MALIBRAN IN BALFE'S 'THE MAID OF ARTOIS' 27TH MAY 1836

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A new opera called The Maid of Artois, the music of which is composed by Mr Balfe, and which Madame Malibran sustained the principal part, was played here for the first time last night. The attraction of a new opera at this period of the season, the fact of its being the work of an English composer, who by his previous efforts has deserved wll of the public, and, more than these, the well-deserved popularity of Madame Malibran, were likely to produce a good house; but even this combination had not prepared us to expect such an audience as was assembled last night. The house was not only full thoughout beofre the opera commenced, but was filled by a company whose appearance gave an *eclat* to the theatre which it does not always display. The whole front of the dress-boxes was occupied by ladies, all the dress-boxes and stalls were filled, and the pit contained a more than usual proportion of well-dressed females.

The overure, which is spirited andgay, was encored. The opera the story of which is, we believe, original, although the persons are French, opens with a scene in one of the public places in Paris; the period of the action being at the latter part of the reign of Louis XV. Groups of citizens and soldiers are seen parading and amusing themselves. After a lively chorus, and a spirited song by a recruiting-sergeant, San Regret (Mr Giubilei) and a very delightful scena by Mr Philips who plays the Marquis de Chateau Vieux, the colonel of the regiment, the stage being cleared, Jules de Montangon(Mr Templeton) a young countryman, from the province of Artois, enters in a state of dejection. He has come from his native village in search of Isoline (Mme Malibran), his betrothed bride, who has been lured to Paris ny the Marquis de Chateau Vieux(Mr Philips) and whom Jules believes to have deserted him for his more wealthy and powerful rival. In his despair the Sergeant presents himself, learns that he is in grief and penniless, proffers him assistance, and under the pretence of serving him enlists him as a recruit into his own regiment. Isoline's friend and follower, Coralie (Miss Healey) has an appointment with the Sergeant; Jules recognizes her, learns that his mistress is in Paris, and at the same moment make the unpleasant discovery that his pretended friend San Regret has enlisted him. He is surrounded by a detatchment of the troops, remonstrance is useless, resistance in vain, and he is marched off to the barracks, and the scene closes with a chorus of that striking character which is likely to make it popular. Coralie bears the intelligence of this disaster to Isoline, who although exposed to the temptations of the Marquis's wealth, and the influence of his persuasion, has resisted all, and remains true to her lover. The scene by Isoline when she is first is a very beautiful composition, and was sung by Madame Malibran with that graceful and touching expression of which she is so perfect a mistress. The applause which followed it was of that rapturous character which she alone upon the English stage has the power of exciting.

From this moment the success of the opera seemed certain. The audience was so completely fascinated, that the sequel must have been bad indeed if it marred the effect which this performance had produced. The Marquis then enters: Isoline implores him to save her lover and to restore her to him. The first request the Marquis is willing to grant, but upon a condition which makes the second impossible, namely, that

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Isoline will become his. After a long and passionate struggle which was admirably acted, and the music accompanying it as admirably sung, she consents to sacrifice herself, if by that means alone she can restore Jules to liberty. Immediately after the departure of the Marquis Jules enters the apartment by the balcony. He has discovered the place of Isoline's retreat, has deserted from his regiment, and arrives worn out by fatigue and drenched by the storm. Avery moving scene ensues. Jules believes her to have been guilty of infidelity; but at length, convinced by her simple but solemn assertion of her innocence, he proposes to her to fly with him from the hotel of the Marquis, which she readily consents to do. The raging of the storm delays the departure, and while they are singing the duet, the Marquis enters. An altercation ensues between Jules and the Marquis; the latter draws upon his rival, who, in his own defence, wounds him. The Marquis's followers and soldiers rush in, the lovers are separated, anf Jules hurried away to his doom. The finale of the act by Madame Malibran, is one of the most powerful and effective of her displays. At the end of the first act she was unanimously called for by the audience and obeyed the call.

The second act open at a fort on the sea coast in French Guiana, where Jules, in the dress of a slave, is enduring the sentence of transportation to which his offence against his superior officer had exposed him. One of the choruses in this scene is perhaps too much like the 'Vive le Roi" chorus from *The Siege of Rochelle*; but, to be sure, if Mr Balfe has the right to borrow at all, he maymore excusably take such a liberty with himself than with any othersperson. Mr Seguin, who plays the inspector of the fort has a clever bass song, which he gave with great skill and spirit.

Malibran as Fidelio

Malibran by Q.Victoria

A ballet is introduced here, which, but that perhaps some expedient is necessary to afford Madame Malibran a short repose after the exertions which the first act requires, might well be dispensed with. A ship from France is seen in the offing, and a boat's crew land with despatches. One of this crew, a seeming sailor-boy, is Isoline, who, in this disguise has fled from France to aid in her lover's rescue or to share his fate. She changes her male attire for the garb of a sister of charity, has an interview with Jules, which she procures by bribing the gaoler, but their raptures are interrupted by the arrival of the inspector, who having learmed Isoline's story and being captivated by her charms, offers his addresses to her. She repulses him, and he is about to proceed to violence, when Jules rushes forward, and having seized a gun, brings the inspector to reason, and locks him up in one of his own dungeons, while, with the assistance of a negro slave, the lovers make their escape to the desert. The duet between Madame Malibran and Mr Templeton in this scene is one of the most charming pieces in the opera. Just as the escape takes place, the new governor if the colony arrives. This is no other than the Marquis de Chateau Vieux, who has accepted a foreign emlpoyment, for the purpose of dissipating the grief which the loss of Isoline and his remorse for having destroyed her happiness has occasioned a ballad. " The light of other days" which is introduced here, is a very elegant composition . Mr Phillip's singing it is likely to add to his well-established reputation. The symphony, on a newly-invented keyed bugle, was received with marked applause. This one of the *morceaux*, and there are several others in the opera, which can hardly fail to become popular. The third act discovers the lovers in the desert. A red interminable waste of sand surrounds them. Jules has

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sunk exhausted on the ground, and Isoline is supporting his head upon her knee. He is bleeding from a stab wound he has received, and the hot sand of the desert has worked itself into his festering wound. She empties the water gourd which was about his neck upon the wound and binds it with her handkerchief. He revives, and they propose to continue their flight, when Isoline's strength fails. She is dying from fatigue and thirst; the gourd is exhausted; she sinks upon the ground dying. No human help is near, and hope seems extinct.
The wretched lover throws himself upon the apparently lifeless body of his mistress in utter despair. At this moment a distant sound of music is heard. Aprocession accompanying the governor to the capital is seen crossing the desert; the sound rouses Jules. The escort approaches; some of the attendants bring refreshments, a nd Isoline is revived, but only to see her lover once more in the power of the inspector, when the negro slave invokes the protection of the governor The Marquis recognizes Isoline and Jules, who expect that a still more dreadful fate than they had just escaped awaits them; but the Marquis touched with their sufferings, joins their hands, and their sorrows are at an end. The *finale*, which Madame Malibran sings, must be heard; - to describe it adequately is impossible. It is one of the most delicious thrilling pieces that has perhaps ever been heard on the stage and is executed with surpassing skill. The opera is in all respects well got up and well-acted. With very delightful music to which Madame Malibran, Mr Phillips, Mr Templeton and Mr Segiun do full justice, with some remarkably good scenary, well written dialogue, and verses good enough for the purpose, it is, upon the whole, the most successful and the most deserving production of the season.
The applause with which it was received throughout, coming ir from such an audience as that of last night, leaves it unquestionable that the opera will become as popular as it deserves to be. The contentment of the spectators seemed to know no bounds, They insisted upon Madame Malibran, Mr Templeton, and Mr Phillips appearing after the curtain had fallen, and called also for Mr Balfe to receive the praises to which he is well entitled for his share in the production which had excited such general delight.
The opera was announced for repetition on every evening during the continuance of Madame Malibran's engagement.