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Richard Wagner and the Woman He Loved.

(John O'London's Weekly.)

"Women are the music of life," Richard Wagner, composer of "Lohengrin," "Tannhauser," and other world-famous operas, once said. "In the hearts of women it has always gone well with my art." Certainly no great Master of Music has ever been more inspired by love. He has put in-

to deathless melody the eternal beauty of man's worship of womanhood, of human joy in marriage, of the soul's quest for its mate. And yet to him love brought no little suffering.

The Black-Eyed Jewess.

He was still a student, struggling and stumbling at the very foot of his Parnassus, when love first came to him in the guise of Leah David, a young Jewess, black-eyed, black-haired, and of distracting beauty. But jealousy followed swiftly on the heels

of this first real passion; and, as the result of a fierce attack on a rival in the lady's own house, he found his door finally closed next day against him, with the crushing news that the Jewess had promised her hand to the man "who knew how to keep his temper."

To seek forgetfulness of this blow to his heart and his pride, he plunged recklessly into dissipation, one wild love-adventure following another, until the prodigal was at last restored to

sanity and a sense of shame, when he lost his heart, for the second time, to Wilhelmina Planer, the leading lady of the Magdeburg Theatre.

In Love And in Debt.

Nor was it long before Wilhelmina, the pretty actress of the gentle voice, timid eyes, and tender heart, was swept off her feet by the passion of the masterful young musician, whose strength and manliness, even his brusque speech and manners, appealed irresistibly to her weakness. That Wagner was deeply in debt, that failure dogged his steps, and that he was out of employment mattered nothing to the brave-hearted girl who had dedicated her life to him.

Thus it was that one November day in 1836, when Wagner, by a stroke of luck, was appointed Musical Director of the Königsberg Theatre, she stood by his side at the altar "for better or for worse," little dreaming how much of the "worse" would fall to her lot.

In spite of poverty and "the most dubious outward circumstances," the young couple were no doubt happy in their mutual devotion; though, as Wagner confesses, "the year I spent at Königsberg was completely lost to my art by reason of the pressure of petty cares." And when he shook the dust of Königsberg off his feet to fare to Russia as Musical Director of the Riga Opera House, struggle and disappointment went with them, and sent them again on their pilgrimage.

When the Riga authorities refused Wagner a passport until he had paid his debts, he and his wife escaped over the frontier in disguise and voyaged to England with, as he tells us, "an opera and a half and a large and ferocious Newfoundland dog." After a terrible voyage of three and a half weeks, and narrowly escaping death from violent storms, the fugitives found such a cold welcome in England that they continued their journey to Paris, where they were soon reduced to such straits that Wilhelmina had to pawn her few remaining articles of jewellery to keep body and soul together.

An Opera And a Half And a Dog.

But even in these black days her devotion never wavered or weakened. With almost superhuman patience she toiled for him night and day, and masked her sufferings and her anxieties with a smiling face. In later years he would weep when describing the heroic self-denial of his wife during these years of eclipse.

With Wagner's return to Germany, though it brought the first gleams of the success that was to be his, such married happiness as poverty had allowed him began to take wings. His wife's health at last broke down under her long sufferings and privations, and she foolishly had recourse to opium to "soothe her nerves," with recourse to opium to "soothe her ner-

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No Injury to Morality.

She became impatient, querulous, and quarrelsome, upbraided her husband for not composing music the public wanted, and ridiculed his claim to genius. Her mental condition became at last such a torment to herself, as well as to all around her, that Wagner was glad to send her away for one "rest-cure" after another, imploring Liszt to lend him money "to make his wife happy, if only for a time."

It was during one of these absences that Wagner succumbed to the temptation to seek consolation elsewhere; and he found it in Emilie Heim, the wife of his next-door neighbour, a conductor. When his wife's jealousy drove him from the neighbourhood of the too seductive Emilie, he quickly found solace in Frau Wesendonck, wife of one of his greatest friends and admirers, whom he described as "the noblest and purest of women," vowing that his love for her was "no in-

Jury to morality."

With jealousy now to widen the gulf that had grown between them, Wagner found life with his wife more and more impossible. "Everlasting squabbles" at last made it such a burden to both that they decided to separate—"Mina" to spend the brief, miserable remainder of her life with her family at Dresden.

To his last day, though he was happily wedded to a second wife—Liszt's daughter—Wagner retained his love for and gratitude to the woman who had trodden the dark valley of failure by his side with such a touching devotion.

Why Frankfurt?

King Carl the Great (Charlemagne) was once defeated by the Saxons, and fled with his Franks to the Main. But they could find no fording-place by which to escape the pursuit of their enemies. Suddenly a cart appeared and made for a spot where it crossed the river and fordable. So they came across the Main, and the place has ever since been called "Frankfurt" (the ford of the Franks.)

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