

Geraldine Farrar

THE STORY OF AN
AMERICAN SINGER

BY
HERSELF



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GERALDINE FARRAR



The Story of an American Singer



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GERALDINE FARRAR

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HERSELF



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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A DEDICATION

IN offering these little sketches of some of the interesting events that have helped shape a career now fairly familiar to the general public, it has not been my intention to weary the indulgent reader with a lengthy dissertation of literary pretension, or tiresome data resulting from the obvious and oft-recurring "I."

From out the storehouse of memory, impressions crystallized into form without regard to time or place, and it was more than a passing pleasure to jot them down at haphazard; in the quiet of my library, on the flying train, or again beneath the witchery of California skies, I scribbled as the mood prompted, as I would converse with an interested and congenial listener.

It is not, perhaps, a New England characteristic to expand in affectionate eulogy for the satisfaction of a curious public, but the threads of these recollections are so closely interwoven with maternal love and devotion, that this volume would be incomplete without its rightful dedication to

MY MOTHER

G. F.

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GERALDINE FARRAR



The Story of an American Singer

GERALDINE FARRAR

THE STORY OF AN AMERICAN SINGER

CHAPTER I

MY LIFE AS A CHILD

I BELIEVE that a benevolent Fate has had watch over me. Some have called it luck; some have spoken of the hard work and the many years of study; others have cited my career as an instance of American pluck and perseverance. But deep down in my heart I feel much has been directed by Fate. This God-sent gift of song was bestowed upon me for some purpose, I know not what. It may fail me to-morrow, to-night; at any moment something may mar the delicate instrument, and then all the perseverance, pluck, study, and luck in the world will not restore it to me. If early in life I dimly sensed this insecurity, yet always have I gone onward and onward, eager for that which Fate had in store for me, and accepting gladly those rewards and opportunities which in the course of my career have been popularly referred to as "Farrar's luck."

GERALDINE FARRAR

Yet do not think that I waited in idleness to see what Fate would bring. From the days of my earliest recollection I have labored unceasingly to attain the goal which I believed and hope Destiny had marked out for me. My mother tells me that before I was five I had already shown strong musical tendencies. By the time I was ten I had visions of studying abroad. At the age of twelve I had heard the music of almost the entire grand opera repertoire. By the time I was sixteen I was studying in Paris.

My earliest memories take me back to my home town, Melrose, Massachusetts, a small but very attractive city not far from Boston. I can recall a large room with an open fireplace and flames flashing from a log fire into which I spent many hours gazing, trying to conjure up strange and fanciful shapes and figures. From the fireplace, so my mother tells me, I would stroll to the great, old-fashioned square piano in the corner, and, standing on tiptoe, would strum upon the keys. I suppose I was two or three years old at the time, yet it seems to me that I was striving to give expression musically to the strange shapes and figures suggested by the fire and by my vivid imagination.

Hereditary influences must have helped to shape



A LITTLE GIRL IN MELROSE

MY LIFE AS A CHILD

my musical career. My mother and father both sang in the First Universalist Church of Melrose. Mother's father, Dennis Barnes, of Melrose, had been a musician, and had organized a little orchestra which played on special occasions. He gave violin lessons and composed, and there is a tradition that in his boyhood days he learned to play the violin from an Italian fiddler, and afterward constructed his own instrument, pulling hairs from the tail of an old white horse to make the bow.

My father, Sydney D. Farrar, owned a store in Melrose when I was born. In the summer time he played baseball with a local amateur team with such success that, when I was two years old, he was engaged by the Philadelphia National League Baseball Club as first baseman. He was a professional ball-player with the Philadelphia team for several years. Yet during the winters he was always in Melrose, looking after business. Both he and my mother were very fond of music, singing every week in the church quartet and sometimes at concerts.

The house in which I was born is still standing, a large, old-fashioned building on Mount Vernon Street, Melrose, which my father rented from the Houghton estate. It is next door to the Blake house, a well-known local landmark. Most of my

early life was spent in this house, although subsequently we moved twice to occupy other houses in the neighborhood.

My mother says that I was a happy baby, crooning and humming to myself, singing when other babies usually cry. She says that the familiar airs of the barrel organs, which were played in the street every day, were all added to my repertoire in due time, correct as to melody, although I was too young to enunciate properly. My mother did not think it out of the ordinary for her baby to be so musically inclined, young as I was. I was her first and only child.

When I was three years old I sang in my first church concert. My childish voice rose up bravely; and my mother distinctly remembers that I had perfect self-possession and never showed the slightest sign of stage fright. When my song was finished, and the kind applause had subsided, I stepped to the edge of the platform and spoke to her down in the front row.

“Did I do it well, mamma?” I asked, not at all disconcerted while every one laughed.

I cannot remember the time when I did not intend to sing and act. As soon as I was a little older it was decided that I should take piano lessons.



MR. AND MRS. SYDNEY D. FARRAR

But at once I made strenuous objection to the necessary restraint, an objection which in after years manifested itself in much that I attempted. I could not force myself to study according to rule or tradition. I wanted to try out things my own way, according to impulse, just when and how the spirit within me moved. I could not drudge at scales, and therefore found the lessons irksome. I preferred to improvise upon the piano, and I had a strange fondness for playing everything upon the black keys.

“Why do you use only the black keys?” my mother asked me once.

“Because the white keys seem like angels and the black keys like devils, and I like devils best,” I replied. It was the soft half-tones of the black keys which fascinated me, and to this day I prefer their sensuous harmony to that of the more brilliant “angels.”

My mother offered me a tricycle — one of those weird three-wheeled vehicles in vogue at the time — if I would learn my piano lessons according to rule; but I had all too little patience and my father gave me the tricycle anyhow, as well as a pony later. These were some of my few amusements. In fact, I cared little for child’s play at any time in

my early youth, and nothing for outdoor sports. I spent most of my time with books and music, or playing with animals.

Among my animal friends was a large Newfoundland dog. One day my mother came into the back yard and found me trying to make him act as a horse, attached by a rough harness to an improvised plough I had made of wood to dig up the back garden. I loved dogs, and once my mother had me photographed seated on a large painted wooden dog.

Another childish amusement was to put fantastic costumes on the cats and pretend that they were actors or actresses. In time there were added to the cats and dog a chameleon, a pair of small alligators, guinea-pigs, rabbits, a bullfinch, and a robin with a broken wing. I was passionately fond of flowers as well, and my own small garden was a source of pride and pleasure.

The world of make-believe was becoming very real to me by this time. I dramatized everything. I had the utmost confidence in my choice to become a great singer, for at all times I was busy with music, either alone or with my mother. It did not occur to me that I could possibly fail in achieving my object, and yet I was so sincere and felt so

MY LIFE AS A CHILD

impelled to try to “touch the stars” that I do not believe it could be called conceit. Young as I was, I felt that with my song I could soar to another world and revel in poetry and music.

CHAPTER II

THE DRAMATIC IMPULSE

AT five I was sent to school. Among my teachers in the Grove Street School, Melrose, was Miss Alice Swett, who remains a dear, good friend to this day. She was ever kind and sympathetic to me, and I always loved her, although I was often rebellious and unmanageable. My own reckless nature, impatient at restraint, could never endure the order and confinement of the classroom.

The dynamic energy, which has suffered little curb in the passing of years, was even then a characteristic to be reckoned with; displays of lively temper were not infrequent, but the method of punishment at an isolated desk in view of the entire class was far too enjoyable to serve as a correction for my ebullient spirits and was abruptly discontinued.

Miss Swett was my teacher for several years. While her affection and trust never wavered, I doubt if she ever quite understood the harum-scarum girl in her charge.

Only the other day, visiting me in my New York



MISS FARRAR AND MRS. LONG, HER FIRST SINGING TEACHER

THE DRAMATIC IMPULSE

home and commenting upon some unconventional act of mine, she sighed and said: "Geraldine, where are you going to end?"

"Well, I may brush the gallows in the wild flight of my career," I replied laughingly, "but I'll never be really hanged."

Those years at the Grove Street School, when I was developing from childhood into young girlhood, were full of excitement, romance, and expectations. But I looked upon them as a trying period which had to be endured before I could devote myself entirely to my ambition. I was full of both temper and temperament, and an unlimited supply of high spirits which manifested themselves in various unusual ways — singing and acting, idealizing myself as many of the heroines whose gracious images intoxicated my imagination. At times I walked on air, and always my head was filled with dreams and hopes of this marvelous career.

It was at this time that I wrote a play, "Rapunzel of the Golden Hair," based upon an old fairy story. As usual I wished always to be the heroine, yet Fate had not bestowed the necessary golden locks upon me. My dark hair was worn short, and I must have looked much like an impish boy. Then, my dramatic vision had soulful eyes and an angelic

expression. But instead of looking like an angel I was more like a gypsy at the distressing gosling stage, too undeveloped; yet I dreamed of the times when I would appear before immense audiences as the beautiful heroine of my dreams and hold them fascinated by my song and personality. I always had the utmost faith in a certain power of magnetism; it seemed as though from my youngest days I felt that I could influence others, and often I experimented just to see what effects I could produce.

The impulse to dramatize everything found an opportunity, when I was about ten years old, in the arrival in town of the brother of a girl friend. This boy, slightly older than I, had been educated in England and had brought back exquisite manners and an English accent that greatly impressed the young ladies of my class. I need hardly mention the fact that these attributes were looked upon with contempt by the masculine element, who had no small measure of derision for the youthful Chesterfield. I had cared little for and never encouraged boy sweethearts, but this youngster's exclusive admiration did arouse my interest. I felt flattered for a short time. But alas! he was unmusical to a degree, and companionship suddenly terminated, on my side, when I found that he was to be

neither subjugated by my singing nor thrilled by my acting.

One day I rebuffed him when he tried to walk home with me after school, offering to carry my books. Puzzled, he made a formal call on my mother, doubtless with a view to a reconciliation, and asked permission to accompany me as usual.

My mother laughed and told him to ask me.

“I have asked Miss Geraldine,” he said sadly; “but she does not seem to care for my attentions.”

A few days later he went skating, the ice broke, and he was drowned. Instantly I became a widow. Drama — real drama — had come into my life, and with all the feeling of an instinctive actress I played my rôle. I dressed in black; abandoned all gayeties; went to and from school mopping my eyes with a black-bordered handkerchief; and the other boys and girls stood aside in silence as I passed, leaving me alone with my grief.

For six weeks I played the tragedy; and then in the twinkling of an eye the mood, in which I had been genuinely serious, passed away. In life this young boy had meant absolutely nothing to me; in death he became a dramatic possibility which I utilized unconsciously as an outlet for my emotion.

I was not pretending; I was terribly in earnest. I actually believed in my grief. Who can say that it was "only acting"?

A temper, which I regret to confess time has not very much chastened, came to the front in my school days, to the dismay of my mother. In 1892, when I was ten years old, the city of Melrose held a carnival and celebration to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. Floats were planned to represent the thirteen original States. The selection of the school girl to impersonate Massachusetts fell to my class in the Grove Street School, and I was anxious for this honor, not only because of the personal glory and prominence, but because I really believed that I could impersonate Massachusetts better than any other girl in the class!

Well, I did appear as Massachusetts, and, with the other "twelve States," was driven through the streets of Melrose, mounted on the float, bearing the flag of the nation. But two girls in the school, who had voted against me in the election, watched me from afar with swollen and blackened eyes; I had struck them in a moment of quick anger because their choice had been against me.

The following winter, while many of the boys and



A YOUNG GIRL WITH A PHENOMENAL SOPRANO VOICE

'THE DRAMATIC IMPULSE

girls were skating, a boy of twelve or thirteen, named Clarence, annoyed me exceedingly by trying to trip me with his hockey stick. I warned him three times that he "had better let me alone," but he persisted in his persecution. After the third time, I skated to shore, picked up my umbrella, carefully tore three of the steel ribs from it and, with these as a whip, I thrashed Clarence. Clarence "sat" with discomfort for some days, and I believe his mother seriously contemplated making a police charge against me for beating him.

This temper — or temperament — often found expression at home in moods, when for hours, sometimes days, I would n't break silence. If any one interfered with or spoke to me during these moments I felt just as though some one were combing my nerves the wrong way with a fine, grating comb. My mother was wise enough to leave me alone in my intense irritability and depression. She appreciated the extremes of my nature, which were somewhat like the well-known little girl of our childhood rhymes:

"When she was good she was very, very good,
And when she was bad she was horrid."

I fear, at times, I was very, very horrid. But I planned a danger signal! One day I came home with

a pair of most distinctive black-and-white checked stockings, the most hideous things one can imagine.

“Mother,” I said, “when I wear these stockings I want to be let alone.”

Thus it was an understood thing that no one should speak to me or notice me in the least while these horrors adorned me. Perhaps after a few hours, or a day, I would go up the back stairs, change my stockings — and the sun would shine again.

It was at this time that I was the victim of an accident which resulted in a neat bit of surgery. My mother and I were spending a summer in the little village of Sandwich, New Hampshire. I was crazy to carve a small horse out of wood, and went down to the woodshed in the rear of the country house where we were staying, armed with a hatchet and followed by an admiring youngster from the village. The hatchet was very sharp. My experience in carving wooden horses was limited. Suddenly the hatchet came down and clipped a tiny bit off the extreme ends of my left thumb and forefinger.

I screamed with agony and cried in amazement as the poor little bleeding tips of my fingers fell

to the floor, but the country boy, with wonderful presence of mind, picked them up, and keeping them warm in his closed hand, ran with me at full speed to the nearest doctor. Fortunately, he happened to be at home. When the village boy showed him the wounded hand and the tiny bleeding bits of finger, he clamped them instantly on the fingers where they belonged, put on ointments, and bound them tight with bandages. This marvelous surgery, without a stitch being taken, actually was successful; the fingers healed, and now only a slight scar remains.

I regret to say that this physician, whose presence of mind thus saved my fingers from being permanently mutilated, is entirely unknown to me now. Some few years ago, in Boston, I told this story in an interview, and a physician wrote me from some other city that he was the man who had saved my fingers for me. I wrote and thanked him for his kindness toward a little girl; but his letter was mislaid and destroyed, so that even now I do not know his name. Wherever he is, however, he will always have my thanks and warmest admiration.

Finally, the time came for me to enter the Melrose High School. I objected seriously to the

further routine of public schooling, as I wished to study only music. But both my father and mother insisted; so I began the study of languages. I was intensely interested in mythology, history, and literature, but I hated mathematics. I always preferred to count on my fingers rather than to use my brain for such merely mechanical feats as adding or multiplying figures. In the study of languages I soon found that my teachers were excellent grammarians, but I pleaded that I wanted to learn to talk and not merely to conjugate.

I took a supplementary course in literature, and well remember the most important incident when I competed for the prize. I was quite sure my essay would win. In fancy I had already rehearsed the pretty speech in which I should thank the committee for the honor conferred on me. But the prize went to some one else. My anger was sudden and hot. Then and there I made up my mind that if ever I could not be first in what I attempted, I would drop it at once. I believed my material was best and deserved the prize, and I was hurt at not conquering before an admiring and enthusiastic audience!

Thus I early learned that maybe I could not always win, could not always be first; that perse-



GROWING UP

THE DRAMATIC IMPULSE

verance must aid natural talents; and that it is cowardly to drop a thing when at first you don't succeed. The sting of adverse criticism may often prove the best of tonics! I have since found it so.

CHAPTER III

I RESOLVE TO SING CARMEN

EACH spring in Melrose there was a May Carnival. One of the features of the carnival in 1894, when I was twelve years old, was a pageant of famous women impersonated by local talent. I was selected to represent Jenny Lind and was told by the committee that I must sing "Home, Sweet Home," but with characteristic disregard for the expected tradition I decided to sing an aria in Italian first. The prima donna of my dreams would naturally dazzle her hearers with a selection in some foreign tongue, and then graciously respond to the clamorous multitude with a simple ballad.

I had this stage effect quite planned in my mind. I did n't know a word of Italian; but studied one song by myself from "Faust" — Siebel's song which Scalchi used to sing in the old days and one seldom heard now. My Italian may have been incomprehensible to a native, certainly it did not disconcert Melrosians; my *aplomb* was richly rewarded by numerous recalls, just as I had dared to hope, and "Home, Sweet Home" was given with due

I RESOLVE TO SING CARMEN

seriousness. I was happy and excited; I was "arriving" at last! Also I wore my first low-neck dress.

Incidentally, this episode in the Melrose Town Hall is made vivid in my memory by two notable happenings. The first is — shades of vanity! — that I wore a new pair of perfectly lovely shoes that were too tight for me (but looked so nice); so, after singing the encore, I was obliged to retire behind a stout lady on the stage and take them off. When the carnival was over, I found to my distress that I could not get them on again, and I walked home in my stocking feet!

The second episode of this day really marked a turning point in my career. A friend who heard me sing happened to be a pupil of Mrs. J. H. Long, the best-known singing teacher in Boston at that time, and this friend insisted that I must go into Boston and sing for Mrs. Long. I was tremulous with joy (still in my stocking feet), and my mother and I — breathless — told my father the news that arrangements were to be made for me to sing at last before a real singing teacher!

My father eyed us and shook his head thoughtfully, looking at my mother as though to say: "She's encouraging the child in all this tomfoolery." For, while he himself had a splendid natural voice and

loved music and was proud of my childish achievements, I doubt if at that time he could foresee the practical side of a musical career. But my mother and I were heart and soul for the idea, and sing I would and must.

Finally came the "day of days," and it poured. Alas for the favorable impression I had hoped to create! My hair had been tightly rolled in lead all night to obtain the desired "crimps"; I had n't closed an eye from the discomfort and nervousness; and here was the fateful hour at hand, with no vestige of a "crimp," my face pale with excitement, though I pinched my cheeks cruelly to make the "roses" come, and my muslin frock out of the question in such weather. I felt like a veritable Cinderella in my plain, dark suit.

However, off we started, half an hour's ride on the train. What I suffered in apprehension; how dizzy I felt, and what a queer feeling I had in the pit of my stomach! I could have wept from the tension. Could this drooping young person be the erstwhile very confident embryo prima donna?

Mrs. Long, of fond memory, put me at once at my ease with her kindly manner. Her great brown eyes looked into mine and inspired me with such confidence that soon I was warbling as freely as if

I RESOLVE TO SING CARMEN

I were at home alone. I no longer heeded the rain, my appearance, or my surroundings. To my delight I was accepted at once as a pupil, and it is to this excellent and thorough teacher that I can give thanks for proper guidance in my early years. My aversion and distaste for the drudgery of scales and routine manifested itself quickly, but Mrs. Long knew the best arguments for my rebellious little soul, and, as I really did wish to become a great and noble singer, I worked as faithfully at my tasks as I could.

Meanwhile I began to sing occasionally in the Congregational Church in Melrose. My mother from this time kept a scrapbook of newspaper notices concerning me, for I was now beginning to become known as a local celebrity. The first clipping in my mother's scrapbook is from the "Melrose Journal" of May 21, 1895, and is as follows:—

Miss Geraldine Farrar, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. D. Farrar, has a voice of great power and richness. Many who heard her for the first time, at the Vesper service last Sunday afternoon, were greatly surprised. She is only thirteen years of age, but has a future of great promise, and it is believed that Melrose will some day be proud of her attainments in the world of music.

As a result of the church singing and the fact

that I was actually studying in Boston under the famous Mrs. Long, I was invited to sing at my first regular concert. The programme, carefully preserved by my mother, shows that it was organized by Miss Eudora F. Parkhurst in aid of the piano fund for the Melrose Highlands Congregational Vestry and that it took place on Wednesday evening, January 15, 1896, in the Town Hall of Melrose. I sang two numbers, "Non conosci il bel suol," from "Mignon" (I note my Italian had improved), and Auguste's "Bird on the Wing." Of this interesting event, my first public appearance in concert, the "Melrose Journal" of the next day said:—

Miss Eudora Parkhurst's concert in aid of the piano fund of the Highland Congregational Church, given in the Town Hall Wednesday evening, attracted a small audience. Miss Parkhurst, who is a very young lady and herself a musician of considerable ability, put a great deal of work into the concert and its details, and it is to be regretted that it could not have been better patronized. Miss Geraldine Farrar was the leading attraction, rendering her two solos with great confidence and ability. For her first number she sang "Non conosci il bel suol," from "Mignon," rendering the difficult music with surprising ease and fidelity, receiving a recall. Her second number, "Bird on the Wing," was also well received. The Alpine Quartet, of Woburn, Miss Cora Cummings, banjo soloist, Miss



THE GOOSE GIRL AND HER FLOCK

I RESOLVE TO SING CARMEN

Welma Cummings and Miss Parkhurst, violinists, and Miss Bessie Adams, reciter, were the other attractions. Mr. Grant Drake presided at the piano as accompanist.

I find in my personal notes of comment on this interesting programme that I disliked the banjo as an instrument, though Miss Cummings played well, and that Mr. Drake, the pianist, was "very nice." Even in those days I was given to analysis.

My success at this recital led directly to another public appearance — February 5, 1896 — in the Y. M. C. A. Hall at Melrose, at a concert given by Miss Jennie Mae Spencer, a Boston contralto, through whose friendship and advice I had gone to study with Mrs. Long. This was the first time my name appeared in large type as one of the principal singers, and I was greatly pleased.

This was the first paying professional appearance I ever made; for singing one number and a duet with Miss Spencer I received the magnificent sum of ten dollars. But this concert called me to the attention of the music critics of Boston, and the critic of the "Boston Times" wrote:—

Miss Geraldine Farrar is a young girl who has a phenomenal soprano voice and gives promise of becoming a great singer.

My marginal criticism on this concert programme shows that Mr. J. C. Bartlett, the tenor, was "fine"; Miss Bell Temple, reader, was "good"; Mr. Wulf Fries, the 'cellist, was "elegant"; and Mr. Drake, the pianist, was "nice," as usual.

These two concerts were followed by further careful study under Mrs. Long, and then at last came the eventful night when I made my real *début* in Boston at the annual recital given by her pupils. I shall never forget the date, Tuesday evening, May 26, 1896. I was fourteen at the time, having celebrated my birthday in February. The recital took place in Association Hall, and I wore a simple little white dress with green trimmings. On the programme of this memorable event, carefully pasted in a scrapbook by my mother, I find this comment written in my own hand: "This is what I made my *début* in, very calm and sedate, not the least nervous."

Following my critical tendencies at the other concerts, I find the programme of this first recital filled with marginal comments. Most of my remarks were very flattering to my fellow pupils. Concerning Miss Leveroni, who afterward studied abroad and returned to America to sing with Henry Russell's grand opera company, I wrote:



CALVÉ AS CARMEN

I RESOLVE TO SING CARMEN

“Very nice, gestures natural.” Others were “pretty good,” “very fine,” or “very nervous,” and only one pupil was criticized as “Bad, off key.”

The Boston newspapers always gave extended notices to the recitals of Mrs. Long’s pupils, and this was no exception. I was mentioned favorably, but it remained for the dear old “Melrose Reporter” to give me a most extraordinary and almost prophetic criticism. I quote from the newspaper clipping so carefully preserved by my mother:—

The Cavatina from “Il Barbiere,” sung by Miss Geraldine Farrar, will interest those in Melrose who were not able to attend the recital. For many months musical people have waited the gradual development of this phenomenal voice, a God-given power which the child has sent forth with a freedom, compass, and quality that has demanded the admiration of our best Boston critics. Notwithstanding the florid and extreme difficulties of the Cavatina, the execution and reserved force, absolutely fresh and firm for each attack, was a triumph and a revelation of tone power. She sang without notes, and embraced the beautiful flowers showered upon her, as unconscious of her success as though she had stood among her mates and told a simple story. With hopeful anticipation, her many loving friends will follow her future which seems already unfolding, and as the child glides to womanhood, our little twinkling star may rise by

GERALDINE FARRAR

and by from dear Melrose, and become resplendent in the musical firmament, where all the world will love to listen and do her homage.

The first flowers sent to me at this recital, carefully dried and pressed, are still one of my dearest souvenirs; and I also treasure carefully the first card of good wishes sent to me on that occasion. It bears the carefully engraved name of "Mr. John E. Pilling," and underneath is written: "May success always attend you." I hope Mr. Pilling, if he ever sees these lines, will accept the long-deferred thanks of the little Melrose girl to whom he sent such an encouraging message.

In my last year of study under Mrs. Long I reveled for the first time in the joys of grand opera. That winter in Boston, the Castle Square Opera Company, an excellent organization managed by Henry W. Savage, was presenting grand opera in English at the old Castle Square Theater. The leading singers were J. K. Murray and his wife, Clara Lane. I became a subscriber to this excellent company's performances on Wednesday matinées. To me these matinées were meat and drink; all performances were well supported by music-lovers in the vicinity. It was Clara Lane whom I first heard sing "Carmen," a rôle which has recently figured



JEAN DE RESZKE

I RESOLVE TO SING CARMEN

so successfully in my own repertoire at the Metropolitan in New York. During these enjoyable weeks I heard this company sing most of the grand opera repertoire, in English, and I was thrilled and fascinated.

Then came another great and unexpected joy. The Maurice Grau Grand Opera Company, from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, visited Boston for a spring season at Mechanics Hall. My mother decided that I must hear Calvé sing "Carmen." The cast included Jean de Reszke, then at the height of his success; Emma Eames, Saleza, Pol Plançon as the toreador, and of course the wonderful Calvé. I completely lost my head over this remarkable performance. For days and nights I reveled in the memories of that magnificent representation. This, then, was the visualization of all my dreams of years. This triumph I had witnessed was that toward which all my hopes, fears, and prayers had been directed. This wonderful creature was what I hoped — nay, intended — to become. And then and there was born within me a fervent and earnest decision that, come what may, I too must some day sing "Carmen" with the most wonderful cast of grand opera artists in the world, at the Metropolitan in New York.

CHAPTER IV

MY FIRST DAYS IN MY DREAM WORLD

MY meeting with Jean de Reszke is stamped vividly in my memory, since he was the first personage from that beautiful dream world of opera that it was my privilege to meet. Music lovers of America need no reminder of his tremendous vogue as a man and his wonderful career as an artist. I had the opportunity to sing for him through Jehangier Cola, a Hindu professor who at the time was interesting Boston society with his Oriental teachings. Just how I met him I cannot recall, but he had personal acquaintance with many of the artists, both here and abroad; and so one rainy morning (dismal weather always seemed to accompany such ventures) my mother and I, escorted by Professor Cola, descended at the Parker House where the de Reszke brothers, Jean and Edouard, were stopping.

I remember that I played my own accompaniment and sang rather indifferently; the inspiring "mood" was not to be commanded. Mr. de Reszke listened politely, probably having been bored often



EMMA THURSBY

MY DREAM WORLD

by many such young aspirants, and gave me sensible advice that could apply to the average girl of intelligence and enthusiastic musical ambitions. I recall that I listened attentively and seriously, quite realizing that Mr. de Reszke could hardly glean other than the most superficial of impressions after hearing a stranger for half an hour, and then hardly at her best.

Upon his advice to go to New York and consult a teacher of whom he had heard excellent reports, my mother and I made plans for such an immediate change. My father listened in passive amazement, but acquiesced, as he always has, in the belief that whatever emotional tornado should overtake me, my mother's steadying influence would maintain the necessary equilibrium.

I shall never forget my excitement and curiosity upon our arrival in New York. The first thing I wanted to see was the Metropolitan Opera House. The great yellow building at the corner of Broadway and Thirty-ninth Street seemed to promise all kinds of wonderful possibilities and the fulfillment of my dreams. Little thrills of hope made my heart sing and my spirits soar as I looked at the billboards and whispered to myself: "Some day I *will*, I *must*, sing there. My name shall adorn those walls

and spell enchantment to the passing crowd." I walked on air, absorbed in the rosy future I was planning so confidently for myself.

The teacher who had been recommended to me for this visit to New York was dear old Louisa Cappiani, bless her! She who had been the teacher of many of the light-opera singers was greatly pleased at my singing, and wanted me to sign a three years' exclusive contract with her, but my mother decided that I was too young to have my future controlled in any way.

The arrival of hot weather drove us to the country; so with great regret I said good-bye to Cappiani, and we started for Greenacre, Maine, and it was there that I met Miss Emma Thursby. She occupied an enviable position in New York musical circles and was recognized as an excellent authority on voice. She was kind enough to say that she would be glad to have me study with her when she returned to New York, and so it happened that the following autumn found us back there, and I commenced my studies with her.

That winter of 1897-98 was full of excitement and thrills for me. In addition to my studies with Miss Thursby I went to the opera and theaters as often as I could afford it. And what a whirlwind of emo-



MELBA AS MARGUERITE

MY DREAM WORLD

tions it was! Melba in "Faust," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Lucia"; Calvé, the peerless "Carmen"; magnificent Lehmann (later to become my revered teacher and dear friend); the incomparable Jean de Reszke; handsome Pol Plançon; sprightly Campanari in the "Barber" — memories crowd in upon me! — not forgetting the versatile Bauermeister of all rôles. I rarely had a seat, but was one of the army of "standees," eager, enthusiastic, oblivious to all save the dream world these wonderful beings unfolded before me.

There was one upon whom I lavished all the ardor of my youthful, heroine-worshipping years — our own lovely Nordica, who became my ideal for beauty, accomplishment, and perseverance. Later I was to owe to her friendship and that of her husband, Zoltan Döme, the valuable and timely advice that diverted my path from a provincial theater in Italy to the magnificent Royal Opera in Berlin, and subsequent friendships that have proved so potent as well as so spectacular a feature in my career.

Among the plays which I saw that winter were "The Devil's Disciple," with Richard Mansfield in the star rôle; Julia Marlowe in "The Countess Valeska," and Ada Rehan in "The Country Girl" and as Lady Teazle in "The School for Scandal"

(how I did love her as Lady Teazle!) — all wonderful plays for a schoolgirl still in her teens.

It was at this time also that I first met Melba, who was in New York, and it was Miss Thursby who took me to sing for her. Much of my former nervousness had worn away. I had worked hard and was anxious for Melba's approval, and her impartial judgment as to the advisability of immediate study abroad. That day, too, the sun was radiant, I was in excellent humor, and, all in all, everything pointed toward a happy and favorable meeting.

I remember Melba's enthusiasm and generosity with gratitude, though I have not seen her these many years to tell her so. I sang unusually well, to my own accompaniment, and she was so genuinely interested as to propose that I should at once sing for her manager, C. A. Ellis, of Boston, of whose opera company, in association with Walter Damrosch, she was the scintillating luminary. So a few days later my mother and I joined her there at a hotel which was the temporary home of the song-birds.

Perhaps you can picture my delight. I floated in fairyland; to lunch and dine in the intoxicating proximity of these wonderful people; to watch them, like gods and goddesses, deign to descend to



MISS FARRAR AND HER MOTHER

the earth of ordinary mortals — it was like living in a dream.

The eventful day came when I finally sang for Mr. Ellis. It was in the Boston Theater, and Melba, Mr. Damrosch, and many others were present. I was a little anxious at the idea of singing in such a large, empty auditorium, and feared that my voice would not be heard to advantage in such an enormous place; yet, after the ordeal was over, Madame Melba took me in her arms and embraced me with enthusiasm and affection. She predicted such splendid things as even I scarcely dared hope. I was elated and grateful indeed at the general commendation, for Mr. Ellis offered me an engagement, and that night, at the hotel, Melba wished me to sign a contract of several years to place myself under her tutelage and appear later in opera subject to her advice.

My dreams were fast becoming realities. But, as usual, my mother's good sense dominated the situation. While thoroughly appreciative of the advantages that Melba could offer me in her generous impulse, my mother felt that I was far too young to restrict my actions and bind my future career in any manner. Besides, with all the excitement of the winter, my intense emotional nature

and the interest I had aroused in musical circles, she wisely thought it best for me to be withdrawn for a time from this all-too-stimulating atmosphere, which might later prove unwholesome and detrimental to serious study. In consequence, I was placed in the household and under the guidance of a dear friend, Mrs. Perkins, in Washington, District of Columbia, to continue other studies in addition to my singing, while I was impatiently waiting to "grow up."

In the spring of 1898, when the war spirit spread over the country like wildfire, my mother and I were taken to the White House one pleasant afternoon to call upon Mrs. McKinley. The President's wife received us in the Blue Room, while Mr. McKinley was occupied in his private office with engrossing business connected with the war. Suddenly the official news came of Dewey's great victory at Manila. The President, with the official dispatches in his hand, entered the room where his devoted wife was surrounded by a sympathetic group of friends. In turn we were each presented to Mr. McKinley, and then, thrilled by the announcement of the victory, Mrs. McKinley asked me to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner."

There was a piano in the room, for Mrs. McKin-

MY DREAM WORLD

ley was intensely devoted to music. I played my own accompaniment, and, stirred by the glorious news and inspired by the presence of the President and his wife and the compliment of being asked to sing the national anthem in the White House, I sang with all the ardor and intensity of which my nature was capable. I have sung "The Star-Span-gled Banner" many times since, but only once under such inspiring circumstances, when, at that dramatic moment after the tragedy of the Lusitania, I called upon the crowded house at the Metropolitan Opera (a benefit performance of "Carmen") to join me in our national hymn. Garbed in Columbia's robes, with two Red Cross nurses at my side, the tableau awoke thunderous applause and the great house joined in the singing with a will!

CHAPTER V

I REFUSE TO SING AT THE METROPOLITAN

THROUGH Miss Thursby I met Dr. Holbrook Curtis, the eminent New York throat specialist, and became his patient; his unfailing, kindly interest and loyal friendship did much for me. One of the amusing events of that early spring of 1898 was a society puppet show which Dr. Curtis staged in New York. There were tableaux and songs and recitations, all for charity, and then came the puppet show itself, in which I appeared as Calvé in a "Carmen" costume.

Imagine a long stretch of painted canvas across the stage, with the costumes painted grotesquely beneath openings through which the performers' heads appeared. Dr. Curtis himself assumed the rôle of Maurice Grau, director of the Metropolitan, and his make-up was splendid; various other amateurs impersonated Melba, Jean de Reszke, and other stars. The idea of the skit was to show the trouble Mr. Grau had in managing his company of stars. There was much amusing dialogue, and I remember my complaint, as Calvé, was that I was



DR. HOLBROOK CURTIS

I REFUSE TO SING

asked to sing for nothing at all-too-many benefits.

In Dr. Curtis's office I soon afterward met Mrs. Grau, wife of the famous director, and she insisted that I should sing for her husband. It was proposed to stage a big special performance of "Mignon" at the Metropolitan, with Melba as "Philine," and a star cast, for the benefit of the families of the victims of the Maine disaster, and Mrs. Grau thought that should I please her husband he might consider the occasion a propitious one to introduce me in grand opera, as the rôle of "Mignon" was admirably suited to my youth and vocal abilities. I had studied "stage deportment" with Victor Capoul, and knew the opera backward and forward in both French and Italian.

I own I was greatly tempted, and eager to make so auspicious a beginning. Such an offer to a sixteen-year-old girl, I think, would be calculated to twist any young woman's head awry. Fortunately, upon reflection, good sense intervened and saved me from what might have been a very unwise step. Granted that I made a successful appearance, at best it could be but the sensation of a few hours; and I had no mind to be a singing Cinderella for one night. When my triumph should come, if it

ever did, it must be the beginning of a well-defined career, and I was far too young and ignorant to tread this difficult and dazzling path so soon.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Grau made an appointment for me to sing for her husband — privately, as I thought. But when I appeared on the stage of the Metropolitan, I found him surrounded by a great many people, members of the Metropolitan Company, business associates and advisers, and others. What my emotions were when I passed in through the stage door I cannot describe. Curiously enough, this time the empty house did not intimidate, but inspired me. Perhaps I felt the encouraging shadows of the great ones hovering about me; at any rate, I sang as I believe I had never sung before. To every one's amazement I dismissed the accompanist whose laborious efforts were more of a hindrance than an aid to my "audition," and, seating myself at the piano, I continued singing to my own accompaniment, as was invariably my habit.

Mr. Grau was exceedingly pleased with the promise I showed and especially predicted a brilliant future in operatic singing; but he seconded my mother's sensibly planned course for me to study more quietly, less in public view, and wait till a few years of hard work and experience had passed



MAURICE GRAU

I REFUSE TO SING

over my ambitious little head. As a kind afterthought he added, no doubt to soften the sting of my disappointment: "Would you like to sing in one of our Sunday night concerts?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Grau," I replied. (No tame concert appearances after my imagination had been dazzled by a possible *début* in opera!)

"But it might be valuable to you to have your name on the billboards of the Metropolitan Opera House," he urged good-naturedly.

"You will see it there some day," I replied with firm conviction.

He laughed, and certainly had no more reason to take me more seriously than dozens of other young "hopefuls" who dreamed of some day storming the Metropolitan doors.

Quite without my knowledge or consent, various reports of this and other incidents in regard to my singing reached the newspapers, and I experienced a distinct shock when I read in the New York "Herald" the following amusing yet caustic criticism: —

If half of what Miss Geraldine Farrar's enthusiastic friends say of her vocal and dramatic talents is true, then this sixteen-year-old girl from Boston is the dramatic soprano for whom we have all been waiting these many years. With all due respect to the young

lady, a lot of rubbish has been circulated as to her marvelous, not to say miraculous, vocal gifts and accomplishments, and she cannot do better than include, in the nightly prayers which all good girls say, an earnest invocation to Heaven to preserve her from her friends, that she may be saved from the results of overpraise.

That Miss Farrar has a wonderful gift of song has been attested by so many discreet judges that it is doubtless true. But when alleged admirers of the young singer tack on all sorts of trimmings, such as that Madame Melba wept with joy upon hearing her, and that Madame Nordica said, "This is the voice of which I have dreamed," and that Miss Emma Thursby refused to be comforted until Miss Farrar consented to come and live with her, it is about time to add, "and then she woke up."

Why not confine the stories to simple facts; that she has a remarkable voice, almost phenomenal in one of her age, which is true; that her concert successes have been extraordinary; and that, if youthful evidences hold good, she will some day assume an enviable position in grand opera? Is n't that quite enough praise without subjecting Melba to tears, disturbing Nordica's dreams, or suggesting the impossibility of comforting Miss Thursby? Miss Farrar is a handsome, gifted, and very earnest young girl, and if she has common sense as well as native talent, she will say that little nightly prayer, turn a deaf ear to the adulation of foolish friends, and attend strictly to practicing her scales. Then some day, perhaps very soon, this Boston girl will be electrifying metropoli-

I REFUSE TO SING

tan audiences as Mlle. Farrarini, the latest operatic comet.

I was almost in tears when I read this article, tempered with kindness as it was, for the stories about Melba and Nordica had been the results of the feverish imagination of newspaper reporters who had exaggerated the truth. But the musical critic of the "Herald," who penned this prophetic and caustic comment, really did me a great service — and I thank him — for from that moment I determined upon a policy of seclusion and self-effacement; my pursuit for glory should be conducted along the lines of modesty and restraint.

Alas for the miscarriage of such good intentions! 'Seclusion and self-effacement have hardly been synonymous with my euphonious name!

CHAPTER VI

PARIS

THE time was now rapidly approaching which was to be the turning point of my career — a trip to Europe. Up to this time I had accomplished practically all that I could hope for in America. I had studied under the best teachers in Boston and in New York. I knew much of the grand opera repertoire. I had sung in concerts and recitals. I had just turned seventeen. The necessary training for a grand-opera career was then impossible in America, and tradition decreed that foreign singers with a foreign reputation should be engaged for grand opera's holy of holies, the shining exception being our own American Nordica, then in her prime. I decided that Paris must be the next stepping-stone; but how?

To study in Paris meant a great deal of money, and my father's business in Melrose, while prosperous enough for our home needs, could not meet the strain of an expensive stay abroad. It was an understood thing that when I did go, my father and mother should accompany me. The financial



MANON



AMICA



NEDDA



ELIZABETH



MIMI

PARIS

problem, however, seemed almost an insurmountable one.

But once more the element of luck — or Fate — intervened just at the most critical moment. At one of the receptions given by Miss Thursby, at her home in Gramercy Park, I had met a Mrs. Kimball, of Boston. She heard me sing, and was interested in the story of my ambition to study abroad. I told her, however, that although my father was seriously considering selling his business in Melrose, we feared the proceeds would be insufficient for the course of study that seemed necessary.

“I have a friend in Boston,” said Mrs. Kimball, “who is interested in music and perhaps she would arrange something if you sang for her. Will you come to Boston and meet her?”

Would I? The prospect was too alluring. A very few days afterward I had returned to Boston with my mother in response to a letter making an appointment for me to meet Mrs. Bertram Webb.

Mrs. Webb was the widow of a former resident of Salem. She was then stopping at her beautiful home in Boston, and I sang for her. I was fortunate enough to enlist her immediate sympathy and interest, and, as I was a minor, the necessary business formalities were concluded by my parents in

my behalf. My father sold his store in Melrose and realized a sum sufficient to reduce materially the amount of the first loan we had from Mrs. Webb. This sum, according to the terms of a written contract drawn up by Mrs. Webb's lawyer and duly signed by my father and mother as my legal guardians, was to be an indefinite amount, advanced as required, and to be repaid at an indefinite date when my voice should be a source of steady income. The only actual security given was that my life was insured in Mrs. Webb's favor, so that in case of my death she would be fully compensated for the risk and loss she might sustain.

I am happy and proud to state that, although Mrs. Webb generously advanced, all told, a sum approximating thirty thousand dollars during the first few years of my studies in Europe, every dollar of it was repaid within two years after my return to America.

Upon my mother's capable shoulders fell the difficult and not always thankful task of financing and planning for our adventurous expeditions. Thus completely shielded from money worries and material vexations, I abandoned myself to the glory of dreams. I was ready to slave in passionate devotion and enthusiasm to further the career that

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meant my life — to conquer in song. And so unafraid, and happy with the heart of youth, I set forth to the Old World of my dreams and hopes!

We sailed from Boston late in September, 1899, on the old Leyland liner *Armenian*. She was a cattle boat; the passengers were merely incidental, the beef was vital. It rained the day we sailed, and it rained the day we arrived at Liverpool. London, where I spent a brief ten days, remains only a vague memory of fog and depression. I was happy to leave it behind and continue toward the wonder city of my dreams — Paris.

Who can ever forget the first intoxicating impression of this queen of cities? The channel trip, the bustle of arrival at Boulogne, the fussy little foreign train tugging us unwillingly over the lovely meadows — all I retain of that is a blur. But it seems like yesterday that the spruce little conductor poked his merry face into the compartment and gurgled joyfully: “Par-ee!” Every nerve in my body tingles now when I recall the excitement of it all.

We drove first to a small family hotel which had been recommended by some of our fellow passengers on the *Armenian*. I at once took charge of the party, and, in a halting harangue in French, told

the landlady what rooms we wanted and how much we wished to pay.

“If you will only tell me in English,” said the landlady helplessly, speaking my native tongue perfectly, “I can understand you better.”

After this crushing rebuke to my French, I let my mother arrange all details.

We remained but a few days here — only until we could install ourselves in an apartment in the Latin Quarter, very near the lovely gardens of the Luxembourg and close to the omnibus stations. It cost then three sous to ride on top of a bus — “*l’impérial*,” as it is called — and six sous to ride inside. By constant patronage of *l’impérial* during pleasant weather, it was possible to lay aside enough for a drive Sunday in the Bois. In those days there was no taximeter system to disconcert, and if one found an amiable *côcher* (and there have been many, bless them!), it was quite within the reach of the modest purse of a grand-opera aspirant thus to join the gay throng of smart Parisian turnouts.

The first thing of importance was to search for a good teacher. While I had letters to various well-known instructors I never used them, preferring to be judged on my merits. At last one day I called upon Trabadello, the Spaniard who had



à Mademoiselle Géraldine Farra
Souvenir de l' Ancêtre
Monte-Carlo 1906

G. Saint-James

numbered among his pupils Sybil Sanderson and Emma Eames. I studied with Trabadello from October, 1899, until the spring of 1900; and, to dispose of unauthorized assertions, I may add that Trabadello is the only vocal teacher I had in Paris.

I also had a course of *mise-en-scène*, or preparation for the stage, with an excellent teacher, Madame Martini, an artist of repute and an excellent instructor in the traditional sense of the word. For instance, Madame would say: "After ten bars, lift the right hand; two more, then point it at the villain; walk slowly toward the hero; raise your eyes at the twentieth bar toward heaven; and conclude your aria with a sweeping gesture of denial, sinking gently to the floor."

Alas, my progress was not brilliant along such lines. I could not study grimaces in the mirror; I could not walk hours following a silly chalk line, and I refused to repeat one gesture a hundred times at the same phrase or bar of music. Discussion and argument were very frequent — also tears. Nevertheless, I did learn much from so well-grounded a teacher, and often have occasion to think pleasantly of her first lessons with my rather difficult nature.

In the spring I heard that Nordica was in Paris with her husband, Mr. Zoltan Döme. I was in a

fever of anxiety to see her, and have her hear me sing since studying abroad. But how could I find her? By chance I heard that she drove daily in the Bois; so I persuaded a friend who had a very elegant equipage to invite me of an afternoon to drive, so that by some happy chance I might speak to Nordica.

Around my neck I wore a talisman which I had worn for many years — a little silver locket for which I had paid two dollars in Melrose when I was a schoolgirl. At that time my cash allowance for pin money was twenty-five cents a week. One day I saw this locket in a jewelry store window. I said nothing, but saved enough to buy the simple trinket, which I wore as a talisman, with Nordica's picture in it. Naturally, therefore, I wore this in the hope that it would bring me luck in my search for her, and soon to my joy I saw the famous singer approaching in her open carriage, with Mr. Döme. Of course, she did not recognize me, but as she drove by I stood up and threw the precious locket into her lap to attract her attention.

Mr. Döme picked it up, and to Nordica's amazement she recognized her own picture. While her carriage turned around, I waited on the path, and soon my idol was actually allowing me to talk with

PARIS

her and renewing once more the interest she had shown while I was in New York.

She invited me to come and sing for her in her beautiful home in the Bois, and, when we parted, she handed back my precious talisman. "Don't throw it away again," she said with a smile.

"But it has brought me such good luck!" I replied happily.

Next day, and many times thereafter, I visited Madame Nordica, and both she and Mr. Döme were genuinely interested in my vocal welfare. The question of my future was discussed, and, contrary to the idea I had of going to Italy and following the usual procedure of enlisting in a provincial theater there for experience, Mr. Döme suggested my studying with a Russian-Italian, Graziani, in Berlin, whose book upon vocal study he had recently received and found unusual and beneficial.

I was not at all keen upon abandoning Italy for Germany, but Madame Nordica's advice was paramount, and, armed with some nice letters from her to various friends whom she had learned to know during her triumphs in Bayreuth, we made plans to break up our Paris home.

CHAPTER VII

GERMANY: THE TURNING-POINT

I SPENT that summer of 1900 uneventfully in Brittany, and in the early autumn off we started for Berlin.

This was another turning-point in my career. The German capital was to further as dazzling a future as my heart could have dreamed — and with it were to come Romance, Fame and Wealth under the shadow of the Prussian eagle's wing.

One of my letters from Nordica was to Frau von Rath, the charming wife of Herr Adolph von Rath, the leading banker of Berlin. Frau von Rath maintained one of the most beautiful homes in the German capital, and her social functions were attended by leading dignitaries and officials of the Court. It was no small honor, therefore, to have the *entrée* to her receptions and to have her take an interest in the little American girl who had come to Berlin to study music.

Graziani proved to be a protégé of Frau von Rath, and through her I met this strange and wonderfully gifted man, whose early death cut short a



"I SPENT THE SUMMER IN BRITANY"

brilliant career. He proved a remarkable teacher, and I profited by his admirable instruction throughout that first winter in Berlin.

One day, in the spring of 1901, Frau von Rath asked me if I could sing in German.

"No, unfortunately only in French and Italian," I replied. "I came to Berlin to study, but I never expect to sing in opera here."

"Would you like to sing for the Intendant of the Royal Opera?" she asked.

The Intendant of the Royal Opera in Berlin is the personal representative of the Kaiser. He has the private ear of the sovereign, and is supposed to carry out his wishes in the conduct of the Royal Opera. To please him, therefore, would be a very great and unusual triumph.

Would I like to sing for him? It is easy to imagine my reply.

I made my preparations accordingly. With the care which I have always bestowed upon my costumes, I ordered an elaborate blue *crêpe-de-Chine* evening gown, to be worn with pearls and diamonds. I carefully studied anew the waltz song from "Juliet," the aria from "Traviata," and the bird song from "Pagliacci." Suddenly, to my consternation, Frau von Rath notified me that the

audience, which was to be in her ballroom, would have to be held in the afternoon instead of the evening, as some occasion at the Palace necessitated the presence of the Intendant there at night.

I was desolate; but I agreed to sing, first begging Frau von Rath to draw the heavy curtains and turn on all the lights, as though for an evening function, so that I could wear my evening gown with the pearls and the diamonds. I can remember now the suppressed murmurs of "The crazy American!" when I appeared, but I obtained the compliment of immediate attention and created the effect I wished.

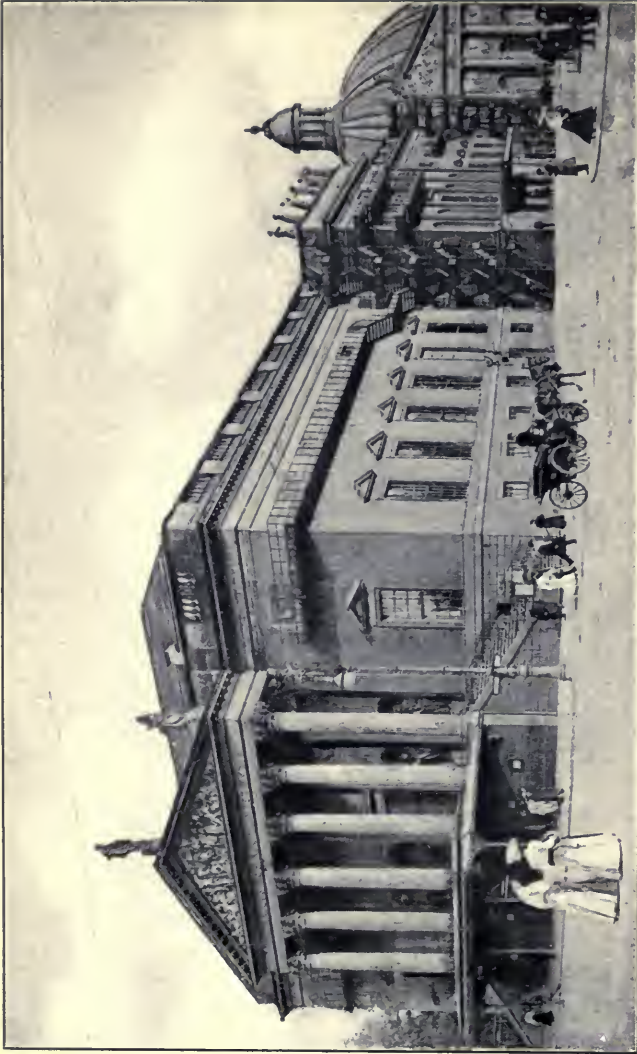
The Intendant of the Royal Opera at that time was Count von Hochberg, a charming, courteous gentleman, who was to show me many favors afterward. He heard me through, attended by a score of Frau von Rath's friends, and then asked me gravely if I had ever sung with an orchestra. I answered truthfully: "No."

"Would you like to sing with the orchestra of the Royal Opera?" he inquired.

"I should be delighted," was my prompt response.

"Do you sing in German?"

"I never have — yet," I replied.



THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, BERLIN

“Could you learn to sing in German in ten days?” he urged.

“I can learn something. What shall it be?”

“Will you study ‘Elsa’s Dream’?”

“Yes —”

“Then in ten days, at the Royal Opera, I will hear you again.” He bowed and took his departure.

Feverishly I began to study German, aided by my dear friend and teacher, Fräulein Wilcke, to whose guidance these many years I owe as excellent a German diction as any foreign or native artist possesses.

When I stepped upon the stage of the great empty Königliches Opernhaus and looked down into the Director’s seat, whom should I see but Dr. Karl Muck, now the Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. That was the beginning of a warm friendship which has endured to this day, for Dr. Muck was at all times kind and sympathetic during those early days in Berlin.

I sang the waltz from “Romeo and Juliet,” in French, the bird song from “Pagliacci,” in Italian, and “Elsa’s Dream,” in German. I finished in absolute silence, as Count von Hochberg was almost alone in the darkened auditorium. Soon he came back to me and said: —

“In my office I have a contract with you for three years. Do you care to sign it?”

“But I had no idea of singing in Berlin,” I protested. “I want to sing Italian.”

“If I let you sing here in Italian, will you sign it?”

“Here — in Berlin — sing in Italian?” I gasped.

“It will be a novelty,” replied Count von Hochberg. “But the people here want one. You are very much of a novelty, quite different from the stout ladies who waddle about protesting their operatic fate to spectators who find it difficult to believe in their cruel lot and youthful innocence. In you I have discovered a happy combination of voice, figure, personality, and — eyes.” He was something of a cavalier, that nice Count von Hochberg, as you will see. “To secure you for my patrons I will let you sing in Italian.”

What could I say? It was the greatest compliment yet paid me. I glanced around the Opernhaus, hesitating. Then — I consented. The legal contract for three years was signed by my mother and father for me, as I was still under age. It was agreed that I was to sing “Faust,” “Traviata,” and “Pagliacci,” three rôles, in Italian, but I was not to be required to sing in German until I should perfect myself in the language.



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GERMANY: THE TURNING-POINT

Then ensued a spring and summer of great preparations, for my contract did not begin until the following autumn. We went to Lake Constance, Switzerland, to study with Graziani. I was as thin as a young girl could well afford to be, yet I worked to the full limit of my strength, for I realized that my wonderful opportunity had at last arrived. I literally floated on air that summer.

Then, too, I had planned a surprise that would especially please the women: the matter of dress. There lives in Paris an artist to her finger-tips in the matter of creating stage frocks, and that wonderful woman has made every costume from head to feet that I have ever put on in the theater. She had already "combined me" such lovely things as made my heart thrill to appear in them!

The night of October 15, 1901, was my *début* at the Royal Opera, Berlin. There was no advance notice, no presswork. The bill bore the usual three asterisks in this wise, as I was a "guest" and not a member of the company:—

MARGUERITE * *

At the bottom of the programme, in small type, the three asterisks were repeated, and the line:—

* * MISS GERALDINE FARRAR AUS NEW YORK

GERALDINE FARRAR

In the simplest of dainty blue *crêpe-de-Chine* frocks, with a lace bonnet over blond curls, "Marguerite" Farrar tripped engagingly down to the footlights with a shy glance of inquiry to the ardent "Faust" who commenced so successful a wooing with "May I give you my arm?" — and everybody felt at that moment how regretful "Marguerite" Farrar was, that the exigencies of the opera did not permit a courteous acceptance of so charming a support to her gateway.

I remember that Dr. Muck conducted divinely; that I was very happy and self-possessed, and my mother said I looked like an angel. I had at last made my *début*.

The following morning the criticisms were so splendid that I told my mother I would never get any more to equal them — and I did not for a long time. Instantly after my success the hammers came out. The idea of letting an American girl sing in Italian in the sacred Royal Opera House — it was preposterous! Count von Hochberg was mildly censured by the press for permitting such proceedings. Nevertheless, the fact remained that I had scored a success on my *début*; the audience had received favorably a "Marguerite" who was neither fat nor forty, and the newspaper critics had



"MY THIRD SEASON OPENED IN TRAVIATA"

GERMANY: THE TURNING-POINT

united in giving me a most enthusiastic verdict of approval.

Naturally after such a success I expected to be called upon again very soon, but many weeks passed and still my name was not included in the published casts given out from week to week. Finally I determined to find out the reason for this neglect, so I called on Count von Hochberg in his private office at the opera.

“Good-evening, Your Excellency,” I remarked pleasantly. “I have just looked over the billboards and I don’t see my name included in next week’s repertoire.”

There was a moment of embarrassment, then I continued:—

“I merely wondered why I don’t sing,” adding, “Of course, if Berlin does n’t want me I should like to know it.”

Count von Hochberg murmured something about giving me an answer the next day, but I insisted I must know that night.

“Very well, then, Fräulein,” replied Count von Hochberg positively. “Within ten days you will sing here.”

Fate was ever watchful over me, and soon I was notified that “Traviata” was to be revived for me.

GERALDINE FARRAR

What fun I had in composing the adorable rôle of Camille. And then, too, I was all afire with memories of the great Sarah as Marguerite Gauthier. I had *heard* famous prima donnas in "Traviata," but few, other than the emotional Bellincioni, had ever successfully *acted* the operatic heroine. I was allowed to eliminate much of the stilted traditional settings, and, with modern scenery and sumptuous dressing, I played this rôle so that it immediately became one of my most popular successes. In the romantic and handsome Franz Naval I had an inspiring partner. Our artistic connection was to endure many years, and we have left behind us, I can truthfully say, very beautiful memories in the hearts of our loyal German public. I particularly recall our joint successes in "Romeo," "Mignon," "Manon," "Faust," "The Black Domino," and such poetic operas.

By this time rumors of the "crazy American" had spread over Berlin, together with reports that she was young, slender and, some said, beautiful. And then there were — eyes! The result was a notable increase in attendance of smart young officers and Court society. The Intendant arranged matters so that I sang quite frequently during the rest of my first season.

CHAPTER VIII

IMPERIAL ENCOURAGEMENT

IT was not until my second season at the Royal Opera that I saw or met the Kaiser. The Court had been in half-mourning during my first season, and members of the royal family had not visited the opera house. In January, 1903, the middle of my second season, a Hofmarshal from the Palace presented himself at our apartment and officially "commanded" my presence at the Palace that night. I was notified that I must wear the prescribed Court dress, either lavender or black, with gloves and no jewelry.

The Hofmarshal, having delivered his message, was about to depart when I called him back.

"I am very sorry," I said meekly, "but I never wear black and I never wear lavender. Neither color is becoming to me."

"But it is the custom of the Court —" he began.

"It is my custom," I replied firmly, "to wear what I choose when I sing, and according to my mood; and I choose to wear white. Furthermore I never wear gloves while singing."

GERALDINE FARRAR

The Hofmarshal was greatly disturbed. He was afraid it would be impossible for me to be received at the Palace unless I conformed to the usual requirements. However, he would see; I would be notified. And later that afternoon came the message that "Miss Farrar could wear whatever she desired, but she must come." I wore white.

My mother and I drove to the Palace together; we were formally received by various flunkies and under-attachés, and finally escorted up the magnificent staircase to the reception room just off the White Hall, where the Kaiser and the Kaiserin were with the Diplomatic Corps after dinner.

At the proper moment I was announced. After I had sung, and had responded to an encore, the Kaiser arose from his place and congratulated me. He then turned and shook hands with my mother, after which we were led to the Kaiserin and formally presented to her. In turn we were made acquainted with the various notables present.

That meeting was the forerunner of many pleasant social gatherings at the Palace, when mother and I were honored guests. His Majesty was exceedingly kind to us, and seemed to like to hear me sing. It was on the occasion of one of these visits to the Palace that I met the Crown Prince for the



MISS FARRAR AT FRAU VON RATH'S

first time. He had been away at school at Bonn, and came in one evening with several of his brothers. I was naturally interested in the personality of the heir to the throne, and spoke to him at some length. I liked him at once, and found him very gay and sympathetic.

One night at the opera he sat in the royal box, and between the acts, so I was told, wished to come behind the scenes to speak to me. The rule against visitors is rigidly enforced at the Royal Opera, and His Highness was so informed. He thereupon returned to the royal box. After the performance he again made an effort to call behind the scenes, but was not permitted. However, later that same evening, he sent me a hastily scribbled message written upon a card showing the Palace gardens, reading:

You played very well to-night. — WILHELM.

I still have the card.

About this time I first met Madame Lilli Lehmann, to whose far-reaching influence I attribute much of the success which has come to me. I felt the need of the careful instruction of a master. Of course, the idol of music-loving Germany was then, as now, Lilli Lehmann. I wrote to her, asking if I could sing for her with the idea of becoming her

pupil. There was no answer. Lilli, with her extensive correspondence and active life, was probably too busy to consider such a matter as a new pupil. Then my mother wrote. In reply came a very concise and businesslike communication. Yes, Lilli had received the letter from me, but, owing to my eccentric handwriting, had been unable to decipher it. My mother's penmanship was clearer, and so Lilli wrote that she would be willing to hear me sing, without promising to accept me as her pupil, however.

An appointment was made for us to call at half-past nine o'clock in the morning at her home in Grunewald, half an hour's ride from Berlin, and, though the day was cold and wintry, my mother and I were there promptly on time.

Beautiful Lilli Lehmann — stately and serene as a queen; with a wonderful personality which seemed naturally to dominate every presence in the room; past the meridian of life yet with an unbroken record of world achievement behind her; greatest living exponent of Mozart, of Brahms, of Liszt, of Wagner — what more can I say of her than that I approached her with the deference and respect which were her due? I was an eager and humble beginner; she of another generation. My desire

To my dearest child
Gerardine Farrar
with all my love
Lilli Lehmann.



"BEAUTIFUL LILLI LEHMANN, STATELY AND SERENE"

'IMPERIAL ENCOURAGEMENT

to secure her as my instructor seemed almost presumptuous; yet, after hearing me sing, Lilli kindly consented to take me, and I am happy and proud to state that I have been her pupil at all times since that first meeting.

Lilli insisted that I should essay one Wagnerian rôle. Under her direction I studied Elizabeth in "Tannhäuser," and the night I made my first appearance in this rôle in Berlin was a memorable occasion for both of us. The entire royal family was present, and Lilli sat in a loge with my mother. I should explain that Lilli, who had been a notable member of the Royal Opera for many years prior to her American successes, had had differences with the direction of the Royal Opera during the years of her tremendous popularity in America, and had followed her own sweet will by remaining here several seasons without receiving the necessary permission from the Intendant to do so.

As a result, upon her return to Germany she had not been summoned to resume her rôles at the Royal Opera. This condition of affairs, I believe, had existed for some time, Lilli, with the pride and independence of a great artist, scorning to make the first advances leading to her return.

On the night of my appearance as Elizabeth,

after I had scored a really great success, the Kaiser summoned me to the royal box to congratulate me. He knew that I had studied the rôle under Lilli's direction. He therefore summoned Lilli as well, complimented her upon her pupil's achievement and then and there requested her to sing as guest artist at the Royal Opera, which she did a few weeks later.

It was a great and happy night for me, and I believe for Lilli also.

Dimly connected with this period I remember various young gentlemen showing me attentions. There was a baron who mysteriously sent gifts concealed in flowers, with very charming poems written about the difficult rôles I was playing. It was some time before I found out who he was and could return his trinkets, with the request that he cease sending presents to me. However, he continued to write me pathetic letters for several years afterward. But I was thrilled and enthusiastic over my career, and had no serious thoughts for love-making or matrimony. I wished to devote all my time and energy to my work.

But no artist can hope to escape permanently the evil tongue and jealousy of those who envy her the success she has won. Thus it happened that



THE CROWN PRINCE OF GERMANY

Henry J. 1894.



IMPERIAL ENCOURAGEMENT

the sudden interest in grand opera manifested by the Crown Prince was made the baseless pretext of a wild rumor of the romantic attachment of the youthful heir for a certain American prima donna singing at the Royal Opera. As I happened to be the only prima donna to conform to the description, I was the unconscious victim of many canards.

The truth of the matter is that the Crown Prince, just out of college, fond of music at all times, was enjoying his first season of opera. That I happened to be the only young prima donna at the opera house may be one reason why he attended every time I sang, and ignored other performances. At any rate, it annoyed the other singers greatly, but it created no end of interest in my performances and in no way disturbed my equanimity. I felt it was all part of the career.

I was young, triumphant, happy in my singing, and making rapid strides toward an international reputation, and at the back of my brain was written, with determination, the ultimate goal: the Metropolitan Opera House at New York. So I pursued my studies with zest and unabated enthusiasm.

Soon afterward I realized from vague storm-clouds and distant mutterings that trouble was brewing. Certain minor officials of the Royal

Opera put their heads together with certain singers; rumors that too much attention was paid to the American singer by royalty were printed in one of the papers; whereupon my father (remember he was once a ball-player and is still a great athlete) retaliated by a physical reminder to one editor that such slanders are not circulated with impunity about young American women. The press caught the romance of the situation, and highly colored stories were the result.

The climax of a series of petty annoyances came one night when my mother was denied permission to accompany me behind the scenes, as she had been doing at every performance for almost two years.

In my anger at these sensational reports, and at the sudden discourtesy to my mother at the opera house, I determined to write to the Kaiser a personal letter of explanation. This letter was entrusted to my devoted friend, Herr von Rath, to be delivered by him personally to the Hofmarshal, who would see that it reached the Kaiser.

Those well-wishers who had been freely predicting that I would soon be requested to resign and "go over the border" because of the rumors regarding the Crown Prince (one newspaper even



THE CROWN PRINCESS OF GERMANY

Lieke 47.

IMPERIAL ENCOURAGEMENT

asserted that he wished to relinquish his right to the succession to the throne in order to marry the American singer!) were soon thrown into consternation when one of the royal carriages stopped in front of my door, to bring official notification from the Kaiser that he had ordered restored to my mother the privilege of accompanying me at any time behind the scenes at the Royal Opera.

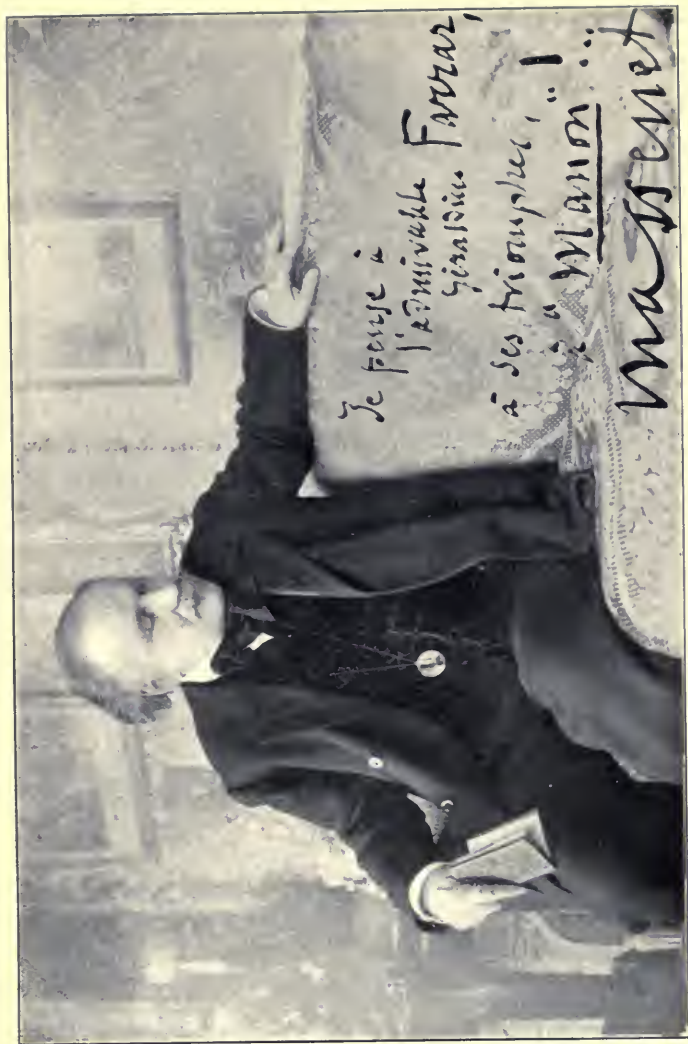
The envious tongues stopped wagging. Official Berlin society took its cue. It was understood that I was *not* to leave Germany.

I determined that since Berlin had been the city first to take me to its heart, Berlin should be my parent house. From there I might try to reach out for other worlds to conquer, but Berlin should be my base for an international career. And so firmly did I adhere to this decision that, when my first contract with the Royal Opera expired, I renewed it again and again, with special permission from His Majesty for my European and subsequent American arrangements.

CHAPTER IX

ON TOUR: MONTE CARLO AND STOCKHOLM

IN discussing the plans for my third season at the Berlin Opera, it had been decided that I should create Massenet's "Manon." I determined to meet Massenet, if possible, in order to get all possible suggestions for the rôle. This was accomplished through the Baroness de Hegermann-Lindencrone, formerly Lillie Greenough, of Boston, who was the wife of the Danish Ambassador to Berlin. I went to Paris, and on May 26, 1903, I called on the composer at his suburban home near the French capital, where I found him in tears. It was the day after the funeral of Sybil Sanderson, the American singer who had won such success abroad, and Massenet wept at the loss of such a delightful artist and friend, who had created so many of his rôles. Several days later, when he was more composed, I saw him again. He was kind and sympathetic, and I studied with him with enthusiasm. He was most interested in the Berlin production, and quite amused at the German translation of the French text which Lilli and I had revised.



"I STUDIED WITH HIM WITH ENTHUSIASM"

MONTE CARLO AND STOCKHOLM

During this visit to Paris it was arranged that I should sing for Gailhard, the Director of the Paris Opera, and at this audience were three other notable directors who were destined to figure in my career. There was Maurice Grau, already relinquishing the reins of management in New York, but still hoping, he said, to take me back to America as an operatic star in the near future; there was Heinrich Conried, his successor, whom I then met for the first time; and there was Raoul Gunsberg, the Director of the Opera at Monte Carlo. Gailhard offered me a flattering engagement at the Paris Opera, but I explained that I was under contract for at least one more year in Berlin. Gunsberg was very enthusiastic in his praise; Conried was quiet and formal. If I made any impression on him, he gave no indication of it.

My third season in Berlin opened November 14, 1905, in "Traviata," when I had my usual charming partner in Franz Naval. I now sang all of my rôles in German save "Traviata," and, in deference to me, all the company sang "Traviata" in Italian, which I thought a pretty compliment.

The Berlin *première* of "Manon" took place on December 1, 1903, and was a wild riot of enthusiasm, but my best reward was a large photo of Lilli

with half a yard of dedication written underneath. By this time — the middle of my third season in Berlin — I had become quite well known in certain operatic circles; I had sung in Paris for four big directors; I had won the real affection and regard of the opera-goers of Berlin; I was now *Die Farrar aus Berlin*, and the Berlin public owned me.

Herr Gunsberg, at Monte Carlo, always on the lookout for novelty, decided he must have the American prima donna who was attracting so much attention in Berlin. One morning in midwinter I received this characteristic telegram from him:—

Offer you début *Bohème* or *Pagliacci*. If you accept this telegram serves as contract. Four thousand francs a night.

Eight hundred dollars a night! It was indeed a fine offer. I replied at once:—

Bohème. When shall I come?

I had visions already of international triumphs. Monte Carlo, the show-place of the world! From there it was only a step to the leading capitals of Europe. Yet I had no wish to leave my beloved Berlin permanently. Therefore, in renewing my contract with the Intendant of the Berlin Opera (a contract, by the way, which is still in force), it was



Atta Signorina Geraldina Ferrari
Con devota amicizia e sincera ammirazione
Guglielmo Marconi
6 Maggio 1912

stipulated that I was to sing so many performances each season in Berlin unless excused by special arrangement; that I should have leave of absence whenever requested under certain conditions; but that at all times I should be subject to the rules and regulations of the Royal Opera in Berlin.

I remember discussing the subject with His Majesty on one occasion when we were entertained at the Palace prior to my departure. I had asked (and received) permission for rather an unusual amount of leave of absence, and the Intendant, who usually conveyed such a request to His Majesty on my behalf, said this time he really did not have the courage to ask again so soon.

“Very well,” said I laughingly, “I will ask him myself, to spare you the embarrassment.”

“But why should you wish to leave Berlin?” inquired the Kaiser. “We are glad to have you with us; we admire you; we love you. What more can you gain elsewhere?”

“Pardon me, Your Majesty,” I replied gayly. “Already I have become accustomed as a spoiled prima donna of luxurious habits to ride in automobiles, and I don’t wish to have to walk when I am an old lady and when this” (touching my throat significantly) “has ceased to interest the public.

In the words of the great Napoleon, Your Majesty, 'Beyond the Alps lies Italy.' Yes, and there is a white château by the sea where the golden shower is just waiting to be coaxed into my pockets. May I not then go and sing a little among the palms and the flowers?"

I went.

Ah, that first rehearsal of "Bohème" in Monte Carlo, in March, 1904! I was introduced for the first time to a tenor of whom I had never heard before. He was somewhat stout, not over-tall, but with a wonderful voice and a winning smile. His name was Enrico Caruso. It was his début in Monte Carlo. He had sung in Milan, in South America, and the preceding winter in New York. But he had not then attained even a small part of his present great fame.

At this first rehearsal in Monte Carlo an interested listener was Jean de Reszke, who was kind enough to say that he remembered me as the little Boston girl who had sung for him some years previously, and that he was delighted to see that I was meeting with the success he had predicted.

My Monte Carlo début occurred on the night of March 10, 1904. Although I had rehearsed with



ENRICO CARUSO

MONTE CARLO AND STOCKHOLM

Caruso, the tenor had never used his voice fully at the rehearsals, and on the night of the actual performance, when I heard those rich and glorious tones rise above the orchestra, I was literally stricken dumb with amazement and admiration. I forgot that I, too, was making a *début*, that I was on the stage of the Opera House, until the conductor, Vigna, rapped sharply with his baton to bring me back to my senses. Then I put forth every ounce of strength to match if possible that marvelous voice singing opposite to me. I copy the following extract *verbatim* from my diary of that night:—

Tremendous reception on my *début*. After the third act, and in full view of the audience, Caruso lifted me bodily and carried me to my dressing-room in the general wave of enthusiasm.

The Monte Carlo engagement was limited, and on March 28, I reappeared in Berlin, being received so cordially that I then and there made up my mind that I would never leave Berlin for good. The reports of the Monte Carlo engagement led directly to a most flattering offer from Stockholm, and on May 6 I arrived in the Swedish capital. My mother, of course, was with me on all my travels.

My *début*, which took place on the evening of

May 9, was as Marguerite in "Faust." It was an enthusiastic, sympathetic audience headed by the venerable and adorable King Oscar. An incident of the performance worth recording is that I sang opposite to Herr Ödman, the tenor, who had sung as a young man with Jenny Lind and Christine Nilsson. He was then almost sixty years old, but he gave a most interesting performance and was extremely vain of his figure in "Romeo" and "Faust." I must say he would put many a younger man to shame in the costume of this romantic period, withal being a sweet singer and excellent artist.

Two days after my début the Royal Intendant of the Opera called to notify me that the King would be glad to receive me at a special audience. The royal carriage was sent to the hotel for us; my mother and I drove first to the Palace in Stockholm, and then, after we had been cordially received by His Majesty, the King invited us to go with him and inspect a beautiful suburban castle just outside of Stockholm, which is one of the show-places of the world. His Majesty had known and admired Lilli Lehmann, and one reason for the personal interest he took in me was because he knew I was Lilli's pupil.

On the last night of the Stockholm season I sang



Oscar

“THE VENERABLE AND ADORABLE KING OSCAR”

“Traviata” before a packed and enthusiastic house. His Majesty was present as usual. He never missed a performance while I sang in Stockholm. During the performance the Intendant notified me that His Majesty desired to receive me at the Palace after the performance at a special audience. Wondering and surprised, my mother and I drove to the Palace in obedience to the royal command. We were ushered into a small audience chamber, where perhaps two dozen members of the Court were already in waiting.

Presently His Majesty entered and, with a few words, decorated me with the gold cross of the Order of Merit, which he personally pinned upon my gown. He explained at the time that only two other singers had previously received this honor — Melba and Nilsson.

After that there was a real Swedish celebration of farewell which lasted until long past midnight — only, as the nights were almost as bright as day in that far northern country, it was difficult to tell the time. I remember that after supper I suddenly recalled that Caruso had written, asking me to secure him a complete set of Swedish stamps, as he was a postage-stamp fiend. When I told His Majesty of this, the King sent out and secured a com-

GERALDINE FARRAR

plete set of stamps, which I forwarded to Enrico with the compliments of the King of Sweden.

As I was leaving and saying farewell, for we were to go on the morrow, His Majesty said: "Next year, Mademoiselle Farrar, you must sing again in Stockholm."

"I shall be delighted, Your Majesty," I replied.

"Meanwhile, you sing only in Berlin?"

"Oh, no," I answered, "I have been offered a reëngagement for Monte Carlo next March."

"Monte Carlo, eh?" And His Majesty laughed. "My dear Mademoiselle Farrar, my physician has been urging me to visit Monte Carlo. I shall time my trip so that I shall be sure to hear you sing there."

What a perfect darling old King Oscar was!

CHAPTER X

MY FOURTH SEASON

THE month of June found me in Paris, where I sang at a charity concert, and in August I went to Bayreuth for the first time and was greatly moved by "Parsifal." On August 12 my diary says: "To-day I placed a laurel wreath on the grave of Liszt."

In October, 1904, before the opening of the regular season in Berlin, I went to fulfill a special engagement in Warsaw. An incident characteristic of the impetuous Poles occurred on the train, which resulted in more than a year's annoyance of rather an amusing character.

My mother and I were traveling in a private compartment, with the door open on the main corridor of the train. A tall, handsome, bearded gentleman had passed that door no less than a dozen times. Finally he passed just at the moment when my mother wished the train porter to change German gold into Russian money. The porter did not have the change. Here was the chance of the bearded man's lifetime. He projected himself into the compartment, he made the change, he intro-

duced himself gracefully, and calmly announced that he knew me all the time as "*Die Farrar aus Berlin*," the singer, and he wished to do everything in his power to make us comfortable during our stay in Warsaw. He turned out to be Count Ischki P——, a very wealthy nobleman with a most romantic temperament and also with the persistence of fly-paper.

We could not disengage ourselves from his courtesy on the train, and he became doubly irksome when he bombarded my apartments in the Hotel Bristol, — the magnificent hostelry, by the way, which Paderewski built and owns in Warsaw, — sending me flowers, sweetmeats, candies, and even attempting to send me jewelry. The poor Count Ischki wanted me to look with favor upon his suit. Never, outside the pages of a novel, have I met any one quite so ardent, in so many languages.

The climax came one afternoon when I was reading in my apartment.

There was a knock at the door; it opened instantly, and in came a procession of bell-boys — each carrying flowers, enormous boxes of candy or tributes of some kind. All these were carefully deposited at my feet without a word. Then, as the boys withdrew, the Count Ischki himself, faultlessly

MY FOURTH SEASON

dressed, entered and threw himself upon his knees before me in the midst of his offerings. It was a perfect setting for the stage. I had all I could do to keep serious as the Polish count poured out the story of his mad love, and declared that, unless I would marry him, he would quickly die the death of a madman.

Gently I motioned for him to arise and depart. "I fear I am only a cold, heartless, American girl," I replied. "I love only my art, and I shall never marry anybody."

The night I left Warsaw the poor Count Ischki was at the station to see me off, and, though I felt sorry for him, I was happy at escaping from so trying an emotional character. For almost a year, however, he followed me over Europe, popping up most unexpectedly at different places, always with a renewed declaration of his love. His attentions at Monte Carlo finally became so embarrassing that I threatened to appeal to the police. Then he ultimately accepted his *cong e*, and I was relieved of this all-too-ardent nobleman.

The season of 1904-05 in Berlin (my fourth season) was made notable by the first appearance there of Caruso, who made his d ebut in "Rigoletto." His coming created a great sensation. I was de-

lighted to sing opposite him again, but there was a complication of which the public knew nothing. With the "king of tenors" singing on the stage with me, I knew there was another—Franz Naval—who had sung opposite me for three seasons, sitting in a box in the background. However, I compromised with the two by usually having tea with Franz and dinner with Enrico during his stay in Berlin, and the artistic world rolled smoothly on.

Many interesting things happened during my fourth season in Berlin. For one thing the marriage of the Crown Prince to the Grand Duchess Cécile took place, thereby permanently putting an end to the little annoyances to which his kindly admiration of me as an artist had subjected me. I am proud and happy to state that soon after the return of the royal couple to the Palace at Potsdam, I was invited to sing for the Crown Princess and, as a result of this meeting, a cordial and friendly intimacy sprang up between us, which often led to informal musicales at the Palace when the Crown Princess played the piano, the Crown Prince the violin, and I sang.

The spring of 1905 found me once more in Monte Carlo, where a notable performance was the *première* of Saint-Saëns' "L'Anêtre," in which I created



"THE AMUSING MADAME SANS GÊNE"

MY FOURTH SEASON

the rôle of Margarita. During this spring engagement I created another rôle, the title part in Mascagni's "Amica." Preparations for the opera had been well under way for some time, Calvé having been engaged for Amica. Five days before the *première* she withdrew for reasons which were never explained to me. Gunsberg appealed to me as a favor to help him out, if possible, and create this very difficult rôle. I agreed, and, by working day and night, I succeeded in preparing it in time for the performance. At this special performance Gatti-Casazza, who was then Director of La Scala at Milan, heard me sing for the first time, but all he recalls, he says, were a pair of eyes and a very tempestuous young person.

One night during this spring season in Monte Carlo I caught sight of a familiar face in the recesses of a stage box and, for the curtain call, I made the royal salute to this box. After the curtain fell, every one started to make fun of me.

"We have no royalty in Monte Carlo," one said.

"Pardon me," I replied, "but I shall always give the royal salute when King Oscar of Sweden is in the audience."

It was, indeed, His Majesty, who had timed his visit to Monte Carlo so that he could hear me

sing, as he said he would. The next morning I read in the newspapers that the King of Sweden, traveling incognito as Count Haga, was visiting Monte Carlo as the guest of the Prince of Monaco.

In Monte Carlo even royalty mingles with the crowd, and so it happened that later in the day I encountered His Majesty strolling along in a smart gray suit, with an Alpine hat and stick, looking for all the world like some prosperous American banker seeing Europe on a vacation. His Majesty was kind enough to entertain both my mother and me at dinner several times during this engagement in Monte Carlo.

The fact that I created the title rôle in "Amica" in five days was duly telegraphed to Paris and other cities, and led directly to a most spectacular engagement in the French capital, which must be recorded as my Parisian début. A certain Count Camondo, a wealthy patron of the arts who made Paris his home, had written the music to an operatic libretto by Victor Capoul, entitled "The Clown." Count Camondo came to Monte Carlo, engaged the entire Monte Carlo Opera Company — including me, as I had special leave of absence from the Kaiser for the occasion — at an exorbitant figure to sing three performances of the new opera in Paris,



LA TOSCA

MY FOURTH SEASON

all proceeds to go to charity. Count Camondo paid all expenses, staged the opera lavishly, and we sang the three performances to crowded houses, at the Théâtre Réjane, Paris. At last I had sung in grand opera in Paris, even if only for charity!

CHAPTER XI

LEAVING BERLIN

AFTER a short season in Stockholm, where once more I had the pleasure of singing before dear old King Oscar, I found myself in Berlin. One morning my maid brought me this telephone message:—

Heinrich Conried of New York is at the Hotel Bristol. Will Miss Farrar please come down and sing for him?

I promptly had the maid telephone carefully as follows:—

Miss Farrar is at her home, and, if Herr Conried wishes to call, she will be glad to see him.

Later that same day Herr Conried called. He was scouting Europe for artists for the Metropolitan, and he had been advised by Maurice Grau to keep a watchful eye upon my career.

We talked of his plans for New York, and Herr Conried expressed a wish to have me return to my native land. Of course, from the day I had first dreamed of singing in grand opera, the Metropolitan had been my ultimate goal, but now that the



WOLF FERRARI

moment for considering so important a step had come I was very wary. Knowing that New York was loyal to some of the older artists still under contract, I wanted to protect my interests as best I could while working up my career in America. I do not believe that Mr. Conried was then very anxious to have me come; certainly he was much taken aback when I stated my ideas of the contract. They were so entirely at divergence with his that the interview came to nothing, and he departed. I was neither glad nor sorry. I telegraphed Maurice Grau the result, to which he laconically replied:—

Don't worry, he'll be back.

Having been many years in that same position, *vis-à-vis* prima donnas, Maurice Grau well knew whereof he spoke, for indeed Mr. Conried did "come back," finding me on my vacation in Franzensbad, where I had been very busily concerned looking up all manner of contracts for America. After much obstinacy on my part and reiteration on his, we managed to close the contract. Besides my guaranteed operatic performances I was to sing in no private houses unless agreeable to me and only for special compensation; and I incorporated every possible clause imaginable about dressing-rooms,

drawing-rooms on trains, carriages, railroad fares for my mother and my maids on tour, and in fact every conceivable concession which the most arrogant prima donna might demand. Not that I really cared about such items of expense, but I was determined to enter the Metropolitan *en dignité*, and I did.

The contract was not to take effect until a year later, in November, 1906. Meanwhile, I was to conclude another season in Berlin, fulfill all European contracts in the spring, and then secure leave of absence from the Kaiser for three years. It was arranged, however, that I should always be subject to the demands of the Royal Opera, and one of the clauses of the Conried contract was that, if at any time I was called back to appear in Berlin, my contract would be indefinitely postponed until such time as I could fulfill it without conflicting with my Berlin contract.

That concluding season in Berlin was a constant series of farewells. The news had been made public that I was to sing in America, and that I would be absent for at least a year. One of the pleasant memories of that season is a farewell concert at the Marmor Palace at Potsdam for the Crown Prince and Princess, when they presented to me a diamond



LEAVING BERLIN

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pendant made up of the letters "W-C" interwoven — Wilhelm and Cécile. The Crown Princess Cécile, gracious, charming, young, adored in Berlin and throughout Germany, was greatly interested in charities, and during my last season in Berlin I assisted her in organizing the programmes for many charity concerts.

At last came the eventful day when I was to leave the country of my adoption for the land of my nativity. I had announced an "Abschied," or "Farewell Concert," in Philharmonic Hall, Berlin, the first week in October, 1906. We charged five dollars a seat, and could have sold the house twice over. One half the gross receipts went to a hospital kitchen founded by my dear Frau von Rath, who had been so kind to me; and the other half went to the fund of the Crown Princess's pet charity for crippled children. It was a wonderful and representative audience, in which royalty was conspicuously present.

Next day we drove through crowds in the streets of Berlin, *en route* to the station for Bremerhaven, from which we sailed on the Kaiser Wilhelm II, my mother, father, and I. Quite a contrast to our last voyage together on the cattle ship from Boston! But now we were homeward bound. I was

GERALDINE FARRAR

returning to the land of my birth after an absence of nearly seven years, to sing in the greatest temple of music in the western world. It represented the near approach of the greatest of my dreams.

But, could I have foreseen all the difficulties that were to come to me, I wonder if I would have been so buoyant and care-free as the great ship pounded her way westward through the October seas!

CHAPTER XII

MY FIRST APPEARANCE IN NEW YORK

THE air was crisp and cold that brilliant November morning when the Kaiser Wilhelm II nosed her way into New York Harbor. How proud and alert I felt as I looked up at the mass of towering buildings, their pinnacles sharply tilted against the dazzling blue of the sky. The harbor swarmed with seagoing craft; all was excitement and interest, particularly so when the revenue cutter and the mail boat were shortly made fast alongside the big liner. The kindly purser was soon pouring hundreds of letters and telegrams into my eager hands, sweet and welcoming messages — happy augury! All the world seemed to smile on me that day. Not even the persistent reporters could curb my enthusiasm or spoil my high spirits. How we laughed and chatted, Mr. Conried an amused spectator at my side.

An avalanche of questions, almost all pointedly personal, were hurled at me, everybody talking at once. The rôle of the modest violet was not to be mine, I could see from the outset. . . . Yes, I loved Berlin. . . . Yes, I had sung for the Emperor. . . .

Yes, the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess were a charming couple. . . . Yes, I hoped to duplicate my European successes in my own country. . . . No, I was not engaged. . . . Nor secretly married. . . . Why? . . . Well, because I just was n't. And so on — endlessly, it seemed. Pencils scribbled unceasingly and cameras clicked at all possible angles. I did not care for that, since I wore a most fetching little turban and some beautiful furs (the pictures would n't be unattractive). I was hardly settled at my hotel when the editions of the papers were being sold, and their readers learned from the notices, profusely illustrated (the turban really did come out well!), that "Geraldine Farrar had arrived."

Dazed and tired by the excitement of arrival and the thousand-and-one greetings of welcoming friends, I could think of but one thing, my *début*. It pursued me by day and haunted my sleepless nights. No one can imagine what anguish I endured once I was alone, and how difficult it was to discuss the event with an airy indifference to outsiders. I told myself there was nothing to fear; that my home people would love and support me as had my loyal Berliners. If only the trying ordeal were over!

To Miss Fernal, with the kindest regards of



Mark Twain

Jan. 14 08

FIRST APPEARANCE IN NEW YORK

To my disappointment "Romeo and Juliet" had been chosen, not only for my *début*, but for the opening performance of the season as well. In vain I pleaded that, under such a strain I should acquit myself much better in Elizabeth ("Tannhäuser"), which I had just sung in Berlin and Munich with great success. Mr. Conried was obdurate, however; he said I must be presented in a spectacular production, and so I had to give in.

I shall always remember my first rehearsal in the dimly-lighted ladies' parlor. The suave and elegant Pol Plançon (the Friar) and my friend, Josephine Jacoby, greeted me, and then Rousselière, of Monte Carlo days, who was making his *début* as well, as my "Romeo." We were both frightfully nervous and longed for the day to be over.

November 26, 1906, however, did finally arrive. I drove to the opera and slipped into my gown—not the usual conventional robe of stiff white satin, but a heavenly concoction that my clever wizard of a dressmaker had faithfully and beautifully modeled after a Botticelli painting. A misty veiling of rose delicately traced with silken flowers and sprinkled with tiny diamonds sheathed my figure of fortunate slenderness (thanks be!), while a jeweled fillet of gold rested on my own dark hair, and a

tiny curling feather waved alertly on my forehead. And so "La Bella Simonetta" came to life, along the Capulet halls, transported for the nonce to the twentieth century and Broadway. A rain of welcoming applause greeted me and told me that so far all was well!

I cannot remember distinctly all that occurred that auspicious evening. There seemed to be cartloads of flowers; and again and again I smiled out from the great yellow curtains. Mr. Conried congratulated me, and the great evening was over!

I was at home.

Now I was to drag out some uninspiring weeks in such operas as "La Damnation de Faust," "Faust," and "Juliette," all of no particular interest to me.

The real bright spot in the season was the first production of "Madame Butterfly" on the 11th of February, 1907. This charming opera was to endear me later to all my audiences and firmly establish me in the favor of the whole country. However, at the time no such encouraging and pleasing vision was vouchsafed me.

I slaved with ardor and enthusiasm, studying Oriental characteristics and gestures with a clever little Japanese actress, Fu-ji-Ko, and incorporat-



"ADORABLE, UNFORGETTABLE BLOSSOM OF JAPAN"

FIRST APPEARANCE IN NEW YORK

ing as much as was possible of her counsels in my portrayal of the hapless "Cio-cio-San." *Maestros* came and went, as did Mr. Ricordi, the publisher, and Mr. Puccini. Everybody had a hand in the pie, till I was nearly out of my mind with all the many advisers. But I left nothing undone (that I could imagine!) to make my rôle as perfect as possible. Caruso and Scotti had already shared with Destinn the success of the London production, so it remained for Louise Homer and myself to make the most of that charming second act, which is so poignant a scene between the two women.

"Madame Butterfly" was a triumph for us all, and for me in particular. There were flowers, laurel wreaths (one with a darling little flag of Nippon tucked away in the green leaves), thanks from author, directors, and so on, embraces, applause, excitement — all the usual hubbub of a successful *première*.

Somehow I got home and sobbed myself to sleep on my mother's shoulder, utterly worn out by the nervous strain and cruel fatigue of the previous weeks.

Ah! Adorable, unforgettable blossom of Japan! Thanks to your gentle ways, that night I placed my foot on the rung of the ladder that leads to the firma-

ment of stars! When I don your silken draperies and voice your sweet faith in the haunting melodies that envelop you, then are all eyes dim and hearts atune to your every appeal for sympathy!

“Butterfly” brought me in touch as well with that past master of stagecraft, David Belasco. To my great delight he was enthusiastic over my portrayal of this little heroine who was the child of his heart and brain in the drama.

I may own that every time we meet and he says, half laughingly, half quizzically, “Well, when are you going to forsake opera and come into the drama?” I am almost tempted to make an experiment of such interest, for the theater has always made a strong appeal to my dramatic instincts.

Who knows? Some day may see me a candidate for such honors if I take his invitation seriously!

Meanwhile, I was wondering just how my artistic status was going to grow under conditions prevailing in our opera house. My repertoire was extensive in my contract, but limited on the actual billboards, owing to a predominance of prima donnas. Patience, with a big P, did not seem to help my ambitions much.

Finally the company went on the annual spring tour, and I have a confused remembrance of much



BELASCO, "THAT PAST MASTER OF STAGECRAFT"

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traveling, new audiences and hard work. I loved Chicago from the first, and its enthusiastic support is always reliable, whether I visit there in opera or in concert.

During the winter Gailhard had negotiated and secured my services for a special spring season, so that after the Metropolitan season I was to realize another cherished ambition and appear in the regular repertoire of the Paris Opera.

With these plans for the spring, Berlin in the autumn, and New York all winter, I was running perilously near the danger line of overwork. My physician advised caution, less work and more absolute rest, not to take my career so strenuously, as even my exuberant spirits would not indefinitely respond to my madly driven energy.

But I could not then call a halt. My star was waxing. I must go on. I would pay the penalty later — and I did!

My Paris début was effected under difficulties. The steamer was delayed; my trunks went astray; and, to add to my distress, three polite gentlemen took the trouble to meet me at Cherbourg, to tell me I had a day to arrive in, one day to rehearse, and the third day in which to persuade “La Ville Lumière” of my artistic worth. But the occasion was

like a whip to a race-horse. It never occurred to me to refuse, despite my consternation.

Fortunately that shrewd dressmaker of mine, with admirable foresight (and second-sight as well, perhaps!) had "completed a whole 'Juliet' outfit for immediate use — don't worry," read the telegram. I could have hugged her!

I hummed a few scales on the dock, and, with a sigh of relief that all was in order (for I had constant nightmares that I should lose my voice some day unexpectedly), I clambered into the overcrowded express and slumbered peacefully till our early morning arrival. That day I went gayly to the rehearsal, and the following evening (not without much nervous anguish) was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm by a representative audience.

An interested listener was Gounod's son, who afterward paid me such delicate and charming compliments as made my ears burn.

I had become a Parisian personage, and I allowed myself to enjoy childishly the adulation and pretty attentions that were showered on me. My woman's vanity was pleased enough at the lovely chiffons and bonnets these ingenious people of the rue de la Paix evolved for my special pleasure. What with fashionable soirées at which I was



L. la Charmante Ferran,
dame de la Grande Dame
Schubertstrasse 1915

FIRST APPEARANCE IN NEW YORK

petted and spoiled, and the parties and teas where my presence seemed to evoke whispers of admiration and envy, I might well have had my youthful head turned to a dizzy angle.

But I had my New England "thinking-cap" firmly set on my shoulders. A little of this charming frivolity was enough, and one fine day I disappeared — back to the simple life of study and quiet with the great Lehmann; I shed the iridescence of my butterfly wings and became, for the nonce, a hard-working grub!

My stay in Paris was memorable to me as well by reason of the meeting with Sarah Bernhardt.

My admiration for this wonderful woman had ever been of the most fervent heroine worship, and when Madame Grau said: "Sarah wants to know you; when will you lunch with her?" I set the following day, for fear she might change her mind and I might thereby lose this privilege.

I see her still, standing slim and white in her long curling draperies at the entrance to her home, her keen eyes appraising me, her voice raised in cordial greeting. How we chattered! What things she had to say, and with what joy I listened!

She knew all about "Juliet" — much to my surprise — even to details, such as dress, innovations

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in *mise-en-scène*, and how I tried to infuse the modern dramatic spirit into the measures of the opera. Then the conversation wandered to personalities; among the most cherished, our mutual great-hearted friend Coquelin, now, alas! gone to his last sleep these many years; books, and her obstreperous dogs, most conspicuous by their noisy presence. I was to enjoy her friendship from that day on. As I write, a recent photograph stands before me, bearing a tender inscription. A smile plays upon her face, despite her recent tragic affliction. She is in truth an element, ageless, fearless, dauntless!

It was good to be back for a short season in the autumn in Berlin, previous to my second departure for New York. The demonstration of the loyal Berliners at my return was beautiful, despite successes elsewhere. I was always to them "*unsere Farrar.*"

CHAPTER XIII

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

MY second Metropolitan season opened pleasantly with a neat little success in the comparatively small rôle of Marguerite in "Mefistofele," which was produced for the benefit of Chaliapine, the great Russian basso. Unfortunately, owing to his dissatisfaction and disappointment at musical matters in general, nothing would induce him to return to America, and we thereby lost an artist unique in all he attempted and unparalleled in some of his typical Russian creations, such as "Boris" and "Ivan the Terrible."

January, 1908, saw me on my native heath in Boston. I sang four performances in six days — "Faust," "Madame Butterfly," "Elizabeth," "Pagliacci" — and the reception was a tornado of enthusiasm, to which the historic walls of the old Boston Theater resounded. The conservative Hub did not deserve such an appellation in the case of my welcome. I was filled with pride and gratitude.

My own home town also wanted to share in the festivities; whereupon a concert was arranged, and

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I returned to sing in the brick town hall that had first sheltered my early efforts. At the close of the programme I shook hands with every man, woman, and child who desired a close scrutiny and personal greeting — and you may be sure I was not allowed to abandon my place on the stage till all had availed themselves of this invitation.

The following morning the Mayor and several prominent townspeople called for me, and we visited the pupils of my former schools. They were all ready, in line, to greet me, flags in their hands.

When an address was suggested, I arose with alacrity — and introduced my friend Kate Douglas Wiggin, as speaker. Despite her surprise she rose gracefully to the occasion in a most flattering little speech, to the delight of her youthful hearers. I was, indeed, most fortunate to have had a Mistress of Ceremonies of such tact and charm.

Meanwhile Mr. Conried's failing health was necessitating a change of management at the Metropolitan, and the choice fell upon Mr. Gatti-Casazza, of La Scala, Milan, in conjunction with Andreas Dippel, the latter a member of our company and very popular with New York audiences. With contracts for Berlin, Paris, and New York, the old cry of "overwork" was dinned into my



MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THE DAY

"AS PRETTY A FLOCK OF BIRDS AS ONE COULD FIND ON ANY FARM"

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

ears, but less than ever was the moment for immediate rest possible. I was about to make a new contract with the Metropolitan under a different management, new artists were engaged who might reasonably be supposed to share some of the repertoire which I had not yet sung.

It behooved me to keep well within the public eye and to make my position as advantageous as I could under the new régime.

Not having acquaintance with Mr. Gatti-Casazza, I preferred signing my engagement with Mr. Dippel; but all our arguments came to naught when he found I was firm in my proposals to improve upon the old contract, and I sailed away in May with no more definite answer than "*Au revoir* in Paris" to him.

While singing there at the Opéra Comique, we again went over the same ground — futilely; and it was not till the following July in Berlin that I was able to arrange a several years' engagement which, in the light of the last years, I may reasonably conclude has been to nobody's dissatisfaction.

My third Metropolitan season started unhappily. I arrived ill and fagged; lamentable altercations took place between the new conductor, Mr. Toscanini, and myself, each having quite opposite ideas

as to the merits of conductor and prima donna, respectively. The estrangement was complete after the opening performance of "Madame Butterfly," when we both lost our manners and our tempers in high-handed fashion.

Outside influences fanned resentment to a white heat, at least on my part; I was in a fury. The papers gave space to stupid fabrications and stories purporting to emanate from those speaking with authority, whose names, however, one could never discover.

Ill in mind and health, I was vexed enough to offer to buy my release from such bondage as I now lived in artistically. I was far from happy, and when I am not happy I cannot sing well. My one idea was to escape from all this turbulence and what seemed to me to be a hotbed of intrigue. I was a rebel, yes; but I was no dissembler, and I hated to come into contact with those in authority under present conditions. Every performance was an occasion of dread; things looked very dark for my peace of mind.

Needless to say, I was not granted a release, but must struggle on during the closing weeks of the spring. I resigned myself to finish the season as best I could, but I was quite decided that when



THE GOOSE GIRL IN "KÖNIGSKINDER"

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

the roll call came the following autumn I would spend my winter quietly in Berlin. That was all to be changed, however, by the very unexpected and friendly overtures which Mr. Toscanini, to my great surprise, made one memorable evening of "Madame Butterfly" in Chicago.

When two ardent and honest workers are desirous of eliminating misunderstandings it is not difficult to arrive at a solution. The various phases of the seething disquiet that had prevailed between us were discussed with commendable frankness on both sides. I need not add that the result was a happy one, and I thereby gained a firm friend and an invaluable ally in my work.

We sealed our differences in a joint curtain call, that same evening, before a jammed house that was fully aware of the significance of our unusual appearance together, and gave way to tumultuous and approving applause.

It would be difficult to estimate justly the influence Mr. Toscanini has had in the musical development of our opera, the artistic direction of which he rightly controls. Personally I am, as in the case of Lilli Lehmann, far more indebted to him than I can properly place in words, certainly more than he, with a morbid dislike for any public

attention to himself, would perhaps allow me to admit.

Lehmann — Bernhardt — Toscanini! These are names to conjure with in the career of a young artist!

Events in the operatic aviary were now destined to proceed more or less smoothly for me — for a while at least. In the spring of 1909 I was urged to give some special performances of “La Tosca” at the Opéra Comique in Paris, with Antonio Scotti in his admirable characterization of Scarpia. The success of the opera was most gratifying, and was in no wise overshadowed by the presence of the Metropolitan Company, which had come from the United States to sing in Paris at the same time.

That same spring, before sailing, Toscanini had asked me to sing Puccini’s “Manon” with the Metropolitan Company during its Paris season. But the rôle was unfamiliar to me, and as I had monopolized the more popular Massenet’s “Manon,” I felt I could not undertake its preparation in six days of ocean travel, together with my promised performances of Tosca at another theater. Toscanini quite understood this, made no further insistence, and the charming Lucretia Bori was

A splendid young Butterfly perched on a leaf,
 Where a middle-aged Katydid modestly sat;
 "We're not the same sort-" so the Butterfly said,
 "But I love you dear Katydid, spite of all that!"



Butterfly
 diurnal
 lepidopteron
 insect

Katydid
 An orthopteron
 insect of arboreal
 habits.

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

"And I," chirped the Katydid, "love your bright hues,
 Your exquisite grace and the dove on your wing
 Perhaps I admire you most first because
 You're the first of your kind that I ever heard sing!"

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

introduced to the Parisian public and later came to delight her New York admirers.

What transpired to offend Puccini I never knew, but the trivial question of my not singing his "Manon" provoked our first argument relative to "The Girl of the Golden West." The production of this long-awaited opera from the popular composer was the one topic of discussion and speculation in musical circles, its *première* being scheduled for the following autumn in New York.

While I had never had the promise of the rôle, the very subject and its appeal to the American public would seem to have indicated the choice of a native prima donna. Not only I, but a large majority of an interested public expected it. However, Puccini himself dispelled any such illusion by opening an argument, while I was singing in a drawing-room, to the effect that I had refused to sing his "Manon" because I had not been asked to create "The Girl." This was really a little too much, and I retorted that such was not the case, but that it might be well for him to consider the eventual popularity of his work with an American singer as the heroine, and that I was not aware he had changed his usual suave style of composition to such an extent that the most popular "Madame Butterfly"

could not cope with its difficulties. With this I sailed out of the room.

Possibly the crowded aspect of the house at some performances at which I sang the following autumn, and which he attended, modified his opinion, for he was effusive in compliments and photographs, and the slight cloud blew over without further parley.

Afterward I was to be consoled by as gratifying a success as my heart could wish as the "Goose Girl." December 28, 1910, saw the *première* of the charming "Königskinder," which enchanted the audience by reason of its lovely simplicity and the introduction of live geese — no less!

Professor Humperdinck was not a little taken aback when I first mentioned that I intended having these live geese which were, according to my plan, to move naturally and unconfined about the stage. Mr. Hertz, the conductor, was much perturbed and objected to the noise and confusion they might create; but Mr. Gatti was resigned to my whim and gave assent. So with the help of our technical director and the "boys" behind the stage I had as pretty a flock of birds as one could find on any farm. When the curtain rose upon that idyllic forest scene, with the goose girl in the grass, the



MISS FARRAR AND CARUSO IN "JULIAN"

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

geese unconcernedly picking their way about, now and again spreading snowy wings, unafraid, the house was simply delighted and applauded long and vigorously. Not to be overlooked was the sympathetic appeal of the children's beloved Fiddler, in the person of Goritz. This operatic fairy-tale held an enviable place in the regular repertoire for three years, and was one of my happiest successes.

Following this I was to create a work of a type quite different from any other I had ever essayed. Had it not been for Toscanini's urging I should hardly have chosen "Ariane et Barbe Bleue" as a medium for my ambitions. While the production was highly interesting, I cannot say that I am much in sympathy with the vague outlines of the modern French lyric heroines; "Mélisande" and "Ariane" I think can be better entrusted to artists of a less positive type.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DAYS I NOW ENJOY

THE season of 1913-14 came very near proving disastrous for me. After repeated danger signals, at last overtaxed Nature took her revenge. I was unable to cope successfully with a bad attack of bronchitis, which made me lose the opening night. Some days afterward, still ill, I was obstinate enough to insist on a "Madame Butterfly" performance, and I collapsed completely in a "Faust" performance later that same week.

I shall never forget my state of mind. Despair overcame me. The awful nightmare had come to pass. I should probably never sing again! Then there flashed through my mind: How should I endure this enforced inactivity? Daily, hourly, I waited, and watched, and coaxed a betterment of my physical condition, which, after all, was at the bottom of my minor vocal troubles. Outside, a generous and affectionate public had not forgotten me, while Mr. Gatti was most kind and patient with this fretful songbird.

One day I judged myself at last ready to venture



“CARMEN”

a performance. Upon my appearance I was greeted with such welcoming applause as threatened to interfere with my continuance of the opera. My heart was full of gratitude as I bowed and bowed my thanks. By dint of care and caution I was able to finish the season with credit, even taking the fatiguing trip to Atlanta, Georgia, prior to sailing, in order not to disappoint that loyal and enthusiastic public. That year, too, was the American *première* of the long-awaited sequel to "Louise" — "Julian," a hodge-podge of operatic efforts that brought little satisfaction to anybody concerned in it. To my surprise the repellent characterization of the gutter-girl in its last act moved some critical craniums to speculate favorably on the ultimate success of "Carmen," should I ever attempt this rôle.

My summer was a long one of quiet and absolute rest. When I was ready to sail home Europe was beginning to seethe in her terrible conflict. I raced from Munich to Amsterdam to get an available neutral steamer; but the prevailing confusion and panic occasioned by the fall of Antwerp and mine disasters in the northern waters made it advisable for me to follow Mr. Gatti's insistent message to join him and the company immediately at Naples.

Ah, that journey to the end of Italy! Shall I ever

forget it? Fortunately, Mr. Gatti had been able to assemble all his songsters — with the exception of Gilly, our French barytone, a prisoner of war in Austria — and we were to enjoy an agreeable and uneventful ocean trip home.

It was while on shipboard, discussing the repertoire, that Toscanini suggested the immediate preparation of "Carmen" for my first appearance of the season. I jumped at the idea, the more so since I should have a rôle I had always longed to sing and which favored me as I had rarely been favored. Here was indeed an occasion to refute many an unkind rumor that I had lost my voice and would never sing again. And as for the acting, and looking — well, I smiled into the miserable little glass in my stateroom that did duty as a mirror, and blew myself a kiss of congratulation! Daily rehearsals were called, and I worked like a slave in the little stuffy dining-room of the ship to the accompaniment of a piano no better than it should be.

Many a gypsy had come and gone, leaving New York mildly indifferent. There had been but one fascinating, unforgettable creature within our memory, the incomparable Calvé! Not one leaf of her coronet of laurel had so much as quivered!



WORK AND PLAY IN CALIFORNIA

THE DAYS I NOW ENJOY

The eventful evening came at last, and I need not dwell upon the wonderful success that attended the brilliant revival of this well-loved opera under Toscanini's splendid direction.

Later in the same season was to come the amusing "Madame Sans Gêne," chiefly interesting for its novelty and touches of comedy.

Added to the fortunate operatic successes, I had made several concert *tournées*, my contract with the record-makers had been rigidly kept, and to succeed in all these artistic directions, the well-being of the voice had ever primarily to be considered.

When the fateful time came that I paid the toll of overwork and my throat was temporarily crippled, my mind was doubly alive and in acute anguish. Inactivity to me has always been something not to be borne. I must have a vital interest with which to stimulate my energies and fancies.

It was during those discouraging days that I be-thought me of the very ardent advances that had been made to me relative to the moving pictures. Perhaps there was another field of expression, not to mention the very flattering financial considerations that were to accompany the offer, did I allow myself to be persuaded.

No small amount of half-hearted condemnation

and significant shoulder shrugging accompanied the announcement that I might seriously consider such a proposal.

“Oh, Geraldine! How can you?” I heard on every hand.

But why should n't I? I have never been the overcautious prima donna, swathed in cotton, silent, save for singing, for fear of undue fatigue upon the voice — the human vocalizer! No. I like the novel and the unusual always, and I *adore* to act!

My friendship with the family of David Belasco, and his son-in-law, Mr. Gest, having large interests in the moving pictures, led me finally to accede to their request; and I signed a contract which promised to be (and fulfilled happily!) as successful a venture as any I have ever undertaken.

My arrival in Los Angeles, the beautifully appointed house there, the special studio built for my privacy and convenience are of too recent an interest to reiterate here. The experience itself was novel and refreshing, with its own unusual dramatic procedure. I sang and declaimed my rôle in French or Italian as I chose. There was no curtain to go up! The director-general replaced the harassed stage manager and gave the signal: “Camera! Go!” No fiery leader overwhelmed me with the feverish



MAKING NEW FRIENDS IN THE "MOVIES"

tempest of his orchestra; just a watchful operator warily turning the crank of his machine while I evolved my "scenes" as I wished.

My "Carmen" has made her screen début, and many of you have doubtless seen it. I have been delighted at its success, and feel that its artistic excellence and the enthusiastic approbation it has met speak loudly enough in favor of my departure from the usual routine of the prima donna.

I have been asked, in summing up these experiences of my artistic career, so far, if it has all been worth while? From my point of view, yes. That is, what you believe to be the most complete fulfillment of yourself and the gratification of your ambitions is always worth while. Fortunately for me the adventurous and inquiring turn of my mind does not allow my ambitions to become narrowed or stationary, and that may possibly account for the unusual phases in my musical career.

It is, however, distinctly *not* worth while, to my mind, unless Fortune smiles upon you in abundance, for art is not the medium stratum of life, but its flowered inspiration and emotional poetry: it demands and obtains its sacrifices and sorrows which modify and chasten its glory, and your own soul best knows the toll you pay.

Personally I would not encourage the graduate of the church choir, or the youthful miss with the pretty voice and smug mind, to embark upon a grand-opera career, such as I have come to understand it. By that, I mean the exceptional career that demands the big outlook and risk in all one attempts — the sacrifices, the unceasing toil, an iron constitution, invulnerable nerves, to say nothing of the financial security involved, according to the magnitude of the undertaking. With the many who earn a comfortable livelihood by their agreeable song I have no question, being, as I said before, solely concerned with the exceptional gift that will not be denied, that brushes aside all obstacles, to proceed on the path of wide appeal in any branch of art or occupation.

When intelligent people will begin to open their minds and refuse to be cajoled by flattery and hypocrisy as to what constitutes “an artistic career,” it may be better for American art in general and easier for the girl who cherishes high ambitions.

How many aimless letters fill the musical columns with admirable advice on a profession of which the writers betray their naïve ignorance by the general vacuity of their remarks, when presuming to measure an artist’s impulses and inspirations



MISS FARRAR AND MR. LOU TELLEGEN

THE DAYS I NOW ENJOY

by their own personal standards and emotions! Let the artist develop in his own orbit, according to his light, nor criticize the method of the fruition of those gifts he so generously flings to his hearers.

And now, in closing, I have purposely left till the last, my affectionate tribute of gratitude and remembrance toward that vital factor in these later years of my career, whose esteem constantly spurs me on to my best efforts and whose support I trust I may enjoy for many years to come: the discerning, generous and appreciative American public!

NOTE : Soon after writing the last pages of this book Miss Farrar announced her engagement to Mr. Lou Tellegen, a talented young actor well known to Americans since he first came here five or six years ago as leading man with Madame Sarah Bernhardt. The picture on the preceding page was taken at the City Hall, New York, just after Miss Farrar and Mr. Tellegen had secured their marriage license. They were married at Miss Farrar's home February 8.

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