

at Stockholm during the festivities arranged for the marriage of his son the Crown Prince. During these gaities Mme. Christine Nilsson would appear in opera one night, and I would sing in concert the next at the Royal Theater.

Before the arrival of the Crown Prince from his wedding journey, the King showed me over the palace, which had been specially decorated for the reception of the young pair. Later, Mme. Nilsson and myself were invited to the court ball given in their honor. Neither one of us had a court train, and we were at our wits' end to know what to do, for we both wanted to go. Every dressmaker in Stockholm was busy night and day; it was too late to order our trains from Paris. "I will write to the King about it," said Mme. Nilsson. And she did. "Your Most Gracious Majesty," she said in her letter, "Miss Thursby and I have no flaps to wear to the court ball. What shall we do?"

"Come without them. OSKAR," was the answer we got back the same day. And we appeared and had a beautiful time.

An incident that occurred the day King Oscar showed me through the palace displayed clearly his kindness of heart. We had been talking of music, and I spoke of his poetic ideas and acquaintance with it.

"I learned all that I know from Berg, the teacher of Jenny Lind," was his answer. After that I could see that he was thinking of something, and presently he said, "I wish you would go to see Berg; he is very old and lonely now."

So I went, and found him living at the top of a house, and that he had not been out for fifteen years. I sang a lot of things to him, songs that he had taught Jenny Lind. When I was through the poor old man wept and said, "To think that a great artist should come and sing to me, when I have heard no one for fifteen years!" When I spoke of the great debt we owed him as the teacher of Jenny Lind, who had given so much happiness, he answered with modest gentleness, "No, she got nothing from me; she had everything within herself."

#### Nilsson's Chilly Reception

THOSE first appearances of Mme. Nilsson in Stockholm were not very bright; it was a case of a prophet in his own country. The night after she sang in "Faust," with a reception as cold as ice, I had a tremendous success. But she was very generous; she had seen it all from a box, and after the concert she said, "You are a fool to go back to America, when you are so well received here." But the attitude of the public changed toward her later, and she came into her own.

A happy incident that touched me deeply was my meeting with Prince Alexander of Hesse, a favorite cousin of the Queen of England, whose father, I believe, would have been heir to the throne of Denmark, but for the fact of his blindness, which made him ineligible, according to the constitution of the country. Prince Alexander has inherited the affliction, and is almost entirely blind. His great happiness is music, and he has composed some really beautiful songs set to the words of Kate Greenaway and dedicated to the Queen of England.

One night in Paris, the day before I was to sail for America, a recent autumn, returning late from an entertainment, I was told that a man had been waiting for hours to see me. It proved to be Prince Alexander. He told me that as a boy at school in England he had heard me sing at the Crystal Palace. The memory of it, he said, had stayed with him all those years, and he insisted that I delay my sailing, that he might entertain me at dinner. My hostess whispered, "You must; it is a royal command." Finally I agreed. During the dinner he would turn to me and say, "To think that I am dining with the Miss Thursby whom I heard as a boy! No voice has ever touched me as yours did. I little thought I should have the honor of meeting you."

Some have said that the reward of a singer is at the end of her song or never. Longfellow knew better than that, when he wrote "The Arrow and the Song." The applause of the moment is all very grateful, but the memory of the song that is left in the hearts of friends that it has raised up for us is

the best of all, for that is the song without ending.

The first time that I saw the old Emperor William was before my musical days, when I went abroad with some Plymouth church people. The older ones had gone on to Berlin and left another young woman, her brother, a little boy, and myself on the Rhine. Some one said that the Emperor was to be in Wiesbaden, so we counted our pennies and set out to see him. After a very frugal supper and breakfast at Coblenz, for our cash was limited, we took the train. Standing about the door of our compartment before the train started, in the way that Americans soon learn to do to keep objectionable people out, we saw a nice looking man searching for a seat. His face was so genial and kindly that with one accord we decided to let him in.

The boy began to chatter in very bad German, but our new friend's was even worse. "Do you speak English?" the boy asked.

"Of course I do; I am an American," he answered.

It was Billy Florence, and when he heard what we were trying to do he promised to help us to see the Emperor. And no man could have been kinder. Lining us up in a row outside the kursaal, Mr. Florence hovered over us until the Emperor appeared, smiling and ruddy. Then Baden was in its heyday as a fashionable resort, and the present Emperor, as a slim boy, was constantly seen in the leafy promenades, in company with his sisters, one of whom is now the Crown Princess of Greece.

#### Foresaw New York's Growth

MAURICE STRAKOSCH was a marvelous man and always ahead of his time. He it was who proposed building an opera house at 40th-st., New York, where the Metropolitan now stands, and at the time people declared him crazy because of the idea of putting a great place of amusement so far up town. But he saw the possibilities and the great future of New York, and the very plans that he projected for the building of that opera house, which were published at the time in "The Graphic," were adopted when the Metropolitan was built, though no credit has ever been given him for the inspiration.

When I was singing in Leipsic under his management, Mr. Strakosch heard Wagner for the first time, and foresaw the great hold that his music was



He Insisted That I Was His Sister.

bound to have on the American public. He engaged all the members of the company then singing there for a tour of the United States. The contracts were made out and he sent word of the undertaking to his brother, Max Strakosch, who wrote back that American audiences would not listen to Wagner. So the plan was abandoned.

It was the same with him in the selection of voices.

He discovered by intuition what singers would please, and the French were right when they called him the Christopher Columbus of voices. Mme. Patti, whose teacher he was for seventeen years, owes to him the debt of her great career; Mme. Nilsson was drilled by him; and he it was who first heard Mme. Melba, as a pupil of Mme. Marchesi, knew the success in store for her, and engaged her on the spot. Had it not been for his sudden death, Maurice Strakosch would have been the one to introduce her.

He knew as much about music as he did about managing. There was a set of scales and exercises that he wrote that he called "The Vocalists' Ten Commandments"; those he made me practise every day, and I have never found anything like them. They were the ones that he used with Mme. Patti, and it was from him that she and others who studied with him learned the secret of how to preserve the voice. One instance of this was in practising very high runs; he would always make me sing them an octave lower. "But how do I know that I will have the high notes when the time comes to sing them?" I would ask him.

"You will have them, and you will have them fresh, because you have saved them," would be his answer. And he was right.

Both Costa and Benediet told me that Mr. Strakosch did all the rehearsing for Patti to save her coming to the opera house. He drilled her in all her operas, taught her, managed her, and never left her until her marriage with the Marquis de Caux, to which he was strongly opposed. The breach between them on this account was never healed.

His wife, who was Amalie Patti, the sister of Mme. Adelina, told me that when Mme. Patti sang in Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet" at the Grand Opera in Paris, after his death, she sat and wept as she listened to think that the beautiful work of her husband would never be credited to him. He taught Mme. Patti every rôle in which she made a success. Those that she learned after their separation were one and all unfortunate, and to this day she sings the cadenzas that he wrote for her.

#### An Inconvenient "Brother"

THE quaintest experience that I had under Mr. Strakosch's management was at Prague. As a result of it I had to leave the town without giving my final concert.

A rather wild looking but very determined man came to my hotel, and insisted that I was his sister, who had gone to America years before as a baller dancer and had never been heard of again. To make matters more uncomfortable, he produced some photographs of her that really resembled me. He got the police to work on the case, and they seemed in such sympathy with his story that we concluded the wisest thing to do was to leave town.

But the matter was actually brought up later in New York. I was away from the city, when my sister received a note to come to police headquarters. The American consul at Prague had taken up the case. The photographs were brought out again, and she was questioned. Mr. French, who was then Chief of Police, exclaimed before she was through, "Well, what kind of an American consul is this, anyway, who doesn't know Miss Thursby?"

Years went by. I had sung in concerts all over Europe and America, and never once heard of Mr. Gray, whose interest was associated with my beginnings. One day I got a church paper with the word "Come!" written on it in blue pencil, and signed Gray. The address given was an Old Man's Home, so I trudged over to the other end of Brooklyn. A little old man, bent with age, came into the room. "Is this Emma?" he asked. He had lost his money through business misfortunes, but assured me that he had remained happy through it all; and it ever I have seen a beautiful Christian character his was one.

"I have followed your whole career in the papers," he said that morning, "and have prayed for the hour that I might hear you sing."

It was a tender privilege to me to sing to the old man all his familiar favorites, and when I heard that he was dead I went over and sang at his funeral "Angels Ever Bright and Fair," that he had loved so well.

## TRIALS OF ORCHID HUNTING

THE prices sometimes paid for rare and new orchids seem exorbitant, but when the figures are put by the side of the hardships endured to procure the plants they are seen to be reasonable enough.

An official of the Botanic Gardens at Washington tells of the perseverance displayed by an agent for that institution.

This agent was sent to New Guinea some years ago to look for a *dendrobium*, then very rare. For months he dwelt among the natives, faring as they fared, and living under the most trying conditions. But he secured about four hundred of the coveted plants and loaded them on a little schooner. Then, thinking his mission accomplished, he hastened away with his trophies. But on putting into a port in Dutch New Guinea he had the misfortune to see his vessel burned to the water's edge.

He was ordered to go back for more plants. He

went. This time he found a magnificent collection of the orchids growing in a native burying ground, among exposed bones and skulls.

It was no easy matter to obtain permission to remove the plants, especially as some of the skulls had to be removed with them. However, at last the natives consented, sending with the consignment a little idol to watch over the spirits of the departed. This time the orchids reached their destination. Inferior varieties, which the agent had been permitted to gather in addition to the specimens desired for the Government's garden, were sold in the open market at prices ranging from twenty-six to one hundred and forty-eight dollars each.

Many such plants will grow in swamps, which the natives themselves regard with dread as the home of fever and mosquitoes. To go in search of the orchids is often to face death. One agent, detained at Panama, went to look for an orchid he had heard

of, and was carried back from the swamps to die.

The difficulties of the work are as great as the dangers. One collector was known to wade up to his waist in mud for a fortnight, seeking a specimen of which he had heard, and another lived among the Indians of Brazil for nine months, peering through the tangled jungle for a lost variety.

To obtain the orchids that grow on trees, the collector must hire a certain area of woodland, with the right to fell the timber. As the natives cannot be trusted to climb the trees and gather the plants, the wasteful plan of cutting down the trees is adopted, and he gathers his specimens from the fallen trunks.

The forest being often inland, the plants, after being collected, must be carried to river or sea. In one case they were carried for six weeks on men's backs from the mountains to a river, then six weeks in canoes, with twenty portages, and then conveyed over the ocean.