Reminiscences of C. M. von Weber and Rossini

Author(s): Max Maria Von Weber and F. W.

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 17, No. 398 (Apr. 1, 1876), pp. 423-427

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3353462>

Accessed: 24-01-2016 08:40 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR.

APRIL 1, 1876.

REMINISCENCES OF C. M. VON WEBER AND ROSSINI.

BY MAX MARIA VON WEBER.

*(Translated, by special permission of the Author, from
the "Deutsche Rundschau.")*

I HAD completed my father's biography. During ten years, in the silent hours of night, I had lived over again another life by the side of my own—that of my father. It was a wondrous time—a time so strange as to almost make me believe in the possibility of citing spirits from the other world. When late in the evening I had laid aside my onerous official work, and had settled down before the desk in my little study wherein the material for this precious task lay piled up almost to the ceiling—lo! how they would swarm out, those kindly spirits, from countless faded letters, from enormous heaps of time-worn journals, from ancient, mysteriously-sounding pianofortes and guitars—so real, so full of life, that, in the delusion of my senses, the living and the dead would appear mixed up together. There they were, these old gentlemen with dandy-swords and bob-wigs, in abbés' robes and violet stockings, in court uniforms and hair-bags; these grave or smiling faces with violins, violoncellos, conductors' bâtons, and zithers; and these ladies, too, with rosy cheeks, their hair fashioned à la "Victime" or "Titus," wearing tight dresses with "Gigot" sleeves, and with rolls of music in their hands, women with sunny eyes and gaily ringing voices—and all these assembled round the small pale man seated in their midst by the piano.

Time had fulfilled its purgatorial office. The heated sympathies and antipathies of the days when politics were still confined to the care of diplomats, and Art alone was free to rouse the heart to stormy emotions, had cooled down. I comprehended, abstractedly, why many of the chief actors of that bygone period had misunderstood and persecuted one another, but I could no longer share with them their hatred or their love; so that some even among those whom my father had loathed and despised during life had become great and attractive in my eyes. The canonization of remarkable men is just now the fashion. Every laurel-wreath is converted into a saintly nimbus, which is made to fit the brow of even a Tiberius or a Nero. But, for all that, these great artists have hated and despised and abused one another heartily, and their mutual feelings of aversion were the more intense, the more decidedly original their artistic organization had been. "The critic must look to all sides," Weber had often exclaimed; "the creative artist, however, must say, 'Mine alone is the true art,' or he will never be worth much." Thus Beethoven could call the composer of "Freischütz" a "tender mannikin," and the latter write a parody on the "Eroica." The poet Tieck could designate "Freischütz" as the most unmusical noise which was ever let loose on the stage; Andræas Romberg could crack his jokes upon Beethoven's quartets, calling them "motley stuff," and Spohr consider the "Ninth Symphony" in questionable taste; Vogler, after hearing Poissl's "Athalia," could find "Don Giovanni" no longer suitable to his palate; and Zelter declare "Euryanthe" not worth the amount

of perspiration it had cost its author. All this was natural and a matter of course. But most natural of all was that, in the eyes of Weber, Rossini should appear as the Lucifer in Music—he, the most beautiful originally, but also the most fallen of angels. "He can do everything, and the good amongst it," he had exclaimed, after hearing the second act of "Mosè;" "only this Satan doesn't care to do it!"

Ever since his genius had attained its maturity, Weber had fought against the Italians. He was the first to challenge them, as their equal, to do battle with the purely Germanic spirit on the operatic stage. They hated one another passionately, blindly, unjustly; like Guelfs and Ghibellines, like the Germanic and the Latin elements. And in this strife with the Italians he had fought single-handed against a mighty host. His straightforward ways had been opposed by the crooked paths of intrigue, his unassuming modesty by dazzling splendour; and but too often he had been compelled, spite of his enthusiasm for the cause he represented, to leave the field in the possession of his enemies. At Berlin they had pitted against the poetic forest-life of his "Freischütz," the "Napoleon of Music," Spontini, with the artillery of his "Olympia." At Dresden, where Weber had with so much fostering care, with so much self-sacrificing anxiety, endeavoured to raise and develop the germs of a national Music-drama—the fame acquired of old by the Italian opera, the sneers of the ultra-conservative court party, and withal the desire to imitate foreign fashions, were grave obstacles in the way of accomplishing his task. His honest strivings were frustrated by the intrigues of his Italian colleagues who, although greatly his inferiors in talent, basked in the sunshine of the royal favour, while the mortification of seeing others preferred—foreigners, whose shallow productions are, with their name, now long forgotten—tended to accelerate the end of his already fast-sinking life. No wonder, therefore, if upon his arriving at Vienna, accompanied by the child of his sorrow, the best of his works, "Euryanthe," and finding there his arch-enemy the Italian, more dazzling, more brilliant, more bewitching than ever, firmly established in the hearts and minds of all—his heart was ready to burst with anger and indignation at a worship akin, in his estimation, to that of Baal. Nor was it here a rigid "Trumpet-General" like Spontini, a talentless back-biter like Morlacchi, whose muse he had to encounter; it was a master equal to himself in genius, the chosen favourite, moreover, of the gods—it was Rossini. Behold the brilliant staff by which the young commander-in-chief is surrounded in his progress; warriors of the first order press in the forefront of that glittering phalanx, ready to convert all his battles into as many victories! Never before or after has the theatre by the Kärntnerthor united within its walls an operatic troupe to be at all compared with that which, in the year 1823, Barbaja, the shrewd manager, introduced to the astonished gaze of the Viennese public. The lustre of every single star forming this memorable constellation has afterwards sufficed to ensure brilliancy and prosperity to an operatic undertaking. There were, in the first place, Mdme. Rossini herself (Rossini-Colbran); the most metallic of basses, Lablache and Ambrogi; the most golden of tenors, Cicimarra, Donzelli, and David; the most silver-voiced of sopranos, Fodor-Mainville; the bell-like alto, Comelli-Rubini; the enrapturing baritone, Nozzari: all these delightful songsters, assembled together as by a miracle under one roof, formed an *ensemble* which would have exalted the most trivial production. And

here it was Rossini who filled the throats of these rare artists with his fascinating melodies. And had not Weber himself, in spite of his wrath, experienced the charm to such a degree that, during a performance of "Cenerentola," after listening to a duet between Ambrogio and Lablache, he abruptly quitted the house, with the furious exclamation—"Now I shall run away; this stuff begins to please *me* too!" His heart drew together in his bosom, and ever and again he was fain to recall the confiding passage in his new work, "I trust in God and in my Euryanth'" when casting his eyes over the battle array with which he was to face this "army of archangels," as he himself called it. To represent the parts of Eglantine, Adolar, and Lysiart, he had the efficient but somewhat worn singer Grünbaum, the excellent but weak tenor Haizinger, the capital but rather vulgar bass, Forti. But who was there for the heroine herself, Euryanthe? M^{me}. Ungher-Sabatier, who may have been in Weber's mind when writing the part, was not to be procured. There was no choice, then, but to run a risk by placing it in the hands of Henriette Sontag, then barely nineteen years of age. And only two years before Weber had pronounced this gifted girl to be "still a bit of a goose;" while, but a few months back, M^{me}. Fodor-Mainville, when hearing her sing the part of Amazili in Spontini's opera, had exclaimed—"This little German can do nothing yet!" But there was no alternative; and the result proved a success. All the performers manifested their enthusiasm and affection for Weber; the true aristocracy of minds, the independent Press, headed by the genial Kanne, were on his side. The better part of the Vienna public, moreover, longed for the more powerful emotions aroused by a truly great German work, heartily tired as they were of the many insipid imitations of "Der Freischütz," such as Weigl's "Eiserne Pforte," and Kreutzer's "Libussa." Had not the "grey lion of Baden" himself (Beethoven) at one of his fitful visits to Stainer's music-shop remarked, "There is much need for a good German opera; I wish Weber success." And yet, already after the first few rehearsals the latter could not deceive himself as to the contrast of colours his work would exhibit, as compared with the popular Italian productions of the day. In creating his new work, the chaste conception of his thoroughly German genius, produced under great anxiety of mind by German earnestness and German perseverance, he had spent his very life's blood—he had given the best he had to give. For this very reason, however, the impression produced on seeing this work now at last on the stage would, in comparison with the glowing, glittering, merrymaking, effervescing, and enticing creations of the "Barber of Seville," of "Othello," "Gazza Ladra," "Matrimonio segreto," and "Donna del Lago," be like the effect of the dreamy poetry of a moonlight night as contrasted with the sunny day. Men of specifically German organization, men of concentrated and intense feeling, paid homage to the German master; the Viennese public at large, whose tastes—directed now, as then, chiefly to scenic and rhetorical effects in art—caused them to be attracted, like the moth, to the glaring light, forsook the serious German work already at its third performance, while even before the arrival of Barbaja's troupe every seat in his theatre had been engaged in advance for as many as twenty performances. It is but small comfort to think that the light by which the public had been thus attracted was really a beautiful and lustrous one.

Weber possessed a keen sense of the advantages waiting upon personal beauty, even in man. On one occasion, while travelling with the clarinet-virtuoso Bärmann, a man handsome and well-formed, to whom a distinguished reception was everywhere accorded, both at hotels and in society, Weber remarked to him: "This is not surprising; the creator in his goodness has fixed a letter of recommendation on your exterior, whilst I carry it only in my pocket." A glance at his own small, fragile figure, therefore, would often provoke in him a melancholy humour. Thus, when for the first time he donned his court uniform as capellmeister at Dresden, he piteously exclaimed, "Dear me, my calves would compare favourably with those of the finest butcher-dog!" And only a few days previous to his death he wrote to his wife, "I shrink together like a dried plum. To shave my face smoothly will henceforward be a puzzle to me." Although his sterling heart was a stranger to envious feelings, it would yet be painfully touched if, careful in his toilet as he was, he would glance at his figure in the glass, previous to a rehearsal, and find therein reflected the pale, spiritualised face of the German thinker, the weary eyes behind the strong spectacles, the narrow shoulders and almost transparent hands; and would then meet at the opera-house his brilliant rival, upon whose cradle Apollo and the Graces had with equal liberality showered their precious gifts. Broad-shouldered, with elastic step, his splendid head erect, orders upon his proud breast, this man confronted him, the same who but a few years previously had, along with his sweet melodies, won the hearts of the most beautiful women of Italy, certain of victory wherever he went. And yet, strange to say, there was a similarity in the features of the two great masters, in so far as sickness and exuberant health, ingenious work and spontaneous creating, Germany and Italy, in short, can be at all likened to one another. This outward resemblance in the physiognomy of the two men may, however, be psychologically established also. Was not Weber exactly to Germany what Rossini was to Italy? The congeniality of their minds to their respective native countries forms an exact parallel, which would seem to account for the similarity in their features. The fact that the existing antipathy between Weber and Rossini, founded as it was alike on homogeneous and heterogeneous elements, had taken a less violent form with the latter may be explained by a feeling of generosity on the part of the more fortunate. With Weber, on the other hand, the aversion had reached its culminating point after the encounter in the arena at Vienna, gradually losing its intensity in proportion as his bodily weakness increased, so that in time he could even bring himself to admit the melodiousness of "Il Barbiere." Passing through Paris, on his way to England, he resolved to pay a visit to the composer. A previous visit to Cherubini, for whom he always entertained the highest admiration, gave him strength for this effort, and, perhaps, he was actuated also by a desire to make his peace with everyone in this world while there was yet time. Rossini, the man of the world, who at an interview with Beethoven at Baden, near Vienna, had ostentatiously bent his knee before the great master, received Weber with signs of homage, not omitting at parting to accompany the "maestro del franco arciero" to the foot of the stairs, whereby the latter, whom want of breath compelled to rest at every step, was fain to lean upon the gladly-proffered arm of his former enemy.

Forty years had gone by, time had reduced the flames of those passions to ashes. To me they had already

become historical. But the picture of the grand immediate past of German musical art had, aided by the researches upon which I had been so recently engaged, assumed in my mind a degree of life and distinctness which surrounded the few remaining representatives of that period with a halo of glory. Above all, Rossini. And even though he had contended with my father—they were champions worthy of each other's steel, and both had been in the right. Rossini, in my eyes, had become identified with the graceful and the sweet sensual charms in music. When, therefore, in the spring of 1865 I had occasion to make a prolonged stay at Paris, with the impression still on mind of the double life I had lived and the spirits I had cited, I felt almost as if the express train were to convey me, not some hundreds of miles onward, but forty years back into the golden time of music; into the very centre of its whole delightful tone-atmosphere. I fancied as if, round its still living heroes, the great departed would move visibly in life and sunshine who had hitherto yielded only to my entreating call to enfold their presence to me in the silence of night. Those hands with which Rossini, Auber, Caraffa pressed mine, had assisted in creating that remarkable epoch, had on their part laid in those of Beethoven, Schubert, and my father's; thus establishing complete "rapport" between myself and them. On the third day after my arrival, the Prefet, M. Haussmann, apologised during dinner to General Morin for having been unable to keep an appointment he had made with the latter. "I had some very distinguished guests," said he; "guess who they were." The General mentioned some very aristocratic names. "Go up higher," replied Haussmann. "Well, then—Prince Napoleon." "Higher still," cried Haussmann. "Indeed," said the General, laughing, "their Imperial Majesties could not have been with you, or else the papers would know it." "Not the majesty of rank, but that of genius," replied Haussmann with animation; "it was Rossini, Auber, and Morse" (inventor of the telegraphic writing-apparatus). "A la bonheur," respectfully saluted the most distinguished engineer of France. Much impressed with the homage thus rendered to genius, so characteristic of the French character, I at once wrote to Rossini to be permitted to visit him, and directly after received a note from his wife, inviting, in the most amiable terms, "the son of the great master." I have never known embarrassment in presence of the great of this world; but, mounting the gloomy staircase at No. 2, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, on the 21st of March, 1865, I felt my heart beating. I was at once admitted, and, passing through a spacious but somewhat sombre ante-chamber, I was ushered into Rossini's study. He rose from behind a huge mass of papers piled upon a table, and quickly walked towards me: very different in appearance to the picture I had conceived of him, the hero of art and of the fair sex—small of stature, corpulent, yet swift in his movements. I was deeply impressed. This was Rossini; and yet—I verily believe my father would have looked like this if, in the full possession of health, he had reached his seventieth year. There were his forehead, his eyebrows, and, above all, the nose; quite different, however, the massive lower part of the face, and the full and decidedly plain, sensual mouth. With a smile which still reminded one of the "love-inspiring enchanter of Pesaro," he extended to me his hand. That was the hand which had written "Il Barbiere" and "Tell;" and never had I held a nobler one in mine. Involuntarily I inclined my head towards it,

whereupon he clasped me in his arms, exclaiming—"Indeed, you are taller and stronger, but you are like your father, who was very ill when I last saw him." "If this be the case, I am fortunate enough to resemble *you* somewhat too," was my reply; "for the upper part of your face—the forehead especially—is like his." "Well, then," he retorted laughingly, "it would seem there is something musical in my features after all! Why do we appreciate great men only when we grow old and wise! And the worst of it is, they are then generally already gone. By this time I know that a work like 'Oberon' can never be written again. And if he were still alive, he would give me some credit too. We should, in fact, be old men both, and nothing more." And then he went on to relate, with an astonishing resource of memory, the particulars of Weber's visit at his house, upon the latter's death-journey to England. "He breathed heavily as I descended the stairs with him. I was obliged to assist him into his carriage—it was impossible he could have breathed in this manner much longer. But he did well to die early," he added with a truly French turn, "what am I good for? I amuse myself, but no longer anyone else." "Surely this is the result merely of your own free choice," I ventured to suggest, "otherwise the composer of 'Tell'!"—"Hush," he replied, with a melancholy wave of the hand, "let us talk no more about that! I am composing continually. Look at these shelves closely packed with manuscript; they have all been filled since 'Tell.' I publish nothing now, and write only because I cannot help it. If we were living among the ancients, I should have the consolation to know that all this would some day be burnt with me, as it is, it will have to find its way into the fire without." I expressed my satisfaction at seeing heaped upon his table the works of exclusively German masters: Beethoven, Gluck, Mozart. "The old composers," he replied eagerly, "only the old ones! They call M. Wagner a great genius. Maybe he is. I am quite sure, however, that I shall never comprehend him, should I reach the years of Noah. Nor would I entertain any doubt as to his genius, if only he would have the goodness to ventilate it in any other direction but that of music." (Just about that time the malicious observation had obtained currency, which Rossini had actually made after hearing the overture to "Tannhäuser:" "Si c'était de la musique, ce serait horrible.") At parting, the veteran master requested my company at dinner on the following Saturday. "I shall cause something very confidential to be whispered into your ear," he said, "my new Spanish Romances, but you must not tell any one that you heard them!" On the occasion in question I found the master—who appeared to-day quite "en belle fourchette"—seated by the chimney with the aged Caraffa, in the most pleasant of humours, and gravely discussing the manner in which certain Sicilian mushrooms, of which we were to partake, should be prepared. I will not decide whether Rossini's or Caraffa's mouth was the more sensual of the two, but I could not refrain from smiling when I called to mind that the latter's thick lips had once sung the love-message "to Alexis," and had "kissed the rose." The eyes of both old gentlemen sparkled during their "piquante" conversation. A small and select company soon assembled. Among them were the vivacious and sympathetic Gustave Doré, looking with his moustache and chin-beard, his round and rosy face, like a German student; the Professor of physical science, Davy Marié, and Madame Ludre, whose clever lectures on an universal language

founded on the denomination of the musical scale, do re mi, &c., invented by her, had made her one of the wonders of the day. At last the lady of the house herself made her appearance, somewhat preoccupied, it seemed, with the ultimate fate of the Italian mushrooms in the kitchen. I had the honour to conduct the lady—an active little woman, in whose features the sound materialism of her husband appeared even more marked—to the table. Never before has it been my share to witness the consumption, with such all-absorbing devotion, and in such orthodox style, according to the ritual of their native countries, of such an extraordinary variety of dishes characteristic of the culinary art of all nations. Rossini himself, perfectly familiar as he was with all the various eating manipulations required, appeared highly amused at the helplessness displayed by most of us in dealing with the *Haché* concealed in the hollow of bones from Catania, with the uncomfortable length of the vermicelli from Naples, and the wormlike muscles from Hyères. Every one of these dishes was accompanied by a corresponding beverage, as decidedly national as it was, generally, most abominable. As the gem of the dinner, the Sicilian mushrooms, were approaching the state of perfection in the kitchen, the fact was announced to the lady of the house. Thereupon, at her bidding, the doors were thrown open, and for a while the adepts of table wisdom sat with their eyes closed in a state of trance, eagerly exposing their noses to the odour proceeding from the kitchen, until the miracle itself—which, ignorant savage that I was, tasted to me very much like common mushrooms—made its appearance on the table, to be despatched amidst befitting silence—or rather, I should say, “discussed” on critical tongue and cunning palate. During dinner, whenever the conversation threatened to stray away from the “*Physiologie du goût*,” our host would lead it back upon the science of Brillat-Savarin; and it was only when dessert was being served that other interests besides those connected with the palate were allowed to prevail. The master’s plump figure fairly shook with laughter when Davy Marié related the malicious manner—so characteristic of Le Verrier—in which the latter had introduced the discoverer of Brome to the Academy. “*Voilà, Monsieur Bâlârd*,” he had said, “*qui a été découvert par le brome*.” After dinner, evening guests poured in—*savants*, beautiful women, artists of both sexes; a brilliant, bustling, chatting crowd. The worship of genius, which so much redounds to the honour of the French, now had in it something of the Fetish idolatry; so fanatic on one side and so apathetic on the part of the art-hero, who, sitting in his arm-chair, was calmly undergoing the process of digestion. There was something very droll in all this even to me, who stood so entirely under the immediate influence of his immortal presence. I fancy he must have been heartily weary of the constant genuflections, even of women, and the eternal “divino maestro” and “immortale.” “He might be envied, if he were a younger man,” whispered Doré into my ear, as the master—with that graceful smile of his by which he magnetically attracted all hearts, and which, at times, could be mingled with an expression the most cunning Satyr would have envied him—had stolen a rose from the bosom of a beautiful girl, a pupil of the Conservatoire, and after pressing it to his lips had placed it in his button hole; or as afterwards he patted Mlle. Frezzolini on her round shoulder, when she had sung those exquisite Romances, which I was not to speak about to any one. Whether they have afterwards

been published I know not; certain it is, however, that since the Serenade in “*Il Barbiere*,” nothing sweeter, nothing more impregnated with southern fragrance has flown from Rossini’s pen. “She acted wisely,” remarked Doré to me, when she had ended, “in singing only the notes which were there, much against her usual habit. Rossini cannot bear to hear his music ‘embellished;’ he can then be devilish angry. Patti herself has fared badly enough in this very room,” he continued, in his pleasant manner. “She sang the air of Rosina from the ‘*Barbiere*’ with some endless ‘*fiorituras*,’ written for her by Strakosch, and which she executed in delightful manner. I noticed how vexed the maestro was. When she had finished he applauded with unusual energy, exclaiming, ‘Exquisite! masterly! a charming composition! And—may I ask what was it you have sung?’ ‘Indeed, maestro,’ replied Patti, ‘how can you ask, it was, of course, the air from “*Il Barbiere*.”’ ‘Ah! but not from *my* Barbiere,’ he replied, smiling sarcastically, ‘probably from the *barbier stracochonné*.’” It was impossible to convey the lesson with greater severity. This anecdote reminded me of a similar occurrence in the professional life of my father, which I could not but relate as being eminently characteristic of the proceedings of both masters in circumstances so similar. Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient who, while a pupil of the famous singing-master, Mieksch, was subject occasionally to “Italian fits,” had, during the general rehearsal of “*Euryanthe*” embellished the words “*mein Adolar*,” in the air “*Glöcklein im Thale*,” with elaborate flourishes, after the most approved manner. Weber immediately laid aside his bâton, and paused till she had ended; whereupon, removing the little cap he generally wore in the orchestra, he slightly bowed to the singer on the stage saying, “Very beautiful, Minchen; very beautiful! But if I had wished it to be like that, depend upon it I would have written it down myself.”

Some two years after this interesting evening, in the summer, I traced my steps to Passy, the suburb in which the villa was situate, which the town of Paris had either presented to Rossini or else placed at his disposal. I knew that he lived in Avenue Ingres, and believed the number to be 20. The front of all the villas being, however, concealed by shrubs and creeping plants, I could not discover the numbers. The glowing sun of August lay between the trees of the avenue, which was completely deserted. I cast my eye about for some one of the inhabitants whose appearance might warrant the hope that he would know something of Rossini. The only human being, however, which met my view was a simple *ouvrier* in his blue blouse, engaged in mending the road. I hailed him. “Friend, have the houses here in Passy no numbers?” “Whom do you seek?” he replied. “Monsieur Rossini.” “Oh, ce nom vaut mieux qu’un numéro,” he answered, touching his hat, and dropping his spade he continued, “I shall be proud to be permitted to open the door of Villa Rossini to you, sir.” I felt my eyes getting hot by the display of this precious trait in the character of the French. Where, in any other country, is the street labourer who would instinctively raise his hand to his cap upon the mere mention of the name of Mozart or Goethe, like the Prussian soldier when speaking of his king!

I spent a lovely summer evening in the villa at Passy. The master was more serenely disposed than usual, only at rare intervals would the old fire flash across his face, or the Satyr glide through

his words. Walking up and down his pretty garden he conversed softly and with exertion. He made me speak about my countrymen, R. Wagner and Schumann, and about the friend of his youth, Morlacchi. Repeatedly the shrill notes of the locomotive, passing through Passy station, interrupted our conversation, so that at last I exclaimed, "How painfully this most modern of all horrible sounds must visit your ears!" "You are mistaken in that," he replied, shaking his head, while a melancholy smile, such as I had never noticed in him before, passed over his features, "these sounds continually remind me of the golden days of my youth. Good heavens! how they have hissed my first operas, in 'Cenerentola,' and 'Torvaldo and Dorlisca.'" It was then mentioned that during the approaching season "Oberon" and "Euryanthe" were again to make their appearance on the Paris stage. "I should like you to hear, for once, how we French maltreat German music," said the great master, shaking me by the hand at parting, "Perhaps I might be induced once more, in company with Weber's son, to hear one of his father's operas." F. W.

THE prospectus of the Royal Italian Opera for the present season is not very exciting. M. Capoul, who joins the Company for the first time, will strengthen the list of tenors; but a serious loss will be sustained in the baritone department by the secession of M. Faure. The names of several new vocalists are however given: but it seems doubtful whether one—Signor Gayarre, a tenor—will appear this season. Verdi's "Aida," Wagner's "Tannhäuser," Rossini's "Mosé in Egitto," and Donizetti's "L'Elisir d'Amore" are mentioned as probable revivals, with the singular announcement that "three at least" of these works will be produced. Knowing the influence of the vocalists in this establishment, we may give a pretty accurate guess as to the selection which will be made. The fact of making "advantageous changes," in an orchestra stated to be already "unrivalled," would at first appear to be a highly praiseworthy attempt to arrive at perfection; but knowing, as we do, that several eminent instrumentalists belonging to the band decline to bind themselves six nights a week to the Royal Italian Opera, the "advantageous" nature of the alterations about to be effected can only have reference to the management. The prospectus announces the 28th ult. as the opening night. Mr. Mapleson advertises that Her Majesty's Opera will commence at Drury Lane Theatre on the 25th inst., but his prospectus has not yet reached us.

THE death of Signor Puzzi, which occurred, at an advanced age, during the past month, again draws our attention to the fact that of the well-known artists connected with the old King's Theatre, in the days when music was a mere aristocratic luxury, there are now but very few left. Signor Puzzi, in addition to holding a high position as solo horn-player at the fashionable lyrical establishment in the Haymarket, was an active agent in making engagements with foreign vocalists, one of whom—Mdlle. Tosio—he not only brought over from Italy, but subsequently married. For many years Madame Puzzi's name has been more before the world than that of her husband; for her annual concerts have always been held in much esteem and liberally patronized.

NEWS comes to us of a "Pianoforte Bee" recently given at the Soldiers' Institute, Portsmouth; and we are also informed that a "novel idea" of the same kind has been announced by Mr. Stroud L. Cocks in the metropolis. We have no doubt that the custom of holding these public tests of progress in the various branches of the art will rapidly grow; but there is nothing "novel" in the idea, for assuredly the meetings organized by Mr. Willert Beale at the Crystal Palace were nothing but "Musical Bees" on an extensive scale. It would give us much pleasure to insert the long account forwarded to us of the Portsmouth gathering, did our space permit; but we may mention that the plan there adopted of giving such appropriate prizes as Schumann's pianoforte works, Beethoven's Sonatas, edited by Agnes Zimmermann, a *fac-simile* of Handel's manuscript of the "Messiah," Stainer and Barrett's "Dictionary of Musical Terms," and two volumes of Mozart's works, is one well worthy of imitation at similar meetings.

A SOCIETY to protect us from our friends is scarcely one we should imagine to be a positive necessity; but the amicable relationship which has so long existed amongst composers, publishers, and executive artists has latterly been so disturbed by the doings of Mr. Harry Wall—an account of which was given in our last number—that meetings have taken place, and an Association formed called the "Vocal and Dramatic Artists' Protection Society," the object of which is to acquaint its subscribers with all the circumstances connected with the copyright of published works, so that no penalty can be unknowingly incurred by the performance of a composition in public. Such a Society must have the best wishes of those who believe that it is the duty of all who claim legal rights to take care that a knowledge of the existence of such rights is not systematically held back until the moment of enforcing them.

CRYSTAL PALACE.

THE interest of the Saturday concerts during the past month has, perhaps, been even above the average. So many works of importance have been brought forward that it will be impossible, within reasonable limits, to speak of them in the detail which they deserve. We must content ourselves with a few general remarks, and refer our readers to the columns of our weekly contemporaries for fuller information.

On February 26th, the special feature of the afternoon was the performance of Mendelssohn's 95th Psalm. This fine work had been previously given at Sydenham, but particular interest attached to it on the present occasion from the fact that the unpublished chorus which there is every reason to believe Mendelssohn intended as the finale was given at the end of the work, this being its first public hearing. It will be remembered that the printed score of the Psalm begins in the key of E flat and ends in G minor, a close, which however defensible on æsthetic grounds, is certainly unsatisfactory from a musical point of view. The new finale, which has been published by Novello & Co., in vocal score and separate chorus parts in the key of E flat, consists of a broad introduction and a spirited fugue; most of the material is taken from the earlier parts of the work. The words of this new chorus are taken from the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses of the Psalm; and it may perhaps have been a feeling that their re-introduction in this place was hardly felicitous, which induced the composer to suppress this chorus when preparing the work for publication.

On the following Saturday (March 4), Herr Joachim played Beethoven's violin concerto in his own unapproachable style. At the same concert his orchestral arrangement of Schubert's great Duo in C, Op. 140, was brought forward. We have no space here to enter into the dis-