

A Resolute Prima Donna

By JOHN BAIRD

HELEN STANLEY, the beautiful young American soprano who will sing leading roles in the National Grand Opera Company of Canada this season, knows the value of the impromptu.

As the special train bearing the members of the Chicago Grand Opera Company on its western tour was pulling out of Dallas, Texas, last spring, Mary Garden came to her and said:

A SUCCESSFUL PRIMA DONNA.



Helen Stanley, a Leading Soprano with the National Opera Company, Giving Performances from Quebec to Vancouver.

"Miss Stanley, would you like to sing with me in 'Natoma'?"

"I should be very glad," she said briefly.

"Do you know the role of Barbara?"

"I do not."

"Well, the important thing is, can you learn it in three days? We are going to give the opera the second night we are in Los Angeles, and Caroline White, the former incumbent of the role, is away on a concert tour. Can you do it?"

"I can," said Miss Stanley.

Miss Stanley disappeared into her state-room, first sending out word that the social diversions of the trainload of artists held no attraction for her.

At the end of the appointed three days she appeared on the Los Angeles stage and gave a performance of Barbara which the critics of that city without dissenting voice hailed as flawless.

Helen Stanley was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her family name is McGrew. She is the daughter of William Wilson McGrew, a well-to-do business man. Even as a child her voice showed remarkable sweetness and purity.

At the suggestion of Mrs. Philip D. Armour, a wealthy Chicago woman who has played fairy godmother to more than one aspiring young artist, Helen went to Chicago in 1905 and began serious study of the art of singing with Mrs. Johnanna Hess-Burr. Only fifteen years old at the time, it was only a few months before she became the soloist at the University Congregational church. She studied incessantly, perfecting her German, French and Italian, and spending several hours each day on her voice.

The next year she went to New York, where she continued her studies with Isadore Luckstone. She sought and found another church position, that of soloist in St. Bartholomew's Episcopal church. At that time she was the youngest soloist in New York.

Her studies carried her to Paris, where she came under the tuition of Frank King Clark. After six months' work with him she made her operatic debut at Versailles, as Mimi, the heroine of Puccini's opera "La Boheme," an undeniable "hit" in the part. At the end of another six months with her instructor in Paris she

received the appointment as prima donna soprano at the Royal Opera House in Wuerzburg, Germany.

During her two years' engagement with this organization she sang the prima donna roles of "Mme. Butterfly," "Tosca," "Faust," "I. Pagliacci," adding to these the three roles of "The Tales of Hoffmann."

She had long cherished a secret ambition to sing in Chicago, the scene of her earliest success, but up to the summer of 1912 she had no idea how it was to be realized. However, Andreas Dippel was on his annual European still hunt for new talent for the Chicago company. He had visited London, Paris, Milan and Florence. Finally he came to Carlsbad, where she was at the time, heard her sing, and engaged her forthwith.

On the night of Wednesday, December 18, 1912, she appeared as Prince Charming in Massenet's fairy opera "Cendrillon."

It would seem that Miss Garden's confidence in the ability of the young artist to learn a role at short notice was created about this time, for about a month thereafter Miss Stanley learned and sang the extremely difficult music apportioned to Maliella, in Wolf-Ferrari's "Jewels of the Madonna," in a week's time. Later in the year she appeared in "Kuhreigen," which opera, however, enjoyed only a moderate popularity.

After the company had finished its western tour and returned to Chicago there was a sudden shifting in its administration. Andreas Dippel resigned as general manager, and Clefante Campanini, formerly the general musical director, was chosen to succeed him. In the midst of the confusion and readjustment resulting from this unexpected change, Max Rabinoff, the impresario of the National Grand Opera Company of Canada, came to Chicago, consulted a few critics, listened to Miss Stanley sing, and before anyone knew what had happened, went away with a contract which bore her name.

Her engagement, which begins in November and will extend into April, will carry her into all the leading cities of Canada and a great part of the Western United States as well. By a peculiar coincidence, practically all her United States visits will be made about two weeks in advance of the Chicago Grand Opera Company on its second western tour. Her roles will be the leading parts in "Louise," "Thais," "Herodiade," "Mme. Butter-

A MATINEE IDOL.



Mr. Cyril Maude, Who Left for a Little While His Worshippers at The Playhouse in London, to Conquer Canada, Which He is Not Finding Very Difficult.

fly, "La Boheme," "Faust," and possibly "Kuhreigen," together with several others drawn from her former roles.

Wherever she has gone Miss Stanley has created a furore. Canadians will have an opportunity of hearing her rendering of roles already consummately rendered, and of passing judgment thereon.

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