English Music in Dresden

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have an opportunity of discussing the matter of Choir Training, which I hope to do in these columns later on. Next month we will consider the accompaniment to the Creed, and playing Anthems, &c., from the ordinary pianoforte arrangement.

(To be continued.)

ENGLISH MUSIC IN DRESDEN.

WITH a view of my keeping perfectly *en rapport*, more especially as to vocal music, in one of the most musical centres in Germany, I recently spent some weeks in Dresden, a city I have visited on former occasions, and in which I have had the happiness of becoming acquainted with many congenial spirits. Among the first pleasures of this, my recent visit, was to hear Sir Hubert Parry's remarkably fine Trio in E minor, which, wherever it is performed, invariably meets with the warmest admiration and sympathy. Such was the appreciation it received on this occasion that it is to be performed again, and by the Dresden Philharmonic Society.

Dresden, as everyone knows, is richly possessed of many architectural as well as other art beauties, the chief of which is its wealth of museums and picture galleries. Here is to be found the world-renowned picture of "La Notte" (the Holy Night), by Correggio, which, with its opening heavens and descent of angels towards the Holy Family, attains to the sublimity of Handel's "Hallelujah," and is of itself sufficient to make priceless the great picture gallery of Dresden.

The art of music finds the most numerous adherents in Dresden; but while classical and chamber concerts have their many admirers, the universal taste is opera, of which the *répertoire*, so far as my information goes, is almost unlimited. Hofrath von Schuch, the conductor, is a man, so to speak, born to his work; and whatever the opera—be it the most classical or the most popular—his rendering of it is as if all his life he had had no other to conduct. It matters not whether it be "Siegfried" or "Fra Diavolo," the utmost perfection is invariably secured. His broad views, his precision, his general picturesqueness—which may be regarded as some of his most striking traits—all combine to justify the opinion that the opera over which he presides is about the most perfect in Germany. I understand that he has been asked by Grau to go to America to conduct the opera. We certainly ought to have him in London; and I endorse the opinion of many in the wish that we may welcome him at Covent Garden. *Apropos* of royal recognition of his merits, it may be mentioned that a year or two since he had the pleasure of receiving from the King of Saxony His Majesty's portrait set in a frame

of twenty bank notes, each of the value of a thousand marks.

It would be a great mistake to assume that all the greatest German vocal artists visit this country. Nor is it needful to give the names of the several fine singers attached to the opera. But my pen seems to force me to write the name of Fräulein Therese Malten, a prima donna whose every impersonation is a musical and dramatic perfection. (Happily when I left Dresden she was well on the road to recovery after a very serious illness.) Nor should I be doing another great artist justice were I not to say that the *Hans Sachs* of Herr Scheidemantel is among the most complete representations of that character I have ever witnessed. In fact, I consider this artist unique in his versatility, and I trust that we may have his presence in London this season and hear him in some of his other famous *rôles*. It can hardly be out of place in speaking of Herr Scheidemantel to make reference to his villa, which is quite the old German type of residence, everything being in thorough keeping; it is entirely of a character to suit a genial worthy like *Hans Sachs*. With regard to the artists in general at the Dresden Opera House, I must content myself with saying that every embodiment I witnessed seemed to be a conception carefully thought out and developed.

I turn now to speak of the Conservatorium, which, in a word, is what might be expected in such a city as Dresden. It is in a very flourishing condition. The head of the establishment is Herr Krantz, son of the former principal; but Frau Hofrath Krantz still takes a great interest in the work which her late husband did so much to bring to its present state of usefulness. The affairs of the Conservatorium are managed by a committee of musicians of high attainments, including Herr Hofrath Draeseke, regarded as the greatest contrapuntist now living. His personality is such that every musician must regard him with supreme interest. His originality, his general skill, his dramatic force, and his inspiration have been abundantly proved in his opera "Herrat," produced some years since, and in the opera "Gutrune." Interesting symphonies have flowed from his pen, notably the one in F. "Cristus," a trilogy, is a great work, which is now finished, and when it is performed should prove, I do not hesitate to say, an epoch-marking masterpiece. The choral and orchestral classes of the Conservatorium are really excellent, the latter being under the direction of Herr Rappoldi. So strong were my expressions of approval of the choral class on a former occasion, that at my suggestion the Director immediately assented to putting into rehearsal some English works. But, alas! death put a stop to the fulfilment of his promise. However, I have the assurance of his son, the present Director, that if I will send him some English works by our foremost writers of

choral compositions, he will not fail to make himself familiar with them for the purpose of their being put into rehearsal.

It is my pleasure to think that in Dresden, at least, there is the "open door." The fact that a young English artist is received on the ground of her own merit, and free from the prejudice of nationality, is in the highest degree satisfactory. Miss Agnes Nicholls, a student of the Royal College of Music, is a case in point. She, at a bound, won the approval of the most enlightened musicians and critics. The *Neueste Nachrichten*, in a eulogistic paragraph, strongly advised her on no account to leave Dresden without singing at an important concert, being fully assured of the great success she would achieve. The opportunity arose, for an invitation from the Directors of the Conservatorium came to her to sing as a "guest" at the great public concert they were about to give in the "Musenhause." There can be no doubt that a reception such as Miss Nicholls secured, some of her songs being redemanded with enthusiasm, reflects credit on the Royal College of Music. She sang as encores songs by Ludwig Hartman, gems in themselves which should be made known in England. The criticisms, too, were most favourable, the *Dresdner Zeitung* finishing by saying that "We shall be delighted to find her name again on the programme," and the *Neueste Nachrichten* predicted a great future for the charming young artist.

Before concluding, I must mention two incidents. The first was a delightful and interesting sleighing party among the Bohemian mountains. After journeying for some hours our sleigh stopped at a lonely inn, when suddenly our party was attracted by the sound of a violin. On looking up we saw on the mountain side a man resting from his wood-cutting labours and fondly scraping his fiddle. What could he be playing? Was it a Bohemian air? No!—it was a tune from Sullivan's "Mikado!" Among the pine-covered mountains, all white with snow, this music, accompanied by the tinkling of the sleigh bells, had for us an inexpressible charm.

Being near Prague we pushed forward and found ourselves in the historic rooms of the "Blauen Stern." On the same evening we visited the German theatre, where we heard a most interesting performance of "Tannhäuser." One Sunday I had the immeasurable pleasure of a long talk with Antonin Dvůrák. His improvement in his mastery of the English language is very great, and he was in jubilant spirits owing to the success with which his last opera had lately been received. He is looking forward with pleasant anticipation to a visit to England this spring, when he is to conduct some new orchestral works at one of the Philharmonic concerts.

The second incident was at the hotel where we stayed in Dresden. A large party of

Germans who had espoused the interests of the Boers were dining near us, giving vent to their sentiments in the singing of a Boer hymn or anthem, whereupon Miss Agnes Nicholls was asked to sing "God save the Queen." She acceded to the request and sang, as from her soul, the National Anthem in such a style as to bring the opposing party into our salon, and they were induced to join lustily in the chorus of our anthem. Thus we should like all pro-Boers and Boers to do—and may they very soon do it!

ALBERT VISETTI.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

THERE is no variation in regard to the success which attends Mr. Elgar's "Variations." Herein is no "enigma." Wherever and whenever these orchestral dainties are performed they naturally charm the ears of those who listen to them. Under the fostering care of Dr. Richter the work has recently conquered the strongholds of hardware and cotton—Birmingham and Manchester to wit. In both these centres of musical activity the "Variations" and their composer have been received during the past month with genuine appreciation and enthusiasm. As with the London critics, the initials at the head of each variation seem to have been the initial difficulty of the provincial gentlemen of the press in enigmatising—if the word may be allowed—the conception of the composition. Especially is this the case in regard to that mysterious individual, "Nimrod" (No. 9), who is thus speculated upon by one of the critical fraternity: "No. 9, perhaps, refers to a mighty hunter (Nimrod); but we rejoice to record that no tarantivys are heard, though perhaps Dr. Richter, who was once an orchestral horn-player, even as the composer was a violinist, would have taken especial interest in the feature. The key, however, is E flat, which is in itself suspicious. Mr. Elgar's 'Nimrod' appears to be enjoying a peaceful old age, marked by Handelian aspirations. A pearl in a string of pearls." This is exceedingly imaginative. Supposing, however, that the veteran "Nimrod" is really flesh and blood, and that he is an out and out Wagnerite, what must be the old gentleman's feelings in regard to these deductions? But the question is: Has anyone yet succeeded in hunting "Nimrod" down?

THE prospectus of the new series of Symphony Concerts at the Queen's Hall is a document that caused us to rub our eyes. It did not contain a single specimen of the Russian school, but, on the other hand, quite a respectable selection from the works of our native composers! Have our protests against the anti-British policy of the Queen's Hall authorities availed, and are the classics, as well as our own representative composers, to come by their own at last? It is devoutly to be hoped; though we would strongly disapprove of any attempt to ignore the vigorous life and sturdy growth of the great musical forces lying even now more or less undeveloped in those Slavonic races to whom the future—not only in matters musical—will very likely belong. There is a vast difference between Mr. Wood's former infatuation with everything Russian, good, bad, or indifferent, and a reasonable appreciation of the fact that Tschaikowsky was a genius, and that the "young Russians" do occasionally produce something worthy of our concert-givers' attention.