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Unpublished Letters of Harriet Smithson and Berlioz

By EDWARD LOCKSPEISER

EVERYONE who is at all acquainted with the life of Berlioz knows about Harriet Smithson, the famous Irish actress who was the inspiration of the 'Symphonie Fantastique' and who, in 1833, became his wife. The biographers of Berlioz tell us that for three years (1827-30) he had been desperately in love with her without ever having met her. Then, suddenly, his passion is transferred to Camille Moke, and for Harriet, who in the rôle of Shakespeare's Juliet had fired the young Romantic's imagination to pathological limits, he has now only abuse. 'I have no desire for vengeance,' he writes to a friend. 'I pity and despise her. She is but an ordinary type of woman, endowed with an instinctive power of expressing those pangs of the human soul which she has never felt, and incapable of entertaining a grand and noble sentiment such as that with which I have endowed her.*' Two years later, however, Berlioz was presented to her, and in October of the following year they were married at the British Embassy in Paris. Their married life lasted nine years.

This is a brief summary of the information to be obtained in the biographies of Berlioz, and which is based on his memoirs and correspondence. The story from Harriet Smithson's viewpoint, however, has not been told, and probably never will be, at least in its entirety, for first-hand documents on her life are extremely scarce, and those that are available throw little light on her relationship with Berlioz. Still, it is strange that no one has investigated her life beyond the account in the 'Dictionary of National Biography,' for there are other sources, some of which will elucidate a point or two in the story as we know it.

The first thing that strikes us is that Harriet Smithson had a much smaller reputation as an actress in England than in France. Her success in the Shakespeare plays at the Odéon—the very performances which so impressed Berlioz—was, in her career, something quite exceptional. In Cumberland's 'British Theatre' (vol. VII) we read that her appearances in Paris were 'crowned with rapturous applause,' but this fact, says the writer, 'may easily be accounted for, since the French critics never saw Miss O'Neill and can have no conception of Siddons.' And in Oxberry's

'Dramatic Biography' (vol. II): 'Miss Smithson would be a first-rate actress in a moderate-sized theatre—she has all the requisites to become so; at Drury Lane she is not one. To us it appears that Miss Smithson's greatest drawback is a want of confidence in her own powers, and, perhaps, their actual misapplication.' Berlioz was often puzzled by her not wanting to return to England. The reason was simple enough: not only was her standing on this side of the Channel distressingly low, but there was apparently a strong, hostile feeling of jealousy that almost forbade her return. On this point the 'Dictionary of National Biography' is explicit: 'The announcement of her marriage in the Court Journal is ungraciously coupled with the expression of a wish that the marriage would prevent her reappearance on the English boards. . . . English opinion was almost uniformly hostile to her and even attributed her accident* to a theatrical ruse.'

These contemporary accounts are all ungrudging, however, in their tributes to her beauty, and also to her morals. Oxberry, with extreme Victorian propriety, notes: 'In private life, Miss Smithson need not blanch from investigation. Her conduct has been one continued and undeviating line of rectitude. Beautiful beyond the common run of beauty, yet as virtuous as beautiful; affable to all the members of the theatre, servile to none; she has never coquetted a manager into favour, nor marted her feelings for the sake of her interest.' And there follow some anonymous 'Stanzas on Miss Smithson,' very much of the same period.

'Can all be dark that life supplies
Whilst earth can boast of Smithson's eyes?'
Beautiful—but very impecunious. She first appeared on an English stage at seventeen, in Birmingham. The following year she appeared at Drury Lane in a play called 'The Falls of Clyde.' At twenty-four she was engaged by her brother at the English theatre at Boulogne, where an important benefit performance was arranged for her. One has the impression that henceforth a benefit performance was arranged for her in almost every town she visited. Her appearances with Kemble and Macready at the

* Shortly before her marriage, Harriet Smithson broke her leg as she stepped out of her carriage.

* W. J. Turner's translation.

Odéon were a financial success, but her subsequent appearances in Paris were all complete failures. True, she was unlucky. Her own season at the Théâtre Italien in 1832 left her in debt to the extent of 14,000 francs, and her engagement in the dumb rôle of Cæcilia, in 'L'Auberge d'Auray,' a play with music by Hérold and Carafa, at the Opéra-Comique in 1830, was never paid for. On this occasion she wrote the following beseeching letter, hitherto unpublished, to no one less than the king, Louis-Philippe himself. It is written in English and dated August 15, 1830, little less than four months before the first performance of the 'Symphonie Fantastique.*'

'Sire,

May it please your most gracious majesty to extend your benignity and goodness in behalf of a Female, a foreigner who ventures to make her humble complaint to your Majesty in the simple words of truth, with the confidence that your Majesty's heart will be the best intercessor in her favour.

'Sire, at the repeated salutations of Col. Ducis and Mons. St. Georges, the late directors of the Opéra-Comique, I was induced five months since to accept an engagement to fulfil which I have travelled one thousand miles accompanied by an aged mother and an invalid sister both of whom are, and have been from my very childhood solely dependent upon my professional exertions for support. After having succeeded in my humble efforts and thereby considerably added to the treasury of the above named Gentlemen on applying for my hard-earned salary I discover'd they had both disappear'd, having spent in the most extravagant luxury the produce of my labours, without paying to me any part of the debt which their own signatures in my possession acknowledge as just. I have been now five months in Paris, I have sought justice in vain until it pleas'd God to give me sufficient courage to implore it at the fountain head, namely Your Majesty, to whom I would not address myself had I ever step'd aside from that path of rectitude which is the best recommendation misfortune can have. May it please Your Majesty I was inform'd on application at the Minister's of the interior by his representative that he would not grant the privilege for re-opening the Opéra-Comique until the debts due to the Artists were paid by the new Director. Yet the Theatre has been re-opened, some of the actors have been paid—but I, having no Father or Brother to protect me am denied my just claim 7000.400 francs† earned at the expense of my health from over exertion, and the loss of my time for five months—one word from your most gracious Majesty to Mons Guizot the *present* Minister, who has I am told at his disposal the funds connected with the Theatres, would obtain for me the debt and

* The manuscript of this letter is in the British Museum (Add. 39965, f. 89). Other letters of Harriet Smithson are in the Conservatoires of Brussels (to Mme. Malibran) and Paris (to the Count d'Argout). Both of these are reproduced in Julien Tiersot's 'Lettres de musiciens écrites en français' (Vol. II, Paris, 1936). The catalogue of the Berlioz Exhibition held at Frankfurt in 1901 contains a letter from her dated October 31, 1832. Finally, J. Tiersot's 'Le Musicien errant' contains a letter from Harriet Smithson to her son, dated October 22, 1846.

† She means, of course, 7,400 francs.

dry the tears of an afflicted family in a strange Country who would pray to God to give your gracious Majesty that reward which is the brightest hope in this-transitory life.

'With the greatest deference I have the honour to subscribe myself

'Sire

'Your Majesty's

'Most humble & obedient Servant
'Harriet C. Smithson.

'Rue de Rivoli 44
'Hotel du Congres.*'

It was Berlioz's passion for Shakespeare that first attracted him to Harriet Smithson; and this passion remained with him till the end of his life. We have evidence of this from another unpublished letter in the British Museum, from Berlioz to the Dutch musician, Edward Silas. At least it would appear to be evidence, for only the most ardent Shakespearian could be so critical of Racine as Berlioz is in this letter. The addressee, Edward Silas (1827-1909), was a teacher at the Guildhall School of Music, the composer of numerous songs and piano pieces, a symphony, and an oratorio, 'Joash,' produced at the Norwich Festival of 1863 and dedicated to Berlioz. The letter, here translated, is doubtless written in acknowledgment of this dedication

'January 6th 1864.

'My dear Silas,

'I am still unwell. However, this morning M. Paquet came to see me and we spoke for a long time about you. He had the most complimentary things to say about your oratorio. I had already an excellent opinion of it, having read it through carefully many times. You cannot imagine the trouble I have had reading a score engraved with those frightful English notes which would put any music out of shape and make it look heavy. Also I find the characters of your Sacred Drama extremely unpleasant. I have a horror of them from the tragedy of Racine;—a work that people in France call a masterpiece. I have no love nor hate for Athalie, but I loathe that crazy Joash whom the English so amusingly call Jehoiaada, and especially that foul little Joash with his sanctified air and his silly smirk. In spite of all this, your work contains a host of very lovely things—for instance, the trio, "There is in him a charm," the March of the Levites and the Chorus of the Baalites which, with a good choir singing with life, should produce a fine effect. The lines of Joash, "Teach me O Lord!" are very graceful, and you were actually able to write some interesting music for that pompous chorus of praise, "Come let me praise the Lord with joy."

Berlioz then points out a printer's error, and concludes:

"Let me present my sincere compliments. Unfortunately I have not a score of "Les Troyens" to send you. My publisher gave me a certain number of copies, which promptly

* Above the letter is written in French: 'Miss Smithson requests that the Minister of the Interior pay her the sum owed to her by the former directors of the Opéra-comique.' And in another hand: 'The Minister has no money for this purpose.'

† Guillaume Paque (1825-76), a well-known Belgian 'cellist who established a reputation in London.

'Athalie.'

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disappeared from my house, and I cannot ask
him for any more. But if I get another copy
I will send it to you.

'Farewell,

'In friendship,

H. Berlioz.'

The second part of 'Les Troyens' had been
given the previous year, but the work in its
entirety was not to be heard until twenty-one
years after the composer's death. 'Joash' has
not been heard since the Norwich performance of
1863.



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The City Theatre was now worked in conjunction with the Cobourg, the same performers appearing at the two places nightly, being conveyed backwards and forwards in hackney coaches. Miss Smithson, the *tragédienne*, who afterwards became the wife of Hector Berlioz, was the principal attraction in 1832.



Letter from Harriet Smithson to William Kenneth (15 February 1831), by permission of the Garrick Club

I take shame to myself for not having bestowed sufficient attention in explaining to you my *views* otherwise I should have saved you the trouble of applying to any minor theatre in London as nothing could possibly be more diametrically opposed to my inclination or taste, at the same time acknowledging my respect for the undoubted Talent which supports those Establishments – neither did I for an instant contemplate travelling so many hundred miles in search of *money* to Scotland or poor Ireland!! the performers who gain any in either place are very fortunate and very limited in number.

With regard to America I am delighted at your proposition as it meets my views & I wish you could arrange my Engagements there to commence about the beginning of June next, if you think it a good season for theatricals, of which you are the best judge and you will be pleased to direct your answer to this place Poste Restante as before with your advice & accept dear Mr Kenneth the sincere acknowledgements of

yours truly – Harriet C Smithson

The offer of the Exeter managers is not sufficiently liberal for my acceptance but I agree to the proposal made to me last year by the manager of the Wisbeach Theatre (of which you can remind them) provided you could make a little tour for me in the same direction.

I believe Mr Manlys Theatres lie in that route if so please to write & remember me to him on the kindest terms. – my mother & sister desire their best regards to you and Mrs Kenneth. I would willingly go to Exeter for the third of each night & half of my *Benefit*.



except perhaps in his London namesake, over whom, however, he has great intellectual superiority.

Miss Smithson has been much applauded, as usual; but we think it a great error in judgment, to select the turgid and preposterous tragedy of Rowe (*Jane Shore*), to make her début this season before a French audience.

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English Theatre at Paris.—This speculation, under the management of Miss Smithson, seems to droop; although from the popularity of that lady among the French, much might reasonably have been expected from it. But good actresses do not always make good managers of theatres.

The French papers speak very highly of Mr. R. Jones, whom Miss Smithson engaged for a few weeks, and who is the prop of the establishment. Even the French *Figaro*, so literally sarcastic and so difficult to please, expresses its delight at the elegant and humorous acting of Mr. Jones, whom the *Journal des Debats*, the best critical journal in France, also terms “acteur élégant et de bon ton,” and “acteur remarquable.”

The truth is, we have often regretted that Mr. Jones was not permanently retained at one of our national theatres; for we say without hesitation that, in his particular line, he is without a rival,



CHAPTER XLIV.

The Censorship—Preparations for Concerts—Return to Paris—The new English Theatre—Fétis—His Corrections of Beethoven's Symphonies—I am introduced to Miss Smithson—She is ruined—Breaks her leg—I marry her.

A SPECIAL authorisation from M. Vernet having, as I said, permitted me to leave Rome six months before the expiration of my two years' exile, I went to my father's house for the first half of the time, with the intention of employing the second in organising a few concerts in Paris before going to Germany, where the rules of the *Institut* obliged me to spend another year. I employed my leisure at the Côte St. André in copying the orchestral parts of the monodrama which I had written during my wanderings in Italy, and was anxious to produce in Paris. I had copied the chorus parts in Rome, and the number called *Les Ombres* caused me a quarrel with the Papal censorship. The text of this chorus, which I have already mentioned, was written in an unknown tongue—a dead language, incomprehensible to the living. When I applied to the censor for leave to print it, the meaning of the words sung by the ghosts puzzled the philologists a good deal.¹

What was this language? and what was the meaning

¹ Since that time I have always adopted French words, reserving the dead language exclusively for the pandemonium in *The Damnation of Faust*.

of those strange words? They had in a German, who declared he could not understand a syllable; an Englishman had no better luck. All the interpreters—Danish, Swedish, Russian, Spanish, Irish, or Bohemian—were at their wits' end. Great perplexity in the censor's office! The printer could not proceed, and the publication remained indefinitely suspended. At last one of the censors, after profound reflection, discovered an argument the justice of which struck his colleagues. "Since neither English, Russian, Spanish, Danish, Swedish, Irish, nor Bohemian interpreters understand this mysterious language," said he, "it is very probable that the Roman people will not understand it either. It seems to me, therefore, that we may fairly authorise the publication, without any risk either to morality or religion." And the ghosts' chorus was accordingly printed. Imprudent censors! What if it had been Sanscrit?

On my arrival in Paris, one of the first visits I paid was to Cherubini. I found him much aged and enfeebled, and he received me with a kindness which I had never observed in him before. This contrast to his former behaviour quite touched me, and I felt disarmed. "Good heavens!" I said to myself; "I find a Cherubini so unlike the one I left, that the poor man must be going to die." But it will be seen that I very soon received such tokens of his vitality as completely to reassure me on that point.

As the apartment in the Rue Richelieu which I had occupied before going to Italy was no longer vacant, a secret impulse prompted me to take one in the house opposite, where Miss Smithson had formerly lived—Rue Neuve St. Marc, No. 1, and there I established myself. Next morning I encountered the old servant, who for a

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long time had been housemaid to the establishment, and at once inquired if she knew anything of Miss Smithson.

“But, monsieur, don't you know? She is in Paris; she was even lodging in this very house a few days ago. She only left the apartment you are occupying the day before yesterday, for one in the Rue de Rivoli. She is the directress of an English theatre, which is to begin its representations next week.”

I was struck dumb by this extraordinary concurrence of events. I saw at once that henceforth it would be impossible for me to struggle against my fate. For more than two years I had heard nothing of the fair Ophelia; whether she were in England, Scotland, or America, I knew not; and now, I had come back from Italy precisely at the same time that she returned to Paris from the north of Europe. And we had but just missed meeting each other in the same house, and I was in possession of an apartment which she had left only on the previous evening!

Now, a believer in magnetic influences, secret affinities, and mysterious promptings would certainly find in all this a powerful argument in favour of his system. Without going so far as that, I reasoned with myself after this manner: “I have come to Paris to produce my new work. If, before giving my concert, I go to the English theatre and see her again, I shall infallibly become delirious about her, lose all my liberty of mind for a second time, and be incapable of making the exertions essential to my success. Let us first of all give the concert, and after that, though Hamlet or Romeo should carry off my Ophelia or Juliet, I will see her again, if I am to die for it; and will then give myself up to the fate which seems to pursue me without further struggle.”

In consequence of this determination the Shakespearean bills were placarded about the streets in vain, as far as I was concerned. I resisted their fascination and the preparations for the concert went on. The programme consisted of my *Symphonie Fantastique*, followed by *Lelio, or the Return to Life*, a monodrama which is the complement of that work, and forms the second part of the *Episode in the Life of an Artist*. The subject of this musical drama is, as everybody knows, the history of my love for Miss Smithson, my anguish and my distressing dreams. Now, wonder at the series of incredible chances about to be opened to your view!

Two days before the concert, which I looked on as a farewell to art and life, I found myself in Schlesinger's music-shop, when an Englishman entered, and went out again almost immediately.

"Who is that man?" said I to Schlesinger, with a singular curiosity which had really no motive.

"It is Mr. Schutter, one of the editors of *Galignani*. Stay, I have an idea!" exclaimed Schlesinger, tapping his forehead. "Give me a box ticket. Schutter knows Miss Smithson. I will get him to give her the ticket, and induce her to attend your concert."

This proposal made me tremble all over; but I had not the courage to reject it, and so gave him the box. Schlesinger ran after Mr. Schutter, explained to him, no doubt, the exceptional interest which the presence of the celebrated actress would give to this musical *séance*, and Schutter promised to do his best to bring her there.

You must know that during the whole of my rehearsals and preparations, the unfortunate directress of the English Theatre had been occupied in completely ruining herself. Poor innocent thing! She had been reckoning upon the

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constancy of Parisian enthusiasm and the support of the new literary school, which only three years ago had lauded Shakespeare and Shakespeare's worthy interpreter up to the skies. But Shakespeare was no longer a novelty to this frivolous and fickle public; the literary revolution evoked by the romanticists was accomplished, and not only had the chiefs of that school ceased to desire any more apparitions of this giant of dramatic poetry, but, without admitting so much themselves, they even dreaded them on account of the numerous plagiarisms that various persons had made from his masterpieces, with which consequently it was to their interest not to allow the public to become too familiar.

Hence the general indifference to the representations at the English theatre, and the poor receipts, which fell so far short of the expenses that the result was a yawning gulf deep enough to swallow up everything the imprudent directress possessed.

It was under these circumstances that Schutter went to Miss Smithson to offer her a box for my concert, and this is what followed. She herself gave me the details long afterwards.

Schutter found her in a state of profound despondency, and at first his offer was received somewhat ungraciously. "Was it likely that she could think of music at such a moment?" Her sister, however, joined her entreaties to those of Schutter that she would accept this offer of distraction; and there was also an English actor present, who appeared desirous on his part of profiting by the box. Accordingly a carriage was sent for, Miss Smithson allowed herself to be put into it almost against her own will, and Schutter triumphantly ordered the coachman to drive to the Conservatoire. On the way the poor thing's

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eyes fell for the first time on the programme which, till then, she had not looked at. They had not mentioned my name to her, but she now learnt that I was the director of the concert. The titles of the symphony and other pieces in the programme rather astonished her, nevertheless she was still far from guessing that she was herself the heroine of this strange and painful drama.

On entering her box in front of the stage, she found herself in the midst of an immense orchestra, and an object of interest to the whole room. So astonished was she at the unprecedented murmur of conversation of which she was plainly the object, that, without being able to account to herself for it, she was filled with a kind of instinctive terror, which moved her powerfully. Habeneck was conducting. When I came in panting and sat behind him, Miss Smithson, who till then had doubted whether she were not mistaken in the name at the head of the programme, saw and recognised me.

"It is the same," she said to herself. "Poor young man! No doubt he has forgotten me. I hope—that he has——" The symphony began, and created a tremendous effect. It was a time of great public ardour in that hall from which I am now excluded. This success, and the passionate character of the work—its burning melodies, its cries of love, its *accès* of fury, and the violent vibrations of such an orchestra, heard close by, were bound to produce, and did in fact produce, an impression as profound as it was unlooked for upon her nervous organisation and poetical imagination. Then in her heart of hearts she said, "What if he loved me still!" In the *entr'acte* which followed the performance of the symphony—Schutter's ambiguous speeches to Schlesinger, who had not been able to resist the desire of coming

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into her box, and their transparent allusions to the well-known sorrows of this young composer of whom everyone was talking—all these raised a doubt in her which agitated her more and more; but when, in the monodrama, Bocage, the actor who recited the part of Lelio¹ (in other words, my own), pronounced these words:

“Ah, could I but find her, this Juliet, this Ophelia whom my heart is ever seeking! Could I but drink to the full of that mingled bliss and sadness which true love creates, and on an autumn evening, cradled with her by the north wind upon some wild moor, sleep my last in her beloved arms!”

“Good God! Juliet—Ophelia—I can doubt no more!” thought Miss Smithson. “It is of me he speaks; he loves me still!” And from that moment, as she has often told me since, it seemed to her as if the room reeled. She heard no more, and went home like one walking in her sleep, almost unconscious of all that was happening around her. This was the 9th of December, 1832. Whilst this curious drama was being unfolded in one part of the room, another was preparing on the opposite side, a drama in which the wounded vanity of a musical critic was to play the principal part, and create a violent animosity against me, of which he did not fail to give me many proofs, until a sense of his injustice towards an artist and critic who, in his turn, had become dangerous, warned him to practise a prudent reserve. This person was M. Fétis, to whom, through the medium of my monodrama, I had distinctly addressed a scathing reproach, dictated by a very natural indignation.

Before my departure for Italy, among my resources for

¹ *Lelio* was not performed dramatically, as was done later in Germany, but only as a concert-piece mixed up with monologues.

gaining a livelihood, I must not omit to include that of correcting the proofs of music. Among other works, Troupenas, the publisher, had given me the scores of Beethoven's symphonies to correct, which M. Fétis had, in the first instance, been employed to edit. I found them full of the most insolent modifications of the very conceptions of the composer, and of annotations still more outrageous. Everything in Beethoven's harmony that did not fit in with the theory of M. Fétis was altered with incredible audacity. Opposite the long holding E flat of the clarinet over the chord of the 6th $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} A \text{ flat} \\ F \\ D \text{ flat} \end{array} \right\}$ in the *Andante* of the Symphony in C minor, M. Fétis had placed this naïve remark in the margin: "This E flat is evidently an F; it is not possible that Beethoven should have made so gross a blunder." In other words, it is impossible that a man like Beethoven should not entirely agree with M. Fétis in his theories about harmony.

Consequently, M. Fétis had put an F in place of the characteristic E flat, thus destroying the evident intention of the suspension, which does not arrive at the F till it has passed through the E natural, thus producing a little ascending chromatic progression, and a *crescendo* of remarkable effect. I had already been irritated by other corrections in the same style, which it would be useless to cite, but by this I was simply exasperated. "What?" said I to myself; "they are making a French edition of the most marvellous instrumental works ever brought forth by human genius, and because the publisher has called in the aid of a professor who is intoxicated with his success, and as capable of making progress within the narrow circle of his own theories as a squirrel in his cage, therefore these monumental works are to be muti-

lated, and Beethoven is to submit to corrections like the veriest pupil in a harmony class. No, indeed, that shall never be." I went at once to Troupenas, and said to him, "Fétis is offering insults both to Beethoven and good sense. His corrections are crimes. The E flat which he wishes to remove from the *Andante* of the Symphony in C minor is magical in its effect, and celebrated in every European orchestra; the F of M. Fétis is a platitude. I warn you that I shall denounce your edition and M. Fétis's proceedings to all the musicians of the Société des Concerts and the Opéra, and your professor shall soon be treated as he deserves by those who respect genius and distrust pretentious mediocrity." I was as good as my word. The news of these insane profanations incensed the Parisian artists, and not the least infuriated among them was Habeneck, who had indeed himself corrected Beethoven by suppressing an entire repeat of the *finale*¹ in the same Symphony, and also the double-bass parts at the opening of the *scherzo*. So great was the uproar that Troupenas was obliged to cancel the corrections and restore the original text, whilst M. Fétis thought it advisable to publish a stupendous falsehood in his *Musical Review*, denying that there was the smallest foundation for the rumour which accused him of having corrected Beethoven's symphonies. This first act of insubordination on the part of one who had been throughout his studies encouraged by M. Fétis, appeared to that gentleman all the more unpardonable, because he saw in it, not only an evident leaning towards heresy, but an act of *ingratitude*.

Many people are thus constituted. From the day that

¹ [Habeneck was a prophet! This repeat is now usually suppressed. It is difficult to believe that Beethoven can have intended either it or the repeat in the *finale* of the *Sonata Apassionata*.]

they have been willing to treat you as not wholly devoid of merit, you are bound, for that reason alone, to admire them for ever—without reserve—in all that they may please to do, or to leave undone, on pain of being considered *ungrateful*. On this principle many a petty composer fancies that, because he has expressed some interest in my works, I am therefore necessarily a bad man if at some future time I speak with lukewarmness of the miserable commonplaces that he has produced under various titles—masses, or, equally comic operas.

On my departure for Italy I thus left behind me in Paris the first really active and bitter enemy I had yet made. As for the others, more or less numerous, whom I already possessed, I must say that I had done nothing to deserve their hostility. They sprang into being spontaneously, like the animalcula in stagnant water. However, I troubled myself little about either. Indeed, as for Fétis, I was even more his enemy than he was mine, and I could never think of his attempt on Beethoven without quivering with anger. I did not forget him in composing the literary part of the monodrama, and this is what I put into the mouth of Lelio in one of the monologues of that work :

“But the worst enemies of genius are the dull inhabitants of the Temple of Routine ; fanatical priests, who would sacrifice their sublimest new conceptions—supposing it were ever given them to have any—to their stupid divinity ; young theorists of eighty, living in an ocean of prejudices, and persuaded that the world ends with the shores of their own island ; old libertines of all ages, who employ music to caress and divert them, never admitting that the chaste muse could possibly have a nobler mission ; but, above all, the desecrators who dare

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to attack original works, submitting them to horrible mutilations which they call corrections and improvements, and for which task, say they, 'much taste is required.'¹ May they be accursed! They offer a ridiculous outrage to art. They are like the vulgar birds that swarm in our public gardens and perch arrogantly on the most beautiful statues; and when they have soiled the forehead of Jupiter, the arm of Hercules, or the bosom of Venus, strut about with pride and satisfaction, as though they had laid a golden egg."

At the last words of this tirade the bursts of laughter and applause were all the more vehement because most of the artists in the orchestra, and many of the audience, understood the allusion. At the words "much taste is required," Bocage even mimicked the affected voice of Fétis, who was actually present in a very conspicuous place in the gallery, and thus received my broadside full in his face. I need not describe his fury and the deadly hatred with which he honoured me from that day forth; it is easy to imagine it.

However, the acrid sweetness which I experienced in having thus avenged Beethoven was soon forgotten. I had obtained leave from Miss Smithson to be introduced to her. From that day forth I had not a moment's rest. Terrible fears were succeeded by delirious hopes. What I went through in the way of anxieties and agitations of all sorts during this period, which lasted for more than a year, may be imagined but cannot be described. Her mother and sister formally opposed our union. My parents would not hear of it. Discontent and anger on the part of both families, and all the scenes to which such opposition gives birth in like cases. Meanwhile the

¹ An expression I had heard from Fétis himself.

English theatre in Paris was compelled to close. Miss Smithson was left absolutely without resources, her whole fortune not being sufficient to pay the debts which she had contracted through this unfortunate undertaking.

Shortly afterwards the finishing touch was put to all her misfortunes by a cruel accident. As she was getting out of a carriage before her own door, on her return from preparing for a representation which she had been getting up for her own benefit, her foot slipped on the pavement, and she broke her leg. She was with difficulty prevented from falling, and was taken in, half fainting, to her apartments. In England the story was believed to be a *ruse* of the directress of the English theatre for the purpose of softening her creditors; but the fact was only too real, at any rate it aroused the keenest sympathy in Paris. Mdlle. Mars behaved splendidly. She placed her purse, her influence, all that she had in fact, at the service of the poor Ophelia who had lost everything; but who, nevertheless, on hearing one day from her sister that I had brought her a few hundred francs, shed tears in abundance, and forced me to take back the money, threatening never to see me again if I refused.

She responded but slowly to our care; both bones had been broken just above the instep; time alone could bring about a perfect cure; indeed, it was possible that she might always be lame. Whilst the poor invalid was thus chained to her bed of suffering, I succeeded in getting up the fatal representation which had been the cause of the accident. Both Liszt and Chopin took part in an *entr'acte*, and the result was a tolerable sum of money, which was at once applied to the payment of the most pressing debts. At length, in the summer of 1833, though ruined and still an invalid, I married her, in spite of the

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violent opposition of her family. As to my own, I was forced to have recourse to the *sommations respectueuses*. On the day of our marriage she had nothing in the world but debts, and the fear of never again being able to appear to advantage on the stage. My property consisted of three hundred francs, borrowed from my friend Gounet, and a fresh quarrel with my parents. . . . But she was mine, and I defied the world.

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Berlioz, *Autobiography of Hector Berlioz*

- p. 187, l. 5: *Bocage*: Bocage (Pierre-François Tousez; 1797–1863) played leading roles in many of Dumas père's plays, including *La Tour de Nesle* and *Kean*. In 1831, he had enjoyed a triumph in *Antony*, by Dumas.
- p. 195, l. 22: *Mdme Dorval*: Marie Dorval (1798–1849) was known for her passionate acting. She had recently played Adèle d'Hervey opposite Bocage in *Antony*.
- p. 197, ll. 18–19: *March to Execution*: more usually known now as *The March to the Scaffold*.

Wilson, *Our Actresses*

- p. 206, ll. 8–9: *the generous-minded Duchess of St. Albans*: see above, note to p. 9, l. 16.
- p. 213, l. 23: *a degree of avarice*: this is one of the few condemnatory things ever said about Smithson, although newspaper comments hinted that fame had gone to her head. Donaldson, who was a member of the company and who included a great many facts about salaries in his *Green-Room Gossip*, makes no mention of this particular episode. E. P. Dutton Cook, in his article in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, repeats the charge, clearly drawing on Mrs Wilson.
- p. 215, l. 7: *a musician who led the band*: this disparaging comment, coupled with the repetition of 'grasping avarice', is a clear indication of the writer's hostility to Smithson.

Dutton Cook, 'Miss Smithson'

- p. 238, l. 36: *Mlle. M—*: Camille Moke.
- p. 240, l. 8: *mon ami Gonnet*: Berlioz's friend was Thomas Gounet.
- p. 240, l. 42: *no more upon the stage*: not strictly true, but Smithson's career was effectively at an end.
- p. 241, l. 1: *Little happiness attended her marriage*: this comment overlooks the extreme, if fragile, happiness, of the very early years of the marriage.

Berlioz, *Autobiography of Hector Berlioz*

- p. 248, l. 3: *My son*: Louis was in the French Navy at this time, later transferring to the Merchant Navy. He died of yellow fever in Havana, in June 1867.
- p. 249, l. 27: *recalled*: This must have been the first occasion when an actress playing Ophelia was recalled to the stage – an action which would have been inconceivable in England at the time.
- p. 250, l. 1: *Othello*: Berlioz only saw Smithson act Ophelia and Juliet, though she often read to him from other plays.
- p. 250, l. 17: *D'Ortigue, Brizeux, Léon de Wailly*: Joseph d'Ortigue (1802–66), critic and musicologist, a close friend of Berlioz; Auguste Brizeux (1803–58), Breton poet; Léon de Wailly (1804–63), writer and dramatist, co-librettist, with Auguste Barbier, of Berlioz's opera *Benvenuto Cellini*. He also translated *Hamlet* for a never realized production at the Odéon, for which Berlioz was to write the incidental music – he composed a first version of the Funeral March for this project.
- p. 250, l. 18: *Baron Taylor*: Baron Taylor (1798–1879) was director of the Théâtre-Français at a critical period of the Romantic movement.