## OUR CHOIR.

FROM BYRON.

Our choir would scarcely be excused
Even as a band of raw beginners;
All mercy now must be refused
To such a set of croaking sinners.

If David, when his rolls were ended,
Had heard these blockheads sing before him,
To us his psalms had ne'er descended,
In furious mood he would have tore 'em.

The jackless Israelites, when taken
By certain cruel tyrants' order,
Were asked to sing, for fun or joy forsaken,
On Babylonian's river's border.

Oh! had they sung in notes like these,
Inspired by stratagem or fear,
They might have set their heartiest ease,
The devil a soul had stayed to hear!

No grunting bull or growling bear
Is needed while our issue thrives;
No screaming loon need wake the air
While our soprano's shout survives.

He snarls and snorts and snuffles through,
As though the notes had bit and stung him;
She aims to hit the farthest pew,
And show the Voice they have got among them!

And so she crawls in barbarous time,
Prolonge her shrieks and assumes appalling;
Each note a fraud, each yell a crime,
Performs a mass of hideous squalling.

Our alto, wheezy, crude and flat,
Explodes in wild, sepulchral tones;
Your emulous tenor, with a pat,
Now chills the cool with dismal groans.

Our other alto, bright and sweet,
Sings only when the notion takes her,
Or when her beau is in his seat,
Or when the sense of duty makes her.

One tenor, with a spacious nose,
Fills that, and thinks his duty done,
No matter how the organ blows,
Nor how the tunes run.

Another rolls his milky eyes,
As though the roof gave inspiration;
Alas! it seemed to shake his cries,
He's doomed to instant strangulation.

And then the being who presides
At all this whooping, frightful row,
The organ whose force beyond besides
This Babel, built the Lord knows how—

His sole endeavor seems to be
To rest the bellows blown by wind,
To break the heart of harmony,
With all his souls strength combined.

And so he plucks the noisiest stops,
And bangs away with feet and muscle,
Till when the game is up, he drops
Undone and beaten with the tussle.

And meanwhile we, the heirs of Zion,
The chosen ones—the meek and lowly,
Must listen as though Judah's lion
Were making all this roly-poly!

For me, I hate the cursed noise,
The usual psalms, the organ's clatter;
I can't discern angelic joys
In such a cracked and crude matter.

I long to pull the basso's nose!
To tell those females what's decorum;
I ache to treat the tenor's throat
And fog the organ man before 'em.

## LITERARY AND ART ITEMS.

### THE FRENCH STAGE.

**Rachel—The Greatest French Actress.**

The era of the Second Empire has hitherto not been distinguished for the appearance of new first-class dramatic talents, although the works of the so-called new classical school of dramatists and the authors of the modern social dramas impose upon the actors by far less arduous tasks than both the classical and romantic tragedies did. The great Rachel, the hot-blooded and almost demoniac performer of the last Queen of Rotaia and the songstress of the Marseillaise, belongs partly to this era, but only as a phenomenon, fading and departing alone as it had come. She no rivals, no successors, she was a genius, but came too late. Genius will always triumph, but these triumphs may be fruitless if such a genius endeavors to resuscitate what is dead and buried. The emancipation of the tragedy from the narrow and restrictive rules of the old classical school was the well established mission of the new school of French poets, which, notwithstanding the monstrosities of the romantic period or school and stress, represented the necessary progress in the development of French literature. Suddenly Rachel obstructed the path of this progress; a puff of her breath, and the shades on the banks of the Acheron of classical poetry revived; an impassioned ardor pervaded the hollow, conventional phraseology and spirit of the old Greek models penetrated, like a torrent of molten lava, into the molds of their imitators, and the three unities of Aristotle, which had long since been felt to be irksome obstacles, seemed to become once more the vigorous wings of concentrated action and passion. Corneille and Racine conquered over Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny; for what was wanting to *their* genius was made up by the genius of the actress. There was grandeur, brilliancy and impassioned warmth in her acting. But it was the grandeur, brilliancy and warmth of the setting sun.

RACHEL AND JANIN.

A genius that was able to achieve such a triumph, and fire the heart of the French people in so extraordinary a manner, could not but be a great and most marvellous one. For Rachel was of short stature and rather ugly, seemingly unhealthy, of ordinary appearance, and even trivial in her language, when, a girl of eighteen, she made, in 1838, her first *debut* on the Theâtre Français. She had already played five parts without making an impression on the audiences, and without eliciting a single favorable and encouraging word from the critics; finally, Jules Janin, the King of Parisian *feuilletonistes*, saw her in Corneille's *Horaces*, and said at once that Rachel was the most wonderful little girl whom the present generation had ever seen on the stage. He wrote to his Monday article in the *Journal des Debats*:

"She possesses the divine spark of genius, illuminating everything around her. No sooner does she step upon the stage than she looms up as a giantess, her form becomes that of Homer's heroes, her head is raised, her breast expands, her eyes kindle, her gesture is, as it were, a sonic spark from her soul; her words, full of the tumultuous passions of her heart, penetrate into the distance and die away. And thus she strides along in Corneille's drama and spreads terror and dismay about her. Passion, majesty, grandeur, nothing is foreign to her. Here is heaven and earth in this wonderful child. She was born in the realm of poetry and knows all its most secret and hidden spots; she reveals all to you, as a sorcerer does. The actors who play with her are thunderstruck with this authority; ancient tragedy breathes more hopefully."

In effect, this prophetic criticism said all that could be, and afterwards was said about Rachel.

RACHEL UNDER THE SECOND EMPIRE.

M. de Wolzogen, one of the most sagacious, keen-eyed observers and critics, portrays Rachel as she was in 1852, when the Second Empire had been proclaimed. She played at that time *Virginie*, *Hermione* and *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. "Furrows and Wrinkles have commenced their impudent encroachments upon this marble face. Such vestiges of mature years were confined, however, to the lower portion of Rachel's head; they left intact the forehead on which they are first to be seen. Her beautifully chiseled nose began to assume somewhat marked outlines; only her neck, her arms, her waist, remained in splendid, exuberant raven hair did their duty still as perfectly as her finely glorious eyes and her organ so susceptible of the most varied modulations, and only sometimes remarkable for too sonorous and defiant and coquetish manner in which she used it. But she was, after all, a French woman, and had to strive for powerful effects. A pity it was that she sought these effects principally in violent contrasts, and thereby often produced hideous, yet so piquant and terrible than beautiful and rethetic. On that evening (in the *role* of Virginia) she wept, for instance, with inimitable grace; but at the same time she inveighed against Appius Claudius, the tyrant, with the ferocity of a hyena, and caused the audience often enough to shudder and tremble. As a matter of course, the Parisians applauded those scenes more boisterously than any others."

RACHEL'S INFLUENCE ON THE FRENCH STAGE.

Rachel played no part in any drama of the romantic school but that of *Tisbée*, in Victor Hugo's *Angelo*. The first great part which she played was Pomaré's *Lucrece*, and Scribe's *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, which was written for her, was one of her most masterly performances; but even in this part she produced the greatest impression by Racine's verses, which she hurled at the duchess like thunderbolts. However, she was inimitable, not only as a fury of hatred, but also as a passionately loving girl. Wolzogen says: "Never shall I forget the inimitable tendering the fragrant and truly heavenly grace and delicacy with which she recited, in the second act, before the young page, Lafon-taine's fable, *Les deux Pigeons*, as an allusion to her tender attachment to him."

Rachel founded no school of her own, as other great actors and actresses did, nor did the nuisance of vitiousing the dramatic art, which Rachel cultivated and fostered so much, strike root in France; on the contrary, it was buried with her. Her starring tour in the towns and provinces and abroad by which she tried to increase her regular income of 12,000 francs, deprived the Theatre Français, especially during the Second Empire, only too sorely of her co-operation, though she achieved European and transatlantic triumphs by these tours. In her letters to accounts, she displayed the feverish, avaricious eagerness which is peculiar to many great artists, but which brought about her premature death. During her vacation in 1849, she played in the course of ninety days, in thirty four different cities, the leading part in no less than seventy-four tragedies of five acts. In 1853 she went to Russia, and received from the intendant of the Imperial Theatre for the short time she played at St. Petersburg the enormous sum of 400,000 francs. Her trip to the United States in 1855 was a failure. Scarcely three years later, on the 3d of January, 1858, she died of consumption, at the beautiful watering-place of Cannes. Since that time the best Parisian actors have disdained the system of travelling virtuosship which, if carried to greater lengths, would prove the ruin of all good theatres. Rachel's special policy to her personal benefit, during these starring tours, with contemptible actors and actresses, that have been long might shine the more radiantly. Adelaide Ristori pursues the same policy, which is evidently an insult offered to the public, and should not be tolerated.

Rachel's national tour ventures to appear in the midst of her miserable stock company in Paris nor in the large cities of Italy. Why does she do so? In the Italian towns where she has been rewarded more generously than anywhere else? Rachel was even jealous of her by her talented sister, Rebecca, when that young girl, who died at so early an age, made an effort to conquer the favor of the audiences of the Théâtre Français. For awhile this extraordinary genius was allowed. But soon the harmonious *ensemble*, to which the Théâtre Français is indebted for its great name, resserted its rights. The ancient tragedy died with Rachel; she resuscitated it; now it has become as dead and soulless as it was. Yesday, the tragedies of *Corneille* and *Racine* leave the audiences cold and indifferent, though it is fashionable, yet to manifest a certain fictitious enthusiasm for them.

### Table Talk.

In a very scarce book, Hals's "Parochial History of Cornwall," published at Exeter in 1750, mention is made of Killigrew, the celebrated Master of the Revels to Charles II., though he never was formally installed as Court Jester. The following anecdote will show that, at all events, he deserved the appointment, even though he did not get it. When Queen Ann, IV, showed him his picture at Paris, the King pointed out to him a picture of the Crucifixion between two portraits. "That on the right," added his Majesty, "is the Pope, and that on the left is myself." "I hereby thank your Majesty," replied the wit, "for the information; for though I have often heard that our Lord was crucified between two thieves, I never knew who they were till now."

EVERYBODY knows the story of Gunter, the pastrycook. He was mounted on a runaway horse with the King's hounds, and excused himself for riding against Alvanley by saying, "O, my lord, I can't hold him; he's so hot." "Ice him, Gunter,—ice him!" was the conscious rejoinder.

WHEN COUNT D'ORSAY first came to England as a very young man, and was about twenty-two years of age, he was invited to dine at Holland House, where he was seated next to Lady Holland herself, who appeared that the handsome stranger was a shy young man, awe-struck by her majestic selfishness. Owing to a considerable abdominal development, her ladyship was continually obliged to unclasp her girdle, and let the gown, and so often as she did so, she smiled blandly, but authoritatively, on the French count, and asked him to pick it up. He politely complied several times, but at last, instead of this exercise, he said, to her great surprise—"Would it not be better, madam, for me to sit under the table, so that I can hand you the napkin more rapidly?"

OLD Madame Rothschild, mother of the mighty capitalists, attained the age of ninety-eight; her wit, which was remarkable, and her intellectual faculties, which were of no common order, were preserved to the end. In her last illness, when surrounded by her family, her pride in her wonderful child, Elise was born in the realm of poetry and knows all its most secret and hidden spots; she reveals all to you, as a sorcerer does. The actors who play with her are thunderstruck with this authority; ancient tragedy breathes more hopefully.

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## CITY BULLETIN.

REPUBLICAN MEETINGS.—A LARGE AND ENTHUSIASTIC GATHERING.—The Republican voters of the Twenty-sixth Ward assembled in great numbers last evening, at Kater Hall, South street, for the purpose of ratifying the nomination of Robert Armstrong, for Select Council, and James S. Stewart and George Slenzler for Common Council. The attendance was quite large, and the readiness with which the speeches from her ordinary routine is made to her credit. When she has gone through her American tour she will probably visit London, but she will have something to tell Irish girls who play on the banjo are not among the institutions of the old country.

A TRIBUTE TO AMERICAN AUDIENCES.

There is one fact with respect to which the English public ought to be thoroughly disabused. When a London actor visits America, and after a course of two or three years comes back to the old country, and is not so much liked as he was before, it is commonly asserted that he has been "vulgarized" in the United States. Now there is nothing "vulgarizing" in an American audience; on the contrary, its fault lies in the opposite direction, and the actor just fresh from London I should feel that there was not enough "go" in my patrons, and that if they showed rather more enthusiasm, my performance would be more inspiriting.

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Army Order.

The following circular has been issued from the headquarters of the Army of the United States, dated Washington, D. C., Sept. 19, 1867:

The attention of officers is called to the law approved August 5, 1861, prohibiting the sale of liquor to soldiers in the District of Columbia. All officers are earnestly enjoined to prosecute and cause to be prosecuted all offenders against the above enactment.

The code of punishment for any officer or any other person having knowledge of the fact, is to make complaint on oath before a competent tribunal, and to furnish the proper officer the necessary process for the arrest of the offender.

By command of Brevet Major-General W. H. Emory.

J. Roberts, Brevet Brigadier-General, U. S. A., Adjutant-General.

Circular of the Treasury Department.

The following circular has been addressed to the Collectors of Customs at New York:

Treasury Department, Sept. 20, 1867.—Sir—Although American vessels have been arriving from certain guano islands and keys specified in the act of Congress of June 28 last, owned by citizens of the United States, are considered entitled to the benefits of the coasting trade, and are entitled to the privileges conferred upon vessels of that class by the act, it is deemed that such vessels are in the habit of calling at ports other than those of entry, for purposes of procuring fresh water and supplies, it is necessary to exercise greater watchfulness over them than over coasting vessels.

You are accordingly hereby directed on the arrival of any such vessel at your port to place a inspector on board, with instructions to supervise the unloading of the same, in order to secure the illegal introduction of articles liable to duty.

Very respectfully, H. McCulloch,
Secretary of the Treasury.

Political.

Williamsport, Sept. 20.—A large and enthusiastic Republican meeting was held in the court-house last evening. Hon. Jas. H. Campbell, Williams, Armstrong, and others, addressed the meeting. Northern Pennsylvania will do her duty this fall.

**From Washington:**

Nothing has transpired to-day to indicate what the President will do concerning the impeachment of the Pennsylvania Democrats. It is thought he will not make such sweeping changes as they deserve, but will extend them all the aid and comfort he can in the grave crime they have committed.

The bugbear of impeachment, which is ever before him, and which would inevitably result if he acceded to their demands, makes him cautious, and although his will is good enough to give them all they ask, yet he knows the men, it is thought, to go to the whole length they require. A day or two will decide what he will do. There is reason to believe, however, that orders will be issued soon to make some alterations or repairs to the iron-clad navy in Brooklyn, at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, which will give work to a large number of men.

Judge Kelley's appointment obtained by the party of Philadelphia Democrats, has been given to Colonel Fotjam Bergen, as Assistant Assessor of Internal Revenue, for the First Collection District, upon the recommendation of Samuel J. Randall, Bergen's examination was made out yesterday.

General Sheridan arrived here this evening, and, without walking or driving anywhere, in the way of reception, proceeded to Willard's Hotel. The carriage, containing General Sheridan, passed staff. On his arrival at the hotel he was received by Generals Grant and Sickles, Colonel Joseph B. Brady, William C. Robinson and Colonel Fox, who had been in the room to dinner. He will remain here for a few days only.

Governor Orr, of South Carolina, has written a letter in which he expresses regret at the removal of Sickles, and says that the Legislature will probably refuse a grant blunder in issuing the order. He also endorses Sickles's policy in the Carolinas to the fullest extent.

Life Insurance.—Dr. Prime, editor New York *Observer*, states: "The Equitable Life Assurance Society, of New York, is the best managed with a view to meet the wants of all parts of our widely-extended country. The directors and trustees are chiefly religious and benevolent men, and have been for years. It now ranks, and has become so widely known that all our ministers, missionaries, and their families, are invited to avail themselves of its rich advantages."

See the advertisement of the company in our paper to-day.

## AMUSEMENTS.

The Arch.—Julia Dean will close her engagement this evening, when the popular favorite will appear in the character of Pauline in the Lady of Lyons.

The Walnut.—*A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be produced for the last time.

The Assembly Rooms.—Mr. Mr. Florence and Miss Fanny Davenport will appear in the popular drama of *Country Cousin* for the last time.

Mr. Wallace's Concert.—Mr. Mark Croft will be present this evening with all the brilliant accessories of a first class concert, including Madame Ole Bull, who is under the able direction of Dr. Leopold Damrosch