

have not the phantom horrors of my sleepless nights and miserable days been worse than the worse bitterness of death?

"And yet I did well to kill him! Face to face with the end, face to face with my own soul, I say that I did well. Alberic Grant was a coward and a traitor. He shamed his own kinswoman before the world, and thought his baseness safe because she stood alone, because she had neither brother, nor lover, nor husband to avenge her. The coward and the fool! The coward to count a woman's helplessness as something in his favour, the fool to forget that woman had Spanish blood in her veins and Spanish fire in her soul. Well—now he knows!

"Little more than two years ago, I thought that Alberic Grant and I were to marry; and, though I always feared and shrank from him, I was content that it should be so; content—no more. My first marriage had been unhappy, and I soon repented the rash folly that had condemned me to poverty, and given me a lower place in the world than I might have hoped to hold. I never thought that my cousin would forgive me; there was little generosity in his character, and that he should bitterly resent the trick I had played him seemed to me only natural and just.

"But, to my amazement, when, the year after my widowhood, I returned to London and took up the threads of my old life, De Gretton was the first to greet me with every expression of affectionate regard. I was sore-hearted and broken-spirited just then; my own world looked upon me indifferently enough. My beauty had faded and my means were small. I had somehow made a failure and a muddle of my life, and for failures and muddles the world has no great taste. Imagine then how my heart warmed to the man I had wronged, the man whose chivalry so easily forgave me!

"At first he spoke lightly and easily of the trick I had played him; and yet under all the lightness I was quick to perceive a subtle undertone of tender regret. He blamed himself, not me. I was too young and bright for a dull old fog. It was a sacrifice any frank-hearted girl would naturally avoid. I looked at him, erect, handsome, dignified, walking in the world's sunshine, crowned with the world's honour and regard, and then at my own dark, haggard face, and there seemed a cruel mockery in his words.

"Something of this I said in passionate incoherent fashion, expressing I know not what of regret for my past madness and ingratitude to him: but even then, though he bent over my hand with the tenderest courtly grace and soothed me with the kindest words, I felt vaguely frightened and oppressed by the odd exultant glitter of his eyes.

"So, little by little, his daily devotion and constant care of me attracted the gossip's notice. Little by little the story crept about that the old past was to be renewed, that I was to be Lady de Gretton after all. Old friends who had forgotten me in my obscure widowhood thronged round me once again, old acquaintances renewed their claim to intimacy, life began to brighten once more, and I knew that I owed it all to Alberic Grant. Was it any wonder that I learned to look for his coming with an eager gratitude that touched on love, to long for the utterance of the words that should make the bond between us irrevocable?

"But those last words were strangely slow in coming. I had been congratulated on what every one looked on as a settled thing a dozen times, and maliciously rallied on my strange reticence as many more; but still the one sentence that would justify me in calling myself 'engaged' was never spoken. Lord de Gretton spoke always with a careless confidence of our future life, did all but ask me to marry him every time we met; but the 'all but' never changed into the 'quite,' the plain Anglo-Saxon phrase never passed his lips; and, as the days and weeks and months passed on, my heart grew sick with hope deferred.

"Yes—hope. Olivia Grant, in the feverish flush of her first romantic passion, might think her middle-aged cousin no desirable mate, and break the bond between them lightly enough; but Olivia Blake, with all the glamour gone, with a bitter knowledge of poverty and fallen fortunes, and a keener appreciation of all the solid goods of life—this Olivia had learned to look on the once-dreaded marriage as the goal of all her hopes.

"It seemed so sure and safe a thing too, for months I had consulted with his stewards and arranged the affairs of his estates, for months the De Gretton diamonds had been in my possession, the jewels that had never flashed on the neck and arms or glittered in the hair of any woman but the wife of a De Gretton before. I wore them one night at a Court ball; and next day—How shall I write of what followed? The shame and pain of that time seem to scorch me now—now that he is dead, and I am face to face with death.

"He came quite early in the afternoon, and began, in his careless indolent fashion, to discuss the events of the previous night; but all the time he watched me with such strange intentness that I felt my face flush and my heart throb with an exultant prevision of a momentous question at hand.

"You were lovelier than ever last night, Olivia," he said, leaning back in the tall chair, and watching me through his half-closed lids. "Oh, no!"—with a little laugh of slow enjoyment—"I do not offer my own partial judgment! The opinion was expressed on every hand."

"The diamonds dazzled people," I said coolly, though my heart beat fast. "So half the admiration belongs of right to you."

"He nodded two or three times, stroked his gray moustache, as though to hide a well-pleased smile, then said lazily—

"Ah, those diamonds! By-the-way, I was a good deal congratulated last night—I think I will take them back now, Olivia."

"I dared not ask why; but my eyes put the question so plainly, he answered it with his accustomed laugh—

"I must have them reset for my wife. I turned my head aside abruptly; the words might—must mean the crowning of my hopes; but the smile filled me with vague dread. "You do not seem to care, Olivia. Do you take no interest in my wife?"

"He laid a soft lingering emphasis on the last two words—it might have been tenderness or subtlest cruelty—I could not tell. My heart beat yet faster, and there was a strange dull rushing in my ears.

"Do you not care, Olivia?" He touched my hand now with his long thin fingers; the touch roused me at once.

"Yes," I said, with an effort. "You know I care."

"For me?" He drew a little nearer, and I felt his breath upon my cheek. "Poor Olivia! I was wrong. You have learned to trust me; you do regret the past?"

"Yes," I whispered again, in a very agony of expectation, for the all-important question lingered still.

"Ah—he patted my head gently, and drew a long, long breath—"the mistakes of our youth, Olivia! You remember the old proverb—*Si la jeunesse savait*—"

"*Si la vieillesse pouvait*," I finished, with a smile. "The conclusion is hardly complimentary, Alberic!"

"No; only true; and truth is not always pleasant, Olivia. You do not ask my wife's name?"

"Where was my pride then? I have been called proud so often. I looked at him with piteous eyes, begging him to torture me no more.

"He laughed, and twirled his gray moustache more sharply.

"Did you think that I should never marry, that no one would have me because you once—"

"Oh, no, no!" I cried vehemently. "You are cruel, Alberic. You know how

bitterly I have repented that mad folly—know—"

"That you would take me now? Is that so, Olivia?" He clasped my hand, and looked into my eyes in ardent lover's fashion. "You are only jesting with me now? You could not be content to pass your life with the man whom you jilted long ago?"

"More than content," I whispered, as his arm stole round me and his moustache brushed my brow; and for one full second I felt that life was good once more.

"Then he withdrew his arm, and broke into the oddest, most misplaced laughter that ever crossed the lips of man. His eyes glittered triumphantly, his arms were folded on his breast.

"Ah," he said, in a tone of burlesque regret, "how very unfortunate that I did not guess your preference before! It comes a little late now. I am engaged to marry Miss Nora Bruce."

TO BE CONTINUED.)

Music and the Drama.

The Lablache Concert Co.

The series of concerts given by the Lablache Co. have not been as well attended as their artistic merits deserved. But what the audience lacked somewhat in numbers they made up in enthusiastic appreciation. As on the previous occasion, the programmes were made up of miscellaneous selections, and scenes from different operas. The event of the first evening was the appearance of Sig. Del Puente, who on a former visit here made himself so popular a favorite. His magnificent voice and admirable method were shown to advantage in his different numbers, more especially so in the selection, from "Il Barbiere," and fully strengthened his claims to the title of premier baritone. Of Mme Lablache's numbers it is scarcely necessary to speak. The "Faci ut Portum" is a number which is eminently suited to her grand style, and was rendered with deep devotional spirit. In striking contrast was her singing of the rollicking "Brindisi" from "Lucretia Borgia," which she sang as an encore. Mlle. Lablache was somewhat hoarse, but sang her numbers in a very artistic manner. She evidently inherits the family talent. Her *Rosina* in the "Barbiere" was charmingly naive and graceful. Signor Stagi deepened the good impression made by his first appearance here, his singing in all his numbers being characterized by artistic grace and expression. Saturday night's performance included selections from "Carmen," in which Signor Del Puente created a *furor* by his magnificent rendering of the famous "Torreador" song. With our recollection of Miss Minnie Hawk's impersonation of Carmen, we cannot say that Mlle. Lablache was a success. In her "Mignon" number she appeared to better advantage. Mme Lablache's rendering of Gounod's "Ave Maria" was superb, and the violin obligato part was well played by Sig. Stagi. The performance Monday night was for the benefit of Mr. J. F. Thomson, a gentleman to whom the citizens of Toronto owe much for his energy in securing some of the best talent that has appeared in Toronto. The programme included selections from "Trovatore" and from "Don Giovanni," Signor Del Puente appearing as the wicked Don Juan, and Mlle. Lablache

as Zerlina. A notice of these concerts would be incomplete without an allusion being made to the admirable work done by Claxton's Orchestra. It must be a source of much satisfaction to lovers of music to know that we have in our midst an organization able to take up and interpret artistically at short notice such music as that of the "Barber." To Mr. Claxton's enterprise, and to Mr. E. F. Moore's able instruction, we owe such satisfactory results, and we trust their efforts will be appreciated as they deserve by the public at large.

The coming musical event is the appearance here, Monday evening next, of the world renowned contralto singer Mme Trebelli-Buttini. Her fame is so great in Europe that many, doubtless, of our readers, who have not heard her, have at least become familiarised with her name. Those who have heard her unanimously pronounce her eminently worthy of the praise so lavishly bestowed upon her. Mr. Torrington—who surely ought to be an authority in musical matters—says she is one of the grandest singers of the age. Miss Nora Hillary—a vocalist who stands high in the ranks of our local singers—says she is one of the most artistic singers she ever heard, and Mr. Arthur E. Fisher—another of our prominent musicians—declares that those hearing her will have a treat never to be forgotten. For ourselves, having heard the great cantatrice on more than one occasion, we can heartily endorse the opinions just quoted. It is doubtful if any artist who has been heard here possesses the power to charm both connoisseurs and public as she does. As the artists accompanying her, they are all of high reputation. Mr. Chas. Werner, the violinist, has a recognized standing as a most finished and masterly artist. Mr. Morawski, the Russian Bass, is an artist of much prominence, possessing a magnificently rich and full voice which he uses to admirable effect. Herr Luckatono, the pianist, is a comparatively young man, and in his playing shows great delicacy of touch and artistic execution. The musical treat in store, therefore, for our citizens, is one of more than ordinary artistic excellence.

Mr. Lauder's piano recital at Messrs. Mason and Risch's rooms Saturday last was attended by a large and appreciative audience. The programme was an unusually varied one, and the various numbers were rendered in that artistic manner so characteristic of this well known performer. It is Mr. Lauder's intention to give three morning recitals of favorite piano compositions during the Semi-Centennial celebration, in which he will probably be assisted by Mr. Henry Jacobson, violin virtuoso, and the Toronto String Quartette Club.

Don Thompson, in "Joshua Whitcombe" proves as popular as ever, and the frequent repetition of the same performance does not seem to detract from its artistic merit or power to attract an audience. *Uncle Jack* is a piece of character acting worthy of being ranked with Jefferson's *Rip Van Winkle*, Mayo's *Dary Crockett*, and others which will readily occur to the mind of the reader.

The Hanlons are so well-known here that their "Voyage en Suisse" need no words from us. It is a piece which defies criticism, but which contains enough fun and drollery of the most harmless nature, to put the most hypocritically inclined in a good humor with himself and the world at large.

The attraction at the Grand next week will be of a military nature. "In the Ranks" is a melodrama which has met with considerable success elsewhere, and will doubtless prove equally so on its first production here.

The Royal Museum presents an excellent bill for the present week, and deserves all the success with which it is meeting.