

(Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.)

LORD DUFFERIN.

BY W. H. WITHROW, M. A.

"Per viam rectam."

Like the swift eagle darting through the air,
Straight and unerring to its destined mark,
Or soaring high the sun as doth the lark,
So seekest thou by ways direct and fair,
Thy noble ends of truth and virtue rare.
And soar'st above the devious ways and dark
Of cunning earthly craft, its guile and cark;
The stamp of truest knight-hood thou dost bear,
Like Arthur, Britain's "blameless king," who bound
In noble fellowship of chivalry
The goodly phalanx of the Table Round.
Be thine the task to mould the destiny
Of this fair land, to latest times renowned
As home of virtue, truth, and piety.
Niagara, Nov., 1872.

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MIREILLE'S DREAM.

CHAPTER I.

The Halifax public cannot boast of much experience in Italian opera. The little that has been exhibited there has generally been of an inferior character—worn voices, cranky stage machinery, and wholly inadequate resources of orchestration. Lovers of music, however—and they are very numerous in the Acadian capital—have not failed to throng the theatres whenever the opportunity was offered of hearing the works of the great masters. They willingly overlooked the faultiness of details, for the sake of getting an idea of the whole, and being able to boast that they had spent a few hours under the spell of such geniuses as Rossini, Donizetti, or Bellini.

Some years ago, a company performed there with rather more than ordinary success. In their repertory was included *La Sonnambula*, in which the rôle of Amina was unusually well rendered by a charming young actress from Naples.

The master-piece of poor Bellini had already been represented a couple of times during the week, but the public insisted on a third repetition, for the benefit of the young cantatrice, above mentioned. That night the theatre was crowded from pit to dome. I had secured a box entirely to myself, being on such occasions constitutionally averse to any company, however pleasant, that might distract me from an absorbing attention to the glorious music. I was not destined, however, to have this selfish enjoyment that evening, for a little before the performance began, my friend Frank Bowden entered my compartment and informed me that Mireille W., with her aged father and mother, had got as far as the corridor, but could not obtain seats anywhere. Under ordinary circumstances I should not have budged from my place for any body, but on the present occasion, I arose and offered my whole box to the W— family. My reasons for so doing were that Frank was a very particular friend of mine, that Mireille was my cousin, and the most charming of my many female cousins. And also, because Frank and Mireille were dead in love with one another. I made Frank take a seat beside his *innamorata*, while I retreated to the back-ground of the box, where I enjoyed something of my coveted solitude.

There is no need here to enter into an analysis of *La Sonnambula*. It must be heard and heard often to be justly appreciated. It bears the same relation to Bellini's *Norma* that Tasso's *Aminta* does to his *Gierusalemme*. It is a delicious idyll, redolent of spring-time and the dawn, resonant with the song of birds and the jubilation of happy nature, palpitating with the freshness, the ingenueness, the purity of pastoral loves.

As I said before, the performance was remarkably good for a Halifax theatre. The beautiful rôle of "Amina" was especially well represented by the Neapolitan actress. Her voice was not of vast power or range, but it was rich in the lower notes, and very sweet in the upper register. Though I had heard the opera before by some of the best artists of Europe, I was completely absorbed in the present representation, and discovered beauties in it which I had never yet perceived. Indeed, my attention was so concentrated on the stage, that I took no notice of my companions in the box, nor of the crowd in the pit and galleries. I did not even experience any fatigue from standing upright for nearly three hours.

The last and principal act came on. The young Neapolitan appeared on the thatched roof of her cabin, and descended thence across the slender bridge over the mill-dam. Her eyes were closed, her hair was dishevelled, she was clad in her white night-dress, and in that melancholy plight the somnambulist traversed the perilous foot-path over the dashing waters—dreaming of love. She had a bouquet of wild flowers in her hand, which she plucked, petal by petal, and threw into the flood, while her pale lips murmured the ravishing song:

"Ah! non credea mirarti,
Sì presto estinto, O fiore!"

A pin might have been heard to drop in the vast building. Why, I cannot tell, but just

then I happened to glance at my friends before me and perceived that Mireille was a prey to the most violent emotion. Neither her old parents nor Frank noticed it. She was sobbing silently, and from the convulsive movement of her shoulders I could see that she was making vain efforts to contain herself. My attention was, however, soon withdrawn from her by the orchestra working itself up for the grand finale, which I would not have missed for the world. Yes! there it was again that famous rondo, so full of love, of pathos and of melancholy. Our artist seemed to excel herself in singing it. I too wept when I heard:

"Ah! non giunge uman pensiero."

The last note had been played, the curtain had already fallen, and yet the audience were still under the spell of the somnambulist's apparition. Suddenly a cry and acclamation arose demanding the favourite actress before the footlights. In the confusion and noise which ensued, I noticed that the W— family precipitately left the box.

"What's the matter?" I inquired of Frank.

"Miss Mireille is very ill," he replied. I followed them to the main entrance and called up their carriage. Frank offered to accompany them home, but old Mr. W. gruffly refused.

CHAPTER II.

MIREILLE'S father was the representative of a class that sorely tries the patience of a hot young lover. He was rude, unmannerly, bearish and, though wealthy, his affluence had only increased his imperiousness without improving his manners. He was sternly opposed to a match between his daughter and Frank, but why, no one could tell. The young man was every way worthy of the girl. They were of the same station in life, and they had loved each other for years.

Mireille was a pale, delicate creature whose health was always fluttering on the borders of consumption. Medical art had kept her aloof from this, so far, but any slight accident—whether physical, mental or moral—was enough to cast her into it without redemption. Her father loved her well, but we have seen, he was a self-willed old fellow, who had the pretension to tyrannize her emotion at that critical period of a girl's life—first love. Mireille was a dutiful, good girl, and she tried hard to do her father's bidding, but she could not uproot her love, and the very effort to do it injured her health. It was her misfortune, too, to be of a very nervous temperament. The least excitement set her whole frame tingling, and her artistic predilections were often the occasion of acute pain, which marred her otherwise thorough enjoyment of poetry and music.

No one—not even myself—had gazed on the beauties of *La Sonnambula* as she had. The difference between us was, that being an unreclaimed and perhaps unreclaimable Bohemian, I had no objective love, but only an ideal one, to which I could adapt the situations of the opera, according to my phantasy; whereas she, living solely and wholly in Frank, made him the Count Rodolfo of Bellini's creation, and recognized her own yearnings in those of the adorable Amina. The consequence was that while every note of the immortal partition sank deep into my soul, soothing and tranquilizing it, it proved for Mireille a new language of passionate love, which unstrung her delicate nerves and plunged her into a tempest of emotions which she had never the physical or moral strength to contain. Hence, it was no wonder that at the end of the representation she would be quite ill.

Frank was, of course, much affected at the roughness of old W— that night. Indeed, he took it so hard that he informed me he was tempted to leave the city forever in despair. I tried to console him, and we walked about the streets for a long time, talking on a variety of subjects. Finally I persuaded him to put up at my rooms for the rest of the night.

"To-morrow morning," I said, "I will call on Uncle W— myself, and argue the matter seriously with him. If he won't listen to me, I am sure my aunt will, for she is a kind and sensible woman."

With this assurance we threw away our cigars and entered my bachelor quarters, which were situated nearly opposite the palatial residence of the W—s, on King Street.

CHAPTER III.

Not more than three hours had elapsed since we had left the theatre, when I fancied I heard some one pulling at my night bell. Frank was fast asleep in an adjoining room, and I had probably slept too, so that I was not quite certain whether I had heard ringing or not. A second pull at the wires, however, left me in no doubt. I ran to the window and inquired who was there.

"It's me, Master John."

I recognized the voice of Nancy, my Uncle W—'s fat cook.

"Master and mistress wants you to come over, right away, sir."

Remembering Mireille's illness, and fearing that something was wrong, I hastily slipped on my clothes and darted down the stair. Nancy was already gone, and I crossed the street at once. On coming to the front door, I found it opened by the cook, who exclaimed breathlessly:

"Run into the garden, sir; run!"

I rushed in the direction indicated, and in a moment reached the scene of excitement. In the capacious garden there was a long bower erected for the propping of vines which my uncle was very fond of cultivating. This bower was terminated by a pavilion, some fourteen feet high, in a yet unfinished state. This he intended for a summer house, and for that purpose he was building stone tables and seats in it. On my coming up, what was my surprise to find that Mireille had climbed to the top of the pavilion and was slowly walking along its edge. She had a bouquet of flowers in her hand, the same that I had seen Frank give her at the theatre. Her eyes were closed; she was barefoot and had her night-clothes on.

"This is a case of somnambulism," I whispered to my uncle and aunt, who stood by in the most painful anxiety.

"Yes, and caused by that confounded opera," muttered the old man.

"Never mind the cause," exclaimed the excited mother. "John, you must help us to rescue our child from her perilous position. I am almost paralyzed with fear."

The position was indeed perilous. What was I to do? Mireille had already been called by name and had not answered. To call her too gruffly or loudly would frighten her and cause her to lose her footing. To apply a ladder to the framework of the pavilion was out of the question, for it scarcely held together. It swayed and cracked even under her gentle, measured tread. If she awoke suddenly, she would certainly fall; if she awoke gradually, she could not possibly find her way down with safety. In either case, she would assuredly be precipitated on the fragments of stone and marble below, and from such a height, the fall would be fatal. The only hope of rescue was to have her descend in her somnambulistic state. She would thus come down as securely, though unaccountably, as she had gone up. But how was this to be effected? I communicated my idea to the father and mother who eagerly grasped at it, but were also at a loss how to carry it out. And yet no time was to be lost. At last a bright thought struck me.

"Will you let me do just as I wish?" I asked.

"Oh! yes, yes," they both exclaimed. "Do what you like, so you save her."

Without saying more, I rushed out of the garden, right through the house and directly across the street to my rooms. My plan was made up and I did not hesitate. I pulled Frank out of bed and in a few words explained my notion to him.

"This is your providential opportunity, my boy," I said. "Take that guitar from the wall and come along."

In five minutes we were both back into the garden. I pushed Frank behind a large catalpa near by and then hastened up to the pavilion.

"Well?" said Mr. and Mrs. W— eagerly, sizing my arm.

"All is right," I answered.

"How?"

"Listen," I exclaimed.

Just then, the sweet sounds of a guitar were heard, preluding an air of *La Sonnambula*.

My uncle and aunt looked at me.

"Pst!" I whispered, placing my finger on my lips. Then, in a soft mellow voice—Frank was a very fair tenor—was repeated the enchanting

"Ah! non giunge....."

The effect was magical. Mireille dropped her flowers, raised her sweet face to the moonlight, and with an ineffable smile of happiness, came down slowly from the pavilion to the bower and down along the shafts of the bower to a slanting beam that reached to the ground. Her father and mother rushed up to her.

"You are saved, my child!"

She fell upon their neck and embraced them, then turning quietly round, she asked:

"Whose voice was it that saved me?"

We need not dwell longer on this scene. Our readers can easily guess how it terminated and what came of it.

Of course, I am a favourite and ever welcome visitor at my cousin's, Mireille Bowden. On her wedding day I presented her a magnificently bound copy of *La Sonnambula*, and we often play it together. She has likewise read up in old quaint books the theories of hypnology and somnambulism and penetrated all their mysteries.

It was only last night, that having her little Minnie on my knee, I asked her:

"Will you be a dreamer like your mother, dear?"

And the mother answered for her:

"No! no! Such dreams are dreadful, and it is only once in a century that they come true."

THE END.

Art and Literature.

Stanley is to lecture in Montreal on some day in December.

The second volume of Forster's *Life of Dickens* is announced as nearly ready.

Mr. W. L. Clowes, London, has suggested the publication of a very cheap series of English classics.

Steps are being taken under the auspices of the Scottish Reformation Society to celebrate the tercentenary of the death of John Knox.

Mme. Nilsson-Rouzaud has written to a friend in New York, stating that she intends to return to America for another tour, at the earliest opportunity.

Dr. Carruthers, of Inverness, is preparing a thoroughly revised edition of the "Cyclopedia of English Literature," which he wrote in conjunction with the late Dr. Robert Chambers.

Earl Russell is about to publish a volume of "Essays on the Rise and Progress of the Christian Religion in the West of Europe, from the Reign of Tiberius to the end of the Council of Trent."

A new publication, to be called the "Workman's Magazine," will be published in London at the commencement of next year, and will be devoted expressly to the interests of the working classes.

Mr. Charles Reade is engaged at present writing a new tale for the Christmas number of the *Graphic*, and it is rumoured that the subject is of a nature that will recall the famous Tichborne case.

Messrs. Cassell, Peeter, and Galpin will shortly commence the issue of a new serial work, entitled "Old and New London; a Narrative of its History, its People, and its places," by Walter Thornbury.

The Genevese paper the *Bien Public*, announces that Dr. Merle d'Aubigné has left two volumes, almost completed, on the Reformation, in which the history is carried down to the death of Luther.

James Reid, the author of the popular songs, "The Good Rhein Wein," "The Stout Old Brigadier," and many other well-known songs, died on the 20th ult. in greatly reduced circumstances, at the age of 73.

Judy is about to produce a book of comicallies, five hundred humorous pictures, with descriptive letter-press, selected from her earlier volumes. The work will be printed by Dalziel Brothers, at the Camden Press.

Mr. Carlyle is making some additions to his "Life of Schiller," the publication of which in the "People's Edition" of his collected works is accordingly postponed till after the third volume of his "Life of Frederick the Great" has appeared.

Patil and Nilsson are now singing in opera at St. Petersburg, and the friendly rivalry between the two stars creates a pleasant excitement. They do not come into immediate collision, although vying with each other in favourite roles on alternate nights.

"Vingt Mois de Présidence" is the title of a work brought out, in two parts, by J. Hetzel & Cie., of Paris. It gives the history of M. Thiers's government from the 17th of February, 1871; and examines the constitutional questions of the day. The book is supposed to be inspired, if not written, by M. Thiers.

Mr. W. H. Hart purposes issuing shortly the first part of "Index Expurgatorius Anglicanus," or a descriptive catalogue of the principal books printed or published in England which have been suppressed or burnt by the common hangman, or censored, or for which the authors, printers, or publishers have been prosecuted.

Mr. Robert Dale Owen has contracted with the *Atlantic Monthly* to publish his autobiography, in monthly chapters, beginning with the number for January. The work will be very comprehensive in scope, and likely to prove interesting to a large class of readers, whether they do or do not agree with the author's views on "Spiritualism."

M. Jules Simon, the French Minister of Public Instruction, is forming a collection of copies of the masterpieces of painting and sculpture, to be made by the best French artists. A large number of Raphaels, Rembrandts, Velasquez, &c., have already arrived from Holland, England, Spain, and Italy, and are now on view at the Palais de l'Industrie.

The Rev. J. Burgon, vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford, after much research in the Bodleian Library, has discovered the exact spot where Amy Robsart was buried, and has caused the following inscription to be placed in the chancel of St. Mary's Church: "In a vault of brick, at the upper end of this chancel, was buried Amy Robsart, wife of Lord Robert Dudley, K. G., Sunday, 22nd September, A. D., 1560."

The Paris *Figaro*, ever ready to sneer at Victor Hugo, thinks it singular that such an ultra-democrat should choose kings and aristocrats for his themes, and quotes "Lucrèce Borgia," "Marie Tudor," "Ruy Blas," "Angelo," "Marion Delorme," "Le Roi s'amuse," and "Hernani," as examples. Does not *Figaro* know that "kings and nobles" are not lauded, but mostly held up to reproach in these works? He ought.

It is reported that Madlle. Albani will soon appear at one of the Paris lyric theatres. Here is an *avant-courier* of the event, in the shape of an acrostic from the pen of M. Sylvain St. Etienne:

A l'aube elle emprunta son nom si souriant.
L'a fauvette des bois lui donna son ramage;
B elle à désespérer les heures d'Orient,
A u théâtre, au salon, chacun lui rend hommage.
N ilsson, Lucca, Patil, pour votre quatuor,
I la vous faut d'Albani la voix au timbre d'or.