

preferred, however, the fugue by Guilmant, which was played clearly and evenly throughout, the grand chords at the close being drawn out of the magnificent piano (we never heard a finer instrument) with skilful fingers. Madame Rivé-King's playing did much to give an artistic air to the concerts, but she seemed to us to be out of place. We regret that such a musician should have to play second fiddle to mere opera singers, and hope the day is not far distant when an artist will be duly appreciated.

Mr. Strakosch has broken faith with the people of Montreal, and we hope that if ever he comes here again they will show him plainly that had he announced honestly what he intended to perform it would in the long run be better for his own interests.

Since writing the above we have received a visit from Mr. Conly with reference to our notice of last week. He says he never claimed to be superior to Whitney or authorised the announcement made on the bills, and throws the blame on an advertising agent named Wallace, who knows nothing about music.

We feel for Mr. Conly, and think he has been placed in a very awkward position. But the bills appeared, the public paid their money, and we must criticise accordingly.

#### THE ORATORIO.

Music is universally acknowledged to have an elevating and refining influence. In almost every grade of society, music of some kind or another, plays an important part in furnishing pure and refined entertainment, which physiologists declare to be absolutely necessary to the preservation of health. In private we play or sing in order to get a little relaxation from the toil and cares of everyday life; or, if we are unable to do so, we ask those who can to play or sing for us, and find pleasure in listening to the sweet sounds produced by their melodious voices or skilful fingers.

Originally music consisted for the most part of melody only, the chorus, if any, being sung in unison; but as harmony was developed and grew to be a science, songs were written consisting of two, three, four or more parts, and still later we have every shade and quality of tone produced by means of the grand modern orchestra. With such resources at their command, it is no wonder that the great musicians sought for some form of composition other than the solo or part song on which to expend their giant strength—some grand art work consisting of both solos and concerted pieces, in which the combined forces of vocal and instrumental music could be used with the greatest effect and advantage.

A combination of the musical and dramatic art, known as opera, was invented, and is still considered by many to be the highest form of musical composition. While there can be no doubt that music and poetry can be satisfactorily wedded together, it is quite questionable if the opera is a true art work at all; it seems to us to be (like the painting of a ship with real canvas sails and rigging) a combination of the real and the artistic or imaginary, which is always unsatisfactory to the true artist, who strives by means of the resources of his art alone to exert an influence over mankind, without the assistance of real or natural objects.

A strict analogy between music and painting cannot be made. The painter imitates something that exists somewhere; his colours are formed into shapes familiar to the eye, and the closer the resemblance is to nature, the more highly do we esteem the painting. Music, on the contrary, does not imitate anything that exists; it excites in the listener certain emotions, which science has so far been unable to unravel or explain, but which affect all in a greater or less degree, although no words or sentiments may be spoken at all.

The drama is, as it pretends to be, a representation of real life; actors talk, look, and gesticulate as they suppose those they represent would do. The opera is not a representation of real life, and in many instances is not only senseless but positively absurd. In the "Magic Flute," for instance, Astria-fiamente, having lost her daughter, gives vent to her feelings by singing the song "Lonely reef," &c., and then starts off into a brilliant aria in bravura style, which under the circumstances could only be expected from an inmate of a lunatic asylum. Several attempts have been made to dramatise grand musical works, such as "Acis and Galatea," "Esther," &c., but they have always been utter failures, people preferring to exercise their imagination freely, without having the characters burlesqued by a ridiculous representation. Fancy, for instance, an opera called "The Creation." Adam and Eve walking through painted scenery, with artificial lions, tigers, &c., walking across a wooden stage, the loving couple (we mean the gentleman and lady) singing duets in the most approved modern fashion, with trills, roulades and cadenzas interspersed; it might do very well as a burlesque or for a children's entertainment, but to the adult mind the incongruity would appear too ridiculous. In "Lucia di Lammermoor," the tenor, stabbed to the heart, instead of sending for a physician or a clergyman, throws out his chest and sings the finest song in the opera, evincing no sign of weakness to the close.

Most of the great musicians have tried their skill at opera. Some (notably Beethoven and Mozart) have succeeded in writing such exquisite music that all absurdities and incongruities are overlooked for the moment, and the ear is delighted with the magnificent strains. Still, we hardly think anyone will claim that Handel, Beethoven, Mozart or Mendelssohn are known to fame as operatic composers; even Rossini (who has written several fine operas) is known generally as the composer of the *Stabat Mater*.

Handel's operas were utter failures; his solos were too solid for the public taste, and his choruses too massive and scholarly for the loungers in the pit of the theatre; so he invented a new form of art work called "oratorio," in which the musician appeals to the imagination of the listener, exerting his power solely through the medium of sound, and unaided by dress, gesture, or gaudy scenery. This we take to be the highest and purest form of art; and the grandest musical works, and those by which the great composers attained their world-wide fame, are oratorios and symphonies.

Handel's "Messiah," "Samson" and "Israel in Egypt"; Haydn's "Creation" and "Seasons"; Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" and "Mount of Olives"; Mendelssohn's "St. Paul" and "Elijah"; in fact, all the masterpieces of harmony are in this form.

Mozart confined himself chiefly to masses, his "Requiem" and "Twelfth"

Masses being superior as choral works to any of his operas. Haydn left operas almost if not entirely alone. Mendelssohn tried his hand at one, but only, like Beethoven, to show that he could do it.

Wagner, in the present day, has discovered that opera, as we know it, is a false form of art, and has got a little nearer the truth by letting everyday life alone and taking mythical subjects for his operas. But the great power of the oratorio lies in the fact that instead of mythical legends and conventional love-making, we have for our subjects scenes and characters which actually existed in olden time, and with which, from our early education, we are all familiar. Then, as a rule, the music of Handel, Haydn and their fellows is wedded to the poetry of such men as Milton, Dryden and Thomson, which is so vastly superior to the ephemeral trash of our libretto-writers.

As regards the relative position of opera and oratorio singers, we think much misconception exists. Most people regard an opera-singer as a musical artist, when she is really only a good actress with a powerful voice. We are well aware that many of our most celebrated prime donne (the late Mdle. Titiens, for example) have taken a high rank in both branches of the art; still we consider that it would be much easier for an oratorio singer to perform in opera than for an operatic singer to sing an oratorio effectively, the latter requiring more skill and vocal culture, and the accessories of dress, gesture, &c., being wanting, more attention is paid to the tone, phrasing, &c., of the oratorio singer. We have known many amateurs get through an opera fairly, but never heard any amateur perform one of Handel's works even tolerably. The opera is still fashionable amongst the elite of London and Paris; but musical people are beginning to patronise Exeter Hall and the Symphony Concerts. On this continent, not having had the opportunity of hearing operas at all, we must be excused for patronising them for a few years longer. But the day is not far distant when musical people will be educated to listen to the best musical works only, and the days of "La donna e mobile" and "O luce di quest'anima" will be numbered.

A LITTLE opera in one act, entitled "Le Pain Bis," will shortly be produced at the Paris Opéra Comique. The music is by M. Theodore Dubois, and the book by MM. Brunswick and de Brauplan. Rumour predicts a great success for the work, equal to that of "Les Noces de Jeannette." M. Carvalho's programme for the ensuing season at the same theatre contains the following new works.—"Un Jour de Noces" (three acts), by MM. Sardon, de Najac, and Delfès; "Suzanne" (three acts), by MM. Lecroy, Cormon, and Paladilhe; "Zingarella" (one act), by MM. Jules Adenis, Montini, and O'Kelly; "Le Vizir dans l'Embaras" (one act), by MM. Ernest de Calonne, Gustave Roger, and Emile Bourgeois; and "L'Urne," by MM. Octave Feuillet, Jules Barbier, and Eugène Ortolan.

MDLE. VAILLANT has achieved a complete success at her *début* at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels in M. Gounod's "Mireille." A breach of contract seems to be the sure means of earning popularity for a singer. Brussels has not seen a more enthusiastic or brilliant reception than that accorded to her. It was natural that the circumstances attending her engagement should cause some interest, but it is due to her own remarkable talent that her first appearance was one continued ovation. MM. Halanzier and Carvalho, the managers of the subsidized opera-houses in Paris had a right to command her services, being a pupil of the Conservatoire, but Signor Calabresi offered her better terms to appear in the Belgian capital, and in spite of a fine of 15,000 fr. with costs, she determined to accept them. The order of the French tribunal, by the way, cannot be enforced in Brussels, as it is a civil cause.

MR. OSBORNE MORGAN, M.P., presided on Tuesday last at the opening of the National Welsh Eisteddfod at Birkenhead. The chief competition, for a price of £60 and a gold medal for the best renderings of three anthems, was won by the Acrefair Philharmonic Society of Ruabon.

SOMETHING NEW IN LABELS.—An old newspaper man from Ohio has started a drug store in the city of Detroit, and a local paper, commenting on his innovations, remarks that he will either be a millionaire during the next three years, or "bust" in less than six months. His store is very cheerful. Skulls, crutches, forceps, chromos, bones, false teeth, almanacs, parrots, and sticks of bottle without an original label. On one drawer he has: "Glue—She sticks slowly and chew fine." On another: "Paris green—Sure in its operation—lasting in its effects." The label on one of the bottles reads: "Buy some of me and stop that blamed cough." On another: "I'm sal. petre—who are you?" On another: "Prussic acid—Don't fool around with a revolver." Hanging against the wall is a beautiful sign, which reads: "If you don't want to ask for a fine comb, point your finger at me!" At the back end of the store is a still larger sign, and it bears the tender sentiment: "There is no flock without its missing lamb. Sometimes you find him in the bedstead. I keep the stuff to make him weary of life. Don't ask for bed-bug poison, but call it 'The Lost Lamb Restorative.' I shall know what you mean." The front of the store bears several happy thoughts. Among them is one reading: "Walk right in here if you had buckwheat for breakfast last winter." Another says: "I can cure that red nose in just fourteen days." A third reads: "You man with the catarrh—please step this way.—*Homoeopathic World*."

On our outer sheet will be seen a list of testimonials referring to the Holman Liver Pad. Mr. Notman, the owner of the right to vend the Pad in Canada, assures us that under no circumstances whatever has a single testimonial ever been solicited, but they have always been sent unasked, and that the success of the Pad is due to its intrinsic merits.

#### MARRIED.

WITCHER—WICKSTEED.—On the 2nd instant, at Christ Church, Ottawa, by the Rev. James Boydell, B.A., brother-in-law of the bridegroom, assisted by Archdeacon Lauder, Arthur Henry Witcher, Esq., Inspector of Surveys, Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Martha Henrietta, second daughter of Gustavus Wm. Wicksteed, Q.C., Law Clerk, House of Commons.