

down to posterity too often on the wave of hearsay. An accredited "musical critic"—whosever that personage may be—is more often than not paid for extirpating the dross from the gold and believed implicitly by persons too ignorant to think for themselves.

When an American girl unwisely chooses—it is always unwise—to exhibit her voice before the glaring white light of foreign public opinion, the abuse which assails that sweet organ of almost divine import is like a flash radiance turned upon a vital part—a part which is not criticised on its own merits, but on the merits of its owner's charms. The voice must undergo a set to with comparison, which in France is considered inevitable rather than odious. It is compared unmercifully with the voices of the past and the present. Then its owner is stoned and subjected to the rack and hacked and besmudged and relegated to the cliffs of good riddance and spitefully misused and purposely misunderstood, and, finally, if in one chance out of a thousand her instrument wins the right to soar indefinitely, an emanation from its owner's heart, a spontaneous outburst of her innermost soul, an utterance of her over-soul, it is as exhaustively discussed as though it were fashioned of flax and tissue instead of gush and outpour, as though of flesh and blood instead of embodying the nucleus of inspiration.

Does that voice win its way to the stars, giving evidence of a sweetness which is supposed to embellish only the main turnpike to Parnassus, the wolves that have failed or the carrion that has faltered or the onlookers who have stolen spurious achievement instead of worked for the legitimate article or the impotent who have twined their thumbs while waiting for fame turn and nod with the hurtful slur of their work-wrath, the being who through sheer grit and indomitable pluck and colossal self-abnegation has lifted his or her God-given gift in an honest fight for better things.

This is not an exaggeration. The night Constance Brilla made her debut at the Paris Grand Opera was one of those bitter nights when the elements war with personal comfort outside and personal comfort wars with itself within. The galleries were literally gorged with the Paris student world, which congregates about the musical and art arena with deathless fidelity whenever one of its rank and file dares to throw his or her effort for recognition within its midst and claim for it, on the ground of merit, adequate recompense. The American girl students, in last year's coats and hats, their countenances pallid and pinched with want, their eyes and lips sharpened with expectancy, sat huddled together in the topmost gallery, with their opera scores on their knees, their tongues chattering like magpies on the tree of knowledge.

The question was, Would the apple of wisdom, of such eminent desirability, of so delightful an import, fall within the hands of their enviable contemporary, or would it smile maliciously, turning its rosiest side toward the breeze of public protest, and refuse to be coerced? Long haired students, dreamy eyed and originally clad, as though indifferent to the law of fashion or custom, with stocks about their slim throats, hats retained between the acts and the odor of last night's tussle with a poverty stricken Bacchus in their breaths—Bacchus who was a poor specimen of his richer relative in that he had substituted absinth for grape juice and nicotine for tobacco—lollid against the railing of the gallery at the left of the highest tier.

In the boxes were the stockholders and their overdressed or underdressed wives, who, ever on the scent of novelty, hired their places semiannually to infuriate the management and spent the other six months grumbling at a government institution which demanded dear pay for cheap ability.

In the parquet were seated the critics, that body, or rather army, of men who exemplify the attenuating apparatus through which merit must creep in order to attain a hearing. Their souls were charged with a cynicism as bald as it was bland, but their pens were tipped with the most corrosive acid extant. Some of them, men with families and the record of experience in their lined physiognomies, affably discussed the newcomer's indubitable pluck and imminent fiasco. Desmoulins ogled the galleries skeptically, regarded his nails diligently, whispered soliloquies in the ear of his companion, who was no less a personage than De Lacaze, and awaited with impatience the rising of the curtain upon the event of the hour. There were two logs in the house which claimed his attention. One was a narrow one on the fourth tier. It contained all the members of the pension in their best bibs and tuckers, the World, the Flesh and the Devil predominating. The other was a large one on the first tier, in which were seated Priscilla, radiantly lovely in pure white; Aunt Mildred, sparkling with magnificent diamonds; Stormmouth and Dixie. The two latter had arrived three days before. Their arrival had scattered as dire a consternation in the opposing camp as though these untitled specimens of a new country, universally reproached for its pulling infamy, represented a dynamite fuso newly organized and warranted to go off with or without cause, according to its own sweet will.

Priscilla was pale and unnerved. She had spent the night, a sleepless one obviously, with Constance. She had suffered the same anticipatory stage fright, the terror, the nauseating fear with which Constance was assailed now she clutched at last her life's opportunity. She shudderingly recognized that, now the die was cast, she could not draw back.

"You will succeed," Priscilla said encouragingly, ignorant of the incongruity displayed in her dark circled eyes and pallid lips, which were in such violent contrast to her brave words. "I looked at the moon over my right

shoulder last night, and I am wearing my little turquoise ring on my left finger instead of my right."

"If it were only that!" Constance shivered. "You cannot imagine. My throat is so dry and my heart feels as if it were in a different place from usual, and," she concluded mournfully, with the when that of utter exhaustion fastened on her waxen features like a death mask, "I never know whether I am going to have stage fright or not. When it comes, it clutches me like a demon. I can't cry out. I am dumb. I just bear." Then very sadly, "It seems to me, Priscilla, that is the whole of life—just endurance."

"Don't," Priscilla had answered chokingly, with a little sob. "Please don't."

The eventful day had dragged along heavily, as though holding back its inevitable decree reluctantly, at least so it seemed to Constance's feverish imagination. Even the sunshine seemed to her like a horrible face of some kind, a demoniacal grin at her superlative fatuity. There was no future for her after tonight unless she succeeded. She found herself leaving her letters unread or unposted. The days or weeks had been numbered up to the night of the debut, not past it. Every blue bloused butcher boy whom she chanced to perceive idly perusing the coming event of her tenacity on the yellow posters pasted on the signboards at the right and the left of the Opera, which cast their highly tinted shadow before, seemed to her a possible carping critic or a scolding agent of the secret police sprung out of the multitude, for the sole purpose of encompassing her vocal ruin. She wondered when she climbed the stairs of the pension after a run around the block to assure herself that her other faculties were not paralyzed, like her throat, if in the early morning hours of the ensuing day she would climb them with a heavy heart or a joyous one. When her humid eyes looked upon her little bed, she wondered if the pillow would smother her tears of womanish impotency or welcome her sighs of infinite relief when the ordeal was over and her triumph was complete.

Desmoulins had been with her all the afternoon, accompanied by six journalists of renown, among whom was De Lacaze, fully cognizant of the superlative importance of his organ. They discussed the new singer's "points" in her hearing, as though she were a prize heifer, and argued out loud the undesirability of one of the opposite sex embracing so arduous a career, which they did not hesitate to denominate a sale métier.

Constance's sole response had been to smile defiantly, a little burning flush purpling her cheek under the eyes, like the glow of an orb which, supposed to have set, suddenly reveals itself once more, as if to give the lie to its mourners. To her they all appeared like tormentors who experienced intense delight in augmenting her torture, in dragging her fears out before the merciless test of their skeptical analysis.

Geoffroy, the great opera manager, had visited his new protegee and counseled coolness and precision, perfun-

torily, taking unsympathetic notice of her waxen face and heavily shadowed brilliant eyes. Then he departed, with a good natured "Courage, mademoiselle," and an undisguised contempt in the lift of his Gallic shoulders. Geoffroy knew what stage fright was. He knew its crippling power and its clutching insistence. He knew such fright could cut off a voice like a knife laid wantonly against a rose stem or hoarsen it into a hideous apology of song or render it strident or force it out into an apology of sound which seemed to mock, like an echo of pain, at its owner's mortification. But Geoffroy was wise in his managerial generation. He waited. American pluck was proverbial in the Paris musical world. He had himself signified unusual daring in his choice of a foreign voice, unknown, unsuspected, unjudged except by himself and that inner circle which constitutes the vocal judgment firmament in Paris. His other prime donne, who were languishing in duration vile awaiting the opportunity to appear, had not hesitated to scoff at him for his conviction so absolute. He had laughed in their faces. "We wish to fill the house," he confided later to one of his satellites. "There is a large foreign colony in Paris. The debutants' friends and enemies will come to witness the slaughter of the innocent. If she fails, they will swallow the pill with miraculous submission. Human nature is wont to be extraordinarily submissive where other people's disappointments are concerned. If she succeeds, they will reorganize their doubtful judgments and confess they suspected their countrywoman's undeniable ability after all."

The corps de ballet had pestered him with questions as incisive, as rife with Parisian wit and cynicism as a prize pug would address to his master if he had the faculty of speech.

He had shaken them all off good humoredly. He "knew a good thing when he saw it," he said. Then he wondered in a softened mood why, after all, there was so little good in the world, totally

unconscious of the truth that he might have seized his managerial opportunity as an instrument toward music's uplifting import instead of just the contrary if he had chosen.

Geoffroy was but a caterer to the public pulse. No more, no less. If that pulse beat sluggishly in the veins of a too pampered audience, which palpated required a shock to set its sluggish blood astir, he considered that he did his duty did he administer the requisite shock through his prima donna, his orchestra or his corps de ballet. It would be fully as justifiable for his purpose of self advertisement to register a fiasco as a success. It would set the newspapers agog and establish a nine days' wonder. The sacrifice of a singer or a coryphee was but part and parcel of his debt to that government institution, the Paris Opera.

When after the prologue—the opera was Gounod's time worn if none the less exquisite one of "Romeo and Juliet"—the curtain rose on the ball scene at the house of the Capulets, Constance descending the staircase with her hand upon her father's arm, there was a pregnant silence. The critics were awaiting a confirmation of their adipose skepticism or a trial exhibition of mediocrity. They were universally defiant as regarded foreign issues. Paris was overrun in their opinion with irreverent foreigners who attacked art superficial-

ly. "I suppose you are going to lie there and wait for the baby to learn to talk so it can tell you what it's crying about?"

"No," he answered, "being able to talk wouldn't make much difference."

"Why not?"

"Because it's a girl. Girls never know what they're crying about. It just comes natural to them to do it."—Pearson's Weekly.

He Turned the Laugh.

President O'Hanlon of the Pennington (N. J.) seminary used to preach every Monday morning at Ocean Grove, and one of his regular hearers was a good Methodist brother who used to shout "Glor-y!" whenever anything pleased him. Once in awhile this shout would come in at an inopportune moment.

After Dr. O'Hanlon had been preaching on Monday mornings for a number of years he arose one day to announce his text. He introduced his remarks with these words: "Brethren, I have been preaching here at Ocean Grove on Monday mornings for a number of years, but some of these days when you are gathered here I will be missing, for the grass will be growing over my grave." Just then the shouter uttered a shrill "Oh, G-l-o-r-y!"

Sedate as was that congregation, there went up a hearty laugh. The doctor was equal to the occasion. He put his hands in his pockets, leaned back and said, "Well, brother, what have you got against me?" The laugh was turned, order was soon restored, and the doctor preached with his usual power and acceptability.—New York Tribune.

The Americans in Egypt.

Americans occupy an important position in extending the prosperity and civilization of modern Egypt.

Not only do they form at least one-third of the tourists visiting Egypt, and number some of the leading Egyptologists, but the beneficent effect of their missions and schools is everywhere apparent throughout Egypt. The magnitude of their Christian operations may be gathered from the fact that the Egyptian mission of the American Presbyterians has 100 stations, 20 churches and 97 schools. Ask a little Egyptian child where it has learned its English and it will very probably answer, "At the American mission." The mission doctors, too, are of much service. An English lady might have died on board our mail steamer had a telegram not been sent to an American mission physician, who came on board, attended to her and removed her to the hospital at Assiut.—North American Review.

Mr. Boffin Scolded by Dickens.

"Dodd the Dustman," who founded the barge race, meant to be the founder of the Royal Dramatic college. He offered the money to Benjamin Webster and Charles Dickens and was not altogether well treated in the matter. He was certainly not an aristocratic donor, and the source of the money might have been materials for ridicule, but he certainly merited more civility than he got. Webster shelved him rather shabbily, and Dickens caricatured him as "Boffin, the Golden Dustman."—London Mail.

Will Cure Him Eventually.

"I feel considerably encouraged about Slusher."

"Why, I thought you told me he was incurable—that he smoked the nasty little things incessantly, and they had given him a constant cough."

"That's why I am encouraged. The cough is getting worse."—Chicago Tribune.

Just Like a Girl.

He is a very young boy. His is the age when a lofty contempt for the opposite sex manifests itself, the contempt which usually finds merciless retribution in later years.

His task of watching the baby was not as distressing as it might have been. He had utilized the bassinet as a cradle and had found a place where the floor sloped a little.

Behind the vehicle he extended himself and with head on hand proceeded to read a story paper. An occasional pull at a string fastened to the rear axle imparted the motion necessary to keep the slumberer from waking. But the baby soon had its nap out and began to cry. The boy paid no attention to the noise, and after awhile his sister came to investigate.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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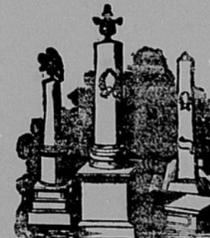
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