

MUSIC IN BERLIN.

One of the principal items which I have to record, in my present letter, with regard to the Royal Opera House, is that the great ornament, the "dulce decus," of the establishment in question, to wit, Mad. Lucca, has taken leave of it to go and sing at the Italian Opera, at St. Petersburg, for two months. Let us hope that the climate will not affect her voice; not every voice can stand it. The last character she sustained previous to her departure was Zerlina, in *Don Juan*. It is not one which affords her an opportunity for the display of her full powers, but, that fact notwithstanding, the applause which greeted her at her first appearance, during the performance, and on the fall of the curtain, proved how highly the public esteem her, and how glad they will be to welcome her back. The other operas in which this accomplished lady sang since I last wrote were *Figaro's Hochzeit*, *L'Africaine*, and *Fra Diavolo*.

Of course Herr Wachtel has played Chapelou in *Le Postillon de Longumeau* again. As I had seen him some few times in that opera already, my seat was unoccupied the evening he donned the well-known jackboots (not "boot-jacks," as they are called by a German friend of mine who suffers under the mild delusion that he is a complete master of "the English"). When, however, he was announced to appear for the first time as the hero in M. Gounod's *Faust*, I was in my place as usual. Herr Wachtel, on this occasion, certainly surprised me. He had evidently taken great pains with the part, and, what is more, resolved to tame down his usual boisterousness. The consequence was that he created a marked sensation, especially in the air of the third act, which air he gave entire, and without the usual "cut." Madam Harriers-Wippem was an admirable Margherite, and Herr Salomon, a most Mephistophelian Mephistopheles, as, indeed, he ought to be by this time, considering that he has played the part here upwards of a hundred nights. That is a high number in Berlin, though it may not be considered much in London or Paris, where a man may return from circumnavigating the globe and see a piece he saw before his departure still figuring in the bills. I must observe, however, that when I say a hundred times is a high number for Berlin, I am referring to classical, or high class works; I do not include the effusions of M. Offenbach's lighter muse, which, in Berlin as elsewhere, enjoy runs resembling the Irishman's cable, the end of which—as he stated, at least—had been cut off.

Boieldieu's *Johann von Paris* has been revived, after having been allowed to slumber undisturbed for a very considerable period. There is something, to my mind, indescribably sweet and charming about the music, but whether it will prove attractive to the general public is quite another thing. I do not fancy it will. The public have become so vitiated in taste by the highly spiced dainties on which they have been fed of late years, that good, honest food is no more sufficient. However, there may be—in fact, I might say, there is sure to be—a change very soon, and a very marked change. Two years since, did not ladies' skirts rival balloons in circumference and the sea-serpent in length, and are they not worn at present as narrow, almost, as a bigot's views, and as short as a miser's reply to an appeal for char-

ity? With such a speedy and total metamorphosis within the memory not of the oldest, but of nearly the youngest inhabitant of this world of ours, why should we despair of seeing, or, rather, hearing a change even in opera? But to return to *Johann von Paris*. Herr Wachtel was Johann, and, I must say, that a worse representative of the part I never saw. Even his admirers could not applaud him as they are wont to do. A bright and entrancing contrast to Herr Wachtel was offered by Mad. Harriers-Wippem as the Princess, a part exactly suited to her, and the music of which she gave in a manner that fairly captivated the audience. The other parts were sustained—satisfactorily? No—not for a theatre like the Royal Opera House, Berlin. Those that were well sung were not well acted, while, on the other hand, where the acting was good, the singing was not altogether irreproachable.

As visitors, or "guests," we have had guest No. 1, Madame Borchers, who impersonated the Queen of Night in *Die Zauberflöte*. Madame Borchers belongs to the Theatre Royal, Hanover, and her impersonation of the fair nocturnal potentate may there be considered highly effective, but I myself deem it no better than what I have heard very often and not thought first-rate. Madame Borchers's voice is not high enough for the part as written, so that the part had to be transposed; her voice is, moreover, deficient in tenderness, and her style wants ease and finish. Visitor No. 2 was Mdlle. Feresi, a pupil of Madame Viardot-Garcia. She appeared as Leonore in *Die Favorite*, but is unfitted for the part vocally and historically. Unless informed of the fact, no one would suppose she had studied under so accomplished and clever an artist as Madame Viardot-Garcia. Guest No. 3 was Mdlle. Artôt, who commenced her engagement with Angela in *Le Domino Noir*. She was very warmly welcomed. From what I have told you, you will perceive that we have not had much novelty, but things are generally well done, and the consequence is that the management is liberally rewarded for its activity and good taste. I see by the papers that the receipts at the Opera House last month were thirty-six thousand thalers; a very tidy sum.

At Kroll's Theatre the burlesque of *Tschin-Tschin*, with Offenbach's music, has proved a hit. At the Friedrich-Wilhelmstadt Theatre, M. Offenbach's *Pariser Leben* continues to draw crowded houses. It has now run some hundred and fifty nights. At the Wallner-Theatre, a new farce entitled, *Die Mollenburger*, has been produced with music by Herr Bial, the conductor at the said theatre. According to report, Herr Bial's music is something far superior to the music usually written for such pieces, and justifies the hope that Herr Bial will some day make his mark among contemporary composers. I trust the hope will be realized, for if ever a new operatic composer was sorely needed in Germany it is at the present day.

Of concerts, there have been plenty. As I did not go to all of them, I shall not notice all of them, but restrict my efforts to telling you something about the principal ones to which I did go. In the first place, there has been a regular Quartet fever raging with great violence. Two different Quartet Unions, that from Florence, and that from Dresden, have visited us lately. This, of course, put the Berlin Quartettists on their metal. And a very good thing, too. There is nothing so advantageous in art, as well as

in trade, as a little frank, honest rivalry. If not stirred up now and then, even the best artists are prone to relax in their efforts, and instead of weaving their laurels into wreaths, and wearing them round their heads, to convert them into mattresses on which to repose. The principal compositions played by the Florentiners, and played really to perfection, were the Quartet in C major, and that in D minor, by Mozart; that in D minor by Schubert; that in F major (Op. 135), that in F major (Op. 59, No. 1), that in A minor (Op. 132), and the "grand" E flat major Quartet by Beethoven; and that in D minor by Schubert. There was but one wish when the Florentiners left—namely, that they would soon return. The Dresden Quartet consists of Herren Lauterbach, Hülweck, Göring, and Friedrich Grützmacher. They, too, produced a most favorable impression, and proved that the reports which had preceded them, and spoken so flatteringly of their merit, rested upon a solid basis of truth. Still, while paying a deserved tribute of praise to Florentiners and Dresdeners, I must in justice add that they have no unworthy rivals in the Berlin Quartet Association, consisting of Herren de Ahna, Espenhahn, Richter, and Bruns. These gentlemen have ably maintained their previous reputation, and need not fear comparison with their late visitors.

The first concert given by Koztolt's Association went off exceedingly well, and afforded great satisfaction. The programme contained several highly interesting pieces. Among them I may mention a Madrigal by Palestrina; a Dancing-Song by Morley; a Choral Song by Adolph Reichel; Uhländ's three "Frühlingslieder," set by Felix Mendelssohn; "Frühlingsliebe," by Hauptmann, and "Konig Mai," by Reinecke. In addition there were various vocal solos contributed by Mdlle. Koztolt and Herr Geyer, as well as an instrumental solo in the shape of Schumann's "Variations Symphoniques," performed, in a masterly manner, by Herr Werkenthin. VALE.

DARMSTADT.—No opera produced here of late years ever proved so successful as M. Gounod's *Faust*. Even his dreary opera of *The Queen of Sheba*, represented subsequently, was unable to efface the favorable impression he had made with his first work. No wonder, then, that every one was anxious to hear the latest novelty from his pen. *Romeo und Julie* was consequently brought out by the management with the greatest care, but it met with only a cool reception on the part of the public.

LEIPZIG.—The 12th Gewandhaus Concert (in honor of the memory of Moritz Hauptmann): First Part—(Compositions by Hauptmann), "Salve Regina" for chorus; overture to the opera of *Mathilde*; three sacred songs for a mixed chorus.—Second Part—Symphony (No. 3) in C minor, Spohr; "Ave Verum," Mozart; "Toccatà," Bach (scored by Esser); and chorus from Mendelssohn's *St. Paul*. The works performed at the 13th Gewandhaus Concert were: "Die Najade," overture, Sterndale Bennett; Concert Air, Spohr (Madame Peschka-Leutner); Violin Concerto, Beethoven (Herr Lauterbach); Recitative and air from *Die Zauberflöte*, Mozart (Madame Peschka-Leutner); Violin Concerto, A minor, J. S. Bach (Herr Lauterbach); and Symphony in B flat major, Schumann.