

**VERDI AT HOME.**—An Italian gentleman who is the intimate friend of Verdi, has given the *Continental Gazette* some curious particulars respecting the great composer's mode of life. His favorite residence is his country seat at Busseta. It is at a considerable distance from any railway station, and situated in the midst of a wild and desolate landscape. A lofty wall (and, if I understand my informant aright, a triple row of walls) surrounds the grounds, which are of great extent. The house is further guarded by two enormous dogs of the famous Pyrenean breed, which are Verdi's great pets and constant companions. The porter has orders to admit no visitors except those who come by special invitation from the master of the house, so that often a distinguished personage will make his way out to this guarded castle only to be met by the information that its master is away from home. "But can we not see the house?" is the next query. "Impossible; we have not got the keys." Verdi meanwhile is promenading with his dogs in some distant portion of the grounds, delighting in his immunity from intrusion. The house itself is of immense size, and the rooms are of proportionate extent, with very lofty ceilings. There is a fine billiard-room on the first floor (Verdi is especially fond of that game), a music-room of exceptionally fine acoustic properties, a series of drawing-rooms, and finally the guarded sanctum that no one dares to approach—namely, Verdi's study. There he shuts himself up for hours every day, and sometimes for days at a time, only emerging to eat and sleep. He does very little of the latter, seldom retiring before midnight and always rising at half-past five, both in winter and summer. "On the rare occasions that I have been admitted to his study," says my informant, "there were always some freshly-written sheets of music lying on his desk, and if I approached too near or strove to cast a glance at the MSS., Verdi would take me by the arm and lead me from the room." "You read music too easily," he said to me one day; "I will not have you investigating my work." Verdi is now seventy-three years of age. He has no children, and his seclusion is shared only by his wife. His vast establishment is thoroughly well kept up, some twenty servants being employed to take care of it and to minister to the wants of the great composer and Madame Verdi. He is a fine-looking old man with snow-white hair and moustache. The death of Wagner, who was just his age, made a deep impression upon him, and has caused a visible alteration in his health. He has grown older in aspect and in his habits ever since his great German rival has passed away. It is generally understood that his opera of "Iago" is completed, but he will not give it to the world till his great friend, Signor Corti, resumes the directorship of La Scala, which he relinquished to take charge of the Italian Opera at Paris. His friend further declared that he thinks it probable that, like Victor Hugo, Verdi has now in his possession the scores of several completed works which will not see the light till after his death. His published operas number one hundred and twenty-five, and include all styles, from the Auber-like lightness of "Il Corsaro," down to the Wagnerian science of "Aïda." His country-seat is crowded with rare, costly and beautiful things many of these gifts from the various sovereigns of Europe. To guard against thieves the doors and windows on the first floor are closed with heavy gratings of iron, which are locked every night by Verdi himself.

#### MUSICAL HASH.

The marriage of Daniel Ollivier, son of Napoleon's Prime Minister, and grandson of the Abbe Liszt, has revived memories of the mixed domestic relations of the great composer. The mother-in-law of Emile Ollivier, the French Minister, was the Comtesse d'Agoult, who was as brilliant as she was depraved. Married quite young to the Comte d'Agoult, she eloped at the age of nineteen with the Abbe Liszt, and lived with him for several years in a pretty villa on the shores of Lake Geneva, where she bore him several children, one of whom married Ollivier. The comtesse's second child by Liszt is Cosima, widow of the composer, Wagner. Cosima's first husband was the eccentric Hans von Bülow. The latter, however, finding that his wife preferred Wagner to himself gallantly surrendered her to the great maestro, arranging for a speedy and uncontested divorce. Liszt, Wagner, Frau Wagner, and von Bülow used frequently to meet; but we are assured that family subjects were not discussed.

#### D'ALBERT AND LISZT.

How the Young Pianist Lived at Weimar With the Old Master.

No performer in America is attracting so much attention to-day as Eugene D'Albert, who, with Sarasate, the violinist, is shortly to appear at the Auditorium. There are several Americans who can recall the days at Weimar when Liszt came to spend the mild season of the year at his modest summer home in the Grand Ducal Park. The small circle of artists who were privileged to meet with the great master three afternoons of each week treasure those memories as the dearest of their lives. It was in May, 1882, when a young, rather Bohemian looking, lad stood for the first time in the rear of the circle of pianists in Liszt's studio. His coat, though of fine black cloth, was unshapely, giving him a countrified appearance, which was increased by the long, stubborn growth of dark, coarse hair, and a slight intimation of a moustache that had not yet been touched by the barber. Yet there was a look in those small dark eyes that justified the anticipation of a hidden power. Who was he? With whom did he study, and had he talent? Such and other interrogations were mentally or loudly asked when the door opened and Liszt entered, bowing as he smiled with his accustomed benevolence.

"You play first," he said, addressing the new comer with a friendliness that betokened admiration and confidence.

The addressed one bashfully stammered an excuse, something about not yet having obtained a piano to practise upon; but the master added:—"Well then, play your cadenza to my second rhapsody for us." This he had evidently played as a private introduction to Liszt that morning. The young man seated himself at the piano as requested, and played a short but very original cadenza to the rhapsody. When the pianist had finished, the venerable master embraced him and kissed him on the forehead, as he prophesied for him a great future; then turning to those who were in the room he introduced—"Herr Eugen D'Albert."

But this was only the beginning. Every lesson brought to light some new and marvellous power from this genius. In fact the entire interest of each afternoon centered in young "D'Albertus Magnus," as the master jestingly called him. Beside him the brilliant Rosenthal, the philosophic Friedheim, the rhythmic Sauer, or the poetic and yet grand Reisenauer seemed almost commonplace artists.

One morning Carl Lachmund, who tells the story, was practising some of the difficult passages of the Rubinstein G major concerto when the door opened and D'Albert entered. "I cannot sit still to practise in that way," he remarked, "Well, how in the world do you learn those difficult pieces in so short a time?" "Oh, I only play them entire," was the response.

Upon being asked what he would play that afternoon at the lesson, he replied that he could not think of anything but the Halka fantasia.

"Why, you purchased that at the music store only two days ago," Lachmund exclaimed in astonishment. "Well, I think I have mastered it; let me try it for you;" and with these words he seated himself at the piano and rushed through the enormous difficulties of Tausig's piece with amazing rapidity. Liszt was even more pleased that afternoon, and D'Albert became the hero of all conversation.

While some played to Liszt but once in two weeks and others once a week, D'Albert was expected to have something ready at every lesson soiree. As there were three of these each week, it was no small task even for a genius to be always prepared, especially as Liszt objected to hearing the hackneyed concert pieces. At another time when D'Albert was short for something new he obtained from a friend Rubinstein's great G major concerto, which he had seen, but never practised before, and brought it to the lesson the same day.

As the master would not listen to a concerto unless the orchestra parts were played on a second piano, the friend promised to bring a second copy to the lesson, but as the second copy could not be found, D'Albert had to stammer an excuse to that effect when he was called upon. "Well, play it any way, D'Albertus," said Liszt pleasantly, and the young virtuoso complied, though rather reluctantly. He then attempted to sketch the orchestra parts, which were printed above the solo, while at the same time playing the latter.

The rolling runs, which are played alternately hand over hand, he grasped with the left hand alone, while with the other he endeavoured to add the melodious strains of the orchestra score. This was all done with such ease that Liszt laughed heartily at this young artist's ingenuity.

Since those days at Weimar D'Albert has matured, and though yet a very young man his philosophic repose is as remarkable as are his bursts of sentiment. Be it Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, or Rubinstein, he plays every style equally well, with originality

and yet fidelity to the composer. During his recent tour in Russia an eminent St. Petersburg critic pronounced him "a Rubinstein and Bülow combined."—*Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

Sarasate and D'Albert were greeted by a vast audience at the Pavilion on Saturday evening, Dec. 28th. Of these two great artists we can only say that their interpretation of the works performed were simply perfect. The programme was as follows:

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| Sonata, op. 53 in C .....                                  | Beethoven                            |
| Allegro con brio—Introduction and Rondo.                   | Eugen D'Albert.                      |
| Andante and variations, from the Kreutzer                  | Beethoven                            |
| Sonata .....   | Mme. Berthe Marx and Paplo Sarasate. |
| (a) Berceuse, op. 57 .....                                 | Chopin                               |
| (b) Barcarolle, A-minor .....                              | Rubinstein                           |
| (c) Valse, Man Lives but Once .....                        | Strauss-Tausig.                      |
| Liebesfee (Morceau caracteristique) .....                  | Raff                                 |
| For Violin and Piano.                                      | Pablo Sarasate and Madame Marx.      |
| Solos (a) Norwegian Bridal Procession, op. 19, No. 2 ..... | Greig                                |
| (b) Tarantella, Venezia e Napoli .....                     | Liszt                                |
| .....  | Eugen D'Albert.                      |
| Faust Fantasie .....                                       | Sarasate                             |
| .....  | Pablo Sarasate.                      |

Mme. Berthe Marx played the piano part in the concerted numbers, and Otto Goldschmidt played the other accompaniments; and too much cannot be said in praise of their conscientious and artistic work, exacting to the fullest extent all the faculties of finished musicians. Frequent recalls, which were mostly conceded to, lengthened the above splendid programme to a generous length. We trust this will not be the last visit to Toronto of these distinguished artists.

#### DEATH OF DR. LOUIS MAAS.

MUSICAL circles will be stirred by the wholly unexpected intelligence of the death of this accomplished pianist, composer and teacher, which occurred at his home in Jamaica Plain, near Boston, on Sept. 17, a few days after his return from Paris, where he was taken ill.

Dr. Maas came to America in 1880, and after a season in New York, chose Boston as the field of his labors, and at once fixed his status among its leading pianists. He conducted the orchestral concerts of the Boston Philharmonic Society during the season of 1881-82, and added to his reputation. Since then he has made brief annual concert tours in all our principal cities, and been acknowledged one of our representative piano virtuosi. Dr. Maas became an American citizen, and thoroughly identified himself with the progressive musical movement that has brought American compositions to the programmes of our leading musical organizations during the past ten years.

Among his compositions are an American symphony entitled "On the Prairies," a piano concerto, suite for orchestra, a fantaisie stück, triumphal march, several overtures for orchestra, three sonatas, a violin concerto, string quartet, numerous songs and thirty or forty piano compositions. Although but thirty-seven years of age, the measure of his work would lead one to believe him to have been more mature in years. Alfred University, New York, conferred upon him his title of Doctor of Music.

Louis Maas was born in Wiesbaden, Germany, June 21st, 1852. His parents emigrated to London

when he was in his infancy. He entered King's College, and graduated at the early age of 15, and immediately after was sent to the Leipzig Conservatory, which he entered in 1867, and where he was called to a professorship of technique and piano-forte playing in 1878, which he held until his coming to New York. For three years past Dr. Maas has been connected with the New England Conservatory Boston.

Of Maas as a pianist, in which capacity he was more widely known, we penned the following upon one of his artistic triumphs in Providence, six years ago:

"Louis Maas represents, perchance, better than any other, that school of technique where rigid adherence to that smooth, unimpassioned style so requisite to the interpretation of the earlier classical works is still preserved amid the more impulsive and emotional works of more modern composers. His technique is well-nigh faultless; every note is given with a staccato like distinctness that when heard in a composition like the Sonata by the old master Scarlatti, which formed one of the numbers upon the programme, produces an effect that is not easily forgotten. Such technical accuracy does not belong to the present age, but serves as an admirable example for us to follow.

"In the playing of Dr. Maas one hardly knows what to admire more, the splendid reserve powers that are never exhausted, no matter to what lengths he goes, that always are ready to come to the rescue, and by some unexpected *coup de main* give us golden glimpses of what may be expected under emergency, or the ready command of powers that contain in themselves so many resources and leave so little to be desired.

"Maas resembles greatly in many respects Hans von Bülow, and like him, his strongest point is in fine conception and interpretation of strictly classical music, in which he excels greatly. Every number upon the programme was liberally applauded, and Maas won admirers for his clear, concise delivery and musical qualifications that, aside from his piano-forte playing, would still place him in the foremost rank of our home musicians.—*American Art Journal*.

#### MUSICAL INSPIRATION.

AT a concert in Berlin, four years ago, D'Albert's playing of Chopin's waltz in D-flat was so electrifying that his auditors were fairly beside themselves with delight. He was questioned afterwards as to the supernatural powers that had come to his aid, for the performance seemed possible only through inspiration. "Yes," he scornfully replied, "the inspiration of three years of hard work."—*Musical Record*.