

MUSICAL GOSSIP.

IT is with very great pleasure we call the attention of our musical readers to the fact that great efforts have been and continue to be made at home towards the foundation of an English Royal Academy of Music. The Society of Arts Committee of Musical Education has for some months past been busily employed in procuring information on the subject; and from the copious evidence taken before it, together with statistics which have been collected concerning the administration of the principal continental conservatories, it is to be hoped that a well digested and practical scheme will be submitted to the authorities for adoption. The desirability of such an institution must be apparent to all. It is true that there already exists a Royal Academy of Music in London, but it is notorious that it is quite inadequate for the purposes for which it was instituted, probably owing to the non-professional element in its constitution. For while all must own the obligation we are under to those gentlemen who founded the institution, obtained for it the Royal Charter, and contributed largely to its funds, yet it would be well if the functions of those gentlemen ceased here, and the administration were left entirely to professional men. In this respect let us hope that the English Royal Academy of Music will have the advantage of its predecessor, and that its chief will be a professional musician.

HOW WE OBTAIN OUR GREAT SINGERS.—If all the paragraphs which are continually appearing in the foreign papers concerning the wonderful tenors, extraordinary sopranos, &c., found by accident, in the most unexpected places, and under the most marvellous circumstances, were true, great singers would be very plentiful, and vocal phenomena, becoming a drug in the market, would grow exceedingly cheap. The last anecdote in the above line is to the following effect. A singer of one of the Vienna theatres arrived, a short time since, at Mayence. He went for a walk. He was suddenly awakened from the brown study in which he was plunged by hearing a magnificent tenor voice. He listened with delight, and when the voice died away, found by inquiry that the voice belonged to a youthful porter on the railway. After testing the voice several times, the Viennese artist suggested that the porter should accompany him on his travels, and that he (the Viennese artist) would give him (the porter) the instruction necessary to develop his great natural abilities. The young man consents, the railway loses a porter, and the German theatres gain a tenor—according to the foreign press.

TORONTO MONSTER CONCERT.—On the Queen's birthday a large body of singers, numbering nearly 300, accompanied by the band of the 47th Regiment, assembled in the drill shed and under the direction of Mr. John Carter, performed an interesting programme of popular music before an immense audience. The chief pieces performed were the "Red, White, and Blue," "March of the Men of Harlech," "God bless the Prince of Wales," "Rule Britannia," and "The National Anthem." These pieces were sung in unison, 1st verse by the trebles, 2nd by the tenors, 3rd by the basses,—all joining in the last. Too much cannot be said in favour of the good social feeling engendered by these concerts, although the musical Torontonians pride themselves mostly on their recent performances of *Trovatore*—the 1st on May 21st; the 2nd on May 31st. This opera was produced under the able direction of Mr. Carter, who is indefatigable in his exertions to create a musical feeling among the citizens of Toronto; and it is pleasant to notice the discrimination and appreciation displayed by the audiences which, on each occasion, were assembled. The stage or platform had no other appendages than customary at ordinary concerts, excepting curtains at the back, behind which the "Nun's chorus," the "Miserere," and the "Troubadour's song" were sung. It can scarcely be said there was no acting, just enough to make the performance understandable and interesting but not enough to excite criticism or remark.

REVIEWS

CERISE. A tale of the last century. By G. J. Whyte Melville, author of "The Gladiators," "Digby Grand," &c. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

If proof were wanting, this spirited novel is evidence sufficient that Mr. Melville possesses great descriptive powers, an active imagination, and much skill in the delineation of human character. The story opens at the court of *Le Grand Monarque*, Louis the Fourteenth, where the hero, George Hamilton, is introduced as a page to Louis le Grand, but subsequently he becomes a captain of musketeers. Soon after the death of Louis, George is compelled to fly from the French court, and his next appearance is as the captain of a privateer, in which character he achieves some of his most interesting adventures. Finally he abandons the sea to inherit the title and estate of the Hamiltons of Hamilton Hill, and to become a representative of the English country gentleman of the last century.

It is in his delineation of female character that the author, we think, has evinced his greatest skill. The two principal creations are Madame de Montmirail and her daughter, Cerise. The former had been taken from a convent and married to a chivalrous veteran, who could scarcely stand long enough at the altar to complete the marriage ceremony. But Madame made an exemplary wife; even at the court of Louis le Grand the tongue of scandal was never raised against her during her married life; and it seemed that she cared but for three persons in the world—"the chivalrous old veteran who had married her," the lovely little daughter Cerise, born of their union, and the young Abbé Malletort, a distant cousin of her own, as remarkable for shrewdness of intellect as for signal ugliness of face.

Madame de Montmirail grieved very honestly for the death of her husband, but after the prescribed period of seclusion she reappeared at court, still young and very beautiful. That she loved admiration was now apparent, for she accepted it with avidity. "She had the softest eyes, the smoothest skin, the sweetest voice in the bounds of France," but her heart was declared by her admirers to be harder than the diamond which became her so well. She refused more offers of marriage, we are told, than any woman in France. But Madame was not altogether unsusceptible; the independent bearing and handsome face of a certain captain of musketeers had unwittingly conquered where Dukes and Counts had sighed in vain. But this was Madame's secret.

Cerise is altogether charming. Her beauty and gentleness had won the heart of George Hamilton, the court page, as they played together as children, and the captain of musketeers did not forget his boyish love. The affection was mutual, but Madame de Montmirail was entirely ignorant of its existence on either side. Good use is made of this position by the author. The same cause which compelled George Hamilton to fly from the French Court led to the banishment of the De Montmirails to an estate they possessed in one of the smaller West Indian islands: and it is there that the captain of the privateer, who is ignorant of their banishment, unexpectedly rejoins them. During one of his cruises George Hamilton had cast anchor in the harbour of the island, where word was brought him that the slaves on a certain estate had risen in insurrection. Obeying the chivalrous instincts of his nature he rushed, at the head of his crew to the rescue. His arrival was opportune: the slaves had burst into the house, and stood confronting Madame de Montmirail and her daughter. It is at this terrible moment, and during the excitement of the unexpected meeting, that Madame learns that Cerise is her successful rival for the affection of the only man who had ever really touched her heart.

We leave the story at this point, as our readers will probably not thank us to reveal more of the plot of a work which many of them will doubtless read for themselves. One word as to the Abbé Malletort. He is described as "a man without religion, without principle, without honour, without even the common sympathies of

humanity," and certainly his career, as sketched by the author, admirably fits the description. We consider this character one of the most skillfully drawn in the work—although one stands aghast at the utter depravity of the man.

Mr. Melville displays, in this stirring book, an intimate acquaintance with the subject on which he writes; and many of his sketches of the manners and customs of a past century are worthy of the author of *Kenilworth*.

HIDDEN DEPTHS. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. Montreal: Dawson Brothers.

Whatever may be thought of this work, as a literary composition, the reader will hardly fail to respect the aim and earnestness of the writer. We are told that the book is not a work of fiction, in the ordinary acceptation of the term;—for the hidden depths, of which it reveals a glimpse, are not fit for a romance, nor ought they to be opened up to the light of day for purposes of mere amusement. All that is narrated the author declares to be actual truth, although it did not occur precisely as placed before the reader.

A few extracts will best indicate the scope of the work. "Let the pale wasted girl be driven from your door; suffer her not to contaminate with her presence so much as the pavement under your feet; but take my Lord, the betrayer, by the hand, and seat him at your table, heap honours upon him, and give an indulgent smile to his deeds of darkness." So judges the world, but so did not judge Ernestine Courtney, a pure and noble-minded woman, as she bent over the lifeless form of

"One more unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate
Gone to her death."

"She had come to renew, in presence of that mute witness, the resolution she had taken as she sat for the first few moments motionless, with the record of her brother's guilt lying at her feet. The knowledge of his crime had entered into her soul with an anguish only less bitter to her than the unavailing pity with which she thought of the lost girl, dead by her own hand."

"As she looked on the cold corpse and thought upon these things her heart burned within her, and she felt that life itself were cheaply given, and with life all she might have to sacrifice, in the search on which she was about to enter, if only in that tremendous hour she might bring this one soul, rescued from the enemy and the avenger, to the dear feet of Him whose infinite compassion flowed forth in His very heart's blood for the wandering and the lost."

This search was for a sister of the dead girl, for whose entrance upon the path of shame and infamy, the wretched suicide had been indirectly responsible. Ernestine was eventually successful, but the unfortunate girl was only rescued to die, and in dying added an unexpected ingredient to the cup of bitterness which Courtney was destined to drink. What this was we leave the reader to discover, premising that the story is interesting in itself, and embodies many serious truths upon subjects respecting which the world's code of justice is sadly at fault.

BETSY JANE WARD. (Better-half to Artemus) Hur Book of Goaks. New York: James O'Hane. Montreal: R. Worthington.

We do not know the author of this work, but it is evidently not our old friend Artemus. Betsy Jane has copied his style: there is the same extraordinary orthography, even a much freer use of the figures 2 and 4 for "to" and "fore" but we miss the broad humour and real wit which make all this tolerable in "Artemus Ward His Book" and the other productions of the celebrated showman. As is the case with imitations generally Betsy Jane Ward's Book of Goaks has in our opinion but little to recommend it. It is flat, stale, and unprofitable.

Coquette.—A child playing with fire.

Imagination.—The salt in our daily bread.

Book.—Brain preserved in ink.

Love.—The soul's glow of health.

Woman.—The melody of the human duet