THE DAILS EVENING TELEGRAPH-21, 1867.

CAREER OF A COMPOSER.

6

Interesting Letter from Offenbach. Four years ago a Paris paper called the Boulevard published a caricature and a biographical notice of M. Offenbach, the composer of La Grande Duchess de Gérolstein.

M. Carjat, the editor, had previously obtained M. Offenbach's permission, and the letter which contained it (a translation of which we subjoin) gives an interesting account of this composer's career up to the time at which it was written.

"PARIS, May 6, 1863 .- My Dear Carjat:-You ask my permission to publish a carica-tured portrait of myself (portrait-charge-pourruei ce pleaname?) and, moreover, you call on my memory to aid your account of my life with such souvenirs as I have preserved.

"As you knew, the permission was granted before you asked for it; as for the second request, I am ready to satisfy it. But simply, I shall content myself with a chronological table, which you may embellish with whatever ornaments of style you please.

witt is forty years since I came into the world, in the town of Cologne (why the deuce do you make me remember that ?) At seven years old I played on the violin; at ten I had mastered pretty difficult pieces.

"When did I take my first lesson of music? That's what I should be very much puzzled to tell you; I believe my first scream was a shake, and my parents have often assured me that I used to cry in time.

"I should be equally troubled to assign a date to my first composition. That mania for jotting down black notes on white paper is in truth a defect of my nature-a sort of organic disease, which, from my infancy, caused much serious inquietude in the breasts of those who loved me. Against all expectation they managed, however, to bring me up, but I shall probably carry to the tomb that vice of my constitution which has so powerfully influenced my whole life.

"I was thirteen years old when I came to Paris. It was Cherubini who welcomed me, and it was he who discovered the malady of which I have just spoken, and sent me to be cared for at the Conservatoire. In those days foreigners were not admitted; but Cherubini succeeded in having an exception made in my case.

"At that time there was a vacancy for a violoncellist at the Opera Combque. I applied for it with several others, and I got it. For some years I remained almost entirely silent, with the exception of a few waltzes and polkas, composed for Jullien's concerts, of which I have very carefully forgotten the names. It was in 1839 that I made my first real attempt at dramatic composition. I wrote a little music for a piece from Anicet Bourgeois et de Brisebarre (Pascal and Chambord), and the doors of the Palais Royal opened wide before me. It was the first lyric theatre which received my works. This success emboldened me, and during several years I knocked discreetly but vainly at the doors of all the musical theatres in Paris, giving meanwhile an annual concert at Herz's or Pleyel's, at which were executed my compositions-operettas, concerted pieces, etc.

" In 1851 M. Arsene Houssaye invited me to undertake the somewhat curious functions of chef d'orthestre at the Theatre Français-that orchestra at the Théâtre Français, which it would have been easy to do without.

"You will easily understand that the duties of my new situation by no means took up the whole of my time. I wrote some music for the entr'actes, I accepted or rejected candidates for positions in the orchestra, and now and then by chance I conducted, baton in hand.

"There remains to me a delightful remembrance of that time-'La Chanson de For-

Bouffes Parisiens, in the Passage Choiseul, with Bataclan. 139

"The theatre being more spacious, my ambition expanded and my license was extended. Only trifling farces (saynetes) of three persons at most were played in the Champs Elysées in the Passage Choiseul I put four actors on the stage, then five, then six, then choruses,

then processions, and-if need were-armies. "You will easily understand that I am not going to name, one after the other, the forty or fifty pieces I composed for the Bouffes in the space of six years. The principal ones must suffice you. These are:-Orphée aux Enfers, La Chanson de Fortunio, Geneviève de Brabant, Le Pont des Soupirs, Tromb, Alcazar, Le Roman Comique, Le Mariage aux Lanternes, Croquefer, Bataclan, La Rose de Saint-Flour Le Violoneux, Les Deux Aveugles, Le Marià la Porte, Le Savetier et le Financier, Les Dames de la Halle, La Demoiselle en Loterie, La Bonne d'Enfant, Le 66, M. et Mme, Denis, Pépito, Daphne et Chloé, La Chatte Metamorphosée en Female, Dragonette, and, finally, Les Bacards.

"I composed, besides, Le Papillon, for the opera, and Barkouf for the Opera Comique.

"Form your own judgment of my works; you may be sure that I have no wish to furnish you with hints to facilitate that task. But since it is agreed that success is no proof of excellence, I have no hesitation in telling you that in Germany I have been even more warmly appreciated than in France. All the theatres of the Confederation, without exception (the theatres of the Court as well as the rest), have produced my works; and it has often happened that my pieces have been played at the same time on two stages in the same town. At Berlin, where they have given my most triffing operatus, such as Le Mariage aux Lanternes, Pépilo, etc., at the Grand Opera. The Theatre Frederick William has just reprerented Orphic aux Enfers for the two hundredth time,

"I am not going to tell you here of all the composers whom I have necessarily become acquainted with during the six years duration of my directorship. If among the number any can be found who have only shown me what I will call the reverse of thankfulness, I take praise to myself-one must always be pleased at having met with ingratitude-it proves that one has been sufficiently fortunate to oblige.

"Here are my notes. Do with them as you please.

"Yours truly, JACQUES OFFENBACH." To the pieces which Offenbach has named above we may add La Belle Heldne, Les Berges, La Barbe Blone, and La Vie Parisienne, all of which have been very successful in Europe, and have been acted night after night to overflowing audiences in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Ayres; and finally La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein, which may be said to have secured its author's reputation in New York.

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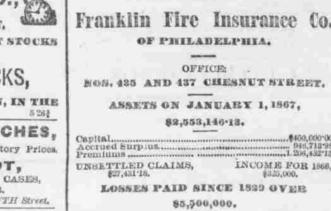
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tunio.' One day Alfred de Musset, whom I had never seen, came into Houssaye's room and said to him-'If you see Offenbach, beg him to be good enough to write some music for the song of "Fortunio."' (The 'Chan-delier' had just been put in rehearsal.) I happened to be present, an introduction took place, and the libretto was sent for. I set about my task, and the next day Houssaye sent me to Delaunay, who had been cast for the part.

"You know Delaunay, the charming lover, with that sweetest and smoothest of voices, whose accents are rather those of a woman than a man's? He was a delicious Fortunio, whom one would certainly have supposed must have possessed an extraordinary high soprano. I sat down to the piano and sang my music, and he tried it after me. My fingers remained fastened to the keys, and I was plunged into an unspeakable astonishment. From that delicate throat, from that almost childlike mouth, came notes powerful, vigorous, deep. Delannay's voice was a magnificent counter-tenor (une basse-taille superbe).

"I took my manuscript and folded it up again, sadly enough. Henceforth it was of no use, at the Théâtre Français, at least; for Fortunio could not decently murmur words of love to Jacqueline with the voice of a Lablache or Levasseur. By my advice Delaunay contented himself with reciting instead of singing the stanzas, and I kept my melody for another occasion; and it was for this song that I had the operatta which you know ("La Chanson de Fortunio") written by MM. Crémieux and Halévy.

"In 1855, several years had gone by in which I had offered without success, although each time with more and more discretion, my works to the directors of the Paris theatres, One only had listened to me-the director of the Varietos-and had consented to play for me a little comic opera called Pepito, which I afterwards took up and represented at the Bouffes Parisiens, and which still remains in the repertoire of that house. I commenced to get tired of these fruitless proceedings, and it came into my head that if I were to employ in obtaining a license the twentieth part of the time and patience I had devoted to the realization of my more modest hopes, I should probably he successful.

"For twelve years I had asked to have a piece put on the stage for me, and I had been refused almost everywhere. Twelve days were gone since I had requested a license, and it was granted to me.

"Long ago it had occurred to me that it was possible to create a kind of mixture of could opera and opera bouffe, and take and maintain thereby a place in public estimation. "It was the 15th of June that I obtained my

Heense, and on the Lih of July I opened in a small room in the Champs Elysées. In twenty days I had improvised a theatre, its name, scenery, and a troupe, composed of MM. Pra-deau, Berthelier, and Darcier, Mmes. Mace and Schneider, and three pieces to begin with, Entres Messieurs, Mesdames; La Nuit Blanche, and Les Deux Aveugles. For more than five months the artists I have just named formed my entire troupe. Ever at work, they took not a single day's rest. Happily no accident happened; for had one of them fallen sick I

happened; for had one of them fallen sick I know not how we should have put the play on. "It is not for me to say If my new oreation was a favorite with the public; all that I know is, that I was very soon in search of a larger and better situated room for the winter; and on the 29th of December I inaugurated the