

and originated a famous divergence of opinions among composers known to the musical world as the war of the Gluckists and Piccinnists. The two most important composers of the Gluck school are Cherubini, born at Florence in 1760, and Spontini, whose "Vestale" and "Fernand Cortez" enjoyed great success at the opera. Among modern composers whose works have been performed at the French National Academy of Music the most popular are, Hérold, Auber, Halévy, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Donizetti, Verdi, Ambroise Thomas, the present director of the Conservatoire, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, and Massenet.

The Opera House is the property of the State, which appoints the manager for a renewable term of seven years, and pays him, after a vote in the Chamber of Deputies, an annual subvention of eight hundred thousand francs (one hundred and sixty thousand dollars). The director or manager is bound to give a fixed number of performances, to keep the opera open during the whole year, and to produce a certain number of new works, which are mentioned in his contract. The manager is amenable to the Minister of Fine Arts and Public Instruction in case of non-fulfilment of his contract. It is only reasonable that the Minister of Fine Arts, who has charge of the national museums and art galleries, the subventioned theaters, and other public buildings, should possess unlimited control over the financial management and the working of the department for which he is responsible to the nation, but in order to regulate the details of art he needs to be at one and the same time an artist, a sculptor, a musician, an author, and a tragedian, as well as a politician, which is practically impossible.

In the contract signed by the manager of the opera the Minister decides not only the number of performances and of new works, but also the number of sopranos, tenors, baritones, basses, choristers, musicians, ballet-dancers, etc. who shall be employed at the opera. In fact he regulates the entire management of the opera in every detail. But there are many artistic questions which arise in the working of a lyric stage that can only be solved by an enlightened and intelligent musical director, and not by a mere stage-manager, however competent he may be in his department.

Since the foundation of the opera there have been forty-eight managers and twenty-six leaders of the orchestra. Some of the latter have resigned the position at the end of a year; M. Lamoureux resigned it at the end of two years; I myself have occupied it for four years.

The musical rehearsals at the opera are conducted on a system unknown to any other theaters in the world, be they Italian, German, English, Russian, American, or Spanish. The chorus-singers are trained by a leader of the chorus, the singers are trained by accompanists known as singing-masters, who give their instructions to the leader of the orchestra. When the preparatory rehearsals are finished, the time-beater, who supports the whole responsibility in the eyes of the public, has only acted as a metronome, if he has the good fortune to score a success. It is evident that some reform is necessary in this division of authority for the good of musical art, and I heartily hope it may soon be accomplished.

The orchestra consists of ninety-four musicians, all of whom are performers of great merit and some of

great celebrity, such as M. Taffanel, the flutist, who is often engaged to perform at Prague, Dresden, St. Petersburg, and Moscow by the Philharmonic societies of those cities; M. Turban, the clarinetist; Messrs. Berthelier, Loeb, and Laforge, the well-known violoncellists. All the musicians of the opera are members of the orchestras of the Conservatoire, Lamoureux, and Colonne concerts. Their salaries at the opera vary from \$140 to \$600 per annum. For this amount they have to play at 192 performances, and at all the rehearsals which may be necessary, and which are unlimited.

While speaking of the orchestra of the opera I am glad to have an opportunity of replying to certain attacks which have been made upon it by M. Robert de Bonnières in the Paris "Figaro" of April 19, 1891, and by a New York journal which accuses the orchestra of decay. The following letter, addressed to me by Franz Liszt, proves that, far from decaying, the orchestra is more powerful than ever.

DEAR M. VIANESI: I wish to renew my thanks and praises to you personally. On the matter of your intelligent and firm conducting of my "Legend of St. Elizabeth" at the Trocadéro, the composers who were present agreed with the public that the results achieved by you and your executants were splendid, spite of the difficulties which the work presents from the frequent changes of rhythm and tone.

FRANZ LISZT.

After the performance of "Ascanio" Camille Saint-Saëns wrote me as follows:

The musicians of the orchestra have added to the instrumentation of "Ascanio" what a great singer adds to a melody — *i. e.*, color and life. If musicians play better anywhere else it can only be in the other world. As for yourself, whose burden in my absence was most heavy, you rose to the height of the situation. You possess the precious quality of not conducting like a metronome, and give to my music the suppleness which is essential to an artistic orchestra.

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS.

The real defect in the orchestra has been pointed out by M. Robert de Bonnières, who says:

The leader of the orchestra, whose word should be law, like that of Hans Richter at Vienna, that of Hermann Levi at Munich, and that of Mottl at Carlsruhe, is ignored at Paris. It matters little therefore who conducts, whether it be M. Vianesi, M. Altès, or M. Lamoureux. Whoever he be, the conductor leads without being permitted to direct those he leads, and is completely powerless. I need not dwell on the fact that he has to be the humble slave of the scene-setters, of the singing-masters, of the chief scene-shifter, of the singers, and even of the dancers: the difficulty of his position will be clearly seen when it is understood that he is required to hold his tongue at the risk of causing a scandal.

Therein lies the real evil, and if the present pernicious system be not speedily and radically reformed the organization of the opera will merit the title given it by a witty Parisian composer, who calls it "Louis XIV.'s musical box."

A. Vianesi,

Musical Director of the French National Academy of Music.

George H. Boughton.

GEORGE H. BOUGHTON was born in England in 1834, but was only three years old when his parents removed to Albany, New York. Here his earliest edu-

cation in art was gained, and though he went to London for a brief period in 1853, he returned here to live for six years, first in Albany and then in New York City. In 1859 he went to Paris, and in 1861 he established himself in London, which has remained his permanent home. Since the year 1858 he has frequently exhibited at the Academy of Design, and he was elected an Academician in 1871. But Mr. Boughton has also been honored by the British Royal Academy with the title of Associate, and despite the fact that he has often painted American themes, as in the very popular "Return of the *Mayflower*," his long residence abroad, his general choice of subject-matter, and especially the character of his painting, rank him rather as an English than as an American artist. Many of his pictures are, however, owned in this country, and while Mr. Boughton was for a time in New York during the autumn of 1890 some twenty-five of them were exhibited at the Union League Club. They included a few landscapes with small figures, some scenes from early life in New England and New Amsterdam, and a larger number of those thoroughly English pictures of pretty maids and children in old-time dress and with outdoor surroundings upon which, even more than upon his Puritan pictures, Mr. Boughton's popularity is based. It is a little difficult now to realize how greatly the English public was charmed by these last-named works when they first began to appear. They have been widely imitated since, in their semi-modern, semi-idyllic character, in their rather pale schemes of color and their flattish effect, imitated on other canvases, on Christmas cards, and in children's books, until Mr. Boughton may well have been reminded of Tennyson's rare flower which so scattered its seed abroad that it came to be called a weed.

Quite different from these in spirit, and, I think, much more vital and interesting, are Mr. Boughton's pictures of the class which is represented by the "Izaak Walton and the Milkmaids" engraved on another page of this magazine. Here we find more naturalness and vigor in the conception of the figures, and an attractive expression of that delicate sense of humor which, to me, seems Mr. Boughton's most enviable gift. Nor in any other of his works has he given us a more charming bit of English landscape than in the background of the "Izaak Walton." It is one of his comparatively recent works, was included in the Union League Club collection, and is owned by Mr. Charles Stewart Smith of New York.

M. G. Van Rensselaer.

A Roman Catholic's View of "Sister Dolorosa."

A REPLY TO MR. JAMES LANE ALLEN'S LETTER IN THE CENTURY FOR MAY.

"SISTER DOLOROSA" is a good example of what may result from superficial writing on the part of an author. Mr. Allen seems to be under a misapprehension in regard to the "religious life" and in ignorance of the rules and regulations which prevail in convents, but in his story there is no evidence anywhere of a want of respect for nuns, or of a wilful intention to misrepresent them, and for that reason he is entitled to courtesy from Catholics even while they criticize relentlessly.

The plot of Mr. Allen's story is built on an impossible foundation. In no recognized religious order is a nun

allowed to go out alone. This is one of the strictest of conventual rules, and is never broken under any circumstances; therefore in the charitable visitations to the cottage "Sister Dolorosa" would most certainly have been accompanied by another nun, and in consequence her trysts with Gordon would have been rendered impossible. She is described as going to the church at night and meeting her admirer by accident on the steps. Nuns usually sleep in dormitories divided off into cells by means of thin muslin curtains only, and it is hardly probable, although of course possible, that one of the number could steal out without attracting the attention of some of her companions, or that she herself would take the risk of going to the church and getting back to bed again, knowing that detection of her act, as an infringement of the vow of obedience, would subject her to a severe reprimand. It is said that weeks passed by and she did not confess. All nuns are required to go to confession once a week, so her failure to confess her trouble is also improbable. In a convent all letters pass through the hands of the Mother Superior. As "Sister Dolorosa" looked at the envelope with indifference she could not have recognized her lover's chirography, and would therefore have had no motive in breaking the rules of her order by reading her letter without first submitting it to the superior, or obtaining permission to read it.

Again, Mr. Allen may not know that in America, with the exception of one or two orders, nuns are not allowed to make perpetual vows, and if "Sister Dolorosa" found her affections irrevocably given to an earthly love, her way was clear to preserve her conscience and her heart too by an appeal to Rome for a dispensation, or by calmly waiting until the term of her vows expired and left her free. Also, in every convent there takes place at certain intervals what is called "the manifestation of conscience," during which any sister who desires to do so may tell the bishop under the veil of secrecy, and without even making known her name, of the anxieties either spiritual or temporal she may have, or if there be anything objectionable about the convent or its management; and if "Sister Dolorosa" had "manifested her conscience" her troubles would probably have been speedily untangled.

The whole plot would have to be reconstructed in order to make it probable or even possible. Fiction, when it transcends the sensational variety, is expected to be true to life, and judged according to that standard "Sister Dolorosa" is a failure. A nun who falls in love after she enters the convent is an anomaly. One may concede without any disrespect to the "religious" in general that in some cases it may be for the want of an opportunity, for it belongs to fallible human nature to make mistakes, and a woman whose vocation it was to live in the world and to get married may have entered the convent in a moment of misapplied zeal; but a fire, even the immaterial fire of love, cannot burn very brightly or very long without some kind of fuel. Mr. Howells in his criticism of "The Senator" says, apropos of Mrs. Armstrong, that "the pursuit of wives by villains is so very uncommon in our society as to be scarcely representative or typical." And with greater truth it may be said in regard to nuns that affairs of the heart are so uncommon as not to be typical.

Catholics must regret that Mr. Allen went to Balzac, Daudet, and Valera for his types of the nun in fiction,