

with that of the much more ancient Opera House. There is probably not another lyrical theatre in Europe which has witnessed so many fine operatic performances during so long a period as the "Queen's Theatre" of 1711, which, after being called for a time the "Royal Academy of Music," became the "King's Theatre" on the accession of George I., and retained that name until another alteration of title became necessary when Her Majesty Queen Victoria ascended the throne. In 1710 when Handel arrived in England, the Académie Royale of Paris, at that time under the direction of Rameau, was held in very little esteem, and Italian music was never performed there at all. Indeed, for some sixty or seventy years afterwards, and until the arrival of Gluck in Paris, to be quickly followed by Piccini, the French had the worst opinion of Italian music, which they despised or perhaps affected to despise. The Queen's Theatre, as directed by Handel, at least during the first years of his management, was doubtless not to be compared with the great operatic theatres of Italy. But it soon became the custom to engage for London all the Italian singers of the highest repute; and scarcely an Italian vocalist of real celebrity appeared from the beginning to the end of the eighteenth century without sooner or later visiting England. Handel, like Shakspeare, was not only a great inventor, but an excellent man of business; and though he did not actually introduce Italian Opera into England (a few experiments in that line having been made during the five or six years preceding his arrival in London), he it was who first brought out a series of Italian operas, and who organized Italian Opera in England on a permanent basis. To his labours as composer, Handel soon added the functions of a manager; and from the early part of the seventeenth century to quite recent times, it may be safely said that Handel was the only manager who ever made Italian Opera in England a paying speculation. Besides the thirty-five operas from his own pen, Handel, during his connection with English Italian Opera, produced works by Buononcini, Scarlatti, Hasse, Porpora, and all the most distinguished composers of the time. At a later period when the management had passed from Handel to the Earl of Middlesex, the operas of Galuppi, Pergolesi, Jomelli, Gluck and Piccini were represented, and all the most eminent vocalists of Europe continued to appear at our London Opera House. After various adventures at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, Covent Garden, the Pavilion, and the King's Theatre, Italian Opera found itself once more, towards the end of the century, established at the last of these theatres, which, until Covent Garden was made into an opera house, did indeed seem to be its natural home. In 1789 the King's Theatre was burned down. It was rebuilt from Novosielski's designs in 1790; and from 1790 until some eight or nine years ago, Her Majesty's—formerly the "King's"—Theatre witnessed the production of a long list of works by the most eminent Italian, German, French, and even English composers; for at least two operas by Balfe, *Fulstaf* and the *Bohemian Girl*, one by Macfarran, *Robin Hood*, and one by Wallace, the *Amber Witch*, were played at Her Majesty's Theatre during the period either of Mr. Lumley's or of Mr. Mapleson's management. From Handel to Gluck, from Rossini to Verdi, almost every composer of European renown, since the first invention of Opera, has appeared at Her Majesty's Theatre; and certainly with the exception of Madame Patti and perhaps another *prima*