

THE WORLD OF MUSIC

OPERA IN RETROSPECT AND IN PROSPECT.

This year's supplementary opera season at the Metropolitan was a success, notwithstanding the warm weather and the absence of many opera goers from New York. Two striking events were a great night upon which Calvé sang "Carmen" in a manner which surpassed anything she had before given us, and the presentation of a truly magnificent diamond tiara to Mme. Nordica.

Every year this last singer gains new favor with American audiences. It may be mentioned incidentally that we hear no more of her engagement to Zoltan Doehme, the Hungarian tenor. It seems that the marriage, which has been so many times announced, is finally off entirely.

It is said that next season the supplementary season will be given up, and its place taken by a company of German singers, under Pollini of the Stadt Theater in Hamburg. Some of Abbey & Grau's artists may be engaged with these, but more probably not. But as the singers who came over to sing in German opera this year have been allowed to go, it being found that performances in German were not pleasing to the general opera goer, Director Pollini might do well to think twice before engaging Van Dyck to come at two thousand dollars a night.

Walter Damrosch lost money, but it was chiefly in the South. He thinks that his company may do better next year; but it will probably take another decade to educate the Americans of the South and West to care for Wagner—at least in paying quantities. Mr. Damrosch has been trying to obtain guarantees from some of the Western cities. St. Louis is said to have responded with eight thousand dollars, although the company lost heavily there last winter.

We shall again have Mancinelli as a conductor next season. It was a serious disappointment to his many friends and admirers here that he did not come back this season, and he was no less missed by the managers. But as a composer, he has no reason to regret his season's retirement. The success of his opera, for which Boito supplied the libretto, is practically assured, although Albani was cast for its first performance in Norwich. Later, at Covent Garden, it will be in the hands of Melba and the de Reszkes, and its full beauties will be discovered.

The subject is "Hero and Leander," and we have a right to expect a poem from that ambitionless man of talent, Arrigo Boito. He seems to care more for assisting at other men's triumphs than for creating works of his own. Without him, Verdi's genius would never have reached its full development in later years. "Otello" and "Falstaff" are great in their

librettos as in their scores. In his verse, and also in his own music, Boito shows the dreaminess of the North and the passion of the South, and a wide culture.

It is becoming more and more difficult to understand why Albani should be cast for any important rôle; for her voice is a thing of the past. Her career is a continual reminder that a reputation will carry a singer through many failures. It appears to give her a momentum which cannot be checked until a new generation of hearers comes upon the scene. Can it be that after all we have no genuine ear for music, and take the opinions of critics, who grow so fond of a singer whose reputation they have once helped to make that they will never destroy what they have created?

EAMES' STAR IN THE ASCENDANT.

It is probable that Mme. Eames will be able to do a little dictating upon her own account next year, so notably has she heightened her reputation in Europe. At one time it was rumored that she would not come back here unless she possessed the exclusive right to certain rôles. This was not true, but she did stipulate that such a right should be given to no one else. *Juliet*, *Elsa*, and *Marguerite* are the rôles in which Mme. Eames has made her great successes. If she is to see these the property of other singers, she is at once placed in a second rate position.

Her independent stand last winter was abundantly rewarded. She was one of the few prima donnas of her rank whom Abbey & Grau and Damrosch left on the other side. The field was before her, and she reaped not only a golden harvest, but such prestige as would have been impossible under existing conditions in America. She has realized her powers.

LEONCAVALLO'S EARLY STRUGGLES.

The success of Leoncavallo's "Thomas Chatterton," produced in Rome a few weeks ago, recalls the early history of the opera. Leoncavallo is popularly known by his two act opera, "I Pagliacci," but "Thomas Chatterton" was written long years before the conception of the showman stabbing his wife in earnest as the climax of a play had come to him. It was the young man's first work, and, as is usually the case, it proved almost impossible to find a manager who would produce it. At last he paid a man three thousand francs to bring it out, with the result that he never saw money or manager again. Finally, poverty and stress of circumstances compelled him to sell it for about sixty dollars; but after fame had come to him, he was able to find it again, revise it, and put it properly upon the stage. It is full of a dramatic interest which is amazing when we realize the youth of its author.

Leoncavallo, like Boito, is a man of letters as well as a musician, writing all of his own librettos, and these are usually a trifle more original than his music, which is as full of plagiarisms as of cleverness.

AT THE SHRINE OF WAGNER.

The lovers of Wagner who go to Bayreuth this season will see produced there, for the first time in twenty years, "*Der Ring der Nibelungen*." The opera was given at the opening of the Bayreuth festivals, but it was found necessary, shortly afterwards, to sell the scenery and costumes to pay expenses.

There are no great singers promised at the festival this year. Frau Wagner appears to consider that the name of Bayreuth, and the management of herself and her son, are a sufficient guarantee that the performances will be artistic. For the scenery and accessories, however, she has gone to a good deal of expense. The horses in the "*Walküre*" are to be shod with rubber and trained to make some sort of showing. It is said that Frau Wagner thought of having the warlike sisters pictured from a magic lantern, to get a realistic rendering of their appearance from the sky.

Jean de Reszke was expected to sing *Tristan* at Bayreuth this season. It is said that it was one of his ambitions to do so, and that he learned German for this special purpose, but now we are informed that Frau Wagner has not invited him.

GOLDMARK'S "CRICKET."

Goldmark's last opera has for its libretto a free version of Charles Dickens' "*Cricket on the Hearth*." It will seem to England and America something like "*Hamlet*" minus the *Prince of Denmark*, for *Caleb Plummer* has been left out. The whole story has been radically changed, and to our ideas there seems nothing suitable for an opera in it; but Goldmark has made for it a score which requires as much orchestration as one of the *Nibelungen* dramas. The libretto is uninteresting and weak, but the music is a different story altogether. There is not one *motif* which is not fresh, original, full of life. It comes at a time when few even passably good scores are being written, and its value is great to the musical world.

THE ECLIPSE OF A NEW STAR.

Mascagni has brought forth another failure. They built those triumphal arches in his native town a little prematurely. Up to this time "*Cavalleria Rusticana*" is his only worthy work, and the critics of a bygone day, those who did not "discover" him, are crying "I told you so!"

His new opera, "*Zanetto*," is founded upon Coppée's "*Le Passant*." It is said to be fairly creditable musically, but exceedingly slight. There is only one noteworthy scene—one that takes place between the soprano and the mezzo soprano, the latter of whom assumes a masculine rôle.

But Mascagni had the triumphs of a lifetime compressed into a few years.

"HANSEL UND GRETEL."

When Humperdinck in "*Hansel und Gretel*" applied the methods of Wagner to a familiar old *Hausmärchen*, he could not have anticipated that it would make the best record as a popular piece which any German opera has ever enjoyed. The opera ran a hundred times in Berlin in eighteen months. In September, 1894, the opera was produced fourteen times in the empire; in the following December, 248 times; and it has been given nearly two thousand times in the past year. In Russia they are going wild over it, three theaters in Moscow producing it at one time.

Here in America it was regarded as rather childish—a sort of fairy play. It was not very well produced, no singers of any note taking part in it; and managers are beginning to learn that in nine cases out of ten it is the singer and not the opera that is the listener's first thought.

A FAIRY TALE WITHOUT WORDS.

Vienna has produced a child prodigy of whom a story is told which is so good that it is to be hoped her fame does not die down and leave it out of the biographies.

She is a pianist named Paula Szalit. Johannes Brahms has taken her as a protégée, and spends hours with her. The child is hardly more than an infant, and the other day the famous musician took her on his knee and told her a quaint old fairy tale. She looked at him with curious eyes as he unfolded the story, and when it was ended still sat staring at him.

"Do you understand it?" he asked.

She slipped down, went to the piano stool, and began to let her baby hands wander over the keys. She was repeating it. When she had finished, Brahms stood with his eyes filled with tears.

FOR STUDENTS OF CHOPIN.

An interesting book for music students is the English edition of Jean Kleczynski's studies of Chopin. These have been translated and added to by Natalie Janotha, who first delivered them as a course of lectures, and then published them under the title of "*Chopin's Greater Works*."

Miss Janotha is not so well known in this country as in Europe, though she has been spending the winter and spring in America. Mr. Gladstone, who has not left music out of his far reaching studies, wrote to his daughter, Mrs. Drew, "I am extremely glad to hear that Miss Janotha is giving her aid to the interpretation of Chopin, whom she so deeply venerates, for I feel sure that no one living is more competent to do it."

The translator wishes it understood that her book is no study of musical feeling or style, but simply of technical execution, of mechanism. Chopin's style is seemingly simple, yet it requires the highest art to interpret his work successfully. Some of the difficulties

Miss Janotha has tried to obviate by her clear analysis.

NORWAY'S GREAT MUSICIAN.

No pianist writing today is more individual, gives more truly the note of his national temperament, than Edvard Grieg. His works should be familiar to every student who has dreams of composing, not that their methods may be imitated, but because they show how the inmost spirit of a country may be translated into exquisite sounds. Grieg is as true to Norway as if he painted pictures of her mountains and fjords, or described the passions of her people.

He has just finished a new pianoforte quartet which is spoken of with enthusiasm by all who have heard it. He will visit England during the summer, and take to the musical world there his variations on an old and popular Norwegian theme called "Legende," which was produced in Copenhagen not long ago.

Grieg is a friend of the reigning family of Denmark, whose queen is one of the best royal musicians in Europe. The French Republic lately conferred upon him the knighthood of the Legion of Honor.

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN AGAIN.

"The Grand Duke," Gilbert and Sullivan's last opera, proves again that these two men are to be found at their best only when they are working together.

"The Grand Duke" may not have the elements which made "Patience" and "Pinafore" loved—at least, not in such quantities—but it has the old dash and spirit and really humorous fun, with a bit of harmless satire here and there. One never knows exactly to whom this is due. It does not seem to appear when the two craftsmen work with others. The music is mischievous when the *Chamberlains* sing their chorus, and when the "wealthy members of the brewing interest, to the peerage elevated," gather in. Sir Arthur Sullivan has the talent for modern comic opera, and is almost alone in his field—when he has Mr. Gilbert to select his themes.

THE SINGER OF MANY FAREWELLS.

Patti has been on the Riviera all spring, and will sing in England in her usual concert tour. Her home at Craig-y-Nos, which she was once so eager to sell, seems to become dearer to her as she grows older, and she stays there for longer and longer periods, but almost always with a party of friends who can be actors and audience in her little theater. She herself is beginning to realize that her voice is not what it once was, and she will probably never again appear in opera.

THE QUESTION OF ENCORES.

We spoke last month of Joseffy's reappearance after a silence of five years. An incident of the famous pianist's return to the world of music brought to a head the much agitated subject of encores. The craze for repetitions and additions has gone to silly extremes with us,

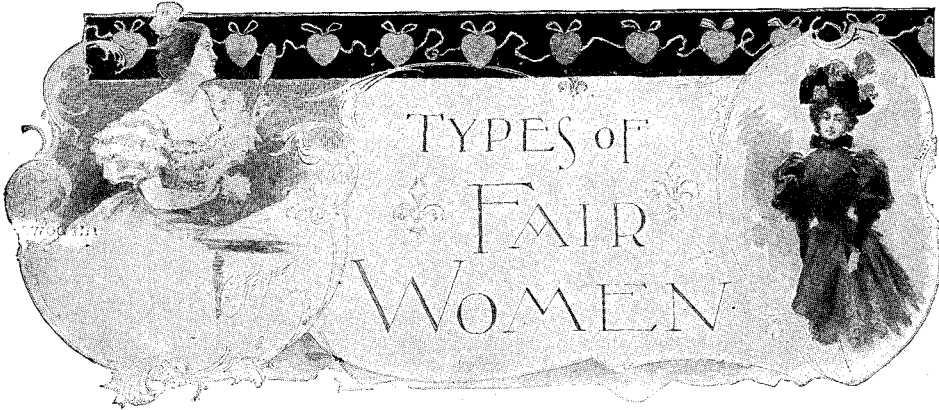
and there is something ridiculously business-like in the way an American audience rolls up its sleeves and proceeds to pound its palms raw in order to extort the last possible extra performance from an artist. On his first appearance in New York the frantic audience compelled Joseffy to play an encore before it would allow the orchestra to go on with the next number. On his second appearance he was forearmed, and could be induced to respond with nothing more artistic than a long series of grace notes.

Mr. Walter Damrosch finally took his place and signaled the orchestra to be ready for the next selection. Still the audience applauded stormily. After a short wait the orchestra struck up, but its music was drowned by the increased fury of the applause. At length the conductor was compelled to rap for silence. Then he rebuked the audience with a severity not conveyed in his well chosen words. He said that the concerto was a very exhausting performance, and that it was a privilege of genius to decline encores. "So," he added, "it is surely bad taste on *our* part to insist." Then the audience permitted the concert to proceed.

When the encore fiend carries his mania to the point of bulldozing obstruction, it is time to call a halt. But there is too common a tendency to condemn a good thing *in toto* on account of the evil of its abuse. It is true, perhaps, that such obliging geniuses as Paderewski have spoiled their audiences; yet a request for an encore is generally both natural and justifiable. A great composition interpreted by a master sets an audience completely *en rapport* with the personality of the artist, and inspires it with a sort of musical ozone. At the end of such a display piece, an audience is unwilling to be dropped back into the formal air of the ordinary concert hall. It is hungry for further spiritual exaltation, or at least a gradual letting down into dull silence. Such a feeling is the highest tribute to the magnetism of the artist, who should himself feel the same atmosphere, and be as reluctant to cease his flight upon the wings of music as the audience is to accept silence. This feeling surely explains the "indulgence" of many great pianists and singers.

Mr. Joseffy further objected that no encore could be found suitable for the spirit of the Brahms concerto. If this were true, he ought to have played last, and not allowed the orchestra to follow him with a piece of different tone. But contrast has the highest artistic possibilities. The concerto itself depicted several different moods with abrupt changes.

At the same time, the question of fatigue to the performer is an important one. Few people realize what a muscular feat a concerto is, with its thousands of blows and sweeps; and what a nervous feat it is with its infinite shadings and emotions. When an audience finds the performer unwilling to play again—and this is easily discoverable—it is flagrant discourtesy to try compulsion. Yet the justification of the encore lover should not be forgotten in the denunciation of the encore fiend.



In these enlightened days, when we are taught philosophy in the kindergarten and made to apply it to everything in creation, it is one of our first lessons that the history of a country's mental life can be better understood by studying the features of its inhabitants. The types that are representative are considered beautiful, and are preserved by the survival of the fittest.

America has reason to congratulate herself upon the change in her ideal beauties, if this be true. The "Book of Beauty" woman, with her sloping shoulders, her eyes larger than her mouth, her curls, and her simper, would be lost in our healthy "rose bud garden of girls," where loveliness holds the same meaning that was put upon it in the days of Greece's ancient



Miss Lillian Yarbrough.

From a photograph by Homer & Clark, Richmond.