

Musical & Dramatic Notes.

BY VIOLA.

Young people who patronise the Grand Opera House have really good grounds of complaint against the manager. It seems that when a good opera or spectacle is produced the prices of the theatre are raised about fifty per cent., and the fact, it is said, is either insufficiently advertised or not advertised at all. The young man who, with his best girl on his arm, two dollars in his pocket, and a twenty-five cent "fore-and-aft" on his head, marches proudly up to the box office and loudly demands two seats in the orchestra, is often placed in a very embarrassing position when the ticket-seller blandly remarks, "Another dollar, sir." It is really too bad of Mr. O. B. Sheppard. Many a young man of Christian proclivities on being caught in this way has inwardly felt himself to be horribly profane, while not a few have fallen permanently from grace.

As I predicted a few weeks ago, the musical festival scheme has been abandoned until next year. I am rather sorry that in this case I have proved to be a true prophet, but of course it would be unwise to press the project this year if the Festival Committee have reason to believe that it would not be supported by the citizens generally.

The *Globe's* musical critic has discovered that the Chopin solos played by Mr. Vladimir de Pachmann at the concert of the Canadian Society of Musicians are only elegant trifles. This is something that modern musicians have not yet suspected, but now that the *Globe* has enlightened them on the subject they can no longer plead ignorance. The *Globe's* critic, however, was not content with one discovery of so astounding a nature, for he went on to say that Mr. De Pachmann plays with an absence of "tonal effects." The phrase is delightfully vague, but probably the *Globe's* critic means that Mr. De Pachmann did not pound and thump on his instrument in the manner so general with German virtuosi.

Mr. F. H. Torrington writes as follows:—

In the musical jottings of the *Daily Graphic*, of Dec. 19, 1891, the following items appear:—"In disproof of the assertion so often heard now-a-days to the effect that Handel's popularity is on the wane, we may notice that no fewer than five performances of the "Messiah" have been given this week in the Free Trade Hall at Manchester to audiences always full, and sometimes overcrowded.

"We learn that a cheque for £500 has been handed to the treasurer of the General Hospital, Birmingham, as the financial result of the festival held last October."

This scarcely accords with the views set forth by "Viola" in your issue of December 12th on the decline of oratorio in English-speaking countries.

My answer to the letter of "Chromaticus" on the same subject, covers, I think, the ground taken

by Mr. Torrington. I pointed out that the Birmingham Festival receipts had been exceeded in previous years, and that, of late, Handel's works occupied but a small proportion of the festival programme. As to the five performances of "The Messiah" at Manchester, the fact carries little significance, more especially as they were given in the week preceding Christmas. I am sorry to hear, though, that the audiences were always "full." The quotation from the *Graphic* shows that I am not singular in my opinion as to the decline of oratorio. In reference to performances of "The Messiah" in England as a basis of argument, one has always to consider how much of the success of these events is due to the religious sentiments of the people, and how much is due to the love of oratorio music.

I stated in the first number of THE OBSERVER that it was probable that ere long the public would have an opportunity of hearing again the incomparable Patti. Mr. O. B. Sheppard, the manager of the Grand Opera House, now advertises that he has secured the *diva* for one concert this month. He is not certain about the date, but thinks it will be the 29th. The admirers of the celebrated *prima donna* had better take this opportunity of hearing her again for Patti, alas! is now forty-nine years of age, and after this concert it may be a case of "she never came back," as the popular song has it. Patti has, I venture to say, carried the star system to its utmost limit. She has invariably exacted exceptionally high fees, and in consequence has been often associated with very indifferent opera companies. She has not done so much for art as some of her less gifted sisters in song. Her roles have been almost invariably in operas of the light Italian school. As her dramatic ability is exceedingly limited, perhaps she has exercised a wise discretion in not appearing in more serious works. She has rarely lent the magic of her voice to the interpretation of the great thoughts of the great composers, and in this respect she has done less for the cultivation of the best music than either Madame Nilsson or Madame Albani. However, she has given thousands and thousands of people the mere sensuous pleasure of enjoying the exquisite tones of her voice—for a consideration.

Mr. John Earls is working hard in the interest of the Philharmonic Society, and it is to be hoped that he will succeed in extricating it from its present financial embarrassments. It would not be a credit to the musical community of Toronto were the Society allowed to die for lack of support. It has now been for twenty years under the direction of Mr. Torrington, and has produced a number of great works which without its agency we should not have heard. Thousands of singers have passed through the training school of its chorus, and it is impossible to estimate the good influence which they have spread throughout the community to the general advantage of the interests of music.

Nothing has been heard of the coming to Toronto of to-day's great sensation in the piano world, Paderewski, and it can only be inferred

that Messrs Suckling & Sons have been frightened off by the high price demanded by the great virtuoso or his manager. I fancy, however, that later in the season some one will make the venture and that we shall hear Paderewski before many months have passed.

A number of English and continental critics are disposed to hail Pietro Mascagni as the apostle of a new school of music, one that shall combine the rich resources and dramatic truth of the Wagner school with the melodic charm of the Italian opera composers. Certainly Mascagni's two operas "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Amico Fritz," give great promise of grand achievements in the future. It is very encouraging to know that Mascagni is still a young man and cannot have attained the full development of his powers. He has been writing a grand opera, and the world of music is awaiting its production with eager expectancy.

"The Power of the Press," by Augustus Pitou and Jessop, now being played at the Grand Opera House, is rather an effective melodrama of its kind. One cannot fail to observe, however, how much the authors have been indebted to the methods of the English melodramatists. The great objection to the ordinary melodrama is that it presents life in such an unreal aspect, The English melodrama generally confines honesty in men and virtue in women to the poorer classes and villainy and vice to the upper and rich classes, just as in the conventional Irish drama the landlord is almost invariably a scoundrel. It is on this account, probably, that these two kinds of plays are so successful with the gallery. "The Power of the Press" is handsomely staged and it is in the hands of a very efficient company. Mr. Augustus Pitou is a shrewd manager, and no doubt the title was chosen with the suspicion that it would do something towards gaining the goodwill of the New York press. To me it seems that the bait was a little too palpable.

A correspondent, "Orchestra," whose letter appears elsewhere, makes several pertinent enquiries in reference to the professional orchestra organised last season, and also to the Orchestral Union. I am not in a position to answer the questions put, as only a member of these organisations could supply the needed information. I do not think women would be admitted as members. Perhaps some of the readers of THE OBSERVER may be able to answer "Orchestra."

A year or two ago the New York World offered a prize for the best play submitted to it. The winner was Martha Morton's "The Merchant," which last season was acted successfully on the road. The New York Herald is now conducting a contest in which 596 one-act plays have been entered. The winner will get \$200 from the Herald, and T. Henry French has offered to buy the play from the author for \$800 more. Music and Drama, of Philadelphia, has offered \$100 for the best play submitted before March 1. It will be performed three times at the expense of Music and Drama and will then become the property of the author.