Lecouvreur, but also the charming Fifine Desaigles, one of the fairest and most fascinating of *blondes*, the beautiful and talented Madame Favart, and a good many other theatrical fair ones. When the Marshal died, poor Fifine went into mourning for him, and wore black, even on the stage, for as many days as it appeared to her that his passionate affection for her had lasted. It is uncertain whether or not the warrior's love for Madame Favart was returned. The Marshal said it was; the lady said it was not; the lady's husband said he didn't know. The best story told about Marshal Saxe and Madame Favart, or rather Mademoiselle Chantilly, which was at that time her name, is one relating to her elopement with Favart from Maestricht, during the siege. Mademoiselle Chantilly was a member of the operatic *troupe* engaged by the Marshal to follow the army of Flanders,[44] and of which Favart was the director. Marshal Saxe became deeply enamoured of the young *prima donna*, and made proposals to her of a nature partly flattering, partly the reverse. Mademoiselle Chantilly, however, preferred Favart, and contrived to escape with him one dark and stormy night. Indeed, so tempestuous was it, that a bridge, which formed the communication between the main body of the army and a corps on the other side of the river, was carried away, leaving the detached regiments quite at the mercy of the enemy. The next morning an officer visited the Marshal in his tent, and found him in a state of great grief and agitation.

"It is a sad affair, no doubt," said the visitor; "but it can be remedied."

"Remedied!" exclaimed the distressed hero; "no; all hope is lost; I am in despair!"

The officer showed that the bridge might be repaired in such and such a manner; upon which, the great commander, whom no military disaster could depress, but who was now profoundly afflicted by the loss of a very charming singer, replied—

"Are you talking about the bridge? That can be mended in a couple of hours. I was thinking of Chantilly. Perfidious girl! she has deserted me!"

Among the historical persons who figured at the Académie Musique about the middle of the 18th century, we must not forget Charles Edward, who was taken prisoner there. The Duke de Biron had been ordered to see to his arrest, and on the evening of the 11th December, when it was known that he intended to visit the Opera, surrounded the building with twelve hundred guards as soon as the Young Pretender had entered it. The prince was taken to Vincennes, and kept there four days. He was then liberated, and expelled from France in accordance with the terms

of the treaty of 1748, so humiliating to the French arms.

CHARLES EDWARD AT THE ACADEMIE.

The servants of the Young Pretender, and with them one of the retinue of the Princess de Talmont, whose antiquated charms had detained the Chevalier de St. Georges at Paris, were sent to the Bastille, upon which the princess wrote the following letter to M. de Maurepas:—

"The king, sir, has just covered himself with immortal glory by arresting Prince Edward. I have no doubt but that His Majesty will order a *Te Deum* to be sung, to thank God for so brilliant a victory. But as Placide, my lacquey, taken in this memorable expedition, can add nothing to His Majesty's laurels, I beg you to send him back to me."

"The only Englishman the regiment of French guards has taken throughout the war!" exclaimed the Princess de Conti, when she heard of the arrest.

There was a curious literary apparition at the Académie in 1750, on the occasion of the revival of *Thétis et Pélée*, when Fontenelle, the author of the libretto of that opera, entered a box, and sat down just where he had taken his place sixty years before, on the first night of its production. The public, delighted, no doubt, to see that men could live so long, and get so much enjoyment out of life, applauded with enthusiasm.

FRENCH COMIC OPERA.

In this necessarily incomplete history of the Opera (anything like a full narrative of its rise and progress, with particulars of the lives of all the great composers and singers, would fill ten large volumes and would probably not find a hundred readers) there are some forms of the lyric drama to which I can scarcely do more than allude. My great difficulty is to know what to omit, but I think that in addressing English readers I am justified in passing hastily over the Pulcinella Operas of Italy and the Opéra Comique of France. I shall say very little about the ballad operas of England, which are no longer played, which led to nothing, and which do not interest me personally. The lowest style of Italian comic opera, again, has not only exercised no influence, but has never attained even a moderate amount of success in this country. Not so the Opéra Comique of France, if Auber is to be taken as its representative. But the author of the *Muette de Portici*, *Gustave III.*, and *Fra Diavolo*, is not only the greatest dramatic composer France has produced, but one of the greatest dramatic composers of the century. By his masterly concerted pieces and finales he has given an importance to the *Opéra Comique* which it did not possess before his time, and if he had never written works of that class at all he would still be one of the favourite composers of the English public, esteemed and studied by musicians, and admired by all classes. The French historians of the Opéra Comique show that, as regards the dramatic form, it has its origin in the *vaudeville*, many of the old *opéras comiques* being, in fact, little more than *vaudevilles*, with original airs in place of songs adapted to tunes already known. In a musical point of view, however, the French owe their lyrical comedy to the Italians. Monsigny, Philidor, Grétry, the founders of the style, were felicitous imitators of the Pergoleses, the Leos, the Vincis, and the Piccinnis. "In *Le Déserteur*, *Le Roi et le Fermier*, *Le Maréchal Ferrant*, *Le Tableau Parlant*, we are struck," says M. Scudo, the excellent musical critic of the *Révue des Deux Mondes*, "as Dr. Burney was, in 1770, to find more than one recollection of *La Serva Padrona*, *La Cecchina*, and other opera buffas by the first masters of the Neapolitan school. The influence of Cimarosa, Paisiello, Anfossi, may be remarked in the works of Dalayrac, Berton, Boieldieu, and Nicolo. Boieldieu afterwards imitated Rossini to some extent in *La Dame Blanche*, but the chief followers of this great Italian master in France have been Hérold and Auber." This brings us down to the present day, when we find Meyerbeer, the composer of great choral and orchestral schemes, the cultivator of musico-dramatic "effects" on a large scale, writing for the Opéra Comique; and in spite of the spoken dialogue in the *Etoile du Nord* and the *Pardon de Ploermel*, it is impossible not to place those important and broadly conceived lyrical dramas in the class of grand opera.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUSSEAU AS A CRITIC AND AS A COMPOSER OF MUSIC.

The Musical Dictionary.—Account of the French Opera from the Nouvelle Héloise.—Le devin du Village.—Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Granet of Lyons.

ROUSSEAU, a man of a decidedly musical organisation, who, during his residence in Italy, learnt, as he tells us in the *Confessions*, to love the music of Italy; who wrote so earnestly and so well in favour of that music, and against the psalmody of Lulli and Rameau, in his celebrated *Lettre sur la Musique Française*; and who had sufficient candour, or, rather let us say, a sufficiently sincere love of art to express the enthusiasm he felt for Gluck when all the other writers in France, who had ever praised Italian music, felt bound to depreciate him blindly, for the greater glory of Piccinni; this Rousseau, who cared more for music than for truth or honour, and who has now been proved to have stolen from two obscure, but not altogether unknown, composers the music which he represented to be his own, in *Pygmalion*, and the *Devin du Village*, has given in his *Dictionnaire Musicale*, in the before-mentioned *Lettre sur la Musique Française*, but above all in the *Nouvelle Héloise*, the best general account that can be obtained of the Opera in France during the middle of the 18th century. I will begin with Rousseau's article on the Opera (omitting only the end, which relates to the ballet), from the *Dictionnaire Musicale*:—

ROUSSEAU'S DEFINITION OF OPERA.

"An opera is a dramatic and lyrical spectacle, designed to combine the enchantments of all the fine arts by the representation of some passionate action through sensations so agreeable as to excite both interest and illusion.[45]

"The constituent parts of an opera are the poem, the music, and the decoration. By poetry, the spectacle speaks to the mind; by music, to the ear; and by painting, to the eye: all combining, through different organs, to make the same impression on the heart. Of these three parts, my subject only allows me to consider the first and last with reference to the second.

"The art of combining sounds agreeably may be regarded under two different aspects. As an institution of nature, music confines its effects to the senses, to the physical pleasure which results from melody, harmony, and

rhythm. Such is usually the music of churches; such are the airs suited to dancing and songs. But as the essential part of a lyrical scene, aiming principally at imitation, music becomes one of the fine arts, and is capable of painting all pictures; of exciting all sentiments; of competing with poetry; of endowing her with new strength; of embellishing her with new charms; and of triumphing over her while placing the crown on her head.

"The sounds of a speaking voice, being neither harmonious nor sustained, are inappreciable, and cannot, consequently, connect themselves agreeably with the singing voice, or with instruments, at least in modern languages. It was different with the Greeks. Their language was so accentuated that its inflections, in a long declamation, formed, spontaneously as it were, musical intervals, distinctly appreciable. Thus it may be said that their theatrical pieces were a species of opera; and it was for this very reason that they could have no operas properly so called.

"But the difficulty of uniting song to declamation in modern languages explains how it is that the intervention of music has given to the lyric poem a character quite different from that of tragedy or comedy, and made it a third species of drama, having its particular rules. The differences alluded to cannot be determined without a perfect knowledge of music, of the means of identifying it with words, and of its natural relations to the human heart—details which belong less to the artist than to the philosopher.

GREEK MUSIC.

"Confining myself, therefore, on this subject to a few observations rather historical than didactic, I remark, first, that the Greek theatre had not, like ours, any lyrical feature, for that which they called so, had not the slightest resemblance to what we call so.

Their language had so much accent that, in a concert of voices, there was little noise, whilst all their poetry was musical, and all their music declamatory. Thus, song with them was hardly more than sustained discourse. They really sang their verses, as they declared at the head of their poems, a practice which gave the Romans, and afterwards the moderns, the ridiculous habit of saying, *I sing*, when nothing is sung. That which the Greeks called the lyric style was a pompous and florid strain of heroic poesy, accompanied by the lyre. It is certain, too, that their tragedies were recited in a manner very similar to singing, and that they were accompanied by instruments, and had choruses.

"But if, on that account, it should he inferred that they were operas like ours, then it must be supposed that their operas were without airs, for it appears to me unquestionable that the Greek music, without excepting even the instrumental, was a real recitative. It is true that this recitative, uniting the charm of musical sounds to all the harmony of poetry, and to all the force of declamation, must have had much more energy than the modern recitative, which can hardly acquire one of these advantages but at the expense of the others. In our living languages, which partake for the most part of the rudeness of their native climates, the application of music to speech is much less natural than it was with the Greeks. An uncertain prosody agrees ill with regularity of measure; deaf and dumb syllables, hard articulations, sounds not sonorous, with little variation, and no suppleness, cannot but with great difficulty be consorted with melody; and a poetry cadenced solely by the number of syllables, whilst it gets but a very faint harmony in musical rhythm, is constantly opposed to the diversity of that rhythm's values and movements. These are the difficulties which were to be overcome, or eluded, in the invention of the lyrical poem. The effort, therefore, of its inventors was to form, by a nice selection of words, by choice turns of expression, and by varied metres, a particular language; and this language, called lyrical, is rich or poor in proportion to the softness or harshness of that from which it is derived.

"Having thus prepared a language for music, the question was next to apply music to this language, and to render it so apt for the purposes of the lyrical scene that the whole, vocal and instrumental, should be taken for one and the same idiom. This produced the necessity of continuous singing,—a necessity the greater in proportion as the language employed should be unmusical, as the less a language has of softness and accentuation, the more the alternate change from song to speech shocks the ear.

MUSIC AND LANGUAGE.

"This mode of uniting music to poetry sufficed to produce interest and illusion among the Greeks, because it was natural; and, for the contrary reason, it cannot have the like effect on us. In listening to a hypothetical and constrained language, we can hardly conceive what the singers would say, so that with much noise they excite little emotion. Hence the further necessity of bringing physical to the aid of moral pleasure, and of supplying, by the charm of harmony, the lack of distinctness of meaning and energy of expression. Thus, the less the heart was touched the more need there was to flatter the ear, and from sensation was sought the delight which sentiment could not furnish. Hence the origin of airs, choruses, symphonies, and of that enchanting melody which often embellishes modern music at the expense of its poetic accompaniment.

"At the birth of the Opera, its inventors, to elude that which seemed unnatural, as an imitation of human life, in the union of music with speech, transferred their scenes from earth to heaven, and to hell. Not knowing how to make men speak, they made gods and devils, instead of heroes and shepherds, sing. Thus magic and marvels became speedily the stock in trade of the lyrical theatre. Yet, in spite of every effort to fascinate the eyes, whilst multitudes of instruments and of voices bewildered the ear, the action of every piece remained cold, and all its scenes were totally void of interest. As there was no plot which, however intricate, could not be easily unravelled by the intervention of some god, the spectator quietly abandoned to the poet the task of delivering his hero from his greatest dangers. Thus immense machinery produced little effect, for the imitation was always grossly defective and coarse. A supernatural action had in it no human interest, and the senses refused to yield to an illusion, in which the heart had no part. It would have been difficult to weary an assembly at greater cost than was done by these first operas.

But the spectacle, imperfect as it was, was for a long time the admiration of its contemporaries. They congratulated themselves on so fine a discovery. Here, they said, is a new principle added to that of Aristotle; here is admiration added to terror and pity. They were not aware that the apparent riches of which they boasted were but a sign of sterility, like flowers which cover the fields before harvest. It was because they could not touch the heart that they aimed at surprising, and their pretended admiration was, in fact, but a puerile astonishment of which they ought to have been ashamed. A false air of magnificence and enchantments, sorceries, chimeras, extravagances the most insane, so imposed upon them that, with the best faith in the world, they spoke with respect and enthusiasm of a theatre which merited nothing but hisses: as if there were more merit in making the king of gods utter the stupidest platitudes than there would be in attributing the same to the lowest of mortals; or as if the valets of

Molière were not infinitely preferable to the heroes of Pradon.

EARLY OPERAS.

"Although the author of these first operas had had hardly any other object than to dazzle the eye and to astound the ear, it could scarcely happen that the musician did not sometimes endeavour to express, by his art, some sentiments diffused through the piece in performance. The songs of nymphs, the hymns of priests, the shouts of warriors, infernal outcries did not so completely fill up these barbarous dramas as to leave no moments or situations of interest when the spectator was disposed to be moved. Thus it soon began to be felt, that independently of the musical declamation, often ill adapted to the language employed, the musical movement of harmony and of songs was not alien to the words which were to be uttered, and that consequently the effect of music alone, hitherto confined to the senses, could reach the heart. Melody, which was at first only separated from poetry by necessity, profited by this independence to adopt beauties absolutely and purely musical; harmony, improved and carried to perfection, opened to it new means of pleasing and of moving; and the measure, freed from the embarrassment of poetic rhythm, acquired a sort of cadence of its own.

"Music, having thus become a third imitative art, had speedily its own language, its expressions, its pictures, altogether independent of poetry. Symphony also learnt to speak without the aid of words; and sentiments often came from the orchestra quite as distinctly and vividly expressed as they could be by the mouths of actors. Spectators then, beginning to get disgusted with all the tinsel of fairy land, of puerile machinery, and of fantastic images of things never seen, looked for the imitation of nature in pictures more interesting and more true. Up to this time the Opera had been constituted as it alone could be; for what better use, at the theatre, could be made of a kind of music which could paint nothing than by employing it in the representation of things which could not exist? But as soon as music learnt to paint and to speak the charms of sentiment, it brought into contempt those of the Wand; the theatre was purged of its garden of mythology, interest was substituted for astonishment; the machines of poets and of carpenters were destroyed; and the lyric drama assumed a more noble and less gigantic character. All that could move the heart was employed with success, and gods were driven from the stage on which men were represented[46]....

OPERATIC SUBJECTS.

"This reform was followed by another not less important. The Opera, it was felt, should represent nothing cold or intellectual—nothing that the spectator could witness with sufficient tranquillity to reflect on what he saw. And it is in this especially that the essential difference between the lyric drama and pure tragedy consists. All political deliberations, all plots, conspiracies, explanations, recitals, sententious maxims—in a word, all which speaks to the reason was banished from the theatre of the heart, with all *jeux d'esprit*, madrigals, and other pleasant conceits, which suppose some activity of thought. On the contrary, to depict all the energies of sentiments, all the violence of the passions, was made the principal object of this drama: for the illusion which makes its charm is destroyed as soon as the author and actor leave the spectator a moment to himself. It is on this principle that the modern Opera is established. Apostolo Zeno, the Corneille of Italy, and his tender pupil, who is its Racine, [Metastasio] have opened and carried to its perfection this new career of the dramatic art. They have brought the heroes of history on a theatre which seemed only adapted to exhibit the phantoms of fable....

"Having tried and felt her strength, music, able to walk alone, began to disdain the poetry she had to accompany. To enhance her own value, she drew from herself beauties of which her companion had hitherto had a share. She still professes, it is true, to express her ideas and sentiments; but she assumes, so to speak, an independent language, and though the object of the poet and of the musician is the same, they are too much separated in their labours, to produce at once two images, resembling each other, yet distinct, without mutual injury. Thus it happens, that if the musician has more art than the poet, he effaces him; and the actor, seeing the spectator sacrifice the words to the music, sacrifices in his turn theatrical gesture and action to song and brilliancy of voice, which transforms a dramatic entertainment into a mere concert....

"Such are the defects which the absolute perfection of music, and its defective application to language, may introduce into the Opera. And here it may be remarked that the languages the most apt to conform to all the laws of measure and of melody are those in which the duality of which I have spoken is the least apparent, because music, lending itself to the ideas of poetry, poetry yields, in its turn, to the inflections of music, so that when music ceases to observe the rhythm, the accent and the harmony of verses, verses syllable themselves, and submit to the cadence of musical measure and accent. But when a language has neither softness nor flexibility, the harshness of its poetry hinders its subjection to music; a good recitation of verses is obstructed even by the sweetness of the melody accompanying it; and one is conscious, in the forced union of the two arts, of a perpetual constraint which shocks the ear, and which destroys at once the charm of melody and the effect of declamation. For this defect there is no remedy; and to apply, by compulsion, music to a language which is not musical, is to give it more harshness than it would otherwise have....

MUSIC AND PAINTING.

"Although music, as an imitative art, has more connection with poetry than with painting, this latter is not obliged, as poetry is, at the theatre, to make a double representation of the same object; because the one expresses the sentiments of men, and the other gives pictures merely of the places where they are, which strengthens much the illusion of the whole spectacle.... But it must be acknowledged that the task of the musician is greater than that of the painter. The imitation expressed by painting is always cold, because it wants that succession of ideas and of impressions which increasingly kindle the soul, all its portraiture being conveyed to the mind at a first look. It is a great advantage, also, to a musician that he can paint things which cannot be heard, whilst the painter cannot paint those which cannot be seen; and the greatest prodigy of an art which has no life but in movement is, that it is able to give even an image of repose. Sleep, the quietude of night, solitude, and silence, are among the number of music's pictures. Sometimes noise produces the effect of silence and silence the effect of noise, as when one falls asleep at a monotonous reading and wakes up the moment the reader stops.... Further, whilst the painter can derive nothing from the musician, the skilful musician will not leave the studio of the painter without profit. Not only can he, at his will, agitate the sea, excite the flames of a conflagration, make rivulets run and murmur, bring down the rain and swell it to torrents, but he can augment the horrors of the frightful desert, darken the walls of a subterranean prison, calm the storm, make the air tranquil and the sky serene, and shed from the orchestra the freshest fragrance of the sweetest bowers.

"We have seen how the union of the three arts we have mentioned constitute the lyric scene. Some have been

tempted to introduce a fourth, of which I have now to speak.

"The question is to know whether dancing, being a language, and consequently capable of becoming an imitative art, should not enter with the other three into the action of the lyrical drama, or whether it would not rather interrupt and suspend this action and spoil the effect and the unity of the whole piece.

"But here, I think, there can be no question at all. For every one feels that the interest of a successive action depends upon the continuance and growing increase of the impression its representation makes on us. But by breaking off a spectacle and introducing other spectacles which have nothing to do with it, the principal subject is divided into independent parts, with no link of connection between them; and the more agreeable the inserted spectacles are, the greater must be the deformity produced by the mutilation of the whole.... It is for this reason that the Italians have at last banished these interludes from their operas. They are, separately considered, a species of spectacle very pleasing, very piquante, and quite natural, but so misplaced in the midst of a tragic action, that the two exhibitions injure each other mutually, and the one can never interest but at the expense of the other."

THE BALLET.

Rousseau then suggests that the ballet should come after the opera, which, as every one knows, is the rule at the Italian Opera houses of London, and which appears to me a far preferable arrangement to that of the French Académie, where no lyrical work is considered complete without a *divertissement* introduced anyhow into the middle of it, or of the Italian theatres where it is still the custom to perform short ballets or *divertissements* between the acts of the opera. Italy, the country of the Vestrises, of the Taglionis, and in the present day I may add of Rosati, has always bestowed much care on the production of its *ballets*. I have mentioned (Chapter I.), that the opera in its infancy owed much to the protection of the Popes. The Papal Government in the present day is said to pay special attention to the *ballet*, and to watch with paternal solicitude the *pirouettes* and *jetés battus* of the *danseuses*. At least I find a passage to that effect in a work entitled "La Rome des Papes,"[47] the writer declaring that cardinals and bishops attend the Operas of Italy to see that the *ballerine* swing their legs within certain limits.

Having seen Rousseau's views of the Opera as it might be, let us now turn to his description of the Opera of Paris as it actually was; a description put into the mouth of St. Preux, the hero of his *Nouvelle Héloise*.

"Before I tell you what I think of this famous theatre, I will tell you what is said here about it; the judgment of connoisseurs may correct mine, if I am wrong.

"The Opera of Paris passes at Paris for the most pompous, the most voluptuous, the most admirable spectacle that human art has ever invented. It is, say its admirers, the most superb monument of the magnificence of Louis XIV.; and one is not so free as you may think to express an opinion on so important a subject. Here you may dispute about everything except music and the Opera; on these topics alone it is dangerous not to dissemble. French music is defended, too, by a very rigorous inquisition, and the first thing intimated as a warning, to strangers who visit this country, is that all foreigners admit, there is nothing in this world so fine as the Opera of Paris. The fact is, discreet people hold their tongues, and dare only laugh in their sleeves.

"It must, however, be conceded, that not only all the marvels of nature, but many other marvels, much greater, which no one has ever seen, are represented, at great cost, at this theatre; and certainly Pope[48] must have alluded to it when he describes one on which was seen gods, hobgoblins, monsters, kings, shepherds, fairies, fury, joy, fire, a jig, a battle, and a ball.

OPERATIC INCONGRUITY.

"This magnificent assemblage, so well organized, is in fact regarded as though it contained all the things it represents. When a temple appears, the spectators are seized with a holy respect, and if the goddess be at all pretty, they become at once half pagan. They are not so difficult here as they are at the *Comédie Francaise*. There the audience cannot indue a comedian with his part: at the Opera, they cannot separate the actor from his. They revolt against a reasonable illusion, and yield to others in proportion as they are absurd and clumsy. Or, perhaps, they find it easier to form an idea of gods than of heroes. Jupiter having a different nature from ours, we may think about him just as we please: but Cato was a man; and how many men are they who have any right to believe that Cato could have existed?

"The Opera is not then here as elsewhere, a company of comedians paid to entertain the public; its members are, it is true, people whom the public pay, and who exhibit themselves before it; but all this changes its nature and name, for these dramatists form a Royal Academy of Music,[49] a species of sovereign court, which judges without appeal in its own cause, and is otherwise by no means particular about justice or truth....

"Having now told you what others say of this brilliant spectacle, I will tell you at present what I have seen myself.

"Imagine an enclosure fifteen feet broad, and long in proportion; this enclosure is the theatre. On its two sides are placed at intervals screens, on which are grossly painted the objects which the scene is about to represent. At the back of the enclosure hangs a great curtain, painted in like manner and nearly always pierced and torn that it may represent at a little distance gulfs on the earth or holes in the sky. Every one who passes behind this stage, or touches the curtain, produces a sort of earthquake, which has a double effect. The sky is made of certain blueish rags suspended from poles or from cords, as linen may be seen hung out to dry in any washerwoman's yard. The sun, for it is seen here sometimes, is a lighted torch in a lantern. The cars of the gods and goddesses are composed of four rafters, squared and hung on a thick rope in the form of a swing or see-saw; between the rafters is a cross-plank on which the god sits down, and in front hangs a piece of coarse cloth well dirtied, which acts the part of clouds for the magnificent car. One may see towards the bottom of the machine, two or three stinking candles, badly snuffed, which, whilst the great personage dementedly presents himself swinging in his see-saw, fumigate him with an incense worthy of his dignity. The agitated sea is composed of long angular lanterns of cloth and blue pasteboard, strung on parallel spits, which are turned by little blackguard boys. The thunder is a heavy cart rolled over an arch, and is not the least agreeable instrument one hears. The flashes of lightning are made of pinches of resin thrown on a flame; and the thunder is a cracker at the end of a fusee.

SCENERY AND

"The theatre is moreover furnished with little square traps, which, opening at need, announce that the demons are about to issue from their cave. When they have to rise into

DECORATIONS.

the air, little demons of stuffed brown cloth are substituted for them, or sometimes real chimney sweeps, who swing about suspended on ropes till they are majestically lost in the rags of which I have spoken. The accidents, however, which not unfrequently happen are sometimes as tragic as farcical. When the ropes break, then infernal spirits and immortal gods fall together, and lame and occasionally kill one another. Add to all this, the monsters, which render some scenes very pathetic, such as dragons, lizards, tortoises, crocodiles and large toads, who promenade the theatre with a menacing air, and display at the Opera all the temptations of St. Anthony. Each of these figures is animated by a lout of a Savoyard, who has not even intelligence enough to play the beast.

"Such, my cousin, is the august machinery of the Opera, as I have observed it from the pit with the aid of my glass; for you must not imagine that all this apparatus is hidden, and produces an imposing effect. I have only described what I have seen myself, and what any other spectator may see. I am assured, however, that there are a prodigious number of machines employed to put the whole spectacle in motion, and I have been invited several times to examine them; but I have never been curious to learn how little things are performed by great means.

"I will not speak to you of the music; you know it. But you can form no idea of the frightful cries, the long bellowings with which the theatre resounds daring the representation. One sees actresses nearly in convulsions, tearing yelps and howls violently out of their lungs, closed hands pressed on their breasts, heads thrown back, faces inflamed, veins swollen, and stomachs panting. I know not which of the two, the eye or the ear, is most agreeably affected by this ugly display; and, what is really inconceivable, it is these shriekings alone that the audience applaud. By the clapping of their hands they might be taken for deaf people delighted at catching some shrill piercing sound. For my part, I am convinced that they applaud the outcries of an actress at the Opera as they would the feats of a tumbler or a rope-dancer at a fair. The sensation produced by this screaming is both revolting and painful; one actually suffers whilst it lasts, but is so glad to see it all over without accident as willingly to testify joy. Imagine this style of singing employed to express the delicate gallantry and tenderness of Quinault! Imagine the muses, the graces, the loves, Venus herself, expressing themselves in this way, and judge the effect! As for devils, it might pass, for this music has something infernal in it, and is not ill-adapted to such beings.

THE AUDIENCE

"To these exquisite sounds those of the orchestra are most worthily married. Conceive an endless charivari of instruments without melody, a drawling and perpetual rumble of basses, the most lugubrious and fatiguing I have ever heard, and which I have never been able to support for half an hour without a violent headache. All this forms a species of psalmody in which there is generally neither melody nor measure. But should a lively air spring up, oh, then, the sensation is universal; you then hear the whole pit in movement, painfully following, and with great noise, some certain performer in the orchestra. Charmed to feel for a moment a cadence, which they understand so little, their ears, voices, arms, feet, their entire bodies, agitated all over, run after the measure always about to escape them; while the Italians and Germans, who are deeply affected by music, follow it without effort, and never need beat the time. But in this country the musical organ is extremely hard; voices have no softness, their inflections are sharp and strong, and their tones all reluctant and forced; and there is no cadence, no melodious accent in the airs of the people; their military instruments, their regimental fifes, their horns, and hautbois, their street singers, and *guinguette* violins, are all so false as to shock the least delicate ear. Talents are not given indiscriminately to all men, and the French seem to me of all people to have the least aptitude for music. My Lord Edward says that the English are not better gifted in this respect; but the difference is, that they know it, and do not care about it; whilst the French would relinquish a thousand just titles to praise, rather than confess, that they are not the first musicians in the world. There are even those here who would willingly regard music as a state interest, because, perhaps, the cutting of two chords of the lyre of Timotheus was so regarded at Sparta.—But to return to my description.

"I have yet to speak of the ballets, the most brilliant part of the opera. Considered separately, they form agreeable, magnificent, and truly theatrical spectacles; but it is as constituent parts of operatic pieces that I now allude to them. You know the operas of Quinault. You know how this sort of diversion is there introduced. His successors, in imitating, have surpassed him in absurdity. In every act the action is generally interrupted at the most interesting moment, by a dance given to the actors who are seated, while the public stand up to look on. It thus happens that the *dramatis personæ* are absolutely forgotten. The way in which these fêtes are brought about is very simple: Is the prince joyous? his courtiers participate in his joy, and dance. Is he sad? he must be cheered up, and they dance again. I do not know whether it is the fashion at our court to give balls to kings when they are out of humour; but I know that one cannot too much admire the stoicism of the monarchs of the buskin who listen to songs, and enjoy *entrechats*, and *pirouettes*, while their crowns are in danger, their lives in peril, and their fate is being decided behind the curtain. But there are many other occasions for dances: the gravest actions in life are performed in dancing.

THE BALLET

"Priests dance, soldiers dance, gods dance, devils dance; there is dancing even at interments,—dancing *àpropos* of everything.

"Dancing is there the fourth of the fine arts constituting the lyrical scene. The three others are imitative; but what does this imitate? Nothing. It is then quite extraneous when employed in this manner, for what have minuets and rigadoons to do in a tragedy? I will say more. It would not be less misplaced, even if it imitated something, because of all the unities that of language is the most indispensable; and an action or an opera performed, half in singing and half in dancing, would be even more ridiculous than one written half in French and half in Italian.

"Not content with introducing dancing as an essential part of the lyrical scene, the Academicians have sometimes even made it its principal subject; and they have operas, called *ballets*, which so ill respond to their title, that dancing is just as much out of its place in them as in the others. Most of these ballets form as many separate subjects as there are acts, and these subjects are linked together by certain metaphysical relations, which the spectator could never conceive, if the author did not take care to explain them to him in the prologue. The seasons, the ages, the senses, the elements, what connexion have these things with dancing? and what can they offer, through such a medium, to the imagination? Some of the pieces referred to are even purely allegorical, as the Carnival, and Folly; and these are the most insupportable of all, because, with much cleverness and piquancy they have neither sentiments nor pictures, nor situations, nor warmth, nor interest, nor anything that music can take hold of, to flatter

the heart or to produce illusion. In these pretended ballets, the action always passes in singing, whilst dancing always interrupts the action. But as these performances have still less interest than the tragedies, the interruptions are less remarked. Thus defect serves to hide defect, and the great art of the author is, in order to make his ballet endurable, to make his piece as dull as possible....

"After all, perhaps, the French ought not to have a better operatic drama than they have, at least, with respect to execution; not that they are not capable of appreciating what is good, but because the bad amuses them more. They feel more gratification in satirising than in applauding; the pleasure of criticising more than compensates them for the *ennui* of witnessing a stupid composition, and they would rather mockingly pelt a performance after they have left the theatre, than enjoy themselves while there."

I have already remarked that, although in his *Lettre sur la Musique Française*, Rousseau had praised the melody of the Italians as much as he had condemned the dreary psalmody of the French, he expressed the highest admiration for the genius of Gluck. He never missed a representation of *Orphée*, and said, in allusion to the gratification that work had afforded him, that "after all there was something in life worth living for, since in two hours so much genuine pleasure could be obtained." He observed that Gluck seemed to have come to France in order to give the lie to his proposition that good music could never be set to French words. At another time he observed that every one complained of Gluck's want of melody, but that for his part he thought it issued from all his pores.

Now let us turn to the *Devin du Village*, of which both words and music are generally attributed to Jean Jacques Rousseau; that Rousseau who, in the *Confessions*, reproaches himself so bitterly with having stolen a ribbon (it is true he had accused an innocent young girl of the theft, and, by implication, of something more), who passes complacently over a hundred mean and disgusting acts which he acknowledges to have committed, and who ends by declaring that any one who may come to the conclusion that he, Rousseau, is, "*un malhonnête homme*," is himself "a man to be smothered," (*un homme à étouffer*).

Le Devin du Village is undoubtedly the work of Jean Jacques Rousseau, as far as the libretto is concerned; but M. Castil Blaze has shown, on what appears to me very good evidence,[50] that the music was the production of Granet, a composer residing at Lyons.

One day in the year 1751, Pierre Rousseau, called Rousseau of Toulouse, to distinguish him from the numerous other Rousseaus living in Paris, and known as the director of the *Journal Encyclopédique*, received a parcel containing a quantity of manuscript music, which, on examination, turned out to be the score of an opera. It was accompanied by a letter addressed, like the parcel itself, to "M. Rousseau, *homme de lettres*, demeurant à Paris," in which a person signing himself Granet, and writing from Lyons, expressed a hope that his music would be found worthy of the illustrious author's words; that he had given appropriate expression to the tender sentiments of Colette and Colin, &c. Pierre Rousseau, though a journalist, understood music. He knew that Granet's letter was intended for Jean Jacques, and that he ought to return it, with the music, to the post-office, but the score of the *Devin du Village*, from the little he had seen of it, interested him, and he not only kept it until he had made himself familiar with it from beginning to end, but even showed it to a friend, M. de Belissent, one of the conservators of the Royal Library, and a man of great musical acquirements. As soon as Pierre Rousseau and De Belissent had quite finished with the *Devin du Village*, they sent it back to the post-office, whence it was forwarded to its true destination.

Jean Jacques had been expecting Granet's music, and, on receiving the opera in a complete form, took it to La Vaubalière, the farmer-general, and offered it to him, directly or indirectly, as a suitable piece for Madame de Pompadour's theatre at Versailles, where several operettas had already been produced. La Vaubalière was anxious to maintain himself in the good graces of the favourite, and purchased for her entertainment the right of representing the *Devin du Village*. This handsome present cost the gallant financier the sum of six thousand francs. However, the opera was performed, was wonderfully successful, and was afterwards produced at the Académie, when Rousseau received four thousand francs more; so at least says M. Castil Blaze, who appears to have derived his information from the books of the theatre, though according to Rousseau's own statement in the *Confessions*, the Opera sent him only fifty *louis*, which he declares he never asked for, but which he does not pretend to have returned.

Rousseau "confesses," with studied detail, how the music of each piece in the *Devin du Village* occurred to him; how he at one time thought of burning the whole affair (a conceit, by the way, which has since been rendered common-place by amateur authors in their prefaces); how his friends succeeded in persuading him to do nothing of the kind; and how, at last, he wrote the drama and sketched out the whole of the music in six days, so that when he arrived with his work in Paris, he had nothing to add but the recitative and the "*remplissage*" by which he probably meant the orchestral parts. In the next page he tells us that he would have given anything in the world if he could only have had the *Devin du Village* performed for himself alone, and have listened to it with closed doors, as Lulli is reported to have listened to his *Armide*, executed for his sole gratification. This pleasure might, perhaps, have been enjoyed by Rousseau if he had really composed the music himself, for when the Académie produced his second *Devin du Village*, of which the music was undoubtedly his own, the public positively refused to listen to it, and hissed it until it was withdrawn. If the director had persisted in representing the piece the theatre would doubtless have been deserted by every one but the composer.

But to return to the original score which, as Rousseau himself informs us, wanted nothing when he arrived in Paris except what he calls the "*remplissage*" and the recitative. He had intended, he says, to have *Le Devin* performed at the Opera, but M. de Cury, the intendant of the Menus Plaisirs, was determined it should first be brought out at the Court. A duel was very nearly taking place between the two directors, when it was at last decided by Rousseau himself, that Fontainebleau, Madame de Pompadour, and La Vaubalière should have the preference. Whether Granet had omitted to write recitative or not, it is a remarkable fact that recitative was wanted when the piece came to be rehearsed, and that Rousseau allowed Jéliotte, the singer, to supply it. This he mentions himself, as also that he was not present at any of the rehearsals—for it is at rehearsals above all, that a sham composer runs the chance of being detected. It is an easy thing for any man to say that he has composed an opera, but it may be difficult for him to correct a very

simple error made by the copyist in transcribing the parts. However, Rousseau admits that he attended no rehearsals except the last, and that he did not compose the recitative, which, be it observed, the singers required forthwith, and which had to be written almost beneath their eyes.

But what was Granet doing in the meanwhile? it will be asked. In the meanwhile Granet had died. And Pierre Rousseau and his friend M. de Bellissent? Rousseau, of Toulouse, supported by the Conservator of the Royal Library, accused Jean Jacques openly of fraud in the columns of the *Journal Encyclopédique*. These accusations were repeated on all sides, until at last Rousseau undertook to reply to them by composing new music to the *Devin du Village*. This new music the Opera refused to perform, and with some reason, for it appears (as the reader has seen) to have been detestable. It was not executed until after Rousseau's death, and at the special request of his widow, when, in the words of Grimm, "all the new airs were hooted without the slightest regard for the memory of the author."

It is this utter failure of the second edition of the *Devin du Village* which convinces me more than anything else that the first was not from the hand of Rousseau. But let us not say that he was "*un malhonnête homme*." Probably the conscientious author of the Contrat Social adopted the children of others by way of compensation for having sent his own to the Enfants Trouvés.

CHAPTER X.

GLUCK AND PICCINNI IN PARIS.

Gluck at Vienna.—Iphigenia in Aulis.—A rehearsal at Sophie Arnould's.—Gluck and Vestris.—Piccinni in Italy.—Piccinni in Paris.—The two Iphigenias.—Iphigenia in Champagne.—Madeleine Guimard, Vestris, and the Ballet.

Fifteen years before the French Revolution, of which, in the present day, every one can trace the gradual approach, the important question that occupied the capital of France was not the emancipation of the peasants, nor the reorganisation of the judicial system, nor the equalisation of the taxes all over the country; it was simply the merit of Gluck as compared with Piccinni, and of Piccinni as compared with Gluck. Paris was divided into two camps, each of which had its own special music. The German master was declared by the partisans of the Italian to be severe, unmelodious and heavy: by his own friends he was considered profound, full of inspiration and eminently dramatic. Piccinni, on the other hand, was accused by his enemies of frivolity and insipidity, while his supporters maintained that his melodies touched the heart, and that it was not the province of music to appeal to the intellect. Fundamentally, the dispute was that which still exists as to the superiority of German or Italian music. Severe classicists continue to despise modern Italian composers as unintellectual, and the Italians still sneer at the music of Germany as the "music of mathematics." Rossini, Donizetti, and Verdi have been undervalued in succession by the critics of Germany, France and England; and although there can be no question as to the inferiority of the last to the first-named of these composers, Signor Verdi, if he pays any attention to the attacks of which he is so constantly the object, can always console himself by reflecting that, after all, not half so much has been said against his operas as it was once the fashion to say against Rossini's. The Italians, on the other hand, can be fairly reproached with this, that, to the present day, they have never appreciated *Don Giovanni*. They consent to play it in London, Paris and St. Petersburgh because the musical public of the capitals know the work and are convinced that nothing finer has ever been written; (this is, however, less in Paris than in the other two capitals of the Italian Opera), but the singers themselves do not in their hearts like Mozart. They are kind enough to execute his music, because they are well paid for it, but that is all.

GERMAN AND ITALIAN MUSIC.

In the present century, which is above all an age of eclecticism, we find the natural descendants of Piccinni going over to the Gluckists, while the legitimate inheritors of Gluck abandon their succession to adopt the facile forms and sometimes unmeaning if melodious phrases of the Piccinnists. Certainly there are no traces of the grand old German school in the light popular music of Herr Flotow (who, if not a German, is a Germanised Russian); and, on the other hand, Signor Verdi in his emphatic moments quite belies his Italian origin; indeed, there are passages in several of this composer's operas which may be traced directly not to Rossini, but to Meyerbeer.

The history of the quarrels between the Gluckists and Piccinnists has no importance in connection with art. These disputes led to no sound criticism, nor have the attacks and replies on either side added anything to what was already known on the subject of music as applied to the expression and illustration of human passion. As for deciding between Gluckism and Piccinnism (I say nothing about the men, who certainly were not equal in point of genius), that is impossible. It is almost a question of organisation. It may be remarked, however, that no composer ever began as a Gluckist (so to speak) and ended as a Piccinnist, whereas Rossini, in his last and greatest work, approaches the German style, and even Donizetti, in his latest and most dramatic operas, exhibits somewhat of the same tendency. It will be remembered, too, that the great Mozart, and in our own day Meyerbeer, wrote their earlier operas in the Italian mode, and abandoned it when they recognised its insufficiency for dramatic purposes. Indeed, Gluck's own style, as we shall presently see, underwent a similar change. But it would be rash to conclude from these instances, that Italians, writing in the Italian style, have produced no great dramatic music. Rossini's *Otello* and Bellini's *Norma* at once suggest themselves as convincing proofs of the contrary.

All that remains now of the Gluck *versus* Piccinni contest is a number of anecdotes, which are amusing, as showing the height musical enthusiasm and musical prejudice had reached in Paris at an epoch when music and the arts generally were about the last things that should have occupied the French. But before calling attention to a few of the principal incidents in this harmonious civil war, let me sketch the early career of each of the great leaders.

Gluck was born, in 1712, of Bohemian parents, so that he was almost certainly not of German but of Slavonian origin.[51] Young Gluck learnt the scale simultaneously with the alphabet (why should not all children be taught to read from music-notes as they are taught to read from ordinary typography?) and soon afterwards received lessons on the violoncello, which, however, were put a stop to by the death of his father.

Little Christopher was left an orphan at a very early age. Fortunately, he had made sufficient progress on the

violoncello to obtain an engagement with a company of wandering musicians. Thus he contrived to exist until the troupe had wandered as far as Vienna, where his talent attracted the attention of a few sympathetic and generous men, who enabled him to complete his musical education in peace.

CHILDHOOD OF GLUCK.

After studying harmony and counterpoint, Gluck determined to leave the capital of Germany for Italy; for in those days no one was accounted a musician who had not derived a certain amount of his inspiration from Italian sources. After studying four years under the celebrated Martini, he felt that the time had come for him to produce a work of his own. His "Artaxerxes" was given at Milan with success, and this opera was followed by seven others, which were brought out either at Venice, Cremona or Turin. Five years sufficed for Gluck to make an immense name in Italy. His reputation even extended to the other countries of Europe and the offers he received from the English were sufficiently liberal to tempt the rising composer to pay a visit to London. Here, however, he had to contend with the genius and celebrity of Handel, compared with whom he was as yet but a composer of mediocrity. He returned to Vienna not very well pleased with his reception in England, and soon afterwards made his appearance once more in Italy, where he produced five other works, all of which were successful. Hitherto Gluck's style had been quite in accordance with the Italian taste, and the Italians did not think of reproaching him with any want of melody. On the contrary, they applauded his works, as if they had been signed by one of their most esteemed masters. But if the Italians were satisfied with Gluck, Gluck was not satisfied with the Italians; and it was not until he had left Italy, that he discovered his true vein.

Gluck was forty-six years of age when he brought out his *Alcestis*, the first work composed in the style which is now regarded as peculiarly his own. *Alcestis*, and *Orpheus*, by which it was followed, created a great sensation in Germany, and when the Chevalier Gluck composed a work "by command," in honour of the Emperor Joseph's marriage, it was played, not perhaps by the greatest artists in Germany, but certainly by the most distinguished, for the principal parts were distributed among four arch-duchesses and an arch-duke. Where are the dukes and duchesses now who could play, not with success, but without disastrous failure, in an opera by Gluck?

GLUCK AT VIENNA.

It so happened that at Vienna, attached to the French embassy, lived a certain M. du Rollet, who was in the habit of considering himself a poet. To him Gluck confided his project of visiting Paris, and composing for the French stage. Du Rollet not only encouraged the musician in his intentions, but even promised him a libretto of his own writing. The libretto was not good—indeed what *libretto* is?—except, perhaps, some of Scribe's *libretti* for the light operas of Auber. But it must be remembered that the *Opéra Comique* is only a development of the vaudeville; and in the entire catalogue of serious operas, with the exception of Metastasio's, a few by Romani and Da Ponte's *Don Giovanni* (with a Mozart to interpret it), it is not easy to find any which, in a literary and poetical sense, are not absurd. However, Du Rollet arranged, or disarranged, Racine's *Iphigénie*, to suit the requirements of the lyric stage, and handed over "the book" to the Chevalier Gluck.

Iphigenia in Aulis was composed in less than a year; but to write an opera is one thing, to get it produced another. At that time the French Opera was a close borough, in the hands of half a dozen native composers, whose nationality was for the most part their only merit. These musicians were not in the habit of positively refusing all chance to foreign competitors; but they interposed all sorts of delays between the acceptance and the production of their works, and did their best generally to prevent their success. However, the Dauphiness Marie Antoinette, had undertaken to introduce the great German composer to Paris, and she smoothed the way for him so effectually, that soon after his arrival in the French capital, *Iphigenia in Aulis* was accepted, and actually put into rehearsal.

Gluck now found a terrible and apparently insurmountable obstacle to his success in the ignorance and obstinacy of the orchestra. He was not the man to be satisfied with slovenly execution, and many and severe were the lessons he had to give the French musicians, in the course of almost as many rehearsals as Meyerbeer requires in the present day, before he felt justified in announcing his work as ready for representation. The young Princess had requested the lieutenant of police to take the necessary precautions against disturbances; and she herself, accompanied by the Dauphin, the Count and Countess of Provence, the Duchesses of Chartres and of Bourbon, and the Princess de Lamballe, entered the theatre before the public were admitted. The ministers and all the Court, with the exception of the king (Louis XV.) and Madame Du Barry were present. Sophie Arnould was the Iphigenia, and is said to have been admirable in that character, though the charming Sophie seems to have owed most of her success to her acting rather than to her singing.

The first night of *Iphigenia*, Larrivée, who took the part of Agamemnon, actually abstained from singing through his nose. This is mentioned by the critics and memorialists of the time as something incredible, and almost supernatural. It appears that Larrivée, in spite of his nasal twang, was considered a very fine singer. The public of the pit used to applaud him, but they would also say, when he had just finished one of his airs, "That nose has really a magnificent voice!"

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

The success of *Iphigenia* was prodigious. Marie Antoinette herself gave the signal of the applause, and it mattered little to the courtiers whether they understood Gluck's grand, simple music, or not.

All they had to do, and all they did, was to follow the example of the Dauphiness.

Never did poet, artist, or musician have a more enthusiastic patroness than Marie Antoinette. She not only encouraged Gluck herself, but visited with her severe displeasure all who ventured to treat him disrespectfully. And it must be remembered that in those days a *Grand Seigneur* paid a great artist, or a great writer, just what amount of respect he thought fit. Thus, one *Grand Seigneur* had Voltaire caned (and afterwards from pride or from cowardice refused his challenge), while another struck Beaumarchais, and, after insulting him in the court of justice over which he presided, summoned him to leave the bench and come outside, that he might assassinate him.

The first person with whom Gluck came to an open rupture was the Prince d'Hennin, the "Prince of Dwarfs," as he was called. The chevalier, in spite of his despotic, unyielding nature, could not help giving way to the charming Sophie Arnould, who, with a caprice permitted to her alone, insisted on the rehearsals of *Orpheus* taking place in her own apartments. The orchestra was playing, and Sophie Arnould was singing, when suddenly the door opened, and in walked the Prince d'Hennin. This was not a grand rehearsal, and all the vocalists were seated.

"I believe," said the *Grand Seigneur*, addressing Sophie Arnould in the middle of her air, "that it is the custom in France to rise when any one enters the room, especially if it be a person of some consideration?"

Gluck leaped from his seat with rage, rushed towards the intruder, and with his eyes flashing fire, said to him:—

"The custom in Germany, sir, is to rise only for those whom we esteem."

Then turning to Sophie, he added:—

"I perceive, Mademoiselle, that you are not mistress in your own house. I leave you, and shall never set foot here again."

When the story was told to Marie Antoinette, she was indignant with the Prince, and compelled him to make amends to the chevalier for the insult offered to him. The Prince's pride must have suffered terribly; for he had to pay a visit to the composer, and to thank him for having assured him in the plainest terms, that he looked upon him with great contempt.

This Prince d'Hennin was a favourite butt for the wit of the vivacious Count de Lauragais, who, as the reader, perhaps, remembers, was one of Sophie Arnould's earliest and most devoted admirers. One day when the interesting Sophie was unwell, the Count asked her physician whether it was not especially necessary to think of her spirits, and to keep away everything that might tend to have a depressing effect upon them.

The doctor answered the Count's sagacious question in the affirmative.

"Above all," continued De Lauragais, "do you not consider it of the greatest importance that the Prince d'Hennin should not be allowed to visit her?"

THE PRINCE D'HENNIN.

The physician admitted that it would be as well she should not see the prince; but De Lauragais was not satisfied with this, and he at last persuaded the obliging doctor to put his opinion in the form of a direct recommendation. In other words, he made him write a prescription for Mdlle. Arnould, forbidding her to have any conversation with the Prince d'Hennin. This prescription he sent to the prince's house, with a letter calling his particular attention to it, and entreating him, for the sake of Mdlle. Arnould's health, not to forget the injunction it contained. The consequence was a duel, which, however, was attended with no bad results, for, in the evening, the insultor and the insulted met at Sophie Arnould's house.

It now became the fashion at the Court to attend the rehearsals of *Orpheus*, which took place once more in the theatre. On these occasions, the doors were besieged long before the performance commenced; and numbers of persons were unable to gain admission. To see Gluck at a rehearsal was infinitely more interesting than to see him at one of the ordinary public representations. The composer had certain habits; and from these he would not depart for any one. Thus, on entering the orchestra, he would take his coat off to conduct at ease in his shirt sleeves. Then he would remove his wig, and replace it by a cotton night-cap of the remotest fashion. When the rehearsal was at an end, he had no necessity to trouble himself about the articles of dress which he had laid aside, for there was a general contest between the dukes and princes of the Court as to who should hand them to him. *Orpheus* is said to have been quite as successful as *Iphigenia*. One thing, however, which sometimes makes me doubt the completeness of this success, in a musical point of view, is the recorded fact, that "*the ballet*, especially, was very fine." The *ballet* is certainly not the first thing we think of in *William Tell*, or even in *Robert*. It appears that Gluck himself objected positively to the introduction of dancing into the opera of *Orpheus*. He held, and with evident reason, that it would interfere with the seriousness and pathos of the general action, and would, in short, spoil the piece. He was overruled by the "*Diou* de la Danse." What could Gluck's opinion be worth in the eyes of Auguste or of Gaetan Vestris, who held that there were only three great men in Europe—Voltaire, Frederick of Prussia, and himself. No! the dancer was determined to have his "*Chacone*," and he was as obstinate, indeed, more obstinate, than Gluck himself.

"Write me the music of a *chacone*, Monsieur Gluck," said the god of dancing.

"A chacone!" exclaimed the indignant composer; "Do you think the Greeks, whose manners we are endeavouring to depict, knew what a chacone was?"

"Did they not!" replied Vestris, astonished at the information; and in a tone of compassion, he added, "Then they are much to be pitied."

GLUCK AND VESTRIS.

Alcestis, on its first production, did not meet with so much success as *Orpheus* and *Iphigenia*. The piece itself was singularly uninteresting; and this was made the pretext for a host of epigrams, of which the sting fell, not upon the author, but upon the composer. However, after a few representations, *Alcestis* began to attract the public quite as much as the two previous works had done. Gluck's detractors were discomfited, and the theatre was filled every evening with his admirers. At this juncture, the composer of *Alcestis* was thrown into great distress by the death of his favourite niece. He left Paris, and his enemies, who had been unable to vanquish, now resolved to replace him.

I have said that Madame Du Barry did not honour the representation of Gluck's operas with her presence. It was, in fact, she who headed the opposition against him. She was mortified at not having some favourite musician of her own to patronize when the Dauphiness had hers, and now resolved to send to Italy for Piccinni, in the hope that when Gluck returned, he would find himself neglected for the already celebrated Italian composer. Baron de Breteuil, the French ambassador at Rome, was instructed to offer Piccinni an annual salary of two thousand crowns if he would go to Paris, and reside there. The Italian needed no pressing, for he was as anxious to visit the French capital as Gluck himself had been. Just then, however, Louis XV. died, by which the patroness of the German composer, from Dauphiness, became Queen. Madame Du Barry's party hesitated about bringing over a composer to whom they fancied Marie Antoinette must be as hostile as they themselves were to Gluck. But the Marquis Caraccioli, the Neapolitan ambassador at the Court of France, had now taken the matter in hand, and from mere excess of patriotism, had determined that Piccinni should make his appearance in Paris to destroy the reputation of the German at a single blow. As for Marie Antoinette, she not only did not think of opposing the Italian, but, when he arrived, received him most graciously, and showed him every possible kindness. But before introducing Piccinni to our readers as the rival of Gluck in Paris, let us take a glance at his previous career in his native land.

Nicolas Piccinni, who was not less than fifty years of age when he left Naples, for Paris, with the avowed purpose of outrivalling Gluck, was born at Bari, in the Neapolitan territory, in 1728. His father was a musician, and apparently an unsuccessful one, for he endeavoured to disgust his son with the art he had himself practised, and absolutely forbade him to touch any musical instrument. No doubt this injunction of the father produced just the contrary of the effect intended. The

NICOLAS PICCINNI.

child's natural inclination for music became the more invincible the more it was repressed, and little Nicolas contrived, every day, to devote a few hours in secret to the study of the harpsichord, the piano of that day. He knew nothing of music, but guided by his own instinct, learnt something of its mysteries simply by experimenting (for it was nothing more) on the instrument which his father had been imprudent enough, as he would have said himself, to leave within his reach. Gradually he learnt to play such airs as he happened to remember, and, probably without being aware himself of the process he was pursuing, studied the art of combining notes in a manner agreeable to the ear; in other words, he acquired some elementary notions of harmony. And still his father flattered himself that little Nicolas cared nothing for music, and that nothing could ever make him a musician.

One day, old Piccinni had occasion to visit the Bishop of Bari. He took his son with him, but left the little boy in one room while he conversed on private business with His Eminence in another. Now it chanced that in the room where Nicolas was left there was a magnificent harpsichord, and the temptation was really too great for him. Harpsichords were not made merely to be looked at, he doubtless thought. He went to the instrument, examined it carefully, and struck a note. The tone was superb.

Next he ventured upon a few notes in succession; and, then, how he longed to play an entire air!

There was no help for it; he must, at all events, play a few bars with both hands. The harpsichord at home was execrable, and this one was admirable—made by the Broadwood of harpsichord makers. He began, but, carried away by the melody, soon forgot where he was, and what he was doing.

The Bishop, and especially Piccinni *père*, were thunderstruck. There was a roughness and poverty about the accompaniment which showed that the young performer was far from having completed his studies in harmony; but, at the same time, there was no mistaking the fire, the true emotion, which characterised his playing. The father thought of going into a violent passion, but the Bishop would not hear of such a thing.

"Music is evidently the child's true vocation," said the worthy ecclesiastic; "He must be a musician, and one day, perhaps, will be a great composer."

PICCINNI AT NAPLES.

The Bishop now would not let old Piccinni rest until he promised to send his son to the Conservatory of Music, directed by the celebrated Leo. The father was obliged to consent, and Nicolas was sent off to Naples. Here he was confided to the care of an inferior professor, who was by no means aware of the child's precocious talent. The latter was soon disgusted with the routine of the class, and conceived the daring project of composing a mass, being at the time scarcely acquainted even with the rudiments of composition. He was conscious of the audacity of the undertaking, and therefore confided it to no one; but, somehow or other, the news got abroad that little Nicolas had composed a grand mass, and, before long, Leo himself heard of it.

Then the great professor sent for the little pupil, who arrived trembling from head to foot, thinking apparently that for a boy of his age to compose a mass was a species of crime.

Leo was grave, but not so severe as the young composer had expected.

"You have written a mass?" he commenced.

"Excuse me, sir, I could not help it;" said the youthful Piccinni.

"Let me see it?"

Nicolas went to his room for the score, and brought it back, together with the orchestral parts all carefully copied out.

After casting a rapid glance at the manuscript, Leo went into the concert-room, assembled an orchestra, and distributed the orchestral parts among the requisite number of executants.

Little Nicolas was in a state of great trepidation, for he saw plainly that the professor was laughing at him. It was impossible to run away, or he would doubtless have made his escape. Leo advanced towards him, handed him the score, and with imperturbable gravity, requested him to take his place at the desk in front of the orchestra. Nicolas, with the courage of despair, took up his position, and gave the signal to the orchestra which the merciless professor had placed under his command. After his first emotion had passed away, Nicolas continued to beat time, fancying that, after all, what he had composed, though doubtless bad, was, perhaps, not ridiculous. The mass was executed from beginning to end. As he approached the finale, all the young musician's fears returned. He looked at the professor, and saw that he did not seem to be in the slightest degree impressed by the performance. What *did* he, what *could* he think of such a production?

"I pardon you this time," said the terrible *maestro*, when the last chord had been struck; "but if ever you do such a thing again I will punish you in such a manner that you will remember it as long as you live. Instead of studying the principles of your art, you give yourself up to all the wildness of your imagination, and when you have tutored your ill-regulated ideas into something like shape, you produce what you call a mass, and think, no doubt, that you have composed a masterpiece."

Nicolas burst into tears, and then began to tell Leo how he had been annoyed by the dry and pedantic instruction of the sub-professor. Leo, who, with all his coldness of manner, had a heart, clasped the boy in his arms, told him not to be disheartened, but to persevere, for that he had real talent; and finally promised that from that moment he himself would superintend his studies.

PICCINNI AND DURANTE.

Leo died, and was succeeded by Durante, who used to say of young Piccinni, "The others are my pupils, but this one is my son." Twelve years after his entrance into the Conservatory the most promising of its *alumni* left it and set about the composition of an opera. As Piccinni was introduced by Prince Vintimille, the director of the theatre then in vogue was unable to refuse him a hearing; but he represented to His Highness the certainty of the young composer's work turning out a failure. Piccinni's patron was not wanting in generosity.

"How much can you lose by his opera," he said to the manager, "supposing it should be a complete *fiasco*?"

The manager named a sum equivalent to three hundred and twenty pounds.

"There is the money, then," said the prince, handing him at the same time a purse. "If the *Donne Dispetose* (that was the name of Piccinni's opera) should prove a failure, you may keep the money, otherwise you can return it to me."

Logroscino was the favorite Italian composer of that day, and great was the excitement when it was heard that

the next new opera to be produced was not of his writing. Evidently, his friends had only one course open to them. They decided to hiss Logroscino's rival.

But the Florentine public had reckoned without Piccinni's genius. They could not hiss a man whose music delighted them, and Piccinni's *Donne Dispetose* threw them into ecstacies. Those who had come to hoot remained to applaud. Piccinni's reputation had commenced, and it went on increasing until at last his was the most popular name in all musical Italy.

Five years afterwards, Piccinni (who in the meanwhile had produced two other operas) gave his celebrated *Cecchina*, otherwise *La Buona Figliuola*, at Rome. The success of this work, of which the libretto is founded on the story of *Pamela*, was almost unprecedented. It was played everywhere in Italy, even at the marionette theatres; and still there was not sufficient room for the public, who were all dying to see it. This little opera filled every playhouse in the Italian peninsula, and it had taken Piccinni ten days to write! The celebrated Tonelli, who, being an Italian, had naturally heard of its success, happened to pass through Rome when it was being played there. He was not by any means persuaded that the music was good because the public applauded it; but after hearing the melodious opera from beginning to end, he turned to his friends and said, in a tone of sincere conviction, "This Piccinni is a true inventor!"

Of course the *Cecchina* was heard of in France. Indeed, it was the great reputation achieved by that opera which first rendered the Parisians anxious to hear Piccinni, and which inspired Madame Du Barry with the hope that in the Neapolitan composer she might find a successful rival to the great German musician patronised by Marie Antoinette.

GLUCK AND PICCINNI.

Piccinni, after accepting the invitation to dispute the prize of popularity in Paris with Gluck, resolved to commence a new opera forthwith, and had no sooner reached the French capital than he asked one of the most distinguished authors of the day to furnish him with a *libretto*. Marmontel, to whom the request was made, gave him his *Roland*, which was the Roland of Quinault cut down from five acts to three. Unfortunately, Piccinni did not understand a word of French. Marmontel was therefore obliged to write beneath each French word its Italian equivalent, which caused it to be said that he was not only Piccinni's poet, but also his dictionary.

Gluck was in Germany when Piccinni arrived, and on hearing of the manœuvres of Madame du Barry and the Marquis Caraccioli to supplant him in the favour of the Parisian public, he fell into a violent passion, and wrote a furious letter on the subject, which was made public. Above all, he was enraged at the Academy having accepted from his adversary an opera on the subject of Roland, for he had agreed to compose an *Orlando* for them himself.

"Do you know that the Chevalier is coming back to us with an *Armida* and an *Orlando* in his portfolio?" said the Abbé Arnaud, one of Gluck's most fervent admirers.

"But Piccinni is also at work at an *Orlando*?" replied one of the Piccinnists.

"So much the better," returned the Abbé, "for then we shall have an *Orlando* and also an *Orlandino*."

Marmontel heard of this *mot*, which caused him to address some unpleasant observations to the Abbé the first time he met him in society.

But the Abbé was not to be silenced. One night, when Gluck's *Alceste* was being played, he happened to occupy the next seat to Marmontel. *Alceste* played by Mademoiselle Lesueur, has, at the end of the second act, to exclaim—

"*Il me déchire le cœur.*"

"*Ah, Mademoiselle*," said the Academician quite aloud, "*vous me déchirez les oreilles.*"

"What a fortunate thing for you, Sir," said the Abbé, "if you could get new ones."

Of course the two armies had their generals. Among those of the Piccinnists were some of the greatest literary men of the day—Marmontel, La Harpe, D'Alembert, &c. The only writers on Gluck's side were Suard, and the Abbé Arnaud, for Rousseau, much as he admired Gluck, cannot be reckoned among his partisans. Suard, who wrote under a pseudonym, generally contrived to raise the laugh against his adversaries. The Abbé Arnaud, as we have seen, used to defend his composer in society, and constituted himself his champion wherever there appeared to be the least necessity, or even opportunity, of doing so. Volumes upon volumes were written on each side; but of course no one was converted.

The Gluckists persisted in saying that Piccinni would never be able to compose anything better than concert music.

The Piccinnists, on the other hand, denied that Gluck had the gift of melody, though they readily admitted that he had this advantage over his adversary—he made a great deal more noise.

GLUCK AND PICCINNI.

In the meanwhile the rehearsals of Piccinni's *Orlando*, or *Orlandino*, as the Abbé Arnaud called it, were not going on favourably. The orchestra, which had been subdued by the energetic Gluck, rebelled against Piccinni, who was quite in despair at the vast inferiority of the French to the Italian musicians.

"Everything goes wrong," he said to Marmontel; "there is nothing to be done with them."

Marmontel was then obliged to interfere himself. Profiting by Piccinni's forbearance, directors, singers, and musicians were in the habit of treating him with the coolest indifference. Once, when Marmontel went to rehearsal, he found that none of the principal singers were present, and that the opera was to be rehearsed with "doubles." The author of the *libretto* was furious, and said he would never suffer the work of the greatest musician in Italy to be left to the execution of "doubles." Upon this, Mademoiselle Bourgeois had the audacity to tell the Academician that, after all, he was but the double of Quinault, whose *Roland* (as we have seen) he had abridged. One of the chorus singers, too, explained, that for his part he was not double at all, and that it was a fortunate thing for M. Marmontel's shoulders that such was the case.

At last, when all seemed ready, and the day had been fixed for the first representation, up came Vestris, the god of dancing, with a request for some *ballet* music. It was for the thin but fascinating Madeleine Guimard, who was not in the habit of being refused. Piccinni, without delay, set about the music of her *pas*, and produced a gavot, which was considered one of the most charming things in the Opera.

When Piccinni started for the theatre, the night of the first representation, he took leave of his family as if he had been going to execution. His wife and son wept abundantly, and all his friends were in a state of despair.

"Come, my children," said Piccinni, at last; "this is unreasonable. Remember that we are not among savages. We are living with the politest and kindest nation in Europe. If they do not like me as a musician, they will, at all events, respect me as a man and a stranger."

Piccinni's success was complete. It was impossible for the Gluckists to deny it. Accordingly they said that they had never disputed Piccinni's grace, nor his gift of melody, though his talent was spoiled by a certain softness and effeminacy, which was observable in all his productions.

Marie Antoinette, whom Madame du Barry and her clique had looked upon as the natural enemy of Piccinni, because she was the avowed patroness of Gluck, astonished both the cabals by sending for the Italian composer and appointing him her singing-master. This was, doubtless, a great honour for Piccinni, though a very unprofitable one; for he was not only not paid for his lessons, but incurred considerable expense in going to and from the palace, to say nothing of the costly binding of the operas and other music, which he presented to the royal circle.

PICCINNI'S SUCCESS.

Beaumarchais had found precisely the same disadvantages attaching to the post of Court music-master, when, in his youth, he gave lessons to the daughters of Louis XV.

When Berton assumed the management of the Opera, he determined to make the rival masters friends, and invited them to a magnificent supper, where they were placed side by side. Gluck drank like a man and a German, and before the supper was finished, was on thoroughly confidential terms with his neighbour.

"The French are very good people," said he to Piccinni, "but they make me laugh. They want us to write songs for them, and they can't sing."

The reconciliation appeared to be quite sincere; but the fact was, the quarrel was not between two men, but between two parties. When the direction of the Opera passed from the hands of Berton into those of Devismes, a project of the latter, for making Piccinni and Gluck compose an opera, at the same time, on the same subject, brought their respective admirers once more into open collision. "Here," said Devismes to Piccinni, "is a libretto on the story of Iphigenia in Tauris. M. Gluck will treat the same subject; and the French public will then, for the first time, have the pleasure of hearing two operas founded upon the same incidents, and introducing the same characters, but composed by two masters of entirely different schools."

"But," objected Piccinni, "if Gluck's opera is played first, the public will think so much of it that they will not listen to mine."

"To avoid that inconvenience," replied the director, "we will play yours first."

"But Gluck will not permit it."

"I give you my word of honour," said Devismes, "that your opera shall be put into rehearsal and brought out as soon as it is finished, and before Gluck's."

Piccinni went home, and at once set to work.

He had just finished his two first acts when he heard that Gluck had come back from Germany with his *Iphigenia in Tauris* completed. However, he had received the director's promise that his Iphigenia should be produced first, and, relying upon Devismes's word of honour, Piccinni merely resolved to finish his opera as quickly as possible, so that the management might not be inconvenienced by having to wait for it, now that Gluck's work, which was to come second, was ready for production.

Piccinni had not quite completed his *Iphigenia*, when, to his horror, he heard that Gluck's was already in rehearsal! He rushed to Devismes, reminded him of his promise, reproached him with want of faith, but all to no purpose. The director of the Opera declared that he had received a "command" to produce Gluck's work immediately, and that he had nothing to do but to obey. He was very sorry, was in despair, &c.; but it was absolutely necessary to play M. Gluck's opera first.

Piccinni felt that he was lost. He went to his friends, and told them the whole affair.

THE TWO IPHIGENIAS.

"In the first place," said Guinguenée, the writer, "let me look at the poem?" The poem was not merely bad, it was ridiculous. The manager had taken advantage of Piccinni's ignorance of the French language to impose upon him a *libretto* full of absurdities and common-places, such as no sensible schoolboy would have put his name to. Guinguenée, at Piccinni's request, re-wrote the whole piece—greatly, of course, to the annoyance of the original author.

In the meanwhile the rehearsals of Gluck's *Iphigenia* were continued. At the first of these, in the scene where *Orestes*, left alone in prison, throws himself on a bench saying "L*e calme rentre dans mon cœur*," the orchestra hesitated as if struck by the apparent contradiction in the accompaniment, which is still of an agitated character, though "Orestes" has declared that his heart is calm. "Go on!" exclaimed Gluck; "he lies! He has killed his mother!"

The musicians of the Académie had a right, so many at a time, to find substitutes to take their places at rehearsals. Not one profited by this permission while *Iphigenia* was being brought out.

The *Iphigenia in Tauris* is known to be Gluck's masterpiece, and it is by that wonderful work and by *Orpheus* that most persons judge of his talent in the present day. Compared with the German's profound, serious, and admirably dramatic production, Piccinni's *Iphigenia* stood but little chance. In the first place, it was inferior to it; in the second, the public were so delighted with Gluck's opera that they were not disposed to give even a fair trial to another written on the same subject. However, Piccinni's work was produced, and was listened to with attention. An air, sung by *Pylades* to *Orestes*, was especially admired, but on the whole the public seemed to be reserving their judgment until the second representation.

The next evening came; but when the curtain drew up, Piccinni discovered, to his great alarm, that something had happened to Mademoiselle Laguerre, who was entrusted with the principal part. *Iphigenia* was unable to stand upright. She rolled first to one side, then to the other; hesitated, stammered, repeated the words, made eyes at the pit; in short, Mdlle. Laguerre was intoxicated!

"This is not 'Iphigenia in Tauris,'" said Sophie Arnould; "this is 'Iphigenia in Champagne.'"

That night, the facetious heroine was sent, by order of the king, to sleep at For-l'Evèque, where she was detained two days. A little imprisonment appears to have done her good. The evening of her re-appearance, Mademoiselle Laguerre, with considerable tact, applied a couplet expressive of remorse to her own peculiar situation, and, moreover, sang divinely.

While the Gluck and Piccinni disputes were at their height, a story is told of one amateur, doubtless not without sympathizers, who retired in disgust to the country and sang the praises of the birds and their gratuitous performances in a poem, which ended as follows:—

IPHIGENIA IN CHAMPAGNE.

> Là n'est point d'art, d'ennui scientifique;
> Piccinni, Gluck n'ont point noté les airs;
> Nature seule en dicta la musique,
> Et Marmontel n'en a pas fait les vers.

The contest between Gluck and Piccinni (or rather between the Gluckists and Piccinnists) was brought to an end by the death of the former. An attempt was afterwards made to set up Sacchini against Piccinni; but Sacchini being, as regards the practice of his art, as much a Piccinnist as a Gluckist, this manœuvre could not be expected to have much success.

The French revolution ruined Piccinni, who thereupon retired to Italy. Seven years afterwards he returned to France, and, having occasion to present a petition to Napoleon, was graciously received by the First Consul in the Palace of the Luxembourg.

"Sit down," said Napoleon to Piccinni, who was standing; "a man of your merit stands in no one's presence."

Piccinni now retired to Passy; but he was an old man, his health had forsaken him, and, in a few months, he died, and was buried in the cemetery of the suburb which he had chosen for his retreat.

In the present day, Gluck appears to have vanquished Piccinni, because, at long intervals, one of Gluck's grandly constructed operas is performed, whereas the music of his former rival is never heard at all. But this, by no means, proves that Piccinni's melodies were not charming, and that the connoisseurs of the eighteenth century were not right in applauding them. The works that endure are not those which contain the greatest number of beauties, but those of which the form is most perfect. Gluck was a composer of larger conceptions, and of more powerful genius than his Italian rival; and it may be said that he built up monuments of stone while Piccinni was laying out parterres of flowers. But if the flowers were beautiful while they lasted, what does it matter to the eighteenth century that they are dead now, when even the marble temples of Gluck are antiquated and moss-grown?

I cannot take leave of the Gluck and Piccinni period without saying a few words about its principal dancers, foremost among whom stood Madeleine Guimard, the thin, the fascinating, the ever young, and the two Vestrises—Gaetan, the Julius of that Cæsar-like family, and Auguste its Augustus.

One evening when Madeleine Guimard was dancing in *Les fêtes de l'hymen et de l'amour*, a very heavy cloud fell from the theatrical heavens upon one of her beautiful arms, and broke it. A mass was said for Mademoiselle Guimard's broken arm in the church of Notre Dame.[52]

Houdon, the sculptor, moulded Mademoiselle Guimard's foot.

MADELEINE GUIMARD.

Fragonard, the painter, decorated Mademoiselle Guimard's magnificent, luxuriously-furnished hotel. In his mural pictures he made a point of introducing the face and figure of the divinity of the place, until at last he fell in love with his model, and, presuming so far as to show signs of jealousy, was replaced by David—yes Louis David, the fierce and virtuous republican!

David, the great painter of the republic and of the empire was, of course, at this time, but a very young man. He was, in fact, only a student, and Madeleine Guimard, finding that the decoration of her "Temple of Terpsichore" (as the *danseuse's* artistic and voluptuous palace was called) did not quite satisfy his aspirations, gave him the stipend he was to have received for covering her walls with fantastic designs, to continue his studies in the classical style according to his own ideas.

This was charity of a really thoughtful and delicate kind. As an instance of simple bountiful generosity and kindheartedness, I may mention Madeleine Guimard's conduct during the severe winter of 1768, when she herself visited all the poor in her neighbourhood, and gave to each destitute family enough to live on for a year. Marmontel, deeply affected by this beneficence, addressed the celebrated epistle to her beginning—

"Est il bien vrai, jeune et belle damnée," &c.

"Not yet Magdalen repentant, but already Magdalen charitable," exclaimed a preacher in allusion to Madeleine Guimard's good action, (which soon became known all over Paris, though the dancer herself had not said a word about it); and he added, "the hand which knows so well how to give alms will not be rejected by St. Peter when it knocks at the gate of Paradise."

Madeleine Guimard, with all her powers of fascination, was not beautiful nor even pretty, and she was notoriously thin. Byron used to say of thin women, that if they were old, they reminded him of spiders, if young and pretty, of dried butterflies. Madeleine Guimard's theatrical friends, of course, compared her to a spider. Behind the scenes she was known as *L'araignée*. Another of her names was *La squelette des grâces*. Sophie Arnould, it will be remembered, called her "a little silk-worm," for the sake of the joke about "*la feuille*," and once, when she was dancing between two male dancers in a *pas de trois* representing two satyrs fighting for a nymph, an uncivil spectator said of the exhibition that it was like "two dogs fighting for a bone."

MADELINE GUIMARD.

Madeleine Guimard is said to have preserved her youth and beauty in a marvellous manner, besides which, she had such a perfect acquaintance with all the mysteries of the toilet, that by the arts of dress and adornment alone, she could have made herself look young when she was already beginning to grow old. Marie-Antoinette used to consult her about her costume and the arrangement of her hair, and once when, for insubordination at the theatre, she had been ordered to For-l'Evèque, the *danseuse* is reported to have said to her maid, "never mind, Gothon, I have written to the Queen to tell her that I have discovered a style of *coiffure*; we shall be free before the evening."

I have not space to describe Mademoiselle Guimard's private theatre,[53] nor to speak of her *liaison* with the Prince de Soubise, nor of her elopement with a German prince, whom the Prince de Soubise pursued, wounding him and killing three of his servants, nor of her ultimate marriage with a humble "professor of graces" at the Conservatory of Paris. I must mention, however, that in her decadence Madeleine Guimard visited London (a dozen Princes de Soubise would have followed her with drawn swords if she had attempted to leave Paris during her

prime); and that Lord Mount Edgcumbe, the author of the interesting "Musical Reminiscences," saw her dance at the King's Theatre in the year 1789. This was the year of the taking of the Bastille, when a Parisian artist might well have been glad to make a little tour abroad. The dancers who had appeared at the beginning of the season had been insufferably bad, and the manager was at last compelled to send to Paris for more and better performers. Amongst them, says Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "came the famous Mademoiselle Guimard, then near sixty years old, but still full of grace and gentility, and she had never possessed more." Madeleine Guimard had ceased to be the rage in Paris for nearly ten years, ("*Vers 1780*," says M. A. Houssaye, in his "Galerie du Dix-huitième Siècle", *elle tomba peu à peu dans l'oubli*"), but she was not sixty or even fifty years of age when she came to London. M. Castil Blaze, an excellent authority in such matters, tells us in his "*Histoire de l'Académie Royale de Musique*," that she was born in 1743.

THE VESTRIS FAMILY.

By way of contrast to Madeleine Guimard, I may call attention to Mademoiselle Théodore, a young, pretty and accomplished *danseuse*, who hesitated before she embraced a theatrical career, and actually consulted Jean Jacques Rousseau on the subject; who remained virtuous even on the boards of the Académie Royale; and who married Dauberval, the celebrated dancer, as any respectable *bourgeoise* (if Dauberval had not been a dancer) might have done. Perhaps some aspiring but timid and scrupulous Mademoiselle Théodore of the present day would like to know what Rousseau thought about the perils of the stage? He replied to the letter of the *danseuse* that he could give her no advice as to her conduct if she determined to join the Opera; that in his own quiet path he found it difficult to lead a pure irreproachable life: how then could he guide her in one which was surrounded with dangers and temptations?

Vestris, I mean Vestris the First, the founder of the family, was as celebrated as Mademoiselle Guimard for his youthfulness in old age. M. Castil Blaze, the historian of the French Opera, saw him fifty-two years after his *début* at the Académie, which took place in 1748, and declares that he danced with as much success as ever, going through the steps of the minuet "*avec autant de grâce que de noblesse*." Gaetan left the stage soon after the triumphant success of his son Auguste, but re-appeared and took part in certain special performances in 1795, 1799 and 1800. On the occasion of the young Vestris's *début*, his father, in court dress, sword at side, and hat in hand, appeared with him on the stage. After a short but dignified address to the public on the importance of the art he professed, and the hopes he had formed of the inheritor of his name, he turned to Auguste and said, "Now, my son, exhibit your talent to the public! Your father is looking at you!"

The Vestris family, which was very numerous, and very united, always went in a body to the opera when Auguste danced, and at other times made a point of stopping away. "Auguste is a better dancer than I am," the old Vestris would say; "he had Gaetan Vestris for his father, an advantage which nature refused me."

"If," said Gaetan, on another occasion, "*le dieu de la danse* (a title which he had himself given him) touches the ground from time to time, he does so in order not to humiliate his comrades."

This notion appears to have inspired Moore with the lines he addressed in London to a celebrated dancer.

> "—— You'd swear
> When her delicate feet in the dance twinkle round,
> That her steps are of light, that her home is the air,
> And she only *par complaisance* touches the ground."

THE VESTRIS FAMILY.

The Vestrises (whose real name was *Vestri*) came from Florence. Gaetan, known as *le beau Vestris*, had three brothers, all dancers, and this illustrious family has had representatives for upwards of a century in the best theatres of Italy, France and England. The last celebrated dancer of the name who appeared in England, was Charles Vestris, whose wife was the sister of Ronzi di Begnis. Charles Vestris was Auguste's nephew. His father, Auguste's brother, was Stefano Vestris, a stage poet of no ability, and Mr. Ebers, in his "Seven Years of the King's Theatre,"[54] tells us (giving us therein another proof of the excellent *esprit de famille* which always animated the Vestrises) that when Charles Vestris and his wife entered into their annual engagement, "the poet was invariably included in the agreement, at a rate of remuneration for his services to which his consanguinity to those performers was his chief title."

We can form some notion of Auguste Vestris's style from that of Perrot (now ballet-master at the St. Petersburgh Opera), who was his favourite pupil, and who is certainly by far the most graceful and expressive dancer that the opera goers of the present day have seen.

END OF VOL. I.

HISTORY

OF

THE OPERA,

from its Origin in Italy to the present Time.

WITH ANECDOTES
OF THE MOST CELEBRATED COMPOSERS AND VOCALISTS OF EUROPE.

BY
SUTHERLAND EDWARDS,
AUTHOR OF "RUSSIANS AT HOME," ETC.

"QUIS TAM DULCIS SONUS QUI MEAS COMPLET AURES?"
"WHAT IS ALL THIS NOISE ABOUT?"

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HISTORY OF THE OPERA.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OPERA IN ENGLAND AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH AND BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

HITHERTO I have been obliged to trace the origin and progress of the Opera in various parts of Europe. At present there is one Opera for all the world, that is to say, the same operatic works are performed every where, if not,

"De Paris à Pékin, de Japon jusqu'à Rome,"

at least, in a great many other equally distant cities, and which Boileau never heard of; as, for instance, from St. Petersburgh to Philadelphia, and from New Orleans to Melbourne. But for the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic wars, the universality of Opera would have been attained long since. The directors of the French Opera, after producing the works of Gluck and Piccinni, found it impossible, as we shall see in the next chapter, to attract the public by means of the ancient *répertoire*, and were obliged to call in the modern Italian composers to their aid. An Italian troop was engaged to perform at the Académie Royale, alternately with the French company, and the best opera buffas of Piccinni, Traetta, Paisiello, and Anfossi were represented, first in Italian, and afterwards in French.

Sacchini and Salieri were engaged to compose operas on French texts specially for the Académie. In 1787, Salieri's *Tarare* (libretto by Beaumarchais),[55] was brought out with immense success; the same year, the same theatre saw the production of Paisiello's *Il re Teodoro*, translated into French; and, also the same year, Paisiello's *Marchese di Tulipano* was played at Versailles, by a detachment from the Italian company engaged at our own King's Theatre.

OPERA AT VERSAILLES.

This is said to have been the first instance of an Italian troop performing alternately in London and in Paris. A proposition had been made under the Regency of Philip of Orleans, for the engagement of Handel's celebrated company;[56] but, although the agreement was drawn up and signed, from various causes, and principally through the jealousy of the "Academicians," it was never carried out. The London-Italian company of 1787 performed at Versailles, before the Court and a large number of aristocratic subscribers, many of whom had been solicited to support the enterprise by the queen herself. Storace, the *prima donna assoluta* of the King's Theatre, would not accompany the other singers to Paris. Madame Benini, however, the *altra prima donna* went, and delighted the French amateurs. Lord Mount Edgcumbe, in his interesting volume of "Musical Reminiscences," tells us that she "had a voice of exquisite sweetness, and a finished taste and neatness in her manner of singing; but that she had so little power, that she could not be heard to advantage in so large a theatre: her performance in a small one was perfect." Among the other vocalists who made the journey from London to Paris, were Mengozzi the tenor, who was Madame Benini's husband, and Morelli the bass. "The latter had a voice of great power, and good quality, and he was a very good actor. Having been running footman to Lord Cowper at Florence," continues Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "he could not be a great musician." Benini, Mengozzi, and Morelli, again visited Paris in 1788, but did not make their appearance there in 1789, the year of the taking of the Bastille. The *répertoire* of these singers included operas by Paisiello, Cimarosa, Sarti, and Anfossi, and they were particularly successful in Paisiello's *Gli Schiavi per Amore*. When this opera was produced in London in 1787 (with Storace, not Benini, in the principal female part), it was so much admired that it ran to the end of the season without any change. Another Italian company gave several series of performances in Paris between 1789 and 1792, and then for nine years France was without any Italian Opera at all.

Storace was by birth and parentage, on her mother's side, English; but she went early to Italy, "and," says the author from whom I have just quoted, "was never heard in this country till her reputation as the first buffa of her time was fully established." Her husband was Fisher, a violinist (whose portrait has been painted by Reynolds); but she never bore his name, and the marriage was rapidly followed by a separation. Mrs. Storace settled entirely in England, and after quitting the King's Theatre accepted an engagement at Drury Lane. Here English Opera was raised to a pitch of excellence previously unknown, thanks to her singing, together with that of Mrs. Crouch, Mrs. Bland, Kelly, and Bannister. The musical director was Mrs. Storace's brother, Stephen Storace, the arranger of the pasticcios entitled the *Haunted Tower*, and the *Siege of Belgrade*.

MADAME MARA.

Madame Mara made her first appearance at the King's Theatre the year before Storace's *début*. She had previously sung in London at the Pantheon Concerts, and at the second Handel Festival (1785), in Westminster Abbey. I have already spoken of this vocalist's performances and adventures at the court of Frederick the Great, at Vienna, and at Paris, where her worshippers at the Concerts Spirituels formed themselves into the sect of "Maratistes," as opposed to that of the "Todistes," or believers in Madame Todi.[57]

Lord Mount Edgcumbe, during a visit to Paris, heard Madame Mara at one of the Concerts Spirituels, in the old theatre of the Tuileries. She had just returned from the Handel Commemoration, and sang, among other things, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," which was announced in the bills as being "Musique de Handel, paroles de *Milton*." "The French," says Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "had not the taste to like it."

The first opera in which Madame Mara appeared at the King's Theatre was *Didone*, a pasticcio, in which four songs of different characters, by Sacchini, Piccinni, and two other composers, were introduced. She afterwards sang with Miss Cecilia Davies (*L'Inglesina*) in Sacchini's *Perseo*.

At this period Handel's operas were already so much out of fashion, though esteemed as highly as ever by musicians and by the more venerable of connoisseurs, that when *Giulio Cesare* was revived, with Mara and Rubinelli (both of whom sang the music incomparably well), in the principal parts, it had no success with the general public; nor were any of Handel's operas afterwards performed at the King's Theatre. *Giulio Cesare*, in which many of the most favourite songs from Handel's other operas ("Verdi prati," "Dove sei," "Rendi sereno il ciglio," and others) were interpolated, answered the purpose for which it was produced, and attracted George III. two or three times to the theatre. Moreover (to quote Lord Mount Edgcumbe's words), "it filled the house, by attracting the exclusive lovers of the old style, who held cheap all other operatic performances."

THE PANTHEON.

In 1789 (the year in which the supposed sexagenarian, Madeleine Guimard, "still full of grace and gentility," made her appearance) the King's Theatre was burnt to the ground —not without a suspicion of its having been maliciously set on fire, which was increased by the suspected person soon after committing suicide. Arrangements were made for carrying on the Opera at the little theatre in the Haymarket, where Mara was engaged as the first woman in serious operas, and Storace in comic. The company afterwards moved to the Pantheon, "which," says Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "in its original state was the largest and most beautiful room in London, and a very model of fine architecture. It was the chef-d'œuvre of Wyatt, who himself contrived and executed its transformation, taking care not to injure any part of the building, and so concealing the columns and closing its dome, that it might be easily restored after its temporary purpose was answered, it being then in contemplation to erect an entirely new and magnificent opera-house elsewhere, a project which could never be realised. Mr. Wyatt, by this conversion, produced one of the prettiest, and by far the most genteel and comfortable theatres I ever saw, of a moderate size and excellent shape, and admirably adapted both for seeing and hearing. There the regular Opera was successfully carried on, with two very good companies and ballets. Pacchierotti, Mara, and Lazzarini, a very pleasing singer with a sweet tenor voice, being at the head of the serious; and Casentini, a pretty woman and genteel actress, with Lazzarini, for tenor, Morelli and Ciprani principal buffos, composing the comic. This was the first time that Pacchierotti[58] had met with a good *prima donna* since Madame Lebrun, and his duettos with Mara were the most perfect pieces of execution I ever heard. The operas in which they performed together were Sacchini's *Rinaldo* and Bertoni's *Quinto Fabio* revived, and a charming new one by Sarti, called *Idalide*, or *La Vergine del Sole*. The best comic were La Molinara, and La bella Pescatrice, by Guglielmi. On the whole I never enjoyed the opera so much as at this theatre."

The Pantheon enterprise, however, like most operatic speculations in England, did not pay, and at the end of the first season (1791) the manager had incurred debts to the amount of thirty thousand pounds. In the meanwhile the King's Theatre had been rebuilt, but the proprietor, now that the Opera was established at the Pantheon, found himself unable to obtain a license for dramatic performances, and had to content himself with giving concerts at which the principal singer was the celebrated David. It was proposed that the new Opera house should take the debts of the Pantheon, and with them its operatic license, but the offer was not accepted, and in 1792 the Pantheon was destroyed by fire—in this case the result, clearly, of accident.

At last the schism which had divided the musical world was put an end to, and an arrangement was made for opening the King's Theatre in the winter of 1793. There was not time to bring over a new company, but one was formed out of the singers already in London, with Mara at their head and with Kelly for the tenor.

MR. MARA.

Mara was now beginning to decline in voice and in popularity. When she was no longer engaged at the Italian Opera, she sang at concerts and for a short time at Covent Garden, where she appeared as "Polly" in *The Beggars' Opera*. She afterwards sang with the Drury Lane company while they performed at the King's Theatre during the rebuilding of their own house, which had been pulled down to be succeeded by a much larger one. She appeared in an English serious opera, called *Dido*, "in which," says Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "she retained one song of her *Didone*, the brilliant *bravura*, *Son Regina*. It did not greatly succeed, though the music was good and well sung. This is not surprising," he adds, "the serious opera being ill suited to our stage, and our language to recitative. None ever succeeded but Dr. Arne's *Artaxerxes*, which was, at first, supported by some Italian singers, Tenducci being the original Arbaces." It is noticeable that in the aforesaid English *Dido* Kelly was the tenor, while Mrs. Crouch took the part of first man, which at this time in Italy was always given to a sopranist.

Madame Mara's husband, the ex-violinist of the Berlin orchestra, appears never to have been a good musician, and always an idle drunkard. His wife at last got disgusted with his habits, and probably, also, with his performance on the violin,[59] for she went off with a flute-player named Florio to Russia, where she lived for many years. When she was about seventy she re-appeared in England and gave a concert at the King's Theatre, but without any sort of success. Her wonderful powers were said to have returned, but when she sang her voice was generally compared to a penny trumpet. Madame Mara then returned to Moscow, where she suffered greatly by the fire of 1812. She afterwards resided at some town in the Baltic provinces, and died there at a very advanced age.

The next great vocalist who visited England after Mara's *début*, was Banti. She had commenced life as a street singer; but her fine voice having attracted the attention of De Vismes, the director of the Académie, he told her to come to him at the Opera, where the future *prima donna*, after hearing an air of Sacchini's three times, sang it perfectly from beginning to end. De Vismes at once engaged her; and soon afterwards she made her first appearance with the most brilliant success. Although Banti was now put under the best masters, she was of such an indolent, careless disposition, that she never could be got to learn even the first elements of music. Nevertheless, she was so happily endowed by nature, that it gave her no trouble to perfect herself in the most difficult parts; and whatever she sang, she rendered with the most charming expression imaginable. Lord Mount Edgcumbe, who does not mention the fact of her having sung at the French Opera, says that Banti was the most delightful singer he ever heard (though, when she appeared at the King's Theatre in 1799, she must have been forty-two years of age[60]); and tells us that, "in her, genius supplied the place of science; and the most correct ear, with the most exquisite taste, enabled her to sing with more effect, more expression, and more apparent knowledge of her art, than many much better professors."

BANTI.

It is said of Banti, that when she was singing in Paris, though she never made the slightest mistake in concerted pieces, she sometimes executed her airs after a very strange fashion. For instance: in the *allegro* of a cavatina, after singing the principal motive, and the intermediary phrase or "second part," she would, in a fit of absence, re-commence the air from the very beginning; go on with it until the turning point at the end of the second part; again re-commence and continue this proceeding, until at last the conductor warned her that next time she had better think of terminating the piece. In the meanwhile the public, delighted with Banti's voice, is said to have been quite satisfied with this novel mode of performance.

Banti made her *début* in England in Bianchi's *Semiramide*, in which she introduced an air from one of Guglielmi's oratorios, with a violin *obbligato* accompaniment, played first by Cramer, afterward by Viotti, Salomon, and Weichsell, the brother of Mrs. Billington. This song was of great length, and very fatiguing; but Banti was always encored in it, and never omitted to repeat it.

At her benefit in the following year (1800) Banti performed in an opera, founded on the *Zenobia* of Metastasio, by Lord Mount Edgcumbe, the author of the interesting "Reminiscences," to which, in the course of the present chapter I shall frequently have to refer. The "first man's" part was allotted to Roselli, a sopranist, who, however, had to transfer it to Viganoni, a tenor. Roselli, whose voice was failing him, soon afterwards left the country; and no other male soprano made his appearance at the King's Theatre until the arrival of Velluti, who sang twenty-five years afterwards in Meyerbeer's *Crociato*.

Banti's favourite operas were Gluck's *Alceste*, in which she was called upon to repeat three of her airs every night; the *Iphigénie en Tauride*, by the same author; Paisiello's *Elfrida*, and *Nina* or *La Pazza per Amore*; Nasolini's[61] *Mitridate*; and several operas by Bianchi, composed expressly for her.

Before Banti's departure from England, she prevailed on Mrs. Billington to perform with her on the night of her benefit, leaving to the latter the privilege of assuming the principal character in any opera she might select. *Merope* was chosen. Mrs. Billington took the part of the heroine, and Banti that of "Polifonte," though written for a tenor voice. The curiosity to hear these two celebrated singers in the same piece was so great, that the theatre was filled with what we so often read of in the newspapers, but so seldom see in actual life,—"an overflowing audience;" many ladies being obliged, for want of better places, to find seats on the stage.

Banti died at Bologna, in 1806, bequeathing her larynx (of extraordinary size) to the town, the municipality of which caused it to be duly preserved in a glass bottle. Poor woman! she had by time dissipated the whole of her fortune, and had nothing else to leave.

Mrs. Billington, Banti's contemporary, after singing not only in England, but at all the best theatres of Italy, left

MRS. BILLINGTON.

the stage in 1809. In 1794, while she was engaged at Naples, at the San Carlo, a violent eruption of Mount Vesuvius took place, which the Neapolitans attributed to the presence of an English heretic on their stage. Mrs. Billington's friends were even alarmed for her personal safety, when, fortunately, the eruption ceased, and the audience, relieved of their superstitious fears, applauded the admirable vocalist in all liberty and confidence. Mrs. Billington was an excellent musician, and before coming out as a singer had distinguished herself in early life (when Miss Weichsell) as a pianoforte player. She appears to have been but an indifferent actress, and, in her singing, to have owed her success less to her expression than to her "agility," which is said to have been marvellous. Her execution was distinguished by the utmost neatness and precision. Her voice was sweet and flexible, but not remarkable for fulness of tone, which formed the great beauty of Banti's singing. Mrs. Billington appeared with particular success in Bach's *Clemenza di Scipione*, in which the part of the heroine had been originally played in England by Miss Davies (*L'Inglesina*); Paisiello's *Elfrida*; Winter's *Armida*, and *Castore e Polluce*; and Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito*—the first of that master's works ever performed in England. At this time, neither the *Nozze di Figaro*, nor Mozart's other masterpiece, *Don Giovanni* (produced at Prague in 1787), seem to have been at all known either in England or in France.

After Banti's departure from England, and while Mrs. Billington was still at the King's Theatre, Grassini was engaged to sing alternately with the latter vocalist. She made her first appearance in *La Vergine del Sole* an opera by Mayer (the future preceptor of Donizetti), but in this work she succeeded more through her acting and her beauty than by her singing. Indeed, so equivocal was her reception, that on the occasion of her benefit, she felt it desirable to ask Mrs. Billington to appear with her. Mrs. Billington consented; and Winter composed an opera called *Il Ratto di Proserpina*, specially for the rival singers, Mrs. Billington taking the part of "Ceres," and Grassini that of "Proserpine." Now the tide of favour suddenly turned, and we are told that Grassini's performance gained all the applause; and that "her graceful figure, her fine expression of face, together with the sweet manner in which she sang several simple airs, stamped her at once the reigning favourite." Indeed, not only was Grassini rapturously applauded in public, but she was "taken up by the first society, *fêted*, caressed, and introduced as a regular guest in most of the fashionable assemblies." "Of her *private* claims to that distinction," adds Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "it is best to be silent; but her manners and exterior behaviour were proper and genteel."

BRAHAM.

At this period 1804-5, the tenors at the King's Theatre were Viganoni and Braham. Respecting the latter, who, in England, France and Italy, in English and in Italian operas, on the stage and in concert rooms, must have sung altogether for something like half a century, I must again quote the author of "Musical Reminiscences," who heard him in his prime. "All must acknowledge," he says, "that his voice is of the finest quality, of great power and occasional sweetness. It is equally certain that he has great knowledge of music, and *can* sing extremely well. It is therefore the more to be regretted that he should ever do otherwise; that he should ever quit the natural register of his voice by raising it to an unpleasant falsetto, or force it by too violent exertion; that he should depart from a good style, and correct taste, which he knows and can follow as well as any man, to adopt at times the over-florid and frittered Italian manner; at others, to fall into the coarseness and vulgarity of the English. The fact is, that he can be two distinct singers, according to the audience before whom he performs, and that to gain applause he condescends to sing as ill at the playhouse as he has done well at the Opera. His compositions have the same variety, and he can equally write a popular noisy song for the one, or its very opposite, for the other. A duetto of his, introduced into the opera of *Gli Orazj*, sung by himself and Grassini, had great beauty, and was in excellent taste. * * * * Braham has done material injury to English singing, by producing a host of imitators. What is in itself not good, but may be endured from a fine performer, becomes insufferable in bad imitation. Catalani has done less mischief, only because her powers are *unique*, and her astonishing execution unattainable. Many men endeavour to rival Braham, no woman can aspire to being a Catalani."

When both Grassini and Mrs. Billington retired, (1806), the place of both was supplied by the celebrated Catalani, the vocal queen of her time. She made her first appearance in Portogallo's *Semiramide*, (which is said to have been a very inferior opera to Bianchi's, on the same subject), and, among other works, had to perform in the *Clemenza di Tito*, of Mozart, whose music she is said to have disliked on the ground that it kept the singer too much under the control of the orchestra. Nevertheless, she introduced the *Nozze di Figaro* into England, and herself played the part of "Susanna" with admirable success.

CATALANI.

"Her voice," says Ferrari (Jacques Godefroi, a pupil of Paisiello), "was sonorous, powerful, and full of charm and suavity. This organ, of so rare a beauty, might be compared for splendour to the voice of Banti; for expression, to that of Grassini; for sweet energy, to that of Pasta; uniting the delicious flexibility of Sontag to the three registers of Malibran. Madame Catalani had formed her style on that of Pacchierotti, Marchesi, Crescentini;[62] her groups, roulades, triplets, and *mordenti*, were of admirable perfection; her well articulated execution lost nothing of its purity in the most rapid and most difficult passages. She animated the singers, the chorus, the orchestra, even in the finales and concerted pieces. Her beautiful notes rose above and dominated the *ensemble* of the voices and instruments; nor could Beethoven, Rossini or any other musical Lucifer, have covered this divine voice with the tumult of the orchestra. Our *virtuosa* was not a profound musician; but, guided by what she did know, and by her practised ear, she could learn in a moment the most complicated pieces."

"Her firm, strong, brilliant, voluminous voice was of a most agreeable *timbre*," says Castil Blase; "it was an admirable soprano of prodigious compass, from *la* to the upper *sol*, marvellous in point of agility, and producing a sensation difficult to describe. Madame Catalani's manner of singing left something to desire in the noble, broad, sustained style. Mesdames Grassini and Barilli surpassed her on this point, but with regard to difficulties of execution and *brio*, Madame Catalani could ring out one of her favourite airs and exclaim, *Son Regina!* She was then without a rival. I never heard anything like it. She excelled in chromatic passages, ascending and descending, of extreme rapidity. Her execution, marvellous in audacity, made talents of the first order pale before it, and instrumentalists no longer dared figure by her side. When Tulou, however, presented himself, his flute was applauded with enthusiasm after Madame Catalani's voice. The experiment was a dangerous one, and the victory was only the more brilliant for the adventurous young artist. There was no end to the compliments addressed to him

on his success."

On her way to London, in the summer of 1806, Catalani, whose reputation was then at its height, passed through Paris, and sang before the Emperor at St. Cloud. Napoleon gave her 5,000 francs for this performance, besides a pension of 1,200 francs, and the use of the Opera, with all expences paid, for two concerts, of which the receipts amounted to 49,000 francs. The French emperor, during his victorious career, had acquired the habit of carrying off singers as captives, and enrolling them, in spite of themselves, in his musical service. The same dictatorial system, however, failed when applied to Catalani.

"Where are you going, that you wish to leave Paris?" said Napoleon.

"To London, Sire," answered the singer.

"You must remain in Paris," replied Napoleon, "you will be well paid and your talents will be better appreciated here. You will have a hundred thousand francs a year, and two months' leave of absence. That is settled. Adieu, Madame."

Catalani went away without daring to say that she did not mean to break her engagement with the manager of the King's Theatre. In order to keep it she was obliged to embark secretly at Morlaix.

CATALANI.

I have spoken of this celebrated vocalist's first appearance in London, and, having given an Italian and a French account of her singing, I may as well complete the description by quoting the remarks made by an Englishman, Lord Mount Edgcumbe, on her voice and style of execution.

"It is well known," he says, "that her voice is of a most uncommon quality, and capable of exertions almost supernatural. Her throat seems endued (as has been remarked by medical men) with a power of expansion and muscular motion by no means usual, and when she throws out all her voice to the utmost, it has a volume and strength that are quite surprising, while its agility in divisions, running up and down the scale in semi-tones, and its compass in jumping over two octaves at once, are equally astonishing. It were to be wished she was less lavish in the display of these wonderful powers, and sought to please more than to surprise; but her taste is vicious, her excessive love of ornament spoiling every simple air, and her greatest delight (indeed her chief merit) being in songs of a bold and spirited character, where much is left to her discretion (or indiscretion) without being confined by accompaniment, but in which she can indulge in *ad libitum* passages with a luxuriance and redundancy no other singer ever possessed, or if possessing, ever practised, and which she carries to a fantastical excess. She is fond of singing variations on some known simple air, and latterly has pushed this taste to the very height of absurdity, by singing, even without words, variations composed for the fiddle."

Allusion is here doubtless made to the *air varié* by Pierre Rode, the violinist, which, from Catalani to Alboni and our own Louisa Pyne, has been such a favourite show-piece with all vocalists of brilliant executive powers, more especially in England. The vocal variations on Rode's air, however, were written in London, specially for Catalani, by Drouet the flute-player.

Catalani returned to Paris in October, 1815, when there was no longer any chance of Napoleon reproaching her for her abrupt departure nine years before. She solicited and obtained the "privilege" of the Italian theatre; but here the celebrated system of her husband, M. Valabrèque (in which the best possible operatic company consisted only of *ma femme et trois ou quatre poupées*) quite broke down. Madame Catalani gave up the theatre, with the subvention of 160,000 francs allowed her by the government, in 1818, M. Valabrèque having previously enunciated in a pamphlet the reasons which led to this abandonment. Great expenses had been incurred in fitting up the theatre, and, moreover, the management had been forced to pay its rent. The pamphlet concluded with a paragraph which was scarcely civil on the part of a foreigner who had been most hospitably received, towards a nation situated as France was just then. It is sufficiently curious to be quoted.

M. VALABREQUE.

"Consider, moreover," said the discomforted director, or rather the discomforted husband of the directress, "that in the time when several provinces beyond the mountains belonged to France, twenty thousand Italians were constantly attracted to the capital and supplied numerous audiences for the Italian theatre; that, moreover, the artists who were chiefly remarked at the theatres of Milan, Florence, Venice and Genoa, could be engaged for Paris by order of the government, and that in such a case the administration was reimbursed for a portion of the extra engagements."

Catalani had left the King's Theatre in 1813, two years before she assumed the management of the Italian Theatre of Paris. With some brief intervals she had been singing in London since 1806, and after quitting England, she was for many years without appearing on any stage, if we except the short period during which she directed the Théâtre Feydau. Her terms were so inordinate that managers were naturally afraid of them, and Catalani found it more to her advantage to travel about Europe, giving concerts at which she was the sole performer of importance, than to accept such an engagement as could be offered to her at a theatre. She gave several concerts of this kind in England, whither she returned twice after she had ceased to appear at the Opera. She is said to have obtained more success in England than in any other country, and least of all in Italy.

When she appeared at the King's Theatre in 1824, and sang in Mayer's *Fanatico per la Musica*, the frequenters of the Opera, who remembered her performance in the same work eighteen years before, were surprised that so long an interval had produced so little change in the singer. The success of the first night was prodigious; but Mr. Ebers (in his "Seven Years of the King's Theatre"), tells us that "repetitions of this opera, again and again, diminished the audiences most perceptibly, though some new air was on each performance introduced, to display the power of the Catalani. * * * In this opera the sweet and soothing voice of Caradori was an agreeable relief to the bewildering force of the great wonder."

In one season of four months in London, Madame Catalani, by her system of concerts, gained upwards of ten thousand pounds, and doubled that sum during a subsequent tour in the provinces, in Ireland and Scotland. She sang for the last time in public at Dublin, in 1828.

CATALANI'S AGREEMENT

As to the sort of engagement she approved of, some notion may be formed from the following draft of a contract submitted by her to Mr. Ebers in 1826:——

"*Conditions between Mr. Ebers and M. P. de Valabrèque.*

"1. Every box and every admission shall be considered as belonging to the management. The free admissions shall be given with paper orders, and differently shaped from the paid tickets. Their number shall be limited. The manager, as well as Madame Catalani, shall each have a good box.

"2. Madame Catalani shall choose and direct the operas in which she is to sing; she shall likewise have the choice of the performers in them; she will have no orders to receive from any one; she will find all her own dresses.

"3. Madame Catalani shall have two benefits, to be divided with the manager; Madame Catalani's share shall be free: she will fix her own days.

"4. Madame Catalani and her husband shall have a right to superintend the receipts.

"5. Every six weeks Madame Catalani shall receive the payment of her share of the receipts, and of the subscription.

"6. Madame Catalani shall sing at no other place but the King's Theatre, during the season; in the concerts or oratorios, where she may sing, she will be entitled to no other share but that specified as under.

"7. During the season, Madame Catalani shall be at liberty to go to Bath, Oxford, or Cambridge.

"8. Madame Catalani shall not sing oftener than her health will allow her. She promises to contribute to the utmost of her power to the good of the theatre. On his side, Mr. Ebers engages to treat Madame Catalani with every possible care.

"9. This engagement, and these conditions, will be binding for this season, which will begin and end and continue during all the seasons that the theatre shall be under the management of Mr. Ebers, unless Madame Catalani's health, or state of her voice, should not allow her to continue.

CATALANI'S AGREEMENT

"10. Madame Catalani, in return for the conditions above mentioned, shall receive the half part of the amount of all the receipts which shall be made in the course of the season, including the subscription to the boxes, the amount of those sold separately, the monies received at the doors of the theatre, and of the concert-room; in short, the said half part of the general receipts of the theatre for the season.

"11. It is well understood that Madame Catalani's share shall be free from every kind of deduction, it being granted her in lieu of salary. It is likewise well understood, that every expense of the theatre during the season shall be Mr. Ebers'; such as the rent of the theatre, the performers' salaries, the tradespeople's bills; in short, every possible expense; and Madame Catalani shall be entirely exonerated from any one charge.

"This engagement shall be translated into English, taking care that the conditions shall remain precisely as in the original, and shall be so worded as to stipulate that Madame Catalani, on receiving her share of the receipts of the theatre, shall in no ways whatever be considered as partner of the manager of the establishment.

"12. The present engagement being made with the full approbation of both parties, Mr. Ebers and M. Valabrèque pledge their word of honour to fulfil it in every one of its parts."

I must now add that Madame Catalani, by all accounts, possessed an excellent disposition, that her private life was irreproachable, and that while gaining immense sums, she also gave immense sums away in charity. Indeed, the proceeds of her concerts, for the benefit of the poor and sick have been estimated at eighty thousand pounds, besides which she performed numerous acts of generosity towards individuals. Nor does she appear to have possessed that excessive and exclusive admiration for Madame Catalani's talent which was certainly entertained by her husband, M. Valabrèque. Otherwise there can be no truth in the well known story of her giving, by way of homage, the shawl which had just been presented to her by the Empress of Russia, to a Moscow gipsey—one of those singing *tsigankie* who execute with such originality and true expression their own characteristic melodies.

After having delighted the world for thirty-five years, Madame Catalani retired to a charming villa near Florence. The invasion of the cholera made her leave this retreat and go to Paris; where, in 1849, in her seventieth year, she fell a victim to the very scourge she had hoped to avoid.

CELEBRATED SINGERS.

As for the husband, Valabrèque, he appears to have been mean, officious, conceited (of his wife's talent!) and generally stupid. M. Castil Blaze solemnly affirms, that when Madame Catalani was rehearsing at the Italian Opera of Paris an air which she was to sing in the evening to a pianoforte accompaniment, she found the instrument too high, and told Valabrèque to see that it was lowered; upon which (declares M. Blase) Valabrèque called for a carpenter and caused the unfortunate piano's feet to be amputated!

"Still too high?" cried Madame Catalani's husband, when he was accused in the evening of having neglected her orders. "Why, how much did you lower it, Charles?" addressing the carpenter.

"Two inches, Sir," was the reply.

The historian of the above anecdote calls Tamburini, Lablache, and Tadolini, as well as Rossini and Berryer, the

celebrated advocate, to witness that the mutilated instrument had afterward four knobs of wood glued to its legs by the same Charles who executed in so faithful a manner M. Valabrèque's absurd behest. It continued to wear these pattens until its existence was terminated in the fire of 1838—in which by the way, the composer of *William Tell*, who at that time nominally directed the theatre, and who had apartments on the third floor, would inevitably have perished had he not left Paris for Italy the day before!

Before concluding this chapter, I will refer once more to the "Musical Reminiscences" of Lord Mount Edgcumbe, whose opinions on singers seem to me more valuable than those he has expressed about contemporary composers, and who had frequent and constant opportunities of hearing the five great female vocalists engaged at the King's Theatre, between the years 1786 and 1814.

"They may be divided," he says, "into two classes, of which Madame Mara and Mrs. Billington form the first; and they were in most respects so similar, that the same observations will apply equally to both. Both were excellent musicians, thoroughly skilled in their profession; both had voices of uncommon sweetness and agility, particularly suited to the bravura style, and executed to perfection and with good taste, every thing they sung. But neither was an Italian, and consequently both were deficient in recitative: neither had much feeling or theatrical talent, and they were absolutely null as actresses; therefore they were more calculated to give pleasure in the concert-room than on the stage.

The other three, on the contrary, had great and distinguished dramatic talents, and seemed born for the theatrical profession. They were all likewise but indifferently skilled in music, supplying by genius what they wanted in science, and thereby producing the greatest and most striking effects on the stage: these are their points of resemblance. Their distinctive differences, I should say, were these: Grassini was all grace, Catalani all fire, Banti all feeling."

GUGLIELMI.

The composers, in whose music the above singers chiefly excelled, were Gluck, Piccinni, Guglielmi, Cimarosa, and Paisiello. We have seen that "Susanna" in the *Nozze di Figaro*, was one of Catalani's favourite parts; but as yet Mozart's music was very little known in England, and it was not until 1817 that his *Don Giovanni* was produced at the King's Theatre.

After Gluck and Piccinni, the most admired composers, and the natural successors of the two great rivals in point of time, were Cimarosa and Paisiello. Guglielmi was considerably their senior, and on returning to Naples in 1777, after having spent fifteen years away from his country, in Vienna, and in London, he found that his two younger competitors had quite supplanted him in public favour. His works, composed between the years 1755 and 1762, had become antiquated, and were no longer performed. All this, instead of discouraging the experienced musician (Guglielmi was then fifty years of age) only inspired him with fresh energy. He found, however, a determined and unscrupulous adversary in Paisiello, who filled the theatre with his partisans the night on which Guglielmi was to produce his *Serva innamorata*, and occasioned such a disturbance, that for some time it was impossible to attend to the music.

The noise was especially great at the commencement of a certain quintett, on which, it was said, the success of the work depended. Guglielmi was celebrated for the ingenuity and beauty of his concerted pieces, but there did not seem to be much chance, as affairs stood on this particular evening, of his quintett being heard at all. Fortunately, while it was being executed, the door of the royal box opened, and the king appeared. Instantly the most profound silence reigned throughout the theatre, the piece was recommenced, and Guglielmi was saved. More than that, the enthusiasm of the audience was raised, and went on increasing to such a point, that at the end of the performance the composer was taken from his box, and carried home in triumph to his hotel.

From this moment Paisiello, with all his jealousy, was obliged to discontinue his intrigues against a musician, whom Naples had once more adopted. Cimarosa had taken no part in the plot against Guglielmi; but he was by no means delighted with Guglielmi's success. Prince San Severo, who admired the works of all three, invited them to a magnificent banquet where he made them embrace one another, and swear eternal friendship.[63] Let us hope that he was not the cause of either of them committing perjury.

FINALES.

Paisiello seems to have been an intriguer all his life, and to have been constantly in dread of rivals; though he probably had less reason to fear them than any other composer of the period. However, at the age of seventy-five, when he had given up writing altogether, we find him, a few months before his death, getting up a cabal against the youthful Rossini, who was indeed destined to eclipse him, and to efface even the memory of his *Barbiere di Siviglia*, by his own admirable opera on the same subject. It is as if, painting on the same canvas, he had simply painted out the work of his predecessor.

Cimarosa, though he may have possessed a more dignified sense than Paisiello of what was due to himself, had less vanity. A story is told of a painter wishing to flatter the composer of *Il Matrimonio Segretto*, and saying that he looked upon him as superior to Mozart.

"Superior to Mozart!" exclaimed Cimarosa. "What should you think, Sir, of a musician, who told you that you were a greater painter than Raphael?"

Among the other composers who adorned the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, may be mentioned Sacchini, the successor of Piccinni in Paris; Salieri, the envious rival of Mozart, and (in Paris) the successor of Gluck; Paer, in whose *Camilla* Rossini played the child's part at the age of seven (1799); Mayer, the future master of Donizetti; and Zingarelli, the future master of Bellini, one of whose operas was founded on the same *libretto* which afterwards served the pupil for his *Capuletti i Montecchi*.

Piccinni is not connected in any direct manner with the present day; but it is nevertheless to Piccinni that we owe the first idea of those magnificent finales which, more than half a century afterwards, contributed so much to the success of Rossini's operas, and of which the first complete specimens, including several movements with changes of key and of rhythm, occur in *La Cecchina ossia la Buona Figliuola*, produced at Rome in 1760.

Logroscino, who sometimes passes as the inventor of these finales, and who lived a quarter of a century earlier, wrote them only on one theme.

The composer who introduced dramatic finales into serious opera, was Paisiello.

It may interest the reader to know, that the finale of *Don Giovanni* lasts fifteen minutes.

That of the *Barber of Seville* lasts twenty-one minutes and a-half.

That of *Otello* lasts twenty-four minutes.

The quintett of *Gazza Ladra* lasts twenty-seven minutes.

FINALES.

The finale of *Semiramide* lasts half an hour—or perhaps a minute or two less, if we allow for the increased velocity at which quick movements are "taken" by the conductors of the present day.

CHAPTER XII.

OPERA IN FRANCE, AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF GLUCK.

A FEW months before Gluck left Paris for the last time, an insurrection broke out at the Opera. The revolutionary spirit was abroad in Paris. The success of the American War of Independence, the tumultuous meetings of the French Parliament, the increasing resistance to authority which now manifested itself everywhere in France; all these stimulants to revolt seem to have taken effect on the singers and dancers of the Académie. The company resolved to carry on the theatre itself, for its own benefit, and the director, Devismes, was called upon to abdicate. The principal insurgents held what they called "Congress," at the house of Madeleine Guimard, and the God of Dancing, Auguste Vestris, declared loudly that he was the Washington of the affair.

MADEMOISELLE GUIMARD.

Every day some fresh act of insubordination was committed, and the chiefs of the plot had to be forced to appear on the stage by the direct interference of the police.

"The minister desires me to dance," said Mademoiselle Guimard on one of these occasions; "*eh bien qu'il y prenne garde, je pourrais bien le faire sauter*."

The influential leader just named conducted the intrigue with great skill and discretion.

"One thing, above all!" she said to her fellow conspirators; "no combined resignations,—that is what ruined the Parliament."

To the minister, Amelot, the destroyer and reconstructor of the Parliament of Dijon, Sophie Arnould observed, in reference to his interference with the affairs of the Académie—-

"You should remember, that it is easier to compose a parliament than to compose an opera."

Auguste Vestris having spoken very insolently to Devismes, the latter said to him—-

"Do you know, sir, to whom you are speaking?"

"To whom? to the farmer of my talent," replied the dancer.

Things were brought to a crisis by the *fêtes* given to celebrate the birth of Marie Antoinette's first child, December, 1778. The city of Paris proposed to spend enormous sums in festivities and illuminations; but the king and queen benevolently suggested that, instead of being wasted in useless display, the money should be given away in marriage portions to a hundred deserving young girls; and their majesties gave fifty thousand francs themselves for the same object. Losing sight of the Opera for the moment, I must relate, in as few words as possible, a charming little anecdote that is told of one of the applicants for a dowry. Lise was the name of this innocent and *naïve* young person, who, on being asked some question respecting her lover, replied, that she had none; and that she thought the municipality provided everything! The municipality found the necessary admirer, and could have had no difficulty in doing so, if we may judge from the graceful bust of Lise, executed in marble by the celebrated sculptor, Houdon.

The Académie, which at this time belonged to the city, determined to follow its example, and to give away at least one marriage portion. Twelve hundred francs were subscribed and placed in the hands of Mademoiselle Guimard, the treasurer elect. The nuptial banquet was to take place at the winter Vauxhall (*Gallicè* "Wauxhall"); and all Paris was in a state of eager excitement to be present at what promised to be a most brilliant and original entertainment. It was not allowed, however, to take place, the authorities choosing to look upon it as a parody of the *fête* given by the city.

AUGUSTE VESTRIS.

The doors of the "Wauxhall" being closed to the subscribers, Mademoiselle Guimard invited them to meet at her palace, in the Chaussée d'Antin. The municipality again interfered; and in the middle of the banquet Vestris and Dauberval were arrested by *lettres de cachet* and taken to For-l'Evèque, on the ground that they had refused to dance the Tuesday previous in the *divertissement* of *Armide*.

Gaetan Vestris was present at the arrest of his son, and excited the mirth of the assembly by the pompous, though affectionate, manner in which he bade him farewell. After embracing him tenderly, he said—

"Go, Augustus; go to prison. This is the grandest day of your life! Take my carriage, and ask for the room of my friend, the King of Poland; and live magnificently—charge everything to me."

On another occasion, when Gaetan was not so well pleased with his Augustus, he said to him:

"What! the Queen of France does her duty, by requesting you to dance before the King of Sweden, and you do not do yours? You shall no longer bear my name. I will have no misunderstanding between the house of Vestris and the house of Bourbon; they have hitherto always lived on good terms."

For his refusal to dance, Augustus was this time sentenced to six months' imprisonment; but the opera goers were so eager for his re-appearance that he was set free long before the expiration of the appointed term.

He made his *rentrée* amid the groans and hisses of the audience, who seemed determined to give him a lesson for his impertinence.

Then Gaetan, magnificently attired, appeared on the stage, and addressed the public as follows:—

"You wish my son to go down on his knees. I do not say that he does not deserve your displeasure; but remember, that the dancer whom you have so often applauded has not studied the *pose* you now require of him."

"Let him speak; let him endeavour to justify himself," cried a voice from the pit.

"He *shall* speak; he *shall* justify himself," replied the father. And, turning to his son, he added: "Dance, Auguste!"

Auguste danced; and every one in the theatre applauded.

The orchestra took no part in the operatic insurrection; and we have seen that the musicians were not invited to contribute anything to the dowry, offered by the Académie to virtue in love and in distress. De Vismes proposed to reward his instrumentalists by giving up to them a third of the receipts from some special representation of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*. The band rejected the offer, as not sufficiently liberal, and by refusing to play on the evening in question, made the performance a failure.

The Academic revolt was at last put an end to, by the city of Paris cancelling de Vismes's lease, and taking upon itself the management of the theatre, de Vismes receiving a large sum in compensation, and the appointment of director at a fixed salary.

BEAUMARCHAIS AND GLUCK.

Beaumarchais, while assisting the national revolution with the *Marriage of Figaro*, is known to have aided in a more direct manner the revolution which was now imminent at the opera. It is said, that he was anxious to establish an operatic republic in the hope of being made president of it himself. He is known to have been a good musician. I have spoken of his having held the honourable, if not lucrative, post of music-master to the daughters of Louis XV. (by whom he was as well paid as was Piccinni by that monarch's successor);[64] and a better proof of his talent is afforded, by his having composed all the music of his *Barber of Seville* and *Marriage of Figaro*, except the air of *Malbrook* in the latter comedy.

Beaumarchais had been much impressed by the genius of Gluck. He met him one evening in the *foyer* of the Opera, and spoke to him so clearly and so well about music that the great composer said to him: "You must surely be M. de Beaumarchais." They agreed to write an opera together, and some years afterwards, when Gluck had left Paris for Vienna, the poet sent the composer the *libretto* of *Tarare*. Gluck wrote to say that he was delighted with the work, but that he was now too old to undertake the task of setting it to music, and would entrust it to his favourite pupil, Salieri.

Gluck benefited French opera in two ways. He endowed the Académie with several master-pieces, and moreover, destroyed, or was the main instrument in destroying, its old *répertoire*, which after the works of Gluck and Piccinni was found intolerable. It was now no longer the fashion to exclude foreign composers from the first musical theatre in France, and Gluck and Piccinni were followed by Sacchini and Salieri. Strange to say, Sacchini, when he first made his appearance at the Académie with his *Olympiade*, was deprived of a hearing through the jealousy of Gluck, who, on being informed, at Vienna, that the work in question was in rehearsal, hurried to Paris and had influence enough to get it withdrawn. Worse than this, when the *Olympiade* was produced at the Comédie Italienne, with great success, Gluck and his partisans put a stop to the representation by enforcing one of the privileges of the Académie, which rendered it illegal for any other theatre to perform operas with choruses or with more than seven singers on the stage.

GLUCK.

No work by Sacchini or Salieri was produced at the Académie until after the theatre in the Palais Royal was burnt down, in 1781. In this fire, which took place about eighteen months after Gluck had retired from Paris, and five months after the production of Piccinni's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the old *répertoire* would seem to have been consumed, for no opera by Lulli was afterwards played in France, and only one by Rameau,—*Castor and Pollux*, which, revived in 1791, was not favourably received.

It was in June, 1781, after a representation of Gluck's *Orphée*, that the Académie Royale was burnt to the ground. *Coronis* (music by Rey, the conductor of the orchestra) was the last piece of the evening, and before it was finished, during the *divertissement*, one of the scenes caught fire. Dauberval, the principal dancer, had enough presence of mind to order the curtain down at once. The public wanted no more of *Coronis*, and went quietly away without calling for the conclusion of Rey's opera, and without having the least idea of what was taking place behind the curtain. In the meanwhile the fire had spread on the stage beyond the possibility of extinction. Singers, dancers, musicians, and scene-shifters, rushed in terror from the theatre, and about a dozen persons, who were unable to escape, perished in the conflagration. Madeleine Guimard was nearly burnt to death in her dressing-room, which was surrounded by flames. One of the carpenters, however, penetrated into her *loge*, wrapped her up in a counterpane (she was entirely undressed), and bore her triumphantly through the fire to a place of safety.

"Save my child! save my child!" cried Rey, in despair; and as soon as he saw the score of *Coronis* out of danger he went away, giving the flames full permission to burn everything else. All the manuscripts were saved, thanks to the courageous exertions of Lefebrvre, the librarian, who remained below in the music room even while the stage was burning, until the last sheet had been removed.

"The Opera is burnt down," said a Parisian to a Parisian the next morning.

"So much the better," was the reply. "It had been there such a time!"

This remark was ingenious but not true, for the Académie Royale de Musique had only been standing eighteen years. It was burnt down before, in 1768, on which occasion Voltaire, in a letter to M. d'Argental, wrote as follows: "*on dit que ce spectacle était si mauvais qu'il fallait tôt ou tard que la vengeance divine éclatât*." The theatre destroyed by fire in 1763[65] was in the Palais Royal, and it was reconstructed on the same spot. After the fire of 1781, the Porte St. Martin theatre was built, and the Opera was carried on there ten years, after which it was removed to the opera-house in the Rue Richelieu, which was pulled down after the assassination of the Duc de Berri. But we are advancing beyond the limits of the present chapter.

The new Opera House was built in eighty-six days. The members of the company received orders not to leave

Paris, and during the interval were paid their salaries regularly as if for performing. The work began on the 2nd of August, and was finished on the 27th of October. Lenoir, the architect, had told Marie Antoinette that the theatre could be completed in time for the first performance to take place on the 30th of October.

THE NEW OPERA HOUSE.

"Say the 31st," replied the queen; "and if on that day I receive the key of my box, I promise you the Order of St. Michael in exchange."

The key was sent to her majesty on the 26th, who not only decorated Lenoir with the *cordon* of St. Michael, but also conferred on him a pension of six thousand francs; and on the 27th the theatre was opened to the public.

In 1784, Sacchini's *Chimène*, adapted from *Il Gran Cid*, an opera he had written for the King's Theatre in 1778, was produced at the Académie with great success. The principal part in this work was sustained by Huberti, a singer much admired by Piccinni, who wrote some airs in the *cantabile* style specially for her, and said that, without her, his opera of *Dido*, in which she played the principal part, was "without Dido." M. Castil Blaze tells us that she was the first true singer who appeared at the Académie. Grimm declares, that she sang like Todi and acted like Clairon. Finally, when Madame de Saint Huberti was performing at Strasburgh, in 1787, a young officer of artillery, named Napoleon Bonaparte, addressed the following witty and complimentary verses to her:—

"Romains qui vous vantez d'une illustre origine
Voyez d'où dépendait votre empire naissant:
Didon n'eut pas de charme assez puissant
Pour arrêter la fuite où son amant s'obstine;
Mais si l'autre Didon, ornement de ces lieux,
Eût été reine de Carthage,
Il eût, pour la servir, abandonné ces dieux,
Et votre beau pays serait encore sauvage."

Sacchini's first opera, *Œdipe à Colosse*, was not produced at the Académie until 1787, a few months after his death. It was now no question, of whether he was a worthy successor of Gluck or a formidable opponent to Piccinni. His opera was admired for itself, and the public applauded it with genuine enthusiasm.

SALIERI.

In the meanwhile, Salieri, the direct inheritor of Gluck's mantle (as far as that poetic garment could be transferred by the mere will of the original possessor) had brought out his *Danaides*—announced at first as the work of Gluck himself and composed under his auspices. Salieri had also set *Tarare* to music. "This is the first *libretto* of modern times," says M. Castil Blaze, "in which the author has ventured to join buffoonery to tragedy—a happy alliance, which permits the musician to vary his colours and display all the resources of genius and art." The routine-lovers of the French Académie, the pedants, the blunderers, were indignant with the new work; and its author entrusted Figaro with the task of defending it.

"Either you must write nothing interesting," said Figaro, "or fools will run you down."

The same author then notices, as a remarkable coincidence, that "Beaumarchais and Da Ponte, at four hundred leagues distance from one another, invented, at the same time, the class of opera since known as "romantic." Beaumarchais's *Tarare* had been intended for Gluck; Da Ponte's *Don Giovanni*, as every one knows, found its true composer in Mozart.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FRENCH OPERA BEFORE AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION.

THE OPERA DURING THE CONVENTION.

A COMPLETE history of the French Opera would include something like a history of French society, if not of France generally. It would, at least, show the effect of the great political changes which the country has undergone, and would remind us here and there of her celebrated victories, and occasionally even of her reverses. Under the despotism, we have seen how a simple *lettre de cachet* sufficed to condemn an *abbé* with a good voice, or a young girl with a pretty face, to the Opera, just as a person obnoxious to the state or to any very influential personage was sent to the Bastille. During the Regency, half the audience at the Opera went there drunk; and almost until the period of the Revolution the *abbés*, the *mousquetaires*, and the *grands seigneurs*, quarrelled, fought, and behaved in many respects as if the theatre were, not their own private house, but their own particular tap-room. Music profited by the Revolution, in so far that the privileges of the Académie were abolished, and, as a natural consequence, a number of new musical works produced at a variety of theatres which would otherwise never have seen the light; but the position of singers and dancers was by no means a pleasant one under the Convention, and the tyranny of the republican chiefs was far more oppressive, and of a more brutal kind, than any that had been exercised at the Académie in the days of the monarchy. The disobedient daughters, whose admirers got them "inscribed" on the books of the Opera so as to free them from parental control, would, under another system, have run away from home. No one, in practice, was injured very much by the regulation, scandalous and immoral as it undoubtedly was; for, before the name was put down, all the harm, in most cases, was already done. Sophie Arnould, it is true, is said to have been registered at the Opera without the consent of her mother, and, what seems very extraordinary—not at the suggestion of a lover; but Madame Arnould was quite reconciled to her daughter's being upon the stage before she eloped with the Count de Lauragais. To put the case briefly: the *académiciens* (and above all, the *académiciennes*) in the immoral atmosphere of the court, were fêted, flattered, and grew rich, though, owing to their boundless extravagance, they often died poor: whereas, during the republic, they met with neither sympathy nor respect, and in the worst days of the Convention lived, in a more literal sense than would be readily imagined, almost beneath the shadow of the guillotine.

In favour of the old French society, when it was at its very worst, that is to say, during the reign of Louis XV., it may be mentioned that the king's mistresses did not venture to brave general opinion, so far as to present

themselves publicly at the Opera. Madame Dubarry announced more than once that she intended to visit the Académie, and went so far as to take boxes for herself and suite, but at the last moment her courage (if courage and not shamelessness be the proper word) failed her, and she stayed away. On the other hand, towards the end of this reign, the licentiousness of the court had become so great, that brevets, conferring the rights and privileges of married ladies on ladies unmarried, were introduced. Any young girl who held a "*brevet de dame*" could present herself at the Opera, which etiquette would otherwise have rendered impossible. "The number of these brevets," says *Bachaumont*, "increased prodigiously under Louis XVI., and very young persons have been known to obtain them. Freed thus from the modesty, simplicity, and retirement of the virginal state, they give themselves up with impunity to all sorts of scandals. * * * Such disorder has opened the eyes of the government; and this prince, the friend of decency and morality, has at last shown himself very particular on the subject. It is now only by the greatest favour that one of these brevets can be obtained."[66]

OPERATIC AND RELIGIOUS FETES.

No *brevets* were required of the fishwomen and charcoal men of Paris, who, on certain fêtes, such as the Sovereign's birth day, were always present at the gratuitous performances given at the Opera. On these occasions the balcony was always reserved for them, the *charbonniers* being placed on the king's side, the *poissardes* on the queen's. At the close of the representation the performers invited their favoured guests on to the stage, the orchestra played the airs from some popular ballet, and a grand ball took place, in which the *charbonniers* chose their partners from among the operatic *danseuses*, while the *poissardes* gave their hands to Vestris, Dauberval, &c.

During Passion week and Easter, the Opera was shut, but the great operatic vocalists could be heard elsewhere, either at the Jesuits' church or at the Abbaye of Longchamp, to which latter establishment it is generally imagined that the Parisian public used to be attracted by the singing of the nuns. What is far more extraordinary is, that the Parisians always laboured under that delusion themselves. "The Parisians," says M. Castil Blaze, in his "History of the Grand Opera," "always such fine connoisseurs in music, never penetrated the mystery of this incognito. The railing and the green curtain, behind which the voices were concealed, sufficed to render the singers unrecognisable to the *dilettanti* who heard them constantly at the opera."

Adjoining the Jesuits' church was a theatre, also belonging to the Jesuits, for which, between the years 1659 and 1761, eighty pieces of various kinds, including tragedies, operas and ballets, were written. Some of these productions were in Latin, some in French, some in Latin and French together. The *virtuosi* of the Académie used to perform in them and afterwards proceed to the church to sing motets. "This church is so much the church of the Opera," says Freneuse, "that those who do not go to one console themselves by attending vespers at the other, where they find the same thing at less cost." He adds, that "an actor newly engaged, would not think himself fully recognised unless asked to sing for the Jesuits." As for the actresses, "in their honor the price which would be given at the door of the opera is given for a chair in the church. People look out for Urgande, Arcabonne, Armide, and applaud them. (I have seen them applaud la Moreau and la Chérat, at the midnight mass.) These performances replace those which are suspended at the opera."

BEHIND THE SCENES.

There would be no end to this chapter (and many persons would think it better not written) if I were to enter into details on the subject of the relations between the singers and dancers of the Académie, and the Grands Seigneurs of the period. I may observe, however, that the latter appear to have been far more generous, without being more vicious, and that they seem to have lived in better taste than their modern imitators, who usually ruin themselves by means of race-horses, or, in France, on the Stock Exchange. The Count de Lauragais paid an immense sum to the directors of the Académie, to compensate them for abolishing the seats on the stage (probably impertinent visitors used to annoy him by staring at Sophie Arnould); the Duke de Bouillon spent nine hundred thousand livres on Mademoiselle la Guerre (Gluck's *Iphigénie*); the Prince de Soubise nearly as much on Mademoiselle Guimard—who at least gave a portion of it away in charity, and who, as we have seen, was an intelligent patroness of David, the painter.

When the Prince de Guéméné became insolvent, the Prince de Soubise, his father-in-law, ceased to attend the Opera. There were three thousand creditors, and the debts amounted to forty million livres. The heads of the family felt called upon to make a sacrifice, and the Prince de Soubise was no longer in a position to give *petits soupers* to his *protégées* at the Académie. Under these circumstances, the "ladies of the *ballet*" assembled in the dressing-room of Mademoiselle Guimard, their chief, and prepared the following touching, and really very becoming letter, to their embarrassed patron:—

"Monseigneur,

"Accustomed to see you amongst us at the representations at the Lyrical Theatre, we have observed with the most bitter regret that you not only tear yourself away from the pleasures of the performance, but also that none of us are now invited to the little suppers you used so frequently to give, in which we had turn by turn the happiness of interesting you. Report has only too well informed us of the cause of your seclusion, and of your just grief. Hitherto we have feared to importune you, allowing sensibility to give way to respect. We should not dare, even now, to break silence, without the pressing motive to which our delicacy is unable any longer to resist.

"We had flattered ourselves, Monseigneur, that the Prince de Guéméné's bankruptcy, to employ an expression which is re-echoed in the *foyers*, the clubs, the newspapers of France, and all Europe, would not be so considerable, so enormous, as was announced; and, above all, that the wise precautions taken by the King to assure the claimants the amount of their debts, and to avoid expenses and depredations more fatal even than the insolvency itself, would not disappoint the general expectation. But affairs are doubtless in such disorder, that there is now no hope. We judge of it by the generous sacrifices to which the heads of your illustrious house, following your example, have resigned themselves. We should think ourselves guilty of ingratitude, Monseigneur, if we were not to imitate you in seconding your humanity, and if we were not to return you the pensions which your munificence has lavished upon us. Apply these revenues, Monseigneur, to the consolation of so many retired officers, so many poor men of letters, so many unfortunate servants whom M. le Prince de Guéméné drags into ruin with him.

"As for us, we have other resources: and we shall have lost nothing, Monseigneur, if we preserve your esteem. We shall even have gained, if, by refusing your gifts now, we force our detractors to agree that we were not

unworthy of them.

"We are, with profound respect,
"Monseigneur,
"Your most Serene Highness's very humble and
"devoted Servants,

"GUIMARD, HEINEL," &c.

With twenty other names.

GENEROSITY OF THE BALLET.

Auguste Vestris spent and owed a great deal of money; the father honoured the engagements of the young dancer, but threatened him with imprisonment if he did not alter his conduct, and concluded by saying:—"Understand, Sir, that I will have no Guéméné in *my* family."

Although ballet dancers were important persons in those days, they were as nothing compared to the institution to which they belonged. Figaro, in his celebrated soliloquy, observes, with reference to the great liberty of the press accorded by the government, that provided he does not speak of a great many very different things, among which the Opera is included, he is at liberty to publish whatever he likes "under the inspection of three or four censors." Beaumarchais was more serious than would be generally supposed, in including the Opera among the subjects which a writer dared not touch upon, or, if so, only with the greatest respect. Rousseau tells us in more than one place, that it was considered dangerous to say anything against the Opera; and Mademoiselle Théodore (the interesting *danseuse* before-mentioned, who consulted the fantastic moralist on the conduct she ought to pursue as a member of the ballet), was actually imprisoned, and exiled from Paris for eighteen days, because she had ventured to ridicule the management of the Académie, in some letters addressed to a private friend. The author of the *Nouvelle Héloise* should have warned her to be more careful.

OPERA AND REVOLUTION.

On the 12th July, 1789, the bills were torn down from the doors of the Opera. The Parisians were about to take the Bastille. Having taken it, they allowed the Académie to continue its performance, and it re-opened on the 21st of the same month. In Warsaw, during the "demonstrations" of last March, the Opera was closed. It remains closed now[67] (end of November), and will re-open—neither Russians nor Poles can say when! No one tears the bills down, because no one thinks of putting them up; it being perfectly understood by the administration, (which is a department of the Government), that the Warsaw public are not disposed at present for amusement of any kind.

In 1789, the revolutionary spirit manifested itself among the company engaged at the French Opera. An anonymous letter—or rather a letter in the name of all the company, printed, but not signed—was addressed to the administration of the theatre. It pointed out a number of abuses, and bore this epigraph, strongly redolent of the period: "*Tu dors Brutus, et Rome est dans les fers!*"

In 1790 the city of Paris assumed once more the management of the Académie, the artistic direction being entrusted to a committee composed of the chiefs of the various departments, and of the principal singers and dancers. One of the novelties produced was a "melodrama founded on passages from the Scriptures," called "The Taking of the Bastille," written specially for Notre Dame, where it was performed for the first time, and where it was followed by a grand *Te Deum*. In this *Te Deum* few of the lovers of the Opera could have joined, for one of the first effects of the revolution was naturally to drive the best singers and dancers away from Paris. Lord Mount Edgcumbe tells us that Mademoiselle Guimard was dancing in London in 1789. Madame Huberti, who was, by all accounts, the best singer the French had ever heard at the Académie, left Paris early in 1790.

We know how injurious a distant war, a dissolution of parliament, a death in the royal family are to the fortunes of an operatic season in London. Fancy what must have been the effect of the French revolution on the Académie after 1789! The subscription list for boxes showed, in a few years, a diminution of from 475,000 *livres* to 000,000! Some of the subscribers had gone into exile, more or less voluntary, some had been banished, others had been guillotined. M. Castil Blaze, from whose interesting works I have obtained a great number of particulars concerning the French Opera at the time of the revolution, tells us that the Queen used to pay 7,000 livres for her box. The Duke d'Orléans paid 7,000 for his own private box, and joined the Duke de Choiseul and Necker in a subscription of 3,200 francs for another. The Princess de Lamballe and Madame de Genlis gave 3,600 francs for a "post chaise;" (there were other boxes, called "spittoons"—the *baignoires* of the present day—"cymbals," &c.; names which they evidently owed to their position and form). On the other hand, there were 288 free admissions, of which, thirty-two were given to authors, and eight to newspapers—*La Gazette de France*, *Le Journal de Paris*, and *Le Mercure*. The remaining 248 were reserved for the Hôtel de Ville, the King's Household, the actors of the Comédie Française, and the singers and dancers of the Opera itself.

OPERA AND REVOLUTION.

The howling of the *ça ira* put an end for ever to the Concert Spirituel, where the Parisians for nearly eighty years had been in the habit of hearing excellent instrumental soloists, and some of the best of the Italian singers, when there was as yet no Italian Opera in Paris. The last *concert spirituel* took place at the theatre of the Tuileries in 1791.

Louis XVI. and his family fled from Paris on the 28th June, 1791. The next day, and before the king was brought back to the Tuileries, the title of the chief lyric theatre was changed, and from the "Académie *Royale*" became simply the "Opera." At the same time the custom was introduced of announcing the performers' names, which was evidently an advantage for the public, and which was also not without its benefit, for the inferior singers and dancers who, when they unexpectedly made their appearance to replace their betters, used often to get hissed in a manner which their own simple want of merit scarcely justified. "*Est ce que je savais qu'on làcherait le Ponthieu?*" exclaimed an unhappy ticket-seller one evening, when an indignant amateur rushed out of the theatre and began to cane the recipient of his ill-spent money. We may fancy how Ponthieu himself must have been received inside the house.

MARIE ANTOINETTE.

By an order of the Committee of Public Safety, dated the 16th of the September following, the title of the Opera was again changed to *Académie Royale de Musique*. This was intended as a compliment to the king, who had signed the Constitution on the 14th, and who was to go to the Opera six days afterwards. On the 20th the royal visit took place. "*Castor and Pollux* was played," says M. Castil Blaze, "and not *Iphigénie en Aulide*, as is asserted by some ill-informed historians, who even go so far as to pretend that the chorus *Chantons, célébrons notre reine* was, as on another occasion, hailed with transports of enthusiasm, and that the public called for it a second time. The house was well filled, but not crammed[68] (*comble*), as is proved by the amount of the receipts—6,686 livres, 15 sous. The same opera of Rameau's, vamped by Candeille, had produced 6,857 livres on the 14th of the preceding June. The representation of *Castor and Pollux* in presence of the royal family took place on Tuesday the 20th September, and not on the 21st, the Wednesday, at that time, not being an opera night. On the 19th, Monday, the people had assisted at a *special performance* of the same work given, gratuitously, in honour of the Constitution. The Royalists were present in great numbers at the representation of the 20th September, and some lines which could be applied to the Queen were loudly applauded. Marie-Antoinette was delighted, and said to the ladies who accompanied her, "You see that the people is really good, and wishes only to love us." Encouraged by so flattering a reception, she determined to go the next night to the Opéra Comique, but the king refused to accompany her. The piece performed was *Les Evénements imprévus*. In the duet of the second act, before singing the words "*Ah comme j'aime ma maitresse*" Madame Dugazon looked towards the Queen, when a number of voices cried out from the pit, *Plus de maitresse! Plus de maitre! Vive la liberté!* This cry was answered from the boxes with *Vive la reine! Vive le roi!* Sabres and sword-sticks were drawn, and a battle began.

FACTS AND COINCIDENCES.

The Queen escaped from the theatre in the midst of the tumult. Cries of *à bas la reine!* followed her to her carriage, which went off at a gallop, with mud and stones thrown after it. Marie Antoinette returned to the Tuileries in despair. On the first of October, fourteen days afterwards, the title of *Opéra National* was substituted for that of *Académie Royale de Musique*. The Constitution being signed, there was no longer any reason for being civil to Louis XVI. This was the third change of title in less than four months. The majority of the buffoons, (M. Castil Blaze still speaks), "who now write histories more or less Girondist, or romantic of the French Revolution, do not take the trouble to verify their facts and dates. I have told you simply that the dauphiness Marie Antoinette made her first appearance at the Opera on the 16th June, 1773, in company with her husband. Others, more ingenious no doubt, substitute the 21st January for the 16th June, in order to establish a sort of fatality by connecting days, months and years. To prophecy after the event is only too easy, above all, if you take the liberty of advancing by five months, the day which it is desired to render fatal. These same buffoons, (says M. Castil Blaze), who now go to the Opera on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, sometimes on Sunday, think people have done the same for the last two centuries. As they have not the slightest suspicion that the evenings of performance at the Académie Royale were changed in 1817, we find them maundering, paddling, splashing about, and finally altering figures and days, in order to make the events of the last century accord with the dates of our own epoch. That is why we are told that the Royal Family went for the last time to this theatre on Wednesday, the 21st September, 1791, instead of Tuesday, the 20th. Indeed how is it possible to go to the Opera on a Tuesday? That is why it is stated with the most laughable aplomb, that on the 21st October, 1793, *Roland* was performed, and on the 16th of October following, the *Siege of Thionville*, the *Offering to Liberty*, and the ballet of *Telemachus*. Each of these history-writing novelists fills or empties the house according to his political opinions; applauds the French people or deplores its blindness; but all the liberalism or sentiment manufactured by them is thrown away. Monday, the 21st of January, Wednesday the 16th of October, 1793, not being opera nights at that time, the Opera did not on those evenings throw open its doors to the public. On Tuesday, the 22nd of January, the day after the death of Louie XVI., *Roland* was represented; the amount of the receipts, 492 livres, 8 sous, proves that the house was empty. No free admissions were given then. On Tuesday, October the 15th, 1793, the eve of the execution of Marie Antoinette, the *Siege of Thionville*, the *Offering to Liberty*, *Telemachus*, in which "*la Citoyenne Perignon*" was to appear—a forced performance—only produced 3,251 livres. On Friday, the 18th of October, the next day but one after this horrible catastrophe, *Armide* and the *Offering to Liberty* —a forced performance and something more—produced 2,641 livres, which would have filled about a third of the house."[69]

The 10th August, 1792, was the last day of the French monarchy. On the Sunday previous, during the Vespers said at the Chapel of the Tuileries in presence of the king, the singers with one accord tripled the sound of their voices when they came to the following verse in the *Magnificat*: *Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles*. Indignant at their audacity, the royalists thundered forth the *Domine salvum fac regem*, adding these words with increased energy and enthusiasm, *et reginam*! The greatest excitement and agitation prevailed in the Chapel during the rest of the service.

To conclude the list of musical performances which have derived a gloomy celebrity from their connexion with the last days of Louis XVI., I may reproduce the programme issued by the directors of the Opéra National, on the first anniversary of his execution, 21st January, 1794.

IN BEHALF OF AND FOR THE PEOPLE,
GRATIS,
In joyful commemoration of the Death of the Tyrant,
THE NATIONAL OPERA
WILL GIVE TO DAY, 6 PLUVIOSE, YEAR II., OF THE REPUBLIC,
MILTIADES AT MARATHON,
THE SIEGE OF THIONVILLE,
THE OFFERING TO LIBERTY.

REPUBLICAN CELEBRITIES.

The Opera under the Republic was directed, until 1792, by four distinguished *sans culottes*—Henriot, Chaumette, Le Rouxand Hébert, the last named of whom had once been check-taker at the Académie! The others know nothing whatever of operatic affairs. The management of the theatre was afterwards transferred to Francœur, one of the

former directors, associated with Cellérier, an architect; but the dethroned *impresarii*, accompanied by Danton and other republican amateurs, constantly made their appearance behind the scenes, and very frequently did the chief members of the company the honour of supping with them. In these cases the invitations, as under the ancient régime, proceeded, not from the artists, but from the artists' patrons; with this difference, however, that under the republic, the latter never paid the bill. There was no Duke de Bouillon now testifying his admiration of the vocal art to the tune of 900,000 francs;[70] there was no Prince de Soubise, to receive from the united ballet letters of condolence, thanks, and proposed pecuniary assistance; and if there *had* been such an impossible phenomenon as a Count de Lauragais, what, I wonder, would he not have given to have been able to clear the *coulisses* of such abominable intruders as the before named republican chiefs? "The chiefs of the republic, one and indivisible," says M. Castil Blaze, "were very fond of moistening their throats. Henriot, Danton, Hébert, Le Roux, Chaumette, had hardly taken a turn in the *coulisses* or in the *foyer*, before they said to such an actor or actress: We are going to your room, see that we are received properly." A superb collation was brought in. When the repast was finished and the bottles were empty, the national convention, the commune of Paris beat a retreat without troubling itself about the expense. You think, perhaps, that the dancer or the singer paid for the representatives of the people? Not at all; honest Mangin, who kept the refreshment room of the theatre, knew perfectly well that the actors of the Opera were not paid, that they had no sort of money, not even a rag of an assignat; he made a sacrifice; from delicacy he did not ask from the artists what he would not have dared to claim from the sans culottes for fear of the guillotine."

Sometimes the executioner, who, as a public official, had a right to his entrées, made his appearance behind the scenes, and it is said that in a facetious mood, he would sometimes express his opinion about the "execution" of the music. So, I am told, the London hangman went one night to the pit of Her Majesty's Theatre to hear Jenny Lind, and on seeing the Swedish nightingale, exclaimed, breathless with admiration and excitement, "What a throat to scrag!"

AGREEABLE CRITICS.

Operatic kings and queens were suppressed by the republic. Not only were they forbidden to appear on the stage, but even their names were not to be pronounced behind the scenes, and the expressions *côté du roi*, *côté de la reine*, were changed into *côté jardin*, *côté cour*, which at the theatre of the Tuileries indicated respectively the left and right of the stage, from the stage point of view. At first all pieces in which kings and queens appeared, were prohibited, but the dramas of *sans culottes* origin were so stupid and disgusting, that the republic was absolutely obliged to return to the old monarchical *répertoire*. The kings, however, were turned into chiefs; princes and dukes became representatives of the people; seigneurs subsided into mayors; and substitutes more or less synonymous, were found for such offensive words as crown, throne, sceptre, &c. In a new republican version of a lyrical work represented at the Opera Comique, *le roi* in one well known line was replaced by *la loi*, and the vocalist had to declaim *La loi passait, et le tambour battait aux champs.* A certain voluble executant, however, is said to have preferred the following emendation: *Le pouvoir exécutif passait, et le tambour battait aux champs.*

The scenes of most of the new operas were laid in Italy, Prussia, Portugal,—anywhere but in France, where it would have been indispensable, from a political, and impossible from a poetical, point of view to make the lovers address one another as *citoyen*, *citoyenne*.

On the 19th of June, 1793, the directors of the Opera having objected to give a gratuitous performance of *The Siege of Thionville*, the commune of Paris issued the following edict:

"Considering that for a long time past the aristocracy has taken refuge in the administration of various theatres;

"Considering that these gentlemen corrupt the public mind by the pieces they represent;

"Considering that they exercise a fatal influence on the revolution;

It is decreed that the *Siege of Thionville* shall be represented gratis and solely for the amusement of the *sans culottes*, who, to this moment have been the true defenders of liberty and supporters of democracy."

Soon afterwards it was proposed to shut up the Opera, but Hébert, the ferocious Hébert, better known as *le père Duchèsne*, undertook its defence on the ground that it procured subsistence for a number of families, and "caused the agreeable arts to flourish."

It was thereupon resolved "that the Opera should be encouraged and defended against its enemies." At the same time the managers Cellérier and Francœur were arrested as *suspects*. Neither of them was executed.

THE "MARATISTES" AGAIN.

The Opera was now once more placed under the direction of a committee chosen from among the singers and dancers, who were selected this time, not by reason of their artistic merit, but solely with reference to their political principles. Lays, one of the chief managers, was a furious democrat, and on one occasion insisted on Mademoiselle Maillard (Gluck's "Armida!") appearing in a procession as the Goddess of Reason.

Mademoiselle Maillard having refused, Chaumette was appealed to. The arguments he employed were simple but convincing. "Well, *citoyenne*," he said, "since you refuse to be a divinity, you must not be astonished if we treat you *as a mortal*." Fortunately for the poor prima donna, Mormoro, a member of the Commune of Paris, and a raging "Maratiste" (which has not quite the same meaning now as in the days of the "Todistes") claimed the obnoxious part for his unhappy wife. The beautiful Madame Mormoro was forced to appear in the streets of Paris in the light and airy costume of an antique Goddess, with the thermometer at twenty degrees below freezing point! "Reason" not unreasonably wept with annoyance throughout the ceremony.

Léonard Bourdon, called by those who knew him *Léopard* Bourdon, used all his influence, as a distinguished member of the Mountain, to get a work he had prepared for the Opera produced. His piece was called the *Tomb of the Impostors*, or *the Inauguration of the Temple of Truth*. It was printed at the expense of the Republic, but never brought out. In the first scene the stage represents a church, built with human skulls. In the sanctuary there is to be a fountain of blood. A woman enters to confess, the priest behaves atrociously in the confessional, &c., &c. The scenes and incidents throughout the drama are all in the same style, and the whole is dedicated in an

uncomplimentary epistle to the Pope. Léopard tormented the directors actors, and actresses, night and day, to produce his master-piece, and threatened, that if they were not quick about it, he would have a guillotine erected on the stage.

This threat was not quite so vain as it might seem. A list of twenty-two persons engaged at the Opera (twenty-two—the fatal number during the Reign of Terror), had been already drawn up by Hébert, as a sort of executioner's memorandum. When he was in a good humour he would show it to the singers and dancers, and say to them with easy familiarity; "I shall have to send you all to the guillotine some day. Two reasons have prevented me hitherto; in the first place you are not worth the trouble, in the second I want you for my amusement." These reasons were not considered quite satisfactory by the proscribed artists, and Beaupré, a comic dancer of great talent, contrived by various humorous stratagems (one of which, and doubtless the most readily forgiven, consisted in intoxicating Hébert), to gain possession of the fatal list; but the day afterwards the republican *dilettante* was always sufficiently recovered from the effects of his excessive potations to draw up another one exactly like it.

DANGEROUS MELODIES.

At the head of the catalogue of suspected ones figured the name of Lainez, whom the republicans could not pardon for the energy and expression with which he had sung the air *Chantez, célébrez votre reine*, at the last performances of *Iphigénie en Aulide*; and that of Mademoiselle Maillard, whose crime has been already mentioned. At this period it was dangerous not only to sing the words, but even to hum or whistle the music of such airs as the aforesaid *Chantez, célébrez votre reine*, *O Richard o mon roi! Charmante Gabrielle*, and many others, among which may be mentioned *Pauvre Jacques*—an adaptation of Dibdin's *Poor Jack*, in which allusions had been discovered to the fate of Louis XVI. Indeed, to perform any kind of music might be fatal to the executant, and thus Mesdemoiselles de Saint Léger, two young ladies living in Arras, were executed for having played the piano the day that Valenciennes fell into the hands of the enemy.

Mademoiselle Maillard, much as she detested the republicans, was forced, on one occasion, to sing a republican hymn. When Lainez complimented her on the warmth of her expression, the vigour of her execution, she replied, "I was burning with rage at having to sing to such monsters."

Vestris, the Prince de Guéméné of the Vestris family, he who had been accused by his father of wishing to produce a misunderstanding between the Vestrises and the Bourbons, had to dance in a *pas de trois* as a *sans culottes*, between two nuns!

Sophie Arnould, accused (and not quite unreasonably), of aristocratic sympathies, pointed indignantly to a bust of Gluck in her room, and asked the intelligent agents of the Republic, if it was likely she would keep the bust of Marat were she not a true republican?

The vocalists of a revolutionary turn of mind would have succeeded better if they had possessed more talent; but the Parisian public, even in 1793, was not prepared to accept correctness in politics as an excuse for inaccuracy in singing. Lefèvre, a sixth tenor, but a bloodthirsty republican, insisted on being promoted to first characters, and threatened those whom he wished to replace with denunciations and the guillotine, if they kept him in a subordinate position any longer. Lefèvre had his wish gratified in part, but not altogether. He appeared as *primo tenore*, but was violently hissed by his friends, the *sans culottes*. He then came out as first bass, and was hissed again. In his rage he attributed his *fiasco* to the machinations of the counter-revolution, and wanted the soldiers to come into the theatre, and fire upon the infamous accomplices of "Pitt and Coburg."

AN ATROCIOUS TENOR.

This bad singer, and worse man, was one of the twelve chiefs of the National Guard of Paris, and on certain days had the command of the city. As his military rule was most oppressive, the Parisians used to punish him for his tyranny as a soldier, by ridiculing his monstrous defects as a vocalist.

Though the Reign of Terror was a fearful time for artists and art, the number of playhouses in Paris increased enormously. There were sixty-three theatres open, and in spite of war, famine, and the guillotine, they were always full.

In 1794, the opera was transferred to the Rue de la Loi (afterwards Rue de Richelieu), immediately opposite the National Library. With regard to this change of locality, let us hear what M. Castil Blaze has to say, in his own words.

"How was it that the opera was moved to a building exactly opposite the National Library, so precious and so combustible a repository of human knowledge? The two establishments were only separated by a street, very much too narrow: if the theatre caught fire, was it not sure to burn the library? That is what a great many persons still ask; this question has been re-produced a hundred times in our journals. Go back to the time when the house was built by Mademoiselle Montansier; read the *Moniteur Universel*, and you will see that it was precisely in order to expose this same library to the happy chances of a fire, that the great lyrical entertainment was transferred to its neighbourhood. The opera hung over it, and threatened it constantly. At this time enlightenment abounded to such a point, that the judicious Henriot, convinced in his innermost conscience that all reading was henceforth useless, had made a motion to burn the library. To move the opera to the Rue Richelieu—the opera, which twice in eighteen years had been a prey to the flames—to place it exactly opposite our literary treasures, was to multiply to infinity the chances of their being burnt.'

Mercier, in reference to the literary views of the Committee of Public Safety, writes in the *Nouveau Paris*, as follows:—

"The language of Omar about the Koran was not more terrible than those uttered by the members of the

committee of public safety when they expressed their intentions formally, as follows:—'Yes, we will burn all the libraries, for nothing will be needed but the history of the Revolution and its laws.'" If the motion of Henriot had been carried, David, the great Conventional painter was ready to propose that the same service should be rendered to the masterpieces in the Louvre, as to the literary wealth of the National Library. Republican subjects, according to David, were alone worthy of being represented.

THE OPERA AND THE NATIONAL LIBRARY.

At one of the sittings of the very council in which Henriot had already brought forward his motion for burning the Library, Mademoiselle Montansier was accused of having built the theatre in the Rue Richelieu with that very design. On the 14th of November, 1793, Chaumette at the sitting of the Commune of Paris, said—

"I denounce the *Citoyenne* Montansier. The money of the Englishman[71] has been largely employed in raising this edifice, and the former queen gave fifty thousand crowns towards it. I demand that this theatre be closed on account of the dangers which would result from its catching fire." Adopted.

Hébert. "I denounce *la demoiselle* Montansier, personally; I have information against her. She offered me a box at her new theatre to procure my silence. I demand that la Montansier be arrested as a suspicious person." Adopted.

Chaumette. "I demand, moreover, that the actors, actresses and directors of the Parisian theatres be subjected to the censorship of the council." Adopted.

After deciding that the theatre in the Rue de la Loi could not be kept open without imperilling the existence of the National Library, and after imprisoning Mademoiselle Montansier for having built it, the Commune of Paris deliberately opened it as an opera house! Mademoiselle Montansier was, nevertheless, still kept in prison, and remained there ten months, until after the death of Robespierre.

Mademoiselle Montansier's nocturnal assemblies in the Palais Royal were equally renowned before and after her arrest. Actors and actresses, gamblers, poets, representatives of the people, republican generals, retired aristocrats, conspicuous *sans culottes*, and celebrities of all kinds congregated there. Art, pleasure, politics, the new opera, the last execution were alike discussed by Dugazon and Barras, le père Duchesne and the Duke de Lauzun, Robespierre and Mademoiselle Maillard, the Chevalier de Saint Georges and Danton, Martainville and the Marquis de Chanvelin, Lays and Marat, Volange and the Duke of Orleans. From the names just mentioned, it will be understood that some members of this interesting society were from time to time found wanting. Their absence was not much remarked, and fresh notorieties constantly came forward to fill the places of those claimed by the guillotine.

After Mademoiselle Montansier's liberation from prison, Napoleon Bonaparte was introduced to her by Dugazon and Barras. His ambition had not yet been excited, and Barras—who may, nevertheless, have looked upon him as a possible rival, and one to be dreaded—wished to get up a marriage between him and the fashionable but now somewhat antiquated syren of the Palais Royal. Everything went on well for some time. Then a magnificent dinner was given with the view of bringing the affair to a conclusion; but Bonaparte was very reserved, and Barras now saw that his project was not likely to succeed. At a banquet given by Mademoiselle Montansier, to celebrate the success of the thirteenth Vendémiaire, Bonaparte proposed a toast in honour of his venerable "intended," and soon afterwards she married Neuville.

MADEMOISELLE MONTANSIER.

Mademoiselle Montansier who had been shamefully cheated, indeed robbed, by the Convention, hoped to have her claims recognised by the Directory. Barras offered her one million, six hundred thousand francs. She refused it, the indemnity she demanded for the losses which she had sustained by the seizure of her theatre at the hands of the Convention amounting to seven millions. Napoleon, when first consul, caused the theatre to be estimated, when its value was fixed at one million three hundred thousand francs. After various delays, Mademoiselle Montansier received a partial recognition of her claim, accompanied by an order for payment, signed by the Emperor at Moscow.

Some readers have, probably, been unable to reconcile two facts mentioned above with respect to the Opera under the Convention:—1. That the performers were not paid; and 2. That the public attended the representations in immense numbers. The explanation is very simple. The money was stolen by the Commune of Paris. Gardel, the ballet-master, required fifty thousand francs for the production of a work composed by himself, on the subject of *William Tell*. Twice was the sum amassed from the receipts and professedly set apart for the unfortunate *William Tell*, and twice the money disappeared. It had been devoted to the requirements of patriots in real life.

Danton, Hébert, Chaumette, Henriot, Robespierre, all administrators of the Opera; Dubuisson, Fabre d'Eglantine, librettists writing for the Opera, and both republicans had been executed during the Reign of Terror. Chamfort, a republican, killed himself to avoid the same fate.

Coquéau, architect, musician, and writer, the author of a number of musical articles produced during the Gluck and Piccinni contests, was guillotined in the year II. of the republic.

The musician, Edelman, after bringing a number of persons to the scaffold, including his patron and benefactor, the Baron de Diétrich, arrived there himself in 1794, accompanied by his brother.

In the same year Despréaux, leader of the first violins at the opera in 1782, and member of the Revolutionary Tribunal in 1793, killed himself from remorse.

Altogether, sixteen persons belonging to the opera in various ways killed themselves, or were executed in 1792, '93, and '94.

After the fall of Robespierre, the royalists for a time ruled the theatres, and avenged themselves on all actors who had made themselves conspicuous as revolutionists. Trial, a comic tenor, who had made a very serious accusation against Mademoiselle Buret, of the Comédie Italienne, which led to her execution, was forced to sing the *Réveil du Peuple* on his knees, amid the execrations of the audience. He sang it, but was thrown into such a state of agitation that he died from the effects.

Lays, whose favourite part was that of "Oreste," in *Iphigénie en Tauride*, had, in the course of the opera, to declaim these verses:—

"J'ai trahi l'amitié,

J'ai trahi la nature;
Des plus noirs attentats
J'ai comblé la mesure."

The audience of the Bordeaux theatre considered this confession so becoming in the mouth of the singer who had to utter it, that Lays took care not to give them an opportunity a second time of manifesting their views on the subject. Lays made his next appearance in *Œdipe à Colone*. As in this opera he had to represent the virtuous Theseus, he felt sure that the public would not be able to confound him in any manner with the character he was supporting; but he had to submit to all sorts of insults during the performance, and at the fall of the curtain was compelled to begin the *Réveil du Peuple*. After the third verse, he was told he was unworthy to sing such a song, and was driven from the stage.

MADELEINE GUIMARD AGAIN.

On the 23rd of January, 1796, Mademoiselle Guimard re-appeared at a performance given for the benefit of aged and retired artists. A number of veteran connoisseurs came forward on this occasion to see how the once charming Madeleine looked at the age of fifty-nine. After the ballet an old *habitué* of Louis the Fifteenth's time called for a coach, drove to his lodging, and on getting out, proceeded naturally to pay the driver the amount of his fare.

"You are joking, my dear Count," said the coachman. "Whoever heard of Lauragais paying the Chevalier de Ferrière for taking him home in his carriage?"

"What! is it you?" said the Count de Lauragais.

"Myself!" replied the Chevalier.

The two friends embraced, and the Chevalier de Ferrière then explained that, when all the royalists were concealing themselves or emigrating, he had determined to do both. He had assumed the great coat of his coachman, painted a number over the arms on his carriage, and emigrated as far as the Boulevard, where he found plenty of customers, and passed uninjured and unsuspected through the Reign of Terror.

"Where do you live?" said the Count.

"Rue des Tuileries," replied the Chevalier, "and my horses with me. The poor beasts have shared all my misfortunes."

"Give me the whip and reins, and get inside," cried de Lauragais.

"What for?" inquired the Chevalier.

"To drive you home. It is an act which, as a gentleman, I insist on performing; a duty I owe to my old companion and friend. Your day's work is over. To-morrow morning we will go to Sophie's, who expects me to breakfast."

"Where?"

"At the Hotel d'Angivillier, a caravansary of painters and musicians, where Fouché has granted her, on the part of the Republic, an apartment and a pension of two thousand four hundred francs—we should have said a hundred *louis* formerly. This is called a national reward for the eminent services rendered by the *citoyenne* Arnould to the country, and to the sovereign people at the Opera. The poor girl was greatly in need of it."

SOPHIE ARNOULD AGAIN.

Fouché had once been desperately in love with Sophie Arnould, and now pitied her in her distress. Thanks to her influence with the minister, the Chevalier Ferrière obtained an order, authorizing him to return to France, though he had never left Paris, except occasionally to drive a fare to one of the suburbs.

The natural effect of Napoleon's campaigns in Italy was to create among the French army a taste for Italian music. The First Consul and many of his generals were passionately fond of it; and a hint from the Tuileries in 1801 was sufficient to induce Mademoiselle Montansier to engage an Italian company, which performed for the first time in Paris on the 1st of May in the same year. The enterprise, however, was not successful; and in 1803 the directress, who had been arrested before because money was owing to her, was put in prison for owing money.

If, by taking his troops to Italy, Napoleon was the means of introducing a taste for Italian music among the French, he provided his country with Italian singers in a far more direct manner. At Dresden, in 1806, he was delighted with the performance of Brizzi and Madame Paer in the opera of *Achille*, composed by the prima donna's husband.

"You sing divinely, Madame Paer," said the emperor. What do they give you at this theatre?"

"Fifteen thousand francs, Sire."

"You shall receive thirty. M. Brizzi, you shall follow me on the same terms."

"But we are engaged."

"With me. You see the affair is quite settled. The Prince of Benevento will attend to the diplomatic part of it."

NAPOLEON AND PAER.

Napoleon took away *Achille*, and everything belonging to it; music, composer, and the two principal singers. The engagement by which the emperor engaged Paer as composer of his chamber music, was drawn up by Talleyrand, and bore his signature, approved by Napoleon, and attested by Maret, the secretary of state. Paer, who had been four years at Dresden, and who, independently of his contract, was personally much attached to the king of Saxony, did all in his power to avoid entering into Napoleon's service. Perhaps, too, he was not pleased at the prospect of having to follow the emperor about from one battle-field to another, though by a special article in the engagement offered to him, he was guaranteed ten francs a post, and thirty-four francs a day for his travelling expenses. As Paer, in spite of the compliments, and the liberal terms[72] offered to him by Napoleon, continued to object, General Clarke told the emperor that he had an excellent plan for getting over all difficulties, and saving the maestro from any reproaches of ingratitude which the king of Saxony might otherwise address to him. This plan consisted in placing Paer in the hands of *gens d'armes*, and having him conducted from camp to camp wherever the emperor went. No violence, however, was done to the composer. The king of Saxony liberated him from his engagement at the Dresden opera, and, moreover, signified to him that he must either follow Napoleon, or quit Saxony immediately. It is said that Paer was ceded by a secret treaty between the two sovereigns, like a fortress, or rather like a province, as provinces were transferred before the idea of nationality was invented; that is to say, without the wishes of the inhabitants being in

any way taken into account. The king of Saxony was only too glad that Napoleon took nothing from him but his singers and musicians.

Brizzi, the tenor, Madame Paer, the prima donna, and her husband, the composer, were ordered to start at once for Warsaw. In the morning, the emperor would attend to military and state affairs, and perhaps preside at a battle, for fighting was now going on in the neighbourhood of the Polish capital. In the evening, he had a concert at head quarters, the programme of which generally included several pieces by Paisiello. Napoleon was particularly fond of Paisiello's music, and Paer, who, besides being a composer, was a singer of high merit, knew a great deal of it by heart.

Paisiello had been Napoleon's chapel-master since 1801, the emperor having sent for him to Naples after signing the Concordat with the Pope. On arriving in Paris, the cunning Italian, like an experienced courtier, was no sooner introduced to Napoleon than he addressed him as 'sire!'

"'Sire,' what do you mean?" replied the first consul; "I am a general, and nothing more."

"Well, General," continued the composer, "I have come to place myself at your majesty's orders."

"I must really beg you," continued Napoleon, "not to address me in this manner."

"Forgive me, General," answered Paisiello, "but I cannot give up the habit I have contracted in addressing sovereigns who, compared with you, seem but pigmies. However, I will not forget your commands, sire; and if I have been unfortunate enough to offend, I must throw myself upon your Majesty's indulgence."

EXPRESSION IN MUSIC.

Paisiello received ten thousand francs for the mass he wrote for Napoleon's coronation. Each of the masses for the imperial chapel brought him one thousand francs. Not much, certainly; but then it must be remembered that he produced as many as fourteen in two years. They were for the most part made up of pieces of church music, which the maestro had written for Italy, and when this fruitful source failed him, he had recourse to his numerous serious and comic operas. Thus, an air from the *Nittetti* was made to do duty as a *Gloria*, another from the *Scuffiera* as an *Agnus Dei*. Music depends so much upon association that, doubtless, only those persons who had already heard these melodies on the stage, found them at all inappropriate in a church. Figaro's air in the *Barber of Seville* would certainly not sound well in a mass; but there are plenty of love songs, songs expressive of despair (if not of too violent a kind), songs, in short, of a sentimental and slightly passionate cast, which only require to be united to religious words to be at once and thereby endowed with a religious character. Gluck, himself, who is supposed by many to have believed that music was capable of conveying absolute, definite ideas, borrowed pieces from his old Italian operas to introduce into the scores he was writing, on entirely different subjects, for the Académie Royale of Paris. Thus, he has employed an air from his *Telemacco* in the introduction to the overture of *Iphigénie en Aulide*. The chorus in the latter work, *Que d'attraits que de majesté*, is founded on the air, *Al mio spirto*, in the same composer's *Clemenza di Tito*. The overture to Gluck's *Telemacco* became that of his *Armide*. Music serves admirably to heighten the effect of a dramatic situation, or to give force and intensity to the expression of words; but the same music may often be allied with equal advantage to words of very different shades of meaning. Thus, the same melody will depict equally well the rage of a baffled conspirator, the jealousy of an injured and most respectable husband, and various other kinds of agitation; the grief of lovers about to part, the joy of lovers at meeting again, and other emotions of a tender nature; the despondency of a man firmly bent on suicide, the calm devotion of a pious woman entering a convent, and other feelings of a solemn class. The signification we discover in music also depends much upon the circumstances under which it is heard, and to some extent also on the mood we are in when hearing it.

TWO PASTICCIOS.

Under the republic, consulate, and empire, music did not flourish in France, and not even the imperial Spontini and Cherubini, in spite of the almost European reputation they for some time enjoyed, produced any works which will bear comparison with the masterpieces of their successors, Rossini, Auber, and Meyerbeer. During the dark artistic period which separates the fall of the monarchy from the restoration, a few interesting works were produced at the Opera Comique; but until Napoleon's advent to power, France neglected more than ever the music of Italy, and did worse than neglect that of Germany, for, in 1793, the directors of the Academy brought out a version of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, in five acts, without recitative and with all the prose dialogue of Beaumarchais introduced. In 1806, too, a *pasticcio* by Kalkbrenner, formed out of the music of Mozart's *Don Juan*, with improvements and additions by Kalkbrenner himself, was performed at the same theatre. Both these medleys met with the fate which might have been anticipated for them.

CHAPTER XIV.

OPERA IN ITALY, GERMANY AND RUSSIA, DURING AND IN CONNECTION WITH THE REPUBLICAN AND NAPOLEONIC WARS. PAISIELLO, PAER, CIMAROSA, MOZART. THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO. DON GIOVANNI.

NOTHING shows better the effect on art of the long continental wars at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century than the fact that Mozart's two greatest works, written for Vienna and Prague immediately before the French Revolution, did not become known in England and France until about a quarter of a century after their production. Fortunate Austria, before the great break up of European territories and dynasties, possessed the two first musical capitals in Europe. Opera had already declined in Berlin, and its history, even under the direction of the flute-playing Frederic, possesses little interest for English readers after the departure or rather flight of Madame Mara. Italy was still the great nursery of music, but her maestri composed their greatest works for foreign theatres, and many of them were attached to foreign courts. Thus, Paisiello wrote his *Barbiere di Siviglia* for St. Petersburgh, whither he had been invited by the Empress Catherine, and where he was succeeded by Cimarosa. Cimarosa, again, on his return from St. Petersburgh, wrote his masterpiece, *Il Matrimonio Segretto*, for the Emperor Leopold II., at Vienna. Of the Opera at Stockholm, we have heard nothing since the time of Queen Christina. The Dresden Opera, which, in the days of Handel, was the first in Europe, still maintained its pre-eminence at the beginning of the second half of the eighteenth century, when Rousseau published his "Musical Dictionary," and described at length the composition of its admirable orchestra. But the state and the resources of the kings of Saxony declined with the power of Poland, and the Dresden Opera, though, thanks to the taste which presided at the court, its performances

were still excellent, had quite lost its peculiar celebrity long before Napoleon came, and carried away its last remaining glories in the shape of the composer, Paer, and Madame Paer and Brizzi, its two principal singers.

PAISIELLO IN RUSSIA.

The first great musical work produced in Russia, Paisiello's *Barbiere di Siviglia*, was performed for the first time at St. Petersburgh, in 1780. In this opera work, of which the success soon became European, the composer entered thoroughly into the spirit of all Beaumarchais's best scenes, so admirably adapted for musical illustration. Of the solos, the three most admired were Almaviva's opening romance, Don Basil's *La Calomnia*, and the air for Don Bartholo; the other favourite pieces being a comic trio, in which La Jeunesse sneezes, and L'Eveillé yawns in the presence of the tutor (I need scarcely remark that the personages just named belong to Beaumarchais's comedy, and that they are not introduced in Rossini's opera), another trio, in which Rosina gives the letter to Figaro, a duet for the entry of the tenor in the assumed character of Don Alonzo, and a quintett, in which Don Basil is sent to bed, and in which the phrase *buona sera* is treated with great felicity.

Pergolese rendered a still greater service to Russia than did Paisiello by writing one of his masterpieces for its capital, when he took the young Bortnianski with him from St. Petersburgh to Italy, and there educated the greatest religious composer that Russia, not by any means deficient in composers, has yet known.

A SINGER'S INDISPOSITION.

We have seen that Paisiello, some years after his return to Italy, was engaged by Napoleon as chapel-master, and that the services of Paer were soon afterwards claimed and secured by the emperor as composer of his chamber music. This was not the first time that Paer had been forced to alter his own private arrangements in consequence of the very despotic patronage accorded to music by the victorious leaders of the French army. In 1799 he was at Udine, where his wife was engaged as *prima donna*. Portogallo's *la Donna di genio volubile* was about to be represented before a large number of the officers under the command of Bernadotte, when suddenly it appeared impossible to continue the performance owing to the very determined indisposition of the *primo basso*. This gentleman had gone to bed in the middle of the day disguised as an invalid. He declared himself seriously unwell in the afternoon, and in the evening sent a message to the theatre to excuse himself from appearing in Portogallo's opera. Paer and his wife understood what this meant. The performance was for Madame Paer's benefit; and Olivieri, the perfidious basso, from private pique, had determined, if possible, to prevent it taking place. Paer's spirit was roused by the attitude of the *primo buffo*, which was still that of a man confined to his bed; and he resolved to frustrate his infamous scheme, which, though simple, appeared certain of success, inasmuch as no other comic *basso* was to be found anywhere near Udine. The audience was impatient, Madame Paer in tears, the manager in despair, when Paer desired that the performance might begin; saying, that Providence would send them a basso who would at least know his part, and that in any case Madame Paer must get ready for the first scene. Madame Paer obeyed the marital injunction, but in a state of great trepidation; for she had no confidence in the capabilities of the promised basso, and was not by any means sure that he even existed. The curtain was about to rise, when the singer who was to have fallen from the clouds walked quietly on to the stage, perfectly dressed for the part he was about to undertake, and without any sign of hesitation on his countenance. The *prima donna* uttered a cry of surprise, burst into a fit of laughter, and then rushed weeping into the arms of her husband,—for it was Paer himself who had undertaken to replace the treacherous Olivieri.

"No," said Madame Paer; "this is impossible! It shall never be said that I allowed you, a great composer, who will one day be known throughout Europe, to act the buffoon. No! the performance must be stopped!"

At this moment the final chords of the overture were heard. Poor Madame Paer resigned herself to her fate, and went weeping on to the stage to begin a comic duet with her husband, who seemed in excellent spirits, and commenced his part with so much *verve* and humour, that the audience rewarded his exertions with a storm of applause. Paer's gaiety soon communicated itself to his wife. If Paer was to perform at all, it was necessary that his performance should outshine that of all possible rivals, and especially that of the miscreant Olivieri, who was now laughing between his sheets at the success which he fancied must have already attended his masterly device. The *prima donna* had never sung so charmingly before, but the greatest triumph of the evening was gained by the new *basso*. Olivieri, who previously had been pronounced unapproachable in Portogallo's opera, was now looked upon as quite an inferior singer compared to the *buffo caricato* who had so unexpectedly presented himself before the Udine public. Paer, in addition to his great, natural histrionic ability, knew every note of *la Donna*. Olivieri had studied only his own part. Paer, in directing the rehearsals, had made himself thoroughly acquainted with all of them, and gave a significance to some portions of the music which had never been expressed or apprehended by his now defeated, routed, utterly confounded rival.

A SINGER'S INDISPOSITION.

At present comes the dark side of the picture. Olivieri, dangerously ill the night before, was perfectly well the next morning, and quite ready to resume his part in *la Donna di genio volubile*. Paer, on the other hand, was quite willing to give it up to him; but both reckoned without the military connoisseurs of Udine, and above all without Bernadotte, who arrived the day after Paer's great success, when all the officers of the staff were talking of nothing else. Olivieri was announced to appear in his old character; but when the bill was shown to the General, he declared that the original representative might go back to bed, for that the only buffo he would listen to was the illustrious Paer. In vain the director explained that the composer was not engaged as a singer, and that nothing but the sudden indisposition of Olivieri would have induced him to appear on the stage at all. Bernadotte swore he would have Paer, and no one else; and as the unfortunate *impresario* continued his objections, he was ordered into arrest, and informed that he should remain in prison until the *maestro* Paer undertook once more the part of "Pippo" in Portogallo's opera.

The General then sent a company of grenadiers to surround Paer's house; but the composer had heard of what had befallen the manager, and, foreseeing his own probable fate, if he remained openly in Udine, had concealed himself, and spread a report that he was in the country. Lancers and hussars were dispatched in search of him, but naturally without effect. In the supposed absence of Paer, the army was obliged to accept Olivieri; and when six or seven representations of the popular opera had taken place and the military public had become accustomed to Olivieri's performance of the part of "Pippo," Paer came forth from his hiding place and suffered no more from the warlike dilettanti-ism of Bernadotte.

There would be no end to my anecdotes if I were to attempt to give a complete list of all those in which

MADAME FODOR AND THE COW.

musicians and singers have been made to figure in connection with all sorts of events during the last great continental war. The great vocalists, and many of the great composers of the day, continued to travel about from city to city, and from court to court, as though Europe were still in a state of profound peace. Sometimes, as happened once to Paer, and was nearly happening to him a second time, they were taken prisoners; or they found themselves shut up in a besieged town; and a great *cantatrice*, Madame Fodor, who chanced to be engaged at the Hamburg opera when Hamburg was invested, was actually the cause of a *sortie* being made in her favour. On one occasion, while she was singing, the audience was disturbed by a cannon ball coming through the roof of the theatre and taking its place in the gallery; but the performances continued nevertheless, and the officers and soldiers of the garrison continued to be delighted with their favourite vocalist. Madame Fodor, however, on her side, was beginning to get tired of her position; not that she cared much about the bombardment which was renewed from time to time, but because the supply of milk had failed, cows and oxen having been alike slaughtered for the sustenance of the beleaguered garrison. Without milk, Madame Fodor was scarcely able to sing; at least, she had so accustomed herself to drink it every evening during the intervals of performance, that she found it inconvenient and painful to do without it. Hearing in what a painful situation their beloved vocalist found herself, the French army gallantly resolved to remedy it without delay. The next evening a *sortie* was effected, and a cow brought back in triumph. This cow was kept in the property and painting room in the theatre, above the stage, and was lowered like a drop scene, to be milked whenever Madame Fodor was thirsty. So, at least, says the operatic anecdote on the subject, though it would perhaps have been a more convenient proceeding to have sent some trustworthy person to perform the milking operation up stairs. In any case, the cow was kept carefully shut up and under guard. Otherwise the animal's life would not have been safe, so great was the scarcity of provision in Hamburg at the time, and so great the general hunger for beef of any kind.

THE D'ENTRAIGUES' MURDER.

Madame Huberti, after flying from Paris during the Reign of Terror, married the Count d'Entraigues, and would seem to have terminated her operatic career happily and honourably; but she was destined some years afterwards to die a horrible death. The countess always wore the order of St. Michael, which had been given to her by the then unacknowledged Louis XVIII., in token of the services she had rendered to the royalist party, by enabling her husband to escape from prison and preserving his portfolio which contained a number of political papers of great importance. The Count afterwards entered the service of Russia, and was entrusted by the government with several confidential missions. Hitherto he had been working in the interest of the Bourbons against Napoleon; but when the French emperor and the emperor Alexander formed an alliance, after the battles of Eylau and Friedland, he seems to have thought that his connexion with Russia ought to terminate. However this may have been, he found means to obtain a copy of the secret articles contained in the treaty of Tilsit[73] and hastened to London to communicate them to the English government. For this service he is said to have received a pension, and he now established himself in England, where he appears to have had continual relations with the foreign office. The French police heard how the Count d'Entraigues was employed in London, and Fouché sent over two agents to watch him and intercept his letters. These emissaries employed an Italian refugee, to get acquainted with and bribe Lorenzo, the Count's servant, who allowed his compatriot to read and even to take copies of the despatches frequently entrusted to him by his master to take to Mr. Canning. He, moreover, gave him a number of the Count's letters to and from other persons. One evening a letter was brought to M. d'Entraigues which obliged him to go early the next morning from his residence at Barnes to London. Lorenzo had observed the seal of the foreign office on the envelope, and saw that his treachery would soon be discovered. Everything was ready for the journey, when he stabbed his master, who fell to the ground mortally wounded. The Countess was getting into the carriage. To prevent her charging him with her husband's death, the servant also stabbed her, and a few moments afterwards, in confusion and despair, blew his own brains out with a pistol which he in the first instance appears to have intended for M. d'Entraigues. This horrible affair occurred on the 22nd of July, 1812.

Nothing fatal happened to Madame Colbran, though she was deeply mixed up with politics, her name being at one time quite a party word among the royalists at Naples. Those who admired the king made a point of admiring his favourite singer. A gentleman from England asked a friend one night at the Naples theatre how he liked the vocalist in question.

"Like her? I am a royalist," was the reply.

When the revolutionists gained the upper hand, Madame Colbran was hissed; but the discomfiture of the popular party was always followed by renewed triumphs for the singer.

Madame Colbran must not lead us on to her future husband, Rossini, whose epoch has not yet arrived. The mention of Paer's wife has already taken us far away from the composers in vogue at the end of the eighteenth century.

IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETTO.

Two of the three best comic operas ever produced, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Il Matrimonio Segretto* (I need scarcely name Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* as the third), were written for Vienna within six years (1786-1792), and at the special request of emperors of Germany. Cimarosa was returning from St. Petersburgh when Leopold II., Joseph the Second's successor, detained him at Vienna, and invited him to compose something for his theatre. The *maestro* had not much time, but he did his best, and the result was, *Il Matrimonio Segretto*. The Emperor was delighted with the work, which seemed almost to have been improvised, and gave the composer twelve thousand francs, or, as some say, twelve thousand florins; in either case, a very liberal sum for the period when Cimarosa, Paisiello and Gughelmi had mutually agreed, whatever more they might receive for their operas, never to take less than two thousand four hundred francs.

The libretto of *Il Matrimonio Segretto*, by Bertatti, is imitated from that of a forgotten French operetta, *Sophie ou le Mariage Caché*, which is again founded on Garrick and Coleman's *Clandestine Marriage*. The Emperor Leopold was unable to be present at the first performance of Cimarosa's new work, but he heard of its enormous success, and determined not to miss a note at the second representation. He was in his box before the commencement of the overture, and listened to the performance throughout with the greatest attention, but without manifesting any opinion as to the merits of the music. As the Sovereign did not applaud, the brilliant audience who had assembled to hear *Il Matrimonio* a second time, were obliged, by court etiquette, to remain silent without giving the slightest

expression to the delight the music afforded them. This icy reception was very different to the one obtained by the opera the night before, when the marks of approbation from all parts of the house had been of the most enthusiastic kind. However, when the piece was at an end, the Emperor rose and said aloud—

"Bravo, Cimarosa, bravissimo! The whole opera is admirable, delightful, enchanting. I did not applaud that I might not lose a single note of this masterpiece. You have heard it twice, and I must have the same pleasure before I go to bed. Singers and musicians, pass into the next room! Cimarosa will come too, and will preside at the banquet prepared for you. When you have had sufficient rest we will begin again. I *encore* the whole opera, and, in the mean while, let us applaud it as it deserves." Leopold clapped his hands, and for some minutes the whole theatre resounded with plaudits. After the banquet, the entire opera was repeated.

The only other example of such an occurrence as the above is to be found in the career of Terence, whose *Eunuchus* on its first production, was performed twice the same day, or, rather, once in the morning, and once in the evening.

A similar amount of success obtained by Paer's *Laodicea* had quite an opposite result; for, as nearly the whole opera was encored, piece by piece, it was found impossible to conclude it the same evening, and the performance of the last act was postponed until the next night.

Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*, produced six years before the *Matrimonio Segretto*, was far less justly appreciated,—indeed, at Vienna, was not appreciated at all. This admirable work, so full of fresh spontaneous melody, and of rich, varied harmony was actually hissed by the Viennese! They even hissed *Non piu andrai*, which seems equally calculated to delight the educated and the most uneducated ear. Mozart has made allusion to this almost incredible instance of bad taste very happily and ingeniously in the supper scene of *Don Giovanni*.

MOZART AND JOSEPH II.

Joseph II. cared only for Italian music, and never gave his entire approbation to anything Mozart produced, though the musicians of the period acknowledged him to be the greatest composer in Europe.

"It is too fine for our ears," said the presumptuous Joseph, speaking to Mozart of the *Seraglio*. "Seriously, I think there are too many notes."

"Precisely the proper number," replied the composer.

The Emperor rewarded his frankness by giving him only fifty ducats for his opera.[74]

Nevertheless, the *Seraglio* had caused the success of one of the emperor's favourite enterprises. It was the first work produced at the German Opera, established by Joseph II., at Vienna. Until that time, Italian opera predominated everywhere; indeed, German opera, that is to say, lyric dramas in the German language, set to music by German composers, and sung by German singers, could not be said to exist. There were a number of Italian musicians living at Vienna who were quite aware of Mozart's superiority, and hated him for it; the more so, as by taking such an important part in the establishment of the German Opera, he threatened to diminish the reputation of the Italian school. The *Entführung aus dem Serail* was the first blow to the supremacy of Italian opera. Der *Schauspieldirector* was the second, and when, after the production of this latter work at the new German theatre of Vienna, Mozart proceeded to write the *Nozze di Figaro* for the Italians, he simply placed himself in the hands of his enemies. At the first representation, the two first acts of the *Nozze* were so shamefully executed, that the composer went in despair to the emperor to denounce the treachery of which he was being made the victim. Joseph had detected the conspiracy and was nearly as indignant as Mozart himself. He sent a severe message round to the stage, but the harm was now done, and the remainder of the opera was listened to very coldly. *Le Nozze di Figaro* failed at Vienna, and was not appreciated, did not even get a fair hearing, until it was produced some months afterwards at Prague. The Slavonians of Bohemia showed infinitely more good taste and intelligence than the Germans (led away and demoralized, however, by an Italian clique) at Vienna. At Prague, *le Nozze di Figaro* caused the greatest enthusiasm, and Mozart replied nobly to the sympathy and admiration of the Bohemians. "These good people," he said, "have avenged me. They know how to do me justice, I must write something to please them." He kept his word, and the year afterwards gave them the immortal *Don Giovanni*.

MOZART AND SALIERI.

At the head of the clique which had sworn eternal enmity to Mozart, was Salieri, a musician with a sort of Pontius Pilate reputation, owing his infamous celebrity to the fact that his name is now inseparably coupled with that of the sublime composer whom he would have destroyed. Salieri (whom we have met with before in Paris as the would-be successor of Gluck) was the most learned of the Italian composers at that time residing in Vienna; and, therefore, must have felt the greatness of Mozart's genius more profoundly than any of the others. When *Don Giovanni*, after its success at Prague, was produced at Vienna, it was badly put on the stage, imperfectly rehearsed, and represented altogether in a very unsatisfactory manner. Nor, with improved execution did the audience show any disposition to appreciate its manifold beauties. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* was quite eclipsed by the *Assur* of his envious and malignant rival.

"I will leave it to psychologists to determine," says M. Oulibicheff,[75] "whether the day on which Salieri triumphed publicly over Mozart, was the happiest or the most painful of his life. He triumphed, indeed, thanks to the ignorance of the Viennese, to his own skill as a director, (which enabled him to render the work of his rival scarcely recognisable), and to the entire devotion of his subordinates. He must have been pleased; but Salieri was not only envious, he was also a great musician. He had read the score of *Don Giovanni*, and you know that the works one reads with the greatest attention are those of one's enemies. With what admiration and despair it must have filled the heart of an artist who was even more ambitious of true glory than of mere renown! What must he have felt in his inmost soul! And what serpents must again have crawled and hissed in the wreath of laurel which was placed on his head! In spite of the fiasco of his opera, which he seems to have foreseen, and to which, at all events, he resigned himself with great calmness, Mozart, doubtless, more happy than his conqueror, added a few 'numbers,' each a masterpiece to his score. Four new pieces were written for it, at the request of the Viennese singers."

M. Oulibicheff's compatriot Poushkin has written an admirable study on the subject presented above in a few suggestive phrases by Mozart's biographer. Unfortunately, it is impossible in these volumes to find a place for the Russian poet's "Mozart and Salieri."

After the failure of *Don Giovanni* at Vienna, a number of persons were speaking of it in a room where Haydn and the principal connoisseurs of the place were assembled. Every one agreed in pronouncing it a most estimable work, but, also, every one had something to say against it. At last, Haydn, who, hitherto, had not spoken a word, was asked

to give his opinion.

"I do not feel myself in a position to decide this dispute," he answered. "All I know and can assure you of is that Mozart is the greatest composer of our time."

As Salieri's *Assur* completely eclipsed *Don Giovanni*, so, previously, did Martini's *Cosa Rara*, the *Nozze di Figaro*. Both these phenomena manifested themselves at Vienna, and the reader has already been reminded that the fate of the *Nozze di Figaro* is alluded to in *Don Giovanni*. All the airs played by the hero's musicians in the supper scene are taken from the operas which were most in vogue when Mozart produced his great work; such as *La Cosa Rara*, *Frà due Litiganti terzo gode*, and *I Pretendenti Burlati*. Leporello calls attention to the melodies as the orchestra on the stage plays them, and when, to terminate the series, the clarionets strike up *Non piu andrai*, he exclaims *Questo lo conosco pur troppo!* "I know this one only too well!" With the exception of *Non piu andrai*, which the Viennese could not tolerate the first time they heard it, none of the airs introduced in the *Don Giovanni* supper scene would be known in the present day, but for *Don Giovanni*.

Don Giovanni, composed by Mozart to *Da Ponte's* libretto (which is founded on Molière's *Festin de Pierre*, which is imitated from Tirso di Molina's *El Burlador di Siviglia*, which seems to have had its origin in a very ancient legend[76]), was produced at Prague, on the 4th of November, 1787. The subject had already been treated in a ballet, in four acts, for which Gluck wrote the music (produced at Parma in 1758; and long before the production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, it had been dramatised in some shape or other in almost every country in Europe, and especially in Spain, Italy, and France, where several versions of the Italian *Il Convitato di Pietra* were being played, when Molière first brought out his so-called *Festin de Pierre*. The original cast of *Don Giovanni* at Prague was as follows:—

Donna Anna, Teresa Saporiti.

Elvira, Catarina Micelli.

Zerlina, Madame Bondini (Catarina Saporiti).

Don Giovanni, Bassi (Luigi).

Ottavio, Baglioni (Antonio).

Leporello, Ponziani (Felice).

Don Pedro, Lolli (Guiseppe).

Masetto, the same.

Righini, of Bologna, had produced his opera of *Don Giovanni, ossia il Convitato di Pietra*, at Prague, only eight years before, for which reason the title of *Il Dissoluto Punito* was given to Mozart's work. It was not until some years afterwards that it received the name by which it is now universally known.

Although the part of *Don Giovanni* was written for a baritone, tenors, such as Tacchinardi and Garcia, have often played it, and frequently with greater success than the majority of baritones have obtained. But no individual success of a favourite singer can compensate for the transpositions and changes that have to be effected in Mozart's masterpiece, when the character of the hero is assigned to a vocalist who cannot execute the music which of right belongs to it. It has been said that Mozart wrote the part of *Don Giovanni* for a baritone, because it so happened that the baritone at the Prague theatre, Bassi, was the best singer of the company; but it is not to be imagined that the musical characterization of the personages in the most truly dramatic opera ever written, was the result of anything but the composer's well-considered design. "*Don Giovanni* was not intended for Vienna, but for Prague," Mozart is reported to have said. "The truth, however, is," he added, "that I wrote it for myself, and a few friends." Accordingly, the great composer was not thinking of Bassi at the time. It would be easy, moreover, to show, that though the most feminine of male voices may suit the ordinary *jeune premier*, or *premier amoureux*, there is nothing tenor-like in the temperament of a *Don Giovanni*; deceiving all women, defying all men, breaking all laws, human and divine, and an unbeliever in everything—even in the power of equestrian statues to get off their horses, and sit down to supper.

But, let us not consider whether or not *Fin ch' han dal vino* is improved by being sung (as tenor *Don Giovannis* sometimes sing it) a fourth higher than it was written by Mozart; or whether it is tolerable that the concerted pieces in which *Don Giovanni* takes part should be, not transposed (for that would be insufficient, or, rather, would increase the difficulties of execution) but so altered, that in some passages the original design of the composer is entirely perverted. Let us simply repeat the maxim, on which it is impossible to lay too much stress, that the work of a great master should not be touched, re-touched, or in any manner interfered with, under any pretext. There is, absolutely, no excuse for managers mutilating *Don Giovanni*; not even the excuse that in its original form this inexhaustible opera does not "draw." It has already lived, and with full, unfailing life, for three-quarters of a century. It has survived all sorts of revolutions in taste, and especially in musical taste. There are now no Emperors of Germany. Prague has become a third-rate city. That German Opera, which Mozart originated with his *Entführung aus dem Serail*, has attained a grand development, and among its composers has numbered Beethoven, Weber, and the latter's follower, and occasional imitator, Meyerbeer. Rossini has appeared with his seductive melody, and his brilliant, sonorous orchestra. But justice is still—more than ever—done to Mozart. The verdict of Prague is maintained; and this year, as ten, twenty, forty years ago, if the manager of the Italian Opera of London, Paris, or St. Petersburgh, has had for some time past a series of empty houses, he takes an opera, seventy-four years of age, and which, according to all ordinary musical calculations, ought long since to have had, at least, one act in the grave, dresses it badly, puts it badly on the stage, with such scenery as would be thought unworthy of Verdi, and hazardous for Meyerbeer, announces *Don Giovanni*, and every place in the theatre is taken!

Although Mozart's genius was fully acknowledged by the greatest musicians, among his contemporaries (the reader already knows what Haydn said of him, and what Cimarosa replied when he was addressed as his superior), his music found an echo in the hearts of only a very small portion of the ordinary public. Admired at Prague, condemned at Vienna, unknown in the rest of Europe, it may be said, with only too much truth, that Mozart's master-pieces, speaking generally, met with no recognition until after his death; with no fitting recognition until long

afterwards. From the slow, strong, oak-like growth of Mozart's fame, now flourishing, and still increasing every day, we may see, not for his name alone, but for his music, a continued celebrity and popularity, which will probably endure as long as our modern civilization. I have already spoken of the effects of the last general war in checking literary and artistic communication between the nations of Europe. This will, in part, account for Mozart's master-piece not having been performed at the Italian Opera of Paris until 1811, nor in London until after the peace, in 1817. In the Paris cast, the part of *Don Giovanni* was assigned to a tenor, Tacchinardi; and when the opera was revived at the same theatre (which was not until nine years afterwards), Tacchinardi was replaced by Garcia.

The first "Don Giovanni" who appeared in London, was the celebrated baritone, Ambrogetti. Among the other distinguished singers who have appeared as "Don Giovanni," with great success, may be mentioned Nourrit, the tenor; Lablache (in 1832), before he had identified himself with the part of "Leporello;" Tamburini, and I suppose I must now add, Mario; though this great artist has been seen and heard to more advantage in other characters. The last great "Don Giovanni" known to the present generation was Signor Tamburini. It is a remarkable fact, well worth the consideration of managers, who are inclined to take liberties with Mozart's master-piece, that when Garcia, the tenor, appeared in London as "Don Giovanni," after Ambrogetti, the baritone, he produced comparatively but little effect; though Garcia was one of the most accomplished musicians, and, probably, the very best singer of his day.

Without going back again to the original cast, I may notice among the most celebrated Donna Annas, Madame Ronzi de Begnis, Mademoiselle Sontag, Madame Grisi, Mademoiselle Sophie Cruvelli, and Mademoiselle Titiens.

Among the Zerlinas, Madame Fodor, Madame Malibran, Madame Persiani[77], and Madame Bosio.

Among the Don Ottavios, Rubini and Mario.

DON GIOVANNI.

Porto is said to have been particularly admirable as Masetto, and Angrisani and Angelini as the commandant.

Certainly, no one living has heard a better Leporello than Lablache.

Mr. Ebers tells us, in his "Seven Years of the King's Theatre," that *Don Giovanni* was brought out by Mr. Ayrton in 1817, "in opposition to a vexatious cabal," and "in despite of difficulties of many kinds which would have deterred a less decided and persevering manager." Nevertheless, "it filled the boxes and benches of the theatre for the whole season, and restored to a flourishing condition the finances of the concern, which were in an almost exhausted state."

DIPLOMATISTS AND DANCERS.

The war, so injurious to the Opera, had a still more disastrous effect on the ballet, a fact for which we have the authority of the manager and author from whom I have just quoted. "The procrastinated war," says Mr. Ebers, "which, until the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, had kept England and France in hostilities, had rendered the importation of dancers from the latter country almost impracticable." Mr. Waters, Mr. Ebers' predecessor, had repeatedly endeavoured to prevail on French dancers to come to England, "either with the *congés*, if attainable, or by such clandestine means as could be carried into effect." He failed; and we are told that his want of success in this respect was one cause of the disagreement between himself and the committee of the theatre, which led soon afterwards to his abandoning the management. Mr. Ebers, however, testifies from his own experience to the almost insuperable difficulty of inducing the directors of the French Opera to cede any of their principal performers even for a few weeks to the late enemies of their country. When the dancers were willing to accept the terms offered to them, it was impossible to obtain leave from the minister entrusted with the supreme direction of operatic affairs; if the minister was willing, then objections came from the ballet itself. It was necessary to secure the aid of the highest diplomatists, and the engagement of a few first dancers and *coryphées* was made as important an affair as the signing of a treaty of commerce. The special envoy, the Cobden of the affair, was Monsieur Boisgerard, an ex-officer in the French army under the Bourbons, and actually the second ballet-master of the King's Theatre; but all official correspondence connected with the negotiation had to be transmitted through the medium of the English ambassador at Paris to the Baron de la Ferté. Boisgerard arrived in Paris furnished with letters of introduction from the five noblemen who at that time formed a "committee of superintendence" to aid Mr. Ebers in the management of the King's Theatre, and directed all his attention and energy towards forming an engagement with Bigottini and Noblet, the principal *danseuses*, and Albert, the *premier danseur* of the French Opera. In spite of his excellent recommendations, of the esteem in which he was himself held by his numerous friends in Paris, and of the interest of a dancer named Deshayes, who appears to have readily joined in the conspiracy, and who was afterwards rewarded for his aid with a lucrative engagement as first ballet-master at the London Opera House—in spite of all these advantages it was impossible, for some time, to obtain any concessions from the Académie. To begin with, Bigottini, Noblet and Albert refused point blank to leave Paris. M. Boisgerard, however, as a ballet-master and a man of the world, understood that this was intended only as an invitation for larger offers; and finally all three were engaged, conditionally on their *congés* being obtained from the directors of the theatre. Now the real difficulty began; now the influence of the five English noblemen was brought to bear; now despatches were interchanged between the British ambassador in Paris and the Baron de la Ferté, intendant of the royal theatres; now consultations took place between the said intendant and the Viscount de la Rochefoucault, aide-de-camp of the king, entrusted with the department of fine arts in the ministry of the king's household; and between the said artistic officer of the king's household and Duplanty, the administrator of the Royal Academy of Music, and of the Italian Opera. The result of all this negotiation was, that the administration first hesitated and finally refused to allow Mademoiselle Bigottini to visit England on any terms; but, after considerable trouble, the French agents in the service of Mr. Ebers obtained permission for Albert and Noblet to accept engagements for two months,—it being further arranged that, at the expiration of that period, they should be replaced by Coulon and Fanny Bias. Albert was to receive fifty pounds for every night of performance, and twenty-five pounds for his travelling expenses. Noblet's terms were five hundred and fifty pounds for the two months, with twenty-five pounds for expenses. Coulon and Bias were each to receive the same terms as Noblet. Three other dancers, Montessu, Lacombe, and Mademoiselle de Varennes, were at the same time given over to Mr. Ebers for an entire season, and he was allowed to retain all his prisoners—that is to say, those members of the Académie, with Mademoiselle Mélanie at their head, whom previous managers had taken from the French prior to the friendly and pacific embassy of M. Boisgerard. An attempt was made to secure the services of Mademoiselle Elisa, but without avail. M. and Mademoiselle Paul entered into an agreement, but the administration refused to ratify it; otherwise, with a little encouragement, Mr. Ebers would probably have engaged the entire ballet

of the Académie Royale.

MADEMOISELLE NOBLET.

Male dancers have, I am glad to think, never been much esteemed in England; and Albert, though successful enough, produced nothing like the same impression in London which he was in the habit of causing in Paris. Mademoiselle Noblet's dancing, on the other hand, excited the greatest enthusiasm, and the subscribers made all possible exertions to obtain a prolongation of her *congé* when the time for her return to the Académie arrived. Noblet's performance in the ballet of *Nina* (of which the subject is identical with that of Paisiello's opera of the same name) is said to have been particularly admirable, especially for the great dramatic talent which she exhibited in pourtraying the heroine's melancholy madness. *Nina* was announced for Mademoiselle Noblet's benefit, on a night not approved by the Lord Chamberlain —either because it interfered with some of the court regulations, or for some other reason not explained. The secretary to the committee of the Opera was directed to address a letter to the Chamberlain, representing to him how inconvenient it would be to postpone the benefit, as the *congé* of the *bénéficiaire* was now on the point of expiring. Lord Hertford, with becoming politeness, wrote the following letter, which shows with what deep interest the graceful dancer inspired even those who knew her only by reputation. The letter was addressed to the Marquis of Ailesbury, one of the members of the operatic committee.

"My dear Lord,—I have this moment (eleven o'clock) received your letter, which I have sent to the Chamberlain's office to Mr. Mash; and as Mademoiselle Noblet is a very pretty woman as I am told, I hope she will call there to assist in the solicitation which interests her so much. Not having been for many years at the opera, except for the single purpose of attending his majesty, I am no judge of the propriety of her request or the objections which may arise to the postponement of her benefit for one day at so short a notice. I hope the fair solicitress will be prepared with an answer on this part of the subject, as it is always my wish to accommodate you; and I remain most sincerely your very faithful servant,

"Ingram Hertford."

"Manchester Square,

April 29th, 1821."

Mademoiselle Noblet's benefit having taken place, the subscribers, horrified at the notion that they had now, perhaps, seen her for the last time, determined, in spite of all obstacles, in spite even of the very explicit agreement between the director of the King's Theatre and the administration of the Académie Royale, that she should remain in London. The *danseuse* was willing enough to prolong her stay, but the authorities at the French Opera protested. The Academy of Music was not going to be deprived in this way of one of the greatest ornaments of its ballet, and the Count de Caraman, on behalf of the Academy, called on the committee to direct Mr. Ebers to send over to Paris, without delay, the performers whose *congés* were now at an end. The members of the committee replied that they had only power to interfere as regarded the choice of operas and ballets, and that they had nothing to do with agreements between the manager and the performers. They added, "that they had certainly employed their influence with the English ambassador at Paris at the commencement of the season, to obtain the best artists from that city; but it appearing that the Academy was not disposed to grant *congés* for London, even to artists, for whose services the Academy had no occasion, the committee had determined not again to meddle in that branch of the management."

TERPSICHOREAN TREATY.

The French now sent over an ambassador extraordinary, the Baron de la Ferté himself, to negotiate for the restoration of the deserters. It was decided, however, that they should be permitted to remain until the end of the season; and, moreover, that two first and two second dancers should be allowed annually to come to London, but only under the precise stipulations contained in the following treaty, which was signed between Mr. Ebers, on the one hand, and M. Duplantys on the part of Viscount de la Rochefoucault, on the other.

"The administration of the Theatre of the Royal Academy of Music, wishing to facilitate to the administration of the theatre of London, the means of making known the French artists of the ballet without this advantage being prejudicial to the Opera of Paris;

"Consents to grant to Mr. Ebers for each season, the first commencing on the 10th of January, and ending the 20th of April, and the second ending the 1st of August, two first dancers, two *figurants*, and two *figurantes*; but in making this concession, the administration of the Royal Academy of Music reserves the right of only allowing those dancers to leave Paris to whom it may be convenient to grant a *congé*; this rule applies equally to the *figurants* and *figurantes*. None of them can leave the Paris theatre except by the formal permission of the authorities.

"And in return for these concessions, Mr. Ebers promises to engage no dancer until he has first obtained the necessary authorization in accordance with his demand.

"He engages not under any pretext to keep the principal dancers a longer time than has been agreed without a fresh permission, and above all, to make them no offers with the view of enticing them from their permanent engagements with the French authorities.

"The present treaty is for the space of * * *.

"In case of Mr. Ebers failing in one of the articles of the said treaty, the whole treaty becomes null and void."

BOISGERARD IN THE TEMPLE.

MARIA MERCANDOTTI.

The prime mover in the diplomatic transactions which had the effect of securing Mademoiselle Noblet far the London Opera was, as I have said, the ballet master, Boisgerard, formerly an officer in the French army. In a chapter which is intended to show to some extent the effect on opera of the disturbed state of Europe consequent on the French Revolution, it will, perhaps, not be out of place to relate a very daring exploit performed by the said M. Boisgerard, which was the cause of his adopting an operatic career. "This gentleman," says Mr. Ebers, in the account published by him of his administration of the King's Theatre from 1821 to 1828, "was a Frenchman of good extraction, and at the period of the French Revolution, was attached to the royal party. When Sir Sidney Smith was confined in the Temple, Boisgerard acted up to his principles by attempting, and with great personal risk, effecting the escape of that distinguished officer, whose friends were making every effort for his liberation. Having obtained an impression of the seal of the Directorial Government, he

affixed it to an order, forged by himself, for the delivery of Sir Sidney Smith into his care. Accompanied by a friend, disguised like himself, in the uniform of an officer of the revolutionary army, he did not scruple personally to present the fictitious document to the keeper of the Temple, who, opening a small closet, took thence some original document, with the writing and seal of which, he carefully compared the forged order. Desiring the adventurers to wait a few minutes, he then withdrew, and locked the door after him. Giving themselves up for lost, the confederate determined to resist, sword in hand, any attempt made to secure them. The period which thus elapsed, may be imagined as one of the most horrible suspense to Boisgerard and his companion; his own account of his feelings at the time was extremely interesting. Left alone, and in doubt whether each succeeding moment might not be attended by a discovery involving the safety of his life, the acuteness of his organs of sense was heightened to painfulness; the least noise thrilled through his brain, and the gloomy apartment in which he sat seemed filled with strange images. They preserved their self-possession, and, after the lapse of a few minutes, their anxiety was determined by the re-appearance of the gaoler, accompanied by his captive, who was delivered to Boisgerard. But here a new and unlooked for difficulty occurred; Sir Sidney Smith, not knowing Boisgerard, refused, for some time, to quit the prison; and considerable address was required on the part of his deliverers to overcome his scruples. At last, the precincts of the Temple were cleared; and, after going a short distance in a fiacre, then walking, then entering another carriage, and so on, adopting every means of baffling pursuit, the fugitives got to Havre, where Sir Sidney was put on board an English vessel. Boisgerard, on his return to Paris (for he quitted Sir Sidney at Havre) was a thousand times in dread of detection; tarrying at an *auberge*, he was asked whether he had heard the news of Sir Sidney's escape; the querist adding, that four persons had been arrested on suspicion of having been instrumental in it. However, he escaped all these dangers, and continued at Paris until his visit to England, which took place after the peace of Amiens. A pension had been granted to Sir Sidney Smith for his meritorious services; and, on Boisgerard's arrival here, a reward of a similar nature was bestowed on him through the influence of Sir Sidney, who took every opportunity of testifying his gratitude."

We have already seen that though the international character of the Opera must always be seriously interfered with by international wars, the intelligent military amateur may yet be able to turn his European campaigning to some operatic advantage. The French officers acquired a taste for Italian music in Italy. So an English officer serving in the Peninsula, imbibed a passion for Spanish dancing, to which was due the choregraphic existence of the celebrated Maria Mercandotti,—by all accounts one of the most beautiful girls and one of the most charming dancers that the world ever saw. This inestimable treasure was discovered by Lord Fife—a keen-eyed connoisseur, who when Maria was but a child, foretold the position she would one day occupy, if her mother would but allow her to join the dancing school of the French Academy. Madame Mercandotti brought her daughter to England when she was fifteen. The young Spaniard danced a bolero one night at the Opera, repeated it a few days afterwards at Brighton, before Queen Charlotte, and then set off to Paris, where she joined the Académie. After a very short period of study, she made her *début* with success, such as scarcely any dancer had obtained at the French Opera, since the time of La Camargo—herself, by the way, a Spaniard.

Mademoiselle Mercandotti came to London, was received with the greatest enthusiasm, was the fashionable theme of one entire operatic season, had a number of poems, valuable presents, and offers of undying affection addressed to her, and ended by marrying Mr. Hughes Ball.

The production of this *danseuse* appears to have seen the last direct result of that scattering of the amateurs of one nation among the artists of another, which was produced by the European convulsions of from 1789 to 1815.

CHAPTER XV.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS AT THE LONDON OPERA, HALF A CENTURY SINCE.

A COMPLETE History of the Opera would include a history of operatic music, a history of operatic dancing, a history of the chief operatic theatres, and a history of operatic society. I have made no attempt to treat the subject on such a grand scale; but though I shall have little to say about the principal lyrical theatres of Europe, or of the habits of opera-goers as a European class, there is one great musical dramatic establishment, to whose fortunes I must pay some special attention, and concerning whose audiences much may be said that will at least interest an English reader. After several divided reigns at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, at Covent Garden, at the Pantheon, and at the King's Theatre, Italian Opera found itself, in 1793, established solely and majestically at the last of these houses, which I need hardly remind the reader was its first home in England. The management was now exercised by Mr. Taylor, the proprietor. This gentleman, who was originally a banker's clerk, appears to have had no qualification for his more exalted position, beyond the somewhat questionable one of a taste for speculation. He is described as having had "all Sheridan's deficiency of financial arrangement, without that extraordinary man's resources." Nevertheless he was no bad hand at borrowing money. All the advances, however, made to him by his friends, to enable him to undertake the management of the Opera, are said to have been repaid. Mr. Ebers, his not unfriendly biographer, finds it difficult to account for this, and can only explain it by the excellent support the Opera received at the period. Mr. Taylor was what in the last century was called "a humorist." Not that he possessed much humour, but he was a queer, eccentric man, and given to practical jokes, which, in the present day, would not be thought amusing even by the friends of those injured by them. On one occasion, Taylor having been prevailed upon to invite a number of persons to breakfast, spread a report that he intended to set them down to empty plates. He, moreover, recommended each of the guests, in an anonymous letter, to turn the tables on the would-be ingenious Taylor, by taking to the *déjeuner* a supply of suitable provisions, so that the inhospitable inviter might be shamed and the invited enabled to feast in company, notwithstanding his machinations to the contrary. The manager enjoyed such a reputation for liberality that no one doubted the statement contained in the anonymous letter.

A MANAGER IN THE BENCH.

Each of the guests sent or took in his carriage a certain quantity of eatables, and when all had arrived, the happy Taylor found his room filled with all the materials for a monster picnic. Breakfast *had* been prepared, the guests sat down to table, some amused, others disgusted at the hoax which had been practised upon them, and Taylor ordered the game, preserved meats, lobsters, champagne, &c., into his own larder and wine cellar.

Even while directing the affairs of the Opera, Taylor passed a considerable portion of his time in the King's Bench, or within its "rules."

"How can you conduct the management of the King's Theatre," a friend asked him one day, "perpetually in durance as you are?"

"My dear fellow," he replied, "how could I possibly conduct it if I were at liberty? I should be eaten up, sir—devoured. Here comes a dancer,—'Mr. Taylor, I want such a dress;' another, 'I want such and such ornaments.' One singer demands to sing in a part not allotted to him; another, to have an addition to his appointments. No, let me be shut up and they go to Masterson (Taylor's secretary); he, they are aware, cannot go beyond his line; but if they get at *me*—pshaw! no man at large can manage that theatre; and in faith," he added, "no man that undertakes it ought to go at large."

Though Mr. Taylor lived within the "rules," the "rules" in no way governed him. He would frequently go away for days together into the country and amuse himself with fishing, of which he appears to have been particularly fond. At one time, while living within the "rules," he inherited a large sum of money, which he took care not to devote to the payment of his debts. He preferred investing it in land, bought an estate in the country (with good fishing), and lived for some months the quiet, peaceable life of an ardent, enthusiastic angler, until at last the sheriffs broke in upon his repose and carried him back captive to prison.

But the most extraordinary exploit performed by Taylor during the period of his supposed incarceration, was of a political nature. He went down to Hull at the time of an election and actually stood for the borough. He was not returned—or rather he was returned to prison.

THE PANTHEON.

One way and another Mr. Taylor seems to have made a great deal of money out of the Opera; and at one time he hit upon a plan which looked at first as if it had only to be pursued with boldness to increase his income to an indefinite amount. This simple expedient consisted in raising the price of the subscribers' boxes. For the one hundred and eighty pound boxes he charged three hundred pounds, and so in proportion with all the others. A meeting of subscribers having been held, at which, although the expensive Catalani was engaged, it was decided that the proposed augmentation was not justified by the rate of the receipts and disbursements, and this decision having been communicated to Taylor, he replied, that if the subscribers resisted his just demands he would shut up their boxes. In consequence of this defiant conduct on the part of the manager, many of the subscribers withdrew from the theatre and prevailed upon Caldas, a Portuguese wine merchant, to re-open the Pantheon for the performance of concerts and all such music as could be executed without infringing the licence of the King's Theatre. The Pantheon speculation prospered at first, but the seceders from the King's Theatre missed their operas, and doubtless also their ballets. A sort of compromise was effected between them and Taylor, who persisted, however, in keeping up the price of his boxes; and the unfortunate Caldas, utterly deserted by those who had dragged him from his wine-cellars to expose him to the perils of musical speculation, became a bankrupt.

Taylor was now in his turn brought to account. Waters, his partner in the proprietorship of the King's Theatre, had been proceeding against him in Chancery, and it was ordered that the partnership should be dissolved and the house sold. To the great annoyance of the public, the first step taken in the affair was to close the theatre,—the chancellor, who is said to have had no ear for music, having refused to appoint a manager.

It was proposed by private friends that Taylor should cede his interest in the theatre to Waters; but it was difficult to bring them to any understanding on the subject, or even to arrange an interview between them. Waters prided himself on the decorum of his conduct, while Taylor appears to have aimed at quite a contrary reputation. All business transactions, prior to Taylor's arrest, had been rendered nearly impossible between them; because one would attend to no affairs on Sunday, while the other, with a just fear of writs before him, objected to show himself in London on any other day. The sight of Waters, moreover, is said to have rendered Taylor "passionate and scurrilous;" and while the negociations were being carried on, through intermediaries, between himself and his partner, he entered into a treaty with the lessee of the Pantheon, with the view of opening it in opposition to the King's Theatre.

Ultimately, the management of the theatre was confided, under certain restrictions, to Mr. Waters; but even now possession was not given up to him without a struggle.

WITHIN THE "RULES."

When Mr. Waters' people were refused admittance by Mr. Taylor's people, words led to blows. The adherents of the former partners, and actual enemies and rivals, fought valiantly on both sides, but luck had now turned against Taylor, and his party were defeated and ejected. That night, however, when the Watersites fancied themselves secure in their stronghold, the Taylorites attacked them; effected a breach in the stage door, stormed the passage, gained admittance to the stage, and finally drove their enemies out into the Haymarket. The unmusical chancellor, whose opinion of the Opera could scarcely have been improved by the lawless proceeding of those connected with it, was again appealed to; and Waters established himself in the theatre by virtue of an order from the court.

The series of battles at the King's Theatre terminated with the European war. Napoleon was at Elba, Mr. Taylor still in the Bench, when Mr. Waters opened the Opera, and, during the great season which followed the peace of 1814, gained seven thousand pounds.

Taylor appears to have ended his days in prison; profiting freely by the "rules," and when at head quarters enjoying the society of Sir John and Lady Ladd. The trio seem, on the whole, to have led a very agreeable prison life (and, though strictly forbidden to wander from the jail beyond their appointed tether, appear in many respects to have been remarkably free.) Taylor's great natural animal spirits increased with the wine he consumed; and occasionally his behaviour was such as would certainly have shocked Waters. On one occasion, his elation is said to have carried him so beyond bounds, that Lady Ladd found it expedient to empty the tea-kettle over him.

MR. EBERS' MANAGEMENT.

In 1816 the Opera, by direction of the Chancellor, (it was a fortunate thing that this time he did not order it to be pulled down,) was again put up for sale, and purchased out and out by Waters for seven thousand one hundred and fifty pounds. As the now sole proprietor was unable to pay into court even the first instalment of the purchase money, [78] he mortgaged the theatre, with a number of houses belonging to him, to Chambers the banker. Taylor, who had no longer any sort of connection with the Opera, at present amused himself by writing anonymous letters to Mr.

Chambers, prophesying the ruin of Waters, and giving dismal but grotesque pictures of the manager's penniless and bailiff-persecuted position. Mr. Ebers, who was a great deal mixed up with operatic affairs before assuming the absolute direction of the Opera, also came in for his share of these epistles, which every one seems to have instantly recognised as the production of Taylor. "If Waters is with you at Brompton," he once wrote to Mr. Ebers, "for God's sake send him away instantly, for the bailiffs (alias bloodhounds) are out after him in all directions; and tell Chambers not to let him stay at Enfield, because that is a suspected place; and so is Lee's in York Street, Westminster, and Di Giovanni, in Smith Street, and Reed's in Flask Lane—both in Chelsea. It was reported he was seen in the lane near your house an evening or two ago, with his eye blacked, and in the great coat and hat of a Chelsea pensioner." At another time, Mr. Chambers was informed that Michael Kelly, the singer, was at an hotel at Brighton, on the point of death, and desirous while he yet lived to communicate something very important respecting Waters. The holder of Waters' mortgage took a post chaise and four and hurried in great alarm to Brighton, where he found Michael Kelly sitting in his balcony, with a pine apple and a bottle of claret before him.

Taylor's prophecies concerning Waters, after all, came true. His embarrassments increased year by year, and in 1820 an execution was put into the theatre at the suit of Chambers. Ten performances were yet due to the subscribers, when, on the evening of the 15th of August, bills were posted on the walls of the theatre, announcing that the Opera was closed. Mr. Waters did not join his former partner in the Bench, but retired to Calais.

Mr. Ebers's management commenced in 1821. He formed an excellent company, of which several singers, still under engagement to Mr. Waters, formed part, and which included among the singers, Madame Camporese, Madame Vestris, Madame Ronzi de Begnis; and M. M. Ambrogetti, Angrisani, Begrez, and Curioni. The chief dancers (as already mentioned in the previous chapter), were Noblet, Fanny Bias, and Albert. The season was a short one, it was considered successful, though the manager but lost money by it. The selection of operas was admirable, and consisted of Paer's *Agnese*, Rossini's *Gazza Ladra*, *Tancredi* and *Turco* in *Italia*, with Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Nozze di Figaro*. The manager's losses were already seven thousand pounds. By way of encouraging him, Mr. Chambers increased his rent the following year from three thousand one hundred and eighty pounds to ten thousand. It is right to add, that in the meanwhile Mr. Chambers had bought up Waters's entire interest in the Opera for eighty thousand pounds. Altogether, by buying and selling the theatre, Waters had cleared no less than seventy-three thousand pounds. Not contented with this, he no sooner heard of the excellent terms on which Mr. Chambers had let the house, than he made an application (a fruitless one), to the ever-to-be-tormented Chancellor, to have the deed of sale declared invalid.

During Mr. Ebers's management, from the beginning of 1821 to the end of 1827, he lost money regularly every year; the smallest deficit in the budget of any one season being that of the last, when the manager thought himself fortunate to be minus only three thousand pounds (within a few sovereigns).

After Mr. Ebers's retirement, the management of the Opera was undertaken by Messrs. Laporte and Laurent. Mr. Laporte was succeeded by Mr. Lumley, the history of whose management belongs to a much later period than that treated of in the present chapter.

THE KING'S THEATRE IN 1789.

During the early part of the last century, the character of the London Opera House, as a fashionable place of entertainment, and in some other respects, appears to have considerably changed. Before the fire in 1789, the subscription to a box for fifty representations was at the rate of twenty guineas a seat. The charge for pit tickets was at this time ten shillings and sixpence; so that a subscriber who meant to be a true habitué, and visited the Opera every night, saved five guineas by becoming a subscriber. At this time, too, the theatre was differently constructed, and there were only thirty-six private boxes, eighteen arranged in three rows on each side of the house. "The boxes," says Lord Mount Edgcumbe, in his "Musical Reminiscences," "were then much larger and more commodious than they are now, and could contain with ease more than their allotted subscribers; far different from the miserable pigeon-holes of the present theatre, into which six persons can scarcely be squeezed, whom, in most situations, two-thirds can never see the stage. The front," continues Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "was then occupied by open public boxes, or *amphitheatre* (as it is called in French theatres), communicating with the pit. Both of these were filled, exclusively, with the highest classes of society; all, without exception, in full dress, then universally worn. The audiences thus assembled were considered as indisputably presenting a finer spectacle than any other theatre in Europe, and absolutely astonished the foreign performers, to whom such a sight was entirely new. At the end of the performance, the company of the pit and boxes repaired to the coffee-room, which was then the best assembly in London; private ones being rarely given on opera nights; and all the first society was regularly to be seen there. Over the front box was the five shilling gallery; then resorted to by respectable persons not in full dress: and above that an upper gallery, to which the admission was three shillings. Subsequently the house was encircled with private boxes; yet still the prices remained the same, and the pit preserved its respectability, and even grandeur, till the old house was burnt down in 1789."

THE KING'S THEATRE IN 1789.

When the Opera was rebuilt, the number of representations for the season, was increased to sixty, and the subscription was at the same time raised to thirty guineas, so that the admission to a box still did not exceed the price of a pit ticket. During the second year of Catalani's engagement, however, when she obtained a larger salary than had ever been paid to a singer before, the subscription for a whole box with accommodation for six persons, was raised from one hundred and eighty to three hundred guineas. This, it will, perhaps, be remembered, was to some extent a cunning device of Taylor's; at least, it was considered so at the time by the subscribers, though the expenses of the theatre had much increased, and the terms on which Catalani was engaged, were really enormous.[79] Dr. Veron, in his interesting memoirs (to which, by the way, I may refer all those who desire full particulars respecting the management of the French Opera during the commencement of the Meyerbeer period) tells us that, at the end of the continental war, the price of the *demi-tasse* in the cafés of Paris was raised from six to eight *sous*, and that it has never been lowered. So it is in taxation. An impost once established, unless the people absolutely refuse to pay it, is never taken off; and so it has been with the boxes at the London Opera House. The price of the best boxes once raised from one hundred and eighty to three hundred guineas, was never, to any considerable extent, diminished, and hence the custom arose of halving and sub-dividing the subscriptions, so that very few persons have now the

sole ownership of a box. Hence, too, that of letting them for the night, and selling the tickets when the proprietor does not want them. This latter practice must have had the effect of lessening considerably the profits directly resulting from the high sums charged for the boxes. The price of admission to the pit being ten shillings and six-pence, the subscribers, through the librarians, and the librarians, who had themselves speculated in boxes, found it necessary in order to get rid of the box-tickets singly, to sell them at a reduced price. This explains why, for many years past, the ordinary price of pit tickets at the libraries and at shops of all kinds in the vicinity of the Opera, has been only eight shillings and six-pence. No one but a foreigner or a countryman, inexperienced in the ways of London, would think of paying ten shillings and six-pence at the theatre for admission to the pit; indeed, it is a species of deception to continue that charge at all, though it certainly does happen once or twice in a great many years that the public profit by the establishment of a fixed official price for pit tickets. Thus, during the great popularity of Jenny Lind, the box tickets giving the right of entry to the pit, were sold for a guinea, and even thirty shillings, and thousands of persons were imbecile enough to purchase them, whereas, at the theatre itself, anyone could, as usual, go into the pit by paying ten shillings and six-pence.

THE KING'S THEATRE IN 1789.

"Formerly," to go back to Lord Mount Edgcumbe's interesting remarks on this subject, "every lady possessing an opera box, considered it as much her home as her house, and was as sure to be found there, few missing any of the performances. If prevented from going, the *loan* of her box and the gratuitous use of the tickets was a favour always cheerfully offered and thankfully received, as a matter of course, without any idea of payment. Then, too, it was a favour to ask gentlemen to belong to a box, when subscribing to one was actually advantageous. Now, no lady can propose to them to give her more than double the price of the admission at the door, so that having paid so exorbitantly, every one is glad to be re-imbursed a part, at least, of the great expense which she must often support alone. Boxes and tickets, therefore, are no longer given; they are let for what can be got; for which traffic the circulating libraries afford an easy accommodation. Many, too, which are not taken for the season, are disposed of in the same manner, and are almost put up to auction. Their price varying from three to eight, or even ten guineas, according to the performance of the evening, and other accidental circumstances." From these causes the whole style of the opera house, as regards the audience, has become changed. "The pit has long ceased to be the resort of ladies of fashion, and, latterly, by the innovations introduced, is no longer agreeable to the former male frequenters of it." This state of things, however, has been altered, if not remedied, from the opera-goers' point of view, by the introduction of stalls where the manager compensates himself for the slightly reduced price of pit tickets, by charging exactly double what was paid for admission to the pit under the old system.

OPERA COSTUME IN 1861.

On the whole, the Opera has become less aristocratic, less respectable, and far more expensive than of old. Those who, under the ancient system, paid ten shillings and six-pence to go to the pit, must now, to obtain the same amount of comfort, give a guinea for a stall, while "most improper company is sometimes to be seen even in the principal tiers; and tickets bearing the names of ladies of the highest class have been presented by those of the lowest, such as used to be admitted only to the hindmost rows of the gallery." The last remark belongs to Lord Mount Edgcumbe, but it is, at least, as true now as it was thirty years ago. Numbers of objectionable persons go to the Opera as to all other public places, and I do not think it would be fair to the respectable lovers of music who cannot afford to pay more than a few shillings for their evening's entertainment, that they should be all collected in the gallery. It would, moreover, be placing too much power in the hands of the operatic officials, who already show themselves sufficiently severe censors in the article of dress. I do not know whether it is chiefly a disgrace to the English public or to the English system of operatic management; but it certainly is disgraceful, that a check-taker at a theatre should be allowed to exercise any supervision, or make the slightest remark concerning the costume of a gentleman choosing to attend that theatre, and conforming generally in his conduct and by his appearance to the usages of decent society. It is not found necessary to enforce any regulation as to dress at other opera houses, not even in St. Petersburgh and Moscow, where, as the theatres are directed by the Imperial Government, one might expect to find a more despotic code of laws in force than in a country like England. When an Englishman goes to a morning or evening concert, he does not present himself in the attire of a scavenger, and there is no reason for supposing that he would appear in any unbecoming garb, if liberty of dress were permitted to him at the Opera. The absurdity of the present system is that, whereas, a gentleman who has come to London only for a day or two, and does not happen to have a dress-coat in his portmanteau; who happens even to be dressed in exact accordance with the notions of the operatic check-takers, except as to his cravat, which we will suppose through the eccentricity of the wearer, to be black, with the smallest sprig, or spray, or spot of some colour on it; while such a one would be regarded as unworthy to enter the pit of the Opera, a waiter from an oyster-shop, in his inevitable black and white, reeking with the drippings of shell-fish, and the fumes of bad tobacco, or a drunken undertaker, fresh from a funeral, coming with the required number of shillings in his dirty hands, could not be refused admission. If the check-takers are empowered to inspect and decide as to the propriety of the cut and colour of clothes, why should they not also be allowed to examine the texture? On the same principle, too, the cleanliness of opera goers ought to be enquired into. No one, whose hair is not properly brushed, should be permitted to enter the stalls, and visitors to the pit should be compelled to show their nails.

I will conclude this chapter with an extract from an epistle from a gentleman, who, during Mr. Ebers's management of the King's Theatre, was a victim to the despotic (and, in the main, unnecessary) regulations of which I have been speaking. I cannot say I feel any sympathy for this particular sufferer; but his letter is amusing. "I was dressed," he says, in his protest forwarded to the manager the next morning, "in a *superfine blue coat*, with *gold buttons*, a white waistcoat, fashionable tight drab pantaloons, white silk stockings, and dress shoes; *all worn but once a few days before at a dress concert at the Crown and Anchor Tavern*!" The italics, and mark of admiration, are the property of the gentleman in the superfine blue coat, who next proceeds to express his natural indignation at the idea of the manager presuming to "enact sumptuary laws without the intervention of the legislature," and threatens him with legal proceedings, and an appeal to British jury. "I have mixed," he continues, "too much in genteel society, not to know that black breeches, or pantaloons, with black silk stockings, is a very prevailing full dress; and why is it so? Because it is convenient and economical, *for you can wear a pair of white silk stockings but once without washing, and a pair of black is frequently worn for weeks without ablution*. P. S. I have no objection to submit an inspection of my dress of the evening in question to you, or any competent person you may appoint."

If this gentleman, instead of being excluded, had been admitted into the theatre, the

silent ridicule to which his costume would have exposed him, would have effectually prevented him from making his appearance there in any such guise again. It might also have acted as a terrible warning to others inclined to sin in a similar manner.

OPERA COSTUME IN 1861.

CHAPTER XVI

ROSSINI AND HIS PERIOD.

ROSSINI.

INNOVATORS in art, whether corrupters or improvers, are always sure to meet with opposition from a certain number of persons who have formed their tastes in some particular style which has long been a source of delight to them, and to interfere with which is to shock all their artistic sympathies. How often have we seen poets of one generation not ignored, but condemned and vilified by the critics and even by the poets themselves of the generation preceding it. Musicians seem to suffer even more than poets from this injustice of those who having contracted a special and narrow admiration for the works of their own particular epoch, will see no merit in the productions of any newer school that may arrive. Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson have one and all been attacked, and their poetic merit denied by those who in several instances had given excellent proofs of their ability to appreciate poetry. Almost every distinguished composer of the last fifty years has met with the same fate, not always at the hands of the ignorant public, for it is this ignorant public with its naïve, uncritical admiration, which has sometimes been the first to do justice to the critic-reviled poets and composers, but at those of musicians and of educated amateurs. Ignorance, prejudice, malice, are the causes too often assigned for the non-appreciation of the artist of to-day by the art-lover, partly of to-day, but above all of yesterday. It should be remembered however, that there is a conservatism in taste as in politics, and that both have their advantages, though the lovers of noise and of revolution may be unable to see them; that the extension of the suffrage, the excessive use of imagery, the special cultivation of brilliant orchestral effects, may, in the eyes of many, really seem injurious to the true interests of government, poetry and music; finally that as in old age we find men still keeping more or less to the costumes of their prime, and as the man who during the best days of his life has habituated himself to drink port, does not suddenly acquire a taste for claret, or *vice versâ*,—so those who had accustomed their musical stomachs to the soft strains of Paisiello and Cimarosa, *could not* enjoy the sparkling, stimulating music of Rossini. So afterwards to the Rossinians, Donizetti poured forth nothing but what was insipid and frivolous; Bellini was languid and lackadaisical; Meyerbeer with his restlessness and violence, his new instruments, his drum songs, trumpet songs, fencing and pistol songs, tinder-box music, skating scenes and panoramic effects, was a noisy *charlatan*; Verdi, with his abruptness, his occasional vulgarity and his general melodramatic style, a mere musical Fitzball.

It most not be supposed, however, that I believe in the constant progress of art; that I look upon Meyerbeer as equal to Weber, or Weber as superior to Mozart. It is quite certain that Rossini has not been approached in facility, in richness of invention, in gaiety, in brilliancy, in constructiveness, or in true dramatic power by any of the Italian, French, or German theatrical composers who have succeeded him, though nearly all have imitated him one way or another: I will exclude Weber alone, an original genius, belonging entirely to Germany[80] and to himself. It is, at least, quite certain that Rossini is by far the greatest of the series of Italian composers, which begins with himself and seems to have ended with Verdi; and yet, while neither Verdi nor Bellini, nor Donizetti, were at all justly appreciated in this country when they first made their appearance, Rossini was—not merely sneered at and pooh-poohed; he was for a long time condemned and abused every where, and on the production of some of his finest works was hissed and hooted in the theatres of his native land. But the human heart is not so black as it is sometimes painted, and the Italian audiences who whistled and screeched at the *Barber of Seville* did so chiefly because they did not like it. It was not the sort of music which had hitherto given them pleasure, and therefore they were not pleased.

ROSSINI'S BIOGRAPHERS.

Rossini had already composed several operas for various Italian theatres (among which may be particularly mentioned *L'Italiana in Algeri*, written for Venice in 1813, the composer having then just attained his majority) when the *Barbiere di Siviglia* was produced at Rome for the Carnival of 1816. The singers were Vitarelli, Boticelli, Zamboni, Garcia and Mesdames Giorgi-Righetti, and Rossi. A number of different versions of the circumstances which attended, preceded, and followed the representation of this opera, have been published, but the account furnished by Madame Giorgi-Righetti, who introduced the music of Rossini to the world, is the one most to be relied upon and which I shall adopt. I may first of all remind the reader that a very interesting life of Rossini, written with great *verve* and spirit, full of acute observations, but also full of misstatements and errors of all kinds,[81] has been published by Stendhal, who was more than its translator, but not its author. Stendhal's "Vie de Rossini" is founded on a work by the Abbé Carpani. To what extent the ingenious author of the treatise *De l'Amour*, and of the admirable novel *La Charteuse de Parme*, is indebted to the Abbé, I cannot say; but if he borrowed from him his supposed facts, and his opinions as a musician, he owes him all the worst portion of his book. The brothers Escudier have also published a "Vie de Rossini," which is chiefly valuable for the list of his works, and the dates of their production.

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE.

To return to the *Barber of Seville*, of which the subject was librsuggested to Rossini by the author of the *libretto*, Sterbini. Sterbini proposed to arrange it for music in a new form; Rossini acquiesced, and the librettists went to work. The report was soon spread that Rossini was about to reset Paisiello's libretto. For this some accused Rossini of presumption, while others said that in taking Paisiello's subject he was behaving meanly and unjustly. This was absurd, for all Metastasio's lyrical dramas have been set to music by numbers of composers; but this fact was not likely to be taken into consideration by Rossini's enemies. Paisiello himself took part in the intrigues against the young composer, and wrote a letter from Naples, begging one of his friends at Rome to leave nothing undone that could contribute to the failure of the second *Barber*. When the night of representation, at the Argentina Theatre, arrived, Rossini's enemies were all at their posts, declaring openly what they hoped and intended should be the fate of the new opera. His friends, on the other hand, were not nearly so decided, remembering, as they did, the uncomplimentary manner in which Rossini's *Torvaldo* had been received only a short time before. The composer, says Madame Giorgi-Righetti "was weak enough

to allow Garcia to sing beneath Rosina's balcony a Spanish melody of his own arrangement. Garcia maintained, that as the scene was in Spain the Spanish melody would give the drama an appropriate local colour; but, unfortunately, the artist who reasoned so well, and who was such an excellent singer, forgot to tune his guitar before appearing on the stage as "Almaviva." He began the operation in the presence of the public. A string broke. The vocalist proceeded to replace it; but before he could do so, laughter and hisses were heard from all parts of the house. The Spanish air, when Garcia was at last ready to sing it, did not please the Italian audience, and the pit listened to it just enough to be able to give an ironical imitation of it afterwards.

The introduction to Figaro's air seemed to be liked; but when Zamboni entered, with another guitar in his hand, a loud laugh was set up, and not a phrase of *Largo al factotum* was heard. When Rosina made her appearance in the balcony, the public were quite prepared to applaud Madame Giorgi-Righetti in an air which they thought they had a right to expect from her; but only hearing her utter a phrase which led to nothing, the expressions of disapprobation recommenced. The duet between "Almaviva" and "Figaro" was accompanied throughout with hissing and shouting. The fate of the work seemed now decided.

At length Rosina came on, and sang the *cavatina* which had so long been looked for. Madame Giorgi-Righetti was young, had a fresh beautiful voice, and was a great favourite with the Roman public. Three long rounds of applause followed the conclusion of her air, and gave some hope that the opera might yet be saved. Rossini, who was at the orchestral piano, bowed to the public, then turned towards the singer, and whispered "*oh natura*!"

This happy moment did not last, and the hisses recommenced with the duet between Figaro and Rosina. The noise increased, and it was impossible to hear a note of the finale. When the curtain fell Rossini turned towards the public, shrugged his shoulders and clapped his hands. The audience were deeply offended by this openly-expressed contempt for their opinion, but they made no reply at the time.

The vengeance was reserved for the second act, of which not a note passed the orchestra. The hubbub was so great, that nothing like it was ever heard at any theatre. Rossini in the meanwhile remained perfectly calm, and afterwards went home as composed as if the work, received in so insulting a manner, had been the production of some other musician. After changing their clothes, Madame Giorgi-Righetti, Garcia, Zamboni, and Botticelli, went to his house to console him in his misfortune. They found him fast asleep.

The next day he wrote the delightful *cavatina, Ecco ridente il cielo*, to replace Garcia's unfortunate Spanish air. The melody of the new solo was borrowed from the opening chorus of *Aureliano in Palmira*, written by Rossini in 1814, for Milan, and produced without success; the said chorus having itself figured before in the same composer's *Ciro* in *Babilonia*, also unfavourably received. Garcia read his *cavatina* as it was written, and sang it the same evening. Rossini, having now made the only alteration he thought necessary, went back to bed, and pretended to be ill, that he might not have to take his place in the evening at the piano.

At the second performance, the Romans seemed disposed to listen to the work of which they had really heard nothing the night before. This was all that was needed to ensure the opera's triumphant success. Many of the pieces were applauded; but still no enthusiasm was exhibited. The music, however, pleased more and more with each succeeding representation, until at last the climax was reached, and *Il Barbiere* produced those transports of admiration among the Romans with which it was afterwards received in every town in Italy, and in due time throughout Europe. It must be added, that a great many connoisseurs at Rome were struck from the first moment with the innumerable beauties of Rossini's score, and went to his house to congratulate him on its excellence. As for Rossini, he was not at all surprised at the change which took place in public opinion. He was as certain of the success of his work the first night, when it was being hooted, as he was a week afterwards, when every one applauded it to the skies.

In Paris, more than three years afterwards, with Garcia still playing the part of "Almaviva," and with Madame Ronzi de Begnis as "Rosina," *Il Barbiere* was not much better received than on its first production at Rome. It was less astonishing that it should fail before an audience of Parisians (at that time quite unacquainted with Rossini's style) than before a highly musical public like that of Rome. In each case, the work of Paisiello was made the excuse for condemning that of Rossini; but Rossini's *Barber* was not treated with indignity at the Italian Theatre of Paris. It was simply listened to very coldly. Every one was saying, that after Paisiello's opera it was nothing, that the two were not to be compared, &c., when, fortunately, some one proposed that Paisiello's *Barber* should be revived. Paer, the director of the music, and who is said to have been rendered very uneasy by Rossini's Italian successes, thought that to crush Rossini by means of his predecessor, was no bad idea. The St. Petersburgh *Barber* of 1788 was brought out; but it was found that he had grown old and feeble; or, rather, the simplicity of the style was no longer admired, and the artists who had already lost the traditions of the school, were unable to sing the music with any effect. Rossini's *Barber* has now been before the world for nearly half a century, and we all know whether it is old-fashioned; whether the airs are tedious; whether the form of the concerted pieces, and of the grand finale, leaves anything to be desired; whether the instrumentation is poor; whether, in short, on any one point, any subsequent work of the same kind even by Rossini himself, has surpassed, equalled, or even approached it. But the thirty years of Paisiello's Barber bore heavily upon the poor old man, and he was found sadly wanting in that gaiety and brilliancy which have given such celebrity to Rossini's hero, and after which Beaumarchais's sparkling epigrammatic dialogue appears almost dull.[82] Paisiello's opera was a complete failure. And when Rossini's *Barbiere* was brought out again, every one was struck by the contrast. It profited by the very artifice which was to have destroyed it, and Rossini's enemies took care for the future not to establish comparisons between Rossini and Paisiello. Madame Ronzi de Begnis, too, had been replaced very advantageously by Madame Fodor. With two such admirable singers as Fodor and Garcia in the parts of "Rosina" and "Almaviva," with Pellegrini as "Figaro," and Begnis as "Basil," the success of the opera increased with each representation: and though certain musical *quid-nuncs* continued to shake their heads when Rossini's name was mentioned in a drawing-room, his reputation with the great body of the theatrical public was now fully established.

The *tirana* composed by Garcia *Se il mio nome saper voi bramate*, which he appears to have abandoned after the unfavourable manner in which it was received at Rome, was afterwards re-introduced into the *Barber* by Rubini.

The whole of the *Barber of Seville* was composed from beginning to end in a month. *Ecco ridente il cielo* (the air adapted from *Aureliano in Palmira*) was, as already mentioned, added after the first representation. The overture,

moreover, had been previously written for *Aureliano in Palmira*, and (after the failure of that work) had been prefixed to *Elizabetta regina d'Inghilterra* which met with some success, thanks to the admirable singing of Mademoiselle Colbran, in the principal character.

Rossini took his failures very easily, and with the calm confidence of a man who knew he could do better things and that the public would appreciate them. When his *Sigismondo* was violently hissed at Venice he sent a letter to his mother with a picture of a large *fiasco*, (bottle). His *Torvaldo e Dorliska*, which was brought out soon afterwards, was also hissed, but not so much.

This time Rossini sent his mother a picture of a *fiaschetto* (little bottle).

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE.

The motive of the *allegro* in the trio of the last act of (to return for a moment to) the *Barber of Seville*, is, as most of my readers are probably aware, simply an arrangement of the bass air sung by "Simon," in *Haydn's Seasons*. The comic air, sung by "Berta," the duenna, is a Russian dance tune, which was very fashionable in Rome, in 1816. Rossini is said to have introduced it into the *Barber of Seville*, out of compliment to some Russian lady.

Rossini's first opera *la Pietra del Paragone*, was written when he was seventeen years of age, for the Scala at Milan, where it was produced in the autumn of 1812. He introduced the best pieces out of this work into the *Cenerentola*, which was brought out five years afterwards at Rome. Besides *la Pietra del Paragone*, he laid *il Turco in Italia*, and *la Gazzetta* under contribution to enrich the score of *Cinderella*. The air *Miei rampolli*, the duet *un Soave non so chè*, the drinking chorus and the burlesque proclamation of the baron belonged originally to *la Pietra del Paragone*; the *sestett*, the *stretta* of the finale, the duet *zitto, zitto*, to the *Turco in Italia*, (produced at Milan in 1814), *Miei rampolli* had also been inserted in *la Gazzetta*.

The principal female part in the *Cenerentola*, though written for a contralto, has generally, (like those of Rosina and Isabella, and also written for contraltos), been sung by sopranos, such as Madame Fodor, Madame Cinti, Madame Sontag, &c. When sung by Mademoiselle Alboni, these parts are executed in every respect in conformity with the composer's intentions.

ROSSINI'S INNOVATIONS.

Rossini's first serious opera, or at least the first of those by which his name became known throughout Europe, was *Tancredi*, written for Venice in 1813, the year after *la Pietra del Paragone*. In this opera, we find indicated, if not fully carried out, all those admirable changes in the composition of the lyric drama which were imputed to him by his adversaries as so many artistic crimes. Lord Mount Edgcumbe, in his objections to Rossini's music, strange and almost inexplicable as they appear, yet only says in somewhat different language what is advanced by Rossini's admirers, in proof of his great merit. The connoisseur of a past epoch describes the changes introduced by Rossini into dramatic music, for an enemy, fairly enough; only he regards as detestable innovations what others have accepted as admirable reforms. It appeared to Rossini that the number of airs written for the so-called lyric dramas of his youth, delayed the action to a most wearisome extent. In *Tancredi*, concerted pieces in which the dramatic action is kept up, are introduced in situations where formerly there would have been only monologues. In *Tancredi* the bass has little to do, but more than in the operas of the old-school, where he was kept quite in the back ground, the *ultima parte* being seldom heard except in *ensembles*. By degrees the bass was brought forward, until at last he became an indispensable and frequently the principal character in all tragic operas. In the old opera the number of characters was limited and choruses were seldom introduced. Think, then, how an amateur of the simple, quiet old school must have been shocked by a thoroughly Rossinian opera, such as *Semiramide*, with its brilliant, sonorous instrumentation, its prominent part for the bass or baritone, its long elaborate finale, and above all its military band on the stage! Mozart had already anticipated every resource that has since been adopted by Rossini, but to Rossini belongs, nevertheless, the merit of having brought the lyric drama to perfection on the Italian stage, and forty and even thirty years ago it was to Rossini that its supposed degradation was attributed.

"So great a change," says Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "has taken place in the character of the (operatic) dramas, in the style of the music and its performance, that I cannot help enlarging on that subject before I proceed further. One of the most material alterations is, that the grand distinction between serious and comic operas is nearly at an end, the separation of the singers for their performance, entirely so.[83] Not only do the same sing in both, but a new species of drama has arisen, a kind of mongrel between them called *semi seria*, which bears the same analogy to the other two that that nondescript melodrama does to the legitimate tragedy and comedy of the English stage."

And of which style specimens may be found in Shakespeare's plays and in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*! The union of the serious and the comic in the same lyric work was an innovation of Mozart's, like almost all the innovations attributed by Lord Mount Edgcumbe to Rossini. Indeed, nearly all the operatic reforms of the last three-quarters of a century that have endured, have had Mozart for their originator.

ROSSINI'S INNOVATIONS.

"The construction of these newly invented pieces," continues Lord Mount Edgcumbe, "is essentially different from the old. The dialogue which used to be carried on in recitative, and which in Metastasio's operas, is often so beautiful and interesting, is now cut up (and rendered unintelligible, if it were worth listening to), into *pezzi concertati*, or long singing conversations, which present a tedious succession of unconnected, ever-changing motivos, having nothing to do with each other: and if a satisfactory air is for a moment introduced, which the ear would like to dwell upon, to hear modulated, varied and again returned to, it is broken off before it is well understood, by a sudden transition into a totally different melody, time and key, and recurs no more; so that no impression can be made or recollection of it preserved. Single songs are almost exploded ... even the *prima donna* who would formerly have complained at having less than three or four airs allotted to her, is now satisfied with one trifling *cavatina* for a whole opera."

Lord Mount Edgcumbe has hitherto given a tolerably true account of the reforms introduced by Rossini into the operatic music of Italy; only, instead of calling Rossini's concerted pieces and finales, "a tedious succession of unconnected, ever-changing motivos," he ought to describe them as highly interesting, well connected and eminently

dramatic. He goes on to condemn Rossini for his new distribution of characters, and especially for his employment of bass voices in chief parts "to the manifest injury of melody and total subversion of harmony, in which the lowest part is their peculiar province." Here, however, it occurs to Lord Mount Edgcumbe, and he thereupon expresses his surprise, "that the principal characters in two of Mozart's operas should have been written for basses."

When the above curious, and in its way valuable, strictures on Rossini's music were penned, not only *Tancredi*, but also *Il Barbiere*, *Otello*, *La Cenerentola*, *Mosè in Egitto*, *La Gazza Ladra*, and other of his works had been produced. *Il Barbiere* succeeded at once in England, and Lord Mount Edgcumbe tells us that for many years after the first introduction of Rossini's works into England "so entirely did he engross the stage, that the operas of no other master were ever to be heard, with the exception of those of Mozart; and of his only *Don Giovanni* and *le Nozze di Figaro* were often repeated.... Every other composer, past and present, was totally put aside, and these two alone named or thought of." Rossini, then, if wrongly applauded, was at least applauded in good company. It appears from Mr. Ebers's "Seven years of the King's Theatre," that of all the operas produced from 1821 to 1828, nearly half were Rossini's, or in exact numbers fourteen out of thirty-four, but it must be remembered that the majority of these were constantly repeated, whereas most of the others were brought out only for a few nights and then laid aside. During the period in question the composer whose works, next to Rossini, were most often represented, was Mozart with *Don Giovanni*, *Le Nozze*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, and *Cosi fan Tutti*. The other operas included in the repertoire were by Paer, Mayer, Zingarelli, Spontini, (*la Vestale*), Mercadante, Meyerbeer, (*Il Crociato in Egitto*) &c.

Our consideration of the causes of Rossini's success, and want of success, has led us far away from the first representation of *Tancredi* at the theatre of La Fenice. Its success was so great, that each of its melodies became for the Venetians a second "Carnival of Venice;" and even in the law courts, the judges are said to have been obliged to direct the ushers to stop the singing of *Di tanti palpiti*, and *Mi rivedrai te rivedrò*.

TANCREDI.

"I thought after hearing my opera, that the Venetians would think me mad," said Rossini. "Not at all; I found they were much madder than I was." *Tancredi* was followed by *Aureliano*, produced at Milan in 1814, and, as has already been mentioned, without success. The introduction, however, containing the chorus from which Almaviva's *cavatina* was adapted, is said to have been one of Rossini's finest pieces. *Otello*, the second of Rossini's important serious operas, was produced in 1816 at Naples (Del Fondo Theatre). The principal female part, as in the now-forgotten *Elizabetta*, and as in a great number of subsequent works, was written for Mademoiselle Colbran. The other parts were sustained by Benedetti, Nozzari, and the celebrated Davide.

In *Otello*, Rossini continued the reforms which he had commenced in *Tancredi*. He made each dramatic scene one continued piece of music, used recitative but sparingly, and when he employed it, accompanied it for the first time in Italy, with the full band. The piano was now banished from the orchestra, forty-two years after it had been banished by Gluck from the orchestras of France.

Davide, in the part of Otello," created the greatest enthusiasm. The following account of his performance is given by a French critic, M. Edouard Bertin, in a letter from Venice, dated 1823:—

"Davide excites among the *dilettanti* of this town an enthusiasm and delight which could scarcely be conceived without having been witnessed. He is a singer of the new school, full of mannerism, affectation, and display, abusing, like Martin, his magnificent voice with its prodigious compass (three octaves comprised between four B flats). He crushes the principal motive of an air beneath the luxuriance of his ornamentation, and which has no other merit than that of difficulty conquered. But he is also a singer full of warmth, *verve*, expression, energy, and musical sentiment; alone he can fill up and give life to a scene; it is impossible for another singer to carry away an audience as he does, and when he will only be simple, he is admirable; he is the Rossini of song. He is a great singer; the greatest I ever heard. Doubtless, the manner in which Garcia plays and sings the part of "Otello" is preferable, taking it altogether, to that of Davide. It is purer, more severe, more constantly dramatic; but with all his faults Davide produces more effect, a great deal more effect. There is something in him, I cannot say what, which, even when he is ridiculous, commands, enhances attention. He never leaves you cold; and when he does not move you, he astonishes you; in a word, before hearing him, I did not know what the power of singing really was. The enthusiasm he excites is without limits. In fact, his faults are not faults for Italians, who in their *opera seria* do not employ what the French call the tragic style, and who scarcely understand us, when we tell them that a waltz or quadrille movement is out of place in the mouth of a Cæsar, an Assur, or an Otello. With them the essential thing is to please: they are only difficult on this point, and their indifference as to all the rest is really inconceivable: here is an example of it. Davide, considering apparently that the final duet of *Otello* did not sufficiently show off his voice, determined to substitute for it a duet from *Armida* (Amor possente nome), which is very pretty, but anything rather than severe. As it was impossible to kill Desdemona to such a tune, the Moor, after giving way to the most violent jealousy, sheathes his dagger, and begins in the most tender and graceful manner his duet with Desdemona, at the conclusion of which he takes her politely by the hand, and retires, amidst the applause and bravos of the public, who seem to think it quite natural that the piece should finish in this manner, or, rather, that it should not finish at all: for after this beautiful *dénouement*, the action is about as far advanced as it was in the first scene. We do not in France carry our love of music so far as to tolerate such absurdities as these, and perhaps we are right."

OTELLO.

Lord Byron saw *Otello* at Venice, soon after its first production. He speaks of it in one of his letters, dated 1818, in which he condemns the libretto, but expresses his admiration of the music.

La Gazza Ladra was written for Milan, and brought out at the theatre of "La Scala," in 1817. Four years afterwards it was produced in London in the spring, and Paris in the autumn. The part of "Ninetta," afterwards so favourite a character with Sontag, Malibran, and Grisi, was sung in 1821 by Madame Camporese in London, by Madame Fodor in Paris. Camporese's performance was of the greatest merit, and highly successful. Fodor's is said to have been perfection. The part of "Pippo," originally written for a contralto, used at one time to be sung at the English and French theatres by a baritone or bass. It was not until some years after *La Gazza Ladra* was produced, that a contralto (except for first parts), was considered an indispensable member of an opera company.

Madame Fodor was not an Italian, but a Russian. She was married to a Frenchman, M. Mainvielle, and, before

visiting Italy, and, until her *début*, had studied chiefly in Paris. Her Italian tour is said to have greatly improved her style, which, when she first appeared in London, in 1816, left much to be desired. Camporese was of good birth, and was married to a member of the Guistiniani family. She cultivated singing in the first instance only as an accomplishment; but was obliged by circumstances to make it her profession. In Italy she sang only at concerts, and it was not until her arrival in England that she appeared on the stage. She seems to have possessed very varied powers; appearing at one time as "Zerlina" to Ronzi's "Donna Anna;" at another, as "Donna Anna," to Fodor's "Zerlina."

LA GAZZA LADRA.

La Gazza Ladra is known to be founded on a French melo-drama, *La Pie Voleuse*, of which the capabilities for operatic "setting," were first discovered by Paer. Paer had seen Mademoiselle Jenny Vertpré in *La Pie Voleuse*. He bought the play, and sent it to his librettist in ordinary at Milan, with marginal notes, showing how it ought to be divided for musical purposes. The opera book intended by Paer for himself was offered to Rossini, and by him was made the groundwork of one of his most brilliant productions.

La Gazza Ladra marks another step in Rossini's progress as a composer, and accordingly we find Lord Mount Edgcumbe saying, soon after its production in England:—"Of all the operas of Rossini that have been performed here, that of *la Gazza Ladra* is most peculiarly liable to all the objections I have made to the new style of drama, of which it is the most striking example." The only opera of Rossini's which Lord Mount Edgcumbe seems really to have liked was *Aureliano in Palmira*, written in the composer's earliest style, and which failed.

"Its finales," (Lord Mount Edgcumbe is speaking of *La Gazza Ladra*) "and many of its very numerous *pezzi concertati*, are uncommonly loud, and the lavish use made of the noisy instruments, appears, to my judgment, singularly inappropriate to the subject; which, though it might have been rendered touching, is far from calling for such warlike accompaniments. Nothing can be more absurd than the manner in which this simple story is represented in the Italian piece, or than to be a young peasant servant girl, led to trial and execution, under a guard of soldiers, with military music." The quintett of *La Gazza Ladra*, is, indeed, open to a few objections from a dramatic point of view. "Ninetta" is afraid of compromising her father; but "Fernando" has already given himself up to the authorities, in order to save his daughter—in whose defence he does not say a word. An explanation seems necessary, but then the drama would be at an end. There would be no quintett, and we should lose one of Rossini's finest pieces. Would it be worth while to destroy this quintett, in order to make the opera end like the French melo-drama, and as the French operatic version of *La Gazza Ladra* also terminates?

I have already spoken of *La Cenerentola*, produced in 1817 at Rome. This admirable work has of late years been much neglected. The last time it was heard in England at Her Majesty's Theatre, Madame Alboni played the principal part, and excited the greatest enthusiasm by her execution of the final air, *Non piu mesta* (the model of so many solos for the *prima donna*, introduced with or without reason, at the end of subsequent operas); but the cast was a very imperfect one, and the performance on the whole (as usual, of late years, at this theatre) very unsatisfactory.

MOSE IN EGITTO.

Mosè in Egitto was produced at the San Carlo[84] Theatre, at Naples, in 1818; the principal female part being written again for Mademoiselle Colbran. In this work, two leading parts, those of "Faraoni" and "Mosè," were assigned to basses. The once proscribed, or, at least contemned basso, was, for the first time brought forward, and honoured with full recognition in an Italian *opera seria*. The story of the Red Sea, and of the chorus sung on its banks, has often been told; but I will repeat it in a few words, for the benefit of those readers who may not have met with it before. The Passage of the Red Sea was intended to be particularly grand; but, instead of producing the effect anticipated, it was received every night with laughter. The two first acts were always applauded; but the Red Sea was a decided obstacle to the success of the third. Tottola, the librettist, came to Rossini one morning, with a prayer for the Israelites, which he fancied, if the composer would set it to music, might save the conclusion of the opera. Rossini, who was in bed at the time, saw at once the importance of the suggestion, wrote on the spur of the moment, and in a few minutes, the magnificent *Del tuo stellato soglio*. It was performed the same evening, and excited transports of admiration. The scene of the Red Sea, instead of being looked forward to as a source of hilarity, became now the chief "attraction" of the opera. The performance of the prayer produced a sort of frenzy among the audience, and a certain Neapolitan doctor, whose name has not transpired, told either Stendhal or the Abbé Carpani (on whose *Letters*, as before mentioned, Beyle's "Vie de Rossini par Stendhal" is founded), that the number of nervous indispositions among the ladies of Naples was increased in a remarkable manner by the change of key, from the minor to the major, in the last verse.

Mosè was brought out in London, as an oratorio, in the beginning of 1822. Probably, dramatic action was absolutely necessary for its success; at all events, it failed as an oratorio. The same year it was produced as an opera at the King's Theatre; but with a complete transformation in the libretto, and under the title of *Pietro l'Eremita*. The opera attracted throughout the season, and no work of Rossini's was ever more successful on its first production in this country. The subscribers to the King's Theatre were in ecstacies with it, and one of the most distinguished supporters of the theatre, after assuring the manager that he deserved well of this country, offered to testify his gratitude by proposing him at White's!

MOSE IN EGITTO.

In the autumn of the same year *Mosè* was produced at the Italian Opera of Paris, and in 1827, a French version of it was brought out at the Académie. The Red Sea appears to have been a source of trouble everywhere. At the Académie, forty-five thousand francs were sunk in it, and to so little effect, or rather with such bad effect, that the machinists' and decorators' waves had to be suppressed after the first evening. In London the Red Sea became merely a river. The river, however, failed quite as egregiously as the larger body of water, and had to be drained off before the second performance took place.

Mosè is quite long enough and sufficiently complete in its original form. Several pieces, however, out of other operas, by Rossini, were added to it in the London version of the work. In Paris, in accordance with the absurd custom (if it be not even a law) at the Académie, *Mosè* could not be represented without the introduction of a ballet. The necessary dance music was taken from *Ciro in Babilonia* and *Armida*, and the opera was further strengthened as it was thought (weakened as it turned out), by the introduction of a new air for Mademoiselle Cinti, and several new choruses.

The *Mosè* of the Académie, with its four acts of music (one more than the original opera) was found far too long.

It was admired, and for a little while applauded; but when it had once wearied the public, it was in vain that the directors reduced its dimensions. It became smaller and smaller, until it at last disappeared.

Zelmira, written originally for Vienna, and which is said to have contained Madame Colbran Rossini's best part, was produced at Naples in 1822. The composer and his favourite *prima donna* were married in the spring of the same year at Castelnaso, near Bologna.

"The recitatives of *Zelmira*" says Carpani, in his *Le Rossinane ossia lettere musico-teatrali*, "are the best and most dramatic that the Italian school has produced; their eloquence is equal to that of the most beautiful airs, and the spectator, equally charmed and surprised, listens to them from one end to the other. These recitatives are sustained by the orchestra; *Otello*, *Mosè in Egitto*, are written after the same system, but I will not attribute to Rossini the honour of a discovery which belongs to our neighbours. Although the French Opera is still barbarous from a vocal point of view, there are some points about it which may be advantageously borrowed. The introduction of accompanied recitative is of the greatest importance for our *opera seria*, which, in the hands of the Mayers, Paers, the Rossinis, has at last become dramatic."

Zelmira was brought out in London in 1824, under the direction of Rossini himself, and with Madame Colbran Rossini in the principal part. The reception of the composer, when he made his appearance in the orchestra, was most enthusiastic, and at the end of the opera, he was called on to the stage, which, in England, was, then, quite a novel compliment.

ROSSINI AND GEORGE IV.

At the same time, all possible attention was paid to Rossini, in private, by the most distinguished persons in the country. He was invited by George IV. to the Pavilion at Brighton, and the King gave orders that when his guest entered the music room, his private band should play the overture to the *Barber of Seville*. The overture being concluded, his Majesty asked Rossini what piece he would like to hear next. The composer named *God save the King*.

The music of *Zelmira* was greatly admired by connoisseurs, but made no impression on the public, and though Madame Colbran-Rossini's performance is said to have been admirable, it must be remembered that she had already passed the zenith of her powers. Born in Madrid, in 1785, she appears to have retired from the stage, as far as Italy was concerned, in 1823, after the production of *Semiramide*. At least, I find no account of her having sung anywhere after the season of 1824, in London, though her name appears in the list of the celebrated company assembled the same year by Barbaja, at Vienna. Mademoiselle Colbran figures among the sopranos with Mesdames Mainvielle-Fodor, Féron, Esther Mombelli,[85] Dardanelli, Sontag, Unger, Giuditta, Grisi, and Grimbaun. The contraltos of this unrivalled *troupe* were Mesdames Cesare-Cantarelli and Eckerlin; the tenors, Davide, Nozzari, Donzelli, Rubini, and Cicimarra; the basses, Lablache, Bassi, Ambroggi, Tamburini, and Bolticelli. Rossini had undertaken to write an opera entitled *Ugo rè d'Italia*, for the King's Theatre. The engagement had been made at the beginning of the season, in January, and the work was repeatedly announced for performance, when, at the end of May, it was said to be only half finished. He had, at this time, quarrelled with the management, and accepted the post of director at the Italian Opera of Paris. The end of *Ugo rè d'Italia* is said by Mr. Ebers to have been, that the score, as far as it was written, was deposited with Messrs. Ransom, the bankers. Messrs. Ransom, however, have informed me, that they never had a score of Rossini's in their possession.

After Rossini's departure from London, his *Semiramide*, produced at Venice only the year before, was brought out with Madame Pasta, in the principal character. The part of "Semiramide" had been played at the *Fenice* Theatre, by Madame Colbran; it was the last Rossini wrote for his wife, and *Semiramide* was the last opera he composed for Italy. When we meet with Rossini again, it will be at the Académie Royale of Paris, as the composer of *the Siege of Corinth*, *Count Ory*, and *William Tell*.

ROSSINI'S SINGERS.

The first great representative of "Semiramide" was Pasta, who has probably never been surpassed in that character. After performing it with admirable success in London, she resumed in it the year afterwards, 1825, at the Italian Opera of Paris. Madame Pasta had already gained great celebrity by her representation of "Tancredi" and of "Romeo," but in *Semiramide*, she seems, for the first time, to have exhibited her genius in all its fulness.[86]

The original "Arsace" was Madame Mariani, the first great "Arsace," Madame Pisaroni.

Since the first production of *Semiramide*, thirty years ago, all the most distinguished sopranos and contraltos of the day have loved to appear in that admirable work.

Among the "Semiramides," I may mention in particular Pasta, Grisi, Viardot-Garcia, and Cruvelli. Although not usually given to singers who particularly excel in the execution of light delicate music, the part of "Semiramide" was also sung with success by Madame Sontag (Paris, 1829), and Madame Bosio (St. Petersburgh, 1855).

Among the "Arsaces," may be cited Pisaroni, Brambilla, and Alboni.

Malibran, with her versatile comprehensive genius, appeared both as "Arsace" and as "Semiramide," and was equally fortunate in each of these very different impersonations.

I will now say a few words respecting those of the singers just named, whose names are more especially associated with Rossini's earliest successes in England.

Madame Pasta having appeared in Paris with success in 1816, was engaged with her husband, Signor Pasta (an unsuccessful tenor), for the following season at the King's Theatre. She made no great impression that year, and was quite eclipsed by Fodor and Camporese, who were members of the same company. The young singer, not discouraged, but convinced that she had much to learn, returned to Italy, where she studied unremittingly for four years. She reappeared at the Italian Opera of Paris in 1821, as "Desdemona," in Rossini's *Otello*, then for the first time produced in France. Her success was complete, but her performance does not appear to have excited that enthusiasm which was afterwards caused by her representation of "Medea," in Mayer's opera of that name. In *Medea*, however, Pasta was everything; in *Otello*, she had to share her triumph with Garcia, Bordogni, and Levasseur. From this time, the new tragic vocalist gained constantly in public estimation. *Medea* was laid aside; but Pasta gained fresh applause in every new part she undertook, and especially in *Tancredi* and *Semiramide*.

PASTA.

Pasta made her second appearance at the King's Theatre in 1824, in the character of "Desdemona." Her performance, from a histrionic as well as from a vocal point of view, was most admirable; and the habitués could scarcely persuade themselves that this was

the singer who had come before them four years previously, and had gone away without leaving a regret behind. When Rossini's last Italian opera was produced, the same season, the character of "Semiramide" was assigned to Madame Pasta, who now sang it for the first time. She had already represented the part of "Tancredi," and her three great Rossinian impersonations raised her reputation to the highest point. In London, Madame Pasta did not appear as "Medea" until 1826, when she already enjoyed the greatest celebrity. It was found at the King's Theatre, as at the Italian Opera of Paris, that Mayer's simple and frequently insipid music was not tolerable, after the brilliant dramatic compositions of Rossini; but Pasta's delineation of "Medea's" thirst for vengeance and despair, is said to have been sublime.

A story is told of a distinguished critic persuading himself, that with such a power of pourtraying "Medea's" emotions, Madame Pasta must possess "Medea's" features; but for some such natural conformity he seems to have thought it impossible that she could at once, by intuition, enter profoundly and sympathetically into all "Medea's" inmost feelings. Much might be said in favour of the critic's theory; it is unnecessary to say a word in favour of a performance by which such a theory could be suggested. We are told, that the believer in the personal resemblance between Pasta and "Medea" was sent a journey of seventy miles to see a visionary portrait of "Medea," recovered from the ruins of Herculaneum. To rush off on such a journey with such an object, may not have been very reasonable; to cause the journey to be undertaken, was perfectly silly. Probably, it was a joke of our friend Taylor's.

PISARONI.

Madame Pisaroni made her début in Italy in the year 1811, when she was eighteen years of age. She at first came out as a soprano, but two years afterwards, a severe illness having changed the nature of her voice, she appeared in all the most celebrated parts, written for the musicos or sopranists, who were now beginning to die out, and to be replaced by ladies with contralto voices. Madame Pisaroni was not only not beautiful, she was hideously ugly; I have seen her portrait, and am not exaggerating. Lord Mount Edgcumbe tells us, that another favourite contralto of the day Mariani (Rossini's original Arsace) was Pisaroni's rival "in voice, singing, and ugliness;" adding, that "in the two first qualities, she was certainly her inferior; though in the last it was difficult to know to which the preference should be given." But the anti-pathetic, revolting, almost insulting features of the great contralto, were forgotten as soon as she began to sing. As the hideous Wilkes boasted that he was "only a quarter of an hour behind the handsomest man in Europe," so Madame Pisaroni might have said, that she had only to deliver one phrase of music to place herself on a level with the most personally prepossessing vocalist of the day. This extraordinary singer on gaining a contralto, did not lose her original soprano voice. After her illness, she is said to have possessed three octaves (between four C's), but her best notes were now in the contralto register. In airs, in concerted pieces, in recitative, she was equally admirable. To sustain a high note, and then dazzle the audience with a rapid descending scale of two octaves, was for her an easy means of triumph. Altogether, her execution seems never to have been surpassed. After making her début in Paris as "Arsace," Madame Pisaroni resumed that part in 1829, under great difficulties. The frightfully ugly "Arsace" had to appear side by side with a charmingly pretty "Semiramide,"—the soprano part of the opera being taken by Mademoiselle Sontag. But in the hour of danger the poor contralto was saved by her thoroughly beautiful singing, and Pisaroni and Sontag, who as a vocalist also left nothing to desire, were equally applauded. In London, Pisaroni appears to have confined herself intentionally to the representation of male characters, appearing as "Arsace," "Malcolm," in *La Donna del Lago*, and "Tancredi;" but in Paris she played the principal female part in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, and what is more, played it with wonderful success.

The great part of "Arsace" was also that in which Mademoiselle Brambilla made her début in England in the year 1827. Brambilla, who was a pupil of the conservatory of Milan, had never appeared on any stage; but though her acting is said to have been indifferent, her lovely voice, her already excellent style, her youth and her great beauty, ensured her success.

"She has the finest eyes, the sweetest voice, and the best disposition in the world," said a certain cardinal of the youthful Brambilla, "if she is discovered to possess any other merits, the safety of the Catholic Church will require her excommunication." After singing in London several years, and revisiting Italy, Brambilla was engaged in Paris, where she again chose the part of "Arsace," for her début.

Many of our readers will probably remember that "Arsace" was also the character in which Mademoiselle Alboni made her first appearance in England, and on this side of the Alps. Until the opening night of the Royal Italian Opera, 1847, the English public had never heard of Mademoiselle Alboni; but she had only to sing the first phrase of her part, to call forth unanimous applause, and before the evening was at an end, she had quite established herself in the position which she has ever since held.

SONTAG.

Sontag and Malibran both made their first appearance in England as "Rosina," in the *Barber of Seville*. Several points of similarity might be pointed out between the romantic careers of these two wonderfully successful and wonderfully unfortunate vocalists. Mademoiselle Garcia first appeared on the stage at Naples, when she was eight years old. Mademoiselle Sontag was in her sixth year when she came out at Frankfort. Each spent her childhood and youth in singing and acting, and each, after obtaining a full measure of success, made an apparently brilliant marriage, and was thought to have quitted the stage. Both, however, re-appeared, one after a very short interval, the other, after a retirement of something like twenty years. The position of Mademoiselle Garcia's husband, M. Malibran, was as nothing, compared to that of Count Rossi, who married Mademoiselle Sontag; the former was a French merchant, established (not very firmly, as it afterwards appeared) at New York; the latter was the Sardinian Ambassador at the court of Vienna; but on the other hand, the Countess Rossi's end was far more tragic, or rather more miserable and horrible than that of Madame Malibran, itself sufficiently painful and heart-rending.

Though Rosina appears to have been one of Mademoiselle Sontag's best, if not absolutely her best part, she also appeared to great advantage during her brief career in London and Paris, in two other Rossinian characters, "Desdemona" and "Semiramide." In her own country she was known as one of the most admirable representatives of "Agatha," in *Der Freischütz*, and she sang "Agatha's" great *scena* frequently, and always with immense success, at concerts, in London. She also appeared as "Donna Anna," in *Don Giovanni*, (from the pleasing, graceful character of her talent, one would have fancied the part of "Zerlina" better suited to her), but in Italian opera all her triumphs were gained in the works of Rossini.

When Marietta Garcia made her début in London, in the *Barber of Seville*, she was, seriously, only just beginning her career, and was at that time but seventeen years of age. She appeared the same year in Paris, as the heroine in *Torvaldo e Dorliska* (Rossini's "*fiaschetto*," now quite forgotten) and was then taken by her father on that disastrous American tour which ended with her marriage. Having crossed the Atlantic, Garcia converted his family into a complete opera company, of which he himself was the tenor and the excellent musical director (if there had only been a little more to direct). The daughter was the *prima donna*, the mother had to content herself with secondary parts, the son officiated as baritone and bass. In America, under a good master, but with strange subordinates, and a wretched *entourage*, Mademoiselle Garcia accustomed herself to represent operatic characters of every kind. One evening, when an uncultivated American orchestra was massacring Mozart's master-piece, Garcia, the "Don Giovanni" of the evening, became so indignant that he rushed, sword in hand, to the foot lights, and compelled the musicians to re-commence the finale to the first act, which they executed the second time with care, if not with skill. This was a severe school in which poor Marietta was being formed; but without it we should probably never have heard of her appearing one night as "Desdemona" or as "Arsace," the next as "Otello," or as "Semiramide;" nor of her gaining fresh laurels with equal certainty in the *Sonnambula*

MALIBRAN.

and in *Norma*. But we have at present only to do with that period of operatic history, during which, Rossini's supremacy on the Italian stage was unquestioned. Towards 1830, we find two new composers appearing, who, if they, to some extent, displaced their great predecessor, at the same time followed in his steps. For some dozen years, Rossini had been the sole support, indeed, the very life of Italian opera. Naturally, his works were not without their fruit, and a great part of Donizetti's and Bellini's music may be said to belong to Rossini, inasmuch as Rossini was clearly Donizetti's and Bellini's progenitor.

CHAPTER XVII.

OPERA IN FRANCE UNDER THE CONSULATE, EMPIRE, AND RESTORATION.

THE History of the Opera, under the Consulate and the Empire, is perhaps more remarkable in connexion with political than with musical events. Few persons at present know much of Spontini's operas, though *la Vestale* in its day was celebrated in Paris, London and especially in Berlin; nor of Cherubini's, though the overtures to *Anacreon* and *les Abencerrages* are still heard from time to time at "classical" concerts; but every one remembers the plot to assassinate the First Consul which was to have been put into execution at the Opera, and the plot to destroy the Emperor, the Empress and all their retinue, which was to take effect just outside its doors. Then there is the appearance of the Emperor at the Opera, after his hasty arrival in Paris from Moscow, on the very night before his return to meet the Russians with the allies who had now joined them, at Bautzen and Lutzen—the same night by the way on which *les Abencerrages* was produced, with no great success. Then again there is the evening of the 29th of March, 1814, when *Iphigénie en Aulide* was performed to an accompaniment of cannon which the Piccinnists, if they could only have heard it, would have declared very appropriate to Gluck's music; that of the 1st of April, when by desire, of the Russian emperor and the Prussian king, *la Vestale* was represented; and finally that of the 17th of May, 1814, when *Œdipe à Colone* was played before Louis XVIII., who had that morning made his triumphal entry into Paris.

AN OPERATIC PLOT.

On the 10th of October, 1800, a band of republicans had sworn to assassinate the First Consul at the Opera. A new work was to be produced that evening composed by Porta to a libretto founded on Corneille's tragedy of *les Horaces*. The most striking scene in the piece, that in which the Horatii swear to conquer or perish, was to be the signal for action; all the lights were to be put out at the same moment, fireworks and grenades were to be thrown into the boxes, the pit and on to the stage; cries of "fire" and "murder" were to be raised from all parts of the house, and in the midst of the general confusion the First Consul was to be assassinated in his box. The leaders of the plot, to make certain of their cue, had contrived to be present at the rehearsal of the new opera, and everything was prepared for the next evening and the post of each conspirator duly assigned to him, when one of the number, conscience smitten and unable to sleep during the night of the 9th, went at daybreak the next morning to the Prefect of Police and informed him of all the details of the plot.

The conspiracy said Bonaparte, some twenty years afterwards at St. Helena, "was revealed by a captain in the line.[87] What limit is there," he added, "to the combinations of folly and stupidity! This officer had a horror of me as Consul but adored me as general. He was anxious that I should be torn from my post, but he would have been very sorry that my life should be taken. I ought to be made prisoner, he said, in no way injured, and sent to the army to continue to defeat the enemies of France. The other conspirators laughed in his face, and when he saw them distribute daggers, and that they were going beyond his intentions, he proceeded at once to denounce the whole affair."

Bonaparte, after the informer had been brought before him, suggested to the officers of his staff, the Prefect of Police and other functionaries whom he had assembled, that it would be as well not to let him appear at the Opera in the evening; but the general opinion was, that on the contrary, he should be forced to go, and ultimately it was decided that until the commencement of the performance everything should be allowed to take place as if the conspiracy had not been discovered.

AN OPERATIC PLOT.

In the evening the First Consul went to the Opera, attended by a number of superior officers, all in plain clothes. The first act passed off quietly enough—in all probability, far too quietly to please the composer, for some two hundred persons among the audience, including the conspirators, the police and the officers attached to Bonaparte's person, were thinking of anything but the music of *les Horaces*. It was necessary, however, to pay very particular attention to the music of the second act in which the scene of the oath occurred.

The sentinels outside the Consul's box had received orders to let no one approach who had not the pass word, issued an hour before for the opera only; and as a certain number of conspirators had taken up their positions in the

corridors, to extinguish the lights at the signal agreed upon, a certain number of Bonaparte's officers were sent also into the corridors to prevent the execution of this manœuvre. The scene of the oath was approaching, when a body of police went to the boxes in which the leaders of the plot were assembled, found them with fireworks and grenades in their hands, notified to them their arrest in the politest manner, cautioned them against creating the slightest disturbance, and led them so dexterously and quietly into captivity, that their disappearance from the theatre was not observed, or if so, was doubtless attributed to the badness of Porta's music. The officers in the corridors carried pistols, and at the proper moment seized the appointed lamp-extinguishers. Then the old Horatius came forward and exclaimed--

"*Jurez donc devant moi, par le ciel qui m'écoute.*
Que le dernier de vous sera mort ou vainqueur."

The orchestra "attacked" the introduction to the quartett. The fatal prelude must have sounded somewhat unmusical to the ear of the First Consul; but the conspirators were now all in custody and assembled in one of the vestibules on the ground floor.

LES MYSTERES D'ISIS.

On the 24th of December, 1800, the day on which the "infernal machine" was directed against the First Consul on his way to the Opera, a French version of Haydn's *Creation* was to be executed. Indeed, the performance had already commenced, when, during the gentle *adagio* of the introduction, the dull report of an explosion, as if of a cannon, was heard, but without the audience being at all alarmed. Immediately afterwards the First Consul appeared in his box with Lannes, Lauriston, Berthier, and Duroc. Madame Bonaparte, as she was getting into her carriage, thought of some alteration to make in her dress, and returned to her apartments for a few minutes. But for this delay her carriage would have passed before the infernal machine at the moment of its explosion. Ten minutes afterwards she made her appearance at the Opera with her daughter, Mademoiselle Hortense Beauharnais, Madame Murat, and Colonel Rapp. The performance of the *Creation* continued as if nothing had happened; and the report, which had interfered so unexpectedly with the effect of the opening *adagio*, was explained in various ways; the account generally received in the pit being, that a grocer going into his cellar with a candle, had set light to a barrel of gunpowder. Two houses were said to have been blown up. This was at the beginning of the first part of the *Creation*; at the end of the second, the number had probably increased to half a dozen.

Under the consulate and the empire, the arts did not flourish greatly in France; not for want of direct encouragement on the part of the ruler, but rather because he at the same time encouraged far above everything else the art of war. Until the appearance of Spontini with *la Vestale*, the Académie, under Napoleon Bonaparte, whether known as Bonaparte or Napoleon, was chiefly supported by composers who composed without inventing, and who, with the exception of Cherubini, were either very feeble originators or mere plagiarists and spoliators. Even Mozart did not escape the French arrangers. His *Marriage of Figaro* had been brought out in 1798, with all the prose dialogue of Beaumarchais's comedy substituted for the recitative of the original opera. *Les Mystères d'Isis*, an adaptation, perversion, disarrangement of *Die Zauberflötte*, with several pieces suppressed, or replaced by fragments from the *Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and Haydn's symphonies, was produced on the 23rd of August, 1801, under the auspices of Morel the librettist, and Lachnith the musician.

Les Misères *d'Isis* was the appropriate name given to this sad medley by the musicians of the orchestra. Lachnith was far from being ashamed of what he had done. On the contrary, he gloried in it, and seemed somehow or other to have persuaded himself that the pieces which he had stolen from Mozart and Haydn were his own compositions. One evening, when he was present at the representation of *Les Mystères d'Isis*, he was affected to tears, and exclaimed, "No, I will compose no more! I could never go beyond this!"

Don Giovanni, in the hands of Kalkbrenner, fared no better than the *Zauberflötte* in those of Lachnith. It even fared worse; for Kalkbrenner did not content himself with spoiling the general effect of the work, by means of pieces introduced from Mozart's other operas, and from Haydn's symphonies: he mutilated it so as completely to alter its form, and further debased it by mixing with its pure gold the dross of his own vile music.

KALKBRENNER'S DON GIOVANNI.

In Kalkbrenner's *Don Giovanni*, the opera opened with a recitative, composed by Kalkbrenner himself. Next came Leporello's solo, followed by an interpolated romance, in the form of a serenade, which was sung by Don Juan, under Donna Anna's window. The struggle of Don Juan with Donna Anna, the entry of the commandant, his combat with Don Juan, the trio for the three men and all the rest of the introduction, was cut out. The duet of Donna Anna and Ottavio was placed at the end of the act, and as Don Juan had killed the commandant off the stage, it was of course deprived of its marvellous recitative, which, to be duly effective, must be declaimed by Donna Anna over the body of her father. The whole of the opera was treated in the same style. The first act was made to end as it had begun, with a few phrases of recitative of Kalkbrenner's own production. The greater part of the action of Da Ponte's libretto was related in dialogue, so that the most dramatic portion of the music lost all its significance. The whole opera, in short, was disfigured, cut to pieces, destroyed, and further defiled by the musical weeds which the infamous Kalkbrenner introduced among its still majestic ruins. At this period the supreme direction of the Opera was in the hands of a jury, composed of certain members of the Institute of France. It seems never to have occurred to this learned body that there was any impropriety in the trio of masques being executed by three men, and in the two soprano parts being given to tenors,—by which arrangement the part of Ottavio, Mozart's tenor, instead of being the lowest in the harmony, was made the highest. The said trio was sung by three archers, of course to entirely new words! Let us pass on to another opera, which, if not comparable to *Don Giovanni*, was at least a magnificent work for France in 1807, and which had the advantage of being admirably executed under the careful direction of its composer.

Spontini had already produced *La Finta Filosofa*, which, originally brought out at Naples, was afterwards performed at the Italian Theatre of Paris, without success; *La Petite Maison*, written for the Opéra Comique, and violently hissed; and *Milton* also composed for the Opéra Comique, and favourably received. When *La Vestale* was submitted to the jury of the Académie, it was refused unanimously on the ground of the extravagance of its style, and of the audacity of certain innovations in the score. Spontini appealed to the Empress Josephine, and it was owing to her influence, and through a direct order of the court that *La Vestale* was put upon the stage. The jury was

inexorable, however, as regarded certain portions of the work, and the composer was obliged to submit it to the orchestral conductor, who injured it in several places, but without spoiling it. Spontini wished to give the part of the tenor to Nourrit; but Lainez protested, went to the superintendant of the imperial theatres, represented that he had been first tenor and first lover at the Opera for thirty years, and finally received full permission to make love to the Vestal of the Académie.

The Emperor Napoleon had the principal pieces in *La Vestale* executed by his private band, nearly a year before the opera was brought out at the Académie. He had sufficient taste to admire the music, and predicted to Spontini the success it afterwards met with. He is said, in particular, to have praised the finale, the first dramatic finale written for the French Opera.

SPONTINI.

La Vestale was received by the public with enthusiasm. It is said to have been admirably executed, and we know that Spontini was difficult on this point, for we are told by Mr. Ebers that he objected to the performance of *La Vestale*, in London, on the ground "that the means of representation there were inadequate to do justice to his composition." This was twenty years after it was first brought out in Paris, when all Rossini's finest and most elaborately constructed operas (such as *Semiramide*, for instance), had been played in London, and in a manner which quite satisfied Rossini. Probably, however, it was in the spectacular department that Spontini expected the King's Theatre would break down. However that may have been, *La Vestale* was produced in London, and met with very little success. The part of "La Vestale" was given to a Madame Biagioli, who objected to it as not sufficiently good for her. From the accounts extant of this lady's powers, it is quite certain that Spontini, if he had heard her, would have considered her not nearly good enough for his music. It would, of course, have been far better for the composer, as for the manager and the public, if Spontini had consented to superintend the production of his work himself; but failing that, it was scandalous in defiance of his wishes to produce it at all. Unfortunately, this is a kind of scandal from which operatic managers in England have seldom shrunk.

Spontini's *Fernand Cortez*, produced at the Académie in 1809, met with less success than *La Vestale*. In both these works, the spectacular element played an important part, and in *Fernand Cortez*, it was found necessary to introduce a number of Franconi's horses. A journalist of the period proposed that the following inscription should be placed above the doors of the theatre:—*Içi on joue l'opéra à pied et à cheval*.

Spontini, as special composer for the Académie of grand operas with hippic and panoramic effects, was the predecessor of M. M. Meyerbeer, and Halévy; and Heine, in his "Lutèce"[88] has given us a very witty, and perhaps, in the main, truthful account of Spontini's animosity towards Meyerbeer, whom he is said to have always regarded as an intriguer and interloper. I may here, however, mention as a proof of the attractiveness of *La Vestale* from a purely musical point of view, that it was once represented with great success, not only without magnificent or appropriate scenery, but with the scenery belonging to another piece! This was on the 1st of April, 1814, the day after the entry of the Russian and Prussian troops into Paris. *Le Triomphe de Trajan* had been announced; the allied sovereigns, however, wished to hear *La Vestale*, and the performance was changed. But there was not time to prepare the scenery for Spontini's opera, and that of the said *Triomphe* was made to do duty for it.

A MURDER AT THE OPERA.

Le Triomphe de Trajan was a work in which Napoleon's clemency to a treacherous or patriotic German prince was celebrated, and it has been said that the programme of the 1st of April was changed, because the allied sovereigns disliked the subject of the opera. But it was perfectly natural that they should wish to hear Spontini's master-piece, and that they should not particularly care to listen to a *pièce d'occasion*, set to music by a French composer of no name.

I have said that Cherubini's *Abencerrages*, of which all but the overture is now forgotten, was produced in 1813, and that the emperor attended its first representation the night before his departure from Paris, to rejoin his troops, and if possible, check the advance of the victorious allies. No other work of importance was produced at the French Académie until Rossini's *Siège de Corinthe* was brought out in 1825. This, the first work written by the great Italian master specially for the French Opera, was represented at the existing theatre in the Rue Lepelletier, the opera house in the Rue Richelieu having been pulled down in 1820.

A MURDER AT THE OPERA.

In the year just mentioned, on the 13th of February, being the last Sunday of the Carnival, an unusually brilliant audience had assembled at the Académie Royale. *Le Rossignol*, an insipid, and fortunately, very brief production, was the opera; but the great attraction of the evening consisted in two ballets, *La Carnaval de Venise*, and *Les Noces de Gamache*. The Duke and Duchess de Berri were present, and when *Le Carnaval de Venise*, *Le Rossignol*, and the first act of *Les Noces de Gamache*, had been performed, the duchess rose to leave the theatre. Her husband accompanied her to the carriage, and was taking leave of her, intending to return to the theatre for the last act of the ballet, when a man crept up to him, placed his left arm on the duke's left side, pulled him violently towards him, and as he held him in his grasp, thrust a dagger through his body. The dagger entered the duke's right side, and the pressure of the assassin's arm, and the force with which the blow was given, were so great, that the weapon went through the lungs, and pierced the heart, a blade of six inches inflicting a wound nine inches long. The news of the duke's assassination spread through the streets of Paris as if by electricity; and M. Alexandre Dumas, in his interesting Memoirs, tells us almost the same thing that Balzac says about it in one of his novels; that it was known at the farther end of Paris, before a man on horseback, despatched at the moment the blow was struck, could possibly have reached the spot. On the other hand, M. Castil Blaze shows us very plainly that the terrible occurrence was not known within the Opera; or, at least, only to a few officials, until after the conclusion of the performance, which went on as if nothing had happened. The duke was carried into the director's room, where he was attended by Blancheton, the surgeon of the Opera, and at once bled in both arms. He, himself, drew the dagger from the wound, and observed at the same time that he felt it was mortal. The Count d'Artois, and the Duke and Duchess d'Angoulême arrived soon afterwards. There lay the unhappy prince, on a bed hastily arranged, and already inundated, soaked with blood, surrounded by his father, brother, sister, and wife, whose poignant anguish was from time to time alleviated by some faint ray of hope, destined, however, to be quickly dispelled.

Five of the most celebrated doctors in Paris, with Dupuytren among the number, had been sent for; and as the patient was now nearly suffocating from internal hæmorrhage, the orifice of the wound was widened. This afforded some relief, and for a moment it was thought just possible that a recovery might be effected. Another moment, and it

was evident that there was no hope. The duke asked to see his daughter, and embraced her several times; he also expressed a desire to see the king. Now the sacrament was administered to him, but, on the express condition exacted by the Archbishop of Paris, that the Opera House should afterwards be destroyed. Two other unacknowledged daughters of his youth were brought to the dying man's bedside, and received his blessing. He had already recommended them to the duchess's care.

"Soon you will have no father," she said to them, "and I shall have three daughters."

In the meanwhile the Spanish ballet was being continued, amidst the mirth and applause of the audience, who testified by their demeanour that it was Carnival time, and that the *jours gras* had already commenced. The house was crowded, and the boleros and sequidillas with which the Spaniards of the Parisian ballet astonished and dazzled Don Quixote and his faithful knight, threw boxes, pit, and gallery, into ecstasies of delight.

Elsewhere, in the room next his victim, stood the assassin, interrogated by the ministers, Decazes and Pasquier, with the bloody dagger before them on the table. The murderer simply declared that he had no accomplices,[89] and that he took all the responsibility of the crime on himself.

At five in the morning, Louis XVIII. was by the side of his dying nephew. An attempt had been made, the making of which was little less than an insult to the king, to dissuade him from being present at the duke's last moments.

A MURDER AT THE OPERA.

"The sight of death does not terrify me," replied His Majesty, "and I have a duty to perform." After begging that his murderer might be forgiven, and entreating the duchess not to give way to despair, the Duke de Berri breathed his last in the arms of the king, who closed his eyes at half-past six in the morning.

Opera was now to be heard no more in the Rue Richelieu. The holy sacrament had crossed the threshold of a profane building, and it was necessary that this profane building should be destroyed; indeed, a promise to that effect had been already given. All the theatres were closed for ten days, and the Opera, now homeless, did not re-commence its performances until upwards of two months afterwards, when it took possession for a time of the Théâtre Favart. In the August of the same year the erection of the theatre in the Rue Lepelletier was commenced. The present Théâtre de l'Opéra, (the absurd title of Académie having recently been abandoned), was intended when it was first built, to be but a temporary affair. Strangely enough it has lasted forty years, during which time it has seen solidly constructed opera-houses perish by fire in all parts of Europe. May the new opera-house about to be erected in Paris, under the auspices of Napoleon III., be equally fortunate.

I am here reminded that both the Napoleons have proved themselves good and intelligent friends to the Opera. In the year eleven of the French republic, the First Consul and his two associates, the Minister of the French republic, the three Consuls, the Ministers of the interior and police, General Junot, the Secretary of State, and a few more officials occupied among them as many as seventeen boxes at the opera, containing altogether ninety-four places. Bonaparte had a report drawn up from which it appeared that the value of these boxes to the administration, was sixty thousand four hundred francs per annum, including fifteen thousand francs for those kept at his own disposition. Thereupon he added to the report the following brief, but on the whole satisfactory remark.

"*A datter du premier nivose toutes ces loges seront payées par ceux qui les occupent.*"

The error in orthography is not the printers', but Napoleon Bonaparte's, and the document in which it occurs, is at present in the hands of M. Regnier of the Comédie Française.

A month afterwards, Napoleon, or at least the consular trio of which he was the chief, assigned to the Opera a regular subsidy of 600,000 francs a year; he at the same time gave it a respectable name. Under the Convention it had been entitled "Théâtre de la République et des Arts;" the First Consul called it simply, "Théâtre des Arts," an appellation it had borne before.[90]

Hardly had the new theatre in the Rue Lepelletier opened its doors, when a singer of the highest class, a tenor of the most perfect kind, made his appearance. This was Adolphe Nourrit, a pupil of Garcia, who, on the 10th of September, 1821, made his first appearance with the greatest success as "Pylade" in *Iphigénie en Tauride*. It was not, however, until Auber's *Muette de Portici* was produced in 1828, that Nourrit had an opportunity of distinguishing himself in a new and important part.

LA MUETTE DE PORTICI.

La Muette was the first of those important works to which the French Opera owes its actual celebrity in Europe. *Le Siège de Corinthe*, translated and adapted from *Maometto II.*, with additions (including the admirable blessing of the flags) written specially for the Académie, had been brought out eighteen months before, but without much success. *Maometto II.* was not one of Rossini's best works, the drama on which it was constructed was essentially feeble and uninteresting, and the manner in which the whole was "arranged" for the French stage, was unsatisfactory in many respects. *Le Siège de Corinthe* was greatly applauded the first night, but it soon ceased to have any attraction for the public. Rossini had previously written *Il Viaggio a Reims* for the coronation of Charles X., and this work was re-produced at the Academy three years afterwards, with several important additions (such as the duet for "Isolier" and the "Count," the chorus of women, the unaccompanied quartett, the highly effective drinking chorus, and the beautiful trio of the last act), under the title of *le Comte Ory*. In the meanwhile *La Muette* had been brought out, to be followed the year afterwards by *Guillaume Tell*, which was to be succeeded in its turn by Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, *Les Huguenots* and *Le Prophète*, (works which belong specially to the Académie and with which its modern reputation is intimately associated), by Auber's *Gustave III.*, Donizetti's *la Favorite*, &c.

La Muette de Portici had the great advantage of enabling the Académie to display all its resources at once. It was brought out with magnificent scenery and an excellent *corps de ballet*, with a *première danseuse*, Mademoiselle Noblet as the heroine, with the new tenor, Nourrit, in the important part of the hero, and with a well taught chorus capable of sustaining with due effect the prominent *rôle* assigned to it. For in the year 1828 it was quite a novelty at the French Opera to see the chorus taking part in the general action of the drama.

LA MUETTE DE PORTICI.

If we compare *La Muette* with the "Grand Operas" produced subsequently at the Académie, we find that it differs from them all in some important respects. In the former, instead of a *prima donna* we have a *prima ballerina* in the principal female part. Of course the concerted pieces suffer by this, or rather the number of concerted pieces is diminished, and to the same cause may, perhaps, be attributed the absence of finales in *La Muette*. It chiefly owed its success (which is still renewed

from time to time whenever it is re-produced) to the intrinsic beauty of its melodies and to the dramatic situations provided by the ingenious librettist, M. Scribe, and admirably taken advantage of by the composer. But the part of Fenella had also great attractions for those unmusical persons who are found in almost every audience in England and France, and for whom the chief interest in every opera consists in the skeleton-drama on which it is founded. To them the graceful Fenella with her expressive pantomime is no bad substitute for a singer whose words would be unintelligible to them, and whose singing, continued throughout the Opera, would perhaps fatigue their dull ears. These ballet-operas seem to have been very popular in France about the period when *La Muette* was produced, the other most celebrated example of the style being Auber's *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*. In the present day it would be considered that a *prima ballerina*, introduced as a principal character in an opera, would interfere too much with the combinations of the singing personages.

I need say nothing about the charming music of *La Muette*, which is well known to every frequenter of the Opera, further than to mention, that the melody of the celebrated barcarole and chorus, "*Amis, amis le soleil va paraitre*" had already been heard in a work of Auber's, called *Emma*; and that the brilliant overture had previously served as an instrumental preface to *Le Maçon*.

La Muette de Portici was translated and played with great success in England. But shameful liberties were taken with the piece; recitatives were omitted, songs were interpolated: and it was not until *Masaniello* was produced at the Royal Italian Opera that the English public had an opportunity of hearing Auber's great work without suppressions or additions.

The greatest opera ever written for the Académie, and one of the three or four greatest operas ever produced, was now about to be brought out. *Guillaume Tell* was represented for the first time on the 3rd of August, 1829. It was not unsuccessful, or even coldly received the first night, as has often been stated; but the result of the first few representations was on the whole unsatisfactory. Musicians and connoisseurs were struck by the great beauties of the work from the very beginning; but some years passed before it was fully appreciated by the general public. The success of the music was certainly not assisted by the libretto—one of the most tedious and insipid ever put together; and it was not until Rossini's masterpiece had been cut down from five to three acts, that the Parisians, as a body, took any great interest in it.

GUILLAUME TELL.

Guillaume Tell is now played everywhere in the three act form. Some years ago a German doctor, who had paid four francs to hear *Der Freischütz* at the French Opera, proceeded against the directors for the recovery of his money, on the plea that it had been obtained from him on false pretences, the work advertised as *Der Freischütz* not being precisely the *Der Freischütz*[91] which Karl Maria von Weber composed. The doctor might amuse himself (the authorities permitting) by bringing an action against the managers of the Berlin theatre every time they produce Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*—which is often enough, and always in three acts.

The original cast of *Guillaume Tell* included Nourrit, Levasseur, Dabadie, A. Dupont, Massol, and Madame Cinti-Damoreau. The singers and musicians of the Opera were enthusiastic in their admiration of the new work, and the morning after its production assembled on the terrace of the house where Rossini lived and performed a selection from it in his honour. One distinguished artist who took no part in this ceremony had, nevertheless, contributed in no small degree to the success of the opera. This was Mademoiselle Taglioni, whose *tyrolienne* danced to the music of the charming unaccompanied chorus, was of course understood and applauded by every one from the very first.

After the first run of *Guillaume Tell*, the Opera returned to *La Muette de Portici*, and then for a time Auber's and Rossini's masterpieces were played alternate nights. On Wednesday, July 3rd, 1830, *La Muette de Portici* was performed, and with a certain political appropriateness;—for the "days of July" were now at hand, and the insurrectionary spirit had already manifested itself in the streets of Paris. The fortunes of *La Muette de Portici* have been affected in various ways by the revolutionary character of the plot. Even in London it was more than once made a pretext for a "demonstration" by the radicals of William the Fourth's time. At most of the Italian theatres it has been either forbidden altogether or has had to be altered considerably before the authorities would allow it to be played. Strange as it may appear, in absolute Russia it has been represented times out of number in its original shape, under the title of *Fenella*.

FRENCH NATIONAL SONGS.

We have seen that *Masaniello* was represented in Paris four days before the commencement of the outbreak which ended in the elder branch of the Bourbons being driven from the throne. On the 26th of July, *Guillaume Tell* was to have been represented, but the city was in such a state of agitation, in consequence of the issue of the *ordonnances*, signed at St. Cloud the day before, that the Opera was closed. On the 27th the fighting began and lasted until the 29th, when the Opera was re-opened. On the 4th of August, *La Muette de Portici* was performed, and created the greatest enthusiasm,—the public finding in almost every scene some reminder, and now and then a tolerably exact representation, of what had just taken place within a stone's throw of the theatre. *La Muette*, apart from its music, became now the great piece of the day; and the representations at the Opera were rendered still more popular by Nourrit singing "*La Parisienne*" every evening. The melody of this temporary national song, like that of its predecessor (so infinitely superior to it), "*La Marseillaise*" (according to Castil Blaze), was borrowed from Germany. France, never wanting in national spirit, has yet no national air. It has four party songs, not one of which can be considered truly patriotic, and of which the only one that possesses any musical merit, disfigured as it has been by its French adapters, is of German origin.

Nourrit is said to have delivered "*La Parisienne*" with wonderful vigour and animation, and to this and to Casimir Delavigne's verses (or rather to Delavigne's name, for the verses in themselves are not very remarkable) may be attributed the reputation which the French national song, No. 4,[92] for some time enjoyed.

Guillaume Tell is Rossini's last opera. To surpass that admirable work would have been difficult for its own composer, impossible for any one else; and Rossini appears to have resolved to terminate his artistic career when it had reached its climax. In carrying out this resolution, he has displayed a strength of character, of which it is almost impossible to find another instance. Many other reasons have been given for Rossini's abstaining from composition during so many years, such as the coldness with which *Guillaume Tell* was received (when, as we have seen, its *immediate* reception by those whose opinion Rossini would chiefly have valued, was marked by the greatest enthusiasm), and the success of Meyerbeer's operas, though who would think of placing the most successful of

Meyerbeer's works on a level with *Guillaume Tell*?

"*Je reviendrai quand les juifs auront fini leur sabbat*," is a speech (somewhat uncharacteristic of the speaker, as it seems to me), attributed to Rossini by M. Castil Blaze; who, however, also mentions, that when *Robert le Diable* was produced, every journal in Paris said that it was the finest opera, *except Guillaume Tell*, that had been produced at the Académie for years. It appears certain, now, that Rossini simply made up his mind to abdicate at the height of his power. There were plenty of composers who could write works inferior to *Guillaume Tell*, and to them he left the kingdom of opera, to be divided as they might arrange it among themselves. He was succeeded by Meyerbeer at the Académie; by Donizetti and Bellini at the Italian opera-houses of all Europe.

Rossini had already found a follower, and, so to speak, an original imitator, in Auber, whose eminently Rossinian overture to *La Muette*, was heard at the Académie the year before *Guillaume Tell*.

ROSSINI'S FOLLOWERS.

I need scarcely remind the intelligent reader, that the composer of three master-pieces in such very different styles as *Il Barbiere*, *Semiramide*, and *Guillaume Tell*, might have a dozen followers, whose works, while all resembling in certain points those of their predecessor and master, should yet bear no great general resemblance to one another. All the composers who came immediately after Rossini, accepted, as a matter of course, those important changes which he had introduced in the treatment of the operatic drama, and to which he had now so accustomed the public, that a return to the style of the old Italian masters, would have been not merely injudicious, but intolerable. Thus, all the post-Rossinian composers adopted Rossini's manner of accompanying recitative with the full band; his substitution of dialogued pieces, written in measured music, with a prominent connecting part assigned to the orchestra, for the interminable dialogues in simple recitative, employed by the earlier Italian composers; his mode of constructing finales; and his new distribution of characters, by which basses and baritones become as eligible for first parts as tenors, while great importance is given to the chorus, which, in certain operas, according to the nature of the plot, becomes an important dramatic agent. I may repeat, by way of memorandum, what has before been observed, that nearly all these forms originated with Mozart, though it was reserved for Rossini to introduce and establish them on the Italian stage. In short, with the exception of the very greatest masters of Germany, all the composers of the last thirty or forty years, have been to some, and often to a very great extent, influenced by Rossini. The general truth of this remark is not lessened by the fact, that Hérold and Auber, and even Donizetti and Bellini (the last, especially, in the simplicity of his melodies), afterwards found distinctive styles; and that Meyerbeer, after *Il Crociato*, took Weber, rather than Rossini, for his model—the composer of *Robert* at the same time exhibiting a strongly marked individuality, which none of his adverse critics think of denying, and which is partly, no doubt, the cause of their adverse criticism.

ROSSINI'S RETIREMENT.

What will make it appear to some persons still more astonishing, that Rossini should have retired after producing *Guillaume Tell* is, that he had signed an agreement with the Académie, by which he engaged to write three grand operas for it in six years. In addition to his "author's rights," he was to receive ten thousand francs annually until the expiration of the sixth year, and the completion of the third opera. No. 1 was *Guillaume Tell*. The librettos of Nos. 2 and 3 were *Gustave* and *Le Duc d'Albe*, both of which were returned by Rossini to M. Scribe, perhaps, with an explanation, but with none that has ever been made public. Rossini was at this time thirty-seven years of age, strong and vigorous enough to have outlived, not only his earliest, but his latest compositions, had they not been the most remarkable dramatic works of this century. If Rossini had been a composer who produced with difficulty, his retirement would have been more easy to explain; but the difficulty with him must have been to avoid producing. The story is probably known to many readers of his writing a duet one morning, in bed, letting the music paper fall, and, rather than leave his warm sheets to pick it up, writing another duet, which was quite different from the first. A hundred similar anecdotes are told of the facility with which Rossini composed. Who knows but that he wished his career to be measured against those of so many other composers whose days were cut short, at about the age he had reached when he produced *Guillaume Tell*? A very improbable supposition, certainly, when we consider how little mysticism there is in the character of Rossini. However this may be, he ceased to write operas at about the age when many of his immediate predecessors and followers ceased to live.[93]

And even Rossini had a narrow escape. About the critical period, when the composer of *Guillaume Tell* was a little more than half way between thirty and forty, the Italian Theatre of Paris was burnt to the ground. This, at first sight, appears to have nothing to do with the question; but Rossini lived in the theatre, and his apartments were near the roof. He had started for Italy two days previously; had he remained in Paris, he certainly would have shared the fate of the other inmates who perished in the flames.

Meyerbeer is a composer who defies classification, or who, at least, may be classified in three different ways. As the author of the *Crociato*, he belongs to Italy, and the school of Rossini; *Robert le Diable* exhibits him as a composer chiefly of the German school, with a tendency to follow in the steps of Weber; but *Robert*, *les Huguenots*, *le Prophète*, *l'Etoile du Nord*, and, above all *Dinorah*, are also characteristic of the composer himself. The committee of the London International Exhibition has justly decided that Meyerbeer is a German composer, and there is no doubt about his having been born in Germany, and educated for some time under the same professor as Karl Maria Von Weber; but it is equally certain that he wrote those works to which he owes his great celebrity for the Académie Royale of Paris, and as we are just now dealing with the history of the French Opera, this, I think, is the proper place in which to introduce the most illustrious of living and working composers.

REHEARSALS.

"The composer of *Il Crociato in Egitto*, an amateur, is a native of Berlin, where his father, a Jew, who is since dead, was a banker of great riches. The father's name was Beer, Meyer being merely a Jewish prefix, which the son thought fit to incorporate with his surname. He was a companion of Weber, in his musical studies. He had produced other operas which had been well received, but none of them was followed by or merited the success that attended *Il Crociato*." So far Mr. Ebers, who, in a few words, tells us a great deal of Meyerbeer's early career. The said *Crociato*, written for Venice, in 1824, was afterwards produced at the Italian Opera of Paris in 1825, six years before *Robert le Diable* was brought out at the Académie. In the summer of 1825, a few months before its production in Paris, it was modified in London, and

Mr. Ebers informs us that the getting up of the opera, to which nine months were devoted at the Théâtre Italien, occupied at the King's Theatre only one. Such rapid feats are familiar enough to our operatic managers and musical conductors. But it must be remembered that a first performance in England is very often less perfect than a dress rehearsal in France; and, moreover, that between bringing out an original work (or an old work, in an original style), in Paris, and bringing out the same work afterwards, more or less conformably to the Parisian[94] model, in London, there is the same difference as between composing a picture and merely copying one. No singers and musicians read better than those of the French Académie, and it is a terrible mistake to suppose that so much time is required at that theatre for the production of a grand opera on account of any difficulty in making the *artistes* acquainted with their parts. *Guillaume Tell* was many months in rehearsal, but the orchestra played the overture at first sight in a manner which astonished and delighted Rossini. The great, and I may add, the inevitable fault of our system of management in England is that it is impossible to procure for a new opera a sufficient number of rehearsals before it is publicly produced. It is surprising how few "repetitions" suffice, but they would *not* suffice if the same perfection was thought necessary on the first night which is obtained at the Paris and Berlin Operas, and which, in London, in the case of very difficult, elaborate works, is not reached until after several representations.

However, *Il Crociato* was brought out in London after a month's rehearsal. The manager left the musical direction almost entirely in the hands of Velluti, who had already superintended its production at Venice, and Florence, and who was engaged, as a matter of course, for the principal part written specially for him. The opera (of which the cast included, besides Velluti, Mademoiselle Garcia, Madame Caradori and Crivelli the tenor) was very successful, and was performed ten nights without intermission when the "run" was brought to a termination by the closing of the theatre. The following account of the music by Lord Mount Edgcumbe, shows the sort of impression it made upon the old amateurs of the period.

MEYERBEER'S CROCIATO.

It was "quite of the new school, but not copied from its founder, Rossini; original, odd, flighty, and it might even be termed *fantastic*, but at times beautiful; here and there most delightful melodies and harmonies occurred, but it was unequal, solos were as rare as in all the modern operas, but the numerous concerted pieces much shorter and far less noisy than Rossini's, consisting chiefly of duets and terzettos, with but few choruses and no overwhelming accompaniments. Indeed, Meyerbeer has rather gone into the contrary extreme, the instrumental parts being frequently so slight as to be almost meagre, while he has sought to produce new and striking effects from the voices alone."

Before speaking of Meyerbeer's better known and more celebrated works, I must say a few words about Velluti, a singer of great powers, but of a peculiar kind ("*non vir sed Veluti*") who, as I have said before, played the principal part in *Il Crociato*. He was the last of his tribe, and living at a time when too much license was allowed to singers in the execution of the music entrusted to them, so disgusted Rossini by his extravagant style of ornamentation, that the composer resolved to write his airs in future in such elaborate detail, that to embellish them would be beyond the power of any singer. Be this how it may, Rossini did not like Velluti's singing, nor Velluti Rossini's music—which sufficiently proves that the last of the sopranists was not a musician of taste.[95] Mr. Ebers tells us that "after making the tour of the principal Italian and German theatres, Velluti arrived in Paris, where the musical taste was not prepared for him," and that, "Rossini being at this time engaged at Paris under his agreement to direct there, Velluti did not enter into his plans, and having made no engagement there, came over to England without any invitation, but strongly recommended by Lord Burghersh." The re-appearance of a musico in London when the race was thought to be extinct, caused a great sensation, and not altogether of an agreeable kind. However, the Opera was crowded the night of his *début*; to the old amateurs it recalled the days of Pacchierotti, to the young ones, it was simply a strange and unexpected novelty. Some are said to have come to the theatre expressly to oppose him, while others were there for the avowed purpose of supporting him, from a feeling that public opinion had dealt harshly with the unfortunate man. Velluti had already sung at concerts, where his reception was by no means favourable. Indeed, Lord Mount Edgcumbe tells us "that the scurrilous abuse lavished upon him before he was heard, was cruel and illiberal," and that "it was not till after long deliberation, much persuasion, and assurances of support that the manager ventured to engage him for the remainder of the season."

VELLUTI.

Velluti's demeanour on entering the stage was highly prepossessing. Mr. Ebers says that "it was at once graceful and dignified," and that "he was in look and action the son of chivalry he represented."

He adds, that "his appearance was received with mingled applause and disapprobation; but that "the scanty symptoms of the latter were instantly overwhelmed." The effect produced on the audience by the first notes Velluti uttered was most peculiar. According to Mr. Ebers, "there was a something of a preternatural harshness about them, which jarred even more strongly on the imagination than on the ear;" though, as he proceeded, "the sweetness and flexibility of those of his tones which yet remained unimpaired by time, were fully perceived and felt." Lord Mount Edgcumbe informs us, that "the first note he uttered gave a shock of surprise, almost of disgust, to inexperienced ears;" though, afterwards, "his performance was listened to with great attention and applause throughout, with but few *audible* expressions of disapprobation speedily suppressed." The general effect of his performance is summed up in the following words:—"To the old he brought back some pleasing recollections; others, to whom his voice was new, became reconciled to it, and sensible of his merits; whilst many declared, to the last, his tones gave them more pain than pleasure." However, he drew crowded audiences, and no opera but Meyerbeer's *Crociato* was performed until the end of the season.

Some years after the production of *Il Crociato*, Meyerbeer had written an *opéra comique*, entitled *Robert le Diable*, which was to have been represented at the Ventadour Theatre, specially devoted to that kind of performance. The company, however, at the "Théâtre de l'Opera Comique," was not found competent to execute the difficult music of *Robert*, and the interesting libretto by M. M. Scribe and Delavigne, was altered and reduced, so as to suit the Académie. The celebrated "pruning knife" was brought out, and vigorously applied. What remained of the dialogue was adapted for recitative, and the character of "Raimbaud" was cut out in the fourth and fifth acts. With all these suppressions, the opera, as newly arranged, to be recited or sung from beginning to end, was still very long, and not particularly intelligible. However, the legend on which *Robert le Diable* is founded is well suited for musical illustration, and the plot, with a little attention and a careful study of the book, may be understood, in spite of the absence of "Raimbaud," who, in the original piece, is said to have served materially to aid and explain the progress of

the drama.

If *Robert le Diable* had been produced at the Opéra Comique, in the form in which it was originally conceived, the many points of resemblance it presents to *Der Freischütz* would have struck every one. Meyerbeer seems to have determined to write a romantic semi-fantastic legendary opera, like *Der Freischütz*, and, in doing so, naturally followed in the footsteps of Weber. He certainly treats these legendary subjects with particular felicity, and I fancy there is more spontaneity in the music of *Robert le Diable*, and *Dinorah*, than in any other that he has composed; but this does not alter the fact that such subjects were first treated in music, and in a thoroughly congenial manner, by Karl Maria von Weber. Without considering how far Meyerbeer, in *Robert le Diable*, has borrowed his instrumentation and harmonic combinations from Weber, there can be no doubt about its being a work of much the same class as *Der Freischütz*; and it would have been looked upon as quite of that class, had it been produced, like *Der Freischütz*, with spoken dialogue, and with the popular characters more in relief.

ROBERT LE DIABLE.

Robert le Diable, converted into a grand opera, was produced at the Académie, on the 21st of November, 1831. Dr. Véron, in his "Mémoires d'un Bourgeois de Paris," has given a most interesting account of all the circumstances which attended the rehearsals and first representation of this celebrated work. Dr. Véron had just undertaken the management of the Académie; and to have such an opera as *Robert le Diable*, with which to mark the commencement of his reign, was a piece of rare good fortune. The libretto, the music, the ballet, were all full of interest, and many of the airs had the advantage (in Paris) of being somewhat in the French style. The applause with which this, the best constructed of all M. Meyerbeer's works, was received, went on increasing from act to act; and, altogether, the success it obtained was immense, and, in some respects, unprecedented.

Nourrit played the part of "Robert," Madame Cinti Damoreau that of "Isabelle." Mademoiselle Dorus and Levasseur were the "Alice" and the "Bertram." In the *pas de cinq* of the second act, Noblet, Montessu, and Perrot appeared; and in the nuns' scene, the troop of resuscitated virgins was led by the graceful and seductive Taglioni. All the scenery was admirably painted, especially that of the moonlight *tableau* in the third act. The costumes were rich and brilliant, the *mise en scène*, generally, was remarkable for its completeness; in short, every one connected with the "getting up" of the opera from Habeneck, the musical conductor, to the property-men, gas-fitters and carpenters, whose names history has not preserved, did their utmost to ensure its success.

In 1832, *Robert le Diable* was brought out at the King's Theatre, with the principal parts sustained, as in Paris, by Nourrit, Levasseur, and Madame Damoreau. The part of "Alice" appears to have been given to Mademoiselle de Méric. This opera met with no success at the King's Theatre, and was scarcely better received at Covent Garden, where an English version was performed, with such alterations in Meyerbeer's music as will easily be conceived by those who remember how the works of Rossini, and, indeed, all foreign composers, were treated at this time, on the English stage.

In 1832, and, indeed, many years afterwards, when *Robert* and *Les Huguenots* had been efficiently represented in London by German companies, Meyerbeer's music was still most severely handled by some of our best musical critics. At present there is perhaps an inclination to go to the other extreme; but, at all events, full justice has now been rendered to M. Meyerbeer's musical genius. Let us hear what Lord Mount Edgcumbe (whose opinion I do not regard as one of authority, but only as an interesting index to that of the connoisseurs of the old school), has to say of the first, and, on the whole, the most celebrated of Meyerbeer's operas. He entertains the greatest admiration for *Don Giovanni*, *Fidelio*, *Der Freischütz*, and *Euryanthe*; but neither the subject, nor even the music of *Robert le Diable*, pleases him in the least. "Never," he says, "did I see a more disagreeable or disgusting performance. The sight of the resurrection of a whole convent of nuns, who rise from their graves, and begin dancing, like so many bacchants, is revolting; and a sacred service in a church, accompanied by an organ on the stage, not very decorous. Neither does the music of Meyerbeer compensate for a fable, which is a tissue of nonsense and improbability. Of course, I was not tempted to hear it again in its original form, and it did credit to the taste of the English public, that it was not endured at the Opera House, and was acted only a very few nights."

ROBERT LE DIABLE.

Meyerbeer's second grand opera, *Les Huguenots*, was produced at the Académie Royale on the 26th of January, 1836, after twenty-eight full rehearsals, occasioning a delay which cost the composer a fine of thirty thousand francs. The expense of getting up the *Huguenots* (in scenery, dresses, properties, &c.), amounted to one hundred and sixty thousand francs.

In London, and I believe everywhere on the continent except in Paris, the most popular of M. Meyerbeer's three grand operas is *Les Huguenots*. At the Académie, *Robert le Diable* seems still to carry away the palm. Of late years, the admirable performance of Mario and Grisi, and of Titiens and Giuglini, in the duet of the fourth act, has had an immense effect in increasing the popularity of *Les Huguenots* with the English. This duet, the septett for male voices, the blessing of the daggers and the whole of the dramatic and animated scene of which it forms part, are certainly magnificent compositions; but the duet for "Raoul" and "Valentine" is the very soul of the work. At the theatres of Italy, the opera in question is generally "cut" with a free hand; and it is so long, that even after plentiful excisions an immense deal of music, and of fine music, still remains. But who would go to hear *Les Huguenots*, if the duet of the fourth act were omitted, or if the performance stopped at the end of act III.? On the other hand, the fourth act alone would always attract an audience; for, looked upon as a work by itself, it is by far the most dramatic, the most moving of all M. Meyerbeer's compositions. The construction of this act is most creditable to the librettist; while the composer, in filling up, and giving musical life to the librettist's design, has shown the very highest genius. It ends with a scene for two personages, but the whole act is of one piece. While the daggers are being distributed, while the plans of the chief agents in the massacre are being developed in so striking and forcible a manner, the scene between the alarmed "Raoul" and the terrified "Valentine" is, throughout, anticipated; and equally necessary for the success of the duet, from a musical as well as from a dramatic point of view, is the massive concerted piece by which this duet is preceded. To a composer, incapable or less capable than M. Meyerbeer, of turning to advantage the admirable but difficult situation here presented, there would, of course, have been the risk of an anti-climax; there was the danger that, after a stageful of fanatical soldiers and monks, crying out at the top of their voices for blood, it would be impossible further to impress the audience by any known musical means. Meyerbeer, however, has had recourse to the expression of an entirely different kind of emotion, or rather a series of emotions, full of admirable variations and

LES HUGUENOTS.

gradations; and everyone who has heard the great duet of *Les Huguenots* knows how wonderfully he has succeeded. It has been said that the idea of this scene originated with Nourrit. In any case, it was an idea which Scribe lost no time in profiting by, and the question does not in any way affect the transcendent merit of the composer.

Le Prophète, M. Meyerbeer's third grand opera, was produced at the Académie on the 16th of April, 1849, with Roger, Viardot-Garcia, and Castellan, in the principal characters. This opera, like *Les Huguenots*, has been performed with great success in London. The part of "Jean" has given the two great tenors of the Royal Italian Opera —Mario and Tamberlik—opportunities of displaying many of their highest qualities as dramatic singers. The magnificent Covent Garden orchestra achieves a triumph quite of its own, in the grand march of the coronation scene; and the opera enables the management to display all its immense resources in the scenic department.

GUSTAVE III.

In passing from *Masaniello* to Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, and from Rossini to Meyerbeer, we have lost sight too soon of the greatest composer France ever produced, and one who is ranked in all countries among the first composers of the century. I mean, of course, M. Auber, of whose works I should have more to say, if I had not determined, in this brief "History of the Opera" to pay but little attention to the French "Opéra Comique," which, with the exception of a very few examples (all by M. Auber)[96] is not a *genre* that has been accepted anywhere out of France. In sketching, however, the history of the Grand Opera, it would be impossible to omit *Gustave III. Gustave ou le Bal Masqué*, composed on one of the two librettos returned to M. Scribe by Rossini,[97] was performed for the first time on the 27th of February, 1833. This admirable work is not nearly so well known in England, or even in France, as it deserves to be. The government of Louis Philippe seems to have thought it imprudent to familiarize the Parisians with regicide, by exhibiting it to them three or four times a week on the stage, as the main incident of a very interesting drama; and after a certain number of representations, *Gustave*, which, taken altogether, is certainly Auber's masterpiece, was cut down to the ball-scene. In England, no one objected to the theatrical assassination of *Gustavus*; but unfortunately, also, no scruple was made about mutilating and murdering Auber's music. In short, the *Gustavus* of Auber was far more cruelly ill-treated in London than the Gustavus of Sweden at his own masqued ball. Mr. Gye ought to produce *Gustavus* at the Royal Italian Opera, where, for the first time in England, it would be worthily represented. The frequenters of this theatre have long been expecting it, though I am not aware that it has ever been officially promised.

The original caste of *Gustave* included Nourrit, Levasseur, Massol, Dabadie, Dupont, Mademoiselle Falcon, Mademoiselle Dorus, and Madame Dabadie. Nourrit, the original "Guillaume Tell," the original "Robert," the original "Raoul," the original "Gustave," was then at the height of his fame; but he was destined to be challenged four years afterwards by a very formidable rival. He was the first, and the only first tenor at the Académie Royale de Musique, where he had been singing with a zeal and ardour equal to his genius for the last sixteen years, when the management engaged Duprez, to divide the principal parts with the vocalist already in office. After his long series of triumphs, Nourrit had no idea of sharing his laurels in this manner; nor was he at all sure that he was not about to be deprived of them altogether. "One of the two must succeed at the expense of the other," he declared; and knowing the attraction of novelty for the public, he was not at all sure that the unfortunate one would not be himself.

"Duprez knows me," he said, "and comes to sing where I am. I do not know him, and naturally fear his approach." After thinking over the matter for a few days he resolved to leave the theatre. He chose for his last appearance the second act of *Armide*, in which "Renaud," the character assigned to the tenor, has to exclaim to the warrior, "Artemidore"—

"Allez, allez remplir ma place,
Aux lieux d'où mon malheur me chasse," &c.

To which "Artemidore" replies—

"Sans vous que peut on entreprendre?
Celui qui vous bannit ne pourra se défendre
De souhaiter votre retour."

NOURRIT.

The scene was very appropriate to the position of the singer who was about to be succeeded by Duprez. The public felt this equally with Nourrit himself, and testified their sympathy for the departing Renaud, by the most enthusiastic applause.

Nourrit took his farewell of the French public on the 1st of April, 1837, and on the 17th of the same month Duprez made his *début* at the Académie, as "Arnold," in *William Tell*. The latter singer had already appeared at the Comédie Française, where, at the age of fifteen, he was entrusted with the soprano solos in the choruses of *Athalie*, and afterwards at the Odéon, where he played the parts of "Almaviva," in the *Barber of Seville*, and Ottavio," in *Don Juan*. He then visited Italy for a short time, returned to Paris, and was engaged at the Opéra Comique. Here his style was much admired, but his singing, on the whole, produced no great impression on the public. He once more crossed the Alps, studied assiduously, performed at various theatres in a great number of operas, and by incessant practice, and thanks also to the wonderful effect of the climate on his voice, attained the highest position on the Italian stage, and was the favourite tenor of Italy at a time when Rubini was singing every summer in London, and every winter in Paris. Before visiting Italy the second time, Duprez was a "light tenor," and was particularly remarkable for the "agility" of his execution. A long residence in a southern climate appears to have quite changed the nature of his voice; a transformation, however, which must have been considerably aided by the nature of his studies. He returned to France a *tenore robusto*, an impressive, energetic singer, excelling in the declamatory style, and in many respects the greatest dramatic vocalist the French had ever heard. As an actor, however, he was not equal to Nourrit, whose demeanour as an operatic hero is said to have been perfection. *Guillaume Tell*, with Duprez, in the part of "Arnold," commenced a new career, and Rossini's great work now obtained from the general public that applause which, on its first production, it had, for the most part, received only from connoisseurs.

NOURRIT.

In the meanwhile, Nourrit, after performing with great success at Marseilles, Toulouse, Lyons, and elsewhere, went to Italy, and was engaged first at Milan, and

afterwards at Florence and Naples. At each city fresh triumphs awaited him, but an incident occurred at Naples which sorely troubled the equanimity of the failing singer, whose mind, as we have seen, had already been disturbed by painful presentiments. Nourrit, to be sure, was only "failing" in this sense, that he was losing confidence in his own powers, which, however, by all accounts, remained undiminished to the last. He was a well-educated and a highly accomplished man, and besides being an excellent musician, possessed considerable literary talent, and a thorough knowledge of dramatic effect.[98] He had prepared two librettos, in which the part adapted for the tenor would serve to exhibit his double talent as an actor and as a singer. One of these musical dramas was founded on Corneille's *Polyeucte*, and, in the hands of Donizetti, became *I Martiri*; but just when it was about to be produced, the Neapolitan censorship forbade its production on the ground of the unfitness of religious subjects for stage representation. Nourrit was much dejected at being thus prevented from appearing in a part composed specially for him at his own suggestion, and in which he felt sure he would be seen and heard to the greatest advantage. A deep melancholy, such as he had already suffered from at Marseilles, to an extent which alarmed all his friends, now settled upon him. He appeared, and was greatly applauded, in Mercadante's *Il Giuramento*, and in Bellini's *Norma*, but soon afterwards his despondency was increased, and assumed an irritated form, from a notion that the applause the Neapolitans bestowed upon him was ironical.

Nothing could alter his conviction on this point, which at last had the effect of completely unsettling his mind—unless it be more correct to say that mental derangement was itself the cause of the unhappy delusion. Finally, after a performance given for the benefit of another singer, in which Nourrit took part, his malady increased to such an extent that on his return home he became delirious, threw himself out of a window, at five in the morning, and was picked up in the street quite dead. This deplorable event occurred on the 8th of March, 1889.

The late "Académie Royale de Musique," the Théatre Italien of Paris, and all the chief opera houses of Italy are connected inseparably with the history of Opera in England. All the great works written by Rossini and Meyerbeer for the Académie have since been represented in London; the same singers for nearly half a century past have for the most part sung alternately at the Italian operas of Paris and of London; finally, from Italy we have drawn the great majority of the works represented at our best musical theatres, and nearly all our finest singers.

GERMAN OPERA.

German opera, in the meanwhile, stands in a certain way apart. Germany, compared with Italy, has sent us very few great singers. We have never looked to Germany for a constant supply of operas, and, indeed, Germany has not produced altogether half a dozen thoroughly German operas (that is to say, founded on German libretti, and written for German singers and German audiences), which have ever become naturalized in this country, or, indeed, anywhere out of their native land. Moreover, the most celebrated of the said *thoroughly* German operas, such as *Fidelio* and *Der Freischütz*, exercised no such influence on contemporary dramatic music as to give their composers a well-marked place in the operatic history of the present century, such as clearly belongs to Rossini. Beethoven, with his one great masterpiece, stands quite alone, and in the same way, Weber, with his strongly marked individuality has nothing in common with his contemporaries; and, living at the same time as Rossini, neither affected, nor was affected, by the style of a composer whose influence all the composers of the Italian school experienced. Accordingly, and that I may not entangle too much the threads of my narrative, I will now, having followed Rossini to Paris, and given some account of his successors at the French Opera, proceed to speak of Donizetti and Bellini, who were followers of Rossini in every sense. Of Weber and Beethoven, who are not in any way associated with the Rossini school, and only through the accident of birth with the Rossini period, I must speak in a later chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DONIZETTI AND BELLINI.

Sigismondi, the librarian of the Neapolitan Conservatory, had a horror of Rossini's music, and took care that all his printed works in the library should be placed beyond the reach of the young and innocent pupils. He was determined to preserve them, as far as possible, from the corrupt but seductive influence of this composer's brilliant, extravagant, meretricious style. But Donizetti, who at this time was studying at Naples, had heard several of the proscribed operas, and was most anxious to examine, on the music paper, the causes of the effects which had so delighted his ear at the theatre. The desired scores were on the highest shelf of the library; and the careful, conscientious librarian had removed the ladder by means of which alone it seemed possible to get to them.

DONIZETTI AND ROSSINI.

Donizetti stood watching the shelves which held the operas of Rossini like a cat before a bird cage; but the ladder was locked up, and the key in safe keeping in Sigismondi's pocket. Under a northern climate, the proper mode of action for Donizetti would have been to invite the jailor to a banquet, ply him with wine, and rob him of his keys as soon as he had reached a sufficiently advanced state of intoxication. Being in Italy, Donizetti should have made love to Sigismondi's daughter, and persuaded her to steal the keys from the old man during his mid-day *siesta*. Perhaps, however, Sigismondi was childless, or his family may have consisted only of sons; in any case, the young musician adopted neither of the schemes, by combining which the troubadour Blondel was enabled to release from captivity his adored Richard.[99] He resorted to a means which, if not wonderfully ingenious, was at least to the point, and which promised to be successful. He climbed, monkey-like, or cat-like, not to abandon our former simile, to the top shelf, and had his claws on the *Barber of Seville*, when who should enter the library but Sigismondi.

The old man was fairly shocked at this perversity on the part of Gaetan Donizetti, reputed the best behaved student of the Academy. His morals would be corrupted, his young blood poisoned!—but fortunately the librarian had arrived in time, and he might yet be saved.

Donizetti sprang to the ground with his prey—the full score of the *Barber of Seville*—in his clutches. He was about to devour it, when a hand touched him on the shoulder: he turned round, and before him stood the austere Sigismondi.

The old librarian spoke to Gaetan as to a son; appealed to his sense of propriety, his honour, his conscience; and

asked him, almost with tears in his eyes, how he could so far forget himself as to come secretly into the library to read forbidden books—and Rossini's above all? He pointed out the terrible effects of the course upon which the youthful Donizetti had so nearly entered; reminded him that one brass instrument led to another; and that when once he had given himself up to violent orchestration, there was no saying where he would stop.

DONIZETTI AND ROSSINI.

Donizetti could not or would not argue with the venerable and determined Sigismondi. At least, he did not oppose him; but he inquired whether, as a lesson in cacophony, it was not worth while just to look at Rossini's notorious productions. He reminded his stern adviser, that he had already studied good models under Mayer, Pilotti, and Mattei, and that it was natural he should now wish to complete his musical education, by learning what to avoid. He quoted the well known case of the Spartans and their Helots; inquired, with some emotion, whether the frightful example of Rossini was not sufficient to deter any well meaning composer, with a little strength of character, from following in his unholy path; and finally declared, with undisguised indignation, that Rossini ought to be made the object of a serious study, so that once for all his musical iniquities might be exposed and his name rendered a bye-word among the lovers and cultivators of pure, unsophisticated art!

"Come to my arms, Gaetano," cried Sigismondi, much moved. "I can refuse nothing to a young man like you, now that I know your excellent intentions. A musician, who is imbued with the true principles of his art, may look upon the picture of Rossini's depravity not only without danger, but with positive advantage. Some it might weaken and destroy;—*you* it can only fortify and uphold. Let us open these monstrous scores; their buffooneries may amuse us for an hour.

"*Il Barbiere di Siviglia!* I have not much to say about that," commenced Sigismondi. "It is a trifle; besides, full justice was done to it at Rome. The notion of re-setting one of the master-pieces of the great Paisiello,—what audacity! No wonder it was hissed!"

"Under Paisiello's direction," suggested Donizetti.

"All a calumny, my young friend; pure calumny, I can assure you. There are so many Don Basilios in the musical world! Rossini's music was hissed because it was bad and because it recalled to the public Paisiello's, which was good." "But I have heard," rejoined Donizetti, "that at the second representation there was a great deal of applause, and that the enthusiasm of the audience at last reached such a point, that they honoured Rossini with a torch-light procession and conducted him home in triumph."

"An invention of the newspapers," replied Sigismondi; "I believe there was a certain clique present prepared to support the composer through everything, but the public had already expressed its opinion. Never mind this musical burlesque, and let us take a glance at one of Rossini's serious operas."

Donizetti wished for nothing better. This time he had no occasion to scale the shelf in his former feline style. The librarian produced the key of the mysterious closet in which the ladder was kept. The young musician ran up to the Rossini shelf like a lamp-lighter and brought down with him not one but half-a-dozen volumes.

"Too many, too many," said Sigismondi, "one would have been quite enough. Well, let us open *Otello*."

In the score which the old and young musician proposed to examine together, the three trombone parts, according to the Italian custom, were written on one and the same staff, thus 1º, 2º, 3º *tromboni*. Sigismondi began his lecture on the enormities of Rossini as displayed in *Otello* by reading the list of the instruments employed.

"*Flutes*, two flutes; well there is not much harm in that. No one will hear them; only, with diabolical perfidy, one of these modern flutists will be sure to take a *piccolo* and pierce all sensitive ears with his shrill whistling.

"*Hautboys*, two hautboys; also good. Here Rossini follows the old school. I say nothing against his two hautboys; indeed, I quite approve of them.

DONIZETTI AND ROSSINI.

"*Clarionets!* a barbarous invention, which the *Tedeschi* might have kept them for themselves. They may be very good pipes for calling cows, but should be used for nothing else.

"*Bassoons*; useless instruments, or nearly so. Our good masters employed them for strengthening the bass; but now the bassoon has acquired such importance, that solos are written for it. This is also a German innovation. Mozart would have done well to have left the bassoon in its original obscurity.

"1st and 2nd *Horns*; very good. Horns and hautboys combine admirably. I say nothing against Rossini's horns.

"3rd and 4th *Horns*! How many horns does the man want? *Quattro Corni, Corpo di Bacco!* The greatest of our composers have always been contented with two. Shades of Pergolese, of Leo, of Jomelli! How they must shudder at the bare mention of such a thing. Four horns! Are we at a hunting party? Four horns! Enough to blow us to perdition."

The indignation and rage of the old musician went on increasing as he followed the gradual development of a *crescendo* until he arrived at the explosion of the *fortissimo*. Then Sigismondi uttered a cry of despair, struck the score violently with his fist, upset the table which the imprudent Donizetti had loaded with the nefarious productions of Rossini, raised his hands to heaven and rushed from the room, exclaiming, "a hundred and twenty-three trombones! A hundred and twenty-three trombones!"

Donizetti followed the performer and endeavoured to explain the mistake.

"Not 123 trombones, but 1st, 2nd, 3rd trombones," he gently observed. Sigismondi however, would not hear another word, and disappeared from the library crying "a hundred and twenty-three trombones," to the last.

Donizetti came back, lifted up the table, placed the scores upon it and examined them in peace. He then, in his turn, concealed them so that he might be able another time to find them whenever he pleased without clambering up walls or intriguing to get possession of ladders.

ANNA BOLENA.

The inquiring student of the Conservatory of Naples was born, in 1798, at Bergamo, and when he was seventeen years of age was put to study under Mayer, who, before the appearance of Rossini, shared with Paer the honour of being the most popular composer of the day. His first opera *Enrico di Borgogna* was produced at Venice in 1818, and obtained so much success that the composer was entrusted with another commission for the same city in the following year. After writing an opera for Mantua in 1819 *Il Falegname di Livonia*, Donizetti visited Rome, where his *Zoraide di Granata* procured him an exemption from the conscription and the honour of being carried in triumph and crowned at the Capitol. Hitherto he

may be said to have owed his success chiefly to his skilful imitation of Rossini's style, and it was not until 1830, when *Anna Bolena* was produced at Milan (and when, curiously enough, Rossini had just written his last opera), that he exhibited any striking signs of original talent. This work, which is generally regarded as Donizetti's master-piece, or at least was some time ago (for of late years no one has had an opportunity of hearing it), was composed for Pasta and Rubini, and was first represented for Pasta's benefit in 1831. It was in this opera that Lablache gained his first great triumph in London.

Donizetti visited Paris in 1835, and there produced his *Marino Faliero*, which contains several spirited and characteristic pieces, such as the opening chorus of workmen in the Arsenal and the gondolier chorus at the commencement of the second act. The charming *Elisir d'Amore*, the most graceful, melodious, moreover the most characteristic, and in many respects the best of all Donizetti's works, was written for Milan in 1832. In this work Signor Mario made his re-appearance at the Italian Opera of Paris in 1839; he had previously sung for some time at the Académie Royale in *Robert* and other operas.

Lucia di Lammermoor, Donizetti's most popular opera, containing some of the most beautiful melodies in the sentimental style that he has composed, and altogether his best finale, was produced at Naples in 1835. The part of "Edgardo" was composed specially for Duprez, that of "Lucia" for Persiani.

The pretty little opera or operetta entitled *Il Campanello di Notte* was written under very interesting circumstances to save a little Neapolitan theatre from ruin. Donizetti heard that the establishment was in a failing condition, and that the performers were without money and in great distress. He sought them out, supplied their immediate wants, and one of the singers happening to say that if Donizetti would give them a new opera, their fortunes would be made: "As to that," replied the Maestro, "you shall have one within a week." To begin with, a libretto was necessary, but none was to be had. The composer, however, possessed considerable literary talent, and recollecting a vaudeville which he had seen some years before in Paris, called *La Sonnette de Nuit*, he took that for his subject, re-arranged it in an operatic form, and in nine days the libretto was written, the music composed, the parts learnt, the opera performed, and the theatre saved. It would have been difficult to have given a greater proof of generosity, and of fertility and versatility of talent. I may here mention that Donizetti designed, and wrote the words, as well as the music of the last act of the *Lucia*; that the last act of *La Favorite* was also an afterthought of his; and that he himself translated into Italian the libretti of Betly and *La Fille du Regiment*.

VICTOR HUGO AT THE OPERA.

When *Lucrezia Borgia* (written for Milan in 1834) was produced in Paris, in 1840, Victor Hugo, the author of the admirable tragedy on which it is founded, contested the right of the Italian librettists, to borrow their plots from French dramas; maintaining that the representation of such libretti in France constituted an infringement of the French dramatists' "*droits d'auteur*." He gained his action, and *Lucrezia Borgia* became, at the Italian Opera of Paris, *La Rinegata*, the Italians at the court of Pope Alexander the Sixth being metamorphosed into Turks. A French version of *Lucrezia Borgia* was prepared for the provinces, and entitled *Nizza di Grenada*.

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A year or two afterwards, Verdi's *Hernani* experienced the same fate at the Théâtre Italien as *Lucrezia Borgia*. Then the original authors of *La Pie Voleuse*, *La Grace de Dieu*, &c., followed Victor Hugo's example, and objected to the performance of *La Gazza Ladra* and *Linda di Chamouni*, &c. Finally, an arrangement was made, and at present exists, by which Italian operas founded on French dramas may be performed in Paris on condition of an indemnity being paid to the French dramatists. Marsolier, the author of the Opéra Comique, entitled *Nina, ou la Folle par Amour*, set to music by Dalayrac, had applied for an injunction twenty-three years before, to prevent the representation of Paisiello's *Nina*, in Paris; but the Italian disappeared before the question was tried. The principle, however, of an author's right of property in a work, or any portion of a work, had been established nearly two centuries before. In a "privilege" granted to St. Amant in 1653, for the publication of his *Moise Sauvé*, it is expressly forbidden to extract from that "epic poem" subjects for novels and plays. These cautions proved unnecessary, as the work so strictly protected contained no available materials for plays, novels, or any other species of literary composition, including even "epic poems;" but *Moise Sauvé* has nevertheless been the salvation of several French authors whose property might otherwise have been trespassed upon to a considerable extent. Nevertheless, the principle of an author's sole, inalienable interest in the incidents he may have invented or combined, without reference to the new form in which they may be presented, cannot, as a matter of course, be entertained anywhere; but the system of "author's rights" so energetically fought for and conquered by Beaumarchais has a very wide application in France, and only the other day it was decided that the translators and arrangers of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, for the Théâtre Lyrique must share their receipts with the descendants and heirs of the author of *Le Mariage de Figaro*. It will appear monstrous to many persons in England who cannot conceive of property otherwise than of a material, palpable kind, that Beaumarchais's representatives should enjoy any interest in a work produced three-quarters of a century ago; but as his literary productions possess an actual, easily attainable value, it would be difficult to say who ought to profit by it, if not those who, under any system of laws, would benefit by whatever other possessions he might have left. It may be a slight advantage to society, in an almost inappreciable degree, that "author's rights" should cease after a certain period; but, if so, the same principle ought to be applied to other forms of created value. The case was well put by M. de Vigny, in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," in advocating the claims of a grand-daughter, or great grand-daughter of Sedaine. He pointed out, that if the dramatist in question, who was originally an architect, had built a palace, and it had lasted until the present day, no one would have denied that it descended naturally to his heirs; and that as, instead of building in stone, he devoted himself to the construction of operas and plays, the results of his talent and industry ought equally to be regarded as the inalienable property of his descendants.

LA FAVORITE.

But to return to *Lucrezia Borgia*, which, with *Lucia* and *La Favorite*, may be ranked amongst the most successful of Donizetti's productions. The favour with which *Lucrezia* is received by audiences of all kinds may be explained, in addition to the merit of much of the music, by the manner in which the principal parts are distributed, so that the cast, to be efficient, must always include four leading singers, each of whom has been well-provided for by the composer. It contains less recitative than any of Rossini's operas—a great advantage, from a popular point of view, it having been shown by experience that the public of the present day do not care for recitative (especially when they do not understand a word of it), but like to pass as quickly as possible from one musical piece to another. From an artistic point of view the shortness of Donizetti's recitatives is not at all to be regretted, for the simple reason that he has never written any at all comparable to those of Rossini, whose dramatic genius he was far from possessing. The most striking situation in the

drama, a thoroughly musical situation of which a great composer, or even an energetic, passionate, melo-dramatic composer, like Verdi, would have made a great deal, is quite lost in the hands of Donizetti. The *Brindisi* is undeniably pretty, and was never considered vulgar until it had been vulgarised. But Donizetti has shown no dramatic power in the general arrangement of the principal scene, and the manner in which the drinking song is interrupted by the funeral chorus, has rather a disagreeable, than a terrible or a solemn effect. The finale to the first act, or "prologue," is finely treated, but "Gennaro's" dying scene and song, is the most dramatic portion of the work, which it ought to terminate, but unfortunately does not. I think it might be shown that *Lucrezia* marks the distance about half way between the style of Rossini and that of Verdi. Not that it is so much inferior to the works of the former, or so much superior to those of the latter; but that among Donizetti's later operas, portions of *Maria di Rohan* (Vienna, 1843), might almost have been written by the composer of *Rigoletto*; whereas, the resemblance for good or for bad, between these two musicians, of the decadence, is not nearly so remarkable, if we compare *Lucrezia Borgia* with one of Verdi's works. Still, in *Lucrezia* we already notice that but little space is accorded to recitative, which in the *Trovatore* finds next to none; we meet with choruses written in the manner afterwards adopted by Verdi, and persisted in by him to the exclusion of all other modes; while as regards melody, we should certainly rather class the tenor's air in *I Lombardi* with that in *Lucrezia Borgia*, than the latter with any air ever composed by Rossini.

When Donizetti revisited Paris in 1840, he produced in succession *I Martiri* (the work written for Nourrit and objected to by the Neapolitan censorship), *La Fille du Regiment*, written for the Opéra Comique, and *La Favorite*, composed in the first instance for the Théâtre de la Renaissance, but re-arranged for the Académie, when the brief existence of the Théâtre de la Renaissance had come to an end. As long as it lasted, this establishment, opened for the representation of foreign operas in the French language, owed its passing prosperity entirely to a French version of the *Lucia*.

Jenny Lind, Sontag, Alboni, have all appeared in *La Figlia del Reggimento* with great success; but when this work was first produced in Paris, with Madame Thillon in the principal part, it was not received with any remarkable favour. It is full of smooth, melodious, and highly animated music, but is, perhaps, wanting in that piquancy of which the French are such great admirers, and which rendered the duet for the vivandières, in Meyerbeer's *Etoile du Nord*, so much to their taste. *L'Ange de Nigida*, converted into *La Favorite* (and founded in the first instance on a French drama, *Le Comte de Commingues*) was brought out at the Académie, without any expense in scenery and "getting up," and achieved a decided success. This was owing partly to the pretty choral airs at the commencement, partly to the baritone's cavatina (admirably sung by Barroilhet, who made his *début* in the part of "Alphonse"); but, above all, to the fourth act, with its beautiful melody for the tenor, and its highly dramatic scene for the tenor and soprano, including a final duet, which, if not essentially dramatic in itself, occurs at least in a most dramatic situation.

The whole of the fourth act of *La Favorite*, except the cavatina, *Ange si pur*, which originally belonged to the Duc d'Albe, and the *andante* of the duet, which was added at the rehearsals, was written in three hours. Donizetti had been dining at the house of a friend, who was engaged in the evening to go to a party. On leaving the house, the host, after many apologies for absenting himself, intreated Donizetti to remain, and finish his coffee, which Donizetti, being inordinately fond of that stimulant, took care to do. He asked at the same time for some music paper, began his fourth act, and finding himself in the vein for composition, went on writing until he had completed it. He had just put the final stroke to the celebrated "*Viens dans une autre patrie*," when his friend returned, at one in the morning, and congratulated him on the excellent manner in which he had employed his time.

L'ELISIR D'AMORE.

After visiting Rome, Milan, and Vienna, for which last city he wrote *Linda di Chamouni*, Donizetti returned to Paris, and in 1843 composed *Don Pasquale* for the Théâtre Italien, and *Don Sebastien* for the Académie. The lugubrious drama to which the music of *Don Sebastien* is wedded, proved fatal to its success. On the other hand, the brilliant gaiety of *Don Pasquale*, rendered doubly attractive by the admirable execution of Grisi, Mario, Tamburini, and Lablache, delighted all who heard it. The pure musical beauty of the serenade, and of the quartett, one of the finest pieces of concerted music Donizetti ever wrote, were even more admired than the lively animated dialogue-scenes, which are in Donizetti's very best style; and the two pieces just specified, as well as the baritone's cavatina, *Bella siccome un angelo*, aided the general success of the work, not only by their own intrinsic merit, but also by the contrast they present to the comic conversational music, and the buffo airs of the bass. The music of *Don Pasquale* is probably the cleverest Donizetti ever wrote; but it wants the *charm* which belongs to that of his *Elisir d'Amore*, around which a certain sentiment, a certain atmosphere of rustic poetry seems to hang, especially when we are listening to the music of "Nemorino" or "Norina." Even the comic portions in the *Elisir* are full of grace, as for instance, the admirable duet between "Norina" and "Dulcamara;" and the whole work possesses what is called "colour," that is to say, each character is well painted by the music, which, moreover, is always appropriate to the general scene. To look for "colour," or for any kind of poetry in a modern drawing-room piece of intrigue, like *Don Pasquale*, with the notaries of real life, and with lovers in black coats, would be absurd. I may mention that the libretto of *Don Pasquale* is a re-arrangement of Pavesi's *Ser Marcantonio* (was "*Ser*" *Marcantonio* an Englishman?) produced in 1813.

DONIZETTI'S REPERTOIRE.

In the same year that Donizetti brought out *Don Pasquale* in Paris, he produced *Maria di Rohan* at Vienna. The latter work contains an admirable part for the baritone, which has given Ronconi the opportunity of showing that he is not only an excellent buffo, but is also one of the finest tragic actors on the stage. The music of *Maria di Rohan* is highly dramatic: that is to say, very appropriate to the various personages, and to the great "situations" of the piece. In pourtraying the rage of the jealous husband, the composer exhibits all that earnestness and vigour for which Verdi has since been praised—somewhat sparingly, it is true, but praised nevertheless by his admirers. The contralto part, on the other hand, is treated with remarkable elegance, and contains more graceful melodies than Verdi is in the habit of composing. I do not say that Donizetti is in all respects superior to Verdi; indeed, it seems to me that he has not produced any one opera so thoroughly dramatic as *Rigoletto*; but as Donizetti and Verdi are sometimes contrasted, and as it was the fashion during Donizetti's lifetime, to speak of his music as light and frivolous, I wish to remark that in one of his latest operas he wrote several scenes, which, if written by Verdi, would be said to be in that composer's best style.

Donizetti's last opera, *Catarina Comaro*, was produced in Naples in the year 1844. This was his sixty-third dramatic work, counting those only which have been represented. There are still two operas of Donizetti's in existence, which the public have not heard. One, a piece in one act, composed for the Opéra Comique, and which is said every now and then to be on the point of being performed; the other, *Le Duc d'Albe*, which, as before-mentioned, was written for the Académie Royale, on one of the two libretti returned by Rossini to Scribe, after the

composer of *William Tell* came to his mysterious resolution of retiring from operatic life.

Of Donizetti's sixty-three operas, about two-thirds are quite unknown to England, and of the nine or ten which may still be said to keep the stage, the earliest produced, *Anna Bolena*, is the composer's thirty-second work. *Anna Bolena*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and *Roberto Devereux*, are included between the numbers 31 and 52, while between the numbers 53 and 62, *La Fille du Regiment*, *La Favorite*, *Linda di Chamouni*, *Don Pasquale*, and *Maria di Rohan*, are found. The first five of Donizetti's most popular operas, were produced between the years 1830 and 1840; the last five between the years 1840 and 1844. Donizetti appears, then, to have produced his best serious operas during the middle period of his career—unless it be considered that *La Favorite*, *Linda di Chamouni*, and *Maria di Rohan*, are superior to *Anna Bolena*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor*; and to the same epoch belongs *L'Elisir d'Amore*, which in my opinion is the freshest, most graceful, and most melodious of his comic operas, though some may prefer *La Fille du Regiment* or *Don Pasquale*, both full of spirit and animation.

It is also tolerably clear, from an examination of Donizetti's works in the order in which they were produced, that during the last four or five years of his artistic life he produced more than his average number of operas, possessing such merit that they have taken their place in the repertoires of the principal opera houses of Europe. Donizetti had lost nothing either in fertility or in power, while he appeared in some respects to be modifying and improving his style. Thus, in the Swiss opera of *Linda di Chamouni* (Vienna, 1842), we find, especially in the music of the contralto part, a considerable amount of local colour—an important dramatic element which Donizetti had previously overlooked, or, at least, had not turned to any account; while *Maria di Rohan* contains the best dramatic music of a passionate kind that Donizetti has ever written.

DONIZETTI'S DEATH.

In composing, Donizetti made no use of the pianoforte, and wrote, as may be imagined, with great rapidity, never stopping to make a correction, though he is celebrated among the modern Italian composers for the accuracy of his style. Curiously enough, he never went to work without having a small ivory scraper by his side; and any one who has studied intellectual peculiarities will understand, that once wanting this instrument, he might have felt it necessary to scratch out notes and passages every minute. Mr. J. Wrey Mould, in his interesting "memoir," tells us that this ivory scraper was given to Donizetti by his father when he consented, after a long and strenuous opposition, to his becoming a musician. An unfilial son might have looked upon the present as not conveying the highest possible compliment that could be paid him. The old gentleman, however, was quite right in impressing upon the bearer of his name, that having once resolved to be a composer, he had better make up his mind to produce as little rubbish as possible.

The first signs of the dreadful malady to which Donizetti ultimately succumbed, manifested themselves during his last visit to Paris, in 1845. Fits of absence of mind, followed by hallucinations and all the symptoms of mental derangement followed one another rapidly, and with increasing intensity. In January, 1846, it was found necessary to place the unfortunate composer in an asylum at Ivry, and in the autumn of 1847, his medical advisers recommended as a final experiment, that he should be removed to Bergamo, in the hope that the air and scenes of his birth-place would have a favourable influence in dispelling, or, at least, diminishing the profound melancholy to which he was now subject. During his journey, however, he was attacked by paralysis, and his illness assumed a desperate and incurable character.

Donizetti was received at Bergamo by the Maestro Dolci, one of his dearest friends. Here paralysis again attacked him, and a few days afterwards, on the 8th of April, 1848, he expired, in his fifty-second year, having, during the twenty-seven years of his life, as a composer, written sixty-four operas; several masses and vesper services; and innumerable pieces of chamber music, including, besides arias, cavatinas, and vocal concerted pieces, a dozen quartetts for stringed instruments, a series of songs and duets, entitled *Les soirées du Pausilippe*, a cantata entitled *la Morte d'Ugolino*, &c., &c.

Antoine, Donizetti's attendant at Ivry, became much attached to him, and followed him to Bergamo, whence he forwarded to M. Adolphe Adam, a letter describing his illustrious patient's last moments, and the public honours paid to his memory at the funeral.

DONIZETTI'S DEATH.

"More than four thousand persons," he relates, "were present at the ceremony. The procession was composed of the numerous clergy of Bergamo; the most illustrious members of the community and its environs, and of the civic guard of the town and suburbs. The discharges of musketry, mingled with the light of three or four hundred large torches, presented a fine effect—the whole was enhanced by the presence of three military bands, and the most propitious weather it was possible to behold. The service commenced at ten o'clock in the morning, and did not conclude until half-past two. The young gentlemen of Bergamo insisted on bearing the remains of their illustrious fellow-citizen, although the cemetery in which they finally rested lay at a distance of a league-and-a-half from the town. The road there was crowded along its whole length by people who came from the surrounding country to witness the procession—and, to give due praise to the inhabitants of Bergamo, never, hitherto, had such great honours been bestowed upon any member of that city."

Bellini, who was Donizetti's contemporary, but who was born nine years after him, and died thirteen years before, was a native of Sicily. His father was an organist at Catania, and under him the future composer of *Norma* and *La Sonnambula*, took his first lessons in music. A Sicilian nobleman, struck by the signs of genius which young Bellini evinced at an early age, persuaded his father to send him to Naples, supporting his arguments with an offer to pay his expenses at the celebrated Conservatorio. Here one of Bellini's fellow pupils was Mercadante, the future composer of *Il Giuramento*, an opera which, in spite of the frequent attempts of the Italian singers to familiarize the English public with its numerous beauties, has never been much liked in this country. I do not say that it has not been justly appreciated on the whole, but that the grace of some of the melodies, the acknowledged merit of the orchestration and the elegance and distinction which seem to me to characterize the composer's style generally, have not been accepted as compensating for his want of passion and of that spontaneity without which the expression of strong emotion of any kind is naturally impossible. Mercadante could never have written *Rigoletto*, but, probably, a composer of inferior natural gifts to Verdi might, with a taste for study and a determination to bring his talent to perfection, have produced a work of equal artistic merit to *Il Giuramento*. And here we must take leave of

Mercadante, whose place in the history of the opera is not a considerable one, and who, to the majority of English amateurs, is known only by his *Bella adorata*, a melody of which Verdi has shown his estimation by borrowing it, diluting it, and re-arranging it with a new accompaniment for the tenor's song in *Luisa Miller*.

RUBINI.

I should think Mercadante must have written better exercises, and passed better examinations at the Conservatorio than his young friend Bellini, though the latter must have begun at an earlier age to compose operas. Bellini's first dramatic work was written and performed while he was still a student. Encouraged by its success, he next composed music to a libretto already "set" by Generali, and entitled *Adelson e Salvino*. *Adelson* was represented before the illustrious Barbaja, who was at that time manager of the two most celebrated theatres in Italy, the St. Carlo at Naples, and La Scala at Milan,—as well as of the Italian opera at Vienna, to say nothing of some smaller operatic establishments also under his rule. The great impresario, struck by Bellini's promise, commissioned him to write an opera for Naples, and, in 1826, his *Bianca e Fernando* was produced at the St. Carlo. This work was so far successful, that it obtained a considerable amount of applause from the public, while it inspired Barbaja with so much confidence that he entrusted the young composer, now twenty years of age, with the libretto of *il Pirata*, to be composed for La Scala. The tenor part was written specially for Rubini, who retired into the country with Bellini, and studied, as they were produced, the simple, touching airs which he afterwards delivered on the stage with such admirable expression.

Il Pirata was received with enthusiasm by the audiences of La Scala, and the composer was requested to write another work for the same theatre. *La Straniera* was brought out at Milan in 1828, the principal parts being entrusted to Donzelli, Tamburini, and Madame Tosi. This, Bellini's third work, appears, on the whole, to have maintained, but scarcely to have advanced, his reputation. Nevertheless, when it was represented in London soon after its original production, it was by no means so favourably received as *Il Pirato* had been.

Bellini's *Zaira*, executed at Parma, in 1829, was a failure—soon, however, to be redeemed by his fifth work, *Il Capuletti ed i Montecchi*, which was written for Venice, and was received with all possible expressions of approbation. In London, the new operatic version of *Romeo and Juliet* was not particularly admired, and owed what success it obtained entirely to the acting and singing of Madame Pasta in the principal part. It may be mentioned that the libretto of Bellini's *I Montecchi* had already served his master, Zingarelli, for his opera of *Romeo e Julietta*.

LA SONNAMBULA.

The time had now arrived at which Bellini was to produce his master-pieces, *La Sonnambula* and *Norma*; the former of which was written for *La Scala*, in 1831, the latter, for the same theatre, in the year following. The success of *La Sonnambula* has been great everywhere, but nowhere so great as in England, where it has been performed in English and in Italian, oftener than any other two or perhaps three operas, while probably no songs, certainly no songs by a foreign composer, were ever sold in such large numbers as *All is lost* and *Do not mingle*. The libretto of *La Sonnambula*, by Romani, is one of the most interesting and touching, and one of the best suited for musical illustration in the whole *répertoire* of *libretti*. To the late M. Scribe, belongs the merit of having invented the charming story on which Romani's and Bellini's opera is founded; and it is worthy of remark that he had already presented it in two different dramatic forms before any one was struck with its capabilities for musical treatment. A thoroughly, essentially, dramatic story can be presented on the stage in any and every form; with music, with dialogue, or with nothing but dumb action. Tried by this test, the plots of a great number of merely well written comedies would prove worthless; and so in substance they are. On the other hand, the vaudeville of *La Somnambula*, became, as re-arranged by M. Scribe, the ballet of *La Somnambule*, (one of the prettiest, by the way, from a choregraphic point of view ever produced); which, in the hands of Romani, became the libretto of an opera; which again, vulgarly treated, has been made into a burlesque; and, loftily treated, might be changed (I will not say elevated, for the operatic form is poetical enough), into a tragedy.

The beauties of *La Sonnambula*, so full of pure melody and of emotional music, of the most simple and touching kind, can be appreciated by every one; by the most learned musician and the most untutored amateur, or rather let us say by any play-goer, who, not having been born deaf to the voice of music, hears an opera for the first time in his life. It was given, however, to an English critic, to listen to this opera, as natural and as unmistakably beautiful as a bed of wild flowers, through a special ear-trumpet of his own; and in number 197 of the most widely-circulated of our literary journals, the following remarks on *La Sonnambula* appeared. With the exception of one or two pretty *motivi*, exquisitely given by Pasta and Rubini, the music is sometimes scarcely on a level with that of *Il Pirata*, and often sinks below it; there is a general thinness and want of effect in the instrumentation not calculated to make us overlook the other defects of this composition, which, in our humble judgment, are compensated by no redeeming beauties. Bellini has soared too high; there is nothing of grandeur, no touch of true pathos in the common place workings of his mind. He cannot reach the *Opera semi-seria*; he should confine his powers to the lowest walk of the musical drama, the one act *Opera buffa*."

Equally ill fared *Norma* at the hands of another musical critic to whose "reminiscences" I have often had to refer, but who tells us that he did not hear the work in question himself. He speaks of it simply as a production of which the scene is laid in *Wales*, and adds that "it was not liked."

Yet *Norma* has been a good deal liked since its first production at Milan, now nearly thirty years ago; and from Madame Pasta's first to Madame Grisi's last appearance in the principal part, no great singer with any pretension to tragic power has considered her claims fully recognised until she has succeeded in the part of the Druid priestess.

I PURITANI.

Beatrice di Tenda, Bellini's next opera after *Norma*, cannot be reckoned among his best works. It was written for Venice, in 1833, and was performed in England for the first time, in 1836. It met with no very great success in Italy or elsewhere.

In 1834, Bellini went to Paris, having been requested to write an opera for the excellent Théâtre Italien of that capital. The company at the period in question, included Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini and Lablache, all of whom were provided with parts in the new work. *I Puritani*, was played for the first time in London, for Grisi's benefit, in 1835, and with precisely the same distribution of characters as in Paris. The "*Puritani* Season" is still remembered by old habitués, as one of the most brilliant of these latter days. Rubini's romance in the first act *A te o cara*, Grisi's *Polonaise*, *Son vergin vezzosa* and the grand duet for Tamburini and Lablache, produced the greatest enthusiasm in all our musical circles, and the last movement of the duet was treated by "arrangers" for the piano, in every possible form. This is the movement, (destined, too soon, to find favour in the eyes of omnibus conductors, and all the worst amateurs of the cornet), of which Rossini wrote from Paris to a friend at Milan; "I need not describe the duet for the

two basses, you must have heard it where you are."

I Puritani was Bellini's last opera. The season after its production he retired to the house of a Mr. Lewis at Puteaux, and there, while studying his art with an ardour which never deserted him, was attacked by a fatal illness. "From his youth up," says Mr. J. W. Mould, in his interesting "Memoir of Bellini;" "Vincenzo's eagerness in his art was such as to keep him at the piano day and night, till he was obliged forcibly to leave it. The ruling passion accompanied him through his short life, and by the assiduity with which he pursued it, brought on the dysentery, which closed his brilliant career, peopling his last hours with the figures of those to whom his works were so largely indebted for their success. During the moments of delirium which preceded his death, he was constantly speaking of Lablache, Tamburini and Grisi, and one of his last recognisable impressions was, that he was present at a brilliant representation of his last opera, at the Salle Favart. His earthly career closed on Wednesday, the 23rd of September, 1835."

BELLINI'S DEATH.

Thus died Bellini, in the twenty-ninth year of his age. Immediately after his death, and on the very eve of his interment, the Théâtre Italien re-opened with the *Puritani*. "The work," says the writer from whom I have just quoted, "was listened to throughout with a sad attention, betraying evidently how the general thoughts of both audience and artists were pre-occupied with the mournful fate of him so recently amongst them, now extended senseless, soulless, and mute, upon his funeral bier. The solemn and mournful chords which commence the opera, excited a sorrowful emotion in the breasts of both those who sang and those who heard. The feeling in which the orchestra and chorus participated, ex-tended itself to the principal artists concerned, and the foremost amongst them displayed neither that vigour nor that neatness of execution which Paris was so accustomed to accept at their hands; Tamburini in particular, was so broken down by the death of the young friend, whose presence amongst them spurred the glorious quartett on the season before, to such unprecedented exertions, that his magnificent organ, superb vocalisation were often considerably at fault during the evening, and his interrupted accent, joined to the melancholy depicted on the countenances of Grisi, Rubini, and Lablache, sent those to their homes with an aching heart who had presented themselves to that evening's hearing of *I Puritani*, previously disposed, moreover, to attend the mournful ceremony of the morrow."

A committee of Bellini's friends, including Rossini, Cherubini, Paer, and Carafa, undertook the general direction of the funeral of which the musical department was entrusted to M. Habeneck the *chef d'orchestre* of the Académie Royale. The expenses of the ceremony were defrayed by M. Panseron, of the Théâtre Italien. The most remarkable piece for the programme of the funeral music, was a lacrymosa for four voices, without accompaniment, in which the text of the Latin hymn was united to the beautiful melody (and of a thoroughly religious character), sung by the tenor in the third act of the *Puritani*. This lacrymosa was executed by Rubini, Ivanoff, Tamburini, and Lablache. The service was performed in the church of the Invalides, and Bellini's remains were interred in the cemetery of Père la Chaise.

Rossini had always shown the greatest affection for Bellini; and Rosario Bellini, a few weeks after his son's death, wrote a letter to the great composer, thanking him for the almost paternal kindness which he had shown to young Vincenzo during his lifetime, and for the honour he had paid to his memory when he was no more. After speaking of the grief and despair in which the loss of his beloved son had plunged him, the old man expressed himself as follows:—

"You always encouraged the object of my eternal regret in his labours; you took him under your protection; you neglected nothing that could increase his glory and his welfare. After my son's death what have you not done to honour his memory and render it dear to posterity! I learnt this from the newspapers; and I am penetrated with gratitude for your excessive kindness, as well as for that of a number of distinguished artistes, which also I shall never forget. Pray, sir, be my interpreter, and tell these artistes that the father and family of Bellini, as well as our compatriots of Catana, will cherish an imperishable recollection of this generous conduct. I shall never cease to remember how much you did for my son; I shall make known everywhere, in the midst of my tears, what an affectionate heart belongs to the great Rossini; and how kind, hospitable, and full of feeling are the artistes of France."

BELLINI AND DONIZETTI.

If we compare Bellini with Donizetti, we find that the latter was the more prolific of the two, judging simply by the number of works produced; inasmuch as Donizetti, at the age of twenty-eight, had already produced thirteen operas; whereas the number of Bellini's dramatic works, when he died in his twenty-ninth year, amounted only to nine. But of the baker's dozen thrown off by Donizetti at so early an age, not one made any impression on the public, or on musicians, such as was caused by *I Capuletti*, or *Il Pirata*, or *La Straniera*, to say nothing of *I Puritani*, which, in the opinion of many good judges, holds forth greater promise of dramatic excellence than is contained in any other of Bellini's works, including those masterpieces in two such different styles, *La Sonnambula* and *Norma*. When Donizetti had been composing for a dozen years, and had produced thirty one operas (*Anna Bolena* was his thirty-second), he had still written nothing which could be ranked on an equality with Bellini's second-rate works, such as *Il Pirata* and *I Capuletti*; and during the second half of Donizetti's operatic career, not one work of his in three met with the success which (*Beatrice* alone excepted) attended all Bellini's operas, as soon as Bellini had once passed that merely experimental period when, to fail, is, for a composer of real ability, to learn how not to fail a second time. I do not say that the composer of *Lucrezia*, *Lucia*, and *Elisir d'Amore* is so vastly inferior to the composer of *La Sonnambula* and *Norma*; but, simply, that Donizetti, during the first dozen years of his artistic life, did not approach the excellence shown by the young Bellini during the nine years which made up the whole of his brief musical career. More than that, Donizetti never produced a musical tragedy equal to *Norma*, nor a musical pastoral equal to *La Sonnambula*; while, dramatic considerations apart, he cannot be compared to Bellini as an inventor of melody. Indeed, it would be difficult in the whole range of opera to name three works which contain so many simple, tender, touching airs, of a refined character, yet possessing all the elements of popularity (in short, airs whose beauty is universally appreciable) as *Norma*, *La Sonnambula*, and *I Puritani*. The simplicity of Bellini's melodies is one of their chief characteristics; and this was especially remarkable, at a time when Rossini's imitators were exaggerating the florid style of their model in every air they produced.

BELLINI'S SINGERS.

Most of the great singers of the modern school,—indeed, all who have appeared since and including Madame Pasta, have gained their reputation chiefly in Bellini's and Donizetti's operas. They formed their style, it is true, by singing Rossini's music; but as

the public will not listen for ever even to such operas as *Il Barbiere* and *Semiramide*, it was necessary to provide the new vocalists from time to time with new parts; and thus "Amina" and "Anna Bolena" were written for Pasta; "Elvino," &c., for Rubini; "Edgardo," in the *Lucia*, for Duprez; a complete quartett of parts in *I Puritani*, for Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, and Lablache. Since Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, composed for Grisi, Mario (Rubini's successor), Tamburini, and Lablache, no work of any importance has been composed for the Italian Opera of Paris—nor of London either, I may add, in spite of Verdi's *I Masnadieri*, and Halévy's *La Tempesta*, both manufactured expressly for Her Majesty's Theatre.

I have already spoken of Pasta's and Malibran's successes in Rossini's operas. The first part written for Pasta by Bellini was that of "Amina" in the *Sonnambula*; the second, that of "Norma." But though Pasta "created" these characters, she was destined to be surpassed in both of them by the former Marietta Garcia, now returned from America, and known everywhere as Malibran. This vocalist, by all accounts the most poetic and impassioned of all the great singers of her period, arrived in Italy just when *I Capuletti*, *La Sonnambula*, and *Norma*, were at the height of their popularity—thanks, in a great measure, to the admirable manner in which the part of the heroine in each of these works was represented by Pasta. Malibran appeared as "Amina," as "Norma," and also as "Romeo," in *I Capuletti*. She "interpreted" the characters (to borrow an expression, which is admissible, in this case, from the jargon of French musical critics) in her own manner, and very ingeniously brought into relief just those portions of the music of each which were not rendered prominent in the Pasta versions. The new singer was applauded enthusiastically. The public were really grateful to her for bringing to light beauties which, but for her, would have remained in the shade. But it was also thought that Malibran feared her illustrious rival and predecessor too much, to attempt *her* readings. This was just the impression she wished to produce; and when she saw that the public had made up its mind on the subject, she changed her tactics, followed Pasta's interpretation, and beat her on her own ground. She excelled wherever Pasta had excelled, and proved herself on the whole superior to her. Finally, she played the parts of "Norma" and "Amina" in her first and second manner combined. This rendered her triumph decisive.

Now Malibran commenced a triumphal progress through Italy. Wherever she sang, showers of bouquets and garlands fell at her feet; the horses were taken from her carriage on her leaving the theatre, and she was dragged home amid the shouts of an admiring crowd. These so-called "ovations"[100] were renewed at every operatic city in Italy; and managers disputed, in a manner previously unexampled, the honour and profit of engaging the all-successful vocalist.

The director of the Trieste opera gave Malibran four thousand francs a night, and at the end of her engagement pressed her to accept a set of diamonds. Malibran refused, observing, that what she had already received was amply sufficient for her services, and more than she would ever have thought of asking for them, had not the terms been proposed by the director himself.

"Accept my present all the same," replied the liberal *impresario*; "I can afford to offer you this little souvenir. It will remind you that I made an excellent thing out of your engagement, and it may, perhaps, help to induce you to come here again."

"The actions of this fiery existence," says M. Castil Blaze, "would appear fabulous if we had not seen Marietta amongst us, fulfilling her engagements at the theatre, resisting all the fatigue of the rehearsals, of the representations, after galloping morning and evening in the Bois de Boulogne, so as to tire out two horses. She used to breakfast during the rehearsals on the stage. I said to her, one morning, at the theatre:—'*Marietta carissima, non morrai. Che farò, dunque? Nemica sorte! Creperai.*'

"Her travels, her excursions, her studies, her performances might have filled the lives of two artists, and two very complete lives, moreover. She starts for Sinigaglia, during the heat of July, in man's clothes, takes her seat on the box of the carriage, drives the horses; scorched by the sun of Italy, covered with dust, she arrives, jumps into the sea, swims like a dolphin, and then goes to her hotel to dress. At Brussels, she is applauded as a French Rosìna, delivering the prose of Beaumarchais as Mademoiselle Mars would have delivered it. She leaves Brussels for London, comes back to Paris, travels about in Brie, and returns to London, not like a courier, but like a dove on the wing. We all know what the life of a singer is in the capital of England, the life of a dramatic singer of the highest talent. After a rehearsal at the opera, she may have three or four matinée's to attend; and when the curtain falls, and she can escape from the theatre, there are soirées which last till day-break. Malibran kept all these engagements, and, moreover, gave Sunday to her friends; this day of absolute rest to all England, was to Marietta only another day of excitement."

Malibran spoke Spanish, Italian, French, English, and a little German, and acted and sang in the first four of these languages. In London, she appeared in an English version of *La Sonnambula* (1838), when her representation of the character of "Amina" created a general enthusiasm such as can scarcely have been equalled during the "Jenny Lind mania,"—perfect vocalist as was Jenny Lind. Malibran appears, however, to have been a more impassioned singer, and was certainly a finer actress than the Swedish Nightingale. "Never losing sight of the simplicity of the character," says a writer in describing her performance in *La Sonnambula*, "she gave irresistible grace and force to the pathetic passages with which it abounds, and excited the feeling of the audience to as high pitch as can be perceived. Her sleep-walking scenes, in which the slightest amount of exaggeration or want of caution would have destroyed the whole effect, were played with exquisite discrimination; she sang the airs with refined taste and great power; her voice, which was remarkable, rather for its flexibility and sweetness than for its volume, was as pure as ever, and her style displayed that high cultivation and luxuriance which marked the school in which she was educated, and which is almost identified with the name she formerly bore."

Drury Lane was the last theatre at which Madame Malibran sang; but the last notes she ever uttered were heard at Manchester, where she performed only in oratorios and at concerts. Before leaving London, Madame Malibran had a fall from her horse, and all the time she was singing at Manchester, she was suffering from its effects. She had struck her head, and the violence of the blow, together with the general shock to her nerves, without weakening any of her faculties, seemed to have produced that feverish excitement which gave such tragic poetry to her last performances. At first, she would take no precautions, though inflammation of the brain was to be feared, and, indeed, might be said to have already declared itself. She continued to sing, and never was her voice more pure and melodious, never was her execution more daring and dazzling, never before had she sung with such

inspiration and with a passion which communicated itself in so electric a manner to her audience. She was bled; not one of the doctors appears to have had sufficient strength of mind to enforce that absolute rest which everyone must have known was necessary for her existence, and she still went on singing. There were no signs of any loss of physical power, while her nervous force appeared to have increased. The last time she ever sang, she executed the duet from *Andronico*, with Madame Caradori, who, by a very natural sympathy, appeared herself to have received something of that almost supernatural fire which was burning within the breast of Malibran, and which was now fast consuming her. The public applauded with ecstacy, and as the general excitement increased, the marvellous vocalisation of the dying singer became almost miraculous. She improvised a final cadence, which was the climax of her triumph and of her life. The bravos of the audience were not at an end when she had already sunk exhausted into the arms of Madame Alessandri, who carried her, fainting, into the artist's room. She was removed immediately to the hotel. It was now impossible to save her, and so convinced of this was her husband, that almost before she had breathed her last, he was on his way to Paris, the better to secure every farthing of her property!

RUBINI.

Rubini, though he first gained his immense reputation by his mode of singing the airs of *Il Pirata*, *Anna Bolena*, and *La Sonnambula*, formed his style in the first instance, on the operas of Rossini. This vocalist, however, sang and acted in a great many different capacities before he was recognised as the first of all first tenors. At the age of twelve Rubini made his début at the theatre of Romano, his native town, in a woman's part. This curious *prima donna* afterwards sat down at the door of the theatre, between two candles, and behind a plate, in which the admiring public deposited their offerings to the fair bénéficiare. She is said to have been perfectly satisfied with the receipts and with the praise accorded to her for her first performance. Rubini afterwards went to Bergamo, where he was engaged to play the violin in the orchestra between the acts of comedies, and to sing in the choruses during the operatic season. A drama was to be brought out in which a certain cavatina was introduced. The manager was in great trouble to find a singer to whom this air could be entrusted. Rubini was mentioned, the manager offered him a few shillings to sing it, the bargain was made, and the new vocalist was immensely applauded. This air was the production of Lamberti. Rubini kept it, and many years afterwards, when he was at the height of his reputation, was fond of singing it in memory of his first composer.

In 1835, twenty-three years after Rubini's first engagement at Bergamo, the tenor of the Théâtre Italien of Paris was asked to intercede for a chorus-singer, who expected to be dismissed from the establishment. He told the unhappy man to write a letter to the manager, and then gave it the irresistible weight of his recommendation by signing it "Rubini, *Ancien Choriste*."

After leaving Bergamo, Rubini was engaged as second tenor in an operatic company of no great importance. He next joined a wandering troop, and among other feats he is said to have danced in a ballet somewhere in Piedmont, where, for his pains, he was violently hissed.

In 1814, he was engaged at Pavia as tenor, where he received about thirty-six shillings a month. Sixteen years afterwards, Rubini and his wife were offered an engagement of six thousand pounds, and at last the services of Rubini alone were retained at the Italian Opera of St. Petersburgh, at the rate of twenty thousand pounds a year.

RUBINI.

Rubini was such a great singer, and possessed such admirable powers of expression, especially in pathetic airs (it was well said of him, "*qu'il avait des larmes dans la voix*,") that he may be looked upon as, in some measure, the creator of the operatic style which succeeded that of the Rossinian period up to the production of *Semiramide*, the last of Rossini's works, written specially for Italy. The florid mode of vocalization had been carried to an excess when Rubini showed what effect he could produce by singing melodies of a simple emotional character, without depending at all on vocalization merely as such. It has already been mentioned that Bellini wrote *Il Pirato* with Rubini at his side, and it is very remarkable that Donizetti never achieved any great success, and was never thought to have exhibited any style of his own until he produced *Anna Bolena*, in which the tenor part was composed expressly for Rubini. Every one who is acquainted with *Anna Bolena*, will understand how much Rossini's mode of singing the airs, *Ogni terra ove*, &c., and *Vivi tu*, must have contributed to the immense favour with which it was received.

Rubini will long be remembered as the tenor of the incomparable quartett for whom the *Puritani* was written, and who performed together in it for seven consecutive years in Paris and in London. Rubini disappeared from the West in 1841, and was replaced in the part of "Arturo," by Mario. Tamburini was the next to disappear, and then Lablache. Neither Riccardo nor Giorgio have since found thoroughly efficient representatives, and now we have lost with Grisi the original "Elvira," without knowing precisely where another is to come from.

RUBINI'S BROKEN CLAVICLE.

Before taking leave of Rubini, I must mention a sort of duel he once had with a rebellious B flat, the history of which has been related at length by M. Castil Blaze, in the *Revue de Paris*. Pacini's *Talismano* had just been produced with great success at *la Scala*. Rubini made his entry in this opera with an accompanied recitative, which the public always applauded enthusiastically. One phrase in particular, which the singer commenced by attacking the high B flat without preparation, and, holding it for a considerable period, excited their admiration to the highest point. Since Farinelli's celebrated trumpet song, no one note had ever obtained such a success as their wonderful B flat of Rubini's. The public of Milan went in crowds to hear it, and having heard it, never failed to encore it. *Un 'altra volta!* resounded through the house almost before the magic note itself had ceased to ring. The great singer had already distributed fourteen B flats among his admiring audiences, when, eager for the fifteenth and sixteenth, the Milanese thronged to their magnificent theatre to be present at the eighth performance of *Il Talismano*. The orchestra executed the brief prelude which announced the entry of the tenor. Rubini appeared, raised his eyes to heaven, extended his arms, planted himself firmly on his calves, inflated his breast, opened his mouth, and sought, by the usual means, to pronounce the wished-for B flat. But no B flat would come. *Os habet, et non clamabit.* Rubini was dumb; the public did their best to encourage the disconsolate singer, applauded him, cheered him, and gave him courage to attack the unhappy B flat a second time. On this occasion, Rubini was victorious. Determined to catch the fugitive note, which for a moment had escaped him, the singer brought all the muscular force of his immense lungs into play, struck the B flat, and threw it out among the audience with a vigour which surprised and delighted them. In the meanwhile, the tenor was by no means equally pleased with the triumph he had just gained. He felt, that in exerting himself to the utmost, he had injured himself in a manner which might prove very serious. Something in the mechanism of his voice had given way. He had felt the fracture at the time. He had, indeed, conquered the B flat, but

at what an expense; that of a broken clavicle!

However, he continued his scene. He was wounded, but triumphant, and in his artistic elation he forgot the positive physical injury he had sustained. On leaving the stage he sent for the surgeon of the theatre, who, by inspecting and feeling Rubini's clavicle, convinced himself that it was indeed fractured. The bone had been unable to resist the tension of the singer's lungs. Rubini may have been said to have swelled his voice until it burst one of its natural barriers.

"It seems to me," said the wounded tenor, "that a man can go on singing with a broken clavicle."

"Certainly," replied the doctor, "you have just proved it."

"How long would it take to mend it?" he enquired.

"Two months, if you remained perfectly quiet during the whole time."

"Two months! And I have only sung seven times. I should have to give up my engagement. Can a person live comfortably with a broken clavicle?"

"Very comfortably indeed. If you take care not to lift any weight you will experience no disagreeable effects."

"Ah! there is my cue," exclaimed Rubini; "I shall go on singing."

"Rubini went on singing," says M. Castil Blaze, "and I do not think any one who heard him in 1831 could tell that he was listening to a wounded singer—wounded gloriously on the field of battle. As a musical doctor I was allowed to touch his wound, and I remarked on the left side of the clavicle a solution of continuity, three or four lines[101] in extent between the two parts of the fractured bone. I related the adventure in the *Revue de Paris*, and three hundred persons went to Rubini's house to touch the wound, and verify my statement."

TAMBURINI.

Two other vocalists are mentioned in the history of music, who not only injured themselves in singing, but actually died of their injuries. Fabris had shown himself an unsuccessful rival of the celebrated Guadagni, when his master, determined that he should gain a complete victory, composed expressly for him an air of the greatest difficulty, which the young singer was to execute at the San Carlo Theatre, at Naples. Fabris protested that he could not sing, or that if so, it would cost him his life; but he yielded to his master's iron will, attacked the impossible air, and died on the stage of hæmorrhage of the lungs. In the same manner, an air which the tenor Labitte was endeavouring to execute at the Lion's theatre, in 1820, was the cause of his own execution.

I have spoken of the versatility of talent displayed by Rubini in his youth. Tamburini and Lablache were equally expert singers in every style. In the year 1822 Tamburini was engaged at Palermo, where, on the last day of the carnival, the public attend, or used to attend, the Opera, with drums, trumpets, saucepans, shovels, and all kinds of musical and unmusical instruments—especially noisy ones. On this tumultuous evening, Tamburini, already a great favourite with the Palermitans, had to sing in Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio*. The public received him with a salvo of their carnavalesque artillery, when Tamburini, finding that it was impossible to make himself heard in the ordinary way, determined to execute his part in falsetto; and, the better to amuse the public, commenced singing with the voice of a soprano sfogato. The astonished audience laid their instruments aside to listen to the novel and entirely unexpected accents of their *basso cantante*. Tamburini's falsetto was of wonderful purity, and in using it he displayed the same agility for which he was remarkable when employing his ordinary thoroughly masculine voice. The Palermitans were interested by this novel display of vocal power, and were, moreover, pleased at Tamburini's readiness and ingenuity in replying to their seemingly unanswerable charivari. But the poor *prima donna* was unable to enter into the joke at all. She even imagined that the turbulent demonstrations with which she was received whenever she made her appearance, were intended to insult her, and long before the opera was at an end she refused to continue her part. The manager was in great alarm, for he knew that the public would not stand upon any ceremony that evening; and that, if the performance were interrupted by anything but their own noise, they would probably break everything in the theatre. Tamburini rushed to the *prima donna's* room. Madame Lipparini, the lady in question, had already left the theatre, but she had also left the costume of "Elisa" behind. The ingenious baritone threw off his coat, contrived, by stretching and splitting, to get on "Elisa's" satin dress, clapped her bonnet over his own wig, and thus equipped appeared on the stage, ready to take the part of the unhappy and now fugitive Lipparini. The audience applauded with one accord the entry of the strangest "Elisa" ever seen. Her dress came only half way down her legs, the sleeves did not extend anywhere near her wrists. The soprano, who at a moment's notice had replaced Madame Lipparini, had the largest hands and feet a *prima donna* was ever known to possess.

TAMBURINI.

The band had played the ritornello of "Elisa's" cavatina a dozen times, and the most turbulent among the assembly had actually got up from their seats, and were ready to scale the orchestra, and jump on the stage, when Tamburini rushed on in the costume above described. After curtseying to the audience, pressing one hand to his heart, and with the other wiping away the tears of gratitude he was supposed to shed for the enthusiastic reception accorded to him, he commenced the cavatina, and went through it admirably; burlesquing it a little for the sake of the costume, but singing it, nevertheless, with marvellous expression, and displaying executive power far superior to any that Madame Lipparini herself could have shown. As long as there were only airs to sing, Tamburini got on easily enough. He devoted his soprano voice to "Elisa," while the "Count" remained still a basso, the singer performing his ordinary part in his ordinary voice. But a duet for "Elisa" and the "Count" was approaching; and the excited amateurs, now oblivious of their drums, kettles, and kettle-drums, were speculating with anxious interest as to how Tamburini would manage to be soprano and basso-cantante in the same piece. The vocalist found no difficulty in executing the duet. He performed both parts—the bass replying to the soprano, and the soprano to the bass—with the most perfect precision. The double representative even made a point of passing from right to left and from left to right, according as he was the father-in-law or the daughter. This was the crowning success. The opera was now listened to with pleasure and delight to the very end; and it was not until the fall of the curtain that the audience re-commenced their charivari, by way of testifying their admiration for Tamburini, who was called upwards of a dozen times on to the stage. This was not all: they were so grieved at the idea of losing him, that they entreated him to appear again in the ballet. He did so, and gained fresh applause by his performance in a *pas de quatre* with the Taglionis and Mademoiselle Rinaldini.

Lablache was scarcely seventeen years of age, and had just finished his studies at the

Conservatorio of Naples when he was engaged as "Neapolitan buffo" at the little San Carlino theatre. Here two performances were given every day, one in the afternoon, the other in the evening, while the morning was devoted to rehearsals. Lablache supported the fatigue caused by this system without his voice suffering the slightest injury, though all the other members of the company were obliged to throw up their engagements before the year was out, and several of them never recovered their voices. He had been five months at San Carlino when he married Teresa Pinotti, daughter of an actor engaged at the theatre, and one of the greatest comedians of Italy. This union appears to have had a great effect on Lablache's fate. His wife saw what genius he possessed, and thought of all possible means to get him away from San Carlino, an establishment which she justly regarded as unworthy of him. Lablache, for his part, would have remained there all his life, playing the part of Neapolitan buffo, without thinking of the brilliant position within his reach. There was at that time a celebrated Neapolitan buffo, named Mililotti, who, Madame Lablache thought, might advantageously replace her husband. She not only procured an engagement for Lablache's rival at the San Carlino theatre, but is even said to have packed the house the first night of his appearance (or re-appearance, for he was already known to the Neapolitans) so as to ensure him a favourable reception. Her intelligent love would, doubtless, have caused her to hiss her husband, had not Mililotti's success been sufficiently great to convince Lablache that he might as well seek his fortune elsewhere, and in a higher sphere. He had some hesitation, however, about singing in the Tuscan language, accustomed as he was to the Neapolitan jargon, but his wife determined him to make the change, and procured an engagement for him in Sicily. Arrived at Messina, however, he continued for some time to appear as Neapolitan buffo, a line for which he had always had a great predilection, and in which, spite of the forced success of Mililotti, he had no equal.

Lablache will be generally remembered as a true basso; but, before appearing as "Bartolo" in the *Barber of Seville*, he for many years played the part of "Figaro." I have seen it stated that Lablache has played not only the bass and baritone, but also the tenor part in Rossini's great comic opera; but I do not believe that he ever appeared as "Count Almaviva." I have said that he performed bass parts (the Neapolitan buffo was always a bass), when he first made his *début*; and during the last five-and-twenty years of his career, his voice—marvellously even and sound from one end to the other—had at the same time no extraordinary compass; but from G to E all his notes were full, clear, and sonorous, as the tones of a bronze bell. Indeed, this bell-like quality of the great basso's voice, is said on one occasion to have been the cause of considerable alarm to his wife, who, hearing its deep boom in the middle of the night, imagined, as she started from her slumbers, that the house was on fire. This was the period of the great popularity of *I Puritani*, when Grisi, accompanied by Lablache, was in the habit of singing the polacca three times a week at the opera, and about twice a day at morning concerts. Lablache, after executing his part of this charming and popular piece three times in nine hours, was so haunted by it, that he continued to ring out his sounding *staccato* accompaniment in his sleep. Fortunately, Madame Lablache succeeded in stopping this somnambulistic performance before the engines arrived.

Like all complete artists, like Malibran, like Ronconi, like Garrick, the great type of the class, Lablache was equally happy in serious and in comic parts. Though Malibran is chiefly remembered in England by her almost tragic rendering of the part of "Amina" in the *Sonnambula*, many persons who have heard her in all her *répertoire*, assure me that she exhibited the greatest talent in comic opera, or in such lively "half character" parts as "Norina" in the *Elixir of Love*, and "Zerlina" in *Don Giovanni*. Lord Mount Edgcumbe declares, after speaking of her performance of "Semiramide" ("Semiramide" has also been mentioned as one of Malibran's best parts) that "in characters of less energy she is much better, and best of all in the comic opera. She even condescended," he adds, "to make herself a buffa caricata, and take the third and least important part in Cimarosa's *Matrimonio Segretto*, that of an old woman (the Mrs. Heidelberg of the *Clandestine Marriage*), generally acted by the lowest singer of the company. From an insignificant character she raised it to a prominent one, and very greatly added to the effect of that excellent opera." So of Lablache, Lord Mount Edgcumbe, after remarking that his voice was "not only of deeper compass than almost any ever heard, but, when he chose, absolutely stentorian," tells his readers that "he was a most excellent actor, especially in comic operas, in which he was (as I am told) as highly diverting as any of the most laughable comedians." Yet the character in which Lablache himself, and not Lablache's reputation, produced so favourable an impression on this writer—not very favourably impressed by any singers, or any music towards the close of his life—was "Assur" in *Semiramide!* Who that remembers Lablache as "Bartolo"—that remembers the prominence and the genuine humour which he gave to that slight and colourless part—can deny that he was one of the greatest of comic actors? And did he not communicate the same importance to the minor character of "Oroveso" in *Norma*, in which nothing could be more tragic and impressive than his scene with the repentant dying priestess in the last act? What a picture, too, was his "Henry VIII." in *Anna Bolena*! A picture which Lablache himself composed from a careful study of the costume worn by the original, and for which nature had certainly supplied him in the first place with a most suitable form. Think, again, of his superb grandeur as "Maometto," of his touching dignity as "Desdemona's" father; then forget both these characters, and recollect how perfect, how unique a "Leporello" was this same Lablache. One of our best critics has taken objection to Lablache's version of this last-named part—though, of course, without objecting to his actual performance, which he as well, or better than any one else, knows to have been almost beyond praise. But it has been said that Lablache (and if Lablache, then all his predecessors in the same character) indulged in an unbecoming spirit of burlesque during the last scene of *Don Giovanni*, in which the statue seizes the hero with his strong hand, and takes him down a practicable trap-door to eternal torments. "Leporello," however, is a burlesque character, and a buffoon throughout; cowardly, superstitious, greedy, with all possible low qualities developed to a ludicrous extent, and thus presenting a fine dramatic contrast to his master, who possesses all the noble qualities, except faith—this one great flaw rendering all the use he makes of valour, generosity, and love of woman, an abuse. "Leporello" is always thinking of the bad end which he is sure awaits him unless he quits the service of a master whom he is afraid to leave; always thinking, too, of maccaroni, money, and the wages which "Don Juan" certainly will not pay him, if he is taken to the infernal regions before his next quarter is due. "*Mes gages, mes gages*," cries the "Sganarelle" of Molière's comedy, and "Sganarelle" and "Leporello" are one and the same person. We may be sure that Molière and Lablache are right, and that Herr Formes, with his new reading of a good old part is wrong. At the same time it is natural and allowable that a singer who cannot be comic should be serious.

In addition to his other great accomplishments, Lablache possessed that of being able to whistle in a style that many a piccolo player would have envied. He could whistle all Rode's variations as perfectly as Louisa Pyne sings

them. As to the vibratory force of his full voice, it was such that to have allowed Lablache to sing in a green house might have been a dangerous experiment. Chéron, a celebrated French bass, is said to have been able to burst a tumbler into a thousand pieces, by sounding, within a fragile and doubtless sympathetic glass, some particular note. Equally interesting, in connexion with a glass, is a performance in which I have seen the veteran,[102] but still almost juvenile basso, Signor Badiali, indulge. The artist takes a glass of particularly good claret, drinks it, and, while in the act of swallowing, sings a scale. The first time his execution is not quite perfect. He repeats the performance with a full glass, a loud voice, and without missing a note or a drop. To convince his friends that there is no deception, he offers to go through this refreshing species of vocalization a third time; after which, if the supply of wine on the table happens to be limited, and the servants gone to bed, the audience generally declares itself satisfied.

MADAME GRISI.

Giulia Grisi, the last of the celebrated Puritani quartett, first distinguished herself by her performance of the part of "Adalgisa," in *Norma*, when that opera was produced at Milan, in 1832. Giulia or Giulietta Grisi, is the younger sister of Giuditta Grisi, also a singer, but to whom Giulietta was superior in all respects; and she is the elder sister of Carlotta Grisi, who, from an ordinary vocalist, became, under the tuition of Perrot, the most charming dancer of her time. When Madame Grisi first appeared, lord Mount Edgcumbe having ceased himself to attend the opera, tells us that she possessed "a handsome person, sweet, yet powerful voice, considerable execution, and still more expression;" that "she is an excellent singer, and excellent actress;" in short, is described to be as nearly perfect as possible, and is almost a greater favorite than even Pasta or Malibran. In his *Pencillings by the Way*, Mr. N. P. Willis writes, after seeing Grisi, who had then first appeared at the King's Theatre, in the year 1833; "she is young, very pretty, and an admirable actress—three great advantages to a singer; her voice is under absolute command, and she manages it beautifully; but it wants the infusion of soul—the gushing uncontrollable passionate feeling of Malibran. You merely feel that Grisi is an accomplished artist, while Malibran melts all your criticism into love and admiration. I am easily moved by music, but I come away without much enthusiasm for the present passion of London." The impression conveyed by Mr. N. P. Willis is not precisely that which I received from hearing Grisi fourteen or fifteen years afterwards, and up to her last season. Of late years, at least, Madame Grisi has shown herself above all "a passionate singer," though as "accomplished artists" superior to her, if not in force at least in delicacy of expression, she has, from the time of Madame Sontag to that of Madame Bosio, had plenty of superiors. It seems to us, in the present day, that the "incontrollable passionate feeling of Grisi," is just what we admire her for in "Norma," beyond doubt her best character; but it is none the less interesting, or perhaps the more interesting for that very reason, to know what a man of taste in poetry and the drama, and who had heard all the best singers of his time, thought of Madame Grisi at a period when her most striking qualifications may have been different from what they are now. She was at all events a great singer and actress then, in 1833, and is a great actress and singer now, in 1861—the year of her final retirement from the stage.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROSSINI—SPOHR—BEETHOVEN—WEBER AND HOFFMANN.

ROSSINI.

Bellini and Donizetti were contemporaries of Rossini; so were Paisiello and Cimarosa; so are M. Verdi and M. Meyerbeer; but Rossini has outlived most of them, and will certainly outlive them all. It is now forty-eight years since *Tancredi*, forty-five since *Otello*, and forty-five since *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* were written. With the exception of Cimarosa's *Matrimonio Segretto*, which at long intervals may still occasionally be heard, the works of Rossini's Italian predecessors have been thrown into utter obscurity by the light of his superior genius. Let us make all due allowances for such change of taste as must result in music, as in all things, from the natural changeableness of the human disposition; still no variation has taken place in the estimation in which Rossini's works are held. It was to be expected that a musician of equal genius, coming after Paisiello and his compeers, young and vigorous, when they were old and exhausted, would in time completely eclipse them, even in respect to those works which they had written in their best days; but the remarkable thing is, that Rossini so re-modelled Italian opera, and gave to the world so many admirable examples of his own new style, that to opera-goers of the last thirty years he may be said to be the most ancient of those Italian composers who are not absolutely forgotten. At the same time, after hearing *William Tell*, it is impossible to deny that Rossini is also the most modern of operatic composers. That is to say, that since *William Tell* was produced, upwards of thirty years ago, the art of writing dramatic music has not advanced a step. Other composers have written admirable operas during Rossini's time; but if no Italian *opera seria*, produced prior to *Otello*, can be compared to *Otello*; if no opera, subsequent to *William Tell*, can be ranked on a level with *William Tell*; if rivals have arisen, and Rossini's operas of five-and-forty years ago still continue to be admired and applauded; above all, if a singer,[103] the favourite heroine of a composer[104] who is so boastfully modern that he fancies he belongs to the next age, and who is nothing if not an innovator; if even this ultra modern heroine appears, when she wishes really to distinguish herself in a Rossinian opera of 1813;[105] then it follows that of our actual operatic period, and dating from the early part of the present century, Rossini is simply the Alpha and the Omega. Undoubtedly his works are full of beauty, gaiety, life, and of much poetry of a positive, passionate kind, but they are wanting in spiritualism, or rather they do not possess spirituality, and exhibit none of the poetry of romance. It would be difficult to say precisely in what the "romantic" consists;—and I am here reminded that several French writers have spoken of Rossini as a composer of the "romantic school," simply (as I imagine) because his works attained great popularity in France at the same time as those of Victor Hugo and his followers, and because he gave the same extension to the opera which the cultivators and naturalisers in France of the Shakspearian drama gave, *after* Rossini, to their plays. [106] I may safely say, however, that with the "romantic," as an element of poetry, we always associate somewhat of melancholy and vagueness, and of dreaminess, if not of actual mystery. A bright passionate love-song of Rossini's is no more "romantic" than is a magnificent summer's day under an Italian sky; but Schubert's well known *Serenade* is essentially "romantic;" and Schubert, as well as Hoffmann, (a composer of whom I shall afterwards have a few words to say), is decidedly of the same school as Weber, who is again of the same school, or rather of the same class, as Schubert and Beethoven, in so far that not one of the three ever visited Italy, or was influenced, further than was

absolutely inevitable, by Italian composers.

SPOHR.

As a romantic composer Weber may almost be said to stand alone. As a thoroughly German composer he belongs to the same class as Beethoven and Spohr. Spohr, greatly as his symphonies and chamber compositions are admired, has yet never established himself in public favour as an operatic composer—at least not in England, nor indeed anywhere out of Germany. I may add, that in Germany itself, the land above all others of scientific music, the works which keep possession of the stage are, for the most part, those which the public also love to applaud in other countries. The truth is, that the success of an opera is seldom in proportion to its abstract musical merit, just as the success of a drama does not depend, or depends but very little, on the manner in which it is written. We have seen plays by Browning, Taylor (I mean the author of Philip Von Artevelde), Leigh Hunt, and other most distinguished writers, prove failures; while dramas and comedies put together by actors and playwrights have met with great success. This success is not to be undervalued; all I mean to say is, that it is not necessarily gained by the best writers in the drama, or by the best composers in the opera; though the best composers and the best writers ought to take care to achieve it in every department in which they present themselves. In the meanwhile, Spohr's dramatic works, with all their beauties, have never taken root in this country; while even Beethoven's *Fidelio*, one of the greatest of operas, does not occupy any clearly marked space in the history of opera; nor is it as an operatic composer that Beethoven has gained his immense celebrity.

BEETHOVEN.

All London opera-goers remember Mademoiselle Sophie Cruvelli's admirable performance in *Fidelio*; and like Mademoiselle Cruvelli (or Cruwel), all the great German singers who have visited England—with the single exception of Mademoiselle Titiens—have some time or other played the part of the heroine in Beethoven's famous dramatic work: but *Fidelio* has never been translated into English or French,—has never been played by any thoroughly Italian company, and admired, as it must always be by musicians—nor has ever excited any great enthusiasm among the English public, except when it has been executed by an entire company of Germans,—the only people who can do justice to its magnificent choruses. It is a work apart in more than one sense, and it has not had that perceptible influence on the works which have succeeded it, either in Germany or in other countries, that has been exercised by Weber's operas in Germany, and by Rossini's everywhere. For full particulars respecting Beethoven and his three styles, and *Fidelio* and its three overtures, the reader may be referred to the works published at St. Petersburgh by M. Lenz in 1852 (*Beethoven et ses trois styles*), at Coblentz, by Dr. Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries in 1838, and at Munster, by Schindler (that friend of Beethoven's, who, according to the malicious Heine, wrote "*Ami de Beethoven*" on his card), in 1845. Schindler's book is the sourse of nearly all the biographical particulars since published respecting Beethoven; that of M. Lenz is chiefly remarkable for the inflated nonsense it contains in the shape of criticism. Thus Beethoven's third style is said to be "*un jugement porté sur le cosmos humain, et non plus une participation à ses impressions*,"—words which, I confess, I do not know how to render into intelligible English. His symphonies in general are "events of universal history rather than musical productions of more or less merit." Those who have read M. Lenz's extravagant production, will remember that he attacks here and there M. Oulibicheff, author of the "Life of Mozart," published at Moscow in 1844. M. Oulibicheff replied in a work devoted specially to Beethoven (and to M. Lenz), published at St. Petersburgh in 1854;[107] in which he is said by our best critics not to have done full justice to Beethoven, though he well maintains his assertion; an assertion which appears to me quite unassailable, that the composer of *Don Juan* combined all the merits of all the schools which had preceded him. I have already endeavoured, in more than one place, to impress this truth upon such of my readers as might not be sufficiently sensible of it, and moreover, that all the important operatic reforms attributed to the successors of Mozart, and especially to Rossini, belong to Mozart himself, who from his eminence dominates equally over the present and the past.

BORROWED THEMES.

Karl Maria von Weber has had a very different influence on the opera from that exercised by Beethoven and Spohr; and so much of his method of operatic composition as could easily be imitated has found abundance of imitators. Thus Weber's plan of taking the principal melodies for his overtures from the operas which they are to precede, has been very generally followed; so also has his system of introducing national airs, more or less modified, when his great object is to give to his work a national colour.[108] This process, which produces admirable results in the hands of a composer of intelligence and taste, becomes, when adopted by inferior musicians, simply a convenient mode of plagiarism. Without for one moment ranking Rossini, Bellini, or Donizetti in the latter class, I may nevertheless observe, that the cavatina of *La Gazza Ladra* is founded on an air sung by the peasants of Sicily; that the melody of the trio in the *Barber of Seville* (*Zitti, Zitti*), is Simon's air in the *Seasons*, note for note; that *Di tanti palpiti* was originally a Roman Catholic hymn; that the music of *La Sonnambula* is full of reminiscences of the popular music of Sicily; and that Donizetti has also had recourse to national airs for the tunes of his choruses in *La Favorite*. In the above instances, which might easily be multiplied the composers seem to me rather to have suited their own personal convenience, than to have aimed at giving any particular "colour" to their works. However that may be, I feel obliged to them for my part for having brought to light beautiful melodies, which but for them might have remained in obscurity, as I also do to Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, for the admirable use they also have occasionally made of popular themes. It appears to me, however, (to speak now of operatic composers alone) that there is a great difference between borrowing an air from an oratorio, a collection of national music, or any other source, simply because it happens to be beautiful, and doing so because it is appropriate to a particular personage or scene. We may not blame, but we cannot praise Rossini for taking a melody of Haydn's for his *Zitti, Zitti*, instead of inventing one for himself; nor was there any particular merit, except that of civility, in giving "Berta," in the same opera, a Russian air to sing, which Rossini had heard at the house of a Russian lady residing at Rome, for whom he had a certain admiration. But the *Ranz des Vaches*, introduced with such admirable effect into *Guillaume Tell*, where it is marvellously embellished, and yet loses nothing of its original character; this *Ranz des Vaches* at once transports us amongst the Swiss mountains. So Luther's hymn is in its proper place in the *Huguenots*;[109] so is the Persian air, made the subject of a chorus of Persian beauties by the Russian composer Glinka, in his *Rouslan e Loudmila*; so also is the Arabian march (first published by Niebuhr in his "Travels in Arabia"), played behind the scenes by the guards of the seraglio in *Oberon*, and the old Spanish romance employed as the foundation to the overture of *Preciosa*.

WEBER.

Weber had a fondness not only for certain instrumental combinations and harmonic effects, but also for particular instruments, such as the clarionet and the horn, and

particular chords (which caused Beethoven to say that Weber's *Euryanthe* was a collection of diminished sevenths). There are certain rhythms too, which, if Weber did not absolutely invent, he has employed so happily, and has shown such a marked liking for them (not only in his operas, but also in his pianoforte compositions, and other instrumental works), that they may almost be said to belong to him. With regard to the orchestral portion of his operas generally, I may remark that Weber, though too high-souled a poet to fall into the error of direct imitation of external noises, has yet been able to suggest most charmingly and poetically, such vague natural sounds as the rustling of the leaves of the forest, and the murmuring of the waves of the sea. Finally, to speak of what defies analysis, but to assert what every one who has listened to Weber's music will I think admit, his music is full of that ideality and spirituality which in literature is regarded in the present day, if not as the absolute essence of poetry, at least, as one of its most essential elements. Read Weber's life, study his letters, listen again and again to his music, and you will find that he was a conscientious, dutiful, religious man, with a thoroughly musical organization, great imaginative powers, inexhaustible tenderness, and a deep, intuitive appreciation of all that is most beautiful in popular legends. He was an artist of the highest order, and with him art was truly a religion. He believed in its ennobling effect, and that it was to be used only for ennobling purposes. Thus, to have departed from the poetic exigencies of a subject to gratify the caprice of a singer, or to attain the momentary applause of the public would, to Weber, with the faith he held, have been a heresy and a crime.

Weber has not precisely founded a school, but his influence is perceptible in some of the works of Mendelssohn, (as, for instance, in the overture to a *Midsummer Night's Dream*) and in many portions of Meyerbeer's operas, especially in the fantastic music of *Robert le Diable*, and in certain passages of *Dinorah*—a legend which Weber himself would have loved to treat. Meyerbeer is said to have borrowed many of his instrumental combinations from Weber; but in speaking of the points of resemblance between the two composers, I was thinking not of details of style, but of the general influence of Weber's thought and manner. If Auber is indebted to Weber it is simply for the idea of making the overture out of the airs of an opera, and of colouring the melodic portion by the introduction of national airs. Only while Weber gives to his operas a becoming national or poetic colour throughout, the musical tints in M. Auber's dramatic works are often by no means in harmony. The Italian airs in *La Muette* are appropriate enough, and the whole of that work is in good keeping; but in the *Domino Noir*, charming opera as it is, no one can help noticing that Spanish songs, and songs essentially French, follow one another in the most abrupt manner. As nothing can be more Spanish than the second movement of "Angèle's" scene (in the third act) so nothing can be more French, more Parisian, more vaudevillistic than the first.

DER FREISCHÜTZ.

But to return to Weber and his operas. *Der Freischütz*, decidedly the most important of all Weber's works, and which expresses in a more remarkable manner than any other of his dramatic productions the natural bent of his genius, was performed for the first time at Berlin in 1821. *Euryanthe* was produced at Vienna in 1823, and *Oberon* at London in 1826. *Der Freischütz* is certainly the most perfect German opera that exists; not that it is a superior work to *Don Giovanni*, but that *Don Giovanni* is less a German than a universal opera; whereas *Der Freischütz* is essentially of Germany, by its subject, by the physiognomy of the personages introduced, and by the general character of the music. There is this resemblance, however, between *Don Giovanni* and *Der Freischütz*: that in each the composer had met with a libretto peculiarly suited to his genius—the librettist having first conceived the plan of the opera, and having long carried its germ in his mind. Lorenzo da Ponte, in his memoirs (of which an interesting account was published some years ago by M. Scudo, the accomplished critic of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*) states, that he had long thought of Don Juan as an admirable subject for an opera, of which he felt the poetic truthfulness only too well, from reflecting on his own career; and that he suggested it to Mozart, not only because he appreciated that composer's high dramatic genius, but also because he had studied his mental and moral nature; and saw, from his simplicity, his loftiness of character, and his reverential, religious disposition, that he would do full justice to the marvellous legend. Frederic Kind has also published a little volume ("Der Freischütz-Buch"), in which he explains how the circumstances of his life led him to meditate from an early age on such legends as that which Weber has treated in his master-piece. When Weber was introduced to Kind, he was known as the director of the Opera at Prague, and also, and above all, as the composer of numerous popular and patriotic choruses, which were sung by all Germany during the national war of 1813. He had not at this time produced any opera; nor had Kind, a poet of some reputation, ever written the libretto of one. Kind was unwilling at first to attempt a style in which he did not feel at all sure of success. One day, however, taking up a book, he said to Weber: "There ought to be some thing here that would suit us, and especially you, who have already treated popular subjects." He at the same time handed to the musician a collection of legends, directing his attention in particular to Apel's Freischütz. Weber, who already knew the story, was delighted with the suggestion. "Divine! divine!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm; and the poet at once commenced his libretto.

DER FREISCHÜTZ.

No great work ever obtained a more complete and immediate triumph than *Der Freischütz*; and within a few years of its production at Berlin it was translated and reproduced in all the principal capitals of Europe. It was played at London in English, at Paris in French, and at both cities in German. In London it became so popular, that at the height of its first success a gentleman, in advertising for a servant, is said to have found it necessary to stipulate that he should *not* be able to whistle the airs from *Der Freischütz*. In Paris, its fate was curious, and in some respects almost inexplicable. It was brought out in 1824 at the Odéon, in its original form, and was hissed. Whether the intelligent French audience objected to the undeniable improbability of the chief incidents in the drama, or whether the originality of the music offended their unprepared ears, or whatever may have been the cause, Weber's master-piece was damned. Its translator, M. Castil Blaze, withdrew it, but determined to offer it to the critical public of the Odéon in another form. He did not hesitate to remodel *Der Freischütz*, changing the order of the pieces, cutting out such beauties as the French thought laughable, interpolating here and there such compositions of his own as he thought would please them, and finally presenting them this remarkable medley (which, however, still consisted mainly of airs and choruses by Weber) nine days after the failure of *Der Freischütz*, under the title of *Robin des Bois*. The opera, as decomposed and recomposed by M. Castil Blaze, was so successful, that it was represented three hundred and fifty-seven times at the Odéon. Moreover, it had already been played sixty times at the Opéra Comique, when the French Dramatic Authors' Society interfered to prevent its further representation at that theatre, on the ground that it had not been specially written for it. M. Castil Blaze, in the version he has himself published of this curious affair, tells us, that his first version of *Der Freischütz*, in which his "respect for the work and the author had prevented him from making the least change" was "*sifflé*, *meurtri*, *bafoué*, *navré*, *moqué*, *conspué*, *turlupiné*, *hué*, *vilipendié*, *terrassé*,

déchiré, *lacéré*, *cruellement enfoncé*, *jusqu'au troisiéme dessous*." This, and the after success of his modified version, justified him, he thinks, in depriving Weber's work of all its poetry, and reducing it to the level of the comprehension of a French musical audience in the year 1824.

Strangely enough, when Berlioz's version of *Der Freischütz* was produced at the Académie in 1841, it met with scarcely more success than had been obtained by *Der Freischütz* in its original musical form at the Odéon. The recitatives added by M. Berlioz, if not objectionable in themselves, are at least to be condemned in so far that they are not Weber's, that they prolong the music beyond Weber's intentions, and, above all, that they change the entire character of the work. I cannot think, after Meyerbeer's *Dinorah*, that recitative is an inappropriate language in the mouths of peasants. Recitative of an heroic character, would be so, no doubt; but not such as a composer of genius, or even of taste or talent, would write for them. Nevertheless, Weber conceived his master-piece as a species of melodrama, in which the personages were now to sing, now to speak, "through the music," (to adopt an expressive theatrical phrase), now to speak without any musical accompaniment at all. If, at a theatre devoted exclusively to the performance of grand opera, it is absolutely necessary to replace the spoken dialogue by recitative, then this dialogue should, at least, be so compressed as to reduce the amount of added recitative to a minimum quantity. *Der Freischütz*, however, will always be heard to the greatest advantage in the form in which it was originally produced. The pauses between the pieces of music have, it must be remembered, been all premeditated, and their effect taken into account by the composer.

DER FREISCHÜTZ.

But the transformations of *Der Freischütz* are not yet at an end. Six years ago M. Castil Blaze re-arranged his *Robin des Bois* once more, restored what he had previously cut out, cut out what he had himself added to Weber's music, and produced his version, No. 3 (which must have differed very little, if at all, from his unfortunate version, No. 1), at the Théâtre Lyrique.

Every season, too, it is rumoured that *Der Freischütz* is to be produced at one of the Italian theatres of London, with Mademoiselle Titiens or Madame Csillag in the principal part. When managers are tired of tiring the public with perpetual variations between Verdi and Meyerbeer, (to whose monstrously long operas my sole but sufficient objection is, that there is too much of them, and—with the exception of the charming *Dinorah*—that they are stuffed full of ballets, processions, and other pretexts for unnecessary scenic display), then we shall assuredly have an opportunity of hearing once more in England the masterpiece of the chief of all the composers of the romantic and legendary school. In such a case, who will supply the necessary recitatives? Those of M. Berlioz have been tried, and found wanting. Mr. Costa's were not a whit more satisfactory. M. Alary, the mutilator of *Don Giovanni*, would surely not be encouraged to try his hand on Weber's masterpiece? Meyerbeer, between whose genius and that of Weber, considerable affinity exists, is, perhaps, the only composer of the present day whom it would be worth while to ask to write recitatives for *Der Freischütz*. The additions would have to be made with great discretion, so as not to encumber the opera; but who would venture to give a word of advice, if the work were undertaken by M. Meyerbeer?

Weber's *Preciosa* was produced at Berlin in 1820, a year before *Der Freischütz*, which latter opera appears to have occupied its composer four years—undoubtedly the four years best spent of all his artistic life. The libretto of *Preciosa* is founded on Cervantes' *Gipsy of Madrid*, (of which M. Louis Viardot has published an excellent French translation); and here Weber, faithful to his system has given abundant "colour" to his work, in which the Spanish romance introduced into the overture, and the Gipsies' march are, with the waltz (which may be said to be in Weber's personal style), the most striking and characteristic pieces.

EURYANTHE.

Euryanthe was written for Vienna, where it was represented for the first time in 1823, the part of "Euryanthe" being filled by Mademoiselle Sontag, that of "Adolar," by Heitzinger. The libretto of this opera, composed by a lady, Madame Wilhelmine de Chézy is by no means interesting, and the dulness of the poem, though certainly not communicated to the music, has caused the latter to suffer from the mere fact of being attached to it. *Euryanthe* was received coldly by the public of Vienna, and was called by its wits—professors of the "*calembourg d'à-peu-près*"—*Ennuyante*. If such facetiousness as this was thought enlivening, it is easy to understand how Weber's music was considered the reverse. I have already mentioned Beethoven's remark about *Euryanthe* being "a collection of diminished sevenths." Weber was naturally not enchanted with this observation; indeed it is said to have pained him exceedingly, and some days after the first production of *Euryanthe* he paid a visit to Beethoven, in order to submit the score to his judgment. Beethoven received him kindly, but said to him, with a certain roughness which was habitual to him: "You should have come to me before the representation, not afterwards...." Nevertheless," he added, "I advise you to treat *Euryanthe* as I did *Fidelio*; that is to say, cut out a third."

Euryanthe, however, soon met with the success it deserved, not only at Berlin, Dresden, and Leipzig, but at Vienna itself, where the part created by Mademoiselle Sontag was performed in 1825 by Madame Schrœder-Devrient, in a manner which excited general enthusiasm. The passionate duet between "Adolar" and "Euryanthe," in the second act, as sung by Heitzinger and Madame Schrœder, would alone have sufficed to attract the public of Vienna to Weber's opera, now that it was revived.

Oberon, Weber's last opera, was composed for Covent Garden Theatre, in 1826. Some ingenious depreciators of English taste have discovered that Weber died from grief, caused by the coldness with which this work was received by the London public. With regard to this subject, I cannot do better than quote the excellent remarks of M. Scudo. After mentioning that *Oberon* was received with enthusiasm on its first production at Covent Garden—that it was "appreciated by those who were worthy of comprehending it"—and that an English musical journal, the *Harmonicon*, "published a remarkable article, in which all the beauties of the score were brought out with great taste," he observes that "it is impossible to quote an instance of a great man in literature, or in the arts, whose merit was entirely overlooked by his contemporaries;" while, "as for the death of Weber, it may be explained by fatigue, by grief, without doubt, but, above all, by an organic disease, from which he had suffered for years." At the same time "the enthusiasm exhibited by the public, at the first representation of *Oberon*, did not keep at the same height at the following representations. The master-piece of the German composer experienced much the same fate as *William Tell* in Paris."

OBERON.

Weber himself, in a letter written to his wife, on the very night of the first performance, says:—"My dear Lina; thanks to God and to his all powerful will, I obtained this evening the greatest success in my life. The emotion produced in my breast by such a triumph, is more than I can describe. To God alone belongs the glory. When I entered the orchestra, the house,

crammed to the roof, burst into a frenzy of applause. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved in the air. The overture had to be executed twice, as had also several of the pieces in the opera itself. The air which Braham sings in the first act was encored; so was Fatima's romance, and a quartett in the second act. The public even wished to hear the finale over again. In the third act, Fatima's ballad was re-demanded. At the end of the representation I was called on to the stage by the enthusiastic acclamations of the public, an honour which no composer had ever before obtained in England. All went excellently, and every one around me was happy."

In spite of the enthusiasm inspired by Weber's works in England, when they were first produced, and for some years afterwards, we have now but rarely an opportunity of hearing one of them. *Oberon*, it is true, was brought out at Her Majesty's Theatre at the end of last season, when, not being able to achieve miracles, it did not save the manager from bankruptcy; but the existence of Weber's other works seems to be forgotten by our directors, English as well as Italian, though from time to time a rumour goes about, which proves to be a rumour and nothing more, that *Der Freischütz* is to be performed by one of our Italian companies. In the meanwhile Weber has found an abundance of appreciation in France, where, at the ably and artistically-conducted Théâtre Lyrique, *Der Freischütz*, *Oberon*, *Euryanthe* and *Preciosa* have all been brought out, and performed with remarkable success during the last few years.

A composer, whose works present many points of analogy with those of Weber, and which therefore belong essentially to the German romantic school, is Hoffmann—far better known by his tales than by his *Miserere*, his *Requiem*, his airs and choruses for Werner's *Crusade of the Baltic*, or his operas of *Love and Jealousy*, the *Canon of Milan*, or *Undine*. This last production has always been regarded as his master-piece. Indeed, with *Undine*, Hoffmann obtained his one great musical success; and it is easy to account for the marked favour with which that work was received in Germany. In the first place the fantastic nature of the subject was eminently suited to the peculiar genius of the composer. Then he possessed the advantage of having an excellent *libretto*, written by Lamotte-Fouqué, the author of the original tale; and, finally, the opera was admirably executed at the Royal Theatre of Berlin. Probably not one of my readers has heard Hoffmann's *Undine*, which was brought out in 1817, and I believe was never revived, though much of the music, for a time, enjoyed considerable popularity, and the composition, as a whole, was warmly and publicly praised by no less a personage than Karl Maria von Weber himself. On the other hand, *Undine*, and Hoffmann's music generally, have been condemned by Sir Walter Scott, who is reported not to have been able to distinguish one melody from another, though he had, of course, a profound admiration for Scotch ballads of all kinds. M. Fétis, too, after informing us that Hoffmann "gave music lessons, painted enormous pictures, and wrote *licentious novels* (where are Hoffmann's licentious novels?) without succeeding in making himself remarked in any style," goes on to assure us, without ever having heard *Undine*, that although there were "certain parts" in which genius was evinced, yet "want of connexion, of conformity, of conception, and of plan, might be observed throughout;" and that "the judgment of the best critics was, that such a work could not be classed among those compositions which mark an epoch in art."

Weber had studied criticism less perhaps than M. Fétis; but he knew more about creativeness, and in an article on the opera of *Undine*, so far from complaining of any "want of connexion, of conformity, of conception, and of plan," the author of *Der Freischütz* says: "This work seems really to have been composed at one inspiration, and I do not remember, after hearing it several times, that any passage ever recalled me for a single minute from the circle of magic images that the artist evoked in my soul. Yes, from the beginning to the end, the author sustains the interest so powerfully, by the musical development of his theme, that after but a single hearing one really seizes the *ensemble* of the work; and detail disappears in the *naïveté* and modesty of his art. With rare renunciation, such as can be appreciated only by him who knows what it costs to sacrifice the triumph of a momentary success, M. Hoffmann has disdained to enrich some pieces at the expense of others, which it is so easy to do by giving them an importance, which does not belong to them as members of the entire work. The composer always advances, visibly guided by this one aspiration—to be always truthful, and keep up the dramatic action without ceasing, instead of checking or fettering it in its rapid progress. Diverse and strongly marked as are the characters of the different personages, there is, nevertheless, something which surrounds them all; it is that fabulous life, full of phantoms, and those soft whisperings of terror, which belong so peculiarly to the fantastic. Kühleborn is the character most strikingly put in relief, both by the choice of the melodies, and by the instrumentation which, never leaving him, always announces his sinister approach.[110] This is quite right, Kühleborn appearing, if not as destiny itself, at least as its appointed instrument. After him comes *Undine*, the charming daughter of the waves, which, made sonorous, now murmur and break in harmonious roulades, now powerful and commanding, announce her power. The 'arietta' of the second act, treated with rare and subtle grace, seems to me a thorough success, and to render the character perfectly. 'Hildebrand,' so passionate, yet full of hesitation, and allowing himself to be carried away by each amorous desire, and the pious and simple priest, with his grave choral melody, are the next in importance. In the back-ground are Bertalda, the fisherman, and his wife, and the duke and duchess. The strains sung by the suite of the latter breathe a joyous, animated life, and are developed with admirable gaiety; thus forming a contrast with the sombre choruses of the spirits of the earth and water, which are full of harsh, strange progressions. The end of the opera, in which the composer displays, as if to crown his work, all his abundance of harmony in the double chorus in eight parts, appears to me grandly conceived and perfectly rendered. He has expressed the words—'good night to all the cares and to all the magnificence of the earth'—with true loftiness, and with a soft melancholy, which, in spite of the tragic conclusion of the piece, leaves behind a delicious impression of calm and consolation. The overture and the final chorus which enclose the work here give one another the hand. The former, which evokes and opens the world of wonders, commences softly, goes on increasing, then bursts forth with passion; the latter is introduced without brusqueness, but mixes up with the action, and calms and satisfies it completely. The entire work is one of the most *spiritual* that these latter times have given us. It is the result of the most perfect and intimate comprehension of the subject, completed by a series of ideas profoundly reflected upon, and by the intelligent use of all the material resources of art; the whole rendered into a magnificent work by beautiful and admirably developed melodies."

M. Berlioz has said of Hoffmann's music, adding, however, that he had not heard a note of it, that it was "*de la musique de littérateur*." M. Fétis, having heard about as much of it, has said a great deal more; but, after what has been written concerning Hoffmann's principal opera by such a master and judge as Karl Maria von Weber, neither the opinion of M. Fétis, nor of M. Berlioz, can be of any value on the subject. The merit of Hoffmann's music has probably been denied, because the world is not inclined to believe that the same man can be a great writer and also

a great musician. Perhaps it is this perversity of human nature that makes us disposed to hold M. Berlioz in so little esteem as an author; and I have no doubt that there are many who would be equally unwilling to allow M. Fétis any tolerable rank as a composer.

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FINIS.

The following typographical errors were corrected by the etext transcriber:

La Dame aux Camelias was to have been played=>*La Dame aux Camélias* was to have been played
J'ai vu le soliel et la lune=>J'ai vu le soleil et la lune
of an Italian, who, adandoning=>of an Italian, who, abandoning
old newspapers before before me=>old newspapers before me
One the contrary, it gives=>On the contrary, it gives
the banquet with the apparation of the murdered=>the banquet with the apparition of the murdered
DUCAL CONNAISSEURS=>DUCAL CONNOISSEURS
Hamburg theatre, where operas had been perfomed=>Hamburgh theatre, where operas had been performed
Woffenbüttel caused the directors of the Hamburgh=>Wolfenbüttel caused the directors of the Hamburgh
retirement, operas by Galuppi, Pergolesi, Jomelli,=>retirement, operas by Galuppi, Pergolese, Jomelli,
Guingueneé, at Piccinni's request=>Guinguenée, at Piccinni's request
"If," said Gaetan, on another occasion, "*le diou de la danse*=>"If," said Gaetan, on another occasion, "*le dieu de la danse*
works, had to perform in the *Clemenzo di Tito*=>works, had to perform in the *Clemenza di Tito*
Gluck benefitted French opera in two ways=>Gluck benefited French opera in two ways
Bernadotte wore he would have Paer, and no one else=>Bernadotte swore he would have Paer, and no one else
by lord Fife—a keen-eyed connoisseur=>by Lord Fife—a keen-eyed connoisseur
For the one hundred and eighty pound boxas=>For the one hundred and eighty pound boxes
meanwhile Mr. Chambers had bought up Water's=>meanwhile Mr. Chambers had bought up Waters's
prima uomo=>primo uomo
Madeimoselle=>Mademoiselle
Hadyn=>Haydn
LA MUETTE DE PARTICI=>LA MUETTE DE PORTICI {2}
La Muette di Portici=>La Muette de Portici
threw himself out of window, at five in the morning=>threw himself out of a window, at five in the morning
the opera perfomed, and the theatre saved=>the opera performed, and the theatre saved
so that the cast, to be efficient=>so that the caste, to be efficient
The young gentlemen of Burgamo=>The young gentlemen of Bergamo
Il Puritani=>I Puritani
general enthusiam=>general enthusiasm
Schindler's book is the course of nearly=>Schindler's book is the sourse of nearly
Berlioz's version of Der Freischutz=>Berlioz's version of Der Freischütz
Dame aux Camelias=>Dame aux Camélias
Der Freischutz, of Weber=>Der Freischütz, of Weber
Mailly's Akebar=>Mailly's Akébar
Marre, Abbé de la, defends Mddlle. Petit=>Marre, Abbé de la, defends Mdlle. Petit
Singers of the seventeenth and eightteenth centuries=>Singers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
Fenelon, Chev. de, accidentally killed, i. 81.=>Fénélon, Chev. de, accidentally killed, i. 81.
of Cimarosa, Paesiello, Anfossi=>of Cimarosa, Paisiello, Anfossi
where are Hoffman's licentious novels=>where are Hoffmann's licentious novels
his opinion of Hoffman's music, 306.=>his opinion of Hoffmann's music, 306.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Wagner calls the composer of an opera "the sculptor *or* upholsterer," (which is complimentary to sculptors,) and the

writer of the words "the architect." I would rather say that the writer of the words produces a sketch, on which the composer paints a picture.

Since writing the above I find that the greatest of French poets describes an admirable *libretto* of his own as "*un canevas d'opéra plus ou moins bien disposé pour que l'œuvre musicale s'y superpose heureusement*;" and again, "*une trame qui ne demande pas mieux que de se dérober sous cette riche et éblouissante broderie qui s'appelle la musique*." (Preface to Victor Hugo's *Esmeralda*.)

[2] Ménestrier, des representations en musique, anciennes et modernes, page 23.

[3] See Vol. II.

[4] Cambronne, by the way is said to have been very much annoyed at the invention of "*La garde meurt et ne se rend pas*;" and with reason, for he didn't die and he *did* surrender.

[5] "*The battle or defeat of the Swiss on the day of Marignan.*"

[6] This was Heine's own joke.

[7] And this, Beaumarchais's.

[8] *La Dame aux Camélias* was to have been played at the St. James's Theatre last summer, with Madame Doche in the principal part; but its representation was forbidden by the licenser.

[9] *Spectator*, No. 18.

[10] "Life of Handel," by Victor Schœlcher.

[11] I adhere to the custom of calling Margarita de l'Epine by her pretty Christian name, without any complimentary prefix, and of styling her probably more dignified competitor, Mrs. Tofts. Thus in later times it has been the fashion to say, Jenny Lind, and even Giulia Grisi, but not Theresa Titiens or Henrietta Sontag.

[12] *Spectator*, No. 261.

[13] Burnt down in 1789. The present edifice was erected from designs by Michael Novosielski, (who, to judge from his name, must have been a Russian or a Pole), in 1790. Altered and enlarged by Nash and Repton, in 1816—18.

[14] It is to be regretted, however, that in sneering at an Italian librettist who called Handel "The Orpheus of our age," Addison thought fit to speak of the great composer with neither politeness, nor wit, nor even accuracy, as "Mynheer."—*Spectator*, No. V.

[15] The same trenchant critics who attribute Addison's satire of the Opera to the failure of his *Rosamond*, explain Steele's attacks by his position as patentee of Drury Lane Theatre. Here, however, dates come to our assistance. The jocose paper on Mrs. Toft's insanity appeared in the *Tatler*, in 1709. The attacks of the unhappy Clayton on Handel (see following pages) were published under Steele's auspices in the *Spectator*, in 1711-12. Steele did not succeed Collier as manager or patentee of Drury Lane, together with Wilks, Doggett, and Cibber, until 1714.

[16] *Spectator*, 290.

[17] The Queen's gardeners.

[18] *Tatler*, No. 113.

[19] *Spectator*, No. 285.

[20] It is also known that both profited by the study of Scarlatti's works.

[21] See Chapter II.

[22] Quoted by Mr. Hogarth, in his Memoirs of the Opera.

[23] *The Theatre.* From Tuesday, March 8th, to Saturday March 12th, 1720.

[24] See a letter of Dr. Harrington's (referred to by Mr. Chappell), in the *Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XI., page 386.

[25] "Memoirs of the Opera," Vol. I., page 371.

[26] The sopranists—a species of singers which ceased to be "formed" after Pope Clement XIV. sanctioned the introduction of female vocalists into the churches of Rome, and at the same time recommended theatrical directors to have women's parts in their operas performed by women. This was in 1769.

[27] The *Dictionnaire Musicale* was not published until some years afterwards.

[28] Le Vieux Neuf, par Edouard Fournier, t. ii., p. 293.

[29] See *Moliére Musicien*, by Castil Blaze; t. ii, p. 26.

[30] Choruses were introduced in the earliest Italian Operas, but they do not appear to have formed essential parts of the dramas represented.

[31] With the important exception, however, of *Don Giovanni*, written for, and performed for the first time, at Prague.

[32] Vocal agility, not gymnastics.

[33] Of Faustina and Cuzzoni, whose histories are so intimately connected with that of the Royal Academy of Music, I have spoken in the preceding chapter on "The Italian Opera under Handel."

[34] The copious title of this work is given by M. Castil Blaze, in his "Histoire de l'Opéra Italien." I cannot obtain the book itself, but Mr. Hogarth, in his "Memoirs of the Opera," gives a very full account of it, from which I extract a few pages.

[35] F. Halévy, Origines de l'Opéra en France (in the volume entitled "Souvenirs et Portraits: Etudes sur les beaux Arts").

[36] By M. Castil Blaze, "Histoire de l'Académie Royale de Musique," vol. i. p. 116.

[37] For a copy of his Mass, No. 2.

[38] It was precisely because persons joining the Opera did *not* thereby lose their nobility, that M. de Camargo consented to allow his daughter to appear there. See page 89 of this volume.

[39] Among other instances of duels between women may be cited a combat with daggers, which took place between the abbess of a convent at Venice, and a lady who claimed the admiration of the Abbé de Pomponne; a combat with swords

between Marotte Beaupré and Catherine des Urlis, actresses at the Hotel de Bourgogne, where the duel took place, on the stage (came of quarrel unknown); and a combat on horseback, with pistols, about a greyhound, between two ladies whom the historian Robinet designates under the names of Mélinte and Prélamie, and in which Mélinte was wounded.

[40] Castil Blaze.

[41] It is not so generally known, by the way, as it should be, that Garrick was of French origin. The name of his father, who left France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, settled in England and married an Englishwoman, was Carric. (See "the Eighth Commandment," by Charles Reade.) On the other hand we must not forget that one of Molière's (Poquelin's) ancestors in the male line was an archer of the Scottish guard, and that Montaigne was of English descent.

[42] One of Mademoiselle Guimard's principal admirers was de Jarente, Titular Bishop of Orleans, who held "*la feuilles des bénéfices*," and frequently disposed of them in accordance with the suggestions of his young friend.

[43] French audiences owe something to the Count de Lauragais who, by paying an immense sum of money as compensation, procured the abolition of the seats on the stage. Previously, the *habitués* were in the habit of crowding the stage to such an extent, that an actor was sometimes obliged to request the public to open a way for him before he could make his entry.

[44] Compare this with the Duke of Wellington keeping foxhounds in the Peninsula, and observe the characteristic pastimes of English and French generals. So, in our House of Commons, there is always an adjournment over the Derby day; in France, nothing used to empty the Chamber of Deputies so much as a new opera; and during the last French republic, when a question affecting its very existence was about to be discussed, the Assemblée Nationale was quite deserted, from the anxiety of the members to be present at the first representation of the *Prophète*.

[45] On this subject see *ante*, page 1.

[46] "Gods and devils," says Arteaga, "were banished from the stage as soon as poets discovered the art of making men speak with dignity."—*Rivoluzioni del teatro Italiano.*

[47] Published by John Chapman, London.

[48] Addison gives some such description of the French Opera in No. 29 of the *Spectator*.

[49] The origin of this absurd title has been already explained (page 15).

[50] *Molière Musicien*, par Castil Blaze, vol. II., p. 409.

[51] Gluck's name proves nothing to the contrary. The Slavonian languages are such unknown tongues, and so unpronounceable to the West of Europe that Slavonians have in numerous instances Latinised their names like Copernicus (a Pole), or Gallicised them like Chopin (also a Pole), or above all, have Germanised them like Guttenberg (a native of Kutna Gora in Bohemia), Schwarzenberg (from Tcherna Gora, the Black Mountain).

[52] We have a right to suppose that the priest did not exactly know for whose arm the mass was ordered.

[53] Of which, the best account I have met with is given in the memoirs of Fleury the actor.

[54] From 1821 to 1828.

[55] For an interesting account of the production of this work, see "Beaumarchais's Life and Times," by Louis de Loménie. See also the Preface to *Tarare*, in Beaumarchais's "Dramatic Works."

[56] See vol I.

[57] *Question.* Quelle est la meilleure? *Answer.* C'est Mara. *Rejoinder.* C'est bientôt dit (*bien Todi*).—(From a joke-book of the period).

[58] A celebrated male soprano, and one of the last of the tribe.

[59] Some writers speak of Mara as a violinist, others as a violoncellist.

[60] Banti was born at Crema, in 1757.

[61] Nasolini, a composer of great promise, died at a very early age.

[62] All three sopranists.

[63] It will be remembered that Berton, the director of the French Academy, entertained Gluck and Piccinni in a similar manner. (See vol. I.)

[64] We sometimes hear complaints of the want of munificence shown by modern constitutional sovereigns, in their dealings with artists and musicians. At least, however, they pay them. Louis XV. and Louis XVI. not only did not pay their daughters' music-masters, but allowed the royal young ladies to sponge upon them for what music they required.

[65] In chronicling the material changes that have taken place at the French Opera, I must not forgot the story of the new curtain, displayed for the first time, in 1753, or rather the admirable inscription suggested for it by Diderot—*Hic Marsias Apollinem.* Pergolese's *Servante Maitresse* (*La Serva padrona*) had just been "*écorchée*" by the orchestra of the Académie.

[66] Mémoires Secrètes, vol. xxi., page 121.

[67] This prevented me, when I was in Warsaw, from hearing M. Moniuszko's Polish opera of *Halka*.

[68] To say that a theatre is "full" in the present day, means very little. The play-bills and even the newspapers speak of "a full house" when it is half empty. If a theatre is tolerably full, it is said to be "crowded" or "crammed;" if quite full, "crammed to suffocation." And that even in the coldest weather!

[69] M. de Lamartine before writing the *History of the Restoration*, did not even take the trouble to find out whether or not the Duke of Wellington led a cavalry charge at the Battle of Waterloo. The same author, in his *History of the Girondist*, gives an interesting picture of Charlotte Corday's house at Caen, considered as a ruin. Being at Caen some years ago, I had no trouble in finding Charlotte Corday's house, but looked in vain for the moss, the trickling water, &c., introduced by M. de Lamartine in his poetical, but somewhat too fanciful description. The house was "in good repair," as the auctioneers say, and persons who had lived a great many years in the same street assured me that they had never known it as a ruin.—S. E.

[70] There was a Marquis de Louvois, but he was employed as a scene-shifter.

[71] It was built chiefly with the money of Danton and Sébastian Lacroix.

[72] Twenty-eight thousand francs a year, to which Napoleon always added twelve thousand in presents, with an annual

congé of four months.

[73] According to M. Thiers, the pretended copies of the secret articles, sold to the English Government, were not genuine, and the money paid for them was "*mal gagné*."

[74] Alexander II. gives Verdi an honorarium of 80,000 roubles for the opera he is now writing for St. Petersburg. The work, of course, remains Signor Verdi's property.

[75] Nouvelle Biographie de Mozart. Moscou, 1843.

[76] There are numerous analogies between the various Spanish legends of Don Juan, the Anglo-Saxon and German legends of Faust, and the Polish legend of Twardowski. It might be shown that they were all begotten by the legend of Theophilus of Syracuse, and that their latest descendant is *Punch* of London.

[77] Madame Alboni has appeared as Zerlina, and sings the music of this, as of every other part that she undertakes, to perfection; but she is not so intimately associated with the character as the other vocalists mentioned above.

[78] Waters appears to have spent nearly all the money he made during the seasons of 1814 and 1815, in improving the house.

[79] After receiving, the first year she sang in London, two thousand guineas, (five hundred more than was paid to Banti,) she declared that her price was ridiculously low, and that to retain her "*ci voglioni molte mila lira sterline*." She demanded and obtained five thousand.

[80] There is a scientific German mind and a romantic German mind, and I perhaps need scarcely say, that Weber's music appears to me thoroughly German, in the sense in which the legends and ballads of Germany belong thoroughly to that country.

[81] As for instance where *Semiramide* is described as an opera written in the German style!

[82] It would be absurd to say that if Rossini had set the *Marriage of Figaro* to music, he would have produced a finer work than Mozart's masterpiece on the same subject; but Rossini's genius, by its comic side, is far more akin to that of Beaumarchais, than is Mozart's. Mozart has given a tender poetic character to many portions of his *Marriage of Figaro*, which the original comedy does not possess at all. In particular, he has so elevated the part of "Cherubino" by pure and beautiful melodies, as to have completely transformed it. It is surely no disparagement to Mozart, to say, that he took a higher view of life than Beaumarchais was capable of?

I may add, that, in comparing Rossini with Beaumarchais, it must always be remembered that the former possesses the highest dramatic talent of a serious, passionate kind—witness *Otello* and *William Tell*; whereas Beaumarchais's serious dramatic works, such as *La Mère Coupable*, *Les Deux Amis*, and *Eugénie* (the best of the three), are very inferior productions.

[83] The serious opera consisted of the following persons: the *primo uomo* (*soprano*), *prima donna*, and tenor; the *secondo uomo* (*soprano*), *seconda donna* and *ultima parte*, (bass). The company for the comic opera consisted of the *primo buffo* (tenor), *prima buffa*, *buffo caricato* (bass), *seconda buffa* and *ultima parte* (bass). There were also the *uomo serio* and *donna seria*, generally the second man and woman of the serious opera.

[84] The San Carlo, Benedetti Theatre, &c., are named after the parishes in which they are built.

[85] Particularly celebrated for her performance of the brilliant part of the heroine in *La Cenerentola*, which, however, was not written for her.

[86] When Madame Pasta sang at concerts, after her retirement from the stage, her favourite air was still Tancredi's *Di tanti palpiti*.

[87] Mémorial de Sainte Hélène.

[88] "Lutèce" par Henri Heine (a French version, by Heine himself, of his letters from Paris to the *Allgemeine Zeitung*).

[89] He persisted in this declaration, in spite of his judges, who were not ashamed to resort to torture, in the hope of extracting a full confession from him. The thumb-screw and the rack were not, it is true, employed; but sentinels were stationed in the wretched man's cell, with orders not to allow him a moment's sleep, until he confessed.

[90] The Académie Royale became the Opéra National; the Opéra National, after its establishment in the abode of the former Théâtre National, became the Théâtre des Arts; and the Théâtre des Arts, the Théâtre de la République et des Arts. Napoleon's Théâtre des Arts became soon afterwards the Académie Impériale, the Académie Impériale the Académie Royale, the Académie Royale the Académie Nationale, the Académie Nationale once more the Académie Impériale, and the Académie Impériale simply the Théâtre de l'Opera, by far the best title that could be given to it.

[91] I was in Paris at the time, but, I forget the specific objections urged by the doctor against the *Freischütz* set before him at the "Académie Nationale," as the theatre was then called. Doubtless, however, he did not, among other changes, approve of added recitatives.

[92] No. 1.—*Vive Henri IV.* No. 2.—*La Marseillaise.* No. 3.—*Partant pour la Syrie.* No. 4.—*La Parisienne.* No. 5.—*Partant pour la Syrie* (encored). No. 6.—?

[93] Mozart, Cimarosa, Weber, Hérold, Bellini, and Mendelssohn.

[94] In the case of *Il Crociato*, however, the model was an Italian one.

[95] Rossini's natural inability to sympathize with sopranists is one more great point in his favour.

[96] For instance: *Fra Diavolo* and *Les Diamans la Couronne*.

[97] The second, *Le Duc d'Albe*, was entrusted to Donizetti, who died without completing the score.

[98] Nourrit was the author of *la Sylphide*, one of the most interesting and best designed ballets ever produced; that is to say, he composed the libretto for which Taglioni arranged the groups and dances.

[99] See Raynouard's veracious "Histoire des Troubadours."

[100] When are we to hear the last of the "ovations" which singers are said to receive when they obtain, or even do not obtain, any very triumphant success? A great many singers in the present day would be quite hurt if a journal were simply to record their "triumph." An "ovation" seems to them much more important; and it cannot be said that this misapprehension is entirely their fault.

[101] That is to say, a quarter or a third part of an inch.

[102] "What a pity I did not think of this city fifty years ago!" exclaimed Signor Badiali, when he made his first appearance in London, in 1859.

[103] Joanna Wagner.

[104] Richard Wagner.

[105] Tancredi.

[106] Once more, I may mention that the "romantic opera" (in the sense in which the French say "romantic drama,") was founded by Da Ponte and Mozart, the former furnishing the plan, the latter constructing the work—"The Opera of Operas."

[107] The gist of M. Lenz's accusations against M. Oulibicheff amounts to this: that the latter, believing Mozart to have attained perfection in music, considered it impossible to go beyond him. "*Ou ce caractère d'universalité que Mozart imprime à quelques-un de ses plus grandes chefs-d'œuvre*," says M. Oulibicheff. "*M'avait paru le progrès immense que la musique attendait pour se constituer définitivement,—pour se constituer, avais-je dit, et non pour ne plus avancer.*" According to M. Lenz, on the other hand, Mozart's master-pieces (after those which M. Lenz discovers among his latest compositions), are what preparatory studies are to a great work.

[108] New form of his overtures, national melodies, &c.—(*Straker*). Love of traditions, melancholy, fanciful, spiritual; also popular.—(*Der Freischütz*).

[109] I will not here enter into the question whether or not Meyerbeer desecrated this hymn by introducing it into an opera. Such was the opinion of Mendelssohn, who thought that but for Meyerbeer and the *Huguenots*, Luther's hymn might have been befittingly introduced in an oratorio which he intended to compose on the subject of the Reformation.

[110] Another proof that this device is not new in the hands of Herr Wagner.

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