

GERSTER ETELKA



MADAME ETELKA GERSTER.

(The Illustrated London News, 1878.)



1855

We are enabled to present, with the accompanying portrait, a short biographical sketch of Madame Etelka Gerster's career. This lady was born on June 16, 1827, at Kaschau, in Hungary. At a very early age she evinced musical abilities of no ordinary kind. Her clear and silver-toned voice drew the attention of everybody acquainted with her family. By the advice of the Director of the Conservatoire at Vienna, who chanced to hear her sing at the head of one of the Catholic processions in her native town, she was placed under the tuition of the far-famed Madame Marchesi, with whom she studied most diligently for

three years—1873 to 1876. In the mean time rumours of her wonderful voice had got abroad, and offers were made her from several German towns. Etelka, however, declined these, as she was determined to commence her career in the Italian school, and in January, 1876, she made her debut at Venice, under the management of Signor Gardini, in the character of Gilda in Verdi's "Rigoletto," and with wonderful success. Almost at once followed the parts of Ophelia, Lucia, Amina in "La Sonnambula," and Marguerite, which last character she at first sang, as it was originally

written, in French. Her next triumph was at Berlin, where it may be justly said she turned everybody's head and created a furore such as had hitherto never been known in the German capital, and her benefit night seemed the climax of her many well-earned triumphs. The demand for places was so great that the administration of the theatre was compelled to ask the public to apply by writing, and it is said that more than 21,000 applications were refused. She then made a short sojourn at Buda-Pesth, where she appeared in the operas of "La Sonnambula" and "Hamlet."

The "Hungarian Nightingale," as she has been called, next went to St. Petersburg and Moscow, where she carried everything before her, and was, at the Emperor's express desire, appointed Kammer-singerin. For her co-operation in the Court concerts, his Majesty presented her with four thousand marks and a handsome bracelet, while the Empress gave her a magnificent chain ornamented with pearls and diamonds. After singing at Pesth and Buda-Pesth Mr. Mapleson had the good fortune to secure her, and she came to London. Here she first sang before an English audience on the 25th of last year, in "La Sonnambula." How she took the English public by storm is a matter of history, since her success as a singer and actress has become established. Her performances at Her Majesty's Theatre during the past season were indeed a continued series of triumphs. Her benefit on the last night was the most brilliant; she was called before the curtain not less than twenty times, and bouquets were literally showered upon her during the evening. Madame Etelka Gerster is about to undertake a tour in the United States, but will appear in some of the provincial towns and cities of our own country during the autumn.

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**MADAME GERSTER, OF HER MAJESTY'S OPERA.**

*La Traviata* was produced on Monday last with a new Violetta in Madame Etelka Gerster. She sang the florid music of the first act in finished and brilliant style, and was even more successful in the pathetic scene with the elder Germont. In the third act she sang the "Addio del Passato" with genuine pathos, and ended it with a remarkably beautiful high note. Her share of the duet, "Parigi o cara," was tastefully and expressively sung, but in the final passages of the act she failed to command sympathy. Here she sang so conventionally that illusion was impossible, and the audience could not avoid noticing the artificiality of her tones and gestures. She reproduced the new effect introduced by Madame Adelina Patti in the final death-scene—rose from her chair, stepped forward, whispered her last words, and finally fell, or rather threw herself back, apparently lifeless. She failed, however, to invest her acting with the vivid and terrible reality which makes Adelina Patti's death-scene so fearful and at the same time so fascinating; but it must be remembered that Madame Gerster has had comparatively little stage practice, and therefore can hardly be placed in comparison with so finished a tragic actress as Adelina Patti. The audience bestowed copious applause, and much of it was well-deserved.