

observable during last winter's session of the legislature. A committee of that body, having to report on the advisability of abolishing the Yosemite Commission, explained in effect that they were not prepared to accept the responsibility of recommending such abolition, simply because the act of Congress which intrusted the Yosemite to California had prescribed the form of government as composed at present. To abolish the Commission before preparing to replace it by some other system of management would be to leave the premises without any ruling authority. Such a report was, of course, equivalent to an announcement that but for the obstacle presented by the act of Congress the committee would have recommended the abolition of the Commission as useless or something worse. It was noticeable, too, that while the Yosemite Commissioners had asked for the sum of \$50,000 to cover their expenses during the present year and the next, the legislature appropriated no more than \$15,000. That in this large reduction of the estimate there was no suggestion of close-handedness is proved by the appropriation later in the session of a sum of \$50,000 (afterward vetoed by the Governor) to pay for building a public highway to the Valley, and so to relieve travelers from the onerous demands of the system of private toll-roads by which the great resort is now reached. It is well understood in California that the controlling element of the Commission has been opposed to the establishment of a free public road, as such an institution would be contrary to the interests of the transportation companies doing business in connection with the Valley. The rejection of the Commission's estimate of expenditure, the appropriation of \$50,000 for a purpose not supported by that body, and the unavoidable interpretation to be given to the legislative committee's report concerning the abolition of the Board of Commissioners, are all instructive indices to the disfavor with which the management is regarded by the mass of Californians themselves.

The time would appear to be ripe for the formulation of a distinct scheme for an improved method of direction of the Valley. The longer a reformation is delayed the greater will become the hindrances to its operation and the more irreparable will be the consequences of inappreciative and unskilful management. It must be borne in mind that the present Commission has publicly announced its intention to cut down all the trees which have sprouted in the Valley within thirty years—a policy which Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, the expert professional landscape architect, states would prove in execution "a calamity to the civilized world." An immense amount of damage may be wrought even with the reduced appropriation which the legislature felt compelled to concede in order to provide for the maintenance of existing roads, trails, and other necessary conveniences. The unwise expenditure of a few hundred dollars may destroy attractions that could be replaced, if at all, by no outlay of money, but only by the indefinitely prolonged lapse of time. Already—and while the Commissioners have been denying that the floor of the Valley has been injured by the official management—an insignificant sum in dollars has proved adequate to degrade the wild natural charm of Mirror Lake into the condition of a mere artificial irrigation reservoir, and the cheap and debasing "improvements" on exhibition at that once romantic tarn have their coun-

terparts in a long panorama of allied barbarities. To the end that such encroachments on the perfection of Yosemite may not become ineradicable, and on a continually spreading scale, procrastination in transferring the management to hands of the highest expertness will be one of those blunders that fall little short of constituting a crime.

Perhaps the readiest and most effective method of securing a reform would be found through the absorption of the district covered by the grant to California in the great National Park—a reservation as large as the State of Rhode Island—recently established by act of Congress, and which entirely surrounds the Valley, extending away for many miles on every side. Such an absorption would go far to hasten the arrangement of a thorough system of park control not yet advanced beyond the stage of a preliminary makeshift. The proposed absorption has been widely commended throughout California, the generality of whose people are endowed with sufficient acumen of mind not to be deceived by appeals to the contrary—appeals based on perverted notions of State pride, and instigated by purely selfish motives of personal vanity or pecuniary advantage. Californians are justly proud of their State, and are not likely to be satisfied with less than the best expert care of their wonderful scenic treasures. One can find an upland farm anywhere. The glory of Yosemite consists largely in its wildness, and this characteristic can be preserved only by intelligence and skill of the highest order.

George G. Mackenzie.

The Paris Opera.

THE French National Academy of Music was founded in the year 1669, during the reign of Louis XIV. Before being transferred to the splendid edifice erected by M. Charles Garnier, the opera was located in various parts of Paris—in the Rue de Valois at one time, on the Place Royale at another, and again in the Rue Le Peletier. Between its foundation and the year 1672 the opera only performed unimportant works, such as ballets. The first lyric work it presented was an opera-ballet by Lulli, entitled "The Fêtes of Cupid and Bacchus." For a century after 1672 a considerable number of operatic works by French and Italian composers of every kind and without any distinct characteristic were performed at the opera, and it was only when Gluck's "Iphigénie en Aulide" was produced in 1774 that dramatic music acquired a special form in France.

M. Arthur Pougin, a French writer well known as an authority on music, has written an admirable monograph on Gluck, who may be styled the founder of French music. His "Orphée" was produced at Paris in 1774, "Alceste" in 1776, "Armide" in 1777, and "Iphigénie en Tauride" in 1779. M. Pougin has justly said that the rôle played by Gluck in the revolution of French dramatic music was so preponderant that he originated a school of music which abandoned and destroyed the former repertoire of the opera. Gluck's genius was so powerful and so innovative that he overturned all musical theories which had preceded him. The only opposition he encountered was from the partizans of an Italian composer named Piccinni, whose "Roland" was performed at the opera in 1778

and originated a famous divergence of opinions among composers known to the musical world as the war of the Gluckists and Piccinnists. The two most important composers of the Gluck school are Cherubini, born at Florence in 1760, and Spontini, whose "Vestale" and "Fernand Cortez" enjoyed great success at the opera. Among modern composers whose works have been performed at the French National Academy of Music the most popular are, Hérold, Auber, Halévy, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Donizetti, Verdi, Ambroise Thomas, the present director of the Conservatoire, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, and Massenet.

The Opera House is the property of the State, which appoints the manager for a renewable term of seven years, and pays him, after a vote in the Chamber of Deputies, an annual subvention of eight hundred thousand francs (one hundred and sixty thousand dollars). The director or manager is bound to give a fixed number of performances, to keep the opera open during the whole year, and to produce a certain number of new works, which are mentioned in his contract. The manager is amenable to the Minister of Fine Arts and Public Instruction in case of non-fulfilment of his contract. It is only reasonable that the Minister of Fine Arts, who has charge of the national museums and art galleries, the subventioned theaters, and other public buildings, should possess unlimited control over the financial management and the working of the department for which he is responsible to the nation, but in order to regulate the details of art he needs to be at one and the same time an artist, a sculptor, a musician, an author, and a tragedian, as well as a politician, which is practically impossible.

In the contract signed by the manager of the opera the Minister decides not only the number of performances and of new works, but also the number of sopranos, tenors, baritones, basses, choristers, musicians, ballet-dancers, etc. who shall be employed at the opera. In fact he regulates the entire management of the opera in every detail. But there are many artistic questions which arise in the working of a lyric stage that can only be solved by an enlightened and intelligent musical director, and not by a mere stage-manager, however competent he may be in his department.

Since the foundation of the opera there have been forty-eight managers and twenty-six leaders of the orchestra. Some of the latter have resigned the position at the end of a year; M. Lamoureux resigned it at the end of two years; I myself have occupied it for four years.

The musical rehearsals at the opera are conducted on a system unknown to any other theaters in the world, be they Italian, German, English, Russian, American, or Spanish. The chorus-singers are trained by a leader of the chorus, the singers are trained by accompanists known as singing-masters, who give their instructions to the leader of the orchestra. When the preparatory rehearsals are finished, the time-beater, who supports the whole responsibility in the eyes of the public, has only acted as a metronome, if he has the good fortune to score a success. It is evident that some reform is necessary in this division of authority for the good of musical art, and I heartily hope it may soon be accomplished.

The orchestra consists of ninety-four musicians, all of whom are performers of great merit and some of

great celebrity, such as M. Taffanel, the flutist, who is often engaged to perform at Prague, Dresden, St. Petersburg, and Moscow by the Philharmonic societies of those cities; M. Turban, the clarinetist; Messrs. Berthelier, Loeb, and Laforge, the well-known violoncellists. All the musicians of the opera are members of the orchestras of the Conservatoire, Lamoureux, and Colonne concerts. Their salaries at the opera vary from \$140 to \$600 per annum. For this amount they have to play at 192 performances, and at all the rehearsals which may be necessary, and which are unlimited.

While speaking of the orchestra of the opera I am glad to have an opportunity of replying to certain attacks which have been made upon it by M. Robert de Bonnières in the Paris "Figaro" of April 19, 1891, and by a New York journal which accuses the orchestra of decay. The following letter, addressed to me by Franz Liszt, proves that, far from decaying, the orchestra is more powerful than ever.

DEAR M. VIANESI: I wish to renew my thanks and praises to you personally. On the matter of your intelligent and firm conducting of my "Legend of St. Elizabeth" at the Trocadéro, the composers who were present agreed with the public that the results achieved by you and your executants were splendid, spite of the difficulties which the work presents from the frequent changes of rhythm and tone.

FRANZ LISZT.

After the performance of "Ascanio" Camille Saint-Saëns wrote me as follows:

The musicians of the orchestra have added to the instrumentation of "Ascanio" what a great singer adds to a melody—*i. e.*, color and life. If musicians play better anywhere else it can only be in the other world. As for yourself, whose burden in my absence was most heavy, you rose to the height of the situation. You possess the precious quality of not conducting like a metronome, and give to my music the suppleness which is essential to an artistic orchestra.

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS.

The real defect in the orchestra has been pointed out by M. Robert de Bonnières, who says:

The leader of the orchestra, whose word should be law, like that of Hans Richter at Vienna, that of Hermann Levi at Munich, and that of Mottl at Carlsruhe, is ignored at Paris. It matters little therefore who conducts, whether it be M. Vianesi, M. Altès, or M. Lamoureux. Whoever he be, the conductor leads without being permitted to direct those he leads, and is completely powerless. I need not dwell on the fact that he has to be the humble slave of the scene-setters, of the singing-masters, of the chief scene-shifter, of the singers, and even of the dancers: the difficulty of his position will be clearly seen when it is understood that he is required to hold his tongue at the risk of causing a scandal.

Therein lies the real evil, and if the present pernicious system be not speedily and radically reformed the organization of the opera will merit the title given it by a witty Parisian composer, who calls it "Louis XIV.'s musical box."

A. Vianesi,

Musical Director of the French National Academy of Music.

George H. Boughton.

GEORGE H. BOUGHTON was born in England in 1834, but was only three years old when his parents removed to Albany, New York. Here his earliest edu-