

Mozart at Salzburg. By EDWARD J. DENT.

It is about 150 years since Mozart lived at Salzburg, but the town has changed its aspect very little since then, at any rate, in certain quarters. It has the reputation of being one of the most beautiful places in the world: Humboldt ranked it with Constantinople and Naples. It is also one of the wettest, for it rains almost every day, and when it does rain it comes down in torrents. No doubt what Humboldt admired was the beauty of the mountains which surround the town and the two hills which rise abruptly in the town itself, one on each side of the river. The peculiarity of the town itself is its Italian aspect. It is about 150 miles north of the present Italian frontier, and much further by road, owing to the mountains; but apart from the climate, one could almost believe oneself in Italy. The prince-archbishops of the 17th and 18th centuries were evidently determined to make Salzburg into a miniature Rome, just as every little German prince of those days tried to set up a Court on the model of Versailles. Churches and houses are all in the Italian style, though in some ways one is reminded more of Naples than of Rome, because the precipitous hill in the town itself made it necessary to build narrow streets and very tall houses. One street is partly cut out of the rock itself, and the long row of house-fronts looks like a piece of theatrical scenery. Later on in the 18th century one of the archbishops had a tunnel cut through the rock, like the famous tunnel of Naples, in order to develop a suburb on the other side.

The social side of Salzburg must have been very strange in Mozart's days. Salzburg is still dominated by the clergy, like any English Cathedral town. There are still some seven or eight monasteries and nunneries as going concerns, and in the eighteenth century there were several more. Mozart's father, though he was a devoutly religious man, made very severe remarks about them in his letters. The archbishops themselves lived as well as any secular princes. There is a huge palace next to the cathedral, taken over later by the Emperor of Austria, the palace of Mirabell across the river, with a park and garden, now public property, and most marvellous of all, the palace of Hellbrunn, a few miles out of the town. Hellbrunn was begun in 1613 as a summer residence; the garden is full of absurd waterworks, which are still in practical order. They are not beautiful, but merely childish—grottoes decorated with shells, where little figures of nymphs and tritons swim round a

pond while toy nightingales and cuckoos sing among the sham rocks—a stone dinner-table with stone seats out of which jets of water suddenly spring—a row of little hutches where the water sets mythological figures in motion. There are similar water-gardens in Italy, and this one was designed by an Italian architect. The most curious device is a toy theatre, about as big as one of the boxes at the Old Vic. with 150 little figures—soldiers, tradespeople, dancers and others, which all move when the water is turned on, to the accompaniment of an organ which plays something like the introduction to an overture by Handel. Further on in the park there is another theatre hewn out of the rock, with natural rock for scenery. Greek plays have been acted there recently by university students, but it must have been even more uncomfortable than the Old Vic., for water drips through the rock and the space behind the stage is almost a pond. One of the most attractive things in old Salzburg is the shop of the archiepiscopal apothecary which is exactly as it was in Mozart's day, with all its decorated shelves and cupboards.

The operatic performances at the Festival in August were rather disappointing. The singers came from the Vienna opera, and had not been able to adapt their style to a small theatre. The operas were given in the usual conventional style; there was no new idea, nothing to give one the feeling that a Salzburg festival was something which took place there and there only. Indeed I often wished myself back at the Old Vic., where however insufficiently rehearsed the performances may be, the audience always makes one feel that opera is a really live thing. I was equally disappointed with the "Theatre of the World"—a play by Hoffmansthal acted in the University Church. It was a miracle of stage production, and the performers were all celebrities from the theatres of Berlin and Vienna; but the beauty of the play (and it is full of beautiful ideas) was quite lost in the magnificence and exaggeration of the stage methods. I wish I could have seen the play acted by simple people—by amateurs if you like—with no more stage effects than we can manage at the Old Vic. The International Chamber Music Festival which preceded the operas brought musicians of all countries together in a friendly spirit, and led to the foundation of a permanent International Society for Contemporary Music with a central office in London, to which the British Music Society is at present giving hospitality.

"A New Way to Pay Old Debts"—(continued).

comparison with Kean as Sir Giles, *and he was hissed!* He never played the part again.

Many notable actors have assumed the part since then—John Vandenhoff, Charles Kean, Samuel Phelps (whose performance was also accounted magnificent), G. V. Brooke, Edwin Booth, William Creswick, Charles Dillon, Walter Montgomery and Hermann Vezin, but none, apparently, ever exhibited the wonderful intensity and terrific power, with which the elder Kean imbued the part.

Sir Henry Irving often thought of producing the play, but decided that his physique was not equal to the strain. His younger son Laurence, also at one

time, contemplated a production, but died, all too early, before his plans had matured.

The play is not a stranger to the Old Vic. In 1844 the young American tragedian, Hudson Kirby, played it here, and in November, 1848, Tom Mead, subsequently a leading actor at Drury Lane and later, a member of Irving's company at the Lyceum, made his first appearances on the London stage here, as Sir Giles Overreach.

Some famous actors have been mentioned above in connection with the old play, and it is therefore of the greatest interest to learn that Sir Giles Overreach will be performed at the Old Vic., by the Vic.'s own producer, Robert Atkins.