A correspondent of the London Athenaum, writing from Munich under date of September 4, gives the following account of Wagmer's last opera:-

I was present the other evening at a fulldress stage rehearsal of Herr Wagner's Das Rheingeld, the Prologue to his three Nibelungen operas. This rehearsal was, in most respects, tantamount to a first performance ewhere; and was followed during some twoand-a-half of the dreariest hours which I ever endured with an amount of readiness to admire, and patience to listen, creditable to the good faith of all concerned, but therefore none the less amazing. The Opera Orchestra in Munich, notoriously superb, had been strengthened for the occasion, and included many harps. By a new arrangement it was sunk out of sight, the traditional foot-lights being also removed. Both innovations seemed to me open to question. The stage was too dark; the accompaniments, at the back of the parterre, sounded weak, wiry, and ill-balanced. The harps were no more potent than so many gnats would have been.

But the world had been promised scenic effects of exquisite fantasy. The opening scene of Das Rheingold is the bed of the Rhine, where three swimming nymphs of the stream are discovered as wheeling upwards and downwards, in guard of the mysterious golden treasure. As a stage effect, this would be, under the best of conditions, obviously extravagant-need it to be said, impossible? Yet the solution of a similar difficulty was infinitely better effected at the Grand Opera of Paris, some thirty-five years ago, when Taglioni danced so exquisitely to Adolphe Adam's charming music, in La Fille du Danube. The subsequent scenes, including a final one with a practicable rainbow, low to earth, and intended for persons to mount by way of tableau, were picturesque enough; but by those who recollect analogous displays at Berlin, Paris, and-last, not least-London, it could not be accepted as either amazing or probable. It is needful to dwell on these facts, because to consider them becomes a just necessity, when a scenic whole, exhibited by one who has more impudently satirized his predecessors than any one pretending to the name of musical artist has done before him-and who has professed to inaugurate a new era-is paraded before the public. Herr Wagner's dreams of shows, which were to carry off the ancient legend, monstrous and dull as arranged by him (yet not without a certain amount of grim, old-world poetry in its idea), and music such as he is capable of making, have not-alas the day! - been

Everybody concerned in the failure of the rehearsal and the postponement of the performance is of course to blame-save the arrogant author. But the work in itself, apart from all its trappings and paddings and puffs preliminary, and enthusiasm wrought up to a fever heat by the herd ready to wonder, "with a foolish face of praise," at any long-bearded prophet or sepulchral seer who is able, by force of brass, to get a hearing and a patron -what is the work, when it is dispassionately considered? Let it be granted that the Nibelungen Lied offers matter for three separate and consecutive musical dramas, to be performed on as many successive evenings, after a first or prefatory one has been devoted to Das Rheingold. This is a concession, on the one hand, tolerably sweeping; while, on the other, such a grant inevitably limits the presentation of the unwieldy marvel.

Das Rheingold consists of four scenes—the first framing three swimming and singing nymphs, who caracole up and down the hill-peaks at the bottom of the Rhine, with painfully acrobatic gestures, to a gibberish of vowel-sounds, recalling similar cries in the Faust of Berlioz, and—proh pudor!—the barking dogs in M. Offenbach's Rol Barkouf! After this water-music enters the hero, to the following euphonious line-

"Garstig glatter glitsch'riger Glimmer."

The entire libretto is wrought out in language varying between such hideous cacophony as the above and a suphuistic alliteration no less remarkable, the source of the verse considered. The march of the story (which marches not) is no less singular and Wagnerian. The legend is conducted by a series of monologues, with the occasional production of bystanders who have nothing to say and do. There is small apparent reason why (Herr Wagner's courage holding out) it should not have been prolonged for some ten hours and as many scenes more! And Das Rheingold, be it recollected, is represented as only the first of a series of four Festival Performances!

Never has partisanship been so unblushing and unscrupulous as on this occasion. Those who refer to the piano-forte score (MM. Schott & Co.) will hear with amazement that persons of no mean authority promised that Das Rheingold was to reveal an entire change in its master's manner, that the work was of the simplest possible structure, and full of intelligible melody. So far from this being the case, all who refuse to surrender themselves to the insanities of the hour must agree that the scanty and spare and stale melodic phrases which it contains, foisted on the public by feeble and inflated efforts at orchestral intricacy, are complicated and worked to death with a persistency which, if found in the work of an old master, would call forth an outpouring of the vials of vitriolic sarcasm by these new prophets and their fanatical congregations.

The opening prelude, however, on a meagre four-bar phrase may be said to produce a monotonous and flowing water-effect by its repetition and climax. There is a stately entrance for the bass voice at the second scene. The appearance of the Rhine nymphs is announced by a phrase judi-ciously borrowed from Mendelssohn's Melusine overture. Later, in the music for the Giants, Meyerbeer's resuscitation of the Nuns in Robert, with its peculiar 9-8 rhythm, has been no less coolly appro-priated by the unblushing insulter of Judaism in music! The diatonic descending scale which marks the character of one of the giants is noticeable in the dearth of better ideas. On the other hand, a chromatic progression ascending and descending becomes most tiresome to the ear, because of its unmeaning triteness. The perpetual use of the tremelando to support the recitatives is no less significant of poverty of resource. The vapidity and un-graciousness of the declamatory music will make itself most wearily felt by all who remember what Gluck and (perhaps a fairer com-parison) Weber could make of their dialogue. cannot but think that the orchestra is ill handled. As has been formerly observed in Herr Wagner's scores, the stringed quartette is lean, and wants the support of central sound in its tenor portion; even in his use of the harp our iconoclast is puny and ineffective, as compared with Meyerbeer and

Thus much of personal impressions which are purposely under rather than everstated. Now as to facts. The the announcement of performance,

more than once postponed, had drawn to-gether a large and intelligent audience of dilettanti artists and critics, some from places as far a-field as London, Paris and Florence, proud to get admission to the rehearsal, and the majority, at least, disposed to believe and accept whatever the archimage of modern German opera might vouchsafe to set before them. Curious it was to observe how the most fervent of the congregation began to shrink and to look anxiously hither and thither as "the allegory" at the bottom of the Rhine was unfolded—nay, should I not rather say, enveloped in fresh mystery? There was a weak attempt at moribund enthusiasm when all was over; but this was as significently transient as it was weak. Subsequently the faithful have made some attempt to rally in nooks and corners by the declaration, as old as theatrical defeat, that the work had been too hastily produced and unfairly treated. Who does not know such imputations and defenses by heart? I recollect an old amateur player belonging to a quartette not unlike that of "Monsieur Pattier," whimsically described by Paul de Kock. who, when his evening's work was over, took off his spectacles, wiped his forehead, and sadly said, "Had there not been a cobweb in my violoncello I should have been heard

better.

Cobweb or no cobweb, however, the end of the whole absurdity was that, subsequent to this rehearsal, the production of Das Rheingold did not take place as advertised. For the utter absence of anything like cordiality at the rehearsal on the part of the audience, "packed" as it was, some reason must needs be given, and Herr Richter is said to have pleaded for more rehearsal, being seconded by telegraphic instructions to that effect for the music, or the music did not fit the scenery, or the actors failed to act properly (where there is nothing to act), or to sing correctly music (in every scene of which a hundred false notes, more or less, would make not the slightest difference.) Thus ran the excuses, after ten weeks' intense and arduous preparation! To this a peremptory refusal was returned by the Court manager of the theatre, Baron von Perfall, and, it may be presumed with the consent of Herr Wagner's "kingly friend"-Herr Richter was, on the spot, suspended, and, to my certain knowledge, half a dozen Kapel'meisters, who had been drawn to Munich by curiosity, were tempted assume the dangerous responsibility. All save one declined. But matters, as I left them, were at "a dead lock," owing to the assumptions of Herr Wagner, who is "nothing if not" persecuted, or when brewing storm. That, for the moment, he will make capital out of his last and worst attempt on public credulity may be safely predicated. The end is not yet. Meanwhile, no one need be surprised should the composer recover or regain his Court ascendancy; if the vindication of a cause so utterly worthless as his, and so utterly distasteful to all right judging people, were to lead to a repetition of those scandals which marked the close of the career of King Louis of Bavaria, who, with all his favoritisms and fopperies in art, proved himself a far wiser and wider patron than his successor has hitherto done by his championship of the trashy productions of the author of Das Rheingold. Never, surely, was there such a storm in a slop-basin.

THE HEIRESS OF ABBOTSFORD.

From Appleton's Journal. "When one remembers the herculean toils of Walter Scott to purchase and adorn Abbotsford, as the future home of his family for many generations, it is melancholy to reflect that his family is entirely extinct, and the place fast going to

As the above paragraph is now going the rounds of the papers, and has found its way into the columns of several usually well-informed journals, we think it time to correct its mis-statements. Sir Walter's family is not extinct, nor is his loved domain going to decay. Abbotsford, when we visited it, was in the most perfect order; and a friend, who was there in July, writes to us that the grounds have been beautified and im proved in various ways, since his previous visit during the summer of 1855. The only change made in this most interesting mediaval mansion since the death of Sir Walter Scott, is the addi-tion, to the north end of the building, of a Romish chapel, its present occupant being a

member of that Church.
"The great unknown" died on a sunny September day, 1832 realizing, before he passed away, in reference to all his fame, honor, and renown, the truth of Solomon: - "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher—all is vanity and vexa-tion of spirit." He left four children—Walter, who succeeded to the baronetcy; Charles; Sophia, the wife of John Gibson Lockhart; and Anne, who died on the 25th of June, 1833, her health and high spirit being broken by her father's misfortunes, and the care with which she had attended Sir Walter and Lady Scott in their last illness. Her sister Sophia died four years afterwards, in May, 1837. When Lockhart concinded his Life of his father-in-law, he said: "There remain of Sir Walter's race only his two sons, Walter, his successor in the baronetcy, major in the 15th Regiment of Hussars, and Charles, a clerk in the office of her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, with two children left by their sister Sophia—a boy and a girl." Charles died a few years after Mrs. Lockhart, leaving his elder brother Walter "Waverley." Walter was six feet one, and as handsome a fellow as ever put foot in a stirrup. He married, but died at the Cape of Good Hope, in 1847, without issue. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Walter Scott, Bart., was succeeded by Walter Scott Lockhart, a cornet in the 16th Lancers, the only son of the editor of the Quarterly Review, and the only grandson of the great author. He, too, passed away childless many years ago, and was succeeded by his sister Charlotte, wife of James Hope, the emineut parliamentary counsel, who took the name of Scott on the death of his brother-in-law, Walter Scott Lockhart. Mary Monica Hope Scott, a falr-haired, blue-eyed girl, whose next birthday will occur on the 5th of October, when she will be seventeen years of age, is the sole survivor of the Scotts of Abbotsford, her mother having passed away, a few summers since, to join two of her children who

"Those everlasting gardens.
Where angels walk and scraphs are the wardens, leaving this fair young girl as the only repre-sentative of all that noble race. Mr. Hope Scott has since married a daughter of the Duke of Norfolk, and erected the Remish chapet, he and his wife being members of that Church. Miss Scott, the great-grandchild of Sir Walter by the female side, is the heiress of Abbotsford house and estate, her father being merely the administrator, in respect to the property, at present, Should Mary Monica marry, her husband must take the name of Scott; and, should she die without issue, then the property, but not the title, which is now extinct, will revert to the nephews of Sir Walter, sons of his elder brother Thomas, who reside in Canada. Thus, although there is no hope of founding a family in the direct male line, there may yet exist a long line

of Scotts of Abbotsford. Strange and sad is the fatality which has attended the family of the modern Shakespeare tended the family of the modern Shakespeare. Sir Walter's brothers all died young. His sons and daughters were summoned early to the silent land. Lockhart, his gifted son-in-law, died broken-hearted, in 1854; and Scott's daughter-in-law, the pretty heiress of Lochore, has also gone to the mysterious realm whence no traveller returns. Let us hope that the surviving scion of the great minstrel's race may be long spared, that she may hand down to poeterity the name and the features of the distinguished Scotchman

whose presence was so dear to the generation who knew and revered him, and whose genius is one of the brightest inheritances of his native

Foreign Items.

Among the favors distributed in France on the occasion of the centenary of the First Napoleon was the pardon granted to thirtyfour forcats confined at Toulon. As every reader of the "Miserables" knows, these convicts are allowed, and, indeed, encouraged, to employ their spare time in the manufacture of different objects, such as toys, frames, baskets, etc., which are sold for their benefit, and the proceeds of which are handed to them at the expiration of their sentences. On the present occasion the sum paid to the thirtyfour liberated prisoners amounted to no less than 26,000 francs, an average of about £30 per man. A sailor who had been nine years in confinement, and was famous for his skill in the construction of model ships, received for his share nearly £100. It appears that the various sums due were formerly handed to the prisoners immediately on their being set at liberty, but it has been found preferable to deliver their earnings to them in mandats payable at the prefectures of the different towns appointed for their future residence, as, under the old system, those known to have received the largest sums were gene rally waylaid and robbed by their less fortunate comrades.

-According to the Lancet, a plan has been generally adopted in France of placing babies in bran. An ordinary cradle is filled with common bran, a hair pillow is put in, and then the bran is moved aside with the hands until a "hollow" is formed the size of the child's body. The infant divested of everything below the waist, and having a little bodice or cape above that, is then placed in the bran, and its body completely covered with it, exactly as may be seen at the seaside at the present time, where children play at burying one another in the sand. A light coverlet or counterpane is finally placed above all, and the baby is in bed for the night. The two great advantages connected with bran are stated to be its particular cleanliness, and the very pleasant and equable temperature which it maintains about the infant's body. There seems to be no good reason why the privilege of sleeping in bran, if it possesses these advantages, should be confined to the small and noisier portion of humanity. Bran might be used instead of bedding in casual wards, night refuges, common lodging-houses, and indeed would be far preferable to the dirty, uncomfortable beds to be found in full perfection at seaside lodgings. Perhaps the day is not far distant when the sojourner at the seaside will take with his carpet-bag a folding box and a bag of bran, and bid defiance to dirt, fleas, and infection.

-Tree and serpent worship must be very inconvenient at times, more especially the latter. In a letter from Bishop Crowther, we have an account of the extent to which it prevails at Brass, a station of the Niger mission. "No poultry," the Bishop says, "can be reared on account of the snake cobra, a species of boa constrictor, which is held sacred here by the people. Not to be killed because sacred, they become possessors of the bushes, and prove a great annoyance and nuisance to the country. They very often visited the poultry coops at night, and swallowed as many as they wanted: in consequence of which no poultry could be kept, either by the natives themselves, or by the supercargoes in their establishments on shore: neither goats, sheep, nor small pigs escaped them. Thus the country is literally impoverished by them. I myself was an eye-witness of one of these instances of late at the establishment of the Company of the African Merchants, on the 13th of October, and two of these reptiles had to be removed by their devotees, after they had devoured seven fowls from the kitchen, leaving some, it is true, for Mr. Lyons for his meal, and yet he dared not kill the creatures, because, by the treaty, he would be fined one puncheon of palm oil in value; at the same time the treaty made no provision for compensation to the sufferers of their stock." To support this superstition two articles in the treaty made and sanctioned by Thomas Joseph Hutchinson, Esq., her Britannic Majesty's Consul for the Bight of Biafra and the island of Fernando Po, on

November 17, 1856, run thus:-Article 12. That long detention having heretofore occurred in trade, and much angry feeling having been excited in the natives from the destruction by white men in their ignorance of a certain species of boa-constrictor that visits the houses, and which is jn-ju, or sacred, to the Brassmen, it is hereby for-bidden to all British subjects to harm or destroy any such snake, but they are required, on finding the reptile on the premises, to give notice thereof to the chief man in town, who is to come and remove it

away.

Article 13. That should, unfortunately, any casualty of said reptile's death again occur, the master or supercargo who himself or his people has been guilty of the same shall pay a fine of one puncheon of palm oil, and his trade shall suffer no stoppage; any detention occurring after this amount has been tendered will render the chief liable to a fine of one puncheon of oil per day.

Under these circumstances we would not recommend Brass as a pleasant place at which holidays may be spent, more particularly if there be young children.

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