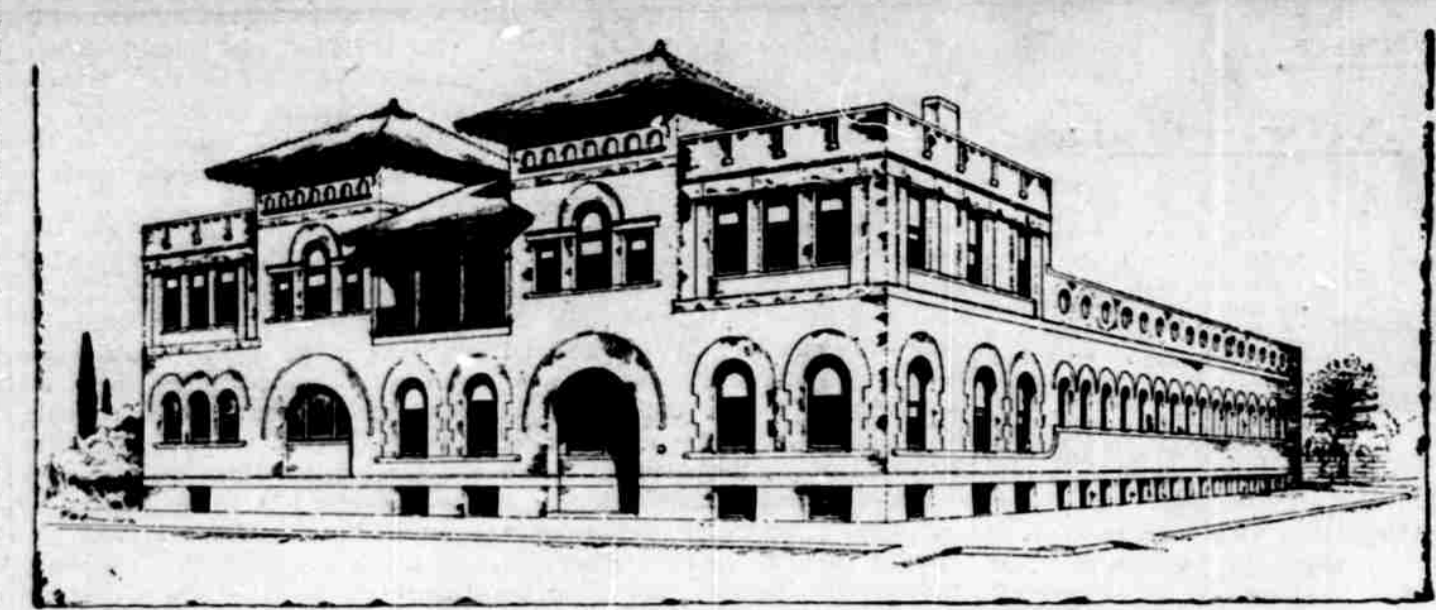


after excitement. But Tradutorri holds back her suffering within herself; she suffers as the flesh and blood women of her century suffer. She is intense without being emotional. She takes this great anguish of hers and lays it in a tomb and rolls a stone before the door and walls it up. You wonder that one woman's heart can hold a grief so great. It is this stifled pain that wrings your heart when you hear her, that gives you the impression of horrible reality. It is this, too, of which she is slowly dying now.

See, in all great impersonation there are two stages. One in which object is the generation of emotional power; to produce from one's own brain a whirlwind that will sweep the commonplace of the world away from the naked soul of men and women and leave them defenseless and strange to each other. The other is the conservation of all this emotional energy; to bind the whirlwind down within one's straining heart, to feel the tears of many burning in one's eye; and yet not weep, to hold all these chaotic faces still and silent within one's self until out of this tempest of pain and passion there speaks the still, small voice unto the soul of man. This is the cry of "repression." This is classical art, art exalted, art defined. And of all the mighty artists of her time Tradutorri is the only woman who has given us art like this. And now she is dying of it, they say.

Nanette was undoing Madame's shoes. She had put the mail silently on the writing desk. She had not given it to her before the performance as there was one of those blue letters from Madame's husband, written in an unsteady hand with the postmark of Monte Carlo, which always made Madame weep and were always answered by large drafts. There was also another from Madame's little crippled daughter hidden away in a convent in Italy.

"I will see to my letters presently, Nanette. With me news is generally bad



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news. I wish to speak with you to-night. We leave New York in two days, and the glances of this signor statuesque of yours is more than I can endure. I feel a veritable *mere Capulet*."

"Has he dared to look impertinently at Madame? I will see that this is stopped."

"You think that you could be really happy with this man, Nanette?"

Nanette was sitting upon the floor with the flowers from Madame's corsage in her lap. She rested her sharp little chin on her hand.

"Is any one really happy, Madame? But this I know, that I could endure to be very unhappy always to be with him." Her saucy little French face grew grave and her lips trembled.

Madame Tradutorri took her hand tenderly.

Then if you feel like that I have nothing to say. How strange this should come to you, Nanette; it never has to

me. Listen: Your mother and I were friends once when we both sang in the chorus in a miserable little theatre in Naples. She sang quite as well as I then, and she was a handsome girl and her future looked brighter than mine. But somehow in the strange lottery of art I rose and she went under with the wheel. She had youth, beauty, vigor, but was one of the countless thousands who fail. When I found her years afterward, dying in a charity hospital in Paris, I took you from her. You were scarcely ten years old then. If you had sung I should have given you the best instruction; as it was I was only able to save you from that most horrible of fates, the chorus. You have been with me so long. Through all my troubles you were the one person who did not change toward me. You have become indispensable to me, but I am no longer so to you. I have inquired as to the reputation of this signor of yours from the proprietors of the house and I find it excellent. Ah, Nanette, did you really think I could stand between you and happiness? You have been a good girl, Nanette. You have stayed with me when we did not stop at hotels like this one, and when your wages were not paid you for weeks together."

"Madame, it is you who have been good! Always giving and giving to a poor girl like me with no voice at all. You know that I would not leave you for any thing in the world but this."

"Are you sure you can be happy so? Think what it means! No more music, no more great personages, no more plunges from winter to summer in a single night, no more Russia, no more Paris, no more Italy. Just a little house somewhere in a strange country with a man who may have faults of his own, and perhaps little children growing up about you to be cared for always. You have been used to changes and money and excitement, and those habits of life are hard to change, my girl."

"Madame, you know how it is. One sees much and stops at the best hotels, and goes to the best milliners—and yet one is not happy, but a stranger always. That is, I mean—"

"Yes, I know too well what you mean. Don't spoil it now you have said it. And yet one is not happy! You will not be lonely, you think, all alone in this big strange city, so far from our world?"

"Alone! Why, Madame, Arturo is here!"

Tradutorri looked wistfully at her shining face.

"How strange that this should come to you, Nanette. Be very happy in it, dear. Let nothing come between you and it; no desire, no ambition. It is not given to everyone. There are women who wear crowns who would give them for an hour of it."

"O, Madame, if I could but see you happy before I leave you."

"Hush, we will not speak of that. When the flowers throw me in my youth shall live again, or when the dead crater of my own mountain shall be red once more—then, perhaps. Now go and tell your lover that the dragon has renounced her prey."

"Madam, I rebel against this loveless life of yours! You shall be happy. Surely with so much else you should at least have that."

Tradutorri pulled up from her dressing case the last great opera written in Europe which had been sent her to originate the title role.

"You see this, Nanette? When I began life, between me and this lay everything dear in life—every love, every human hope. I have had to bury what lay between. It is the same thing florists do when they cut away all the buds that one flower may blossom with the strength of all. God is a very merciless artist, and when he works out his purposes in the flesh his chisel does not falter. But no more of this, my child. Go find your lover. I shall undress alone to-night. I must get used to it. Good night, my dear. You are the last of them all, the last of all who have brought warmth into my life. You must let me kiss you to-night. No, not that way—on the lips. Such a happy face to-night Nanette. May it be so always!"

After Nanette was gone Madame put her head down on the dressing case and wept, those lonely tears of utter wretchedness that a homesick girl sheds at school. And yet upon her brow shone the coronet that the nations had given her when they called her queen.—From *the Home Magazine*.

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