

says, "you intend to adopt painting as a profession, you cannot too soon accustom yourself to study the *meaning* of a work of art with more earnestness and zeal than its mere *form*,—that is, in other words (as a painter is so fortunate as to be able to select visible nature herself for his substance), to contemplate and to study nature most lovingly, most closely, most innately and inwardly, all your life long. Study very thoroughly how the outer form and the inward formation of a tree, or a mountain, or a house always *must* look, and how it *can* be made to look, if it is to be beautiful, and then produce it with sepia or oils, or on a smoked plate; it will always be of use, if only as a testimony of your love of substance." It is difficult to find such lessons as these, whatever remuneration may be offered in return.

That the small works of a great man are immeasurably superior to the great works of a small man, may be proved beyond doubt by the many exquisite little pieces which Mendelssohn has left us, under the title of "*Lieder ohne worte*." These results of what may be called his hours of idleness, are as perfect of their kind as the most elaborate compositions; and so thoroughly diversified are they in character, that the fingers of a well-trained pianist, and the mind of an accomplished musician, are absolutely necessary to give them due effect. The *indefinite* nature of music as a language was never admitted by Mendelssohn. To him words were more ambiguous than notes; and his "*lieder ohne worte*," however they may be felt by others, were to him even more intelligible than if he had conveyed his meaning in words. What he says on this subject is, however, too interesting to be passed over, considering how extensively these compositions are spread abroad. In a letter to Marc-André Souchay, who had asked him the meaning of some of his "*songs without words*," he writes, "If you ask me what *my* idea is, I say—just the song as it stands; and if I have in my mind a definite term or terms with regard to one or more of these songs, I will disclose them to no one, because the words of one person assume a totally different meaning in the mind of another person, because the music of the song alone can awaken the same ideas and the same feelings in one mind as in another,—a feeling which is not, however, expressed by the same words. Resignation, melancholy, the praise of God, a hunting-song,—one person does not form the same conception from these that another does. Resignation is to the one, what melancholy is to the other; the third can form no lively idea of either. To any man who is by nature a very keen sportsman, a hunting-song, and the praise of God, would come pretty much to the same thing; and to such a one the sound of the hunting-horn would really and truly be the praise of God, while we hear nothing in it but a mere hunting-song; and if we were to discuss it ever so often with him, we

should get no further. Words have many meanings, and yet music we could both understand correctly." A quotation from the fourth part of Goethe's "*Dichtung und Wahrheit*," given as a foot-note in this letter, adds strength to these remarks of Mendelssohn. "I have already but too plainly seen that no one person understands another; that no one receives the same impression as another from the very same words."

It is painful to read of the bereavements which, in the midst of his brilliant career, came upon Mendelssohn so rapidly, that his constitution had barely time to rally between each. The death of his father, mother, and lastly of his favorite sister, threw a gloom over his mind which even the active nature of his daily pursuits could not dissipate. After the loss of his sister, his words of grief show how hard was the task of nerving himself to exertion. "My family are all well," he writes; "the happy unconcerned faces of my children alone have done me good in these days of sorrow. I have not as yet been able to think of music; when I try to do so, all seems empty and desolate within me. But when the children come in, I feel less sad, and I can look at them and listen to them for hours." This letter was written on the 24th May, 1847; and on the 4th November, of the same year, he had ceased to exist.

These fragments of a life, in which so much is necessarily omitted, will, we hope, not be accepted in place of a biography, which should rank as one of the most interesting ever given to the world. There are no doubt reasons why those in charge of his many unpublished works should be cautious in submitting them to public criticism; yet we earnestly hope that, for the sake of art, these reasons may not be considered of sufficient weight to justify them in placing a permanent seal upon compositions which may yet add a lustre to the name of Mendelssohn. No verdict of private individuals, delivered with closed doors, however competent they may imagine themselves to pass judgment, will satisfy the many who justly feel that they have a right to be admitted to the trial. We have the utmost respect for the sacred duties entrusted to his surviving relatives; yet we would urge upon them to reflect whether, in their too zealous desire to carry out those duties conscientiously, they are not withholding a treasure which its possessor, had he lived, might have voluntarily bequeathed to the art which he had already done so much to enrich.

#### ROYAL ENGLISH OPERA.

THE management of this establishment, having at length discovered that no amount of exaggerated advertisement can effectually support a feeble work, determined on Monday, the 4th ult., to call in the aid of a name hitherto unknown to fame, and achieved the first genuine success of the season. The new operetta, *Fanchette*, is the composition of Mr. W. C. Levey, son of the musical director of the Theatre Royal, Dublin, and the *libretto* is by Mr. Maddison Morton. The scene is laid, during

the time of the Republic in France, at Douay, a small town in La Vendée. The niece of the mayor is betrothed to a republican soldier; but to protect her foster-brother, a royalist marquis, who seeks refuge in the house, she persuades him to assume the name of her lover, and is, in consequence, almost forced by her uncle into a marriage with the wrong man. The death of Robespierre, which occurs just at the right time, at once solves the difficulty, and enables the happy bride, who is now restored to her betrothed, to express her joy in the usual florid *finale*. Presuming that this is the first work of a young composer, there is every hope for his future. A ten years' residence in Paris has evidently had its effect in creating a love for the fascinating sparkle of the French school, and consequently in distracting the mind from that earnest and conscientious study without which the highest rank in art can never be attained; but he has done wisely in writing within his powers, and there is a feeling for dramatic effect throughout his operetta which keeps the attention alive. We shall be glad to find in a second work that he relies more upon himself, and that the influences outside the art are not suffered to cramp the natural flow of his ideas. We must at once say that his songs are the weakest part of his music;—not that they are destitute of grace, but that they are not sufficiently original to command attention. Mr. Harrison's ballad, "Look, this is joy," is merely the inevitable commonplace string of passages to which we have latterly been so accustomed in English opera, that the intelligent amongst the audience have almost begun to look upon the first tenor as their natural enemy. Beyond these prefatory remarks—made in all kindness of spirit—we have little but praise. His dramatic writing evinces a talent which must some day develop itself in a more important work. The trio in which the mayor is led to believe that the marquis is the republican soldier to whom his niece is betrothed, is excellent throughout, and the laughing *finale* elicited a well-merited *encore*. The quartet, "Fie, for shame, sir," is also very cleverly written; and the duet for soprano and tenor, "What'er may be our fate," has a smooth and vocal melody with which the accompaniment of the chorus is skilfully combined. Miss Louisa Pyne as *Fanchette*, sang extremely well, especially in the solo, "How sad all nature seems to be," the *encore* to which was, however, chiefly owing to the long concluding *cadenza*, with flute obbligato. Mr. W. Harrison acted with spirit the part of the marquis, and sang the sentimental music in his usual sentimental style. Mr. H. Corri played the part of the fussy mayor with much humour; and if he could only find out where character ends and caricature commences, he would prove most useful in comic opera. The same may be said of Mr. J. Rouse, as *Pierre Poulot*, the republican soldier, who is betrothed to *Fanchette*, and Mr. Aynsley Cook, as the corporal, both of whom should take a lesson from the French stage, if they wish to know how to be humorous without being obtrusive. We must not omit to mention that the overture is spirited and melodious, and that the instrumentation throughout the operetta is clear and generally free from exaggeration. Mr. Levey was called for at the fall of the curtain, and received the well-merited applause of the audience. On the whole, we have much pleasure in recording a success which will, we trust, bring profit to the establishment, and act as an incentive to increased exertion on the part of the young composer. We are glad to find that Mr. G. A. Macfarren's opera, on the subject of *She stoops to conquer*, is already in an active state of preparation.

#### HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

ON Saturday, the 23rd ult., *Faust*, translated into English, was produced at this establishment; and as no other opera has been mentioned in the opening prospectus, we presume that the firm hold it has taken of the public, added to the novelty of its English costume, has induced

the management to venture on a "Faust season." Judging by its reception on Saturday evening, we see no reason to doubt the success of the experiment; and the admirable manner in which the opera was sung throughout, with English vocalists in four of the principal parts, must still more confirm the views we have so often expressed, that the materials for native opera, with an audience eagerly ready to appreciate, lie within the grasp of any manager who feels that a fair hearing for the English composer is the one thing wanting. The part of *Margarita* is admirably suited to Madame Lemmens-Sherrington; and although we miss the power of Titiens, where power is essential, she invests the part with so much of that artless grace inseparable from our own ideal of the beautiful peasant girl, that with a voice admirably trained, and a fair knowledge of the stage, so even a performance of this difficult character is presented, as to leave a thoroughly satisfactory impression on the audience. The "bijou" song was deliciously sung; and in the garden scene, where she plucks the flower as the well-known love-test, the tenderness which she threw into her maidenly accents of doubt in the truth of *Faust*, added an infinite charm to the delicate music of this most beautiful of all love-scenes. Mr. Sims Reeves has already played the part of *Faust*, and we need scarcely say that he sang the very arduous music of the character with his accustomed care and finish. A certain hardness in his acting, which appears only to arise from want of practice, has yet to be conquered; and in the present dearth of tenor singers, we should be glad to find that, instead of the meteoric appearances which he has hitherto made on the stage, he had really resolved to devote his fine voice to the service of the lyrical drama. Much as we admire Mr. Sims Reeves in the concert-room—and especially in the sacred concert-room—we cannot consent that he should become only an occasional member of an operatic company. Of Mr. Santley, who played *Valentine*, we have little new to say, singing and acting as he does in every part with the conscientious zeal of a finished artist; but on this occasion a new cavatina, written for him by M. Gounod, gave an additional importance to the character. This cavatina, based on the major subject in the orchestral prelude to the opera, occurs naturally enough in its situation, and materially heightens the effect of the scene. Signor Marchesi sang the music of *Mephistophiles* carefully throughout; but the part has no material points of attraction, and we fear that all singers will find it a somewhat thankless character. We have but space to record the success of Madlle. Florence Lancia in *Siebel*, who sang extremely well, but nervously; and of M. Dussek, in *Wagner*, a small part, but one important to the general effect. Madame Tacani resumed her old character of *Martha*. The opera was well placed upon the stage, the scenic effects being duly studied and arranged. We should however have preferred the organ, in the fourth act, which is so evidently intended as a feature by the composer, to have been brought out with greater fulness of tone. The effect was so exceedingly weak, that the dramatic intention was almost destroyed. The English version of the opera, which its author, Mr. H. F. Chorley, tells us is not to be accepted as a translation, is unnecessarily harsh in many parts; so much so, indeed, that the vocalists—whether with or without the author's permission, we have no means of knowing—continually substituted other words, as good for the sense, and infinitely better for the sound, than those in the printed copy. There is feeling, however, in much of the poetry; and as the excuse of its being a literal translation cannot be urged for its defects, we trust that a little revision may be given to the book, so that it may become a standard English version of one of the most successful operas of modern times. The principal singers were continually called on during the progress of the opera, and greeted with the loudest applause from a house crowded in every part.