

WAGNER AND SHAKESPEARE.

The Opera And The Drama in New York—
Passionate Playing of The Belgian Violinist
—More Than Ten Thousand Persons in The
Metropolitan.

Your Editress has asked me "to send a criticism on Ysaye, or a letter giving an account of some opera or play," for this issue of the PRESS AND CAROLINIAN, and I am glad to do the very little I can for a work in which I am so much interested. If you knew how often I have thought of you all when I was enjoying these rare treats and wished you could be with me to share them, I am sure you will pardon the personal note in my accounts.

When shall I begin? Well, my latest pleasure was "Lohengrin." I do not exactly agree with the policeman who was found asleep in the Opera House, although I think of his reply to the surprise expressed at his not listening to the music: "And phwat do I be wanting to listen to them Daotch singers for after hearing Milby and the DeRooshkies." Gadski was a good Elsa, but Brema's Ortrud was finer. Here Rothmuhl's Lohengrin was very well vocally, but he a most substantial middle aged "Knight of the Swan," sadly lacking in knightly elegance. The chorus, especially the men, were like caricatures in Puck of "The Great Unwashed." The music is wonderful, for the richness and breadth of the Wagnerian Drama is unrivaled in Lohengrin. I shut my eyes and listened to the ravishing music, and from the beginning of Act III, which opens with the famous Bridal chorus until the scene changes, there was not a break in the dream of beauty (with eyes closed).

When I recall being transported into the heaven of sweet sounds, I think pre-eminently of Ysaye and of The Huguenots with the ideal cast: Melba, the De Reszkes, Sealchi, Plancon and Ancona, every role taken by a star. Never have I seen The Metropolitan so closely packed, with not an inch of standing room left on all the six floors. You can imagine the audience when it seats ten thousand. Very rarely has such wild enthusiasm been displayed, even in the days of Alvary's Seigfried. You could feel the electric tension, the holding of the breath, the excited glances of ecstatic delight. Before, when hearing Les Huguenots, I must confess, over four hours of it dragged; but this time, such was the mighty sway of transcendent art, only the next day's utter exhaustion made me realize its length.

How can I give you an idea of Ysaye? By the way, that curious looking name is pronounced as the French and Hebrew pronounce Isaiah, Ee-sah-yea. He is a Belgian and is the first professor of violin playing in the Conservatory of Brussels, as Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski, his teachers, were before him. Ysaye was also a pupil of Massart in Paris and is a disciple of the French school which attained the supremacy after the death of Paganini, rivalling the German of which David and Joachim were masters, but from the Polish he has gained breadth, warmth and romantic sentiment. He is thirty-six years old and has a wife and four children. His personality is commanding, for he is cast in a large mould, large features, very mobile, that suggest Beethoven and Rubenstein, straight hair, cut square and rather long with one large lock that falls over his cheek as he plays. Then as he stands, dignified, abstracted, impressive, swaying to and fro in his playing, his violin nestled under his chin seems a part of his very inmost soul, a part of himself just as the voice is of the singer, beating with every pulse, taking changing color and pitch and form from every variation of feeling. He made his first appearance in America here in New York at the Philharmonic Society Concert under Anton Seidl, Nov. 16, 1894. It has been my good fortune to hear him several times, to delight in the enthusiastic ovations he has received, to join in the recalls upon recalls even to eight and nine times. It was interesting to see the violin students following him with their scores and noting down his renderings. As I look over my programs, I despair of particularizing. There was that "Fantasia Appassionata" of Vieuxtemps which made tears come to all eyes, the Mendelssohn Concerts, the Kreutzer Sonata and some of his own compositions, and oh, the Bach Sonata, for violin alone when he gave the quartet effect with such a singing tone, melting into tenderness, ringing out with gladness, all variations. Poetry, vitality, life is in every tone—a human voice that tells us all we have felt or thought or known. That is his great power. He feels much and expresses every phase of emotion in his violin. He is a popular player, because he appeals to the feelings which are universal and the great throbbing human heart responds.

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In a publication of his Sunday School he has recently published the following open letter:

BOSTON, Nov. 1894.

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You know me of old. I would like to tell you of the wonderful boy "Cellist Gerardy, about Gounod's Romeo and Juliet with that ideal cast, and about Rob-Roy, too. You wouldn't care for Falstaff, Verdi's latest and worst opera, for several times, when a part begins to be interesting, it stops.

I went to see "Two Gentlemen of Verona" at Daly's because it is Shakespeare. It has not been played here for nearly fifty years. With all the wealth of stage setting, the scenery of a dream, historical costumes, dances and music, it was rather tame for it lacks human interest. In a literary point of view, it is worth seeing, for it suggests other and stronger plays; and then one likes for once, at least, to see Shakespeare, as it were, illustrated. Ada Rehan as Julia is Ada Rehan still. Sylvia is beautiful, the two sets of contrasted lovers mildly interesting. Your sense of the fitness of things is outraged when Julia accepts Proteus after all his faithlessness and his meanness, too, she so delicate, refined and

Both wife and I, in our arduous church work, are often, by anxiety and overwork, reduced the verge of nervous prostration, and as often, by the use of Paine's celery compound, restored to our wonted energy of mind and vigor of body.

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high-minded. You exclaim it is unnatural until you remember in your life's experience, you have seen just such women love just such men. Unlike the person who said he didn't like Hamlet because it was so full of quotations, one great charm of this play is the peeping forth of familiar lines. Anyway we must be grateful for "Two Gentlemen of Verona" as it contains that exquisite sonnet: "Who is Sylvia?" Launce and his dog live in the same world as Sancho and Doppel. This play, though not so beautiful, suggests in its setting, "Twelfth Night," played earlier in the season. But best of all was "Taming of the Shrew," where Ada Rehan is the historical Katharine.

I wish I could tell you about Beerholm Tree and Madame Sans Gene; but with much else I would like to say, unsaid, I must say farewell, since art is long and time is short.

I am yours sincerely,

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