

IRISH HARP REVIVAL FESTIVAL.

The first of a series of three concerts, initiated by Herr Adolf Sjoden, the accomplished harpist, and announced under the above appropriate title, was given last evening in the Round Room of the Rotundo. There was a large attendance, which was of a rather representative character, being fairly divided through the several sections of the room. The idea of an entertainment consisting mainly of harp music, and in which the ancient Irish harp, with wire strings, was to be introduced, seemed to be rather strongly taken up by the public, and the compliment thus paid to our national instrument was enhanced by the fact that the weather was decidedly unæsthetic, and of a character rather to prevent people from coming out. The piercing wind which prevailed during the evening was enough to make one think that a day belonging to January had got into the calendar for May. The programme was of a two-fold character—classical and national. The pieces in the first part were chiefly of the former, and those in the second of the latter character. Unquestionably the modern harp in the hands of an artist like Herr Sjoden is capable of a great deal and has a peculiar charm. Still it labours under disadvantages as regards capacities of phrasing and sustained tone, and its chief feature—the arpeggio grace—is in most harp music overdone. On the whole we cannot conceal from ourselves that it is an instrument rather of the past than of the future. The opening piece was a trio for harp, violin, and violoncello, by Oberthur, the harp part being taken by Herr Sjoden, while the violinist was Herr Lauer, and the violoncellist Herr Elsner. It went very well. Mr. Albert M'Gucken sang "Rocked in the cradle of the deep" very creditably. Miss Bessie Craig, who on coming forward was warmly applauded, sang "Batti, Batti," and repeated it in compliance with an encore. Sir Robert Stewart played piano accompaniments for the two vocalists just named with his usual taste. Herr Sjoden next played a group of harp pieces—namely, "La Danse les Silphes," an arrangement of a hymn by Liszt, and a Turkish march by Parish-Alvares. His performance of them, it is hardly necessary to say, was extremely able. Miss Johanna Ward gave an excellent rendering of Sullivan's song "Quiquevere," doing credit to the Royal Irish Academy of Music, of which she was a pupil. In compliance with a warm encore she sang "Twas but a dream." Signor Ceracciolo gave her an elegant pianoforte accompaniment. Gounod's "Meditation" on Bach's prelude was the next item, a harp part being played by Herr Sjoden, a violin part by Mr. Levey, and a harmonium part by Sir Robert Stewart. It went very nicely. Gounod's melody was given by the violin, while the notes of Bach's prelude fell to the lot of the harp, and were played by Herr Sjoden with a most thorough appreciation of them. In the interval between the first and second parts there was a performance by Mr. O'Flaherty, an Irish piper, and by an Irish harpist, who played on a wire-strung instrument. The ancient Irish air, "The Tailor's Son," was cleverly sung by Miss Bessie Craig, with Irish words, and her pronunciation of them was extremely good. The second part contained no less than ten items. Amongst the best of them were the Irish dance tunes played on the violin and harp (Mr. Levey and Herr Sjoden), which were very effective. Professor Glover's fantasia on Irish airs, played by Mrs. Mackey on the harp, and by him on the piano, and which was warmly encored, and Herr Sjoden's own illustrations on the harp of Irish and Welsh music, which were played with feeling and power. We did not particularly care for the selection played on the three wire-strung harps. The concert, which was not over until after eleven o'clock, was listened to with evident pleasure by the audience, as the frequent applause proved.

