STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

GLADYS DAVIDSON

Mildred C. Brooks

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By GLADYS DAVIDSON

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Short Biographies of the Composers.

TWO HUNDRED OPERA PLOTS

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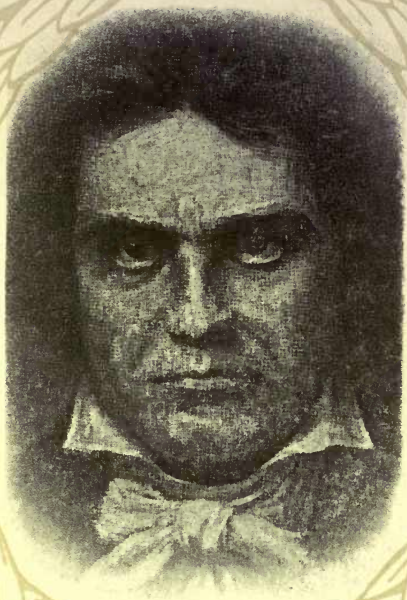

BEETHOVEN

STORIES FROM THE OPERAS

WITH SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE COMPOSERS

SECOND SERIES

BY

GLADYS DAVIDSON

FIFTH THOUSAND

LONDON
T. WERNER LAURIE
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BY KIND PERMISSION

TO

MR. CHARLES MANNERS

WHO HAS DONE SO MUCH

TO FURTHER THE CAUSE

OF GRAND OPERA.

PREFACE

OWING to the kind reception accorded to my first book of "Stories from the Operas," I have been encouraged to prepare a second series of Stories on similar lines. The Stories now selected are taken from amongst the most popular operas frequently performed at Covent Garden and Drury Lane Theatres; the object being, as before, to present all the incidents of each Libretto in the clear, readable form of a short story.

I have to express my best thanks to the following publishing firms for the kind permission they have given me to use the stories of the various libretti :—

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(For *Star of The North*, *La Traviata*, *Fidelio*, and *La Sonnambula*).

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(For *Die Meistersingers*, and *Parsifal*).

Mr. CHARLES MANNERS.
(For *Eugene Onegin*).

CONTENTS

STORIES FROM THE OPERAS.

PHILEMON AND BAUCIS.

One stormy evening long ago, in the mythical days of the gods and heroes of the ancients, a poor peasant named Philemon and his wife, Baucis, were resting peacefully in their humble cottage, where they had lived together for many years of happy wedded life. They were now growing old; but although the shadows of life's eventide were fast deepening around them, they did not waste their remaining days in uttering vain regrets after departed youth, because the love in their hearts was as fresh and green as ever, and happiness was still theirs, in spite of poverty and old age.

As they sat together in the twilight this evening, whilst the sound of the gathering storm without came every now and again to their ears, they were rejoicing with each other because of the joy that yet remained to them. Though they could no longer join in the merry dances and wild pleasures of the gay young folks around them, that fact did not trouble them at all, since contentment was theirs; and they declared to one another that even in the

days of their youth they were not happier than now in their old age, for, as the years went on, the love in their faithful hearts grew deeper and stronger than ever. Since they enjoyed such perfect love and harmony, they did not envy the careless youths and maidens, but resigned themselves cheerfully to old age, knowing well that life would be sweet to the very end whilst love remained to them.

Thus did the contented old couple talk happily together until darkness fell; and not even a band of merry Bacchantes who presently danced past the cottage door, on wildest revels bent, could draw from either a sigh of regret for the lost pleasures of youth.

When, however, the song of the Bacchantes had died away in the distance, Baucis declared that it was now time for their evening meal, and went into an inner room to prepare the humble food that was sweeter to them than the luxuries of the rich, since it was procured by their own honest labour, and seasoned with love.

When she had gone, Philemon busied himself by making the fire burn more brightly; and whilst engaged in this homely task, he was interrupted by an imperative knock at the cottage door. By this time the storm was raging with great violence; and when, upon opening the door, he was accosted by two strangers who craved shelter from the wind and rain, Philemon at once invited them to enter, being distressed that travellers should be out on such a wild night.

Now, though the poor peasant little guessed it, these two strangers were in reality Jupiter, the

Father of the Gods, and Vulcan, the God of Iron, who were visiting the earth thus disguised in order to bring punishment upon certain disobedient mortals who had offended them. Having, however, been overtaken by this terrible storm, brought about by Jupiter's own commands as his means of punishment, they had sought refuge at the first homestead they came to, hoping that the owner might grant them shelter, and thus prove himself to be more worthy than his neighbours, upon whom the angry god's vengeance was now about to fall.

Their hopes were realised; for Philemon received them with great kindness and hospitality, leading them to the warm hearthstone, where he proceeded to divest them of their wet cloaks, declaring it was a delight to him to welcome guests whom the gods must surely have sent.

Jupiter was very well pleased at this reception; but Vulcan, being in an exceeding ill-humour, and still smarting from the recent intrigues of his beautiful wife Venus with the gods Mars and Mercury, only grumbled and growled at having been dragged from his accustomed work against his will, and even called down curses upon the gods who were the cause of his domestic woes and of his present plight. Upon hearing this, Philemon, being a devout upholder of the honour of the gods whom he served so faithfully, sternly reproved the stranger for thus speaking irreverently of the great Immortals; but Jupiter laughingly bade the peasant not to heed the ill-humour of his companion, who was in a strange mood that night.

Philemon, having thus extended a hearty welcome

to his unexpected guests, retired to the inner room to help his wife prepare a repast for them; and when he had departed on this hospitable errand, Jupiter began to rally Vulcan on his gloomy looks and sulky temper. But the cross-grained, deformed god was not to be pacified, and declared that he preferred to be left working with his faithful Cyclops in his subterranean forges, where no one dared to poke fun at him for his ill-humours and ugly appearance, and where he was not plagued by the sight of his faithless wife bestowing her bewitching smiles on other admirers.

Whilst Jupiter was laughing over his companion's complaints, and gaily bidding him not to care for aught done by one so fair and fickle, Baucis entered the room, bearing a jug full of goat's milk, which she placed before the visitors, saying that Philemon would shortly follow with ripe fruits, which he was even now gathering in the garden. Being even better pleased with the cheerful, kindly looks of Baucis, Jupiter entered into conversation with her; and when, on questioning her as to the reason of her evident contentment and happiness, she replied that this was due to the all-absorbing love that she and her husband had for each other, which made them count poverty and old age as nothing, he was filled with amazement.

"What!" he exclaimed. "You can still talk of love, even now that you are growing old?"

"Oh, yes," answered Baucis, with a smile of pure joy. "For love has been the guiding star of our simple lives; and now that our days are drawing to a close, our only regret is that we cannot start over

again, and tread the same sweet path side by side a second time!"

At this moment, Philemon returned with a basket of fine ripe fruit from the garden, and a vessel of sparkling water from the spring; and placing these on the table beside the goat's milk, he invited his guests to draw near and partake of the humble food, which was, nevertheless, the best that his poor home could offer.

Jupiter, delighted at the gracious hospitality of the good old couple, gladly accepted the invitation; and having drained the vessel of water to satisfy his own thirst, he bade Baucis to fill out yet another cupful from the now empty flagon, for Vulcan. Baucis was greatly surprised at this strange bidding; but on receiving the command from Jupiter a second time, she inclined the empty vessel, and to her utter astonishment a stream of rich red wine immediately flowed into the goblet!

The poor peasants now knew that their strange guests were not ordinary mortals, and were in some fear as to who they might really be; but Jupiter, though still retaining his *incognito*, quickly reassured them, saying that he and his companion had been sent by the gods to bring dire punishment on the disobedient mortals in this neighbourhood who had offended them. He then bade them listen to the terrific thunderstorm which was now raging, and which would certainly destroy those on whom the gods' vengeance was to fall; but when the old couple began to tremble for their own safety, he told them to be of good comfort, since they should be spared, because of the hospitality and kindness they had

shown to two travellers in distress. He then bade the wondering pair to lie down in peace, and rest securely until the morning, when they should awaken to reap the reward of their good deed.

Philemon and Baucis, now feeling a delicious drowsiness creeping over their senses, obeyed the god's authoritative command, and gladly laid themselves down to sleep; and then, as they sank into a peaceful slumber, Jupiter cast a magic spell over them, by means of which their beautiful youth was completely restored to them, and their humble cottage at the same moment transformed into a noble palace.

When morning dawned, the gods retired for awhile, that the rejuvenated pair might make their wonderful discovery alone. Baucis was the first to awaken; and, surprised at an unusual exhilaration of spirits, and at feeling the blood coursing merrily through her veins as in the days of her youth, she sprang to her feet and exclaimed as she now beheld the new grandeur around her, "I must be dreaming!" Then, on approaching her still sleeping husband, she was amazed to find him young and handsome as in the days of yore, when he had first won her love; and running to a mirror, her joy was complete when its reflection showed her that she also was now restored to beautiful youth, and was even fairer still than in the early flush of maidenhood long years ago!

"Philemon! Philemon! awake, my love, and rejoice!" she cried in delight; and when Philemon arose immediately at the sound of her sweet young voice, he also was astonished to find himself within a

palatial mansion, and was utterly bewildered at the sight of the lovely maiden before him.

"Who art thou, fair one?" he asked in awestruck tones. "Thou art beautiful as my beloved Baucis was in the days of her youth!"

But Baucis held the mirror up before his eyes, and bade him look at his own reflection; and when Philemon saw that he also had regained his handsome youth, his joy was unbounded.

The happy pair now knew that this marvellous transformation must have been brought about by the influence of the gods, whose messengers they had entertained the previous evening; and overcome with gratitude and joy that the passion and delight of their youthful love was thus restored to them, they fell into each other's arms and rapturously embraced. The wondrous love of these two faithful hearts, though it had clung to them even in old age, had of necessity run in a calmer stream with advancing years; but now with youth and beauty once more before them, it flooded their hearts afresh with renewed life, and the all-absorbing desires and sweet joys of old again held them under magic sway.

For long the happy lovers rejoiced together in perfect bliss, regardless of time and heedless of the whole world; and then Baucis, growing suddenly timid and shy, broke coquettishly away from the embrace of Philemon, and ran laughing out into the open air, to hide in the groves beyond.

As Philemon turned to follow her, the god Vulcan appeared in the doorway of the palace; and on beholding one whom he felt to be his benefactor, the grateful peasant fell on his knees before him and

tendered his grateful thanks. Vulcan, however, was still sulky and ill-tempered, and so, gruffly bade him keep his thanks to himself, since the sight of one so happy in his love filled him with envy; nor was he any better pleased when Philemon innocently expressed the desire that a faithful loving wife might also fall to his benefactor's share, for the alluring glances of his fickle Venus were more frequently bestowed on other lovers than on himself! Philemon soon left the taciturn god to his own devices, and ran off in pursuit of Baucis; and shortly afterwards Jupiter appeared, and questioned his companion as to whether the peasants were satisfied with their changed lot.

Vulcan replied in an aggrieved tone that they seemed to be very much in love with one another; and presently catching sight of Baucis hiding amidst the bushes, he bade Jupiter to look on his own handiwork. Now, when Jupiter beheld the lovely maiden as she mischievously sped from tree to tree to avoid her fond pursuer, he was so enthralled with her sweet fresh beauty, that he suddenly desired to possess her for himself; and, god-like, he at once sought the means of gratifying his desire.

After giving vent to an extravagant outburst of admiration for this new object of his fickle fancy, he began to persuade Vulcan to keep Philemon engaged for awhile; and presently the God of Iron departed on this thankless mission, leaving Jupiter free to go in search of Baucis.

In a very short time, Jupiter came face to face with the lovely maiden, and began to address her in tones of admiration, at the same time giving her to

understand his high estate; and when Baucis knew that it was the great god Jupiter to whom she was indebted for her restored youth, and who now graciously condescended to speak with her, she was so overcome that she sank humbly to her knees, trembling with fear. But Jupiter gently raised her from the ground, reassuring her in tender accents; and more and more enthralled by the maiden's exquisite loveliness, he began to pour forth passionate protestations of love, even imploring her to accept his overtures.

At first, Baucis repulsed him, shrinking back with frightened mien; but at length her timidity was overcome, and with a feeling of pardonable pride that her beauty was sufficient to cause even the Master of the Gods himself to plead for her love, she began to enjoy the situation, and even to coquette with her exalted admirer. So, when Jupiter, pleased with this first success, went further still, and next boldly demanded the kiss that had been promised to Philemon, the maiden, having gone thus far, dared not refuse, for fear of offending the great god; but just at this moment, Philemon himself appeared on the scene, and was filled with amazement and indignation at beholding his beautiful wife in the arms of the stranger he had entertained the night before.

Baucis, quickly brought back to her senses by this timely interruption, instantly ran to her husband's side, begging him to curb his wrath until she could explain the matter to him; but Philemon's anger was not to be restrained, and he broke forth into passionate reproaches. Jupiter, though furious that Vulcan's carelessness should have caused this

unwelcome interruption to his enjoyment, thought it prudent to retire for awhile; and when he had departed, Philemon's torrent of reproaches fell faster than ever. Even when Baucis explained that it was the Immortal Jupiter who had thus honoured her with his admiration, and whom he himself had addressed so roughly, the angry young peasant was not pacified, though he felt he was certainly doomed to destruction for crossing the pleasure of the mighty god; and he still continued to pour forth such scornful words, that Baucis also grew angry, and began to return his reproaches with equal passion.

Into the midst of this quarrel came Vulcan, who tried to make peace between them, grimly bidding Philemon to be of good cheer, since a matter of this sort was considered a mere trifle up in Olympus, where faithlessness in love was rather the rule than the exception; and he added that the fair daughters of earth were not likely to excel where goddesses failed.

But Philemon was not to be satisfied with any such doubtful comfort as this; and at last, in a paroxysm of anger, he overturned the household gods, which in the form of statuettes adorned his new abode, and then rushed wildly forth into the open air.

Baucis now began to weep bitterly, full of remorse that she should have so carelessly grieved the heart of her faithful Philemon; for, though a natural passing feeling of vanity in her re-born beauty had led her to be pleased with the admiration of the great god, yet her love for her husband had never for a moment wavered, and she was filled with despair at

the thought that she might have forfeited his regard, which was her dearest possession.

After vainly trying to comfort the poor girl, Vulcan went off in search of Philemon, intending to act the part of peacemaker; and no sooner had he gone on this difficult errand, than Jupiter again appeared in the entrance. On beholding Baucis in tears, the amorous god hurried to her side, tenderly entreating her not to grieve, but rather to accept his caresses instead; but Baucis, determined not to let such alluring flatteries again overcome her nobler instincts, quickly withdrew herself from his embrace, and, falling on her knees before him, passionately besought him to take her fatal beauty away and make her old and wrinkled once more, that she might thus atone for the wrong she had done her faithful husband in listening even for a moment to words of love from other lips than his.

Jupiter was astounded at this request, thinking that the lovely maiden had taken leave of her senses; but Baucis exclaimed again:

"Nay, my lord, give me back my old age again, when calm and peaceful days were mine, and pure and perfect love for my faithful Philemon was happiness enough for me! What care I for beauty that but enthrals the hearts of others? I only want my husband's love, and that was mine when old! Therefore, make me old again, my lord!"

As Baucis was pleading with Jupiter, Philemon approached with Vulcan; and on thus learning from her impassioned words that his wife still loved him, he ran forward with great gladness, and clasped her in his arms. Baucis, full of thankfulness that her

fault was forgiven, returned his caresses with great joy; and Jupiter, though at first furious that a mere mortal should be preferred before himself, the Master of the Gods, yet could not withhold his admiration at the sight of such perfect love as this.

Gradually, his anger melted away, and though he might still have gratified his passing fancy by force, had he wished to do so, it pleased him instead to be magnanimous; and presently he graciously announced to the faithful pair that they should still retain their youth and beauty, and that he would no longer come between their affection, but pour blessings upon them instead.

Having thus restored harmony to the earthly home they had deigned to visit, the two gods returned to Olympus; and Philemon and Baucis were left in peace to rejoice in their renewed youth, and the perfect love that should again guide them surely along the path of happiness and contentment to their lives' end!

TSHAIKOWSKY

EUGENE ONEGIN.

It was a warm evening in the late autumn, and Frau Larina, a wealthy landowner in Russia, was sitting in the garden of her beautiful country house, busily engaged upon the homely task of peeling fruit, in which she was assisted by an old nurse named Philipjewna. Through the open windows of the mansion close by came the sound of the sweet singing of her two fair young daughters, Olga and Tatiana; and as she listened to their song, the mother's heart was filled with sympathy and tender recollection, for the song was one she had herself sung in the days of her youth.

Darkness was fast closing around, and presently a band of merry peasants came trooping into the grounds, carrying sheaves of corn, which they presented to Frau Larina, for to-day was the last of the Harvest, and they had come to lay their customary tribute at the feet of their Lady Benefactress.

Frau Larina received the peasants with great kindness, inviting them to sing and dance before her, and to partake of the refreshment she had ordered to be prepared for them. So the lively youths and maidens, in spite of weariness after their long day's toil, began to go through the mazy figures of a country dance upon the moonlit lawn, singing a merry harvest song as an accompaniment.

On hearing the song of the peasants, Olga and Tatiana came out into the garden and stood beside their mother, listening to the singing and watching the dance with interest.

The two sisters, though both fair to look upon, presented a great contrast to each other; for whereas the elder, Olga, was light-hearted, matter-of-fact, and frivolous, loving gaiety and amusement, Tatiana, on the other hand, was dreamy, romantic and retiring, caring little for the usual excitements of youth, but preferring to wander off alone to read in solitude, or indulge in day-dreams.

This difference in disposition was shown now, as they emerged from the house; for Olga, exhilarated by the lively music, was ready enough to join the peasants in their merry dance, but Tatiana, in whom the music had awakened more romantic thoughts, retired to a quiet corner of the terrace to read a favourite book, and to enjoy the beauty of the night.

Seeing that her young daughter was more than usually quiet and dreamy this evening, Frau Larina, with motherly solicitude, approached to enquire if all were well with her; but Tatiana declared that nothing ailed her, and that she was but deeply interested in her book and musings.

When the peasants had finished their dance, they trooped away again to partake of their patroness's hospitality; and immediately after, a carriage drove up, from which alighted two gentlemen who lived in the neighbourhood. These were Vladimir Lenski, a young nobleman who was betrothed to Olga, and his friend, Eugene Onegin, who, although he owned

land in the neighbourhood, yet was unknown to Frau Larina and her daughters.

At sight of the stranger, the shy and timid Tatiana would have retired to the house, but was detained by her mother; and a few moments later, Lenski came forward to greet the ladies, at the same time introducing his friend.

Onegin was a handsome man, who had seen much of the world, and possessed an interesting and fascinating personality; and as the impressionable Tatiana lifted her timid eyes and gazed shyly upon him, she was strangely attracted by him, feeling that he was the very impersonation of the romantic hero of her girlish dreams. Onegin, too, was interested in the pensive girl, who was more to his taste than the laughing Olga; and entering into conversation with her, they presently strolled into the garden together, leaving Lenski and his *fiancée* to their own sweet devices.

Lenski was overjoyed at finding himself alone with his beloved Olga, and poured forth passionate protestations of devotion into her ear, which, although she received them with merry bantering, were nevertheless pleasing to his *fiancée*; and the time passed all too quickly for the happy lovers.

Presently, however, Frau Larina interrupted this pretty scene by bidding them to the evening meal, which was now ready; and as the lovers retired to the house, Tatiana and Onegin emerged from the garden, deep in conversation, and passed in after them.

Tatiana, in spite of her shyness, had found intense enjoyment in the society of Onegin; and although

his conversation revealed him to be a world-weary cynic, with little belief in human goodness, yet his personality thrilled her to her utmost being, and her heart throbbed wildly with a strange delirious joy that would not be suppressed. As the night advanced, this sudden passion grew more and more intensified; and when at last she retired to her chamber, her agitation was so great that she could restrain her feelings no longer.

The old nurse, who had accompanied her to attend to her wants, endeavoured to soothe the young girl, seeing that she was over-wrought; but she found her task a hard one, for Tatiana insisted on hearing the story of Philipjewna's own love and betrothal, and was not to be diverted from this all-enthralling subject. So, to satisfy her young mistress, the old nurse described the events connected with her marriage, which were prosaic and unromantic enough; since, according to the usual custom of the Russian peasantry, a husband was chosen for her, and she was bidden to wed him, the short courtship being a mere matter of form, and the question of love having nothing whatever to do with the transaction.

Tatiana, however, paid little heed to the story she had asked for, being too much engrossed with her own conflicting emotions; and as the recital came to an end, she desired the old nurse to bring writing materials into the room, and then retire.

Philipjewna, thinking it best to humour the young girl, obeyed her behest at once; and having placed writing materials on the table, she kissed her nursling tenderly, and left the room, hoping that sleep and pleasant dreams would restore her to calmness by the morning.

But sleep was very far from the thoughts of the agitated Tatiana; for, unable to restrain her feelings any longer, she had determined to write a letter to Eugene Onegin, to confess the passionate love she had conceived for him, and to ask him to grant her a meeting in the grounds next day. For a long time conflicting thoughts assailed her, maidenly modesty and natural reticence struggling with her new-born love and the longing desire to have it returned; but at length the intensity of her passion overcame all other feeling, and, seizing a pen, she began to write. But even now, when her decision was made, she found it a difficult task to put her overwhelming thoughts upon the paper; and many were the sheets she destroyed, and the new attempts she made.

The night crept on, but Tatiana was heedless of the passing hours; and at length, as the first signs of dawn appeared, she finished the letter, and with trembling hands and much misgiving, placed it in an envelope ready to be delivered.

The letter was characteristic of the girl's disposition, and every line breathed of the sweet trustfulness that had prompted its writing. It was the simple outpouring of a generous, beautiful nature, and the depth and intensity of passion it revealed but proved the value of the gift offered—the gift of a pure young maiden's heart.

Having sealed the letter, Tatiana went up to the window, and, drawing aside the curtains, pensively watched the rosy dawn of another beautiful autumn morning; and a short time afterwards, Philipjewna came in to awaken her, according to her usual custom. Amazed to find her young mistress already

risen, the old nurse hurried forward to greet her, noticing with alarm that the bed had not been slept in; but Tatiana, scarcely waiting for her greeting, hastily placed the letter she had written in her hands, and nervously entreated her to have it conveyed to Eugene Onegin without delay.

At first the nurse hesitated, knowing that this was an extraordinary request; but seeing that the girl was still in a state of nervous excitement, she again thought it best to humour her, so took the note and promised to have it delivered at once. As soon as Philipjewna had left the room, Tatiana buried her face in her hands, half-regretting that she had sent the letter, and wondering if Onegin would grant her the appointment she had asked for, first hoping that he would come, and the next moment praying that he would not.

However, later in the day, as the time appointed for the meeting drew near, she gathered her courage together, and went out into the grounds, with doubt and longing in her heart, trembling at the thought of what the result of her interview would be, fearing lest her love should be scorned, yet equally full of shy fears should it be returned.

As she appeared in the grounds, she found that a group of village maidens were continuing their harvest festivities by indulging in further merry songs and dances on the lawn; but presently they departed to another part of the grounds, leaving Tatiana alone, and a few moments later Eugene Onegin appeared and hurried towards her.

At the sight of the man she loved so passionately, Tatiana's little stock of courage entirely forsook her,

leaving her trembling like an aspen leaf, and she would certainly have run away again, had not Onegin imperiously bidden her to remain. Then, drawing nearer to the agitated girl, he told her gently that he had received and read her letter, and since she had been so frank with him, he would, in return, be frank with her.

He then went on to declare in passionless tones, yet half-regretfully, that he was too world-weary to accept the fresh young love she had to offer, and was neither worthy to receive so generous a gift, nor had he a like passion to offer in return.

As the trembling Tatiana listened to these cold, yet truthful words, each one of which stabbed her to the heart, she felt crushed to the earth; and, overcome with grief and shame, she buried her face in her hands. Onegin, sorry for the pain he was thus inflicting upon the heart of this romantic girl, now bade her in a more tender tone than he had yet used to restrain her feelings, since another, less conscientious than himself, might use such impulsiveness for his own selfish ends; and then, taking her by the hand, he led her into the house as though she were a little child.

A short time after this, Frau Larina gave a splendid ball in honour of Tatiana's eighteenth birthday, and all the *élite* of the neighbourhood were invited to join in the festivities, prominent amongst the guests being Lenski and Eugene Onegin.

The entertainment was an elegant one, and the assemblage brilliant; but Onegin found it dull, and was frankly bored. He passed most of his time with Tatiana, for the romantic girl still interested him;

but Tatiana was restless and silent, and at last he left her to her own reflections, seeing that she seemed ill at ease with him.

Being now more bored than ever, he felt annoyed with Lenski for having persuaded him to come; and presently the spirit of mischief suggested a means for paying off this small grudge against his friend. Seeing the pretty smiling Olga approaching at the moment, he invited her to dance with him several times, including the cotillon she had promised to her *fiancé*, and Olga, being by nature a daring coquette, gaily accepted his attentions with such evident pleasure, that Lenski's brow grew black with disappointment and jealousy, for he loved her passionately, and could brook no rival in his affections. Full of gloom, he watched the pair as they danced through the intricate figures, noting with increasing anger the many roguish glances bestowed by the coquettish Olga upon her partner; and when the cotillon came to an end, unable to restrain his feelings any longer, he openly accused Onegin of endeavouring to steal away the affections of his *fiancée*, and before all the guests, he furiously challenged him to give him satisfaction and fight with him on the morrow.

At first, Onegin tried to laugh the matter off, declaring that he had no thought of doing his friend a wrong; and Olga, now frightened and full of remorse that her giddy conduct should have thus been the means of causing strife, also implored her *fiancé* to calm himself and think no more of the matter.

But Lenski's jealous passion would brook no interference; and he continued to pour such angry re-

proaches and stinging taunts upon Onegin, that the latter at length lost control of himself also, and, goaded beyond bearing, angrily accepted the challenge. The guests, alarmed and dismayed, at once took a hurried departure, and the ball, which had commenced so brightly, ended in confusion and gloom.

Early next morning, Lenski and Onegin, with their seconds, met in a retired part of the grounds, and there, with all the usual ceremonious etiquette, the duel was fought. Both felt sad at the thought that their long and happy friendship should end in this terrible way, and longed to utter the one word that would have reconciled them; but pride kept their lips sealed, and when the signal was given, they raised their pistols and fired instantaneously.

Lenski fell to the ground at once; and when Onegin, who was untouched, ran forward with the seconds, and clasped him in his arms, he found to his horror that he was dead.

Full of grief and remorse that he had thus for the sake of a foolish code of honour slain the dearest friend of his youth, Onegin, dazed and miserable, left the neighbourhood at once; and for several years afterwards, he wandered restlessly from country to country, in the vain endeavour to drown the tormenting regrets and harrowing recollections that haunted his brain.

But neither change of scene nor wildest adventure could succeed in bringing any comfort or peace to his wounded and remorseful heart; and at last, overruled by an irresistible longing to return to the scene of his trouble, he set sail for Russia once more, and

upon arriving in St. Petersburg, he was sought out by his old friends, and induced to remain there for awhile. On receiving an invitation from one of his near relations, Prince Gremin, a nobleman of high position and honours, to a magnificent ball, he was persuaded to accept this; and when the evening arrived, he proceeded to attend the function, though very much against his will.

But even such a brilliant scene as this could not bring distraction to the torn and weary heart of Eugene Onegin; and as he wandered restlessly from room to room, his self-accusing thoughts still haunted him, and the memory of the fatal duel was again pictured in his mind as vividly as ever. Presently, however, he noticed a stir among the guests, and a subdued murmur of admiration; and following their gaze, he saw that the centre of attraction was a beautiful young woman, richly clad, and sparkling with jewels, who was passing from one group to another with easy dignity, bestowing smiles and gracious words on all. A second glance told Onegin that this brilliant figure was Tatiana, the young daughter of Frau Larina, the romantic maiden who had so impulsively offered him her fresh girlish love a few years ago; Tatiana, no longer a dreamy child, but grown up into a lovely, soulful woman, gracious and self-controlled, a very queen even amidst this dazzling array of fair women.

Tatiana, it was indeed, who had been taken from her quiet country home to become the admired wife of Prince Gremin, who, though many years older, yet loved her tenderly, and did all in his power to make her happy; and the fair young girl, though she

could not give him love, yet made him a dutiful and devoted wife, and soon learned to bear her exalted position with becoming dignity.

Now, as Onegin gazed once again upon Tatiana, always interesting to him, but doubly so in her matured beauty, with all her natural charms of mind, body and disposition intensified a hundredfold, his heart suddenly throbbed with a new and strange feeling of exaltation, and he who had thought himself dead to all passion, felt his pulses quicken and a thrill of the keenest joy pass like an electric current through his whole being.

His emotion increased presently when Prince Gremin brought his beautiful young wife forward, and introduced her to him with pride and affection; for although Tatiana greeted him with easy calm and even coldness, making no attempt to hide their former acquaintance, yet the intense look of repressed passion in her deep tender eyes told him plainly that her feeling for him had not altered, but deepened with her growth. As she moved away again on the arm of her husband, Onegin felt the sharp pangs of jealousy for the first time in his life, and knew that he now loved this woman with his whole heart; and he was seized with a passionate desire to possess the love he had once refused.

Unable to restrain his overwhelming feelings, he determined to declare himself at all costs; and, making his way to a retired spot, he waited until Tatiana came by alone; and then, hastening towards her, trembling with emotion, he told her of his love, and implored her to grant him hers in return; but Tatiana reminded him bitterly that he had slighted

her proffered affection in former years, treating it as the mere fancy of a sentimental girl, and even blaming her for her boldness.

Cut to the quick by this just retort, Onegin sank to his knees and begged her with increasing emotion to have pity and to grant him the love he now longed for above all things; and his pleading was so powerful that Tatiana, unable to keep up her pretence of coldness any longer, admitted that her passion for him was still the same, and for a few moments a feeling of delirious joy filled her heart at the thought that her love was at last returned.

But when Onegin next entreated her to leave her home with him, that they might be yet happy together, since theirs was a love that would not be denied, then the young wife declared in broken accents that she would not be untrue to her husband, no matter how hard it might be to refuse the pleading of the man she loved.

Again and again, Onegin passionately besought her to obey the dictates of her heart, and to fly with him; but Tatiana, though tempted almost beyond endurance, still brokenly, yet firmly, refused, and at last, fearing to remain longer lest her resolution should break down, she fled away from his presence with a last distracted look.

Then Onegin, full of despair, and feeling that happiness could never now be his, drew forth a pistol that he had carried with him on his travels; and, since he cared no longer to live, he drew the trigger, and fell lifeless to the ground!

AÏDA.

During the reign of one of the great Pharaohs of Egypt, Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, declared war against the Egyptians, and invaded their country. In spite of their daring, however, the Ethiopians were beaten time after time; for the Egyptian army was then at the height of its glory, and was victorious wherever it went.

After one of his most crushing defeats, Amonasro had to bear yet another bitter blow, for amongst the many captives carried away by the all-conquering Egyptians, was his own fair young daughter, the Princess Aïda.

Although unaware of their lovely captive's high rank, the conquerors guarded her with special care, because of her dazzling beauty and gentle grace; and upon her arrival in Memphis, the great Pharaoh presented her as a slave to his daughter Amneris. The Princess of Egypt was so pleased with the sweet charms of the girl-captive, that she refused to regard her as merely an ordinary slave, but treated her instead with the familiarity and affection of a sister; and so for a time, Aïda's bonds rested but lightly upon her, and except for a natural grief for the sufferings and wrongs of her beloved country,

and her own enforced exile, she had little to trouble her. But after awhile, when the joy of a great love came into her life, a change took place; and then for the captive maid, black storm-clouds of woe quickly gathered around.

Radames, a handsome young officer in the King's Guards, owing to his high position, had frequent access into the presence of the Princess and her attendants; and from the very first moment his eyes rested upon the beautiful and gentle Aïda a passionate love for her sprang up within his heart, which deepened and strengthened daily. His love was quickly returned by the captive maid; and although at first her conscience blamed her for loving the enemy of her country, she could not long struggle against a passion that would not be subdued, and so resigned her heart unreservedly into the keeping of the handsome young Egyptian.

Their joy, however, though they tried to keep it secret, was not long permitted to remain unclouded, for the noble Radames was also beloved by the Princess Amneris, whose proud and passionate nature could brook no rival in her affections. For long, the fair Amneris had cherished her passion, and had vainly longed to have it requited; but Radames, though he quickly guessed her secret, refused to meet her open advances, for he was too noble to accept favours from one whom he could not love. Yet, in spite of the young officer's coldness, Amneris had always hoped to win his affection in the end; but with the advent of Aïda, her hopes were quickly dashed to the ground. For although Radames and the beautiful slave at first tried to hide their love,

the jealous eyes of the Princess speedily detected it; and then, determined that her passion should not be slighted, she still used all the means in her power to obtain her heart's desire.

War was soon again declared between the rival countries, the King of Ethiopia having once more gathered a large army together and already invested Thebes; and the Egyptians having also massed their mighty forces, instructions were given to the priests of Isis to learn the will of the goddess as to who should lead them against the foe. On a certain day, the priests declared that the dread goddess had spoken; and Pharaoh then called together all the officers of his forces, that he might announce to them the name of their chosen leader.

The young Radames, who had already proved himself brave and fearless in battle, had great ambition to distinguish himself in the coming campaign in a greater degree; and upon hearing that the goddess had named the champion of Egypt, he was filled with eager anticipation, hardly daring to hope that the chosen one might prove to be himself, yet longing above all things that it might indeed be so, for he now had a greater incentive than ever to win renown, because of the exquisite joy of laying his laurels at the feet of his beloved Aïda; and as he wandered early into the vast hall of the royal palace on the day on which the announcement was to be made, his mind was full of this sweet, delirious thought. But his happy reflections were presently interrupted by the entrance of the Princess of Egypt, who, quickly noting his rapt expression, desired him to tell her of his pleasant thoughts; and Radames, on his guard

at once, replied that, carried away by his ambition, he had been daring to hope that he might be the leader chosen to head the Egyptian army.

But Amneris was not satisfied with this, and softly asked if his mind were not rather occupied with some fairer attraction to be found in Memphis; and as Radames was vainly endeavouring to frame an answer to this pertinent question, the object of his happy thoughts, the beautiful Aïda herself, came into the hall with sad, downcast looks, for she had been weeping for the sufferings of her country.

As the young officer's eyes fell upon the fair form of his beloved one, he could not repress an exclamation of delight; and this, coupled with the tender glances unconsciously exchanged between the lovers, confirmed the former suspicions of the Princess, whose heart was straightway filled with a consuming jealousy. The entrance of Pharaoh with his ministers, officers, and guards, together with the priests of Isis, prevented any outburst of passion at that moment, and as soon as the Court was assembled, the great business of the day went forward.

After the King had scornfully reminded the company of the presumption of the Ethiopian monarch in daring to invade their land, and when the warriors had answered his proud call to arms with eager cries of vengeance, the name of the champion chosen by the goddess Isis to lead them to victory was declared; and amidst a sudden hush of breathless expectancy, Pharaoh announced in a clear ringing voice: "The chosen leader of our host is Radames, the Brave!"

A wave of overwhelming joy swept through the

heart of Radames at this glad fulfilment of his dearest wish; and as he breathed a prayer of gratitude to the goddess who had thus favoured him, a thunder of applause burst from the assembled company, for though but young in years, the chosen warrior was honoured and beloved by all.

The Princess Amneris then came forward, and placed the royal standard of Egypt in the hands of Radames, bidding him in a voice that trembled with emotion to bear it ever into the paths of victory and renown; for she was filled with exaltation that the man she loved was chosen for this honour, and already looked ahead to the time when he should return, covered with glory, a hero for whom even the hand of a Princess of Egypt would not be too great a reward.

But Aïda was filled with despair, being torn by conflicting feelings; and when all the resplendent company had departed to the Temple of Vulcan to witness the investiture and dedication of Radames to his heaven-chosen office, she remained behind, that none might witness her sorrow.

"How dare I wish victory to my beloved one, when that means defeat and bondage for my native land?" she murmured, in anguish. "Shall I desire my own royal father, my brothers, and my people to be destroyed? Yet, if they are victorious, my lover will be dishonoured and ruined! Alas, why am I so tormented! Uuhappy maid that I am, to love the enemy of my country!"

Overcome by these torturing thoughts, poor Aïda crept away to her own chamber, where her tears might flow unhindered; for she dared not trust her-

self where curious eyes might witness her emotion.

Meanwhile, the dedication service was taking place in the Temple of Vulcan; and here, amidst great pomp and the performance of many strange and mysterious rites, Radames was solemnly invested by Ramphis, the High Priest, with the sacred arms pertaining to his position as leader of the Egyptian army. When the investiture was over, the priests and assembled warriors broke into a sacred song of dedication and encouragement; and as Radames went forth from the Temple, he was filled with enthusiasm for the great cause he had embraced, and eager anticipation of success.

Nor were these anticipations vain; for the Egyptian forces again carried all before them, and defeated the Ethiopians on every side.

Thus it came about that, after driving the enemies of his country away from the land, the young Radames returned to Memphis a victorious hero, covered with glory and honour, and followed by a long train of captives to make his triumph complete.

Amongst these captives, though unknown to all, was Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, himself, who having gone into the field disguised as an ordinary officer, had escaped recognition; and, though his proud spirit revolted against the degradation of being thus taken prisoner, he yet went to Memphis with the hope that he might there meet with his lost daughter, and also learn something of his enemies' plans.

On the day on which Radames was to make his triumphal entry into the city, great preparations were made to receive him with all the pomp and

magnificence usually associated with such a pageant; and within the royal palace, the Princess of Egypt commanded her slaves to sing the praises of her hero, that the weary waiting-time might pass the quicker. For Amneris was filled with joyous expectation; for she felt that the victor's reward would certainly be her own hand in marriage, and thus her dearest hopes be realised. She therefore listened to the laudatory songs of her slaves with unrestrained joy; but upon the entry of Aïda, her brow grew dark, for the beautiful slave's presence at that moment revived the jealous feelings which had remained dormant during the absence of Radames.

In order to prove whether Aïda's love was still the same, Amneris, in the course of conversation, announced that Radames had been killed in battle, and her frown grew deeper still when Aïda, full of grief at this terrible news, broke forth into a tearful lament. As a further proof, however, she added immediately: "Nay, I did but wish to fright thee! Calm thyself, for the brave Radames lives yet!"

Upon hearing this, Aïda, her face transfigured with joy, sank upon her knees, and uttered a prayer of gratitude that her beloved one had been saved; and then, Amneris, unable to restrain her jealous anger any longer, sprang forward with blazing eyes, crying with haughty fury: "What, thou, a slave, to dare to aspire to one whom the daughter of Pharaoh deigns to love! Know, rash maiden, that the Princess of Egypt will brook no rival!"

Then, unheeding Aïda's gentle plea for mercy, the passionate Princess bade her prepare to meet her doom, since she was determined to humble her to

the dust for her presumption; but at that moment, hearing sounds which told her that the festival was about to commence, her mood suddenly changed to expectancy again, and she went to join her father upon the throne which had been set up at the city gates, through which the triumphal procession had to pass, bidding Aïda attend her.

Radames was received with great kindness and favour by Pharaoh, who showered praises and thanks upon him for the mighty deeds he had performed; and as the young conqueror knelt, overcome, at the foot of the throne, the Princess Amneris with her own hands placed the crown of victory upon his brow with gentle tenderness.

The King now desired to see the prisoners who had been taken in battle; and as the captives one by one passed the throne, Aïda uttered a cry of surprise and grief, and, running into the arms of Amonasro, who was one of them, greeted him tenderly as her father. Amonasro, however, whispered to her not to disclose his true identity; and so when the company gathered round, on hearing that he was the beautiful slave girl's father, the disguised king related a feasible story as to his capture, describing himself as an ordinary Ethiopian officer, which was readily enough believed.

Pharaoh now desired Radames to name any favour he pleased, which should be immediately granted; and the young victor, whose heart was as yet unhardened by the fortunes of war, besought the King to set all the captives free, as his reward.

But Ramphis, the High Priest, and the other counsellors declared that this would be an act of folly;

and when they saw that Pharaoh would not deny the request that had been made, they entreated that at least it would be better to retain Aïda's father as a hostage of peace. To this, Pharaoh agreed, giving orders that all the other captives should be set free; and then, leading Amneris forward, he placed her hand in that of Radames, declaring before all the people that the Princess of Egypt was the prize he had destined for the deliverer of the country.

Amneris was radiant with joy, having thus secured her dearest wish, and, feeling that she need no longer fear Aïda as a rival; but Radames was plunged in despair, for he was determined to wed no other maid but Aïda, whom he loved so passionately, and for whose sweet sake he had crowned himself with laurels. Aïda, too, was filled with grief, for Radames wed, naught remained to her but death.

Radames, however, saw that nothing was to be gained just then by refusing to accept the reward offered to him; and so he prudently permitted himself to be regarded as the affianced husband of Amneris, trusting to find some means of disentangling himself later on. He still saw Aïda from time to time in the palace, and sometimes found means to address a few words to her; but these opportunities were few and far between; and at last, despairing of ever securing a sufficiently long interview in which to talk over their plans, he invited her to meet him on the eve before his wedding-day, outside the Temple of Isis.

Now, Amonasro, who was also lodged in the Palace, had quickly observed the love that existed between Aïda and Radames; and having learnt from

the soldiers that the scattered forces of Ethiopia had once more been banded together to invade Egypt, he determined to make use of his daughter's love as a means of securing information as to the Egyptians' war plans. For this reason, having overheard the arrangement made for the lovers' meeting, he managed to creep unseen by the guards from the palace, and made his way to the Temple of Isis.

As it happened, the Princess Amneris had also arranged to visit the Temple of Isis that night, in order to offer prayers and incense to the goddess on this the last evening of her maidenhood, in accordance with an ancient custom; and attended by women-slaves and guards, she arrived soon after darkness had set in, and was immediately conducted by Ramphis, the High Priest, into the Temple, where she began her vigil.

No sooner had the Princess and her party retired within the sacred building, than Aïda, alone and unattended, drew near, trembling with fear; and almost immediately she was joined by her father, who had awaited her arrival in a hiding-place close by. Quickly reassuring the frightened maiden, Amonasro informed her of the service he wished her to do for him; and after declaring that his reassembled forces were already prepared and waiting for battle, reminding her also of the wretched condition of their people, he entreated her to discover from her lover by what path the Egyptians intended to surprise their enemies, a fact which, in the hands of the Ethiopians, meant success to their enterprise.

At first, Aïda refused indignantly to ask her lover to be disloyal to the arms he bore; but upon Amon-

asro declaring reproachfully and angrily that he would no longer regard her as his daughter if she thus refused to help her country, she reluctantly promised to seek the information needed. Amonasro now retired to his hiding-place, and as he departed, Radames came up to the meeting-place, and clasped Aïda in his arms in a passionate embrace.

When the first joy of meeting was over, Aïda asked her lover to tell her of his plans, for since his nuptials with the Princess were now so near at hand, it seemed well-nigh impossible for him to avoid the step, which was the express command of the King and the wish of the people; and the hopelessness of the situation made her have misgivings whether he would care to make so great a sacrifice for her sake. Radames, however, declared that not all the wealth of Egypt could make up to him for the loss of Aïda's love; and with eager enthusiasm, he declared to her that early next morning he would join the Egyptian forces now under arms, and after leading them once more to victory, he would return triumphant to the city, and then, telling the King of his love for the Ethiopian maid, beseech him of his mercy to grant him her hand in marriage as a reward.

But Aïda was not satisfied with this, knowing that the rage and jealousy of Amneris would never permit them to marry; and she cried eagerly:

"Nay, there is but one course, my beloved! Let us fly to-night, and in a far-away land, where we are not known, we may pass our life in perfect joy together!"

Then, seeing that Radames hesitated at this suggestion, which meant his resignation of all the glory

and renown he had won, she thrust him from her, exclaiming passionately: "Ah, then, you love me not! Return to the Princess of Egypt, and in the enjoyment of her embraces forget poor Aïda, who would now gladly seek death!"

This was more than Radames could endure; and, clasping Aïda in his arms once again, he declared that they would indeed fly that night, since her love was more to him than anything else the world could offer.

Intoxicated with the intensity of their passion, the lovers prepared to carry out their resolve at once; but, as they were about to depart, Aïda, remembering with a pang her father's command, said in a trembling voice: "How shall we escape being seen by the Egyptian soldiers?"

"All will be well," returned Radames reassuringly. "If we avoid the Pass of Napata, where they lie hidden!"

No sooner had he spoken these fatal words, than Amonasro, having thus learnt the secret he had longed to possess, sprang from his hiding-place, and boldly approaching the lovers, announced to the young Egyptian that he was the King of Ethiopia.

Radames was now overcome with dismay that he had, though unconsciously, betrayed his country's cause into the hands of her enemies; but Amonasro, declaring that no blame could ever attach to him, entreated him to join the Ethiopian ranks, where glory awaited him, and the hand of Aïda should be his reward.

At that moment, however, the Princess Amneris, and Ramphis, the High Priest, emerged from the

Temple, having heard all that had passed; and calling to the guards, they bade them seize the three offenders at once. Radames, calling to Amonasro and Aïda to fly for their lives, engaged the attention of the guards until he knew that the Ethiopian King and his daughter had escaped to a safe distance; and then, nobly scorning to avoid the just wrath of the monarch whom he had so unwittingly betrayed, he yielded himself without a struggle into the hands of the High Priest, and was carried away captive to await his doom.

A few days later, Radames was brought to the Hall of Judgment within the royal palace, to be tried as a traitor, and to receive the sentence of death; but as the guards were conducting him thither, they were accosted by the Princess Amneris, who imperiously demanded to speak with the prisoner.

The guards having fallen back respectfully, Amneris addressed Radames, asking him if he was prepared to die the death of a traitor, or if he desired to live; for the proud Princess was still unable to repress the love which consumed her, in spite of her anger that it was not returned, and she was determined to offer the object of her affections a means of saving his life.

Radames, however, answered sorrowfully that he had no further desire to live, since Aïda was lost to him for ever; for he believed her to be dead, and in his grief he even accused the Princess of being the cause of her death. But Amneris declared that this was not so, since Aïda still lived; for though her father had been slain in the battle that had just taken place, his daughter had managed to escape, though none knew of her whereabouts.

Then, with passionate earnestness, Amneris besought Radames to renounce all thought of Aïda for ever, thus hoping that she might herself reign in his heart at last; and she added that if he would do so, she would intercede for his life with the King, who loved her so well that he would grant her even so great a request as this. But Radames declared staunchly that no power on earth could ever induce him to thrust the dear image of Aïda from his heart; and since his beloved one was now lost to him, he should welcome death with gladness.

"Go, then, and die!" cried Amneris, enraged that her love should be thus slighted yet again; and then, as Radames passed into the Hall of Judgment, she burst into a wild paroxysm of weeping, knowing that nothing could now save him, since once in the presence of his judges, his doom was sealed.

Full of remorse that she had not called him back, she crouched near the portal, and listened to what passed within; for though in her heart she realised that Radames was innocent, yet she knew that he would be condemned, since he had done, though unwittingly, a traitor's deed.

To the accusations made against him, Radames answered not a word, for in spite of his clear conscience, he also knew that defence was useless; and when the High Priest pronounced the doom of living incarceration as the traitor's sentence, he bowed his head in resignation, having no longer the desire to live.

Amneris, however, was filled with rage on hearing the cruel sentence passed upon the man she still loved; and when the priests issued forth from the

Hall of Judgment, she passionately commanded them to revoke their judgment. But Ramphis, the High Priest, whose might and sacred power could not be encroached upon even by a Princess of Egypt, sternly replied, "The traitor's doom has gone forth, and none can alter it!"

Then, heedless of the wailing curses that followed him, the relentless Priest passed on, and the despairing Princess was left alone with her sorrow and remorse.

Meanwhile, Radames was conducted to the Temple of Vulcan, and ushered into the subterranean vault in which he was to be buried alive; and as the stone that covered the opening was gradually lowered, the priests broke into the sacred hymn of death.

Radames stood resigned and unafraid upon the bottom step of the crypt; but just as the stone was falling into its socket, he heard a soft sigh behind him, and, turning, beheld, ere the last ray of light faded, the trembling form of his beloved Aïda!

Filled with amazement and horror that one so young and lovely should thus be entombed with him, Radames pressed and beat frantically upon the roof of the vault; but the stone had now fallen into its place, and he was powerless to dislodge it. As he sank despairing upon the step, Aïda groped her way through the darkness to his side; and in a sweet, exultant voice, bade him gently to be comforted, since, having foreseen his doom, she had of her own free will crept unobserved by the priests into the vault, preferring to die with him, rather than to live on alone.

Filled with gratitude at this wonderful proof of

love and devotion, Radames passionately embraced the triumphant Aïda, and thus clasped in each other's arms, the lovers calmly awaited their end, rejoicing that though in life they had been forced asunder, yet in death they were not divided!

LA TRAVIATA.

ONE night, towards the end of the reign of Le Grand Monarque, no more lively party could have been found in the whole of gay Paris, than that which was assembled in the *salon* of the beautiful and fascinating courtesan, Violetta Valèry; for with her accustomed extravagant generosity, the fair hostess had provided an entertainment upon the most lavish scale, so that the guests, feasted thus royally, and freed from conventional restraint, found it an easy matter to be merry, and to exercise their wit for the benefit of one another.

It was a brilliant company, too, for Violetta numbered amongst her admirers many scions of the nobility, besides the devotees of art; and since all were bent on pleasure, a constant flow of sparkling humour and joyous mirth on every side made it impossible for anyone to be dull.

The beautiful Violetta herself was one of the merriest of all that merry throng; for pleasure was as the very breath of life to her, and such a scene as this was her delight. Yet, in spite of natural inclination, her gaiety was not without physical effort; for indulgence in pleasure had developed inherent seeds of consumption with alarming rapidity, and already her frail form showed signs of the advance of the dread disease. Every now and then a sudden

Amongst the guests present to-night, was a n
some young man of noble family, Alfred Germi
who, although he had not yet confessed his pass
had given his whole heart to the lovely courte
and had loved her secretly for many months;
Violetta, who, though she had had many lovers,
never yet given her heart to anyone, had always
a thrill of joy when Alfred approached her, and k
that it was love she felt at last. She had, howe
tried to treat him with careless indifference, an
conquer the passion that was slowly but surely
veloping her whole being; for though she had
exercised any such scruples with her former admi
for his own sake she felt it better that he should
become her lover.

But Alfred was not to be discouraged by any
assumed coldness; and since he had determined t
clare himself that very evening, it was not
before he found an opportunity to do so.

Violetta presently suggested to her guests
they should crown their carousal with dancing;
upon this suggestion being received with accla
tion, she invited them to repair to the dancing *salon* beyond, and, springing from her couch, declared merrily that she would lead them. No sooner had she spoken, however, than a sudden faintness seized

her, and she fell back upon her couch, pale and trembling; but though her friends crowded round in anxious sympathy, she would not allow them to interrupt their pleasure on her account, bidding them with laughing carelessness to begin the dance without her, and to allow her to rest alone for a few moments.

No sooner had they gone, than Violetta rose slowly, and looked anxiously at herself in the nearest mirror, sighing deeply at the sight of her pale face; and at that moment, Alfred returned to the room, and, hurrying to her side, besought her to take more care of the life that was now so precious to him. He then went on to declare how passionately he loved her, and to entreat her to accept him as her lover; and though Violetta at first tried to treat the matter lightly and with gentle banter, she could not long struggle against the wild throbbing of her own heart, which told her only too plainly that she loved him in return. She therefore at last gave way to his pleading, and letting him now see that his love was returned, she determined to forego all her former scruples on his behalf, that they might both experience that deep wondrous happiness that only comes once in a life-time.

After this, the lovers met constantly, and at length became so enthralled in their passion that they could not bear to be separated; and at last, impatient of the society of their friends, they retired to a country house some little distance out of Paris, and owned by Violetta, where they could enjoy their bliss undisturbed.

Here they spent three months of perfect happiness,

falling more deeply in love every day; and thus wrapped up in each other's sweet presence, they lived for one another alone, and seemed oblivious of the whole world.

But such absorbing joy could not last for ever, and at length the dream was broken.

One day, on returning to the house after a few hours' absence spent in hunting, Alfred met Violetta's maid, Annina; and noticing that the girl appeared travel-stained and somewhat disturbed, he stopped to enquire the reason of her flustered state. Annina replied that she had just returned from Paris, whither she had been sent on business for her mistress; and upon being questioned further, she revealed the fact that she had been making arrangements for the sale of all Violetta's property and possessions, since the luxurious manner in which they had been living of late was expensive, and more means were needed to keep it up.

Filled with compunction that his own selfish enjoyment should have made him forgetful of such mundane but necessary matters, and horrified that Violetta should be about to make such a sacrifice on his behalf, Alfred declared that he would also go to Paris at once to settle the difficulty by paying over a large sum of money to prevent the sales, and, bidding Annina say nothing to her mistress about the matter, he set off for Paris immediately, saying that he would return in a few hours.

Violetta soon afterwards came from her room, and, entering a pretty salon that opened out on to the garden, she began to look through a number of papers relating to her business affairs, and to read

her letters; and amongst these latter, she found a note from her most intimate friend, Flora Bervoix, requesting her presence at a masked ball that evening.

As the happy Violetta was reading this note, and laughingly reflecting that Flora would look in vain for her that evening, a stranger was ushered into the room; and upon turning to greet her visitor, she beheld a gentleman of advanced years, and of haughty, aristocratic appearance, who immediately announced that he was the father of Alfred Germont, her lover, whom, he added in the same breath, she was bringing to ruin.

Then, as Violetta drew back indignantly at these words, Monsieur de Germont, though greatly impressed by her dazzling beauty and proud bearing, went on with the difficult task he had come to perform, that of persuading her to renounce his son, and leave him for ever; and in eloquent, but gentle tones, he declared that not only was she ruining Alfred's own social position as heir to one of the proudest names in France, but she was also the means of his sister's hand being refused in marriage, since her aristocratic suitor refused to enter their family whilst her brother was held in thrall by the lovely courtesan.

At first, Violetta hoped that her separation from Alfred was only desired to be a temporary one, in order that his sister's marriage might be arranged; but when she found it was required that they should never meet again, she was overcome with grief, and declared passionately that this could never be, since she could not bear to be parted from the only man she had ever loved.

Though truly grieving for the pain he was inflicting upon one so lovely, M. de Germont still continued his pleading; and he now implored Violetta to reflect upon the good deed she would be doing by renouncing a lover to whose worldly welfare she was a stumbling block, reminding her that in the years to come, when her beauty should have faded, it would be a consolation to her to remember that she had thus restored peace to one home.

By this time, Violetta was weeping bitterly, for she knew only too well that M. de Germont spoke the truth, and that Alfred's position was ruined by his connection with herself; and her love for him was so great that she determined for his sake to make the sacrifice that was required, and in a broken voice declared that she would leave him that very day.

M. de Germont, overcome with gratitude and admiration for her noble resolve, embraced her tenderly, as though she were his own daughter, half regretting the harsh course he had felt compelled to take with one who possessed so generous and brave a heart; and he then retired to another room, there to await the return of Alfred, to whom Violetta promised to write a farewell message at once.

Having written this heartrending note, Violetta was about to leave the room, when Alfred himself entered, having finished his business in Paris; and seeing her sad looks, he hurried to her side at once, enquiring anxiously for the cause of her gloom. Violetta, however, though terribly agitated, only declared that she wished to hear him say once again that he loved her; and when Alfred had amply satisfied her request, and embraced her tenderly, she re-

tired to the garden without informing him of her new resolve. Here she gave her note into the hands of a servant to deliver to his master; and then, entering a carriage that was already waiting for her, she drove away to Paris with great speed, firmly resolved to keep her promise of renouncing her lover for ever.

By the time the servant delivered the note, she was already far away; and when Alfred read her farewell message, and realised that she had left him with the intention of severing their connection, he was filled with despair. His grief, however, presently turned to jealousy, on perceiving on the table the note from Flora Bervoix, which Violetta had forgotten in her haste, for he immediately drew from this the mistaken conclusion that she had left him to attend Flora's ball that night, with a view to meeting a former admirer, the Baron Duphol, whom he had always regarded as a rival.

It was in vain that his father, who entered the room at this moment, endeavoured to calm the agitated young man, entreating him tenderly to think no more of Violetta, but to return to his own ancestral home, where a glad welcome awaited him; for Alfred, now consumed with bitter jealousy, declared that he would also attend the ball at the house of Flora Bervoix that night, to learn the truth, and avenge his wrongs. Heedless of his father's continued pleadings for him to return to his home, he set off for Paris at once; and M. de Germont, now afraid to leave his headstrong son when in such a disturbed state, followed him, hoping that he might yet be able to curb his passionate outburst in some measure.

That evening a brilliant company of gay pleasure-seekers met at the house of Flora Bervoix, to enjoy the extravagant entertainment which she had prepared so lavishly; and amongst these guests was the Baron Duphol, together with other admirers of the beautiful Violetta. A grand new masque of Gipsies and Spanish Matadors and Picadors was one of the chief features of the entertainment; and it was shortly after this had taken place that Alfred entered, and mingled with the maskers and other guests at the gaming tables.

Violetta also arrived about this time, and, in company with the Baron Duphol, who immediately took her on his arm on seeing her unescorted, moved from room to room, until the gaming tables were reached; and here, on beholding the very man she most wished to avoid, in order to keep her promise to the elder de Germont, the poor girl was so overcome with conflicting feelings, that she drew back, pale and trembling, afraid of what his greeting would be at seeing her in the company of his most detested rival.

Alfred was, indeed, strung up to a high pitch of excitement, and his jealousy and anger was increased tenfold at thus beholding the two together, his suspicions of Violetta's desertion of himself being now confirmed; but, assuming for the time being a careless tone, he challenged the Baron to play with him, which Duphol haughtily accepted.

The stakes were very high, and were doubled each time; and to the amazement of all, Alfred won again and again, his luck being so phenomenally great that the announcement of supper came as a relief to all.

Violetta, who had watched this contest between her lover and the Baron with the greatest anxiety, feeling that their scarcely suppressed passion would break forth on the slightest provocation, and that a duel might be the result, now found an opportunity of attracting Alfred's attention; and, having succeeded in drawing him apart from the guests, she implored him to leave the house, and thus avoid the danger she feared, should a quarrel take place between himself and the Baron. But Alfred, mistaking her motive, and thinking she only wished to save her new lover from his wrath, repulsed her with scorn; and now quite beside himself with jealousy, he called the guests from the supper table, and openly insulted her before them all, declaring that the favours he had accepted from her when she had professed to love him he now repudiated, and, flinging his heavily-weighted purse at her feet, he called them to witness that he had now paid her for all she had been to him.

Overcome with grief, and wounded to the heart at hearing these cruel words from one whom she loved so passionately, and for whom she had just made so great a sacrifice, poor Violetta fell back fainting into the arms of the sympathetic Flora; and the Baron Duphol immediately demanded satisfaction for the insult that had been put upon the lady he honoured with his attentions, a challenge which Alfred eagerly accepted, reckless of what might happen to him, but full of despair. M. de Germont, who had also witnessed this terrible scene with much grief, now led his agitated son away; and the entertainment ended in confusion and dismay.

Violetta now sank quickly, and grew weaker from day to day; for the dread disease that held her in remorseless grip had been accelerated and alarmingly developed by the terrible mental anguish she had been called upon to suffer, and her end grew rapidly nearer, for the doctor could give no hope of her recovery.

One day, however, as she reclined in bed, being no longer able to rise, she received a letter from M. de Germont, which revived her drooping spirits, and made her feel almost better for the time being; for the proud aristocrat, who had once desired her to renounce his son's love, now entreated her to accept it, for her heroic sacrifice and generous nature had completely won his heart, and he now desired above all things to see them united. He wrote that the duel had taken place, and that though Duphol had been wounded, he was recovering; and he added that Alfred was even now on his way to visit her, and to entreat her pardon, having been told of the noble part she had played, and realising the mistake he had made in supposing that she had accepted Duphol as a lover.

She had scarcely finished reading the letter, when Alfred himself was announced, followed shortly afterwards by his father; and hastening forward with eager steps, the young man clasped his beloved one in his arms, and the two rejoiced together with full hearts.

But the delight of seeing her lover once more was too much of an effort for the enfeebled Violetta, who soon fell back fainting, and in a dying condition; and with anxious haste the doctor was summoned immediately.

Alfred, full of horror at now beholding the frailty of the suffering girl's appearance, fell on his knees beside her, passionately imploring her to revive and live for his sake; and his father also added his entreaties, encouraging her by declaring that he hoped to call her his daughter yet.

Violetta, rejoicing at thus finding herself to be so greatly beloved, tried to make an effort to cast off the terrible faintness that constantly seized her; and upon the arrival of the doctor, in spite of the latter's look of pity, she declared that she must now live since such perfect happiness awaited her, and with a bright smile announced that she already felt better.

But scarcely had she spoken thus bravely, than she fell back upon her pillows with closed eyes; and as Alfred bent tenderly over her, he uttered a cry of grief and despair, for he saw that his beautiful and beloved Violetta was dead!

PAGLIACCI

(Punchinello.)

It was the Feast of the Assumption, and the light-hearted inhabitants of a pretty village in Calabria had turned out in full force to make the most of the last day of a successful fair that had been held in their midst. The fair ground was crowded with holiday makers, all bent on amusement, and a brisk business was carried on at the various shows and booths from morning till night.

A company of strolling players had been one of the chief attractions of the fair; and when during the afternoon, Canio, the master of the troupe, mounted the steps of his portable theatre, and, beating a noisy drum, invited the holiday-makers to attend the last performance to be given that evening, the announcement was hailed with great delight. The merry youths and maidens all signified their intention of witnessing the play, and then Canio, assured of a good audience, went to spend the intervening time at the village tavern, together with his friend Beppo, the Harlequin of the company.

The travelling theatre had been set up close beside a high wall that separated the fair-ground from the country road; and no sooner had Canio departed,

than his pretty young actress wife, Nedda, came out from the booth, and began to stroll towards this wall, as though expecting to see someone appear above it.

At the same moment, a hunchback named Tonio, who was clown to the troupe, quickly approached and addressed her in endearing terms; for, though distorted in mind as well as in body, the poor buffoon had yet fallen a victim to the charms of his master's wife, and had long awaited this opportunity to declare his love. But the pretty Nedda, who hated and despised the hunchback, only laughed in derision at his protestations; and when the eager Tonio, rendered reckless by his passion, attempted boldly to seize her in his arms, she angrily snatched up a whip that was lying near, and began to belabour him with it. The wretched hunchback was now obliged to beat a hasty retreat; but, full of rage at her scornful treatment of him, he determined to revenge himself upon her, and slunk off with evil in his heart.

As Nedda heaved a sigh of relief after watching Tonio vanish in the crowd, she heard her own name softly uttered in tender accents, and, seeing the form of a handsome young man appearing above the wall, she hurried forward with delight, this second intruder on her solitude being as welcome as the first had been distasteful. For the pretty young actress had already wearied of her husband, whose coarser nature, and rough, almost savage love, repelled her; and so, when Silvio, a rich young farmer in the district, who had fallen in love with her at the theatre, found an opportunity to declare his passion, she had quickly

returned his love, finding relief and pleasure in his gentler manners and softer moods.

The lovers met in secret every day; for Nedda, though constantly afraid of her husband's anger should he discover the intrigue, was yet daring enough to seek happiness at the risk of danger; and now Silvio had come for a last interview, knowing that the troupe were to depart on the morrow, since this was the final day of the fair.

The rustic youth quickly scaled the wall; and, clasping his sweetheart in his arms, he besought her to fly with him that night, and leave a husband who was no better than a tyrant, and a life that was distasteful to her. For a short time, Nedda tried to resist Silvio's pleading, begging him not to tempt her; but at length, overcome by his passionate entreaties, she yielded, and promised to meet him that night after the last performance was over at the theatre, that they might escape away together.

Whilst the lovers were thus engrossed, Tonio returned, and watched this pretty scene for a few moments unobserved; and then, suddenly seeing in this incident a means of revenging himself upon Nedda for her disdainful treatment of himself, he crept softly away, and departed to the village tavern to disclose to Canio the story of his wife's faithlessness.

On hearing the hunchback's tale, Canio was overwhelmed with rage and jealousy, and instantly returned with him to the theatre; and he arrived on the scene just in time to see Silvio disappearing over the wall and waving a tender farewell to Nedda, who answered him lovingly from below, repeating her promise to meet him after dark.

Enraged at this proof of his beautiful wife's infidelity, the injured husband ran forward to intercept the departing lover; but Silvio was already on the other side of the wall, and beyond his reach. Canio then turned furiously upon the trembling Nedda, and roughly seizing her by the arm, he demanded the name of her lover. But Nedda, though terrified by her husband's angry words and threatening aspect, boldly refused to betray the man she loved; and Canio, maddened by her refusal, impetuously drew his dagger from its sheath, declaring that he would kill her.

At this moment, Beppo appeared, having followed his friend from the tavern, fearing that something was wrong; and, hearing Canio's threat, he sprang forward at once, and snatched the weapon from his hand, begging him to calm himself and prepare for the evening's performance at the theatre, since the holiday-makers were already clamouring for admission.

After much trouble, Canio was at length persuaded to remember the duties of his profession, and to release Nedda, who quickly escaped to the theatre; and having thus pacified his friend for the time being, Beppo began to make preparations for the approaching entertainment. The hunchback, too, seeing now that he must wait a little longer before carrying out his plan of vengeance, begged his master to dress for the play, cunningly suggesting that Nedda's lover would probably attend the theatre that night, and thus give them an opportunity of attacking him; and at last, Canio, full of grief and despair (for he loved his wife passionately in his

rough, savage way), was persuaded to take part in the comedy, although a tragedy was in his heart.

A lively audience of village lads and maidens now quickly filled the benches that had been placed before the open stage; and those who could not get seats, stood on the rising ground at the back, all chattering together and eager for the play to begin.

Amongst those who managed to get a place near the front, was the handsome Silvio, who, as Tonio had predicted, had not been able to resist the temptation of watching his sweetheart from afar; and when Nedda, now clad in her stage dress as Columbine (which part she took in the play) presently appeared amongst the audience to collect the entrance money, he whispered in her ear a tender reminder of their meeting later on.

As it happened, the play chosen for performance that night, by a strange coincidence, proved to be a burlesque of the very incidents the actors themselves had just experienced, and the unsuspecting audience, though they little guessed it, were to be regaled with a page from real life, a repetition of the events that had occurred unobserved by them outside the theatre that afternoon—a comedy that was to end in a tragedy!

When the curtain went up, Columbine (personated by Nedda) was discovered waiting for her lover, Harlequin (played by Beppo), whom she was about to entertain to supper during the absence of her husband, Punchinello. An idiot-servant, Taddeo (played by Tonio), entered after the opening speech, carrying food for the supper; and after placing the viands on the table, he began to make a grotesque declaration

of love to Columbine, causing much laughter amongst the audience. Columbine, however, scornfully rejected his addresses, and bade him begone, and Harlequin, who entered through the window at that moment, soon drove off the importunate servant, and sent him to keep watch below. Harlequin and Columbine next went through an exaggerated love-scene, the faithless wife yielding to her lover's request to fly with him that night; and then, just as they had settled down to enjoy their feast together, Taddeo ran into the room again, announcing in dramatic tones to Columbine that her husband had just returned home unexpectedly, and was already vowing vengeance on her for entertaining a stranger during his absence. With a parting injunction, Harlequin very ungallantly disappeared through the window, following the example of Taddeo, who had already decamped in another direction; and just as Columbine called out a tender farewell to her departing lover, Punchinello (personated by Canio) dashed into the room.

Until now, the play had been a most amusing burlesque, and the audience had been kept in a state of constant laughter at the many ridiculous situations; but with the entrance of Punchinello, they quickly saw that more serious work was to follow. Now, it happened that Nedda, as Columbine, in her farewell speech to Harlequin, had unconsciously made use of the very same words she had addressed to her real lover in the afternoon; and Canio, remembering only too well the speech that had brought such despair to his heart, gave vent to his jealous rage once more, and, forgetting the words of the play,

he seized his wife by the arm, and again demanded the name of her lover. Nedda, surprised and alarmed by this unrehearsed incident of the play, went on with her Columbine speeches, and for a short time Canio returned to his part of Punchinello, and the play proceeded. Columbine explained to the enraged spouse that it was only the foolish servant Taddeo who had been her guest at supper, and Taddeo, being discovered hiding in a cupboard, made a ludicrous speech, beseeching Punchinello not to doubt the fidelity of his wife, declaring in exaggerated terms that she would never deceive him. These words caused Canio's suppressed passion to break out once more, and, forgetting all but his own wrongs, he once more ordered Nedda to reveal the name of her lover, declaring passionately that he was Punchinello no longer, but the husband she had deceived.

The audience had at first been delighted at what they considered the fine acting of the injured Punchinello, frequently giving vent to enthusiastic rounds of applause; but now they began to grow restless, feeling uncomfortably that such an intensity of passion could hardly be assumed. It was in vain that Nedda endeavoured to go on with the words of the play; and, seeing that her maddened husband was in deadly earnest, she only sought to defend herself. In spite of his threats, she utterly refused to declare the name of her lover; and at last, driven to madness by her refusal, Canio, in a frenzy of jealousy, drew his dagger and plunged it into her heart.

The audience, no longer deceived, but now seeing that a real tragedy was going on before their eyes,

uttered loud shrieks of dismay; and Silvio, full of horror and despair, sprang upon the stage at a bound, and, lifting his dead love in his arms, implored her in grief-stricken accents to speak to him once again. But Canio leaped upon him instantly, knowing now that the handsome young farmer was his rival and the cause of his woe; and with a second stroke of his dagger, he laid the bereaved lover dead beside his stricken mistress.

For a few moments, the frenzied Canio stood dazed and stupefied, gazing upon his dreadful handiwork; and then, as the spectators sprang forward to seize him, he yielded himself quietly into their hands, muttering as they led him away: "The comedy is finished!"

STAR OF THE NORTH.

ONE sunny noontide, towards the end of the seventeenth century, a number of workmen in the shipyard of a certain little village in Finland were resting from their labours during the dinner hour, and as they chatted and laughed together a pastrycook presently appeared in their midst with a basket of fresh sweetmeats, and quickly began to do a roaring trade. For Danilowitz, the pastrycook, though not a native of the village, was a great favourite with the workmen, being a lively fellow, and ever ready to join in a merry jest; and since his wares were good, and of that delicate kind usually only to be got in large cities, he always found a ready market in the shipyard.

Amongst the group of idlers was one young man who alone continued his work, even during this hour of general relaxation. This industrious worker was a stranger also to the village, who had only taken up his abode there some few weeks ago, and was known amongst the villagers as Peter Michaeloff. But, though the simple peasants little guessed it, the young carpenter whom they treated as an equal was in reality none other than the Czar of Russia, Peter I., who, in accordance with his accustomed energy of character and love of thoroughness, had come thus to the village in humble dress and hired himself

out as a carpenter, in order to learn for himself the art of shipbuilding, and to know that his navy was being properly constructed. On his arrival in the village, he had fallen ill, and during his illness was tenderly nursed back to health by a fair maiden named Catherine Skavronski, whose brother, George, was a teacher of music; and having afterwards fallen deeply in love with this maiden, whose beauty and wonderful strength of character exercised extraordinary fascination over him, the young King lingered on in the village long after the time when he should have left. He was encouraged to this course by hearing Catherine declare one day that her dead mother, who had possessed wonderful gifts of prophecy, had foretold a brilliant future for her; and he determined to persevere in his wooing, since the maiden would fulfil her destiny if she became his bride.

Catherine usually appeared in the shipyard at noon-day, to sell spirits to the workmen, in which she did a good trade, and earned enough money to keep herself and her brother, who, being of a weaker nature, had always allowed his energetic sister to take the lead in all things connected with their welfare.

But to-day the pretty cantinière was not at her usual trade, and the merry workmen presently began to rally Peter on his gloomy looks, knowing well enough that the cause was to be found in the absence of his sweetheart, Catherine. Peter's passionate nature at all times could ill brook badinage of this kind, and it was with difficulty he now restrained himself; but just at that time, one of the workmen

began to sing a patriotic song in praise of Finland, and King Charles XII., and all joined in it uproariously, for the workmen were for the most part Finns or Swedes, to whom the sentiments of the song were acceptable.

Danilowitz, the pastrycook, however, remained silent, with a frown on his face; and when the song came to an end, he raised his glass to his lips, and cried fearlessly, "*I* pledge the Czar, brave Peter the First!"

Instantly there was a tumult amongst the men, who indignantly rushed forward to punish the rash man who had dared to drink to one whom they regard as the enemy of their country; but, to the surprise of Danilowitz, Peter sprang to his aid, and by his skilful defence, kept all at bay.

Just then, the bell for the recommencement of work clanged forth, and the workmen trooped off, and when they had gone, Peter and Danilowitz began to talk together, surprised at having thus discovered that they were countrymen, Danilowitz explaining that he found little opening for his trade in the small Finnish village, and thought of returning to his own country to seek employment under the Czar, whom he spoke of in terms of high praise, little dreaming that he stood before him; and Peter, pleased with the man's daring and evident ambition, invited him to return to Russia with himself, saying he also meant to seek service under the Czar, and prophesying success for his new friend should he join this army. Danilowitz eagerly agreed to this proposal, laughing light-heartedly at the honours which Peter declared were waiting for him; and when he had

gone off to dispose of the remainder of his wares elsewhere, Peter made his way to the house of George Skavronski.

Hearing George playing one of Catherine's favourite airs, Peter took his own flute from his pocket, and began to play the same tune in answer; and George quickly appeared at the door, praising his excellent performance, and inviting him to enter for a lesson, since he was one of his most promising pupils. Upon Peter enquiring the cause of Catherine's absence from her accustomed duties, George explained that she had gone to plead his cause with the uncle and guardian of Prascovia, the pretty maiden whom he loved and desired to marry that day; and whilst they were thus talking together, Catherine herself came in, and announced exultantly that she had succeeded in her mission.

Peter now seized the opportunity of pleading his own cause with Catherine, who, as usual, only gave him sharp and merry rebuffs for answer, for although she had really loved him deeply from the beginning of their acquaintance, she so thoroughly understood the weak points of his character, that she always declared she could not marry him until he learned to keep his passions in control, to be less impetuous, and not so determined to have his own way in every matter.

Although Peter greatly appreciated Catherine's clear insight into his character, and knew that she admired his nobler qualities and instincts, he loved her so passionately that her rebukes constantly filled him with impatience; and this afternoon, as usual, he quickly lost his temper, to the great amusement

of his tantalizing sweetheart, who cried merrily, "There! There! A pretty husband *you* would make, to be sure!"

Whilst Peter was vainly endeavouring to choke back his right royal wrath at this saucy speech, the pretty little Prascovia hurriedly entered the house, in great agitation; and as George ran to her side in tender concern, she declared that she had been pursued by a party of Kalmuks and Cossacks, who were even now following her to the house with evil intent.

All were alarmed by this news, but Catherine boldly avowed that all would be well, since she herself would address these wild tribesmen, who were, indeed, her kinsmen, since her mother had been their priestess and held in great reverence by them. So when the Kalmuks presently came dashing up, the brave girl ran out fearlessly to meet them, and commanded them instantly to forego their intention of raiding the house, in the name of her dead mother, the Priestess Vlasta; and on hearing this revered name, the wild troop immediately withdrew respectfully.

Then Catherine approached their leader, Gritzenko, and, seizing his hand, prophesied that promotion quickly awaited him in the army of the Czar; and filled with dreams of glory, Gritzenko soon led his men away.

When they had gone, George and Prascovia went off to make arrangements for their wedding that evening; and thus Catherine and Peter were left alone. Catherine, having noticed with pleasure that during the whole time she had spoken with the Kalmuks, Peter had stood near at hand, grimly hold-

ing a hatchet, in readiness to dash out to her aid at the least sign of danger, now spoke tenderly to him, declaring that such noble conduct endeared him to her; and Peter was filled with joy, for he felt that his cause was not so helpless after all, since he could see now that his love was returned, even though the high-spirited maiden did not as yet respect him. Thus fired with a passionate desire to win her regard at all costs, Peter impetuously determined to return with the Kalmuks to the army, and earn such renown as should compel her ungrudging admiration; and bidding Catherine a hasty farewell, he hurried off to seek out Danilowitz to return to Russia with him.

Catherine had not been long alone ere Prascovia returned, saying that all the preparations were now ready for her wedding that evening with George, who would shortly arrive with the wedding guests and musicians; and then, carelessly producing a letter, she handed it to her friend, saying it had been sent to her from the Burgomaster, and upon the letter being opened, the two girls read it together.

To their dismay, they found that this was an order for George to leave the village that night with the Muscovite soldiers who had just arrived, as he was one of twelve chosen recruits who had been impressed into the service of the Czar; but the Burgomaster added that if a substitute could be found to take his place, he would thus be freed from serving.

Prascovia was filled with distress and grief because her wedding could not now take place, and began to weep bitterly, knowing well that no substitute could be found for George, since all in the village hated the Russians, and would refuse to serve

the Czar unless compelled to do so; but Catherine, accustomed always to take her brother's troubles upon her own strong young shoulders, bade her dry her tears, and declared that she would herself take George's place as a recruit for a fortnight, so that he might be married that night after all, and also remain with his bride a short time before taking up his soldier's duties.

So when George returned, this plan was eagerly explained to him, and he promised to relieve Catherine of her difficult undertaking in a fortnight's time; and then, as the wedding guests, with the priest and musicians, shortly afterwards arrived, the marriage was celebrated with all the accustomed rejoicings and merriment.

Catherine herself joined gaily in the lively wedding songs, for she delighted in the happiness of her brother, and was quite regardless of the hardships and dangers she would shortly have to endure for his sake; but when the festivities were at their height she stole away unnoticed from the merry throng, and, dressing herself in male attire, went off courageously to join the recruits who were to march with the Russian troops that night.

And now for Catherine came a very difficult and trying time, since the training of a raw recruit was exceedingly exhausting and full of hardships, but the girl's own wonderful powers of endurance and dauntless spirit carried her through without misadventure, or discovery of her real identity.

At the end of a fortnight, the recruits all arrived at the Russian camp, where the imperial forces were gathered, and waiting to attack the armies of

Sweden, with which country they were then at war; and here Catherine met with her first difficulty. For the Kalmuk, Gritzenko, who had already attained promotion to the rank of a corporal, in accordance with her prophecy, had many times on the march eyed her with curiosity, as though he half recognised her; and on arriving in the camp, he called her up to him, saying that her face reminded him of a pretty maiden who used to sell spirits in the Finnish village they had just left.

Catherine, though trembling for fear of discovery, laughingly put him off by declaring that the maiden he spoke of must have been her own sister; and then, by entering into friendly conversation with the talkative soldier, she learnt from him, to her surprise and consternation, that a serious conspiracy amongst many of the chief officers was afoot in the camp, unknown to the general in command, and that Gritzenko himself was receiving large sums of money for carrying treasonable documents, though, being unable to read or write, he was quite ignorant of their contents and purpose, thinking conceitedly that the money bestowed upon him was given by the officers concerned as a reward for his own military zeal and good conduct. Catherine, however, being educated and quick-witted, quickly grasped the situation, and having hastily read the documents produced by Gritzenko, she kept the true knowledge of their contents to herself, leaving the ignorant soldier in his former belief, but afterwards wrote down the names of the officers concerned on a slip of paper, which she concealed in her coat, intending to form some plan of action later. Then, being ordered by Grit-

zenko to mount guard as sentinel outside a certain tent, within which a rich supper had been laid, pending the arrival of some distinguished officers, she commenced her patrol up and down.

Soon afterwards, whilst Catherine was at the far end of her beat, the expected officers arrived, and entered the tent, their features being unobserved by her; and these new arrivals were none other than Peter and Danilowitz, the latter already a colonel in the Russian army, and rejoicing in the confidence of his companion, whose true identity was of course now known to him.

Peter, though in the dress of a plain captain, was received respectfully by the general in command as Czar, but immediately requested that his *incognito* should be strictly preserved for the present, since he had been told of the conspiracy in the camp, and had boldly come to quell it in person, having already thought out a scheme by which success would be assured; and when the general had retired, astonished at the news, Peter and Danilowitz sat down to enjoy the supper that had been prepared for them, and which was served by two very pretty and lively little vivandières.

Peter, as he ever did in his moments of relaxation, gave himself up unreservedly to the pleasure of the moment; and casting aside for the time being the cares of state, he began to carouse gaily with Danilowitz, drinking deeply, and caressing the pretty vivandières with the accustomed license of the times.

Catherine, attracted by the sounds of hilarity that issued from the tent, and forgetful of military discipline, could not refrain from peeping through the

opening, and instantly recognising Peter, she was filled with joy on hearing her own name toasted by him at that moment. Her delight, however, quickly turned to indignation on beholding her lover, heated by the wine he had drunk, the next instant freely embracing the vivandière who so constantly kept his goblet filled; and as she continued to look angrily upon the scene, Gritzenko came by, and, discovering the sentry thus forgetful of his duty, instantly dragged her away, and ordered her into confinement.

Catherine, already upset by the scene within the tent, and resenting the rough handling of the Kalmuk, struck him angrily on the face, upon which Gritzenko, furious at being thus defied by a mere recruit, forced her into the tent before the officers, and, explaining her insubordination, demanded reparation.

Peter, impatient at this unwelcome interruption of his pleasure, and without even looking upon the offender, cried out carelessly: "Let him be shot!"

Catherine, now realizing the danger of her position, called out as she was being dragged away to execution, "Peter! Peter! Do not let me be killed, but save me!"

At first, Peter, still under the influence of the strong wines he had been drinking, did not heed her appeal, but as her last despairing cry rang out as she was hustled from the tent, his attention was suddenly arrested, and at length, recognising the voice as that of his beloved Catherine, he sprang to his feet in bewilderment. Then, the shock of his discovery quickly restoring his clouded senses, he

felt convinced that the young recruit was indeed the village maiden in disguise, and, overcome with horror that he had so carelessly given orders for her execution, he authoritatively commanded the pair to be brought back.

But Gritzenko, in his zeal, had already endeavoured to carry out his first command; and when he was at length brought back to Peter, he explained that the prisoner had attempted to escape by swimming the river close by, upon which he had promptly shot his victim in the water. Then, well satisfied with what he had done, the Kalmuk handed Peter a note, which he stated the young recruit had flung to him before plunging into the stream; and upon opening this missive, the now despairing lover saw that it contained the names of those officers concerned in the conspiracy, at the end of which was a message written in haste by Catherine, bidding him to use this information to advance himself in the favour of the Czar. Enclosed in the paper was the ring he had himself given to her; and as he gazed upon this ring, and read her last tender message of farewell, Peter was plunged into the deepest woe, realizing that by his own rash impetuosity the maiden he loved so passionately was now lost to him for ever.

At that moment, the leaders of the conspiracy entered the tent, and, regarding Peter and Danilowitz as belonging to their party, began to talk over their plans of insurrection, declaring that at a given signal they intended to join the ranks of the enemy against the Czar, followed by all the men in the imperial army whom they had affected; and Peter,

thus roused from his grief by this pressing need for immediate action, quickly determined to turn this moment of danger to advantage by his own fearless daring. In spite of the efforts made to restrain him by Danilowitz, who trembled for the safety of his beloved sovereign, thus unprotected in the midst of traitors, he sprang forward and rebuked the officers passionately for thus seeking to avenge their own petty grievances by the sacrifice of their honour at a time when their country was in danger; and having worked them up into the wildest enthusiasm of patriotism by his burning eloquence, he implored them to first drive away the enemies of their land, after which he swore that he would himself deliver up the Czar to them, unprotected and alone, to deal with as they chose.

The conspirators, although already ashamed of their base designs by these scathing words, yet demanded who should be their guarantee of this; and Peter, without a moment's hesitation, answered fearlessly: "I, the Czar, whom you were about to betray! Now, slay me if you will!"

But for answer, the conspirators instantly fell on their knees, imploring pardon for their treachery; for they were completely conquered by the dauntless courage thus displayed by the young monarch, whose brave and warlike spirit they had ever admired, even whilst resenting his strict discipline, which had been the cause of their insurrection.

Thus, by a single bold action, and the influence of his own noble personality, did Peter quell the mutinous spirit which had threatened such disaster to his arms, and, having once restored the patriotism of his

men, and their loyalty to himself as King, he was now able to lead them on to victory, and scatter the enemies of his country.

Whilst engaged in active warfare, as leader of his now enthusiastic army, Peter had no time to think of his lost Catherine; but when peaceful days came once again, and he returned to the royal palace, all his old grief broke out afresh, and he was plunged into the deepest melancholy.

In order to try to drown his sad thoughts, from time to time he would take up his carpenter's work once more; but even when labouring his hardest, the beautiful face of the maiden he had loved so dearly still intruded, a bright mental picture he could never forget.

Acting upon his instructions, Danilowitz had made every possible effort to discover what had become of the lost Catherine; for, though fired at in the water, Peter clung to the belief that she was not dead, but might possibly have escaped to land, since her body had never been recovered.

At first, Danilowitz found his task a hopeless one; but at length his efforts were crowned with success, and having learnt from a poor peasant woman that she had rescued a wounded soldier from the river some weeks ago, whom she had since discovered to be a female, he bade her bring the girl to his own private room in the palace.

The rescued maiden was accordingly brought to the palace, and proved indeed to be Catherine; but, to the consternation of Danilowitz, he discovered that the shock of her wounds and the terrible hardships she had gone through had told so heavily upon the

poor girl's mental activities, that, though now restored to bodily health, she had completely forgotten all the circumstances connected with her love for Peter, the mention of whose name had no meaning for her.

Wondering how he should break this sad news to his royal master, Danilowitz went into the presence chamber with a preoccupied air, and upon Peter as usual peremptorily demanding if he yet had news of his lost love, afraid to tell him the truth, he endeavoured to put him off for awhile by admitting that he had got a clue, though he feared that little would result from it.

Whilst they were talking together, Gritzenko entered, and upon Peter demanding the reason why his privacy should be thus disturbed, the conceited soldier announced that he had come to ask for promotion, saying that he considered this to be his due for the zeal he had displayed in having fired upon the recruit who had dared to strike him.

Now recognising Gritzenko as the man who had been the unconscious cause of all his woe, Peter flew into a violent passion on hearing his request, and, seizing a weapon, would have killed him instantly, had not Danilowitz restrained him; and then, controlling himself by a violent effort, he left the room, after commanding the Kalmuk, upon pain of death, to produce, ere the next day ended, the recruit whom he had fired upon in the water.

As Gritzenko moved away, astonished at being thus blamed for having done, as he considered, his duty as a zealous soldier, and grumbling at the vagaries of the great, he encountered Prascovia and

George Skavronski, the latter having come at last to relieve his sister and join the regiment he had been impressed into, and who, having discovered that Catherine had disappeared, had now come to the palace with his bride to get news of her; and having some days before received instructions to detain all who came from the little Finnish village, now beloved by the Czar, he took the pair into his charge, and kept them under guard, until he should receive the will of his royal master regarding their disposal.

Meanwhile, Peter, having heard Catherine singing as he passed along the corridor, and instantly recognising her voice with overwhelming joy, Danilowitz could no longer keep the secret of her presence from him; and as gently as possible, he broke to him the sad news of her disturbed mental state and forgetfulness of himself.

Peter was again plunged into despair on thus learning that though his beloved Catherine was restored to him, she no longer remembered their love; but upon Danilowitz mentioning that the poor girl's thoughts all centred round her old home, and especially the events connected with her brother's marriage, a sudden hope sprang up within him, for he remembered having heard of cases similar to that of Catherine, where persons so affected had been restored to their normal state by being again brought into contact with scenes and incidents which had strongly impressed them in their happier days.

Determined to try this course with Catherine, whom he now longed to thus restore that she might become his Empress, Peter quickly pressed Danilo-

witz, together with Prascovia and George (of whose arrival he was presently informed by Gritzenko), and certain other peasants who had recently arrived from Finland, into his service; and with all a lover's eager hope, he proceeded to instruct them in their parts.

All were soon ready; and when Catherine was brought into the room, the peasants began to sing the same song they had sung at her brother's wedding, with George and Prascovia moving amongst them in thei festive garments. Then Danilowitz, having donned his old pastrycook's dress, sang the song he used to sing in the village when offering his wares; and finally, Peter himself took up his flute, and began to play Catherine's own favourite air, which was so closely bound up with the story of their love.

As Catherine listened to this sweet music, her memory was indeed gradually awakened, as her lover had hoped, until the cloud of forgetfulness was entirely removed from her mind; and at last, recognising in the kingly figure so eagerly watching her, the features of the man she had loved so dearly in the past, she moved forward with a glad cry, and was clasped in his arms.

Full of joy that his beloved one was thus restored to reason, Peter led her proudly forward to receive the homage of his friends and helpers, who one and all greeted her respectfully as their future Empress; and thus did the humble Catherine fulfil the brilliant destiny prophesied by her priestess mother, and become the bride and good genius of a great monarch, who always loved and revered her as his guiding star, his precious "Star of the North"!

THE HUGUENOTS.

TOWARDS the close of an August day, in the year 1572, a festive scene was taking place in the Castle de Nevers, in the fair land of Touraine; for the young Count de Nevers, a Catholic nobleman of great wealth and vast estates, was entertaining his friends at a magnificent banquet, set out with all the luxurious extravagance customary to his high position.

All the gentlemen present were Catholics; and so, when De Nevers presently announced that he had invited a young Huguenot gentleman, one Sir Raoul de Nangis, to join them at the board, they were at first filled with surprise and displeasure; but upon their host assuring them that his new friend was of noble blood, and had been received well at Court, they were somewhat mollified, and awaited his arrival with eager expectation, intending to exercise their wit at his expense, for the feuds between the Huguenot and Catholic parties in France at this time had now reached the culminating point when an outburst between the two factions was daily looked for.

Consequently, when Raoul de Nangis was at length announced, he was received by the guests at first with suspicion, changing gradually to easy tolerance, for his handsome appearance and noble air dispelled the contempt usually expressed for those of the new faith; and seeing that he wore a somewhat pensive look, they presently began to rally him on his

abstraction, declaring that he must be in love, and thinking of his fair lady.

Raoul, being of a frank and sunny nature, readily fell in with their mood, and admitted that they had indeed guessed the truth; and upon being pressed further, he told them the story of his first meeting with his lady-love, which had happened only that very morning. During his rambles through the town, he had observed a sedan-chair, in which was seated a very beautiful young girl, and which was at the moment surrounded by a group of hilarious students, who were annoying its fair occupant, and alarming her with their vulgar attentions, and, full of indignation, he had drawn his sword, and rushed amongst the importunate loiterers, quickly scattering them. Then, when the lady he had thus saved from annoyance had poured her grateful thanks upon him, he had been so enthralled by her witching smiles and sweet beauty, that he had fallen desperately in love with her at first sight, and now declared that she was the lady of his heart for ever.

As this pretty story came to an end, the entrance of Raoul's old Huguenot servant, Marcello, created a diversion; for his odd appearance, quaint dress, and severe puritanical manners made him a ready butt for the wit of the gay cavaliers in whose company he now found himself very much against his will. He could not refrain from expressing his disapproval of this frivolous scene, and upbraided his young master for sharing in what his strict notions compelled him to consider sinful pleasures.

Afraid that Marcello's severe remarks would offend the proud Catholic nobles, Raoul apologised for his

outspoken manner, and craved their indulgence, since Marcello was an old and faithful retainer of his family, and had been accustomed to many privileges not usually extended to serving-men; but the merry guests declared that the old man amused them greatly, and they only treated his censure with laughing derision.

Whilst this slight diversion was taking place, a lady, closely veiled, was seen to enter the grounds, following a servant, who conducted her to an arbour within view of the banquet-hall; and presently the attendant entered to announce that the veiled lady desired an immediate interview in private with the Count de Nevers. The bantering now fell to the share of the young host, his guests declaring that he must indeed be fascinating, since his fair conquests even called him away from his feasts; and when De Nevers had excused himself, and departed to his interview, they all crowded to the window, dragging Raoul with them, in order to catch a glimpse of the mysterious fair one.

As De Nangis looked carelessly towards the arbour, the lady removed a portion of her veil as she addressed De Nevers; and to his surprise and grief, the young Huguenot recognised the beautiful face of the lady he had assisted in the morning, and by whom his heart had immediately been taken captive.

Full of sorrow and disappointment at thus discovering his lady-love to be, as he now naturally supposed from this incident, the mistress of De Nevers, Rauol uttered an exclamation of anger, and would have rushed out into the grounds to interrupt the interview, but was laughingly held back by the lively

guests; and shortly afterwards, De Nevers returned to the room, wearing a now weary and somewhat preoccupied air.

For the mysterious lady whom he had just interviewed, and whom Raoul had so sadly recognised, had proved to be his own *fiancée*, Valentina, the beautiful daughter of the Count de St. Bris, Governor of the Louvre, and one of the principal leaders of the Catholic party; and the object of her visit had been to implore De Nevers to relinquish her hand, since she did not love him, and was only being coerced into the union by the will of her ambitious father.

When De Nevers returned to the banquet-hall, he was instantly surrounded by the laughing guests, who showered eager questions upon him as to the identity of the veiled lady; but at this moment there came another interruption in the person of Urbano, one of Queen Marguerite's pages, who announced that he was the bearer of a letter from his royal mistress to Sir Raoul de Nangis.

Full of amazement, Raoul broke open the missive, and found that it contained a command from the young Queen to attend her Court that evening before sunset, and added that a carriage would be waiting for him at a certain time, to conduct him to his destination.

Surprised that the young stranger whom they had been inclined to treat somewhat disdainfully was thus about to be so greatly honoured, the fickle guests now began to pour enthusiastic congratulations upon Raoul, and to treat him with marked respect; and so, for the remainder of the banquet,

the young Huguenot found himself the centre of attraction.

Meanwhile, Queen Marguerite of Navarre, with her Maids-of-Honour, was awaiting in the grounds of the Castle of Chenonceaux the return of Valentina, whom she intended to use as the means of uniting the antagonistic Catholic and Huguenot parties, having formed the plan of wedding this fair daughter of the Catholic leader, the Count De St. Bris, to the handsome Huguenot noble, Sir Raoul de Nangis; and for this purpose she had persuaded Valentina to visit her *fiancé* in secret, and beg him to release her hand.

Valentina had been willing enough to fall in with this plan, for she had already become deeply attached to Raoul, whom she had quickly identified with the gallant cavalier who had saved her from the annoyance of the students only that very morning; and when on her return from her painful mission she informed the Queen that De Nevers had promised to relinquish her hand, she was filled with joy, mingled with shyness, on being told that De Nangis was expected almost immediately, and that her betrothal to him would soon afterwards be announced before the whole Court, her father having been persuaded by Queen Marguerite to renounce the more ambitious marriage he had arranged for her, and to consent to this betrothal as a step towards reconciling the two religious parties.

Whilst they were talking together, Raoul arrived, and was conducted immediately into the presence of the Queen; and as greetings and courtly speeches were being exchanged, Valentina timidly crept away into the background.

Then Queen Marguerite explained to the young Huguenot her reason for desiring his presence, and the marriage she had arranged for him; and Raoul, no longer caring to have any choice in such a matter, since the one upon whom he had fixed his affections had proved to be unworthy, as he supposed, gave his consent readily enough.

Very soon afterwards, the Count de St. Bris and the other lords of the Court appeared on the scene, the Catholic lords ranging themselves in a group on one side of the young Queen, and the Huguenots on the other. All had been made aware of the matter in hand; and so, when Queen Marguerite desired the two parties to vow friendship and peace with one another, they took the oath without demur.

Then, at a sign from the Queen, St. Bris led his beautiful young daughter forward to present her in betrothal to the young Huguenot noble; but Raoul drew back with a loud exclamation of repugnance, as he now beheld his offered bride to be none other than she whom he believed to be the mistress of De Nevers, and he declared passionately that he would not wed with one so perfidious.

The Queen and her Courtiers were amazed and indignant at this unexpected outburst, and Valentina was filled with despair, for she already loved De Nangis, and had hoped that her affection was returned; but Raoul, still believing her to be base, again declared that he would not bring disgrace upon his ancient name by wedding with one so unworthy, and with these words he departed, leaving the company in a state of great confusion.

Soon after these events, the whole Court removed

to Paris, where the Catholic plot for a general massacre of the Huguenots was quickly coming to a head, and the Count de St. Bris, who had only sworn friendship with the Huguenots to please Queen Marguerite, now lost no time in reopening negotiations for his daughter's marriage with the Catholic noble, De Nevers, after having first of all sent a challenge to Raoul de Nangis for satisfaction of the insult that had been put upon his name.

On the appointed day of the wedding, Valentina, who had broken-heartedly obeyed her father's wishes, entreated to be left alone in a little chapel situated on the banks of the Seine until evening, that she might spend the time in prayer and meditation; and in accordance with her wish, she was left in the sacred building until twilight had set in.

Shortly after dusk, De Nevers arrived on the scene with St. Bris and other lords, to claim his bride; but ere they entered the chapel, however, the old Huguenot retainer, Marcello, suddenly appeared, and handed a note from his master to St. Bris, in which Raoul accepted his challenge, and appointed a meeting for that night.

When Marcello was out of hearing, Maurevert, one of the lords present, suggested a plot to St. Bris, whereby they could surround and assassinate the young Huguenot without risk to their own lives; and having arranged this, they retired to await his arrival.

Now, though they knew it not, Valentina, through the open door of the chapel, had heard the whole plot; and when they had gone, she crept from the building with trembling steps, hoping that she might

find some means of warning Raoul, who, in spite of his strange treatment of her, she still loved, and would willingly save from such a peril.

At that moment, old Marcello came by again; and, recognising him as De Nangis' servant, Valentina intercepted him, and, telling him of the proposed plot, besought him to devise some means of saving his master's life. Marcello, full of alarm, rushed off at once to seek help; and in a short time he returned, having arranged with a party of Huguenot soldiers, who were supping at a tavern close by, to come to his master's assistance at the first sound of strife.

Valentina then returned to the chapel; and shortly afterwards Raoul and St. Bris, with their seconds, appeared at the appointed place on the banks of the Seine, and the arrangements for the duel were made in accordance with the customary etiquette.

Ere the duel had begun, however, a band of the Catholic followers of Maurevert suddenly surrounded Raoul; and in another moment he would have been slain, but for the prompt arrival of the Huguenot soldiers, who dashed boldly amidst the assassins with drawn swords. The two parties now began to fight; but the combat was soon interrupted by the approach of Queen Marguerite and her escort returning to the Palace.

With an imperious gesture, the young Queen bade the combatants cease, and enquired the cause of the strife; and when Raoul's story was hotly contradicted by St. Bris, old Marcello came forward and verified his master's version, declaring that the warning of treachery had come from the lady who was even then issuing from the chapel.

Valentina, indeed, at that moment came forth, overcome with anxiety for her lover's safety, yet full of fear at being discovered interfering in his behalf. All were amazed at her appearance; and Raoul, who had not been able to quell his love for her, for all that he had spurned her, was bewildered at hearing that she had been the means of saving his life, and, doubtful now of his former suspicions, asked how she had come to be seen by him at the house of De Nevers that fatal evening.

Queen Marguerite answered for the agitated girl, saying that Valentina had gone at her own request to De Nevers, to implore him to renounce her hand; and when Raoul thus knew that Valentina's motive had been a pure and honourable one, and not as he had so jealously imagined, for an unworthy reason, he was filled with joy.

But his joy was quickly turned to grief once more, on learning that Valentina was about to become the bride of another; and at that moment, De Nevers appeared in a splendid barge, in which he was to carry away his bride-elect. As De Nevers landed, St. Bris presented his daughter to him with pride, throwing a triumphant glance towards the wretched De Nangis, and, full of elation, the young Catholic noble led his beautiful though now half-fainting *fiancée* to the barge, in which they were conducted to his mansion, where their nuptials were celebrated that same evening.

Raoul was now plunged into despair at having thus lost the maiden he loved so well, and for several days he was almost beside himself with grief; and at last, unable to bear his misery any longer, on the

fatal eve of St. Bartholomew, he determined to make an effort to see Valentina once more even at the risk of his life.

Quite unsuspicious of the terrible fate that was to fall on those of his faith that night, the young Huguenot repaired to the mansion of De Nevers, and managed to make his way unperceived into the very room in which Valentina sat, lost in meditation; for she was at the moment bemoaning her sad fate at having been compelled to wed a man she did not love, when her heart was given to another.

As Raoul broke in upon these sad reflections, she was filled with dismay; but scarcely had she exchanged greetings with her distracted lover than she heard the approaching voices of her father and husband, and knew that the discovery of De Nangis alone with her at that hour would mean danger to him and disgrace to herself. In frightened tones, she besought him to fly whilst he yet had time; but Raoul declared that he cared not for danger, and would gladly welcome death, since she was lost to him. Valentina, however, entreated him not to be so rash, since his safety was dear to her; and then, finding that the approaching voices were drawing nearer, and that there was no longer time for him to escape, she thrust him behind a heavy curtain, bidding him, by their love, to remain in hiding until the danger was past.

Almost immediately afterwards, De Nevers, St. Bris, and a number of other Catholic lords entered the room, and proceeded to hold a conference; and when they were all assembled, St. Bris unfolded to them the dreadful plot of the Catholic King, Charles

IX., whereby at the tolling of a bell that night, the Huguenots, one and all, irrespective of age, sex, or position, were to be massacred without mercy. He next administered an oath, bidding them swear, as good Catholics, to assist in this terrible work, and to show no mercy. All took the oath except De Nevers, who, being of a noble disposition, indignantly refused to disgrace his ancient name by joining in such a murderous enterprise; but, in order to convince the now suspicious lords that he should not betray their plot, even though he would not share in it, he threw his sword at their feet and stood disarmed before them all.

St. Bris then gave his final instructions, bidding the conspirators to disperse in various directions and await the tolling of the bell, which should be the signal for commencing the carnage; and after tying white scarves round their arms, in order to distinguish themselves from their intended victims, the party left the room and departed on their awful mission, leaving the trembling Valentina alone.

No sooner had they gone, than Raoul sprang from his hiding-place, pale and filled with horror at the terrible plot that had, unknown to the assassins, been revealed to him; and hoping yet to be in time to warn his brother Huguenots of the calamity about to fall on them, he would have instantly rushed from the house, had not Valentina held him back, wildly imploring him not to venture into the streets that night, for since she now loved him with her whole heart, his life was too precious for her to bear the thought of his almost certain death, should he take such a risk.

Even in this moment of confusion and danger, Raoul's heart thrilled with a deep joy at thus learning that his love was returned, and he clasped Valentina in his arms in a passionate embrace; but, in spite of this double temptation to remain, his noble nature asserted itself, and upon hearing the sudden clanging of a deep bell, which he knew to be the signal for the Huguenots' doom, he struggled from the tender restraining arms of the now swooning Valentina, as she tried vainly to hold him back, and dashed from the house.

The massacre had already begun, and the streets of Paris were even now running with the innocent blood of the murdered Huguenots, whilst the night was made hideous with the shrieks of the helpless victims and the triumphant cries of those who, in such mistaken zeal, were thus carrying out the dreadful instructions that had been given to them.

As Raoul, filled with horror at the awful scenes of carnage that met his eyes on every side, hastened through the streets in the vain hope that he might yet be in time to save some of his doomed brethren of the faith, he stumbled against a wounded man, and, to his joy, he found that this was none other than his own faithful old body-servant, Marcello.

Equally glad at thus meeting with his beloved master, whom he had never expected to see again alive, Marcello described the terrible scenes that had already taken place, adding that they could now do nothing to help their Huguenot friends, since it was impossible to stem the fury of their remorseless foes, and that they themselves must also be prepared to meet death, since they could not hope to escape.

Whilst they were still standing together, they were overtaken by Valentina, who, on recovering from her swoon, had followed Raoul with frantic haste, hoping that she might even yet be able to save him from his enemies; and she now held out towards him a white scarf she had brought, beseeching him to allow her to fasten it round his arm, that he might then be taken for a Catholic, and so be safe from harm in the streets, adding that if he would proceed with her to the Louvre, and abjure his unfortunate faith, he would receive a free pardon. To strengthen her entreaty, she added that if he would fall in with her plan, when peace had afterwards been restored, they could be wed and be happy together yet; for Marcello had just related to them how his own life had been saved by the brave conduct of the Count de Nevers, who, by endeavouring to protect the old Huguenot from the hand of the Catholics, had himself been slain.

But Raoul, though now terribly tempted by this alluring picture of safety and happiness, was too noble to save himself by denying the religion for which his companions in the faith were still sacrificing their lives; and, refusing the white scarf, he declared that he would remain with Marcello and await his fate.

When Valentina saw that he was thus resolved, she threw herself into his arms, declaring that she would die with him as a Huguenot also, since without him she cared no longer to live; and then, hand-in-hand, they knelt together in the street, and old Marcello uttered a prayer of blessing, as the consecration of their love and devotion.

Whilst they thus prayed together, a party of Catholic musketeers surrounded them, and, eager for more victims, demanded if they were of the true faith or not; and without a moment's hesitation, Raoul replied that they were Huguenots. The musketeers instantly fired a volley upon the little group; and all three fell to the ground, mortally wounded.

The Count de St. Bris was at the head of this company; and upon approaching the fallen victims, he was filled with horror at discovering that he had fired upon his own beloved daughter!

On hearing his exclamation of grief, the dying Valentina opened her eyes once more, and weakly murmured a few words of forgiveness; and then, falling back, she expired in the arms of her dead Huguenot lover!

MADAM BUTTERFLY.

In a quaint little house perched at the top of a steep hill in Nagasaki, great preparations for coming festivities might have been observed one bright sunny afternoon; for within the next few hours, a young American naval officer, Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton, was to be wedded to Cho Cho San, a pretty little geisha maid, and was even now inspecting his new abode with old Goro, the broker, who had arranged this " Japanese Marriage " for him.

For the young American, like many others of his class, had sought to relieve the monotony of his sojourn in Nagasaki by amusing himself with the pretty maids of the town; and having conceived a sudden passion for the fairest of them all, Cho Cho San, or Butterfly, as she was more generally called, whose bewitching daintiness and sweet nature had quickly enthralled his heart, he had determined to indulge his love at all costs, and for this reason had engaged the services of Goro.

The old marriage broker, delighted at having secured such a desirable client, to whom dollars seemed of little count, assured the eager lover that the matter was quite an easy one to arrange; and not only did he undertake to draw up the marriage contract (which, however, could be annulled monthly !), and to assemble the relations and neces-

sary legal officials, but also to secure for him a house in which to spend this blissful dream, a nest which he well knew would sooner or later be deserted.

And so well had Goro managed his commission, that the match was successfully arranged, and about to take place; and now, as Pinkerton followed the obsequious old broker from room to room of the charming retreat that had been prepared for his pleasure, he was delighted with everything he saw, admiring the wonderful mechanical contrivances by which the building could be altered according to fancy, and praising his guide for his careful work. For Goro had forgotten nothing, not even the Japanese servants, whom he presently introduced to their new master; nor the wedding guests, the relations of pretty Butterfly, who were expected to shortly appear for the ceremony.

Just as Pinkerton was beginning to tire of the old broker's loquacity, the first of the wedding guests arrived. This was Sharpless, the American Consul, who had come in his official capacity, and also as the friend and compatriot of the bridegroom. He was an older man than Pinkerton, for whom, however, he had much affection; so much, indeed, that he had come with the intention of persuading his friend to abandon this Japanese so-called "marriage," knowing that little real happiness was likely to come of it. Although he had not actually seen the little bride, he had heard her speaking when she called the day before at the Consulate about her marriage, and had been so impressed by the thrilling charm of her voice that he was persuaded she regarded this step with intense seriousness, not as a mere tem-

porary amusement; and in his own large-hearted tenderness, it pained him to think that one so fragile and innocent should be called upon to suffer when the awakening should come.

He therefore pointed out to Pinkerton to reflect again before he entered into this connection, of which he would doubtless quickly tire, and have no compunctions in severing, since he was sure that the Japanese maiden's love was so deep that she believed her future husband would regard their marriage as a binding one; and with sincere earnestness, he besought his young friend not to gratify what was to him a mere passing fancy, at the expense of bruising the wings of this trusting little Butterfly. Pinkerton, however, impatiently refused to listen to his friend's counsel, for he had no compunctions himself as to the course he was pursuing, which was one frequently practised by others of his class with no serious consequences, since the deserted little Japanese " wives " were afterwards usually contented to accept new husbands of their own race; and gaily assuring the prudent Consul that no harm was likely to come of his pleasure, he ran to greet his little bride, who at this moment appeared on the open terrace, accompanied by a bevy of merry girl friends.

A veritable little butterfly in appearance was Cho Cho San, sweet and dainty as a freshly-opened flower bud; sunny-hearted and gay, yet full of quaint and thoughtful fancies; childish, fragile and fairy-like, yet possessing a woman's heart, pure, true, and capable of a deep and abiding passion. She had bestowed this treasure of love upon the handsome Pinkerton with childish and implicit trust; and her

belief in his professed love for her was so intense that she never gave a single thought to the future possibility of his affection waning, but considered herself the happiest girl in all Japan.

She now greeted him with bright smiles, introducing him with pride to her friends; and then with simple artlessness, she began to prattle merrily to the two Americans, telling them of her family history, how her mother was poor, and how she herself had been obliged to become a geisha to earn a living. When asked about her father, she grew suddenly sad, and merely stated that he was dead; but later on they learnt that he had met his death bravely by "*Hara-kiri*," a sword having been sent to him by the Mikado with a message to despatch himself. Presently, Butterfly herself, when asking Pinkerton's permission to retain a few girlish treasures she had brought with her, showed him this very sword, which she revered as her greatest possession. As a further proof of her perfect trust in her future husband, she now whispered in his ear the startling fact that she had the day before visited the Christian mission-house, to adopt his faith, having been willing for his sake to renounce her old religion, a fact which, if known to her relations, would cause the .. to regard her as an outcast.

By this time, the relations who had been bidden to the wedding had arrived; and a motley enough group of undesirables they were in the eyes of Pinkerton, who, however, received them graciously, accepting their flowery compliments with gay good nature. The Registrar and Commissioner having also arrived, the wedding took place without further

delay, being concluded in a few minutes, the ceremony merely consisting of the reading of the marriage contract by the Commissioner, and the signing of the same by the bride and bridegroom.

This simple proceeding over, the guests crowded round to congratulate the happy pair, and having wished the young American good luck, Sharpless and the other officials took their leave at once. Pinkerton now tried to rid himself of the wedding guests, longing to be left alone with his dainty little bride; but this he found to be a more difficult matter, for the impecunious relations of the pretty Butterfly had come with the intention of enjoying themselves to the full at the expense of the rich American, and were not to be deprived of such a treat. Finding this to be the case, Pinkerton resigned himself to the inevitable; and, inviting the expectant guests to the refreshment tables, he plied them lavishly with wines, sweetmeats, and all the fanciful Japanese delicacies that had been provided by the ingenious Goro, encouraging their unrestrained greed in the hope that satiation would shortly bring about the fulfilment of his desires.

Just as the hilarity was at its height, however, there came an unexpected interruption; for suddenly an uncouth individual of weird aspect burst in amongst the guests, wildly brandishing his arms, and uttering cries of furious rage. This unwelcome intruder was Butterfly's most important uncle, a Bonze, or Japanese priest, who, having by some means learnt of his niece's visit to the hated Christian mission, had now come to denounce her for her apostacy; and, alarmed at the threatening aspect of

one whom they held in awe, the guests drew back in frightened groups. Butterfly, in fear and trembling, also tried to crouch from the sight of her outraged relative; but the Bonze sought her out, and ruthlessly declaring to the relations that she had of her own free will renounced them all and forsaken the religion of her forefathers, he furiously called down curses upon her, in which he was immediately joined by the now angry guests, in whose eyes such an offence was unpardonable.

Pinkerton had at first laughed at the extravagant speeches and ridiculous gesticulations of the weird-looking Bonze; but when the relations took up the denunciation also, he grew angry, and unceremoniously turned them all out of the house.

As the imprecations of the departing guests died away in the distance, poor little Butterfly buried her face in her hands, and burst into tears, but Pinkerton folded her in his arms, and soon succeeded in restoring her to smiles and joyousness once more.

"I do not mind anything, if you will only love me!" she said, as she kissed his hand with quaint humility. "Though they have cast me off, yet am I full of joy! I am with you; and you are my people and my life!"

Night had now closed in, and as they presently wandered out together on to the moonlit terrace, Pinkerton folded his fair bride in his arms in a passionate embrace, and in that moment of ecstasy, the lovers felt that the world was indeed well lost.

A period of intense happiness now followed; but, alas! it was but a short one. For Pinkerton's love for his little Japanese wife, though passionate at the

time, was, as Sharpless had declared, but a passing phase; and when, after a few months had drifted pleasantly by in this pretty dream, his ship had received orders to return to America, he had departed with little real regret. For he did not intend to return to the nest he was now deserting for ever; and in his careless way he felt no compunctions, for he believed that the pretty Butterfly would as easily forget him, and eventually take unto herself a Japanese husband. Yet to ease the pain of his departure, he promised the weeping girl that he would return to her when the robins began to nest; and Butterfly, believing implicitly in this promise, was satisfied, and daily declared to her faithful maid and sole companion, Suzuki, who had no such trusting faith, that this happy event would certainly come to pass.

Later on, when a fair, blue-eyed baby boy was born to her, she rejoiced at the little one's birth the more because of the additional pleasure she felt was in store for the surely-returning father; and even when three years had passed since her wedding-day, and no word had yet come from the faithless Pinkerton, she still hoped and waited patiently, confident that her hopes would be realised. It was quite useless for the handmaid, Suzuki, whose knowledge of such "marriages" was wider, to suggest to her mistress that her hope was a vain one; for the trusting little Butterfly would only grow angry, and refuse to listen to her.

But at last, the money which Pinkerton had left for their temporary support (thinking that they would soon be established in some other household) became exhausted; and now, towards the end of the third

year, they found themselves within a few coins of destitution. Even on the day when this sad discovery was made, the deserted little bride bid her handmaid not to trouble, since the waiting-time would now soon be over, and rousing herself up to a transport of happy expectation, she reminded Suzuki of Pinkerton's promise to return when the robins should nest, and carried away by her eager thoughts, she began to describe the arrival of the expected ship, from which her beloved husband would most assuredly land, and hasten to her side.

But Suzuki, knowing that the robins had already nested several times since the young officer's departure, only muttered gloomily that it was not known for a Western husband to return to a Japanese nest; but when on hearing this, Butterfly sprang up with eyes blazing with anger, to soothe and comfort her once more, the faithful handmaid repeated the eager girl's own hopeful words.

Whilst they were thus talking, a visitor suddenly appeared; and to the delight of Butterfly, this proved to be none other than Sharpless, the American Consul, who had come on a very difficult mission. For he had just received a message from Pinkerton, who was returning at last to Nagasaki, and whose ship was expected to arrive that very day; and in this letter the young lieutenant announced that he was now married to a beautiful American lady, and asked his old friend to seek out the pretty Butterfly, and if she still remembered him, to break this news as gently as he could.

Butterfly received the Consul with joy, and on hearing that he had a letter from Pinkerton, she

clapped her hands and became very excited, declaring that her hopes were about to be realised, and that her beloved husband was really returning to her, as she had never for a moment doubted, or ceased to believe. Her eager anticipation and childish delight quite unmanned the tender-hearted Sharpless, who now saw only too plainly how right he had been when warning Pinkerton that the Japanese maiden regarded their marriage as a binding one, and that her love was a deep and abiding passion, the very breath of life to her; and though he essayed many times to explain his cruel mission, his efforts to do so were quite in vain. For, upon every sentence he read from the letter, Butterfly put her own happy construction, finding in each line an imaginary message of hope for herself; and so vivid was her delusion, that Sharpless despaired of ever making her realise the fatal truth.

He was therefore somewhat relieved by the unexpected appearance of old Goro, the marriage broker, who brought with him Prince Yamadori, a wealthy Japanese suitor, whom he had for a long time past tried vainly to induce the deserted wife to accept as a husband, for one so young and pretty was still a tempting prize to offer to his amorous clients. Yamadori had now come to plead his own cause with the obdurate Butterfly, who, however, still refused to listen to him; and, full of indignation, she turned to Sharpless, and cried: "You hear what he and that wicked Goro wish me to do! How can I marry him, when I have a beloved husband already, who is now returning to claim me once again?"

Even when Goro, eager to secure her for his

wealthy client, reminded her that in Japan desertion constituted divorce, and that she was therefore perfectly free to marry again, she was not to be convinced, but declared scornfully: "But the law of Japan is not the law of my husband's country!"

Seeing that argument was useless in her present state, old Goro and his disappointed client withdrew, hoping for better success on their next visit; and when they had gone, Sharpless, distressed beyond measure at the poor girl's absolute blindness to the fact that Pinkerton had really deserted her, and that he had never even regarded his marriage with her in a serious light at all, but merely as a pleasant interlude made possible by the easy law of Japan, again tried to tell her the real reason for his visit. Having once more dismally failed in this, he next tried to persuade her to accept the wealthy Japanese suitor who desired to make her his bride; but such a suggestion coming from one she trusted so deeply wounded her, that he did not venture to press the point.

As the final strengthening of her argument, and crowning proof of the utter uselessness of trying to persuade her that she was forgotten, Butterfly ran to fetch her bonny baby boy, and, holding him up before the eyes of the amazed Consul, who had no idea of the child's existence, she cried with passionate pride: "Do you think he could forget *this* proof of our love?"

Sharpless, knowing that Pinkerton had no knowledge that a son had been born to him, was now so overcome with deep emotion that he could scarcely control his feelings of pity for the deserted little

Japanese wife; and, utterly unable to reveal the truth to her just then, he hastily took his leave, inwardly railing at his friend for entrusting him with such an impossible commission.

No sooner had the Consul departed than the roar of cannon was heard from the harbour; and, hurrying to the terrace, Butterfly discovered that this was a salute to an arriving ship, which, to her indescribable joy, she saw was flying the American flag, and by the aid of a telescope made out its name to be the "Abraham Lincoln," which she knew to be Pinkerton's vessel. Full of delirious joy, and feeling fully convinced that her beloved one would now without doubt be with her in an hour or two's time, she called to Suzuki, and bade her to quickly bring in the fairest flowers from the garden, that she might adorn the little home with garlands in honour of the master's return.

Though Suzuki had still no belief that the young American would return, she went in haste to gather the flowers, in order to humour her beloved mistress; and as quickly as she brought the lovely fragrant blooms into the house, Butterfly placed them in every available space, calling continually for more, until each room was a perfect bower of roses, violets, lilies, and blossoms of every kind the garden could produce.

Having even strewed sweet-scented petals lavishly upon the floors, Butterfly next dressed her baby in his finest clothes, and arrayed herself in her wedding garments; and then, calling Suzuki, and making three holes in the *shoshi*, the three settled down to watch for Pinkerton's approach. Many hours

passed, and still the expected visitor did not appear; and when darkness set in, Suzuki and the child, tired out with watching, fell fast asleep. But Butterfly would not sleep; and all through the long weary night, she kept a constant watch, never losing hope, but still believing that her beloved one would surely come.

When daylight dawned, Suzuki awakened, and, shocked at her poor little mistress's tired looks, insisted that she should retire to her chamber to rest; and Butterfly, now overcome with fatigue, and wishing to look well when her eagerly expected husband should arrive, was at last persuaded to retire.

When she had departed to the little chamber upstairs, Suzuki, having seen that the little boy was playing happily outside, returned to the flower-decked room, and sank upon her knees before the image of Buddha, to pray for her mistress's comfort. Whilst she was thus engaged, there came a gentle tap at the door; and upon opening it, she admitted, to her amazement, not only Sharpless, but Pinkerton also, who, after hearing of the Consul's unavailing visit of the day before, had now come with his friend to seek advice thus early in the morning from the faithful handmaid, as to a means of acquainting the expectant Butterfly with the true position of affairs.

Suzuki, thinking for the moment that Pinkerton had indeed returned to claim his little Japanese wife, received him gladly, telling him of Butterfly's preparations for his arrival, and of her trust in him and eager longing for his arrival, each word of which was as a knife in the heart of the now remorseful Pinkerton, who at last realised the cruelty of his

conduct, and was filled with grief at the pain he was about to inflict upon the noble heart of one who loved him so truly and deeply.

The handmaid, however, was quickly undeceived upon observing a tall and beautiful lady waiting in the garden, and upon learning from Sharpless that this was the "real" wife of Pinkerton, she fell to the ground, overcome by this realisation of her fears. The kindly Consul gently raised her; and explaining that Mrs. Pinkerton had come to offer protection and care for the helpless baby boy, that his future welfare might be assured, begged her to assist them in this matter by all the means in her power.

Pinkerton, who had been wandering round the flower-decked room, noting with increased emotion the many signs of Butterfly's deep love for him, now declared that he could not bear the anguish of meeting her, and rushed away, leaving the Consul to perform his painful task alone; and as he departed, full of remorse and grief, his wife entered from the garden.

Kate Pinkerton was a beautiful and kind-hearted woman, and the Japanese girl's sad story had filled her with great pity; and she also added her entreaties that Suzuki would help them to be of service to her poor little mistress.

Whilst they were discussing this matter, Butterfly was heard calling from the chamber above; and having heard the sound of voices, she immediately afterwards appeared, full of excitement, and expecting to greet her husband. At the sight of Kate, she stopped short, gazing intently upon her; and though no word was spoken, she knew instinctively that this

was the woman for whose sake she herself had been cast aside.

Sharpless now expected an outburst of passionate reproach; but to the surprise of all, Butterfly remained quite calm, and bore this sudden shattering of all her cherished hopes with a noble dignity, so touching that all were moved. When Kate entreated forgiveness for the pain she had so unconsciously been the means of bringing upon her, she answered gently that she only wished that every happiness might be showered upon her. Then, when asked to give up her baby boy to the guardianship of his father, that his future welfare and prosperity might be assured, she promised quietly that Pinkerton should have his child if he would himself come for him in half an hour's time; and having thus succeeded in their mission, Kate and Sharpless departed, unable to bear any longer the heartrending sight of such resigned suffering.

When they had gone, Butterfly dismissed Suzuki, and, taking down her father's sword, which she had always carefully cherished, with great reverence kissed the blade. For now that she at last realised the terrible truth that Pinkerton was her husband no longer, and that for his own good she must part with her child also, she had no further desire for life; and as she lifted the sword, she murmured broken-heartedly to herself: "If I can no longer live with honour, at least I can die with honour!"

At that moment, the door was opened to admit the baby boy, who was pushed gently within by Suzuki, and, dropping the sword, Butterfly rushed forward,

and clasped her child in her arms in a last passionate embrace.

Then, laying him carefully upon the ground, she suddenly seized the sword once more, and plunged it into her bosom.

When, a little later, Pinkerton entered the room to claim fulfilment of her promise, Butterfly was lying motionless and still; and the faithful heart that had loved him with such true devotion was at rest for ever!

LA BOHÈME.

WHEN Louis Philippe, the Citizen King of the French, was vainly trying to retain his seat upon a tottering throne, two young students might have been seen one cold Christmas Eve at work in an attic in the Quartier Latin, in Paris.

These two were Marcel, a painter, and Rudolf, a poet; two careless, light-hearted young men, who, together with their friends, Schaunard, a musician, and Colline, a philosopher, loved to regard themselves as great artists, whom a cold and unappreciative world had as yet failed to recognise.

Full of buoyant spirits, daring, reckless, and happy-go-lucky, these four students seemed to pass a charmed existence; a life which, though full of ups and downs, of wealth and poverty, of joy and sorrow, they would not have exchanged for any other, since they were true Bohemians at heart, to whom the intoxicating atmosphere of the Quartier Latin was as the very breath of life. Extravagant to the last degree, they spent their money lavishly when Fortune smiled upon them, feasting like lords, indulging their sweethearts, snatching at every joy within their reach, and reckless of what the next morn might bring forth; and when rainy days came quickly once more, nothing remaining to tell the tale of their recent magnificence, they cheerfully returned to work again, no whit dismayed by reverses, but

eager to retrieve their broken fortunes. For joy was to be found even in poverty, and sparkling wit, redundant spirits, and optimistic belief in a dazzling future never forsook them, whether they dined off venison or a dry crust! Free, untramelled by social conventions, they obeyed the magic impulse of their quickly-coursing young blood and the dictates of generous hearts and vivid minds; and, sunshine or rain, nothing could damp the ardour of these bold spirits in their impetuous pursuit of the fairest joys of life.

Thus it was with Rudolf and Marcel on this Christmas Eve; for though their fortunes were at that moment at their lowest ebb, and they knew not whence their next meal would come, yet were they merry and light-hearted, as though the fickle goddess had never ceased to smile. There was no fire in the grate, and no food in the cupboard, but both enthusiasts tried to believe that neither were necessary even on such a freezing day. Whilst Rudolf endeavoured to warm himself by writing fiery matter for his fondly imagined "great" journal, *The Beaver*, Marcel worked vigorously at his equally "great" picture, "The Passage of the Red Sea," wielding his brushes with fingers stiff with cold, stamping his feet and changing position frequently in order to keep circulation going; but at last, both were obliged to confess that they were nearly frozen, and that unless they could make a fire of some kind, their "genius" would soon be lost to the world for ever!

"Sooner than that," cried Marcel, "let's make a bonfire of my great picture!"

But Rudolf declared that such a remedy would be worse than the disease, since he could not endure the odour of burning paint; and then, seized with a happy thought, he dragged forth from a hidden recess the MS. of a mighty drama with which he had once had hopes of astonishing the world, and declared heroically that its pungent wit and sparkling dialogue should give them warmth, and the world would have to bear its loss as best it could. So, act by act, and page by page, the play was recklessly set alight; and as the two friends drew up their chairs and warmed their hands at the grateful blaze, they merrily bade one another to observe the bright sparks of wit that flashed from the dusty pages!

Whilst they were thus engaged, Colline, the "great" philosopher, entered the room, bearing under his arms a bundle of books, with which he had been vainly endeavouring to raise funds for the general use; and, flinging the parcel on the table, announced in an aggrieved tone that Christmas Eve was indeed highly honoured, since no pawning was allowed that day! Then, observing that a fire was actually burning in the grate, which he had left black and cheerless, he ran eagerly to thaw his frozen limbs, joining gaily in the applause that greeted each addition to the greedy bonfire, and hailing Rudolf as a noble benefactor of freezing mankind.

J-st as the last flame was dying down, a pleasant interruption came; for two serving boys suddenly entered, the one carrying abundant fuel, and the other laden with rich provisions of all kinds. Having solemnly laid down their burdens, the lads de-

parted without a word; and then the three students, not troubling to enquire into the cause of this timely miracle, immediately fell upon the good things with loud cries of delight. Colline snatched up the fuel with frantic haste, and quickly built up a roaring fire; whilst Marcel and Rudolf seized upon the provisions, and proceeded to lay out a feast with lavish extravagance, and sublime disregard of the next day's needs.

With the entrance of Schaunard, the musician, they learnt that he was the giver of the feast, having had a happy and unexpected windfall, which with the usual generosity of the Quartier Latin, he was anxious to share with his friends; and then, the table being spread to their satisfaction, the four students sat down to enjoy the treat.

Just when the hilarity was at its height, there came a knock at the door, and the voice of Benoit, the landlord, was heard, calling for admission; and, knowing well enough that this unwelcome intruder could only have come for one purpose—to demand his long-overdue rent—the students were at first inclined to refuse him admission.

Then, having hastily arranged a better plan of action for getting rid of him for a longer time, they opened the door with a flourish, and as Benoit entered with a rent-paper, which he presented to Marcel as the tenant of the room, they greeted him with a boisterous welcome, expressing themselves as overjoyed to see him, and inviting him to join them at their feast.

Though amazed at being received in such a friendly manner, Benoit walked unerringly into the

trap that had been laid for him; and, always ready to accept luxuries at another's expense, he willingly allowed himself to be led to the table, and helped to the good things. The wily students enjoying their trick immensely, plied the greedy landlord with wine until his brains became muddled, and his vision too uncertain to observe that he was being laughed at; and then, cunningly leading the conversation round to love and gallantry, they declared that he must be a sad rogue with the ladies, since they had heard of his many amours and intrigues. Benoit, though somewhat advanced in years, was delighted at being taken for such a gay young Lothario, and agreed with all they said, even enlarging on his imaginary adventures, and painting himself in more glaring colours still; but this boasting, to his astonishment, was not received with the approval he expected. For the four students, suddenly pretending to be shocked beyond measure at such licentious conduct, and declaring that one so debauched was not fit to breathe the same air with themselves, they seized the old braggart by the scruff of the neck, and bundled him out of the room and down the stairs with more haste and force than ceremony.

Knowing that they were now safe for a few hours, the friends returned to the room, laughing merrily at the easy way in which they had disposed of the tiresome landlord for the time being; and then Schaunard, declaring that it was folly to remain within doors when Christmas gaieties were afoot without, suggested that they should divide the remainder of the money he had brought, and go forth to spend it, concluding with a supper at the

Café Momus, one of their favourite haunts when in funds.

This suggestion being received with acclamation, they proceeded to carry it out at once; and having divided the money equally between them, they set off in high good humour to spend it, with the exception of Rudolf, who remained behind to finish the article for his new and precious journal, promising to join his companions in a short time at the café.

When his three friends had noisily departed, Rudolf brought the candles nearer to his work, and began to write; but he had scarcely written a few words, w en he heard a timid knock at the door, and on opening it, was amazed to see a poorly-clad but lovely young girl standing there, holding a key in one hand and an extinguished candle in the other. Her beauty was of that ethereal, refined, and exquisitely delicate qua'ity that particularly appeals to the sensitive poetic mind; and as Rudolf gazed upon the girl's velvety pale skin, slight graceful form, soft dreamy eyes, and tiny white hands, a wave of joy flooded his artistic soul at the mere sight of one so fair, and yet so frail.

So fragile, indeed, was the young girl, that the effort of climbing the stairs had completely exhausted her, and brought on a violent fit of coughing; and scarcely had she explained that she had called to beg a light for her candle, which had gone out, than she was seized with sudden faintness, and would have fallen to the ground had not Rudolf caught her in his arms.

Quickly placing the girl in a chair, the young student revived her with water, and made her drink

some wine afterwards, watching her the while with increasing interest and a strange joy, which he felt instinctively was reciprocated; for when his fair visitor opened her eyes, she looked upon him with the swe shy g'ances of newly-born passion.

Having recovered from her swoon, however, the girl arose at once, and asked again for her candle to be lighted; and when Rudolf had performed this small office for her, trembling with emotion as he placed the light in the tiny hand, which seemed to him one of her greatest charms, she bade him farewell, and opened the door. Then, remembering her key, which she had dropped when seized with faintness, she turned to look for it; and in so doing, the draught from the door blew out the light once more. At the same moment, Rudolf's candle was also extinguished, so that the room was plunged in darkness; and the young student, moved by a sudden impulse, slipped round to the door and fastened it.

Both were now groping in the darkness, the girl seeking her key, which Rudolf presently found and put in his own pocket, still making no effort to get a light; for he was filled with a sudden fear that this sweet young creature would shortly leave him, and he longed above all things to prolong her stay. They talked to each other in a happy way as they continued the search in the dark; and presently, Rudolf, guided by his companion's sweet voice, came close to her side, and caught her little hand in his. Thrilled by her touch, the young student could no longer restrain the passion that now filled his heart with such exquisite joy; and folding her in his arms, he poured forth an eager declaration of his love, to

which, to his delight, the young girl as gladly responded.

Having presently described his own life and occupation, Rudolf questioned his companion as to hers, and the girl informed him that her name was Mimi, and that she worked fine embroideries for a living.

Whilst they were still talking happily together, the voices of Marcel, Colline, and Schaunard were heard outside, calling loudly for their companion to come and join them in their pleasure, to which Rudolf returned an impatient answer, angry at the interruption; but Mimi, thus learning that her lover had gaie afoot, suggested that she should go with him, that they might pass the evening together. Rudolf, overjoyed that she was thus willing to acknowledge him as her accepted lover, gladly made ready to go out; and, hand locked in hand, the two went forth joyously to join in the merry-making of Christmas Eve.

They soon reached an open square, at one side of which was the Café Momus, the favourite meeting-place of the Quartier Latin; and here they were joined by the three students, who received Mimi with a hearty welcome.

The square presented a lively scene, and was filled with a crowd of students, work girls, and children, with their parents, bargaining at the brilliantly lighted shops and stalls, and all bent on light-hearted enjoyment; and the shouting of the street vendors as they called their wares, the gleeful cries of the children, and the laughter of the youths and maidens as they chatted and made merry together, filled the air

with a confused medley of sound, the keynote of which was reckless mirth.

Rudolf, seeing a pretty bonnet trimmed with pink roses in one of the shops, went in with Mimi, to buy it for her, utterly regardless of the fact that its price swallowed all his share of Schaunard's windfall; and when the delighted Mimi had placed this fascinating "creation" upon her dainty head, they went to join their companions at the Café Momus for supper.

Finding the café crowded within, the three friends seated themselves at a table outside, from whence they could the better observe the amusing scene taking place in the square, and having ordered an extravagant supper, they began to enjoy themselves with their usual careless abandon.

As they sat there, an extremely pretty, coquettish, and smartly-dressed girl approached the café, accompanied by a fussy old gentleman, with whom she presently sat down at an outside supper table a few yards further along; and at the sight of the newcomer, Marcel turned pale, and began to fidget nervously in his chair. For this aggravatingly pretty young woman was Musetta, a former sweetheart of Marcel's, with whom he had quarrelled some time ago, and who had in revenge quickly found a new admirer. These two really loved each other, but their quarrels and separations were frequent, for Musetta was a born coquette, and also having a passion for fine clothes and luxuries such as Marcel seldom had the means to provide, she would occasionally desert him for an adorer more richly endowed with the means of satisfying her extravagant wants.

Her latest conquest was this fussy old noble, Alcindoro de Mitonneaux, who had been so flattered by the pretty girl's attentions, which she bestowed on him in pique at Marcel's conduct, that still considering himself to be somewhat of a beau, he had allowed her to twist him round her clever little finger with ease, and to drag from him much of his carefully hoarded wealth.

Thus it came about that Musetta was gorgeously attired, and was filled with elation at the effect her finery made upon all who knew her amongst the Christmas crowd; but upon observing Marcel taking supper outside the Café Momus, she had hoped specially to attract his attention, and for this purpose had seated herself opposite, for the sight of this man, whom she really loved, had immediately dissatisfied her with her present uninteresting cavalier, of whom she had already tired.

But Marcel at first refused to look in the direction of this coquettish temptress, whom he still so passionately adored; and then, Musetta, annoyed at this tantalizing behaviour, resorted to noise in order to make her presence noted. She dropped a plate with a great clatter upon the hard ground, where it broke into many pieces; she talked in a loud voice to her companion, scolding him vigorously when he remonstrated with her for her noisiness; and then, finding that she was still unnoticed, she began, as a last resource, to sing, to the great disgust of old Alcindoro, who irritably endeavoured to make her stop.

The sound of Musetta's sweet singing was more than Marcel was proof against; and, fascinated in spite of himself, he turned his eyes upon the girl with

an intense look of passionate entreaty and longing.

Musetta, recognising at once that her lover had capitulated, now sought to rid herself of the tiresome old beau at her side; and, uttering an exclamation of pretended pain, she declared that her foot was pinched beyond bearing. Then, taking off one of her shoes, she thrust it into the hand of Alcindoro, and imperiously bade him to take it to a boot shop in an adjacent street, and bring her a pair of shoes one size larger; and the fussy old gentleman, not daring to refuse, being in wholesome fear of his charming innamorata's wayward temper and sharp tongue, hobbled away with the shoe, grumbling furiously.

The students had watched this little manœuvre with great amusement, and when the foolish old dupe had disappeared, Marcel rushed across to Musetta, and embraced her with loving fervour.

Whilst the reunited lovers were thus rejoicing together, the sound of beating drums announced the approach of a patrol of soldiers; and immediately the crowd of merrymakers in the square gathered to one side, to leave a clear space for the picket to march through. The soldiers soon appeared, headed by a band; and as they passed through the square to the main thoroughfare, the crowd quickly followed, anxious to see the tattoo that was about to take place.

The students decided to join this merry throng also, and, having by this time no money left to pay for the luxurious supper they had just enjoyed, Musetta mischievously suggested that they should leave their bill on her table, and tell the waiter that

old Alcindoro would pay for it. Hailing this suggestion with hilarious applause, the gay students gave the necessary instructions to the waiter, and hurried quickly from the square, Rudolf and Mimi arm-in-arm, Schaunard playing a new pipe he had just bought, and Marcel and Colline carrying Musetta between them, for, having but one shoe, she could not walk.

When the pompous Alcindoro presently returned with the pair of shoes he had been despatched to buy, he found the supper table deserted, and his fickle charmer flown; and upon the obsequious waiter presenting him with the long bill run up by the extravagant students, with which had been incorporated his own smaller one, he realised the trick that had been played upon him, and began to storm lustily, though in the end he had to submit and settle the bill, rather than become the laughing stock of the café.

Marcel and Musetta now passed some months happily together, for though the coquettish girl still took every possible opportunity for a flirtation with anyone who might happen to admire her, yet she really loved Marcel only. But she would not be tyrannised over, for her high spirit could not brook restraint; and if Marcel showed signs of wishing to curb her inordinate love of fine clothes and admiration, she quickly resented it. The two, however, fared better than Rudolf and Mimi, who, in spite of their passionate love, yet spent a miserable existence together.

For Rudolf's love was of that all-absorbing and madly jealous nature, that was for ever imagining

and fostering suspicions of the object of his affections; and not a glance nor a word could he bear Mimi to bestow elsewhere. Their life was, therefore, passed in a constant state of misunderstandings, for though they might be deliriously happy one day, they would suffer for this by many weeks of misery. Often they were on the point of separating for ever; and, indeed, at last they finally agreed to this.

At the time when Mimi, after a great mental struggle, came to this resolution, she had been avoided by Rudolf for some little time; and, having learnt that he had joined Marcel and Musetta at an inn on the borders of the Latin Quartier, she made her way there one cold wintry morning.

As she stood waiting outside the inn for Marcel, to whom she had sent a message desiring him to help her to carry out her resolve, she was seized with a violent fit of coughing; for of late the wasting disease to which she had always been inclined, had developed with alarming rapidity, and her frail form was constantly shaken by a racking cough.

When Marcel presently appeared, he was shocked at her wasted looks, and anxiously tried to draw her into the inn; but Mimi refused to enter for fear of meeting with Rudolf. She then told Marcel of the constantly strained relations between herself and Rudolf, whose mad jealousy made them both wretched; and she implored him to help her to part finally from her lover, since she felt that their lives would be at least more peaceful apart.

Whilst she was still speaking of this, Rudolf himself appeared in the doorway of the inn; and, fearing

to meet him just then, Mimi crept behind a group of plane trees as he approached. As Marcel turned to greet his friend, Rudolf declared that he had come to seek his assistance in effecting his final separation from Mimi, describing their strained relations in very much the same way as the poor girl herself had done; and then, his bitter tone giving way to a softer mood, he admitted that his jealous suspicions were really groundless, being caused only by his great love for her. He next began to speak in anxious tones of Mimi's frail health, declaring that her constant cough, wasted form, and feverish looks filled him with despair, since he knew that they were the unmistakable heralds of an early death; and Mimi, who could not fail to hear all that passed, thus realizing for the first time the doom that awaited her, was so overcome with woe that her sobs quickly made her presence known to her lover.

In a moment Rudolf was at her side, embracing her tenderly, and entreating her to enter the inn for warmth and refreshment; but this Mimi again refused to do, declaring that she had come to bid him a final farewell, having at last made up her mind to see him no more, since they could not be happy together. Rudolf, refusing to believe her in earnest, passionately pleaded his cause with her, so that her resolution soon melted away; and whilst the once more reconciled lovers were thus happily engaged, Marcel, hearing Musetta's saucy laugh pealing forth from the inn, dashed within, fully convinced that she was carrying on a lively flirtation in his absence. His conviction proved to be a right one, and presently the two emerged from the inn squabbling vio-

lently, Marcel jealously accusing the girl of accepting the attentions of a new admirer, and declaring that he would not permit her to be so free with her smiles. The high-spirited, admiration-loving Musetta, resenti g this interference with her pleasure, for her wayward nature would not brook restraint, and hotly declaring that she should flirt just whenever she pleased, she impetuously bade Marcel farewell, and flounced away in a pet.

Mimi and Rudolf, however, were by this time quite reconciled to each other, and yet once again they entered upon a phase of delirious joy. But this happy phase, like the many others that had preceded it, also quickly came to an end; and the separation that followed was the longest they had yet endured.

Rudolf and Marcel, both being thus deprived of their loved ones, joined their student friends once more, and tried to interest themselves in their work as formerly, endeavouring to heal their sore hearts in the pursuit of art. But neither could forget the joy that had been theirs; and one day as they sat working together in the same old attic in which pretty Mimi had first introduced herself, the thoughts of both turned back to the days of their happy love. Marcel, whenever his companion's glance was averted, would press to his lips a bunch of ribbons that had once belonged to Musetta; and Rudolf, when he thought himself unobserved by his friend, would take from a drawer beside him the little rose-trimmed bonnet Mimi had left him as a keepsake, and tenderly caress it.

Though it was now many months since they had parted, they had seen the girls from time to time,

though from afar; and observing that they were richly clad, knew that they had found new admirers. They were speaking of this as they sat at work, making a sorry pretence of not caring about the circu...stance, which, however, revived all the pain in their hearts; and since this attempt at mutual comfort was a dismal failure, they gladly hailed the arrival of Colline and Schaunard, who brought with them a very meagre meal, consisting of four small rolls and a herring. For the friends were just at that time going through one of their frequent penniless stages; but with their usual careless good humour, they sat down to the humble food with as much hilarity as though it had been a feast of the highest order, gaily inviting one another to imagine that the crusts were dainty dishes, and pledging one another in water, as though it had been champagne.

Whilst they were thus making merry, the door was suddenly opened; and, to the astonishment of all, Musetta entered, wearing an anxious face, and appearing much agitated. In answer to the eager questions poured upon her, she announced that Mimi was without, but was too weak and exhausted to mount the stairs, being, in fact, in a dying condition; and upon learing that his beloved one was so near, Rudolf rushed to her assistance, and with the help of his friends, brought her into the room, and laid her tenderly upon the bed.

Mimi and Rudolf embraced one another passionately; and whilst they were thus absorbed in their joy, Musetta related to the others the reason of their sudden visit. Having heard that Mimi had left her rich admirer, and was now lying in the last stages of

consumption, she had hastened to her side; and upon the poor exhausted girl expressing a passionate desire to see Rudolf once more before her death, she had undertaken to bring her to him, and by half carrying her had succeeded in this difficult enterprise. She now asked the students if they had any food or cordials to revive the fainting girl, and was sadly informed that they had nothing in their store, and no money either; but Colline and Schaunard presently left the room, taking with them an overcoat which they meant to pawn.

Mimi presently motioned Marcel to her side, and, placing Musetta's hand in his, desired that they would be reconciled once more for her sake; and she was filled with joy when the two embraced, and declared that they still loved one another dearly.

Then Musetta, anxious to leave the dying girl alone with her lover, that they might have a last happy talk together, suggested to Marcel that they should go to fetch Mimi's little muff, which she had asked for, being unable to keep her hands warm, and so the two presently departed on this kindly errand.

Finding that they were now alone, Mimi lay happily in Rudolf's arms, and told him again and again that her love for him had never changed; and the young student, overjoyed at thus learning that he was still beloved by the being he himself adored, declared passionately that they would never again be parted, in his gladness failing to realise that Mimi's little spark of life was even now almost extinguished.

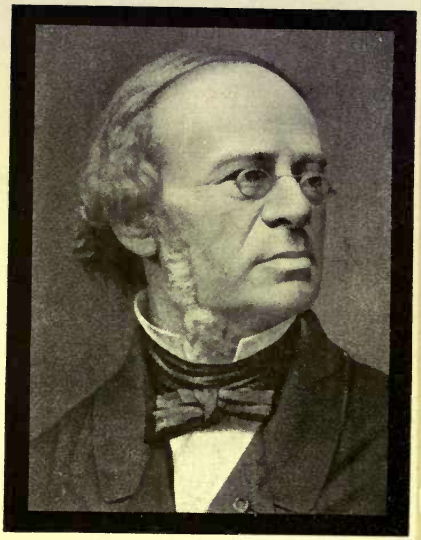
Schaunard and Colline presently returned with food and a cordial they had bought with the money

obtained by pawning the coat, saying also that a doctor would shortly arrive; and soon after Marcel and Musetta appeared with the muff they had been to fetch.

Mimi placed her tiny hands in the muff with childish pleasure; and presently, declaring that she now felt quite warm, she closed her eyes and seemed to rest.

Rudolf then gently moved away, and questioned his friends in a low voice as to when the doctor would arrive; but when Musetta approached the bed with the cordial she had poured out, she saw to her sorrow that Mimi was already dead.

Hearing her exclamation of consternation, Rudolf ran forward and took Mimi's cold little hand in his; and then, gradually realizing the terrible truth, he uttered a cry of anguish and sank, overcome with grief and despair, beside her lifeless form.



HALÉVY

THE JEWESS.

TOWARDS the end of the fourteenth century, Monseigneur de Brogni, Chief Magistrate of Rome, issued an Edict which decreed that all Jews were to be banished from the sacred city; and the persecuted people, knowing too well that delay meant torture and death, were compelled to submit to their enforced exodus, and to seek refuge in other lands.

Before all had departed, however, the Neapolitans, who were at that time waging war with the Roman Government, laid siege to the city, and having forced an entry, commenced ruthlessly to pillage and burn. During the absence of Monseigneur de Brogni, his splendid palace was sacked, and set ablaze; and when his arduous duties at length permitted the Chief Magistrate to return, he found his home destroyed, and was informed, to his horror, that his beloved wife and infant daughter had been left to perish in the flames.

But this was not in reality the truth, since, though the mother had indeed been burned, the babe had been rescued by a Jew, named Eleazar, who, having thus saved the child by a sudden impulse, immediately carried her away with him to share his own fortunes, rather than restore her to the hated enemy of his race.

De Brogni, frantic at the loss of his beloved ones,

sought solace by joining the Church, and having attained to the rank of a Cardinal, he quickly rose to great eminence and power in the service of Sigismund, Emperor of the West.

Meanwhile, Eleazar, the Jew, had journeyed with many of his brethren to the city of Constance, then under the sway of the Pope, and, settling here, he engaged in the occupation of a dealer in gems, and by his industry soon became very wealthy. The little girl he had rescued was given the name of Rachel, and brought up as his own daughter, and in his own religion.

As time went on, Rachel grew up to be a very beautiful maiden; and as she had been always taught to regard Eleazar as her father, she rendered him due reverence and obedience as such, and proved herself to be a loving and devoted daughter. So the years passed peacefully enough for Eleazar and Rachel; but at last a change came, and terrible trouble fell upon them.

One day, in the year 1414, the city of Constance put on its gayest appearance, and the people prepared to celebrate a solemn festival in honour of recent brilliant victories gained by their young Prince, Leopold, over certain hated enemies, and as the Emperor Sigismund was to make a triumphal entry into the city during the day, all work was suspended, and the citizens prepared to receive their ruler with loyal rejoicings.

A solemn thanksgiving service was first held in the chief church of the city, which was situated in a great square, at one end of which was the jewel shop and dwelling of Eleazar the Jew; and presently,

noticing signs of work going on within the Hebrew's abode, contrary to the decree gone forth that the day was to be observed as a sacred festival, the people in the crowded square gathered in angry groups before the gem shop, and indignantly shouted commands for the work to be stopped instantly.

Eleazar, having scorned to recognise the Christian Festival as applying to himself, had decided to carry on his work as usual; and now, hearing the menacing cries of the outraged populace, he appeared fearlessly at the door of his shop, accompanied by his daughter, and a handsome young man, whom he had recently taken into his service as an artist, though a complete stranger to him.

This stranger was in reality none other than the young Prince Leopold, who, having on a former visit to the city seen the jeweller's lovely daughter, had straightway fallen in love with her; and knowing that he would never be permitted to wed with a Jewess, he had resorted to a disguise in order to satisfy the longings of his heart, and enjoy intercourse with the object of his affections. For this purpose, he had left the Court a few weeks before the Emperor's entry into Constance, giving out that he would join the royal party when the day of rejoicing arrived, since great honours were to be showered upon him on that occasion, and then, disguising himself in the humble dress of an artist, he journeyed to Constance, and introduced himself as a Jew, named Samuel, to Eleazar, who willingly took him into his service since he had great natural abilities. Here he quickly won the affections of Rachel; but, still remembering that he could never marry the beautiful

Jewess, he persuaded her to keep their love for awhile from the knowledge of Eleazar, as he could not bear the thought of parting from her so soon.

As the three now appeared at the shop door, the indignant mob dragged them roughly outside, declaring that they deserved to die by torture for their sacrilege of a solemn Festival Day, and, in spite of Rachel's piteous plea for mercy, she and her father would have been quickly borne away to their death, had not an interruption occurred by the entry of the Cardinal de Brogni, who was at the time passing on his way to join the Emperor. Seeing that a disturbance was taking place, De Brogni stopped to enquire the reason for it; and this being explained to him, he gave orders for the persecuted pair to be released, recognising Eleazar as one of the prominent Hebrews he had known in Rome, although quite unconscious that the fair Rachel was in reality his own daughter, whose loss he had never ceased to mourn. Compelled to obey the command of the powerful Cardinal, the crowd drew back sullenly; and Eleazar and Rachel returned in safety to their home.

That evening, being the Jewish Feast of the Passover, a number of Hebrews met together to celebrate the solemn service at the house of Eleazar, who was a leader amongst his brethren of the faith; and amongst the company was the disguised Prince Leopold, who, though pretending to join in the ceremony, yet did not commit himself, for when the consecrated bread was handed to him, he surreptitiously flung it aside when he thought himself unobserved.

As the ceremony came to an end, a loud clamour was heard at the entrance, and upon the door being

opened, to the astonishment of all, guards and attendants in the royal livery were seen without, escorting a richly-dressed lady, who entered the house alone, and announced herself to be the Princess Eudossia, niece of the Emperor. As she entered, Leopold quickly retired into the background, and kept himself concealed from view; for he was affianced to this same fair princess, and knew that ruin awaited him should he be discovered by her in the Jewish household.

The Princess, however, addressed herself to Eleazar, stating that she had come to purchase from him a handsome jewelled chain, which she wished to present to her betrothed, Prince Leopold, when he appeared at her Uncle's Court on the morrow; and having chosen the most magnificent ornament of the kind which Eleazar possessed, she bade him bring it to the Palace next day, and then withdrew.

The Jewish brethren having also by this time all departed, Leopold and Rachel found themselves alone; and the beautiful Jewess, observing her lover's pale face and agitated looks, entreated him to tell her the reason of this. Then the young prince, having been awakened by Eudossia's visit to a sense of the wrong he was doing Rachel by thus seeking to win her love by deception, and filled with remorse, confessed to the Jewish maiden that he was a Christian, though still not revealing his true rank; and Rachel, overcome with grief at this revelation, reproached him bitterly for having thus led her into the crime of having loved and sacrificed her honour to a Christian. But when her father, hearing their voices, suddenly entered the room, and hearing of the

stranger's deception, was about to stab him in his wrath, her mood instantly changed; and, flinging herself upon her knees between them, she implored Eleazar to have pity on them both, and to permit them to marry.

"My father! Be not angry, but grant my wish!" she cried passionately, "for I love Samuel, and he is all the world to me!"

Eleazar, who loved his adopted daughter with great tenderness, gently raised her from the ground, and in tones from which the anger had all vanished, he said that he would consent to the marriage, since her happiness depended upon it. But Leopold, knowing that he, a royal prince, could never enter into such a marriage, now felt himself compelled to repudiate the bride offered to him, madly though he still loved and longed to possess her; and, declaring cruelly that he could never wed with a Jewess, he rushed hastily from the house, despising himself for his own base conduct, and followed by the furious curses of Eleazar.

Next day, the Jew and his daughter made their way to the royal Court, taking with them the splendid jewelled chain which the Princess Eudossia had purchased the evening before; and upon arriving at the Palace, they were at once ushered into the presence chamber. Here the Court was assembled with great magnificence, and Prince Leopold, seated on a throne beside his betrothed, was receiving the congratulations and praises of the courtiers upon his success in the recent war.

When Rachel beheld the young Prince, in spite of his resplendent attire, she at once recognised him as

her false lover, Samuel; and as the Princess Eudossia was about to present her gift, determined to be revenged for her cruel treatment, she sprang forward, and, snatching the chain away, passionately denounced Leopold before the whole company, declaring that he had committed the sacrilegious crime of having betrayed a Jewess.

"I, Rachel, am the maiden he has sacrified to his unlawful passion!" she added, in a voice that trembled with emotion. "And since I, too, have shared in his guilt, I am prepared to suffer for my sin!"

Upon hearing Rachel's denunciation, a wave of horror swept over the whole assemblage, for the deed of which she accused the young prince was regarded at that time as a terrible crime, and was punishable by death; and since Leopold did not attempt to deny the accusation, but bent his head in acknowledgment of guilt, they knew that he had indeed committed this act of sacrilege against his religion.

The Cardinal de Brogni, who was also present, seeing that this was so, now rose in righteous indignation at this outrage which had been offered to the Christian Church, and declared that, in accordance with the existing law, Leopold and Rachel must both suffer death for their crime, and that Eleazar should also share their fate as an accomplice; and then, followed by the curses of the whole Court, the condemned three were led away to prison.

The Princess Eudossia was overwhelmed with grief at this terrible conclusion to all her dearest hopes; but, in spite of Leopold's faithlessness, she

still passionately loved him, and determined to make an effort to save him from death.

Having obtained permission to visit Rachel in prison, she repaired to the fortress without delay, and when the young Jewess was brought before her, she besought her to save Leopold's life by declaring to the judges that he was not guilty of the crime of which she had accused him.

Rachel, however, at first indignantly refused to help one who had so basely betrayed and repudiated her; but when Eudossia fell on her knees, and passionately pleaded with her again and again to save the man they both loved, she relented, unable to struggle longer against the natural promptings of her own heart, in which her false lover's image was for ever enshrined. She therefore promised Eudossia to obey her wish; and when brought before the judges a short time later, she declared to them that Leopold was not guilty of the crime she had attributed to him. The Cardinal de Brogni, rejoicing at this news, now declared Leopold to be innocent, and gave orders for his instant release; but Eleazar and Rachel, being now accused of having fabricated the whole story to entrap the royal prince, were condemned for such high treason to the terrible death of being flung into a caldron of boiling oil.

The Cardinal, however, feeling pity for the dreadful fate about to fall upon the lovely Jewish maiden, gave Eleazar the opportunity of saving his daughter by abjuring his faith and becoming a Christian, but this suggestion the staunch Jew scornfully repudiated, declaring that he preferred to die in his own faith rather than live to join the ranks of the Chris-

tians, whom he hated. Then, having suddenly bethought him of a means of revenging himself upon the Cardinal for thus condemning him to so terrible a death, he related to him the story of how his infant daughter had been rescued from the fire years ago, saying that her preserver was a friend of his own, and that she was still living; and the Cardinal, who had never ceased to mourn for his lost child, implored him to say where the maiden was to be found, that he might cherish her once again.

But Eleazar refused to reveal the secret, having determined not to give De Brogni the information until Rachel was no more, that he might thus bring everlasting grief upon him for having condemned his own child to such an agonising death; and though the Cardinal even humbled himself by kneeling in supplication before the Jew he despised, the longing of his heart remained unsatisfied.

However, when the day of execution arrived, and Rachel and himself were brought out to meet their fate, and were left together for a few moments near the scaffold from which they were to be flung into the boiling oil, the old Jew's resolution broke down, and, feeling horror at the thought of sacrificing the beautiful maiden he had loved as his own daughter, to satisfy his private vengeance, he besought her with all his heart to become a Christian, since by that means she could save herself from the awful death that awaited her.

But Rachel declared nobly that she would never forsake the faith in which she had been brought up, and had learned to love; and thus firmly resolved to wear the martyr's crown, she heroically sprang upon

the scaffold, and with a cry of exaltation, leapt into the seething caldron.

Eleazar's moment of revenge had now arrived, although he had sought to avert it; and as his beloved Rachel vanished from sight, he turned to De Brogni, and cried in a frenzied voice in which triumph and anguish struggled for the mastery, "Behold, your daughter, proud Cardinal, now lost to you for ever!"

MASCAGNI

Face page 185

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA.

(Rustic Chivalry.)

It was Easter morning, and the inhabitants of a certain pretty little village in the island of Sicily were wending their way towards the church to join in the customary special service of praise and thanksgiving in honour of the festival. They were light-hearted, peaceful peasants, who worked hard for their living, and so were glad to rejoice and be merry on feast days; and though shut off from the outside world, like other island folk, they had considerable pride, and jealously guarded the honour of their native village. As they approached the church this bright Easter morning, their simple hearts were filled with joy and gratitude for the life of peaceful calm allotted to them; and yet, though they knew it not, a tragedy was even now being enacted in their midst.

Turiddu, one of the handsomest youths in the village, had become a soldier, and before going off to the wars, he had obtained the promise of his sweetheart, Lola, to remain faithful to him, that they might be wed on his return.

But the pretty Lola found the waiting time long and wearisome; and, at last, tiring of an ever-absent lover, she accepted the advances of Alfio, the pros-

perous village carrier, who had a comfortable home to offer, and loved her dearly.

So when Turiddu at length returned from his military service, he found his faithless sweetheart the wife of the happy Alfio; but though filled with disappointment and grief, he determined in his pride not to let Lola see that he cared aught for his loss. To this end, knowing that he was looked upon with favour by another fair village maiden, named Santuzza, he began to pay his addresses to her with much ardour; and he pursued his false wooing with such success that in a very short time he had not only stolen this poor girl's heart, but her honour, also.

Now, when Lola saw that Turiddu had taken a new sweetheart in her place, she was filled with unreasonable resentment; and all her old love returning with the sting of jealousy, she sought to draw him back to her side once more, regardless of her wifely vows to Alfio. Nor did she find her task a difficult one; for Turiddu's passion for her had never altered, although he had found comfort for a time in the smiles of Santuzza, and he gladly accepted her invitation to resume their old sweet intercourse.

Every day the lovers met in secret, being careful to keep all their movements concealed from the unsuspecting Alfio; and for a little while they were able to rejoice in their lawless love.

But the secret did not long remain hidden from the betrayed and deserted Santuzza, who still passionately loved Turiddu; and when she discovered that he had returned to his old love, she was filled with grief and jealousy. For awhile, she kept the secret to

herself, hoping to persuade the man she loved to come back to her, and give up his dangerous intercourse with Lola; but when after many weeks had passed, and still Turiddu came not, she determined to go and seek him out.

Having learnt from a neighbour that her false lover had been seen lingering near the abode of Alfio on the previous evening, she made her way, full of misery and longing, to the cottage of Turiddu's mother, Lucia, which was situated near the church in an open square. Here she waited until Lucia came out from the cottage, ready for church; and then, hurrying towards the good dame, she asked her where Turiddu was to be found.

Lucia replied that her son had gone a few days ago into the neighbouring town of Francoflute to fetch wine, and had not yet returned; but Santuzza declared this could not be true, since he had been seen in the village only the evening before. On hearing this, Lucia was surprised and troubled; for, although she knew nothing of Turiddu's secret love, his movements had been mysterious to her of late, and she had felt that all was not right with him.

Just then, Alfio, the carrier, entered the square with his team, singing a merry song as he drove by. He stopped at the cottage to ask for a cup of wine, and upon the name of Turiddu being mentioned, he told Lucia, with a sudden frown, that her son had been lurking near his own cottage that very morning, and had been seen there several other times of late. Lucia was about to say more on the subject, when Santuzza, not wishing to betray her faithless lover, made a sign to her to desist; and a few

moments later Alfio went off with his team, but with a troubled look on his face, for a suspicion as to Turiddu's object in haunting his wife's abode now flashed across his mind for the first time.

When he had gone, Santuzza, unable to bear her grief in silence any longer, determined to take Lucia into her confidence; and, in despairing tones, she now poured out the whole wretched story to the dame—how Turiddu, in pique, had won her love and betrayed her, deserting her in order to return to his former sweetheart, Lola.

Lucia listened to this sad story with grief in her heart for the sin of her son, and pity for the unhappy girl he had wronged; and when it came to an end, she folded Santuzza in her arms, and said that she would offer prayers for her comfort even now. She then went into the church, which was already filled with worshippers singing their Easter anthem; but Santuzza remained weeping by the cottage door.

Presently, she saw Turiddu enter the square, and, hurrying forward eagerly, she greeted him with reproaches, passionately imploring him to return to her love once more. But Turiddu, who had come to look for Lola on her way to church, was in no mood to hear the reproaches of Santuzza; and he declared that her pleadings were in vain to move him, for she was nothing to him, and Lola's love was all he wanted.

At this moment Lola herself came by, singing on her way to church, and seeing Santuzza and Turiddu together, a momentary wave of jealousy seized her. She began to mock at them both for choosing the public square for their love-making, and when

Turiddu tried to draw her away with him, she shook herself free, and scornfully bade him stay with his beloved Santuzza. She then turned away with a careless laugh, and went into the church, and Turiddu, rendered furious at her mocking words, which had been incited by the presence of her rival, turned angrily away from Santuzza, and bade her leave him.

The wretched Santuzza, however, refused to be dismissed; and again she implored him to have pity and return to her loving heart once more. But Turiddu declared cruelly that everything was now over between them, his love for Lola being all-absorbing, and when Santuzza clung to his arm in her wild eagerness, he flung her passionately from him, and hastened into the church, heedless that she had fallen to the ground.

Poor Santuzza lay for a few moments where she had fallen; and when she had recovered sufficiently to raise herself, she saw that Alfio the carrier had returned to the square again, and was standing close beside her. Maddened by Turiddu's cruel treatment, she now determined to be revenged upon him, and, turning eagerly to Alfio, she related to him the story of his wife's intrigue. She kept nothing back, not even Turiddu's betrayal of herself, and Alfio knew from her deep distress and passion that she spoke the truth, which his own recently awakened suspicions too surely confirmed.

The injured husband listened with grief and rage in his heart, and when the story came to an end, he exclaimed vehemently that all his love for his faithless wife was now changed to hate, and that he

would surely avenge himself speedily upon the betrayer of his honour.

Santuzza was terrified at the tumult of passion she had thus raised, and would gladly have recalled her words, could she have done so; but Alfio flung her detaining arm from him, and fled away to collect his agonised thoughts.

The service at the church was now at an end; and the worshippers came pouring forth into the square, laughing and rejoicing together, for the rest of the day was to be spent in merriment.

Turiddu and the pretty Lola came out together with happy faces, for the careless girl's jealous outburst had quickly flown; and as they passed a little inn at one side of the square, Turiddu snatched up a cup of wine from a table that stood without, and drank it off to the health of his sweetheart. Lola recklessly responded to the pledge; and then, Turiddu, carried away by the delirium of the moment, began to sing a lively drinking song, in which he was heartily joined by the merry bystanders.

As the song came to an end, Alfio suddenly broke into the group; and from his pale, set face, and the look of suppressed passion in his burning eyes, it soon became plain to all that some fearful act was in contemplation. The women drew together, and began to whisper in frightened tones; but the men called out a friendly welcome to Alfio, who returned their greeting with calmness.

But when Turiddu, still keeping up his gay tone, offered the newcomer a cup of wine, and boldly invited him to drink to their friendship, Alfio refused with the utmost scorn, and he declared in resentful

tones that wine offered by Turiddu was to him but deadly poison. On hearing these words, Lola uttered a cry of fear, knowing now that her wronged husband had discovered all; and, full of despair, she allowed herself to be led away by the trembling women, who quickly guessed that she was concerned in the quarrel, and were eager to remove her from the scene.

Turiddu also saw that his secret was known by the man he had wronged, but was not afraid to meet the consequences of his guilt; and seeing that Alfio meant to satisfy his honour by fighting, he went boldly forward and made the first challenge himself. This he did by biting the left ear of his opponent, according to the local custom of the island; and at the same time, he took all the blame of the intrigue upon himself, and begged Alfio not to deal harshly with Lola.

Alfio calmly accepted the challenge, and, leading the way to a garden near by, he bade Turiddu follow him, that they might fight there undisturbed. As Turiddu followed, he stopped at the door of his home and called for his mother, and when Lucia hurried out, alarmed at his excited tones, he begged her in case he was killed, to guard and care for poor Santuzza, whom he had so cruelly wronged. He also implored her to bless him and pray for his forgiveness, and then, with a last tender embrace, he drew his dagger, and rushed into the garden to begin the duel.

Lucia was terrified at her son's aspect, and guessed at once what had happened; and when, at that moment, Santuzza ran up, asking wildly for her lover, she folded her in her arms with a sobbing cry.

Suddenly, a loud shout of "Turiddu is slain!" came from those who had followed to watch the fight, and as the cry was taken up in the square, Lucia and Santuzza, grief-stricken, sank senseless to the ground.

Thus was rustic honour satisfied, and Alfio avenged of his wrongs; but the bright Easter morn that had dawned so joyously, ended in gloom and the dark shadow of death!

FIDELIO.

One bright summer day, during the seventeenth century, in the courtyard of a certain prison castle in Spain, the jailor's daughter, a pretty girl, named Maicellina, stood ironing linen in the doorway of her father's lodge; and though not in reality pressed for time, it pleased her to make a great pretence of being very busy, in order to avoid the attentions of Jacquino, the porter of the prison, who was constantly passing to and fro, and engaging in conversation with her.

It was quite in vain, however, that the amorous porter tried to get the maiden interested in his pretty speeches, for pert Miss Maicellina would have none of him to-day, and was even cruel enough to hint that her thoughts were with some more favoured suitor elsewhere; and Jacquino felt himself very badly used. For until lately, he alone had been the favoured swain of this rustic coquette; but since the recent advent of a new assistant, a handsome youth, rejoicing in the name of Fidelio, the jailor's pretty daughter had looked coldly upon her old sweetheart, and bestowed all her most bewitching smiles upon the newcomer.

It was of Fidelio she was thinking now, knowing that the youth would shortly be returning from an errand upon which he had been sent some hours

before; and so, when a loud knock was presently heard at the outer gate, she was filled with joyful anticipation, and eagerly bade Jacquino unfasten the bolts at once, which the porter did very reluctantly, and with much grumbling at such untimely interruption to his own suit. He was somewhat grimly pleased, therefore, when, on opening the gate, he admitted Rocco, the jailer, instead of the new assistant; but even this small satisfaction was short lived, for almost immediately afterwards, his rival, Fidelio, appeared, and so laden with packages and baskets, that Marcellina ran to relieve him of them at once, commiserating tenderly with him on being thus heavily laden on so hot a day.

Now, in reality, though none suspected it, Fidelio was not the person he represented himself to be, but instead a lady of high degree, who had thus taken on the disguise of a youth from a very noble motive. Within this prison castle there were a number of political prisoners, who, though innocent, were the victims of despotic power, and pined in captivity, because some private enemy refused to speak the word that would have set them at liberty.

Amongst these prisoners was a certain Don Florestan, a nobleman, who, having had the misfortune to offend Don Pizarro, the governor of the fortress, had been by him accused of some slight political misdemeanour, and thrust into a deep dungeon of the prison. Having thus got his hated enemy into his power, the crafty Governor gave out shortly afterwards that he had died, so that he should not be released when his short term of imprisonment was over; and thus, by keeping him closely chained in

the deepest dungeon, and slowly starving him, he hoped that the wretched man would really die, and his own private vengeance be thus satisfied without resort to actual violence.

However, his plans were to be frustrated from quite an unexpected source; for Don Florestan had a beautiful young wife, the Lady Leonora, who loved her husband so devotedly that, refusing to believe the report of his death, she determined to learn the truth at all costs, and if he still lived, to rescue him from the hands of his unscrupulous enemy, Pizarro, who she knew would not hesitate to murder him so soon as he could do so without fear of discovery.

Being of a brave and heroic disposition, Leonora was not afraid to risk her life for the sake of the man she loved; and so, having donned masculine attire, she boldly made her way to the fortress where her husband pined in captivity, and, giving her name as Fidelio, humbly requested the jailor to engage her as his assistant, hoping that in this way she would at last discover how Don Florestan was faring, and perhaps be able to plan some means of escape for him. Rocco, the jailor, being greatly struck with the pleasant looks and manners of the supposed youth, very willingly took her into his service, and, since the new assistant was neat-handed, useful and obliging, he quickly became a favourite with all within the castle, to the great chagrin of Jacquino, who, being clumsy and somewhat dull, now found himself quite out of favour.

Poor Jacquino felt more aggrieved still when saucy Mistress Marcellina also showed preference for the newcomer, whose handsome face and air of melan-

choly attracted her fancy, and caused her to treat her old sweetheart with disdain; and when discovering in addition that his master, Rocco, favoured his daughter's new choice, he felt justly jealous of the unknown stranger, who had so coolly supplanted him.

So to-day, as Marcellina and her father ran to relieve the supposed Fidelio of his burdens, Jacquino kept sulkily in the background, and presently he departed to perform some duties within the castle, determined to press his own suit at some more favourable time.

Rocco now began to praise his new assistant for the clever manner in which he had carried out his instructions that day; and to show his approval of this and of his conduct in general, he announced that he was quite willing to welcome such a likely youth as a son-in-law, since Marcellina seemed to regard him also with evident favour, and he even hinted at a very early date for the wedding-day.

Marcellina was delighted to hear this, and to know that her father favoured her fancy for her dear Fidelio; but Leonora was greatly embarrassed, not knowing how she should get safely out of this new difficulty, for though she had tried to ingratiate herself with the jailor's daughter for her own purposes, she did not wish to pain the maiden in any way.

However, she succeeded in hiding her embarrassment for the time being, and presently managed to direct the conversation into a safer channel, by begging Rocco to allow her to accompany him on his daily visits to the prisoners in the lower dungeons, and to assist him with this work, which the jailor had hitherto performed alone; for in this way,

she knew she would be able to discover if her beloved husband still lived, since she had not seen him amongst the more favoured prisoners, whom she was permitted to wait upon.

At first Rocco refused this plea, declaring that Fidelio was too young to witness such dreadful sights as these wretched chained captives, and to emphasise his refusal, described the miserable state of one of these, who was nearly at the point of death through close confinement and starvation; but when Leonora, on hearing this, redoubled her entreaties, feeling sure from the description that this unhappy prisoner must be her own dear husband, he at length consented, feeling better pleased than ever with the youth's evident desire to assist him even in such disagreeable duties as visiting the dungeon captives.

At this moment Don Pizarro, the cruel Governor of the prison, entered the courtyard with some of the guard; and, after giving orders to the captain, he proceeded to read the despatches brought from the town by Fidelio, and now handed to him by Rocco.

Amongst these despatches, Pizarro found a missive, warning him that the Prime Minister intended to pay a surprise visit to the prison that evening, having been informed that certain victims of despotic power were still unjustly held captive there; and, suddenly filled with fear at the thought of how he should account for the presence of Don Florestan, so long believed to be dead, he began to form a plan to avoid this new danger to himself, and soon decided to kill his hated enemy within the next few

hours. However, he did not mean to do this dreadful deed himself, if possible, and so, when the guard had presently gone on duty, he detained Rocco, intending to make him his instrument of vengeance.

Carelessly handing the jailor a purse of gold, he hinted darkly that he desired the death of this wretched prisoner in the lowest dungeon, but Rocco, recoiling from the thought of such cold-blooded murder, refused to do the deed, although, being afraid of offending his unscrupulous superior, he tremblingly agreed to dig the victim's grave, if Pizarro himself would strike the fatal blow. With this the Governor was fain to be content; and the two departed separate ways, having first laid their plans, and arranged that the grave should be dug beneath an old ruined cistern at the side of the dungeon.

Now, it happened that Leonora, having suspected from the dark looks of Pizarro that he intended ill to someone, had crept back to the courtyard, where she had remained hidden in such a position that she could overhear the conversation between the Governor and Rocco; and filled with horror at the thought of the violent death now destined for the unhappy prisoner, whom she felt sure was her own beloved husband, she determined to rescue him that evening if possible, and hurried after Rocco, in order to be with him wherever he should go, and so learn all his plans.

Later on, she returned with the jailor to the courtyard, where she discovered Marcellina and Jacquino engaged in a lively dispute; and, finding that the squabble was about herself as the supposed Fidelio,

whom Jacquino regarded as a rival, and Marcellina desired as a new sweetheart, she hastily changed this embarrassing subject by entreating Rocco to allow the more privileged prisoners to walk for a short time in the courtyard to enjoy a breath of fresh air, a request he had several times promised to grant when a suitable opportunity should occur. As Marcellina also added her entreaties to this kindly request, hoping to please her dear Fidelio by so doing, Rocco agreed, promising to keep Pizarro engaged for a short time on business at the other end of the fortress; and so, when he had departed, Jacquino and Leonora unlocked the cells, and invited the wretched inmates to walk outside for a while.

Full of gratitude for this unexpected pleasure, the prisoners poured forth into the courtyard, walking about with slow painful steps, but uttering cries of delight at the sight of the brilliant sunshine, and inhaling the fresh summer air with deep thankfulness.

Presently, Rocco returned, and informed his new assistant that Pizarro had consented to his helping him in the duties of attending upon the dungeon captives, and that he should begin that day by helping to dig the grave of the victim who was to die so soon as it was ready; and Leonora was filled with conflicting emotions, joyful at the thought of meeting her beloved one again, should the captive indeed prove to be her husband, but terrified by the prospect of her dreadful task.

Whilst they were still talking together, Pizarro unexpectedly appeared on the scene, and, enraged at the sight of the captives walking in the courtyard, he poured forth angry abuse upon Rocco for daring

to permit such a thing. The jailor, however, stopped this outburst by reminding Pizarro of the dark deed he was presently to assist him with; and, anxious to keep on good terms with one who knew his wicked plans, the Governor ceased to bluster, but gave orders for the prisoners to be once more locked up.

When the wretched captives had returned reluctantly to their cells, uttering deep sighs of regret as they quitted the bright sunshine for the gloomy darkness of the prison, Rocco called the supposed Fidelio to one side; and, laden with spades and pick-axes, they made their way to the deepest dungeon to commence their gruesome task.

Little dreaming that the one person in all the world he most longed to see, his beloved wife, was even now approaching, Don Florestan lay suffering upon the floor of his horrible cell, with despair in his heart, for he had now been so long without food, and was so terribly exhausted, that he knew death could not be far off. All hope of escape had long since deserted him, and he had quite resigned himself to his fate, looking forward to death as the end of his sufferings; but even now the image of his beautiful Leonora shone brightly in his heart, and every now and again he would breathe her name tenderly, and stretch forth his arms with a loving gesture, as though about to embrace her visionary form, or call a passionate greeting to her, thinking in his wandering delirium that she indeed stood before him.

Just as he sank back exhausted after one of these flights of feverish fancy, Rocco the jailor entered the dungeon, followed by the trembling Leonora,

who shivered as she felt the chill, damp air of the subterranean cell, and glanced apprehensively at the huddled form on the ground, fearing, yet hoping, that it would prove to be her husband.

Rocco at once proceeded to the ruined cistern situated at one side of the dungeon, and, taking his spade and pickaxe, began to dig the grave, calling to his assistant to do likewise, speaking in gruff but not unkindly tones, thinking that the youth's evident reluctance to commence the horrid task was due to the softness natural to his tender years, rather than to any deeper feeling.

At length, however, Leonora, in order to keep up her disguise, took her spade and began to assist in the work; but every now and again, she turned her eyes upon the crouching form of the poor prisoner, who appeared to be sleeping.

Presently, however, Don Florestan raised his head, and addressed the jailor; and Leonora, seeing now that he was indeed her own beloved husband, was so overcome that she sank back in a swoon. Rocco, not noticing the agitation of his assistant, approached the prisoner, who demanded, as he had already done many times before, the name of the tyrant whose cruelty thus doomed him to a living death. Rocco, knowing that the poor man was to die within the next hour, felt that there could now be no harm in granting this request; and so he told Florestan that his enemy was Don Pizarro, the Governor of the prison.

The name of Pizarro recalled Leonora's wandering senses; and still keeping her face hidden from Florestan, she tried to persuade Rocco to permit her to

give the captive some bread she had brought with her for this purpose. Though the jailor at first refused, his own pity for the wretched prisoner at length got the better of him, and he gave his consent, even making him drink a little wine from a small flagon he had himself brought.

No sooner had Florestan eagerly partaken of the welcome food, which quickly brought back some little strength to his weary frame, than the dreaded Pizarro entered the dungeon, his first words being to bid Rocco send his youthful assistant away. Leonora, however, though she pretended to obey, only retired into the shadows of the dungeon; and then Pizarro, flinging open his cloak, and drawing his dagger, strode towards the prisoner, and in cruel, triumphant tones bade him prepare to die, hoping to see him fall on his knees and beg for mercy.

But Florestan, who had now risen to his feet, bravely drew himself up to his full height with quiet dignity; and his look of calr contempt so exasperated the wicked Pizarro, that he sprang forward immediately, intending to stab him to the heart. Ere he could strike, however, Leonora flung herself upon him, and bade him desist; and as Pizarro, taken by surprise, drew back, she now boldly declared herself to be the wife of his intended victim.

Florestan, seeing the face of the supposed youth for the first time, was amazed to recognise his beloved Leonora; and full of joy, even in this awful moment of danger, the long separated husband and wife embraced tenderly.

Pizarro, enraged at this untimely interruption of his

evil plans, and knowing that he had little time to lose, since his superior officer would arrive very shortly, sprang forward again, intending to stab them both; but Leonora, in a flash, drew forth a loaded pistol she had concealed in her garments, and, covering him with it, declared she would fire if he moved a step further.

Chagrined, and completely non-plussed at this sudden turning of the tables upon him, Pizarro stood helpless, glaring furiously upon the brave Leonora; and as they stood thus, the sound of a trumpet was heard, and Jacquino, accompanied by several officers of the castle, appeared in the doorway, announcing that Don Fernando, the Minister, had just arrived, and demanded an immediate interview with the Governor of the prison.

Pizarro, balked of his prey, and feeling that disaster was about to fall on him, yet not daring to disobey the command of his superior, turned angrily on his heel, and left the cell.

When their enemy had departed, Florestan and Leonora again fell into each other's arms, and rejoiced together, full of gladness at meeting once more, and hopeful that their troubles would now shortly come to an end; and then, as soon as the exhausted Count had sufficiently recovered, Rocco escorted them both to the large court of the castle, where the Minister, Don Fernando, surrounded by soldiers and officers, was receiving the thanks of the grateful captives, whom he had just ordered to be set free, knowing that they had unjustly been kept in bonds.

The jailor, eager to bring his cruel master into

disgrace, led Florestan and Leonora forward at once, and appealed to the Minister for justice; and Don Fernando, astonished at thus beholding the young Count, whom all had believed to be dead, received him with great kindness, and gave him a hearty welcome. Then, when he was told the whole story of Pizarro's infamous plot, and how it was frustrated by the intended victim's brave wife, he declared that Florestan was free from that moment, and that Leonora herself should have the joy of removing the chains that had been put so unjustly upon him.

When this pleasant task had been performed by the now happy Leonora, the whole assemblage were free to rejoice together, for all were glad at the downfall of the tyrant Pizarro. The released captives were glad because they were at liberty once more; Jacquino was glad because the dangerous Fidelio could no longer be a rival to his claim upon the pretty Marcellina, who was even now ready to smile on him again; and Florestan and his faithful Leonora were the most joyful of all, since they were restored to each other and a life of perfect peace and happiness.

LA SONNAMBULA.

In a certain pretty village in Italy, the light-hearted peasants were gathered together one summer evening on the shady green, talking in groups as they waited to witness the betrothal of Elvino, a prosperous young farmer, and his fair sweetheart, Amina, whose nuptials were to be celebrated on the morrow. The wreaths and garlands of flowers for the wedding decorations were being merrily set up by willing hands, and the village already wore a gala air; for all were looking forward eagerly to the coming festivities, with the exception of one person, who alone refused to be joyful.

This was Lisa, the pretty young hostess of the village inn, who, having once received attentions herself from the handsome Elvino, had felt slighted when he had fixed his affections upon Amina, whose beauty and sweet winning ways had made her the belle of the village; and now, as she mingled with the merry throng on the green, she was filled with envy for the happy fate of the bride elect, and could do nothing but make spiteful remarks about her rival, declaring her to be a mere nobody, and not worthy of so great a piece of fortune.

For Amina was but a poor orphan, who had been brought up by Dame Teresa, of the Mill, a worthy woman who had loved and cared for her as though

she were her own child; but in spite of her unknown birth and dependent position, Amina was beloved by all the villagers, whose hearts she had won by her many deeds of kindness. But Lisa's jealousy would not allow her to see any perfection in the gentle Amina; and so full of envy and disappointment did she feel just now that to all the remarks made to her by her devoted admirer, Alessio, she only returned snappish replies, which, however, disconcerted her swain but little. For Alessio was a merry, lively fellow, full of fun, and not easily discouraged, and having conceived a great admiration for the pretty but sharp-tongued Lisa, he was for ever coaxing her to marry him, and in spite of her many snubs, he still felt confident of success in the end.

As they walked about the green this evening, he said again: "Come, Lisa, let us also sign our marriage contract, whilst the Notary is here, and save him the trouble of coming again!"

But to this cool suggestion, however, Mistress Lisa merely tossed her head, and turned impatiently away; and Alessio, nothing daunted, began to join heartily in the merry wedding song he had himself composed in honour of the day, which the villagers had just raised as the pretty Amina appeared on the green, accompanied by Dame Teresa.

When the song came to an end, Amina thanked her friends in a gentle voice for their kindly wishes, and then, turning to Alessio and Lisa, she mischievously suggested that they should follow her example and plight their troth with her that night.

"'Tis just what I have been saying!" cried the irrepressible Alessio, gleefully. "Come, Lisa, say

that you will, for I feel I *must* get married to-day, and if *you* won't have me, I'll have to marry Dame Teresa!"

All laughed merrily at this; but Lisa sulkily refused to join in the fun, for Elvino had now arrived, and the sight of his devoted attentions to Amina caused her jealousy and disappointment to smart afresh. The Notary having also now arrived with the marriage contract, the guests gathered around a table which had been placed beneath the trees outside Dame Teresa's house; and Elvino and Amina, having signed their names to the paper, their betrothal was thus formally concluded.

Just as the happy pair were receiving the congratulations of their friends, a strange cavalier—whose gay attire, aristocratic bearing, and deferential attendants proclaimed him to be a person of rank—approached the inn, and enquired of the bystanders if the landlord's chateau were near at hand; and on being informed that it was some little distance away, he announced his intention of passing the night at the inn.

On hearing this, Lisa, mindful of her duties as hostess, hurried forward officiously, and offered her best accommodation to the stranger; and then, having received some gallant compliments from her guest, who had an appreciative eye for a pretty face, she hastened within doors to make all ready, beaming with pleasure.

The stranger was, however, more greatly struck with the beauty of Amina, to whom he next addressed himself, declaring that she reminded him of someone whom he had long since loved and lost; and so intense was his gaze, that after he had de-

parted within the inn, Elvino, seized with a sudden pang of jealousy, reproached the maiden for having thus spoken with the newcomer. But Amina, tenderly reassured her anxious lover, declaring that she loved but him alone; and the little cloud that had threatened to gather, now quickly vanished.

As they moved away happily together, Alessio presently came running out to announce that he had discovered the stranger to be none other than the Count Rodolpho, their own Lord of the Soil, whose chateau overlooked the village, and who had not visited his native place since he was a child; and upon hearing this interesting news, the villagers were all filled with great excitement, and, as they trooped away to their homes, arranged to proceed to the inn at break of day to sing a song of welcome to their Seigneur, and to show their joy at his arrival.

Some hours later, Count Rodolpho was conducted to the finest chamber which the old-fashioned inn afforded, and which, though it had the reputation of being haunted, he had laughingly insisted upon occupying, finding it quaint and comfortable; and before retiring for the night, though it was already late, Lisa appeared at the door, to ask if all his wishes had been attended to, and also to offer her respects to him as her Seigneur.

The Count, being a gay cavalier, and accustomed to making conquests wherever he went, invited her to enter, thinking that a flirtation with his pretty hostess would pass the time pleasantly; and Lisa, nothing loth, but delighted at the impression she imagined she had made on her guest, was willing enough to accept his attentions. The Count's pretty

speeches pleased her very well, nor did she object when he snatched a kiss or two; but, not daring to remain longer, since the night was advancing, she was just about to depart, when a strange interruption came. For at that moment, a slight female figure, clad in a long white robe, softly entered the room, and walked slowly across the floor, speaking aloud, as though holding a conversation with some unseen person; and to the great amazement of the Count and Lisa, they saw that this mysterious nocturnal visitor was Amina, who, although her eyes were wide open, saw them not, since she was walking in her sleep. For, though unknown to anyone, and still less to herself, Amina was a somnambulist, and had quite unconsciously walked from her own home and entered through the unfastened door of the inn; and as Count Rololpho now gazed in astonishment upon the maiden, whose lovely face had so interested him earlier in the evening, he was filled with a strange deep emotion, and listened eagerly to the words she said, from which he gathered that she imagined herself speaking to Elvino, since she spoke reproachfully of his having for a moment doubted her faithful heart.

But Lisa, though at first alarmed, quickly saw in thus unforeseen circumstance, a means for satisfying her petty spite against the orphan she despised, and, quickly making her escape from the room, she determined to seek out Elvino, and prove to him that his betrothed was base and unfaithful to him, since she had found her in the chamber of the Count Rodolpho.

Meanwhile, Amina continued to speak in tender

accents of her love for Elvino; and, unconsciously taking the Count's hand in hers, she softly caressed it, repeatedly avowing her passion.

Count Rodolpho watched the sleeping maiden with increasing emotion, feeling the charm of her ethereal beauty creeping over him like a spell; and at last, fearful of awakening her, and not daring to trust himself longer in her sweet presence, since, though her helplessness appealed to his chivalry, he felt drawn towards her by a strange attraction, he hastily left the room, and, leaving the inn at once, made his way to his own chateau.

After he had gone, Amina ceased to speak; and, presently sinking upon a couch, remained there in peaceful slumber.

It was now daybreak; and the peasants, in accordance with the arrangement of the evening before, assembled in the inn, and, making their way to the Count's chamber, began to sing a joyous song of welcome, which they hoped would presently arouse him from his slumbers. Soon afterwards, Lisa entered the room with Elvino, whom she had brought to behold for himself his betrothed slumbering in the chamber of the stranger, cruelly and unjustly keeping from him the fact that Amina had walked there in her sleep.

Elvino, who had indignantly refused to believe her story, now uttered an exclamation of grief and despair on beholding what appeared to him the proof of Lisa's statement; and at that moment Amina, awakened by the singing, opened her eyes, and was quickly filled with amazement on beholding her unaccustomed surroundings. As she rose from the

couch in bewilderment, Elvino burst forth into angry reproaches, declaring her to be faithless and base; and in spite of poor Amina's piteous assurances of innocence, since she could not explain how she came to be found in such a compromising situation, he spurned her with scorn, and, thrusting aside her clinging arms, departed in anger.

Amina, overcome with grief and despair, sank sobbing into the arms of Dame Teresa, who, though not understanding the mystery, yet believed her to be innocent, and led her away with great tenderness; and the peasants then sadly dispersed, loth to think ill of the pretty maiden they loved so well, yet compelled to admit the evidence of their own eyes. But they were not satisfied; and later on in the day they set off to seek out Count Rodolpho in his chateau, and to learn what he knew of this strange matter, and if he had indeed enticed the poor girl to her ruin.

Meanwhile, Lisa was triumphant, and, having thus succeeded in bringing disgrace and ignominy upon her rival, she sought out Elvino, who had wandered into the woods near the chateau, and tenderly offered words of comfort to him, and by encouraging his rage against Amina, led him artfully to think of renewing his vows to herself; and then, wisely refraining from becoming too importunate, she left him to his own reflections again, and wandered alone down another glade. Here she was joined by the lively Alessio, who, after first bewailing the sad fate of Amina, made the brilliant suggestion that Lisa should marry him at once, so that the wedding decorations should not be wasted, a suggestion, however, which was again disdainfully flouted by the

captious Lisa, who informed him that she already felt assured of eventually securing the more prosperous Elvino as a husband. Alessio, well used to such rebuffs, and not the least disconcerted by this surprising announcement, still pressed his own claims; and then seeing that the peasants were approaching from the chateau, the wrangling pair set off to join them.

Meanwhile, Amina, accompanied by the solicitous Dame Teresa, had also sought solace for her woe in the woods, and presently, coming face to face with the unhappy Elvino, she once more besought him to believe in her innocence. Elvino, though filled with emotion at beholding the maiden whom he believed had wronged him, still refused, however, to listen to her pleadings, and again turning from her with scorn and anger, hurried quickly away; and as Dame Teresa vainly endeavoured to comfort the now heart-broken girl, the peasants came in sight, headed by Count Rodolpho, who, having heard from them of Amina's sad plight, had now come to prove her innocence.

Full of compassion, he approached the half-fainting girl; and, seeing that she was utterly exhausted by the strain that had been put upon her, he bade Dame Teresa to take her into a neighbouring mill, and make her rest for awhile, promising that in the meantime, he would seek out Elvino, and try to convince him of the innocence of his betrothed.

When Dame Teresa had led the weary Amina into the mill, the peasants went to seek Elvino, and when they had at length found and persuaded him to return with them, the Count bade him be of good comfort

and cease to mourn, since Amina was still worthy of his love. He then described to him that the maiden had entered his room the night before in her sleep, explaining that she was a somnambulist, and, as such, utterly unconscious of her actions at the time; but Elvino and the simple peasants, never before having heard of this strange phenomenon, were scarcely yet convinced, finding it difficult to realise such a curious circumstance, which had not come within their experience before.

But whilst they were still wondering at the story that had been told to them, they saw Amina softly approaching from the mill, passing them with wide-open, unseeing eyes, and uttering Elvino's name in loving accents; and, seeing that the maiden was again walking in her sleep, the Count explained this fact to the peasants, and bade them remain quiet until she should awaken.

Elvino, overjoyed at this final proof of his beloved one's innocence, could scarcely restrain his happy feelings, watching the lovely maiden's movements with eager interest; and when she presently awakened to full consciousness, he clasped her in his arms with joy, beseeching her to forgive him for doubting her faith.

Amina, full of happiness at thus learning that Elvino still loved her, and no longer believed her to be false, was soon restored to her accustomed gaiety; and so, the reunited pair were wedded that same day ere the sun went down, amidst the great rejoicings of the villagers, who were filled with delight that the fair maiden they loved so well was now cleared from all reproach.

DIE MEISTERSINGERS.

After the decay of the knightly court poetry of the Minnesingers, whose pure and noble art had been inspired and encouraged by the age of chivalry in which they lived, the spontaneous love of song, natural to the character of the German people, was lost for a time in the gloom and ignorance of the dark Middle Ages; but, later on, when the Reformation had once more lighted the way to knowledge and culture, the beautiful art was revived by guilds of musical enthusiasts, known as The Mastersingers.

But the dramatic, chivalric conception of life, which had been the prevailing spirit of the Minnesingers of old, all of whom had been of noble birth, and exercised their art in the courts of kings, never quite returned; for the Mastersingers, being but humble burghers and artisans, could not attain to such courtly grace of expression, and their art was naturally of a stiffer and more pedantic character. Yet they did excellent work, establishing schools and guilds of poetry and song in most of the principal towns of Germany; but by hedging themselves in by narrow rules and conventions, they left little margin for the soaring spirit of true genius, which ever chafes at petty restraints, and insists on freedom of fancy.

In Nuremberg, the Mastersingers attained to the

greatest excellence of their class; and in the middle of the sixteenth century there flourished in this community, the simple-minded, large-hearted Hans Sachs, the truest poet of his time, whose broad views were in refreshing contrast to the dull and cramped conceptions of art held by most of the Mastersingers.

It was during the time when Hans Sachs was a leader amongst the celebrated Mastersingers of Nuremberg, that this story opens; and upon St. John's Eve in a certain year, he and his musical friends were called upon to undergo a new and exciting experience in the pursuit of their beloved art.

Veit Pogner, a goldsmith, and the wealthiest of the older Mastersingers, impelled by an enthusiastic love of art, had just offered the hand of his beautiful daughter, Eva, together with the inheritance of all his riches and worldly possessions, as a prize to the master musician who should gain the wreath of victory in the grand contest to be held on St. John's Day, in accordance with the usual custom.

Amongst the competing masters who felt most confident of success was Sixtus Beckmesser, the town clerk, who occupied the important office of marker in the society, an officer whose duty it was to mark on a slate the faults made against the established rules and regulations of the Guild. Beckmesser, though without talent, and no longer young, nor even possessed of any pleasing personal charms, was so conceited that he fancied none to be his equal in music and poetry; and in spite of the fact that Eva was to have power to refuse the prize-winner, should he prove distasteful to her, he yet

felt assured of success, though the maiden had never shown signs of favour to him.

As a matter of fact, Eva had already fixed her affections upon a young Knight, one Sir Walter von Stolzing, who, being descended from the old Minnesingers, whose glorious achievements he had read of and studied, and in whom the truly poetic, romantic, and knightly art was revived, had left his now decaying ancestral hall, in order to find kindred spirits amongst the celebrated Mastersingers of music-loving Nuremberg; and having once been brought into contact with the soaring, enthusiastic spirit of this noble youth, she could never again be contented with the pedantic methods of the burgher Mastersingers.

Walter, having business relations with old Pogner in connection with his poverty-stricken estate, had thus made acquaintance with the goldsmith's fair daughter; and the exquisite soul-inspiring beauty and pure, sweet nature of this maiden having quickly kindled a consuming passion in his impetuous, romantic heart, and knowing that his love was returned, he determined to enter the ranks of the competitors on St. John's Day, since none but a Mastersinger could aspire to her hand, and trusted that his great love would enable his song to gain the victor's wreath.

For this reason, he repaired on St. John's Eve to the Church of St. Katherine, where the Mastersingers held their meetings, and requested to be admitted to the competition. He was greatly disconcerted on being informed by a lively young man named David, who was apprenticed to Hans Sachs,

the cobbler, that the musical guild was arranged as a trades' guild, with degrees of membership, such as apprentices, scholars, and singers, and that it was usual to spend at least a year in each degree before attaining to the rank of a "master"; and he was filled with impatience on hearing of the many petty rules and narrow restrictions in verse and song-making which were necessary to be observed ere he could hope to please the Mastersingers, who had absolute faith in their own standard of perfection, and refused to admit into their ranks any who failed to conform to the same, seven faults only against the rules being allowed to candidates for admission to their competitions.

Nevertheless, still believing in his own natural gifts, which he had cultivated in the beautiful woodlands of his birthplace, untrammelled by forms and conventions, when the Mastersingers had assembled, he requested permission to prove to them that he was a master of poetic song, and therefore justified in entering the competition on the morrow; and, since he was introduced to them by Pogner himself, who vouched for his good faith, he was invited to sing a song, though the Guild members were horrified on hearing that he had never studied in any Mastersinging Guild, and had received no other instruction than that afforded by a love of Nature, and a natural poetic instinct fanned into being by reading accounts of the romantic Minnesingers of old.

Beckmesser, the marker, having pompously ensconced himself in his accustomed curtained recess, with slate and chalk to mark down the faults of the candidate, announced that he was ready to hear the

young knight's trial; and Walter immediately burst forth into an enthusiastic song in praise of spring-time and maidenhood, so full of true poetry and music that it held the masters spell-bound, in spite of the fact that it completely outraged all their pet rules in every direction.

But the conceited Beckmesser was full of indignation that one so unheedful of the forms and conventions of his own infallible guild should dare to aspire to enter the ranks of the Mastersingers; and before the song was half finished, he burst noisily from behind his curtain, and contemptuously announced that the candidate had already failed many times over, since his slate was scored at least fifty times with faults against the rules, the singer having had no regard at all for the special construction of verse and musical form which he and his friends alone considered to be correct.

The Mastersingers all agreed with the marker's condemnation, with the exception of Hans Sachs, who knew that Beckmesser's verdict was chiefly caused by jealousy; and he himself being the only true poet-musician in the Mastersingers' Guild, alone was able to appreciate Walter's beautiful song, and, seeing that the young knight had a real and lofty genius far beyond anything that his burgher friends could boast of, boldly stood up in his defence, declaring to the outraged company that the stranger's music was of a higher order than their own, and consequently not to be judged by their standards, which might not be infallible after all.

But the Mastersingers were not to be convinced, even though their favourite Hans Sachs spoke in

favour of the audacious stranger; and so Walter was declared "outsung," and in no way fit to be admitted into the ranks of the Mastersingers.

The young knight, repelled by the Mastersingers' narrow art, from which he had hoped to derive such pleasure, was filled with disappointment and despair; but, finding that he could not hope to gain the hand of his beloved Eva as a Mastersinger, he determined to make an attempt to elope with her that evening.

Eva, being anxious to learn how her lover had fared at his trial, sent her attendant, Magdalena, to get the news from her sweetheart, David, the apprentice of Hans Sachs; and then, upon returning at dusk from a walk with her father, she remained outside the house, to hear what her handmaid had to say. The two girls talked in low tones, for they saw that Hans Sachs (whose shop stood exactly opposite the house of the goldsmith) was still at work; for honest Hans, suspecting the young knight's intention with regard to Eva, had determined to frustrate his plans, in kindness to the imprudent pair, since he loved them both.

Eva was in despair when told by Magdalena of her lover's failure; but, seeing Walter at that moment approaching, she sent her maid within doors, and awaited him with a joy she could not conceal.

The lovers embraced rapturously; and Eva, enthralled by Walter's love for her, readily agreed to his passionate pleading that they should fly together that night. Ere they could make their escape, however, they heard approaching steps; and, hastily concealing themselves behind some bushes, they were forced to wait until the intruder should depart.

The newcomer was none other than Beckmesser, the conceited marker, who, having composed a song to sing at the contest on the morrow, had come now to sing it as a serenade beneath the window of the fair Eva, hoping that the maiden would be thus so favourably impressed by his composition, that she would speak in his favour when he was adjudged the winner, as he so fondly expected to be; and, stationing himself beneath his charmer's chamber window, he commenced his song, which was in reality a very poor one, consisting of inferior poetry and worse melody.

Hans Sachs, hoping now to deter Sir Walter and Eva from their rash act by keeping them in their hiding-place, at once began to sing himself in a very loud voice, to a rollicking tune and merry words; an unexpected performance which was naturally very disconcerting to the serenader.

In a furious rage at this wanton drowning of his sentimental song, with which he had intended to win the heart of Eva, Beckmesser many times shouted to the cobbler to hold his peace; but, finding that Hans refused to listen to his request he resorted to strategy in order to enable his fair mistress to hear his song undisturbed. Approaching the cobbler's shop, he invited Hans to listen to his song, and criticise it, that he might correct any faults there might be in the composition ere performing it on the morrow; and this the cobbler agreed to do, saying that for every fault he detected, he would hammer a nail into the pair of shoes he was at that moment mending for the town clerk, who had been blaming him earlier in the day for being behindhand with his work.

So Beckmesser began his song again, full of delight at observing a maiden's figure appear at the chamber window, imagining this to be his adored, though it was in reality the waiting-maid, Magdalena, who was anxiously awaiting the return of her young mistress; but his rage was soon increased tenfold, for his halting verses were so full of faulty accents and unmusical discords, that the cobbler's hammer fell with a thud almost constantly. Ere the song was half over, Hans ran out of his shop, and, holding up the finished shoes in triumph, cried mischievously in imitation of the marker's own manner at the young knight's examination: "Haven't you done yet? Because I've finished the shoes already, thanks to the many faults you have made!"

As Beckmesser furiously endeavoured to scream out the last verses of his song, the apprentice David, disturbed by this unmusical squalling, opened his chamber-window, and, seeing his sweetheart, Magdalena, in the chamber opposite, and thinking the serenade addressed to her, he was seized with jealousy, and, rushing out into the street, set upon the bold serenader and began to cudgel him with right good will.

Taken thus by surprise, Beckmesser began to cry out for aid, for David was a lusty youth, and was quickly beating him black and blue; and, aroused by the sounds of the scuffle, the neighbours came pouring from the houses on every side, and not understanding the reason for the commotion, but stumbling in the dark against each other, they began to quarrel amongst themselves, and a general scrimmage

quickly ensued, in which the mischievous apprentice friends of David gladly took part, enjoying the riot as a great joke.

Thinking that in the midst of this scuffle they might make their escape, Sir Walter tenderly endeavoured to lead Eva round the edge of the crowd, but Hans Sachs, who had kept his eyes constantly on the pair, soon frustrated this pretty plan by seizing Walter's arm in his own iron grasp, and at the same time pushing Eva up the steps of her father's house, where she was quickly seized and taken within by Pogner himself, who, having opened his door to enquire the cause of the scrimmage, was amazed to find his daughter in the midst of the crowd.

Having seen that the half-fainting Eva was safely in her father's care, Hans Sachs, having first caught David and unceremoniously kicked him into his shop, followed himself, dragging the despairing Walter with him; and upon the sound of the night-watchman's horn being heard, the crowd melted away as quickly as it had gathered, so that by the time the sleepy guardian of the peace appeared, the street was deserted and still once more.

Next morning, as Hans, attired in gala dress, ready for the great Festival of St. John's Day, sat in his workshop, the young knight entered from the chamber where he had been resting, and announced to his kind friend that he had just awakened from a beautiful and vivid dream, which he longed to put into song; and the honest, art-loving cobbler entreated him to sing it to him straightway, whilst still fresh in his mind, in the form of a master-song of the correct form, of which he gave him some few

hints, declaring that with such a heaven-sent subject, sung in the richly-flowing stream of melody that was his own priceless gift, he would certainly yet win the maiden he loved so well.

Encouraged thus by the large-hearted Hans, and inspired by his dream, Walter broke forth into a gloriously beautiful song, perfect alike in poetic form and wondrous melody, which the cobbler eagerly wrote down as he sang; and when the song came to an end, Hans, overcome with emotion and joy, hastily pushed the singer back to his chamber, bidding him put on gala raiment, and declaring himself confident of his success in the contest.

Whilst the knight was thus engaged, Beckmesser entered the shop, so stiff from his cudgelling of the night before that he could scarcely walk, and, intending to continue his quarrel with the cobbler; but, seeing the MS. of the song lying on the table, and imagining this to have been composed by Hans, his mood quickly changed, and he asked to be allowed to sing this in the competition, instead of the one he had himself written, since the latter, he added conceitedly, had now without doubt lost the charm it possessed in the ears of his adored mistress, who, having once heard it under such adverse conditions, would probably never care to hear it again.

Hans, knowing well enough that the unmusical town clerk would never be able to enter into the beauty of Walter's love-inspired words, said that he might have the song, bidding him, however, to sing it to a suitable melody; and Beckmesser, more confident than ever of his success, hurried away, full of

delight at having thus secured, as he supposed, a song by Hans Sachs, who was acknowledged to be the finest poet amongst the Mastersingers.

A little later in the day, crowds of merry holiday-makers assembled in the large, open meadow on the outskirts of Nuremberg, to hear the great Competition of Song, which had been so eagerly looked forward to by all; and when Eva, the fair prize-maiden, looking more beautiful than ever in her dazzling white robe, and attended by a number of pretty maids-of-honour, had taken her seat upon the dais which had been set for her, the enthralling business of the day began.

Amidst a sudden hush of expectancy, Hans Sachs rose to announce once again to the people the generous and soul-inspiring prize offered by the art-loving Pogner, to be awarded to the Master Musician whose song should be unanimously declared the most worthy of praise; and when the loud applause which greeted this speech had died away, Beckmesser was called upon to commence his song.

Nervously unrolling the MS. he had all the morning been vainly endeavouring to commit to memory, Beckmesser moved forward, and began his song, singing it to an altogether unsuitable, discordant, and unmusical tune; and in a frantic effort to remember the sense of what he was singing, he mixed up the words in the most hopeless manner, and, plunging deeper into the mire of confusion as he proceeded, he succeeded in completely losing himself, and converted the poem into an astonishing *pot-pourri* of ludicrous and meaningless balderdash.

At first, the people listened in amazement, think-

ing that the infallible marker, usually such a stickler for the correct rules of Mastersinging, had suddenly taken leave of his senses; and then, unable to restrain their merriment any longer, they all burst forth into a loud peal of derisive laughter, which completely drowned the ridiculous singer.

In a furious rage of disappointment and wounded vanity, Beckmesser flung the MS. at the feet of Hans Sachs, declaring to the people that the cobbler had schemed thus to disgrace him by foisting his own bad song upon him; but in spite of his defence, as he rushed away in a storm of vexation, he was followed by the jeers of the crowd, with whom he was by no means popular, and who had not desired that one so pompous and elderly should gain so fair a prize.

When Beckmesser had disappeared, Hans Sachs picked up the despised poem, and declared to the people that the song was a good one, but could only be properly sung by the person who had composed it, whose name was not Hans Sachs; and then he called on Sir Walter von Stolzing, as the composer of the song, who would, by singing it to them, quickly prove that he was worthy to be regarded as the very Mastersinger of Mastersingers.

A hum of admiration swept over the assembled company as the young knight stepped forward, for here, indeed, was one whose graceful form, glowing eyes, and poetry-inspired brow recalled the resplendent Minnesingers of old; and with hearts that throbbed with excitement, they listened to the rich joyous flood of melody that now filled the summer air.

Yes, Hans Sachs was right, and the song was a noble one, and this was a heaven-sent singer who laid a magic touch upon their very hearts, and filled them with a rapture almost too intense to be borne; and even the critical Mastersingers who had cavilled at his heedless disregard of their various rules the evening before, were now held spell-bound with wonder that song could be so glorious a thing.

As the song came to an end, a deafening burst of applause broke from the assemblage, who, with one accord, declared the young knight to be the winner in the contest; and as the beautiful Eva bent forward to place, with hands that trembled with joy, the wreath of victory upon the brow of the man she loved, a second burst of applause broke forth, for the two were well-matched, and made a fair picture as they stood together.

The Mastersingers now eagerly invited Walter to join their guild as one of themselves, an honour which, however, the young knight proudly refused, since his free spirit could not be curbed within so small a range.

On hearing this, Hans Sachs humorously reproved him for speaking disparagingly of an art which had bestowed so rare a prize upon him; and then he launched forth staunchly into a speech in praise of the honest German art he loved so well, a speech which was received with the wildest enthusiasm by all, for Hans Sachs was the darling of the people of Nuremburg.

Thus the Contest of Song came to an end; and the young knight who had set out so hopefully in search of Art, had found instead a fair bride, whose love

should henceforth be the magic golden key that should unlock for him the gates of Fame, Honour, and Glory.

PARSIFAL.

In the early days of Christianity, when troublous times beset the path of the true believer, the Holy Grail, or Sacred Cup from which our Saviour had drank at the Last Supper, and which had afterwards received the blood that flowed from his pierced side as He lay upon the Cross, had been brought, together with the spear which had wounded Him, by a company of angels into the mountainous district of Northern Spain; and here the holy relics were reverently received with joy and gratitude by the good King, Titurel, who build for them a Temple-Sanctuary and castle upon the beautiful mountain of Monsalvat, where they were constantly guarded by brave knights of stainless purity and integrity.

Great was the reward of their faithful service, for the Holy Grail possessed miraculous powers, bestowing both bodily as well as spiritual strength and nourishment upon its guardians, giving them such means of grace that they were able to perform mighty deeds for the good of mankind; and with the Sacred Spear, the righteous King Titurel was able to keep at bay the Infidels and all who were opposed to Christianity, and who struggled vainly to break down his stronghold.

None but the pure and innocent could approach the holy sanctuary, or hope to derive benefit from its wondrous powers; for the Grail Knights, by reason

of their own spotless purity, could read the hearts of all comers, and sternly repulsed any who were unworthy.

Thus it came about that when Klingsor, the most wicked of all magicians, and the ruler of the heathen and infidel races, once sought the Grail, hoping to be released from his many sins, partly seized by a temporary fit of remorse, but chiefly for the means of worldly advancement and power, he was denied entrance to the sacred temple; for the Guardian of the Grail saw clearly into the deceitful heart of the sorcerer, and reading there, as in a book, his impious and unholy thoughts, he drove him back with horror.

Rendered furious by his ignominious defeat, Klingsor determined to be revenged, and for this purpose he set up an Enchanted Castle on the southern slopes of the same mountain, surrounding it with luxuriant gardens in which he placed sirens of dazzling beauty, who with their seductive charms should ensnare the Knights of the Grail, who wandered that way, and lure them by unholy passions and evil spells to destruction from which there should be no return.

Many were the knights thus enticed from the paths of purity to a life of sinful pleasures and soul-destroying voluptuousness.

Thus many years passed away and, at last, good King Titurel, now well-stricken in years, felt himself growing too old to perform the sacred offices of the Holy Grail any longer; so he invested his son, Amfortas, the handsomest and most glorious of all the knights, with the royal mantle and made him King in his stead.

The young King Amfortas, impatient of Klingsor's evil influence, determined to vanquish the wicked Enchanter and put an end to his dangerous magic; and, armed with the sacred spear, he went fearlessly forth one day upon his great mission. But Klingsor beheld the royal knight's approach and summoned to his aid Kundry, a strange being, who, against her will, had ever been subservient to his power; and, bidding her practice her arts upon his enemy, he had little doubt as to the issue.

Nor was he mistaken, for Kundry (who could assume any shape) transformed herself into a woman of such surpassing beauty that Amfortas felt his senses leave him as he gazed upon her. It was in vain that the young King struggled to maintain his integrity, and to fight against the evil influence that closed so surely around him; for Kundry never relaxed her seductions until he was locked in her embrace, in the snares of guilty passion.

Then Klingsor, stealing unawares upon his victim, as he lay thus entranced, seized the sacred spear and stabbed him in the side with it; and then, with a triumphant laugh, he rushed back to his Enchanted Castle, bearing the holy relic with him.

The wounded King was carried back by his faithful knights to the Sanctuary, full of remorse for his sin and doomed to suffer agonies of pain for many long, weary years; for the wound inflicted by the evil sorcerer throbbed and burned unceasingly, and could never be healed until the holy spear should be reclaimed and brought back to the Sanctuary, and so the unhappy Amfortas remained helpless and agonised in mind and body, with a wound that would not close.

Once, as the King lay groaning in the Sanctuary, the angels of the Holy Grail were heard proclaiming that the sacred spear could alone be regained by "The Blameless Fool," one who, simple and pure, unacquainted with worldly knowledge, should, from pure, whole-hearted sympathy with the sufferer's terrible agony, recognise the woes of suffering humanity, and by such loving pity bring redemption. This, then, was the one hope held out, and the sublime deed to be performed; and, after many long years of woe, the deliverer of Amfortas appeared.

One early dawn, Gurnemanz, one of the oldest of the Grail Knights, was resting with his Esquires in a glade within the sacred domains, waiting for the arrival of Amfortas, who was to be carried, in accordance with his usual daily custom, to bathe in the lake near by, that its soothing waters might ease his ever-burning wound for a short time; and as the first rays of the rising sun shone forth, the solemn morning bell of the Sanctuary was heard calling all to their devotions.

At the sound of the bell, the watchers in the glade knelt reverently to offer up their morning prayer; and as they rose once more to their feet they were joined by other knights.

As the newcomers spoke sadly with old Gurnemanz of the perpetual sufferings of the King, a wild female figure was seen riding furiously towards them; who, upon approaching the knights, flung herself from the foaming steed and hastened to them, bearing in her hand a small crystal vial.

This was none other than Kundry, the witch-maiden, who, when temporarily freed from the evil

influence of the sorcerer, Klingsor, would serve the Knights of the Grail as message-bearer; and by the performance of extraordinary feats of endurance, would seem as though striving to atone by such penances for the evil deeds she did when unable to resist her sinful nature and the commands of her unholy master. She was well-known to the knights, some of whom, however, regarded her with scorn and suspicion, knowing her to be a sinner; but Gurnemanz was always kind and gentle with her, and would often reprove his companions for their hostile attitude, declaring that though she might be under an evil curse, yet she did penance by serving the Grail, and that when she was absent for long, some misfortune was sure to happen to them.

Kundry now appeared as a wild, half-savage creature, clad in a fantastic robe fastened by a girdle of snake-skins, and with long flowing locks of black hair and piercing black eyes, sometimes wildly flashing, but more usually fixed and glassy; and having travelled far in search of a healing balsam for the wounded King, she handed the vial to Gurnemanz, roughly refusing all thanks.

Amfortas, groaning with pain, now appeared in the glade in a litter borne by a number of noble knights, and having received Kundry's balsam from Gurnemanz, he thanked her for her gift, although he knew it could afford relief but for a few hours. He was then carried forward to the lake; and soon afterwards—as Gurnemanz remained lost in his sad thoughts, standing beside the now prostrate Kundry, who had flung herself exhausted on the ground—loud cries of indignation were suddenly heard, and as the

old knight looked around, he saw a wild swan slowly sink to the ground and die.

At the same moment, the Esquires dragged forth a handsome youth, whose beauty and look of perfect innocence and purity made all regard him with interest and wonder, and yet who's bow and arrows proclaimed him as the slayer of the fair bird, a species held sacred by the Guardians of the Grail.

Gurnemanz poured forth indignant reproaches upon the youth, who, however, appeared unconscious that his deed was wrong; but on seeing the sorrow he had caused, his own heart was touched, and suddenly, breaking his bow and arrows, he impetuously flung them away.

Gurnemanz, struck by the noble looks of the young stranger, began to question him; but the youth declared that he knew not from whence he had come, nor what his name was, nor who his father had been, though he recollected that his mother's name was "Heart-in-Sorrow," and that they had dwelt together in the forest wilds.

Kundry, who, in her weary wanderings over the world, had knowledge of everything, now approached and declared that the stranger's father had fallen in battle, and that his mother had brought him up in a desert place, where he could not learn the use of arms, nor gain any knowledge of the wicked world, and so the lad had led the pure, innocent life of nature, and knew not the meaning of evil. Having beheld a party of knights in glittering armour one day, he had followed them, full of wonder, forgetful of the mother who so tenderly loved him, and whom Kundry now declared had died of grief at his loss.

On hearing this, the youth, feeling for the first time in his life for another than himself, sprang furiously at Kundry's throat, and would have choked her, had not Gurnemanz dragged him back; and then he sank down half-fainting, whilst the witch-maiden hurried to bring water to refresh him.

Gurnemanz, astonished at the utter innocence and primitive simplicity of the handsome stripling, and recollecting the prophecy that one who should be a "Blameless Fool," pure and undefiled, would alone be found worthy to regain the lost spear, regarded the youth with new interest, feeling that the Holy Grail itself must have guided him thither as the one who should indeed perform the supreme deed; and gently laying his hand on the youth's shoulder, he began to tell him about the Holy Grail and its wonderful powers.

Kundry, meanwhile, had crept away unperceived to a thicket, and, overcome by a deadly weariness, sank down into a deep slumber; for this was the means by which Klingsor the sorcerer called her to perform his evil behests, and struggle as she might, she could not prevail against this fateful sleep.

Having explained to the wondering youth the mysterious nourishment and power given by the Holy Grail, the uncovering of which was about to be performed by the King, who had now left the lake and was being carried back to the castle, Gurnemanz took him to join in the sacred ceremony; for he saw plainly that the stranger had noble qualities in him, and believed that these would be stirred into actual being by the holy influence of the Sanctuary treasures.

When they reached the magnificent hall of the Temple, the knights were already assembled, waiting with rapt and reverent attention for the customary unveiling of the Grail, by which they received physical and spiritual food and strength. The litter of Amfortas was carried forward and placed beside the holy shrine; and then, as all stood round expectantly, the voice of the aged King Titurel was heard from a niche in the background, where he sat in retirement, calling upon his son to uncover the Grail, that its wondrous blessing might yet once more be bestowed upon its guardians.

Amfortas, suffering acutely from the burning and throbbing of his wound, broke forth into agonised lamentation, because he, the most unworthy of them all, should thus be the one whose duty it was to perform this, the holiest office of their order; and in despairing tones, he besought his father to take back his old authority and leave him to die. But the aged King declared he was too feeble to perform the blessed office, and was only kept alive by the daily strength he received from beholding the Grail; and he again commanded Amfortas to proceed with the duties of his position, since by continuing to serve the Grail in spite of his agony, he might atone for his guilt. The knights also reminded their fallen master of the promised deliverance from his woe, and Amfortas, somewhat comforted, raised himself painfully, and, unveiling the Holy Grail, waved it reverently to and fro, thus consecrating the bread and wine, which was then distributed, that all might partake of the wondrous Love-Feast.

As the Holy Cup was revealed, a brilliant light fell

upon it, which caused it to glow with a rich wine purple colour, and to shed a soft heavenly effulgence on all around, and Amfortas, though he took no part in the meal, remained for some time in a state of rapt exaltation. Then, as he felt his wound break out afresh, as it ever did when he performed the sacred office, he uttered a long-drawn cry of agony and sank back, fainting and exhausted.

All this time, the strange youth had stood apart, taking no part in the ceremony, but remaining still and dazed, as though entranced; but when the wounded King gave forth his last cry of anguish, he placed his hand with a convulsive movement over his heart, as though filled with an emotion entirely new and strange to him.

But, though pity was thus unconsciously awakened in his breast, he did not yet understand the agonies of a conscious guilt, which was the wounded King's chief woe, nor did he comprehend the meaning of what he had just seen; and Gurnemanz, impatient at such seeming stupidity, and deeming him a fool, indeed, irritably thrust him out through a side door of the Temple, bidding him depart to his old wild ways once more, knowing that he must first experience the stabs of passion and temptation in himself, and conquer the same, ere he could understand and feel sympathy for the woes and sins of others.

But the pity that had indeed stirred the youth's heart so strangely for the first time grew apace; and since he had learned from Gurnemanz the story of the lost spear, he determined to try to regain the sacred weapon which alone could bring relief to the poor sufferer; and with a fearless spirit and a joyous step,

he set off, alone and unafraid, to storm the Enchanted Castle.

Klingsor, the sorcerer, saw him approaching, and at once recognised him as a dangerous foe, since his breastplate was purity, and his shield foolishness; and quickly he called to his aid the witch-maiden, Kundry, whom he had just awakened from the deep slumber of destiny by his magic spells, to work his evil will once more. But though Kundry could not prevail against the terrible power of Klingsor, she only obeyed his commands in anger and horror, doing against her will wicked deeds for which, when removed from her master's influence, she would tearfully endeavour to atone by her acts of mercy and service. She longed above all things to die, but could not; for she who had lived through all the ages, and laughed at everything good and pure, whose spirit had inspired the savage heart of Herodias, and had mocked the Saviour of the world, was now doomed to a path of evil for ever, compelled to lure all into her snares of passion and sin.

On hearing that the simple Fool was to be her victim also, she asked Klingsor in despair if she was never to be released from his toils, and to find rest in eternal sleep; and the sorcerer replied that deliverance for her would only come when someone should be found strong and pure enough to resist her wiles. Kundry, with a heart-rending moan, now resigned herself to the terrible part of temptress she was thus compelled to play, being unable to resist her master's will; and Klingsor, from his magic tower, watched his approaching victim with malignant interest.

As the youth approached the Enchanted Castle with a light step and joyous heart, he found his entry opposed by the fallen knights who had been lured within its walls by Klingsor's beautiful sirens; but, fearlessly resisting them, he snatched a sword from the nearest, and continued boldly to scale the walls, wounding and scattering all who opposed him. For the degraded knights, once so brave and strong, had now grown weak and dull through indulgence, sloth, and voluptuous sin; and the fiery ardour and simple fearlessness of the young invader so daunted these dullards that they soon fled and left him master of the situation.

Having thus triumphed over the weak guardians of the Castle, the handsome stripling gazed proudly around him, and, perceiving the sorcerer's magic garden close at hand, he entered it, marvelling at its luxuriance.

Here he was quickly surrounded by Klingsor's sirens, beautiful flower-maidens, who, clad in gossamer garments, appeared like a throng of brilliant living flowers, and, bewildered and dazzled by the voluptuous beauty of these fair inhabitants of the magic garden, the young man gazed upon them with delight. The sirens, looking upon the handsome stranger as their lawful prey, instantly began to entice him into the snares of passion, each one trying to win him for herself; but the simple youth remained calmly insensible to their soft persuasions, and at last they left him in anger, deeming him to be a Fool, indeed.

Then, suddenly, Kundry appeared, now wearing the form of a maiden more bewitchingly beautiful

than any he had yet seen, calling to him in thrilling tones by the name of "Parsifal."

Remembering that this was the name by which his mother had always called him, the youth approached the dazzling vision before him, filled with wonder; and Kundry, after explaining to him that his name meant "Pure-in-Folly," told him again of his mother's love and devotion, and how she had died of grief at his absence from her.

Overcome at the thought of the woe he had caused by his conduct, Parsifal sank weeping to the ground, for this was his first grief, and his first consciousness of his own part in the life of another human being. Kundry, having thus awakened the youth's emotions, now sought by her seductive arts to lure him into the toils of passion; and, offering him the comforts of love, bestowed on him his first lover's kiss.

But at this, Parsifal sprang to his feet, pressing his hand to his heart, for it seemed to him that the wound of Amfortas burned there; and the thought of the wounded King's urgent need recalled his wandering senses to the great mission he had undertaken. In that critical moment, his nature seemed to change, for, in a flash, world-knowledge had come to him, and he realised the great truth of redemption by grace, and understood that he, by conquering temptation, could become worthy of bringing salvation to the stricken King, whose sufferings had awakened sweet pity within his heart.

The temptress never ceased her wily arts for a moment, and the youth felt more and more the pangs of guilty desires and passions burning within him;

but when she again encircled him in her sensuous embrace, and pressed a second long kiss upon his heated brow, he was awakened to the full consciousness of his danger, and repulsed her with horror. Then, having triumphed over the desires of the flesh, Parsifal gazed upwards towards the heavens with such rapt ecstasy upon his face, that Kundry was filled with remorse, and looked upon him with awe and wonder; then, fancying she beheld in him the Saviour of the world, whom she had mocked as He lay upon the Cross, she sank at his feet, telling the whole terrible story of her everlasting sufferings, beseeching him to be pitiful to her and grant her the joy of being his, if but for one hour only. But Parsifal sternly replied that he would be condemned everlastingly with her, if even for one hour he forgot his holy mission.

Finally, as her last effort, the temptress sought to ensnare him by declaring that her kiss had awakened in him world-wide knowledge and vision, and that in her love he might reach unto Godhead and Omnipotence; but this subtle suggestion Parsifal resisted also, remaining true to his own pure and noble nature, and refusing to be enticed from the path of duty and mercy which he now so clearly recognised.

Then Kundry, finding that all arts and lures were in vain, sprang furiously from his side, cursing him, and calling loudly upon her wicked master to avenge her wrongs; for never before had any man been able to resist her offers of love.

The sorcerer immediately appeared on the battlements of the Enchanted Castle, bearing aloft the holy spear; and, casting this with rage at the youth,

he at the same time set his evil spells to work destruction upon his defier.

But his magic was powerless when brought into contact with purity and Faith; and the holy spear remained hanging in the air over Parsifal's head, until the noble youth seized it in his hand, and solemnly made the sign of the Cross with it. Instantly the Enchanted Castle fell to the ground, shaken by a violent earthquake; the beautiful garden was changed to a desert once more; and as Kundry sank to the ground with a cry of woe, Parsifal hastened from the place of his temptation triumphantly bearing aloft the sacred spear, with which he was now to conquer the hostile races of the world.

For many years Parsifal wandered forth alone; and then at last, when grown to perfect manhood by suffering and sorrow, he returned to the domains of the Holy Grail. Here he was gladly welcomed one morning by the knight, Gurnemanz, now grown to be a very old man, who had taken up his abode in the forest, and become a hermit; and he learned from the old man that most of the Grail knights had gradually left the Sanctuary, because Amfortas, in his agony of body and mind, had refused to perform the life-preserving office of revealing the Holy Grail, which had formerly given them such wonderful nourishment and power. Thus the strength of the noble knights had dwindled and faded; and the aged King Titurel had already died, for, deprived of the nourishment of the Grail, he could no longer live.

On hearing this sad news, Parsifal was overcome with sorrow, knowing that he had been the cause of this long-drawn-out woe, because he had for so

many long years neglected to bring the salvation that lay in his power. But Gurnemanz comforted him, declaring that the suffering King should now be restored, since the only cure for his wound was at last nigh at hand; and he then invited Parsifal to go with him to the Sanctuary that day, since it was Good Friday, and Amfortas was expected to reveal the Holy Grail once again at the funeral service of the dead King Titurel.

Whilst the old and the young knight talked thus together, a female figure had come forth from the hermit's hut close by, and, drawing slowly nearer, had stood beside them with bowed head and humble mien. This was Kundry, who, in her wild witch-maiden form, Gurnemanz had that morning found in the forest, wrapped in the usual deep slumber, into which she had sunk upon being released from the influence of the sorcerer, Klingsor; and, having gently revived her, the good old man had permitted her to perform for him the menial services she ever did at such times. Now approaching Parsifal, she humbly and tenderly washed his feet, anointing them with the contents of a golden vial she drew from her bosom; seeming as though, by such an act of service she would atone for the evil she had formerly tried to work to his soul. Old Gurnemanz then took the vial from her, and poured the remainder of its contents over the head of Parsifal, saluting him afterwards as King and Saviour; and the young knight, filling his hand with water from the sacred spring close by, very gently sprinkled it over the bent head of Kundry, as she knelt at his feet, thus baptizing the poor sinner as his first act as the bringer of Salvation.

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Gurnemanz now brought forth from the hut the rich scarlet mantle of the Grail Knight, with which he and Kundry proceeded to invest Parsifal over the shining armour which he wore; and then the three very solemnly bent their steps towards the holy castle and entered the Sanctuary.

Here the knights who still remained were gathered beside the bier of the dead King Titurel, waiting for the Holy Grail to be revealed to them; but Amfortas, whose agony was now even greater than ever, and who passionately longed for death, again refused to perform his holy office, and, rising from his litter in a mad frenzy of pain and despair, he tore the covering from his wounded side, and wildly implored his faithful companions to plunge their swords into his heart, and thus end his woe.

As the knights drew back in alarm at this outburst, Parsifal stepped forward with noble and calm dignity, and gently touched the suffering King's open wound with the sacred spear that alone had power to cure it; and at the touch of the holy weapon, Amfortas felt his pains vanish, and his wound close, and, knowing that he was now restored and forgiven, he fell upon his knees in an ecstasy of gratitude and praise.

Parsifal now assumed the office of King, which was henceforth his right; and, uncovering the long-unrevealed Holy Grail, he waved it solemnly before the kneeling knights. The Sanctuary was gradually flooded with the dazzling purple light that glowed from the sacred vessel, in the midst of which a white dove was seen to slowly descend from the dome; and as the holy bird hovered over the head of the rapt

Parsifal, the witch-maiden, Kundry, sank dying to the ground, at last released from the doom of evil by the noble knight who had been strong enough to resist her wiles.

Thus was the sacred spear restored to the Sanctuary of the Holy Grail, and salvation brought to its guardians by the "Blameless Fool," the true and simple one, whose purity and faith had overcome temptation, and whose awakened pity for the sufferings of others had revealed the real spirit of brotherly love.

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It will be plain to all that the story of "Parsifal" is an allegory, and that the incidents and characters of the piece are symbolic of human development, of the conquest of good over evil, and of the revivified spirit soaring triumphant above the baser instincts that struggle to draw it back.

Amfortas represents suffering and guilty humanity. The body of humanity, grievously wounded by the throbbing, burning poison of sin, can only be healed by the restoration of the Genius of Good, which is symbolised by the spear, which has obtained mastery over the powerful spirits of evil. Klingsor represents everything opposed to Christianity, the mainspring and source of all evil. Kundry, the instrument subject to the power of the instigator of ill, signifies the temptations that beset the seeker after Truth—the evil moral law, which the pilgrim can only resist with the strength which is given by purity and faith. Finally, Parsifal himself is typical of the Saviour of the world, the pure and blameless One, the conqueror

of temptation, whose pity and love for wounded guilty humanity brought salvation to all, and by redemption threw open the way to eternal Life and Love.

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE COMPOSERS.

GOUNOD

CHARLES FRANÇOIS GOUNOD was born at Paris, 17th June, 1818; died there 18th October, 1893. He entered the Conservatoire in 1836, and took the Grand Prix de Rome in 1839. In Rome he was appointed Honorary Maestre di Capella for life. After several years of study, he produced his *Messe Solonnelle in G*, some portions of which were brought out in London in 1851. He held in Paris, from 1852-60, the post of conductor of the *Orpheon*. He wrote operas from 1851. *Faust* was produced at the Theatre Lyrique in 1859, and placed him at once in the first rank of his profession. Amongst his other best known operas are:—*Romeo et Juliette* (1867), *Sapho* (1851), *Philemon et Baucis* (1860), *Cinq-Mars* 1877), etc. In 1882 he produced an oratorio, *The Redemption*, at the Birmingham Musical Festival; and he also wrote much church music.

VERDI

GUISEPPE VERDI was born at Rancola, in the Duchy of Parma, Italy, 10th October, 1813; died in January, 1901. He received his musical education at Bussets

and Milan. He was appointed organist at Rancola at the age of ten years; and when but twenty years old he became director of the Philharmonic Society at Bussets. He settled in Milan in 1838, and there his first opera, *Oberto di San Bonifazio* was produced at La Scala in 1839. The opera that first brought him European fame was *Ernani* (1844). *Rigoletto* was produced in 1851, and *Il Trovatore* in 1853; and these two operas, through all changes of taste and style, still continue to hold their own in popular favour. He wrote many other operas, the best known of which are:—*La Traviata* (1853), *Aida* (1871), *Otello* (1877), *Macbeth* (1847), *Falstaff* (1893), *I Lombardi* (1843), *Un ballo in Maschera* (1859), *Simon Boccanegra* (1857), *Les Vepres Siciliennes* (1855), etc. His other works include *Requiem Mass* (1847), and other sacred compositions, etc.

MEYERBEER

Giacomo Meyerbeer was born at Berlin, 5th September, 1791; died at Paris, 2nd May, 1864. He was a pupil of Lauska, and also had lessons from Clementi. In 1815 he went to Italy to study musical composition, and there he began to write operas. He first took Rossini as his model, the best example of which was *Il Crociata* (1824). In 1831 he struck out in a new style with *Robert de Diable*, produced at the Grand Opera, Paris. This beautiful and fantastic opera was received with the wildest enthusiasm, and quickly brought fame to the composer. His masterpiece was *Les Huguenots* (1836), and his other best known works are:—*Le Prophete* (1849), *L'Etoile du Nord* (1854), *Dinorah* (1859), etc.

WAGNER

RICHARD WAGNER was born at Leipzig, on 22nd May, 1813; died at Venice, 13th February, 1883. He was educated at Dresden and Leipzig, where he also studied music. Poetry was a passion with him as a boy; and verse and play writing occupied his mind until a great enthusiasm for Beethoven turned it into a musical direction. He was Musical Director at the Magdeburg Theatre from 1834-36, Conductor at Konigsberg in 1836, Music Director at Riga in 1837-39, and lived in Paris in 1839-42, where he struggled to obtain a footing. His opera, *Rienzi*, was produced at Dresden in 1842 with a success which obtained for him the post of Kapellmeister at the opera house there. *The Flying Dutchman* was produced the following year at Dresden, and marked a new epoch in his artistic history. *Tannhäuser*, the first of his creations from the German myth-world, was also produced at Dresden in 1845. After this he got into pecuniary difficulties; and his sympathies being with the revolutionary movement of 1849, he was proscribed and escaped to Paris. By the efforts of Liszt *Lohengrin* was produced in 1850 at Weimar. After ten years of exile, Wagner was pardoned and took up his residence at Munich, where King Ludwig of Bavaria became his enthusiastic and generous patron. *Tristan and Isolda* was produced at Munich in 1865; and this genuine music-drama marked a new epoch in operatic art. *Die Meistersinger* followed in 1868. Wagner was now-world famous, and his colossal genius began to receive the support it deserved. In 1872 his own great theatre at Bayreuth was founded; and upon its

completion in 1876, his noble Tetralogy, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* was produced there. His last dramatic effort and crowning achievement, *Parsifal*, was produced at Beyreuth in 1882. Wagner's early years were full of struggle, opposition, and strife; but through all his disappointments he clung firmly to the new and great ideals of art he had formed and in the end he conquered, his latter years being crowned with success and enthusiastic appreciation.

HALÈVY

JACQUES FRANÇOIS FROMENTAL HALÈVY was born in Paris, 27th May, 1799: died at Nice, 1862. Showing great musical ability in his early years, he entered the Conservatoire when only ten years old, and studied under Cavot, Berton, and Lambert, and for five years received lessons in counterpoint from Cherubini. He also studied for two years at Rome, and later became a popular teacher, numbering amongst his most celebrated pupils, Gounod and Bizet. He met with no important success until the year 1835, when he produced two operas:—*La Juive*, presented 23rd February, and *L'Eclair*, presented 16th December. *La Juive* was an immediate success, and won for its composer a first place amongst French musicians. Fifteen years later, this opera was produced at Covent Garden, where it also met with great appreciation and success. *La Juive* is the only one of Halèvy's operas that still enjoys European fame, though he wrote many others, the most worthy of mention being *La Reine de Chypre* (1841), *Les Mousquetaires* (1846), *Guido et Ginevra*, and *Le Val d'Andorre*,

TSCHAIKOWSKY

PETER ILJTSCH TSCHAIKOWSKY was born in Wotkinsk, May 7th, 1840: died at St. Petersburg, 5th November, 1905. Early showed his bent for music, and though trained for the law, abandoned that profession and, determining to study music alone, entered the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, where he studied with Anton Rubenstein and Saremba. After studying three years in St. Petersburg, Tschaikowsky was appointed a teacher at the new Moscow Conservatorium, established by Nicholas Rubenstein, where he produced a number of orchestral works and three operas. His first opera, *The Voïevoda*, produced in Moscow in 1869, was a failure; and of the list of eleven operas which he produced, but a few retained lasting popularity, with the exception of *Vakoula the Blacksmith*, and *Eugene Onegin*. The latter is the most famous of all his works, and is still extremely popular in Russia, being full of delightful melodies. *Eugene Onegin* was first produced in Moscow in 1879. Amongst his other operas are *The Enchantress*, *The Queen of Spade*, *Joan of Arc*, *Mazeppa*, *Iolanthe*, *Undine*, *The Oprichinki*. Besides these, Tschaikowsky wrote a great number of brilliant orchestral works, deservedly popular throughout Europe, being noted for their fine tone-colouring, spirit, and beauty of melody: amongst the most celebrated of these being the rich *Overture* "1812," composed in memory of Nicholas Rubenstein, the *Fifth Symphony* and the *Sixth Symphony*, *The Pathètique*.

BEETHOVEN

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN, the greatest of musicians, was born at Bonn, 16th December, 1770: died 26th March, 1827. He was the son of a tenor singer in the service of the Elector of Cologne. His wonderful talent for music was early displayed and cultivated, and even in his eighth year he delighted all who heard him by his truly astonishing execution on the violin. He began to compose sonatas in his thirteenth year, and these promising signs of genius caused the Elector of Cologne to send him, in the character of his Court-Organist, to Vienna, to study composition under the instruction of Haydn, Schenk, and Albrechtsberger. Here, except for some few years spent in the new Court of the King of Westphalia, Beethoven passed the remainder of his life, latterly retiring to the village of Modlingen, near Vienna. Most of his principal works were composed after 1801. He did not hold musical offices, but devoted himself entirely to composition, and though at first he appeared as a pianoforte player, he afterwards withdrew entirely from the world, and lived in a solitude enhanced latterly by almost total deafness. Beethoven was essentially a composer of instrumental music, which received from his work an entirely new and original character, and he developed the symphonic art to a surprising boldness and breadth of form and outline, filling this in with a truly marvellous wealth of grand melody—the landmark of a completely new phase in the history of music. Beethoven only wrote one opera, *Fidelio* (first entitled *Leonore)*, and one sacred cantata, *The Mount of Olives*; but, original and beautiful as these are, they still show us that this great musician was at his greatest in his instru-

mental works, upon which his chief fame rests. Besides his noble symphonies and overtures, his quintettes, quartettes, and trios, for stringed instruments, his numerous sonatas, variations, and other pieces for the pianoforte, all show the great richness, power, and originality of his imagination. Beethoven died in the village of Modlingen on March 26th, 1827.

BELLINI

VINCENZO BELLINI was born in Catania, in Sicily, November 3rd, 1802; died at Puteaux, near Paris, September 24th, 1835. He studied at the Conservatorium in Naples, and in 1833 went to Paris. He produced a number of operas, his style being chiefly founded on that of the then fashionable Rossini, but with the defects of that composer's florid work somewhat exaggerated. Rossini was, however, a good friend to the young Bellini, and gave him very valuable assistance and encouragement. Bellini's best known and most attractive operas are *La Sonnambula* (La Scala, 1831); *Norma* (Dec. 26th, 1831); and *I Puritani* (1835); all of which are full of melodious airs, and have attained great popularity.

MASCAGNI

PIETRO MASCAGNI was born at Leghorn, December 7th, 1863. His father intended him for the law, and discouraged his many efforts to learn music. The musical youth, however, entered himself secretly at the Istituto Luigi Cherubini, his chief instructor being Alfredo Solfredini. Later on an uncle adopted him; and he was

then permitted to devote himself entirely to music, and was afterwards sent to Milan Conservatoire. Unable to bear the restrictions of the Conservatoire, however, Mascagni joined various travelling operatic companies as conductor, and for a time lived in great obscurity, from whence he emerged by the success of his brilliant one-act opera, "*Cavalleria Rusticana*," which won the first prize in a competition, and was produced at the Costanzi Theatre, Rome, May 18th, 1890. This was received with overwhelming appreciation, and made its composer immediately famous. His next opera was *L'Amico Fritz* (1891); after which followed:—*I Rantzan* (1892); *Guglielino Ratcliff* (1895); *Silvano* (1895); *Zanetto* (1896); *Iris* (1898); *Le Maschere* (1901); *Amica* (1905); but none of these have fulfilled the brilliant promise of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and have met with little success.

PUCCINI

Giacomo Puccini was born at Lucca, June 22nd, 1858, and belongs to a family of well-known musicians. Studied first at Lucca, and afterwards at Milan Conservatoire, his chief teacher being Ponchielli. His first opera, *Le Villi*, was produced at the Teatro dal Verme, Milan, May 31st, 1884, with such success that it was afterwards revised and enlarged, and produced at La Scala, January 24th, 1885. His next opera, *Edgar*, produced at La Scala, 1889. *Manon Lescant*, produced at Teatro Regio, Turin, showed considerable development, and with the production of *La Bohême* (Teatro Regio, Turin, 1896), he was placed at once in the first rank of modern composers. His next opera, *Tosca* (1900), met with equal success. *Madama*

Butterfly (La Scala, Milan, 1904) is undoubtedly the finest work Puccini has yet produced; yet when first given, for some unaccountable reason, it was not well received. But on its second appearance at Brescia, it was received with the greatest applause, and has also been enthusiastically welcomed wherever it has been produced, being now, together with *La Bohême*, a universal European favourite.

LEONCAVALLO

RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO was born at Naples, March 8th, 1858. He studied at the Neapolitan Conservatoire, afterwards gave singing lessons, and went through many hard struggles. His first opera, "*Medici*," being part of a trilogy *Crepusculinis*, was not produced until after *Pagliacci* (produced at the Teatro dal Verme, Milan, May 21st, 1892) had won great success for him. *Medici* was given in 1893, but proving unsuccessful, the remaining portions of the trilogy *Savonarola* and *Cesare Borgia* were not produced. The other operas that followed were: *Chatterton* (1896); *La Bohême* (1897) *Zaza* (1900); and *Der Roland* (1894); but none of these have met with great success, his lighter work, such as *Zaza* and *Pagliacci*, being in his happiest vein.

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