*Anglais,* by Georges Bourdon (1902); *Die Theater.* Wien, 2 vols. quarto, by Josef Bayer (1894). (E. O. S.)

“Spectacle”

The appeal to the eye has been the essential feature of dramatic production in its many stages of development from the earliest times of the miracle plays and “ moralities,” mummers and morris-dancers, down through the centuries, in the form of masques and ballets, to the luxuriance of scenic and costume display that is lavished on the latest forms of theatrical entertainment. Considering the enormous advance that has been made in mechanical appliances, more especially in the increased powers of illumination supplied by gas and electricity@@1 as compared with oil and candles, we must acknowledge that the artistic achievement of spectacle has hardly kept pace with the times. If we may credit the veracity of contemporary chroniclers, the most elaborate effects and illusions were successfully at­tempted in the various courtly entertainments that are recorded under the Tudor and Stuart dynasties, and found perhaps their most sumptuous expression in the courts of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. It would be a difficult task for the most experienced of modern stage managers to rival the splendours of apparel and the ingenious devices that were exploited in increasing magnificence during successive periods, as described by Froissart, Holinshed, Cavendish, Stow, Pepys and other writers. The sums expended on these entertainments were prodigious, and a perusal of the extraordinarily detailed descriptions of such lavishly appointed masques as those designed by Inigo Jones in particular renders credible the statement that a certain masque presented before Charles I. at the Inns of Court in 1633 cost £21,000. Spectacle in its earlier phases appears to have existed chiefly in connexion with court and civic ceremonial: as evidenced in the wonderful pageantry of the Field of the Cloth of Gold; in such princely entertainment as the Revels at Kenilworth, when the Earl of Leicester welcomed Queen Elizabeth in a series of splendid fetes; and in the more accom­plished imaginings of Ben Jonson, decorated by Inigo Jones, such as the Inns of Court masque, already cited. The scenic effects and illusions which had evidently been brought to great perfection in these masques were not devoted to the service of the drama in the public theatres until Davenant introduced them at the period of the Restoration, although simple scenery, probably mere background “ cloths,” had been seen on the stage as early as 1605. The built-up stage pictures, familiar to us as “ set-scenes,” are said to owe their origin to Philip James de Loutherbourg, R.A., and to have been first used in 1777; but it is difficult to believe that some such elaborate construc­tions had not already enjoyed a term of popularity in view of the contemporary paintings and engravings of the epoch of Louis XIV., who was himself not averse from appearing (in 1653) as “ Le Roi Soleil ” in the midst of an *entourage* com­bining much that was artistic and fanciful with the most pompous and most absurd incongruities of character and costume. A greater measure of elegance and refinement distinguished the spectacles of the reign of Louis XV., inspired by the delicate art of Watteau, Boucher and Lancret, and preserved for our delectation in their delightful canvases. Under the French Revolution the spectacular ballet lost much of its prestige; and its decorative features were for a time principally associated with the fêtes inaugurated by the Republic, and presented in the classic costume, which the severity of the new régime adopted as a reaction, or as a protest against the frivolities and furbelows of the obliterated monarchy. The Festival of the Supreme Being, decreed by the National Convention, designed by David and conducted by Robespierre, was perhaps the most impressive spectacle of the close of the 18th century.

@@@1 The Savoy Theatre, London, was first entirely lighted by electricity in 1882. The various methods of lighting used have been an important item in the production of striking effects. The old system of a row of “ foot-lights, ” with their unpleasant upward shadow, is now almost obsolete. Dip candles were used till 1720,when moulded candles were introduced into French theatres. The next improvement was the lamp of Μ. Argand, with its circular wick. In 1822 gas was first used in a Parisian theatre, next came the oxyhydrogen lime-light, used for special effects, and then electric lighting.

The old way of producing lightning was to blow lycopodium or powdered resin with bellows through a flame, and this is still used in realistic effects of conflagrations. More effective lightning is now made by flashing the electric light behind a scene painted with clouds, in which a zigzag aperture has been cut out and filled with a transparent substance. Thunder is made by shaking large sheets of iron. Wind is imitated by a machine with a cogged cylinder, which revolves against coarse cloth tightly stretched. The sound of rain is produced by shaking parched peas in a metal cylinder.

The 19th century saw spectacle devoted almost exclusively to theatrical entertainment. In London, melodrama, both of the romantic and domestic description, claimed its illustrative aid. At Drury Lane Theatre (which, with Covent Garden, the Adelphi and Astley’s, was first illuminated by gas in 1817-18) the *Cataract of the Ganges,* with its cascade of real water and its prancing steeds, made a great sensation in 1823, and the same stage in 1842, under Macready’s management, displayed the “ moving wave ” effect in the Sicilian views, painted by William Clarkson Stanfield for √lctr *and Galatea.* The Lyceum Theatre from 1847 to 1855 introduced a long series of elegant extrava­ganzas from the pen of J. R. Planché, elaborately illustrated by the scenery of William Beverly. The *Golden Branch,* the *King of the Peacocks* and the *Island of Jewels* (Christmas 1849) were the most remarkable of these productions, and were noteworthy as originating the fantastic fairy pictures that became known as “ transformation scenes,” and were copied and popularized in all directions. Beverly’s skilful brush was at a later date employed at Drury Lane to enhance the attractions of a succession of spectacular versions of Sir Walter Scott’s novels, *Amy Robsart* (1870), *Rob Roy* (with a beautiful panorama of the Trossachs scenery), *Rebecca, England in the Days of Charles II..* and others. Later still, under the régime of Sir Augustus Harris and his successors, spectacle at Drury Lane assumed even more costly proportions, and modern melodramas, representing well-known localities with extra­ordinary fidelity and all kinds of disasters from earthquakes to avalanches, have been alternated with sumptuously mounted pantomimes (so-called), in which the nominal fairy-tales were almost smothered by the paraphernalia of scenery and costume. It is remarkable that, for a “ run ” of ten weeks only, such a sum as £16,000 each can have been profitably expended on more than one of these productions.

London playgoers will recall the processional glories of *A Dream of Fair Women,* designed by Alfred Thompson; *The Land of Fairy Tales,* by Percy Anderson; and *The Silver Wedding* (Puss in Boots), *The Paradise of the Birds* (Babes in the Wood), and *The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus* (Jack and the Beanstalk), for which Mr Wilhelm was responsible. *The Armada,* a historical drama (1888), also deserves to be remembered for the completeness and excellence of its spectacular features. In addition to the names of Clarkson Stanfield and Beverly, already cited as masters of scenic art, it must not be forgotten that the skill of David Roberts was also devoted to the embellishment of the stage; and the names of Grieve, the Telbins (father and son), Hawes Craven, and J. Harker have in successive years carried on the best traditions of the art. Alfred Thompson was one of the first to revise the conventionalities of fanciful stage costume, and to impart a French lightness of touch and delicacy of colour. A ballet, *Yolande,* which he dressed for the Alhambra in the ’sixties, was the first Japanese spectacle to grace the English stage; and he was also mainly responsible for the attractions of *Babil and Bijou,* which cost upwards of £11,000 at Covent Garden Theatre in 1872, and was at the time considered to have surpassed all former spectacular accomplish­ments. It achieved, however, merely a *succès d’estime,* and has bequeathed to a later generation only the recollections of its “ Spring ” choir of boys, and of the brilliant danseuse, Henriette d'Or, who revived memories of the great days of the ballet, when Taglioni, Cerito, Elssler, Duvernay and other “ Déesses de la Danse,” appeared under Lumley’s management at the old Her Majesty’s Theatre in the Haymarket. Since the memorable tenancy of Sadler’s Wells Theatre by Phelps (1844-62), Shake­speare and spectacle have been honourably associated. Charles Kean’s revivals at the Princess’s Theatre (1850-59) deservedly attracted considerable attention for the splendour and accuracy of their archaeology. Byron’s *Sardanapatus* was also a triumph for the same management in 1853; and the same theatre three