

THE DRAMA.

THOMAS BETTERTON, the great actor, used to say, that it was easy for any player to *rouse* the house, but to *subdue* it, render it rapt, and hushed to, at the most, a murmur, was work for an artist—and, if this assertion of the man, reported to have been the most perfect Hamlet that ever trod the boards, can be accepted as correct, Mr. Dillon's Hamlet was, eminently, that of an artist. The philosophic prince of Denmark was, in his hands, what Shakespeare drew him—a gentleman; there was none of that ranting or roaring about it, that is too often made the attribute of this character on the stage. In the scene with Ophelia, for instance, he did not bully her, as is often the case, by shouting like a madman at the top of the voice "Get thee to a nunnery!" but he was quiet and natural. The sorrowful manner in which he bade her "To a nunnery go!" seemed to indicate that it was the only way by which she could possibly escape that calamity, which by being "as chaste as ice, as pure as snow," she could not otherwise avoid. The coming back, after leaving her to kiss her hand, with seemingly repentant gentleness, as if to show that it was his deep love working on a mind half distracted, that made him give such advice, was a very artistic touch. In the ghost scene, Hamlet's anxiety to know the reason of his father's reappearance was very well rendered; and the way in which, as if suddenly recollecting it, he flung off his cap, when about to address "the majesty of buried Denmark," was very natural. In the closet scene with the Queen, Mr. Dillon introduced an entirely new style of illustrating the passage commencing "Look here upon this picture, and on this," where Hamlet compares the merits of his father and uncle; it is generally done by pointing to a picture on either wall, or by roughly dragging from poor Gertrude's bosom a miniature of her second husband with one of the late king carried by his son; but Mr. Dillon, very wisely, made the portraits air-drawn, and leaning over to his mother's chair, drew them in imagination, by which the effect was greatly increased. The death scene was very fine, and the whole performance was an original, poetical, and refined interpretation of, perhaps, the least understood of Shakespeare's heroes.

As Othello, Mr. Dillon's acting was magnificent; the Moor's modest consciousness of his felicity, in securing so great a prize as Desdemona, his tenderness towards her, so admirably contrasting with the severity of his deportment as the soldier best trusted by Venice, his jealousy, so evidently springing from his great love, and the horrid consequences of allowing his simple unsophisticated mind to be misled by the arts of "honest Iago," were admirably portrayed. The description before the senate, of how he wooed and won Desdemona, was a splendid bit of elocution. In the interviews with Iago, Mr. Dillon introduced some entirely new business; in ordinary performances of "Othello," Iago and the Moor deliver all their speeches standing before the footlights, after the fashion of school-boys giving melancholy "recitations," but Mr. Dillon went through most of the scenes seated naturally in his chair, with Iago leaning over the table, pouring his insidious hints into his unwilling ears, by which means his outbursts of rage and struggles against conviction, when he rose to his feet, told with much greater effect. After the murder of Desdemona, Othello's pathetic exclamation in answer to Emilia's enquiry as to his wife, of "My wife! my wife, what wife. I have no wife!" seemed wrung from his very heart and was terrible in the impression it conveyed of despair. Of King Lear we have but little space to speak. Mr. Dillon brought out the senile childishness of the old king, who thirsting for his daughters' love, could not discriminate between possession and sincerity, excellently well. The imprecations of the headstrong, loving, aged monarch, when his affection was met by such ingratitude as his elder daughter displayed, were sublime—and there was something frightful in the reality of his madness—the key-note

of his rambling exclamations being ever the unnatural conduct of his children. The interview with Cordelia, his much injured daughter, whom in his madness he takes for a spirit, was very affecting: the feebleness of the poor old man, quite subdued by the affection of the child he had wronged so much, and the eagerness with which he clung to the hope of her recovering, when in the last act, he brings her in dead in his arms, were very natural.

It will be long before Montreal again sees such a thoroughly original and natural actor as Charles Dillon, who in his impersonations of Shakespeare's heroes, entirely throws away the traditional modes of delivery, except so far as they are in evident accordance with common sense; and who, though a most accomplished master, is yet a loving student of the art "holding the mirror up to nature." JOHN QUILL.

MUSICAL.

MENDELSSOHN'S SONGS WITHOUT WORDS.—Without words, and without names even! Its music speaking for itself, or rather speaking for the human heart, disdaining any other interpreter. Each melody, with its accompaniment, is like a pure stream flowing through a rich scenery. The stream is the soul's consciousness, the scenery is the world of mingled associations through which it flows, time's shadow on its surface. Sometimes, however, the accompaniment suggests unearthly scenery, enchanted regions, and the song is like the life of a soul disembodied, or translated where it knows no more the fretting bounds of time. Several of these pieces, however, have a title, indicating merely their general character: there is one styled a "People's Song," and there are three "Venetian Gondola Songs." Let us look at these latter for the present. After being rocked by this music, till it haunts your thoughts, you feel that you know Venice, though you may never have been there.

"My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing."

The atmosphere, the limpid coolness of the water, the rhythm of its motion, and the soft, sad, yet voluptuous colouring of all things; in short, the very volatile essence of all that life, is, as it were, caught and perpetuated in these subtle accommodating forms of melody. What is the meaning of Venice in history, is a question which might perhaps be answered, if we could only tell what influence this music ministers to the mind. Hearing it, and losing yourself in it, you inhabit an ideal Venice, the soul, as it were, of the real one, without its sins and infirmities, its horrible suicidal contrasts.

The first of the three (Number Six of the First Set) is a sustained Andante, in six-eight measure. The accompaniment, by a very simple figure, gives the rocking sensation of a gondola, while "the oars keep time." The gentle key, G minor, indicates soft moonlight or starlight; and presently the song floats off, in loving thirds and sixths, full of tenderness and musing sadness, which has more of longing in it than of regret for actual suffering. It rises higher and louder at times, but never breaks through the gentle spell, always sinks back into the dreaminess of the hour. The sentiment is so pure, that one might dream himself in heaven; only the sadness makes it human. Far off in the smooth stream, the boat for a time seems fixed, suspended, and the voice alone, amid its natural accompaniments, informs the distance. Again the motion is resumed, but fainter and more remote, and as the sounds die away in the smooth shining distance, how magical the effect of those soft high octaves, ever and anon twice struck, as if to assure us that beyond it is as beautiful as here; and finally all the harmonies converge into a single note, just as broad spaces on the farthest verge and boundary of sight are represented by a single fine line. At the introduction, after the rocking accompaniment, so soft and dreamy, has proceeded a few measures, you seem suddenly to touch the water and have

a cold thrill of reality for a moment, as the harmonies brighten into the major key. The predominating expression of the Air, however, is more that of tranquil, childlike harmony and peace, than of any restless passion; an innocent delight just slightly tempered with the "still sad music of humanity." The coolness of the buoyant element allays all inward heat.

(To be Continued.)

ARMY LIFE ON THE BORDER. By Colonel R. B. Marey, U. S. A., author of the "Prairie Traveler." New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

This is one of those pleasant books of travel and adventure which possess so many charms to a large class of readers, and its value is greatly enhanced by the fact, that it deals with conditions of life and races of men which are fast passing away. Colonel Marey, we are told, has spent the greater part of thirty-years of his life on the prairies and among the far Western mountains, where he was the frequent companion of hardy trappers, the pioneers of civilization, and where he met, either on friendly or hostile terms, nearly all the aboriginal tribes of the prairies. In a comparatively few years, probably these prairies will have been transformed into farms, and the aboriginal races will have passed away for ever. The author offers these sketches as a contribution to the truthful history of a condition of men which can hardly again exist on this or any other continent.

The contents of the book are varied; several chapters are devoted to descriptions of various tribes of Indians—mode of Indian warfare—and Indian customs generally. There is also an account of a winter expedition over the Rocky Mountains, undertaken by the author with a company of United States troops, to obtain supplies; together with narratives of expeditions to Utah and the Red River. A chapter on the pioneers of the west is replete with anecdotes and curious sketches of frontier life; another on hunting, contains a description of the various modes of hunting practiced on the prairies.

On the whole, we consider the book a very readable one, and not without practical and scientific value.

THE GREY WOMAN, AND OTHER TALES. By Mrs. Gaskell, author of "Mary Barton," "Cranford," "Sylvia's Lovers," &c., &c. Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

No writer of the present age has won more of the respect and admiration of the reading public than did the author of these tales. The evidences of her wide sympathy with suffering and sorrow, her love of truth, her gentle humour and the tenderness of her womanly heart, still live in her works; but it is sad to feel that the hand which guided her graceful pen is now mouldering in the dust. A few months since the literary journals of Britain and the United States teemed with admiring tributes to her memory, and expressions of regret that one who had so often delighted us with the purity and vigour of her genius, was called away for ever. Her works still retain their hold upon the public; and posterity, we are convinced, will not willingly let them die. The tales which compose the volume before us may be considered as the lighter efforts of Mrs. Gaskell's genius, but they all bear evidence of conscientious work, and that graphic power which characterize her larger volumes. The titles of the tales in addition to "The Grey Woman," are "The Doom of the Griffiths," and "The Half Brothers."

BOOKS RECEIVED.

HISTORY OF JULIUS CÆSAR. Vol. II. New York: Harper & Brothers. Montreal: Dawson Bros.
FOUR YEARS IN THE SADDLE. By Colonel Harry Gilmor. New York: Harper & Brothers. Montreal: Dawson Bros.
ANDERSONVILLE PRISON. By Ambrose Spencer. New York: Harper & Brothers. Montreal: Dawson Bros.
PHEMIE KELLER. A novel by F. G. Trafford. Author of Maxwell Drewitt, &c. New York: Harper & Brothers. Montreal: Dawson Bros.