THE ART of SINGING

BY SIR CHARLES SANTLEY

THE ART OF SINGING

AND

VOCAL DECLAMATION

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TO

PAULINE VIARDOT GARCIA

DEAR PAULINE,

Although an unworthy offering to your great genius, I dedicate this work to you; as whatever of good it may contain is chiefly the result of the influence of that genius, and the valuable instruction I received from your lamented brother Manuel.

I pray you, accept my offering as a small token of my esteem and affection.

Your devotedly attached Friend,

C. SANTLEY.

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INTRODUCTORY

For some time regret has been expressed that the Art of Singing is dying out. There is no reason why it should; but it will die out if the system of teaching at present generally in vogue continues.

There is only one system by which anything — art, science, or profession — can be learned!

A housemaid can never become expert if she does not first learn to handle broom, brush, and duster; carpets will be worn to shreds, furniture scratched, ornaments defaced, long before they ought to show the least sign of "wear and tear."

If such be the effect of imperfect education in the ordinary profession of

keeping a house clean and orderly, what must be the necessity for acquiring first principles in order to attain perfection in the exercise of one, if not the most difficult of all arts!

In the course of the remarks I intend to make, I wish it to be distinctly understood that I make them as adviser, not as dictator. They will be opinions formed on theoretical and practical experience extending over upwards of sixty years. As I have always minutely studied the results of the work of those artistes with whom I have been associated, as well as of my own, I believe I may justly hope that my remarks will prove useful to those who are desirous of studying singing with the object of adopting the vocal art as a profession.

It is a mistake to suppose that because in modern compositions for the voice there is an absence, or nearly so, of "fioritura," the exercise of scales, solfeggi, etc., is unnecessary; as such

exercises have other two objects of greater importance than that of acquiring even rapid execution, viz. of equalising the quality and power of the voice, and of preserving it intact until age destroys its charm.

It is a general idea that florid music was introduced to "show off" the technical ability of the singer. It was not! The "fioritura" is a great assistance to declamation, whether in serious or comic (*buffo*) music. "Plain chant" is the most ancient vocal music, I believe, in use at the present day; I could quote innumerable examples of it from the Gradual and other music books used in the Roman Church, abounding in "fioriture." They surely could not have been written to "show off" the technical ability of the monks or priests whose office it was to sing them; but by holding the ear in suspense with attractive sound, to intensify materially the declamation of the text!

There must have been a reason for wedding words to music and singing instead of reciting them. A sonorous singing voice is more sympathetic than a speaking voice, and consequently, when well trained, makes more, and a more lasting, impression on the generality of mankind; moreover, a singing voice properly trained is more distinctly audible in a large space than a speaking voice of equal power.

This probably led to the adoption of musical representation in the theatre, and so laid the foundation of the opera, for which the training of the singers must have been severe, judging from exercises written by the old singing masters from the end of the seventeenth to the early part of the nineteenth century, which few of the best singers of the present day could execute without a considerable amount of study. They embrace every species of florid and sustained singing, besides afford-

ing the dramatically gifted student the means of attaining proficiency in vocal declamation.

Most of the composers of vocal music of our own day have either been ignorant of or have paid no attention to the capabilities of the human voice; and for this reason alone it is imperative that young singers should be perfectly exercised in the rudiments of singing, that they may know how to husband their resources, so as to avoid unnecessary "wear and tear." How many voices, originally sonorous and sympathetic, are utterly ruined through the study of unvocal so-called dramatic music, before the rudiments of singing have been thoroughly mastered!

The voice is the most sympathetic and the most perfect of all musical instruments, but being at the same time the most delicate, in its exercise during study, and afterwards during the singer's career, it must be treated with

the utmost care and attention. I will point out the only means by which this can be accomplished. It must be clearly understood that by singer I mean the person whose object is, being possessed of the necessary qualifications, to become an artiste, not the one whose sole object is to use those qualifications merely to make money.

It is a generally received idea that a singer's life is a merry one — little to do, storms of applause, topped-up with sacks of gold, and amusement without end. My experience does not confirm that idea in the least; my anticipation which pointed to merriment broke down in the realisation. No gold nor amusement could repay the toil, worry, and disappointment of a singer's life as I know it.

I have been happy when my conscience told me my performance was good, and I received the congratulations of those who I knew praised it con-

scientiously, and in whose judgment I had faith. The happiest time of my musical life were the two hours a week I spent at the rehearsals of the "Società Armonica," where I played principal second violin for four or five years previous to my leaving Liverpool to continue my vocal studies in Milan. I was not much of an executant, but being a good sight-reader and time-keeper, I was entrusted with that post by our director. My first year in Milan was a happy time, as I felt I was working with an object; except that I experienced an occasional pang when I was reminded that I ought to be making a name and earning my living at the Scala or other great theatre, knowing that I was not yet sufficiently advanced to aspire to engagements at such important houses. I may say that with that year ended for me the merry side of the singer's life. Wandering from one agent's office to another, to be told

I had not sufficient voice to sing in a theatre, and that my style of singing was not adapted to the exigencies of the then public taste, that it was necessary to have the voice of a bullock and to sing like a butcher, were not encouraging, to say the least. This is the story of all those who earnestly endeavour to repay the talents entrusted to them with interest. I am witness to the struggle every day, and my great object in writing this book is to warn those who are about to enter the arena of what they will have to encounter, and at the same time to encourage them to fight valiantly, and never lose sight of the goal as long as their powers last. If they are faithful to their trust, they will reap the only reward worth fighting for — the satisfaction of having done their duty.

THE ART OF SINGING

AND

VOCAL DECLAMATION

I

ADVICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE DESIROUS OF JOINING THE VOCAL PROFESSION

MANY young people are induced to believe they will attain eminence as vocal artistes; — because they have great ambition, that they feel it is the line they are called to adopt, that music is their only joy; because their parents and intimate friends declare they have but to go through a course of training, if only for a short period, to arrive at the "top of the tree"; because, being engaged in some commercial or other business, they find the close confinement of an office, shop, or factory

engenders headache and general lassitude and cramps their genius; because having been well brought up, and owing to the death or failure of the family bread-winner they find themselves reduced to comparative poverty, they wish to exercise their musical knowledge and faculties in the laudable endeavour to provide for themselves and reinstate their family in comfort.

Ambition is a virtue if tempered with discretion, which, however, is rarely developed to sufficient extent for the purpose in the young; therefore it would be well for parents to instil into the minds of their children the necessity for cultivating this virtue, in order that their ambition may not run wild and lead them to attempt things for which they do not possess the natural qualifications. At the same time it is cruel as well as stupid to curb ambition without due consideration (and advice from an adept, in case the

parents are not conversant with the object of the child's ambition), with harsh commands or cynical words.

The ambition to become a wealthy merchant would only end in failure if not guided by discretion; but the lesson derived from the failure would lead a courageous man to make a fresh start and probably succeed, whereas in the Fine Arts such uncurbed ambition could only end in total shipwreck. The adventurer might make money, but could never become an artiste. If we reflect on the number of those who have arrived at artistic excellence — how few they are when compared with the population of the universe — a mere handful!

A danger to be carefully avoided in choosing any one of the Fine Arts as a profession is the interference of ignorant, injudicious friends, who, having no knowledge of Art, or of the qualifications necessary to form an

artiste, raise hopes (already too eagerly nursed) which can rarely be fulfilled.

Those who pay for the solace or amusement they find in exhibitions of pictures, musical and dramatic performances or reading, have a perfect right to enjoy all the pleasure they derive from them, but that does not constitute them connoisseurs of painting, music, the drama, or literature, all of which require an intimate knowledge of their rudiments to judge of their merits and of the talent of the artistes who conceived and executed them. If such be the case with regard to works already executed and their executants, it must be of paramount importance that those who are called upon to judge of qualifications and talents in embryo should be thoroughly acquainted with the exigencies of Art and the qualifications necessary to form an artiste, it being a question of a life made or marred.

The only adviser to be consulted is a conscientious, practical artiste who has "gone through the mill" and come out stamped "genuine"!

I urge this point emphatically, as in the course of my career I have come across many lives wrecked through the interference of injudicious, ignorant parents and friends which might have turned out successful. I use the word ignorant only as regards the Fine Arts.

II

ON THE QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO FORM A SINGER

It is said that on being asked what were the qualifications necessary to form a singer, Rossini replied, "Voice! Voice! Voice!" but it is quite evident, from even a casual acquaintance with the music he wrote for singers, that there must be something more than voice alone, or there will be no singer. An artiste with very little voice, if it be of a sympathetic quality, could not fail to give pleasure to an audience composed of artistes, but audiences are very rarely so composed. Among a large audience at the opera, or in the concert room, the small number of

those capable of judging of the performance or the performers may be generally counted on the fingers of the two hands at most, the major number being solely attracted by a sonorous voice.

Very often a singer is dubbed great who possesses little or no merit, beyond beauty and power of voice, which would almost lead to the supposition that artistic cultivation is unnecessary — that it is, in fact, labour thrown away.

If a large reward is to be earned by voice alone, why spend time, labour, and money on acquiring artistic excellence? Here the money-making question enters, and that I have already abjured. Given a sonorous voice of sufficient compass, one, whose aim is to use it as an artiste, must be gifted with a true ear, accent, the sense, if not the knowledge, to a certain extent, of harmony; besides the gifts necessary for all who

enter on an important career — untiring patience and perseverance, and the courage to be undismayed by repeated failure and the adverse criticism of "candid friends."

III

ON THE CHOICE OF A MASTER

It is said that at the present time there are about ten thousand persons engaged in teaching singing in London alone; in the larger provincial towns there is a large number; in the smaller the organist of the parish church and other places of worship almost invariably teaches singing. A short time ago a friend, a teacher of singing, remarked to me that nowadays every individual who found it difficult to make a living turned his or her attention to "teaching singing" or "selling coals"; probably an exaggerated statement, but no doubt there are hundreds who teach "singing" and "production of the voice" who never

had a lesson in "singing" in their lives, and do not know what they mean by "production of the voice."[1] I have been asked to take a pupil for "singing" who had already received twelve months' instruction in "production," which is simply an exhibition of crass ignorance on the part of the person who asked the question, the intended pupil, and his "production" master; as *what is called* "production" cannot be taught without teaching singing, and *vice versa*.

A master must be an accomplished practical artiste, gifted with the faculty of imparting his knowledge, and must ever bear in mind the trouble and anxiety he caused *his* master, especially during the course of his early studies. If I were questioned as to the requisites of a singing master, as Rossini to the question regarding those of a singer, I would reply, "Patience! Patience!

[1] The "production" of the voice is Nature's work; the singing-master's work begins with teaching the "emission" of the voice after its "production."

Patience!" A singing master has the most trying task of all teachers! He has to teach an instrument which cannot be seen except by an expert, and cannot be touched at any time for practical purposes. He must do all in his power by precept and example to develop moral as well as musical, poetical, and dramatic sentiment, and instil in the minds of his pupils the necessity for strict attention to bodily health and grace of speech and movement. Bodily ill-health will cause diminution of sonority, and at times total loss of voice; rough speech will cause the loss of kind and influential friends; ungainly movement of the body will seriously diminish the effect an otherwise promising young artiste might be expected to make when called upon to face an audience.

As far as numbers are concerned there are plenty of masters to choose from. I might, without impropriety, paraphrase what Max O'Rell says in

Jonathan and his Continent — "The population of the United States numbers about 60,000,000, chiefly colonels"! — and say "the professional musical population of England numbers about so many thousands, chiefly masters"! There is the *only* professor of the true Italian method, "*il bel canto Italiano*"; the *only* professor who understands the management of the breath (with a newly invented pair of bellows); there is the professor of voice production (in my early days the birch rod was considered the ablest professor of that art), and innumerable other onlys, including one who styled himself on his professional card "Voice Builder." To any daring individual desirous of following in this gentleman's footsteps, I would venture to remark that even a *good* builder, unless he were also a good architect, or employed one, would be very liable to build here and pull down there at random, and so endanger,

if not destroy, the beauty and solidity of his building.

A teacher of singing must be, or must have been, a good singer. It is not enough that he should have mixed with or heard good singers, or have accompanied them either as orchestral conductor or on the pianoforte or other instrument; such experiences may give him an insight into the effects an artiste can produce, but they will afford him none into the means by which these effects are produced. As well might I undertake to teach the organ, having blown the bellows for my father when he practised the organ; or the pianoforte because I turned over the leaves for him whilst he played the pianoforte, as an organist or pianist undertake to teach singing whose only knowledge of the art is derived from accompanying singers. Without a thorough knowledge of the rudiments it is impossible to teach anything, and these cannot be

picked up at random; they must be mastered by study and exercise.

It is very important that students should be placed, from the beginning, under a thoroughly competent master, as inferior tuition may ruin a voice, or certainly so far impair its quality and power as to cost much trouble and time to restore its original strength and freshness. In the first place, the register of the voice, soprano, contralto, tenor, or bass, must be clearly established. These, again, are subdivided into high soprano, dramatic soprano, mezzo soprano, high or florid tenor, robust tenor, high baritone, low baritone, or *basso cantante*, and bass.

In England these distinctions are not properly observed; a singer is supposed to be capable of singing whatever music is written in the soprano, alto, tenor, or bass clef respectively. At times, no doubt, there will be found some difficulty, even by an experienced master, in

deciding to which class a particular voice belongs, if it is of more than ordinary limited or extensive compass; the quality of the voice, not its compass, is the only reliable test.

As I cannot illustrate this better than by my own case, I will, though I dislike doing so, speak of myself. When my voice recovered after the usual break (which occurred to me before I was fourteen years of age), my father insisted on my singing tenor, which I did, contrary to my own opinion that I was not a tenor. As such I passed an examination before the committee of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society on my fifteenth birthday, 28th February 1849, and was unanimously elected a performing member of the Society, and took part in the chorus at the festival with which their present fine hall was opened (I will say, by the way, the most complete and comfortable hall, both for public and artistes, I have ever sung in)

in the month of August of the same year. The morning performances included *Elijah*, *The Messiah*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Mendelssohn's *Lauda Sion*, and selections from *Israel in Egypt* and other works; the evening concerts included, for the chorus, some madrigals, four-part songs, etc. My voice suffered from excitement and the work, but recovered in a day or two. I felt sure that my own opinion of the register of my voice was correct, but I submitted to my father's decree, and continued as I had begun until I arrived at the age of seventeen to eighteen, when I rebelled and dropped into the bass clef. I was then (as I had a certain power in the low notes) pronounced a bass, and sang any music written in the bass clef which fell to my lot. When I was studying in Milan, 1855 to 1857, my master, Gaetano Nava, kept me to the baritone parts of Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Mercadante, and others of that

school, with an occasional dip into the more exacting Verdi. It was not until I made my operatic début with the "Pyne and Harrison" company in 1859 as Hoel in *Dinorah*, that my real register was revealed to me (high baritone); I then began to see my way and feel my legs; the future depended on the use I might make of experience. After singing the same part every night for six weeks running, I changed it on the Monday of the seventh week for that of Count di Luna in *The Trovatore;* and continued in these and other operas throughout the season, which lasted nearly six months, every night, except during a part of the run of the pantomime, and two nights when I was prevented by a bad cold from appearing during the run of *Lurline*, by W. V. Wallace, the last opera produced that season. My part in it, Rhineberg, was intended for a bass, but what of it was already written Wallace transposed to

suit my register, and my part in the last act, which was not written until after he had heard me, he wrote expressly for me.

I made my début in Italian opera at Covent Garden in 1862, when I took the part of the Conte di Luna in *Il Trovatore* for three nights in place of Graziani to oblige Mr. Gye. Shortly after, in the same season, I was engaged by Mapleson for Her Majesty's Theatre, and remained with him there until the theatre was burned down in 1867, and afterwards at Drury Lane and Covent Garden until 1869. My last season in Italian opera in London was with George Wood at Drury Lane in 1870, when I played Vanderdecken in *The Flying Dutchman*, the first opera of Wagner produced in England.

During my operatic career, with the exception of Vanderdecken, Caspar in *Der Freischütz*, Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, St. Bris in *Les Huguenots*,

and my work at the "festivals," I sang none but pure baritone parts.

As I have already said, I introduce this portion of my work by way of illustration, and, I will now add, also by way of advice and warning. Had I followed the commands of my first musical instructor, to keep to the tenor clef, or the advice of would-be instructors when I adopted the bass clef, the inevitable result would have been ruin to, or total loss of, my voice.

I owe the preservation of my voice to the study of the best vocal exercises I could find — the study of the result of study, in the work of the great singers it was my privilege to hear from an early age, and to my good fortune in being able to use my voice in its proper register, with slight deviation, for a number of years.

Since I have been a singing master, I have found that these two great requisites to form a vocal artiste, viz.

the study of vocal exercises and the study of the work of great artistes, are almost universally neglected. A few exercises are got through, not studied, and the pupil is in too short a time launched into the study (if it can be called study where the preparation for study is lacking) of difficult music; and the study of artistes is confined to criticism without the knowledge necessary to form an opinion, or to the adoration of an idol of an ignorant public. There is no doubt there is fault on both sides, but I ascribe the greater fault to the master. It is his business to ascertain the natural compass of each pupil's voice. In order to develop its quality and power, it is absolutely necessary that all exercises be adapted to that compass, so as not to force the voice beyond it, up or down.

It is here that the experienced practical singer is required. An instrumentalist, however accomplished, cannot be of any service. An instrumental

pupil has an instrument of wood or iron, or both, under his hands; the vocal pupil one of flesh and blood, which he can neither see nor touch, at any rate when in action. I have had great trouble with pupils taught by instrumentalists, and also with others taught by singers, who, though they may be worthy of admiration as vocalists, earnest and well-intentioned though they may be, do not possess the requirements of a teacher, or, having them, have not formed any system by which they could be made available.

Another and most cogent reason why a master must be a practical singer is, that he must be prepared to illustrate practically what he teaches. True, a violinist or 'cellist could "sing" a particular phrase on his instrument, but that would teach the pupil nothing more than how that phrase could be rendered — the mechanism of the rendering would remain a dead letter to him.

To those people who wish to learn a few songs, duets, etc., in order better to entertain their friends, or to those victims of adulation who, restrained by their *position* in society from becoming professional singers, believe they are robbing the world of brilliant operatic or concert luminaries (while not fit to sing at a penny reading), it is of little consequence whom they may choose for a master; but for those God-gifted beings who possess, besides a fine voice, a soul to use that voice as an artiste (few and far between as angels' visits), the master such as I have described is the only master possible.

I have dwelt at length on the choice of a singing master, as there are many gifted young people (albeit not of the angel-visit class) capable of doing good, interesting work, who are robbed of their birthright by (I know no other name for them) quacks! A great deal of fuss has been made of late years

by persons professing to teach the production of the voice on scientific principles. The result of a recent action in the Court of King's Bench ought to serve as an eye-opener to those deluded individuals who hope to have voices made and brains provided for them. The evidence of two eminent scientific witnesses proved to the judge and the jury that the so-called scientific principles were a delusion; in fact, they were totally opposed to all that has been discovered with regard to the organs employed in singing. This is but one instance out of numbers of scientific methods in vogue. Some of the pranks I have heard of being played on pupils are so egregiously ridiculous that it is scarcely possible to imagine any human being such a ninny as to allow himself to be gulled into entertaining the idea of reaping any benefit from their exercise. But man is a gullible animal, as Thomas Carlyle says, and not only gullible, but

he prefers to be gulled. That is the only possible explanation I can find for the profuse way in which people go on paying for "unsound science" when they might procure "sound instruction" for a tithe of the money.

Manuel Garcia is held up as the pioneer of scientific teachers of singing. He was — but he taught singing, not surgery! I was a pupil of his in 1858 and a friend of his while he lived, and in all the conversations I had with him, I never heard him say a word about larynx or pharynx, glottis, or any other organ used in the production and emission of the voice. He was perfectly acquainted with their functions, but he used his knowledge for his own direction, not to make parade of it before his pupils, as he knew it would only serve to mystify them, and could serve no good purpose in acquiring a knowledge of the art of singing. My experience tells me that the less pupils know

about the construction of the vocal organs the better; in fact, as I heard a master once remark, "better they should not be aware they had throats except for the purpose of swallowing their food." I am confident that great harm has been done by mixing up "singing" and "surgery." Young people are prone to imagine they are suffering from diseases of the throat, and resort to applications of tannin, iron, and even nitrate of silver, besides swallowing draughts and sucking lozenges of the effects of which they are entirely ignorant, when a little attention to regularity and choice of diet and proper outdoor exercise would keep their throats in a perfectly healthy condition. Without doubt, any one is liable to suffer from a cold and partial or complete loss of voice — in such case it is imperative to consult an experienced medical man and follow his directions implicitly. Here I may offer a word of advice to

all singers, especially the inexperienced. After singing, the vocal organs are always slightly congested, therefore I advise them when they leave the warm atmosphere of the theatre or concert-room to encounter the cold air, especially at night, to keep the mouth quite closed and breathe gently through the nostrils, and so avoid talking and laughing. After singing, being a smoker, I always light a cigar before stepping into the open air; those who do not smoke ought to cover the mouth and nose with a light woollen wrap.

IV

TO THE PUPIL

If there are many so-called masters who cannot teach, there are many more would-be pupils who cannot or will not learn. If Rossini said, "Voice! Voice! Voice! is the only requisite of a singer" (which I do not believe), with all due respect to his memory I say he did a great deal of harm. Human beings, especially young ones, are not prone to be industrious, and a great man having told them, as it pleases them to believe or fancy, that voice is all-sufficient, they shirk everything in the way of work. A simple scale may be made interesting by a combination of voice and soul, and most uninteresting by a voice without

the soul (the soul which lives to work!). Any ass can bray without a soul, but I doubt whether his music is interesting even to his own species; he may astonish them (all kinds of asses like to be astonished, it is their greatest pleasure, they are willing to pay dear for it) with the amount of noise he produces, but from which most animals not of his species fly in affright or disgust.

What a laudable aim to have in view, to bray loud enough to drown the efforts of one's fellows! Yet it seems the aim in view of many singers who ought to have become worthy of assisting the angels in their song, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth"! and so have used their gifts in praise of their Giver. Shame! Shame! Shame! on their idleness and neglect! And yet there is some excuse for the younger of their number who see that one who can bray louder than his fellows stuffs his pockets with gold, decorates himself with

jewels of price, and is decorated with unearned or ill-earned honours. I would put this plain question to those who take the trouble to read this: Is it not disgraceful that a being, having received a heavenly gift, instead of using it in the service of the Giver, simply barters it for money? I like money as much as any man, but I like to earn it honourably, and I say distinctly that though such may earn their wealth by the sweat of their brow, they earn it with dishonour to themselves and their Creator.

Your voice is not your possession; it is a seed entrusted to your care, to cultivate that it may grow up a fruitful tree. The *métier* (if I may use the word) of Art is not to make money for the professors of Art; it is a Divine office; its productions, the picture of the painter, the statue of the sculptor, the work (prose or poetry) of the author, the song of the singer (vocal or instrumental), are meant to satisfy the

cravings of the purely artistic soul, and to solace the soul to which the seed from which Art fruit is produced has been denied.

Your duty is to cultivate the tree grown from the seed entrusted to you as long as a drop of sap flows in it, that the fruit may become as perfect as human efforts can make it.

The question arises, Are you fulfilling the duty imposed on you? If you reflect on it and your conscience tells you you are not, if you are honest you will set your shoulder to the wheel and face the difficulties which confront you with courage and zeal, and work on until you become worthy of the name you covet. If, on the contrary, you have no conscience, or do not heed its prickings if you have one, you will give vent to "Fiddlesticks!" or "What rot!" or some such vulgar exclamation, and lay yourself out (better be laid out!) to grasp money that you may get rid of

the trouble and worry of work and pass a useless retirement eating and drinking and making merry (if you can)! What a glorious end! Those who outlive you, though they will be deprived of your company, will be reminded of you very probably by a marble slab set up in some conspicuous place relating how you sacrificed yourself (Heaven help us!) on the altar of Art. I would fain add *Requiescat in pace*, but — I have a conscience!

Now that I have told you something you must *not* do, I will tell you something you *must* do to fulfil the end for which you were endowed with the means.

In every phase of life we must all practise self-denial, attach ourselves to what is good for us, and detach ourselves from what is merely pleasant. In the matter of food, it is not the quantity or quality of what is taken, but what is digested which feeds; lolling about in a close atmosphere is

not a specific for calming the nervous system; lying in bed until a late hour, unless when suffering from unavoidable fatigue, is not refreshing to mind or body. An artiste must exercise moderation in all things — food, bodily exercise, sleep, and study.

Overfeeding produces a disordered stomach, which, acting on the voice and brain, robs both of their brightness; pottering about in a close atmosphere without any distinct object in view produces irritation; and sloth produces sluggishness of mind, with consequent negligence of study, ending in destruction of all hope of advancement. This applies equally to the artiste in embryo and the artiste in career. Moderation, exercised from the first, will become a confirmed habit, and there will then be little risk of falling victim to immoderation.

Immoderate consumption of solid or liquid food is equally destructive of

health; the glutton, however, may cover his inability to fulfil his duty with the excuse of (fictitious) cold, whereas the votary of Bacchus, with "winks and nods and wreathèd smiles," or more unattractive signs, makes it patent to every one concerned that it is not cold but heat (of liquor) which interferes with his performance.

My experience is that sound, light Bordeaux or Italian wines are preferable to all other liquid foods, and should be used strictly as food except on occasions when the bodily and mental strain caused by the execution of a trying scene in opera, oratorio, or concert is succeeded by momentary depression; then a glass of wine (at times a glass of good old port may be substituted for the lighter fluid) will enable the artiste to finish the remaining work with brilliancy.

Great caution must be observed, however; for the use of stimulant if

indulged in frequently becomes a habit; its effect decreases and the quantity must be constantly increased, until the unfortunate victim becomes a confirmed drunkard. Not men alone, but many women originally of most temperate habits have come to an untimely end through the lack of strength of mind to nip this too easily acquired habit in the bud. I could enumerate at least a dozen examples, my own comrades, male and female, all of whom might have filled a high position in their profession, who have been either cut off prematurely by death; or, disabled, have lingered through a poverty-stricken old age, a burthen to their relations and old comrades, from the deadly effect of drinking to excess. Two great artistes whom I knew, one an intimate friend, so ended prematurely a glorious career; the one began with a teaspoonful of sal volatile in a wine-glassful of water, and ended by imbibing a great part of a bottle of

brandy on the road from his residence to the theatre where he was the particular star; the other, from a sip of weak brandy and water, finished by gulping down from half to a whole pint of raw whisky at a draught. So, I repeat, be careful, and curb any inclination to increase the quantity of stimulant at the first sign of its appearance; let your potations be strictly limited to a moderate quantity of wine taken with your solid food.

V

THE USE OF TOBACCO

WITH regard to the use of tobacco, I may be allowed to say a word. The innocent vegetable has been a "bone of contention" for some time, even from its first introduction into this country. One royal personage described it as "that filthy herb." Where the filth exists my limited knowledge fails to discover. Tobacco is grown in good clean earth, it is washed by the gentle rain which drops from heaven, during its growth it is as tenderly nurtured as the costly orchid; when mature it is still tended by watchful eyes and hands until it is ready for use in the shape of cigar, cigarette, cut for the pipe, snuff,

or for chewing, every process being carried on with perfect cleanliness! Again I repeat, Where does the filth come in? I own my first encounter with tobacco was anything but soothing, but I was only about eight years of age, and my essay was made on my grandfather's pipe, in which I found he had left some of the weed. Not content with lighting up, I covered the mouth of the bowl with putty, so as to prevent any of the fragrance escaping. The consequences were dire, and I "swore off" and never tried a smoke again until I was one day weather-bound at Lecco on the Lake of Como. Having no means of whiling away the time, as a resource I procured a couple of cigars and smoked them; the only disagreeable result being, that I dreamt that night I was making a meal of choice Havanas, and I made up my mind I preferred the domestic cabbage. I either took a dislike to tobacco or

fancied I did (the latter, I believe), and when I had a house of my own, for two or three years, when my father paid me a visit, I used to insist upon his parading in front of my house after dinner whilst he indulged in the post-prandial pipe. But I changed my tune when indigestion and domestic bliss began to interfere with my work and my temper. I was advised to try the soothing effect of tobacco. I did, and in a short time I could digest tenpenny nails, anything, even slighting remarks made about the weed by feeble-minded scoffers, and I bore the squalling of the baby and smashing of crockery, not to mention other little disturbances, with perfect equanimity. The filth I have never yet discovered. I have seen lately that one eminent personage declares he takes it as an insult even to ask him "what he would smoke." Another, that he has never indulged in the filthy habit of smoking, it being disgusting to his

fellow-creatures to smell the stale smoke. I don't object; but for myself I prefer the odour of even second-hand tobacco smoke to the exhalations arising from unsound teeth or stomach. I was asked by a medical man of note, when I told him I smoked, if I did not find it bad for the voice, and if other singers smoked. I replied that I smoked in moderation, and found it had the effect of making my voice clear, and that I had never known but two or three rather indifferent singers who did not smoke. I do not advocate smoking; those who find themselves perfectly well without, should leave well alone; those who find themselves perfectly well with it, ditto! ditto!! ditto!!! ditto!!!!

VI

THE SISTER ARTS

A VOCAL artiste must have a nodding acquaintance, at least, with the sister Arts, literature, prose and poetry (especially the latter), and painting; he must have a knowledge of other languages, to read them well, with their proper pronunciation and accent, so as to understand the text of the work to be studied and sing it with appropriate declamation. Italian is the most useful, as the best works as studies for a singer are written in that language. The easiest and surest way to learn it would be to reside for a time in some quiet little city in Tuscany with a family ignorant of English, and where

there are no gay distractions to disturb the rest or interfere with study. Three months ought to suffice for a conscientious student to understand and make himself understood, after which he would soon begin to converse without much difficulty. During these three months it would be better to exercise the singing voice in studies without words.

I have often heard English singers say they prefer singing in Italian, as it is so much easier to pronounce than their own language. I differ with them entirely. My experience is that Italian is the most difficult of all the languages most generally wedded to music. Few people of other nations than Italian ever acquire a pure pronunciation of the Italian language. English Italian is especially defective; we do not divide our words nor the component syllables of our words distinctly; the Italians do both. In a place such as I have indicated above, the

peasant speaks with as perfect a pronunciation, and in a language as elegant and poetic, as the refined orator — an unspeakable advantage to a student.

Possible perfection can never be attained without study; study to be profitable must be systematic and must be directed solely to the attainment of perfection in the Art we desire to adopt as a profession; consequently each step must be mastered before attacking the next in order. Jumping from one exercise to another, or to a song or other piece, or scrambling through an accompaniment on the piano under pretence of studying a piece of music, is not work, and tends only to irritate and discourage; time so occupied is simply wasted. Much more profitable would it be to walk out into the fresh air and observe how everything in Nature is busy with systematic work, and take a lesson therefrom.

Many students, and professors too,

consider that Bohemian life, so called, is the only artistic existence. I beg to deny it! Bohemian life may suit Bohemians, another name for "would-be's"; they who adopt it, or affect to adopt it, never rise to a place in the "angels' visit" class. I never yet encountered a great artiste who led a Bohemian life, or was unsystematic in his work.

Of the sluggard I need only say, "Let him complain, 'You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again'"! He may dream of greatness, but never can realise it!

Study, to be available, must be judiciously regulated. The voice, however strong the constitution of its possessor may be, is a delicate instrument; it must be exercised with great care. If strained, especially the higher and lower tones of its register, both its quality and power will suffer; only such exercises as lie well within its

natural compass should be made use of at first, the range being extended as the voice develops. The length of time occupied in exercise, regulated according to the physique of the student, should be from thirty to forty minutes at a spell, including an occasional pause of a minute or two for rest and meditation; the actual exercise of the voice would thus occupy from twenty to thirty minutes. Three, or at most four, such spells, the first fully half an hour after a light breakfast, the others an hour before or an hour after a meal is concluded, are sufficient for each day. I will add, make Sunday a day of rest; suspend your studies entirely, occupy yourself, if not spiritually inclined, with reading good prose or poetry in English and Italian.

Nothing must be allowed to interfere with the regularity of the hours devoted to exercise of the voice; you cannot be an artiste and a votary of Society at the same time. It has been often tried and

always proved a failure. The exigencies of Society will interfere with the punctual performance of your duty, and (which is of equal importance) will run you into expenses you are not justified in incurring, as the means of carrying on your studies are, in nearly every case, provided by your parents or generous friends, which means you are bound in honour to apply solely to the object for which they are provided. Your duty is to work that you may be able to repay your benefactors, be they parents or friends, the full amount they have been called upon to expend on your education and probation! If they be well-to-do, and you do not work to repay them, your conduct is dishonourable; if they can ill afford to assist you and are obliged to forego relaxation from work and legitimate pleasures to provide you with funds, and you do not work to repay them, your conduct is dishonourable and cruel!

VII

OBEDIENCE

OBEDIENCE to your teacher must be as strict as obedience to your parents. In an important epoch of your life he stands in the relation of a parent to you; you are bound to respect and honour him as such, mindful that he labours under this disadvantage: he cannot administer punishment for inattention and negligence as your parents are bound to do. Being in earnest, he is exigent; and if in his zeal for the welfare of his pupil he insist rigorously on strict obedience, if you do not acknowledge his authority he runs the risk of losing a promising pupil. Young people (and some old ones) kick at the traces and at times

break them to their own detriment, as good masters are scarce; and to the master's loss — not pecuniary loss; money could never repay the loss of a pupil whose talents justify the hope of producing an artiste worthy of the name!

Trust your master, and obey him implicitly; make him your friend by your diligence and attention; never interrupt his instructions or explanations; be silent until he has concluded, then, if they are not clear to you, request him *politely* to repeat them until you understand them perfectly. A good master will have no difficulty in varying the mode of explanation without interfering with the sense. It is excessively vulgar to interrupt, or, by word or gesture, to indicate contempt or indifference. Presumptuous pupils are liable to make such a suggestion as, "Do you not think it would be better I should try such an exercise or sing it in such a way?"

I always reply, "Had I thought so, I would have already told you so!"

Your place is to keep your tongue still and the ears of your intellect open, and not to make parade of your fancied knowledge. A chattering pupil profits little or not at all by the clearest explanation or instruction. Let not a syllable escape you except, as I have before said, to ask *politely* for a repetition of any explanation you have not clearly understood. In your case the proverb "Silence is golden" is particularly apt.

Between an accomplished master and intelligent and obedient pupil it is only natural that affection, offspring of sympathy of mutual interest, should be called into existence. Young women, never allow that affection to ripen into one of a more tender nature; it will prove but a hindrance to your progress, and, as we are all human, might lead to unpleasant consequences.

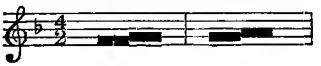
VIII

TO THE PUPIL (*continued*)

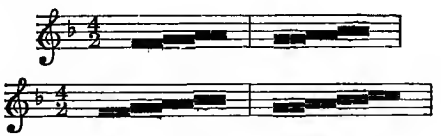
In this chapter I will indicate what more you *must* do; it is your master's business to teach you *how* that must be done; with which it is not my business to interfere.

You must begin your studies by learning to sing one note at a time slowly, commencing, continuing, and concluding each note in strict time, perfect tune, and with equal power throughout, without the slightest shock at the beginning or the end; in fact, forming a perfect, solid rectangle of sound.

This accomplished, you must then learn to sing two notes in succession without slur, executed each as in the example above, and without break be-



tween them, taking breath at each bar, for which a momentary cessation of sound will be necessary at the end of each bar, and so on to three and four notes following.



This is the foundation of the Art of Singing, on which all culture of the voice depends; equality and beauty of tone, power, sustaining the power and quality (loud or soft), and rhythm, one of which lacking, singing can never be perfect.

The sound of the voice is produced

by the breath acting on the vocal cords, the tone or emission of the voice is consequent on the influence of the formation of the throat and mouth. Unless there exist some peculiarity of formation (rare in my experience), the tone ought not to be interfered with, as it is this formation which gives the character to the voice, by which persons may be as readily distinguished as by their faces or movements. The tone may be peculiar, even to a certain extent disagreeable, but the peculiarity may, by an intelligent student aided by an equally intelligent master, be turned to such account as to render it a striking speciality in the rendering of certain dramatic parts. If your voice is of good quality and sufficient power, never allow it to be tampered with by "production quacks"; a master of the Art of Singing knows all that is requisite to develop your natural qualifications.

When you have mastered this step,

you can proceed to increase by slow gradations the compass and speed of your exercises. Give your artistic feeling full play even at this early stage; a simple scale or a single note may be interesting if sung with the feeling of an artiste, while if blurted out in a commonplace style, it may cause your neighbours to entertain a desire to indict you as a nuisance. Persevere diligently with the exercises I have indicated until your master is satisfied, then follow on with "vocalises" and "solfeggi" until you are ready to apply what you have learned to its object, the interpretation of such good vocal music as is adapted to the quality and compass of your voice, irrespective of its character or style. The more these are varied the better, in order that you may bring out whatever dramatic talent you may possess, and thus discover where your strength lies — in tragedy, light comedy, or low comedy.

IX

STUDY OF VOCAL WORKS

ENUNCIATION AND BREATHING

BEFORE entering on the study of vocal works, it is absolutely necessary to make a serious study of pronunciation and enunciation, that is, the sounding of words and their delivery. The object of wedding music to words is surely to give greater emphasis to the sentiment or passion those words express; then if those words are not distinctly audible, what becomes of the emphasis? The English-speaking peoples, more than any other, require to pay strict attention to this study; as a rule, they are totally regardless of uttering letter or syllable

clearly in ordinary conversation, and so acquire a slipshod, inelegant enunciation which requires patient, persevering study to correct and fit them for public speaking or singing.

English is a fine language for both, but as practised by the generality of public speakers and singers it is devoid of accent, unpleasant to the ear, and at times even unintelligible. I was once present at a performance of *The Merchant of Venice* at the Princess's Theatre. Carl Formes, the once celebrated bass singer, played Shylock. He always preserved a strong German accent in conversation; but though all the other characters in the play were sustained by Englishmen, the only one who recited his lines to be understood was Formes. The reason was obvious; he pronounced the letters, divided the syllables, and accented the accented syllables, so that, though now and then his pronunciation of a word was not quite English, his

enunciation was perfectly distinct. I did not miss a single syllable throughout his entire performance. The study must be commenced by learning to pronounce each letter distinctly and purely, adopting the Italian pronunciation of the vowels.

a — as *ah* in English.
e — long as *a* in *fate*,
short as in *let*.
i — long as *ee* in *feet*,
short as in *ink*.
o — long as in *rose*,
short as in *lot*.
u — as *oo* in English.

By purely, I mean the sound of the vowel must be preserved intact as long as it is held. We have the defect in England of adding *ee* after a syllable or word ending with a vowel, as day-ee, defy-ee, pray-ee-ing, abi-ee-ding, which is not only inelegant, it is vulgar.

The consonants must be pronounced promptly and firmly, using the tongue, the teeth, and the lips — otherwise the

words will not be distinct and their sense be lost. They must not intrude on the value of the vowels, otherwise the voice speaking or singing will lose in resonance and carrying power. The mouth ought not to open more than sufficient to introduce the tip of a finger; if the under jaw is lowered beyond what is necessary for this it is impossible to pronounce the consonants promptly and firmly, as the tongue, teeth, and lips will be too far apart to fulfil their office. Moreover, the wagging of the lower jaw is destructive of any expression of sentiment the countenance ought to display. In low comedy licence may be permitted, but in tragedy or elegant comedy such grimacing is not permissible.

The most advantageous, and at the same time the most pleasing and elegant, position of the mouth is the approach to a smile, all the muscles of the face being kept perfectly supple so as to be ready

to second every change of expression occurring in the work the performer is engaged on, but without exaggeration; there is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, which exaggeration would inevitably make.

This must be followed by learning to pronounce distinctly single syllables, then combinations of syllables, each syllable distinct in itself though joined to its fellows; which can only be effected by making a short pause after each syllable and joining them by degrees until the word becomes a perfect whole.

Great care must be taken to make a clear distinction between single and double consonants. In England the tendency is to neglect this, and we hear "a-tention" instead of "at-ten-tion," "fe-low" instead of "fel-low"; while we also have the opposite, as in the first example given below.

Few English singers take the trouble to study their words sufficiently to give

the accented syllable its due force; in recitative, where accent is left entirely to the performer, those who are attentive will hear very curious things. For example, the fine recitative in *Judas Maccabæus* —

Oh let eternal honours crown his name —

rendered more or less (generally more) in this wise: —

Olletteturnullhonnurs crownnhis na-em;

and in a matter-of-fact style, seemingly without a notion that it is a call to the Israelitish nation to celebrate with due honour the glorious victory obtained over their foe by Judas, the leader of their army.

Again, in the same oratorio, when Judas himself speaks, "Sound an alarm," which as generally interpreted becomes "Sounddannalaam."

No wonder foreigners find English ineligible as a singing language.

It is not the fault of the language but of those who speak it without learning how it should be spoken. However much one county may differ from another in its opinion of the pronunciation, there can be no difference of opinion regarding the necessity for distinctness of enunciation or delivery either of a speech or song. In other countries I have heard many public speakers, and as a rule I have found them much more distinct than the generality of English public speakers I have heard; but foreign singers I have found less distinct than their orators, yet still as a rule more distinct than English singers. The Germans, as far as my experience goes, sin more on the score of indistinctness than the Italians or French. I heard *Aïda* once at an important city in Germany, and throughout I only heard three words, "Ach meine tochter," which did not explain much of the plot of a long opera. It

should be the endeavour of all speakers and singers to get rid as much as possible of local pronunciations and accents, which in the north are somewhat rough and uncouth, although they preserve the full sound of the vowels better than those of the south, especially the absurd pronunciation affected in and around the Metropolis, where we hear "Ow de-ah now!" for "Oh dear no!" "Down't wike the biby!" for "Don't wake the baby!" "Hawt" for "Heart," "Nevah" for "Never," "Men" for "Man," "Sinnin'" for "Singing." It has always appeared to me miraculous how a foreigner ever arrives at understanding English as spoken in London, with the defective pronunciation and the fusing of words into a conglomerate mass. In my opinion, the educated classes in Dublin and Edinburgh speak better English and better pronounced than is heard anywhere in England.

Having acquired possible perfection of pronunciation, there is still a point without which enunciation would be imperfect, "the management of the breath," as without perfect control over the wind chest, equality, variety, and sustentation of tone could not be attained. It is a common idea that speakers and singers should be able to speak or sing a long phrase or sentence without a break. What they ought to learn is to be able to take breath at any convenient point in a phrase in such a way that the break may not be observable. The lungs should never be entirely exhausted; in speaking, breath may be taken at any place where a comma might stand, and in singing before any weak accent in a bar, of course being careful not to divide the syllables of a word. There is no mystery or difficulty about breathing. All it requires is care in arranging convenient and appropriate places to take breath, and practising speech or

song accordingly. Inexperienced people would do well to note that under the influence of nervousness they will find it more difficult to maintain a chestful of wind, and in studying they should mark places where an extra breath may be taken without interfering with the effect of their speech or song. The act of taking breath must not be accompanied by any visible sign, such as hunching the shoulders, nor any audible sound. Attention to these few remarks and careful practice are all that are necessary for the management of the breath.

Immediately below the vocal cords there exists a valve; the breath should be raised to that valve ready before the sound is required, then when the valve is opened the pressure of wind produces the sound or sequence of sounds the singer or speaker wills. The pressure must be maintained steadily as long as the phrase, sung or spoken, lasts, exactly as a glass-blower maintains the stream of

breath on the piece of glass he is shaping; if he takes off the pressure for a moment, his work is spoiled and he will have to find another piece of glass. In the same way, if you take off the pressure of breath for a moment you may probably make what is commonly called a "quirk," and break your phrase, which you unfortunately cannot replace, but must bungle it through to the best of your ability.

I have heard and read most amusing instructions for breathing, but, of all, I think "abdominal breathing" is the most comical. I have in vain tried to discover whereabouts in the abdomen there exists a store-room for breath; wind there may be, perhaps, but not available for breathing purposes. I hope I do not incur any risk of an action for libel or hurt anybody's feelings in describing the authors of such theories as "wind-bags."

It is not to be expected that an artiste

great in one line should be equally great in another. There have been, however, a few of the "angels' visit" class, perfect both in tragedy and comedy: Lablache; Giorgio Ronconi; Pauline Viardot, intensely tragic in *Le Prophète*, equally gracefully comic in *Il Barbiere;* in *Il Flauto Magico*, when it was revived at Covent Garden at the express desire of H.R.H. the Prince Consort in 1851, she made the otherwise unimportant part of Papagena an important feature in the revival; Giulia Grisi in *Norma* and *La Gazza Ladra;* Mario in *Le Prophète* and *Il Barbiere;* and Gardoni, who had always been accepted as one of the most accomplished interpreters of the lighter tenor parts in serious and semi-serious opera, towards the close of his career displayed great talent for low comedy, which probably he himself never suspected, as Corentin in *Dinorah*.

These examples will suffice to show what great artistes could do; the least

you can do is to try with all your might to emulate them. You may not succeed in reaching the height they attained, but there are many honourable and agreeable places to be found on the ascent; and though you may not rise beyond a moderate elevation, you will find that a limited genius developed by well-regulated study will not fail to make a pleasing and lasting impression.

X

DRAMATIC CONCEPTION

EVERY part in a drama, or a detached piece, a song or poem, if it has any meaning at all, is essentially dramatic; every action of our lives, every word we utter with an object, is dramatic! What does the word dramatic imply? It applies both to conception and interpretation; a dramatic conception implies a sentiment or passion which its author desires to express clearly, forcibly, and logically; a dramatic interpretation implies the expression of such sentiment or passion by an artiste whose gifts, developed by study and experience, render him capable of interpreting that

conception clearly, forcibly, and logically.

The interpretation depends greatly on the idiosyncrasies of its interpreters; if they are experienced artistes, though the mode of carrying out the interpretation be in each case different, the result will be clear, forcible, and logical. It is not uncommon that the author of a drama or opera, whilst superintending the rehearsals of his work, is surprised to find the strength and beauty of his conception much enhanced by the suggestion, tacit or otherwise, of an artiste of genius. For instance, at the first stage rehearsal of Halévy's opera, *La Juive*, the author expostulated with Pauline Viardot for keeping her back turned to the auditorium while she gazed on the cauldron of boiling oil placed at the back of the scene, he being on the stage at the time. At her request he removed to the front of the house, and seeing the horror depicted

on her countenance through her attitude, he accepted and congratulated her on the improvement effected by her dramatic genius.

We hear a great deal about traditions, and we consequently find lazy students who, to save trouble, imitate what they have seen, or what they have heard of their studious predecessors doing. Such a one may, by attentive observation, learn to copy the peculiarities or mannerisms of the artiste he takes for a model; but the artiste knew how to turn such peculiarities to his advantage, whilst to the copyist they will not only prove a disadvantage, but will often render him an object of ridicule or pity. The industrious student, on the contrary, pays no attention to peculiarities or mannerisms, his whole attention is directed to realising the value of the artistic qualities of his model, which, without scruple, he uses for his own advantage by applying them to his individual means. This is

no doubt imitation, but perfectly legitimate; it is not the servile imitation of the mere copyist.

Art must have commenced by imitating Nature alone; then, as it progressed, by imitating Nature developed by artistic genius. There were both imitators and copyists at all times, but they are easily distinguished by those who possess artistic perception. The imitator, the artiste student, imitates the *manner;* the impostor, the mere copyist, imitates the *mannerisms* of his model.

XI

THE CONTINUATION OF SAME

I WOULD suggest, subject of course to your master's approval, the works of the best Italian masters for your first studies, as they contain all the elements to produce a good singer and develop dramatic talent. These, after a short time, may be alternated with more serious works, such as any of Mozart's operas and Handel's operas and oratorios. I suggest them for study only, though many of them, and pieces taken from them, will prove useful for public performance; for, spite of public taste, which is constantly subject to change, a considerable number of the works of the old masters are at all times received with acclamation

by old opera and concert frequenters, as also by the younger artistic generation, who cannot but acknowledge their beauty, power, and freshness. They are of infinite service in the cultivation of dramatic expression; each number taken separately being a small drama in itself, while yet forming a logical episode in the entire drama of which it is a part.

You find in them the invaluable study of recitative, greatly neglected by most students, who seem to try to "*get through them*" as fast as they can, in order to come to the "tune." As Mr. Ducrow, the celebrated equestrian, remarked at the rehearsal of one of his dramas, finding the dialogue too long to suit his views, "Cut the cackle and come to the 'osses!"

The study of recitative is all-important. To the studious it will prove a source of intense interest, to the young Ducrows it will prove an intense bore.

There are two species of dialogue — the *parlanto* (half-spoken), accompanied originally on the *cembalo*, now by violoncello and contrabasso, only used in opera buffa (in the French "opera comique" and English opera replaced by spoken dialogue), which presents no particular difficulty when you have acquired a tolerable acquaintance with the language, its pronunciation and accent. The other species, accompanied by the orchestra, is more important, as it contains, in a more serious degree, the subject, of which the piece it introduces is a meditation, reflection, or maybe an explanation.

Though divided into bars and the notes interspersed with rests, in the generality of cases the recitative is perfectly free as regards time; the rhythm of the music is properly wedded to the accent of the words by all the good Italian composers. I do not remember any instance of the contrary. In works translated from another lan-

guage errors occur which the student must learn to rectify. Unfettered, he may revel in the display of his dramatic instinct in the declamation of recitative, the perfection of which ought to be the aim, as it is the crucial test, of a vocal artiste.

It is a great and not uncommon mistake to leave out the recitative when introducing an operatic scene at a concert, with the excuse that it may be tedious and bore the audience. None but those who have no business at a concert of refined music are ever bored by a true dramatic interpretation of a true dramatic conception, even though it may be rendered in a language the bulk of the audience does not understand; and again, which is no doubt a reason of minor importance except to the performer, the recitative gives the artiste, who, however experienced, must suffer from a certain amount of anxiety, time to collect himself, and so be better

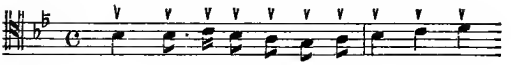
prepared to concentrate his vocal power and skill on the execution, with appropriate sentiment, of the piece of which it is the introduction. If you believe you have dramatic talent, do not hide it under a bushel; have the courage of your conviction, and show it in that part of your work where it can shine most conspicuously.

The study of the works I have recommended above is also the surest road to the acquirement of the perfect *sostenuto* (sustained singing), without which a slow movement will present a choppy, confused series of sounds signifying nothing in particular, instead of a broad, elegant, passionate recitation of the words of the text emphasised by the music to which they are wedded. A quick movement will present a hopeless muddle of badly constructed fireworks. Every note, however short, has its just time-value, which if not sustained, the sound has not time to vibrate

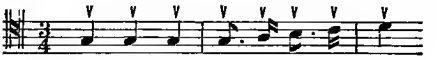
sufficiently to render it audible at even a short distance, the consequence being that groups of rapid notes introduced as ornaments in a slow movement, and in such passages as constantly occur in quick florid music, might as well be left out.

Again I refer you to the exercise you commenced with, and repeat that it is the foundation of the art of singing. The lack of attention to it not only obviates the chance of your being heard, but leads to such executions (murders, I might call them) as the following: —

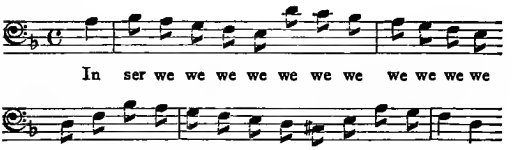
1.


Il mio te - so - wo - ro in ta - wan - to

2.


Love sounds tha - la - wa - wa - wa - warm

3.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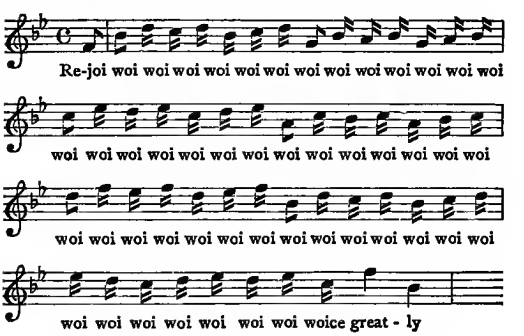
Re-joi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi
woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi
woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi woi
woi woi woi woi woi woi woice great - ly

These are not the ravings of a disordered brain, as you might suppose; I heard them exactly as I have written them, within the last three or four years; specimens of the modern school of singing performed by singers holding the first rank. Good gracious! what will the singing of the future be?

I can imagine Mozart, Handel, and Haydn in concert, with hands uplifted in horror, exclaiming, "Vot is dat for singing?" Either master or pupil or both must have mistaken their vocation. At most it is meaningless cachinnation, bearing no relation to the art of singing. It is productive of great harm, for young people witnessing the storm of acclamation with which such shocking caricature is greeted, are led to believe that the only way open to them to advance in popular favour is to adopt the reprehensible slovenliness of those who ought to be their models of perfection in Art.

I have heard bad singers in my youth, not a few enjoying a reputation which their lack of merit did not justify; but there were giants too, men and women who had reached the topmost rung of the ladder of Fame by obedience to the direction of competent masters interested in their advancement, united to their own unflagging zeal, untiring patience, and indomitable courage. After I returned from Italy most of those still living received me as a personal friend, and accepted me as a "comrade in arms." To three of their number — Mario, Giorgio Ronconi, and Sims Reeves — I owe much; from my first acquaintance with them professionally, they took sufficient interest in my work to act as my guides, and I thank Providence for gifting me with sufficient common sense to accept and profit by such able guidance.

I warn you to be on your guard and avoid an error which, I grieve to say, I

frequently fell into in my early days. Never use the *little you know* to criticise those *who know* and *have done* a great deal! Let your observation be directed to discovering the method by which they arrived at high artistic excellence, and do your best to emulate them. "Anno Domini" will come, as my doctor once remarked to me when I had a fit of the "grumbles." Pass over the defects (if you choose to call failing power and freshness defects), and study the art with which they bridge over the ravages of time. Respect their age, and be silent, though the estimation of your own baby efforts blind you to the merits of an artiste whose power and freshness of voice are on the wane. This does not apply merely to the great artiste who surveys the whole of his world from the top of the ladder; on every step you may discover a real artiste if you will keep your common sense awake, and allow your self-esteem to slumber.

Your progress will entirely depend on diligent practice. However slow it may be, leave nothing undone, make each step safe before proceeding to another. Those who advance carefully though slowly, advance more surely, and, in the long run, if not in point of time, will beat the swift student, by gaining a higher degree of perfection. It is not what we swallow, but what we digest, which gives us strength to sustain us in the race.

XII

AT THE BASE OF THE LADDER

YOUR preliminary studies terminated, your master having pronounced you ready to try your strength in public, as you are still ignorant of what you will now have to face, and with what and with whom you will have to deal, I will devote this chapter to an endeavour to enlighten you, bearing in mind that I am dealing with an aspirant to artistic fame only. You are sound in wind and limb, you possess a voice of sufficient power and quality to cope with any music or any style of music you may be called upon to perform; you have had the advantage of exercising it under the direction of an able master; by your

obedience to his instructions, and your own industry and perseverance, you are now in a position to say with justice: "I am prepared for all emergencies. Whatever may be the result, I am resolved to exercise the gifts I am endowed with in following out the counsels of my master, so as to show my gratitude to Him who entrusted me with my natural means, to the master by whose knowledge, patience, and unremitting attention those means were developed; to be an honour to both, and to my parents; and to leave behind me, when I die, the story of a life distinguished for industry, perseverance, and courage, bearing the stamp of the true votary of Art."

I admire your resolution; stick fast to it! You will have need of all your fortitude, the path you are entering on being narrow, steep, and rugged. I daresay at times during your preliminary course you felt disheartened,

perhaps inclined to give up all hope of success; but the difficulties you had to surmount as a student were bagatelles compared to those that confront you as a professional performer. Be "bold and brave" and you will overcome them!

"Forewarned is forearmed!" I will endeavour to prepare you for the combat; I can do so from my personal experience in Italy and in England.

During your student days you had a master to guide, advise, and encourage you; now you have only yourself to depend on.

As musical affairs are at present constituted, your master can render you very slight assistance. You must learn to pocket your pride (except pride in doing your work well); to be patient under reverses and delays; to be courteous to all you meet, even those you know to be detractors, inclined rather to injure than to aid you; to

control your nerves (always active in an artistic temperament), without which — though, if uncontrolled by force of will, they paralyse your powers to a greater or less extent — you could not give adequate expression to the sentiment or passion you wish to portray; to conquer shyness and give full play to your artistic feeling, whilst preserving becoming modesty of demeanour; and last, but by no means least, to keep a silent tongue.

Never discuss the talents of your fellow-artistes, nor your own prospects, your prospective engagements or the remuneration you expect to receive from them; they are your business only, and once you confide them to your bosom friend, they will soon be everybody's business, and probably end in no business at all.

You will have trouble with agents; I have already told you how I fared with those I had to visit in Milan. As

the agent is now an established feature in England, you will probably meet with disappointments and difficulties such as I endured. As in all professions, there are agents who know their business, who honourably fulfil their duties for the fees they exact; but there are, unfortunately, also those who know nothing about the qualities which distinguish an artiste, who take up the business simply because it entails little labour; and the reward, if they are lucky, is ample to satisfy their desires. It is a pity there is no power to limit their number to those who by examination obtain a legal right to exercise the calling.

There are many who, having little or no musical knowledge, have the audacity to insist upon hearing artistes seeking engagements play or sing, in order to judge of their proficiency. Imagine an accomplished young vocalist or instrumentalist compelled to un-

dergo such an absurd, degrading ceremony.

We can only hope that the "Incorporated Society of Musicians" will before long obtain legal influence to put a stop to such business. It is bad for caterers and artistes alike, as to my knowledge incompetent artistes obtain engagements they have not the talent to fulfil, where competent artistes could be engaged on the same and even lower terms, who would fulfil their engagements to the satisfaction of the caterer and the public.

The only advice I can offer you is — Be careful, before dealing with an agent, to ascertain that he is a person of probity, and that he understands his business sufficiently to render you useful service for adequate remuneration. Have nothing to do with those who tell you that the only way to make a name, and so procure engagements, is to give a concert or recital in which you

would have an opportunity to display your talents in their various phases and obtain notices of your performance in the public journals (the quality of which they, the agents, can command), which will spread your name far and wide, together with sundry similar chimerical advantages. They do not tell you, at the same time, that your chances are a hundred to one against any benefit to be derived by you from your speculation. In the first place, whatever ability you may possess, you are almost sure to be paralysed with stage fright, and cannot therefore do yourself justice; in the second place, unless you are provided with ample funds, the expense of giving even a modest concert will assuredly cripple your means of living, if it do not leave you bankrupt.

The management of a theatre or of concerts is no sinecure; they are both attended with great pecuniary risk,

public taste either as regards music or drama being subject to fluctuation. The expense attendant on operatic performances or concerts on a grand scale is enormous; consequently managers of such entertainments must be wary in the choice of the artistes they engage, not only as regards their talent, but also as regards their power of attracting the sympathy of the public. An artiste of great talent lacking the particular charm which would render it sympathetic will have to give place to one of inferior talent. That is not the manager's fault; his success is at stake, and he is bound to cater for those who provide him with the means of carrying on his enterprise.

In former times, when the great theatres in Italy received a government subvention, there were laws by which both manager and artiste were bound mutually to abide by the stipulations put forth in their contract, under penalty for contravention of same. An obstinate

artiste refusing to comply with the terms of his contract would be lodged in "Santa Margarita" (the prison) for a term of days, conducted to the theatre to do his work each evening and back to prison by the police, who kept a watchful eye on him during the performance, until his contempt was purged; the manager was liable to similar treatment if he did not carry out his part of the agreement.

We have no such laws here, so it behoves manager and artistes to have all stipulations in a contract clearly set forth. Promises are proverbially made of pie-crust, and should be avoided in order to preserve a mutual good understanding. The manager has a right to exact all he pays for, and the artistes to refuse to do anything they are not paid for; all dealings on both sides ought to be arranged entirely on business principles. Through neglect of attention to this I involved myself in

a sea of troubles, and, much against my inclination, I resolved to quit the stage, the passion and lodestar of my life, as early as the year 1877.

Solo musical artistes are more than all others victims to the very temperament which is the great cause of their excelling in their art; sensitive, nervous, and excitable, wayward as spoiled children, and consequently requiring special treatment, the iron hand must be clothed in a glove of down. Velvet would be useless. Managers do not always remember this, hence follow disturbances which, with a little tact, might easily be avoided; rivalries are set up which serve to widen the breach in a dispute instead of filling it up, to the detriment of one or both parties concerned.

Rivalry is good when fair means are used on both sides; it sharpens the wits! Honest and earnest rivals leave no stone unturned until one wins honour-

ably and the other accepts honourable defeat. At the present time anything except brains and honour are to be bought with money — even a coveted position as an artiste. Why should I blame a manager if he allows a not highly gifted person to make use of the prestige of his theatre or hall, and the forbearance of his audience, for a stipulated sum?

The gilded aspirant to fame, if successful, will probably reap good interest on the capital invested; if unsuccessful, as long as money is forthcoming, opportunities will offer to conclude similar bargains, until a success of some kind is scored or patience and funds are exhausted. Let such a one pass with the charitable hope that he or she will *not* meet with the reward they merit. To the manager the immediate result may not matter, but in the long run, if such bargains are persisted in, he will surely find his prestige as a caterer

diminish, as likewise his exchequer. In the meantime a young artiste who is not gifted with means to buy a position, or, if so gifted, unwilling to use them disloyally, but endowed with natural gifts and talent, is kept in the background. Whatever difficulties may stand in the way, they may be surmounted by faith, courage, and patience — virtues at all times difficult to exercise, but especially so for an artistic temperament. The situation must be accepted without murmur, and every available moment be devoted to study! study! study!

The clouds will disperse, the sun will shine when least expected, and the long-sighed-for, merited reward *will* be gained.

XIII

ABOUT THEATRES AND HALLS BUILT EXPRESSLY FOR MUSICAL, DRAMATIC, AND ORATORICAL PURPOSES

Of the "Laws of Sound" I know nothing scientifically; practically I do know something. Whatever professors of the science may know, architects, who ought to carry out practically the Laws of Sound, are either unacquainted with them or do not abide by them. A theatre or hall may be perfect for the listener, yet be imperfect for the singer or speaker, or *vice versa*. I have sung and spoken in theatres and halls in many parts of the world, and my ex-

perience is that of the greater number the acoustic properties are very imperfect. Perfection we need not hope to attain, an approach to it would be satisfactory. I was in St. Peter's, Rome, on the occasion of the reception of pilgrims from Germany, Spain, Italy, etc., who, with the addition of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and others officially engaged, formed an audience numbering between thirty and forty thousand. His Holiness pronounced his blessing at the termination of the ceremony, every word of which was distinctly — faintly in some parts, but distinctly — heard in every corner of the vast area. It may be suggested that the Pope was a fine orator, but I deem that beside the question. Theatres and halls are not built solely to accommodate fine singers and speakers; there are others less gifted who have to be heard and seen in them, and so entitled to consideration.

I am inclined to believe that in designing a theatre or hall an architect's attention is directed more to the beauty of his design than to the Laws of Sound. By all means let the building be a "thing of beauty," but if it is not adapted to the purpose for which it was intended it will not be a "joy for ever"! Very often I have heard it stated by those who are supposed to know, that acoustic properties are a matter of chance. Granted that such be the case, and a completed building turn out defective, if the architect is versed in the Laws of Sound, surely he would be able to apply them in order to remedy the defect to some extent, if not entirely.

I would like to ask "one who knows" how it is that, being in equally good voice and humour, "ready for my work," in one room I go through it in perfect comfort, without fatigue, and in another with so much discomfort

that I am glad to land safe at the end. Again, why is it that from the place I occupy when singing in an oratorio in a certain room I hear every note and word distinctly repeated somewhere in the ceiling apparently, and in another room I can scarcely hear a note I utter?

If science can cope with these defects, why are they not remedied, that the singer may be at ease to interest and amuse the audience?

There are halls built for the purpose of holding political or other public meetings where some of the audience have to keep their attention riveted to hear what might be called the ghost of a speech or discourse, while others remain in blissful ignorance of what they came to hear? Why is it that in some halls I know, the unfortunate people who are seated about the middle of the body may indulge in a nap without fear of being disturbed by anything

taking place in the orchestra (unless startled by a sudden crash of trumpets and drums), while their fortunate neighbours, a yard or two before or behind, are enjoying the music and muttering anathema on the brazen blast common in modern orchestral compositions.

For a speaker such rooms are trying; for a singer who has to execute long sustained phrases they are exhausting. His labour, which ought to be "of love," becomes one of pain, mental and physical.

Attached to or forming part of the concert-room, there ought to be a retiring-room, generally designated the "green-room," for the accommodation of artistes taking part in a concert. In only a few instances is the room fit for the occupation of ladies and gentlemen who wear decent attire and have to do delicate work in front of and for the amusement of an audience. As a rule, if there is a room at all, it is one compared to which the third-class waiting-

room at an ordinary railway station is a boudoir. Are singers supposed to combine the two natures of the Laplander and the salamander? In one "green-room" they run the risk of being frozen "blue," in another of being roasted "brown," owing to the absence of the means of proper ventilation; the only pretension to the name of "green-room" being an effluvium suggestive of "green mould."

I have known more than one young girl to have an elegant dress, bought with her hard-earned money, entirely ruined on stepping into such a place. Such a one, engaged to sing at a small town, after travelling some hours in a third-class carriage, arrives a short time before she has to appear on the platform; she engages a room at the best hotel in the place, probably a public-house of the better class; being modest, she does not like the company of the frequenters of the house, and must take her meals

in her bedroom; she must dress by the dim light of a couple of candles or single jet of gas without the assistance of a maid; she must make her way alone to the concert-room, perhaps on foot, and there make herself as comfortable as she can in such a room as I have described, during the time she is not occupied in her work, while her satisfied audience is under the impression that she has nothing to do but enjoy herself. I would the gentleman who designed her bower of enjoyment had to go through his work in the discomfort his neglect provided for that poor child! If he possessed a trifle of the milk of human kindness he would, in future, while providing for the convenience and comfort of the audience, take care to provide a retiring-room, sufficiently decent and convenient, for the accommodation of people who, for their endowments and education, are chosen to entertain the musical public.

I took part in Gounod's *Faust*, in Italian, at the opening of a new theatre in the north of England. The architect who designed it was an intimate acquaintance of mine. He told me that before drawing out his plans he had visited the Scala, Milan, the San Carlo, Naples, and all the principal theatres on the Continent; that, constructed as they were, he was convinced that half the audience could neither see the stage nor hear the singers; and that, after a considerable amount of study, he had developed a plan for a theatre where the entire audience should see and hear perfectly, and where the performers should sing with perfect ease. As one of the performers I can truly say it was one of the most trying places I ever sang in; and it was found that a third of the audience could not see the stage, and as many could not hear the singers. The auditorium was altered on various occasions with doubtful result. At a subsequent

date I sang at a theatre in Scotland, shortly after it was opened, in *Zampa*, in English, when I had both to sing and speak. I did not know the architect who designed it. Being his first attempt in the theatrical line, he also had made the round of continental theatres and found them generally excellent as regards sound and sight. The result of his experience was, to my mind, a model theatre. When I had sung my first phrase I was satisfied that, for audience and singer, the acoustic properties were of the highest order, and after I had spoken my first lines I was satisfied that they were equally perfect for the audience and speaker.

Allow me to remark that after these two examples I cannot believe that all architects comprehend or pay due attention to the "Laws of Sound."

My experience of foreign theatres is limited. I sang at the Liceo, Barcelona, during the carnival, 1864–65; at

the Scala, Milan, in 1865–66; at the Opera-houses, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and Baltimore, in 1872 — all very large theatres, and all perfect as far as acoustics are concerned. In Great Britain and Ireland I found on a par with these, though more limited in size: Her Majesty's Theatre, London (burned down in 1867); the old Theatre Royal, Liverpool (a little gem, converted into a cold store some years ago); and the Amphitheatre, Liverpool (now the Court Theatre); the Theatres Royal, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, and Dublin (burned down some years ago).

But in not one of them did I find a decently appointed dressing-room; with few exceptions they were at a distance from the stage, and approached by a narrow staircase, often stone steps; the performer passing to and fro exposed to draughts of cold air, such as are only to be encountered on the stage at all

seasons of the year. No wonder singers are disabled by sudden loss of voice from fulfilling their duty; it is a wonder such disappointments are not of more frequent occurrence. Preventive appliances may have been discovered since I retired from the stage; for the sake of the younger generation, I sincerely hope they have.

XIV

ABOUT SELF

POLONIUS

Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for. There; my blessing with thee!
And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear't, that the opposèd may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;

For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

Hamlet, ACT i. Scene 3.

THESE precepts contain the soundest advice that could be offered to young people when starting on the journey of active life. They ought to be printed in large type and hung up in each class-room of every school or college in every place where the English language is spoken; and expounded from time to time by a competent person, that every student may clearly understand them. No more fitting memorial could be erected to the genius of our immortal Shakespeare.

(*"Yet here, Laertes!" etc.*) — You have secured an engagement to sing at

the opera; you have been cast for a part, rehearsals are soon to begin. Do not wait for your music to be sent to you; go at once to the librarian and procure it; and learn it by heart in anticipation, in order that during the rehearsals you may direct your whole attention to the development of the character you have to represent; and to the assimilation of your part with those of your fellow-performers, that you may do your share in carrying out the interest of the drama.

("*And these few precepts,*" *etc.*) — I recommend you to commit them to memory, that you may at all times recall them, and use them as a sure, safe guide. They will remind you of the consideration you owe to others as well as to yourself, and teach you how to regulate your conduct so as to form lasting friendships of mutual advantage in fulfilling your duty to God and man.

You have now your own battle to fight; you will have your share of trials, difficulties, and disappointments; temper self-interest with self-denial, and accept them cheerfully; what may appear at the first glance a hard task will then become a pleasant duty. The most tempestuous life may be made sunny by a cheerful spirit. Procure a copy of *Evenings at Home*, by Mrs. Barbauld, and read a story it contains, entitled, "How to make the best of it." It is very simple, but if you read it carefully so as to remember it, you will find it an invaluable help. I did.

(*"Give thy thoughts no tongue," etc.*) — The will controls the thoughts and actions. Your will is your self, therefore you must be unceasingly on guard that you may control your speech, which is the expression of your thoughts in language; and your actions, which are

the expression of your thoughts in acts, moral or physical.

(*"Be thou familiar," etc.*) — Our copy books used to tell us "Familiarity breeds contempt"; if you are not careful, you will find it breeds many other disagreeable things. A theatrical company is a society whose members, constantly thrown together at rehearsals and performances, soon become more or less intimate. Be on your guard; do not let familiarity breed contempt of danger. In a mixed company, as you will find it, there is danger. Artistes spring from all ranks of society; among your comrades you will find ladies and gentlemen by birth, position, and education; others may be of low origin, unacquainted with the exigencies of polite society, who, being gifted with artistic feeling, have succeeded in raising themselves to the position they hold by work and observation, and therefore worthy of your re-

spect and consideration. Be courteous and good-natured to all, but avoid familiarity of speech and manner, or you may be led into unpleasant intimacies, more easily formed than broken off.

(*"Those friends thou hast," etc.*)—On the other hand, you may form acquaintances ending, after mature consideration and trial, in solid friendships. Hold them fast; friends are not easily found; at one time or other you may have need of one; or, better by far, be able to show yourself a true friend to one who requires consolation and assistance.

(*"Beware of entrance to a quarrel," etc.*) — Keep strict guard over your tongue and you will avoid quarrels; if, however, a quarrel be unavoidable and your opponent determined "to fight it out," do not give way to anger; be calm and courteous, content to parry the thrusts aimed at you without attempting to

return them until your opportunity, which is sure to arrive, gives you the chance to end the combat with the most deadly blow you can inflict — "the soft answer which turneth away wrath."

("*Give every man thy ear,*" *etc.*) — If you are good-natured, as I take for granted you are, you will have ample scope for exercising this precept. You will be made a receptacle for troubles of all kinds; listen to them patiently; if you cannot heal them, you can pour oil on the wounds and soothe the pain, real or imaginary. The "crushed tragedian" will indulge you with the censure of the manager who cannot see his fitness for the part which he has made his own all over the world; the ancient dancer, with her comments on a stupid ballet-master who allows her grace and experience to lie neglected while a clumsy, inexperienced beginner in whom he is interested is allowed to take the place which is

hers by right. Listen patiently, but do not constitute yourself judge. If your judgment does not coincide with the lady's, you will make an enemy of her; if it does, it will be quoted with additions, and you will make two enemies, the manager and the ballet-master.

(*"Costly thy habit," etc.*)—Your dress is an important factor in your appearance on the stage. Before paying a visit to the wardrobe make yourself acquainted with the style of dress worn by such a personage as you are called upon to represent at the period in which the drama you take part in is laid. Plates of the characters in most of the operas, old and modern, are published in Paris, etc., and failing these, there are many excellent works on costume, with illustrations, including minute details of ornaments, to be seen at the British Museum. Your costume as provided by the manager may not be to your liking;

do not grumble. What may appear by daylight little better than a bundle of rags, may, with tact and taste, be turned into an appropriate elegant costume when seen by the glare of the stage lights. Spend *what you can afford* upon it; you need not be alarmed by the word "costly" in the precept; adroitly used, a piece of old flannel, if clean, will often make a better show than the finest cloth. Consult your authority with regard to the manner of wearing the hair, beard, etc., and conform to the instructions as closely as possible; and learn to "make up" your face that the colour does not hide the lines of expression; and above all, I recommend the ladies to be careful in the use of black cosmetic for the eyes; I have seen many who appeared as though adorned with horn spectacles. Whatever ornaments you wear, let them be in good taste, "rich, not gaudy"; nor too lavish in quantity; elegant simplicity is more becoming, and to the

refined portion of your audience more pleasing than a great display of jewels, however costly they may be.

It has become a fashion to wear orders of distinction at ordinary concerts, which being only intended for use on State occasions, are quite out of place; they who wear them show lack of good taste and thoughtless disregard for the feelings of their less fortunate comrades.

(*"Neither a borrower nor a lender be," etc.*) — If you can assist a comrade, it is your duty to do so, without thought of reward or repayment; but first be sure that your assistance is bestowed on a worthy object; *ad captandum* lending is not generosity; on the contrary, it is productive of evil in various ways; you may suffer loss which your pocket cannot afford, and loss of friendship your heart cherished; you may also be providing means for indulgence in intemperate habits.

Work for your living, keep strictly within your means, do not indulge in expenses in anticipation of what you expect to earn; make it a hard and fast rule to pay your way as you go; you will then avoid the necessity and mortification of becoming a borrower.

(*"This above all: to thine own self be true," etc.*). — Self-government is the most difficult task we have to perform. As in all other tasks, its successful accomplishment depends on ourselves. Teachers can inculcate principles, but the only master who can guide us in their application is our own conscience. Hence from our earliest years the necessity for attention to moral instruction, in order that our conscience may have a clear perception of what we owe to our Creator, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves: to our Creator, all we are, all we have, and all we can do; to our fellow-creatures, charity; to ourselves,

the exercise of abnegation, for without this we cannot pay what we owe to God and man. Our passions rise up in defiance of conscience when we least expect; the struggle is a lifelong duel *à outrance*. Woe betide us if conscience succumbs; the man exists no longer; the being is reduced to the level of the beast of the field.

Look to your conscience every moment of your life; learn to keep your passions in subjection; you will then be true to yourself, and cannot be otherwise to your fellow-creatures.

("*Farewell*," *etc.*). — "Make the best of it" whatever befalls you; and you will triumph over all difficulties which may confront you.

XV

ABOUT ACTING

HOWEVER great you may estimate your dramatic genius, do not imagine you are a born actor; no such being ever existed. True it is, that dramatic genius or instinct must be born with the individual, but unless that genius is kept in proper bounds by the rules of the art of declamation, the gifted individual will never become an actor. Declamation comprises the just delivery of the words in speech or song, and the gesture or action appropriate to their sense.

Barring the experience necessary to develop your powers to their full extent, you have mastered the former; it is now your business to turn your

attention to the latter. The office of action is to emphasise the words you utter; occasionally to supply the place of an unuttered word or sentence; hence you will easily perceive how necessary it is that the action should coincide with the meaning of the words, uttered or not. Sawing the air with your arms, straddling on chairs and tables, constantly changing your position on the stage, only distract the attention of the audience and consequently diminish the effect of your performance. Unless there is some positive reason for such movements they only serve to show to people of judgment your ignorance of the art of declamation.

To prepare for the stage you ought to place yourself under a master of gesture, that you may learn how to use your head and limbs with elegance and grace, and "to suit the action to the word." This is not the place to enter into minute instructions, but a few

general hints will give you an idea of the necessity for this particular study. Each action is a combination of two or more movements, each one a segment of a circle, united in such a manner as to present the appearance of a single movement. Any angularity or rigidity would destroy the elegance of your action. You have to learn to stand perfectly still, and perfectly at ease — I think the most difficult of all stage business for a beginner.

If you go to Italy, you will have no difficulty in finding a good master among the mimes who carry on the action of the ballets produced at the Scala and other great theatres. I had a course of instruction from Effisio Catte, the principal mime at the Scala, whilst I was studying in Milan, from which I reaped great benefit in after-years.

Grace and elegance in ordinary life are natural to some people; for the stage they must be studied, they must

be artistic. A person may be perfectly graceful and elegant in a drawing-room, who, without proper study, would appear awkward and clumsy on the stage. You have to "hold the mirror up to Nature," and that can only be done by Art.

Again, each action, though performed directly by the head or limbs, must be indirectly performed by the whole body. The face, especially the mouth, should indicate the sentiment you would portray; if, then, your action is not accompanied by appropriate expression of the face, it loses all the meaning it is intended to convey; and if the expression depicted on your countenance is not seconded by the expression of your whole body, it will not impress your audience with the idea that you are in earnest. I believe it was Dr. Johnson who told David Garrick, after seeing him play Romeo, that in the balcony scene he was in love all over *except his left hand.*

As you have to be listener as well as speaker, you can never remain unoccupied; you must show you are listening, which cannot be done with a blank face and inert body; at the same time, you must not interrupt or interfere with the speaker by meaningless grimace or movement.

And lastly, which perhaps ought to be firstly, you will have to learn to walk again, the stage being an inclined plane. The master of gesture will teach you your steps, and you will have ample opportunity for practising them during the intervals when you are unoccupied during rehearsal. These details are of great importance; pay great attention to them, as their acquisition or neglect shows the difference between the artiste and the artizan.

As an instance of perfection in the art of declamation, I cite Pauline Viardot in *Le Prophète*. When she was kneeling at the feet of her misguided

son, imploring him to give up his wild project and return to her, to the spectator's imagination every fibre in her body was vibrating with intense passionate love and devotion, without the slightest touch of exaggeration in word or gesture; that is the way to *embody* a part.

If you can afford it, spend at least a month in Paris, and make a study of the actors at the Théâtre Français and other good theatres, and you will come away a wiser and better-prepared man or woman for the work you will have to undertake. You will learn it is not by making an effect in any particular scene which shows the artiste, but by logically representing a character throughout the drama. You must be a figure in a picture, or a series of pictures, which anything overdone or underdone will displace; your attention must be concentrated on keeping the figure in its place. When you are alone on the stage you

must, in theatrical terms, fill it; you have the picture all to yourself; a moment's inattention may spoil it, the audience will lose interest which you will have difficulty in reawakening.

I once saw Got play Sganarelle in *Le Cocu Imaginaire*, in which occurs a monologue occupying about five pages in a small 8vo edition. It was a masterpiece of declamation; without a single grimace or interpolation of his own witticisms, he kept the audience bound in perfect silence until the end, when he received a storm of applause, not from the *claque*, but from the entire house, men and women. It was a revelation, after the jibbering tomfoolery I had often witnessed in my own country.

Got was as great in serious work as in comic; for instance, as Giboyer in *Le Fils de Giboyer*. I mention him specially, as he was the leading actor at the Français in my day, but his companions were all great artistes — Mdlle. Favart,

Madeleine Brohan, Delaunay (the *beau ideal* of the *jeune premier*), Bressant, Prévost, Worms, Coquelin ainé. When playing together, as I have seen them in the above-mentioned comedy, there was no hopping about from one perch to another, smoking cigars or cigarettes at inopportune times, pirouetting about the stage fluttering pocket-handkerchiefs in the air, or employing other adventitious aids to cover awkwardness.

I was once present at a performance of a comedy in which there was an important drawing-room scene. During the few moments employed by the stage attendants in furnishing the stage with tables, chairs, couches, etc., I remarked to the friend who shared the box with me that, without knowing the number of actors who would take part in the scene, I was sure that each one would sit on each chair and couch before the scene concluded; my companion replied, "Stuff! Nonsense! Impossible!"

Although not a betting man, I offered to bet a sovereign to a shilling that he would find I was right. He accepted my bet, and (there were eight or nine actors engaged in the scene) I won it! but — we were not in Paris!

During my career I found only one stage manager from whose directions I reaped any material benefit, or who took the trouble to study the drama he had to put on the stage.[1] I had the good fortune to profit by his instructions for three seasons at the English opera, Covent Garden, and two or three years at the Italian opera.

When *Robin Hood* was produced at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1860, at the first full rehearsal, during the finale of the second act, we came to a deadlock; the crowd of chorus singers, ballet, and principal singers had got into such a hopeless muddle that nobody knew how to move. I had figured to myself during

[1] William (familiarly called Billy) West.

the preceding rehearsals how the scene could be effectively arranged, and, finding that the stage manager was quite at sea, I spoke to Reeves, explaining my idea; he seemed to enter into my views; so with Halle's (our conductor then) permission my plan was tried and adopted with complete success, the stage manager being only too pleased with such a comfortable solution of his difficulty. He confessed he had not even read the libretto.

I could quote many similar instances, as in the *Flying Dutchman* (Wagner), *The Water Carrier* (Cherubini), *The Siege of Rochelle* (Balfe), etc., etc., not as a boast of superior knowledge, but to show what may be accomplished by giving your steadfast attention to your work — keeping the picture in which you are to be a figure constantly before you, and profiting by the example of those of your companions who are more experienced than yourself.

It is not enough you should know your own part, you ought to make yourself well acquainted with the whole drama in which you are a figure. You cannot be an attentive "stage-listener" unless you know to what you are listening, ready with your lines at the proper moment. In a work entirely musical you must be "up to time," therefore you are bound to know perfectly the music of every scene in which you take part. Among your comrades you will probably find "procrastinators" and "slow studies"; very tiresome they are to deal with; never give way to temper, but having carried out what I have just advised, render them all the assistance which lies in your power, in a friendly spirit.

There is another tiresome person you may meet — an experienced actor who plays tricks when he has to deal with a "greenhorn." When I played Don Sallust in Howard Glover's *Ruy Blas*

I had the advantage of Walter Lacy's instruction for the dramatic element. He cautioned me about the scene in the third act, where Don Sallust interrupts Ruy Blas in the midst of a great speech, requesting him to pick up his handkerchief which he has purposely dropped from his hand. "Be on your guard," said Lacy; "your Ruy Blas is an old stager, and as you are not on the best of terms, will one night, when he thinks he has caught you napping, withdraw the handkerchief; do not close your hand until you feel you have it fast, or you will raise a laugh at your own expense, and make an end of your dignified demeanour." And, surely, during the second week of the run of the opera, when I felt myself quite at home, I nearly fell into the trap. I was just closing my hand and preparing my sneering "Thank you," when I felt the handkerchief slipping; fortunately the warning flashed on my mind, I did not

move a finger until all was safe; I then turned to my old stager and sneered a "Thank you" he did not forget.

When you arrive at being an old stager do not you play tricks on the inexperienced — it is bad manners, unkind, and instead of enhancing your reputation, will lessen you in the estimation of those among your audience and comrades who are aware of your disloyal conduct.

In what I have said about stage management I intend no slight on what is done in England. Of late years I have seen many plays staged to perfection by some of our noted "actor-managers." My experience was on the operatic stage, and there I did not find stage management as perfect as it might have been with the good material at command.

XVI

ABOUT REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

In an operatic theatre the musical director is the responsible head of all that concerns the stage, the commander of the forces placed at his disposal — artistes, chorus, orchestra, and ballet where employed in the opera. The manager of the theatre, if a singer taking part in the performances, is bound to obey him as strictly as any member of his own company.

Rehearsals are tedious or enjoyable according to the way in which they are conducted, which depends almost entirely on the business capacity of the musical director. He must use an iron

hand in a velvet glove; singers are, as a rule, a "rebellious" crew, and very "touchy" under reproof. He should insist on punctuality, but arrange "calls" so as not to encroach on the time of his artistes, either before or after their services are required, and also to avoid interruptions from those who would be waiting about. In a theatre like Covent Garden, where so many operas are produced during the season, unless punctual attendance and strict attention at rehearsals were insisted on, well-organised performances would be impossible. Costa and Mellon were both rigorous, they never allowed frivolity to interfere with business; and, punctual themselves, they would not excuse the lack of it in others. They were called "martinets" by the heedless, unsystematic members of the company, but some of us preferred the martinet who did not detain us three or four hours where one would suffice to go through our work.

When I was rehearsing *The Trovatore* for my début in Italian opera at Covent Garden in 1862, the first morning Tamberlik did not put in an appearance until half an hour after the appointed time. He had a fair excuse, as he had been singing in *William Tell* the night before, which did not finish until close on midnight. When he came into the room Costa took out his watch and called the great tenor's attention to his tardy arrival. Tamberlik made some excuse about the late hour he arrived at home the preceding night. Costa merely remarked, "I let you off this time, but pray do not let it occur again." It did not matter — artiste, chorus singer, orchestral player, all were treated alike. The result was manifest in the fine performances we were accustomed to.

Throughout the rehearsals concentrate your thoughts upon your work. You need not use your full voice, but sing so that the director may know what you

intend to do with the music allotted to you, and if he offers you advice accept it graciously — his greater experience will most probably prove of great value. During your unoccupied intervals you can pay attention to your comrades to your advantage; you may learn something worth adopting, or note something to be avoided. Take every opportunity which offers of singing your solo pieces that the director may have no trouble in accompanying you when you arrive at the orchestral rehearsals, and that you may feel at home when you appear before the public. At every rehearsal on the stage go through your part as you intend to play it, leave nothing to the spur of the moment. I have often heard procrastinators say, when imperfect at rehearsal, "It will be all right at night" — a bad system. What is not right at a rehearsal does not turn out right at the performance.

When you are before the public keep

your attention fixed on your work; sink your identity in the character you are portraying, and though nervous at the start you will soon "warm up," forgetting audience and everything else except your work.

These remarks apply in a modified degree to the concert platform. Gesture is not permissible here; passion and sentiment must be expressed by the face alone. Beware, however, of exaggeration. Expression would drop into grimace, and destroy all effect you might make with your singing.

Do not rest satisfied with or elated by your first success; be content with having done your best, and continue to study in order to improve what you have already done successfully. Absolute perfection you can never hope to attain. As long as you exercise your art you will find room for improvement, and when you retire, on looking back and meditating on your successes, you

will of a surety discover many points in which the speaking, singing, or acting could have been improved. It is then too late for you to profit by your more mature study, but you can and ought, when opportunity occurs, to impart to your young successors the knowledge which you can no longer make use of yourself.

The anticipation of the pleasure of a life of repose after one of active labour is but natural, especially after the wearing and often wearying career of a true artiste; but if the repose is to consist of a total cessation of employment for mind and body, the realisation will be attended with anything but pleasure. You will be free from contracts with managers, from the caprice of public taste, the petty jealousies of the "green-room," and other annoyances, but you will find their place will be filled up by others as disagreeable, whether you seek your pleasure in the attractions of society

or of retirement. There is only one method of extracting pleasure from life in this world — by preserving the mind and body active as long as they retain any vigour. That vigour can only be maintained by employment, and what employment could be more generous and interesting than helping the young struggler with the benefit of your experience? Work! work! work! as long as you have breath. That is your contract with the Author of all you are, all you have, and all you can do. Be careful to fulfil it or . . .

POST SCRIPTUM

THERE are few people who do not look on a well-arranged, well-stocked garden of flowers and inhale their delicious perfume with delight; the few must be those few who have "no music in their souls," though it is to be hoped they are not therefore "fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils." All delights are attended with danger when indulged in beyond reasonable bounds; it is incumbent on us at all times to moderate our transports, or we are bound to suffer more or less from our indiscretion. Flowers growing in the open air are innocuous, so far as I know, but, growing or cut, confined in the space of an ordinary room, they are the cause of suffering,

especially to those afflicted with highly strung nervous systems. I can speak advisedly, from the result of personal experience. It is a fashion in England, where flower-gardens are for the most part bare during a great portion of the year, to garnish our living and even bedrooms with flowers imported from foreign countries or from English greenhouses; in the spring we deck them with those flowers which bloom early in the woods; our windows are ornamented with hyacinths. The exhalations from most of these are highly pernicious to the health. I have often been ridiculed for saying so. I have known ladies who suffered martyrdom from headache caused by the flowers, without which, they declared, "they could not exist." It is useless to try the effect of reasoning with such. Finding that no argument I could offer, though backed by the opinion of one of our most eminent medical men, had any

effect, I had to leave them to enjoy the sight of the flowers and suffer the pains of the headache caused by their exhalations. I felt grieved that it was not in my power to offer any sympathy, and probably was counted a barbarian, and a hater of one of Nature's choicest products.

To you, young friends, who have to use your throats, I must be more insisting; it is not a matter of a headache, which you may suffer from your own indiscretion if you choose; you have a public duty to perform, and the public will not stop to inquire about your adoration of flowers, or excuse you on that ground if you are unable from loss of voice to do your duty.

I will give you now the result of my experience, and you can judge for yourselves and take the advice I give you, founded on that experience, or not, as you like. In the early part of my career I found that occasionally, leaving home for a concert in excellent voice,

after being in the artistes' room for a little time I was attacked with an unaccountable hoarseness, the cause of which I vainly endeavoured to discover. I found that when I left the artistes' room, during the few minutes' wait in the corridor leading to the platform (I am speaking of the recently demolished St. James's Hall), my voice entirely regained its clearness. On close observation I found the hoarseness attacked me when there were flowers in the room, particularly the (to me) deadly gardenia, stephanotis, hyacinth, lily, etc. I mentioned the fact, and was, as I said before, laughed at for my "fad," as it was called — a mere piece of imagination; if I had not seen the flowers, I should never have accused them. That is probable; but I had opportunities of proving the contrary, of which one will suffice. I was singing at a private party one evening, at a very nice house somewhere in the neighbourhood of Belgrave

Square, in which Gardoni, the tenor, a charming little soprano, a daughter of Varesi, the baritone, and others whose names I do not remember, were engaged. I left home happy, feeling I was in splendid form. I arrived at the house, and was in the drawing-room for about half an hour before the concert commenced. I began to feel rather husky, and tried the remedy of a simple lozenge, as I fancied the heat had dried my throat. When it came to my turn to sing I almost collapsed, for I could scarcely produce a sound. Mdlle. Varesi was in the same plight, Gardoni was husky, and all the others were more or less incapacitated. There was not a flower in the room that I could discover, and I began to doubt my theory. The concert concluded, the host came to thank me for the pleasure I had given him and his guests (I thought they were very kind, or more anxious about the supper served after the concert than the music),

and asked me if I had seen his splendid show of lilies. I had not; so he conducted me into a room adjoining, which was literally packed with "harem lilies," the deadly exhalations from which had penetrated into the drawing-room and paralysed the efforts of those who ought to have been the chief attraction of the party. I could not forbear telling him that his show of lilies had upset the musical proceedings. He seemed perfectly contented, however; so I got away as soon as I could, and had not been out of the house ten minutes before my voice was as clear and fresh as when I entered it. I have since had many proofs that my theory, certainly as far as my own throat is concerned, is correct. My opinion was confirmed by Morell Mackenzie, on an occasion on which I met him at a party where I was singing. He told me that the exhalations from flowers, especially such as those I have before enumerated, have

the effect of paralysing to a greater or less extent the nerves of the throat, and so render the voice husky even to hoarseness.

Whenever I find a room where I have to sing decorated with strong-smelling flowers, I insist on having them removed, and have several times been voted a nuisance in consequence. Some years ago at the Crystal Palace I was singing at a Saturday afternoon concert, when dear old August Manns was director; during the interval between the rehearsal and the concert the platform had been lined with hyacinths in full bloom. When I went on to the orchestra the odour from the flowers was overpowering, and I insisted on the whole of them being cleared away before I sang, which made George Grove furious and declare in a loud voice it was ridiculous to keep the audience waiting for such nonsensical "fads." I had to sing, he had not; so I waited until my enemies were removed.

I deemed it better to try the patience of the audience for a few minutes than to annoy them by croaking through my song. Fad or no fad, on future occasions I never had to engage in a battle of flowers at the same place.

Jonquils, wood violets, and other strong-scented spring flowers, which are frequently used to ornament the dining-room, generally have a very bad effect on most people's digestive organs; they will not admit it, and blame the salmon or the sauce, anything rather than their beloved flowers. I have never experienced any ill effect from the odour of the rose, though in some species it is strong and penetrating.

All singers may not be subject to the same ill effects produced by the exhalations of scented flowers as I am, but I would advise them to be on their guard, and not allow their affection to overcome their reason.

EPITAPH

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