

Musical.

OUR AMATEURS IN "PINAFORE."

The initial performance of "H. M. S. Pinafore," by the Amateur Operatic Society, so eagerly awaited for some time past, took place at the Academy on last Tuesday night, before a good audience. The performance, apart from one or two drawbacks incidental to a first night, reflected much credit both on singers and conductor; indeed in some particulars it was really excellent and would have done no discredit to a professional company. An easy bearing and entire presence of mind could not be expected of those who trod the boards and faced the footlights for the first time, hence nervousness and stage-fright caused some *contredans* at first; these, however, have now disappeared, and, taken for all in all, the present can fairly be entitled by far the most finished and complete performance of Sullivan's opera yet witnessed in Montreal.

Miss Zippora Monteith, from the New York Broadway Theatre, sings the part of *Josephine* in a pleasing manner; she has a high and effective voice, but acts in too hoydenish a fashion. More quietness would lend an added grace to the captain's daughter. Miss Mary Maltby takes *Little Buttercup* excellently, evidently knowing her part to a crotchet; *Fraulein Heise* enacts *Hebe* with wonderful *aplomb* for a novice, and dances a rollicking double horn-pipe with the graceful Miss Fuhrer in a style which nightly "brings down the house"; Mr. Donald Campbell's voice is just suited in the part of *Ralph*, which he sings in excellent and artistic fashion; Mr. G. L. DeZouche, as *Captain Corcoran*, acts and sings in a manly way that pleases greatly; and Mr. Maltby, as the *Boatswain* would be capital were he to infuse just a trifle more dash into the part. Mr. Geo. Holliday, as *Sir Joseph Porter*, was indisposed on Tuesday evening, and through a mistake of the prompter in giving the cue for music too soon, the orchestra commenced his song, "I am the Monarch," &c., before he was prepared, which very naturally threw him out. He sustained the character capitally next night. The choruses were full, true and good, and notable for richness of quality. If the "sisters, cousins and aunts" were to come further down the stage, it would be better still, as much of the voice is lost in "the flies." The orchestra, though at fault in time and tune once or twice, is the best in respect of balance, shading and precision that has been heard in the Academy for some time. They played the overture finely. Dr. MacLagan and the Company deserve credit for the production of this work as a whole, though flaws could be picked out by persons wishing to be hypercritical. Those interested need not be afraid of the performance, though amateur, being judged on its merits. The scenery is very beautiful, and the mounting is the best we have yet seen. We wish the good ship "Pinafore" a successful voyage, and safe arrival in port with "all hands" well.

THE "HERALD'S" DICTUM ON OPERA.

The peculiar ability of our esteemed contemporary in matters musical was thus ably shown forth in a recent criticism on "Trovatore," as sung by the "Emma Abbott" troupe:

"Notwithstanding that a musical editor in a weekly contemporary has laid it down that only those deficient in musical education now crave and patronize such operas as 'Lucia,' 'Traviata' and 'Trovatore,' and that those of superior musical minds only care for such operas as 'Carmen,' 'Aida,' 'Pinafore' and Wagner's 'Lohengrin,' we are glad to state that last night's audience at the Academy gave a very strong contradiction to such a rash and ignorant assertion. The operas of the last few years are deficient in that solidity and plot that so characterizes those of older date. True such operas as 'Pinafore,' 'Aida,' &c., like society plays, will last for a time and tickle the taste of those not capable of understanding and appreciating the more beautiful music of 'Trovatore,' or the deep grandeur of Shakespeare, but as to their being standard operatic pieces, no sensible person with any knowledge of music would dare to assert such a thing. 'Trovatore,' 'Faust,' 'Traviata' and 'Bohemian Girl' will be played and sung when 'Carmen,' 'Aida,' and 'Pinafore' are forgotten."

We are always glad to have erroneous impressions corrected, and now take it for granted that as "he himself has said it," "the operas of the last few years,"—we suppose "Carmen," "Aida," "Lohengrin," and probably the latest of all, Wagner's "Nibelungen," are meant—"are deficient in that solidity and plot that so characterizes those of older date," meaning, we suppose, the "Lucia," "Traviata," and "Trovatore," of Verdi, and Balfe's "Bohemian Girl!" "Solidity" of the "Bohemian Girl" is good. That "Aida," composed expressly for the Khedive, with a wealth of instrumentation, full of superb music and fine effects for both voice and orchestra, a remarkably good plot, demanding a very large cast, intended to be put on with exceeding pomp and barbaric splendor, looked upon by Verdi himself as his masterpiece, and acknowledged everywhere by musicians to be the ripest fruit of this composer's genius,—that this should be classed with Society plays, compared with "Trovatore," a composition filled with ear-taking melody, but weak in almost every other particular, and that it should be averred by this experienced critic that "Aida" would "tickle the taste of those not capable of understanding 'Trovatore,'" is such a delightfully new departure, to be taken by one whose *connaissance de chose* entitles him to speak with all the weight of supreme authority, that we hasten to place it on record. "Traviata" and the "Bohemian Girl" will be sung when "Carmen" and "Aida" are forgotten." *Mirabile dictu!*

It is said that "Aida," as now presented at the New York Academy of Music by the Mapleson opera company, is the most complete performance of grand opera in America. At no presentation has the house been large enough to hold all who wished to see and hear it.—*Montreal Star.*

DRAMATIC.

BANDMANN IN SHAKSPERE'S MASTERPIECES.

Daniel E. Bandmann completed a week's engagement at the Academy on Saturday night last, having played five Shakspearean rôles—those of "the intellectual men of Shakspeare," as an author calls them—to disgracefully slim houses. Events which appeal to the emotional nature can seldom obtain the verdict of the judgment until they are past, and due allowance has been made for those feelings which the play is specially meant to excite. In the calmness, therefore, which succeeds to the excitement of first impressions, we may review Mr. Bandmann's methods and manners, and record our opinion of them.

That he is an intellectual and versatile actor cannot be denied, but he lacks the divine fire of genius, and his performances are full of fluctuations. At one moment he realizes our ideal and is almost electrifying; at the next, he falls off, just where it is to be expected he will make his mark, and rather disappoints. He doubtless fully apprehends the divine truths and

human facts of Shakspeare, but he does not invariably make this insight apparent. This may arise from the difficulties of the language to one whose mother-tongue it is not, and in the same way, many peculiarities of pronunciation and accentuation may be accounted for. The subtler shades of meaning, the delicate hints barely capable of explanation, were sometimes lost, or not elucidated. In the category of Mr. Bandmann's intellectual excellencies belong his rhetoric and elocution. He declaims finely; for, though his voice is not naturally a musical one, it has been perfectly trained, comes full from the chest, and is very powerful. In passages where passion demanded rapid utterance, the words were run together and enunciated indistinctly, proving a blemish so serious that without a knowledge of the text it would have been impossible to follow.

His reading is, as a rule, scholarly, and in accordance with the accepted authorities, though in one or two instances, there were interpretations with which we could hardly agree, and to several passages the rising inflection was given, with a strained and unnatural effect. Bandmann, though making havoc with the pronunciation of many simple and beautiful words, such as nature, stars, ravelled, servants, surcease, stuck, &c., (the two latter pronounced "sursees" and "schluck,") is singularly free from the traditional pronunciation of the stage, and especially from all those vulgarisms which, in Kemble, so excited the ire of Leigh Hunt. With a magnificent physique, well-defined and mobile features, a head somewhat Hebraic in cast and crowned with dark curly hair, he possesses all the ideal, personal attributes needful for portraying heroic characters. His gestures are well-chosen and graceful, save for a habit when in excited colloquy, of repeatedly marking the emphasis by shaking the arm with forefinger extended, and a most ungainly fashion of plunging the body. His portrayal of Othello and Macbeth was pitched in the major key throughout; in fact, this seems to be the regnant and dominant principle of his mind. He is not invariably effective in conveying introspection, and to quiet conversational tones, neither his voice nor thought seems naturally attuned. The play of muscle and varied expression are strong features in Mr. Bandmann's acting. His eyes are large and keen, his movements are very rapid, and he thoroughly "fills the stage;" as with his fine presence he well may.

The English Company forming Mr. Bandmann's support was above the average in ability and usefulness; that is to say, it was efficient mediocrity, except in the instance of two or three individuals. Miss Marguerite Eenison, Miss Elinor Aiken, Mr. Gerald Eyre and Mr. Percy Lyndal were pleasing, intelligent players, versed in the ways of the stage, and conscientious in their efforts, though not of particular strength. In some characters the leading ladies were excellent.

The part of Othello is a *Crescendo*, from the Moor's opening speech, delivered in a style of easy narration before the Senators, to the final burst of furious rage, in which the climax of the tragedy is reached. This gradation was finely preserved by Mr. Bandmann, and indeed, in many respects, the character of Othello seems that to which he is most perfectly attuned. A slight analysis of this play will afford a fair conception of the salient points in all this actor's work.

His bearing during Acts I. and II. was dignified and excellent, and the whole of Scene III. in the 3rd Act was finely given. The determination expressed in the line—

"I'll see before I doubt,"

and the passionate scorn on the words—

"I'd rather be a toad and live upon the vapour of a dungeon, than keep a corner in the thing I love, for others' uses,"

were powerful. Where Iago says: "I see this hath a little dash'd your spirits," and Othello replies "Not a jot, not a jot"; the affected indifference of manner was very fine, while the excited and nervous handling of the quill-pens on the writing table was most effective stage business. The use of the rising inflection in response to Desdemona's query:

"How is't with you, my lord?"

"Well, my good lady," was surely incorrect. When jealousy has at last driven Othello to say to Iago: "Set on thy wife to observe," the horror with which he recoils immediately the speech falls from his lips was depicted in the most realistic manner.

When Othello, taking Iago by the throat, exclaims—

"If thou dost slander her and torture me, never pray more,"

the fury expressed by voice, looks and action was so vivid as almost to be terrifying.

In the affecting speech where the Moor bids farewell to all the pursuits in which he gloried, closing with the mournful declaration that "Othello's occupation's gone!" Mr. Bandmann delivered the lines in full voice, with extended gesture, the rising inflection and growing force, as if he were rather pleased than otherwise to give up "the plumed troop, the big wars," and all such old-time delights. Surely this should be pitched in a minor key, and be uttered in quiet and sombre fashion.

Where Othello is goaded to madness by Iago's insinuation, and declares, "I will withdraw to furnish me with some swift means of death for the fair devil," a beautiful point was made on the words "fair devil," and a complete change of countenance and tone took place on each word. The splendid scene of accusation and defence between Othello and Desdemona in Act IV., Scene II., was most notable. Desdemona played excellently here, though her fall was rather violent. The speech where she declares on her knees that "his unkindness may defeat my life, but never taint my love," was plaintively and movingly delivered. In Act V., Scene II., where Desdemona exclaims, "Then Lord have mercy on me," Othello's reply, "I say, Amen!" was magnificent; but passionate rapidity rendered the succeeding phrases all but unintelligible. The soliloquy when Emilia is seeking to enter the chamber, in which occur the words, "I have no wife," was very fine, but the staggering about the stage was overdone and too drunken-like. The speech in Act V., "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul," was a fine piece of elocution, while the emphasis on the words, "Put out the light, and then—put out the light!" and the beauty of the gesture in the latter clause, where Othello points to the sleeping Desdemona, were delicate touches that brought finely into prominence the splendid contrast in the noble passage which follows. The speech at the close of Act V., commencing, "Behold, I have a weapon," containing the forlorn expression of despair, "Where shall Othello go?" and ending with "O Desdemona, dead! dead!" as also the final "Soft you, a word or two before you go," call for unqualified praise. They were artistic in conception and rendition, and brought a finished and gratifying performance to a fitting close.

Space will not permit a discussion of "Macbeth" and "Richard III.," but both of these noble plays were worthy of a more generous attention from Montreal than, in the present condition of the drama here, it seems willing to bestow. "Macbeth" was most creditably put on, with the original music by Locke respectably sung; but "Richard III." was cut and slurred, as the Company was in haste to leave the city. Mr. Bandmann and Mr. Eyre in each of these plays proved themselves no novices in the art of fence.

Generally speaking, the *mise en scene* was good in all the plays, the mounting and properties were much better than ordinary and the costumes were tasteful and chronologically correct. In fact it is a long time since the legitimate drama has been put upon the boards here in similar fashion, and, if the patronage (Heaven save the mark!) doled out last week be any criterion, it will be a long time before we are again called upon to exhibit our disregard for anything above the level of original Topsy and trick donkeys! These attractions are now close at hand, and we predict crowded houses and "standing-room only" will be the order of the day.