

## M. SERGEI RACHMANINOFF.

Apart from a group of his own compositions and a brief *étude de concert* of M. Dohnanyi, the programme of M. Rachmaninoff's recital at the Queen's Hall on Saturday afternoon consisted entirely of the music of the great classics—Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, and Mendelssohn. There was no Liszt to set us wondering at the marvellous penetration and no less surprising limitations of this genius, there was no example of Debussy's "new style," nor any of minor modern composers whose names figure prominently at most pianoforte recitals—Albeniz and his class. Whether the choice was in every way deliberate and denotes a protest against modernity, or whether it meant simply temporary neglect it is impossible to say. But it certainly fits in well with the general impression conveyed by M. Rachmaninoff's performances. Technically his playing is above praise. There was at times a delicacy and finish about his playing of Chopin that M. Pachmann himself could not have surpassed, and his Mozart, his Mendelssohn were equally polished in every detail. But through it all one seemed to feel a mind somewhat too well versed in the ways of the old, yet too sceptical, or, maybe, too sensitive to set forth boldly to the conquest of the new. The man-of-the-world in M. Rachmaninoff must have smiled in reading Tausig's platitudes about the Chopin Barcarolle ("a love scene in a discreet gondola . . . at the modulation in C sharp the lovers embrace and kiss"), yet he played it as if he had been giving evidence in a divorce court. The dislike of a hackneyed notion or tradition which would provoke in M. Busoni the most uncompromising rebellion only urges M. Rachmaninoff to retire still further within himself, to seek greater polish and greater finish until polish and finish become the most striking features of the performance. The group of his own compositions included, beside two preludes, two transcriptions. Of the latter one was an arrangement of a song; the other was a clever, remorseless arrangement of M. Kreisler's "Liebeslied." The tenderly sentimental melody of M. Kreisler is teased and twisted as a clever advocate may tease and twist in a breach of promise case the letter of a love-sick boy. But for all its skill and hard brilliancy it is not nearly as convincing as the simplicity of the original. The house was full—which is no more than this great Russian pianist deserves.