PARIS AT THE THEATRE.

Watching the Skies for New Stars.

CLARY AND HUMBERTA.

How Theo, the Blonde, Shakes Empires with Her Nod.

PRINCESS CENDRILLON.

PARIS, Nov. 20, 1879.

The directors of the operetta theatres of Paris are all active men. Not satisfied with zealously devoting themselves to their business, it is at the same time their constant effort to insure a long vogue to the particular class of performances which they produce. To effect this they require stars. Of these there are but few, and it is a question whether there will be any to succeed them. Judic has already adopted a style of performance which approaches more nearly to the vaudeville than the operetta, and Granier may some time or other follow her example. Hence the necessity of finding new divas *à succès*. No effort is considered too great to discover them. Certain theatrical directors pass their evenings in exploring the cafés concerts in the eccentric quarters of the city in the hope of discovering a new and hitherto unknown star. They may even be observed at times stopping in the street to listen to the warblings of the little mendicants who sing for charity in the courtyards.

From this multitude of efforts result occasionally débuts announced long in advance, and which are generally unsuccessful. In the fortnight which has just elapsed two theatrical directors have each produced an operetta star. The one at the Bouffes was a girl, seventeen years of age, named Mlle. Clary, who modestly presented herself as a new Judic. A great deal of fuss was made about her and care was taken to inform the public in advance that she had issued from a café concert, the Eldorado from whence the theatre had already drawn Theo, Judic and a few other artists of lesser importance. But all this preliminary *tapage* not having prevented the piece in which Mlle. Clary made her début—"Les Noces d'Olivette"—from having a very moderate share of success, the result was a disappointment for the débutante and her too zealous partisans. A star is judged of by the receipts, and Mlle. Clary, notwithstanding her merits as a singer and as a comédienne, did not make money for the Bouffes.

More fortunate was Mlle. Humberta in the "Billet de Logement" at the Fantaisies Parisiennes. Her success was very great, and if it cannot as yet be determined whether she will be a Parisian star, if we have still to wait to judge of the duration of her vogue, which is only of a few days date, there are certainly great chances that we shall count a diva additional on the list of our theatrical divinities. Playing in a theatre situated at a considerable distance from the centre of the city Mlle. Humberta does not the less attract there elegant and aristocratic audiences, and if this vogue continues it is more than probable that the pretty young *chanteuse* will soon be taken permanent possession of. A number of popular authors and leading managers have already proposed to her *rôles* and engagements. She has confidence in her own success, and in a short time, when the interest excited in her will have increased, she will be able to impose her own terms.

The new star, although only of recent discovery, seems to me to possess all the qualities necessary to captivate the public. Her beauty, her elegance and her gracefulness, alone suffice to explain the popularity into which she has suddenly started. She possesses in an eminent degree that personal originality which is a sure passport to the favor of the Parisians. It is known that owing to her fortune and her education she is entirely independent of the theatre, and that it is merely an irresistible taste for it which has led her to appear on the stage. Facts like these have always a certain attraction for the Parisians, and they have, in no small degree, contributed to render Mlle. Humberta popular.

THEO AS CINDERELLA.

In the meanwhile, while the managers are making such efforts to discover new stars, an old one (old in point of date) who had been in a measure eclipsed, seems to be resuming her place in the Parisian firmament. I allude to Mme. Theo.

For a long period, owing to a series of unfortunate creations, the blonde diva found it impossible to obtain a *rôle* in any of the operetta theatres. In despair she determined to change her style of performance. When she decided to assume in "Cendrillon" (Cinderella) at the Porte St. Martin the *rôle* of a fairy heroine every one thought her "used up."

"She is done for. There is nothing left of her," observed one of her most fervent adorers.

Her admirers decided not to follow her to this popular theatre, which is devoted, as every one knows, to melodrama and grand spectacular pieces.

But when they heard of her in this fairy piece as lovelier and more engaging than ever they resumed the habit of going to see her and of passing their evenings at the Porte St. Martin, as they had formerly been accustomed to spend them at the Bouffes or at the Renaissance. And now Theo has resumed her empire over her special public, and her power is greater than ever. She has every reason to felicitate herself on quitting operetta, in which she was really on the decline, to play fairy pieces, in which she reigns without a rival. This is the first time that a star has been seen to play in fantastic pieces of this kind. The experiment, thanks to Theo, has been attended with brilliant success; but it establishes a mischievous and expensive precedent. These pieces, which already cost a great deal of money to mount, will henceforth prove equally costly in the interpretation.

It was therefore quite a theatrical revolution to which Theo attached her name. But the creatress of the "Jolie Parfumeuse" does not confine herself to revolutions. After having transformed the artistic tastes of the little circle of adorers who have followed her everywhere for the last ten years she has also changed their most inveterate habits. In Paris the mundane public do not care to go early to the theatre. They dine late, and the favorite theatres, such as the Variétés and the Renaissance, never commence their performances, or at least that of the principal piece, before nine o'clock.

WHIMS OF A DIVA.

But this is not the case in the popular theatres, such as the Porte St. Martin, in which Theo is now playing. The curtain rises on "Cendrillon" at half-past seven. It is true that the adorers of the diva are always certain of seeing a good deal of her from their *avant scène* toward the middle of the piece. But that is not sufficient for Theo. She desires that they should also see her in the first act, and she has serious reasons for this. It is, in fact, in the first act that lies the principal feature of attraction so far as her performance is concerned, or what in theatrical performance is called "*le clou du rôle*." It is a simple appearance, but an appearance so marvellously lovely, so admirably *mise en scène*, that it suffices to explain the popularity of the new "Cinderella." The pretty head of Theo rises suddenly in the centre of a *corbeille* of flowers illuminated by the electric light. The *coup d'œil* is indescribably beautiful; no effect like it has ever been seen at the theatre, and it can readily be understood that Theo holds to being admired in this *corbeille*, which, though it can add nothing to her reputation as an artist, is a veritable triumph for her incomparable beauty.

When any one goes to her box to congratulate her upon her performance she always eagerly inquires:—

"Did you come in time to see me in my *corbeille*?"

When she receives a reply in the negative she usually dismisses her visitor without further remark.

This peculiarity has naturally caused a great disturbance in the gastronomic habits of the *jeunes élégants*, who would do anything rather than displease the star of their dreams. Some breakfast later, some dine earlier, and all arrange in one way or other to go to the Porte St. Martin before eight o'clock so as not to miss the *corbeille*. It is a settled habit. When the Russian Grand Dukes passed through Paris they twice advanced the hour of their dinner to go and see Theo in her *corbeille* a couple of evenings in succession. Prince Vladimir even made Theo promise that she would introduce this luminous *corbeille* in all her operettas when she goes to sing in St. Petersburg.

IDOLATRY AND GASTRONOMY.

Certain *habitués* of the Porte St. Martin, among those who go there exclusively for Theo, have arranged to dine every evening in the neighborhood of the theatre during the scene which follows that of the *corbeille*. They can in this way manage to go to the theatre early and without imposing on themselves the necessity of a hasty and unsatisfactory repast. But others hit upon an improved arrangement. One evening the figurantes, the machinists and the other employés of the theatre were astonished by the arrival of an army of cooks, scullions and restaurant waiters, who proceeded to the dressing room of Cinderella bearing dishes, cakes, *pièces montées* and *entremets*—all the novelties and delicacies, in short, of a royal banquet. On witnessing all this Theo herself was equally surprised. She only discovered *le mot de l'énigme* in the next *entr'acte* on receiving the visit of several of the members of one of the most aristocratic clubs of Paris.

"My dear Theo," they said to her, "we came here thus early in order to see you in the midst of your flowers. And as we have not had time to dine we have come to dine with you in your dressing room. Everything is prepared, as you see; you will be free for half an hour during the ballet. We shall be very quiet, and it will be good fun."

Theo naturally hastened to decline this strange invitation, not wishing to transform her *loge* into a dining room. Her admirers were compelled to abandon their project. As to the superb dinner which was served at one of the large restaurants on the Boulevard it made happy a host of supernumeraries and small danseuses. These people had never before enjoyed such a treat.

All this for a simple *corbeille*!

But this is not all. Whatever she may desire or will Theo is inseparable from her *corbeille*. She is daily invited to go and give *séances de corbeille* at parties or at the large clubs of the capital. It is a veritable mania to which the newspapers have given the name of *corbeillomanie*. In short more fuss is made about the *corbeille* of the Porte St. Martin than was recently made about the *corbeille* of the Bourse on the occasion of the failure of the financier Philippart.

QUEEN OF HEARTS.

From all this Theo derives a fresh celebrity. It has enabled her again to rally round her that court of platonic adorers which for some time past had been on the point of deserting her. Her whole personnel of courtiers is again complete at the Porte St. Martin, and is daily on the increase. Among them are rich, intelligent and well educated young men, the bearers of great names, and who for the last six years have had but one idea, one object in life—that of devoting themselves to Theo from morning till night. It is a devotion all the more inexplicable from the fact that they derive but little satisfaction from it. The Diva of their affections is faithful to her husband, a working tailor, and she will not permit any one to make love to her. Notwithstanding that the fact is indisputable her sighing swains persist in their attentions. Do they each entertain the secret hope that some day or other Theo will be less cruel to them? It is probable. No matter how great may be their illusions this constancy is really touching. They continue, despite all discouragement, to send her flowers and presents. She deigns to accept them, and they commence over again the same game without ever tiring or uttering the least complaint. As they have become numerous and all stand on the same footing, it follows that the virtue of Theo has been productive to her of a much larger number of costly presents than misconduct the most notorious and the best remunerated would have brought her. It is therefore to her interest that she should remain as virtuous as in the past—a fact which will insure her in Paris an unmistakable originality.

What would she gain by losing her reputation of a dramatic Lucretia? There is not in the world a position more agreeable than hers. Never since the time of Louis XIV. has there been a power as absolute. She has organized and regulated the whole of her little court, establishing and defining clearly the duties and rights of each of its members. The visits which she receives at the theatre are divided into series. Certain admirers can come to her dressing room on the Mondays, others on the Tuesdays and so on during the week. These visits are more or less long, according to the degree of consideration in which the visitors are held. And she presides over their receptions with the most perfect tact, taking care always to mark the rights of *ancienneté* and to avoid bringing together people who detest each other or adorers who belong to the same clique.

All these courtiers—rich, worldly and aristocratic—obey Theo as conscripts obey their instructing captain. The Diva moves about, powders and dresses herself in the midst of the dazzled faithful. She places them all under contribution, and is careful not to be ceremonious with any of them, knowing well that this off-hand mode of proceeding renders her still more seductive and charming in their eyes. One holds a looking glass before her, another searches for something she has lost on the carpet. She asks for information of this gentleman and for her powder box of that, and orders them all to close their eyes while she changes her costume.

There is no court, even a *court d'amour*, without a certain degree of discipline. Theo frequently exhibits great severity for the slightest infraction of her rules. The delinquents—those who in despite of their pledges try to make love to her or to kiss the tips of her fingers—are immediately punished with a suspension of their privilege of visiting her, more or less prolonged in proportion to the gravity of the offence. Those who repeat it are liable to be sentenced to perpetual exclusion.

TRIBULATIONS OF A COUNT.

Every one is familiar with the celebrated scene in the "Dame aux Camélias" of Dumas. Armand Duval is madly in love with a courtesan. To the despair of his family he retires with her to a retreat which their passion renders delightful. The father of Armand adopts a sudden resolution and makes a serious and dangerous effort to tear from the arms of Marguerite Gautier his son, for whom he is arranging a wealthy marriage. The poor courtesan pushes her devotion to the point of martyrdom and quits the lover claimed by an inflexible father. This episode is by no means an infrequent one in private life, and the conduct of M. Duval *père* is that of numerous fathers of families.

A proceeding identically the same, although with an object dramatically opposite, has just been undertaken with Theo by the Comte de X.

M. de X. has a son nineteen years old, a pupil of the Polytechnic School. This young man, like most of his fellow pupils, became desperately enamored of Theo. Every Wednesday—*jour de sortie*—he had obtained the privilege of passing a quarter of an hour in Theo's dressing room at the theatre. Unfortunately his juvenile ardor, his unceasing passion, induced him to commit two or three imprudences, which finally condemned him to perpetual exclusion. His grief was so great that the poor boy fell ill, from the bare idea of being unable any longer to converse with the Diva.

The Comte X., determined to save the life of his son at any cost, resolved to make a last effort in his favor.

He went to see Theo just as the father of Armand Duval went to see Marguerite Gautier.

"Madame," he said to her, "my son is in love with you."

"He has, in fact, told me so two or three hundred times," replied the lovely Cinderella.

"I know," rejoined the father, "that you have shut the door of your dressing room against him. It has rendered him quite ill. His health is broken down, his studies are compromised by you."

"What can I do?"

"You can save him. I come in the name of a weeping family to entreat you to forgive him, and to allow him to pay his court again to you."

"Impossible! he was too bold, he would spoil all the others."

"If we were to promise that he would be more reasonable in future?"

"Could I only be sure of it."

"We have made him promise it."

"In that case," replied the Diva, "I will forgive him. He may come back. But let it be distinctly understood that I do this not for him, but for his family."

QUEEN CHRISTINA'S APPETITE.

Every one who has seen Don Alfonso's intended wife and spoken with her, if only for a moment, says the Paris correspondent of a Dublin paper, is charmed with the august lady. Though no amount of flattery can well call her very handsome she is certainly the very opposite of plain. Let me remark, for the special information of Irish ladies, that the future Queen of Spain wears no earrings on her travels, and, so far as I could observe, has no piercings for these pendants. When the illustrious party were installed at the comfortable hotel in the Rue de Rivoli dinner was immediately served, and I am told it was eaten with an appetite. Some fellow who thought himself shrewder than probably he really was has remarked that school girls commence their dinner at dessert, that those of twenty throw themselves on the *hors-d'œuvre*, the pickles and salads, that at thirty the dear creatures deign to accept the white flesh of a chicken or the wing of a partridge, while at thirty-five they attack more solid meats. It is recommended by the same authority never to ask a lady's age when you see her eating cheese. Well, the little Queen to be is only twenty, and the people at the hotel say she can play a knife and fork as well as any lady come to the cheese taking age. So much the better. I can never admire a woman unsound of appetite. But, in all the orders given along the line of route where there are halts for repasts the commands are of the plainest and most moderate kind. The House of Austria is always simple and economical in its habits. At Nancy, where the *déjeuner* taken in France first by the illustrious travellers was eaten on Wednesday, the bill of fare was simple enough for you or me. There was a *consommé* of poached eggs, trout with Dutch sauce, a small sirloin of beef, roast fowl and watercress, some little sweets and fruits and black coffee. Only two kinds of wine, red and white, were produced. One was Château Larose. The white wine was sauterne of an excellent quality—La Tour Blanche. The imperial party rose early on Thursday. At half-past ten the Archduchess heard mass at the Church of Nôtre Dame des Victoires. It was the anniversary of the death of the future Queen's father. The dinner of the day before yesterday was given by Queen Isabella of Spain at the Basilewski Palace, and was ordered for five o'clock, the early Austrian hour, in compliment to the imperial guests. The bride elect was dressed in a crimson and scarlet robe, and I may again remark for the benefit of the ladies that the corsage was high bodied. No bare necks and no earrings! Why, it is a sort of revolution.

The Paris correspondent of London *Truth* is astonished that the Archduchess did not order Von Eltz, her house steward, to covenant strictly with the proprietors of restaurants and hotels where the imperial travellers alighted to withhold the *menus* of their repasts from newspaper reporters. If it were possible to depoetize the future Queen of Spain she would have been utterly depoetized by the *cartes* of her *déjeuners* and dinners which have been published. No doubt brides elect travelling in cold weather will get hungry and play a good knife and fork. Their being of illustrious birth does not release them from the common law. Nevertheless, I am of the religion of the Camerara Mayor, who would not admit that Her Most Catholic Majesty could by any possibility have legs and stand in need of hosiery. Thrones are strongest when the fiction is all round accepted that those who sit upon them are superior to the infirmities of human nature. The explanation of Louis XIV.'s prestige was given by Dengeau in one short sentence:—*L'homme était toujours souffrant; le Roi ne fut jamais malade.* Hosiery, and so on, bring me to the feet of the Archduchess. They are in proportion to her slender little figure, and done justice to by elegantly finished boots, such as are only made in Vienna. I recommend English beauties to patronize Viennese shoemakers. The French shoemaker works mainly for the shop window. He neither studies convenience nor anatomy, and he thinks it the business of the foot to adapt itself to the boot, and not the boot to fit the foot. Of the hands of the Archduchess I shall only say Her Imperial Highness is fresh from school. The feminine hand does not attain perfection before six or seven and twenty. It may before nineteen be delicate, but it is seldom white or dimpled. Its touch is not a caress; sinews have relief. I dislike to see the hand of a miss in her teens execute "a run" on the keyboard of a piano.

GLADSTONE IN MIDLOTHIAN.

THE EX-PREMIER'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT—AN ENGLISH GULLIVER BOUND BY LILIPUTIANS.

LONDON, Nov. 22, 1879.

Political warfare is raging all over the United Kingdom. Dukes are at loggerheads with marquises; Mr. Gladstone has entered upon his campaign in Scotland and been presented with black cloth enough to make a coat and vest, and "shepherds plaid" tweed sufficient for a pair of pantaloons. These gifts he held lovingly in his hands while he addressed the crowd, and, no doubt, he will shortly display them, properly fashioned, on his own person, in the halls of Lord Roseberry, at Dalmeny, where he is an honored guest. So, at last, Gladstone has matched presents with his great political rival. If Beaconsfield can point to his wreath, Gladstone can produce his p[illegible]nts. The wreath, it is true, never graced the brows of the Premier, while the shepherd's plaid certainly will adorn the legs of Mr. Gladstone; but in all human probability they will some day both find a resting place side by side where the wreath now is—at Mme. Tussaud's, in the Chamber of Horrors. Probably most of Mr. Gladstone's speeches in Scotland, or at least the pith of them, has been cabled over to you, but for such readers as may like to glance at specimens of the style of the great political orator's speeches, I quote a few extracts. He made his chief assault, of course, upon the foreign policy of the tory government, and, in his happiest vein, he compared the effect of their policy upon the country to the machinations practised upon Gulliver by the Liliputians.

GULLIVER AND THE LILIPUTIANS.

"The conduct of the government," Mr. Gladstone said, "in making so many Imperial engagements and acquisitions all over the world reminded him of a little incident in a book which is at once a great ornament as a work of literature, or of fancy, and is full of profound good sense—I mean the travels of 'Gulliver.' Under the form of allegory is here conveyed, with infinite fun and humor, a lesson of profound political wisdom. When Gulliver lands among the Liliputians he is a man of six feet; he lands among men of six inches. He goes to sleep, and the Liliputians, you would say, would have no chance in dealing with such a man; but they tied him down with their greatest cables, which are about the thickness of packthread, and by using an enormous number of these cables, which are packthreads in our point of view, and by fastening them in the ground by the most powerful rivets they could get, which were nearly as large as our pins in a lady's toilet, they contrived to fasten him down to the ground, so that it was only with the utmost effort that he could liberate one of his arms, and as to the other arm or leg he thought the best thing was not to try to liberate them at all. That is the way in which we are being tied down."

ENGLAND'S LATE WARS.

Regarding war in general Mr. Gladstone said:—"I am not here as one of those who has ever professed to believe that the state our society has reached permits us to make a vow of universal peace, and to renounce in all cases the alternative of war; but I am here to say that a long experience of life leads me to a deeper and deeper conviction of the enormous mischief of war, even under the best and most favorable circumstances, and of the mischief indescribable and unredeemed of causeless and unnecessary war. Look back over the pages of history and consider the feelings with which we now regard wars that our forefathers in their time supported with the most tenacious enthusiasm, of which we have had some development in this country within the last three years. Can you credit, for example, that the American war, now deemed foolish by 999 men in every 1,000 in this country, was a war which for long years was supported, and for some years was enthusiastically supported, by the mass of the people? See how powerful and deadly are the fascinations of passion and of pride, and if it be true that errors of former times are recorded for our instruction, in order that we may avoid their repetition, then I beg and entreat you to be on your guard against this deadly fascination. Do not suffer appeals to national pride to blind you to the dictates of justice. Remember that the rights of those savages, as we may call them, and the sanctity of life among the hill tribes, and the happiness of their humble homes amid the winter snows of Afghanistan, are as sacred in the eyes of Almighty God as are your own. Remember that He who has united you together as human beings of the same flesh and blood, and has bound you in mutual love; that such love is not limited by the shores of this country nor limited by the boundaries of Christian civilization; that it passes over the wide surface of the earth and embraces the meanest as well as the greatest in its wide scope."

A SPEECH TO THE LADIES.

Later on, Mrs. Gladstone having been presented by the ladies of Mid Lothian with a tablecloth and congratulated upon her domestic virtues and the possession of such a husband, Mr. Gladstone remarked:—"You, Mr. Provost, have referred to the domestic relations in which I have had the happiness to stand, and the inestimable blessing, not from my own deserving, that has been permitted me through a long life. These family relations have been a source of unequalled and unvarying consolation without a break, without a shadow, without a doubt, without a change. I look at the inscription which faces me on yonder gallery. I see the words, 'Peace, Retrenchment and Reform.' All these words are connected with the promotion of human happiness in what some would call the desert of this world, and the political world would be an arid desert indeed if we could not hope that our labors would tend to increase human happiness, to diminish the sin, the sorrow of the world, to do something to reduce its grievous and overwhelming misery, to alleviate a little the burden of life for some, and to take out of the way of struggling excellence those impediments at least which the folly or the greater offence of man has offered as obstacles to its progress. These are the hopes that cheer and ought to cheer the human heart amid the labors and the struggles of political life. But of the three words, 'peace,' 'retrenchment' and 'reforms,' the one word upon which I would say a few more special words to you on this occasion is the word 'peace.' Is this, ladies, a time of peace? Cast your eyes abroad over the world, think what has taken place in the last three or four years, think of the events which have flooded many a hill, many a plain with blood, and think, with regret and pain, of the share which you, not individually, but which your country collectively has had in that grievous operation. If we cast our eyes to South Africa we behold that the nation whom we term savages have in defence of their own land offered their naked bodies to the terribly improved artillery and arms of modern military science and have been mowed down by hundreds and by thousands—(cries of Shame!)—having committed no offence, but having with a rude, ignorant courage done, and done faithfully and bravely, what were for them the duties of patriotism. You may talk of glory, you may offer rewards—and you do right to give rewards for the gallantry of your soldiers, who, I think, are entitled not only to our admiration of their courage, but to our compassion for the nature of the duties they have been called upon to perform."

GLADSTONE'S PERORATION.

Lord Beaconsfield, in his latest public speech, sarcastically inveighed against perorations and called Mr. Gladstone's beloved ancient Greeks to witness against the practice. To his speech to the ladies of Mid Lothian, however, Mr. Gladstone added a peroration too curious and beautiful not to be quoted wherever the English language is spoken:—"Do not suffer appeals to national pride to blind you to the dictates of justice. Remember that the rights of the savage, as we call him, remember that the happiness of his humble home, remember that the sanctity of life in the hill tribes of Afghanistan among the winter snows are as sacred in the eyes of Almighty God as your own. Remember, again, that He who has united you together as human beings in the same flesh and blood has bound you by the law of mutual love, that that mutual love is not limited by the shores of these islands, not limited by the boundaries of Christian civilization, but passes over the whole surface of the earth, and embraces the meanest along with the greatest in its wide scope. I think that in appealing to you ungrudgingly to open your own feelings and bear your own part in a political crisis like this we are making no inappropriate demand, but are beseeching you to follow a duty which belongs to you, which so far from involving any departure from your character as women is associated in the fulfilment of that character and the performance of its duties, the neglect of which would be to you in future times a source of pain and mortification, the accomplishment of which will serve to gild your own future years in sweet remembrances, and to warrant you in hoping that each in your own place and sphere have raised your voice for justice, and have striven to mitigate the sorrows and misfortunes of mankind."

THE VATICAN.

A most important opinion has been given to the Pope by the Cardinals, heads of congregations, to whom was propounded the question whether, considering the important matters awaiting solution, it is necessary and urgent to reopen and continue the Vatican Council. Their Eminences affirm that, looking to the infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith, there is no absolute urgency for a council, and as regards the subsidiary question where such council should be held, they declare that in the present state of things the Council could not be held in Rome, while as to any place abroad it is not to be thought of. All idea of reopening the Council may therefore be considered abandoned, at all events for the present.

THE LONDON STAGE.

Proposals for a National Theatre.

MANAGERS DISCUSSING THE PLANS

How the Best English Thespians Receive Their Training.

NEED OF A DRAMATIC CONSERVATOIRE.

Ever since the Comédie Française left us there has been a revival of an old idea which had been much better consigned to the limbo of oblivion—viz., the establishment among us of a State aided theatre similar to the Théâtre Français. This is, of course, no new idea. Some eight or nine years ago Mr. George Godwin, F.S.A., called attention to the necessity of a State aided theatre at a public meeting, and he was backed up by Mr. Planché, the Somerset *Herald*, and one of our oldest dramatic writers; by Mr. Tom Taylor, who wrote a series of letters on the subject; by Lord Dufferin, who spoke on it at a dinner in aid of the general theatrical fund and urged the need of a national theatre; by Mr. E. L. Blanchard, Mr. Joseph Knight, of the *Athenæum*, and, in short, by a good many people who had a practical acquaintance with the drama and ought therefore to have been the very last persons to support a scheme which would do more to degrade it than the most foolish burlesques or adaptations of *risqué* French plays. Mr. Matthew Arnold, too, gave vent to his feelings in a shrill scream in the *Nineteenth Century*, in which he pictured the inimitable Sara Bernhardt looking at us, as indeed she does look from the photograph shop windows in the Strand, and saying, "the theatre is irresistible; organize the theatre." But it will be said, if a State aided theatre would do no particular good how would it do harm, and the answer is an easy one. Passing over the impossibility of ever getting a grant—for the money which would tempt the really great histrions would amount to an enormous sum, and the national exchequer has little for such luxuries as art, having recently curtailed the money spent by the British Museum—it is easy to see the kind of people into whose hands a national theatre would fall.

WHO SHALL RULE THE ROAST?

It would in the first place probably be engineered from South Kensington, and if the science and art department had anything to do with it, adieu to any practical results. Then, again, the scheme would be officered by those lordlings and young men of fashion who take an interest in the stage—such geniuses, for example, as Lords Newry and Desart, to say nothing of scores of other people in good positions in society with still less claim to speak with authority on matters dramatic. The company, too, would be of necessity a second rate one. For what money would tempt Mr. Irving to sell his interest in the Lyceum and make Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft give up the Haymarket, whither they migrate at the New Year, and would bring Mr. Hare and Mr. Kendal from the St. James to play under one roof? And even if all the big people were not required, it would not be easy at the present moment to make a company better, if indeed one could be brought together so good, as those which play under the above named managers. Thus it would inevitably happen that the pretentious mediocrities would find a place in such a theatre, and the leading ladies who are great guns in provincial towns, but who don't draw a sixpence in London, and who are "slated" with surprising unanimity by metropolitan critics. Nor would the *ensemble* of the performances be so wonderful even if good people were engaged in spite of all the twaddle that is talked about it, as if Mr. Vezin was going to bring on a banner when Mr. Irving played Hamlet and Miss Neilson take the nurse's part to Miss Ellen Terry's Juliet. Thus, then, we should have all sorts of jobbery and corruption in the managerial department and incompetency on the stage, so that the National Theatre would soon become a byword and would do an infinite amount of harm to the very cause which it was intended to serve.

HOW THE IDEA IS REGARDED.

It is fortunate, then, that the revival of the idea has not produced any unanimity of opinion regarding it, and that many of the managers and actors most competent to judge of the merits of the scheme have pronounced decisively against it. First, as to the evidence in its favor. Of course, Mr. Gladstone, whose opinion on all things under the sun is perpetually being expressed as a rule on halfpenny post cards, has a word to say on the matter. He says:—"I have already thought that there are strong arguments, among them some which may be drawn from the existence of institutions like the Royal Academy, to show that the drama requires, in order to its prosperity, some great centre of attraction and of elevation." Now, Mr. Gladstone is undoubtedly a great statesman and orator, and an authority on the Homeric ballads, but his competence to judge of the stage may be gauged by his excessive admiration, publicly expressed, of a very second class actor named Pennington, while his reference to the Royal Academy will be esteemed a singularly unfortunate one by the many people who hold that it very perfunctorily performs its duties to contemporary art whether as an exhibition or an art school. Mr. Vezin also wants a theatre aided by a State subvention or supported by "a guild of actors themselves without any exterior aid," which, by the way, might be appropriately called:—

"THE KILKENNY CAT COMPANY, LIMITED."

Mr. Irving again writes to Mr. Godwin that he would like to see a national theatre, but in the course of a rather long-winded letter he seems to deprecate any application for State aid; for, as he shrewdly observes, "in this country the State would never grant monetary aid to individual enterprise under any guarantees whatever." Another manager, Mr. Hare, in a letter to the *Times* a short while ago, speaks decisively against the scheme, remarking that "the expense would be necessarily prohibitive, for with the present limited means of artistic culture we do not possess a sufficiently large body of trained artists to supply the demands of existing theatres." That remark is a very sensible one, for we must always remember that the National Theatre would be an extra house, and would have to compete with those now in existence, even if started under the most august patronage. A writer in the *Standard*, dating from the Garrick Club, thus sums up the question of a demand for a subsidized theatre. He says, with considerable truth, that it would be "an asylum for the incompetent, the home of the homeless actor; it would be ruled after a fashion which would produce innumerable heartburnings in a profession already too much given to jealousy, and, finally, there is about as much chance of obtaining a grant for such a purpose as for the establishment of a Retreat for Broken-down Bookmakers in the Mountains of the Moon." Finally Mr. Clement Scott, the dramatic critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, in an able paper in *The Theatre*, pronounces against the idea, and indeed the balance of opinion among practical men seems to be against going to government for two good and sufficient reasons. In the first place, there is no earthly chance of getting such a grant, and in the second, it would do no good to the stage if it was given. And yet, in spite of all this, the question crops up again. A lady who has written some rather washy poetry has offered £1,000 toward the establishment of a National Theatre, and a circular has been sent round in which a number of individuals express their anxiety to get more money, and then, I suppose, start a theatre and spend the funds daily in producing Shakespeare after the fashion of a second rate London house.

NEED OF TRAINING SCHOOLS.

What is really wanted, and what more than one writer has suggested, is the establishment of a conservatoire similar to that in Paris, where actors and actresses could learn their business. In olden days they could do this in the country, but now a good stock company is a thing of the past in England, Scotland and Ireland, the managers of provincial theatres relying upon the travelling companies which start from London. All the provincial manager does is to find a home for his visitors; he may keep an old man and an old woman, general utility people, and an odd young man or woman to supplement a star who has run short of people, but the old companies which went on certain small circuits in the country—say to two or three theatres, under the same manager, within the radius of a few miles—are now things of the past. And yet they were very useful. The Bancrofts, the Terrys, the Kendals, Mr. Irving and Mr. Toole, all learned their profession by being members of such companies, with, it need hardly be said, the happiest results. Nowadays, however, a young man or a young woman does not know where to turn if desirous of going on the stage. One or two actors, such as Messrs. Ryder, Vezin and Mead teach elocution, and here and there a promising pupil is brought forward, generally a great deal too soon, and after essaying Juliet—all the ladies begin with Juliet—they retire to contemplate failure with what equanimity they can muster.

TRAINING PICKED UP.

One or two ladies and gentlemen who have gained good positions owe much to the first named teacher, but there is no school or college, call it what you like, where aspirants may at least learn the rudiments of the most difficult of all arts. There would be plenty of pupils if such a school were founded, and, what is more, it would in a very short time be self-supporting, for not only would the students pay fees, but the public interest in the performances given by the school would assuredly be so great as to make them a pecuniary success. Curiosity would of course attract people at first, but afterward they would go from worthier motives—that is to say, if such an institution were conducted without fear or favor and only the most competent pupils allowed to take part in public performances. Two things, however, would be absolutely necessary if such a conservatoire is to succeed among us. First, its teachers and professors must be the foremost actors of the day, not the mediocre men who would merely use it for the purpose of advertising themselves. It must be officered by the men who are, so to speak, above advertisement and who have won an assured position entitling them to lecture upon histrionic art. There is no use in getting Messrs. Brown, Jones and Robinson to instruct tyros, but if Messrs. Irving, Bancroft, Hare and Kendal will come forward and help, to say nothing of other managers and actors of reputation, they would be listened to with respect and attention. Second, these managers—and almost every actor of any standing becomes a manager nowadays, sometimes to the detriment of his art—must put their theories into practice; they must not only teach elocution, or what not, at the conservatoire, but they must make a point of selecting the recruits for their companies from the most promising pupils. There would be no occasion then to give prizes, or, indeed, any other incitement to work. The chance of becoming a member of a good London company, if the pupil showed aptitude, would be quite sufficient to make young men and women work with all possible ardor and cheerfully undergo that drudgery which is absolutely necessary before any one can taste the intoxication of stage success.

A CONSERVERTOIRE TALKED OF.

There is a scheme talked of which might be carried out with great advantage to the stage, and I am glad to know that it is being matured in the mind of more than one prominent manager. This plan embraces lectures on elocution, on stage history, on costume, on stage dancing, on dramatic literature; but all these things are matters of detail which would easily arrange themselves when once the school was started. Mr. Irving has done so much for art, and so has Mr. Bancroft, that they may well do this also. Mr. Hare says he is considering the matter, and he and Mr. Kendal have a beautiful newly decorated theatre to commence in. Practical John Hollingshead will not be far behind where *kudos* is to be gained, and other managers will very soon follow when such men lead. The establishment of a conservatoire would, I am assured, do wonders for the stage in this country, and, though plays have long ceased to be, as St. Chrysostom called them, "the devil's solemnities or pomps," nor are players, as St. Augustine mildly said, "most villainous fellows;" still there is room for improvement. And when the British Conservatory is started will not you in America follow suit? or, better still, as becomes a go-ahead people show us the way and be the first to establish what would do so much for the theatre?

ECHOES FROM ABROAD.

The Papal Consistory, originally announced for the middle of December, and then postponed till Christmas, is further postponed till the 15th of January.

A marble medallion of Father Secchi has been placed in front of the Stilvio Observatory, 2,543 mètres above the level of the sea. The observatory owes its establishment to him.

Count Barbo Wasenstein, a leading Austrian Ultramontane, who protested against the abolition of the Concordat, died recently. Pope Pius II. belonged to the Barbo family.

Mr. Labouchère states that "it is a fact" that Lord Beaconsfield has three times tendered his resignation to the Queen within six months, and that Her Majesty has each time begged him to reconsider his request to be relieved of his duties.

Baker Pacha becomes now a central figure in the solution of the great Anglo-Asiatic question. His powers to all intents and purposes constitute him de facto the Viceroy of Asia Minor. He will be in that vast and important province what Gordon has been in the Soudan.

London *Truth*:—"I advised the clergy last week who complain of the small coins that find their way into offertory bags, to substitute basins. One of the most witty of our judges says that when he goes on circuit he attends church on Sundays with a threepenny piece in one pocket and a sovereign in the other. 'If there is a bag,' he observes, 'I get off with the threepence, but if there is a plate it costs me the sovereign.'"

London *Truth*:—"Telegrams, like other things, are occasionally to be somewhat doubted as to their exact meanings, especially in such a case as Lord Carnarvon's speech at Winchester at the Diocesan Conference. According to the telegraphic report it would appear that he said:—'The worst-paid curate is expected to preach twice on Sundays with the persuasiveness of a journeyman tailor and the eloquence of a barrow.' In truth, Jeremy Taylor and Barrow were the names used."

London *Truth*:—"I have read over the utterances of the Irish who have been arrested for seditious language, and really I do not perceive that they have gone further than Mr. Parnell and other Irish M. P.'s have done fifty times. It would have been more honest, therefore, to have arrested the latter instead of those obscure individuals. But I can well understand why Mr. Parnell and his parliamentary lieutenants have not been arrested. Their absence from Parliament would be an irreparable loss to the conservative leaders."

London *World*:—"An Irishman has had the happy thought—in his mind—of interviewing Victor Hugo and Louis Blanc as to their views on the Green Isle. The great poet, with his invincible tendency to paradox, declares that the island is near to France, and far; near by race, far by position. Had he his will he would moor it somewhere in the Straits of Dover. The little politician considers the only chance of Ireland attaining independence is when France shall have beaten England in war, and then he hopes to see Ireland republican. That double event may be expected on or about Tib's eve, which is neither before nor after Christmas."

There are now surviving five children of the late Charles Dickens. [illegible] Henry Fielding Dickens, the barrister, [illegible] Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens [illegible] The daughters are Kate Dickens, [illegible] and Miss Mary Dickens. Two sons are also deceased—viz., Walter Savage Landor Dickens, [illegible] and Sydney Smith Dickens [illegible] that Dickens named all his sons after writers as eminent as himself in English literature. Bulwer Lytton, indeed, was godfather to the youngest of them.

The funeral of the late Mrs. Dickens took place at Highgate Cemetery, near London. [illegible]

Sergeant Hoff is almost a legend of the Franco-Prussian war; [illegible] Sunday, the 7th of December, at the Hôtel Continental, [illegible] Victor Hugo, Jules Simon, M. Magnin, Jules Claretie, Erckmann-Chatrian, Bamberger, Floquet, Louis Blanc, Gambetta, [illegible] Etienne Arago, Juliette Lambert, Crémieux, Henri de la Pommeraye, [illegible]

In the Baltic, a few weeks ago, a ship was attacked by a large fish, [illegible] the horn in it had been preserved."

NEW HOME FOR BOYS.

THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE MISSION OF THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN TO BE LAID NEXT SUNDAY.

The corner stone of the first house of the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, at the corner of Lafayette place and Great Jones street, New York, will be laid on next Sunday, the 14th inst., being the Sunday within the octave of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by Very Rev. Father Quinn, V.G., at three o'clock P. M. His Eminence Cardinal McCloskey [illegible]

ARRAIGNED FOR LOTTERY DEALING.

A BROADWAY OFFICE RAIDED—TICKETS SEIZED AND THE INMATES ARRESTED—THREE PRISONERS HELD.

Captain Kealey, with Detectives Von Gerichten, Cumming and McNamara, yesterday afternoon raided the lottery office No. 319 Broadway and arrested B. Frank Moore, the alleged proprietor; Charles Moore, his son, and eleven clerks, [illegible]

THE COMPLAINANTS IN COURT.

[illegible]

SHE WOULDN'T HAVE DARED.

It was a sad thing for Lettie Davis (colored) when she put out her washing on the clothes lines of her South Fifth avenue abode yesterday. [illegible]

STABBED BY HIS PLAYMATE.

William Stanton, ten years old, who on Friday night stabbed with a small pocket knife Luke Murphy, twelve years old, [illegible]