

## White Elephant

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thought at first, but Rufus putting on a record of that song he had talked so much of hearing the Scotch comedian sing in New York. Slipping out of bed she tiptoed to the door. It was locked. Well, of all things! She was on the point of calling Rufus to open it, when unearthly orchestral strains wailed down the hall, passing from sombre weirdness through conflicting passionate motifs to a majestic triumphal finale. It was not the kind of music Mrs. MacNab enjoyed. Not the kind that Judith—zealously hunting “red seals”—had found pencilled in the catalogue. But it held Mrs. MacNab spell-bound, not so much by its eeriness, as by the train of speculation it evoked. Why had Judy and Rufus said nothing about them at supper? Why were they putting them on at night, after locking her, Mrs. MacNab's, door?

There went another! She listened to two voices, soprano and tenor, sometimes singing alone, sometimes together—in Italian. Judy liked operatic things, she reflected pensively. Now she herself preferred something she could understand the words of. Old-fashioned tunes she knew. What was that? Cheering—the Marseillaise—more shouting—Tipperary. That must be Murray's choice. Mrs. MacNab waited till the band died away in the distance, and then she crept back into bed.

Since “the children” had grown too old for hanging up stockings, they had hit upon the expedient of arranging a row of chairs, Christmas Eve, in the fire-lit sitting-room for the presents. In order to preserve inviolate the mystery of the gifts, no one was supposed to enter on Christmas Day till they all entered together. On the morning in question they filed in, a little sleepy, but laughing and joking and casting furtive glances at the laden chairs.

“Why, they all look alike!” exclaimed Murray, suddenly. “Same sized boxes on every cane seat of them.”

Judith, who had lost no time in tearing the tissue paper off her highest box, looked at its contents and then at her mother.

“How lovely,” she said faintly. “We haven't any Plantation Medley records. Thank you ever so much, Mother dear.”

Mrs. MacNab beamed.

“I thought you would be pleased. I am very fond of those old Southern Ballads, and—What is that, Rufus? Yes; I gave you ‘The Maiden's Prayer’ and ‘The Blue Danube Waltz.’ I used to admire them when I was a girl. Don't you like them?”

“Oh, yes, I—I like them. But open your boxes, Maria. There are some Harry Lauders there.”

“And a Tanhauser Overture and a Farrar-Caruso ‘Madame Butterfly,’” cried Judith, cheering up a little.

“And ‘The British Troops Passing Through Boulogne,’” subscribed Murray, who was looking from “Silver Threads Among the Gold,” in one hand, to “When You and I Were Young, Maggie,” in the other. All at once he set them both down precipitately, and slapped his knee.

“Jove, but it's funny!” he shouted.

“Our all giving each other records?” giggled Judy.

“Our all giving each other the records we wanted ourselves.”

“As long as we all did it, we are all satisfied,” observed Mrs. MacNab, complacently. “Father has his Harry Lauders, Judy her operas, Murray his war selections, and I my old favourites.”

“Worked like a charm, didn't it?” drawled Murray, scrutinizing his mother's face. “In fact it worked so

very charmingly that I suspect, I really suspect it—was worked.”

“Mother!” cried Judy, suspiciously. “You heard us the other night?”

Mrs. MacNab laughed, busy separating “red seals” from plebeian black.

“Sauce for the goose—sauce for the gander,” she quoted.

## Boston Opera

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advantage. Both are necessary. It is so writ in the music if you like. For here is Scarpia habited in black with a white wig, a handsome desperado of intellectual mould—and impersonated by Balakoff he sings tremendously with a golden brown velvety voice that in the height of passion becomes too magnificent to

be the organ of a villain. However, the devil uses strange devices and this is one of them. Scarpia attracts Tosca. Her maidenly nature and her fidelity to the lover Cavaradossi keep her from yielding to the tempter. If she will consent, her tortured lover will be released from prison—and the doors of the jail are opened that she may hear his cries; he is brought in that she may behold his agony. If she will not, then he must be.

And all the while there is a long knife on the table—for Scarpia has just been dining. While Tosca consents to his proposal and he writes her lover's release, promising that the shots fired at him shall be blank cartridges, she—gets the knife. She kills him. The orchestra tell you that she has done it. She wrenches from the dead man's hand the letter. She places two tall candles at his head and

a crucifix on his breast. And the curtain goes down on the second act.

The third is quite as realistic. Cavaradossi is not saved. The cartridges were not blank. When the volley is fired, with Tosca looking on, he falls. The soldiers cover him with a cloth. She rushes to him on the wings of the orchestra to embrace a living lover whom she finds as dead as she had made Scarpia. Then with the orchestra haunting her at every breath she leaps from the parapet to her own death—and the orchestra tell you that at last it is all over.

And it is all diabolically beautiful; so much so that it is set down here—not forgetting that Zenatello warmed up to be a really great Cavaradossi—in order that one may trace out the complexities of modern opera as it appeals to the tastes and the purses of Canadians in the year 1916.



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