

That Night at "La Scala."

IT WAS the third day of the carnival at Milan, in the year 1836. Donizetti's immortal masterpiece, Lucia di Lammermoor, had been performed for the first time at the San Carlo, in Naples, a few months previous, and was then making its triumphal tour through Italy.

The genius of Bergamo's sweet bard had attained its culminating point. Its great aria and the stupendous magnificence of the septet had electrified the entire musical world; even the star of Rossini was eclipsed by the incredible success of the younger composer.

Milan was in an uproar; the streets, squares, and arcades were illuminated a giorno; the cathedral in marble majesty glittered beneath the glare of innumerable lanterns, while the joyous laughter of sixty thousand pleasure-seekers made the old, narrow streets ring and echo again, and the Scala, Italy's greatest opera house, ablaze with glory, had placed before the entrance, in letters of fame, the magic word Lucia.

No wonder the crowd hastened thither; for eighty lire you could not have obtained a seat. It was the third representation only, and fame, beauty, or gold could not have forced an entrance. It was six o'clock; the pit and gallery boxes and stalls of the immense theater were crowded to suffocation. Four thousand eager people—four thousand anxious, soulful Italians—were waiting with subdued frenzy for the curtain to rise.

The nobility of Lombardy graced the boxes, the political celebrities of the city crowded the passages, all the elite of the art-loving town had flocked thither.

The heat was stifling; at half-past six the overture began. The immense throng was silenced at the first wave of the conductor's baton. Was it not to hear the last and most admirable of Donizetti's operas? Had not the Neapolitan papers been devoured with avid eyes? Was it not to hear the song over which Italy was raving? And last, but not least, was it not to applaud the beautiful prima donna, Alferi, who had achieved such a colossal success the two previous nights—their favorite—their idol—the divine Alferi! who had sung for seven consecutive seasons in Milan, alike renowned for her consummate art, her beauty, and her unrivaled voice! How the audience was moved; how it trembled with expectant ecstasy!

The curtain rose at last. The hunters' chorus was listened to with religious attention; the baritone's song and cabaletta which follow caused but a slight impression in spite of their veritable excellence, and the shifting of the scene to the park where Lucia makes her first appearance was welcomed with a husky murmur of delight.

A frail, white-robed female form advanced toward the footlights, her eyes were cast down, and she moved slowly near the prompter's box. There she stood still, raised her eyes and gazed full upon the audience.

A howl of disappointment arose from the house: "It's not Alferi!" The cry was echoed on all sides; groans, hissing, and stamping of feet drowned the orchestra.

"Off! off! Alferi! Alferi!" The woman, confronting that audience, not in the least disconcerted, walked leisurely around the stage. A man peeped out from the side-scenes. It was the director—astonished and disturbed.

"Who is that woman? It is not Alferi!"

"No one knows—no one saw her enter."

Again the conductor raised his baton; the unknown prima donna seemed to rouse herself from her pensive lethargy, and moved solemnly to the center of the stage.

The clamor had ceased. She raised her eyes to the level of the first tier, and stood in the full force of the light. She was wondrously beautiful, but white—white as snow; deathly, spectrally white; not a tinge of rose enhanced the marble graces of her face, which was purely, faultlessly Greek.

Her eyes, black and radiant, flashed luridly. When she dropped them their light became sad, gray, and crepuscular. Her lips shone red as vermillion, and seemed like a gash—like a hideous gash—when contrasted with the whiteness and rigidity of her face.

Her hair, long and purplish, in undulate tresses rife over her shoulders, pure and colorless as marble.

She had no ornaments. A tuberoso thrust in a rebellious curl adorned her brow; around her throat was a piece of broad, black velvet.

Her dress was white—all white. She gazed weirdly upon the audience and began, in a strange, vague, unearthly tone of voice, the ravishing aria of "Lucia" upon her entrance.

"I was present, and I can recall perfectly the cold sensation and chilliness I felt at the first few notes.

It seemed to me as if some humid cavern had been suddenly opened, and that I had breathed the first icy wafts of air emanating therefrom.

Not a sound save her voice was heard. Her hands hung listlessly by her side. I do not remember how she finished. I heard her first strange tones change to a soft, sweet voice of fascinating, bell-like brilliancy, and break from a trance by hearing

the audience shriek and stamp with delight.

The applause was feverish and frantic, then suddenly ceased as if by enchantment; the strange woman had turned aside and began the ordinary stage business and duet with Edgardo, as Alferi would have done. The act ended in indescribable amazement.

"Who is she? Who is she? What a voice!" and such exclamations were heard on all sides.

The director appeared at this moment, evidently anxious to find out for himself who the beautiful pale songstress was, but could answer no inquiries.

In the meantime I hurried behind the scenes to Alferi's dressing-room, where I had often gone to chat with her, expecting to see this marvelous creature.

The apartment was illuminated; Lucia's bridal costume for the second act was ready on the sofa; a bottle of Asti wine, which Alferi always partook of between the acts, stood on the table; but naught proved that the room had been occupied previously by another—nothing showed the presence of the new-comer.

I waited a few minutes, took a few whiffs from my cigarette, and was about to return, when I spied upon the floor an earring of such uncommon size that I stooped to pick it up, and gazed upon it in wonder, held spell-bound by its beauty.

It was a solitary diamond, richly set, of a slightly greenish tint. I knew the value of green diamonds, and estimated this one to be worth at least seven or eight thousand dollars, being really finer than any I had seen in the famous vaults of Dresden.

I hastened down to the director's office to remit it, thinking it belonged to the new-comer or to Alferi. The director was absent; soon I heard the bell ring. The diamond in my hand, I hastened to my seat.

The unknown woman again entered; she was, if possible, a tinge paler than before. She wore gloves this time, and her lips were not so cruelly red. She sang, and, ye gods, what song! Her voice soared, spread, fused with other invisible voices; it rang sonorously, and murmured divinely in magnificent power and harmony—a voice all fire, a voice all soul.

I trembled—the audience quivered. Still that strange being stood in the same position, still did her great luminous black eyes gaze continually upward; she seemed not to heed her fellow-artists; the bewilderment of Edgardo, the anxious, inquiring glance of Ashton did not move her; she would glide by them like a sylph, a vision—light, ethereal, graceful. No one heard her walk—she sang!

Again the curtain fell, again the house cried out with delirium. "Brava! brava!" yelled the rabble. But no one appeared.

Again I went to Alferi's box while the ballet (which in those days was performed between the acts) was going on, but it was empty; so I returned to listen to the animated discussions and conversations in the lobby.

"Alferi is eclipsed; she is Pasta and Persiani combined! She is not human, she is an angel from Heaven's gates!"

"'Tis the Beatrice of Dante descended from Heaven!"

A friend came from behind the scenes.

"Well, what news, Ricciardo? Have you seen her?"

"No, but Grazzini has" (Grazzini was the tenor, a handsome fellow, and he tells me he spoke to her—forced to do so by some subtle, magnetic attraction. He told her of his wonder, his admiration, his love, I believe, and she answered him, in Milanese dialect, "We shall meet again.")

The bell rang, and the curtain went up slowly. The lights seemed to burn badly, and the heat was stifling, but upon the entrance of the mysterious stranger a sudden chill pervaded every one.

We did not breathe to listen, and as I gazed upon her, charmed by her supernatural beauty, I noticed that from one of her ears hung a bright, large stone, similar to the one I held in my hand. Scarcely had I seen it when she caught my eye. She smiled—the only time. I averted my glance. The music went on.

The scene where the unhappy Lucia, after having been dragged to the altar by her heartless brother, realizes the full atrocity of his conduct, seemed to influence the sombre sprite-like prima donna, for she roused herself at last and acted—acted with the frenzy of passion, acted with the sublimity of pathos and despair. She was intense, superb in the mad scene. Her voice had sob's of anguish.

Up swelled the vertiginous staccato high above the moans of the orchestra. She raved, she wept, and the large tears rolled down her white cheek; her hair floated wildly over her quivering shoulders, and still rang forth her magical, heartrending notes.

I trembled; the house groaned. The mad scene neared its end, and the musicians, as if ordered, ceased to play. They looked at her, she sang unaccompanied. It was terrible, unique, sublime.

The culminating point arrived, and the pains and pangs of Donizetti's masterpiece vibrated on her lips as

they had never done on lips before. She gazed wildly, stupidly about, when she stopped, and I saw drops of blood ooze from her mouth; she fell heavily upon the stage, and the curtain went down. The house was in tears.

Half an hour later all Milan knew of the miraculous performance at the Scala. The last act of the opera was listened to without curiosity, Lucia not appearing in it. Nothing occurred except the indisposition of the tenor, Grazzini, who was taken suddenly ill, and I afterward learned, died that night.

Milan, outdoors, all fun and animation, could not comprehend the story told in the cafes and on the squares. The reports were called exaggerated, and the singer's phenomenal voice a myth. No one could find her, and it was in vain that I waited for more than an hour in Alferi's box.

The director told me confidentially that he was as nuptial as the audience, and had never beheld the marvelous singer before. Then, as he left me, he superstitiously added: "She was a spirit, I believe."

Full of conflicting thoughts, I walked sadly homeward, and heard again through the quiet streets, far away from the riot and revel of the carnival, the heavenly echo of that unutterably divine voice.

I walked on, and passed across the Saint Halda Cemetery to near my home. It was late. The noise of Milan's festivities reached my ear from time to time faintly.

Within a few steps of my house, separated by a high wall from the end of the graveyard, there, beneath a few cypress trees, in the full glare of the moon, I beheld an unusual sight.

The cemetery, through which I passed regularly, and which I knew in every nook and corner, presented in that particular spot a singular aspect. I advanced, and remarked with astonishment that a tomb had been exhumed.

Sure enough, the sod on either side was all strewn and scattered here and there, foot-prints were plainly visible, and, to my horror I saw that the coffin was open. In it, wrapped rather loosely in a faded yellow shroud, was a human form.

I was about to call for the guard, when my eye was suddenly attracted by a faint greenish light twinkling near the top of the coffin.

I stooped over, and to my amazement saw a diamond earring in the lobe of the corpse's ear—the mate of the one I had found.

The moonlight, checked by the tree-boughs, did not allow me to view the face, and trembling I drew aside and lit a match. Approaching, I gazed on the body. It was the spectral songstress!

Utterly bewildered, with haggard eyes and quivering knees, I grasped the coffin lid and replaced it over the livid face. On it was written in large letters:

Virginia Cossell, queen of soprano, died September, 1781, requiescat in pace.

I remember a wild thrill of horror came over me and I felt senseless. For weeks I raved in delirium. When I had sufficiently recovered I left Milan. People were still talking of the mysterious prima donna.—Saturday Evening Post.

His Own Hat.

George Buchanan, who represents the firm of Bunnell & Buchanan on the curb, was the victim of his own love of missing a rumpus on the day when the curb takes to smashing hats. Before Mr. Buchanan left his office that morning he warned his partners that if they happened to come down to the curb on that morning he would see to it that their hats paid the penalty. When Mr. Von Gossler, his junior partner, put in an appearance in the crowd the genial Buchanan proceeded to put his threat into effect. He knocked the visitor's hat off and made a football out of it.

"I told you what would happen to you!" he said.

His partner took it very good-naturedly, merely remarking, as he headed for the office:

"I remembered all right. That was the new hat you bought yesterday and forgot to take home. It fitted me all right."

White Blackberries.

By means of cross-breeding Luther Burbank, of Santa Rosa, California, has developed a variety of blackberries, which are perfectly white, as bright as snow in the sunshine, and so transparent that the seeds can be seen inside the ripe fruit. The seeds are said to be unusually small, and the berries are as sweet and meltingly tender as the finest of the black varieties. The familiar Lawton berry is described as the great-grandparent of the new white variety, to which has been given the name "Iceberg." The white berries are as large as the Lawtons.

Red Blindness.

Inability to "see red" is the main form of color blindness from which sailors suffer. Last year thirty-four officers and would-be officers of Great Britain's mercantile marine failed to pass the color tests; and of these twenty-three were more or less completely red blind, the rest more or less unable to distinguish green. The 4,000 candidates for certificates were also submitted to a test for form vision, and twenty-two of them failed to distinguish the form of the object submitted.

We have always imagined that it is called a de-butt, because it means that one more has butted in.

When you make wishes, it is a sign you are not getting what you want.

OLD FAVORITES

My Name is Norval.

My name is Norval; on the Grampian hills My father feeds his flocks—a frugal swain,

Whose constant cares were to increase his store,

And keep his only son, myself, at home. For I had heard of battles, and I longed To follow to the field some warlike lord;

And heaven soon granted what my sire denied. This moon which rose last night, round as my shield,

Had not yet filled her horns, when, by her light,

A band of fierce barbarians from the hills Rashed like a torrent down upon the vale,

Sweeping our flocks and herds. The shepherds fled For safety and for succor, I alone, With bearded bow and quiver full of arrows,

Hovered about the enemy, and marked The road he took; then hasted to my friends,

Whom, with a troop of fifty chosen men, I met advancing. The pursuit I led, Till we o'ertook the spoil-encumbered foe.

We fought and conquered. Ere a sword was drawn An arrow from my bow had pierced their chief,

Who wore that day the arms which now I wear. Returning home in triumph, I disdained The shepherd's stolid life; and having heard

That our good king had summoned his bold peers To lead their warriors to the Carron side,

I left my father's house, and took with me A chosen servant to conduct my steps— You trembling coward who forsook his master,

Journeying with this intent, I passed these towers. And, heaven directed, came this day to do

The happy deed that gilds my humble name. —John Home.

Afton Water.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes;

Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise; My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,

Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds through the glen,

Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,

Thou green-crowned lapwing, thy screaming forbear;

I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighboring hills,

Far marked with the courses of clear-winding rills!

There daily I wander as noon rises high, My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,

Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow!

There oft as mild evening sweeps over the lea,

The sweet-scented birch shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,

And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;

How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,

As gathering sweet flowerets, she stems thy clear wave!

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes;

Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;

My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,

Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream. —Robert Burns.

SUNFISH WEIGHED A TON.

Captured Off the California Coast with a Boat Hook.

A huge, throbbing lump of fish flesh, estimated to weigh nearly a ton, and resembling an elephant in all but shape, was fought to its death in the channel this morning and held up on the beach to amaze the summer thousands, says the Avalon (Cal.) correspondent of the Los Angeles Times. It was a giant sunfish.

The capture of the creature constitutes one of the most remarkable and interesting events in Catalina history—a history which is crowded with extraordinary piscatorial events. The catch astonished pioneer fishermen and summer newcomers alike, for no fish anything like the one caught to-day was ever seen in these waters before. There have been vague traditions of sunfish weighing half a ton having been seen, but such reports have been generally discredited. The fish taken to-day eclipses the storied ones and establishes a new record.

was black and rough, so Farnsworth put his boat about for an investigation. The mammoth sunfish was approached as noiselessly as possible and closer views showed it to be lazily lolling about in enjoyment of the sun. Close approach was known to be perilous courting of shipwreck, but a consultation of the trio showed the women stout-hearted. It was decided to engage and snare the monster if possible. Farnsworth armed himself with his stoutest gaff hook and full steam was thrown on for a rush along side.

When within reach Farnsworth swung his gaff with all his might and the hook sunk deep into the flesh of the sleeping monster. Then began one of the most terrific fish fights ever heard of in this home of gummy sea prey. The hook took a firm hold, the pain awakening the sunfish and goading it to fury. The fish threw its huge form about, pulling and beating in its struggle to get free from the painful hook. Its big fins and tail lashed the water to a foam and repeatedly drenched the trio from head to foot. The little launch rocked and plunged, several times careening over to the danger point. Farnsworth braced his feet, clinched his teeth and just held on. The women offered him such assistance as they could.

For a mortal hour this exciting combat continued. Then help came to the drenched and tired trio. From a distance Harry Elms saw that a battle extraordinary was on and hurried to the scene in his launch. Elms sunbathed his gaff into the wounded fish and by taking turns they held on until it had fought itself into complete exhaustion. It was one hour and forty minutes after Elms arrived that the sunfish stopped fighting, which made it close to three hours from the time it was first gaffed until it was conquered.

SULTAN AND HIS PLAYERS.

Actors Have Military Organization and Are Subject to Call.

The Sultan of Turkey has his own way of taking his theatrical pleasures. An account of the performances give before him was recently made public by one who was long attached to the palace staff, and it reads like the exaggerations of a comic opera librettist. The power that controls all these performances is Arturo Stravolo, known simply as Arturo, who came from Naples some years ago and settled with his father, mother, sisters and brother and sisters-in-law in Constantinople. He was formerly a dialect comedian in Naples.

He is a prime favorite with the Sultan. The other actors are called to the palace to perform not oftener than once a month. Arturo acts at least weekly.

As the Sultan is very fond of variety and will rarely consent to witness the same performance twice, it is necessary to provide constant change. To do this one of the Stravolos is always traveling through the European capitals at the expense of his patron, seeking novelties.

All of the Sultan's actors must wear a certain uniform. They have a military organization. Angelo is a lieutenant; the violinist, Luigi, is a captain; the baritone, Gaetano, is a major and the tenor, Nicola, is a general. The performances take place at a fixed time, but whenever it appears to the Sultan that he would like to see a show. Thus the company, like soldiers, must always be ready to march.

Frequently the director of the orchestra, Aranda Pasha, will be notified in the middle of the night that he must come to the palace as quickly as possible. He learns on arriving that his majesty desires to hear "Un Ball in Maschera," or some other opera. A the Sultan's wish is a command, the opera begins within half an hour.

The Sultan sits entirely alone, as a rule, and if any point in the act of either play or opera is not clear he halts the performers until it is explained to him.—New York Sun.

How a Tramp Sawed Wood.

Harry Sanderson, manager for Tony Pastor, who lives at Cranford, N. J. not feeling particularly well, took a day off recently and remained at home. From the window of his library he observed a tramp entering his gate, and he walked down to the rear door to meet him. It was the old story—a request for a meal. Having a load of unsawed wood in the shed, he told the fellow that if he got to work on performed on the sawbuck for a brief period he would have something prepared for him.

The tramp went to the shed and immediately the sound of vigorous sawing was heard, stick after stick parting under his energetic efforts. Calling the tramp into the kitchen, Sanderson complimented him upon his energy and the tramp replied with a modest air that whenever he had anything to do he generally paid attention to it. The meal was eaten and the tramp expressed his thanks and departed.

Shortly after Sanderson went out to the shed and was surprised to find every stick of wood intact. Upon inquiry in the village he ascertained that he had been entertaining a stranger ventriloquist, who was working his way back to New York from Easton Pa. The mean chap had simply gone into the shed and given him imitation of sawing wood.—Rochester (N. Y.) Herald.

The Army Incubus.

In Russia 2,810 men in every million are annually called into the army in Germany 4,120 and in France 5,620. To get so large a number of French men weaklings have to be taken. This makes the mortality in the French army three and a half times that of the German army.

SOME Dainty LINGERIE.



There are many who would not attempt to make a frock or even a blouse, but who always make their own lingerie. For the real dainty and fine garments such exorbitant prices are usually asked that, unless one has plenty of money, they must content themselves with inexpensive things or make them one's self. A corset-cover can easily be cut from one's shirt-waist pattern. The one in the illustration is cut just to the waist, wide heading put on for a waistband, and a circular tail put on it. The inserting is braided on in diamond shapes. The petticoat ruffle is extremely pretty and launders very well. The shapes are all cut out first and bound all around with inserting. These are whipped together; the edge by so doing makes points. A rather wide lace is then sewed all around them. The ruffle is sewed on with a row of the inserting. The sleeves in the nightgown are very pretty, having the seam entirely open and not drawn in to any band at the elbow. The edges have a ruffle of lace all around. The little shaped yoke has three Swiss embroidery motifs applied on it and a design in briar-stitching. It is edged around the top with a little ruffle of lace.

When the Circus Comes.

There are pleasing recollections called up by the tented show. Memories of youthful pleasures in the days of long ago. Vividly again are pictured scenes that then enjoyed renown. And the same old thrills we're feeling when the circus comes to town.

We remember how the arches then by scores were supplicants. For the job of lugging water for the thirsty elephants. How they used to gather early and express their wonderment. For a palace of enchantment was the old-time circus tent.

We remember how we struggled for a seat down near the ring. To be close to clown and riders and keep track of everything. How we watched with wide-eyed wonder when each daring leap was made. How we feasted on the peanuts and tinted lemonade.

We remember how young ambitions in those old-time circus days. When we yearned to wear the spangles and disport in public gaze. How we envied all the riders their connection with the show. And how sadly we lamented when we saw the circus go.

It is not the old-time circus that now gayly comes to town. Not the old-time beasts and riders and the solitary clown. For by train loads now performers and accessories are brought. And the tented show is spreading o'er a forty-acre lot.

Great and many are the changes since those happy early days. When the little circus charmed us, and in wonder we would gaze. But there comes the same old feeling. And we simply have to go. Though there's risk of getting cross-eyed at the modern tented show. —Pittsburg Chronicle.

Germ Theory of Consumption.

Prof. Kossel, of the Imperial health office, has reported to the Berlin Medical Society the results of the prolonged experiments of the tuberculosis commission in infecting calves with human tuberculosis. Prof. Koch's observations, prior to the celebrated London address, caused the health office to appoint the commission to make systematic experiments. The commission's investigations cover three forms of introducing tubercle bacilli in calves—first, cutaneous injection; second, in food, and, third, by inhalation. The preliminary report covers only the first form, but the experiments with the other forms continue. The commission summarizes as follows: "The series of experiments strengthens Prof. Koch's view that animal consumption does not play the role generally attributed to it, but definitive judgment requires further experimentation."

What's in a Name?

Nikolai Polites Popokonolov has been arrested in New York on a charge of having given a false name eleven years ago when he applied for his naturalization papers. A plea of justification will be entered.

Notice is served on country women that when town people visit them they would rather go to the cellar for a drink of milk than to have it brought to them in the parlor.

How often the same old story is told!