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### "MIGNON."

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The most now suffice for noting the fact that M. Faure's performance was most masterly, and formed an important feature in the "Hæmon"; and that Signor Nicolini sang all Gagliardi's music with great taste.

### BISHOP WILBERFORCE'S ESSAYS.\*

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after quoting Milne Edwards's saying, that "Nature is prodigal in variety but niggard in innovation," proceeds to argue from this pregnant truth—really the very key to his position—to his own hypothesis. "Why on the theory of creation," he asks, "should this be so? Why should all the parts and organs of many independent beings, each supposed to have been separately created for its proper place in nature, be so commonly linked together by graduated steps? Why should not Nature have taken a leap from structure to structure?" And he goes on to enlarge upon the wonderful fact that "all animals and plants throughout all time and space should be related to each other in group subordinate to group, in the manner in which we everywhere behold—namely, varieties of the same species most closely related together, species of the same genus less closely and unequally related together, species of distinct genera much less closely related, and genera related in different degrees forming sub-families, families, orders, sub-classes, and classes." This being the fact to be accounted for, the evolution hypothesis is offered to account for it. And account for it it certainly does, with all the completeness with which community of origin will always account for relations of similarity. Whether subsequently observed facts confirm it, or contradict it, or simply fail to support it, is another matter altogether; and the Bishop had already shown with a force which, great as it is, does not exceed the candour of Mr. Darwin's own admission, the notable failure of the geologic record in many respects, and of zoologic observation altogether, to support the hypothesis proposed. But the Bishop is now upon the question of *à priori* merits as a hypothesis; he has to suggest an alternative explanation for the facts. And it is this. After quoting Mr. Darwin's statement above given of the phenomena to be explained, he continues: "How can we account for all this? By the simplest and yet the most comprehensive answer. 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Of the essays which are not controversial, or only indirectly controversial, that on Dr. Newman's "Apologia" is the most striking; it does high credit to the Bishop's power of sympathetic appreciation of a type of character in many respects markedly unlike his own. But the whole contents of the two volumes will be relished by those who like to read in polished and occasionally eloquent English the expression of an acute and versatile mind.

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### "MIGNON."

OPINIONS may differ as to who is the greatest composer of the day; but the most fortunate would certainly seem to be M. Ambroise Thomas. Yet he has been a long time discovering his true vein; and if his "Hamlet" and his "Mignon" have enjoyed unusual advantages such as are still reserved for the new version of "Psyché" on which M. Ambroise Thomas is known to be engaged, he had previously, during a period of some thirty years, produced a long series of works which could scarcely have repaid him in any sense for the trouble he had bestowed upon them. It is not every one who remembers "Le Caid," brought out five-and-twenty years ago, before opera bouffe of a less artistic type had taken exclusive possession of the minor operatic stage in France; and "Le Songe d'une Nuit d'Été" was never known in England except by published narratives of its astounding libretto, in which William Shakspeare, deer-stealer and dramatic poet, is the hero, and Queen Elizabeth, in whose royal park deer were stolen, the heroine. Yet these two best remembered specimens of all that M. Ambroise Thomas wrote before Mignoia form but a tenth part of all that he has produced. Since "La double Echelle" (1837), this prolific though tardily appreciated, or at least tardily successful, composer has written about a dozen works for the Opéra Comique, beginning with "Le Perruquier de la Régence" (1838), and two for the Grand Opera, "La Carmagnole" (1841) and "Le Guerillero" (1842)—these last named works differing from those written for the Opéra Comique only in the fact that the musical pieces composing them were connected by recitative in lieu of spoken dialogue. With all these works M. Ambroise Thomas achieved nothing like European success until he produced "Mignon" in 1866—twenty-nine years, that is to say, after "La double Echelle," his first opera. A portion of the favour with which both "Mignon" and "Hamlet" have been received, and which "Mignon" will, to all appearances, enjoy permanently, must be attributed to those excellent librettists M.M. Barbier and Carré; who may also claim a considerable share in the success which M. Gounod's principal operas have met with. Out of upwards of twenty works composed by M. Ambroise Thomas, the three by which he is most likely to be known to posterity, and certainly the three by which he himself would elect to be remembered, are "Mignon," "Hamlet," and that "Psyché," soon to be presented to the world, if not in an absolutely new bodily form, at least under new conditions; and these are just the three for which M.M. Barbier and Carré furnished the librettos.

Next to being supplied with an excellent basis for musical composition the best thing that can happen to the maestro is to have his music when composed admirably executed; and in this respect again M. Ambroise Thomas has been most happy as regards the two works by which he is known in England. "Hamlet" has been represented season after season at the Royal Italian Opera, with Mdme. Nilsson, Mdle. Sessi, and Mdle. Albani in the part of Ophelia, and with M. Faure as Hamlet; while "Mignon" has now been given at both our opera-houses, the heroine being impersonated by Mdme. Nilsson at the one, by Mdle. Albani at the other. At Her Majesty's Opera, as now at the Royal Italian Opera, the cast was remarkably complete; including as it did besides Mdme. Nilsson as Mignon, Mdle. Carlotta Grossi as Filina, Mdme. Trebelli-Bettini as Federigo, and M. Capoul as Guglielmo. The remarkable thing, however, in the execution of "Mignon," as now given at the Royal Italian Opera, is that while the air given to Federigo ("rondo gavotte") is very well sung by Mdle. Smeroschi, and the minor characters generally are well represented, the four leading parts, who have all that is dramatic in the opera to themselves, are played very well indeed, and at least three of the four parts, those of Mignon, Filina, and Lothario, in an absolutely perfect manner. The three principal figures in the story of "Wilhelm Meister" could not be more finely impersonated than they now are in M. Ambroise Thomas's very beautiful opera by Mdle. Albani, Mdle. Marimon, and M. Faure. There were no signs in Mdle. Marimon's singing of the indisposition which rendered her unable to appear last Tuesday. She was in good voice, looked the part of Filina to perfection, acted with much spirit, and sang magnificently. There is indeed no more perfect vocalist on the operatic stage than Mdle. Marimon; and the showy effective music by which the composer has characterized the personage of Filina is well suited for the display of her brilliant qualities. The somewhat hard but infinitely attractive Filina is admirably contrasted with the gentle sympathetic Mignon, who is as full of soul as her dazzling rival is of worldly wit; and this contrast is as well and as thoroughly brought out in the music—alike by the melodies, the harmonies, and the orchestration—as in the original literary portrayal of the two characters. As the opera was first composed there was a further contrast between the

two voices; the part of Filina being written for a high soprano, that of Mignon for a deep contralto. Filina could not possibly be other than she is as regards vocal characteristics; but, after hearing Mdme. Nilsson and Mdle. Albani as Mignon, no one—and least of all M. Ambroise Thomas himself—would say that there was any essential reason why the poetical child, who was but a child when she died (or, as in the operatic version, gets married), should have a contralto voice. It seems to us that in ordinary moods she would often have sung up to C, and, in moments of supreme emotion, might have attained those higher altitudes so much beloved by all sopranos who can reach them.

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A line must now suffice for noting the fact that M. Faure's performance as Lothario was most masterly, and formed an important feature in the representation; and that Signor Nicolini sang all Guglielmo's music with excellent taste.

### BISHOP WILBERFORCE'S ESSAYS.\*

To say that Bishop Wilberforce's reputation will gain more than it loses by this republication of his articles contributed to the *Quarterly Review* is, all things considered, to give no slight praise both to the writer and to the work. It is not every one who can afford the reproduction of his opinions of a dozen years ago. To many of us, such a republication would be the raising of the ghosts of false prophecies and unrealized fears—ghosts which we should be only too glad to exorcise with all convenient speed. Nor do we mean to say that, so far as many of the Bishop's essays are concerned, the result is very different even in his case; but it is the great merit of these volumes that they can make us forget the practical defeat in many cases of the cause which the writer espoused in admiration for the skill and polish of his unsuccessful advocacy. The Darwinian controversy, for instance, has advanced several stages since the Bishop's essay on the "Origin of Species" was written, and the position for which the Bishop here so stoutly contends has been since surrendered by his allies; but none the less the essay to which we refer has a merit of its own and an interest which is something more than historical. The articles, again, on "Essays and Reviews," and the replies which that rather over-rated volume called forth, contain the records of another struggle before a now abandoned outpost; but here again we are saved from the usual tedium which attends the perusal of obsolete polemics by the unflinching vigour and vivacity of the style. Apart, however, from all questions of dialectical or critical success on particular points, the two volumes before us should add to the Bishop's reputation, if only as bringing out what was undoubtedly his most striking characteristic—the versatility and many-sidedness of his mind. The busy Bishop, who was also a keen and active politician, a distinguished orator and preacher, and a well-known figure in society, shows here almost the same variety of literary as of social gifts; and is equally master of his means whether discoursing pleasantly on natural history, or marshalling the heavy artillery of geology against Mr. Darwin, or analyzing with a criticism at once sympathetic and acute the character of John Keble or the self-revelations of Dr. Newman.

The force and at the same time the limitations of this general intellectual ability are perhaps nowhere so well shown as in the Bishop's criticism on the "Origin of Species." On every point in which mere acuteness of intelligence and dialectical skill are sufficient to command success, the Bishop succeeds; on every point in which the philosophic instinct and the scientific habit are demanded, he as regularly fails. His power, in fact, is purely forensic; the power which deals triumphantly with the details of an unfamiliar subject, the principles of which it can perhaps neither grasp nor appreciate. Thus, while he is merely pressing Mr. Darwin with all those geological objections to his theory which the great naturalist himself has so fully and frankly admitted, he is as successful as would be a consummate advocate with an instinctive eye for the "points" of his case, an admirable lucidity in setting them forth, and a thorough mastery of a brief carefully prepared for him by an able solicitor. When from details he passes to principles, from destructive criticism to constructive speculation, he fails as signally as the advocate would fail who, after having triumphantly cross-examined a scientific expert, should proceed to enunciate a rival theory of his own. Bishop Wilberforce, in short, could see by the native force of his intelligence all the weak points in the collateral evidence for a scientific hypothesis, but he was evidently—in part, no doubt, from theologic prepossessions, but in part also from natural defects—incapable of appreciating the true import and significance of such a hypothesis, if not, indeed, of fully apprehending even its nature and object. This is briefly and convincingly shown in his mode of opposing his own explanation of the facts of nature to Mr. Darwin's. Mr. Darwin,

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after quoting Milne Edwards's saying, that "Nature is prodigal in variety but niggard in innovation," proceeds to argue from this pregnant truth—really the very key of his position—to his own hypothesis. "Why on the theory of creation," he asks, "should this be so? Why should all the parts and organs of many independent beings, each supposed to have been separately created for its proper place in nature, be so commonly linked together by graduated steps? Why should not Nature have taken a leap from structure to structure?" And he goes on to enlarge upon the "wonderful fact" that "all animals and plants throughout all time and space should be related to each other in group subordinate to group, in the manner in which we everywhere behold—namely, varieties of the same species most closely related together, species of the same genus less closely and unequally related together, species of distinct genera much less closely related, and genera related in different degrees forming sub-families, families, orders, sub-classes, and classes." This being the fact to be accounted for, the evolution hypothesis is offered to account for it. And account for it it certainly does, with all the completeness with which community of origin will always account for relations of similarity. Whether subsequently observed facts confirm it, or contradict it, or simply fail to support it, is another matter altogether; and the Bishop had already shown with a force which, great as it is, does not exceed the candour of Mr. Darwin's own admission, the notable failure of the geologic record in many respects, and of zoologic observation altogether, to support the hypothesis propounded. But the Bishop is now upon the question of its *à priori* merits as a hypothesis; he has to suggest an alternative explanation for the facts. And it is this. After quoting Mr. Darwin's statement above given of the phenomena to be explained, he continues: "How can we account for all this? By the simplest and yet the most comprehensive answer. 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Willerforce could see the theological results of such a concession better than he could see its logical necessity. "How, he asks, is it possible to stop where such a principle has been admitted, or why should not the 'verifying faculty' of Voltaire or Thomas Paine be as good an authority as the same faculty when exercised by Rowland Williams?" The question is, doubtless, a difficult one to answer, but how, on the other hand, without such a "verifying faculty," could the Bishop have dealt, as he does, in this very essay with the miracle of Joshua? The succeeding essay on "Aids to Faith" (the now almost forgotten volume of replies by various writers to "Essays and Reviews") is less successful—partly because the Bishop's sympathy with the writers led him to take a quite exaggerated view of its merits, and partly because his discussion of it leads him into that field of physical reasoning where he is least at home. Thus, for instance, he selects for quotation and special approval an argument of one of the essayists in favour of miracles, founded upon the often exposed confusion of thought which mistakes man's power to modify the results of the operation of natural laws by altering the collocations of matter for a power to "suspend the operation" of those laws.

Of the essays which are not controversial, or only indirectly controversial, that on Dr. Newman's "Apologia" is the most striking: it does high credit to the Bishop's power of sympathetic appreciation of a type of character in many respects markedly unlike his own. But the whole contents of the two volumes will be relished by those who like to read in polished and occasionally eloquent English the expression of an acute and versatile mind.

#### GLAPTHORNE'S PLAYS AND POEMS.\*

GLAPTHORNE, who belongs to the reign of Charles I., appears to have enjoyed some reputation in his own age, for Winstanley writes of him as "one of the chiefest dramatic poets." He has since fallen into utter neglect, and his reputation will not be revived by this republication of his works. Readers who admire what is old simply because of its age may find some pleasure in these plays; but when we consider the noble dramatic literature of the Elizabethan day it seems surprising that the five plays now reprinted should have ever attained popularity. Glapthorne has some command of poetical diction, and so far as there is any merit in his work it is the merit of a poet rather than of a dramatist; but a want of taste is evident throughout, and if the best of his dramas—"Albertus Wallenstein" and "The Lady's Privilege," for example—contain several fine passages, the conceits of the writer and the absurdity of his plots are likely to disgust the modern reader. In "Albertus Wallenstein" the Duke consents that his youngest son shall marry Isabella, "woman to the Duchess," upon condition that the morning after the nuptials he consents to kill his wife. In "The Lady's Privilege" Chrisea, who is engaged to marry Doria, a victorious Admiral, induces him to renounce his claim on her, and to do his uttermost to gain for her the hand of his friend Vitelli, who is in love with her sister. The passion is but feigned to try Doria's affection, and when the change causes a quarrel, and the Admiral is sentenced to death for killing, as it is supposed, one of Chrisea's relatives, Chrisea refuses to claim the privilege awarded to the virgins of Genoa of redeeming a condemned person on condition of marrying him. The kinsman, who has been concealed by her in order to test Doria's constancy, then appears upon the scene, but the Admiral has already taken to wife a young lady, who had threatened to die with him if he refused her offer. It would seem, then, that Chrisea's ingenuity has defeated itself, and that she is doomed to suffer as she deserves. The dramatist, however, finds a way of escape from the dilemma, for the bride turns out to be a page who has acted this part in order to save Doria's life. The treatment of the characters is as fantastic as the plot, but here and there we meet with poetical thoughts and elevated sentiments. As much cannot be said for "The Hollander," a comedy without humour, or of which all the humour consists in the presentation of obscenity. We are unable to admit, with the anonymous editor of these volumes, that Glapthorne "has claims on our esteem and admiration," neither can we agree with him that many of the poems which follow the dramas possess great sweetness and beauty. They are marked by fantastic imagery, farfetched allusions, and ridiculous similes. His mistress's breath is so sweet that the panther, envious at its excelling his, sighs to death.

To venture to compare  
Her cheeks to lilies, sunbeams to her hair,  
Were to allow her mortal.

Her tears are so holy that when the earth is plague-stricken, one drop from her eyes will save it; the Indian who dives for pearls borrows lustre from her eyes "to polish his dull merchandize;" her hairs are nets of gold, fit to ensnare the King of Gods; her ivory breasts are, on one page, hills of wonder, upon which little cupids dance, and on another, balls of camphire; her lips are "fragrant mountain-tops of bliss;" her eyes have so dazzled her lover that he is deprived of sight.

But lest such gems should be confined  
To earth; behold the amorous wind  
Catching them, fixes every one  
In heaven, a constellation.

This wearisome toil after fancy and this ingenious affectation remind us of Donne, who died a few years before Glapthorne published his poems. We find nothing to justify the editor's statement that Henry Glapthorne was "a man of the most exquisite refinement." His dramas, however leniently judged, would seem to prove the contrary; and if his love pieces are grotesque rather than indecent, he himself accounts for this lack of sensuality by informing his mistress that he intends "in action not in words to be obscene."

\* "The Plays and Poems of Henry Glapthorne." Now first Collected, with Illustrative Notes and a Memoir of the Author. In 2 vols. (London: John Pearson, 1874.)