

laughter, which disconcerted the otherwise favorable reception of the piece, and entirely spoiled the final effects. The manager was at his wit's end, till Tattola, the librettist, suggested a prayer for the Israelites before and after the passage of the host through the cleft waters. Rossini instantly seized the idea, and, springing from bed in his night-shirt, wrote the music with almost inconceivable rapidity, before his embarrassed visitors recovered from their surprise. The same evening the magnificent *Dal tuo stellato soglio* ("To thee, Great Lord") was performed with the opera.

Let Stendhall, Rossini's biographer, tell the rest of the story: "The audience was delighted as usual with the first act, and all went well till the third, when, the passage of the red sea being at hand, the audience as usual prepared to be amused. The laughter was just beginning in the pit, when it was observed that Mosès was about to sing. He began his solo, the first verse of a prayer, which all the people repeat in chorus after Moses. Surprised at this novelty, the pit listened and the laughter entirely ceased. The chorus, exceedingly fine, was in the minor. Aaron continues, followed by the people. Finally, Eleia addresses to Heaven the same supplication and the people respond. Then all fall on their knees and repeat the prayer with enthusiasm; the miracle is performed, the sea is opened to leave a path for the people protected by the Lord. This last part is in the major. It is impossible to imagine the thunders of applause that resounded through the house; one would have thought it was coming down. The spectators in the boxes, standing up and leaning over, called out at the top of their voices, '*Bello, bello! O che bello!*' I never saw so much enthusiasm nor such a complete success, which was so much the greater, inasmuch as the people were quite prepared to laugh. . . . I am almost in tears when I think of this prayer. This state of things lasted a long time, and one of its effects was to make for its composer the reputation of an assassin, for Dr. Cottogna is said to have remarked: 'I can cite you more than forty attacks of nervous fever or violent convulsions on the part of young women, fond to excess of music, which have no other origin than the prayer of the Hebrews in the third act, with its superb change of key.'" Thus by a stroke of genius, a scene which first impressed the audience as a piece of theatrical burlesque, was raised to sublimity by the solemn music written for it.

M. Bochsa some years afterward produced "Mosé" as an oratorio in London, and it failed. A new libretto, however, "Pietro L'Eremito," again transformed the music into an opera. Ebers tells us that Lord Sefton, a distinguished connoisseur, only pronounced the general verdict in calling it the greatest of serious operas, for it was received with the greatest favor. A gentleman of high rank was not satisfied with assuring the manager that he deserved well of his country, but avowed his determination to propose him for membership at the most exclusive of aristocratic clubs—White's.

"*La Donna del Lago*," Rossini's next great work, also first produced at the San Carlo during the Carnival of 1820, though splendidly performed, did not succeed well the first night. The composer left Naples the same night for Milan, and coolly informed every one *en route* that the opera was very successful, which proved to be true when he reached his journey's end, for the Neapolitans on the second night reversed their decision into an enthusiasm as marked as their coolness had been.

Shortly after this Rossini married his favorite *prima donna*, Madame Colbran. He had just completed two of his now forgotten operas, "*Biacca e Faliero*," and "*Matilda di Shabran*," but did not stay to watch their public reception. He quietly took away the beautiful Colbran, and at Cologne was married by the archbishop. Thence the freshly-wedded couple visited Vienna, and Rossini there produced his "*Zelmira*," his wife singing the principal part.

One of the most striking of this composer's works in invention and ingenious development of ideas, Carpani says of it: "It contains enough to furnish not one but four operas. In this work, Rossini, by the new riches which he draws from his prodigious imagination, is no longer the author of '*Otello*,' '*Tancredi*,' '*Zoraide*,' and all his preceding works; he is another composer, new, agreeable, and fertile, as much as at first, but with more command of himself, more pure, masterly, and, above all, more faithful to the interpretation of the words. The forms of style employed in this opera according to circumstances are so varied, that now we seem to hear Gluck, now Traetta, now Sacchidi, now Mozart, now Handel; for the gravity, the learning, the naturalness, the suavity of their conceptions, live and blossom again in '*Zelmira*.' The transitions are learned, and inspired more by considerations of poetry and sense than by caprice and a mania for innovation. The vocal parts, always natural, never trivial, give expression to the words without ceasing to be melodious. The great point is to preserve both. The instrument of Rossini is really incomparable by the vivacity and freedom of the manner, by the variety and justness of the coloring." Yet it must be conceded that, while this opera made a deep impression on musicians and critics, it did not please the general public. It proved languid and heavy with those who could not relish the science of the music and the skill of the combinations. Such instances as this are the best answer to that school of critics, who have never ceased clamoring that Rossini could write nothing but beautiful tones to tickle the vulgar and uneducated mind.

"*Semiramide*," first performed at the Venice theatre in Venice on February 3, 1823, was the last of Rossini's Italian operas, though it had the advantage of rehearsals and a noble cast. It was not well received at first, though the verdict of time places it high among the musical masterpieces of the country. In it were combined all of Rossini's ideas of operatic reform, and the novelty of some of the innovations probably accounts for the inability of his earlier public to appreciate its merits. Mme. Rossini made her last public appearance in this great work.

MUSICAL GOSSIP.

Mr. Whitney, the able organist of St. George's, gave a recital upon the new organ lately built for Queen avenue Methodist Church, London, by Messrs. Warren & Son. A large and critical audience was assembled by invitation, who departed well pleased with the performance. The programme was a classical one demanding nothing short of first-class ability, for want of which it did not suffer at the hands of the performer. Mr. Torrington was to have assisted, but on account of his late accident was prevented therefrom.

A matinee Pinafore recital was given on Saturday afternoon June 11th, by Mr. Fisher's pupils. A large audience, composed chiefly of ladies, was present. The programme, which was judiciously chosen, was in all respects well carried out. The numbers being especially worthy of notice were *Rhapsody*, No. 12, *Liszt* being played by Miss Cox; *Berceuse* (op. 57 *Chopin*), played by Miss Playfair, and the *Andante and Rondo Capriccioso*, (op. 14) *Mendelssohn*, by Miss Boyd. The recital was relieved by some vocal numbers, which, however, did not approach to the high standard of the instrumental music.