

STARS

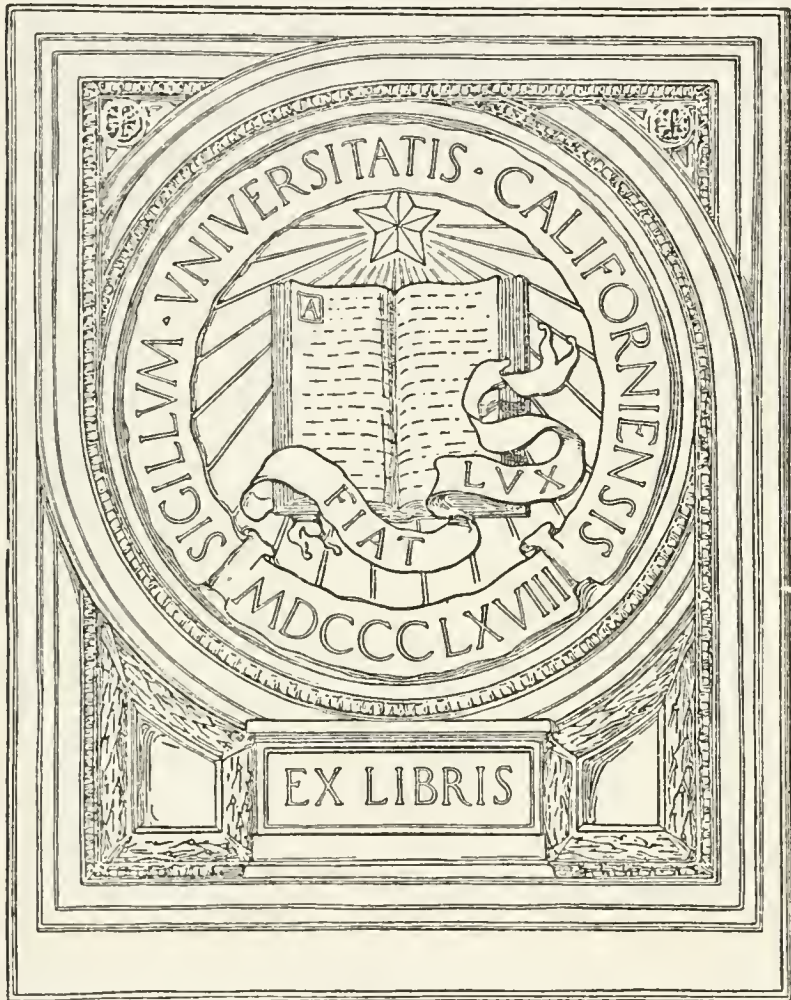
OF THE

OPERA



BY
MABEL WAGNALLS

GIFT OF
A. F. Morrison



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STARS OF THE OPERA
By
MABEL WAGNALLS



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"STARS OF THE OPERA."

STARS OF THE OPERA

A description of twelve operas and a series of personal sketches, with interviews, of Marcella Sembrich, Emma Eames, Emma Calve, Lillian Nordica, Lilli Lehmann and Nellie Melba

BY
MABEL WAGNALLS
AUTHOR OF "MISERERE"

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

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H. M. WAGNALLS

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To those who love music but have
no opportunity to familiarize them-
selves with grand opera this
book is respectfully
dedicated

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An Interview
with

Marcella Sembrich



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MARCELLA SEMBRICH.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH MARCELLA SEMBRICH.

EARLY in the season of 1898-99 there was a performance of "Traviata" in the Metropolitan Opera-House which might be described as "an occasion of superlatives"—including the largest auditorium, the biggest audience, the finest singers.

Grand opera in itself is a culmination and combination of the greatest efforts of the greatest minds. There is, in the first place, the plot of the libretto, which in the case of "Traviata" was the masterpiece of Dumas, France's greatest dramatist—a man who labored all his life as tho achievement required only work, and who yet possessed

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such mental power as no amount of work could achieve.

After Dumas comes the librettist who transposed the story into suitable Italian verse to be set to music. And then we have the work, the inmost thoughts, of Giuseppe Verdi, Italy's greatest living composer. There was a day when each of these sparkling melodies that now delight the whole world was born in the soul of Verdi, and heard by him alone. But he patiently put upon paper every note that his years of study and his gifted soul impelled.

The work of the composer, the dramatist, and the librettist belongs to the past, however, and that audience of five thousand people did not bestow much thought on them. Nor did they think very often of the orchestra, composed of fifty thorough musicians, who really worked more during the performance than any of the other participants.

It may be mentioned here that in all grand operas the orchestra plays continually; it is the wall upon which the picture is

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hung. There may be pauses in the singing, but the conductor's baton never rests.

People seldom appreciate the vast knowledge of music and the remarkable ability in sight-reading which these orchestra players possess. Not one of them but has worked at his art from childhood; most of them play several different instruments; and they all hold as a creed that a false note is a sin, and a variation in rhythm is a fall from grace. The director is their temporary deity who commands the orchestra beneath and the stage above—a little universe of music. He holds all together and dictates the tempo, the expression, and the phrasing. His commands are for the time being immutable as the laws of nature, for any serious disobedience would cause the whole structure to fall to pieces.

The five thousand listeners gave some applause to the director after the playing of the introduction, and they gave a little more to the chorus—those earnest workers who serve grand opera as the stokers do a ship.

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Then the tenor received a good deal of applause—his reward for training his voice, studying music, memorizing operas, overcoming nervousness, and singing in public twenty years.

But the great applause, the “bravos,” the cheering, the excitement, were reserved for the star, the soprano—Marcella Sembrich! It is always impressive to witness such a success. It is inspiring to know that one woman can so stir the hearts of the people.

Madame Sembrich's voice is as perfect a voice as the world has ever heard. Yet her greatness consists more in her art than in her voice. She has not been satisfied merely to use her gift as nature gave it, but she has acquired a mastery of tone-coloring so that every tone has a meaning of its own, and seems to express a distinct emotion. In the last act of “Traviata” the quality of her tones, always beautiful, but ever varying as her art dictates, conveys to the listener surely and truly the approach of death and the hope of heaven. This is great art

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indeed. No wonder the audience fairly gasps as the last sweet tone leaves the lips of the pale Violetta and soars away into infinite space.

It was the day after "Traviata," when, in response to a knock at Madame Sembrich's door in the Hotel Savoy, a mellow voice said, "Come in."

On my obeying this summons, the singer was "discovered"—as the librettos have it—standing near her grand piano, alone, and as unostentatious as your own sister.

There was no effect of the impressive prima donna, all flowers and frills and *frou-frou*. She was quite alone, just as lesser mortals sometimes are; and she furthermore spared her visitor from any sense of interrupted work, or great haste, or the magnitude of the occasion.

It was just a courteous, quiet lady who seated herself beside the visitor and talked earnestly about music and work.

When asked how early she began to study the art seriously, she replied: "When I

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was six years old. My father taught me the piano until I was ten. He was a very gifted man. Then I also studied for a while with Dr. Stengel, who is now my husband, and with Epstein in Vienna."

On learning that her visitor was acquainted with Vienna, Madame Sembrich's face lighted up (she has a radiant smile): "Ach! then you speak German?" And from this point she talked altogether in German, which is more akin to her native Polish.

She is fluent, however, in all the continental languages. "We have to know them all, for we need them constantly," she explained. In reply to other questions, the singer told enthusiastically of her early work.

"I can not say I was ever discouraged, for I so enjoyed my art that it was always of absorbing interest; but my whole life has been made up of hard work, always work. I also studied the violin and composition, and I used to rise early and go to bed late, for I worked six and seven hours a day."

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Madame Sembrich is one of the most thorough, all-round musicians on the lyric stage to-day, for she is not only a singer, but has played successfully in public on piano and violin. Her rare gift of voice was not discovered until she was seventeen. Then her great knowledge of music enabled her to quickly develop the voice, and it was not long before she appeared in opera and made her first great success in London. When asked if she was ever nervous, the answer came promptly:

“Oh, yes, very nervous! *Now* I am always nervous. But in the early days it was not so bad. When you are young and have a beautiful voice, you think it is all that is necessary, and are not nervous, because you do not realize the depth and extent of art. But as you grow older you appreciate the possibilities of art—you know what it implies, and how perfect you wish to make it; and then you are nervous. It is more nervous work, too, for such artists as Madame Patti, Madame Melba, or myself, who travel

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about and sing first in one place and then in another, because each time we have to win our audience and make a new conquest. In Europe, at the great opera-houses such as are in Vienna or Berlin, it is different, for there the singers are engaged permanently. The public knows how well they can do, and if sometimes they are not at their best, they know the public will excuse them. I find I am more nervous, too, as my reputation increases, for more is expected of me."

Referring again to her studies, Madame Sembrich counted over thirty-seven full operas that she has learned. It is well to consider for a moment what this implies. Aside from the native gifts of voice, musical talent, and dramatic temperament, there must be years of practise in singing and acting; then the words of each opera must be memorized, sometimes in three languages. After studying, originating, and mastering the action, the music must be learned, and every word wedded to a certain



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Sembrich as Rosina in "The Barber of Seville."

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

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tone, and every tone to a certain beat of time. Herein the actress has but a slight task compared to the opera singer, for in the drama it matters not if a word comes a moment sooner or later; but in grand opera a second's deviation might cause a discord.

Madame Sembrich delights in the opera "Traviata" because of its intense action.

"But I like, too, the lighter operas. The merriment of 'Rosina' amuses me as I act it."

One more question was asked as her visitor arose to go.

"Is it true, Madame Sembrich, that you walk two hours every day?"

"Yes," she answered good-humoredly. "I had just returned to-day when you came. I started at eleven and got home at one."

Regular and rigorous in her daily life even yet! Upon meeting Madame Sembrich, one receives an impression of graciousness and greatness not to be forgotten.

“Semiramide”

“SEMIRAMIDE.”

ALL great prima donnas have in their repertoire the majority of famous operas, but through fitness of physique or temperament or quality of voice they become associated with certain rôles more than others. Sometimes it is merely a caprice of the public that holds them to a particular line of operas. At present Madame Sembrich is regarded as the great exponent of the old Italian school. Among her thirty-seven operas “Semiramide” is one in which New Yorkers have not yet heard her; but it is in some respects the most typical of its kind.

“Semiramide” belongs to the old style of Italian operas. It is light in substance, but glistening with scales and cadenzas that are scattered over it like spangles upon tulle. Rossini’s music is always beautiful but conveys little meaning, and it impresses the

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modern musical taste like a meal of bonbons. Although Semiramis lived hundreds of years before the Christian era, we listen in vain for any ancient atmosphere to the composition or for the "*melodrame tragico*," as designated by the libretto. This music would be as suitable to the "Barber of Seville" as to the "Queen of Babylon." In other words, the old operas were a series of separate songs adapted to a connected story, whereas we now expect the score to so thoroughly embody the text that the two are inseparable.

"Semiramide," however, bears several claims to distinction that prevent the possibility of extinction. It is the opera *par excellence* of duets. They are the delightful, old-fashioned kind, wherein the two voices are side by side, only separated by a perfect third; and when the conductor has whipped up a good tempo away they go like a span of horses, over hills and valleys of scales and arpeggios, bridged-over intervals, and clumps of trills. Differing from all other

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operas, this one gives as much prominence to the contralto as to the soprano. They must have equal facility of execution; and, indeed, none of the rôles are exempt from this demand. Tenor, contralto, baritone, and bass vie with each other in performing dangerous feats of vocal agility. There are passages where they all, one after another, run up a scale and land on a certain note, like athletes jumping from a spring-board. We smile at such display, and are inclined to regard the opera as one big solfeggio; but let it not be forgotten that this is the old Italian style, and interesting from this point of view.

Another claim to lasting fame is its overture—one of the prettiest, happiest, showiest orchestral compositions extant. It is a stock program piece, being simple enough for any orchestra to perform and yet rousing enough to always elicit applause.

The opening scene represents a temple wherein Oroë, the chief of the Magi, is discovered kneeling before an altar. He has

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received a celestial revelation of some dark crime that is awaiting vengeance, and his first short recitative refers to this secret. Arising from his knees, Oroë orders the gates of the temple to be opened. The Assyrian multitude enter bearing offerings and garlands, while they sing a light melody that would do for a modern topical song. Idrenus, an Indian prince, also comes in with his attendants, bearing incense and offerings. He is the tenor, but unimportant, because this opera has no love-scene, and consequently little use for a tenor. Assur, an Assyrian potentate, is another devout supplicant at the altar of Belus. And we soon learn the occasion of these earnest efforts to propitiate the gods: Semiramis, the queen, will to-day select a successor to the late King Ninus.

A very good example of what we consider the incongruities of the old school is found in these first two arias of Idrenus and Assur. The tenor comes in alone and delivers a flourishing solo, ornate as his costume.

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Then Assur, the basso, makes his entrance and sings in a lower key the same remarkable pyrotechnics. This antagonizes the fundamental rule of modern opera, which requires each character to maintain a musical individuality. There is some further conversation in the form of a terzetto between Idrenus, Assur, and Oroe, and the fact is disclosed that Assur expects the queen's choice to fall on him.

Another light and bright chorus announces the entrance of Semiramis. She is represented as young and beautiful, altho she is a widow and the mother of a son who mysteriously disappeared years before the story opens. But radiant as is her appearance, Semiramis opens the ceremonies with uneasiness, for she has determined to make Arsaces the future king. He is a young army officer, and there is no just reason why he should be favored; but the queen has become enamored of him. Arsaces, however, is unconscious of her infatuation. She has summoned him to this

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ceremony; but he has not yet arrived, and for this reason she hesitates. In a quartet that is worked up like a rondo upon a very pleasing theme, the others urge her to begin. She reluctantly steps forward, but at her first mention of the dead king there is a flash of lightning and the sacred fires are extinguished. The people regard this as a dire omen. Oroë glances knowingly at both Semiramis and Assur as he again refers to a crime that has aroused the wrath of the gods. He orders the ceremonies to be postponed pending the arrival of a sacred oracle from Memphis. The queen and her attendants withdraw, and the temple is vacated.

The orchestra plays through several pages of sixty-fourth and thirty-second notes, after which the interesting and important Arsaces enters with two slaves who bring a casket. Arsaces is always a very youthful and impossible-looking general, in spite of his glittering cuirass, for be it known this is the contralto rôle, and, musically speaking, a very great one.

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We learn from his first recitative that this casket contains precious documents and relics of the late king which have been guarded and concealed by Phradates, the supposed father of Arsaces. Phradates has recently died, and in compliance with his request Arsaces brings these treasures to the high priest. We also learn that the young general is puzzled over the queen's summons; and last, but not least, we learn that he is in love with the beautiful Princess Azema. The mere mention of her name starts him to singing a rapturous song, bubbling over with brilliant roulades. After presenting his casket to the high priest, Arsaces encounters Assur, who soon makes it known that he also loves the fair Azema. This so maddens Arsaces that he resolves to at once ask Semiramis for the hand of the princess. These rivals cordially hate each other, but Rossini inspires them to sing the same melodies, and their voices mingle in beautiful harmony of tone and rhythm.

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The second rising of the curtain reveals Semiramis reclining under a bower in her palace garden. She is surrounded by maidens and slaves who sing languid, luxuriant melodies for her diversion. Rossini's style is well suited to this scene. As the arias are presented one by one, it is like unfolding the contents of an Assyrian treasure-chest full of shimmering silks and glittering jewels. Among this collection there is one gem called the "Bel Raggio," a name as famous in its way as the Koh-i-noor. This musical brilliant belongs to Queen Semiramis, who displays its scintillating beauty with evident pride. The "Bel Raggio" is one of the four great corner-stones of the bravura singer's repertoire, of which the remaining three are: "Una voce poco fa," also by Rossini; the Dinorah "Shadow Song," and Eckert's "Echo Song." When listening to "Bel Raggio" one should never try to follow the words or even wonder what she is saying. Just listen to the music. Those radiant, ravishing, intoxicating war-

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bles and runs tell one plainly enough that she is happy, and this is sufficient.

Semiramis is awaiting Arsaces and the oracle from Memphis. The latter is received first, and bears the cheering words, "Thy peace shall be restored with the return of Arsaces." True to the nature of oracles, this one has a double meaning, and Semiramis construes it in the wrong way. When Arsaces enters there follows a bevy of famous duets. But the conversation is quite at cross purposes. Arsaces tells of a long-cherished love, which Semiramis thinks is for herself. She promises that all his hopes shall be realized, whereupon the two wander off side by side through a forest of cadences, roulades, and scales. They sometimes become separated, when the soprano pauses to run up the scale-ladder and pluck a brilliant high note, or the contralto lingers to pick up tones that are rich and full as fallen fruit; but they finally emerge together, trilling high and low like birds from a thicket.

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The third scene represents a magnificent hall in the palace. There are, of course, a throne and other "properties," but most conspicuous is the tomb or mausoleum of Ninus. For a second time the Assyrian noblemen and people gather to hear the appointment of a new king. As they sing a sweeping march, Semiramis enters more gorgeously arrayed than ever. She takes her place at the throne, and with an imperious gesture commands allegiance to the king of her choice. These regal phrases contain such a prodigality of dazzling colorature that we are reminded of the far-famed hanging gardens devised by this same extravagant queen. In the matter of lavish display the music of "Semiramide" is strikingly appropriate. Assur, Arsaces, Idrenus, and Oroë vow obedience, and their hymn-like ensemble is one of the grandest themes Rossini ever composed. Like the prayer from Weber's "Freischütz," this quintet has long held a place in church choir-books, and a more religious and inspiring melody

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could hardly be imagined. The soprano scatters delicious appoggiaturas and cadenzas above the steady and noble ensemble like flowers upon an altar. The "Semiramide Quintet" is another one of its claims to lasting fame.

In a lighter vein is the queen's next proclamation, to the effect that the future king shall also be her husband. This arouses general surprise. But when she finally designates Arsaces, the amazement on all sides is loud. Assur demands justice from the queen, insinuating some secret compact that she dare not disregard. He is haughtily silenced by Semiramis, who at the same time bestows upon him the hand of fair Azema.

Poor Arsaces is beside himself. He tries to explain, but the queen will listen to no remonstrances. An altar is brought forward, and the priests are about to pronounce the marriage bans when a hollow, subterranean sound and distant thunder cause consternation. The people are horrified to

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behold the tomb of Ninus slowly open and its occupant step forth. Turning to Arsaces, the ghost bids him avenge a terrible crime: "With courage into my tomb descend; there to my ashes a victim thou shalt offer. But first obey the counsel of the priest." The ghost disappears, and the act closes with a strong chorus of dismay. Semiramis leads the singing, and for once her music has only prim quarter-notes and half-notes: her colorature is all frightened away.

The next act contains an interview between Assur and Semiramis, wherein we learn about the crime so often referred to. The late King Ninus was poisoned by Assur, who had been promised the throne. But the guilty queen has since preferred Arsaces, and this explains Assur's great anger. He threatens to kill the young favorite; but Semiramis has resumed her ostentatious manner and music, and will not heed his words.

There follows a scene in the queen's apartment. She is still striving to win

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Arsaces, but her overtures repel him more than ever. He has just returned from an interview with the priest. The contents of the casket have been revealed to him, and he shows Semiramis a paper proving the startling fact that Arsaces himself is her long-lost son. He has also learned that Ninus, his father, was murdered. Remorse promptly overtakes the queen. She weeps and wails in chromatics and scales that quite touch Arsaces. They sing a glorious duet that is like a benediction, so noble and pure are its harmonies. It is called "Giorno d'orrore" (day of horror). Arsaces bids his mother adieu. He is going to the tomb to avenge his father's death, tho he knows not how nor whom he shall strike. It rests with the gods to guide him; he only obeys the command. There follows another smoothly flowing duet resembling all the others in its simple structure, unmistakable rhythm, and prominent melody.

The finale of "Semiramide" has little to commend it, being absurd in action and

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presenting only one pleasing or noticeable theme. This is a dainty, quaint violin passage that delighted us in the overture, but which we never thought of connecting with a tragic climax. How different is this tomb music from that of Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet!" There the marvelous harmonies are like sweet dreams accompanying the sleep of death, but here we are only conscious of the "deep, damp vault, the darkness and the worm."

The chief absurdity of this scene lies in the fact that it should be too dark for the characters to see each other and yet it must be light enough for the audience to see everything. Another incongruity is the assembling of all the principals and a good-sized chorus in this tomb where we expected Arsaces alone. But it is explained that Assur heard of the hero's coming and planned to follow with the intention of killing him; Oroë heard of Assur's plan and brings an armed guard to protect Arsaces; and, finally, Semiramis follows because

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she is anxious about everybody and everything.

They enter at different times; grope around among tombs, and pretend not to see each other. Arsaces finally hears and recognizes the voice of Assur. He has no doubt that the gods have sent Assur to be the victim. The hero promptly stabs in the direction of the voice, but because it is so very dark he happens to kill Semiramis instead of Assur. But this mistake does not much affect either the music or the action. The final chorus of the opera is as light and bright as the first.

A Call
on
Emma Eames

Handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is faint and difficult to decipher but appears to be organized in a list or table format with multiple columns.



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EMMA EAMES.

A CALL ON EMMA EAMES.

A CALL at the Hotel Marie Antoinette is a veritable eighteenth-century dream. A powdered footman in satin knee-breeches and the full court costume of that period flings open the great glass doors as you enter, and another one escorts you around some columns, and through some curtains, and down some steps to the main reception-room, where you wait while your name is announced.

The Hotel Marie Antoinette is very exclusive, so you happen to be alone in this great apartment, with its stained-glass dome and carved-oak walls; alone, excepting for the pretty soft-voiced maid who is arrayed as were the ladies-in-waiting of the Trianon. She assists you in removing your wraps, and at the same time talks enthusiastically about the great personage you have come to see.

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“We all here just love her, she is so gracious and appreciative of everything we do, and so kind to us. She gives us tickets to the opera, and she isn't at all proud or haughty. She often comes in here of an afternoon to have tea. There is her corner where she always sits”—and the maid points quite reverentially to a dainty recess curtained with tapestries and dreamily illumined by a huge pendant red globe. As your glance roams on, you find many objects that hold your attention. There are historic cabinets of rare value and workmanship, little tea-tables beside the various couches, bearing trays of antique china and tiny spoons of old silver, all sought and selected from the castles and treasure-rooms of Europe. There is one dainty solid gold clock that belonged to Marie Antoinette and was used in her boudoir. Another one which she also owned is jeweled with turquoise and garnets. Many valuable miniatures of the unfortunate queen and her family are on the desks and writing-tables. In

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one enticing alcove are two rows of sumptuous volumes bound in red and gold whose mere titles set one to dreaming of court intrigues and palace revels. "The Secret Memoirs of the Court" comprise one set of ten books; ten more are devoted to Napoleon, and "The Life and Times of Louis XV." also occupies much shelf-room; while on the center-table is a collection of engravings portraying the life of Marie Antoinette.

You quite feel yourself a court lady by this time; and when the powdered dignitary again appears and calls out your name in stately tones, you follow him with a sense of importance quite pleasant and unusual. You are led past more columns and through more curtains, until finally he leaves you in a moderate-sized ante-room. Here you wait for some moments, expectantly watching the doorway by which you entered, when suddenly, on the opposite side of the room, some folding-doors which you had not noticed are flung wide open by unseen

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hands, and behold the queen of grand opera, Madame Emma Eames!

It was indeed a right royal vision I beheld: a beautiful woman, in every sense of the term, clad in a fawn-colored gown of rich design, and bejeweled with chains of pearls and a brooch of diamonds. She was seated on a pale satin divan, but came forward to greet her visitor, and shook hands cordially. Madame Eames is more than beautiful, for together with regular features and soft curves she has a strong face and a pose of the head that is all determination and force. She is tall and full-figured, her hair is dark, and her eyes are very blue.

She displayed a charming smile as she motioned her visitor to a seat near by, and then followed a rapid sequence of questions and answers. Madame Eames showed a kindly response to her visitor's spirit of earnestness, and tried to tell as much as possible in every reply she made.

First in order of interest is the fact that she was born, August 13, 1867, in Shanghai,

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China. There's a beginning for you!—enough to crush an ordinary mortal. But Emma Eames took it otherwise; and all who know of her now must admit that to be born under the star of the East on the thirteenth day of the month is after all not bad. As soon as she was old enough to walk she left the land of her birth and came with her mother and father (who was a lawyer of the international courts) to their native home, the city of Bath, in Maine.

Here she studied music with her mother, going later on to Boston and finally to Paris, where she worked with indomitable will studying operas, dramatic action, voice culture, and especially French. This last is very important for those aiming to sing publicly in Paris, for the people there will not tolerate any weakness of pronunciation.

When asked if she ever had time for any social pleasures, Madame Eames answered very earnestly: "I have never done anything in my life but work. I cared for

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other pleasures just as any girl does, but have always foregone them.”

As a result of this ceaseless work she was fitted for the operatic stage in two years' time.

“It was Gounod himself who selected me to sing in his opera ‘Romeo and Juliet.’ He taught me that music, and also ‘Faust.’ He was a most lovable old man, so modest, and above all sincere and truth-loving in his music. He often said to me, ‘Never degrade music, the one divine language on earth, to express a lie.’ When teaching a phrase, instead of dictating, as you would expect so great a man to do, he always asked, ‘How do you *feel* when you hear that? Sing it as *you feel it*, not what I feel or tell you.’ And he could sing so exquisitely! Yes, old as he was, and he had just the smallest possible voice, yet it was delightful to hear.”

Madame Eames's tones were tender and thoughtful as she recalled these reminiscences of her beloved master.

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The number thirteen looms up again in Madame Eames's history as the date of her great *début*. It was the evening of March 13, 1889, in the world's most beautiful opera-house, that the swaying pendants of its great chandelier vibrated to the sound of a new voice and the marble walls of its ornate halls reverberated to the sound of a new name—"Emma Eames, *la jeune Américaine*."

No wonder she made a sensation; she is the ideal Juliet, youthful, beautiful, and with a voice of golden timbre.

A more lovely scene and more tender tragedy has never been depicted in music than is the last act of this opera. The beholder sees in the somber setting of an iron-barred tomb the white-clad form of Juliet lying upon a bier that is raised like an altar above several steps. There are loose flowers still unwithered scattered near the silent sleeper, and one pale torch burns restlessly in a brazier at her head. No other movement; no change on the stage for many minutes.

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But the listeners, in this pause, are brought heart to heart with the gentle composer, who sleeps himself now in the Pantheon of Paris. Gounod has enwrapped this scene in ethereal harmonies that make one think of Death not as the King of Terrors, but as the Queen of Repose. It is a lulling, loving strain that floats and fades away like a final "hush" to rest.

The classic purity of Madame Eames's beauty impresses itself in these moments perhaps more than any other, and the nobility of her voice reveals itself, in the succeeding dramatic climax of the opera, to the fullest.

In speaking now of her *début*, the singer says that she was very nervous, "for, before the public has approved, you don't feel sure that you know anything. After this, there is some foundation for your nerves to rest on, altho you realize how much there is still to learn. But I am always nervous even yet, never knowing what trick my nerves may play on me. No, my memory gives me

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no anxiety, for I fortunately have a very reliable one. If by any chance I forget a word on the stage, I know my health is run down, and I then at once take a rest for several days.”

But Emma Eames does not take many such rests. Young as she is, she has already sung in twenty-one different operas with unvarying success, in England, France, and Italy as well as her own country. When studying a new rôle she makes every effort to be accurate in all details.

“I always give great thought to my costumes, but when once I have studied thoroughly into the period represented and feel convinced that my designs are correct, I never change them. When one set is shabby I merely have it duplicated.”

Little wonder a prima donna has no time for social gayety when you consider all the accessories to her art. Aside from the study and actual performing, she must take proper exercise for her health, must attend rehearsals, give time to the costumer—and,

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also, to the many interviewers. Madame Eames smiled at this suggestion, and said:

“I don't mind any of these, but I do dread having my photograph taken. We have to put on the entire costumes of different operas: wigs, stockings, gloves, slippers—everything as tho ready to go on with our lines, and all just to stand around in a studio and pose. It is terrible; it takes a whole day sometimes.”

There is one studio, however, of a different kind, in which Madame Eames does not object to pose, and this is the studio of her husband, Julian Story, who is a famous artist. Here she has been made the subject of various beautiful paintings, some of which are on exhibition in different galleries, and some few are retained in her own Paris home. Mr. Story is the son of W. W. Story, America's most distinguished sculptor-poet, and this marriage of art and music is so ideal as to be continually commented upon. Madame Eames is no less proud of her husband than he is of his gifted

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wife. He always travels with her during the season, but between times they hasten to one or the other of their homes; a modest term for *one* of these, which is no less than a castle of medieval design recently completed in the suburbs of Florence, Italy. I was shown a description of this edifice which reads like a page of old history. The sullen gray stone walls are six feet thick, and the heavy doors with their great iron hinges are all carved by hand, as indeed is all the workmanship on the place. The main hall of the castle is sixty feet long and twenty-five feet wide. There are four massive fireplaces in this one apartment, and a wooden balcony reached by a broad stairway runs all around the second story of the hall. The ceiling is of carved oak, and a reproduction of a famous one in Florence. Everything is in accord with the traditions of the Middle Ages. Madame Eames takes great delight in this castle, and she has with her numerous photographs of it.

There will probably be many guests in

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those halls; but even if the gifted owners lived there alone it would always seem peopled by a large assemblage, for Madame Eames studies much during these vacations, and the mystic characters of her repertoire may be said to hover ever near. The castle is to be furnished with rich hangings and historic trophies; but most priceless of all should be counted the music furnished by her own rare voice. This will soar out and reecho at all hours; sometimes a memory of Elsa, and again a thought of Sieglinde.

It were indeed a pity to fling the stray tones of a great voice upon crude walls and cramped quarters; let them rather resound and reverberate, and perchance be preserved, by the listening atoms of carved wood and chiseled stone.

If the earth is God's garden and we are the plants that grow, then Madame Eames must be likened to a rare orchid, radiant in the sunshine of great success, and showered with all possible blessings.

“Faust”

“FAUST.”

FAUST is the opera in which Madame Eames has appeared most often in this country. No less than sixteen composers have used Goethe's poem as a libretto. Many of these works are excellent, and frequently we hear excerpts from them in our concerts. But Gounod has clad the words in musical raiment of such surpassing loveliness that he has almost robbed Goethe of his masterpiece. At this day, on hearing the name Faust we think of the opera simultaneously with, if not before, the poem. He has made of it a “grand opera” in every sense; and yet so abounding in melody that even an untrained ear is captured.

There is no overture. It is a fact without a cause that some operas have overtures and some have not. “Faust” opens with a

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short orchestral prelude that is somber and subdued—quite suggestive of the doubt and darkness that characterize the scene upon which the curtain rises.

Faust, the philosopher, the student, is seated in his cell, surrounded by books, parchments, chemicals, skulls, and hour-glasses. He has grown old in his delving after the mysteries, and even now he has devoted the whole night to study. The lamp burns low, and all about him is dark and gloomy. He closes his book sadly, and exclaims in tones that seem spontaneous, but are, nevertheless, in accurate rhythm with the orchestra, "In vain!" He does not find the knowledge he seeks; his investigations are without avail. It seems strange to hear these laments sounded by a tenor voice; but this trifling incongruity of high tones and old age does not last long. The character Faust is one of the greatest tenor rôles.

His soliloquy is presently broken in upon by a chorus behind the scenes. It is the

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song of reapers going to their daily work. The morning light streams in at the window which Faust throws open as he listens. But sunshine itself is not brighter than that song. It is so joyous and light-hearted that the listener fairly inhales the dew-laden air of the fields. This first melody in the opera is as perfect a morceau for its size as was ever written. The solitaire in his cell is also affected by the radiant song, and he envies the reapers for their contentment and for their youth. Yes, *youth* is what he longs for.

Altho Faust has declared his study to be "in vain," he has, nevertheless, acquired the accomplishment of being able to call up Mephistopheles (this is the operatic name for the great demon), and in his present despair he resorts to this method. Mephisto appears without delay. Flaming colors and a bass voice are the essential attributes of this great character. It seems rather hard on our artists who sing to low G that a bass voice is so often chosen to represent iniquity; but such happens to be the case. Mephisto

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is invariably clad in red from head to toe; exaggerated eyebrows and a fantastic cap with unobtrusive horns complete his diabolical appearance.

In a continuous flow of harmony, Faust informs his visitor of his wants, and Mephisto promptly states his conditions: for the price of his soul after death the philosopher shall now be granted his youth. Faust hesitates at this, whereupon the wily demon causes him to behold a vision. A bright light at the back of the stage suddenly reveals the lovely Marguerite at her spinning-wheel. While the picture lasts there is heard in the orchestra a suggestion of one of the themes that come afterward in the love-scene of the opera; this is accompanied by a soft tremolo on the violins. Forest scenes, moonlight, and dreams are very often represented in music by a violin tremolo. When the vision passes away, Faust is decided, and he drinks the potion Mephistophiles prescribes. Presto! The gray hair and beard disappear; the long robe falls off,

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and Faust is a young man—tall and handsome, as a tenor should be. He comes forward with an elastic step and sings of youth and its joys, which now are his. The music has undergone a metamorphosis like the singer. It throbs with a life and vigor which were lacking before; and this final song of the first act is one of the best tenor solos in the opera.

The second act is chiefly remarkable for its choruses. It is called the Kyrmess, and represents a street thronged with villagers in festive array and mood. They dance and sing in honor of their soldiers, who start this day to war. The opening chorus is divided among the students, girls, soldiers, and citizens, the latter being represented by old men, who come forward and sing their delightful refrain in thin, piping voices. Every phrase of this first chorus is a surprise, and each one seems more fascinating than the preceding. It is all in a rapid, tripping tempo, and fairly bubbles over with good humor.

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In this act we are introduced to all the principal characters. Siebel, the village youth who loves Marguerite, is already on the scene, and very soon her soldier-brother, Valentine, appears. This is the baritone rôle, and, while not a long one, is still important, and requires a great artist, for he has a splendid death-scene in the fourth act. His first solo begins with the words "O santa medaglia!" ("O blessed medallion!"). He sings to the token which his sister has just given him at parting. He is depressed at the thought of leaving Marguerite alone, for she is an orphan; but Siebel consoles him with promises to protect and watch over her.

Mephisto is the next one to come upon the scene, and, in spite of his satanic make-up, the villagers do not recognize his "name and station." He joins in their merrymaking, and soon astounds them with his wizard tricks and actions. He sings a song about "Gold—the lord of the earth." It is one of the three important solos of this rôle, and is a



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Melba as Marguerite in "Faust"

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most characteristic piece. One has not the least doubt that he learned it at home! Such eccentric, sardonic intervals and rhythm at once suggest an unholy origin.

The peasants soon become so convinced of this stranger's evil power that they unanimously hold up the hilts of their swords, which are formed like a cross, and before this emblem Mephisto trembles. A very strong and inspiring chorus accompanies this move on the part of the peasants.

Faust, the handsome cavalier, now comes forward. After a short dialog between this master and servant—who we know are under compact to change places in the hereafter—the chorus again take possession of the stage. They sing first a charming waltz song, which of itself seems to start them all to dancing. And then comes the celebrated "Faust Waltz," during which the listener should pay most attention to the orchestra. There is some singing and much dancing on the stage, but the instruments have the most important part. Of this

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well-known composition it is unnecessary to say more than it is a splendid waltz.

Its brilliant rhythm is temporarily diverted by the entrance of Marguerite, who is on her way home from church. She carries a prayer-book in her hand, and is dressed in white, which betokens innocence. This costume of the heroine has been considered as imperative as the make-up of Mephisto; but Madame Eames carefully studied old Nuremburg pictures and resurrected the correct style of that period, which somewhat departs from operatic tradition.

On seeing Marguerite, Faust addresses her as "My charming lady," and begs permission to walk home with her. To which Marguerite very properly replies that she is neither "charming" nor a "lady," and can go home "alone." The question and response last only a moment, but the two themes are most exquisitely adapted to the words, and should be noted, as they recur later on in the opera. Especially lovely are these first notes of the soprano; and after

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so much chorus and bass and orchestra, they soar out like strokes from a silver bell.

Marguerite goes on her homeward way, and leaves Faust more in love than before. Mephisto rejoices, and the waltz is resumed. Thus ends Act II.

And now for the Garden Scene—a veritable bouquet of melodies, flowers that never fade! The first aria is, indeed, called the “Flower Song,” but only because Siebel sings to the flowers he has brought for Marguerite. Siebel is the contralto rôle, and therefore always taken by a woman. It is a very short part, but as two of the sweetest songs in the opera belong to Siebel, great artists are glad to take the character. The short prelude by the orchestra before the “Flower Song” is as artistic as any other part. It seems to smooth the brow and quiet the mind, and coax the hearer into just the right mood “to be lulled by sounds of sweetest melody.” Siebel’s song is indeed “sweetest melody”—so much so that a poor singer can hardly spoil it. That

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gentle and caressing theme captures the heart every time.

After Siebel has gone, there enter Faust and Mephistopheles (who gains admission everywhere). The latter is in high spirits, and Faust is in love. They look upon the garden with different emotions. Faust rhapsodizes and is lost in romance; but Mephisto's more practical vision perceives the flowers which Siebel has left at Marguerite's door. He goes off at once to procure a present that shall outshine these. During his absence Faust sings the "Salve Dimore." These are the first words of the song, which mean "Hail! dwelling pure and simple;" but this composition is always given its Italian name. It is interesting to note the names by which celebrated arias are known. Some are designated by the subject, as the "Jewel Song," "Flower Song." Then, again, some are known by the rhythm, as the "Waltz Song" from "Romeo and Juliet," or the "Polacca from 'Mignon.'" Then, there are others whose

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names only indicate the number of voices, as the "Sextet from 'Lucia,'" the "Quartet from 'Rigoletto';" while many are spoken of by their Italian names. The "Salve Dimore" belongs to this class, and, like the "Jewel Song," is so celebrated that many people who have not heard the music are still familiar with the name. The tenor who does not receive abundant applause after this aria may feel that he has lost his best chance in the opera.

After the solo Mephisto reenters with a jewel-casket under his arm. He places this where Marguerite will surely find it, and then the two retire. Now is an expectant moment, for the soprano holds the stage alone for some time, and has in this scene her finest solos. She comes in through the garden gate and walks very slowly, for she is thinking about the handsome stranger who spoke to her in the street. She tries, however, to forget the occurrence, and resolutely sits down to her spinning. As she spins she sings a ballad called "The King

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of Thule." It is a sad little song, with strange minor intervals that make one feel "teary 'round the heart." Marguerite interrupts her ballad to soliloquize again, in pretty recitative tones, about that "fine stranger," but she soon recalls herself and resumes the song. At last she gives up trying to spin, and starts for the house; whereupon she sees Siebel's flowers, which are admired, but dropped in amazement when her eyes rest upon the jewel-box. After some misgivings she opens it and discovers jewels so beautiful that from sheer joy and delight she starts to trilling like a bird. This trill is the opening of the great aria, which seems to thus poise for a moment and then fly away in the ascending scale which commences the brilliant theme. The "Jewel Song" is as difficult as it is beautiful, and the artist who renders it well deserves unstinted praise.

Before the song is ended, Martha, the matron in whose care Marguerite has been entrusted, comes into the garden, and soon

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is followed by Faust and Mephistopheles. Hers is a necessary but unimportant character, as she has no solo and is merely a foil for Mephistopheles. She is represented as a very susceptible widow, and he takes upon himself the uninviting task of making love to her in order that Faust and Marguerite may have a chance. The two couples walk back and forth in the garden, which is supposed to extend beyond the limits of the stage. The courting as done by Mephistopheles is highly absurd, and is, in fact, the only touch of humor in the opera.

But very different are the scenes between Faust and Marguerite. Every phrase is full of charming sincerity. But it is after the quartet, after the second exit and reappearance, that we hear their great love duet. The evening shadows have lengthened, and "Tardi si fa" ("It groweth late") are the first words of this superb composition, which is indeed like pure gold. It stands alone in musical literature as the ideal love music. The only work that is ever com-

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pared to it is Wagner's duet in the "Wälküre." Some writer has ventured the statement that in this "Faust" duo Gounod has "actually discovered the intervals of the scale which express the love passion." The idea is not a wild one nor a new one, for it is known that the Greeks held a similar belief, and even prohibited certain harmonies and intervals as being too sensuous. Be that as it may, there is a subtle charm about Gounod's music that eludes description. When we hear that final ecstatic leap from C sharp to high A, a very hush and spell come over us.

There is little more after the duo. Marguerite rushes into the house, and Faust is aroused by the unwelcome voice of Mephistopheles. The latter's jesting tone is most irritating to the lover. But this dialog is soon interrupted by one of the loveliest scenes in the opera. Marguerite throws open the blinds of her window and looks into the garden, which she believes is now vacant. The moonlight falls upon her, and

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she suddenly begins singing. It is a burst of melody as spontaneous and free as the song of a nightingale. The song is not long, and soon the curtain descends; but the picture leaves a lasting impression.

Act IV. comprises three scenes. The first one is short, and depicts Marguerite's grief and remorse. Faust has forsaken her, and the faithful Siebel tries to comfort and console. This second solo of Siebel's is a melody of noble simplicity. The beautiful cadence given to the twice-repeated name, "Marguerita," reveals a heart full of unselfish love.

The next scene represents a street in front of Marguerite's house. There is general excitement and anticipation among the villagers, for to-day the soldiers return from war. They presently enter, amid much rejoicing, and sing their great chorus, called the "Faust March." This march is so popular and well known that people who believe they have never heard a note of the opera will be surprised to find that they

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recognize this march. It is played by every military band in the country. After the chorus the soldiers disperse to their homes and friends. Valentine is greeted by Siebel, but the brother inquires about his sister, and hastens into the house.

The stage now is darkened, for the hour is late. Presently Faust and Mephisto appear. The latter has brought his guitar, and he assumes the privilege of singing a serenade to Marguerite, while Faust stands to one side in melancholy meditation. Mephisto's song is more insulting than complimentary. As a musical expression of irony, sarcasm, and insolence, this composition is certainly a success. The last three notes of the first phrase are a veritable leer. This is the second important bass solo, and, when well given, is highly effective, as it admits of great variety of expression. But instead of bringing forth the object of the serenade, Marguerite's brother appears at the door, and with drawn sword. He seeks out Faust and challenges

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him to a duel. The challenge is accepted, and they are soon fighting; but the result is inevitable, for Mephisto uses his demoniac power to protect Faust, and so Valentine is wounded. The noise of the scuffle has aroused the villagers, who hurry in with lanterns and find Valentine dying. Marguerite rushes forward and falls on her knees beside him, but Valentine motions her away. He rises up in his death agony and curses her in tones that are like balls of fire. The villagers look on with awe, while poor Marguerite is stunned by these terrible words from her dying brother. It is the most tragic moment of the opera. When Valentine expires, every one kneels as they sing a solemn prayer, and the curtain falls.

We have next the Church Scene, whose sublime music displays Gounod's special forte. He is perhaps greater as a composer of ecclesiastical music than anything else. His genius finds most congenial soil in religious themes, and therefore is this church scene with its mighty choruses and

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organ interludes truly grand. We hear the organ tones even before the curtain rises, and when it does Marguerite is discovered kneeling on a prayer-chair, apart from the other worshipers. She tries to pray and find comfort in her despair, but an awful voice mocks her endeavors, and that voice is Mephistopheles, who comes to her now in his true character. He is near her, but she can not see him, while he terrifies and tortures her with fearful prophecies. Vainly and desperately she strives to follow the familiar service, but she can hear only the demon's voice. It draws ever nearer, and its words increase her terror. At last with a cry of anguish Marguerite falls down unconscious. Mephistopheles stands over her, and his face beams with satanic glee.

True to Goethe's story, Marguerite becomes insane from grief and kills her child. The last act finds her in prison. Once again she is clad in white. Her hair hangs loose upon her shoulders, and chains bind her wrists. She is sleeping on a straw pallet

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as the curtain rises, and Faust enters with his companion. They have come to release the prisoner. But when she is aroused and urged to flee she pays little heed to their request, for she does not recognize them. But the sound of Faust's voice recalls to her that first meeting so long ago, when he said, "My fair lady, may I walk with you?" She sings again the charming phrase as we heard it in the second act; but it is now rendered with a certain pathos and simplicity that bring tears to our eyes.

She presently perceives Mephistopheles, and the sight fills her with terror. She falls on her knees and invokes the angels of heaven to pardon and receive her soul. The fervor of this prayer knows no bounds. A veritable religious ecstasy throbs through the music. The theme is broad and free, and seems to burst asunder every bond. It suggests a glory and splendor that are celestial. Ever higher and grander it grows. Marguerite is now standing with upraised arms; and altho Faust and Mephisto join

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in the singing, our attention is entirely riveted by that white-robed supplicant. The peerless theme is repeated three times, and always higher than before. Those soprano tones finally reach an atmosphere so clear and rare that they seem to carry the soul of Marguerite with them. The last high B soars up to heaven like a disembodied spirit.

It matters not what occurs after this. We have a dim consciousness of Marguerite falling down, of some words of lament from Faust; but for us the opera was ended with that last supernal note.

“Werther”

“ WERTHER.”

MADAME EAMES is the only prima donna whom America has heard in “ Werther ”—a work which in Paris ranks as Massenet’s best. But she does not sing it often, because, as she says, “ It all lies in such a low tone; and to sing always in one place is hard on the voice.” Then she adds, “ But the love-music of Werther is beautiful.”

Goethe’s love-stories find favor with French composers. Massenet has accomplished with “ Werther ” what his predecessors have done with “ Mignon ” and “ Faust.” His work is very recent and altogether unique. The story is not dramatic, and there are no regulation operatic characters,—no gods, no kings, no peasants, gypsies, fairies, demons, villains, slaves, soldiers, and not even a chorus. The scenery is also unconventional; not a palace, nor a mountain, nor a dungeon in the whole play.

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The *dramatis personæ* of "Werther" are taken from "ye lower middle classes," and they are graced with such names as Schmidt, Johann, Sophia, and Katie. We find it agreeable and gratifying to see our own common selves and everyday emotions elevated to the regions of classic music.

It is easy to understand why Massenet was attracted by the story, in spite of its dramatic weakness and lack of stage effects. It offers unbounded opportunities for love-music. Most opera composers must content themselves with one rousing duet and perhaps a solo or two; but in this story the hero sings of love from first to last.

The prelude to this homely opera is like the blessing before a meal. It is peaceful and soothing, and might be called a pastorage.

As the curtain rises we are greeted with the chatter and laughter of childish voices: two innovations at one stroke, for real children and real laughter have never before held a place in grand opera. This first scene of "Werther" forms a pleasing sum-

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mer picture. We see the garden and terrace of a simple country house, whose owner, the town bailiff, is seated upon the veranda surrounded by his six children, to whom he is teaching a Christmas carol. He seems to be teaching them, but in point of fact he is teaching the audience this charming melody, which must be kept in mind, for it recurs at various intervals during the opera. So the children sing at first very loud and badly. The good-natured bailiff shakes his head and stops his ears. After a second attempt the song goes smoothly, and during this performance Schmidt and Johann enter the garden. These are some tavern friends of the bailiff, who lend variety to the music by giving occasion for the inevitable drinking-song. They compliment the children and inquire after Charlotte. "She is dressing for a ball," answers Sophia, the bailiff's second daughter.

We might tire of this plain conversation and the buffoon manners of Schmidt and Johann, but the accompanying music is of

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absorbing interest. Massenet makes much use of counterpoint, which has been broadly defined as the art of combining melodies. A crude but familiar example is that wonder-inspiring piano performance of "Yankee Doodle" in one hand with "Fisher's Hornpipe" in the other. It is interesting to follow the various themes in Massenet's orchestra. Sometimes a bit of the Christmas carol combines with the gruff, reeling song of Bacchus, which, in turn, is blended with a broad and noble theme that always appears in connection with the name of Charlotte. Another theme, that might be characterized as severely intellectual, asserts itself whenever the conversation turns upon Albert, her absent fiancé.

Schmidt and Johann go off arm in arm, lustily singing, "Vivat Bacchus."

Sophia enters the house, while the bailiff retires with the children to an alcove on the veranda, where we see him patiently rehearsing that Christmas carol, word for word.

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The music now undergoes a transition, like a dreamer turning in his sleep. There are harp-chords, arpeggios, and trills written soft and "dim."

A richly clad traveler enters the garden, looking about him with evident emotion. It is Werther, returned after years of absence to his native village.

"I know not if I dream or wake," are his first words, while the instruments recall that pastoral motif of the prelude. Birds and trees and the limpid brook are all apostrophized in word and tone, until, with a sunburst of rising chords, there is introduced a new and radiant theme, eulogizing—

"All nature, full of grace,
Queen over time and space;"

while under the spell of his emotions—for Werther is a poet and a dreamer—there comes to him, like the song of angels, that blessed Christmas carol which the children are singing softly and with perfect rhythm.

The already familiar Charlotte-theme announces the heroine's entrance. The girl-

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ish costumes of this bourgeoisie character are unusually becoming to Madame Eames; they present her in quite a new light, and her first entrance gives a pleasing surprise to the audience.

She is embraced by the children, who love Charlotte dearly, for she is to them both a sister and a mother. Regardless of her best gown, she now goes to a buffet on the veranda and distributes slices of bread and butter. This scene has prompted the epithet, "bread-and-butter opera."

In the mean time Werther is welcomed by the bailiff and introduced to Charlotte. Sounds of gay music accompany the arrival of guests who will take Charlotte to the ball. This festive music is unique. The bass presents a defiant repetition of one chord that is stubbornly out of harmony with the bright melody above, like old age shaking his head at youthful gaiety.

It is decided that Werther shall go along to the ball. The dance-theme is resumed, and the merry party go out. Sophia takes

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the children into the house, and the bailiff goes off to the tavern, humming on the way that comical drinking-song.

The stage grows darker, the music softer, and we hear a fragment of the Albert-theme. It is like seeing the shadow before the person, for Albert soon enters. He has returned unexpectedly. Sophia rushes out to greet him, and she regrets that Charlotte is absent.

Before going into the house Albert sings to the night winds of his love, and hopes that Charlotte on entering the garden will discover the thoughts that he leaves.

The orchestra toys with this melody for a time, but then is diverted by memories of the ball music. Snatches of the bewitching strain flit by in different keys, like belated guests in vari-colored dominoes. They are faint as phantoms—a gentle swaying of the violins, a touch of the harp, and then they vanish. There is a pause. The moon has appeared, and the humble garden seems transformed into a fairy bower.

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Like the spirit of a dream is the melody now arising. Ethereal in its beauty but supreme in power, it rules over the entire opera. This is the love-theme. We are not surprised to see Werther and Charlotte enter arm in arm. It is a familiar situation: he is "seeing her home" from the ball. And arrived at their destination, they linger at the gate as couples have done before and since.

Charlotte is of a serious nature, and their talk is never light. She tells of her mother and the terrible experience of losing one so dear. "I believe that she watches over me and knows when I do her bidding." Charlotte's tones are full of pathos, and she becomes abstracted in her memories, while Werther, enraptured by her goodness and beauty, gives utterance to the feelings that enthrall him. The music grows stronger and higher, until it breaks forth in a resounding reality of the love-theme. Over an accompaniment of throbbing chords this superb melody sweeps by like a meteor

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passing the earth; and during this luminous transition we hear the voice of Werther, "Charlotte, I love thee!" There follows a hush, and then a chilling, awful discord. Some one is calling from the house, "Albert has come home!" Charlotte staggers at this news. She explains that Albert is her betrothed—it was her mother's wish. "May she forgive me, that for one moment at your side I forgot my vow." Charlotte goes up the steps; she turns once, but then hastens inside. Werther buries his face in anguish at the thought of her wedding another.

Several months have elapsed since the events of the first act. The elm-tree foliage is denser and the situations of the drama have changed, but love and music remain the same.

Schmidt and Johann are discovered sitting before the tavern "of a Sunday afternoon." Their good-natured song of Bacchus greets us like an old friend. The church and parsonage are in plain view, and a solemn choral from within alternates with the drink-

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ing-song without. The village is to-day *en fête* in honor of the pastor's golden wedding.

The serious and thoughtful Albert-theme marks the entrance of Charlotte and Albert, who are married. They loiter on their way to church and sit down on a bench under the trees. Very calm and tender is the music of this little scene between husband and wife. The organ resounds the chords of a beautiful hymn, at which summons Charlotte and Albert join the other worshippers.

Werther has been observing the pair from a distance. When they are gone he comes forward, exclaiming with grief and bitterness, "Wedded to another!" The tempestuous chords of the orchestra clash into the holy harmonies of the organ. Jagged fragments of Werther's first song of admiration depict his shattered joy. As one holds together the pieces of a broken vase, sadly recalling its lost loveliness, so does the orchestra again build up that old theme in all its beauty while Werther sings of

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what might have been. Rebellious at fate, he cries out: "It is I—I alone whom she could have loved!" The succeeding aria is reckless as a steed galloping to his death. It plunges from high tones to a sob, and the singer, flinging himself upon a bench, buries his face in his arms.

Albert discovers Werther thus despondent, and, suspecting the cause, he questions him; but Werther desperately disclaims his love for Charlotte. This interview is musically serious and sad. But suddenly the orchestra gives us a new key, a new melody, a sprinkling of lithesome staccatos falling like a shower of apple-blossoms. With a smile on her lips and flowers in her hands, Sophia enters, unconscious of the surrounding turbulent emotions. She gaily announces that they intend to dance, and that Werther must join her in the minuet. Observing his somber expression, she bids him cheer up, for to-day—

"All the world is gay!
Joy is in the air!"

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This song is the most popular one of the opera. It is bright and light, and full of fluttering phrases—a veritable song of spring.

When Albert and Sophia are gone, Werther cries out with explosive candor, “I told a falsehood!” He is wretched beyond compare. He can not cease loving, and he dare not cease lying.

Charlotte comes from the church, and, greeting him kindly, asks if he, too, is going to the parsonage. They speak lightly but feel deeply, as is evidenced by the music. That wondrous love-theme softly surrounds them like the magic fire of the Walküre. The harmonies mount up from the instruments like flames from living embers. A spell is upon them. Charlotte stands mute, while Werther sings of that evening when he touched her hand and looked into her eyes for the first time. Softly and slowly the beautiful melody disappears, giving place to a different chord and motif: “Albert loves me—and I am

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his wife!" Charlotte has recovered herself. She entreats Werther to turn his heart elsewhere: "Why do you love me?" This hero seems to understand himself, for he answers: "Ask a madman why he has lost his reason!" Then Charlotte urges him to go away for a time, say until Christmas. "Yes, until Christmas—good-by, my friend!" She leaves before he has time to refuse.

Now follows a musical adaptation of Goethe's very poetical and ingenious plea for suicide.

"Do we offend Heaven in ceasing to suffer? When a son returns from his journey before the expected time, far from feeling resentment, the father hastens to greet him; and can it be that our heavenly Father is less clement?"

During this soliloquy we encounter strange chords in the orchestra. Strains of a gay minuet play upon these tragic tones like rainbow colors on the angles of a glacier.

The dance has begun, and Sophia, appearing at the parsonage door, tells Werther that she is waiting. He walks away.

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“You are leaving! But you will come back?” cries the disappointed Sophia.

“No—never! Good-by!” and Werther turns down the road out of sight. Either for the lost dance or the lost partner, Sophia bursts into tears. Albert and Charlotte find her thus, and between sobs she tells them how Monsieur Werther has gone away forever. Charlotte stands rigid, while Albert exclaims to himself: “He loves my wife!” The gay assemblage within the parsonage has no knowledge of this brewing tragedy, so the minuet continues till the curtain descends.

The prelude to Act III is somber and depressing. It clings to the harmonies of that last scene between Charlotte and Werther—the exile motif.

The curtain’s rising reveals Charlotte sitting at her work-table, lost in thought while her needle plies.

The soft light of the lamp illumines a *petit salon*; the hour hand of the clock points to the figure five, and the libretto tells us it

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is the 24th of December. The subject of her thoughts is Werther—always Werther! Why can she not banish him from her mind as she did from her presence? The question is not hard to answer, for we learn that he has been writing to her. As tho drawn by a magnet, Charlotte goes to the desk and reads again the letters she fain would forget. Moaning minors like a winter wind accompany the perusal of these sad and poetic epistles. Werther writes: “If I never return, blame me not, but weep instead, for I shall be dead.”

Terrifying tremolos accompany the tragic theme that is now let loose in the orchestra like a strange, wild animal in the arena. It preys upon the emotions, gnawing at the heart of every listener. Massenet delights in startling contrasts.

While Charlotte is grieving over these missives, a happy voice greets her, “Good day, sweet sister!” It is Sophia, come with an armful of toys and a heart full of melody. She is accompanied by the gay staccatos of

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her "Spring Song." Charlotte hastily conceals the letters; but tears are not so easily disposed of. Perceiving the reddened eyes, Sophia tries to cheer her sister by singing of "Laughter, the light of the heart." The gaiety of this music, with its sparkling scales and tripping tempo, is infectious. But tears again gather in Charlotte's eyes when Sophia mentions the name of Werther. The little sister is very sorry; but Charlotte says never mind, weeping does one good. "The tears we do *not* shed fall back upon the heart, which, altho it is big, is very frail and can break with the weight of a tear."

The music to this sentiment is a tone-poem well worthy of the text. It is written in a low key. Joy mounts upward on the scale, but grief weighs down.

Sophia goes out, and all the bright music with her. Falling upon her knees, Charlotte prays for strength. This supplication is truly grand, with superb crescendos and plaintive diminuendos.

The music now swells out with sudden

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impetus and the parlor door is brusquely opened. Charlotte turns around and exclaims with startled tones, "Werther!"

He is leaning against the door as tho wearied in mind and body. "I tried not to come—*mais me voici!*"

With forced calm Charlotte bids him welcome. He looks with fond memory upon the old piano and familiar books. They talk of casual things, and incidentally Charlotte calls his attention to the poems he was translating when he left.

The music of this scene has been unnaturally tranquil; the gentle Charlotte-theme and another phrase, graceful and simple as a nursery rhyme, are used with touching effect. But with the mention of these poems sudden emotion breaks through the constraint. Werther turns to the unfinished verse and reads aloud.

The ensuing scene is dramatically not a new one. In "Francesca da Rimini" the heroine is wooed and won by the reading of a poem; but added to the charm of verse we

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here have the enthralling power of music. In both instances the reading ends with—a kiss.

The succeeding aria is a song of soaring ecstasy about “*ce premier baiser.*” Werther proclaims that “only love is real!” But Charlotte suddenly recoils at her weakness, and rushing to a side door, exclaims: “We must never meet again! Good-by—for the last time!” and disappears.

The music has assumed a dolorous strain that vividly portrays the pathos of her last words. Werther calls for her to come back. He knocks at the door, but is only answered by the tragic chords of the orchestra. They are furious and fearful, but, strange to say, they adequately express an awful silence. “So be it!” at last exclaims the sorrowful Werther. Crashing chords whirl riot in the orchestra as the hero hastens away.

The stage is vacated, but the music tells us whom next to expect. The Albert-theme, easily recognizable tho a trifle harsher than before, comes forward to preside over the finale of this act.

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Albert steps into the room, surprised and preoccupied. He has met the distracted Werther at the front door, and here finds Charlotte locked in her room. In answer to his authoritative call she comes forward looking pale and frightened. He questions her, but she answers evasively. At this moment a message is handed to Albert by a servant. It is from Werther: "I go on a long journey. Kindly lend me your pistols. Farewell." Charlotte knows the import of these words, but dare not speak. Perhaps Albert also knows. He coldly bids her hand the weapons to the servant. Mutely and slowly she goes to the case and delivers the contents as she was bid. That theme in the orchestra continues quietly to move back and forth like a person keeping the death-watch. When the servant has gone. Albert strides angrily out of the room. Charlotte stands for a moment immobile. The music also seems to stand still; then a sudden impetuous outburst of the instruments coincides with her decision. From

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highest B to lowest F octaves and chords are hurled together, as Charlotte, seizing a mantle, rushes to the door. "Pray Heaven I may not be too late!"

We follow Charlotte in her flight. The scene changes to a view of the village. It is Christmas eve, nearing midnight. The snow is falling in wild gusts, but through a rift in the clouds the moon looks down upon the peaceful town. Roofs and trees are covered with snow, while from some of the windows household lights are gleaming. The church, too, is lighted, but the moonlight and the snow are most prominent. Even these however are not so important as the music. More chilling than hail or snow are those sudden blasts of chords and octaves falling one on top of the other, down, down until they join and melt into the steady tremolo of the bass. Finally, like Death seated on a tombstone, the terrifying tragic theme again looms up.

During this introduction the winter scene on the stage remains the same. The snow

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continues to fall, and we hear it in the orchestra—a steady movement of double thirds over which play varying melodies like Christmas lights. The musicians turn their leaves once, twice, three times, but still that slowly palpitating accompaniment goes on. There is something appalling in this persistency. What was at first delightful becomes oppressive, for we are somehow reminded that falling snow can bury the living and hide the dead.

A distant bell sounds the hour of twelve. Fierce winds arise, and we see the muffled figure of a woman struggling her way against the gale. The tempest is again heard in the orchestra. Breathlessly we watch the heroine's slow progress, and wonder if she will be too late.

The scene changes to a little room strewn with books and papers. A lamp on the wooden table casts sickly rays upon the surroundings, but we can plainly see a figure reclining on a chair near the open window. It is Werther, pale and unconscious. Char-

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lotte rushes in, and at sight of the dying man is beside herself with grief. She calls him by name, and the sound of her voice revives him. He asks her faintly to stay near him, to pardon him and love him. While he speaks there arises from the orchestra, like the dim visions of a dying man, that first love-theme so full of summer gladness. Charlotte sings to him the words he has longed to hear. This last love-song ends in a whisper. The instruments, too, seem hushed with that mysterious silence of Christmas night. We can see through the window the bright moonlight, for the storm has abated.

Suddenly the dying man looks up as sweet music greets his ear—

“Noël! Noël! Noël!
Proclaim the wondrous birth!
Christ the Lord has come to earth!”

It is the happy children's voices singing their Christmas song in the church. A merry carillon of the instruments accom-

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panies the familiar tones of Sophia's high, bright voice in the distance—

“All the world is gay!
Joy is in the air!”

This startling contrast of life and death has never been more beautifully portrayed.

Werther sadly smiles, murmuring that it is his song of deliverance. He dies in Charlotte's arms. She cries out, despairing, inconsolable, “It is finished!” Death is in the orchestra, in the darkness, in the ensuing silence. But suddenly, like “the morning in the bright light,” those far-away voices again sing—

“Noël! Noël! Noël!”

Calvé
and “Carmen”



EMMA CALVÉ.

CALVÉ AND "CARMEN."

"HEAR Calvé in 'Carmen'—and die," is the motto which heralded this singer's first visit to America. Our curiosity was greatly aroused, for we thought we knew all about "Carmen." We clung to the traditions of our own Minnie Hauk who had created the rôle, and could imagine nothing better than a trim, dainty Carmen with high-heeled slippers, short skirts, and a Spanish mantilla.

Great was our amazement on that memorable night in 1894 when we beheld for the first time a real cigarette girl of modern Spain. Here was a daring innovation that at once aroused attention and new interest in the opera. This Carmen wore high-heeled slippers, 'tis true, but somewhat worn down and scuffed, as they must be if she was in the habit of running over the cobblestones of Seville as she ran to the footlights

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on her first entrance. And her skirts, far from being well-setting and so short as to reveal shapely ankles and a suspicion of lace petticoats, were of that sloppy, half-short length, which even the street girls of London wear to-day. But most astounding of all departures was the absence of any sign of a mantilla! How could one be Spanish without a mantilla—any more than one could be Russian without fur! But this Carmen had an eye to color—she could hardly otherwise be a coquette—and in her hair at the nape of her neck was deftly tucked a large crimson flower. Her hair, however, was carelessly pinned, and even tumbled quite down later on—a stroke of realism which was added to by the way she coiled it up and jabbed it into place again. A strange performance to behold in a grand opera setting; and we might have resented such defiance of the code had we not been forced to admit that it was all absolutely correct, and this Carmen was more truly Spanish than any impersonation we had

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seen. Even her voice seemed tropical; such richness of tone, warmth, and color had never before been combined in the singing of Bizet's opera. Had Bizet only lived to this day he might have died happily, for Carmen, the child of his brain, found no favor with the public when first introduced.

After the surprise of Madame Calvé's costume and then of her voice, New Yorkers awoke to the fact that Carmen had never before been acted. This performance was a revelation, a character study of a creature who recklessly holds that it is *right* to get all the pleasure you can, and *wrong* not to have what you want. Madame Calvé's Carmen, needless to say, became the talk of the town and the fad of the day. She had scarcely any chance to appear in other rôles; but since her first season we have been shown that her dramatic talent is many-sided. Even in Faust, the very Ancient of Days among operas, so rigid are its traditions, she imparts original touches

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that give high light to its effects and new color to the masterpiece. A very stroke of genius is the dropping of Marguerite's prayer-book in the excitement of her first meeting with Faust, so symbolical is it of his effect on her life. This is more than realism—it is poetry. Again in the spinning-song she creates an exquisite effect by disentangling a knot in the thread on her wheel and at the same time slowing up with her song and diminishing it until the wheel turns again and she resumes the tempo.

She also sings Ophelia in Hamlet with many new ideas and startling voice and breath effects. Throughout all the mad music she calls into use an "eerie tone" that is fearful in its pathos and terror.

Madame Calvé is unique in her art and isolated in her life. She is a Theosophist, and regulates much of her art by the precepts of this philosophy. Her own life seems so enchanted that she may well think the stars have shaped it. Born and raised in a village of Southern France, the peas-

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ants there can hardly realize to this day that the lady of wealth and fame who now owns a neighboring estate is one who grew up among them. Her name was originally Emma Roquer, but when she became wedded to her art it was changed to Calvé.

Her manner and personality are well portrayed in a recent article by Harry Steele Morrison, from which we quote:

“When she had finished her last number on the program, the mad scene from ‘Hamlet,’ the audience rose as one man and cheered the great actress and songstress for several minutes without ceasing, and I lost no time in hastening behind the scenes to see if I could not secure an introduction. The great Ophelia stood in the center of the stage still clad in her burial robes and surrounded by the flowers which she had torn to pieces in her madness. Her friends were gathered about her, congratulating her upon her triumph. When the crowd about the singer had gone away and I was introduced, I found her charming. Her sincerity of

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manner, her childish simplicity of bearing, made an impression which was most favorable. And her first remark was typical of the woman. 'You don't know how I've enjoyed this evening. It brings back to me the nights at the Opéra Comique. It is almost like France, and I am so thankful to all the people for their kindness.

"'You Americans are so good,' she said, turning to me, while Signor Campanari translated her French. 'I was so afraid the evening would be a failure, but I couldn't have desired a greater success than it has proven to be. I am too hasty, I fear, and too apt to borrow trouble. Do you know,' she said, turning to the signor, 'I actually stormed before the performance, because I thought there would not be a good house. And now, of course, I'm ashamed of myself. They don't always understand me here. In France they know my moods and pardon all my eccentricities. They are so kind to me there. In Cevennes they wouldn't mind if I stormed about for a week at a time.

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The good people would probably think all the more of me.' ”

Cevennes is the village where she was born. Her voice was first discovered and trained in the convent school, where, as is the custom in France, she was placed at an early age. We quote again from Mr. Morrison's article :

“Among her other studies was that of music, and it was noticed by the nuns that she took greater interest in this than in any other. Her tuneful ‘Ave Marias’ were soon the wonder and admiration of the entire school, and it was a recognized fact that Emma Roquer had the finest voice which had ever been heard in the convent. She was called upon to sing solos whenever there was a visitor of importance, and was allowed to give much time to her music. ‘Of course I had no idea of ever singing in opera at this time,’ said Madame Calvé in speaking of the school. ‘The nuns would have severely punished me if they had suspected any such intention on my part.

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They allowed me to learn a few operatic airs, however, and of course I practised all the sacred oratorios obtainable.'

"The young girl's term at school was hardly finished when she was shocked with the news of her father's death, and Calvé found her mother left with a large family to support. The noble-hearted girl was never in doubt about what course she should pursue. 'It was my plain duty to make something of my musical talent,' she said, 'and I set to work to fit myself for opera.'

"The training at the convent was now a great help to the young aspirant for operatic laurels. Her education was excellent in certain ways, and the chief task remaining was for her to learn a repertoire of operatic rôles. Money was secured for her to complete her studies in Paris, and then, after many months of hard work, there came an opportunity for her to make her début in Brussels."

Her success was immediate and permanent, both financially and artistically. She

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is young yet and unmarried, but has made money enough to buy a beautiful château, and to be largely charitable. Her generosity is praised by all who know her.

Imaginative, intense, and impulsive, and possessed of musical and dramatic powers which seem almost unaccountable, it is not to be wondered at that Madame Calvé finds some fascination in the mysteries of occultism, and has become persuaded of her own preexistence. It may be—on the stage she is so lost in her part that she believes her old self is revived—that she once was Ophelia in the palace of Denmark and Prince Hamlet was her betrothed.

At the time being it would hardly be difficult to persuade the whole audience to harbor this bit of fancy, for so genuine is her grief and so tender her song that it indeed seems like a voice from the past. In the future, at any rate, Madame Calvé intends to be identified with this character, for she is now having her tomb erected in Paris, with Ophelia sculptured upon it life size.

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It is interesting to note that one so beautiful, brilliant, and successful still gives time to much serious thought of death and the hereafter.

“Carmen”

“CARMEN.”

EVERY ONE likes “Carmen.” Its popularity has been ascribed to the fact that “the action explains itself to the eye.” One might also add that the music explains itself to the ear, for the themes are all unfurled and displayed like so many banners. In choosing Mérimée’s novel for a libretto, Bizet recognized the growing demand for dramatic plots with rapid action—a demand which has since evolved such one-hour tragedies as “Cavalleria Rusticana” and “I Pagliacci.” Aside from the stirring romance and fascinating music, “Carmen” also presents very delightful stage-pictures. The suburbs of Seville form an interesting setting, and the characters all require brilliant costumes. A bull-fighter, two smugglers, three gypsies, cigarette girls, and soldiers—not a plain individual among them!

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Before meeting these unusual personages we are presented with a letter of introduction from Bizet, which, because it is written in musical notation, the orchestra kindly interprets to us. We herein learn that these people take their pleasures, loves, and hates at a breakneck pace. There is a feverish excitement about the whole prelude; but at the end we hear a tragic minor motif of passion and pain that sends a chill to the heart. It is the Carmen-theme—Carmen herself.

A gay plaza in Seville is the first scene of action. At one side is the guard-house, near which are a number of soldiers who mingle and converse with the other strollers and promenaders. A gossiping, good-natured chorus about the square and the people is the opening number. This pleasing melody, in spite of its simplicity, has strange intervals and a restless tempo that are thoroughly Spanish. A young peasant girl soon enters, rather timidly. It is Michaela, the high soprano rôle, which be-

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cause of its two fine arias is often taken by a great artist, altho the part is a subordinate one. It has frequently been sung by Madame Eames. Michaela inquires for a brigadier called Don José. An officer politely informs her that Don José belongs to the next guard, which will soon arrive. With a musical phrase of dainty and condescending gallantry he invites her to tarry with them. Michaela declines the invitation, and uses the same musical setting for her own words. With the announcement that she will return after a while she escapes from their entreaties. The chorus is resumed, and the walking and talking go on as before. Soon the fifes and drums of the relief guard are heard in the distance. The soldiers in front shoulder arms and stand in file as the approaching company appears, followed by a lot of street gamins who keep step and sing to the music. This is so lively and inspiriting that we would march and sing too if we dared. There is a satisfying quantity of this "ta-ta-ta-ra" music. After march-

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ing to the foreground the new guards change place with the old, who are then led away with the same contingent of music and street boys. The soldiers and people at last disperse, leaving Don José and a superior officer, Zuniga, conversing together. The latter points to a large building, which he says is the cigarette factory, where are employed many pretty girls. Don José professes to care little for these, and we soon learn that he loves Michaela.

The factory bell now rings, and a crowd of young men and boys at once fill the square in eager anticipation of seeing the cigar girls. José sits down near the guard-house and busies himself with a little chain he is mending. The tenors sing a short pianissimo chorus about these dark-eyed girls, whom they always court and follow. It closes with a drooping, yearning *ritardando* that quite prepares us for the next languishing measures. The factory girls enter, with cigarettes in their mouths and a nonchalant manner that is delightful. Be-

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tween puffs of smoke they sing a slumbrous refrain that suggests the effect of nicotine. The lingering legato melody seems to rise softly and rest in the air until it passes away in tones so faint that Bizet has marked them four times pianissimo.

The young men now accost the girls, and soon inquire for Carmen. "Where is Carmen?" That tragic cry which ended the prelude is heard again in the orchestra, but so disguised by rapid tempo as to be scarcely recognizable, and with this theme Carmen rushes upon the scene.

Black-eyed, pearly-teethed Carmen, with cheeks like the red acacia flowers at her throat, and her whole appearance like a splash of sunshine!

The youths clamor about her and inquire collectively when she will love them. Carmen bestows regardlessly some of her dangerous laughing glances, and then sings her great song, the "Habenera," so called because of its rhythm, which is like a Spanish dance. But no mazy, undulating dance

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could be so fascinating as this song about "Love, the child of Bohemia." The compass of its ravishing melody is within a single octave. The notes cling lovingly together, for the intervals are mostly half-tones; and, indeed, as Carmen sings them each one seems like a kiss or a caress. The theme is first given in the minor, and then softly taken up by the chorus in the major—an effect as surprising and delightful as a sudden breeze on a sultry night. The accompaniment is like the soft picking of mandolins, and all things combine to represent the warm luxuriance of Spain.

During the song Carmen has perceived Don José, who continues his work and gives her no attention whatever, which is a new experience for this spoiled and petted cigarette girl. She purposely becomes more personal in her song, and ends with the audacious words, "if you love me not and I love you—beware!" With a sudden dash of impertinent coquetry she flings a flower at Don José, and then rushes off the stage

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amid peals of laughter from the others, who follow. The young soldier, thus left alone, finds himself troubled with mingled feelings of resentment at the girl's impudence and admiration for her beauty. He puts the flower in his coat, but at once forgets the whole incident as he sees Michaela, whom he joyously welcomes.

She has come to town for a day, and she brings a letter from his mother, also some money, and still something else, which she hesitates over, but finally delivers as it was given her—a kiss from his mother. There is nothing of the coquette about Michaela, and her songs are all straightforward, simple airs that win by their very artlessness. Her message is sung with harp accompaniment, and the harmonies are pure and clear. Then follows a duet about the mother and home in the village, and the tenderness of this music reveals that Don José is a loving and devoted son. When the duet is ended Michaela leaves José to read his letter. Music as peaceful as village

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church bells comes from the orchestra while the young soldier reads. He touches the letter to his lips and is prepared to obey his mother, especially in the matter of wedding the pretty Michaela.

His thoughts are interrupted by a wild scream from the factory and sounds of disputing voices. A number of girls rush from the building, all talking at once, and they fairly besiege Zuniga with explanations of what has happened. There was a quarrel and Carmen struck another girl—some say she did, and some say she didn't. Don José, in the mean time, has gone into the factory and brings out the struggling Carmen. He tells his superior officer about the affair, which ended in one girl's being wounded by "this one." Carmen tosses her head, and when the officer asks what she has to say in defense she looks into his face and sings "la-la-la-la!" Her impertinence would be almost repellent were it not that her voice is "like the wooing wind," and even her "la-la-la" is bewitching. Further question-

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ing only elicits the same response, and the officer angrily declares she may finish her song in prison. He orders Don José to fetter her hands and keep watch while he goes to make out the order of imprisonment. While all are gone a most interesting scene occurs between the prisoner and her keeper. The latter ties her hands, and says he must take her soon to prison, as his superior has ordered. Carmen, in her present attitude of charming helplessness, announces with sweetest tones that Don José will help her, in spite of the orders, because "I know you love me!" This is too much. When José recovers from his astonishment at her audacity he commands her to sit still and not speak to him—"not another word." Carmen nods her head in saucy obedience, and talks no more; she only sings! Sings of "an inn near the ramparts of Sevilla" where she will go to dance the Seguidilla. The song is in the rhythm of that dance, and its sinuous melody is handled by Carmen like a toy. She composes words to

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suit the occasion: "My heart is free and willing to love whoever loves me."

Don José, who has been trying to ignore her, but without success, tells her again to stop. She looks up with a grieved expression and her prettiest smile, and says she is not talking, only singing to herself and thinking; he surely cannot forbid her thinking! So she goes on thinking aloud about a "certain officer, who is not captain, nor even lieutenant—he is only a brigadier; but still he is great enough to win the heart of Carmen." Such words, music, glances, and smiles are more than Don José can resist, and it is not long before he succumbs to her witchery. He unties her hands and asks desperately, "Carmen, Carmen, do you mean it?" And for answer she softly sings to him that rapturous song of the Seguidilla.

The orchestra now starts up a lively repetition of the last chattering chorus, and with it the superior officer, Zuniga, reenters. He hands José the order and bids him lead



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Calvé as Carmen.

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the prisoner to her destination. Carmen holds her hands back, as tho still fettered, and she tells José in an undertone to let her push him as they march off, and during the commotion thus aroused she will escape. Then she turns to Zuniga, and with the greatest effrontery favors him with a fragment of the "Habenera" song, to which refrain she marches away with apparent docility. The whole group of cigarette girls and young men follow after. Just as they are turning to the bridge, Carmen escapes as she has planned. She throws back the rope from her hands and runs off laughing. It is fun for all but Don José, who for this neglect of duty is himself escorted to prison.

Bizet has preceded every act with an orchestral introduction called the *entr'acte*, which presents some important theme or portrays the character of the scene. Thus before the curtain rises on the second act we become familiar with a new and happy melody, which we later on recog-

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nize and welcome. After the *entr'acte* the stringed instruments, with a touch of the triangle and tambourine, hold the supremacy as they breathe forth faint, weird harmonies that flit about like moving shadows. The scene presents an interior view of the inn "near the ramparts of Sevilla."

It is evening, and amid the glow of soft lights Carmen and her gypsy friends are entertaining some officers with their dancing. She further enlivens the scene by singing a Bohemian song, whose liquid phrases fall upon the air like the soft splashing of a fountain.

After the song and dance it is time for the inn to close, but at this moment shouts and hurrahs are heard from without. It is a torchlight procession in honor of Escamillo, the bull-fighter, who presently enters amid general acclamations. He wears a gorgeous costume, and sings a rousing song about the exciting life of a toreador. This baritone aria is the most famous of the many popular numbers which comprise this opera. Its

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strongly accented rhythm and pulsating theme immediately suggest the blaze of lights and blare of trumpets which belong to the arena.

Escamillo soon perceives Carmen, and as quickly falls in love. She dismisses him with a coquettish remark that might mean much or little, and then all depart excepting Carmen and her two gypsy friends, Frasquita and Mercedes. These are soon joined by their comrades, the two smugglers, who softly tell of a new enterprise which will require the "ladies' assistance." Frasquita and Mercedes consent to leave at once. Then follows an exquisite quintet, sung with tempo prestissimo and tones pianissimo. Carmen suddenly astounds them with the assertion that she can not go, and gives as her reason that she is awaiting Don José, who to-day is released after two months' imprisonment, and further adds that she loves him. They take this at first as a joke; but finding her determined, they suggest that she induce José to join them. She

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says she will try, and the rest hurry out as they hear the young soldier approaching.

He is singing a gay barrack song, and thus comes to Carmen with his heart in his voice and soul in his eyes. She welcomes him impulsively, and ere long she sings and dances for his amusement. Her song is but an accompaniment to the dance—a low, crooning melody without words which resembles the contented purring of a magnificent feline as she glides and sways with a splendid grace around the infatuated José. A bugle-call is heard in the distance, a summons the soldier must obey, and he stops Carmen in the midst of her dance. She thinks he is joking and commences again; but when she actually realizes that he is going to leave her, that he finds it *possible* to leave, a perfect whirlwind succeeds the sirocco. She throws him his cap and sword, and bids him go forever if such is his love. Poor Don José remonstrates, but she will not listen until at last he forces her to hear how real and true is his love for her. He

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draws from his coat the little flower she threw at him two months ago, and he tells how, during all his days in prison, it was his dearest treasure. This music is more like the song of a pilgrim at a sacred shrine than a song of love, it is so simple and sincere. Its tenderness seems to reach even the heart of Carmen, for she now turns and with entreating looks and wooing tones she coaxes him to go with her and lead the free life of a bandit.

The accompaniment is like the distant prancing of wild horses and the melody like the forest wind, low as a whisper, but sweeping before it all the fluttering doubts of a weak conscience. It is desertion, disgrace, dishonor, that Carmen asks of him, and José recoils. He is just on the point of refusing when a knock at the door is heard and Zuniga enters. He is himself in love with Carmen, and has presumed to thus return after the others have gone in hopes of finding her alone. On discovering the presence of Don José he is angry and orders

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him away; but José's jealousy is also aroused and he firmly refuses to obey. A duel would ensue did not Carmen quickly call her friends. They seize Zuniga, and to avoid being denounced must keep him prisoner until they have made sure their escape. Carmen turns to José and asks once more if he will be one of them. As there is now no alternative, he consents, whereupon Carmen with light steps and light heart rushes to his arms like a sunbeam, dispelling for the moment all clouds of memory and doubt. The free, fearless measures of her mountain song are heard again as all sing about the gypsies' life of liberty. They all go off as the curtain falls.

The next *entr'acte* is sometimes called the intermezzo, for it divides the opera—the comedy from the tragedy—and it contains the first premonition of sorrow. As the curtain rises we hear a stealthy, shivering theme that well characterizes the scene before us—a wild, picturesque ravine, which is the smugglers' retreat. Some gypsies

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are reclining on the rocks; others soon enter, and sing a quite enticing chorus about the dangers and pleasures of their profession. Two leaders of the band then go off to reconnoiter, while the others rest. Don José is seen standing on one of the rocks, and when Carmen rather moodily inquires his thoughts he tells her of his mother in the village, who still believes him to be an honest man. Carmen coldly advises him to go back to her. Quick as thought-suggestion the orchestra recalls the tragic motif which we had almost forgotten. It causes us to feel with José the sting of Carmen's words.

Our attention is now directed to Frasquita and Mercedes, who are seated on a bale of goods and trying their fortunes. A light staccato accompaniment sustains their still lighter song. The dainty measures are flung up like bubbles, reflecting the gay colors of the cards, which chance to be all diamonds and hearts. Carmen also tries her luck, but only the dark cards fall to her

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—death, always death; and to the superstitious gypsy this is like a knell. Again that tragic, mournful theme, like the extended hand of fate, feels its way slowly but surely through the orchestra, and then Carmen sings a meditative, melancholy refrain about the cards whose “decrees are never false.” The music is in a low key, as tho kept under and depressed by her despair, and it touches our sympathy to see the sunny, frivolous Carmen for once thoughtful.

The two smugglers presently return and report that three coast-guards intercept the way. The girls promise to entertain and divert these while the men make off with the booty. To the strains of a rollicking chorus they all go out, after stationing Don José as watch on one of the highest rocks. At this moment Michaela, with a guide, comes timidly forward. She has dared to follow the smugglers to this retreat for the purpose of seeing José and begging him to return. She has tried to be brave, but her

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heart now trembles, and this fact she confesses in her beautiful and best aria, "Je dis que rien ("I say that nothing shall terrify me"). As she begs Heaven to strengthen her courage, the soft arpeggios of the instruments seem to rise like incense and carry her sweet prayer with them. She presently perceives José in the distance and tries to attract his attention, but he is watching another intruder—on whom he now fires. Michaela hides herself in terror as Escamillo enters and philosophically studies the newly made bullet-hole in his cap. Don José also comes down to interrogate this visitor. The toreador good-naturedly informs him that he has fallen in love with a gypsy girl, Carmen, and comes to find her. He also adds, "It is known that a young soldier recently deserted his post for her, but she no longer loves him." Jealousy seems but a feeble word to describe the feelings of Don José on hearing this. He quickly reveals his identity and challenges the toreador. After a short duet, which contains chro-

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matic crescendos of blind fury for the tenor and insolent intervals for the baritone, they fight. Carmen, for the second time, averts a duel by her timely entrance. She calls for help, and the whole troupe of gypsies rush in. They separate the rivals and order them to suspend their quarrel, as all is now arranged for the journey. Before bidding farewell Escamillo invites all to his next bull-fight in Seville. "Whoever loves me will come,"—this with a tender look to Carmen that maddens José.

Escamillo goes off and the others also start, but they suddenly discover Michaela in her hiding-place and bring her forward. She is frightened and rushes to José for protection, begging him to go home with her. Carmen cruelly seconds this entreaty, and then José turns upon her: "Take care, Carmen!" The words are menacing, but not so the music. José suffers more than he hates, and, instead of the rising tones of anger, the harmonies which struggle upward are continually repulsed as they

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reach the top, like a wild bird that beats its wings against prison bars. When Michaela finally tells him that his mother is dying, Don José consents to go. He calls out to Carmen, "We shall meet again!" She pays little heed to his words, but a glad smile lights her features as she hears in the distance the song of the toreador. And with this melody the act ends.

The final scene represents the gates of the arena where occurs the great bull-fight, and the preceding *entr'acte* is like the flaming advertisement of a circus, exciting and enthusing from first to last. The opening chorus is sung by venders who throng the square and cry their wares. After this the arena music announces the entrance of the performers. They come in on horseback, and amid enthusiastic greetings from the crowd ride into the arena. Escamillo, the hero of the hour, enters with Carmen at his side. The public cry, "Vive, Escamilla!" and burst into a vociferous singing of the "Toreador Song." Carmen is radiant as the

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dawn, and the bull-fighter wears colors and spangles that quite eclipse any soldier's uniform. Before he enters the ring they sing a love-duet that displays more depth of feeling than we should expect from a Zingara.

When the toreador has gone and the arena gates are closed, Mercedes and Frasquita anxiously inform Carmen that Don José has been seen in the crowd, and they urge her to leave; but she declares she is not afraid of José or any one. They leave her alone, and presently the rejected lover appears before her. But not in anger or to avenge does Don José present himself. He is too utterly dejected and broken-hearted for that. He comes only to entreat and plead for her love. Before he speaks we are warned by the ever-terrible death-theme, which has hung over the whole opera like a suspended sword, that the end is near. But Don José does not know this. Neither does Carmen, else perhaps she would not so ruthlessly spurn him when he begs her to

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go with him and begin a new life. When he piteously asks if she no longer loves him, her answer is a decisive "Non; je ne t'aime plus." But words have lost their sting for poor José. In a minor melody, that seems to cry out for pity, he says he loves her still. He offers to remain a bandit—anything, all things! And then the pathetic minor melody breaks into the major as he desperately adds: "Only, Carmen, do not leave me!" At this moment a fanfare and applause are heard in the arena, which cause Carmen's face to glow with pleasure as she thinks of Escamillo. She tries to rush past Don José into the amphitheater, but he intercepts her and forces her to confess that she loves this man whom they applaud. Once again the gay fanfare is heard, and Carmen tries to pass.

It is now that the tragic motif takes possession of the orchestra and dominates all else. Fearful and appalling sound those five notes which form the theme as they are repeated in various keys. In a frenzy of anguish Don José asks Carmen for the last

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time to go with him. She refuses, and then, as the toreador's song of triumph announces his success, José stabs the beautiful gypsy, who falls at his feet like a crushed butterfly. The gates of the arena are thrown open and its glittering pageant comes forth, while José, with insane grief, calls out, "I have killed her—Carmen—whom I adored!"

There is no climax more thrilling on the lyric stage than this death of Carmen.

“Hamlet.”

“HAMLET.”

OF all Shakespeare's plays, Hamlet is the most difficult to surround with music and adapt for the lyric stage. It is more scholastic than dramatic, and for this reason composers have passed it by with the single exception of Ambroise Thomas. His accomplishment certainly deserves more commendation than was bestowed by an irate critic who said: "There are four weary, dreary acts before you come to the music." This assertion is correct in one way, for the opera is indeed long—quite too long; but there is, nevertheless, much that is beautiful in those four acts preceding the mad scene. But even were this not the case, that last scene is so exquisite that it would atone for any amount of previous ennui.

Thomas has given his principal rôle to the baritone, which seems an innovation.

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Whenever a lower voice has been honored with the leading rôle in a grand opera the reason is found in the character, as the jovial Barber of Seville, the deformed Rigoletto, the accursed Flying Dutchman; but the tenor has always held undisputed possession of the lover's part. It takes us some little time to become reconciled to this baritone-voiced young prince. But we finally realize that he is less a lover than a philosopher, which probably explains why Thomas turned from the tenor.

The opera opens with a short and somber prelude that closely resembles the later introduction to the ghost-scene. It is therefore more descriptive of the melancholy Dane than of the first act, which is brilliant throughout. The curtain rises upon a state hall in the palace, where have been celebrated the wedding and coronation of Claudius and Gertrude, brother and widow of the late king. A sturdy march that is quite Danish in character accompanies the grand entrance of the king and queen. That

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music can express a nationality is clearly evinced by this march, which possesses a rugged, North-sea atmosphere that differs from all others. The first aria is given by the king, who eulogizes his new-made wife, "our sometime sister, now our queen." After this bass solo with its pleasing rhythm and satisfying cadences the queen inquires for her son Hamlet, who is not among the revelers. But her anxieties are drowned by the festive music that recommences and continues until the entire court have made their exit.

The music now changes to a meditative, minor mood, which announces the entrance of Hamlet. He shares no joy on this occasion of his mother's wedding, and his first words are a short recitative about "frailty, thy name is woman."

His soliloquy is followed by a phrase in the orchestra—a timid, questioning sort of introduction which before the opera is over we learn to associate with the gentle Ophelia. She enters and addresses Hamlet,

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her betrothed, with an anxious inquiry about his intended departure from Denmark. On learning from his own lips that the report is true, she asks why he leaves, and begins to doubt his love. There is a daintiness and a delicacy to all of Ophelia's music; and in this short melody, so admirably blended with the accompaniment, there is a wooing charm that diverts even Hamlet from his grief. He clasps her hands, and with thrilling fervor bids her—

“Doubt that the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt Truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.”

This is the great theme of the opera, the center-stone of the musical crown that the French composer has given to Shakespeare's Hamlet. Its love-laden melody would carry conviction to a less trusting heart than Ophelia's. She receives it like truth from heaven. Its memory lingers ever, and even in her after madness, when the words have no meaning, we hear them again “like sweet

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bells jangled out of tune." There follows a duet based upon Hamlet's vow. The soprano voice occasionally runs up in some happy little roulades which seem like the outburst of joy which can not confine itself to the prescribed theme. However long the whole opera, we certainly could not spare a note from the love-duet; it ends only too soon.

Ophelia's brother, Laertes, comes in. He is a soldier, and has just received a commission which requires his speedy departure; so he sings a farewell to his sister and bids Hamlet be as a brother to her in case he never returns. This first and only cavatina of Laertes is well worth a good artist. It is melodious and pleasing, even when compared to the previous duet. As he finishes, gay music is heard from the inner hall. Ophelia asks Hamlet to join the festivities, but he declines and retires sorrowfully as some pages and young officers enter. They sing a unique and merry chorus without accompaniment, which is interrupted by the

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entrance of Horatio and Marcellus, who inquire for Hamlet. They declare they have seen the ghost of the late king, and seek to apprise Hamlet of the fact. The merry-makers laugh and call it a delusion; but the two friends continue their search for the young prince. The dance music is resumed, and so fascinating and emphatic is its rhythm that our pulses throb in tempo long after the curtain descends.

The second act represents the esplanade outside of the castle. It is a chilly moonlight night—a sharp contrast to the beam of lights from within and the blare of dance music which ever and anon reaches our ears. But the prelude which opens the act is thoroughly descriptive of the scene before us. It has deep, rumbling tremolos and chilling chromatic crescendos, with here and there a moaning, wo-weighted theme that is piteous to hear. There is much singing without orchestra and much orchestra without singing in this scene of the esplanade, which accounts for the charge

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against it of being "rather thin ghost music." Horatio and Marcellus are the first to enter. They are soon joined by Hamlet, to whom they recount the strange visitation of the previous night. As they wait and watch for the specter to reappear, a gay fanfare from the palace jars upon the stillness. Strains of the wedding-march are heard, and there seems abundant reason for the dead king to rise from his grave! Hamlet utters expletives over the mockery of such gaiety within, while "here is the shadow of mourning." His words are accompanied by an oft-repeated minor phrase of four notes which is stealthy and fearful. This ghost-theme alternates with a single monotonous tone that represents the twelve strokes of a clock. Hamlet hushes his singing; there is a soft, eerie tremolo of the violins; the pale moonlight falls upon the castle's turreted towers. Marcellus and Horatio speak in whispers, when suddenly the orchestra gives a great crash of brass and cymbals that makes your blood freeze.

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The phantom has appeared. Now follows the incantation, so called because Hamlet conjures the spirit to speak to him. This music is based entirely upon the four-note ghost theme, which is elaborated and carried by the orchestra through many forms. At last the specter speaks, and in a deep monotone informs Hamlet how he was murdered by the present King. His own brother stole his life, his wife, and his throne. He bids Hamlet avenge this terrible crime, and then disappears. Hamlet cries out in a theme large and grand, "Farewell to fame, love, and happiness!" Revenge shall hereafter be the aim of his life.

The peaceful love-music greets our ears as we look upon the next scene, which reveals the gardens of the palace. The superb theme of Hamlet's vow rings out in clear, untroubled octaves as the fair Ophelia comes forward with a book in her hand. She is trying to read, but thoughts of Hamlet constantly intrude themselves. "He has not touched my hand for quite two days, and

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seems to avoid my presence.” She again turns to her book and reads aloud. Ophelia reads very beautifully. Thomas has with music conveyed the impression of enunciating words from a book. We would know she was reading even if the book were not visible nor the words audible, and yet it is not by means of a monotone that this idea is conveyed. It is a simple song melody, and the effect is probably due to the rhythm rather than the intervals. After reading one stanza, Hamlet’s vow—that theme so deep and true—is again heard, and the hero himself comes thoughtfully upon the scene. He is in the background, but Ophelia has seen him, and she quickly makes a pretense of reading. She listens for every step as he draws nearer, and believes he will speak. He sees her and at first comes forward, but then remembers that he has foresworn love; and thinking she has not seen him, he quietly retires. Poor Ophelia throws down her book in wildest grief, and a song of despair springs from her heart. “Vows have wings

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and they fly with the dawn; the day which gives them birth also sees them die." Every note is like a tear, and the harmonies are plaintive and pitiful.

The queen presently enters and is grieved to find Ophelia weeping. The latter explains that Hamlet no longer loves her, and she begs permission to leave the court; but the queen puts other ideas in her head. She says that Hamlet has also acted strangely toward her, and she believes his mind is affected. For this reason she asks Ophelia to remain, and hopes her presence may restore him. This first song of the queen, who must have a mezzo-soprano voice of dramatic quality, combines dignity and pathos. Its mood does not contrast, but harmonizes with the previous aria. Ophelia accepts the queen's advice, and then goes off as the king enters. He confers with his wife about Hamlet's alarming behavior, but their conversation is interrupted by the prince himself, who greets them moodily and assumes more vagaries than he feels.

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He is constantly seeking to entrap the king into some sign or remark which will verify the ghost's charge of murder. He has therefore planned to have a play enacted which shall depict the king's crime. His invitation to this theatrical entertainment is welcomed by the unsuspecting king and queen, who are delighted that he thus seeks diversion. As they go off, Hamlet exclaims tragically, "Patience, my father, patience!" and the orchestra reveals to us thoughts of revenge, for we hear again that ponderous and melancholy theme which ended the ghost scene.

Hamlet is now joined by the actors whom he has engaged for the play. They sing a characteristic chorus about their several talents, and then Hamlet explains to them the plot they are to enact—how a king whom he calls Gonzago shall be poisoned by his brother, who afterward places the crown on his own head and marries the widow. After this preliminary, Hamlet calls for wine and bids the players make merry. He sings to

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them a drinking-song of dazzling exuberance.

It is strange how universally successful operatic composers are in the matter of drinking-songs. You can name off-hand more popular *chansons Bacchic* than any other one style of aria. There are various well-known serenades and prayers and spinning-songs, but of drinking-songs there are any number. "Lucrezia Borgia," "Rigoletto," "Traviata," "Huguenots," "Cavalleria Rusticana,"—their drinking-songs are heard every day on the hand-organs in the street. And so in "Hamlet" its drinking-song is one of the most celebrated numbers of the opera. Its bubbling rhythm and hilarious melody are continued even after the song is ended and the curtain descends. It lingers like the effect of wine.

Act III. is the play scene. There is a small stage erected at one side of the spacious palace hall, and opposite this is a throne for the king and queen. The orchestra carries everything before it with the rousing

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Danish march which accompanies the ceremonious entrance of the entire court. This composition ranks with the drinking-song in popularity. When all are assembled, Hamlet places himself in a position to watch the king, and as the mimic play proceeds he explains the action, which is all in pantomime. The orchestral descriptive music of this play within a play is beautiful and interesting. As in Ophelia's reading, the simple melody and hesitating rhythm again convey the impression of something inserted, something apart from the real action of the play. Hamlet becomes more and more excited as the play goes on, for he sees unmistakable signs of uneasiness in the king's expression; and when at last the mimic murderer pours poison into the ear of his sleeping victim, the king rises in anger and orders the players away. Hamlet in a delirium of vengeful joy cries out the king's guilt. He pushes his way through the surrounding courtiers, and with unbridled fury accuses the murderer. He

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is sustained by a perfect tidal wave of chords from the orchestra, which dash and beat and break, but only harm the good ship they bear instead of the rock they attack. The people regard Hamlet's charge as an outburst of madness, and he presently lends credence to this belief by singing with wild hilarity the drinking-song of the previous act. The following strong and seething chorus of dismay is again interrupted at the very end by Hamlet's mad song—

“Life is short and death is near ;
We'll sing and drink while yet we may.”

With a wild mocking laugh he falls into Horatio's arms as the king and court withdraw.

The great feature of the fourth act is the scene between Hamlet and his mother, but there is much besides. The scene represents the queen's apartment in the palace, and the first number is Hamlet's soliloquy. He blames himself and deems it cowardice that he did not strike the king dead when

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he had the opportunity. Then follows the musical arrangement of "To be or not to be," a speech so unsuited to music that Thomas has cut it down to a few lines. Hamlet presently sees the king approaching, and he conceals himself behind a curtain with the intention of attacking him. But the king thinks himself alone, and in agony of mind he kneels on the prie-dieu and prays. It is an impressive composition, this prayer with its cathedral harmonies and blending accompaniment. Hamlet glides softly toward the door, for he can not kill even his father's murderer at prayer. The king, who has heard the footsteps, cries out in terror, for he fancies it was the ghost of his brother. Polonius, the father of Ophelia, quickly enters and reassures the king. They walk out arm in arm, and from their few words it is gleaned that Polonius was an accomplice to the crime. Hamlet hears them, and is horrified to learn this fact about Ophelia's father. At this moment the queen and Ophelia enter, and the former

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announces to Hamlet that it is her wish as well as the king's that his marriage shall take place at once. The prince blankly refuses to obey in spite of the queen's urging; but his heart endures a struggle when the poor Ophelia sings of her grief and returns to him his ring. The sweet minor strain in her song implies a sad resignation that is more touching than intense lamentation. She goes out weeping. The queen then turns to Hamlet and upbraids him for his faithlessness. She presently recurs to the terrible scene at the play, and utters the famous words, "Thou hast thy father much offended."

The scene which follows demands great dramatic ability of the queen, as well as vocal strength. After a sharp and active recitative dialog, in which Hamlet announces himself as her judge and no longer her son, she sings a fine entreaty that the tenderness of the son may mitigate the severity of the judge. It is a strong and powerful theme, but Hamlet is obdurate. He contrasts the

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late king with the present one in words and tones that make his mother cower. She again pleads for mercy and forgiveness, and finally falls in a swoon as the stage is darkened and the ghost appears. Hamlet trembles before this admonisher. The music of the incantation is again heard, and the phantom bids Hamlet spare his mother, but "fail not to avenge." As the ghost disappears the instruments are weighted with that great and gloomy theme of revenge which seems to descend and enwrap the whole scene like a dark, heavy mist. The queen awakens; but there is little more seen or heard before the curtain falls.

Act V. is known as the Mad Scene, one of the most beautiful, most ideal, and most difficult creations ever put upon the lyric stage. It is seldom performed, merely because there are few artists who can adequately render its astonishing music. There are other mad scenes in existence. The one from "Lucia di Lammermoor" is very celebrated, but its music no more expresses the

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vagaries of madness than does any other florid aria. Of course, lavish colorature seems appropriate and is considered imperative; but Donizetti's florid fancies are mere plumes and flounces draped upon a melody, whereas with Thomas these form the texture of the theme. The French composer well knows the worth of his mad music, and he has taken pains to present it most advantageously. You are not ushered at once from the grim and gruesome harmonies of the last act to this wealth of inspiration, but are first entertained by a ballet of shepherds and shepherdesses. During this dance we become accustomed to the beautiful rural landscape, the gentle stream at the back and the drooping willows. We are also brought under the spell of a different kind of music; these pastoral ballet motifs are very charming. They are light and fantastic, but at the same time suggest a midsummer peace and tranquillity.

At last the dainty dance is ended, and then the rustic group perceive a strange

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figure approaching—a beautiful maid, with her flowing hair adorned with bits of straw and wild flowers. Her white dress is torn, and her bare arms carry a straggling bunch of flowers which she plays with and caresses. That exquisite inquiring little introduction which we heard in the first act again announces the entrance of Ophelia. She glances a moment at the pretty peasants, and then, with intuitive politeness, asks permission to join in their sport. There is a subtle pathos about this first little phrase, which is sung without accompaniment, and is simple as a child's question. She goes on to tell them how she left the palace at dawn and no one has followed. "The tears of night were still on the ground and the lark poured forth its morning song." A perfect bird-throat warble of trills and fluttering staccatos follows this memory of the lark. But her thoughts are varied, and she suddenly turns and asks: "Why do you whisper to each other? Don't you know me? Hamlet is my betrothed, and I—I am

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Ophelia.” Then she tells them, in tones that rest upon the accompaniment like lilies on a lake, how Hamlet vowed to always love her and that she has given him her heart in exchange. “If any one should tell you that he will leave and forget me, do not believe it. Believe nothing they tell you, for Hamlet is my betrothed, and I—I am Ophelia.” But in spite of this assertion of Hamlet’s faith, there is throughout all the music a ring of perpetual pain. She clasps her hand to her head with terror, and exclaims: “If he were false I think I should lose my reason!”

The flowers again hold her attention, and she plays with them as the orchestra commences a ravishing waltz theme. She at first pays little heed to the music, but its gay melody at last drifts to her soul and finds immediate expression. The difficult phrases fall from her lips like petals from a flower. Gleeful chromatics and happy trills are also thrown in, and we would soon forget it was the sad Ophelia did she not sud-



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Calvé as Ophelia in "Hamlet."

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denly tire of this extravagant virtuosity. She turns to the shepherds and bids them harken to the song she will sing. Then follows a ballad whose moaning, minor harmonies sound like a sighing breeze. It is about the sirens beneath the water who lure men to its glassy depths. The wearied, worried mind of the mad girl now revels in a wild, merry laugh, which is as quickly followed by passionate sobs; but she finally remembers to finish her song about the siren. This strange, sad melody possesses a weird charm that is irresistible. Again she breaks into hilarious laughter and uncontrolled weeping. Grief without hope and joy without memory alternate in rapid succession. The music of this portion defies description. It is a perfect conflagration of impossible staccatos and scales. With one last sweeping chromatic run, that rushes like the whistling wind from low D to high E, Ophelia kneels down with her flowers and thinks only of them. The peasants retire from the scene, and

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the orchestra take up fragments of the waltz.

They play for some moments, while Ophelia contentedly rearranges her bouquet. But presently a wonderful change comes over the music. We hear only the string instruments and flute, and soon these, too, are hushed, while out of the air a magical song arises. It is the siren's ballad, faint as a vision but with full harmonies. Thomas has produced this effect of dream-music by having the chorus sing behind the scenes with closed mouth: This soft humming of a hidden chorus well resembles the buried voices of water-nymphs. Ophelia at once recognizes the song, and she is drawn by the music toward the stream, where she hopes to see the sirens. All unconscious, she pushes her way through the rushes and reeds on the bank. The chorus has ceased, and only the tender, liquid tones of the harp now fill the air. Ophelia steps too far and soon falls into the "weeping brook." Her dress bears her up for a time, and we hear

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her sweetly singing as she floats down the stream. It is no longer the ballad or the gay waltz, but quite another theme to which her memory now clings. It is Hamlet's glorious vow—

“Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.”

Ophelia ends her song with a lingering high note of such silvery beauty that it seems like a far-away star in the dark night of death.

A Talk
with

Lillian Nordica.

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LILLIAN NORDICA.

A TALK WITH LILLIAN NORDICA.

IT was during one of Patti's farewell seasons at the old Academy of Music that a young American girl, by the name of Lillian Norton, first appeared as a prima donna. She made a success, but not a sensation, for she had not then the halo of a European glory, and people were in those days too intent on the passing star to note any rising one.

But later on, when she Italianized her name, they applauded the same voice more loudly, tho their attention was still more directed to the foreign artists who appeared every year.

The American girl all this time never relaxed her determination, but kept on working with a will, learning rôles there was no prospect of using, and studying all things in her line. At last she was engaged

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by the Metropolitan Opera Company; but her name was not printed at the top of the list, and she was not held out as the magnet to fill the house on the opening night. In the end, tho, she sang oftener than any of the other sopranos, for when they were indisposed she it was that always came forward. *There was never a rôle she could not sing, and never a time she was not ready.*

The dormant appreciation of her countrymen became at last thoroughly aroused. Since then her success has swept onward with unabating force. The following season in New York the enthusiasm she inspired was so great that one large club of opera-goers presented her with a diamond tiara, and the people that year had to stand in line when buying seats to hear Madame Lillian Nordica.

The Waldorf-Astoria, where she lives when in New York, is quite a contrast to the humble New England home in Farmington, Me., where she was born. This hotel is a city in itself, and the visitor who

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inquires for some distinguished resident is conducted personally along the marble avenues and carpeted byways and through the beautiful "palm-garden." The door of Madame Nordica's apartment was opened by a white-capped maid, who seated the caller and then left the room. It was the day of the blizzard, and from this sixth-floor elevation the snow-storm without was of superb fury. It battered against the window as tho maddened by the sight within of the prima donna's cosy parlor, of the shaded electric lights, the wide-open grand piano, and the numerous long-stemmed roses, in various tall jars, fragrant and peaceful as a summer's day. Through the silken draperies of a doorway could be heard the sound of voices, of occasional laughter, and then—a scale, a trill, and a soft high note. It was an exquisite grand-opera effect with the whistling storm by way of orchestral accompaniment.

Soon the curtains were parted and Madame Nordica entered—a woman of regal height

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and figure, but with manners thoroughly American and democratic.

“Do you mean to say you came through all this storm to see me! You are certainly very brave.” These were her first words; then she drew up a comfortable chair, and added: “Well, it’s just the sort of day to talk and take things easy.”

Madame Nordica’s tones convey even more than her words, for her voice is noticeably beautiful in conversation. It is fascinating in its variety, its softness, and its purity. Her face is also very expressive, as well as beautiful, with a complexion remarkably fine, teeth of absolute perfection, and thoughtful blue eyes set well apart.

She wore a house-gown of pale, clinging blue silk, and, with the exception of her wedding ring, had on no jewelry.

She told first of her birthplace and home.

“I was the sixth girl, and I think my parents were rather tired out by the time I came. I wasn’t even baptized!” Then she talked of her work.

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“I studied first in Boston, and sang there in church; but I made my concert *début* here in New York with Gilmore at the old Madison Square Garden. He took me with him afterward to Europe. When I returned to America I sang in all the Italian operas, especially Verdi's.”

Madame Nordica still holds to-day a supreme place as a singer of the Italian school, altho her greatest fame has been won in the Wagner rôles.

When asked if she had ever met Verdi, the singer replied in the affirmative.

“I met him in Italy, but only once. I was much better acquainted with Gounod, and also the modern composers, Leoncavallo, Mascagni, etc., but now I devote my chief time to Wagner.”

This led to inquiries about Madame Cosima Wagner.

“Ah, I lived right with her for three months, and it was a great privilege for me. Her husband's music is to her like her very eyes. She taught me the German and helped

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me in every way. 'Lohengrin' had never been sung in Baireuth, and I was to create there the rôle of Elsa."

A remarkable honor this was, indeed: to be the first Elsa in Wagner's own temple, under the guidance of his own wife, with the grave of the great composer fairly in sight, and memories of the "Mad King" on all sides—the king whose ears were deaf to the functions of state, but open to the art of heaven.

"It was a great opportunity for me, but I sometimes thought I would have to give it up. Oh! I have been so discouraged! I have wept *barrels of tears!*"

This is a kind message for the great singer to send to the many struggling aspirants who may to-day be working under discouragement.

Madame Nordica insists that "work is everything. The voice is but the material; it is the stone from which the cathedral is built."

After her great success in Baireuth, the

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American prima donna sang Elsa in New York.

“But I had to sing again in Italian, for the rest of the company had not learned the German. It was through my efforts that they have since studied these rôles in the original, and we now sing all the Wagner operas in German.”

It was a great musical event when Jean de Reszke and Madame Nordica appeared as Tristan and Isolde. This love-tragedy done in music is perhaps the most profound of all operas. It is somber with sorrow throughout; even the great love-duet in the second act is too intense and grand in its motifs ever to be called happy. It is not the joyous emotion of youth, but the fervor of maturity, where life itself is staked for a mighty love. This second act is a wondrous musical scene. It is in the moonlit gardens of the Cornish castle where Tristan and Isolde meet clandestinely, while Bragaende, the faithful attendant, keeps watch in the tower above. She is not seen, but the calm

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sustained tones of her watch-tower song soar out in contrast to the intense love-music like a beacon-light on a turbulent sea.

Another very popular rôle of Madame Nordica's, tho altogether different in style, is Valentine in "The Huguenots." Her sustained and crescendoed high C in the third act of this opera is worth a long journey to hear. Madame Fursch-Madi in years ago used to sing this rôle very grandly, but she was plain of feature; whereas with Madame Nordica her Valentine is so beautiful to behold that the audience is aroused to greatest sympathy with the hero's struggle between love and duty.

"Our art is so very legitimate," Madame Nordica thoughtfully remarked. "The painter or the writer can take advice, can be assisted, and has time to consider his work; but we must face the music alone, at the point of the bayonet as it were, for every tone must come at the right moment and on the right pitch. The actress has neither of these requirements to meet. It is very

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trying, also, to sing one night in German and the next time in some other language. Indeed, every performance is a creation. No wonder we are so insistent on the applause. A painter or writer can say to himself, if his work is not at first well received, 'Just wait till I am dead!' But our fate and fame are decided on the spot."

Madame Nordica grew enthusiastic as she talked, and her face was all animation.

"It is easy to criticize us, but hard for an outsider to appreciate the difficulties of our art. No one is in a place he does not deserve—at least not for any length of time. And I believe, too, that no one lacks for opportunity. When people say, So-and-so has a beautiful voice, and ought to be on the Metropolitan stage, just inquire what that person can do. Very likely she only knows one language, and probably can not sing a single act of one opera straight through. Why should she be on the Metropolitan stage? A girl came to me not long ago who had been singing with some Eng-

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lish opera company. She had a beautiful voice and said she could sing everything, which I found to be true. I asked why she did not go to Mr. Grau, and she replied, quite disheartened, that he would do nothing for her. Then I asked, 'Are you ready for *anything*? I feel quite sure he could use you now as the page in "Romeo and Juliet." ' 'Oh, I wouldn't sing a secondary rôle!' she quickly exclaimed. Now that girl makes a great mistake. To sing well one beautiful aria on the same stage with such artists as the two De Reszkes and Madame Melba would do her more good than to sing the first rôles in a poor company."

Madame Nordica spoke very earnestly as she related this story of a lost opportunity, which so plainly points its own moral. Another incident she told gives the reverse side of the same idea:

"I remember one day some singers were discussing another member of their company, and claiming that he did not deserve his high position; but I protested, and said:

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‘ Just consider what that man can do. He knows every language, has a fine stage presence, a good voice, and can sing every rôle in the repertoire. Now where will you get another to fill his place? ’

“ Our art to-day is very different from what it used to be. People wonder who will replace Patti or some other retiring singer; but if one should appear who adequately filled the vacant place, we would at once hear people saying, ‘ She only sings colorature rôles and nothing but Italian! ’ No, the great artist to-day is the one who has mastered all, who does the work of three in former years, and not one who shines forth temporarily in a few special rôles.”

Madame Nordica can certainly speak with authority on this point, for she is one whom we may truly say has “ mastered all.” Her repertoire is astonishing in its scope and variety; and when we consider that out of eighty-seven million people, which is our present population, including the colonies,

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she is the only one to-day who sings the three "Brünhildes" of Wagner and also his "Isolde," we can then better appreciate Madame Nordica's achievement. It needs a very great mind to grasp and portray these Wagnerian creations. Brünhilde, the war goddess, must be both tender and heroic—as it were, divinely human. No composer but Wagner could have imparted these qualities; but he was himself a sort of musical Jove, who wielded the scale like a thunderbolt. If any one doubt this, let him hear and behold the wonderful "Ride of the Walküre," those five war maidens, daughters of Wotan, who chase through the clouds on their armored steeds, and call one another in tones unearthly, to an accompaniment of whizzing strings, and clanging brass, and a torrent of intricate chords. The music depicts the fierce clash of the elements, the war gods in battle, the clamor of shields, and the furious dash of wild horses. Above it all there rings out on the air the weird, far-reaching cry of Brünhilde,



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Nordica as Brünhilde in "Siegfried."

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the leader of the Walküre maidens, and her call is repeated from the East, from the West, from the uttermost mountain-peaks, by her sister spirits, who are sometimes hidden and sometimes revealed by the fast-rushing clouds, through which their steeds gallop and plunge.

Whoever can hear this wonder-work and not bow to Wagner's greatness is surely a musical degenerate.

"My progress has not been by leaps and bounds," Madame Nordica presently announced; "it has been more tortoise-like; and I have sometimes seen others sweep past me with apparently little effort. But in the end justice comes around to all. What is it Mrs. Carter says in 'Zaza' about success? 'It comes from much misery.' Yes, there is very much of that. 'And much work,'—ah, a *great deal* of that. 'And a little luck,'—yes, a *very* little of that; it is not good to have much luck."

As I arose to go, Madame Nordica added with a smile: "You see I could talk on this

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subject all day. The sum of it is, success comes from steady daily work. You must work well in the morning, and then work some more in the afternoon—and it is well to practise between times too!”

“Lohengrin.”

“LOHENGRIN.”

THERE seems a very magic about the name of Lohengrin—a mythical strength and beauty that at once characterize the whole opera. The fault is occasionally found that Wagner’s operas are long and at times tedious; but this term is never applied to “Lohengrin.” One is disarmed of this suspicion in the very first prelude. Ah, what a prelude is that! It is like the gradual drawing together from empty space all the music of the spheres. The two first measures are so pianissimo that we scarcely hear them, but the vague and far-away voices come slowly nearer. They mingle with each other and weave in and out, until there is a crescendo mighty and overpowering. We are now prepared for the legendary character of the opera; such music could not represent things earthly.

The curtain rises upon a scene of medi-

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eval coloring. It is a woodland upon the banks of the Scheldt in the province of Brabant. A throne is erected on one side, and here the king of Germany is holding court. He is visiting this province of his realm to solicit aid in a coming war. After this fact is announced by the herald, the king arises and in stately phrases greets the people and explains more fully the object of his visit. He closes with the observation that it grieves him to find this province in a state of discord, and he requests Frederick of Telramund, an esteemed nobleman of Brabant, to recount the situation.

Frederick, which is the baritone rôle, tells a strange and interesting story. The province is at present without any ducal ruler, owing to the recent mysterious disappearance of the young heir. He was last seen in company with his sister Elsa. The two were walking in the forest, but she returned alone and declared she had lost her brother. Frederick now charges Elsa with murder, and furthermore lays claim to the ducal

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throne in the name of himself and also his wife Ortrud, who bears some kinship to the late duke.

On hearing this charge the king summons Elsa, who presently comes forward with bowed head and sorrowful mien. This must have been a thrilling moment at that first performance in Baireuth when Lillian Nordica stepped before the audience. It was not only Elsa challenging her accusers, but an American girl challenging German critics under the dome of their most hallowed shrine, with their own music and in their own language. But whatever a singer's emotions may be, she must give no evidence of them. It is wonderful how smoothly these great performances always run. Come what may, the play goes on.

Elsa can say no more in her behalf than has already been given; but when urged by the king to speak freely all that is on her heart, she tells of a wonderful vision which came in her hour of distress. An armored knight, more grand than any she had seen,

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appeared to her and promised to be her deliverer and champion. This dream-song of Elsa's is like a musical apparition, so ethereal and spirituelle; but one must not seek for these wonderful beauties in the voice-part alone. With Wagner the orchestra is never a mere accompaniment, but more often the principal part. A theme is sometimes begun in the orchestra and finished by the voice, or it may be altogether with the instruments. Wagner handles the voice like a noble metal which can be fashioned into useful vessels to carry and convey the emotions, in contrast to the Italian composers, who look upon the voice as a jewel to be displayed and admired for its own sake.

To return to Elsa's song. It should be understood from the first that each theme in the opera expresses some emotion or idea which is consistently adhered to throughout. For instance, when Elsa describes the knight in her dream, there is heard in the orchestra a few bars of the Lohengrin- or

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swan-song, a theme which is constantly revealing itself in this great kaleidoscope of sound whenever the hero appears or is mentioned. Again, when she speaks of his glittering armor, the splendid warlike motif which asserts itself is the same one that is worked up in the crescendo preceding Lohengrin's arrival.

After this strange recital of Elsa's, Frederick still maintains his charge against her, and states as her motive for the crime that she hoped to gain the throne. The king decides to settle the question by single combat. Frederick must defend himself against whomever may come forward as Elsa's champion. This custom is according to the ancient belief that "might is right," and that Heaven itself is the awarder of victory and defeat. The herald of the king announces, with a trumpet-call, the impending combat, and bids "him who will fight for Elsa of Brabant to come forth at once." The call dies away, but no one presents himself as her defender, and it

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appears as tho Heaven already indicates which side is right. Elsa piteously begs them to call again. Her wish is granted, and once more the cry rings forth. She falls on her knees, and in tones that vibrate with intense despair prays Heaven to send her the hero of her dream. "Elsa's prayer" and "Elsa's dream" are two of the most beautiful soprano solos in the opera. The prayer is short, but it accomplishes a thrilling crescendo. The final climax is such a passionate outcry that we are not surprised to see an immediate answer granted.

Wagner is a master of crescendos, and he now commences one for the chorus which is truly wonderful in effect. Instead of starting all the voices pianissimo, or even part of the chorus, he starts with a single voice. One man has perceived a knight floating down the river in a boat drawn by a swan. He whispers it to his neighbor, who in turn says, "Look!" and then another and another in quick succession join in exclamations, until all are singing of the strange

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sight. They rush to the bank, and still the wonder grows. The knight of the swan draws nearer, the orchestra crashes out its stupendous theme, the sopranos ring out above everything, and the whole chorus seems to have doubled its capacity. It is a greeting worthy of the subject, who is Lohengrin himself.

No wonder the people subside and look at him with awe as he steps upon the bank. He is clad in shining silver, with a helmet, shield, and sword. His face is fair and his hair is blonde. Before noticing the people, he turns to the swan and sings it a farewell. This song is only two lines long, and for the most part without accompaniment. It is apparently simple, and differs little from the form of a recitative, and yet so rare and strange is this melody that it portrays the legendary character of the opera more than any other phrase. It seems as tho Lohengrin is still singing in the mystical language and music of that other world from which he has come. Every one knows this song

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by its German name, "Mein lieber Schwan," and it is so much admired and so famous that it is actually paraphrased. A man must be great indeed to be caricatured; how much more is this true of classical music!

Lohengrin soon comes forward and bows before the king, after which he announces that he has been sent as champion "for a noble maid who is falsely accused." But before entering the combat he speaks to Elsa, who has previously offered to bestow her hand and heart upon whomever would fight for her. She now reiterates this vow most gladly, and also makes another promise which the strange knight requests—she must never ask from whence he came, nor what his name. Lest there be any misunderstanding, he repeats the impressive phrase in a higher key, and Elsa again promises. This short theme is most important. It might be described as the dark motif. It is the one most often heard when Ortrud and Frederick do their evil

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plotting, for it is by means of this interdiction of Lohengrin's that they eventually succeed in accomplishing Elsa's unhappiness.

When the two combatants face each other and all is ready, the herald again comes forward and solemnly proclaims the rules governing such contests. They are interesting to note: "No one shall interfere with the fight under penalty of losing his head or his hand;" and furthermore, no sorcery or witchcraft shall be exerted, for Heaven alone must decide who is right. After this preliminary the king arises and prays for the just judgment of Heaven to clearly show which side is true and which is false. Wagner always favored the bass voice when possible, and so he has given to the king this splendid and impressive composition, with its rich, full chords and stirring rhythm. The chorus takes up the prayer and finishes it with inspiring breadth and grandeur. The king strikes upon his shield three times and the battle begins. It does not last long, for Frederick is soon disarmed

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and thrown down by Lohengrin, who, however, spares his life.

The victory has proven Elsa's innocence and Frederick's falsehood. The latter is disgraced utterly, while Lohengrin is regarded as Heaven's favorite. Elsa sings forth her joy and gratitude in melodic phrases which would need no words. The music of Elsa and Lohengrin is like the music of day—it is so clear, so lucid and full of melody in contrast to the rugged, weird, and gloomy themes of Ortrud and Frederick.

The great chorus of victory is the last number of this act. It brings in with Wagner's inimitable modulations the martial theme of the previous chorus and also Elsa's song of praise. All excepting Ortrud and Frederick look happy and join in the singing right heartily as the curtain descends.

The second act comprises Ortrud's great scene. This rôle may be sung by a contralto, but is better adapted to a mezzo-soprano. Ortrud is often called the operatic

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Lady Macbeth. She is not only as wicked and ambitious as Shakespeare's heroine, but is also a sorceress of no mean ability, for it is she who made away with Elsa's brother; but this fact is not revealed until the last act. She also exerted her power upon Frederick with such effect that he believed her to be a prophetess. He was sincere in his accusation against Elsa, for Ortrud told him she had witnessed the crime herself. But he is now awakened to her wickedness, and the scene opens with his maledictions against her and his abject wretchedness over his own disgrace. The two are seated upon the church steps facing the palace, where jubilant preparations are going on for the wedding of Elsa and Lohengrin, which will take place at dawn. It is yet night, and the music is deep and ominous. The dark motif and a new one which seems to represent Ortrud are the musical heart and soul of this scene. They stalk about the orchestra like restless phantoms, and are heard in all sorts of

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keys and instruments. After Frederick's great harangue against his wife and fate and everything, she calmly inquires the cause of his anger. She declares that she never deceived him, and that the recent combat was unfairly influenced by Lohengrin's sorcery. Such is her power over Frederick that he again believes and listens to her plans. She explains how Lohengrin may yet be robbed of his power and Frederick's honor vindicated. Elsa must be induced to ask the hero his name, or he must be wounded, be it ever so slightly. Either of these methods will annihilate his power. This remarkable scene closes with a duet about revenge, which the two voices sing in unison—a point indicative of their renewed unity of purpose.

The music now changes to harmonies that charm and soothe, and Elsa appears upon the balcony of her palace. The moonlight falls upon her as she clasps her hands in rapture and sings to the gentle zephyrs of her love. It is a song as peaceful as the

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night; and in contrast to the recent somber and spectral themes, it beams forth like a diamond against black velvet. This solo of Elsa's is one of the most difficult to sing because of its many sustained pianissimo tones. After the last sweet note has died away like a sigh, Ortrud, who is still seated on the steps beneath, calls to Elsa in a pleading voice. She appeals to the latter's sympathy by announcing herself as "that most unhappy woman, Ortrud," wife to the disgraced Frederick. "We are cursed by God and man, and welcomed nowhere." Thus speaks the sorceress; and Elsa, in the goodness of her heart, takes pity and impulsively offers to receive the outcast. She retires from the balcony and presently opens the door below to welcome Ortrud, who in this short interim has sung some splendid phrases of gloating animosity. But she kneels like a humble slave before the unsuspecting Elsa, who invites her to the wedding and also promises to induce Lohengrin to pardon Frederick.

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As an expression of gratitude, Ortrud now offers to exert the power of prophecy for Elsa's benefit. Prophecy and sorcery are regarded in different lights: the latter is wicked and implies collusion with the evil one, while the "prophetic eye" is a gift to be coveted. Ortrud pretends to possess this power. She forewarns Elsa against too great confidence in her hero, and mysteriously hints that he may leave as suddenly as he came. These words are accompanied by the threatening dark motif, which hovers ever near like a lowering cloud. Elsa recoils at the thought—this first seed of suspicion,—but she soon smiles assuredly and sings to Ortrud a lovely song about "the faith and trust that knows no doubt." Wagner's words are as beautiful as his music, and in this composition they seem to mount upward on the "wings of song" like the spontaneous utterance of a pure heart. Elsa puts her arms gently about Ortrud and leads her into the palace. Frederick, who has kept in the background,

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watches them disappear, and the scene closes with his final descant on revenge.

After his exit the orchestra has a solo, so to speak, while the stage is occupied in representing the dawn of day. Villagers stroll in one by one, garlands are hung in honor of the wedding, and the scene becomes constantly brighter and more active. The herald appears above the gates of the palace and makes three announcements in the name of the king: First, that Frederick of Telramund is banned and shall be befriended by no none; second, that the Heaven-favored stranger shall hereafter be called the guardian of Brabant; and, third, that this hero shall lead them soon to "victorious war." Then follows a chorus about the Heaven-sent guardian of Brabant, after which there is a momentary commotion caused by Frederick, who, in spite of the ban against him, comes forward and asserts that he will defy their much-lauded hero and will open their eyes to his duplicity.

But this incident is forgotten in the

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gorgeous scene which now commences. The wedding-guests come slowly from the palace, and wend their way in stately procession toward the church. Their course is accompanied by a march of pontifical solemnity, which attains its grandest beauty when Elsa comes down the great stairway clad in robes of regal splendor. All voices join in praise for "Elsa of Brabant."

The procession proceeds to the church; the music increases in strength, when suddenly there is a discord. Elsa is confronted at the church entrance by Ortrud, who fiercely declares she will no longer follow like an attendant; that she is the one to whom people should bow instead of Elsa, whose future lord comes of a land and family which he dare not tell! Elsa is dumbfounded by this sudden onslaught from the woman she has befriended. But Ortrud maintains her position, and actually defies Elsa to ask the hero his name. This attack is diverted by the ceremonious entrance of the king and Lohengrin, to whom Elsa hastens with



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Eames as Elsa in "Lohengrin."

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her grievance. Ortrud is promptly ordered aside, and the procession resumes its march. But again the solemn cathedral music crashes into a discord. Frederick, the despised one, dares to rush before the king and bar the way as he begs them to harken to his words. There is great indignation over the interruption, but Frederick so intensely cries for justice that at last even the king listens as he charges Lohengrin with sorcery. He sustains the charge by demanding Lohengrin to tell his name, if he be an honest man; if he can not do this there must be some dark secret to hide. All turn to the hero expectantly, but he only defends himself by saying that he has proven his worth in mortal combat, according to ancient usage, and that he will not answer Frederick nor even the king—only Elsa shall be answered this question. He turns to her and finds her trembling with agitation. The orchestra tells us her thoughts, for we hear the Ortrud-theme and dark motif writhing in and out like venomous serpents. A murmuring sort

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of chorus about the strange secret which the hero so zealously guards is gradually resolved into a song of allegiance and belief. The king declares Frederick unworthy of consideration. But during the jubilant chorus which follows, that Miserable steals up to Elsa and casts his final poison-shaft. He tells her that if Lohengrin were once wounded, "merely pricked in the finger," he would then bestow upon her full confidence and never leave. Frederick further says he will "linger near the coming night," and when she calls will enter and commit the deed without harm to Lohengrin. Elsa spurns the tempter away, and Lohengrin, who perceives him at her side, bids him forever begone. But finding Elsa even more agitated than before, he asks in the presence of all if she wishes to be told his name. She remembers her vow, and in tones of exultation declares that love is greater than doubt. The magnificent march music is again resumed, and they enter the minster without further incident,

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excepting the defiant gaze of Ortrud as Elsa passes; and while the curtain descends we hear again, half hidden in the orchestra, the terrible dark motif.

There is a brilliant orchestral introduction to the third act, which represents the marriage fête. Its tempo and rhythm are positively gay, tho this is an adjective seldom appropriate to Wagner. But the hilarity has subsided by the time the curtain rises; the trumpets and cymbals are hushed, and the gentlest of music greets our ears as we look upon the bridal chamber. The voices are at first distant, but gradually approach, and the effect of their song steals over us like a potent charm. It is the wedding-march—the “Lohengrin Wedding-March”! We all know the power of that music. There are some compositions which become absorbed, as it were, by the world like important inventions or discoveries. People require certain musical forms of expression as they do artificial light, and we pity those who did without this “Wedding-March,” or

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Chopin's "Funeral March," or the Schubert "Serenade," as we pity our ancestors who made shift with tallow candles instead of incandescent lamps. The charm of the "Wedding-March" is not diminished because we know it so well. With Wagner as with Beethoven, every hearing reveals new beauties. When the chorus at last leaves Elsa and Lohengrin alone, we echo his first words: "The sweet song now is ended."

But our regrets are quickly appeased by the delicious love-duet which follows. It is a scene of rapt delight—of happiness too great to last. Not in vain did we have the dark motif jangled in our ears when the curtain last descended; it meant trouble in the coming act, as we soon perceive. Elsa wishes she knew his name—just to speak it lovingly as he does hers. Then Lohengrin points to the open window through which the moonlight streams upon them, and he sings of the perfumed air which they enjoy without questioning its cause or source;

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thus, he says, should they love. The exquisite melody of this song seems to exhale from his heart like fragrance from a flower. It is redolent of tenderest love.

The nobility and beauty of Lohengrin's character so impress themselves, that Elsa feels oppressed with her own unworthiness. She wishes she might do something heroic to prove her love. For instance, if he would confide to her his secret, she would guard it so faithfully that death itself could not wrest it from her! Very sweetly and beautifully does she coax for this token of trust on his part. Lohengrin replies most gently that he has trusted her already by believing that she would keep her vow. Then he says she little knows how much she is to him; that no earthly honor—not the king's kingdom—could replace what he has left. Only Elsa, his bride, can recompense the sacrifice; for not from night and grief does he come, but from a home of joy and pride.

Like a flash does this remind Elsa of

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Ortrud's prophecy that he may leave her. The Ortrud-theme swoops down upon the orchestra and settles there like an ill-omened bird. The director's baton may send it away for a moment, but down it comes again, and the dark motif with it. Poor Elsa becomes almost frenzied. She believes Lohengrin will long for his beautiful home, which even now he can not forget. She sees in her mind's eye the swan-boat approaching to take him away. Lohengrin speaks reassuringly; but the spell is upon her, and nothing—nothing can give her peace but to know the truth. With mounting tones, the last one of which is like an outcry, she asks the fatal question. Lohengrin gives an exclamation of grief.

At this moment the door is burst open by Frederick, who with drawn sword has come to wound the hero, or, more probably, to kill him. Elsa at once recognizes his intention, and frantically bids Lohengrin defend himself. With a single thrust he kills his would-be assassin.

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This intense and tragic climax is followed by a lull. Elsa has fallen half-swooning on the couch, and Lohengrin stands sorrowfully to one side. He at last exclaims slowly and sadly: "Now is our sweet joy fled;" and then we hear in the orchestra, faint and beautiful as a memory, that first love-duet. It is only a fragment, a fleeting thought, but so touching and pathetic that we could weep with Lohengrin for the harmony that is gone.

The last act is short and almost entirely taken up by Lohengrin's story and farewell. The scenery is the same as in the first act, and the entire chorus of noblemen and soldiers again assemble before the king. They have not yet heard of the tragic event which ended the last act, and are therefore surprised when a bier is carried in and placed solemnly before them. It bears the body of Frederick. They are still more surprised when Elsa enters, pale and dejected, and then their hero, who appears equally sad. But surprise reaches its climax

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when they hear him announce that he can not be their leader.

Lohengrin wastes no words. After the first assertion he informs them of Frederick's death; whereupon all voices declare his fate to be most just, and the body is removed. Lohengrin then announces that Elsa, his wife, has broken the vow which they all heard her make, and he has come before them to answer her question and dispel the mad suspicion which a wily tempter implanted in her heart. They shall all learn his name and heritage, and may then judge whether he was worthy of their trust. The people wonder with awe-hushed voices what revelation is in store, and then there comes in the orchestra the soft tremolo of the swan-music, as Lohengrin tells them of a distant land called Montsalvat, where is a radiant temple. And in this temple is guarded a sacred vessel which possesses wonder-powers. A dove descends from heaven once every year to renew its marvelous strength. This treasure-blessing

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is called the "Grail," and to its chosen votaries a matchless power is given. These knights of the Grail are sent abroad as champions of innocence and truth, and they may tarry so long as their name is unknown. But the Grail's blessing is too pure and holy to be regarded by common eyes, and if disclosed its champion must leave at once. Lohengrin adds that this penalty now falls on him, for he is a knight of the Grail: his father, great Parsifal, wears its crown, and "I am Lohengrin."

As in the first prelude and swan-song, the harmonies of this last great recital seem not of earth but from another sphere; they linger and abide with us like a beautiful blessing. This silver-clad knight of the Grail has been singing of a hallowed mystery whose purity and spirituality are revealed more in the music than by the words. After bidding farewell to the hapless Elsa, from whom he must part in spite of her piteous appeals, there comes floating upon the river the swan-boat. He sings a sad welcome to

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the swan, and then announces to Elsa that could he have remained one year, through the mercy of the Grail her brother would have returned. He hands her his sword and horn and ring to give this brother if ever he comes back. The sword and horn will impart strength and victory, and the ring shall remind him of "Lohengrin who loved Elsa and was her champion."

A jarring interruption is now created by Ortrud, who cries out with reckless triumph that the swan who serves Lohengrin is the bewitched brother, and that Elsa has herself to thank for causing the hero's departure, which forever prevents the young Duke's return. On hearing this mocking invective from the sorceress, Lohengrin clasps his hands in a fervent prayer, which is at once answered. A dove descends from heaven and touches the swan, which is immediately changed into the young heir. He rushes forward to embrace his sister, while Lohengrin steps into the boat, which is drawn away by the dove. It floats silently

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down the beautiful river, and the hero stands sorrowfully leaning upon his silver shield. This is our last glimpse of Lohengrin, the Knight of the Grail.

“Aida.”

“AIDA.”

MADAME NORDICA'S “Aida” is an unsurpassed performance and always draws crowded houses, for the strange pathos of the music displays her wonderful voice to its fullest beauty.

As in “Carmen” every measure scintillates with the sunshine of Spain, so in “Aida” every phrase seems shadowed by the mysteries of Egypt. A comparative study of these two operas will forcibly impress one with the power of music to express nationality. “Aida” carries one to a distant land and centuries back; but this power of breathing the musical life of ancient Egypt into the still form of a libretto is the culmination of modern art. Giuseppe Verdi, the greatest living Italian composer, had written twenty-six operas before he wrote “Aida.”

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A tender, wistful strain high up in the violins forms the opening of the prelude. With this first faint phrase the composer seems to awaken from her long sleep the muse of Egyptian music. Like the hero of fairy lore, Verdi, the prince of melody, has penetrated a realm of slumbering harmonies. They are at first subdued, dazed, and bewildered with themes mingled and woven together like exquisite cobwebs. The conductor's wand gently disperses these clinging meshes of sound, the curtain is lifted, and we are ushered into the musical life of an ancient civilization.

We see a hall in the palace at Memphis, and Ramphis, the high priest, converses with Rhadames, a distinguished soldier. They talk of the impending war against Ethiopia, and it is intimated that Rhadames may be chosen to lead the Egyptians. But the words and song are of little interest compared to the orchestral accompaniment. This is somber and subdued; the notes are of equal length, and the intervals seem of

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geometric exactitude like the diagram of an astrologer.

Ramphis goes out leaving Rhadames joyous over the prospect of becoming a general. He thinks of his beloved Aida, to whom he will return laden with laurels. "Celeste Aida!" is the title of this great romanza. Like all love-songs it is legato, andante, and pianissimo, but at the same time noticeably original and characteristic. The harmonies are constructed with rigid grandeur, but softened and beautified by a tender melody that rests upon them like moonlight on the pyramids. While he is lost in thoughts of Aida, the Princess Amneris enters. She inquires the cause of his radiant expression, and insinuatingly wonders if it is some dream of love. Rhadames only replies that he has hopes of martial honors, and is therefore happy. The Princess secretly loves Rhadames, and her questions are based on jealousy, which is revealed in the nervous, agitated theme that accompanies this duet. Her suspicions are further

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aroused by the entrance of Aida. As the heroine approaches we hear again the pensive theme that opened the prelude. It takes on a new and greater meaning, for Aida is a captive slave, an exile, and the music reminds us of some great longing that vainly strives to express itself. This effect is due to the fact that the musical cadence is left unresolved.

Aida must have the dark complexion of the Ethiopian, and very few prima donnas look well under coffee-colored cosmetic; but Madame Nordica's appearance does not suffer from the application. This Aida is beautiful, and Rhadames can scarce conceal the joy of her presence. The captive also looks down to hide her emotion. But Amneris has detected every glance, and again that jealous theme sweeps like a flame over the orchestra.

The princess addresses her slave by sisterly names, and asks the cause of her downcast looks. Aida says she grieves because of the war against her native land.



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Nordica as Aida.

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There follows a trio wherein Amneris fosters her jealousy, while Aida and Rhadames tremble lest their secret be discovered.

Sounds of martial music prelude the entrance of the king and his suite. When they are assembled a messenger comes forward to announce that the Ethiopians are marching toward Egypt's capital under the leadership of their king, Amonasro. Upon hearing this name Aida exclaims to herself, "My father!" and we thereby learn that she is a princess, but has concealed the fact from her captors. The Egyptians impulsively shout "To war!" and Rhadames is proclaimed their leader. They sing a war-hymn which is so inspiring that even Aida joins in this prayer for victory to Rhadames. After a grand climax all go out excepting the heroine.

"Return victorious!" She repeats this last sweeping phrase, and shudders at the words, for success to Rhadames implies defeat to her father. This distressing thought agitates the music like the passing of a great

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ship over tranquil waters. The ensuing melody rises and falls like waves in the wake of a vessel. Aida realizes that she can not pray for either lover or father. "Was there ever a heart so oppressed!" Her song is like a wail, and the accompaniment introduces a pagan use of the monotone that gives startling effects. "Pieta, pieta!" are the final words of Aida's great solo.

She goes off, and the scene changes to an interior view of the temple of Vulcan. It is a brilliant setting, with solid columns and golden statues, mysterious colored lights and fuming incense, priests and priestesses in glittering costumes; but the music of this consecration-scene reveals more barbaric splendor than the surroundings. The first sounds are the full, pulsating chords of a harp, and from an inner sanctum the grand priestess sings with rich soprano tones a weird refrain that is weighted with mystery. The priests in front answer in subdued, awe-hushed voices. Three times the won-

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drous song and answer are repeated, after which the priestesses perform a sacred dance around the altar. The music of this dreamy dance has the most astonishing progressions, but at the same time maintains an imposing solemnity. During the dance Rhadames is led to the altar, where a silver veil is placed over his head. Ramphis, the high priest, charges him with the welfare of the Egyptian army; and then follows a splendid prayer that Ramphis starts like a sacred fire. It reaches Rhadames, who sings in a higher key, and then it spreads and fills the great temple; basses, tenors, soloists, and chorus take it up in turn and form one mighty rondo. Like a response from heaven comes the chant of the grand priestess from within. Her inspired refrain with its harp accompaniment alternates with the exalted prayer in front. This consecration-scene has little to do with the plot of the story, but it contains some of Verdi's finest music.

Several months are supposed to elapse

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before the second act, which opens with a scene in the apartment of Amneris. Maids are robing the princess for a festive occasion, and we learn by their chorus that Rhadames will to-day return from victorious war. This scene is monopolized by the stringed instruments and female voices. A tropical indolence characterizes the choruses, with their abundant harp accompaniment. Amneris ever and anon breaks forth with an expansive theme expressing her unconquered love for Rhadames. To divert their mistress a group of Moorish slaves perform a lively, grotesque dance, for which Verdi has written music of intoxicating witchery. It is crisp as the snapping of fingers and uncivilized as the beating of bamboo reeds—a veritable savage revel that is nevertheless graceful and delicate. The chorus resume their dreamy praise of the hero, and Amneris continues her moody thoughts of love.

Like an electric flash from a sultry sky does the entrance of Aida affect the musical

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atmosphere. At sight of the beautiful captive, Amneris again rages with jealousy, as is plainly indicated by the conflicting themes in the orchestra. With subtle devices the princess seeks to entrap her rival. She pretends a deep sympathy for Aida's grief over the vanquished Ethiopians, and adds that "Egypt also has cause to mourn, for our brave leader Rhadames is among the slain." This treacherous falsehood is foisted so suddenly that Aida loses caution and reveals her emotion. Amneris cries out in fury: "Tremble, slave! thy secret is discovered!" She informs Aida that Rhadames lives, and that she, Pharaoh's daughter, loves the hero and "will not brook the rivalry of a slave!" Amneris threatens death as the punishment for such audacious love. The proud captive stands for a moment in defiance; but realizing the futility of such action, she humbly pleads for pardon. In this song the composer admirably simulates a savage dearth of compass and harmony—an effect of crude

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simplicity that is charming and touching. The scene is interrupted by a song of victory from the streets, a signal for the festivities to begin. After commanding the Ethiopian to follow as a menial in the celebration, Amneris goes out. Aida closes the scene with the same prayer to Heaven "Pieta!" that ended the first act.

A noisy march introduces the next scene, which represents a grand avenue in Egypt's capital. At the back of the stage is a triumphal arch and at one side a throne. The greater part of this act is spectacular, and after an opening chorus the orchestra has for some time entire charge of the music. The March from "Aida" is almost as popular as the Faust March. Its harmonies never swerve from the Egyptian type, being always stately and substantial as their architecture.

While the brass instruments are playing with full force, we witness the ceremonial entrance of the court, with innumerable priests and soldiers, trumpeters, fan-bear-

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ers, standard-bearers, train-bearers, white slaves, black slaves, flower girls, and dancing girls. There follows an elaborate ballet divertissement, clothed in music of gay pattern and gaudy design, but light in substance. Five lines of continuous staccatos, like so many strings of beads, form the opening of this dance music. The salient points that impart an unmistakable Egyptian atmosphere to this composition are as follows: A savage repetition of every musical phrase, a wild predilection for the monotone, a limited variety of keys, and a preponderant accenting of the rhythm.

After the dance more soldiers enter, some more slaves, more banners, chariots, and sacred images. A chorus of welcome to the conquering hero is struck up, and it increases in strength and grandeur with the pageantry on the stage. It is not merely the crescendo, but the glorious swing and rhythm of the melody that so inspires enthusiasm. When at last Rhadames is borne in on a golden palanquin, the climax is

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stupendous. With a final "Gloria!" shouted by every voice the hero comes forward to be embraced by the king. A group of Ethiopian prisoners are led forward, and Aida with a cry of joy recognizes her father. He has disguised himself as a common soldier, and does not wish it known that he is the defeated king Amonasro. Every one is interested in this reunion of Aida with her father, and the princess secretly rejoices to have them both in her power. Amonasro makes a noble plea for mercy, and his words are set to music that "droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven." It is like a tone-translation of Shakespeare's ode to the quality of mercy. Aida and the other captives lend their voices to the entreaty. Rhadames, who has been observing Aida but dare not address her, is moved by his love to ask for the prisoner's release. The king feels bound to grant the hero's request, but finally decides to retain Aida and her father as hostages of peace. As a final honor the king presents his daughter to

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Rhadames, and adds that by her side he shall some day reign over Egypt. The act closes with another grand ensemble. Amneris gloats over her rival's subjection, Rhadames longs for Aida but dare not oppose the king, and the heroine bemoans her fate. The priests, people, soldiers, and prisoners praise the king, the trumpets blare forth the Aida March, and the curtain descends.

Act III. is the most beautiful both scenically and dramatically. It pictures the banks of the Nile at night. An illuminated temple is at one side, and we see the silvery river winding its way amid palms and rushes far into the distance. Not only is the landscape bathed in "softened light," but also the music imparts an unmistakable effect of moonlight. A faint violin pizzicato that vibrates but never changes position is maintained throughout the introduction, while the other instruments call up weird sounds of the night—the palm-trees rustling together and the plaintive cry of some river-

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bird—then all is still: only that fluttering moonbeam holds the senses.

The silence is broken by a solemn chant from within the temple, and one soprano voice soars out alone in an incantation, mysterious and imposing as an oracle. A royal barge glides to the river's bank, and Amneris with her maids and the high priest Ramphis betake themselves to the temple, where the princess offers prayers for her coming marriage. The sphinx-like song of the grand priestess is again heard, and then every sound is hushed excepting the dreamy pizzicato movement in the violins that so resembles the flitting of moonbeams.

Ere long the solitary tones of the Aida-theme arise from the stillness like a spirit of night. Never before have we realized the full beauty of this melody, for amid the blare and brightness of other harmonies it has been obscured like a sensitive flower. But here in the solitude and darkness it unfolds itself like some glorious night bloom. With cautious steps the heroine enters.

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Rhadames has told her to meet him, and Aida wonders what greeting he will have for her. If it is but to say farewell, then "Nilus, the mighty river, shall quiet forever the exile's grief." For the present she plunges into a flood of memory about her native land, a stream of words that gently flows through a forest of beautiful harmonies. It is a song of homesickness that soothes tho it saddens.

While still under the spell of this music Aida is startled by the entrance of her father. He also sings of their distant home, but with an underlying purpose. He says they may yet return; that it is in her power to save Ethiopia, to regain her throne, her love, and to vanquish her rival Amneris. The father has been quick to detect the love between Aida and Rhadames. Amnasro announces that his people are prepared to renew their attack and that success is assured if they can learn by what path the Egyptians will march. He wishes his daughter to win, by fair means or false, this

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secret from Rhadames. Aida at first refuses to act this part of treachery, whereupon Amonasro chills her with his curse. He says she is no longer his daughter, "No longer princess of Ethiopia, but a slave of the Pharaohs!" The proud blood of the captive is aroused by this epithet. She entreats her father to recall his words, for "'Patria mia' ('my country') is more to me than my love. I will obey." The accompaniment presents an unvaried monotone in the treble, while beneath it there is a pathetic melody half hidden by the upper octaves like romance suppressed by duty. Amonasro conceals himself behind palm-trees as Rhadames approaches.

Never has the joy of meeting been more admirably expressed in music than in Rhadames's greeting of Aida. It is a flight of song as spontaneous and free as the flight of a released bird. He tells her that he will not marry the princess, but must start at once on a second war; and if this time victorious he will tell the king of his love

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and will claim Aida as the reward of his valor. It is a brave plan, but she quickly discovers the weak point. The nervous, inflammatory theme of jealousy that accompanied Amneris in the first act again arises like a hot breath from the orchestra. Aida well knows that the princess would wreak vengeance "like the lightning of heaven." There is only one course that will unite the lovers, and this is to fly—"Fugire!"—to fair Ethiopia, Aida's native land. She coaxes and entreats in phrases of delirious, dream-like beauty descriptive of that wondrous land—"There where the virgin forests rise 'mid fragrance softly stealing." A halcyon peace pervades the music, and its harmonies are strange and rare like the perfume of some exotic flower. Rhadames demurs, but the power of her song is irresistible, and he soon consents to leave Egypt for her sake. There is nothing half way about his decision when once made. The orchestra music rises in emphatic, resolute crescendos that are gloriously inspiring, and the singer's

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voice is carried forward like a rider on his steed. The music recurs to the first impulsive theme of greeting. It is given in full chords, and the soprano joins with the tenor. Every note is accented and the crescendos are augmented. Both voices and orchestra mount upward and soar away on one final, sustained note.

As the lovers start to go, Aida asks, "By what route do the Egyptians march? We must avoid them in our flight." Rhadames names the path, whereupon Amonasro steps forward announcing that "the king of Ethiopia" has overheard this important secret. He promises royal honors to Rhadames; but the hero is overwhelmed with the realization that he has betrayed his country. Vengeance falls upon him at once, for Amneris and the high priest have also overheard. They come from the temple and denounce Rhadames as a traitor. He is seized, but Amonasro and Aida escape.

The first scene of the fourth act reveals a hall in the palace. At the back is a large

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portal leading to the subterranean court of justice. Amneris holds the stage alone during the greater part of this scene. The orchestra preludes it with the familiar theme of jealousy that indicates the ensuing action as clearly as the title to a chapter. Rhadames is to-day awaiting judgment, and the princess, as a last resort, offers to secure his pardon if he will promise to forget Aida. The hero firmly refuses the proffered love of Amneris. He believes Aida is dead and prefers to die also. Very grandly does the music depict Amneris's outraged feelings. She flings a fusilade of wrathful tones, every one bearing the sting of sharp accent. But when he is gone her pride and jealousy wilt under the warmth of genuine love. She sees him led to his doom in the underground courts and hears the priests and judges chanting his name as traitor. This scene resembles the "Miserere" in "Il Trovatore." Three times the unseen chorus is followed by the soprano in front, who sings an anguished phrase that starts with a high

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note and ends with a palpitating, gasping decrescendo that is almost identical with the music of Leonore. The priests condemn Rhadames to be buried alive. As they again pass through the hall, Amneris pleads and implores for mercy, but it is now too late. No power can save the hero.

The last scene of the opera is very short, but it is the most important. It represents two floors, the upper one being a splendid and brilliant temple interior, while beneath it is the crypt—gloomy and terrible. This is the tomb of Rhadames, who has just been immured. The priests above are placing the final stone as the curtain rises and the hero is seen below reclining on the steps. He is thinking of Aida while resignedly awaiting his slow and awful death. Suddenly a voice calls him, and Aida herself appears to his wondering gaze. She had heard of his fate, and to prove her love has secretly returned and hidden in this tomb to die with him. The following song of the lovers has been humorously referred to

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as the "starvation duet." The fact of this appellation only reveals how celebrated is the composition. It is more generally known as "the duet from 'Aida.'" There are other duets in the opera, but when another is meant it is designated; this is the *great* one. Its pathetic harmonies are mingled with the solemn chant of the grand priestess in the temple above and the music of a sacred dance. Aida becomes delirious, and sees in her dreams the gates of heaven opening. Indeed, the music is exquisite enough to make any one dream of heaven. When Madame Nordica sings it, the whole scene seems real and so sadly beautiful that your own heart too almost stops its beating. With soft, sweet tones and bated breath Aida sings till she dies.

Instead of closing with a crescendo, as do most operas, the final of "Aida" becomes ever softer and fainter, like a departing spirit. The brass and wood instruments have long since retired, only the violins and harp keep up a gentle vibrating accompani-

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ment like the flutter of cherubs' wings. The curtain descends very slowly, and the last notes of the violin are written doubly pianissimo. The muse of Egyptian music glides away as silently as she came.

“The Huguenots.”

“THE HUGUENOTS.”

IT is not surprising that the massacre of St. Bartholomew should have attracted such a composer as Giacomo Meyerbeer. The terrible scene immediately suggests a blaze of orchestral chords, seething strings, and shrieking brass, a style in which Meyerbeer delighted. He secured the collaboration of the celebrated French dramatist Eugene Scribe, who apparently went to work at this libretto by writing the fourth act first and then forcing the preceding situations to fit together as best they would. The result is not wholly satisfactory; but where the plot is vague the music is clear and strong enough to carry our emotions over chasms of inconsistencies.

The great theme of the opera is the Huguenot hymn, a thrilling song of faith, with firm, bold harmonies that express un-

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swerving belief. This hymn is used in the overture with grand effect. It is sustained and upheld clear and strong amid the murmurings and attacks of surrounding variations until it finally bursts forth in untrammelled splendor like the supremacy of religious faith.

The curtain rises upon a banquet-hall in the mansion of Count de Nevers, who is a gay young nobleman of Touraine, the province of France in which the first two acts occur. Nevers is giving a supper to his comrades, and the first chorus is the celebrated drinking-song, a refrain so abounding in good cheer that it predisposes one in favor of the whole opera. The revelers are all Romanists, with the exception of Raoul de Nangis, a young Huguenot, who because of recent promotion in the army has been included among the guests. Nevers proposes a toast to "our sweethearts," and gaily adds that he must soon forego such frivolities as he is to be married. Some one suggests that they all recount their

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love affairs, and Raoul is requested to begin. He relates an adventure wherein he rescued a beautiful lady from the rude insults of some boisterous students. He has not seen her since and knows not her name, but she dwells—in his heart. His glowing description of the heroine is a verbal portrait framed in music of golden beauty. It is the best tenor solo of the opera.

After this love-story some surprise is caused by the entrance of Marcel, a Huguenot soldier, who is Raoul's faithful attendant and has followed his young master to this banquet merely to be near and watch over him. Marcel much disapproves of this "feasting in the camp of the Philistines," as he terms it, and by way of atonement he renders in a loud voice that fervid hymn which the Huguenots always sing when in danger. Raoul begs his friends to excuse the rough soldier, and they promptly attest their good will by inviting Marcel to drink. He declines the wine, but consents to sing for them. His song has a wild refrain like

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the firing of musketry, "Piff-paff-piff," and it is a celebrated bass aria.

When this whizzing composition is ended a servant informs the host that a strange visitor would like to speak with him privately. Nevers at first refuses to see any one; but on learning that it is a veiled lady he changes his mind and goes out, after laughingly announcing that he is thus constantly sought by handsome women. During his absence the others joke about the incognita and handle her reputation lightly. They look through a window and see her conversing with Nevers in his private apartment. At sight of her face Raoul recoils, for this clandestine visitor is none other than the heroine of his romance—the beauty to whom he had lost his heart. His ideal is shattered by the discovery. When Nevers returns the audience learns from an aside remark that the lady was his prospective bride, Valentine de St. Bris, and that she came to beg release from her promise. He has reluctantly complied, but does

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not inform his guests of the matter. At this moment a richly attired young page presents himself. It is Urban, the contralto role, who after bowing gracefully on all sides sings a charming and celebrated aria, "Nobil donna,"—"a noble lady sends by me a missive to one of these gentlemen." Such is the substance of this exquisite song with its chivalrous melody, surrounded by rococo embellishments that seem as appropriate to the pretty page as are his Louis Quinze slippers and point-lace ruffs. The note is addressed to Raoul, a fact that occasions some surprise. The young Huguenot reads aloud what sounds like a practical joke, for the paper tells that a court carriage is in waiting to convey him blindfolded to an unnamed destination. His companions urge him to go, for they have recognized the seal as belonging to Queen Margaret of Touraine; but Raoul does not know this. He, however, accepts their advice, and allows himself to be blindfolded in spite of protests from Marcel. They sing a bewitch-

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ing ensemble that is finally resolved into the familiar drinking-song. With these rollicking measures Raoul is led away by the page and the curtain descends.

The opening of the second act is like a musical mirage—tone-phantasies suspended in the air. We see before us the luxuriant palace gardens where Margaret, queen of Touraine, is surrounded by her maids of honor. Terraces and fountains, jeweled hands and feathered fans, vibrant harps and caroling flute combine to form an effect of elegant repose. Margaret is the rôle for colorature soprano, in contradistinction to the heroine, Valentine, which is for dramatic soprano. The music of the queen is very beautiful and so difficult that it requires a great artist, altho there is but the one important scene. It is considered by some to be Madame Melba's best rôle.

Her first aria is about "this fair land," and we incidentally learn that she deplures the existing dissension between Catholics and Huguenots, the one blot upon the per-

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fect peace of Touraine. Her court ladies presently sing an idyllic refrain, and Margaret joins in their song; but while the others abide by the simple melody she decks it out with colorature spangles quite befitting a queen. After another florid solo the favorite maid of honor, Valentine de St. Bris, enters. She wears a riding costume and has just returned from her venturesome interview with De Nevers, who, as she joyfully announces, has released all claim to her hand. We soon learn that Valentine loves Raoul and has confided in the queen, who is planning the marriage of these two, which she much desires because it will unite the leading families of Catholics and Huguenots. The queen rather delights in playing the good fairy, and for this reason has summoned Raoul in the mysterious fashion witnessed in the first act. Before he arrives there is another chorus, called the "song of the bathers." A harp accompaniment like rustling leaves plays around the melody, which is of eolian sweetness, until sud-

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denly, like a fitful breeze, there comes an elfish measure all in the treble. After a brief disporting of this air-sprite we hear again the soft eolian harmonies, which rise and fall until lulled into silence. The page Urban announces that a stranger is approaching, and the maids of honor gather around as he tells of this young cavalier who comes with blindfolded eyes and knows not his destination. Urban's song is brimming over with mischievous coquetry. Its opening words are simply, "No, no, no, no, no, no, you never heard so strange a tale." The court ladies are all in a flutter of curiosity when Raoul is led in, and they would like to see the outcome of this adventure; but the queen orders them away.

Now follows a scene that is full of quaint themes and ingenious duets, a musical branch with many blossoms. Raoul is permitted to remove the bandage from his eyes. He looks with wonder upon the beautiful scene, and then addresses elegant phrases of adoration to the fair lady before

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him. She is not devoid of coquetry—this queen of Touraine—and for some moments there is a graceful game between the two in which the shuttlecock of love is tossed upon the battledores of music. But it is only a game, and the toy is presently dropped. Urban enters to announce that some noblemen of Touraine have come to attend the queen. Raoul is amazed to learn the lady's identity, and Margaret hastens to inform him that in order to unite the Huguenots and Catholics of her province she has arranged a marriage between him and the daughter of St. Bris. Raoul bows obedience to her wish.

The Catholics and Protestants enter in stately procession and group themselves on either side of the stage, Raoul and Marcel heading the Huguenots, while St. Bris and Nevers represent the opposite side. Margaret welcomes them in musical phrases that are right royal. She informs St. Bris and Nevers that the king of France requests their immediate presence in Paris,

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and she then makes her own request, which is that Huguenots and Catholics shall lay aside all enmity and sanction the marriage that she has arranged. They sing a splendid refrain calling upon heaven to witness their vow of future fellowship. This scene contains some fine climaxes, and several brilliant cadenzas for the queen. Margaret sends for Valentine, and expects Raoul to be thrilled with delight when he recognizes the heroine of his romance. But as Valentine comes forward, Raoul gives an exclamation of indignant surprise, for he thinks some great insult is implied in asking him to marry this woman who secretly visits De Nevers and who has been the subject of jests. Without explanation he firmly refuses to accept her for his bride. The consternation hereby aroused is admirably expressed in the music. The first measures are hushed, as tho the chorus were dumb-founded; but they soon gain their voices and denounce Raoul in ringing tones. Valentine exclaims, "What have I done to earn

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such disgrace?" and the theme is taken up in grand form by the others. Every now and then we catch the firm tones of Marcel who amid all this dissension is singing his Huguenot hymn. St. Bris draws his sword, but the queen forbids a duel in her presence, and reminds him that he must go at once to Paris. Raoul declares he will follow and is ready to fight St. Bris at any time. The action and music increase in strength until the curtain falls.

Act III. pictures an open square in Paris, the Pré-aux-Clercs, which extends back to the river. There are two taverns and a church in the foreground, and the stage is filled with a mingled crowd. After an opening chorus of promenaders some Huguenot soldiers come forward and sing a march that is equally stirring and much resembles our own "Rally 'round the flag." It is, however, more elaborate, and has a surprising effect in which the upper voices sing a steady accompaniment of "derum-dedum-dum," while words and melody are in

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the bass. There follows a sharp contrast in the song of some Catholic maidens on their way to church. Purity and simplicity are expressed by the slender accompaniment of flute and clarinet. The people kneel as they hear this "Ave Maria," but Marcel, who has just entered, refuses to do so. The Catholics are angered, while the Huguenots side with Marcel. There is a vigorous ensemble in which the "Ave Maria" and soldiers' chorus are admirably combined, and through it all are heard the disputing cries of the two factions. A general scuffle would ensue were it not for a sudden diversion in the form of some brightly clad gypsies who enter and solicit trade in fortune-telling. Their song is as gay as their costume, and they wind up with a fantastic dance. The orchestra music is here more deserving of attention than the stage picture. The principal melody has the quaint conceit of reiterating one note through five beats, and then with a quick turn reeling on to the next, like a dancer poising on

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one foot until forced to whirl upon the other.

After this *divertissement*, St. Bris, his friend Maurevert, and de Nevers come out of the church where they have left Valentine, who, we now learn, is after all to marry Nevers and this is their wedding-day. The bridegroom goes to bring his retinue to escort the bride home, and St. Bris felicitates himself for bringing about this union which wipes out the disgrace of Raoul's refusal. His remarks are interrupted by Marcel, who delivers a letter from his master which designates the *Pré-aux-Clercs* as meeting-place and an "hour after sundown" the time for their deferred duel. Maurevert suggests to St. Bris that the Huguenot deserves more punishment than can be meted out in honorable combat, and the two friends retire in consultation.

The stage is darkened and we hear the curfew bell, while a watchman goes through the street chanting a drowsy refrain that tells all good people to close their doors and

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retire. Maurevert and St. Bris again cross the stage, and we glean from their few words that a plot is brewing for Raoul's destruction. But Valentine has been standing at the church door and overheard their talk. She is much alarmed, and wishes to warn Raoul, but knows of no way until suddenly she hears and recognizes the voice of Marcel. She calls to him, and he asks: "Who calls in the night? Explain at once or I will fire!" Valentine quickly thinks to speak the potent name "Raoul." Meyerbeer has very aptly used for this call the interval of the perfect fifth, which is known as the cry of nature, because it is the most natural interval to fall upon when calling in the open air. The milkmaid calling her cows or the huckster vending his wares will most often be found singing the perfect fifth.

On hearing the name of his master Marcel is satisfied and comes forward to investigate, but Valentine's face is concealed by her bridal veil. She tells him that his master should be well armed and have strong

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friends near in the coming duel, else he will fall the victim of a plot. Valentine starts to go, but Marcel detains her with the question, "Who art thou?" She hesitates and then answers, "A woman who loves Raoul." In a highly dramatic aria whose phrases are like storm-tossed billows on a restless deep-sea accompaniment she confesses that in saving the one she loves she has "betrayed her own father." The two voices finally work together as is the fashion of duets, and end up with a flourishing climax. At this point occurs the famous high C which Madame Nordica so brilliantly sustains and crescendos throughout four measures. It is a *tour de force* which always brings down the house. Valentine now re-enters the church as the principals and seconds of the duel approach. Marcel tries to warn his master, but Raoul will not listen to suspicions, for he believes his opponent to be honorable. There follows a splendid septet, in which Raoul sings the leading refrain buoyant with youthful courage. The en-

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semble is occasionally interspersed with the religious tones of Marcel, who prays Heaven to interfere. A grand, swinging theme in which all the voices move together like a great pendulum is the final of this septet.

The duel begins, but Marcel, who is on the alert, hears approaching footsteps and draws his sword. Maurevert enters and cries out as prearranged: "A duel with unfair numbers! More Huguenots than Catholics! Help!" whereupon his followers rush in and surround Raoul. But at this moment the Huguenot soldiers who are merry-making in the tavern commence singing their jolly "derum - de - dum - dum," whereupon Marcel rushes to the door and sings in thundering tones the Protestant hymn, which the soldiers within at once recognize as a signal of danger. They hurry out, and then follows a lively commotion on all sides. But there are more words than blows, and the excitement is presently quelled by the ceremonious entrance of Queen Margaret who has just arrived in Paris. She is much

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displeased to come upon party dissension. St. Bris blames Raoul, while the Huguenot charges St. Bris with treachery. At this moment Valentine comes from the church, and Marcel relates how she warned him of a plot. There is general amazement on hearing this. Raoul now thinks to make some inquiries about this lady he had so unhesitatingly condemned, and learns how terrible was his mistake. St. Bris enjoys telling him that she is the bride of De Nevers, and we hear the approaching music of the nuptial barge. An illuminated flotilla appears at the back of the stage, and Nevers steps upon the bank. He addresses to Valentine some gallant phrases of welcome, and escorts her to the boat as his splendid retinue sing a joyous wedding-march. The curtain falls upon a whirl of gay music.

Scribe is on terra firma in the fourth act, which is really the nucleus of the plot, and is perhaps the most dramatic love-scene of any grand opera. The curtain rises upon an apartment in the house of Nevers, and

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Valentine is alone. The opening orchestral measures seem oppressed with a tuneful despair that is soon explained by her song, wherein she bewails this forced marriage, for her heart still cherishes Raoul. The hero suddenly appears at her door, and Valentine thinks she is dreaming until Raoul announces that he has come "like a criminal in the night, risking all" for the sake of seeing her and craving forgiveness. They hear approaching footsteps, and Valentine prevails upon him to enter a side room just as her father and husband come in at the main door with a company of Catholic noblemen. They are too interested in themselves to note Valentine's agitation, and she, being a Catholic, is allowed to remain while her father unfolds the awful plan sanctioned by Catherine de Medicis to "wipe the Huguenots from the face of the earth." The great theme of this conjuration-scene, "blessed is revenge, obey the good cause," is softly sung by St. Bris and then taken up by the others in broad har-

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monies that swell out and sweep forward like a mighty torrent. When the tone-waves are again tranquil St. Bris bids his friends swear allegiance to the royal decree, and all comply with the exception of De Nevers, who declares he can not join in such murder. There is graceful nobility in his music and fervor in his words.

The details of the plot are sung by St. Bris in hushed, hurried tones: how "to-night when strikes the bell of St. Germaine" the Catholics shall rush upon the unsuspecting Huguenots. He then admits into the room a group of monks, who tie white scarfs upon the conspirators and bless their uplifted swords. The music of this scene is grandly sustained by the orchestra, but the ensemble is difficult and requires much rehearsing, for it abounds in surprising fortes and pianissimos.

When the conspirators are gone, Raoul starts from his hiding-place toward the door, but Valentine intercepts the way. He wishes to fight for his friends or die with

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them, but she begs him to stay. There follows a thrilling duet in which the voices pursue each other with growing intensity. The tempo is rapid, and the phrases short and breathless. The first minor melody is soft, but throbbing with suppressed emotion like the strange light and peculiar hush preceding a tempest. Then the music rushes into the major, where it reels and sways like an anchored ship that must soon break its moorings. The soprano voice rises upon G, A, B flat, B natural, and finally C, where all bonds seem loosed and the music rebounds in a rapid descending chromatic run. Then comes a furious passage in which the orchestra conductor uses his baton like a Roman charioteer lashing his steeds. Valentine places herself before the door, and in a desperate moment she declares, "Thou must not go, for, Raoul—I love thee!" This confession is followed by a transporting duet that brings oblivion to other memories. Its mellifluous melody is written *pianissimo*, *dolce*, *legato*, *amoroso*, and the

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orchestra carries it one measure behind the voice, thus keeping the theme constantly in the air like a sweet incense.

A bell in the distance suddenly scatters all lingering harmonies. It is the bell of St. Germaine, and Raoul is aroused to reality. He sings a dramatic refrain about duty and honor, but Valentine still entreats him to stay. Her song is simple as a lullaby but powerful in effect, and he is distracted between her pleadings and the cries from the street. Flinging open the window, he shows her the terrible scene of massacre. A lurid light falls upon them, and there is murder in the orchestral music. Valentine swoons. Raoul looks with anguish upon her prostrate form and we hear the struggle he endures. The melody of Valentine's last sweet song predominates for a moment in the orchestra, but then the noise of the massacre is resumed. Raoul hesitates no longer. One farewell glance, and he rushes with drawn sword through the open window to the street.

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Unlike many operas in which the fourth act is the greatest, the finale of "The Huguenots" is of sustained intensity and not an anti-climax. This fifth act is often omitted, however, as it makes the opera very long. The scene represents a street at night—men, women, and children cross the stage and take refuge in a church. Raoul and Marcel chance to meet, and they are soon surprised by the entrance of Valentine, who has recklessly followed the hero. She wears the white scarf which betokens Catholicism and has brought one for Raoul, but he refuses this mode of escape. Valentine then flings her own emblem away and declares she will join his faith. The music of this entire act is most thrilling. We hear the women in the church singing as a last prayer that grand Huguenot hymn and in the distance a chorus of murderers as they make their awful progress through the streets. This massacre music is blood-curdling; its steady, muffled tread sounds like marching over a paving of dead bodies.

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The waiting figures in the foreground again hold our attention. Marcel relates how he witnessed the death of De Nevers, and on learning that Valentine is free these lovers kneel before the Huguenot soldier, who blesses their union. The choral in the church is again heard, and those outside join in its splendid harmonies. Valentine sings with the fervor of her new-found faith, "Hosanna, from on high the clarion sounds!" This last trio resembles the finale of "Faust" in that the theme rises higher and higher, like a flaming fire, to be quenched at last by Death. The murder-chorus is heard approaching, and soon a group of massacrers enter. "Who is there?" they ask.

"Huguenot!" replies the hero, and in ringing tones a woman's voice cries out, "Huguenot!" "Fire!" orders St. Bris, who thereby kills his own daughter.

An Hour
with
Lilli Lehmann

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LILLI LEHMANN.

AN HOUR WITH LILLI LEHMANN.

IN Berlin, fourteen years ago, the foreigner was at once impressed with two faces, new to him, but conspicuous in every show-window. One picture represented an imposing, middle-aged man, which you were told was "unser Kronprinz," and the other, a handsome, fine-figured woman, was "unsere Lilli Lehmann." And you were looked at in surprise for not knowing "our Lilli Lehmann."

The Berliners have always spoken in a possessive sense of this lady—their star of the opera—especially in that year when she broke her contract with the Kaiser to accept an engagement in America. It made a great talk there at the time, but the Berliners thought none the less of her, and the morning after her *début* in New York the first words that greeted you in the Vaterland were:

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“Have you heard the news? The Lilli Lehmann has had a great success in America.”

Fourteen years later this same Lilli Lehmann is still having “a great success in America.” Her art is enduring as it is great. She is equally successful in colorature and dramatic rôles; but her physique and voice are particularly fitted to the mythical Wagnerian characters. Lilli Lehmann imparts to these legends of the Norseland all the attributes our fancy calls for. Her Scandinavian goddess is a creature of mighty emotions, heroic build, and a voice at times like the fierce north wind. Her cry of the Walküre is a revelation in the art of tone-production.

I was to call upon Madame Lehmann at 9:30 A.M., and this after a great and long performance the evening before. I had visions of the prima donna still in bed, receiving her caller quite in negligee, and sipping her coffee, served by a French maid, while a parrot and pet dog and flowers and

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the morning mail and newspapers combined to form an effect of artistic confusion.

This makes a pleasing picture, but it is not Lilli Lehmann. There is no sense of "artistic confusion" about her from her gray-tinged hair to her grand, true voice.

In answer to the visitor's knock at her room in the Hotel Netherlands, she opened the door herself, and shook hands with true German cordiality.

The bed in the adjoining room was already made up, and there was no sign of a late breakfast; all this at an hour when it is safe to say half her hearers of the evening before were not yet up.

And Lilli Lehmann, who in the eyes of the public is majestically arrayed in flowing robes and breastplates and silver shields, wore on this occasion, over her plain serge dress, the typical little fancy apron—so dear to the German *Hausfrau*.

The Berliners may well call her "Our Lilli Lehmann," for she is as unassuming to this day as the least of them.

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But altho she impresses you as unpretentious, you also feel at once her great force and energy. It shows in her every word and movement, and also in her business-like method of being interviewed.

“Yes, I am quite tired,” was her first remark as she seated herself at a little writing-desk and her visitor near by. “The opera lasted so late; I did not get to bed until two o’clock. But I was waiting for you this morning, and had just prepared to write down some items you might wish to know.”

Then she took a pencil and paper,—and what do you suppose she wrote first? These are the exact words, and she read them aloud as she wrote:

“Born—Würzburg, November 24, 1848.”

I could not conceal some surprise, and was obliged to explain: “The American ladies so seldom give their age that your frankness is a revelation.”

“The Lilli Lehmann” smiled and said: “Why not? One is thereby no younger.”



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Lehmann as Isolde in "Tristan and Isolde."

1870

1871

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She turned again to the desk, and went on with the "interview," using her pencil with great firmness and rapidity as she wrote in German, and with all possible abbreviations:

"I was brought up in Prague, where I made my *début* when eighteen years of age. My mother was my first teacher and constant companion. She was herself a dramatic soprano, well known as Maria Löw, and my father, too, was a singer."

"In what opera did you first appear?"

"It was the ' Magic Flute,' and I appeared in one of the lighter rôles; but two weeks later, during the performance, the dramatic soprano was taken ill, and I then and there went on with her rôle, trusting to my memory after hearing it so often. My mother, who was in the audience and knew I had never studied the part, nearly fainted when she saw me come on the stage as Pamina."

Madame Lehmann's feats of memory have more than once created a sensation. We remember the astonishment aroused in New

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York music circles five years ago when she mastered the Italian text of "Lucrezia Borgia" in three days.

Recurring to her life in Prague, Madame Lehmann further said:

"I appeared not only in many operas, but also as an actress in many plays. In those days opera singers were expected to be as proficient in the dramatic side of their art as the musical, and we were called upon to perform in all the great tragedies. But nowadays this would be impossible, since the operatic repertoire has become so tremendous."

People seldom consider how much larger is the present list of famous operas than formerly. All the Wagnerian works, many of Verdi's, and most of the French have taken their places in comparatively recent years, and yet there is still a demand for all the old operas too. The singer who attains Wagner must at the same time keep up her Mozart, Beethoven, Glück, Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Bellini.

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As the visitor mentioned Bellini, Madame Lehmann assented. "Yes, we are to give 'Norma' here next month." "Norma," abounding in melody and florid fancies, is as different from Wagner as a cloudless sky from a thunder-storm.

The divine art, like nature, has its various moods, and Wagner and Bellini represent two extremes.

Among Wagner's works, "Isolde" is one character to which Madame Lehmann's temperament and physique are strikingly fitted. Throughout the long first act, wherein she is almost constantly singing, she imparts a glorious impression of one who *thinks in music*. The fearless, impassioned Isolde thinks bitter, rancorous thoughts of Tristan, whom she abhors, until with fierce resolve she hands him the fatal drink which, unknown to herself, is a love-potion. The previous dearth of action has created a ready mood for us to thrill and respond at the love-frenzy, the delirium which now animates the scene as these unwitting lovers

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suddenly find all hatred and other memories gone from their hearts.

It may be mentioned here that Wagner firmly believed in the power of contrast, and he purposely preceded his greatest climaxes by what many would deem an unwonted length of inaction.

In 1870 Lilli Lehmann was engaged for the Berlin Opera-House.

Americans can hardly appreciate the significance of this fact; but it means much. The opera in Berlin is supported by the government and directly under the supervision of the emperor. The singers are not engaged for a season, but for life, being entitled to an annuity after they retire from the stage. Lilli Lehmann's contract was signed by the kaiser during the Franco-Prussian war.

When asked if the old Emperor Wilhelm was musical, Madame Lehmann smiled, and there was a gleam of humor in her eyes:

“No, I can not truthfully say that he was

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at all musical, tho he was wonderfully kind and good to all artists.”

For fifteen years Lilli Lehmann sang in Berlin with an occasional flight to Baireuth under the kaiser's permission, where she sang for Wagner himself.

“I was one of the Rhine daughters, and also the first Forest Bird in ‘Siegfried.’”

Wagner's own Forest Bird! It is a thrilling and poetic statement that would be hard to equal. Of all this great master's characters, including gods and demi-gods, knights and shepherds, dwarfs and giants, his most original, and perhaps for this reason his best-loved children of the brain, were, we believe, his Rhine daughters and his Forest Bird. The former sing under the water laughing strains of mystical import and unearthly sweetness, while the Forest Bird sings in the air—everywhere unseen, but more impressive than the greatest presence.

This bird-music is not very long, but it is of unsurpassed beauty, and the most memorable theme in the opera. The scene too is

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exceptional and powerful in its simplicity—only one person on the stage. Siegfried, the inspired youth, who knows the speech of bird and beast, is alone in the forest when he hears a bird sing. He pauses to listen, as you in the audience do too, for the song is not a meaningless mocking-bird array of trills and cadences, but a tender strain that bespeaks the bird as a prophet. Siegfried tries to catch the message, tries to see the bird, and tries, too, to imitate its tones. He cuts him a reed from the water-banks, and shapes it and tests it until he can play upon it the music he hears. Ah, we should like to have been in that audience at Baireuth when this Forest Bird took its first flight into the world!

It is a great thing to create a rôle, to set the standard by which all later performances shall be modeled. If the new opera proves to be a great and lasting work, the singers who created the important rôles are always credited therewith and mentioned. They usually have been selected by the



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Lehmann as Venus in "Tannhäuser."

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composer, and their performance is the result of his best instruction as well as their own inspiration. Madame Lehmann has "created" many rôles, but the most poetic, we deem, is the Forest Bird.

After writing with characteristic abbreviation the foregoing fact—" '75-'76, Bai-reuth, Rhine daughter, I Forest Bird"—Madame Lehmann handed over the paper and asked "Is there anything more I can tell you?"

Her bright eyes, clear complexion, and magnificent figure prompted a personal question:

"How do you keep your splendid health, and the strength to work so much?"

For this she had a ready answer:

"I have been a vegetarian for the past five years."

In reply to one more parting question, Lilli Lehmann spoke words of wisdom that are worthy of reflection:

"Yes, I still practise and study more than ever. At the end one is just beginning."

“The Flying Dutchman”

“THE FLYING DUTCHMAN.”

“The Flying Dutchman” is one of the most melodious of Wagner’s operas, and also one of the most popular in Germany. Its soprano rôle is well beloved by all Wagnerian singers, but for some reason the work is seldom given in this country. Americans have never had an opportunity to hear Madame Lehmann in this opera, but it is one in which she is well known abroad.

“Der Fliegende Holländer” is an early offspring of Wagner’s genius, and was composed at a time when Fate frowned upon him, and poverty and despair were his close companions. After six weeks of feverish labor, alone in hostile Paris, Wagner presented his beloved score to the orchestra of the “Conservatoire.” They promptly condemned it, which affords a notable example of the change in musical taste. Por-

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tions of the "Flying Dutchman" now hold a permanent place on French programs.

The plot, as well as the music, is as usual Wagner's own. "A daring captain, after frequent vain attempts to double the Cape of Storms, swears a mighty oath to persevere throughout eternity. The devil takes him at his word, and the hapless mariner is doomed to roam the seas forever." Such is the legend of the Flying Dutchman, to which Wagner has added one redeeming clause: once in seven years the wanderer may land in search of a faithful wife. If she be true unto death the curse shall be lifted.

Wagner's music is so powerful and absolutely appropriate that it seems to suggest the text, instead of conforming to it. No ordinary tunes or conventional harmonies could adequately depict the roaming, restless, Satan-chased sailor. The overture opens with the curse-theme, which seems like the phantom ship itself as we follow its course throughout the introduction. It rides

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over and under and around hurricanes of chromatics and tremolos. Chords sweep like a deluge over the luckless theme. But as neither rocks nor tempest can annihilate the accursed vessel, so this theme mounts ever uppermost. On and on, "*Ohne Rast, ohne Ruh,*" must sail the Flying Dutchman. But the wanderer in his dark existence finds hope in the salvation-theme, a peaceful, religious phrase that is poised like a single star amid the tumultuous elements. Like all of Wagner's overtures, this one has become a favorite program piece.

With the ascending curtain there arises from the orchestra a storm of restless tremolos and shrieking scales. The wind and waves thus rendered in the music are also depicted on the stage. An expanse of ocean occupies most of the scene, only in front the turbulent waves beat against a bleak Norwegian coast. Driven thither by the elements, a ship casts anchor at the shore. Daland, the captain, steps on land, while his crew noisily pull up sails and cast out

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cables. As they work they shout in unison a rude refrain that lends rhythm to their movements, "Ho-lo-jo! Ho-he!" This is accompanied by surging waves of sound from the orchestra. Owing to the sudden storm, this ship has been carried seven miles away from the home port, to which it was returning after a long voyage. There is nothing to do but wait for a south wind to carry them back. Daland goes on board again and orders the sailors to rest. He also retires, after entrusting the watch to his boatswain.

Altho this boatswain has no name, he is no insignificant character, for to him falls one of the loveliest songs of the opera. He has a tenor voice, and is in love with a "blue-eyed mädcl." He makes a tour of the deck, and then seats himself by the rudder. The storm has abated, but we occasionally hear a gust of chromatics and a splash of chords. To ward off sleep, the boatswain sings of his sweetheart, and calls upon the south wind to blow their good ship

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home. This music is delightful and refreshing as a salt sea breeze. The sailor does not trouble himself with any fixed standard of tempo. He sings like the fitful wind, one moment "accelerando," and the next "una poco moderato." He sustains the climaxes and indulges in sentimental "rubatos," all of which is a touch of naturalness skilfully introduced by the composer. The boatswain makes another tour of the deck and then renews his song; but there is this time more languor in his tones. The phrases are separated by frequent "rests," the "moderatos" have developed into "largos;" the "rubatos" are exaggerated, and finally this sweet-voiced boatswain falls asleep.

Soon the clouds become black and lowering, the waves are white and towering, and the orchestra is like a seething cauldron of sound. The conductor stirs it up more and more, until he brings to the top that awful curse-theme of the Flying Dutchman. We lift our eyes to the stage, and lo! over the

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dark waters comes another ship, strange and uncanny in appearance, for its sails are blood-red and they hang upon masts that are black as night. With a mighty crash this wanderer of the seas sinks anchor alongside the Norwegian vessel. The dreaming boatswain is aroused for a moment. He hums a snatch of his love-song, and then once again nods his head in slumber. A terrifying silence falls upon the music as we watch the ghostly crew of the phantom vessel noiselessly furl those crimson sails.

There is a pause, and then, soft but impressive, that remarkable curse-motif announces the approach of the Holländer himself. He steps upon shore after another seven years of wandering. His stalwart figure is draped in a black mantle, he wears a full beard, and has a baritone voice.

The first solo of the Holländer is most interesting; but those who expect a pleasing tune with a one-two-three accompaniment will be disappointed. One is apt to

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think that music must be always beautiful to be admired, but Wagner has taught that this idea is erroneous. Music should represent what the maker feels, just as painting does what he sees; and in proportion to the correctness of his representation is the work to be admired. As a prominent example of this fact in painting, mention may be made of Munkacsy's picture of Judas, which all admire but none call beautiful. And so this solo of the accursed mariner is not beautiful, as that term goes. How could it be? The weary, dreary, condemned Dutchman communing with himself does not think of graceful melodies that delight the senses. His phrases, instead, are all angular, bitter, heavy, and despairing. He tells of his longing for rest, and he mocks at the hope of finding true love. Too often has he been deceived: "I wait and watch for the Judgment Day. Then only shall I rest!"

The Holländer leans mournfully against a rock, and the music subsides, until a light-

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hearted melody directs our attention to the Norwegian ship. Daland has come upon deck, and is surprised to find another ship alongside. He calls the boatswain, who, half awake, commences to hum his love-song; but another call from the captain brings him to his feet. They hasten to signal the strange ship, but receive no answer; whereupon Daland, seeing the *Holländer*, steps upon shore to accost him.

Politely but unconcernedly the hero makes answer to all questions, and learns, in turn, that Daland's home is but seven miles' sail from here. The *Holländer* asks for a night's lodging, and offers to pay liberally. He brings forth a casket of jewels, which he declares is but a sample of the cargo he carries. With bitter tones he adds: "What joy are such riches to me? I have no home, no wife, no child; all my wealth should be yours if you could give me these." He astonishes Daland with the sudden question, "Have you a daughter?" and on being answered in the affirmative

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the Holländer proposes to wed her. Very nobly does this strange suitor plead his cause, his longing for love and rest. The music is here truly beautiful, for the hero is striving to win and please.

Captured by the prospect of wealth and also by the strange fascination of the Holländer, Daland consents to the proposition. Once again the sad seaman is tempted to hope. The music has become decisive and, because of rapid tempo, sounds quite joyous. On top of this pleasing climax there comes a happy cry from the Norwegian ship: "A south wind! south wind!" The sailors sing their "Ho-lo-jo" chorus as they let down sails and pull up anchor. Daland goes on board, and the Holländer promises to follow. With a breezy accompaniment of wind instruments the two ships sail away and the curtain descends.

The prelude to the second act carries us from the storm-beaten coast of Norway to the domestic peace of Daland's home. The composition is like a brisk sail over smooth

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harmonies. It opens with the boatswain's song of the south wind, and after a succession of undulating passages finally lands upon the celebrated spinning-chorus.

A capacious room in the captain's home is filled with a merry company of maidens, who, with their spinning-wheels, are working together under the watchful eyes of Frau Mary. The wheels whir and whiz, like a drone of bees, the orchestra keeps up a continuous revolving accompaniment, and even the melody, with its ingenious rhythm, simulates a whirling wheel. The picture is as pleasing as the music; both are unique and delightful. The girls spin industriously where the song goes fast, but unconsciously hold up with the *ritardandos*, and Frau Mary has frequent occasion to remonstrate.

Only Senta, the captain's daughter, does not join in the song. She is sitting in a big arm-chair and dreamily regards a large picture that is hanging over the hearth. It is an ideal portrait of the Flying Dutchman,

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such as many seafaring folk possess. Senta is an imaginative girl, and has always been fascinated by the "pale man" on the wall and his story. She begs Frau Mary to sing the ballad of the Flying Dutchman. This request being refused, Senta sings it herself. Truly wonderful is this ballad, with its blustering accompaniment and shivering climaxes. The final verse relates how every seven years the weary seaman lands in search of a faithful wife, but never yet has he found one. "False love! false faith! Forever and ever must he ride the seas!"

Senta has become so wrought up by the song that she now sinks back in her chair from exhaustion, while the other girls sing with bated breath that beautiful melody of the salvation-theme. "And will he never find her?" they ask with childlike credulity. Senta suddenly springs from her chair and sings out with exultant tones: "I am the one who could save him! I would be true till death! May heaven's angels send him to me!" This music is of boundless

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intensity; the strongly accented accompaniment sweeps forward and recedes like angry breakers, while the voice part soars above like a fearless sea-bird. "Senta! Senta! Heaven help us, she has lost her reason!" exclaim the astonished maidens, and Frau Mary utters maledictions upon that "miserable picture," threatening to throw it out of the house.

At this moment Erik, the young hunter who loves Senta, hastily enters, announcing that her father's ship is landing. The dreamy heroine promptly revives at this news, and becomes as elated and excited as any of the girls. They all want to rush out and see the ship, but Frau Mary orders them back, directing them, instead, to the kitchen, where there is work to be done on account of this sudden home-coming. With much chattering and commotion the girls and Frau Mary go out, leaving Senta and Erik alone.

He detains her to listen to his vows and fears. Very tender and earnest is this song

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of love and doubt. Wagner knew well how to use the simple melody, which he considered essential to some emotions but out of place with others. Like the artist's fine brush, it will not do for painting storm-clouds, but in scenes of delicate delineation it is used with good effect. Erik is troubled about a dream he had the night before. To the usual accompaniment of violin tremolos, he relates how he saw Senta's father bring with him a stranger who looked like that picture on the wall. Already we hear far away beneath the tremolos, soft but distinct, the curse-theme of the Flying Dutchman. As the dream-song goes on this ominous phrase comes nearer, step by step, always in a higher key, always louder and more impressive. It represents, in fact, the actual approach of the Holländer. Senta listens as though entranced while Erik tells how he saw her come forward and kneel at the stranger's feet. But the "pale man" lifted her in his arms and carried her away over the sea. To Erik's horror, Senta turns

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toward the picture and cries out: "He is seeking me! I would save him!" The young hunter sadly goes away, believing that she is out of her mind.

Senta continues gazing at the picture. The music has become soft and slow, and the curse-theme pervades the air like a ghostly presence. But the heroine sings to herself that beautiful salvation-motif. The phrase is finished with a startled shriek, for the door has opened, and there before the astonished girl stands her hero—"der Fliegende Holländer!" Daland, her father, is also there, but Senta has neither sight nor thought of him. She stands immobile and amazed, her eyes never turning from the Holländer. When Daland comes nearer, she grasps his hand, whispering, "Who is that stranger?"

The father has carefully prepared his answer, and it is the finest bass solo of the opera. After telling Senta that the stranger has come to be her bridegroom, he turns to the Holländer, asking, "Did I ex-

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aggerate her loveliness? Is she not an ornament to her sex?" In this phrase the listener is surprised with a genuine *ad libitum* colorature passage, a style of musical decoration in which Wagner seldom indulges. But in the original text this bit of fioritura falls upon the word *zieret* ("ornament"), and thus is a striking example of Wagner's theory that music must fit the words. Daland sings on for some time, until he notices that neither Senta nor the Holländer accord him any attention. They are still gazing at each other, and the father very wisely goes out.

The leading theme of his aria slowly departs from the orchestra, and then, softly and hesitatingly, the curse-theme and salvation-motif enter side by side. They move around a little, as tho to make themselves at home, and then begins the great duet between soprano and baritone.

The Holländer recognizes in Senta the angel of his dreams, and she finds his voice greeting her like familiar music. A beau-

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tiful melody is borne upon the orchestra like a boat on the breast of a stream. As the graceful structure floats past, the soprano and then the baritone enter upon it. They glide on together, over smooth places, upon tremulous undercurrents, but finally touch upon the salvation-theme, which, throughout the opera, is typical of the seaman's haven. It often arises above stormy passages like a mirage of the longed-for harbor.

After this vocal excursion the Holländer asks Senta if she is willing to abide by her father's choice and to vow eternal faith. Her consent is glad and free. There is another ensemble introducing a new and stirring joy-theme. The highest note always occurs upon the word faith, thus fulfilling the substance of the text, which is, "Faith above all!"

Daland reenters and is delighted to find such unity of voice and purpose. He wishes the engagement announced at the evening fête which his sailors will have to celebrate their home-coming. Senta repeats her vow

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to be faithful unto death, and the act closes with an exhilarating trio.

Wagner makes his orchestral preludes conform to a distinct purpose—that of connecting the acts. So with the next introduction we hear the joyous theme of the recent duet gradually modulated into a whispering memory of the boatswain's song. This, in turn, develops into a new and noisy nautical refrain, that is continued till the curtain rises, and then is sung by the Norwegian sailors who are on the deck of their ship. They are merry-making. The ship is illuminated with gay lanterns, as are also the tavern and houses in the foreground. But not so the stranger's vessel that lies alongside at the back of the stage. It is engulfed in gloom and silence like the grave. The gay Norwegian chorus has a peculiar rhythm that suggests the flapping of sail-cloth in a brisk wind; it has sharp, rugged accents and a spirited tempo. The song is ended with a regular hornpipe dance on deck. This bewitching dance-melody seems

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thrown in to show what Wagner could do in that line if he wanted to.

Some maidens come from the tavern with a basketful of provisions. While the sailors continue dancing to the gay orchestral accompaniment, the girls sing among themselves in quite another strain. As their conversation should be most prominent, the dance-melody is promptly changed from major to minor, which always gives a subduing and receding effect like "scumbling over" in painting.

The girls go toward the Holländer's ship, intending their provisions for the strangers, who seem to be sleeping profoundly. The girls call to them, but only a ghostly silence rewards their efforts. They sing a winning waltz phrase inviting the strangers to join their fête; they offer every inducement to arouse the silent crew, and finally resort to a great outcry: "Seamen! Seamen! wake up!" But again only prolonged stillness is the answer.

The well-meaning maidens are thoroughly

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frightened, and they hasten away after handing their basket to the Norwegian sailors. These proceed to enjoy the contents. They fill their wine-glasses and repeat the merry opening chorus.

In the mean time the sea surrounding the Holländer's ship becomes suddenly turbulent, a weird blue light illumines the vessel, and its crew, which were before invisible, are seen to move about.

The Norwegians cease singing, while their ghostly neighbors begin to chant in hollow tones that terrible curse-theme. Tremolos and chromatics descend upon the orchestra like a storm of hail and rain that almost drown the singers' voices. To a demoniacal refrain full of startling crescendos and pauses they sing of their gloomy captain

“Who has gone upon land to win a maiden's hand.”

Then they laugh an unearthly “Ha! ha!”

The Norwegian sailors have listened at first with wonder and then with horror. Like children afraid in the dark, they decide

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to sing as loud as they can. So their gay sailors' chorus rings out above the steady curse-theme of the Holländer's crew. The Norwegians urge each other to sing louder. Three times they start their song in a higher key, but that fearful refrain from the phantom ship overcomes every other sound. The Norwegians are too terrified to continue. They cross themselves and hurry below deck. The sign of the cross arouses another mocking laugh from the crew of the *Flying Dutchman*. Then sudden silence falls upon them. The blue flame disappears and darkness hangs over all, while in the orchestra there is a long-sustained note, and then one soft minor chord like the shutting of a door upon the recent musical scene.

The succeeding harmonies are of another character, as distinct as a new stage-setting. A phrase that well simulates hurried footsteps accompanies the hasty entrance of Senta and Erik, who is much agitated. He has just heard of her engagement to the stranger, and can scarce believe it. He

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upbraids and pleads in one breath, while Senta begs him to desist. But the despairing Erik kneels before her and sings with grief-stricken tones of their past love. Like all of Erik's music, this cavatine is simple and sincere, as one would expect from a peasant lad.

While he is kneeling before her the Holländer comes upon the scene unobserved. With tones as furious as the orchestra accompaniment he cries out: "Lost! My happiness is lost! Senta, farewell!" He summons his crew to haul up anchor and let down sails. "False love! false faith! I must wander the seas forever!"

A tempestuous trio follows the Holländer's outcry. Senta reiterates her vow, and with intense fervor declares he must not leave her. Maidens and sailors rush to the scene, but all stand back in amazement as they hear the stranger announce: "You know me not, else had you ne'er received me. My ship is the terror of all good people. I am called Der Fliegende Holländer!" With

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this word he springs upon board; the crimson sails expand upon the black masts, and the ship leaves shore; while the ghostly crew chant their blood-curdling "Jo-ho-ho!"

But this is our last hearing of the curse-theme. Senta has rushed upon a high rock projecting into the sea. With full voice and soaring tones she calls to the receding ship: "My vow was true! I am faithful unto death!"—whereupon she throws herself into the waves.

No sooner has she done so than the phantom vessel sinks from sight. The music also tumbles down a tremendous chromatic; then it mounts again, changing from minor to major, which gives an effect of sudden peace. The *Holländer* has found true love. He rescues Senta, and we see him clasping her in his arms, while the chords of the salvation-theme rise above the other harmonies like the spires of a beautiful city. The haven has been reached at last.

Melba,
the Australian
Nightingale

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NELLIE MELBA.

MELBA, THE AUSTRALIAN NIGHT-INGALE.

SOME years ago in London, before the name of Melba had become a household word, there was a performance of *Aida* at Covent Garden which was attended by many, merely for the sake of the opera. The overture was well given and the opening numbers well sung. The tenor was so fine that those who did not know supposed him to be the star of the evening, and they scarcely noticed a slender figure who presently came forward in the garb of an Ethiopian slave. After her first recitative notes, which were unimportant, most of the audience forgot all about her, and became lost in studying the orchestral music and admiring the tenor's voice. There was more singing; a bit of ensemble; much pleasing harmony, and an effect of rhythm or some-

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thing that gradually caused every pulse to quicken, and stirred every soul in a strange, unaccountable way, until suddenly they realized that it was not the rhythm, or the harmony, or the orchestra, or the tenor, but *one soprano voice*, whose tones seemed to penetrate all space and soar to all heights and thrill all hearts in a manner that was overpowering!

The slave girl was singing. It was a new star from the Southern hemisphere just beginning to appear in the North. *A new name* had been added, and was soon to be heard by all who had an ear to hear—Melba, the Australian nightingale!

All critics agree that the quality of her voice has never in the annals of music been surpassed. In furnishing Melba her name, which is a diminutive of Melbourne, the far continent has sprung into a musical prominence it never before attained. One could hardly have a beginning farther removed from the "center of art," as Paris is usually called, than did Madame Melba. But she

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was endowed with all the gifts that nature could bestow: good looks, good health, and a voice so perfectly placed that even when she talked it was music, and her very laugh was a song. She had, besides, true musical talent, inherited from her father, who has a fine baritone voice and sings to this day in the church choir of Colby Abbin, Australia. But best of all, Nellie Mitchell, as she was then known, had the perseverance to work and study in spite of her isolated life in an inland province. The story of her early struggles is best told in her own words, as repeated in an article by Harry Steele Morrison:

“ You know we lived in Melbourne only a part of each year, and when we were in the wilderness it was not easy to get servants, so it became my duty to help with the housework. Before I was seven years old I could wash dishes and dry them as well as any one, and I really enjoyed it. It was better than having nothing at all to do, which was usually our condition on the ranch. It was

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not always easy for me to gratify my desire for music. I taught myself a great deal, and with the help of my Aunt Lizzie I was finally able to play very well. Then I took up the study of music in Melbourne, tho I never thought seriously of making it my profession. It was a great delight to me, however, and I remember my great disappointment when the family once moved to a house where there was no piano. Of course none was to be had in those backwoods; but father pacified me by procuring a concertina. I played on that for months. On Sundays, when the traveling minister came along, I played at the service which he held in our parlor. I never thought much of singing, tho at this time I was anxious to become a great pianist. I went along day by day studying as much as I could, and almost my only happiness was found in playing and singing. I mastered the pipe organ and several other instruments, and in Melbourne I used to practise in one of the churches every afternoon. Then

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I suddenly arrived at a determination to do something with my voice. It seemed a shame to let it lie quiet, and I decided to make some use of it. So I studied harder than ever, and, after appearing occasionally for two years in Australia, my friends urged me to go to Europe for study, and I followed their advice. I went at once to Paris, and placed myself under dear Madame Marchesi.

“I will never forget the day I presented myself at her door. I was rather awkward then, and decidedly shy, and since I was by no means rich I feared that she would refuse me as a pupil. I was almost fainting when she entered the room, but gradually I recovered my self-possession, and when she asked me to sing for her I was feeling as well as ever. It seemed to me that my voice was in poor condition, and I almost dreaded her verdict. My apprehensions were without reason, however, for the dear woman took both my hands in hers and told me that some day I would be her greatest

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pupil if only I would work and persevere. . . . Two years passed away—two years of such work as few women go through when studying music. I was anxious to make my *début* as soon as possible, for my funds were by no means large, and I needed the money which would come when once I had appeared in public. So I worked both night and day. Sometimes the madame said that I tried to do too much, but I told her that every hour was precious to me. . . . I have worked almost as hard since my *début* as before.

“ A prima donna’s working days are never over so long as she is before the public. I am constantly studying some new rôle, whether I expect to sing it or not. If one does not learn new parts her art is sure to stagnate, and progress is the surest way to success in music. I think I would rather not sing at all than always to sing the same. Each time I try to do better than before, and in this way my work is made interesting. I shall always keep on working just as hard

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as ever, for I find that the only happy way of living."

Some one has remarked that the ease of Melba's singing is positively audacious! for she toys with the most time-honored difficulties. She will start a high note without any preparation, with apparently no breath and no change of the lips. Faint at first as the "fabric of a dream," it is followed by the gradual grandeur of a glorious tone, until finally it attains the full zenith of a crescendo. Straight and true as a beam of light, it is called in France *la voix blanche*. All the Italian operas afford a good medium for the display of her powers, and the more intricate the music, in point of execution, the more suitable it seems to be. In "Lucia di Lammermoor" there is one cadenza in the fourth act—the mad scene—which, if alone on a program with Melba's name, would invariably "crowd the house." It is a veritable frolic to hear her in this. She is pacemaker, as it were, to the flute, which always repeats what she sings. It is the

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prettiest race ever run; and when at the finish the timekeeper brings down his baton, the audience cheers itself hoarse for the winner. Like all great prima donnas, Madame Melba has a home of her own, to which she hies in the summer. It is called "Fernley" and is situated at Maidenhead, England.

We imagine these song-birds during the hot months resting luxuriantly in their various retreats—Melba in her English manor, Calvé in her French château, Jean de Reszke on his Polish estate, Eames in her Italian castle, and Patti, too, at "Craig y Nos." But it is hardly an accurate picture, for *rest* to the artist still means *work*. They study all summer, every one of them, and entertain other artists, who work with them, or at any rate who contribute to the perpetual whirl of music in which they live.

A very good idea of the home life of these song-queens was given to me by a young lady who visited one of them for several months.



Melba as Juliet in "Romeo and Juliet"

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“Do you know,” she said, “it was positively depressing to be near so much talent and genius. Why in the drawing-room they would be talking in seven or eight languages; and some one would improvise at the piano while another would take a violin and join in with the most wonderful cadenzas, and then perhaps the pianoplayer would step aside and some one else would slide into his place and continue the improvisation the first one had begun; and so on, all the time, until really I began to feel just about as small and worthless as a little pinch of dust!”

“Lakme”

“LAKME.”

LAKME was one of Patti's most successful rôles, and very few other singers have ventured to attempt it. But Madame Melba includes it in her repertoire, and a great treat is in store for New Yorkers when the managerial difficulties in the way of its production are sufficiently overcome for her to present it.

“Lakme” is composed by Delibes. This name at once recalls that exquisite “pizzicato” from the ballet “Sylvia,” a musical fragment that has floated around the world and stuck to the programs of every land. The same delicate fancy and witchery that characterize the ballet are also prominent in the opera. His style is perhaps the furthest removed from Wagner of any modern composer. “Lakme” has no crescendo worth mentioning, and the themes are, for the most part, left to take care of

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themselves; but every phrase is fascinating, and there is never a tedious passage.

The prelude opens in the minor key with a group of octaves erect and solemn as pine trees. The next phrase starts up like a blue flame darting from obscurity—a fantastic measure with wild harmonies that plainly suggest India as Lakme's home. A pathetic wail from the flute offsets this elfish interlude; the gloom of the minor still hangs over all, and the persistent tremolo of the violins becomes oppressive as the perfume of magnolias. It is like a forest at midnight. Suddenly the gloom and stillness are dispersed by the love-theme of the opera, which is in the major key, and consequently has a purifying effect. Major and minor are the oxygen and nitrogen of the musical atmosphere.

A peculiar, rhythmical beating of the triangle accompanies the rising of the curtain, which reveals a luxuriant garden enclosed by a bamboo fence. At the back is a little river, and a modest dwelling stands

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on the bank; but a pretentious idol at one side characterizes the place as a sanctuary. Day is breaking, and as the light increases those soft, metallic tones of the triangle penetrate the air like sunbeams. Nilikanthe, a Brahmin priest and owner of the dwelling, comes forward with two slaves, who open the bamboo gates, admitting a group of Hindu devotees, who prostrate themselves before the idol. Beneath the radiance of those unceasing triangle tones arises a languid prayer, soft as the gray morning mist, after which Nilikanthe addresses the worshipers. He refers to their recent English conquerors, who have "displaced our gods and devastated our temples." His tones mount higher and ring out with religious ecstasy until he causes a sudden hush. The music of invisible harps fills the air, and as the Hindus again kneel a woman's voice, like a clarion call, renders an incantation that is rare and wondrous. It sounds like the song of an angel, but it is only Lakme, the Brahmin's daughter. She

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comes forward and mingles her prayer with those of the people. Weird and strange, like the tones of a wild bird, her voice soars above the chorus, filling the air with reckless trills and soft staccatos. The worshipers arise and go out, leaving Lakme and her father alone. She is a "child of the gods," and her life is dedicated to Brahma. Nilikanthe declares it is her pure influence that protects their sacred abode from the enemy. He leaves her for a time in charge of Mallika, a trusty slave.

When he is gone the music assumes a lighter mood, while mistress and maid look about for diversion. After removing her jewels and placing them upon a stone table, Lakme proposes a row on the river. The music of this scene is fraught with a tropical heat and midday languor—dreamy, drowsy violin tremolos that suggest the drone of bees. The two maidens render a duet whose words—

"Ah, we'll glide,
With the tide—"

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are set to music that seems to sing itself. It is a fountain of melody with flowing rhythm and rippling runs, staccatos like drops of water, and trills that are light as bubbles. The singers step into the boat, and we hear their song far down the stream, soft as a shadow and lovely as a dream.

After a moment's silence a new element comes forward—a party of English sight-seers. Their appearance in grand opera seems to us as much an invasion as their presence in India does to the Hindu. After the costume of *Lakme*, which is all spangles and bangles and gauze and fringe, we are astonished to see the modern English waist-coats, fashionable bonnets, and long-trained skirts. But it is all compatible with facts and history. Gerald is an officer in the army; Ellen, his fiancée, is a daughter of the governor; the other couple are their friends, and Mrs. Benson is the chaperone.

To enter this enclosure, the party have had to force an opening in the bamboo. It is evident trespassing, but they are too un-

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concerned to care. Their first rollicking ensemble is an interesting evidence of the composer's ability to change from the Hindu to the English type. Instead of weird, uncivilized cadenzas, these are plain, Christianlike harmonies, such as we have been brought up to and can anticipate. Indeed, this song recalls Arthur Sullivan in his best mood.

After inspecting the idol and various points of interest, the party discover Lakme's jewels. Ellen admires their workmanship, and Gerald proposes to sketch them; but Mrs. Benson urges the party away. They all go excepting Gerald, who insists on copying the jewels. He prepares his sketching materials and is apparently in haste; but true to the precepts of grand opera, he first sings to us a long and beautiful aria about "taking the design of a jewel."

By the time he has sustained the last high tone through five measures, Lakme and Mallika have finished their row upon the river. Gerald conceals himself behind a

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shrub as they enter. The undulating melody of their boat-song is rendered by the orchestra, first softly and then increasing, until it ends with a sforzando chord as the boat touches shore.

Lakme brings forward an armful of flowers as an offering to the idol, and she sings a tender little song whose pathetic melody belies the text, which constantly asserts, "I am happy." The accompaniment is a simple violin arpeggio, swaying back and forth upon the melody like a butterfly on a flower. Between the verses it flutters up in a fanciful cadenza, but soon returns, and, alighting on the melody, it continues to sway as before.

Great is Lakme's indignation on perceiving Gerald, the intruder. As she goes toward him, her every step is emphasized by a resolute chord in the orchestra.

"Leave at once!" she commands. "This ground is sacred, and I am a child of the gods!"

But Gerald has fallen hopelessly in love with the pretty priestess, and he loses no

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time in telling her. No one has ever dared to so address Lakme, and she is incensed at his boldness. She warns him that death will be the penalty of his rash trespassing unless he goes at once. But Gerald only repeats his sweeping song of infatuation.

At last, moved to admiration by his courage, Lakme ventures to ask by what god is he inspired. Like ripples of sunlight are the next measures, wherein he tells her that the God of Love makes him fearless.

Interested in this new deity, the Hindu maiden repeats after him the sparkling words and music. She sings timidly and a tone too low, but Gerald leads his ready pupil into the right key, and they sing together with full voice this most fascinating melody. The final rapturous tone has scarcely subsided when Lakme hears her father approach.

Complying with her entreaties, Gerald departs just in time for Nilikanthe to perceive the broken fence. He vows vengeance upon the profane foe who has dared to

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enter here. His followers second the cry, while Lakme stands aside in fear and trembling.

Tambourines and fifes predominate in the next orchestral prelude. It is a miniature *marche militaire*, and unmistakably English. The second act discloses a public square filled with Indian shops and bazars. It is the occasion of a great festival at the pagoda. Merchants and promenaders occupy the stage, and their opening chorus is all bickering and bargaining. The music is very ingenious. A free use of harmonic discords, dazzling scales that seem to clash with their bass, and chromatics that run into each other gives an effect of Oriental extravagance—gay colors upon crumbling walls, jewels over rags.

The chorus continues until a bell announces the beginning of the festival and time for the venders to disperse. They slowly depart and give place to the ballet, without which Delibes would hardly be himself.

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It is interesting to note the specialties that different composers unconsciously assume. Liszt seemed to revel in rhapsodies; while the alliteration, "Schubert's Songs," comes uppermost in spite of our knowledge that he wrote some eleven hundred other compositions. Bach invented more fugues than any one else; while Handel made his most lasting impression with oratorios. Symphonies and sonatas were the life-work of Beethoven; while Chopin had a particular fancy for nocturnes. And Mendelssohn! With all deference to his greater works, it must be conceded that "Songs Without Words" are inseparably linked with his name. Verdi with his tremendous range of operas has had little time for anything else. The list could be extended to almost any length; but we will only add that Czerny is known for his scale exercises and Kullak for his octaves; while Weber, in the language of a recent critic, "is famous because he invited all the world to waltz!"

But to return to Delibes and his ballets.

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The present one is divided into several movements—the first being slow but of throbbing rhythm, while in the second one the melody whirls and spins around like a top. It is constantly whipped up by the conductor's baton, and the dizzy pace continues until this merry melody bumps against a substantial chord.

After the ballet Lakme and her father come forward. They are disguised as pilgrim mendicants, the better to enable Nilikanthe to seek out his foe. It must be understood that this Hindu thirst for vengeance is a matter of religious belief, and the music plainly impresses this fact. A weird theme that was prominent in the overture recurs as Nilikanthe explains that the wrath of heaven must be appeased with the blood of a victim. He has cleverly surmised that Lakme was the attraction inducing the stranger to trespass on sacred ground. Confident that every one will attend this great festival, the Brahmin has brought his daughter as a decoy. She plays the rôle of

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a street ballad-singer, and is at the merciless command of her father. He bids her look gay and sing with full voice so as to attract a crowd. The orchestra gives her the keynote, and then, like a necromancer performing wonders with a coin, she executes a cadenza that bewilders and dazzles the senses. Her tones soar away like carrier-birds, and they bring the people from far and near to hear the wondrous singing. When a crowd has collected, Nilikanthe announces that she will sing to them the "Legend of the Pariah's Daughter." Lakme sings as easily as she talks. The first phrase is a simple little narrative about a maiden wandering at eve in the forest, fearless of beast and sprite, for she carries in her hand a little bell that wards off evil with its merry tinkling. Then follows one of the most difficult staccato fantasias in existence, for the voice imitates the tinkle of that silver bell. The tones fall fast as rain-drops in a shower, round as beads and clear as crystal. The composer shows no respect or rever-

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ence for high notes. Upper B is given a "shake" and any amount of staccato raps, while even high E, that slumbering "spirit of the summit," is also aroused to action. In fact, this aria is one of the few that can not be poorly rendered. To do it at all argues doing it well. Its difficulties protect it like a barricade from the attack of mediocre singers. The second verse relates how the maiden meets a stranger, who is saved from the surrounding wolves by the tinkle of her magic bell. This stranger was "great Vishnu, Brahma's son;" and since then—

"In that dark wood
The traveler hears
Where Vishnu stood
The sound of a little bell ringing."

Soft and clear as a wood-nymph laughing
those marvelous staccatos again peal forth.

During his daughter's performance Nili-kanthe has been scanning the faces around him, but none reveals any emotion other than the pleasure of listening. Furious that his plan has not succeeded, he bids

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Lakme to sing it again—"Louder!" But she has suddenly perceived Gerald approaching; and, knowing that if he recognizes her he will betray himself, she does not wish to sing. She pleads and entreats, but her father is obdurate. So she begins with pouting lips and trembling voice. "Sing out!" admonishes Nilikanthe. As Gerald draws nearer, Lakme becomes more and more disturbed. The pretty staccatos are all out of place, like blossoms falling to pieces. They are flat where they should be sharp, and minor instead of major; but her tones, like perfect petals, are none the less lovely because detached. Once, twice, three times she recommences, always in a higher key. Suddenly she utters a musical scream as Gerald comes up to her, and Nilikanthe exclaims: "'Tis he!"

In the mean time, Gerald hears the fifes and tambourines of his regiment and goes to answer the roll-call.

Nilikanthe summons his Hindu followers and informs them that he has discovered

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the foe. This solo with chorus of the conspirators is minor, *mysterioso*, and *agitato*; it is the most interesting bass solo of the opera. The conspirators go off, leaving Lakme alarmed and disconsolate. Like a faithful hound, Hadji, the slave, draws near to her and whispers that he has seen her tears and heard her sighs: "If you have a friend to save, confide in me." His words are *parlando*, but the orchestra illumines them with music clear as a calcium light. Lakme grasps his hand in gratitude, but motions him aside as she perceives Gerald thoughtfully returning.

The hero has left his comrades at the first opportunity and retraced his steps to the place he left Lakme. His joy on finding her is portrayed in a musical greeting of such unbounded rapture that one key will hardly hold it. The ensuing love-duet deserves to rank with the best. But Lakme is more sad than glad, for she knows of impending danger. She urges him to flee, and tells him of "a little cabin hidden in

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the forest, quite near by," where he can hide secure from his enemies. This Cabin Song is an idyllic refrain, with gentle harmonies that picture more than the words. She urges him to follow her; but, in spite of his infatuation, Gerald realizes his duty as a soldier. He dare not go.

Like dust before a tempest is the succeeding instrumental passage announcing the approach of the great procession. The notes, like atoms, are carried forward faster and higher, until they come so thick that you can not distinguish them. This cloud of music melts away before the mighty chant of the Brahmins as they march to the pagoda. Their weird incantation fills the air like a trumpet-blast. The greater part of this processional music greets our ears familiarly, because it was given in the overture. Upon this somber background of Hindu harmonies the composer delights in casting gleams of Sullivan-esque music in the form of passing remarks from the English onlookers. The contrast is startling as

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magic-lantern pictures thrown upon the pyramids.

As the procession marches on, we see Nilikanthe point out Gerald to the other conspirators. They cautiously surround him, and at the bidden moment he is stabbed by Nilikanthe, who then disappears in the crowd. On hearing the victim's cry, Lakme rushes forward. The stage is darkened, for it is evening, and the lights of the procession are gone. The Hindu maiden finds Gerald but slightly wounded. She calls Hadji, the slave, and then, without further explanation on her part, the instruments whisper to us her intention. We hear the soothing harmonies of that lovely song about "a little cabin hidden in the forest quite near by."

The second *entr'acte* is performed after the rising of the curtain. We see an Indian forest, dense of foliage and brilliant with flowers. At one side is a hut, half concealed by the shrubbery, and near it are Lakme and Gerald, the latter reclining upon

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a bank, while she watches over him as he slumbers. No sound or movement mars the effect of a perfect picture, and beneath it all, like gold letters spelling out the subject, come the tones of that sweet melody of the Cabin Song. The conductor at his desk reminds us of an artist at his easel who, with a magic brush, traces in tone-colors this beautiful inscription.

After the *entr'acte* Lakme softly sings a slumber-song, simple as a child's prayer and as beautiful. There are only two phrases in it, but they come and go like wandering thoughts. When Gerald awakes he recalls how he was brought here, while Lakme relates how with wild herbs and the juice of flowers he has been restored. Their rapturous conversation is interrupted by a chorus from without, the voices of young men and maidens on their way to a fountain in the forest from whence, it is said, if two lovers drink they will always be united. Lakme solemnly explains this beautiful belief and at once proposes to bring a cup of

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the water. "Wait for me," she admonishes as she runs out, and we hear her voice mingle with the far-away chorus of the other lovers.

During her absence a comrade of Gerald's discovers his retreat. The newcomer announces that their regiment has orders to move on, and that if Gerald does not join them he will be dishonored. This visit passes over like a modern railroad through an Arcadian temple. Poor Lakme soon discovers the devastation. With charming faith she extends her cup of water to Gerald, but at this moment he hears the fifes and drums of his regiment. Lakme still offers the cup. "Drink and vow to be mine!" But Gerald does not heed her words, for he is distracted with thoughts of duty and honor. She also hears this English music.

"His love is faltering!" she piteously cries; and then with a decision as impulsive as her nature she plucks a flower of the deadly *Datura* and eats it without being observed by Gerald.

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She turns to him tenderly and sings of their love,—a melody so gentle and pathetic that he can no longer resist. He picks up the fallen goblet, and touching it to his lips vows to love forever. They sing together a song of exaltation.

Suddenly Nilikanthe breaks in upon them. He brings his followers and would kill Gerald at once, did not Lakme rush between them: “If a victim to the gods must be offered, let them claim one in me!” In tones of ecstasy she repeats the final phrase of her love-song; but her voice soon fails, and with a sudden gasp she falls at the Brahmin’s feet—dead.

Like hot flames reaching up at him from the orchestra come the tones of his terrible vow-theme. The victim has been offered, but instead of glory, only ashes fall upon him.

“ I Pagliacci ”

“I PAGLIACCI.”

Pagliacci is the Italian word for clowns, a decidedly unique subject for grand opera. Novelty is one of the characteristics of this work. It has already achieved fame, altho but a child in age and size, being only a few years old and two acts long. Leoncavallo, the composer and librettist, has since written another opera, “I Medici,” which has found favor in Europe, but is still unheard in America.

Pagliacci is startling and intense from the entrance of the Prologue to the clown's last word, “*fnita.*” The music abounds in surprises, and altho Leoncavallo has been charged with some plagiarism, his work but reflects the influence of such recent composers as Wagner and Mascagni.

The opening orchestral measures are of peculiar rhythm, and suggest the spasmodic

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movement of puppets on a string; but this implies no lack of dignity to the composition. There are passages that recall the "Flying Dutchman," and Leoncavallo adopts the Wagnerian method of handling his themes; in other words, each one has a meaning that is adhered to throughout the opera. In this introduction we hear the warm and sunny love-music, followed by the somber theme of revenge like a shadow after light. Then the puppet-music is hastily resumed, to remind us that a clown must laugh and dance, however bitter his feelings.

During the overture a painted and grotesque personage steps before the curtain and announces himself as the Prologue. This innovation has prompted some wag to remark that "the opera commences before it begins!" Mascagni, in his "Cavalleria Rusticana," was the first to present an unconventional opening, by having a serenade behind the curtain, but Leoncavallo has outdone his rival by having a prologue in front

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of the curtain. He tells us that the play is taken from life, and that in spite of their motley and tinsel the actors have human hearts. This satisfying song, with its appealing melody and large, resounding accompaniment, has never yet failed to arouse an encore. With a final signal for the play to begin, the Prologue skips out as the curtain goes up.

The scene represents an Italian village gaily decorated for the "Feast of the Assumption," an annual fête that lasts a week. We see at one side a rough mimic theater, with stage and curtain, a temporary structure erected for a troupe of players who are just entering the town. There are shouting and laughter behind the scenes, sounds of a discordant trumpet and a terrible drum, and soon the villagers enter, vociferously greeting and surrounding a donkey-cart in which are the players. It is a meager troupe, consisting of Canio, the master, Nedda, his wife, Beppo, the harlequin, and Tonio, the fool. They wear fantastic costumes. Canio

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beats his big drum, while Nedda scatters play-bills, and the villagers think the troupe quite wonderful. They are welcomed with an impulsive sweeping chorus that seems to disregard all precedent in the matter of keys. These peasants apparently sing in an ungoverned, unrestrained way of their own; but as an Italian's tattered costume is always picturesque, so is this artless music most graceful and charming. Canio bows grotesquely on all sides, and again thumps his drum to make the people listen as he tells them that at seven o'clock the play will begin:

"You all are invited,
And will be delighted
As you witness the woes of poor Punchinello,
Who revenges himself on a rascally fellow."

Canio's professional music, such as the foregoing speech, is made admirably artificial, thin and cheap as tissue paper, with uncertain accompaniment and flimsy melodies.

When the excitement has subsided, Tonio, the fool, offers to lift Nedda from the cart,

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but Canio boxes his ears and helps his own wife down. The people laugh at Tonio's discomfort, and he goes off grumbling. This pantomime action and the succeeding bit of dialog are accompanied by a rollicking, hurdy-gurdy sort of motif in the orchestra. A villager invites the players to a drink in the tavern. Canio and Beppo accept, and they call Tonio to come along, but he replies from behind the mimic theater, "I am cleaning the donkey, and can't come." The villager laughingly suggests that Tonio is only waiting for a chance to court Nedda. Canio takes this joke rather seriously, and sings an earnest cantabile to the effect that such a game would be dangerous: "On the stage, when I find her with a lover I make a funny speech and every one applauds; but in life—believe me, it would end differently." This last phrase is adapted to the dismal, menacing theme of revenge that was started like a germ in the overture. It is still deeply buried among the instruments, but its growth is steady from the beginning

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of the opera to the end. Canio closes his song by assuring all that there is no ground for suspicion. He embraces Nedda, and declares that he loves and respects her. The hurgy-gurdy music is resumed, and distant bagpipes are heard,—noises peculiar to a village fête. The chorus sing with much good humor, and are accompanied by a charming violin obligato. Then comes the Bell Chorus, so named because the church bell calls them to vespers. “Prayers first, and then the play!” exclaim the young people as they go out. The delightful turns and curves of this bell-song are continued until quite in the distance.

Nedda is left alone, and the orchestra, like a merciless conscience, repeats to her Canio’s threatening theme. She has a secret that causes her to tremble as she recalls her husband’s dark looks and words; but her fears are momentary, for the day is bright and so is her heart. She sings to the sunshine and the birds in the sky. A gay tremolo of the stringed instruments

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seems to fill the air with feathered songsters, and they remind Nedda of a little ballad her mother used to croon. This popular balladella is generally referred to as the Bird Song. There is a busy, buzzing string accompaniment, and the melody is a gentle, legato waltz movement. The last notes are descriptive of a bird's flight "away, away!" so high that the tone seems to soar out of sound as a bird out of sight.

Nedda turns around, and is surprised to find Tonio listening with rapt adoration. He is only a jester, and quite ridiculous to look upon; but he nevertheless loves Nedda, and tells her so. In this aria, Tonio reveals a depth of feeling that is in touching contrast to his painted face and comical clothes. Nedda laughs uproariously at his confession, and with heartless sarcasm she quotes the scherzando music of the prospective play-scene, and says he must save his fine love-making for the stage. In vain Tonio pleads and falls on his knees. She threatens to call her husband, and finally snatching up

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a whip, gives Tonio a smart blow on the face. His love is turned to hatred, and he vows vengeance for this insult. He is very much in earnest, and indeed the composer has given him quite a fine vengeance-theme, all his own. It is heard groveling and growling among the bass instruments, like some disturbed animal. Tonio goes off with frowns and threats, but Nedda forgets these in the joy of seeing Silvio. As he cautiously enters, the orchestra announces in the plainest musical phrases that this newcomer is the lover. That theme *amoroso* is unmistakable even had we not been introduced to it in the prologue. Throughout this love-scene it is the leading spirit, sporting around from treble to bass, now in the orchestra, then in the voice; sometimes veiled in a minor key or suppressed by top-heavy chords; again, it will start to materialize but at once disappear, or when most unexpected will push itself forward with impish delight.

The witchery of this music undermines

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fear and caution. The lovers do not notice Tonio's leering face as he overhears their vows and then goes off to bring Canio; nor do they hear the stealthy approach of Tonio's revenge in the orchestra. Nedda agrees to elope with Silvio, "to forget the past and love forever!" He has climbed the wall and sings these farewell words with Nedda, just in time for Canio to hear them. The husband rushes forward with a cry of rage, but he fails to recognize the lover. Nedda has warned Silvio to flee, and Canio scales the wall in pursuit. She is left for a moment with Tonio, who gloats over his revenge. With bitter irony Nedda cries "Bravo!" to his success. She calls him a coward and other terrible names, but the despised jester only shrugs his shoulders.

When Canio returns from his futile chase, he grasps Nedda, tortures her and threatens her, but she will not tell her lover's name. He declares she shall die, and with these words that bitter revenge-theme for the first time blossoms out in the voice part. It is

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sung and shouted by the maddened Canio, while the director's baton swings over the orchestra like a reaper's sickle, gathering in this full-grown theme. Canio draws his dagger, but is forcibly restrained by Beppo, who tries to reason with his master. "It is time for the play to begin. The people pay their money and must be entertained." Nedda is told to go and dress for her part, while Canio is advised to restrain his anger until after the play. He allows himself to be persuaded. The others go off to make ready, and he too must soon don the paint and powder. He looks sadly at the little theater, and sings a magnificent aria that attains the uttermost heights of pathos. He must amuse the people while his heart is breaking. He dare not weep as other men, for "I am only a clown." Canio goes off sobbing as the curtain descends.

An intermezzo of much beauty and deep feeling is performed by the orchestra between the acts. Its opening measures recall the funeral march of the "Götterdäm-

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merung"—dolorous, heart-weary passages that presently break away with a nervous energy into the cantabile theme of the prologue. This intermezzo is not long, and we are again enlivened by the scene on the stage.

It is evening, "at seven o'clock," and the mimic theater is illuminated by gay lanterns. The people are flocking to the performance, and they drag forward benches and chairs to sit upon. Tonio stands at one side of the little stage beating a drum, while Beppo blows the trumpet which is still out of tune, and therefore the opening bars of this act are exactly like the first. These good people make a great rush and fuss in getting their seats, and they sing a simple, hearty refrain about the great event of seeing a play. The original and refreshing chorus that delighted us in the first act is repeated, and we become as excited and eager as the villagers to witness the performance about to take place on that little wooden stage with its cheap red curtain.

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Silvio is among the crowd, and he finds a chance to speak with Nedda as she passes the money-box. He arranges to meet her after the play, and she admonishes him to be careful. After she has collected the money the players go back of the scenes. A little bell is rung, and the wonderful red curtain goes up.

The comedy is called "Columbine and Punchinello," and Nedda, who plays the part of Columbine, is discovered sitting by a table. The room is roughly painted and Nedda wears some cheap finery, but the people applaud and think it beautiful. The play-music is all angular and grotesque, glaring effects thrown on in splashes like an impressionist painting. It is admirably appropriate, and perhaps the most unique stroke in the opera.

To return to the action of the mimic play. Columbine soliloquizes for a moment about her husband Punchinello, whom she does not expect home until morning. She looks toward the window and evidently expects

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some one else. The pizzicato tuning of a violin is heard through the window. The player gets his instrument to the right pitch and then sings a serenade to the "fair Columbine." She would fain receive her adorer, but at this moment the servant (Tonio) enters. He looks at Columbine, and with exaggerated music and ridiculous sighs informs the hearers that he loves her, and now that the husband is away he finds courage to abruptly get on his knees. Columbine pays no attention to his love-making, but she accepts the property chicken that he takes from his basket. The village spectators laugh and applaud. The scene on the mimic stage is next enlivened by the lover (Beppo), who climbs in through the window, and on seeing the servant promptly takes hold of his ear and shows him out of the room. The spectators, of course, laugh at this and think the whole play very funny. Columbine entertains her lover by giving him a good supper. Their harmonious conversation includes a charming and graceful

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gavotte melody that is decidedly the gem of this play-music. Its dainty elegance and classic simplicity are worthy of Bach himself.

The servant rushes in upon the supper-scene, and with mock agitation announces that Punchinello is coming. The lover hurries out of the window as the husband enters. It is Canio, the real husband, who acts this part, and as he sees Nedda at the window he is struck with the similarity of the play to the reality. For a moment the play-music is dropped and we hear the serious love-theme of the opera closely pursued by that bitter wail of revenge that clings and creeps around it like a poison-vine. Canio chokes down his grief and bravely tries to go through his burlesque part. A new, jerky little melody accompanies the remarks of Punchinello, and it would be very gay were it not written in the minor, which gives it a touching effect of faint-heartedness. Punchinello asks Columbine who has been with her, and she replies, "Only the servant." But Punchinello again

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asks who was the man—"tell me his name." The last words are real, and Canio no longer acts a part. Nedda tries to keep up the farce, and the serious themes and play-music alternate as the scene goes on. With curses, threats, and entreaties Canio tries to learn the name of Nedda's lover, and Silvio in the audience becomes uneasy; but the other villagers only think it is fine acting. When Canio at last buries his face in sobs as he recalls how much he loved his wife, the people shout "Bravo!"

Nedda again tries to resume the play. She forces herself to smile and sing the gay gavotte; but this only maddens Canio the more. With tones of fury he declares that she shall either die or tell her lover's name. Nedda defies him, and her words are sustained by a distorted arrangement of the love-theme, which effect is like seeking concealment behind a skeleton. The music has become as breathless as the situation. Nedda tries to escape toward the spectators, but Canio holds her, and there follows a

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piercing shriek. Nedda has been stabbed. She falls, and with her dying breath calls "Silvio!" Canio turns upon her lover and completes vengeance with a single stroke. The orchestra now trumpets forth, like the expounding of a moral, that poignant theme whose growth and supremacy we have watched. The village spectators are still puzzled, and can hardly believe that the tragedy is real. Tonio comes forward and announces in *parlando* voice that "the comedy is finished!"

"Pagliacci" only occupies half an evening, and even with the "Australian Nightingale" and a great tenor in the cast the public still expect "some more." New Yorkers have become spoiled by the great performances lately given at the opera-house. We take it as a matter of course that "Don Giovanni" should be given with Lehmann, Sembrich, Nordica, Edouard de Reszke and Maurel, and quite expect "The Huguenots" to have in its cast two great sopranos and

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the two de Reszkes. We have an idea that a large city like New York should expect nothing less, and are not sure but the European capitals do better. In point of fact, however, when Madame Sembrich sings in Berlin the royal opera-house is crowded by the attraction of her name alone; and the same may be said of Madame Melba in Paris, or Calvé, or any of them. There are never more than six or seven great prima donnas in the world at one time, and when one of these sings in Europe the rest of the company is often mediocre. But not so in New York. After "Pagliacci" with Melba, "Cavalleria" with Calvé is the usual program—a rather unfortunate combination of operas, for they are both so feverishly intense. After the "beautiful horror" of "Pagliacci's" finale, a contrast might be welcome. Glück's "Orpheus and Eurydice" is a short opera that alongside of Leoncavallo's work would delight the musical epicure. Such an opportunity to study the new and the old would surely be beneficial.

**“Orpheus
and Eurydice”**

“ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE.”

CLASSIC myth and classic music are in this opera happily united. The beautiful legend belongs to the past, but Glück the composer, like Orpheus the musician, has brought the departed to life. With gentle harmonies he pacified those surrounding Furies, the critics, and his creation has attained a lasting place in the musical world. Simplicity and sincerity stamp the entire composition. The musical thoughts are put down in the plainest, straightest way, in strong contrast to the old Italian style, whose profuse embellishments remind one of ornate penmanship. Glück lived more than a century ago, but his ideas anticipated many of our modern formulas. He succeeded in imparting a musical individuality to all his characters.

To properly enjoy Glück's masterpiece

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the listener should present himself with a spirit as gentle as the composer. The opera is more idyllic than overpowering. Enjoy it as you would a perfect day in some peaceful valley.

The overture to "Orpheus and Eurydice" is not remarkable. It bears no theme-feature in common with the opera, and its kinship is only discernible in name and nature, both opera and overture being devoid of ostentation.

The curtain rises upon a Grecian landscape that is beautiful but sad, for amid drooping willows and solemn pines stands the tomb of Eurydice. Orpheus, the disconsolate husband, is leaning upon the shrine. Not even his lute can solace him in this hour of grief. A dirge of unrivaled beauty arises from the orchestra like a flower from the earth. It is taken up by the chorus and given as an offering to the departed. There is something mythical about the music as well as the scene. All nature seems to join in this lament over

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Eurydice. Ever and anon Orpheus proclaims her name in tones so pitiful that—

“The rocks and rills and surrounding hills
Feel pity, and are touched.”

He asks the chorus to scatter flowers upon her grave and then leave him alone, for their song but adds to his grief. Accompanied by an orchestral ritornelle of Arcadian simplicity, they strew their garlands and then retire.

The wood-wind and viol follow Orpheus in his solitary plaint that again reminds us of the voice of nature. It is a feminine voice, too, a fact worth mentioning, for Orpheus is now considered the contralto *rôle de résistance*. After vainly beseeching high heaven and all the gods to restore his lost Eurydice, Orpheus decides to brave the realms of Pluto. He will himself wrest her from death's power. The gods help those that help themselves, and now Amor, the god of love, comes to his assistance. Amor says he shall descend in safety to the lower world, and will find his Eurydice among the

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peaceful shades. He must take his lute, and perchance by the power of music he can induce Pluto to release her. Was there ever a more charming story for an opera! Amor further dictates that while leading Eurydice to the upper world he must not look upon her, else all endeavor will have been in vain, and death will at once claim his own. After promising to obey, Orpheus sings a song full of gratitude, with here and there a gleam of gladness like flecks of sunlight after rain. His final aria is the very noontide of joy, dignified always but none the less radiant. Glück here finds use for colorature—plain, classical scales and broken thirds without any appoggiaturas or even staccatos; but his even-tempoed sixteenth notes seem as gay as Rossini's breathless sixty-fourths.

The second act is the most interesting. It pictures the nether world of Hades. There are vistas of receding caverns full of smoke and flames. Furies and Demons occupy the stage. According to Glück, the

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brass instruments furnish the music of Hades, in opposition to the harps, which belong to heaven. The first tones are hurled up by the trumpets like a blast of molten rocks. Then like a balm to all the senses, nectar after poison, incense after sulfur, day after night, come the next celestial harmonies. It is Orpheus with his lute, whose harp-tones reach us from afar, as this musician of the gods plays his way through the gates of Hades. For a moment the Furies cease their revel, as they wonder what mortal dares to enter here. When they resume their dance the orchestra renders a reeling, demoniacal medley of scales and staccatos. Again the Furies stop as they see Orpheus approaching, and they sing a malediction upon this mortal so audacious. They try to frighten him with howls from the watch-dog Cerberus, an effect admirably represented by the instruments. The music is all fearful and threatening, with creeping chromatics shrouded in a minor key.

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Orpheus is undaunted; and with enduring faith in the power of his music he takes up his harp and sings to them of his love for Eurydice. Entreating their pity, he begs them to let him pass; but Cerberus still howls and the Furies shout "No!" They threaten him with eternal torture, but the inspired youth sings on. No punishment they can devise could exceed the grief he already suffers—such is the burden of his song. Even the Demons and Furies can not long resist such tender strains. With bated breath they wonder what strange feeling steals o'er them, for pity is a new sensation: "The cheeks of the Furies were wet with tears; all Hades held its breath." Three times the wondrous song and accompaniment still the shrieks of Pluto's realm. Orpheus is finally allowed to pass. The Furies and Demons hasten to drown their recent emotion in a mad revel that surpasses the first one. This demon-dance is admirably characterized by the music. It is a rapid tempo and a perpetual motion that

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suggest dancing on hot iron. Tremolos rise and fall like puffs of smoke, while scales like coiling snakes and staccatos like skipping imps add to the effect of pandemonium.

Act III. pictures the Elysian fields, the abode of the blest where "calm and eternal rest" pervade even the music. The orchestral introduction is saintly, with its religious harmonies and classic purity. It is simple, but yet so interesting that we can imagine the immortal spirits hearing forever and never weary, for classical music is always new and always beautiful. The flute and stringed instruments perform the great part of this Elysian music. White-robed spirits glide about, and one soprano voice starts up a happy, flowing melody that inspires a chorus of others. It is Eurydice who leads this singing of the blest.

There is dancing as well as singing, and during this divertisement the instruments weave out a new musical fabric. The steady accompaniment and firm legato theme are

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the woof and warp through which, around which, and over which a little five-note *ap-poggiatura* sports like a weaver's shuttle. It appears four times in every measure, but never twice in the same place.

With wonder and admiration comes Orpheus upon the scene. The orchestra continues its blithe harmonies while Orpheus sings of the beauteous sight. But not even such surroundings can quell his longing for Eurydice. Unlike the Furies, who only granted his prayer because compelled by his wondrous music, the spirits of the blest can not see any one suffer. With one voice and immediately they tell him to take Eurydice. To the strains of softest music Orpheus approaches the various spirits. He harkens to their heart-beats, and finally recognizes his loved one without seeing her.

The scene changes to another part of the nether world, a forest through which Orpheus is leading Eurydice back to earth. A nervous, anxious instrumental passage precedes the opening recitative dialogue. Eu-

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rydice at first rejoices over her new-found life, but then forgets all else in surprise and grief because Orpheus will not look at her. She questions him, entreats him, fears she is no longer beautiful, or that his heart has changed. Orpheus explains that he dare not look at her, but Eurydice is not satisfied. She refuses to go farther, for if he can not look at her she does not wish to live. The ensuing duet is intense and full of climacteric effects. The voices chase each other like clouds before a storm, low down and hovering near that sea of sound, the orchestra, over which the conductor rules with his wand like Neptune with his trident.

Orpheus firmly resists the pleadings of Eurydice until she declares that his coldness will break her heart,—she will die of grief if he does not look at her. Little wonder that he flings prudence to the winds and impulsively turns to embrace her.

But no sooner has he looked upon Eurydice than she droops and sinks from his arms like a blighted flower. Death has again

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come between them. Orpheus cries aloud his grief, and there springs from his heart a song of lamentation surpassing any other as a geyser does a fountain. "Ach, ich habe sie verloren!" is the German and "Che in faro" the Italian name of this great song that is the standard classical contralto program piece. It is full of sobbing cadenzas and sighing intervals that express more than words or deeds.

Grief at last gives place to desperation: He is on the point of killing himself when Amor reappears. The gods are again moved to pity by his enduring love, and Amor with a touch of her wand revives Eurydice.

The opera closes with a trio between Amor and the reunited pair, an ode to the power of love. It is a sort of musical apotheosis. The orchestral accompaniment has a steady, revolving movement that might suggest the wheel of time tuned and turned in harmony with the voice of love.

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