

to greet the new incumbrance that he must have some notice, by rocket or gun, of the precise moment of Hunt's passing Lerici. The 'lying memoirs' of Byron to which Shelley refers

were, Dr. Garnett informs us, the work of one John Watkins, and were published in 1822 under the title: 'Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Lord Byron, with Some of his Contemporaries.'

## LIFE, LETTERS AND THE ARTS

### OPERA IN EUROPE

IN spite of political and economic vicissitudes, the musical life of Vienna still goes on, though not quite at its old pace. The two operas, headed by Strauss and Weingartner respectively, are crowded at every performance and the concerts are equally popular, many of them being sold out far in advance.

The Staats-Oper, which is still under the control of the state, is directed by Strauss, although the cost of living compels him to supplement his earnings by visiting other countries professionally, as otherwise his government salary would be wholly inadequate. Other conductors take his place during his absences and the system of give-and-take does not seem to affect the artistic quality of the productions. In fact, there is more difficulty in securing singers than conductors, for the inroads of American operatic managers upon the ranks of foreign singers continue.

The repertory is not much affected. National lines are no more drawn than before the war and the impressarios venture upon very few novelties. The only new production at the Staats-Oper is a new work by Korngold, the child composer of the days before the war, who is now a mature musician of some twenty-three years. His latest work, *The Dead City* is based on Rodenbach's novel, *Le Mirage*. The opera exhibits Korngold's remarkable

command of tone in his treatment of the orchestra and has much music which is admirably singable, although the youthful composer at times shows varied influences—Puccini, Strauss, and Meyerbeer. The principal singers at the premiere were Oestwig, a Scandinavian tenor who is said to combine great vocal and dramatic ability with a fine stage presence, and Madame Jeritza, whom Vladimir Cernicoff declares to be possessed of 'one of the finest soprano voices I have heard for years.'

Within three weeks seventeen operas were performed, including works by Mozart, Wagner, Puccini, Massenet, Gounod, and Herr Strauss himself. Among the singers who are attracting attention are Bertha Kiurina, a beautiful singer of Mozart's music, Piccaver, an American tenor who specializes in Puccini, Richard Mayer, a genuine basso-profundo, and Gutheil Schoder, who has been singing *Carmen* and *Salome*.

La Scala at Milan is being practically rebuilt at a cost of 6,000,000 lire. The stage, roof, and artists' dressing rooms are to be wholly new, and large rooms for the chorus singers are to be added. Although 250 workmen have been employed since last August, the alterations are so extensive that no operas can be produced before next December, when the winter season will be given over principally to new operas.

In the meantime, the Paris Opera

is in such financial straits that it has even been proposed to hold moving-picture shows on certain afternoons each week. The finances of the Republic are in such a bad way that it is quite out of the question to look to the government for an increase in subsidy. At present, however, it does not seem likely that the 'movie shows' will be given—not because Paris recoils from the profanation but because it is feared that the proportions of the theatre would dwarf even the most ambitious film production.

#### SHAKESPEARE IN ARABIAN

A company of strolling players from Egypt have been presenting an Arabian version of *Romeo and Juliet* in a theatre in the European quarter of Tunis. Although Shakespeare has been translated into many tongues and presented on many foreign stages, his plays have seldom been more curiously distorted. The blood feud between the Capulets and Montagues, of course, agreed with the best Arab tradition. The action of the piece unrolled itself in due and decorous order. Juliet and her nurse, Romeo and Friar Laurence, Mercutio and Benvolio and Tybalt—they were all there.

Unfortunately, the native *regisseur* found it necessary to adapt the text to the traditions of the Arab theatre, which, needless to say, differ somewhat from those of the west. In the popular literature of the east, a declaration of love is conventionally expressed in song, and the observance of this convention constrained Romeo and Paris to interrupt their lines ever and anon to break into the curiously plaintive Oriental chants without accompaniment, which to European ears do not differ greatly from the amazing succession of nasals and gutturals of the native street peddlers.

The scenes which have the strongest popular appeal were the duels and the love scenes. A dolorous love song, which took the place of the famous lines

Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.  
It was the nightingale and not the lark  
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear,

and which was sung by 'Romeo' to 'Shoulit', won thunderous applause.

Although the troupe was reputed to be the best of its sort in the East, the Europeans in its audience were unable to make much even of those portions of the play which most closely resembled western drama. Naturally the conventional ideas of Mohammedan countries have hitherto forbidden the appearance of women upon the stage, precisely as in Shakespeare's England. Of late years, however, this convention has been breaking down and the troupe at Tunis boasted a few actresses. They were timid, with feeble voices, and naturally without much theatrical training. In dialogues with men they invariably permitted the actor to dominate the scene. It is a little difficult to imagine just how, under the circumstances, the old nurse was presented.

Notwithstanding all its shortcomings, the company pleased its audiences. It continues to give a performance each Thursday morning, the day preceding the Mohammedan Sabbath. As in the Elizabethan theatre the audience is almost entirely composed of men, although there is one gallery where women may see the play without themselves being seen. Except for a few rough adaptations from the *Thousand and One Nights*, which have no intrinsic value in themselves, whether literary or dramatic, the repertoire is almost entirely made up of European plays of the romantic period, ranging from Schiller to Dumas.

[*The Spectator*]  
SENTINEL SONG  
BY ROBERT NICHOLS

AFTER the silence  
The twilight deepens,  
After the twilight  
The silence deepens.

And darkness and silence  
Over desert and mountain  
Distill on all creatures  
Thick dew, softest slumber.

"Ah, Twilight! Twilight,  
Hasten! I long for  
Deep sleep, complete darkness,  
Nothingness, silence."

Hush, heart have patience;  
He knows, Who the Day-Watch  
And Night-Watch ordaineth,  
How much or little  
The heart sustaineth.

Abide the vigil,  
Though seeming distant,  
Where sun most smiteth,  
Night is most sudden,  
Twilight is sweetest,  
Dark sleep deepest,  
Silence completest.

[*London Times*]  
THE CLOUD  
BY PERCY HASELDEN

A cloud that capped the fir-clad hill  
Changed fitfully to countless shapes,  
Now clustered like a bunch of  
grapes,  
Now like a face that threatened ill.

And once, when gilded by the sun,  
A palace rose with sparkling domes,  
Then vanished, and a troupe of  
gnomes

Danced on the tree-tops one by one.

And then an Alpine glacier,  
Intent to carve the world below,  
Loomed o'er the wood, and whirling  
snow  
Shrouded and slew each pointed fir.

[*Westminster Gazette*]  
EASTER HYMN IN THE  
FIFTEENTH-CENTURY MODE  
BY "NULLOS"

[These metres are based on those used  
in fifteenth-century Mystery Plays. The  
narrative style and Latin refrains are  
both typical of fifteenth-century hymns.]  
In Lenten, when smal briddes syng  
And al thyng murie be,  
Thre holi wommen cam wepyng  
And spycis in ther handys bryng  
T' anoynt ther lordys buryyng—  
*Sed resurrexit hodie.*

An Aungell met hem atte doore—  
A taylor of mirthe tolde he:  
'Youre lorde lyeth her namore—  
'To Galile he goth bifore:  
'Reioyceth the, Mari, therfor—  
'*Quia surrexit hodie.*'

The holi wommen yon yfere  
Syngyng to Galile:  
Thei meten Johan and eke Peter  
Forth wendyng to the sepulchere:  
'Cristus is risn, he is not her,  
'*Quia surrexit hodie.*'

O who shal syng of manys blis,  
His merthe and iolte,  
To heren tydyng lyk to this?  
Syngeth, with angell mynstrellis,  
'Prays God to whom the glorie is—  
'*Christus surrexit hodie.*  
*Deo gratias. Alleluia.*