

THALBERG.

He was an innovator on the piano, though not of the first rank; he invented forms, notably effects. He had wonderfully formed fingers, the tips of which were real little cushions. This formation and very persevering study enabled Thalberg to produce such wonderful *legato* that Liszt said of him: "Thalberg est le seul artiste, qui joue du violon sur le clavier." When he played for the first time in public, in Vienna, in 1829, his touch and his expression at once conquered the audience, but even then principally the ladies. In Paris his winning manners and his scientific mode of education, which, with a very adroit modesty he knew how to show, though seeming to conceal it, contributed as much as his talent to render him the talk of the day. It must not, however, be surmised that his execution, although it could not stand the test of comparison with that of the Attila of the piano, Liszt, nor the dreamy attractive poetry of Chopin, was by any means ordinary. It is not true that, as another great *calambouriste* pretended, Thalberg, "playfully" attained his high position (*en jouant*). He was so fond of music that he overcame Prince Dietrichstein's preconceived idea of a diplomatic career, only by dint of earnest study and determination. He often left his bed at three o'clock in the morning to practice on his piano, and those who heard him privately and knew him intimately were much more able to appreciate the extraordinary difficulties he was able to overcome, than those who only heard him play his compositions in public. It was one of the reproaches which classical but tedious players heaped upon him, that "he did not play the great masters, but that he only shone in public with his own compositions." Yet when he played Beethoven it did not "amuse" the audiences of that day, and he lived before all for his success, for his own personality. Among all great piano-players, it should be said of him what Catalani said of Sontag: "His genre was not great, but he was great in his genre." He was amiable, both as a man and as a performer. His position, highly recommended as he was, and supported in society by Prince Dietrichstein, who endowed him with £20,000 and launched him with his powerful connections, was of course an exceptional one. It was one of the curious anomalies so often observable in life, that although he so earnestly preached against the mania of the century of sacrificing everything to effect, the gist of his art, the aim and purpose of all his musical studies, was nothing but to produce effect. That he was, musically speaking of a most sympathetic, attractive, even irresistible organisation, it would be difficult to deny; but it is, above all skill and education, which his piano compositions show, which, although influenced by Liszt's brilliancy and Chopin's florid style, are nevertheless more valuable than his orchestral and operatic compositions, which totally failed. He was a celebrated man for many reasons, one of which only was his executive talent, and for the successful endeavour to sing on the piano. It is a well known fact that Mme. Malibran, after hearing him play one evening, sang in a manner which astonished even her most ardent admirers. She made no secret of the reason of this most extraordinary effort, which was caused by the excitement which the brilliancy and elegance of Thalberg's performance had engendered in her.—*Temple Bar*.

HOW THE DUCHY OF PRUSSIA CAME TO THE HOHENZOLLERNS.

The country in question lies along the coast of the Baltic, east of the River Vistula. The natives—the Prussians, or Po-Russians—were slaves by race, heathen by religion, fishermen and hunters by occupation; and they were ever ready to fight, and fight bravely, for their religion, their homes, and their independence. But the Church could not tolerate their religion, and sought to carry them the Gospel of Peace on the point of the sword. With the sword the barbarians resisted; and more than one pious expedition marched into fatal disaster. At length it was determined to call in the Teutonic Knights—an order of chivalry founded during the Crusades, and in the early part of the thirteenth century settled without employment at Venice. Those zealous adventurers responded with eagerness to the appeal. They received a grant of the country from the Pope and the Emperor, set about the conquest with energy and method, and eventually subdued the natives under their authority and that of the Church. For two centuries they governed well. The country was prosperous, and the knights, though a privileged caste, averse to labour, set at least an example of temperance and equity. But luxury and idleness began finally to work their effects, and by the fifteenth century the knights had lost their habits of sobriety, their sense of justice, their valour and skill in battle. In wars with Poland they were repeatedly unsuccessful, and paid for their defeats by the loss of territory. The post of Grand Master of the order went begging all over Europe. It had ceased to be a post either of honour or of power. But early in the sixteenth century the choice fell upon Albert of Hohenzollern, of the Nuremberg branch of the family, and he accepted, with the resolution to restore the wasted fortunes of the colony. The task was difficult. The princes of the Empire, to whom Albert applied for help, gave only advice. Martin Luther, whom he consulted, also gave advice, and on that he acted. He adopted the Reformation, secularized the order, and created the Duchy of Prussia, he himself being Duke, and a vassal of the Republic of Poland.

With this revolution begins the chain of circumstances which led to the acquisition of the Duchy by Albert's kinsmen of Brandenburg. It will suffice to say that in 1569 the right of succession in the duchy, on the failure of direct heirs of Albert, had been secured to the Electors of Brandenburg by treaty with Poland, that in 1618 this contingency arrived, and that John Sigismund, who had a further claim based on his marriage with a granddaughter of Albert, became Duke of Prussia.—*Herbert Tuttle, in Harper's Magazine for April*.

RESOLUTIONS in favour of Mr. M'Legg's local veto bill are being passed at large public meetings all over Scotland.

THE OLD HOME.

The dear, familiar, old-time home
Stands on its pleasant hill,
Grey, weather-beaten, ivy-clad—
To me 'tis lovely still.

Surrounded by its sheltering trees,
All budding with the spring;
Ah me! these buds on hedge and tree,
What memories they bring!

The garden wall so softly clad
With moss and lichens grey;
The apple trees "old as the hills"
We said when we were gay.

sweet-scented thyme and peppermint,
And all the old-time flowers
(We never saw a garden then
We thought so sweet as ours).

Within I wander to and fro,
Through every pleasant room;
The sunshine is so bright to-day
I cannot think of gloom.

And yet regret will sometimes fill
These human hearts of ours;
Vague longings for a by-gone time,
For long departed hours.

The old home, 'tis hallowed now
By many a subtle spell;
By memories of a sainted life,
Now gone—but it is well!

The new is dear, but ah! the old
Clings close about the heart,
And, mingling with a present joy,
Past grief has oft a part.

But there awaits for us above
A grand and blissful home,
Where never partings rend the heart,
Where never sorrows come.
—Annie F. Swan, author of "Aldersyde."

AN EASTERN LEGEND.

The most painful thing to endure among the ruins of Palmyra is the want of water. The inhabitants have no other water than that of a hot spring, the water of which has an intense smell of sulphur. It can only be drunk after it has been exposed for twelve hours to the wind in a leather bottle. Yet, however repulsive it might have appeared at first, one gets so accustomed to it that at last the water brought by travellers, even from the "Wild-goat's Well" (Ain el Woul, halfway between Karatam and Palmyra), appears tasteless. The following legend relates to the sulphurous well of Palmyra, Ain el Rishen, or the Star Well. Once upon a time a large snake had taken its abode in the well, and was stopping its mouth so that no water could be drawn from it. Solomon, son of David, ordered the animal to leave the place, in order that the people might use the water. The snake replied to the wise king: "Grant me to come out with my whole body, and promise me not to kill me. I have a sun-spot in the middle of my body, and I shall die if anything touches me on that place." When Solomon had given him the required promise, the snake began to wind itself out; it crawled and crawled, but there was no end to it. Its rings already filled the valley, and there was no appearance of a sun-spot yet. Solomon began to be frightened, and he trembled so much that a ring slipped from his finger at the very moment when the mysterious spot appeared at the mouth of the well; the ring fell on that spot, and the snake was broken in two parts. The hind part of the monster remained in the well, and was putrefied in it, so that it became impossible to drink the water. Solomon purified the spring with sulphur, the putrid smell disappeared, but that of sulphur remains till now. The ashes of the front part of the snake burnt by Solomon, dispersed to the four winds, became another plague, that of the army of springing insects, e.g. locusts, etc.—*Deutsche Familienblatt*.

The lighting of the church is one of the most important items that come before finance committees. The following letter speaks for itself and will perhaps suggest a solution of the light problem:

GALT, Ont., June 23, 1883.

The Combination Gas Machine Co., Detroit, Mich.

GENTLEMEN,—In reply to your letter of the 16th ult., we have much pleasure in stating that the Combination Gas Machine you put in the Central Presbyterian Church here in February, 1882, has been doing good work ever since. It is a one hundred light machine, and we have in constant use ninety-five to ninety-eight lights, and on some occasions we have had as many as one hundred and twenty-five, and it has invariably worked well and given entire satisfaction. We consider it quite up to the representations, and have no hesitation in recommending it to those who are in want of gas machines. We might also state that the work of placing and fitting up the machine and connections was very satisfactory, inasmuch as you sent a thoroughly competent and gentlemanly mechanic to do it, who was most painstaking and careful that everything should be right.

Yours truly,

THOMAS TODD,

Chm's Board of Managers.

JAMES McFEGGAN,

Secretary.

Write to the Detroit or Windsor office for particulars.

The Prince of Wales has agreed to lay the foundation stone of the new tower of Peterborough cathedral in the first week of May.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN ITEMS.

A CREMATION society has been organised in Boston.

LORD LORNE is going to make an attempt to introduce the whitefish of the Canadian lakes into several rivers and lochs in the west of Scotland.

THE sum of £10,748 has been contributed by the congregations in Paisley Presbytery during the past year. The largest amount was £1,177 by the Paisley Abbey Church.

PROF. CANDLISH delivered on Friday the closing address of the Cunningham lectureship. His subject was "The Kingdom of God in Relation to Modern Social Ideas."

REV. GEO. COUSINS says that rarely has a sovereign lived who was so opposed to capital punishment and all harsh treatment of criminals as the late Queen of Madagascar.

A MEETING to protest against Sabbath desecration was held last Thursday in Patrick. The provost attributed the superiority of Scotch workmen to the worship and holy quiet of their Sabbath.

LORD BUTE will give a prize of £500 for the best setting of music to the "Alcestis" of Euripides. Lord Bute has also offered £50, through the National Eisteddfod Committee, for its translation into Welsh.

At Valparaiso the Congress has secularised the public cemeteries, enacted civil marriage, and passed a civil marriage registration bill, thus completing a trio of liberal measures designed to liberate oppressed consciences.

THE testimonial to Dr. and Mrs. Johnston will take the form of a training home for orphan girls. £4,000 will be required to build and furnish a suitable house, and it is anticipated no difficulty will be incurred in raising this sum.

KIRK WALL town council by a large majority has resolved not to appoint a representative elder to the Assembly. The mover said if the Assembly could not do without the aid of Kirkwall town council it was time to disestablish the Church.

THE latest return of the number of volumes in the British Museum is just over 1,300,000. There are 160 miles of shelves, and about twenty more miles to be filled. It is calculated that about one ton of literature a day is sent into that institution.

MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD does not seem to have profited by his elocution lessons in the United States. On the occasion of his first lecture in England, after his return home, *Truth* says that whenever he "wished" to be particularly impressive he was perfectly inaudible.

SEVERAL colleges at Oxford have suffered greatly by the agricultural depression. Wadham's revenues are diminished by about fifty per cent. Things are so bad with St. John's that the President has refused to accept his stipend for three years past, and Lincoln is also suffering severely.

DEAN CHISHOLM says he became acquainted a few years ago with an old man residing in the Causeway of Paisley who remembered the time when there were only a dozen Roman Catholic families in that town; now, according to the Dean, Paisley is favoured with the presence of about 12,000 Romanists.

THERE has been an increase of upwards of 30,000 members of the Wesleyan body in Great Britain during the last three years. The returns for this year, which are now being made up, are expected to prove that during recent years there has been the greatest development of Methodism since the days of John Wesley.

THE late Mr. White, of Overton, has bequeathed £34,000 to religious and charitable institutions. The sum of £5,000 goes to the sustentation fund, £3,000 to the Foreign, £3,500 each to the Home and Livingstonia missions, to the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, and to the Society for Children of Ministers and Missionaries.

In connection with the tercentenary of Edinburgh university a volume of pen-and-ink sketches of the professors is being issued by Messrs. Constable. Prof. Flint is represented as Christian clad in armour sheathing his sword, while the vanquished demons of modern scepticism are depicted in the background in full flight.

PRINCE BISMARCK's annual revenues amount to about \$25,000. He lives quietly, but is hospitable, and wishes all his visitors to feel at home while under his roof. When living on his estates he occupies himself with forestry, and his favourite walk is in the oak woods when his favourite flower, the heather, is in bloom.

UPWARDS of 400 Church of England clergymen are said to have signed a declaration in favour of the affirmation bill. The names include Dean Plumtre, Archdeacon Cheetham, Canon D. J. Vaughan, Rev. H. Scott Holland, Dr. Abbott, Hon. and Rev. W. H. Freeman, and Rev. C. H. Turner, rector of St. George's-in-the-East.

THE British House of Commons by 148 votes to 137 declined to accept Mr. Willis' resolution regarding the expediency of bishops ceasing to be members of the Legislature, and the House of Lords by forty-six votes to thirty-eight refused to adopt Lord Thurlow's motion in favour of museums and art galleries being open on Sunday.

MR. T. PAINTER ALLEN has published in England a book on the deceased wife's sister question. It contains the opinions of seventy of the foremost Greek and Hebrew scholars of the universities of Europe and America on the Biblical aspect of the question. Of the whole seventy, only one opinion is unequivocally adverse to the proposed change in the law.

VIGILANCE committees are being formed in some of the Dundee churches. The members of committee scatter themselves over the church and note absentees and strangers. Any member out of his place for two Sabbaths is reported to the minister, who immediately adopts means to know the reason why. In like manner, strangers attending for two Sabbaths are seen after with the view of attaching them to the congregation.