

Madame Albani

THE greatest of all singers born in Canada, and the greatest oratorio diva of the Victorian period, was Madame Albani. In her old age the great Canadian prima donna, as the wife of Mr. Ernest Gye, sings only now and then, and teaches a few pupils—because she has spent her large fortune as bountifully as her once glorious voice. A cold newspaper item a few days ago announced that owing to the rather straitened circumstances of Madame Albani, a fund for her benefit will be started in Montreal and Quebec.

Well, Montreal has her grand opera stars now—but not forgetful of Madame Albani. In fact one real estate firm there has named a new boom town "Albani." Canada has become a musical land since Albani went abroad. But we may be much more musical than we are now before we give to the world another such an artist as "La Jeunesse de Chamblly." Montreal sent out Edmund Burke, celebrated baritone, in grand opera, and Donalda the eminent protege of Lord Strathcona. Ontario sent Edward Johnson, near-famous tenor, now in Italy; Winnipeg—or was it Toronto?—lately took leave of Percy Hollinshead, who seems destined to make his mark as a rival of great tenors now living. Calgary has the honour of giving to the world Kathleen Parlow, whose playing is known all over Europe. But Albani was famous in the great concert halls of England and the opera houses of

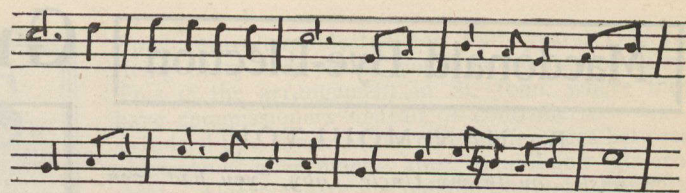


By JOSEPHINE TROTTER

Europe before any of these people were born. She was a great figure in American oratorio and opera before there was any Metropolitan Opera House or Boston Symphony Orchestra. And she sang again and again in almost every city and large town of her native land, even after the death of her friend, Queen Victoria. England has never grown weary of Albani, who goes down to history with Patti and Jenny Lind as one of the greatest singers of all time.

Albani was born in the village of Chamblly, hard-by Montreal, in 1852. Her first teacher was her own father, Monsieur Lajeunesse, a thorough savant both on instruments and the voice. To Montreal the singer returned in 1883 with the critical world "in bonds at her wheels," as the phrase goes. Her "compatriotes," as she loves to call them, welcomed their "La Jeunesse" with an ardour, a tenderness, which more than amply atoned for any former misgivings about her success.

"On our arrival at Montreal station," so run the memoirs, "we found it so packed that we actually had to fight our way through the cheering crowd, who seemed reluctant to let us move on. A large



The Chamblly Girl

number of the members of the snow shoe clubs had come to meet us and they lined the streets, lighted torches in hand, as, in four-horse carriages and preceded by a band, we went in slow procession to Windsor Hotel. Before the hotel so dense a crowd had assembled that I had to be carried over the heads of the people into the building."

The next day, Albani was welcomed, officially, at an overwhelming reception at the City Hall. "I was placed on the Mayor's throne amidst deafening cheers," she writes, "and remained on the dais standing for more than two hours and shaking hands with more than two thousand people. The afternoon was like a holiday, shops were closed, crowds were in the streets, and we were cheered all the way back as we returned from the Hotel de Ville to our hotel."

To the diva's singing at that time the tenderest tribute is Drummond's, which he puts in the habitant mouth of one "Antoine":

"I 'member wan tam I be sleepin' jus' onder some beeg pine tree
An' song of de robin wak' me, but robin, he don't see me,
Dere's not'ing for scarin' dat bird dere, he's feel all alone on de worl',
Wall! Ma-dam she mus' lissen lak dat, too, w'en she was de Chamblly girl!"

Shall We Ever Have a National Song?

A CANADIAN national spirit would stir to united action the conservative Nova Scotian, the ardent and radical plainsman, the alert and imaginative French-Canadian, and the steady-going Elder of St. Andrew's Church. It would be a solvent for sectionalism, a philosopher's stone capable of transmuting a confederacy into a nation.

Some of us still doubt if such a spirit has blessed this Federal Union. The distillation of it is such a slow process, especially in times of peace. No flag-waving can hasten it. No Parliamentary eloquence of itself is responsible for it. It comes by an assimilated knowledge of the country's resources, by a final appreciation of the shining deeds of patriots long dead, by all the appeals of men of vision, by the dreams of poets, by comparison, conscious or sub-conscious, of this country with others less fortunately dowered.

One reason for doubting the existence of a National Spirit in Canada lies in the fact that we possess no great National Anthem. Out of the stress and horror of the French Revolution came La Marseillaise. Not from Paris, the centre of the agitation, did it arise, but from the dusty hills overlooking the Mediterranean. The sentiment of men toiling in the vineyards in a semi-tropical heat was identical with that of the swarming suburb of St. Antoine. The song was not written, in the ordinary sense of the word. It happened, a miracle of inspiration. It expressed the National Spirit of France then newly born. All Frenchmen sang it then, and sing it now. Its words are exalted by sincerity. Its music is a paean of triumph. Rhythmically it is compelling. No finer march hymn was ever written. The melody, like all war-music, is first cousin to the bugle, which can play only the tonic, mediant and dominant of the Major Diatonic Scale.

Patriotic songs have been written in Canada. Several tons of them cumber the shelves of the publishers. Only two have attained any widespread vogue, Alexander Muir's "The Maple Leaf," and Lavallee's setting of Judge Routhier's poem, "O Canada, Terre de Nos Aïeux." The first expresses the sentiment of the English-speaking people whose parents were born in the United Kingdom. The second sings the passion of the French-Canadian for the good land where the Angelus has sounded continuously every evening since the year 1609. It is apparent that neither could be acceptable to the whole people. Presbyterian Bruce County may be pardoned if it regards the Angelus with calm indifference. Scarcely also could we expect the

By J. E. MIDDLETON

County of Vercheres to become enthusiastic over the entwining of the thistle, the shamrock and the rose, especially when the *fleur de lis* is consistently if not truculently ignored.

Musicians find such nobility and grace in "O Canada" that efforts have been made to write suitable English verse to fit it. But a translation of Routhier, whether literal or free, is of small value west of the Ottawa. Adjusted poems lack freedom, are English in spirit and consist mainly of potted history. That, too, is the failing of "The Maple Leaf" aside altogether from its commonplace, stodgy music. It is the failing of ninety-nine per cent. of the patriotic songs that have been written in these parts. It may be taken as an axiom that the last thing to be desired in a national song is information. While we may set the encyclopaedia to music no one would desire to sing it, nor would any be moved to tears by hearing it.

THE British National Anthem, "God Save the King," would be much lengthened if it gave a brief review of the reign of every King since Edward the Confessor. The proper attitude of patriotic poets is expressed to a nice particularity in the line, "Confound their politics."

The men who write real national songs are Futurists. They express a fervent hope, a flaming determination. Their one idea is that of liberty. When the Canadian National Anthem is written it will resemble neither a history primer, nor a railway travel folder.

Our statesmen inform us fully and frequently about the Atlantic breaking on the rock-bound coast, the Pacific rolling up its long swells, and the mountains knocking their snow-crowned heads against the stars. It seems a waste of time to sing them.

There is no National Spirit if we are merely proud of what we have, or of what our grandfathers have done. National Spirit is expressed in the declaration of what we ourselves are determined to

do. Great and perilous events awaken that determination. An invasion of Canada by an armed force would kindle a hot flame of resentment in every Canadian soul. It would stir emotions long of deadened by wheat, and real estate and bank clearings. With public feeling at such a pitch, passionate verse asserting the universal determination to be free would be as welcome in French as in English. Only war, it seems, can stir that feeling. And not merely a successful war. Military disaster is more likely to awaken it. In the Spanish-American affair the Americans were so sure of victory that the men sang "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night"—an expressive composition, no doubt, but hardly serious enough for a national anthem. Cromwell's Ironsides and Vater Fritz's Prussian veterans went into action singing war psalms by King David. Out of such serious, deep-feeling, self-forgetting determination comes the spirit which makes nations and national anthems.

An English farmer once prayed:

"God bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife,
We four, and no more."

That is the commercial spirit which rules all too often after long years of peace. Out of that sandy ground no national anthem could ever spring.

Some of us imagine that the Government could settle the question of a National Anthem by choosing some composition and giving it official standing. The United States tried that. "The Star Spangled Banner" is the melody that brings millions of colonels throughout the country to their feet. It is a good anthem from a musical standpoint, but its poetry is awkward. Every short line is a tongue-twister, every long line is a mouthful. One can understand Franklin P. Adams' statement: "'The Star Spangled Banner' is a composition that everybody knows—a few lines of."

Patriotic verse and a thrilling melody live by favour of merit, and without reference to patronage. They are born in times of stress when men begin rightly to value birthright and cherish citizenship.

