

attention, and the curtain rose to a whirlwind of applause. The opening chorus was well received, and on the entrance of the Princess (*my prima donna*), surrounded by her attendants, the whole house literally cheered her. I threw myself back in the chair, and anxiously awaited the effect of my first song. It was encored. From this point the enthusiasm of the audience gradually increased, and the judicious and hearty applause bestowed upon the opera throughout, fully proved to me the fallacy of the observation that we are not a musical nation. The success was, indeed, complete, and at the conclusion, two or three of the principal singers were summoned before the curtain. I was in the act of quitting my box, when Mr. Medium rushed towards me, without saying a word, and pulled me, by main force, through a private door and down a flight of stairs. I now heard my name repeatedly called throughout the theatre, and, scarcely knowing how I got there, I found myself upon the stage. I have an indistinct recollection of bowing before a sea of heads, and seeing a number of white handkerchiefs in the distance. As soon as I could get free, I went into the green-room. The first person I caught sight of was the Lessee endeavouring to hide behind a door; and when I entered the room, expecting to be overwhelmed with congratulations, a number of actors, who were talking earnestly together, appeared scarcely to notice my presence. Those singers, however, who had been called before the curtain, advanced and shook me cordially by the hand, but all the rest, without exception, had retired from the stage to their dressing-rooms; and although I waited for some time, not one appeared in the green-room during the rest of the evening.

“The reception of the opera had been so triumphant, that I was totally unable to account for this extraordinary behaviour on the part of the company, and it was not without some vague misgivings that I at length quitted the theatre for the evening. Half an hour’s cool reflection convinced me that I had nothing to fear, and I sought the repose of my own lodgings with a fixed determination to think no more.

“The next morning the bills informed the public that the opera, having been ‘decidedly successful,’ would be repeated that evening and the next. As red letters and monster placards were matters unknown to me, I imagined, in my innocence, that such a simple announcement was all that could be desired. In this happy frame of mind, therefore, I entered a coffee-room, and blandly ordering a cup of coffee, proceeded to read my fate in the morning journals. The critiques were peculiar, and somewhat contradictory. One commenced by laying before its readers what somebody had said about music in the sixteenth century, and then came what somebody else had said upon what *he* said. This was followed by a history of the introduction of the Italian opera into England, and a brief sketch of the life of Handel. At the conclusion of this vast parade were a few lines upon my opera, declaring it to have been well received, giving a correct list of the characters, and awarding much praise to the scene-painter. Another spoke so learnedly of the music that it quite frightened me. I solemnly declare that half the terms used I had never heard of before: and if (as they concluded by saying,) the ‘noble Marquis’ and

the ‘illustrious Count’ *did* applaud so energetically from their private-boxes, I am exceedingly glad that they had such faithful chroniclers, for the fact had quite escaped my observation. A third critic advised me, in a friendly way to avoid identifying myself with the ‘severe German school;’ and a fourth begged to suggest that Rossini, although a great man himself, was by no means a good model for a young composer. In fact, many hints were thrown out to guide me in my future career; and if I did not rise from the table a wiser man, it was only because one piece of advice so neutralized another, that I was really perplexed which to follow.

“As I had been told that so much depended upon the second night of a new opera, it was with no little trepidation that I took my seat, at seven o’clock, in a stage-box, and glanced around at the house. It was tolerably full, but it struck me that there was an absence of that warmth and predisposition to be amused amongst the audience which I had observed on the preceding evening. A coldness appeared to reign throughout the theatre, and even the orchestra seemed to partake of the general epidemic. No sooner had the opera commenced, however, than the people began to thaw; and had the execution of the music been at all equal to that of the previous night, I have no doubt that the applause would have been as unanimous. It was true that those who played the first-rate characters exerted themselves to the utmost, but *all* those who acted subordinate ones appeared scarcely able to utter a note. To make matters worse, too, the failure of voice was not the only thing—for they seemed actually to have forgotten every line that was set down for them. In spite of these drawbacks, however, the success of the opera was unequivocal, and I had now, of course, every reason to imagine that it was fully established in public favour.

“As soon as I made my appearance in the green-room excuses poured upon me from all quarters. One lady (who played the constant attendant upon the Princess) had been suddenly attacked with a violent cold, which rendered singing exceedingly dangerous—especially (she said) the *very high* music I had written for her. Another, who played a young peasant girl, (a nice little part, I assure you) had just heard of the death of an intimate friend in the country, and the news had so preyed upon her mind that she feared she should be compelled to give up the character for a week to compose herself. A baritone singer, who had much to do in the concerted pieces, had been drenched to the skin, he said, the night before, and had been forced to sit in his wet clothes, which had materially impaired his voice. In short, so serious was the list of casualties, that had it not been for the *prima donna*, first tenor, and principal bass (who were all in excellent health and spirits), I should have trembled for the fate of my opera.

“As I was about to leave the green-room, my attention was drawn to a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, surrounded by a group of listeners, who was declaring that it was his decided intention to electrify the audience forthwith:—that few actors understood how to pourtray the noble Roman character in all its phases, and that whenever and wherever *he* had acted, there had not been a dry eye in the house. At another part of the room, the principal low comedian and a very pretty girl (evidently the first fascinator of the com-