

Romance of Signor Scotti The Metropolitan Opera Baritone

At last Scotti, the bachelor baritone, is to be married. The public that has been mystified and disheartened by the failure of his many attempts, and has sympathized with him in those repeated failures, is sending him a flood of congratulations. "Good old boy. You've done it at last." "Guess you've read the story of Robert Bruce and his spider that tried seventy-seven times before success." "There's as good fish in the sea as ever slipped off your hook." To all of which Scotti, the long term bachelor, sends affable replies. He can afford to tolerate familiarities at this time, for he knows that all the world is interested in a lover, especially if that lover has been singing for it for a quarter of a century. And most of all if the lover has had a particularly hard time in all those years trying to win one bride after another.

Not among the queens of grand opera though, but in the realms of modest vaudeville has the distinguished grand opera singer found his bride. Ina Claire, a dancer and singer, it is who has made his heart captive, and who will, it is expected, soon become Signora Scotti. Antonio Scotti is in his fiftieth year. His bride-elect is twenty. But Cupid danced gaily across the bridge that spanned the disparity in years. Cupid scorns the obstacle of a difference in ages. Particularly when a man has tried so often and so long to marry as has Scotti.

If search were made in the archives of the little god, for he does keep books, in his own fashion, it would be found that Signor Scotti is not by his fault a bachelor. Has he not been seeking the joys and responsibilities of the Benedict for thirty years, since ten years, in fact, before Mrs. Scotti that is to be was born? No man can do more than his best.

As the baritone sits in his chair beside the window of his apartment in a Broadway hotel and reflects that he is to marry a girl of such charm that she quickened the pulses of staid London, when she appeared on its stage, and that she, so gossips say, might have wedded Vincent Astor, multi-millionaire, he looks supremely happy. After thirty years of trying he is a conqueror.

But the man who at last is victor might, if he chose, recall many defeats. A procession of the unvanquished might pass before him in review. The roll-call of the procession of them might be this: Charlotte Ives, present; Geraldine Farrar, present; Mary Garden, present; Mary Leavy, present; Emma Eames, present; Olive Fremstadt, present, and so on, and so on. All these at some time, it is believed, declined to become Signora Scotti. Why?

Signor Scotti would be considered by all matchmaking mammas, and by most matchmaking maids, as a good catch. There can be no doubt of that. He is handsome. He has manners that are declared by matinee girls to be "adorable." Displaying European thrift, he has become rich from his large salaries as singer. He sings no longer because he must, but because he wishes to sing. He is of amiable character. Why, then, when he kept on selecting a queen of his heart from the long procession of grand opera prima donnas did each one hesitate, consider, and at last say firmly and finally "No."

There is no dark secret in his life. He is no Blue Beard. Nor is he a Don Juan. No skeleton obtrudes its bones from his closet. Why would not women marry Scotti? Why have they refused until in his fiftieth year he has become betrothed to a girl of twenty?

He has sung and wooed in the large cities of three continents. He made his debut in Malta, twenty-six years ago, since which he has sung before impressionable Italians, artistic Spaniards, sophisticated Parisians, the gay and wealthy of Buenos Ayres and Rio Janeiro, the cosmopolitan audiences of London and New York. Everywhere he has loved as well as sung.

Again and again he was reputed to be engaged. One mamma actually announced



Ina Claire, the Vaudeville Performer, Who Will Become Mrs. Scotti.

Recall the spectacle that Scotti made to Metropolitan audiences the past fifteen years. Tonio, ugly, beaten clown, in his loose baglike clothes and with his peaked hat and clown's painted cheeks in "Pagliacci." Who would want to wed with poor, grovelling Tonio?

Falstaff is as repulsive as Tonio, in an ampler way. Ever since Shakespeare caused "The Merry Wives of Windsor" to gibe and laugh at rotund Falstaff, it has been understood by women that they would not willingly accept the lovmaking of a fat man.

The Count, in "La Traviata," it will be recalled, was no hero. And Scotti has hundreds of times sung the Count. Iago? That has been a favorite part of Scotti's, and so realistic did he make it that it was difficult for him to induce any one to sup with him after the opera. The memory of the way he looked and the cruel words he sung with such vehemence could not easily be shaken off. Scarpia, in "La Tosca," was no heroic lover. Nor was Salazar, in "Lohengrin." Scotti roles all.

The opportunity to woo by proxy never came to Antonio Scotti. Instead he frightened his ladies off. While earning a huge salary by each note he sang, he could not, as tenors did, set the hearts of his auditors aflutter. Caruso, while singing in "La Boheme," addressed his stage adored one, Mimì, by the name of his real life adored one, who sat in the audience. "Did you not hear me sing 'Mimì'?" he asked her.

Scotti's was the task to overcome the resistance offered by the more or less repulsive parts he sang.

The man who sings Romeo in the presence of one he wishes to win, has already won her. But no Romeo was Scotti. In his stage life he was rather a Tonio.

The mistake Scotti apparently made was in relying upon the artistic discernment of the ladies of his adoration. Geraldine Farrar, though she sang Marguerite, could forget his diabolical Mephistopheles, because she was an artist. So thought Signor Scotti. In all things else he bent the knee of the lover. She said it was he and her mother who were her pair of most helpful critics. They taught her more than she had ever learned from any one else of music. The friendship begun between the singers while the young American prima donna was in Germany, continued in this country. The Italian's devotion was unmistakable. It came to be

said that wherever you saw Geraldine Farrar, you saw Scotti. Together at a concert in Philadelphia they discovered Anna Case, the girl with the dramatic soprano voice, the daughter of a blacksmith at Somerville, N. J.

Again and again rumor said, not in a whisper, but a shout, that Geraldine Farrar would soon become Signora Scotti. But after three years of devotion that it seemed would surely be rewarded, a chill began to be manifest in the air that surrounded them. The breach widened. Scotti was not a passenger on the steamer that carried Miss Farrar to Europe. Miss Farrar was tired. She wished to forget Scotti as Tonio, as Scarpia, as Falstaff, as Iago. That execrable Iago into which he flung such fervor that almost she believed him Iago. No, Miss Farrar was tired of baritone villains. Tonio-Iago-Falstaff-Scarpia-Scotti had gotten on her nerves.

It must be remembered that before Farrar stretch dozens of other prima donnas who were wooed the same, and who refused the same. Lack of space prevents anything except a presentation of the most modern.

Scotti sailed alone. In Europe he met Miss Charlotte Ives, a charming girl who had but recently gone upon the stage. Would she, could she, overlook his other selves, his many villainous "stage life"? She would and could. It seemed when she returned from Europe and announced her approaching marriage to the baritone, that here was one who could dissociate the man from the role. But alas and alack for the staunchness of women. Miss Ives, too, became obsessed by the "heavy" parts he played. When she met her betrothed it was not Scotti, immaculate, ideally groomed, debonair whom she beheld, but crouching Tonio. She hesitated. She considered. She tried to reason with that worst of rebels, a woman's heart. But Scotti lost. His villain repertoire won.

Thus had it been with Lillian Nordica, in the brief interval between her separation from Zoltan Doehms and her marriage to George W. Young. Signor Scotti it was thought was regarded with favor. The life union of a great dramatic soprano with a famous baritone was predicted in the music world. Then the accumulation of evil roles overwhelming her, the prima

After Years of Devotion to Half a Dozen of the Grand Opera Queens He at Last Wins the Heart of a Vaudeville Singer

donna strayed from the world of art and married a mere banker. Emma Eames, so the chronicles run, was wooed by Scotti. Her artist suitor, Julian Story won, chiefly because he had never played Iago nor Tonio nor the Count nor Falstaff. When that marriage ended in the courts, sympathizers of unfortunate Scotti wrote the prima donna expostulatory letters saying: "Better that you had married Scotti, even though he did play and sing devils."

Mary Garden was one of the chosen, so far as Scotti was concerned, but she refused to be chosen. So, too, of Olive Fremstadt. Character, like history, repeats itself. The prima donna would, as a husband, have none of him. His villainous roles, they feared, might stalk nightmare-like through their dreams by day and night.

Miss Mary Leavy, he believed, was braver and less imaginative. Miss Leavy's

mother was so interdicted as to announce the engagement. And shades of lean Iago, and corpulent Falstaff! By the shadows that they cast he lost her!

And now in little Miss Ina Claire he places his last hope. In his suit he has been persistent as a shadow. He is so constantly beside her in their drives in the park, at luncheon, at tea, that he banishes the memory of his villains. At the Plaza, at tea, he sits beside her, outwardly adoring as any college sophomore, and making no attempt to hide the fact that his hand is seeking hers in her concealing muff. While Mrs. Claire sits beside them, a stately and approving chaperone. Mothers are not so meticulous as their daughters. It would not be undesirable to be the mother-in-law of a grand opera stage Iago.

But a wife! Apparently Miss Claire thinks that state endurable. In her, Scotti has found his long-sought exception.



Olive Fremstadt, Who Tired of Seeing a Scowling Character About.

Photo by Otto Sorenson



Geraldine Farrar Who Could Not Forget His Villain Roles.



Antonio Scotti as Iago.

the engagement. But in this instance, as in all others, the young women who have attracted the baritone have smilingly passed out of his sight, if not out of his heart. They have added other names to their own, but never the name Scotti. And always, contradicting the adage about women's inability to keep a secret, they have refused to say why.

At last the secret has been divulged, and by one of the objects of the baritone's love and wasted proposals of marriage. Said she: "It is the parts that Scotti plays. A tenor never has any trouble to marry. Why? Because the tenor is generally the hero and always the lovmaker in the opera. Ask any tenor you know, Caruso, Riccardo Martin, John McCormack, Orville Harrold, how he won his wife, and every one of them will say, 'By singing love songs on the stage to other women.' And they might well have added, 'And by looking like lovers and heroes we stirred their hearts.'

"But Scotti. Poor man. He has been playing and singing villains ever since I can remember, and looking as nearly like Satan as he could possibly make himself look."

Mary Garden Who Declined to Be Chosen.