

Literature Music Art



MADAME NORDICA'S EARLY SUCCESSES

Recently Madame Nordica bade her final farewell to an English audience, upon her retirement from the stage. She was married a few days ago to Mr. G. W. Young, an American banker, and has let it be understood that she does not intend to sing professionally again. Those who have had the pleasure of hearing her marvelous voice both in England and America, will hope that she may claim the prerogative of many of the retiring prima donnas, and change her mind, and let an admiring public still have the happiness of hearing her sing from time to time. When a man or a woman has been given a great gift of giving pleasure through any art which he or she can perfectly express, it seems nothing less than a crime to keep the talent entirely to oneself or to use it simply for the delectation of a favored few.

Madame Nordica was born in Farmington, Maine, and sang, so she tells us, before she could talk. Her very first appearance upon any stage was at a Sunday School concert, when she was so small that it was necessary to place her upon a table in order that she might be seen by the audience. She sang:

"Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean,
And the beautiful land."

Which little song the most of us who ever attended Sunday School fifteen or twenty years ago can well remember. When she had finished her solo the loud applause so startled her that she burst into floods of tears, and tells us that even to this day so great was the effect produced upon her childish mind that the sound of applause almost unnerves her, and anything in the nature of an ovation, overcomes her altogether.

When she was sixteen she obtained her first engagement, singing in the choir of First Church, Boston, at a salary of \$1,000. When Gilmore's band was at its height of popularity she sang at some of the concerts in Madison Square Garden, New York. "It was Mr. Patrick Gilmore," she says, in an interview with M.A.P., "who one day exclaimed to me, 'You will yet be crowned queen of your country.' I recalled that warm-hearted prophecy, which seemed so far-fetched at the time, when years afterward I was presented on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, with a diamond crown, subscribed for by people who were kind enough to like me."

Her first appearance in opera was made at Brescia, Italy, as Violetta in Verdi's La Traviata, and in London she sang in the same role on the occasion of her initial performance. But, to quote her own words, "For what I should call my first real success, because it was all pure, unalloyed delight. I must take you to the Bayreuth Testspielhaus in 1894, when I created the role of Elsa in Lohengrin. Ah, that was a moment worth living for. But did I say that it was all pure, unalloyed delight?—well, yes, from the moment I stepped on the stage and forgot my tremors. But, oh,

he let it be known that he would rather have had almost anyone else to sing his music; but after the concert he came to me, in his own words, to 'take it all back,' which he did in the nicest way possible.

Just Au Revoir

There remains one other success I simply must mention: I mean my farewell to London. It has been just wonderful; I cannot tell you how deeply I have been touched and moved by the wonderful kindness shown to me by London and everybody. I never dreamed of anything like it, and almost I falter in my determination to say good-bye to England.

Indeed, I cannot say it, and so let it be good-bye, but au revoir.

WITH THE PHILOSOPHERS

Thomas Henry Huxley

Huxley was pre-eminently a scientist and only incidentally a philosopher, but some of his essays convey the most profound ethical truths put forward in the plainest, sanest manner possible. Indeed, his total lack of abstruseness in all his writings remind one of the delightful straightforwardness of Ruskin, who always claimed that the greatest and most forceful eloquence lay in the use of simple, direct language. Huxley has written a quaint autobiography, which though naturally not as complete as it should be, furnishes us with the bare facts relative to his career, and gives us some idea of his character. Naturally he does not tell us what others have written of him since, that he was one of the fairest-minded of men, with a capacity for clear-sightedness and unbiased judgment, that was unique, a conscientious student always, endowed with all the manly qualities, and of a character wholly lovable. "I was born," he writes, "at eight o'clock in the morning of the 4th of May, 1825, at Ealing, which was at that time, as quiet a little country village as could be found, within half a dozen miles of Hyde Park Corner. Why I was christened Thomas Henry I do not know; but it is a curious chance that my parents should have fixed upon the name of that particular Apostle with whom I have always felt the most sympathy. Physically and mentally I am the son of my mother—I can hardly find any trace in myself of my father, except an inborn faculty for drawing, which has never been cultivated, a hot temper, and that amount of tenacity of purpose which unfriendly observers might sometimes call obstinacy.

"I have next to nothing to say about my childhood. In later years my mother, looking at me almost reproachfully, would sometimes say, 'Ah, you were such a pretty boy, whence I had no difficulty in concluding that I had not fulfilled my early promise in the matter of looks. My regular school training was of the briefest. As I grew older, my great desire was to be a mechanical engineer, but the fates were against this, and while very young I commenced the study of medicine under a medical brother-in-law."

It was in the early spring of 1846 that, having passed his first M. B. examinations at the London University, he was entered on the books of Nelson's old ship the Victory for duty at Haslar Hospital. He practiced his profession on board various ships for some years, and at the same time pursued his studies in natural science. After the publication of his first work honors began to be bestowed upon him. He was made a fellow of the Royal Society and appointed to several professorships. He became very popular as a scientific lecturer, and received numerous honorary degrees from many different universities. He numbered among his friends the most eminent scientists and philosophers of the day, and apart from his valuable contributions to the realms of science, he has left behind him a reputation for wholesome and profound philosophy.

That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready like a steam engine to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the laws of her operations; one, who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will; the servant of a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty, whether of Nature or of art, to hate all violence, and to respect others as himself.

In an ideal university, as I conceive it, a man should be able to obtain instruction in all forms of knowledge, and discipline in all the use of all the methods by which knowledge is obtained. In such a university the force of living example should fire the student with a noble ambition to emulate the learning of learned men, and to follow in the footsteps of the explorers of new fields of knowledge, and the very air he breathes should be charged with that enthusiasm for truth, that fanaticism for veracity, which is a greater possession than much learning; a nobler gift than the power of increasing knowledge; by so much greater and nobler than these, as the moral nature of a man is greater than the intellectual; for veracity is the heart of morality.

At the Albert Hall

Now I have just time to mention a "success" outside the operatic stage. This was in the Golden Legend, in which at the Albert Hall I took Madame Albani's place, she being indisposed. At the time Sir Arthur Sullivan did not at all approve of the change; in fact,

Suppose it were perfectly certain that the life and fortune of every one of us would, one day or another, depend upon his winning or losing a game of chess. Don't you think that we should all consider it to be a primary duty at least to learn the names and the moves of the pieces; to have a notion of the gambit, and a keen eye for all the means of giving and getting out of check? Do you not think that we should look upon a disapprobation amounting to scorn, upon the father who allowed his son, or the state which allowed its members to grow up without knowing a pawn from a knight?

Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth, that the life, the fortune, the happiness of every one of us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and more complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man or woman of us being one of the two-players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated—without haste, but without remorse. My metaphor will remind some of you of that famous picture in which Retsch has depicted Satan playing at chess with a man for his soul. Substitute for the fiend in that picture a calm, strong angel who is playing for love as we would say, and would rather lose than win—and I should accept it as an image of human life.

PAGEANTRY

England has lately been having a series of pageants which have attracted world-wide interest. There is no country in the world richer in picturesque, historical and legendary lore than Great Britain. Ever since the days in the dawn of history when Caesar's legions landed on the shores of "the White Island to the westward of Gaul," England has been the stage for most elaborately set romances of love, for thrilling dramas of royal intrigue and daring adventure, for the enactment of glorious battles won and great battles lost. The world's most famous poets, novelists, singers, scientists, warriors, statesmen, adventurers, travelers, have appeared on the scenes in their appointed times; women famed for their beauty or wit have walked upon the stage, the favorites of kings, perhaps, and for their little span the real rulers of England. History tells us the stories and we can close our eyes and imagine the dramas enacted, the swift changing scenes, the fitting forms, but the pageant makes the story a real thing of vital interest. When history repeats itself by this means the effect produced is lasting and the events themselves never forgotten.

The recent festival at Bath was one of peculiar interest and great beauty. Bath is one of the oldest of the old towns of England. It was first built by the Romans, who discovered the curative powers of the waters, and it is with this epoch in its history that the pageant began, though legend attributes its origin to the discovery of the medicinal properties of the waters by the mythical king, Bladud. The following description of the affair is from the London Morning Post:

The scene of the pageant is very beautiful. From the vast grassy stand undulating meadows descend to the river. Through a screen of tall trees glimpses are obtained of a Gothic gateway in the valley and of the houses rising to the summit of the distant hill. In front stands a Roman temple, on the left are the facade of Roman baths and a mediaeval porte. The first episode shows the dedication of Sul's temple at Bath A. D. 166. There is bustle and beauty in the Forum. Priestesses carrying a figure of Sul Minerva march in, stately Roman soldiers appear, healthy and invalid citizens from the baths come to witness the ceremony; peasants buy and sell, a rascally beggar tries to steal the purse of Rusonia Avenna, and a fantastic Greek trader has rings for agave, salves for sore eyes, drugs for old age, spells, charms, lotions, and potions, and what you will. But in the hubbub the trumpet of a herald is heard and he cries: "Let all trading and games cease until after the dedication of the temple." The most beautiful incident in this scene happens after incense has been thrown on the altar. Priestesses advance in an archaic dance to the rhythm of cymbals and pipes. They circle round the altar and mount the steps of the temple, their swaying blue and white figures suggesting the floating movement and mystery of incense.

The second episode, representing the Sack of Akeman After Dyrham Fight, is extremely effective, the Queen's death especially. The Saxons have burst the gates of Bath, and Ceawlin, the King, rides in from the west, stops the fighting, and on seeing the British Queen asks: "Who is this woman?" "The wife of Ferimael," she answers, and on being told that her husband is slain, she stabs herself and falls on the temple steps. "She was a King's wife and died royally," shouts Ceawlin; "carry her body within and set the temple ablaze for a Queen's funeral pyre." Sax-

on soldiers carry the body into the temple on shields, smoke rises, and in a moment the building is in flames. "The Coronation of King Edgar, A. D. 973," brings more color into the arena, but the speeches might be shortened. The King and Queen are regal in appearance and we have never seen taller or more dignified than the Bishops, those who spoke having splendid voices. "King Henry VII. Visits Bath, A. D. 1497," is opened with the entry of a flock of sheep and a shepherd singing:

Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho!
Black night is turned to day, O.
And man must to his toil and work
Till the closing of the day, O.

There follow laborers, with matlocks, scythes, and oxen; lifting an old Somerset folk-song until silenced by the sound of the Angelus. By-and-by trumpets and martial music ring out, and the Royal procession enters, led by horsemen and a guard of bowmen. Groups of maidens meet the King with song and give him flowers, and in return for his friendly welcome he agrees to restore the Abbey.

The fifth episode is magnificent and diverting. It represents the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Bath in 1590, and the pomp, splendor, and revelry of that period are realized with a beauty and abandon not surpassed in any pageant we have seen. The fun is infectious. Mischievous 'prentices jostle to quarrel, and they pelt with eggs, vegetables, etc., Benjamin Grimkin, who is a prisoner in the pillory. But he is rescued by Sweet Nell of Souter street who, if she washes in asses' milk, 'tis not for asses' eyes to admire. Kit Marlowe, Will Shakespeare, and a band of players enter; then a mighty shout fills the air—"The Queen! the Queen!" From the Guildhall comes the mayor's procession. Somerset girls strew roses in the Queen's way as she follows her knights and ladies in a beautiful white dress, seated on a white palfrey caparisoned in green, and over her Majesty a canopy is held by men in green doublets. The cortege ends in a blaze of gorgeous color. The Mayor presents Shakespeare to the Queen, and the poet declaims in blank verse with the gesticulation and elocution of Mr. Tree, and Mr. Hall Caine might recognize some likeness to himself in Shakespeare's "makeup." The Masque of Prince Bladud creates much amusement, and the laughter has scarcely subsided when the fierce clamor of the Battle of Lansdown (Episode VI), arrests attention. The excitement is intense. Roundhead horsemen charge the Cornish pikemen raised by Sir Bevel Grenville, but are repelled again and again, and in the end the Royalists win a bloody battle, but their leader, Sir Bevil, is killed, and to the sorrowing throb of drums his body is borne off in impressive fashion.

Now comes the Glorious Times of Beau Nash and Ralph Allen, and the scene is of exceeding interest and grace. Men and women famous in history meet decked in costumes of the most exquisite cut and color. Ladies patched and powdered curtsy to the ground in response to the courtly bow of handsome gallants. A minute of alluring grace and rhythm is danced, and generous Ralph Allen invites Princess Amelia and the Duke of Cumberland to enjoy the hospitality of Prior Park.

The eighth episode represents the visit of Queen Charlotte to Bath in 1817, and in this scene appear most of the eminent people of the period, while in their wonderful finale are seen great writers, Fielding, Smollett, Fanny Burney, Sheridan, Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens, who bring with them characters from their books and plays, who are followed by representatives of Colonial and American places called Bath, daughter towns of the Mother City. The acting throughout is excellent, and the music is admirably adapted to the spirit of the various episodes.

LADY TREE

The clever wife of the new theatrical knight has for long been known as the most learned of living English actresses. She early developed a taste for classics and mathematics, and her favorite subject was Greek, at which she attained to great efficiency. Many years ago she took part in a Greek play before an audience that numbered so distinguished a classical authority as the late Mr. Gladstone. Besides her histrionic talent, Lady Tree has many gifts of an artistic nature. She is possessed of a charming voice, which she has often used to advantage in public, and she can paint and draw very cleverly. Lady Tree is credited with having written what is probably the shortest autobiography on record. Here it is: "This is the life of little me; I am the wife of Beerbohm Tree."

A Rude Awakening

Lady Tree has told an amusing story of her early "stage-struck" days which is worth repeating. She was a great admirer of Sir Henry Irving, and almost every day she would walk miles out of her way in order to pass his window. Long afterwards, she met the great actor in the flesh, and told him about her early hero-worship. But Sir Henry's reply was disconcerting. "Very nice, very interesting," he said; "but that was not my window. I lived opposite."

A Christian home is the great audience-chamber of the Almighty for His children, whether they be young or old.—J. W. Reynolds.

R.U.

PREPARING FOR THE WINDOW GARDEN

The month of August is leisure month with the plants. The lawn, vegetable and flower garden require as close attention during the months of spring and summer as during the months of autumn and winter. Thus giving a little more time to potting of plants from the garden that have been enjoying a hot sun of rest; or possibly in some cases have been started specially for window or greenhouse for autumn and spring months. Plants such as Begonia, dracaenas (cane plants), Boston and lace ferns, similar decorative plants that enjoy a season of partial rest, thus giving a little more time to potting of plants from the garden that have been enjoying a hot sun of rest; or possibly in some cases have been started specially for window or greenhouse for autumn and spring months. 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