

signal for the overture to begin. He appeared stout and somewhat below the middle height, with rather a heavy air, and a countenance which, though intelligent, betrayed none of the vivacity which distinguishes his music; and it was remarked that he had more of the appearance of a sturdy, beef-eating Englishman, than a fiery and sensitive native of the south."

The king, George IV., treated Rossini with peculiar consideration. On more than one occasion he walked with him arm-in-arm through a crowded concert-hall to the conductor's stand. Yet the composer, who seems not to have admired his English Majesty, treated the monarch with much independence, not to say brusqueness, on one occasion, as if to signify his disdain of even royal patronage. At a grand concert at St. James' Palace, the king said, at the close of the programme, "Now, Rossini, we will have one piece more, and that shall be the *finale*." The other replied, "I think, sir, we have had music enough for one night," and made his bow.

He was an honored guest at the most fashionable houses, where his talents as a singer and player were displayed with much effect in an unconventional, social way. Auber, the French composer, was present on one of these occasions, and indicates how great Rossini could have been in executive music had he not been a king in the higher sphere. "I shall never forget the effect," writes Auber, "produced by his lightning-like execution. When he had finished I looked mechanically at the ivory keys. I fancied I could see them smoking." Rossini was richer by seven thousand pounds by this visit to the English metropolis. Though he had been under engagement to produce a new opera as well as to conduct those which had already made him famous, he failed to keep this part of his contract. Passages in his letters at this time would seem to indicate that Rossini was much piqued because the London public received his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, with coldness. Notwithstanding the beauty of her face and figure, and the greatness of her style both as actress and singer, she was pronounced *passee* alike in person and voice, with a species of brutal frankness not uncommon in English criticism.

When Rossini arrived in Paris he was almost immediately appointed director of the Italian Opera by the Duc de Lauriston. With this and the Academie he remained connected till the revolution of 1830. "Le Siege de Corinthe," adapted from his old work, "Maometto II.," was the first opera presented to the Parisian public, and, though admired, did not become a favorite. The French *amour propre* was a little stung when it was made known that Rossini had simply modified and reshaped one of his early and immature productions as his first attempt at composition in French opera. His other works for the French stage were "Il Viaggio a Rheims," "Le Comte Ory," and Guillaume Tell."

The last-named opera, which will ever be Rossini's crown of glory as a composer, was written with his usual rapidity while visiting the chateau of M. Aguado, a

country-seat some distance from Paris. This work, one of the half-dozen greatest ever written, was first produced at the Academie Royale on August 3, 1829. In its early form of libretto it had a run of fifty-six representations, and was then withdrawn from the stage; and the work of remodeling from five to three acts, and other improvements in the dramatic framework, was thoroughly carried out. In its new form the opera blazed into an unprecedented popularity, for of the greatness of the music there had never been but one judgment. Fetis, the eminent critic, writing of it immediately on its production, said, "The work displays a new man in an old one, and proves that it is in vain to measure the action of genius," and follows with, "This production opens a new career to Rossini," a prophecy unfortunately not to be realized, for Rossini was soon to retire from the field in which he had made such a remarkable career, while yet in the very prime of his powers.

"Guillaume Tell" is full of melody, alike in the solos and the massive choral and ballet music. It runs in rich streams through every part of the composition. The overture is better known to the general public than the opera itself, and is one of the great works of musical art. The opening *andante* in triple time for the five violoncelli and double basses at once carries the hearer to the regions of the upper Alps, where amid the eternal snows Nature sleeps in a peaceful dream. We perceive the coming of the sunlight, and the hazy atmosphere clearing away before the new-born day. In the next movement the solitude is all dispelled. The raindrops fall thick and heavy, and a thunderstorm bursts. But the fury is soon spent, and the clouds clear away. The shepherds are astir, and from the mountain-sides come the peculiar notes of the "Ranz des Vaches" from their pipes. Suddenly all is changed again. Trumpets call to arms, and with the mustering battalions the music marks the quickstep, as the shepherd patriots march to meet the Austrian chivalry. A brilliant use of the violins and reeds depicts the exultation of the victors of their return, and closes one of the grandest sound-paintings in music.

The original cast of "Guillaume Tell" included the great singers then in Paris, and these were so delighted with the music, that the morning after the first production they assembled on the terrace before his house and performed selections from it in his honor.

With this last great effort Rossini, at the age of thirty-seven, may be said to have retired from the field of music, though his life was prolonged for forty years. True, he composed the "Stabat Mater" and the Messe Solennelle," but neither of these added to the reputation won in his previous career. The "Stabat Mater," publicly performed for the first time in 1842, has been recognized, it is true, as a masterpiece; but its entire lack of devotional solemnity, its brilliant and showy texture, preclude its giving Rossini any rank as a religious composer.

He spent the forty years of his retirement partly at