

## HOW EUROPE REGARDED US A HALF A CENTURY AGO.

BY L. M. GOTTSCHALK.

[EDITOR'S NOTE. - Louis M. Gottschalk, the American pianist and composer, writing at the time of the War of the Rebellion (1862), gives an idea of the struggle with which Americans who sought European recognition had to contend. ]

It is difficult to account for the extreme ignorance of many foreigners with regard to the political and intellectual standing of the United States, when one considers the extent of our commerce, which covers the entire world like a vast net. or when one views the incessant tide of immigration which thins the population of Europe to our profit. A French admiral. Viscount Duquesne, inquired of me at Havana in 1853 if it were possible to venture in the vicinity of St. Louis without apprehending being massacred by the Indians. The father of a talented French pianist who resides in this country wrote a few years since to his son to know if the furrier business in New York was exclusively carried on by Indians. Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess of Russia, on seeing Barnum's name in an American paper, requested me to tell her if he were not one of our prominent statesmen. All this may seem improbable; but I advance nothing that I am not fully prepared to prove. There is assuredly an intelligent class of people who read and know the truth. but unfortunately it is not the most numerous, nor the most inclined to render us justice.

Proudhon himself—that bold, vast mind, ever struggling for the triumph of light and progress—regards the pioneer of the West merely as an heroic outlaw, and the Americans in general as half-civilized savages. Zimmermann, the director of the pianoforte classes at the Conservatory of Paris, without hearing me, gave as a reason for refusing to hear me in 1841 that "America was a country that could produce nothing but steam engines." Nevertheless, the little Louisianian who was refused as a pupil in 1841 was called upon in 1851 to sit as a judge on the same bench with Zimmermann at the "*Concours*" (Contest) of the Conservatory.

Unquestionably there are many blank- in certain branches of our civilization. Our appreciation of the fine arts is not always as enlightened, as discriminating, as elevated as it might be. We look upon them somewhat as interlopers, parasites, occupying a place to which they have no legitimate right.

Our manners, like the machinery of our government, are too new to be smooth and polished: they occasionally grate. We are more prone to worship the golden calf in bowing before the favorites of fortune than disposed to kill the fatted calf in honor of the elect of thought and mind. Each and every one of us think himself as good and better than any other man — an invaluable creed when it engenders self-respect; but, alas! when we put it in practice, it is generally with a view of putting down to our level those whose level we could never hope to reach. Fortunately, these little weaknesses are not national traits. They are inherent in all new societies, and will completely disappear when we shall attain the full development of our civilization with the maturity of age.

## GOTTSCHALK AND IMPRESARIOS.

MUCH has been said about the impresario's share in gaining publicity for the virtuoso. Conditions change but little with time, and we find that the American pianist, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, writing over one-half a century ago, had much the same conditions to contend with as have the concert artists of to-day. The virtuoso remains the producer, while the impresario seems to remain the necessary commercial factor required to place the artist's products before the market. In his letter, written in 1862, Gottschalk says :

"Alas! are you ignorant of the fact that the artist is a piece of merchandise, which the impresario has purchased, and which he sets off to the best advantage according to his own tastes and views? You might as well upbraid certain pseudo gold mines for declaring dividends which they will never pay, as to render the artist responsible for the puffs of his managers. A poor old negress becomes, in the hands of the Jupiter of the museum, the nurse of Washington. After that can you marvel at the magniloquent titles coupled with my name ?

"The artist is like the stock which is to be quoted at the board, and thrown upon the market. The impresario and his agents, the broker and his clique, cry out that it is 'excellent, superb, unparalleled: the shares are being carried off by magic; there remain but very few reserved seats.' (The house will perhaps be full of deadheads, and the broker may be meditating a timely failure.) Nevertheless, the public rushes in, and the money follows a similar course. If the stock be really good, the founders of the enterprise become millionaires. If the artist has talent, the impresario occasionally makes his (the impresario's) fortune. In case both stock and artist prove bad, they fall below par and vanish, after having made (quite innocently) a certain number of victims. Now, in all sincerity, of the two humbugs, do you not prefer that of the impresario? At all events it is less expensive."