

AUX ITALIENS.

THE POEM OF THE OPERA SEASON.

When the opera season comes around there is always a revival of interest in this poem.

At Paris it was, at the opera there—

And she looked like a queen in a book that night,
With the wreath of pearls in her raven hair,
And the brooch on her breast, so bright.

Of all the operas that Verdi wrote,
The best, to my taste, is the "Trovatore;"
And Mario can soothe with a tenor note
The souls in Purgatory.

The moon on the tower slept soft as snow;
And who was thrilled in the strangest way,
As we heard him sing, while the gas burned fow,
"Non ti scordar di me?"

The emperor there, in his box of state,
Looked grave, as if he had just then seen
The red flag wave from the city gate,
Where his eagles in bronze had been.

The empress, too, had a tear in her eye,
You'd have said that her fancy had gone back again,
For one moment, under the old blue sky,
To the old glad life in Spain.

Well, there in our front-row box we sat
Together, my bride betrothed and I;
My gaze was fixed on my opera-hat,
And hers on the stage hard by.

And both were silent and both were sad.
Like a queen she leaned on her full white arm,
With that regal, indolent air she had—
So confident of her charm!

I have not a doubt she was thinking then
Of her former lord—good soul that he was!—
Who died the richest and roundest of men,
The Marquis of Carabas.

I hope that, to get to the kingdom of heaven,
Through a needle's eye he had not to pass;
I wish him well, for the jointure given
To my lady of Carabas.

Meanwhile, I was thinking of my first love,
As I had not been thinking of aught for years,
Till over my eyes there began to move
Something that felt like tears.

I thought of the dress that she wore last time,
When we stood, 'neath the cypress trees, together,
In that lost land, in the soft clime,
In the crimson evening weather.

Of that muslin dress (for the eve was hot),
And her warm white neck in its golden chain,
And her full soft hair just tied in a knot,
And falling loose again;

And the jasmine flower in her fair young breast
(Oh, the faint, sweet smell of that jasmine flower),
And the one bird singing alone to his nest,
And the one star over the tower.

I thought of our little quarrels and strife,
And the letter that brought me back my ring;
And it all seemed then, in the waste of life,
Such a very little thing!

For I thought of her grave below the hill,
Which the sentinel cypress-tree stands over.
And I thought . . . "were she only living still,
How I could forgive her and love her!

And I swear, as I thought of her thus, in that hour
And of how, after all, old things were best,
That I smelt the smell of that jasmine flower
Which she used to wear in her breast.

It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,
It made me creep, and it made me cold!
Like the scent that steals from the crumbling sheet
When a mummy is half unrolled.

And I turned and looked. She was sitting there
In a dim box, over the stage; and drest
In that muslin dress, with that full, soft hair,
And that jasmine in her breast!

I was here; and she was there;
And the glittering horse-shoe curved between:
From my bride betroth'd, with her raven hair,
And her sumptuous, scornful mien.

To my early love, with her eyes downcast,
And over her primrose face the shade,
(In short, from the Future back to the Past)
There was but a step to be made.

To my early love from my future bride
One moment I looked. Then I stole to the door.
I traversed the passages and down at her side,
I was sitting, a moment more.

My thinking of her, or the music's strain,
Or something which never will be express,
Had brought her back from the grave again,
With the jasmine in her breast.

She is not dead, and she is not wed!
But she loves me now and she loved me then!
And the very first word that her sweet lips said,
My heart grew youthful again.

The Marchioness there, of Carabas,
She is wealthy, and young, and handsome still;
And but for her . . . well, we'll let that pass,
She may marry whomever she will.

But I will marry my own first love,
With her primrose face, for old things are best;
At the flower in her bosom, I prize it above
The brooch in my lady's breast.

The world is filled with folly and sin,
And Love must cling where it can, I say!
For Beauty is easy enough to win;
But one is not loved every day.

And I think, in the lives of most women and men,
There's a moment when all would go smooth and even,
If only the dead cou'd find out when
To come back and be forgiven.

But oh, the smell of that jasmine flower!
And oh, that music! and oh, the way
That voice rang out from the donjon tower,
Non ti scordar di me,
Non ti scordar di me!

—Owen Meredith.

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