

GERSTER, Etelka

Gerster (gër'shtër), Etelka. 1855- + 1920 Sep. 29

Famous operatic soprano, born at Kaschau, Hungary, studied at the Vienna Conservatory under Mme.

Marchesi, during which period Verdi prophesied a brilliant career for her. On her graduation she won all the prizes offered in her branches, and in the season of 1875 and 1876 made her debut as Gilda in Rigoletto, and as Ophelia in Hamlet, with such remarkable success that she was offered a three years' engagement by the director of the Paris Opera. Carlo Gardini, with whom she had already signed a five years' contract, accepted the engagement for her, but a long delay awaited her in Paris, whither she had gone to study the part of Ophelia in French under the composer, Ambroise Thomas, and she finally canceled the engagement. She next appeared at the Italian Opera in Madrid, but owing to the rude outcry raised at the beginning of the performance by the people in the pit and galleries she was disheartened, and could not do her best. She was, however, consoled by an invitation from the King to sing at a Court concert, where all the nobility were present, and also by a valuable gift from him. She sang next at Marseilles; then at Genoa, where she was engaged for the winter, making a striking impression in La Sonnambula and I Puritani, and receiving much encouragement from Verdi. She next appeared in Kroll's Theatre, Berlin, in Italian opera, under the management of Gardini, which brought her into greater prominence and she was invited to sing at court. In 1877 she married Gardini at Pesh, and sang the same year in Breslau. For several seasons she sang at Her Majesty's Theatre in London, and made tours through Europe and America, appearing in all the large cities. She visited the United States three times, in 1873, 1883 and 1887, accompanied by her husband, and was called the Hungarian Nightingale. Gerster retired from the stage about 1890, and in 1896 opened a school for singing in Berlin. She possessed dramatic talent as well as a beautiful voice, and was a skilful coloratura singer.