

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 previously, 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 gloom; 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 flame, 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 followed 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 hushed 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.

"Oh! oh! 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.

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 solitaire 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.

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 nonplused 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 Italda 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 Cosselli, queen of soprano, died September, 1781, requestat in pace.

I remember a wild thrill of horror came over me and I fell 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 raising 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 general 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 4,600 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.

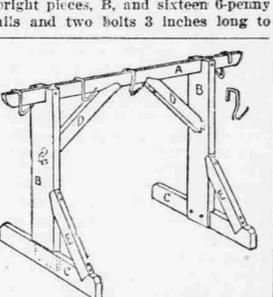
FARMS AND FARMERS



A Handy Hog Scaffold. In my visits to many farm houses in this country I noted many homemade scaffolds on which to hang hogs after they are killed and scalded, but the one shown in accompanying figure and which I use myself, I consider as handy and practical as any. It can be moved anywhere, even in the smoke-house, and if made out of good seasoned timber and painted, it will last a lifetime. It will hold five hogs weighing 300 pounds each.

One can buy five large hooks, or have a blacksmith make them, at a very small cost; these are to hook over the beam, A, on which to hang the hogs. The top piece, A, is a chestnut canting, 2x4 in. and 6 ft. 10 in. long; this piece has two mortises, 3 inches from center, as shown in cut. The two upright pieces, B, are hardwood scantlings, 2x4 in. and 5 ft. 8 in. long. These have a mortise at the top 2 inches wide and 4 inches deep; also a mortise at bottom 1 inch deep and 1 inch long. These pieces also have a mortise 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 in., 2 ft. 5 in. from center to the upper end, for the tenon of brace, D, to go into. These pieces also have a mortise 2 feet from lower end for brace, E, to set in. The sills, C, are 2x4 in. and 2 ft. 4 in. long. They have a mortise in center 4 inches wide and 1 inch deep; also a mortise 1 inch from center, for brace, E, to set into. D is a brace 1 1/2 x 2 1/2 in., and 1 ft. 4 in. long, including tenon, which is 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 in. square and 4 inches long. E is a brace 2x3 in. and 1 ft. 11 in. long.

All that is required to put this scaffold together are two 1/2-in. bolts, 5 inches long, to bolt the beam, A, to the upright pieces, B, and sixteen 6-penny nails and two bolts 3 inches long to



hold B to C at bottom. I have found it very handy on a bad day, for one can set it in some building to hang the hogs on; it is also handy to hang them on to butcher.—Charles E. Cummins, in Ohio Farmer.

The Oleomargarine Law. Some time ago it was shown that one weakness of the present oleomargarine law, the use of some ingredient which made it possible to avoid the law against the use of coloring matter, was working hardships on butter makers, but reports generally indicate that the law was a wise one, and prove beyond all question that consumers do want oleomargarine. It was held by the opponents of the Groat bill that the public demand was so great that to place any restrictions on the methods of marketing oleo would be to drive out of the market a meritorious article. Those who upheld the bill claimed that if oleo had any merit of its own it should be sold on that merit, and not disguised as butter. The law as enforced has shown that by far the greater number of those who used oleo did so because they assumed it was butter, the color helping to carry out the deception. Oleo may be nutritious and have great merit, but it is evident that few people desire it or will buy it when they have full knowledge that it is not from the product of the cow. The Groat bill has benefited farmer and consumer alike, and any attempt which is likely to be made this coming session of Congress to modify its provisions should be fought hard by farmers and dairymen. If butter must be sold on its merits, why not oleo, also?—St. Paul Dispatch.

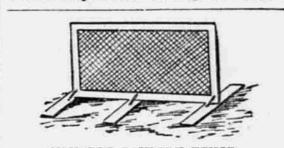
Live Stock at St. Louis Fair. Live stock exhibitors in each breed class at the World's Fair will receive a senior champion prize and a junior champion prize for males and females, and a reserve champion award will follow in four classes. Competition for the senior championships will be limited to mature animals, and young males and females only will compete for the junior champion prizes. Prospective exhibitors express themselves as highly pleased with the plan of Chief Coburn of providing for a more equitable method of awarding championship prizes and thus increasing the number of honors.

Start in a Small Way. Most of the failures in trying to operate poultry farms have been brought about by trying to keep too many fowls at first. Begin on a small scale and work up to your limit. You may be surprised to find how few you can keep at a profit, and you may find that you were born to be a poultry man. Trying it is the only way to get at the truth.

Wintering Cabbage for Family Use. Cabbages that winter best are those just fully formed and not overripe.

For family use bury an empty barrel in a well drained spot and fill it with good heads. Place a lot of dry leaves on top and cover the barrel so that it will shed rain or pile some cabbage in a corner on the barn floor and cover them with enough straw to prevent solid freezing.—Exchange.

Movable Poultry Fences. When for any reason one does not care to go to the expense of permanent fences around the poultry yard, movable fences like that shown in the cut may be used to advantage. They cost but little, and if well made will last for several seasons. The sections, as shown, may be of any dimensions desired, although if about four feet high and six feet long they can be better handled than when larger. The frame may be of any light weight material and should be made so that it will be as stiff as possible. It might be a good



idea, and especially if the sections were of greater dimensions than those given, to run a brace from corner to corner diagonally to give additional stiffness. The corners should be well fastened and the frame is then covered with wire netting. Three planks are fastened to the bottom of the frame at intervals, as shown, and braced with a strip from the frame to the planks. These planks will hold the section up right and prevent it from sinking into the mud. Several sections can be quickly made after the same pattern and hooked together at the corners the desired length. These movable fences would be especially valuable in the spring, where numbers of chicks were to be raised and it was desired to keep them in inclosures. If used to surround chicks, a wire of a finer mesh would need to be used.—Indianapolis News.

Hogs on Pasture. On most farms there is a worn-out pasture or a newly-cleared piece of ground thick in underbrush or sprouts which would make ideal runs for swine. A good plan is to fence off a portion of such places so that the animals will not run off the flesh as fast as it is put on, build some sort of rough house so they will be protected from storms and turn them loose to root and grub. Many a pasture that was supposed to be worthless has been rendered fit for reseeding after a drove of hogs had occupied it one summer. Much of the living can be picked up on the range in the manner suggested and the swine will be in fine shape to take on fat when the proper time comes to confine them more closely.

The Man Behind the Cow. Don't dose your cow or dog until you know what is the trouble. Treating the symptoms should be most cautiously done. If your dairy business is sick locate the cause most carefully or you may treat the case ignorantly and kill the patient—the business.

Some dairy troubles originate in the herd, some trace to the farm, a few are based on the market, but the fountain head of nearly all such evils is found in the man behind the cow. Ferret out the certain weakness that is found here, and all others are quickly cleared up. Watch the man behind the cow.—Farm and Ranch.

Picking Fowls for Market. Poultry shipped for market always lose considerable of their weight in transit, and while there is a demand for poultry in this condition that must be met, by far the greater demand is for dry-picked carcasses. It is not a pleasant task to prepare poultry for market particularly when the entrails must be removed, but as stated in this department several weeks since the additional price pays well for the labor. A dry-picked fowl has a perfection of skin which is attractive and for which the best customers are quite willing to pay.

Ginseng a Dubious Venture. Ginseng culture has been discussed by farmers for some time, but very little is known of the plant. A Maine bulletin describes and figures the plant and gives brief directions for culture. The experiment station does not encourage ginseng culture as a commercial venture in Maine.

The Pestilent Sparrow. Even in youth not much more than half the food of the sparrow consists of insects, and this brief period passed its diet afterwards consists of three-fourths grain and useful seeds. Systematic thinning on a scale so drastic as to amount as nearly as possible to extermination is advised.

Salt and Charcoal. Salt and charcoal should be kept in reach of hogs at all times, says Tennessee Farmer. They will help themselves when their systems require it. A little turpentine in the slops occasionally is valuable as a preventive of disease.

Apple Scab Fungus. A cold, damp season seems to be favorable to the development of apple scab fungus. The scab is one of the diseases that are most effectively and profitably treated by spraying with Bordeaux mixture.

COMPENSATION.

The Little Blind Girl Did Not Think of Being Unhappy. A personal experience of Governor Odell of New York, recorded in the Tribune, illustrates anew how often he soul encompassed by infirmity knows the compensating secret of happiness. Governor Odell was inspecting the state institution for the blind at Batavia. As he was walking through one of the buildings he noticed a golden-haired child standing at a window. He had her back to him. The Governor walked over to the window, and said:

"How do you do, my little lady?" The child turned to him with a smile. She was exceedingly beautiful, but her eyes were sightless.

"Are you Governor Odell?" she said. The Governor said that he was. "Oh, I have been waiting to see you," she said. "I heard you were coming."

The Governor then took her on his lap and asked her name. "My name is Ruth."

"I have a little girl at home just about as big as you, but her name is Estelle."

They talked freely after that. The little girl told her story without sighs or bitterness. She was unable to go home for a vacation, because it was necessary for her to remain for treatment. It was a disappointment, but she smiled brightly as she said that "seeing" the Governor partly "made up." Finally, when it came time for him to go, the Governor said:

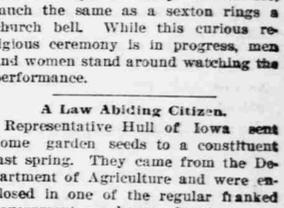
"Is there any message I can take back to my little girl from you?" "Yes, oh, yes, you can give her my love."

"Is that all?" asked the Governor. "No," said the child, clasping the Governor's neck and kissing him. "Say I sent her a kiss."

The next day, when the Governor was in Buffalo, he bought the biggest doll he could find and sent it to Ruth. A few days later he got a letter of thanks. "I can feel its eyes shut when I put it to bed at night," she wrote, "and in the morning I can feel them open. I have named my dolly Estelle, and I pray every night that your little girl may never be blind."

AN ACROBATIC PRAYER.

How the Hindu Appeals to Providence for Rain. The Hindu indulges in many curious practices. His religious rites are unique and some of them are to Christian eyes ludicrous. An instance of this kind is found in his method of appealing to Providence for rain.



which is herewith depicted. The supplicant is tied to a bar, head downward, and tight cords around his legs. Then a rope is placed around his body and the turbaned, bewiskered old Hindu sways the body to and fro, much the same as a sexton rings a church bell. While this curious religious ceremony is in progress, men and women stand around watching the performance.

A Law Abiding Citizen. Representative Hull of Iowa sent some garden seeds to a constituent last spring. They came from the Department of Agriculture and were enclosed in one of the regular franked government envelopes. On the corner of each of these envelopes appears this legend: "Penalty for private use, three hundred dollars."

A few days later Hull received a letter from his constituent which read: "Dear Mr. Hull—I don't know what to do about those garden seeds you sent me. I notice it is three hundred dollars fine for private use. I don't want to use them for the public. I want to plant them in my private garden. I can't afford to pay three hundred dollars for the privilege. Won't you see if you can't fix it so I can use them privately, for I am a law-abiding citizen and do not want to commit any crime."

Newspaper in the Far North. There is only one newspaper which is published in the arctic circle, and that is the Nourlanste, or Eastern Star, which is issued once a week at Sigerfjord, in the extreme north of Norway. It is written in the Lap language and is a very small paper, consisting of only four pages. Its contents are chiefly short articles on religious subjects and items of local news. The peculiarity of the little paper is that it has no advertisements, probably because the wants of its readers are few and easily satisfied.

Money and Votes. "Money and votes are the only things that count in politics," said the positive person. "That may be true," replied the comparatively wise individual, "but money has the advantage—it is sure of a count and votes are not."—Baltimore American.