

AS has been said elsewhere, this is one of the most popular of Verdi's operas. It was the one that, when performed for the first time in the Venice Theatre, Venice, on March 11, 1851, brought him recognition, and secured for him a place among the great writers of opera. Taking as its theme the test by Piave (after Victor Hugo's famous novel "Le Roi S'amuse"), the opera contains some delightful solos, duets, and quartets, and should delight many of those who will listen to it for the first time from 4YA Monday next. No doubt some of the airs will be more or less known, but this will be the first complete rendition over the air.

It is completely recorded on H.M.V. and representatively on Columbia. We have chosen a few excerpts from each, for it would be impossible to review the opera in full.

The introduction and minuet played by Creatore and his band on H.M.V. EB29 is good, bright music, which moves rapidly from the opening phrase. The rendition abounds in colourful passages with plenty of deep bass and bright treble. The band is well balanced and usually gives bright interpretations of music regarded as heavy. But the introduction to Rigoletto is by no means heavy and the band makes a fine record.

"E IL SOL DELL'ANIMA" (Love is the light of the soul). H.M.V. DA 646, a duet between Galli-Curci and Schipa. Being one of the newer recordings one can expect a good excerpt from the opera, and he should not be disappointed with this record. The Duke has stolen into Rigoletto's garden and surprised Gilda in her confession of love for the handsome youth who she has encountered on her way to and

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## THE OPERA "RIGOLETTO"

from church. (This is the duke in guise of a poor student.) She begs him to leave her, but he replies that she has lit the fire within him, and loses no time to win the heart of the pretty maid. He tells her that "love is the sun by which passion is kindled." The address of the duke wherein he tells of his scholarly attributes merges into a love duet. This is the part covered by the record. One hears the address in all the tenderness and suppressed passion of the gentle, silvery notes of Schipa. Then he is interrupted by Galli-Curci and the delightful love duet ensues. The passion of both grows and reaches a climax as the record draws to a close.

WE now turn to the end of the second act, which closes in the dramatic climax where Rigoletto discovers that the Duke had found his daughter and used her to his own ends. Several solos lead up to "Piangi, Fanciulla," a duet between father and daughter. Rigoletto, distracted, comes before the barred door, behind which are the Duke and his daughter. In a rage he denounces the Duke and the grinning courtiers, the while crying for the door to be opened, but it does not yield. While the courtiers are jeering at the distracted

jester Gilda rushes in and throws herself in the arms of her distracted father. She sobs out her confession to the heartbroken cries of her father, and finally weeps upon his breast.

This is one of the most passionate and difficult airs in the opera, and is true Verdi. The duet on H.M.V. DA1028 takes place between Galli-Curci and de Luca. This, too, is a re-recording. The pained notes of the baritone endeavour-

### Retrospect

*SORROW is not for ever;  
only the joys remain!  
Do we remember  
When years are past,  
The hour which we spent in  
pain?*

—Olympus.

ing to comfort the daughter are soon broken by her sobs as she cries out her confession. This is a splendid record and is perfectly recorded. One could almost imagine that these two artists are present in the room singing this passionate duet.

DESPITE her woe in "Si Vendetta, Tremenda Vendetta," Gilda pleads with her father, who cries for vengeance. But her pleading is in vain, and in a passionate climax brings the second act to an end. On H.M.V. DA189 Battistini and Lulu Hayes sing the duet. This wonderful duet shows the passion of the jester rising from the gentle strains of the opening phrases to the violent passages where he is interrupted by the cries of his daughter. Each tries to out-voice the other, and the duet rises in intensity until the brilliant climax, with the baritone crying in suppressed fury and the soprano raising her pleading voice higher and higher, brings the second act to a conclusion. The artists are well chosen and sing a brilliant duet, though it is not electrically recorded and suffers much in consequence.

ACT three is ushered in by what is perhaps the best known air of the opera "La Donna e Mobile" ("Woman is Fickle").

THE Duke comes to the door of Sparafucile's house and calls for wine. Though he has loves in every street in the town he sings of the fickleness of women. Of the words little can be said, for they only repeat that women are fickle, but the tune is so catchy that it has been whistled and sung the world over. In fact it was not given to the tenor who created the part in the initial performance until the afternoon of the performance. Verdi was afraid that, had it been otherwise, the whole town would be singing the air before it was per-

formed. Here are the words that give the key:—

*Woman is fickle,  
Like a feather in the wind,  
Changeable always,  
Constant never.*

An interesting record is made by Caruso on DA561, for it is one made before his art is properly mature. There are many recordings both on H.M.V. and Columbia.

THE next record is one of the most famous quartets in opera and the one we have chosen is that backing the sextet from "Lucia di Lammermoor" on DQ102. Rigoletto and Gilda find the Duke making love to Maddalena. In this quartet the emotions of all four are brought out, and it requires many playings to realise its beauty. Here is the tender pleading of the Duke, the coquetry of Maddalena, the fierce cries of Rigoletto, the broken sobs of Gilda, who sees another woman in the arms of the man she loves. It is through the music and not the words that the beauty of this quartet is realised. With Galli Curci (Gilda), Gigli (the Duke), de Luca (Rigoletto), and Homer (Maddalena) the success of the record is doubly assured. It is an air that one can play many times and each time detect something more beautiful. It is recorded on Columbia 04344, with Gentile, Stignani, Granda, and Galeffi. This is another beautiful record in which the conflicting emotions are brought out with fidelity. On the reverse is the "Prelude to the Duke's Song" ("La Donna Mobile"), with Gentile, Granda and Galeffi. A splendid interpretation is given to the lilting melody of La Donna.

THE famous quartet is recorded as a band item on H.M.V. EB29, by Creatore and his band. It is on the reverse of the "Introduction" mentioned previously. It is remarkable how nearly instruments can approximate the human voice, especially when under skilful conductorship, and in this air the band very nearly approaches the voice. The emotions are plainly evident when one knows what to look for.

BAND selections are played by the Regimental Band of the Grenadier Guards on Columbia 3890. A surprising amount of variety is found in this interpretation, and many of the best-known airs are brought in. The quartet comes in at the commencement of the second record and occupies most of the side. It is worth while, for this is a delightful ensemble, and well worth performing in a variety of styles.

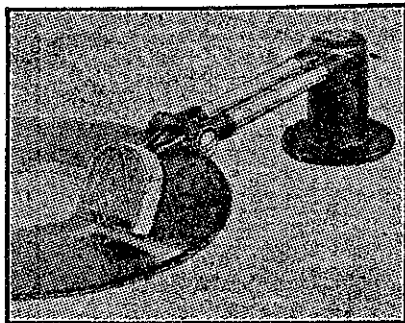
### Other Features

THERE are other noteworthy musical features of the week. "Merry England," as part of Christchurch Music Week, will be presented from 8YA Saturday next. It is comprehensively recorded on both H.M.V. and Columbia, but certain of the records chosen for review should prove of interest to those who wish to make their collection representative only. On Columbia 926 the Light Opera Company record vocal gems. The company is a good combination of voices of all pitch and textures. They are heard in solo and choruses happily mixed. There

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