

## Florian Pascal.

SHOULD music publishers compose? Some of them do it already. They know best what kind of music is in demand, and if they can supply it there is no reason why they should not do so. It is convenient, however, to have different names for author and publisher. Pen names are adopted for various reasons, and in the case of a publisher, one of these is that he prefers to sell his music on its merits, rather than by his facilities for pushing it. Some names are obviously adopted ones. The real names are sometimes carefully concealed, but we do not think it is much of a secret to say that Florian Pascal is Mr. Joseph Williams. We went to 32 Great Portland Street, London, to meet the well-known composer-publisher, and asked him about his pen name. "What was the origin of it?" we enquired.

"A man cannot be a composer and a publisher at the same time. The public will not have it so. I have found the advantage of publishing under a different name. For a humorous purpose which I had in view when I assumed a name I wanted one which I thought would sound outrageously soft and silly. Pascal seemed to be suitable, and when I prefixed Florian to it I thought I had what I required. I was under parental influence at the time. My father said, 'I don't want you to be an artist; you are my only son, and I want you to be a business man.' I wished to do my duty and gave way. All my music was done outside of business hours."

"Have you written what you thought was needed, or what you preferred to write?"

"The two principles cannot always run side by side; one must be neglected. Here is the last thing that I have done, an orchestral work on a story by Turgenev; it is not much needed in business, and it is hard to say whether choice or necessity is the guiding principle. I will tell you how my day's life is made up and you will understand better. I read and answer letters up to noon. My lunch is strictly vegetarian. There again necessity rules rather than choice. In the afternoon up to four o'clock I am writing, and then have two hours' rest or open air recreation. I am composing again up to 7.30, and after my evening meal, I go early to bed to read. All my composition is done at home in a room where no instrument is at hand."

One advantage of an assumed name is that it can be dropped so readily. Another is that one's friends offer the most candid opinions upon the music of a new composer. We wish to put the friends of Mr. Joseph Williams upon their guard or their mettle, as they please, when they see anything by Lionel Elliott, J. B. Waldeck, Arthur Grenville, Emllyn St. Maur, Pierre Duchènes, Mark Calmond, Charles Tourville, or Conrad Huber. You will find Mr. Joseph Williams personally interested in your views about these composers. You will never,

however, get through the list. Under the head of Florian Pascal alone, we find there are nearly 300 songs and duets published, 12 comic operas and operettas, and about 20 school cantatas and operettas, besides a large number of pianoforte and violin solos. Florian Pascal has had much to do with light opera, and naturally we turn to that first.

"Is the outlook for light opera satisfactory?" we enquire.

"Taste is certainly improving. People want music of a higher order than formerly. The intended resuscitation of Mozart, the noblest of comic-opera writers that ever God created, is a good sign. The operas that are now appearing are vastly better than some that used to be in vogue."

"On the other hand, are not some of these works very loosely constructed; merely songs strung together?"

"Yes, but the tendency is towards improvement in the music. Many things have to be considered in a theatre. A composer turns up with a good song or two. A lady who is a good dancer and no singer is connected with the theatre, and must have her song in the piece. Or a good tune is at hand, and new words must be written for it. The production is built up in patchwork. There is no symmetrical form in the piece, and rarely a finale which contains good writing or dramatic propriety. It may be a little quadrille with a rum-tum accompaniment in either 6-8 time or 2-4 time. Faults may easily be found in most things by those who seek for them."

"Now look at oratorio. It does not hold the position that it used to do."

"The form seems to be obsolete. Costa's *Eli* and *Naaman* were formerly popular, and even since our firm

published them, but they do not seem even to be known now. Such works are too long and heavy for us; we are living too fast. Modern works by Elgar and others have more life and dramatic instinct, both in libretto and music, and play closer."

"What is going to take the place of the oratorio?"

"I suppose the short cantata. People do not take seriously to work as they used to do. I have been told that the reason why *Elijah* and *Messiah* are performed so much is because our choral singers do not give sufficient time for the study of new compositions."

"Was not your own musical education well looked after?"

"Fairly. From my earliest years I can remember playing four-handed works (Haydn, &c.), with my father, who was, by the way, an excellent sight-reader and good all-round pianist; then again, I took the 'cello in Corelli, Haydn, and Hummel's trios with intense delight. As a boy I went to Zurich for three years. My father and the Farmers of Nottingham were old friends. Mr. John Farmer was then at Zurich



[Photo by Russell & Sons.]