

# Great Singers, Second Series eBook

## Great Singers, Second Series

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### I.

With the name of Malibran there is associated an interest, alike personal and artistic, rarely equaled and certainly unsurpassed among the traditions which make the records of the lyric stage so fascinating. Daring originality stamped her life as a woman, her career as an artist, and the brightness with which her star shone through a brief and stormy history had something akin in it to the dazzling but capricious passage of a meteor. If Pasta was the Siddons of the lyric drama, unapproachable in its more severe and tragic phases, Malibran represented its Garrick. Brilliant, creative, and versatile, she sang equally well in all styles of music, and no strain on her resources seemed to overtax the power of an artistic imagination which delighted in vanquishing obstacles and transforming native defects into new beauties, an attribute of genius which she shared in equal degree with Pasta, though it took on a different manifestation.

This great singer belonged to a Spanish family of musicians, who have been well characterized as "representative artists, whose power, genius, and originality have impressed a permanent trace on the record of the methods of vocal execution and ornament." Her father, Manuel Vicente Garcia, at the age of seventeen, was already well known as composer, singer, actor, and conductor. His pieces, short comic operas, had a great popularity in Spain, and were not only bright and inventive, but marked by thorough musical workmanship. A month after he made his *debut* in Paris, in 1811, he had become the chief singer, and sang for three years under the operatic *regime* which shared the general splendor of Napoleon's court. He was afterward appointed first tenor at Naples by King Joachim Munit, and there produced his opera of "Califo di Bagdad," which met with great success. It was here that the child Maria, then only five years old, made her first public appearance

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in one of Paer's operas, and here that she received her first lessons in music from M. Panseron and the composer Herold. When Garcia quitted Italy in 1816, he sang with Catalani in Paris, but, as that jealous artist admitted no bright star near her own, Garcia soon left the troupe, and went to London in the spring of 1818. He oscillated between the two countries for several years, and was the first brilliant exponent of the Rossinian music in two great capitals, as his training and method were peculiarly fitted to this school. The indomitable energy and ambition which he transmitted to his daughters, who were to become such distinguished ornaments of the stage, were not contented with making their possessor a great executant, for he continued to produce operas, several of which were put on the stage in Paris with notable success. Garcia's name as a teacher commenced about the year 1823 to overshadow his reputation as a singer. In the one he had rivals, in the other he was peerless. His school of singing quickly became famous, though he continued to appear on the stage, and to pour forth operas of more than average merit.

The education of his daughter Maria, born at Paris, March 24, 1808, had always been a matter of paternal solicitude. A delicate, sensitive, and willful child, she had been so humored and petted at the convent-school of Hammersmith, where she was first placed, that she developed a caprice and a recklessness which made her return to the house of her stern and imperious father doubly painful, her experience was a severe one, and Manuel Garcia was more pitiless to his daughter than to other pupils. Already at this period Maria spoke with ease Spanish, Italian, French, and English, to which she afterward added German. The Garcia household was a strange one. The Spanish musician was a tyrant in his home, and a savage temper, which had but few streaks of tenderness, frequently vented itself in blows and brutality, in spite of the remarkable musical facility with which Maria appropriated teaching, and the brilliant gifts which would have flattered the pride and softened the sympathies of a more gentle and complacent parent. The young girl, in spite of her prodigious instinct for art and her splendid intelligence, had a peculiarly intractable organ. The lower notes of the voice were very imperfect, the upper tones thin, disagreeable, and hard, the middle veiled, and her intonation so doubtful that it almost indicated an imperfect ear. She would sometimes sing so badly that her father would quit the piano precipitately and retreat to the farthest corner of the house with his fingers thrust into his ears. But Garcia was resolved that his daughter should become what Nature seemingly had resolved she should not be, a great vocalist, and he bent all the energies of his harsh and imperious temper to further this result. "One evening I studied a duet with Maria," says the Countess Merlin, "in which Garcia had written a passage, and he desired



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her to execute it. She tried, but became discouraged, and said, 'I can not.' In an instant the Andalu-sian blood of her father rose. He fixed his flashing eyes upon her: 'What did you say?' Maria looked at him, trembled, and, clasping her hands, murmured in a stifled voice, 'I will do it, papa;' and she executed the passage perfectly. She told me afterward that she could not conceive how she did it. 'Papa's glance,' added she, 'has such an influence upon me that I am sure it would make me fling myself from the roof into the street without doing myself any harm.'"

Maria Felicia Garcia was a wayward and willful child, but so generous and placable that her fierce outbursts of rage were followed by the most fascinating and winning contrition. Irresistibly charming, frank, fearless, and original, she gave promise, even in her early youth, of the remarkable qualities which afterward bestowed such a unique and brilliant *cachet* on her genius as an artist and her character as a woman. Her father, with all his harshness, understood her truly, for she inherited both her faults and her gifts from himself. "Her proud and stubborn spirit requires an iron hand to control it," he said; "Maria can never become great except at the price of much suffering." By the time she had reached the age of fifteen her voice had greatly improved. Her chest-notes had gained greatly in power, richness, and depth, though the higher register of the vocal organ still remained crude and veiled. Fetis says that it was on account of the sudden indisposition of Madame Pasta that the first public appearance of Maria in opera was unexpectedly made, but Lord Mount Edgcumbe and the impresario Ebers both tell a different story. The former relates in his "Reminiscences" that, shortly after the repair of the King's Theatre, "the great favorite Pasta arrived for a limited number of nights. About the same time Konzi fell ill and totally lost her voice, so that she was obliged to throw up her engagement and return to Italy. *Mme. Vestris* having seceded, and Caradori being for some time unable to perform, it became necessary to engage a young singer, the daughter of the tenor Garcia, who had sung here for several seasons.... Her extreme youth, her prettiness, her pleasing voice, and sprightly, easy action as *Rosina* in 'Il Barbiere,' in which part she made her *debut*, gained her general favor." Chor-ley recalls the impression she made on him at this time in more precise and emphatic terms: "From the first hour when Maria Garcia appeared on the stage, first in 'Il Barbiere' and subsequently in 'Il Crociato,' it was evident that a new artist, as original as extraordinary, was come—one by nature fairly endowed, not merely with physical powers, but also with that inventive, energetic, rapid genius, before which obstacles become as nothing, and by the aid of which the sharpest contradictions become reconciled." She made her *debut* on June 7, 1825, and was immediately engaged for the

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remaining six weeks of the season at five hundred pounds. Her first success was followed by a second in Meyerber's 'Il Crociato,' in which she sang with Velluti, the last of that extraordinary *genre* of artists, the male sopranos. Garcia wrote several arias for her voice, which were interpolated in the opera, much to Manager Ayrton's disgust, but much also to the young singer's advantage, for the father knew every defect and every beauty of his daughter's voice.

If her father was ambitious and daring, Maria was so likewise. She had to sing with Velluti a duet in Zingarelli's "Romeo e Giulietta," and in the morning they rehearsed it together, Velluti reserving his fioriture for the evening, lest the young *debutante* should endeavor to imitate his ornaments. In the evening he sang his solo part, embroidering it with the most florid decorations, and finishing with a new and beautiful cadenza, which astonished and charmed the audience; Maria seized the phrases, to which she imparted an additional grace, and crowned her triumph with an audacious and superb improvisation. Thunders of applause greeted her, and while trembling with excitement she felt her arm grasped by a hand of iron. "Briccona!" hissed a voice in her ear, as Velluti glared on her, gnashing his teeth with rage. After performing in London, she appeared in the autumn with her father at the Manchester, York, and Liverpool Festivals, where she sang some of the most difficult pieces from the "Messiah" and the "Creation." Some said that she failed, others that she sang with a degree of mingled brilliancy, delicacy, and sweetness that drew down a storm of applause.

## II.

Garcia now conceived a project for establishing Italian opera in the United States, and with characteristic daring he set sail for America with a miserable company, of which the only talent consisted of his own family, comprising himself, his son, daughter, and wife, *Mme.* Garcia having been a fairly good artist in her youth. The first opera produced was "Il Barbiere," on November 29, 1825, and this was speedily followed by "Tancredi," "Otello," "Il Turco in Italia," "Don Giovanni," "Cenerentola," and two operas composed by Garcia himself—"L'Amante Astuto," and "La Figlia dell' Aria." The young singer's success was of extraordinary character, and New York, unaccustomed to Italian opera, went into an ecstasy of admiration. Maria's charming voice and personal fascination held the public spellbound, and her good nature in the introduction of English songs, whenever called on by her admirers, raised the delight of the opera-goers of the day to a wild enthusiasm.



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The occurrence of the most unfortunate episode of her life at this time was the fruitful source of much of the misery and eccentricity of her after-career. M. Francois Eugene Malibran, a French merchant, engaged in business in New York, fell passionately in love with the young singer, and speedily laid his heart and fortune, which was supposed to be great, at her feet. In spite of the fact that the suitor was fifty, and Maria only seventeen, she was disposed to accept the offer, for she was sick of her father's brutality, and the straits to which she was constantly put by the exigencies of her dependent situation. Her heart had never yet awakened to the sweetness of love, and the supposed great fortune and lavish promises of M. Malibran dazzled her young imagination. Garcia sternly refused his consent, and there were many violent scenes between father and daughter. Such was the hostility of feeling between the two, that Maria almost feared for her life. The following incident is an expressive comment on the condition of her mind at this time: One evening she was playing *Des-demonia* to her father's *Othello*, in Rossini's opera. At the moment when *Othello* approaches, his eyes sparkling with rage, to stab *Desdemonia*, Maria perceived that her father's dagger was not a stage sham, but a genuine weapon. Frantic with terror, she screamed "Papa, papa, for the love of God, do not kill me!" Her terrors were groundless, for the substitution of the real for a theatrical dagger was a mere accident. The audience knew no difference, as they supposed Maria's Spanish exclamation to be good operatic Italian, and they applauded at the fine dramatic point made by the young artist!

At last the importunate suitor overcame Garcia's opposition by agreeing to give him a hundred thousand francs in payment for the loss of his daughter's services, and the sacrifice of the young and beautiful singer was consummated on March 23, 1826. A few weeks later Malibran was a bankrupt and imprisoned for debt, and his bride discovered how she had been cheated and outraged by a cunning scoundrel, who had calculated on saving himself from poverty by dependence on the stage-earnings of a brilliant wife. The enraged Garcia, always a man of unbridled temper, was only prevented from transforming one of those scenes of mimic tragedy with which he was so familiar, into a criminal reality by assassinating Malibran, through the resolute expostulations of his friends. *Mme.* Malibran instantly resigned for the benefit of her husband's creditors any claims which she might have made on the remnants of his estate, and her New York admirers had as much occasion to applaud the rectitude and honor of the woman as they had had the genius of the artist. Garcia himself, hampered by pecuniary difficulties, set sail for Mexico with his son and younger daughter, to retrieve his fortunes, while Maria remained in New York, tied to a wretch whom she despised, and who looked on her musical talents

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as the means of supplying him with the luxuries of life. *Mme.* Malibran's energy soon found a vent in English opera, and she made herself as popular on the vernacular as she had on the Italian stage. But she soon wearied of her hard fate, which compelled her to toil without ceasing for the support of the man who had deceived her vilely, and for whom not one spark of love operated to condone his faults. Five months utterly snapped her patience, and she determined to return to Paris. She arrived there in September, 1826, and took up her abode with M. Malibran's sister. Although she had become isolated from all her old friends, she found in one of the companions of her days of pupilage, the Countess Merlin, a most affectionate help and counselor, who spared no effort to make her talents known to the musical world of Paris, *Mme.* de Merlin sounded the praises of her friend so successfully that she soon succeeded in evoking a great degree of public curiosity, which finally resulted in an engagement.

Malibran's first appearance in the Grand Opera at Paris was for the benefit of *Mme.* Galli, in "Semiramide." It was a terrible ordeal, for she had such great stars as Pasta and Sontag to compete with, and she was treading a classic stage, with which the memories of all the great names in the lyric art were connected. She felt that on the result of that night all the future success of her life depended. Though her heart was struck with such a chill that her knees quaked as she stepped on the stage, her indomitable energy and courage came to her assistance, and she produced an indescribable sensation. Her youth, beauty, and noble air won the hearts of all. One difficult phrase proved such a stumbling-block that, in the agitation of a first appearance, she failed to surmount it, and there was an apprehension that the lovely singer was about to fail. But in the grand aria, "Bel Raggio," she indicated such resources of execution and daring of improvisation, and displayed such a full and beautiful voice, that the house resounded with the most furious applause. *Mme.* Malibran, encouraged by this warm reception, redoubled the difficulties of her execution, and poured forth lavishness of fioriture and brilliant cadenzas such as fairly dazzled her hearers. Paris was conquered, and *Mme.* Malibran became the idol of the city, for the novelty and richness of her style of execution set her apart from all other singers as a woman of splendid inventive genius. She could now make her own terms with the managers, and she finally gave the preference to the Italiens over the Grand Opera, at terms of eight hundred francs per night, and a full benefit.

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In voice, genius, and character *Mme. Malibran* was alike original. Her organ was not naturally of first-rate quality. The voice was a mezzo-soprano, naturally full of defects, especially in the middle tones, which were hard and uneven, and to the very last she was obliged to go through her exercises every day to keep it flexible. By the tremendously severe discipline to which she had been subjected by her father's teaching and method, the range of voice had been extended up and down so that it finally reached a compass of three octaves from D in alt to D on the third line in the base. Her high notes had an indescribable sparkle and brilliancy, and her low tones were so soft, sweet, and heart-searching that they thrilled with every varying phase of her sensibilities. Her daring in the choice of ornaments was so great that it was only justified by the success which invariably crowned her flights of inventive fancy: To the facility and cultivation of voice, which came from her father's training, she added a fertility of musical inspiration which came from nature. A French critic wrote of her: "Her passages were not only remarkable for extent, rapidity, and complication, but were invariably marked by the most intense feeling and sentiment. Her soul appeared in everything she did." Her extraordinary flexibility enabled her to run with ease over passages of the most difficult character. "In the tones of Malibran," says one of her English admirers, "there would at times be developed a deep and trembling pathos, that, rushing from the fountain of the heart, thrilled instantly upon a responsive chord in the bosoms of all." She was the pupil of nature. Her acting was full of genius, passion, and tenderness. She was equally grand as *Semiramide* and as *Arsace*, and sang the music of both parts superbly. Touching, profoundly melancholy as *Desdemona*, she was gay and graceful in *Rosina*; she drew tears as *Ninetta*, and, throwing off the coquette, could produce roars of laughter as *Fidalma*. She had never taken lessons in poses or in declamation, yet she was essentially, innately graceful. *Mme. Malibran* was in person about the middle height, and the contour of her figure was rounded to an enchanting *embonpoint*, which yet preserved its youthful grace. Her carriage was exceedingly noble, and the face more expressive than handsome; her hair was black and glossy, and always worn in a simple style. The eyes were dark and luminous, the teeth white and regular, and the countenance, habitually pensive in expression, was mutable in the extreme, and responsive to every emotion and feeling of the heart. To quote from Mr. Chorley: "She may not have been beautiful, but she was better than beautiful, insomuch as a speaking Spanish human countenance is ten times more fascinating than many a faultless angel-face such as Guido could paint. There was health of tint, with but a slight touch of the yellow rose in her complexion; great mobility of expression in her features; an honest, direct brightness of eye; a refinement in the form of her head, and the set of it on her shoulders."



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When she was reproached by Fetis for using *ad captandum* effects too lavishly in the admonition: "With the degree of elevation to which you have attained, you should impose your opinion on the public, not submit to theirs," she answered, with a laugh and a shrug of her charming shoulders: "*Mon cher grognon*, there may perhaps be two or three connoisseurs in the theatre, but it is not they who give success. When I sing for you, I will sing very differently." *Mme. Malibran*, buoyed up on the passionate enthusiasm of the French public, essayed the most wonderful and daring flights in her song. She appeared as *Desdemona*, *Rosina*, and as *Romeo* in Zingarelli's opera—characters, of the most opposing kind and two of them, indeed, among Pasta's masterpieces. It was said that, "if Malibran must yield the palm to Pasta in point of acting, yet she possessed a decided superiority in respect of song"; and, even in acting, Malibran's grace, originality, vivacity, piquancy, spontaneity, feeling, and tenderness, won the heart of all spectators. Such was her versatility, that the *Semi-ramide* of one evening was the *Cinderella* of the next, the *Zerlina* of another, and the *Desdemona* of its successor; and in each the individuality of conception was admirably preserved. On being asked by a friend which was her favorite role, she answered, "The character I happen to be acting, whichever it may be."

In spite, however, of the general testimony to her great dramatic ability, so clever and capable a judge as Henry Chorley rated her musical genius as far higher than that of dramatic conception. He says: "Though creative as an executant, Malibran was not creative as a dramatic artist. Though the fertility and audacity of her musical invention had no limits, though she had the power and science of a composer, she did not establish one new opera or character on the stage, hardly even one first-class song in a concert-room." This criticism, when closely examined, may perhaps indicate a high order of praise. *Mme. Malibran*, as an artist, was so unique and original in her methods, so incomparable in the invention and skill which required no master to prompt or regulate her cadences, so complex in the ingenuity which blended the resources of singing and acting, that other singers simply despaired of imitating her effects, and what she did perished with her, except as a brilliant tradition. In other words, her utter superiority to the conventional made her artistic work phenomenal, and of a style not to be perpetuated on the stage. The weight of testimony appears to be that *Mme. Malibran* was, beyond all of her competitors, a singer of most versatile and brilliant genius, in whom dramatic instincts reigned with as dominant force as ability of musical expression. The fact, however, that *Mme. Malibran*, with a voice weak and faulty in the extreme in one whole octave of its range, and that the most important (between F and F), was able by her matchless skill and audacity in the forms of execution, modification, and ornament, to achieve the most brilliant results, might well blind even a keen connoisseur by kindling his admiration of her musical invention, at the expense of his recognition of dramatic faculty.

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It was characteristic of *Mme. Malibran* that she fired all her fellow-artists with the ardor of her genius. Her resources and knowledge were such that she could sing in any school and any language. The music of Mozart and Cimarosa, Boieldieu and Eossini, Cherubini and Bellini, Donizetti and Meyerbeer, furnished in equal measure the mold into which her great powers poured themselves with a sort of inspired fury, like that of a Greek Pythoness. She had an artistic individuality powerful to create types of its own, which were the despair of other singers, for they were incapable of reproduction, inasmuch as they were partly forged from her own defects, transformed by genius into beauties. In all those accomplishments which have their root in the art temperament, she was a sort of Admirable Crichton. She played the piano-forte with great skill, and, with no special knowledge of drawing, possessed marked talent in sketching caricatures, portraits, and scenes from nature. She composed both the music and words of songs and romances with a felicitous ease. She excelled in feminine works, such as embroidery, tapestry, and dressmaking, and always modeled her own costumes. It was a saying with her friends that she was as much the artist with her needle as with her voice. She wrote and spoke five languages, and often used them with different interlocutors with such readiness and accuracy that she rarely confused them. Her wit and vivacity as a conversationalist were celebrated, and her *mots* had the point as well as the flash of the diamond. Her retorts and sarcasms often wounded, but she was quick to heal the stroke by a sweet and childlike contrition that made her doubly fascinating.

Impassioned, ardent, the prey of an endless excitement, her restless nature would quickly return from its flights to the every-day duties and responsibilities of life, and her instincts were so strong and noble that she was eager to repair any errors into which she might be betrayed. Lavish in her generosity to others, she was personally frugal, even penurious. A certain brusque and original frankness, and the ingenuousness with which she betrayed every impression, often involved her in compromising positions, which would have been fatal to a woman in her position less pure and upright in her essential nature. Fond of dolls, toys, and trifles, she was also devoted to athletic sports and pastimes, riding, swimming, skating, shooting, and fencing. Sometimes her return from a fatiguing night at the opera would be marked by an exuberance of animal spirits, which would lead her to jump over chairs and tables like a schoolboy. She was wont to say, "When I try to restrain my flow of spirits, I feel as if I should be suffocated." Her reckless gayety and unconventional manners led to strange rumors. She would wander over the country attired in boy's clothes, and without an escort, and a great variety of innocent escapades led a carping world to believe that she indulged excessively in stimulants, but the truth was that she never drank anything but a little wine-and-water.



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Maria could not long endure the frowning tutelage of M. Malibran's sister, whom she at first selected as her chaperon, and so one day she decamped without warning, in a coach, and established her "household gods" with *Mme. Naldi*, an old friend of her father, and a woman of austere manners, whom she obeyed like a child. Her protector had charge of all her money, and opened all her letters before Maria saw them. When her fortune was at his height, *Mme. Malibran* showed her friend and biographer, Countess do Merlin, a much-worn Cashmere shawl, saying: "I use this in preference to any that I have. It was the first Cashmere shawl I ever owned, and I have pleasure in remembering how hard I found it to coax *Mme. Naldi* to let me buy it."

In 1828 the principal members of the operatic company at the Italiens were Malibran, Sontag, Donzelli, Zuchelli, and Graziani. Malibran sang in "Otello," "Matilda di Shabran," "La Cenerentola," and "La Gazza Ladra." Jealous as she was by temperament, she always wept when Mademoiselle Sontag achieved a great success, saying, naively, "Why does she sing so divinely?" The coldness between the two great singers was fomented by the malice of others, but at last a touching reconciliation occurred, and the two rivals remained ever afterward sincere friends and admirers of each other's talents. There are many charming anecdotes of Madame Malibran's generosity and quick sympathy. At the house of one of her friends she often met an aged widow, poor and unhappy, and strongly desired to assist her; but the position and character of the lady required delicate management. "Madame," she said at last, "I know that your son makes very pretty verses." "Yes, madame, he sometimes amuses himself in that way. But he is so young!" "No matter. Do you know that I could propose a little partnership affair? Troupenas [the music publisher] has asked me for a new set of romances. I have no words ready. If your son will give them to me, we could share the profits." *Mme. Malibran* received the verses, and gave in exchange six hundred francs. The romances were never finished.

She performed all such acts of charity with so much refined delicacy, such true generosity, that the kindness was doubled. Thus, at the end of this season, a young female chorister, engaged for the opening of the King's Theatre, found herself unable to quit Paris for want of funds. *Mme. Malibran* promised to sing at a concert which some of the leading vocalists gave for her benefit. The name of Malibran of course drew a crowd, and the room was filled; but she did not appear, and at last they were obliged to commence the concert. The entertainment was half over when she came, and approached the young girl, saying to her in a low voice: "I am a little late, my dear, but the public will lose nothing, for I will sing all the pieces announced. In addition, as I promised you all my evening, I will keep my word. I went to sing in a concert at the house of the Duc d'Orleans, where I received three hundred francs. They belong to you. Take them."



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### III.

In April of the same year during which *Mme. Malibran* had established herself so firmly in the admiration of the Parisian world, she accepted an engagement for the summer months with La-porte of the King's Theatre in London. She made her *debut* in the character of *Desdemona*, a part which had already been firmly fixed in the notions of the musical public by the two differing conceptions of Pasta and Sontag. The opera had been originally written for *Mme. Colbran*, Rossini's wife, and when it was revived for Pasta that great lyric tragedienne had embodied in it a grand, stormy, passionate style, suited to the *genre* of her genius. *Mme. Sontag*, on the other hand, fashioned her impersonation from the side of delicate sentiment and tenderness, and Malibran had a difficult task in shaping the conception after an ideal which should escape the reproach of imitation. Her version was full of electric touches and rapid alternations of feeling, but at times it bordered on the sensational and extravagant. Her fiery vehemence was often felt to be inconsistent with the tenderness of the heroine. The critics, while admitting the varied and original beauties of her reading, were yet severe in their condemnation of some of its features. *Mme. Malibran*, however, urged that her action was what she would have manifested in the actual situations. "I remember once," says the Countess De Merlin, "a friend advised her not to make *Otello* pursue her so long when he was about to kill her. Her answer was: 'You are right; it is not elegant, I admit; but, when once I fairly enter into my character, I never think of effects, but imagine myself actually the person I represent. I can assure you that in the last scene of *Desdemona* I often feel as if I were really about to be murdered, and act accordingly.' Donzelli used to be much annoyed by *Mme. Malibran* not determining beforehand how he was to seize her; she often gave him a regular chase. Though he was one of the best-tempered men in the world, I recollect him one evening being seriously angry. *Desdemona* had, according to custom, repeatedly escaped from his grasp; in pursuing her, he stumbled, and slightly wounded himself with the dagger he brandished. It was the only time I ever saw him in a passion."

She next appeared successively as *Rosina*, *Ni-netta*, and *Tancredi*, winning fresh laurels in them all, not only by her superb skill in vocalizing, but by her versatility of dramatic conception and the ease with which she entered into the most opposite phases of feeling and motive. She covered Rossini's elaborate fioriture with a fresh profusion of ornament, but always with a dexterity which saved it from the reproach of being overladen. She performed *Semiramide* with *Mme. Pisaroni*, and played Zerlina to Sontag's *Donna Anna*. Her habit of treating such dramatic parts as *Ninetta*, *Zerlina*, and *Amina*



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was the occasion of keen controversy among the critics of the time. Entirely averse to the conventional method of idealizing the character of the country girl out of all semblance to nature, Malibran was essentially realistic in preserving the rusticity, awkwardness, and *naivete* of peasant-life. One critic argued: "It is by no means rare to discover in the humblest walk of life an inborn grace and delicacy of Nature's own implanting; and such assuredly is the model from which characters like *Ninetta* and *Zerlina* ought to be copied." But there were others who saw in the vigor, breadth, and verisimilitude of *Mme. Malibran's* stage portraits of the peasant wench the truest and finest dramatic justice. A great singer of our own age, *Mme. Pauline Lucca*, seems to have modeled her performances of the operatic rustic after the same method. In such characters as \_\_\_ *Susanna* in the "Nozze di Figaro," and *Fidalma* in Cimarosa's "Il Matrimonio Segreto," her talent for lyric comedy impressed the *cognoscenti* of London with irresistible power. She was fascinated by the ludicrous, and was wont to say that she was anxious to play the *Duenna* in "Il Barbiere" for the sake of the grotesque costume. In playing *Fidalma* the drollery of her tone and manner, the richness and originality of her comic humor, were incomparable. Her daring, however, prompted her to do strange things, which would have been condemned in any other singer. For example, while *Fidalma* is in the midst of the most ludicrous drollery of the part, Malibran suddenly took up one word and gave an extended series of the most brilliant and difficult roulades of her own improvisation, through the whole range of her voice. Her hearers were transported at this musical feat, but it entirely interrupted the continuity of the humor.

On *Mme. Malibran's* return to Paris, she found her father, who had unexpectedly returned from his Mexican tour, thoroughly bankrupted in purse, and more embittered than ever by his train of misfortunes. He announced his intention of giving some representations at the Theatre Italien. This resolution caused much vexation to his daughter, but she did not oppose it. Garcia had lost a part of his voice; his tenor had become a barytone, and he could no longer reach the notes which had in former times been written for him. She knew how much her father's voice had become injured, and knowing equally well his intrepid courage, feared, not without reason, that he would tarnish his brilliant reputation. Garcia displayed even more than ever the great artist. A hoarseness seized him at the moment of appearing on the stage. "This is nothing," said he: "I shall do very well"; and, by sheer strength of talent and of will, he arranged the music of his part (*Almaviva*) to suit the condition of his voice, changing the passages, transposing them an octave lower, and taking up notes adroitly where he found his voice available; and all this instantly, with an admirable confidence.



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Malibran's second season in Paris confirmed the estimate which had been placed on her genius, but the incessant labors of her professional life and the ardor with which she pursued the social enjoyments of life were commencing to undermine her health. She never hesitated to sacrifice herself and her time for the benefit of her friends, in spite of her own physical debility. One night she had promised to sing at the house of her friend, *Mme. Merlin*, and was amazed at the refusal of her manager to permit her absence from the theatre on a benefit-night. She said to him: "It does not signify; I sing at the theatre because it is my duty, but afterward I sing at *Mme. Merlin's* because it is my pleasure." And so after one o'clock in the morning, wearied from the arduous performance of "*Semiramide*," she appeared at her friend's and sang, supped, and waltzed till daybreak. This excess in living every moment of her life and utter indifference to the requirements of health were characteristic of her whole career. One night she fainted in her dressing-room before going on the stage. In the hurry of applying restoratives, a *vinaigrette* containing some caustic acid was emptied over her lips, and her mouth was covered with blisters. The manager was in despair; but *Mme. Malibran*, quietly stepping to the mirror, cut off the blisters with a pair of scissors, and sang as usual. Such was the indomitable courage of the woman that she was always faithful to her obligations, come what might; a conscientiousness which was afterward the immediate cause of her death.

### IV.

It was in Paris, in 1830, that *Mme. Malibran's* romantic attachment to M. Charles de Beriot, the famous Belgian violinist, had its beginning. M. de Beriot had been warmly and hopelessly enamored of Malibran's rival, *Mdlle. Sontag*, in spite of the fact that the latter lady was known to be the *fiancee* of Count Rossi. The sympathies of Malibran's warm and affectionate heart were called out by her friend's disappointment, for gossip in the musical circles of Paris discussed De Beriot's unfortunate love-affair very freely. With her usual impulsive candor she expressed her interest in the brilliant young violinist without reserve, and it was not long before De Beriot made Malibran his confidante, and found consolation for his troubles in her soothing companionship. The result was what might have been expected. Malibran's beauty, tenderness, and genius speedily displaced the former idol in the heart of the Belgian artist, while she learned that it was but a short step between pity and love. This mutual affection was the cause of a dispute between Maria and her friend *Mme. Naldi*, whose austere morality disapproved the intimacy, and there was a separation, our singer moving into lodgings of her own.

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It was during her London engagement of the same year that *Mme. Malibran* became acquainted with the greatest of bassos, Lablache, who made his *debut* before an English public in the role of *Geronimo*, in “*Il Matrimonio Segreto*.” The friendship between these two distinguished artists became a very warm one, that only terminated with Malibran’s death. Lablache, who had sung with all the greatest artists of the age, lamented her early taking off as one of the greatest misfortunes of the lyric stage. One strong tie between them was their mutual benevolence. On one occasion an unfortunate Italian importuned Lablache for assistance to return to his native land. The next day, when all the company were assembled for rehearsal, Lablache requested them to join in succoring their unhappy compatriot; all responded to the call, *Mme. Lalande* and *Donzelli* each contributing fifty francs. Malibran gave the same as the others; but, the following day, seizing the opportunity of being alone with Lablache, she desired him to add to her subscription of fifty francs two hundred and fifty more; she had not liked to appear to bestow more than her friends, so she had remained silent the preceding day. Lablache hastened to seek his *protege*, who, however, profiting by the help afforded him, had already embarked; but, not discouraged, Lablache hurried after him, and arrived just as the steamer was leaving the Thames. Entering a boat, however, he reached the vessel, went on board, and gave the money to the *emigre*, whose expressions of gratitude amply repaid the trouble of the kind-hearted basso. Another time Malibran aided a poor Italian who was destitute, telling him to say nothing about it. “Ah, madame,” he cried, “you have saved me for ever!” “Hush!” she interrupted; “do not say that; only the Almighty could do so. Pray to him.”

The feverish activity of *Mme. Malibran* was shown at this time in a profusion of labors and an ardor in amusement which alarmed all her friends. When not engaged in opera, she was incessant in concert-giving, for which her terms were eighty guineas per night. She would fly to Calais and sing there, hurry back to England, thence hasten to Brussels, where she would give a concert, and then cross the Channel again, giving herself no rest. Night after night she would dance and sing at private parties till dawn, and thus waste the precious candle of her life at both ends. She was haunted by a fancy that, when she ceased to live thus, she would suddenly die, for she was full of the superstition of her Spanish race. *Mme. Malibran* about this time essayed the same experiment which *Pasta* had tried, that of singing the role of the Moor in “*Otello*.” It was not very successful, though she sang the music and acted the part with fire. The delicate figure of a woman was not fitted for the strong and masculine personality of the Moorish warrior, and the charm of her expression was completely veiled by the swarthy mask of paint. Her versatility was so daring that she wished even to out-leap the limits of nature.

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The great *diva's* horizon (since Sontag's retirement from the stage she had been acknowledged the leading singer of the age) was now destined to be clouded by a portentous event. M. Malibran arrived in Paris. He had heard of his wife's brilliant success, and had come to assert his rights over her. Maria declined to see him, and no persuasions of her friends could induce her to grant the *soi-disant* husband, for whose memory she had nothing but rooted aversion, even an interview. Though she finally arrived at a compromise with him (for his sole interest in resuming relationship with his wife seemed to be the desire of sharing in the emoluments of her profession), she determined not to sing again in the French capital while M. Malibran remained there, and accordingly retired to a chateau near Brussels. The whole musical world was interested in settling this imbroglio, and there was a final settlement, by the terms of which the singer was not to be troubled or interfered with by her husband as long as he was paid a fixed stipend. She returned to Paris, and reappeared at the Italiens as *Ninetta*, the great Rubini being in the same cast. The two singers vied with each other "till," observed a French critic, "it seemed as if talent, feeling, and enthusiasm could go no further." This engagement, however, was cut short by her frequent and alarming illnesses, and *Mme.* Malibran, though reckless and short-sighted in regard to her own health, became seriously alarmed. She suddenly departed from the city, leaving a letter for the director, Severini, avowing a determination not to return, at least till her health was fully reestablished. This threatened the ruin of the administration, for Malibran was the all-powerful attraction. M. Viardot, a friend who had her entire confidence (*Mlle.* Pauline Garcia afterward became *Mme.* Viardot), was sent to Brussels as ambassador, and he represented the ruin she would entail on the operatic season of the Italiens. This plea appealed to her generosity, and she returned to fulfill her engagement. Constant attacks of illness, however, continued to disturb her performances, and the Parisian public chose to attribute this interruption of their pleasures to the caprice of the *diva*. She so resented this injustice that she determined, at the close of the engagement, that she would never again sing in Paris. Her last appearance, on January 8, 1832, was as *Desdemona*, and the fervency of her singing and acting made it a memorable night, as the rumor had crept out that *Mme.* Malibran was then taking a lasting leave of them as an artist, and the audience sought to repair their former injustice by redoubled expressions of enthusiasm and pleasure.



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An amusing instance of her eccentric and impulsive resolution was her hasty tour with La-blache to Italy which occurred a few months afterward. The great basso, passing through Brussels *en route* to Naples, called at her villa to pay his respects. Malibran declared her intention, in spite of his laughing incredulity, of going with him. Though he was to leave at dawn the next morning, she was waiting at the door of his hotel when he came down the stairs. As she had no passport, she was detained on the Lombardy frontier till Lablache obtained the needed document. At Milan she only sang in private concerts, and pressed on to Rome, where she engaged for a short season at the Teatro Valle, and succeeded in offending the *amour propre* of the Romans by singing French romances of her own composition in the lesson-scene of "Il Barbiere." She learned of the death of her father while in Rome, news which plunged her in the deepest despondency, for the memory of his sternness and cruelty had long been effaced by her appreciation of the inestimable value his training had been to her. She had often remarked to her friend, *Mme.* Merlin, that without just such a severe system her voice would never have attained its possibilities.

From Rome she went to Naples to fulfill a *scrittura* with Barbaja, the celebrated *impresario* of that city, to give twelve performances at one thousand francs a night. An immense audience greeted her on the opening night at the Fondo Theatre, August 6, 1832, at first with a cold and critical indifference—a feeling, however, which quickly flamed into all the unrestrained volcanic ardor of the Neapolitan temperament. Thenceforward she sang at double prices, "notwithstanding the subscribers' privileges were on most of these occasions suspended, and although 'Otello,' 'La Gazza Ladra,' and operas of that description were the only ones offered to a public long since tired even of the beauties of Rossini, and proverbial for their love of novelty."

Her great triumph, however, was on the night when she took her leave, in the character of *Ninetta*. "Nothing can be imagined finer than the spectacle afforded by the immense Theatre of San Carlo, crowded to the very ceiling, and ringing with acclamations," says a correspondent of one of the English papers at the time. "Six times after the fall of the curtain *Mme.* Mali-bran was called forward to receive the reiterated plaudits and adieux of the assembled multitude, and indicate by graceful and expressive gestures the degree to which she was overpowered by fatigue and emotion. The scene did not end within the walls of the theatre; for a crowd of the most enthusiastic rushed from all parts of the house to the stage-door, and, as soon as her sedan came out, escorted it with loud acclamations to the Palazzo Barbaja, and renewed their salutations as the charming vocalist ascended the steps."



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*Mme.* Malibran had now learned to dearly love Italy and its impulsive, warm-hearted people, so congenial to her own nature. She sang in different Italian cities, receiving everywhere the most enthusiastic receptions. In Bologna they placed a bust of their adored songstress in the peristyle of the theatre. Each city vied with its neighbor in lavishing princely gifts on her. She had not long been in London, where she returned to meet her spring engagement at the King's Theatre in 1833, when she concluded a contract with the Duke Visconti of Milan for one hundred and eighty-five performances, seventy-five in the autumn and carnival season of 1835-'36, seventy-five in the corresponding season of 1836-'37, and thirty-five in the autumn of 1836, at a salary of eighteen thousand pounds. These were the highest terms which had then ever been offered to a public singer, or in fact to any stage performer since the days of imperial Rome.

### V.

*Mme.* Malibran's Italian experiences were in the highest sense gratifying alike to her pride as a great artist and to her love of admiration as a woman. Her popularity became a mania which infected all classes, and her appearance on the streets was the signal for the most fervid shouts of enthusiasm from the populace. For two years she alternated between London and the sunny lands where she had become such an idol. She had to struggle in Milan against the indelible impress made by *Mme.* Pasta, whose admirers entertained an almost fanatical regard for her memory as the greatest of lyric artists; but when Malibran appeared as *Norma*, a part written by Bellini expressly for Pasta, she was proclaimed *la cantante per eccellenza*. A medal, executed by the distinguished sculptor Valerio Nesti, was struck in her honor. Her generosity of nature was signally instanced during these golden Italian days in many acts of beneficence, of which the following are instances: During her stay at Sinigaglia in the summer of 1834, she heard an exquisite voice singing beneath the windows of her hotel. On looking out she saw a wan beggar-girl dressed in rags. Discovering by investigation that it was a case of genuine want, she placed the girl in a position where she could receive an excellent musical education and have all her needs amply supplied. On the eve of her departure from Naples, the last engagement she ever sang in that city, Gallo, proprietor of the Teatro Emeronnio, came to entreat her to sing once at his establishment. He had a wife and several children, and was a very worthy man, on the verge of bankruptcy. "I will sing," answered she, "on one condition—that not a word is said about remuneration." She chose the part of *Amina*; the house was crammed, and the poor man was saved from ruin. A vast multitude followed her home, with an enthusiasm which amounted almost to a frenzy, and the grateful manager named his theatre the Teatro Garcia. On Ash-Wednesday, March 13, 1835, *Mme.* Malibran bade the Neapolitans adieu—an eternal adieu. Radiant with glory, and crowned with flowers, she was conducted by the Neapolitans to the faubourgs amid the *eclat* of *vivats* and acclamations.



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The Neapolitans adored Malibran, and she loved to sing to these susceptible lovers of the divine art. On one occasion when she was suffering from a severe accident, she appeared with her arm in a sling rather than disappoint her audience. During all her Italian seasons, especially in Naples, where perfection of climate and delightful scenery combine to stimulate the animal spirits, she pursued the same wild and reckless course which had so often threatened to cut off her frail tenure of life. A daring horsewoman and swimmer, she alternated these exercises with fatiguing studies and incessant social pleasures. She practiced music five or six hours a day, spent several hours in violent exercise, and in the evenings not engaged at the theatre would go to parties, where she amused herself and her friends in a thousand different ways—making caricatures, doggerel verses, riddles, conundrums, *bouts-rimes*, dancing, jesting, laughing, and singing. Full of exhaustless vivacity, she seemed more and more to disdain rest as her physical powers grew weaker. The enthusiasm with which she was received and followed everywhere was in itself a dangerous draught on her nervous energies, which should have been husbanded, not lavishly wasted. One night at Milan she was deluged with bouquets of which the leaves were of gold and silver, and recalled by the frantic acclamations of her hearers twenty times, at the close of which she fainted on the stage. It was during this engagement at Milan that she heard of the death of the young composer, Vincentio Bellini, on September 23, 1835, and she set on foot a subscription for a tribute to his memory, leading the list with four-hundred francs. It was a premonition of her own departure from the world of art which she had so splendidly adorned, for exactly a year from that day she breathed her last sigh.

Her arrival in Venice during this last triumphant tour of her life was the occasion for an ovation not less flattering than those she had received elsewhere. As her gondola entered the Grand Canal, she was welcomed with a deafening *fanfare* of trumpets, the crash of musical bands, and the shouts of a vast multitude. It was as if some great general had just returned from victories in the field, which had saved a state. Malibran was frightened at this enthusiasm, and took refuge in a church, which speedily became choke-full of people, and a passage had to be opened for her exit to her hotel. Whenever she appeared, the multitude so embarrassed her that a way had to be made by the gendarmes, and her gondola was always pursued by a *cortege* of other gondolas, that crowded in her wake. When she departed, the city presented her with a magnificent diamond and ruby diadem.

In March, 1835, the divorce which she had long been seeking was granted by a French tribunal, and ten months later, at the expiration of the limit fixed by French law, she married M. De Beriot, March 29, 1836, thus legalizing the birth of their son, Wilfred de Beriot, who, with one daughter, that did not live, had been the fruit of their passionate attachment. On the day of her marriage she distributed a thousand francs among the poor, and her friends showered costly gifts on her, among them being an agraffe of pearls from the Queen of France.



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During the season of 1835 *Mme. Malibran* appeared for Mr. Bunn at Drury Lane and Covent Garden in twenty-six performances, for which she received £3,463. Among other operas she appeared in Balfe's new work, "The Maid of Artois," which, in spite of its beautiful melody, has never kept its hold on the stage. Her *Leonora* in Beethoven's "Fidelio" was considered by many the peer of *Mme. Schroder-Devrient's* grand performance. Her labors during this season were gigantic. She would rise at 5 a.m., and practice for several hours, rehearsing before a mirror and inventing attitudes. It was in this way that she conceived the "stage-business" which produced such an electric impression in "Gli Orazi," when the news of her lover's death is announced to the heroine. "While the rehearsals of 'The Maid of Artois' were going on from day to day—and *Mme. Malibran's* rehearsals were not so many hours of sauntering indifference—she would, immediately after they were finished, dart to one or two concerts, and perhaps conclude the day by singing at an evening party. She pursued the same course during her performance of that arduous character," thus wrote one of the critics of the time, for the interest which *Malibran* excited was so great that the public loved to hear of all the details of her remarkable career.

Shortly after her marriage in the spring of 1836, *Mme. de Beriot* was thrown from her horse while attending a hunting-party in England, and sustained serious internal injury, which she neglected to provide against by medical treatment, concealing it even from her husband. Indeed, she sang on the same evening, and her prodigious facility in *tours de force* was the subject of special comment, for she seemed spurred to outdo herself from consciousness of physical weakness. When she returned to England again in the following September, her failing health was painfully apparent to all. Yet her unconquerable energy struggled against her sufferings, and she would permit herself no relaxation. In vain her husband and her good friend *Lablachc* remonstrated. A hectic, feverish excitement pervaded all her actions. She was engaged to sing at the Manchester Musical Festival, and at the rehearsals she would laugh and cry hysterically by turns.

At the first performance of the festival in the morning, she was carried out of her dressing-room in a swoon, but the dying singer was bent on doing what she considered her duty. She returned and delivered the air of *Abraham* by *Cimarosa*. Her thrilling tones and profound dejection made a deep impression on the audience. The next day she rallied from her sick-bed and insisted on being carried to the festival building, where she was to sing a duet with *Mme. Caradori-Allen*. This was the dying song of the swan, and it is recorded that her last effort was one of the finest of her life. The assembly, entranced by the genius and skill of the singer, forgot her precarious condition and demanded a repetition. *Malibran* again sang with all the passionate fire of her nature, and her wonderful voice died away in a prolonged shake on her very topmost note. It was her last note on earth, for she was carried thence to her deathbed.



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Her sufferings were terrible. Convulsions and fainting-fits followed each other in swift succession, and it was evident that her end was near. The news of her fatal illness excited the deepest sympathy and sorrow throughout England and France, and bulletins of her condition were issued every day. Pending the arrival of her own physician, Dr. Belluomini, from London, she had been bled while in a fainting-fit by two local practitioners. When she recovered her senses, she said, "I am a slain woman, for they have bled me!" She died on September 23, 1836, and De Beriot's name was the last word that parted her pallid lips.

The death of this great and idolized singer produced a painful shock throughout Europe, and was regarded as a public calamity, for she had been as much admired and beloved as a woman as she was worshiped as an artist. Her remains, first interred in Manchester, were afterward removed by her husband to Brussels, where he raised a circular memorial chapel to her memory at Lacken. Her statue, chiseled in white marble by Geefs, represents her as *Norma*, and stands in the center, faintly lit by a single sunbeam admitted from a dome, and surrounded by masses of shadow. "It appears," says the Countess de Merlin, "like a fantastic thought, the dream of a poet."

Maria Malibran was unquestionably one of the most gifted and remarkable women who ever adorned the lyric stage. The charm of her singing consisted in the peculiarity of the timbre and the remarkable range of her voice, in her excitable temperament, which prompted her to execute the most audacious improvisations, and in her strong musical feeling, which kept her improvisations within the laws of good taste. Her voice, a mezzo-soprano, with a high soprano range superadded by incessant work and training, was in its middle register very defective, a fault which she concealed by her profound musical knowledge and technical skill. It was her mind that helped to enslave her hearers; for without mental originality and a distinct sort of creative force her defective voice would have failed to charm, where in fact it did provoke raptures. She was, in the exact sense of a much-abused adjective, a phenomenal singer, and it is the misfortune of the present generation that she died too young for them to hear.

WILHELMINA SCHROEDER-DEVRIENT.

*Mme.* Schroeder-Devrient the Daughter of a Woman of Genius.—Her Early Appearance on the Dramatic Stage in Connection with her Mother.—She studies Music and devotes herself to the Lyric Stage.—Her Operatic *Debut* in Mozart's "Zauberflöte."—Her Appearance and Voice.—*Mlle.* Schroeder makes her *Debut* in her most Celebrated Character, *Fidelio*.—Her own Description of the First Performance.—A Wonderful Dramatic Conception.—Henry Chorley's Judgment of her as a Singer and Actress.—She marries Carl Devrient at Dresden.—*Mme.* Schroeder-Devrient makes herself celebrated as a Representative of Weber's



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Romantic Heroines.—Dissolution of her Marriage.—She makes Successful Appearances in Paris and London in both Italian and German Opera.—English Opinions of the German Artist.—Anecdotes of her London Engagement.—An Italian Tour and Reengagements for the Paris and London Stage.—Different Criticisms of her Artistic Style.—Retirement from the Stage, and Second Marriage.—Her Death in 1860, and the Honors paid to the Memory of her Genius.

### I.

In the year 1832 German opera in its original form was introduced into England for the first time, and London learned to recognize the grandeur of Beethoven in opera, as it had already done in symphony and sonata. "Fidelio" had been already presented in its Italian dress, without making very much impression, for the score had been much mutilated, and the departure from the spirit of the composer flagrant. The opera, as given by artists "to the manner born," was a revelation to English audiences. The intense musical vigor of Beethoven's great work was felt to be a startling variety, wrought out as it was in its principal part by the genius of a great lyric vocalist. This was *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient*, who, as an operatic tragedienne, stands foremost in the annals of the German musical stage, though others have surpassed her in merely vocal resources, and who never has been rivaled except by *Pasta*.

She was the daughter of *Sophia Schroeder*, the *Siddons* of Germany. This distinguished actress for a long time reigned supreme in her art. Her deep sensibilities and dramatic instincts, her noble elocution and stately beauty, fitted her admirably for tragedy. In such parts as *Phedre*, *Medea*, *Lady Macbeth*, *Merope*, *Sappho*, *Jeanne de Montfaucon*, and *Isabella* in "The Bride of Messina," she had no pere. *Wilhelmina Schroeder* was born in Hamburg, October 6, 1805, and was destined by her mother for a stage career. In pursuance of this, the child appeared at the age of five years as a little Cupid, and at ten danced in the ballet at the Imperial Theatre of Vienna. With the gradual development of the young girl's character came the ambition for a higher grade of artistic work. So, when she arrived at the age of fifteen, her mother, who wished her to appear in tragedy, secured for her a position at the Burgtheater of Vienna, where she played in such parts as *Aricie* in "Phedre," and *Ophelia* in "Hamlet." The impression she made was that of a great nascent actress, who would one day worthily fill the place of her mother. But the true scope of her genius was not yet defined, for she had not studied music. At last she was able to study under an Italian master of great repute, named *Mazzatti*, who resided in the Austrian capital.



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Her first appearance was as *Pamina* in Mozart's "Zauberflöte," at the Vienna theatre, January 20, 1821. The *debutante* was warmly welcomed by an appreciative audience, and the terrors of the young girl of seventeen were quickly assuaged by the generous recognition she received. The beauty of her voice, her striking figure and port, and her dramatic genius, combined to make her instantly successful. Wilhelmina Schroeder was tall and nobly molded, and her face, though not beautiful, was sweet, frank, and fascinating—a face which became transfigured with fire and passion under the influence of strong emotion. Her vocal organ was a mellow soprano, which, though not specially flexible, united softness with volume and compass. In intonation and phrasing, her art, in spite of her youth and inexperience, showed itself to be singularly perfect. Though she rapidly became a favorite, her highest triumph was not achieved till she appeared as *Leonora* in the "Fidelio." In this she eclipsed all who had preceded her, and Germany soon rang with her name as that of an artist of the highest genius. Her own account of her first representation of this role is of much interest:

"When I was studying the character of *Leonora* at Vienna, I could not attain that which appeared to me the desired and natural expression at the moment when *Leonora*, throwing herself before her husband, holds out a pistol to the Governor, with the words, 'Kill first his wife!' I studied and studied in vain, though I did all in my power to place myself mentally in the situation of *Leonora*. I had pictured to myself the situation, but I felt that it was incomplete, without knowing why or wherefore. Well, the evening arrived; the audience knows not with what feelings an artist, who enters seriously into a part, dresses for the representation. The nearer the moment approached, the greater was my alarm. When it did arrive, and as I ought to have sung the ominous words and pointed the pistol at the Governor, I fell into such an utter tremor at the thought of not being perfect in my character, that my whole frame trembled, and I thought I should have fallen. Now only fancy how I felt when the whole house broke forth with enthusiastic shouts of applause, and what I thought when, after the curtain fell, I was told that this moment was the most effective and powerful of my whole representation! So, that which I could not attain with every effort of mind and imagination, was produced at this decisive moment by my unaffected terror and anxiety. This result and the effect it had upon the public taught me how to seize and comprehend the incident, so, that which at the first representation I had hit upon unconsciously, I adopted in full consciousness ever afterward in this part."

Not even Malibran could equal her in the impersonation of this character. Never was dramatic performance more completely, more intensely affecting, more deeply pathetic, truthful, tender, and powerful.



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Some critics regarded her as far more of the tragedian than the singer. “Her voice, since I have known it,” observes Mr. Chorley, in his “Modern German Music,” “was capable of conveying poignant or tender expression, but it was harsh and torn—not so inflexible as incorrect. *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* resolved to be *par excellence* ‘the German dramatic singer.’ Earnest and intense as was her assumption of the parts she attempted, her desire of presenting herself first was little less vehement: there is no possibility of an opera being performed by a company, each of whom should be as resolute as she was never to rest, never for an instant to allow the spectator to forget his presence. She cared not whether she broke the flow of the composition by some cry heard on any note or in any scale—by even speaking some word, for which she would not trouble herself to study a right musical emphasis or inflection—provided, only, she succeeded in continuing to arrest the attention. Hence, in part, arose her extraordinary success in “*Fidelio*.” That opera contains, virtually, only one acting character, and with her it rests to intimate the thrilling secret of the whole story, to develop this link by link, in presence of the public, and to give the drama the importance of terror, suspense, and rapture. When the spell is broken by exhibiting the agony and the struggle of which she is the innocent victim, if the devotion, the disguise, and the hope of Leonora, the wife, were not for ever before us, the interest of the prison-opera would flag and wane into a cheerless and incurable melancholy. This *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* took care that it should never do. From her first entry upon the stage, it might be seen that there was a purpose at her heart, which could make the weak strong and the timid brave; quickening every sense, nerving every fiber, arming its possessor with disguise against curiosity, with persuasion more powerful than any obstacle, with expedients equal to every emergency... What Pasta would be in spite of her uneven, rebellious voice, a most magnificent singer, *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* did not care to be, though nature, as I have heard from those who heard her sing as a girl, had blessed her with a fresh, delicious soprano voice.”

## II.

Her fame so increased that the *Fraeulein Schroeder* soon made an art-tour through Germany. Her appearances at Cassel in the spring of 1823, in such characters as *Pamina* and *Agathe*, produced a great sensation. At Dresden she also evoked a large share of popular enthusiasm, and her name was favorably compared with the greatest lights of the German lyric stage. While singing at this capital she met Carl Devrient, one of the principal dramatic tenors of Germany, and, an attachment springing up between the pair, they were married. The union did not prove a happy one, and *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* had



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bitter occasion to regret that she had tied her fortunes to a man utterly unworthy of love and respect. She remained for several years at Dresden, and among other operas she appeared in Weber's "*Euryanthe*," with *Mme. Funk*, Herr Berg-mann, and Herr Meyer. She also made a powerful impression on the attention of both the critics and the public in Cherubini's "*Faniska*," and Spohr's "*Jessonda*," both of which operas are not much known out of Germany, though "*Faniska*" was first produced at the Theatre Feydeau, in Paris, and contributed largely to the fame of its illustrious composer. The austere, noble music is not of a character to please the multitude who love what is sensational and easily understood. When "*Faniska*" was first produced at the Austrian capital in the winter of 1805, both Haydn and Beethoven were present. The former embraced Cherubini, and said to him, "You are my son, worthy of my love"; while Beethoven cordially hailed him as "the first dramatic composer of the age." The opera of "*Faniska*" is based on a Polish legend of great dramatic beauty, and the unity of idea and musical color between it and Beethoven's "*Fidelio*" has often excited the attention of critics. It is perhaps owing to this dramatic similarity that *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* made as much reputation by her performance of it as she had already acquired in Beethoven's lyric masterpiece.

In 1828 she went to Prague, and thence to Berlin, where her marriage was judicially dissolved, she retaining her guardianship of her son, then four years old. Spontini, who was then the musical autocrat of Berlin, conceived a violent dislike to her, and his bitter nature expressed itself in severe and ungenerous sarcasms. But the genius of the singer was proof against the hostility of the Franco-Italian composer, and the immense audiences which gathered to hear her interpret the chef-d'ouvres of Weber, whose fame as the great national composer of Germany was then at its zenith, proved her strong hold on the hearts of the German people. Spontini's prejudice was generally attributed to *Mme. Devrient's* dislike of his music and her artistic identification with the heroines of Weber, for whose memory Spontini entertained much the same envious hate as Salieri felt for Mozart in Vienna at an earlier date.

Our singer's ambition sighed to conquer new worlds, and in 1830 she went to Paris with a troupe of German singers, headed by *Mme. Fischer*, a tall blonde beauty, with a fresh, charming voice, but utterly *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient's* inferior in all the requirements of the great artist. She made her *debut* in May at the Theatre Louvois, as *Agathe* in "*Der Freischutz*," and, though excessively agitated, was so impressive and powerful in the impersonation as to create a great *eclat*. The critics were highly pleased with the beauty and finish of her style. She produced the principal parts of her *repertoire*

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in “Fidelio,” “Don Giovanni,” Weber’s “Oberon” and “Euryanthe,” and Mozart’s “Serail.” It was in “Fidelio,” however, that she raised the enthusiasm of her audiences to the highest pitch. On returning again to Germany she appeared in opera with Scheckner and Sontag, in Berlin, winning laurels even at the expense of *Mme. Sontag*, who was then just on the eve of retiring from the stage, and who was inspired to her finest efforts as she was departing from the field of her triumphs.

Two years later *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* accepted a proposition made to her by the manager of the Theatre Italiens to sing in a language and a school for which she was not fully qualified. The season opened with such a dazzling constellation of genius as has rarely, if ever, been gathered on any one stage—Pasta, Malibran, Schroeder-Devrient, Rubini, Bordogni, and Lablache. *Mme. Pasta*’s illness caused the substitution of Schroeder-Devrient in her place in the opera of “Anna Bolena,” and the result was disastrous to the German singer. But she retrieved herself in the same composer’s “Pirata,” and her splendid performance cooperated with that of Rubini to produce a sensation. It was observed that she quickly accommodated herself to the usages and style of the Italian stage, and soon appeared as if one “to the manner born.” Toward the close of the engagement *Mme. Devrient* appeared for Malibran’s benefit as *Desdemona*, Rubini being the Moor. Though the Rossinian music is a *genre* by itself, and peculiarly dangerous to a singer not trained in its atmosphere and method, the German artist sang it with great skill and finish, and showed certain moments of inspiration in its performance which electrified her hearers.

*Mme. Schroeder-Devrient*’s first appearance in England was under the management of Mr. Monck Mason, who had leased the King’s Theatre in pursuance of a somewhat daring enterprise. A musical and theatrical enthusiast, and himself a composer, though without any experience in the practical knowledge of management, he projected novel and daring improvements, and aspired to produce opera on the most extensive and complete scale. He engaged an enormous company—not only of Italian and German, but of French singers—and gave performances in all three languages. Schroeder-Devrient sang in all her favorite operas, and also *Desdemona*, in Italian. Donzelli was the *Otello*, and the performance made a strong impression on the critics, if not on the public. “We know not,” wrote one, “how to say enough of *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* without appearing extravagant, and yet the most extravagant eulogy we could pen would not come up to our idea of her excellence. She is a woman of first-rate genius; her acting skillful, various, impassioned, her singing pure, scientific, and enthusiastic. Her whole soul is wrapped in her subject, yet she never for a moment oversteps the modesty of nature.” It was during this season that Mr. Chorley first heard



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her. He writes in his "Musical Recollections" a vivid description of her appearance in "Fidelio": "She was a pale woman. Her face, a thoroughly German one, though plain, was pleasing from the intensity of expression which her large features and deep, tender eyes conveyed. She had profuse fair hair, the value of which she thoroughly understood, delighting in moments of great emotion to fling it loose with the wild vehemence of a Maenad. Her figure was superb, though full, and she rejoiced in its display." He also speaks of "the inherent expressiveness of her voice which made it more attractive on the stage than a more faultless organ." *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* met a warm social welcome in London from the family of the great pianist, Moscheles, to whom she was known of old. *Mme. Moscheles* writes in her diary: "Our interesting guests at dinner were the Haizingers, he the admirable tenor singer of whom the German opera company here may well be proud, she pretty and agreeable as ever; we had, too, our great Schroeder and our greater Mendelssohn. The conversation, of course, was animated, and the two ladies were in such spirits that they not only told anecdotes, but accompanied them with dramatic gestures; Schroeder, when telling us how he (the hero of her anecdote) drew his sword, flourished her knife in a threatening manner toward Haizinger, and Mendelssohn whispered to me, 'I wonder what John [the footman] thinks of such an English vivacity? To see the brandishing of knives, and not know what it is all about! Only think!'" A comic episode which occurred during the first performance of "Fidelio" is also related by the same authority: "In that deeply tragic scene where *Mme. Schroeder (Fidelio)* has to give Haizinger (*Florestan*) a piece of bread which she has kept hidden for him three days in the folds of her dress, he does not respond to the action. She whispers to him with a rather coarse epithet: 'Why don't you take it? Do you want it buttered?' All this time, the audience, ignorant of the by-play, was solely intent on the pathetic situation." This is but one of many instances which could be adduced from the annals of the stage showing how the exhibition of the greatest dramatic passion is consistent with the existence of a jocose, almost cynical, humor on the part of the actors.

### III.

In the following year (1833), *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* sang under Mr. Bunn at the Covent Garden Theatre, appearing in several of Weber's and Mozart's masterpieces. She was becoming more and more of a favorite with the English public. The next season she devoted herself again to the stage of Germany, where she was on the whole best understood and appreciated, her faults more uniformly ignored. She appeared in twelve operas by native composers in Berlin, and thence went to Vienna and St. Petersburg. She proceeded to Italy in 1835, where she sang for eighteen



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months in the principal cities and theatres of that country, and succeeded in evoking from the critical Italians as warm a welcome as she had commanded elsewhere. In one city the people were so enthusiastic that they unharnessed her horses, and drew her carriage home from the theatre after her closing performance. Although she never entirely mastered the Italian school, she yet displayed so much intelligence, knowledge, and faculty in her art-work, that all catholic lovers of music recognized her great talents. She appeared again in Vienna in 1836, with *Mme. Tadolini*, Genaro, and Galli, singing in "L'Elisir d'Amore," and works of a similar cast, operas unsuited, one would think, to the peculiar *cachet* of her genius, but her ability in comic and romantic operas, though never so striking as in grand tragedy, seemed to develop with practice.

Her last English engagement was in 1837, opening the season with a performance of "Fidelio" in English. The whole performance was lamentably inferior to that at the Opera-House in 1832. "Norma" was produced, Schroeder-Devrient being seconded by Wilson, Giubilei, and Miss Betts. She was either very ill advised or overconfident, for her "massy" style of singing was totally at variance with the light beauty of Bellini's music. Her conception of the character, however, was in the grandest style of histrionic art. "The sibyls of Michael Angelo are not more grand," exclaimed one critic; "but the vocalization of Pasta and Grisi is wholly foreign to her." During this engagement, *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* was often unable to perform, from serious illness. From England she went to the Lower Rhine.

In 1839 she was at Dresden with Herr Tichatschek, one of the first tenors of Germany, a handsome man, with a powerful, sweet, and extensive voice. In June, 1841, she gave a performance at Berlin, to assist the Parisian subscription for a monument to Cherubini. The opera was "Les Deux Journees," in which she took her favorite part of *Constance*. The same year she sang at Dresden with the utmost success, in a new *role* in Goethe's "Tasso," in which she was said to surpass her *Fidelio*. For several years *Mme. Schroeder-Devrient* resided in perfect seclusion in the little town of Rochlitz, and appeared to have forgotten all her stage ambition. Suddenly, however, she made her reappearance at Dresden in the *role* of *Romeo* in Bellini's "I Montecchi ed i Capuletti." She had lost a good deal of her vocal power and skill, yet her audiences seemed to be moved by the same magic glamour as of old, in consequence of her magnificent acting. Among other works in which she performed during this closing operatic season of her life was Gluck's "Iphigenie en Aulis," which was especially revived for her. Johanna Wagner, the sister of the great composer, was also in the cast, and a great enthusiasm was created by a general stage presentation of almost unparalleled completeness for that time.



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*Mme.* Devrient retired permanently from the stage in the year 1849, having amassed a considerable fortune by her professional efforts. She made a second matrimonial venture with a rich Livonian proprietor named Bock, with whom she retired to his estate. Her retirement occasioned profound regret throughout Germany, where she was justly looked on as one of the very greatest artists, if, indeed, even this reservation could be made, who had ever shone on their lyric stage. The Emperor Francis I. paid *Mme.* Schroeder a compliment which had never before been paid to a German singer. He ordered her portrait to be painted in all her principal characters, and placed in the collection of the Imperial Museum. Six years after her farewell from the stage, an Italian critic, Scudo, heard her sing in a private house in Paris, and speaks very disparagingly of her delivery of the melodies of Schubert in a weak, thin voice. She, like Malibran, possessed one of those voices which needed incessant work and practice to keep it in good order, though she did not possess the consummate musical knowledge and skill of Malibran. She was a woman of great intelligence and keen observation; an artist of the most passionate ardor and impetuosity, always restrained, however, by a well-studied control and reserve; in a word, a great lyric tragedienne rather than a great singer in the exact sense of that word. She must be classed with that group of dramatic singers who were the interpreters of the school of music which arose in Germany after the death of Mozart, and which found its most characteristic type in Carl Maria von Weber, for Beethoven, who on one side belongs to this school, rather belonged to the world, like Shakespeare in the drama, than to a single nationality. *Mme.* Schroeder-De-vrient died February 9, 1860, at Cologne, and the following year her marble bust was placed in the Opera-House at Berlin.

## GIULIA GRISI.

The Childhood of a Great Artist.—Giulietta Grisi's Early Musical Training.—Giuditta Grisi's Pride in the Talents of her Young Sister.—Her Italian *Debut* and Success.—She escapes from a Managerial Taskmaster and takes Refuge in Paris.—Impression made on French Audiences.—Production of Bellini's "Puritani."—Appearance before the London Public.—Character of Grisi's Singing and Acting.—Anecdotes of the Prima Donna.—Marriage of *Mlle.* Grisi.—Her Connection with Other Distinguished Singers.—Rubini, his Character as an Artist, and Incidents of his Life.—Tamburini, another Member of the First Great "Puritani" Quartet.—Lablache, the King of Operatic Bassos.—His Career as an Artist.—His Wonderful Genius as Singer and Actor.—Advent of Mario on the Stage.—His Intimate Association with *Mme.* Grisi as Woman and Artist.—Incidents of Mario's Life and Character as an Artist.—Grisi's Long Hold on the Stage for more than a Quarter Century.—Her American Tour.—Final Retirement from her Profession.—The Elements of her Greatness as a Goddess of Song.



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### I.

A quarter of a century is a long reign for any queen, a brilliant one for an opera queen in these modern days, when the “wear and tear” of stage-life is so exacting. For so long a time lasted the supremacy of *Mme. Grisi*, and it was justified by a remarkable combination of qualities, great physical loveliness, a noble voice, and dramatic impulse, which, if not precisely inventive, was yet large and sympathetic. A celebrated English critic sums up her great qualities and her defects thus: “As an artist calculated to engage, and retain the average public, without trick or affectation, and to satisfy by her balance of charming attributes—by the assurance, moreover, that she was giving the best she knew how to give—she satisfied even those who had received much deeper pleasure and had been impressed with much deeper emotion in the performances of others. I have never tired of *Mme. Grisi* during five-and-twenty years; but I have never been in her case under one of those spells of intense enjoyment and sensation which make an epoch in life, and which leave a print on memory never to be effaced by any later attraction, never to be forgotten so long as life and power to receive shall endure.”

Giulietta Grisi was the younger daughter of M. Gaetano Grisi, an Italian officer of engineers, in the service of Napoleon, and was born at Milan, July 2, 1812. Her mother’s sister was the once celebrated Grassini, who, as the contemporary of Mrs. Billington and *Mme. Mara*, had shared the admiration of Europe with these great singers. Thence probably she and her sister Giuditta, ten years her elder, inherited their gift of song. Giuditta was for a good while regarded as a prodigy by her friends, and acquired an excellent rank on the concert and operatic stage, but she was so far outshone by her more gifted sister, that her name is now only one of the traditions of that throng of talented and hard-working artists who have contributed much to the stability of the lyric stage, without adding to it any resplendent luster. Delicate health prevented the little Giulia from receiving any early musical training, but her own secret ambition caused her to learn the piano-forte, by her own efforts; and her enthusiastic attention, and attempt to imitate, while her sister was practicing *sofeggi*, clearly indicated the bent of her tastes. She soon astonished her family by the fluency and correctness with which she repeated the most difficult passages; and Giuditta, who appreciated these evidences of vocal and mimetic talent, would listen with delight to the lively efforts of her young sister, and then, clasping her fondly in her arms, prophesy that she would be “the glory of her race.” “Thou shalt be more than thy sister, my Giuliettina,” she would exclaim. “Thou shalt be more than thy aunt! It is Giuditta tells thee so—believe it.” The only defect in Giulia’s voice—certainly a serious one—was a chronic hoarseness, which seemed a bar to her advancement as a vocalist.



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Her parents resolved that Giulia should have regular lessons in singing; and she entered the Conservatory of her native town, where her sister had also obtained her musical training. The early talent she developed, under the direction of the composer Marliani, was remarkable. That she might continue her studies uninterrupted, she was sent to Bologna, to her uncle, Colonel Ragani, husband of Grassini, by whom she was put under the care of the learned Giacomo Guglielmi, son of the celebrated composer, who during three years devoted himself entirely to her musical education. Gradually the lovely quality of her voice began to be manifest, and its original blemishes disappeared, her tones acquiring depth, power, and richness.

Giuditta was deeply interested in her young sister's budding talents, and finally took her from the Conservatory, and placed her under the tuition of Fillippo Celli, where she remained for three months, till the *maestro* was obliged to go to Rome to produce a new opera. Giulia Grisi was remarkably apt and receptive, and gifted with great musical intelligence, and she profited by her masters in an exceptional degree. Industry cooperated with talent to so advance her attainments that her sister Giuditta succeeded in the year 1828 in securing her *debut* in Rossini's "Elmira," at Bologna. The part was a small one, but the youth, loveliness, and freshness of voice displayed by the young singer secured for her a decided triumph. Rossini, who was then at Bologna, was delighted with Giulia Grisi, and predicted a great career for her, and Giuditta shed tears of joy over her beloved *protegee*. The director of the theatre engaged her immediately for the carnival season, and in 1829 she appeared as prima donna in many operas, among which were "Il Barbiere," "Towaldo e Dorliska," and "La Sposa di Provincia," the latter of which was expressly written for her by Millotatti.

Our young singer, like many another brilliant cantatrice, in the very dawn of her great career fell into the nets of a shrewd and unprincipled operatic speculator. Signor Lanari, an *impresario* of Florence, recognized the future success of the inexperienced young girl, and decoyed her into an engagement for six years on terms shamefully low, for Giulia's modesty did not appreciate her own remarkable powers. Alone and without competent advisers, she fell an easy prey to the sharp-witted farmer of other people's genius. Among the operas which she sung in at this early period under Lanari's management were Bellini's "I Montecchi ed i Capuletti," which the composer had just written for her sister Giuditta at Venice; "Il Barbiere," and "Giulietta e Romeo," written by Vaccai. She was pronounced by the Italians the most fascinating *Juliet* ever seen on the stage. At Bologna her triumph was no less great, and she became the general topic of discussion and admiration. Lanari was so profiting by his stroke of sharp business that



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he was making a little fortune, and he now transferred his musical property for a large consideration to Signor Crevelli, the director of La Scala at Milan. Here Julia Grisi met Pasta, whom she worshiped as a model of all that was grand and noble in the lyric art. Pasta declared, "I can honestly return to you the compliments paid me by your aunt, and say that I believe you are worthy to succeed us." Here she enjoyed the advantage of studying the great lyric tragedienne, with whom she occasionally performed: not a look, a tone, a gesture of her great model escaped her. She was given the part of *Jane Seymour* in Donizetti's "Anna Bolena," which she looked and acted to perfection, Pasta personating the unfortunate Queen. Madame Pasta, struck with the genius displayed by her young rival, exclaimed: "*Tu iras loin! tu prendras ma place! tu seras Pasta!*" Bellini, who was then in Milan, engaged in the composition of his "Norma," overwhelmed her with applause and congratulations, intermingled with allusions to the part he had in contemplation for her—that of *Adalgiza*.

In November, 1831, there was a strenuous rivalry between the two theatres of Milan, La Scala and the Carcano. The vocal company at the latter comprised Pasta, Lina Koser (now *Mme. Balfe*), Elisa Orlandi, Eugenie Martinet, and other ladies; Kubini, Mariani, and Galli being the leading male singers. The composers were Bellini, Donizetti, and Majocchi. At the Scala, which was still under the direction of Crivelli, then a very old man, were Giulietta Grisi, Amalia Schuetz, and Pisoni, with Mari, Bonfigli, Pocchini, Anbaldi, etc. To this company Giuditta Grisi was added, and a new opera by Coccia, entitled "Enrico di Montfort," was produced, in which both the sisters appeared. The company at the Scala received an accession from the rival theatre, the great Pasta, and soon afterward Donzelli, who ranked among the foremost tenors of the age.

Bellini had just completed "Norma," and it was to be produced at the Scala. The part of the Druid priestess had been expressly written for Pasta. This Bellini considered his masterpiece. It is related that a beautiful Parisienne attempted to extract from his reluctant lips his preference among his own works. The persistent fair one finally overcame his evasions by asking, "But if you were out at sea, and should be shipwrecked—" "Ah!" said the composer, impulsively, "I would leave all the rest and save 'Norma'!" With Pasta were associated Giulia Grisi in the *role of Adalgiza*, and Donzelli in *Pollio*. The singers rehearsed their parts *con amore*, and displayed so much intelligence and enthusiasm that Bellini was quite delighted. The first performance just escaped being a failure in spite of the anxious efforts of the singers. Donzelli's suave and charming execution, even "Casta Diva," delivered by Pasta in her most magnificent style, failed to move the cold audience. Pasta, at the end of the first act, declared the new opera a *fiasco*. The second act was also coldly received till the great duet between *Norma* and *Adalgiza*, which was heartily applauded. This unsealed the pent-up appreciation of the audience, and thenceforward "Norma" was received with thunders of applause for forty nights.



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Encouraged by Pasta, Giulia Grisi declared that she, too, would become a great tragedienne. "How I should love to play *Norma!*" she exclaimed to Bellini one night behind the scenes. "Wait twenty years, and we shall see." "I will play *Norma* in spite of you, and in less than twenty years!" she retorted. The young man smiled incredulously, and muttered, "*A poco! a poco!*" But Grisi kept her word.

Her genius was now fully appreciated, and she had obtained one of those triumphs which form the basis of a great renown. With astonishing ease she passed from *Semiramide* to *Anna Bolena*, then to *Desdemona*, to *Donna Anna*, to *Elena* in the "Donna del Lago."

The young artiste had learned her true value, and was aware of the injury she was suffering from remaining in the service to which she had foolishly bound herself: she was now twenty-four, and time was passing away. Her father's repeated endeavors to obtain more reasonable terms for his daughter from Lanari proved fruitless. He urged that his daughter, having entered into the contract without his knowledge, and while she was a minor, it was illegal. "Then, if you knew absolutely nothing of the matter, and it was altogether without your cognizance," retorted Lanari, imperturbably, "how did it happen that her salary was always paid to you?"

But the high-spirited Giulietta had now become too conscious of her own value to remain hampered by a contract which in its essence was fraudulent. She determined to break her bonds by flight to Paris, where her sister Giuditta and her aunt *Mme. Grassini-Ragani* were then domiciled. She confided her proposed escapade to her father and her old teacher Marliani, who assisted her to procure passports for herself and maid. Her journey was long and tedious, but, spurred by fear and eagerness, she disdained fatigue for seven days of post-riding over bad roads and through mountain-gorges choked with snow, till she threw herself into the arms of her loving friends in the French capital.

## II.

An engagement was procured for her without difficulty at the Opera, which was then controlled by the triumvirate, Rossini, Robert, and Severini. Rossini remembered the beautiful *debutante* for whom he had predicted a splendid future, and secured a definite engagement for her at the Favart to replace *Mme. Malibran*. That this young and comparatively inexperienced girl, with a reputation hardly known out of Italy, should have been chosen to take the place of the great Malibran, was alike flattering testimony to her own rising genius and Rossini's penetration. She appeared first before a French audience in "*Semiramide*," and at once became a favorite. During the season of six months she succeeded in establishing her place as one of the most brilliant singers of the age. She sang in cooperation with many of the foremost



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artists whose names are among the great traditions of the art. In “Don Giovanni,” Rubini and Tamburini appeared with her; in “Anna Bolena,” *Mme.* Tadolini, Santini, and Rubini. Even in Pasta’s own great characters, where *Mlle.* Grisi was measured against the greatest lyric tragedienne of the age, the critics, keen to probe the weak spot of new aspirants, found points of favorable comparison in Grisi’s favor. During this year, 1832, both Giuditta and Giulia Grisi retired from the stage, the former to marry an Italian gentleman of wealth, and the latter to devote a period to rest and study.

When Giulia reappeared on the French stage the following year, a wonderful improvement in the breadth and finish of her art was noticed. She had so improved her leisure that she had eradicated certain minor faults of vocal delivery, and stood confessed a symmetrical and splendidly equipped artist. Her performances during the year 1833 in Paris embraced a great variety of characters, and in different styles of music, in all of which she was the recipient of the most cordial admiration.

The production of Bellini’s last opera, “I Puritani,” in 1834, was one of the great musical events of the age, not solely in virtue of the beauty of the work, but on account of the very remarkable quartet which embodied the principal characters—Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, and La-blache. This quartet continued in its perfection for many years, with the after-substitution of Mario for Rubini, and was one of the most notable and interesting facts in the history of operatic music. Bellini’s extraordinary skill in writing music for the voice was never more noticeably shown than in this opera. In conducting the rehearsals, he compelled the singers to execute after his style. It is recorded that, while Rubini was rehearsing the tenor part, the composer cried out in a rage: “You put no life into the music. Show some feeling. Don’t you know what love is?” Then, changing his voice: “Don’t you know your voice is a gold-mine that has never been explored? You are an excellent artist, but that is not enough. You must forget yourself and try to represent *Gualtiero*. Let’s try again.” Rubini, stung by the reproach, then sang magnificently. “I Puritan!” made a great *furor* in Paris, and the composer received the Cross of the Legion of Honor, an honor then less rarely bestowed than it was in after-years. He did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his widening reputation, but died while composing a new opera for the San Carlo, Naples. In the delirium of his death-bed, he fancied he was at the Favart, conducting a performance of “I Puritani.” *Mlle.* Grisi’s first appearance before the London public occurred during the spring of the same year, and her great personal loveliness and magnificent voice as *Ninetta*, in “La Gazza Ladra,” instantly enslaved the English operatic world, a worship which lasted unbroken for many years. Her *Desdemona* in “Otello,” which shortly followed her first opera, was supported by Rubini as *Otello*, Tamburini as *Iago*, and Ivanhoff as *Rodriguez*. It may be doubted whether any singer ever leaped into such instant and exalted favor in London, where the audiences are habitually cold.

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Her appearance as *Norma* in December, 1834, stamped this henceforth as her greatest performance. "In this character, Grisi," says a writer in the "Musical World," "is not to be approached, for all those attributes which have given her her best distinction are displayed therein in their fullest splendor. Her singing may be rivaled, but hardly her embodiment of ungovernable and vindictive emotion. There are certain parts in the lyric drama of Italy this fine artiste has made her own: this is one of the most striking, and we have a faith in its unreachable superiority—in its completeness as a whole—that is not to be disturbed. Her delivery of 'Casta Diva' is a transcendent effort of vocalization. In the scene where she discovers the treachery of *Pollio*, and discharges upon his guilty head a torrent of withering and indignant reproof, she exhibits a power, bordering on the sublime, which belongs exclusively to her, giving to the character of the insulted priestess a dramatic importance which would be remarkable even if entirely separated from the vocal preeminence with which it is allied. But, in all its aspects, the performance is as near perfection as rare and exalted genius can make it, and the singing of the actress and the acting of the singer are alike conspicuous for excellence and power. Whether in depicting the quiet repose of love, the agony of abused confidence, the infuriate resentment of jealousy, or the influence of feminine piety, there is always the best reason for admiration, accompanied in the more tragic moments with that sentiment of awe which greatness of conception and vigor of execution could alone suggest."

Mr. Chorley writes, in his "Musical Reminiscences": "Though naturally enough in some respects inexperienced on her first appearance in England, Giulia Grisi was not incomplete. And what a soprano voice was hers! rich, sweet; equal throughout its compass of two octaves (from C to C), without a break or a note which had to be managed. Her voice subdued the audience ere 'Dipiacer' was done.... In 1834 she commanded an exactness of execution not always kept up by her during the after-years of her reign. Her shake was clear and rapid; her scales were certain; every interval was taken without hesitation by her. Nor has any woman ever more thoroughly commanded every gradation of force than she—in those early days especially; not using the contrast of loud and soft too violently, but capable of any required violence, of any advisable delicacy. In the singing of certain slow movements pianissimo, such as the girl's prayer on the road to execution, in 'La Gazza,' or as the cantabile in the last scene of 'Anna Bolena' (which we know as 'Home, Sweet Home'), the clear, penetrating beauty of her reduced tones (different in quality from the whispering semi-ventriloquism which was one of *Mlle. Lind's* most favorite effects) was so unique as to reconcile the ear to a certain shallowness of expression in her rendering of the words and the situation.

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“At that time the beauty of sound was more remarkable (in such passages as I have just spoken of) than the depth of feeling. When the passion of the actress was roused—as in ‘La Gazza,’ during the scene with her deserter father—with the villainous magistrate, or in the prison with her lover, or on her trial before sentence was passed—her glorious notes, produced without difficulty or stint, rang through the house like a clarion, and were truer in their vehemence to the emotion of the scene than were those wonderfully subdued sounds, in the penetrating tenuity of which there might be more or less artifice. From the first, the vigor always went more closely home to the heart than the tenderness in her singing; and her acting and her vocal delivery—though the beauty of her face and voice, the mouth that never distorted itself, the sounds that never wavered, might well mislead an audience—were to be resisted by none.”

Henceforward, *Mlle.* Grisi alternated between London and Paris for many years, her great fame growing with the ripening years. Of course, she, like other beautiful singers, was the object of passionate addresses, and the ardent letters sent to her hotel and dressing-room at the theatre occasioned her much annoyance. Many unpleasant episodes occurred, of which the following is an illustration, as showing the persecution to which stage celebrities are often subjected: While she was in her stage-box at the Paris Opera one night, in the winter of 1836, she observed an unfortunate admirer, who had pursued her for months, lying in ambush near the door, as if awaiting her exit. M. Robert, one of the managers, requested the intruder to retire, and, as the admonition was unheeded, Colonel Ragani, Grisi’s uncle, somewhat sternly remonstrated with him. The reckless lover drew a sword from a cane, and would have run Colonel Ragani through, had it not been for the coolness of a gentleman passing in the lobby, who seized and disarmed the amorous maniac, who was a young author of some repute, named Dupuzet. Anecdotes of a similar kind might be enumerated, for Grisi’s womanly fascinations made havoc among that large class who become easily enamored of the goddesses of the theatre.

Like all the greatest singers, Grisi was lavishly generous. She had often been known to sing in five concerts in one day for charitable purposes. At one of the great York festivals in England, she refused, as a matter of professional pride, to sing for less than had been given to Malibran, but, to show that there was nothing ignoble in her persistence, she donated all the money received to the poor. She rendered so many services to the Westminster Hospital that she was made an honorary governor of that institution, and in manifold ways proved that the goodness of her heart was no whit less than the splendor of her artistic genius.



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The marriage of *Mlle.* Grisi, in the spring of 1830, to M. Auguste Gerard de Melcy, a French gentleman of fortune, did not deprive the stage of one of its greatest ornaments, for after a short retirement at the beautiful chateau of Vaucresson, which she had recently purchased, she again resumed the operatic career which had so many fascinations for one of her temperament, as well as substantial rewards. Her first appearance in London after her marriage was with Rubini and Tamburini in the opera of "Semiramide," speedily followed by a performance of *Donna Anna*, in "Don Giovanni." The excitement of the public in its eager anticipation of the latter opera was wrought to the highest pitch. A great throng pressed against both entrances of the theatre for hours before the opening of the doors, and many ladies were severely bruised or fainted in the crush. It was estimated that more than four thousand persons were present on this occasion. The cast was a magnificent one. *Mme.* Grisi was supported by *Mmes.* Persiani and Albertazzi, and Tamburini, Lablache, and Rubini. This was hailed as one of the great gala nights in the musical records of London, and it is said that only a few years ago old connoisseurs still talked of it as something incomparable, in spite of the gifted singers who had since illustrated the lyric art. *Mme.* Pasta, who occupied a stage box, led the applause whenever her beautiful young rival appeared, and Grisi, her eyes glowing with happy tears, went to Pasta's box to thank the queen of lyric tragedy for her cordial homage.

"Don Giovanni" was performed with the same cast in January, 1838, at the Theatre Italiens. About an hour after the close of the performance the building was discovered to be on fire, and it was soon reduced to a heap of glowing ashes. Severini, one of the directors, leaped from an upper story, and was instantly dashed to pieces, and Robert narrowly saved himself by aid of a rope ladder. Rossini, who had an apartment in the opera-house, was absent, but the whole of his musical library, valued at two hundred thousand francs, was destroyed, with many rare manuscripts, which no effort or expense could replace.

### III.

*Mme.* Grisi, more than any other prima donna who ever lived, was habitually associated in her professional life with the greatest singers of the other sex. Among those names which are inseparable from hers, are those of Rubini, Tamburini, Lablache, and, *par excellence*, that of Mario. Any satisfactory sketch of her life and artistic surroundings would be incomplete without something more than a passing notice of these shining lights of the lyric art. Giambattista Rubini, without a shred of dramatic genius, raised himself to the very first place in contemporary estimation by sheer genius as a singer, for his musical skill was something more than the outcome of mere knowledge



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and experience, and in this respect he bears a close analogy to Malibran. Rubini's countenance was mean, his figure awkward, and lacking in all dignity of carriage; he had no conception of taste, character, or picturesque effect. As stolid as a wooden block in all that appertains to impersonation of character, his vocal organ was so incomparable in range and quality, his musical equipment and skill so great, that his memory is one of the greatest traditions of the lyric art.

Rubini, born at Bergamo in the year 1795, made his *debut* in one of the theatres of his native town, at the age of twelve, in a woman's part. This curious prima donna afterward sat at the door of the theatre, between two candles, holding a plate, in which the admiring public deposited their offerings to the fair *beneficiaire*. His next step was playing on the violin in the orchestra between the acts of comedies, and singing in the chorus during the operatic season. He seems to have been unnoticed, except as one of the *hoi polloi* of the musical rabble, till an accident attracted attention to his talent. A drama was to be produced in which a very difficult cavatina was introduced. The manager was at a loss for any one to sing it till Rubini proffered his services. The fee was a trifling one, but it paved the way for an engagement in the minor parts of opera. The details of Rubini's early life seem to be involved in some obscurity. He was engaged in several wandering companies as second tenor, and in 1814, Rubini then being nineteen years of age, we find him singing at Pavia for thirty-six shillings a month. In the latter part of his career he was paid twenty thousand pounds sterling a year for his services at the St. Petersburg Imperial Opera. This singer acquired his vocal style, which his contemporaries pronounced to be matchless, in the operas of Rossini, and was indebted to no special technical training, except that which he received through his own efforts, and the incessant practice of the lyric art in provincial companies. A splendid musical intelligence, however, repaired the lack of early teaching, though, perhaps, a voice less perfect in itself would have fared badly through such desultory experiences. Like so many of the great singers of the modern school, Rubini first gained his reputation in the operas of Bellini and Donizetti, and many of the tenor parts of these works were expressly composed for him. Rubini was singing at the Scala, Milan, when Barbaja, the *impresario*, who had heard Bellini's opera of "Bianca e Fernando," at Naples, commissioned the young composer, then only twenty years old, to produce a new opera for his theatre in the Tuscan capital. He gave him the libretto of "Il Pirata," and Bellini, in company with Rubini (for they had become intimate friends), retired to the country. Here the singer studied, as they were produced, the simple, touching airs which he afterward delivered on the stage with such admirable



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expression. With this friendship began Rubini's art connection with the Italian composer, which lasted till the latter's too early death. Rubini was such a great singer, and possessed such admirable powers of expression, especially in pathetic airs (for it was well said of him, "*qu'il avait des larmes dans la voix*"), that he is to be regarded as the creator of that style of singing which succeeded that of the Rossinian period. The florid school of vocalization had been carried to an absurd excess, when Rubini showed by his example what effect he could produce by singing melodies of a simple emotional nature, without depending at all on mere vocalization. It is remarkable that it was largely owing to Rubini's suggestions and singing that Bellini made his first great success, and that Donizetti's "Anna Bolena," also the work which laid the foundation of this composer's greatness, should have been written and produced under similar conditions.

The immense power, purity, and sweetness of his voice probably have never been surpassed. The same praise may be awarded to his method of producing his tones, and all that varied and complicated skill which comes under the head of vocalization. Rubini had a chest of uncommon bigness, and the strength of his lungs was so prodigious that on one occasion he broke his clavicle in singing a B flat. The circumstances were as follows: He was singing at La Scala, Milan, in Pacini's "Talismano." In the recitative which accompanies the entrance of the tenor in this opera, the singer has to attack B flat without preparation, and hold it for a long time. Since Farinelli's celebrated trumpet-song, no feat had ever attained such a success as this wonderful note of Rubini's. It was received nightly with tremendous enthusiasm. One night the tenor planted himself in his usual attitude, inflated his chest, opened his mouth; but the note would not come. *Os liabet, sed non clambit*. He made a second effort, and brought all the force of his lungs into play. The note pealed out with tremendous power, but the victorious tenor felt that some of the voice-making mechanism had given way. He sang as usual through the opera, but discovered on examination afterward that the clavicle was fractured. Rubini had so distended his lungs that they had broken one of their natural barriers. Rubini's voice was an organ of prodigious range by nature, to which his own skill had added several highly effective notes. His chest range, it is asserted by Fetis, covered two octaves from C to C, which was carried up to F in the *voce di testa*. With such consummate skill was the transition to the falsetto managed that the most delicate and alert ear could not detect the change in the vocal method. The secret of this is believed to have begun and died with Rubini. Perhaps, indeed, it was incommunicable, the result of some peculiarity of vocal machinery.

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From what has been said of Rubini's lack of dramatic talent, it may be rightfully inferred, as was the fact, that he had but little power in musical declamation. Rubini was always remembered by his songs, and though the extravagance of embroidery, the roulades and cadenzas with which he ornamented them, oftentimes raised a question as to his taste, the exquisite pathos and simplicity with which he could sing when he elected were incomparable. This artist was often tempted by his own transcendent powers of execution to do things which true criticism would condemn, but the ease with which he overcame the greatest vocal difficulties excused for his admirers the superabundance of these displays. In addition to the great finish of his art, his geniality of expression was not to be resisted. He so thoroughly and intensely enjoyed his own singing that he communicated this persuasion to his audiences. Rubini would merely walk through a large portion of an opera with indifference, but, when his chosen moment arrived, there were such passion, fervor, and putting forth of consummate vocal art and emotion that his hearers hung breathless on the notes of his voice. As the singer of a song in opera, no one, according to his contemporaries, ever equaled him. According to Chorley, his "songs did not so much create a success for him as an ecstasy of delight in those that heard him. The mixture of musical finish with excitement which they displayed has never been equaled within such limits or on such conditions as the career of Rubini afforded. He ruled the stage by the mere art of singing more completely than any one—man or woman—has been able to do in my time." Rubini died in 1852, and left behind him one of the largest fortunes ever amassed on the stage.

Another member of the celebrated "Puritani" quartet was Signor Tamburini. His voice was a bass in quality, with a barytone range of two octaves, from F to F, rich, sweet, extensive, and even. His powers of execution were great, and the flexibility with which he used his voice could only be likened to the facility of a skillful 'cello performer. He combined largeness of style, truth of accent, florid embellishment, and solidity. His acting, alike in tragedy and comedy, was spirited and judicious, though it lacked the irresistible strokes of spontaneous genius, the flashes of passion, or rich drollery which made Lablache so grand an actor, or, in a later time, redeemed the vocal imperfections of Ronconi. An amusing instance of Tamburini's vocal skill and wealth of artistic resources, displayed in his youth, was highly characteristic of the man. He was engaged at Palermo during the Carnival season of 1822, and on the last night the audience attended the theatre, inspired by the most riotous spirit of carnivalesque revelry. Large numbers of them came armed with drums, trumpets, shovels, tin pans, and other charivari instruments. Tamburini, finding himself utterly unable to make his ordinary *basso*



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*cantante* tones heard amid this Saturnalian din, determined to sing his music in the falsetto, and so he commenced in the voice of a *soprano sfogato*. The audience were so amazed that they laid aside their implements of musical torture, and began to listen with amazement, which quickly changed to delight. Tamburini's falsetto was of such purity, so flexible and precise in florid execution, that he was soon applauded enthusiastically. The cream of the joke, though, was yet to come. The poor prima donna was so enraged and disgusted by the horse-play of the audience that she fled from the theatre, and the poor manager was at his wit's end, for the humor of the people was such that it was but a short step between rude humor and destructive rage. Tamburini solved the problem ingeniously, for he donned the fugitive's satin dress, clapped her bonnet over his wig, and appeared on the stage with a mincing step, just as the rioters, impatient at the delay, were about to carry the orchestral barricade by storm. Never was seen so unique a soprano, such enormous hands and feet. He courtesied, one hand on his heart, and pretended to wipe away tears of gratitude with the other at the clamorous reception he got. He sang the soprano score admirably, burlesquing it, of course, but with marvelous expression and far greater powers of execution than the prima donna herself could have shown. The difficult problem to solve, however, was the duet singing. But this Tamburini, too, accomplished, singing the part of *Elisa* in falsetto, and that of the *Count* in his own natural tones. This wonderful exhibition of artistic resources carried the opera to a triumphant close, amid the wild cheers of the audience, and probably saved the manager the loss of no little property.

But, greatest of all, perhaps the most wonderful artist among men that ever appeared in opera, was Lablache. Position and training did much for him, but an all-bounteous Nature had done more, for never in her most lavish moods did she more richly endow an artistic organization. Luigi Lablache was born at Naples, December 6, 1794, of mixed Irish and French parentage, and probably this strain of Hibernian blood was partly responsible for the rich drollery of his comic humor. Young Lablache was placed betimes in the Conservatorio della San Sebastiano, and studied the elements of music thoroughly, as his instruction covered not merely singing, but the piano, the violin, and violoncello. It is believed that, had his vocal endowments not been so great, he could have become a leading *virtuoso* on any instrument he might have selected. Having at length completed his musical education, he was engaged at the age of eighteen as *buffo* at the San Carlino theatre at Naples. Shortly after his *debut*, Lablache married Teresa Pinotti, the daughter of an eminent actor, and found in this auspicious union the most wholesome and powerful influence of his life. The young wife recognized the great



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genius of her husband, and speedily persuaded him to retire from such a narrow sphere. Lablache devoted a year to the serious study of singing, and to emancipating himself from the Neapolitan patois which up to this time had clung to him, after which he became primo basso at the Palermitan opera. He was now twenty, and his voice had become developed into that suave and richly toned organ, such as was never bestowed on another man, ranging two octaves from E flat below to E flat above the bass stave. An offer from the manager of La Scala, Milan, gratified his ambition, and he made his *debut* in 1817 as Dandini in “La Cenerentola.” His splendid singing and acting made him brilliantly successful; but Lablache was not content with this. His industry and attempts at improvement were incessant. In fact this singer was remarkable through life, not merely for his professional ambition, but the zeal with which he sought to enlarge his general stores of knowledge and culture. M. Scudo, in his agreeable recollections of Italian singers, informs us that at Naples Lablache had enjoyed the friendship and teaching of *Mme. Mericoffre* (a rich banker’s wife), known in Italy as La Cottellini, one of the finest artists of the golden age of Italian singing. *Mme. Lablache*, too, was a woman of genius in her way, and her husband owed much to her intelligent and watchful criticism. The fume of Lablache speedily spread through Europe. He sang in all the leading Italian cities with equal success, and at Vienna, whither he went in 1824, his admirers presented him with a magnificent gold medal with a most flattering inscription.

He returned again to Naples after an absence of twelve years, and created a grand sensation at the San Carlo by his singing of *Assur*, in “*Semiramide*.” The Neapolitans loaded him with honors, and sought to retain him in his native city, but this “pent-up Utica” could not hold a man to whom the most splendid rewards of his profession were offering themselves. Lablache made his first appearance in London, in 1830, in “*Il Matrimonio Segreto*,” and almost from his first note and first step he took an irresistible hold on the English public, which lasted for nearly a quarter of a century. It perplexed his admirers whether he was greater as a singer or as an actor. We are told that he “was gifted with personal beauty to a rare degree. A grander head was never more grandly set on human shoulders; and in his case time and the extraordinary and unwieldy corpulence which came with time seemed only to improve the Jupiter features, and to enhance their expression of majesty, or sweetness, or sorrow, or humor as the scene demanded.” His very tall figure prevented his bulk from appearing too great. One of his boots would have made a small portmanteau, and one could have clad a child in one of his gloves. So great was his strength that as *Leporello* he sometimes carried off under one arm a singer of large stature representing



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*Masetto*, and in rehearsal would often for exercise hold a double bass out at arm's length. The force of his voice was so prodigious that he could make himself heard above any orchestral thunders or chorus, however gigantic. This power was rarely put forth, but at the right time and place it was made to peal out with a resistless volume, and his portentous notes rang through the house like the boom of a great bell. It was said that his wife was sometimes aroused at night by what appeared to be the fire tocsin, only to discover that it was her recumbent husband producing these bell-like sounds in his sleep. The vibratory power of his full voice was so great that it was dangerous for him to sing in a greenhouse.

Like so many of the foremost artists, Lablache shone alike in comic and tragic parts. Though he sang successfully in all styles of music and covered a great dramatic versatility, the parts in which he was peculiarly great were *Leporello* in "Don Giovanni"; the *Podesta* in "La Gazza Ladra"; *Geronimo* in "Il Matrimonio Segreto"; *Caliban* in Halevy's "Tempest"; *Gritzonko* in "L'Etoile du Nord"; *Henry VIII* in "Anna Bolena"; the *Doge* in "Marino Faliero"; *Oroveso* in "Norma"; and *Assur* in "Semiramide." In thus selecting certain characters as those in which Lablache was unapproachably great, it must be understood that he "touched nothing which he did not adorn." It has been frankly conceded even among the members of his own profession, where envy, calumny, and invidious sneers so often belittle the judgment, that Lablache never performed a character which he did not make more difficult for those that came after him, by elevating its ideal and grasping new possibilities in its conception.

Lablache sang in London and Paris for many years successively, and his fame grew to colonial proportions. In 1828 his terms were forty thousand francs and a benefit, for four months. A few years later, Laporte, of London, paid Robert, of Paris, as much money for the mere cession of his services for a short season. In 1852 when Lablache had reached an age when most singers grow dull and mechanical, he created two new types, *Caliban*, in Halevy's opera of "The Tempest," and *Gritzonko*, in "L'Etoile du Nord," with a vivacity, a stage knowledge, and a brilliancy of conception as rare as they were strongly marked. He was one of the thirty-two torch-bearers who followed Beethoven's body to its interment, and he sung the solo part in "Mozart's Requiem" at the funeral, as he had when a child sung the contralto part in the same mass at Hadyn's obsequies. He was the recipient of orders and medals from nearly every sovereign in Europe. When he was thus honored by the Emperor of Russia in 1856, he used the prophetic words, "These will do to ornament my coffin." Two years afterward he died at Naples, January 23, 1858, whither he had gone to try the effects of the balmy climate of his native city on his failing health. His only daughter married Thalberg, the pianist. He was the singing master of Queen Victoria, and he is frequently mentioned in her published diaries and letters in terms of the strongest esteem and admiration. His death drew out expressions of profound sorrow from all parts of Europe, for it was felt that, in Lablache, the world of song had lost one of the greatest lights which had starred its brilliant record.



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### IV.

But of all the great men-singers with whom the Grisi was associated no one was so intimately connected with her career as the tenor Mario. Their art partnership was in later years followed by marriage, but it was well known that a passionate and romantic attachment sprang up between these two gifted singers long before a dissolution of Grisi's earlier union permitted their affection to be consecrated by the Church. Mario, Conte di Candia, the scion of a noble family, was born at Genoa in 1812. His father had been a general in the army at Piedmont, and he himself at the time of his first visit to Paris in 1836 carried his sovereign's commission. The fascinating young Italian officer was welcomed in the highest circles, for his splendid physical beauty, and his art-talents as an amateur in music, painting, and sculpture, separated him from all others, even in a throng of brilliant and accomplished men. He had often been told that he had a fortune in his voice, but his pride of birth had always restrained him from a career to which his own secret tastes inclined him, in spite of the fact that expensive tastes cooperated with a meager allowance from his father to plunge him deeply in debt. At last the moment of successful temptation came. Duponchel, the director of the Opera, made him a tempting offer, for good tenors were very difficult to secure then as in the later days of the stage.

The young Count Candia hesitated to sign his father's name to a contract, but he finally compromised the matter at the house of the Comtesse de Merlin, where he was dining one night in company with Prince Belgiojoso and other musical amateurs, by signing only the Christian name, under which he afterward became famous, Mario. He spent a short season in studying under Michelet, Pouchard, and the great singing master, Bordogni, but there is no doubt that his singing was very imperfect when he made his *debut*, November 30, 1838, in the part of *Robert le Diable*. His princely beauty and delicious fresh voice, however, took the musical public by storm, and the common cry was that he would replace Kubini. For a year he remained at the Academie, but in 1840 passed to the Italian Opera, for which his qualities more specially fitted him.

In the mean time he had made his first appearance before that public of which he continued to be a favorite for so many years. London first saw the new tenor in "Lucrezia Borgia," and was as cordial in its appreciation as Paris had been. A critic of the period, writing of him in later years, said: "The vocal command which he afterward gained was unthought of; his acting then did not get beyond that of a southern man with a strong feeling for the stage. But physical beauty and geniality, such as have been bestowed on few, a certain artistic taste, a certain distinction, not exclusively belonging to gentle birth, but sometimes associated with it, made

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it clear from the first hour of Signor Mario's stage life that a course of no common order of fascination had begun." Mario sung after this each season in London and Paris for several years, without its falling to his lot to create any new important stage characters. When Donizetti produced "Don Pasquale" at the Theatre Italiens in 1843, Mario had the slight part of the lover. The reception at rehearsal was ominous, and, in spite of the beauty of the music, everybody prophesied a failure. The two directors trembled with dread of a financial disaster. The composer shrugged his shoulders, and taking the arm of his friend, M. Dermoy, the music publisher, left the theatre. "They know nothing about the matter," he laughingly said; "I know what 'Don Pasquale' needs. Come with me." On reaching his library at home, Donizetti unearthed from a pile of dusty manuscript tumbled under the piano what appeared to be a song. "Take that," he said to his friend, "to Mario at once that he may learn it without delay." This song was the far-famed "Com e gentil." The serenade was sung with a tambourine accompaniment played by Lablache himself, concealed from the audience. The opera was a great success, no little of which was due to the neglected song which Donizetti had almost forgotten.

It was not till 1846 that Mario took the really exalted place by which he is remembered in his art, and which even the decadence of his vocal powers did not for a long time deprive him of. He never lost something amateurish, but this gave him a certain distinction and fine breeding of style, as of a gentleman who deigned to practice an art as a delightful accomplishment. Personal charm and grace, borne out by a voice of honeyed sweetness, fascinated the stern as well as the sentimental critic into forgetting all his deficiencies, and no one was disposed to reckon sharply with one so genially endowed with so much of the nobleman in bearing, so much of the poet and painter in composition. To those who for the first time saw Mario play such parts as *Almaviva*, *Gennaro*, and *Raoul*, it was a new revelation, full of poetic feeling and sentiment. Here his unique supremacy was manifest. He will live in the world's memory as the best opera lover ever seen, one who out of the insipidities and fustian of the average lyric drama could conjure up a conception steeped in the richest colors of youth, passion, and tenderness, and strengthened by the atmosphere of stage verity. In such scenes as the fourth act of "Les Huguenots" and the last act of the "Favorita" Signor Mario's singing and acting were never to be forgotten by those that witnessed them. Intense passion and highly finished vocal delicacy combined to make these pictures of melodious suffering indelible.



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As a singer of romances Mario has never been equaled. He could not execute those splendid songs of the Rossinian school, in which the feeling of the theme is expressed in a dazzling parade of roulades and fioriture, the songs in which Rubini was matchless. But in those songs where music tells the story of passion in broad, intelligible, ardent phrases, and presents itself primarily as the vehicle of vehement emotion, Mario stood ahead of all others of his age, it may be said, indeed, of all within the memory of his age. It was for this reason that he attained such a supremacy also on the concert stage. The choicest songs of Schubert, Mendelssohn, Gordiniano, and Meyerbeer were interpreted by his art with an intelligence and poetry which gave them a new and more vivid meaning. The refinements of his accent and pronunciation created the finest possible effects, and were perhaps partly due to the fact that before Mario became a public artist he was a gentleman and a noble, permeated by the best aesthetic and social culture of his times.

Mario's power illustrated the value of tastes and pursuits collateral to those of his profession. The painter's eye for color, the sculptor's sense of form, as well as the lover's honeyed tenderness, entered into the success of this charming tenor. His stage pictures looked as if they had stepped out of the canvases of Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese. In no way was the artistic completeness of his temperament more happily shown than in the harmonious and beautiful figure he presented in his various characters; for there was a touch of poetry and proportion in them far beyond the possibilities of the stage costumer's craft. Other singers had to sing for years, and overcome native defects by assiduous labor, before reaching the goal of public favor, but "Signor Mario was a Hyperian born, who had only to be seen and heard, and the enchantment was complete." For a quarter of a century Mario remained before the public of Paris, London, and St. Petersburg, constantly associated with *Mme. Grisi*.

### V.

To return once more to the consideration of *Grisi's* splendid career. The London season of 1839 was remarkable for the production of "Lucrezia Borgia." The character of the "Borgia woman" afforded a sphere in which our prima donna's talents shone with peculiar luster. The impassioned tenderness of her *Desdemona*, the soft sweetness of "love in its melancholy and in its regrets" of *Anna Bolena*, the fiery ardor and vehemence of *Norma*, had been powerfully expressed by her, but the mixture of savage cruelty and maternal intensity characteristic of *Lucretia* was embodied with a splendor of color and a subtilty of ideal which deservedly raised her estimate as a tragedienne higher than before. Without passing into unnecessary detail, it is enough to state that *Mme. Grisi* was constantly before the publics of London and Paris in her well-established



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characters for successive years, with an ever-growing reputation. In 1847 the memorable operatic schism occurred which led to the formation of the Royal Italian Opera at Convent Garden. The principal members of the company who seceded from Her Majesty's Theatre were Mmes. Grisi and Persiani, Signor Mario, and Signor Tamburini. The new establishment was also strengthened by the accession of several new performers, among whom was *Mlle.* Alboni, the great contralto. "Her Majesty's" secured the possession of Jenny Lind, who became the great support of the old house, as Grisi was of the new one. The appearance of *Mme.* Grisi as the Assyrian Queen and Alboni as *Arsace* thronged the vast theatre to the very doors, and produced a great excitement on the opening night. The subject of our sketch remained faithful to this theatre to the very last, and was on its boards when she took her farewell of the English public. The change broke up the celebrated quartet. It struggled on in the shape of a trio for some time without Lablache, and was finally diminished to Grisi and Mario, who continued to sing the *duo concertante* in "Don Pasquale," as none others could. They were still the "rose and nightingale" whom Heine immortalizes in his "Lutetia," "the rose the nightingale among flowers, the nightingale the rose among birds." That airy dilettante, N. P. Willis, in his "Pencilings by the Way," passes Grisi by with faint praise, but the ardent admiration of Heine could well compensate her wounded vanity, if, indeed, she felt the blunt arrow-point of the American traveler.

A visit to St. Petersburg in 1851, in company with Mario, was the occasion of a vast amount of enthusiasm among the music-loving Russians. During her performance in "Lucrezia Borgia," on her benefit night, she was recalled twenty times, and presented by the Czar with a magnificent Cashmere shawl worth four thousand rubles, a tiara of diamonds and pearls, and a ring of great value. From the year 1834, when she first appeared in London, till 1861, when she finally retired, Grisi missed but one season in London, and but three in Paris. Her splendid physique enabled her to endure the exhaustive wear and friction of an operatic life with but little deterioration of her powers. When she made her artistic tour through the United States with Mario in 1854, her voice had perhaps begun to show some slight indication of decadence, but her powers were of still mature and mellow splendor. Prior to crossing the ocean a series of "farewell performances" was given. The operas in which she appeared included "Norma," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Don Pasquale," "Gli Ugonotti," "La Favorita." The first was "Norma," *Mme.* Grisi performing *Norma*; *Mlle.* Maria, *Adalgiza*; Tamberlik, *Pollio*; and La-blache, *Oroveso*; the last performance consisted of the first act of "Norma," and the three first acts of "Gli Ugonotti," in which Mario sustained the principal tenor part. "Rarely,

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in her best days," said one critic, "had Grisi been heard with greater effect, and never were her talents as an actress more conspicuously displayed." At the conclusion of the performance the departing singer received an ovation. Bouquets were flung in profusion, vociferous applause rang through the theatre, and when she reappeared the whole house rose. The emotion which was evinced by her admirers was evidently shared by herself.

The American engagement of Grisi and Mario under Mr. Hackett was very successful, the first appearance occurring at Castle Garden, August 18, 1854. The seventy performances given throughout the leading cities are still a delightful reminiscence among old amateurs, in spite of the great singers who have since visited this country and the more stable footing of Italian opera in later times. Mr. Hackett paid the two artists eighty-five thousand dollars for a six months' tour, and declared, at a public banquet he gave them at the close of the season, that his own profits had been sixty thousand dollars. *Mme. Grisi* had intended to retire permanently when she was still in the full strength of her great powers, but she was persuaded to reappear before the London public on her return from New York. It became evident that her voice was beginning to fail rapidly, and that she supplied her vocal shortcomings by dramatic energy. She continued to sing in opera in various parts of Europe, but the public applause was evidently rather a struggle on the part of her audiences to pay tribute to a great name than a spontaneous expression of pleasure, and at Madrid she was even hissed in the presence of the royal court, which gave a special significance to the occasion. Mr. Gye, of the Royal Italian Opera in London, in 1861 made a contract with her not to appear on the stage again for five years, evidently assuming that five years were as good as fifty. But it was hard for the great singer, who had been the idol of the public for more than a quarter of a century, to quit the scene of her splendid triumphs. So in 1866 she again essayed to tread the stage as a lyric queen, in the *role* of *Lucrezia*, but the result was a failure. It is not pleasant to record these spasmodic struggles of a failing artist, tenacious of that past which had now shut its gates on her for ever and a day. Her career was ended, but she had left behind a name of imperishable luster in the annals of her art. She died of inflammation of the lungs during a visit to Berlin, November 25, 1869. Her husband, Mario, retired from the stage in 1867, and suffered, it is said, at the last from pecuniary reverses, in spite of the fact that he had earned such enormous sums during his operatic career. His concert tour in the United States, under the management of Max Strakosch, in 1871-'72. is remembered only with a feeling of pain. It was the exhibition of a magnificent wreck. The touch of the great artist was everywhere visible, but the voice was utterly lost. Signor Mario is still living at Rome, and has resumed the rank which he laid aside to enter a stage career.



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Grisi united much of the nobleness and tragic inspiration of Pasta with something of the fire and energy of Malibran, but in the minds of the most capable judges she lacked the creative originality which stamped each of the former two artists. She was remarkable for the cleverness with which she adopted the effects and ideas of those more thoughtful and inventive than herself. Her *Norma* was ostentatiously modeled on that of Pasta. Her acting showed less the exercise of reflection and study than the rich, uncultivated, imperious nature of a most beautiful and adroit southern woman. But her dramatic instincts were so strong and vehement that they lent something of her own personality to the copy of another's creation. When to this engrossing energy were added the most dazzling personal charms and a voice which as nearly reached perfection as any ever bestowed on a singer, it is no marvel that a continual succession of brilliant rivals was unable to dispute her long reign over the public heart.

### PAULINE VIARDOT.

Vicissitudes of the Garcia Family.—Pauline Viardot's Early Training.—Indications of her Musical Genius.—She becomes a Pupil of Liszt on the Piano.—Pauline Garcia practically self-trained as a Vocalist.—Her Remarkable Accomplishments.—Her First Appearance before the Public with De Beriot in Concert.—She makes her *Debut* in London as *Desdemona*.—Contemporary Opinions of her Powers.—Description of Pauline Garcia's Voice and the Character of her Art.—The Originality of her Genius.—Pauline Garcia marries M. Viardot, a Well-known *Litterateur*.—A Tour through Southern Europe.—She creates a Distinct Place for herself in the Musical Art.—Great Enthusiasm in Germany over her Singing.—The Richness of her Art Resources.—Sketches of the Tenors, Nourrit and Duprez, and of the Great Barytone, Ronconi.—Mine. Viardot and the Music of Meyerbeer.—Her Creation of the Part of *Fides* in "Le Prophete," the Crowning Work of a Great Career.—Retirement from the Stage.—High Position in Private Life.—Connection with the French Conservatoire.

#### I.

The genius of the Garcia family flowered not less in *Mme.* Malibran's younger sister than in her own brilliant and admired self. Pauline, the second daughter of Manuel Garcia, was thirteen years the junior of her sister, and born at Paris, July 18, 1821. The child had for sponsors at baptism the celebrated Ferdinand Paer, the composer, and the Princess Pauline Prascovie Galitzin, a distinguished Russian lady, noted for her musical amateurship, and the full name given was Michelle Ferdinandie Pauline. The little girl was only three years old when her sister Maria made her *debut* in London, and even then she lisped the airs she heard sung by her sister and her father with something like musical intelligence, and showed that the hereditary gift was deeply rooted in her own organization.



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Manuel Garcia's project for establishing Italian opera in America and the disastrous crash in which it ended have already been described in an earlier chapter. Maria, who had become *Mme. Malibran*, was left in New York, while the rest of the Garcia family sailed for Mexico, to give a series of operatic performances in that ancient city. The precocious genius of Pauline developed rapidly. She learned in Mexico to play on the organ and piano as if by instinct, with so much ease did she master the difficulties of these instruments, and it was her father's proud boast that never, except in the cases of a few of the greatest composers, had aptitude for the musical art been so convincingly displayed at her early years. At the age of six Pauline Garcia could speak four languages, French, Spanish, Italian, and English, with facility, and to these she afterward added German. Her passion for acquirement was ardent and never lost its force, for she was not only an indefatigable student in music, but extended her researches and attainments in directions alien to the ordinary tastes of even brilliant women. It is said that before she had reached the age of eight-and-twenty, she had learned to read Latin and Greek with facility, and made herself more than passably acquainted with various arts and sciences. To the indomitable will and perseverance of her sister Maria, she added a docility and gentleness to which the elder daughter of Garcia had been a stranger. Pauline was a favorite of her father, who had used pitiless severity in training the brilliant and willful Maria. "Pauline can be guided by a thread of silk," he would say, "but Maria needs a hand of iron."

Garcia's operatic performances in Mexico were very successful up to the breaking out of the civil war consequent on revolt from Spain. Society was so utterly disturbed by this catastrophe that residence in Mexico became alike unsafe and profitless, and the Spanish musician resolved to return to Europe. He turned his money into ingots of gold and silver, and started, with his little family, across the mountains interposing between the capital and the seaport of Vera Cruz, a region at that period terribly infested with brigands. Garcia was not lucky enough to escape these outlaws. They pounced on the little cavalcade, and the hard-earned wealth of the singer, amounting to nearly a hundred thousand dollars, passed out of his possession in a twinkling. The cruel humor of the chief of the banditti bound Garcia to a tree, after he had been stripped naked, and as it was known that he was a singer he was commanded to display his art for the pleasure of these strange auditors. For a while the despoiled man sternly refused, though threatened with immediate death. At last he began an aria, but his voice was so choked by his rage and agitation that he broke down, at which the robber connoisseurs hissed. This stung Garcia's pride, and he began again with a haughty gesture, breaking forth into a magnificent flight of song,



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which delighted his hearers, and they shouted "*Bravissimo!*" with all the *abandon* of an enthusiastic Italian audience. A flash of chivalry animated the rude hearts of the brigands, for they restored to Garcia all his personal effects, and a liberal share of the wealth which they had confiscated, and gave him an escort to the coast as a protection against other knights of the road. The reader will hardly fail to recall a similar adventure which befell Salvator Rosa, the great painter, who not only earned immunity, but gained the enthusiastic admiration of a band of brigands, by whom he had been captured, through a display of his art.

The talent of Pauline Garcia for the piano was so remarkable that it was for some time the purpose of her father to devote her to this musical specialty. She was barely more than seven on the return of the Garcias to Europe, and she was placed, without delay, under the care of a celebrated teacher, Meysenberg of Paris. Three years later she was transferred to the instruction of Franz Liszt, of whom she became one of the most distinguished pupils. Liszt believed that his young scholar had the ability to become one of the greatest pianists of the age, and was urgent that she should devote herself to this branch of the musical art. Her health, however, was not equal to the unremitting sedentary confinement of piano practice, though she attained a degree of skill which enabled her to play with much success as a solo performer at the concerts of her sister Maria. Her voice had also developed remarkable quality during the time when she was devoting her energies in another direction, and her proud father was wont to say, whenever a buzz of ecstatic pleasure over the singing of *Mme. Malibran* met his ear, "There is a younger sister who is a greater genius than she." It is more than probable that Pauline Garcia, as a singer, owed an inestimable debt to Pauline Garcia as a player, and that her accuracy and brilliancy of musical method were, in large measure, the outcome of her training under the king of modern pianists.

Manuel Garcia died when Pauline was but eleven years old, and the question of her daughter's further musical education was left to *Mme. Garcia*. The celebrated tenor singer, Adolphe Nourrit, one of the famous lights of the French stage, who had been a favorite pupil of Garcia, showed great kindness to the widow and her daughter. Anxious to promote the interests of the young girl, he proposed that she should take lessons from Eossini, and that great *maestro* consented. Nourrit's delight at this piece of good luck, however, was quickly checked. *Mme. Garcia* firmly declined, and said that if her son Manuel could not come to her from Rome for the purpose of training Pauline's voice, she herself was equal to the task, knowing the principles on which the Garcia school of the voice was founded. The systems of Rossini and Garcia were radically different, the one stopping at florid grace of vocalization, while the other aimed at a radical and profound culture of all the resources of the voice.



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It may be said, however, that Pauline Garcia was self-educated as a vocalist. Her mother's removal to Brussels, her brother's absence in Italy, and the wandering life of *Mme. Malibran* practically threw her on her own resources. She was admirably fitted for self-culture. Ardent, resolute, industrious, thoroughly grounded in the soundest of art methods, and marvelously gifted in musical intelligence, she applied herself to her vocal studies with abounding enthusiasm, without instruction other than the judicious counsels of her mother. She had her eyes fixed on a great goal, and this she pursued without rest or turning from her path. She exhausted the *solfeggi* which her father had written out for her sister Maria, and when this laborious discipline was done she determined to compose others for herself. She had already learned harmony and counterpoint from Reicha at the Paris Conservatoire, and these she now found occasion to put in practice. She copied all the melodies of Schubert, of whom she was a passionate admirer, and thought no toil too great which promoted her musical growth. Her labor was a labor of love, and all the ardor of her nature was poured into it. Music was not the sole accomplishment in which she became skilled. Unassisted by teaching, she, like Malibran, learned to sketch and paint in oil and water-colors, and found many spare moments in the midst of an incessant art-training, which looked to the lyric stage, to devote to literature. All this denotes a remarkable nature, fit to overcome every difficulty and rise to the topmost shining peaks of artistic greatness. What she did our sketch will further relate.

## II.

Pauline Garcia was just sixteen when, panting with an irrepressible sense of her own powers, she exclaimed, "*Ed io anclu son cantatrice.*" Her first public appearance was worthy of the great name she afterward won. It was at a concert given in Brussels, on December 15, 1837, for the benefit of a charity, and De Beriot made his first appearance on this occasion after the death of *Mme. Malibran*. The court and most distinguished people of Belgium were present on this occasion, and so great was the impression made on musicians that the Philharmonic Society caused two medals to be struck for De Beriot and *Mlle. Garcia*, the mold of which was broken immediately. Pauline Garcia, in company with De Beriot, gave a series of concerts through Belgium and Germany, and it soon became evident that a new star of the first magnitude was rising in the musical firmament. In Germany many splendid gifts were showered on her. The Queen of Prussia sent her a superb suite of emeralds, and *Mme. Sontag*, with whom she sang at Frankfort, gave the young cantatrice a valuable testimonial, which was alike an expression of her admiration of Pauline Garcia and a memento of her regard for the name of the great Malibran, whose passionate strains

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had hardly ceased lingering in the ears of Europe. Paris first gathered its musical forces to hear the new singer at the Theatre de la Renaissance, December 15, 1838, eager to compare her with Malibran. Among other numbers on the concert programme, she gave a very difficult air by Costa, which had been a favorite song of her sister's, an *aria bravura* by De Beriot, and the "Cadence du Diable," imitated from "Tartini's Dream," which she accompanied with marvelous skill and delicacy. She shortly appeared again, and she was supported by Rubini, Lablache, and Ivanhoff. The Parisian critics recognized the precision, boldness, and brilliancy of her musical style in the most unstinted expressions of praise. But England was the country selected by her for the theatrical *debut* toward which her ambition burned—England, which dearly loved the name of Garcia, so resplendent in the art-career of *Mme.* Malibran.

Her appearance in the London world was under peculiar conditions, which, while they would enhance the greatness of success, would be almost certainly fatal to anything short of the highest order of ability. The meteoric luster of Malibran's dazzling career was still fresh in the eyes of the public. The Italian stage was filled by *Mme.* Grisi, who, in personal beauty and voice, was held nearly matchless, and had an established hold on the public favor. Another great singer, *Mme.* Persiani, reigned through the incomparable finish of her vocalization, and the musical world of London was full of distinguished artists, whose names have stood firm as landmarks in the art. The new Garcia, who dashed so boldly into the lists, was a young, untried, inexperienced girl, who had never yet appeared in opera. One can fancy the excitement and curiosity when Pauline stepped before the footlights of the King's Theatre, May 9, 1839, as *Desdemona* in "Otello," which had been the vehicle of Malibran's first introduction to the English public. The reminiscence of an eminent critic, who was present, will be interesting. "Nothing stranger, more incomplete in its completeness, more unspeakably indicating a new and masterful artist can be recorded than that first appearance. She looked older than her years; her frame (then a mere reed) quivered this way and that; her character dress seemed to puzzle her, and the motion of her hands as much. Her voice was hardly settled even within its own after conditions; and yet, juaradoxical as it may seem, she was at ease on the stage; because she brought thither instinct for acting, experience of music, knowledge how to sing, and consummate intelligence. There could be no doubt, with any one who saw that *Desdemona* on that night, that another great career was begun.... All the Malibran fire, courage, and accomplishment were in it, and (some of us fancied) something more beside."



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Pauline Garcia's voice was a rebel which she had had to subdue, not a vassal to command, like the glorious organ of *Mme. Grisi*, but her harsh and unmanageable notes had been tutored by a despotic drill into great beauty and pliancy. Like that of her sister in quality, it combined the two registers of contralto and soprano from low F to C above the lines, but the upper part of an originally limited mezzo-soprano had been literally fabricated by an iron discipline, conducted by the girl herself with all the science of a master. Like Malibran, too, she had in her voice the soul-stirring tone, the sympathetic and touching character by which the heart is thrilled. Her singing was expressive, descriptive, thrilling, full, equal and just, brilliant and vibrating, especially in the medium and in the lower chords. Capable of every style of art, it was adapted to all the feelings of nature, but particularly to outbursts of grief, joy, or despair. "The dramatic coloring which her voice imparts to the slightest shades of feeling and passion is a real phenomenon of vocalization which can not be analyzed," says Escudier. "No singer we ever heard, with the exception of Malibran," says another critic, "could produce the same effect by means of a few simple notes. It is neither by the peculiar power, the peculiar depth, nor the peculiar sweetness of these tones that the sensation is created, but by something indescribable in the quality which moves you to tears in the very hearing."

Something of this impression moved the general mind of connoisseurs on her first dramatic appearance. Her style, execution, voice, expression, and manner so irresistibly reminded her fellow-performers of the lamented Malibran, that tears rolled down their cheeks, yet there was something radically different withal peculiar to the singer. This singular resemblance led to a curious incident afterward in Paris. A young lady was taking a music-lesson from Lablache, who had lodgings in the same house with *Mlle. Garcia*. The basso was explaining the manner in which Malibran gave the air they were practicing. Just then a voice was heard in the adjoining room singing the cavatina—the voice of *Mlle. Garcia*. The young girl was struck with a fit of superstitious terror as if she had seen a phantom, and fainted away on her seat.

Yet in person there was but a slight resemblance between the two sisters. Pauline had a tall, slender figure in her youth, and her physiognomy, Jewish in its cast, though noble and expressive, was so far from being handsome that when at rest the features were almost harsh in their irregularity. But, as in the case of many plain women, emotion and sensibility would quickly transfigure her face into a marvelous beauty and fascination, far beyond the loveliness of line and tint. Her forehead was broad and intellectual, the hair jet-black, the complexion pale, the large, black eyes ardent and full of fire. Her carriage was singularly majestic and easy, and a conscious nobility gave her bearing a loftiness which impressed all beholders.



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Her singing and acting in *Desdemona* made a marked sensation. Though her powers were still immature, she flooded the house with a stream of clear, sweet, rich melody, with the apparent ease of a bird. Undismayed by the traditions of Mali-bran, Pasta, and Sontag in this character, she gave the part a new reading, in which she put something of her own intense individuality. "By the firmness of her step, and the general confidence of her deportment," said a contemporary writer, "we were at first induced to believe that she was not nervous; but the improvement of every succeeding song, and the warmth with which she gave the latter part of the opera, convinced us that her power must have been confined by something like apprehension." Kubini was the *Otello*, Tamburini, *Iago*, and Lablache, *Elmiro*. Her performance in "La Cenerentola" confirmed the good opinion of the public. Her pure taste and perfect facility of execution were splendidly exhibited. "She has," said a critic, "more feeling than *Mme. Cinti Da-moreau* in the part in which the greater portion of Europe has assigned to her the preeminence, and execution even now in nearly equal perfection."

M. Viardot, a well-known French *litterateur*, was then director of the Italian Opera in Paris, and he came to London to hear the new singer—in whom he naturally felt a warm interest, as he had been an intimate personal friend of *Mme. Malibran*. He was so delighted that he offered her the position of prima donna for the approaching season, but the timidity of the young girl of eighteen shrank from such a responsibility, and she would only bind herself to appear for a few nights. The French public felt a strong curiosity to hear the sister of Mali-bran, and it was richly rewarded, for the magnificent style in which she sang her parts in "Otello," "La Cenerentola," and "Il Barbiere" stamped her position as that not only of a great singer, but a woman of genius. The audacity and wealth of resource which she displayed on the first representation of the latter-named opera were worthy of the daughter of Garcia and the sister of Malibran. Very imperfectly acquainted with the music, she forgot an important part of the score. Without any embarrassment, she instantly improvised not merely the ornament, but the melody, pouring out a flood of dazzling vocalization which elicited noisy enthusiasm. It was not Rossini's "Il Barbiere," but it was successful in arousing a most flattering approbation. It may be fancied, however, that, when she sang the *role* of *Rosina* a second time, she knew the music as Rossini wrote it.

III.



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*Mlle.* Garcia was now fairly embarked on the hereditary profession of her family, and with every prospect of a brilliant career, for never had a singer at the very outset so signally impressed herself on the public judgment, not only as a thoroughly equipped artist, but as a woman of original genius. But she temporarily retired from the stage in consequence of her marriage with M. Viardot, who had fallen deeply in love with the fascinating cantatrice, shortly after his introduction to her. The bridegroom resigned his position as manager of the Opera, and the newly married couple, shortly after their nuptials in the spring of 1840, proceeded to Italy, M. Viardot being intrusted with an important mission relative to the fine arts. *Mme.* Viardot did not return to the stage till the spring of the following year. After a short season in London, in which she made a deep and abiding impression, in the part of *Orazia* ("Gli Orazi ed i Curiazi"), and justified her right to wear the crown of Pasta and Malibran, she was obliged by considerations of health to return to the balmy climate of Southern Europe.

While traveling in Spain, the native land of her parents, she was induced to sing in Madrid, where she was welcomed with all the warmth of Spanish enthusiasm. Her amiability was displayed during her performance of *Desdemona*, the second opera presented. Pleased with the unrestrained expressions of delight by the audience, she voluntarily sang the *rondo finale* from "Cenerentola." There was such a magic spell on the audience that they could not be prevailed upon to leave, though *Mme.* Viardot sang again and again for them. At last the curtain fell and the orchestra departed, but the crowd would not leave the theatre. The obliging cantatrice, though fatigued, directed a piano-forte to be wheeled to the front of the stage, and sang, to her own accompaniment, two Spanish airs and a French romance, a crowning act of grace which made her audience wild with admiration and pleasure. An immense throng escorted her carriage from the theatre to the hotel, with a tumult of *vivas*. During this Spanish tour she appeared in opera in several towns outside of the capital, in the important pieces of her repertoire, including "Il Barbiere" and "Norma," operas entirely opposed to each other in style, but in both of which she was favorably judged in comparison with the greatest representatives of these characters.

When this singer first appeared, every throne on the lyric stage seemed to be filled by those who sat firm, and wore their crowns right regally by the grace of divine gifts, as well as by the election of the people. There seemed to be no manifest place for a new aspirant, no niche unoccupied. But within three years' time *Mme.* Viardot's exalted rank among the great singers of the age was no less assured than if she had queened it over the public heart for a score of seasons, and in her endowment as an artist



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was recognized a bounteous wealth of gifts to which none of her rivals could aspire. Her resources appeared to be without limit; she knew every language to which music is sung, every style in which music can be written with equal fluency. All schools, whether ancient or modern, severe or florid, sacred or profane, severely composed or gayly fantastic, were easily within her grasp. Like Malibran, she was a profoundly scientific musician, and possessed creative genius. Several volumes of songs attest her inventive skill in composition, and the instances of her musical improvisation on the stage are alike curious and interesting. Such unique and lavish qualities as these placed the younger daughter of Garcia apart from all others, even as the other daughter had achieved a peculiarly original place in her time. Like Lablache, in his basso roles, *Mme. Viardot*, by her genius completely revolutionized, both in dramatic conception and musical rendering, many parts which had almost become stage traditions in passing through the hands of a series of fine artists. But the fresher insight of a vital originating imagination breathed a more robust and subtle life into old forms, and the models thus set appear to be imperishable. It has been more than hinted by friends of the composer Meyerbeer, that, when his life is read between the lines, it will be known that he owes a great debt to Pauline Viardot for suggestions and criticism in one of his greatest operas, as it is well known that he does to the tenor, Adolphe Nourrit, for some of the finest features of "Robert le Diable" and "Les Huguenots."

In October, 1842, *Mme. Viardot* made her reappearance on the French stage at the Theatre Italien as *Arsace* in "Semiramide," supported by *Mme. Grisi* and *Tamburini*. There was at this time such a trio of singers as is rarely found at any one theatre, Pauline Viardot, Giulia Grisi, and Fanny Persiani, each one possessing voice and talent of the highest character in her own peculiar sphere. Not the smallest share of the honors gathered by these artists came to *Mme. Viardot* who had for intelligent and thoughtful connoisseurs a charm more subtle and binding than that exercised by any of her rivals. At the close of the Paris season she proceeded to Vienna, where her artistic gifts were highly appreciated, and thence to Berlin, where Meyerbeer was then engaged in composing his "Prophete." The dramatic conception of *Fides*, it may be said in passing, was expressly designed for Pauline Viardot by the composer, who had the most exalted esteem for her genius, both as a musician and tragedienne. She was always a great favorite in Germany, and Berlin and Vienna vied with each other in their admiration of this gifted woman. In 1844 she stirred the greatest enthusiasm by singing at Vienna with *Ilonconi*, a singer afterward frequently associated with her.



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Perhaps at no period of her life, though, did *Mme. Viardot* create a stronger feeling than when she appeared in Berlin in the spring of 1847 as *Rachel* in Halevy's "La Juive." It was a German version, but the singer was perfect mistress of the language, and though the music of the opera was by no means well suited to the character of her voice, its power as a dramatic performance and the passion of the singing established a complete supremacy over all classes of hearers. The exhibition on the part of this staid and phlegmatic German community was such as might only be predicated of the volcanic temperament of Rome or Naples. The roar of the multitude in front of her lodgings continued all night, and it was dawn before she was able to retire to rest. The versatility and kind heart of *Mme. Viardot* were illustrated in an occurrence during this Berlin engagement. She had been announced as *Alice* in "Robert le Diable," when the *Isabella* of the evening, *Mlle. Tuezck*, was taken ill. The *impresario* tore his hair in despair, for there was no singer who could be substituted, and a change of opera seemed to be the only option. *Mme. Viardot* changed the gloom of the manager to joy. Rather than disappoint the audience, she would sing both characters. This she did, changing her costume with each change of scene, and representing in one opera the opposite *roles* of princess and peasant. One can imagine the effect of this great feat on that crowded Berlin audience, who had already so warmly taken Pauline Viardot to their hearts. Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg, Dresden, Frankfort, Leipsic, and other German cities were the scenes of a series of triumphs, and everywhere there was but one voice as to her greatness as an artist, an excellence not only great, but unique of its kind. Her repertoire at this time consisted of *Desdemona*, *Cenerentola*, *Rosina*, *Camilla* (in "Gli Orazi"), *Arsace*, *Norma*, *Ninetta*, *Amina*, *Romeo*, *Lucia*, *Maria di Rohan*, *Leonora* ("La Favorita"), *Zerlina*, *Donna Anna*, *Iphigenie* (Gluck), the *Rachel* of Halevy, and the *Alice* and *Valentine* of Meyerbeer.

### IV.

*Mme. Viardot's* high position on the operatic stage of course brought her into intimate association with the leading singers of her age, some of whom have been mentioned in previous sketches. But there was one great tenor of the French stage, Nourrit, who, though he died shortly after *Mme. Viardot's* entrance on her lyric career, yet bore such relation to the Garcia family as to make a brief account of this gifted artist appropriate under this caption. Adolphe Nourrit, of whom the French stage is deservedly proud, was the pupil of Manuel Garcia, the intimate friend of Maria Malibran, and the judicious adviser of Pauline Viardot in her earlier years. The son of a tenor singer, who united the business of a diamond broker with the profession of music, young



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Nourrit received a good classical education, and was then placed in the Conservatoire, where he received a most thorough training in the science of music, as well as in the art of singing. It was said of him in after-years that he was able to write a libretto, compose the music to it, lead the orchestra, and sing the tenor role in it, with equal facility. His first appearance was in Gluck's "Iphigenie en Tauride," in 1821, his age then being nineteen. Gifted with remarkable intelligence and ambition, he worked indefatigably to overcome his defects of voice, and perfect his equipment as an artist. Manuel Garcia, the most scientific and exacting of singing teachers, was the *maestro* under whom Nourrit acquired that large and noble style for which he became eminent. He soon became principal tenor at the Academie, and created all of the leading tenor roles of the operas produced in France for ten years. Among these may be mentioned *Neocles* in "La Siege de Corinthe," *Masaniello* in "La Muette de Portici," *Arnold* in "Guillaume Tell," *Leonardo da Vinci* in Ginestell's "Francois I," *Un Lnconnu* in "Le Dieu et la Bayadere," *Robert le Diable*, *Edmond* in "La Serment," *Nadir* in Cherubini's "Ali Baba," *Eleazar* in "La Juive," *Raoul* in "Les Huguenots," *Phobus* in Bertini's "La Esmeralda," and *Stradella* in Niedermeyer's opera.

Nourrit gave a distinct stamp and a flavor to all the parts he created, and his comedy was no less refined and pleasing than his tragedy was pathetic and commanding. He was idolized by the public, and his influence with them and with his brother artists was great. He was consulted by managers, composers, and authors. He wrote the words for Eleazar's fine air in "La Juive," and furnished the suggestions on which Meyerbeer remodeled the second and third acts of "Robert le Diable" and the last act of "Les Huguenots." The libretti for the ballets of "La Sylphide," "La Tempete," "L'ile des Pirates," "Le Diable Boiteux," *etc.*, as danced by Taglioni and Fanny Elssler, were written by this versatile man, and he composed many charming songs, which are still favorites in French drawing-rooms. It was Nourrit who popularized the songs of Schubert, and otherwise softened the French prejudice against modern German music. In private life this great artist was so witty, genial, and refined, that he was a favorite guest in the most distinguished and exclusive *salons*. When Duprez was engaged at the opera it severely mortified Nourrit, and, rather than divide the honors with a new singer, he resigned his position as first tenor at the Academie, where he so long had been a brilliant light. His farewell to the French public, April 1, 1837, was the most flattering and enthusiastic ovation ever accorded to a French artist, but he could not be induced to reconsider his purpose. He was professor of lyric declamation at the Conservatoire, but this position,



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too, he resigned, and went away with the design of making a musical tour through France, Germany, and Italy. Nourrit, who was subject to alternate fits of excitement and depression, was maddened to such a degree by a series of articles praising Duprez at his expense, that his friends feared for his sanity, a dread which was ominously realized in Italy two years afterward, where Nourrit was then singing. Though he was very warmly welcomed by the Italians, his morbid sensibility took offense at Naples at what he fancied was an unfavorable opinion of his *Pollio* in "Norma." His excitement resulted in delirium, and he threw himself from his bedroom window on the paved court-yard below, which resulted in instant death. Nourrit was the intimate friend of many of the most distinguished men of the age in music, literature, and art, and his sad death caused sincere national grief.

As a singer and actor, Nourrit had one of the most creative and originating minds of his age. He himself never visited the United States, but his younger brother, Auguste, was a favorite tenor in New York thirty years ago.

The part of *John of Leyden* in "Le Prophete," whose gestation covered many years of growth and change, was originally written for and in consultation with Nourrit, just as that of Fides in the same opera was remolded for and by suggestion of Pauline Viardot. Yet the opera did not see the light until Nourrit's successor, Duprez, had vanished from the stage, and his successor again, Roger, who, though a brilliant singer, was far inferior to the other two in creative intellectuality, appeared on the scene. Chorley asserts that Duprez was the only artist he had ever seen and heard whose peculiar qualities and excellences would have enabled him to do entire musical and dramatic justice to the arduous part of *John of Leyden*.... "I have never seen anything like a complete conception of the character, so wide in its range of emotions; and might have doubted its possibility, had I not remembered the admirable, subtile, and riveting dramatic treatment of *Eleazar* in 'La Juive' (the *Shyloch* of opera) by M. Duprez."

This artist may be also included as belonging largely to the sphere of Pauline Viardot's art-life. Albert Duprez, the son of a French performer, was born in 1806, and, like his predecessor Nourrit, was a student at the Conservatoire. At first he did not succeed in operatic singing, but, recognizing his own faults and studying the great models of the day, among them Nourrit, whom he was destined to supplant, he finally impressed himself on the public as the leading dramatic singer of France. According to Fetis and Castil-Blaze, he never had a superior in stage declamation, and the finest actors of the Comedie Francaise might well have taken a lesson from him. His first great success, which caused his engagement in grand opera, was the creation of *Edgardo* in "Lucia di Lammermoor" at Naples in 1835.

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Two years later he made his *debut* at the Academie in “Guillaume Tell,” and his novel and striking reading of his part on this occasion contributed largely to his fame. He was a leading figure at this theatre for twelve years, and was the first representative of many important tenor roles, among which may be mentioned those of “Benvenuto Cellini,” “Les Martyrs,” “La Favorita,” “Dom Sebastien,” “Otello,” and “Lucia.” Duprez was insignificant, even repellent in his appearance, but, in spite of these defects, his tragic passion and the splendid intelligence displayed in his vocal art gave him a deserved prominence. Duprez composed many songs and romances, chamber-music, two masses, and eight operas, and was the author of a highly esteemed musical method, which is still used at the Conservatoire, where he was a professor of singing.

Another name linked with not a few of *Mme. Viardot's* triumphs is that of Ronconi, a name full of pleasant recollections, too, for many of the opera-goers of the last generation in the United States. There have been only a few lyric actors more versatile and gifted than he, or who have achieved their rank in the teeth of so many difficulties and disadvantages. His voice was limited in compass, inferior in quality, and habitually out of tune, his power of musical execution mediocre, his physical appearance entirely without grace, picturesqueness, or dignity. Yet Ronconi, by sheer force of a versatile dramatic genius, delighted audiences in characters which had been made familiar to the public through the splendid personalities of Tamburini and Lablache, personalities which united all the attributes of success on the lyric stage—noble physique, grand voice, the highest finish of musical execution, and the actor's faculty. What more unique triumph can be fancied than such a one violating all the laws of probability? Ronconi's low stature and commonplace features could express a tragic passion which could not be exceeded, or an exuberance of the wildest, quaintest, most spontaneous comedy ever born of mirth's most airy and tameless humor. Those who saw Ronconi's acting in this country saw the great artist as a broken man, his powers partly wrecked by the habitual dejection which came of domestic suffering and professional reverses, but spasmodic gleams of his old energy still lent a deep interest to the work of the artist, great even in his decadence. In giving some idea of the impression made by Ronconi at his best, we can not do better than quote the words of an able critic: “There have been few such examples of terrible courtly tragedy in Italian opera as Signor Ronconi's *Chevreuse*, the polished demeanor of his earlier scenes giving a fearful force of contrast to the latter ones when the torrent of pent-up passion nears the precipice. In spite of the discrepancy between all our ideas of serious and sentimental music and the old French dresses, which we are accustomed to associate with the *Dorantes* and *Alcestes*



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of Moliere's dramas, the terror of the last scene when (between his teeth almost) the great artist uttered the line—'*Suir uscio tremendo lo sguardo figgiamo*'—clutching the while the weak and guilty woman by the wrist, as he dragged her to the door behind which her falsity was screened, was something fearful, a sound to chill the blood, a sight to stop the breath." This writer, in describing his performance of the part of the *Doge* in Verdi's "I Due Foscari," thus characterizes the last act when the Venetian chief refuses to pardon his own son for the crime of treason, faithful to Venice against his agonized affections as a father: "He looked sad, weak, weary, leaned back as if himself ready to give up the ghost, but, when the woman after the allotted bars of noise began again her second-time agony, it was wondrous to see how the old sovereign turned in his chair, with the regal endurance of one who says 'I must endure to the end,' and again gathered his own misery into his old father's heart, and shut it up close till the woman ended. Unable to grant her petition, unable to free his son, the old man when left alone could only rave till his heart broke. Signor Ronconi's *Doge* is not to be forgotten by those who do not regard art as a toy, or the singer's art as something entirely distinct from dramatic truth."

His performance of the quack doctor *Dulcamara*, in "L'Elisir d'Amore," was no less amazing as a piece of humorous acting, a creation matched by that of the haggard, starveling poet in "Matilda di Shabran" and *Papageno* in Mozart's "Zauberflote." Anything more ridiculous and mirthful than these comedy *chef-d'ouvres* could hardly be fancied. The same critic quoted above says: "One could write a page on his *Barber* in Rossini's master-work; a paragraph on his *Duke* in 'Lucrezia Borgia,' an exhibition of dangerous, suspicious, sinister malice such as the stage has rarely shown; another on his *Podesta* in 'La Gazza Ladra' (in these two characters bringing him into close rivalry with Lablache, a rivalry from which he issued unharmed); and last, and almost best of his creations, his *Masetto*." Ronconi is, we believe, still living, though no longer on the stage; but his memory will remain one of the great traditions of the lyric drama, so long as consummate histrionic ability is regarded as worthy of respect by devotees of the opera.

## V.

*Mme. Viardot's* name is, perhaps, more closely associated with the music of Meyerbeer than that of any other composer. Her *Alice* in "Robert le Diable," her *Valentine* in "Les Huguenots," added fresh luster to her fame. In the latter character no representative of opera, in spite of the long bead-roll of eminent names interwoven with the record of this musical work, is worthy to be compared with her. This part was for years regarded as standing to her what *Medea* was to



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Pasta, *Norma* to Grisi, *Fidelio* to Malibran and Schroeder-Devrient, and it was only when she herself made a loftier flight as *Fides* in "Le Prophete" that this special connection of the part with the *artist* ceased. Her genius always found a more ardent sympathy with the higher forms of music. "The florid graces and embellishments of the modern Italian school," says a capable judge, "though mastered by her with perfect ease, do not appear to be consonant with her genius. So great an artist must necessarily be a perfect mistress of all styles of singing, but her intellect evidently inclines her to the severer and loftier school." She was admitted to be a "woman of genius, peculiar, inasmuch as it is universal."

Her English engagement at the Royal Italian Opera, in 1848, began with the performance of *Amina* in "La Sonnambula," and created a great sensation, for she was about to contest the suffrages of the public with a group of the foremost singers of the world, among whom were Grisi, Alboni, and Persiani. *Mme. Viardot's* nervousness was apparent to all. "She proved herself equal to Malibran," says a writer in the "Musical World," speaking of this performance; "there was the same passionate fervor, the same absorbing depth of feeling; we heard the same tones whose naturalness and pathos stole into our very heart of hearts; we saw the same abstraction, the same abandonment, the same rapturous awakening to joy, to love, and to devotion. Such novel and extraordinary passages, such daring nights into the region of fioriture, together with chromatic runs ascending and descending, embracing the three registers of the soprano, mezzo-soprano, and contralto, we have not heard since the days of Malibran." Another critic made an accurate gauge of her peculiar greatness in saying: "*Mme. Viardot's* voice grows unconsciously upon you, until at last you are blind to its imperfections. The voice penetrates to the heart by its sympathetic tones, and you forget everything in it but its touching and affecting quality. You care little or nothing for the mechanism, or rather, for the weakness of the organ. You are no longer a critic, but spellbound by the hand of genius, moved by the sway of enthusiasm that comes from the soul, abashed in the presence of intellect."

The most memorable event of this distinguished artist's life was her performance, in 1849, of the character of *Fides* in "Le Prophete." No operatic creation ever made a greater sensation in Paris. Meyerbeer had kept it in his portfolio for years, awaiting the time when *Mme. Viardot* should be ready to interpret it, and many changes had been made from time to time at the suggestion of the great singer, who united to her executive skill an intellect of the first rank, and a musical knowledge second to that of few composers. At the very last moment it is said that one or more of the acts were entirely reconstructed, at the wish of the representative of *Fides*, whose dramatic instincts were as unerring as her musical judgment. No performance since that of *Viardot*, though the most eminent singers have essayed the part, has equaled the first ideal set by her creation from its possibilities.



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In this opera the principal interest pivots on the *mother*. The sensuous, sentimental, or malignant phases of love are replaced by the purest maternal devotion. It was left for *Mme. Viardot* to add an absolutely new type to the gallery of portraits on the lyric stage. We are told by a competent critic, whose enthusiasm in the study of this great impersonation did not yet quite run away with his judicial faculty: "Her remarkable power of self-identification with the character set before her was, in this case, aided by person and voice. The mature burgher woman in her quaint costume; the pale, tear-worn devotee, searching from city to city for traces of the lost one, and struck with a pious horror at finding him a tool in the hands of hypocritical blasphemy, was till then a being entirely beyond the pale of the ordinary prima donna's comprehension—one to the presentation of which there must go as much simplicity as subtile art, as much of tenderness as of force, as much renunciation of woman's ordinary coquetries as of skill to impress all hearts by the picture of homely love, desolate grief, and religious enthusiasm." M. Roger sang with *Mme. Viardot* in Paris, but, when the opera was shortly afterward reproduced in London, he was replaced by Signor Mario, "whose appearance in his coronation robes reminded one of some bishop-saint in a picture by Van Ryek or Durer, and who could bring to bear a play of feature without grimace, into scenes of false fascination, far beyond the reach of the clever French artist, M. Roger." The production of "Le Prophete" saved the fortunes of the struggling new Italian Opera House, which had been floundering in pecuniary embarrassments.

The last season of *Mme. Viardot* in England was in 1858, during which she sang to enthusiastic audiences in many of her principal characters, and also contributed to the public pleasure in concert and the great provincial festivals. The tour in Poland, Germany, and Russia which followed was marked by a series of splendid ovations and the eagerness with which her society was sought by the most patrician circles in Europe.

Her last public appearance in Paris was in 1862, and since that time *Mme. Viardot* has occupied a professional chair at the Conservatoire. In private life this great artist has always been loved and admired for her brilliant mental accomplishments, her amiability, the suavity of her manners, and her high principles, no less than she has been idolized by the public for the splendor of her powers as musician and tragedienne.

## FANNY PERSIANI.



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The Tenor Singer Tacchinardi.—An Exquisite Voice and Deformed Physique.—Early Talent shown by his Daughter Fanny.—His Aversion to her entering on the Stage Life.—Her Marriage to M. Persiani.—The Incident which launched Fanny Persiani on the Stage.—Rapid Success as a Singer.—Donizetti writes one of his Great Operas for her.—*Personnel*, Voice, and Artistic Style of *Mme.* Persiani.—One of the Greatest Executants who ever lived.—Anecdotes of her Italian Tours.— First Appearance in Paris and London.—A Tour through Belgium with Rubini.—Anecdote of Prince Metternich.—Further Studies of Persiani's Characteristics as a Singer.—Donizetti composes Another Opera for her.—Her Prosperous Career and Retirement from the Stage.—Last Appearance in Paris for Mario's Benefit.

### I.

Under the Napoleonic *regime* the Odeon was the leading lyric theatre, and the great star of that company was Nicholas Tacchinardi, a tenor in whom nature had combined the most opposing characteristics. The figure of a dwarf, a head sunk beneath the shoulders, hunchbacked, and repulsive, he was hardly a man fitted by nature for a stage hero. Yet his exquisite voice and irreproachable taste as a musician gave him a long reign in the very front rank of his profession. He was so morbidly conscious of his own stage defects that he would beg composers to write for him with a view to his singing at the side scenes before entering on the stage, that the public might form an impression of him by hearing before his grotesque ugliness could be seen. Another expedient for concealing some portion of his unfortunate figure was often practiced by this musical Caliban, that of coming on the stage standing in a triumphal car. But this only excited the further risibilities of his hearers, and he was forced to be content with the chance of making his vocal fascination condone the impression made by his ugliness.

At his first appearance on the boards of the Odeon, he was saluted with the most insulting outbursts of laughter and smothered ejaculations of "Why, he's a hunchback!" Being accustomed to this kind of greeting, Tacchinardi tranquilly walked to the footlights and bowed. "Gentlemen," he said, addressing the pit, "I am not here to exhibit my person, but to sing. Have the goodness to hear me." They did hear him, and when he ceased the theatre rang with plaudits: there was no more laughter. His personal disadvantages were redeemed by one of the finest and purest tenor voices ever given by nature and refined by art, by his extraordinary intelligence, by an admirable method of singing, an exquisite taste in fioriture, and facility of execution.



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Fanny Tacchinardi was the second daughter of the deformed tenor, born at Rome, October 4, 1818, three years after Tacchinardi had returned again to his native land. Fanny's passion for music betrayed itself in her earliest lisps, and it was not ignored by Tacchinardi, who gave her lessons on the piano and in singing. At nine she could play with considerable intelligence and precision, and sing with grace her father's ariettas and *duettini* with her sister Elisa, who was not only an excellent pianist, but a good general musician and composer. The girl grew apace in her art feeling and capacity, for at eleven she took part in an opera as prima donna at a little theatre which her father had built near his country place, just out of Florence. Tacchinardi was, however, very averse to a professional career for his daughter, in spite of the powerful bent of her tastes and the girl's pleadings. He had been *chanteur de chambre* since 1822 for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and in the many concerts and other public performances over which he was director his daughter frequently appeared, to the great delight of amateurs. Fanny even at this early age had a voice of immense compass, though somewhat lacking in sweetness and flexibility, defects which she subsequently overcame by study and practice. As the best antidote to the sweet stage poison which already began to run riot in her veins, her father brought about an early marriage for the immature girl, and in 1830 she was united to Joseph Persiani, an operatic composer of some merit, though not of much note. She resided with her husband in her father's house for several years, carefully secluded as far as possible from musical influences, but the hereditary passion and gifts could not be altogether suppressed, and the youthful wife quietly pursued her studies with unbroken perseverance.

The incident which irretrievably committed her energies and fortunes to the stage was a singular one, yet it is not unreasonable to assume that, had not this occurred, her ardent predilections would have found some other outlet to the result to which she aspired. M. Fournier, a rich French merchant, settled at Leghorn, was an excellent musician, and carried this recreation of his leisure hours so far as to compose an opera, "Francesca di Rimini," the subject drawn from the romance of "Silvio Pellico." The wealthy merchant could find no manager who would venture to produce the work of an amateur. But he was willing and able to become his own *impresario*, and accordingly he set about forming an operatic troupe and preparing the scenery for a public representation of his dearly beloved musical labor. The first vocalists of Italy, Mmes. Pisaroni and Rasallima Caradori, contralto and soprano, were engaged at lavish salaries, and on the appointed day of the first rehearsal they all appeared except Caradori, whose Florentine manager positively forbade her singing as a violation of his contract. M. Fournier was in despair,

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but at last some one remembered *Mme. Persiani*, who was known as a charming dilettante. Her residence was not many miles away from Leghorn, and it was determined to have recourse to this last resort, for it was otherwise almost impossible to secure a vocalist of talent at short notice. A deputation of M. Fournier's friends, among whom were those well acquainted with the Tacchinardi family, formed an embassy to represent the urgent need of the composer and implore the aid of *Mme. Persiani*. With some difficulty the consent of husband and father was obtained, and the young singer made her *debut* in the opera of the merchant-musician. *Mme. Persiani* said in after-years that, had her attempt been a successful one, it was very doubtful if she ever would have pursued the profession of the stage. But her performance came very near to being a failure. Her pride was so stung and her vanity humiliated that she would not listen to the commands of husband and father. She would become a great lyric artist, or else satisfy herself that she *could* not become one. The turning-point of her life had come.

She found an engagement at the La Scala, Milan, and she speedily laid a good foundation for her future renown. She sang at Florence with Duprez, and Donizetti, who was then in the city, composed his "Rosmonda d'Inghilterra" for these artists. For two years there was nothing of specially important note in *Mme. Persiani's* life except a swift and steady progress. An engagement at Vienna made her the pet of that city, which is fanatical in its musical enthusiasm, and we next find her back again in Italy, singing greatly to the satisfaction of the public in such operas as "Romeo e Giulietta," "Il Pirata," "La Gazza Ladra," and "L'Elisir d'Amore." *Mme. Pasta* was singing in Venice when *Persiani* visited that city, and the latter did not hesitate to enter into competition with her illustrious rival. Indeed, the complimentary Venetians called her "la petite Pasta," though the character of her talent was entirely alien to that of the great tragedienne of music. Milan and Rome reechoed the voice of other cities, and during her stay in Rome she appeared in two new operas, "Misantropia e Pentimento" and "I Promessi Sposi." Among the artists associated with her during the Roman engagement was Ronconi, who was then just beginning to establish his great reputation. One of the most important events of her early career was her association, in 1834, at the San Carlo, Naples, with Duprez, Caselli, and La-blache. The composer Donizetti had always been charmed with her voice as suiting the peculiar style of music in which he excelled, and he determined to compose an opera for her. His marvelous facility of composition was happily illustrated in this case. The novel of "The Bride of Lammermoor" was turned into a libretto for him by a Neapolitan poet, Donizetti himself, it is said, having written the last act in his eagerness to save time and get



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it completed that he might enter on the musical composition. The opera of “Lucia di Lammermoor,” one of the most beautiful of the composer’s works, was finished in little more than five weeks. The music of *Edgar* was designed for the voice of M. Duprez, that of *Lucia* for M<sup>me</sup>. Persiani, and the result was brilliantly successful, not only as suiting the styles of those singers, but in making a powerful impression on the public mind. M<sup>me</sup>. Persiani never entered into any rivalry with those singers who were celebrated for their dramatic power, for this talent did not peculiarly stamp her art-work. But her impersonation of *Lucia* in Donizetti’s opera was sentimental, impassioned, and pathetic to a degree which saved her from the reproach which was sometimes directed against her other performances—lack of unction and abandon.

### II.

The *personnel* of M<sup>me</sup>. Persiani could not be considered highly attractive. She was small, thin, with a long, colorless face, and looked older than her years. Her eyes were, however, soft and dreamy, her smile piquant, her hair like gold-colored silk, and exquisitely long. Her manner and carriage both on and off the stage were so refined and charming, that of all the singers of the day she best expressed that thorough-bred look which is independent of all beauty and physical grace. “Never was there woman less vulgar, in physiognomy or in manner, than she,” says Mr. Chorley, describing M<sup>me</sup>. Persiani; “but never was there one whose appearance on the stage was less distinguished. She was not precisely insignificant to see, so much as pale, plain, and anxious. She gave the impression of one who had left sorrow or sickness at home, and who therefore (unlike those wonderful deluders, the French actresses, who, because they will not be ugly, rarely *look* so) had resigned every question of personal attraction as a hopeless one. She was singularly tasteless in her dress. Her one good point was her hair, which was splendidly profuse, and of an agreeable color.”

As a vocalist, it was agreed that her singing had the volubility, ease, and musical sweetness of a bird: her execution was remarkable for velocity. Her voice was rather thin, but its tones were clear as a silver bell, brilliant and sparkling as a diamond; it embraced a range of two octaves and a half (or about eighteen notes, from B to F in alt), the highest and lowest notes of which she touched with equal ease and sweetness. She had thus an organ of the most extensive compass known in the register of the true soprano. Her facility was extraordinary; her voice was implicitly under her command, and capable not only of executing the greatest difficulties, but also of obeying the most daring caprices—scales, shakes, trills, divisions, fioriture the most dazzling and inconceivable. She only acquired this command by indefatigable labor. Study had enabled her

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to execute with fluency and correctness the chromatic scales, ascending and descending, and it was by sheer hard practice that she learned to swell and diminish her accents; to emit tones full, large, and free from nasal or guttural sounds, to manage her respiration skillfully, and to seize the delicate shades of vocalization. In fioriture and vocal effects her taste was faultless, and she had an agreeable manner of uniting her tones by the happiest transitions, and diminishing with insensible gradations. She excelled in the effects of vocal embroidery, and her passion for ornamentation tempted her to disregard the dramatic situation in order to give way to a torrent of splendid fioriture, which dazzled the audience without always satisfying them.

The characters expressing placidity, softness, and feminine grace, like *Lucia*, *Amina*, and *Zerli-na*, involving the sentimental rather than the passionate, were best fitted to *Mme. Persiani's* powers as artist. She belonged to the same school as Sontag, not only in character of voice, but in all her sympathies and affinities; yet she was not incapable of a high order of tragic emotion, as her performance of the mad scene of "Lucia di Lammermoor" gave ample proof, but this form of artistic expression was not spontaneous and unforced. It was only well accomplished under high pressure. Escudin said of her, "It is not only the nature of her voice which limits her—it is also the expression of her acting, we had almost said the ensemble of her physical organization. She knows her own powers perfectly. She is not ambitious, she knows exactly what will suit her, and is aware precisely of the nature of her talent." Although she attained a high reputation in some of Mozart's characters, as, for example, *Zerlina*, the Mozart music was not well fitted to her voice and tastes. The brilliancy and flexibility of her organ and her airy style were far more suited to the modern Italian than to the severe German school.

A charming compliment was paid by Malibran, who knew how to do such things with infinite taste and delicacy, to Persiani, when the latter lady was singing at Naples in 1835: while the representative of *Lucia* was changing her costume between the acts, a lady entered her dressing-room, and complimented her in warmest terms on the excellence of her singing. The visitor then took the long golden tresses floating over Persiani's shoulders, and asked, "Is it all your own?" On being laughingly answered in the affirmative, Malibran, for it was she, said, "Allow me, signora, since I have no wreath of flowers to offer you, to twine you one with your own beautiful hair." *Mme. Persiani's* artistic tour through Italy, in 1835, culminated in Florence with one of those exhibitions of popular tyranny and exaction which so often alternate with enthusiasm in the case of audiences naturally ardent and impressible, and consequently capricious. When the singer arrived at the Tuscan capital, she

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was in such a weak and exhausted state that she did not deem it prudent to sing. Her manager was, however, unbending, and insisted on the exact fulfillment of her contract. After vain remonstrances she yielded to her taskmaster, and appeared in "I Puritani," trusting to the forbearance and kindness of her audience. But a few notes had escaped her pale and quivering lips when the angry audience broke out into loud hisses, marks of disapprobation which were kept up during the performance. *Mme.* Persiani could not forgive this, and, when she completely recovered her voice and energy a few weeks after, she treated the lavish demonstrations of the public with the most cutting disdain and indifference. At the close of her engagement, she publicly announced her determination never again to sing in Florence, on account of the selfish cruelty to which she had been subjected both by the manager and the public. Persiani's fame grew rapidly in every part of Europe. At Vienna, she was named chamber singer to the Austrian sovereign, and splendid gifts were lavished on her by the imperial family, and in the leading cities of Germany, as in St. Petersburg and Moscow, the highest recognition of her talents was shown alike by court and people.

It was not till 1837 that *Mme.* Persiani ventured to make her first appearance in Paris, a step which she took with much apprehension, for she had an exaggerated notion of the captious-ness and coldness of the French public. When she stepped on the stage, November 7th, the night of her *debut* in "Sonnambula," she was so violently shaken by her emotions that she could scarcely stand. The other singers were Rubini, Tamburini, and *Mlle.* Allessandri, and the audience was of the utmost distinction, including the foremost people in the art, literary, and social circles of Paris. The *debutante* was well received, but it was not until she appeared in Cimarosa's "Il Matrimonio Segreto" that she was fully appreciated. Rubini and Tamburini were with her in the cast, and the same great artists participated also with her in the performance of "Lucia," which set the final seal of her artistic worth in the public estimate. She also appeared in London in the following year in "Sonnambula." "It is no small risk to any vocalist to follow Malibran and Grisi in a part which they both played so well," was the observation of one critic, "and it is no small compliment to Persiani to say that she succeeded in it." She had completely established herself as a favorite with the London public before the end of the season, and thereafter she continued to sing alternately in London and Paris for a succession of years, sharing the applause of audiences with such artists as Grisi, Viardot, Lablache, Tamburini, Rubini, and Mario.



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A tour through Belgium and the Rhenish provinces, partly operatic, partly concertizing, which she took with Rubini in the summer and fall of 1841, was highly successful from the artistic point of view, and replete with pleasant incidents, among which may be mentioned their meeting at Wiesbaden with Prince Metternich, who had come with a crowd of princes, ministers, and diplomats from the chateau of Johannisberg to be present at the concert. At the conclusion of the performance, the Prince took Rubini by the arm, and walked up and down the salon with him for some time. They had become acquainted at Vienna. "My dear Rubini," said Metternich, "it is impossible that you can come so near Johannisberg without paying me a visit there. I hope you and your friends will come and dine with me to-morrow." The following day, therefore, Rubini, *Mme. Persiani, etc.*, went to the chateau, so celebrated for the produce of its vineyards, where M. Metternich and his princess did the honors with the utmost affability and cordiality. After dinner, Rubini, unasked, sang two of his most admired airs; and the Prince, to testify his gratification, offered him a basket of Johannisberg, "to drink my health," he laughingly said, "when you reach your chateau of Bergamo." Rubini accepted the friendly offering, and begged permission to bring *Mme. Rubini*, before quitting the north of Europe, to visit the fine chateau. Metternich immediately summoned his major-domo, and said to him, "Remember that, if ever M. Rubini visits Johannisberg during my absence, he is to be received as if he were its master. You will place the whole of the chateau at his disposal so long as he may please to remain." "And the cellar, also?" asked Rubini. "The cellar, also," added the Prince, smiling: "the cellar at discretion."

### III.

The characteristics of *Mme. Persiani's* voice and art have already been generally described sufficiently to convey some distinct impression of her personality as a singer, but it is worth while to enter into some more detailed account of the peculiar qualities which for many years gave her so great a place on the operatic stage. Her acute soprano, mounting to E flat *altissimo*, had in it many acrid and piercing notes, and was utterly without the caressing, honeyed sweetness which, for example, gave such a sensuous charm to the voice of *Mme. Grisi*. But she was an incomparable mistress over the difficulties of vocalization. From her father, Tacchinardi, who knew every secret of his art, she received a full bequest of his knowledge. Her voice was developed to its utmost capacity, and it was said of her that every fiber in her frame seemed to have a part in her singing; there was nothing left out, nothing kept back, nothing careless, nothing unfinished. So sedulous was she in the employment of her vast and varied resources that she frequently rose to an animation which, if not sympathetic, as

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warmth kindling warmth, amounted to that display of conscious power which is resistless. The perfection with which she wrought up certain scenes, such as the "Sonnambula" *finale* and the mad scene in "Lucia," judged from the standard of musical style, was not surpassed in any of the dazzling displays of the stage. She had the finest possible sense of accent, which enabled her to give every phrase its fullest measure.

Groups of notes were divided and expressed by her with all the precision which the best violinists put into their bowing. The bird-like ease with which she executed the most florid, rapid, and difficult music was so securely easy and unflinching as to excite something of the same kind of wonder with which one would watch some matchless display of legerdemain.

Another great musical quality in which she surpassed her contemporaries was her taste and extraordinary facility in ornament. Always refined and true in style, she showed a variety and brilliancy in her changes and cadenzas which made her the envy of other singers. In this form of accomplishment she was first among Italians, who, again, are first among the singers of the world. Every passage was finished to perfection; and, though there were other singers not inferior to her in the use of the shake or the trill, yet in the attack of intervals distant from each other, in the climbing up a series of groups of notes, ascending to the highest in the scale, there was no singer of her own time or since who could compete with her. Mr. Chorley tells us how convincingly these rare and remarkable merits impressed themselves on him, "when, after a few years' absence from our stage, *Mme. Persiani* reappeared in London, how, in comparison with her, her younger successors sounded like so many immature scholars of the second class." On her gala nights the spirit and splendor of her execution were daring, triumphant, and irresistible, if we can trust those who heard her in her days of greatness. Moschles, in his diary, speaks of the incredible difficulties which she overcame, and compares her performance with that of a violinist, while Mendelssohn, who did not love Italian music or the Italian vocalization, said: "Well, I do like *Mme. Persiani* dearly. She is such a thorough artist, and she sings so earnestly, and there is such a pleasant *bitter* tone in her voice."

Donizetti met *Mme. Persiani* again in Vienna in 1842, and composed for her his charming opera, "Linda di Chamouni," which, with the exception of the "Favorita" and "Lucia," is generally admitted to be his best. In this opera our singer made an impression nearly equal to that in "Lucia," and it remained afterward a great favorite with her, and one in which she was highly esteemed by the European public.



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The transformation of Covent Garden Theatre into a spacious and noble opera-house in 1847, and the secession of the principal artists from Her Majesty's Theatre, were the principal themes of musical gossip in the English capital at that time. The artists who went over to the Royal Italian Opera were Mines, Grisi and Persiani, *Mlle.* Alboni (then a novelty on the English stage), and Signors Mario, Tamburini, Salvi, Ronconi, Hovere, and Marini. M. Persiani was the director, and Signor Costa the *chef d'orchestre*. Although the company of singers was a magnificent combination of musical talent, and the presentation of opera in every way admirable, the enterprise had a sickly existence for a time, and it was not until it had passed through various vicissitudes, and came finally into the hands of the astute Lumley, that the enterprise was settled on a stable foundation.

From 1850 to 1858 *Mme.* Persiani sang with her usual brilliant success in all the principal cities of Europe, receiving, for special performances in which she was a great favorite, the then remarkable sum of two hundred pounds per night. Her last appearance in England was in the spring of 1858, when she performed in "I Puritani," "Don Pasquale," "Linda di Chamouni," and "Don Giovanni." In the following winter she established her residence in Paris, with the view of training pupils for the stage. Only once did she depart from her resolution of not singing again in opera. This was when Signor Mario was about to take his benefit in the spring of 1859. The director of the Theatre Italiens entreated Persiani to sing *Zerlina* to the *Don Giovanni* of Mario, to which she at last consented. "My career," she said, "began almost in lisping the divine music of 'Don Giovanni'; it will be appropriately closed by the interpretation of this *chef-d'oeuvre* of the master of masters, the immortal Mozart." *Mme.* Persiani died in June, 1867, and her funeral was attended by a host of operatic celebrities, who contributed to the musical exercises of a most impressive funeral. *Mme.* Persiani, aside from her having possessed a wonderful executive art in what may be called the technique of singing, will long be remembered by students of musical history as having, perhaps, contributed more than any other singer to making the music of Donizetti popular throughout Europe.

### MARIETTA ALBONI.

The Greatest of Contraltos.—Marietta Alboni's Early Surroundings.—Rossini's Interest in her Career.—First Appearance on the Operatic Stage.—Excitement produced in Germany by her Singing.—Her Independence of Character.—Her Great Success in London.—Description of her Voice and Person.—Concerts in Paris.—The Verdicts of the Great French Critics.—Hector Berlioz on Alboni's Singing.—She appears in Opera in Paris.—Strange Indifference of the Audience quickly turned to Enthusiasm.—She competes favorably in London with Grisi, Persiani, and Viardot.—Takes the Place of Jenny Lind as Prima Donna at Her Majesty's.—She extends her Voice into the Soprano Register.—Performs *Fides* in "Le Prophete."—Visit to America.—Retires from the Stage.



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### I.

There was a time early in the century when the voice of Rosamunda Pisaroni was believed to be the most perfect and delightful, not only of all contraltos of the age, but to have reached the absolute ideal of what this voice should be. She even for a time disputed the supremacy of Henrietta Sontag as the idol of the Paris public, though the latter great singer possessed the purest of soprano voices, and won no less by her personal loveliness than by the charm of her singing. Pisaroni excelled as much in her dramatic power as in the beauty of her voice, and up to the advent of Marietta Alboni on the stage was unquestionably without a rival in the estimate of critics as the artist who surpassed all the traditions of the operatic stage in this peculiar line of singing. But her memory was dethroned from its pedestal when the gorgeous Alboni became known to the European public.

Thomas Noon Talfourd applied to a well-known actress of half a century since the expression that she had “corn, wine, and oil” in her looks. A similar characterization would well apply both to the appearance and voice of *Mlle.* Alboni, when she burst on the European world in the splendid heyday of her youth and charms—the face, with its broad, sunny Italian beauty, incapable of frown; the figure, wrought in lines of voluptuous symmetry, though the *embonpoint* became finally too pronounced; the voice, a rich, deep, genuine contralto of more than two octaves, as sweet as honey, and “with that tremulous quality which reminds fanciful spectators of the quiver in the air of the calm, blazing summer’s noon”; a voice luscious beyond description. To this singer has been accorded without dissent the title of the “greatest contralto of the nineteenth century.”

The father of Marietta Alboni was an officer of the customs, who lived at Casena in the Romagna, and possessed enough income to bestow an excellent education on all his family. Marietta, born March 10, 1822, evinced an early passion for music, and a great facility in learning languages. She was accordingly placed with Signor Bagioli, a local music-teacher, under whom she so prospered that at eleven she could read music at sight, and vocalize with considerable fluency. Having studied her solfeggi with Bagioli, she was transferred to the tuition of *Mme.* Bertoletti, at Bologna. Here she had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of Rossini, in whom she excited interest. Rossini gave her some lessons, and expressed a high opinion of her prospects. “At present,” he said to some one inquiring about the young girl’s talents, “her voice is like that of an itinerant ballad singer, but the town will be at her feet before she is a year older.” It was chiefly through Rossini’s cordial admiration of her voice that Morelli, one of the great *entrepreneurs* of Italy, engaged her for the Teatro Comunale of Bologna. Here she made her first appearance as *Maffeo Orsini*,



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in "Lucrezia Borgia," in 1842, Marietta then having reached the age of twenty. She was then transferred to the La Scala, at Milan, where she performed with marked success in "La Favorita." Rossini himself signed her contract, saying, "I am the subscribing witness to your union with renown. May success and happiness attend the union!" Her engagement was renewed at the La Scala for four successive seasons. A tempting offer from Vienna carried her to that musical capital, and during the three years she remained there she won brilliant laurels and a fame which had swiftly coursed through Europe; for musical connoisseurs visiting Vienna carried away with them the most glowing accounts of the new contralto. Her triumphs were renewed in Russia, Belgium, Holland, and Prussia, where her glorious voice created a genuine *furore*, not less flattering to her pride than the excitement produced at an earlier date by Pasta, Sontag, and Malibran. An interesting proof of her independence and dignity of character occurred on her first arrival in Berlin, before she had made her *debut* in that city.

She was asked by an officious friend "if she had waited on M-----." "No! who is this M-----," was the reply. "Oh!" answered her inquisitor, "he is the most influential journalist in Prussia." "Well, how does this concern me?" "Why," rejoined the other, "if you do not contrive to insure his favorable report, you are ruined." The young Italian drew herself up disdainfully. "Indeed!" she said, coldly; "well, let it be as Heaven directs; but I wish it to be understood that in *my* breast the woman is superior to the artist, and, though failure were the result, I would never degrade myself by purchasing success at so humiliating a price." The anecdote was repeated in the fashionable saloons of Berlin, and, so far from injuring her, the noble sentiment of the young *debutante* was appreciated. The king invited her to sing at his court, where she received the well-merited applause of an admiring audience; and afterward his Majesty bestowed more tangible evidences of his approbation.

It was not till 1847 that Marietta Alboni appeared in England. Mr. Beale, the manager of the Royal Italian Opera, the new enterprise which had just been organized in the revolutionized Covent Garden Theatre, heard her at Milan and was charmed with her voice. Rumors had reached England, of course, concerning the beauty of the new singer's voice, but there was little interest felt when her engagement was announced. The "Jenny Lind" mania was at its height, and in the company in which Alboni herself was to sing there were two brilliant stars of the first luster, Grisi and Persiani. So, when she made her bow to the London public as *Arsace*, in "Semiramide," the audience gazed at her with a sort of languid and unexpectant curiosity. But Alboni found herself the next morning a famous woman. People were astounded by this wonderful voice, combining luscious

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sweetness with great volume and capacity. It was no timid *debutante*, but a finished singer whose voice rolled out in a swelling flood of melody such as no English opera-house had heard since the palmiest days of Pisoni. Musical London was electrified, and Grisi, who sang in "Semiramide," sulked, because in the great duet, "Giorno d'orrore," the thunders of applause evidently concerned themselves with her young rival rather than with herself. Another convincing proof of her power was that she dared to restore the beautiful aria "In si barbara," which had been hitherto suppressed for lack of a contralto of sufficient greatness to give it full effect. In one night she had established herself as a trump card in the manager's hand against the rival house, an accession which he so appreciated that, unsolicited, he raised her salary from five hundred to two thousand pounds.

*Mlle.* Alboni's voice covered nearly three octaves, from E flat to C sharp, with tones uniformly rich, full, mellow, and liquid. The quality of the voice was perfectly pure and sympathetic, the articulation so clear and fluent, even in the most difficult and rapid passages, that it was like a performance on a well-played instrument. The rapidity and certainty of her execution could only be compared to the dazzling character of *Mme.* Persiani's vocalization. Her style and method were considered models. Although her facility and taste in ornamentation were of the highest order, Alboni had so much reverence for the intentions of the composer, that she would rarely add anything to the music which she interpreted, and even in the operas of Rossini, where most singers take such extraordinary liberties with the score, it was Alboni's pride neither to add nor omit a note. Perhaps her audiences most wondered at her singular ease. An enchanting smile lit up her face as she ran the most difficult scales, and the extreme feats of musical execution gave the idea of being spontaneous, not the fruit of art or labor. Her whole appearance, when she was singing, as was said by one enthusiastic amateur, conveyed the impression of exquisite music even when the sense of hearing was stopped.

Alboni's figure, although large, was perfect in symmetry, graceful and commanding, and her features regularly beautiful, though better fitted for the expression of comedy than of tragedy. The expression of her countenance was singularly genial, vivacious, and kindly, and her eyes, when animated in conversation or in singing, flashed with great brilliancy. Her smile was bewitching, and her laugh so infectious that no one could resist its influence.

Fresh triumphs marked *Mlle.* Alboni's London season to its close. In "La Donna del Lago," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Maria de Rohan," and "La Gazza Ladra" she was pronounced inimitable by the London critics. *Mme.* Persiani's part in "Il Barbiere" was assumed without rehearsal and at a moment's notice, and given in a way which satisfied the most exacting judges. It sparkled from the first to the last note with enchanting gayety and humor.



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### II.

M. Duponchel, the manager of the Opera in Paris, hastened to London to hear Alboni sing, and immediately offered her an engagement. In October, 1847, she made her Parisian *debut*. Her first appearance in concert was with Alizard and Barroilhet. "Many persons, artists and amateurs," said Fiorentino, "absolutely asked on the morning of her *debut*, Who is this Alboni? Whence does she come? What can she do?" And their interrogatories were answered by some fragments of those trifling and illusory biographies which always accompany young vocalists. There was, however, intense curiosity to hear and see this redoubtable singer who had held the citadel of the Royal Italian Opera against the attraction of Jenny Lind, and the theatre was crowded to suffocation by rank, fashion, beauty, and notabilities on the night of her first concert, October 9th. When she stepped quietly on the stage, dressed in black velvet, a brooch of brilliants on her bosom, and her hair cut *a la Titus*, with a music-paper in her hand, there was just one thunder-clap of applause, followed by a silence of some seconds. She had not one acknowledged advocate in the house; but, when Arsace's cavatina, "Ah! quel giorno," gushed from her lips in a rich stream of melodious sound, the entire audience was at her feet, and the critics could not command language sufficiently glowing to express their admiration.

"What exquisite quality of sound, what purity of intonation, what precision in the scales!" wrote the critic of the "Revue et Gazette Musicale." "What *finesse* in the manner of the breaks of the voice! What amplitude and mastery of voice she exhibits in the 'Brindisi'; what incomparable clearness and accuracy in the air from 'L'Italiana' and the duo from 'Il Barbiere!' There is no instrument capable of rendering with more certain and more faultless intonation the groups of rapid notes which Rossini wrote, and which Alboni sings with the same facility and same celerity. The only fault the critic has in his power to charge the wondrous artist with is, that, when she repeats a morceau, we hear exactly the same traits, the same turns, the same fioriture, which was never the case with Malibran or Cinti-Damoreau."

"This vocal scale," says Scudo, speaking of her voice, "is divided into three parts or registers, which follow in complete order. The first register commences at F in the base, and reaches F in the *medium*. This is the true body of the voice, whose admirable timbre characterizes and colors all the rest. The second extends from G in the *medium* to F on the fifth line; and the upper part, which forms the third register, is no more than an elegant superfluity of Nature. It is necessary next to understand with what incredible skill the artist manages this instrument; it is the pearly, light, and florid vocalization of Persiani joined to the resonance, pomp, and amplitude of Pisoni. No words can convey an idea of the exquisite purity of this voice, always mellow, always equable, which vibrates without effort, and each note of which expands itself like the bud of a rose—sheds a balm on the ear, as some exquisite fruit perfumes the palate. No

scream, no affected dramatic contortion of sound, attacks the sense of hearing, under the pretense of softening the feelings.”



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“But that which we admire above all in the artist,” observes Fiorentino, “is the pervading soul, the sentiment, the perfect taste, the inimitable method. Then, what body in the voice! What largeness! What simplicity of style! What facility of vocalization! What genius in the contrasts! What color in the phrases! What charm! What expression! *Mlle. Alboni* sings as she smiles—without effort, without fatigue, without audible and broken respiration. Here is art in its fidelity! here is the model and example which every one who would become an artist should copy.”

“It is such a pleasure to hear real singing,” wrote Hector Berlioz. “It is so rare; and voices at once beautiful, natural, expressive, flexible, and *in time*, are so very uncommon! The voice of *Mlle. Alboni* possesses these excellent qualities in the highest degree of perfection. It is a magnificent contralto of immense range (two octaves and six notes, nearly three octaves, from low E to C in alt), the quality perfect throughout, even in the lowest notes of the lowest register, which are generally so disastrous to the majority of singers, who fancy they possess a contralto, and the emission of which resembles nearly always a rattle, hideous in such cases and revolting to the ear. *Mlle. Alboni*’s vocalization is wonderfully easy, and few sopranos possess such facility. The registers of her voice are so perfectly united, that in her scales you do not feel sensible of the passage from one to another; the tone is unctuous, caressing, velvety, melancholy, like that of all pure sopranos, though less somber than that of *Pisaroni*, and incomparably more pure and limpid. As the notes are produced without effort, the voice yields itself to every shade of intensity, and thus *Mlle. Alboni* can sing from the most mysterious piano to the most brilliant forte. And this alone is what I call singing humanly, that is to say, in a fashion which declares the presence of a human heart, a human soul, a human intelligence. Singers not possessed of these indispensable qualities should in my judgment be ranked in the category of mechanical instruments. *Mlle. Alboni* is an artist entirely devoted to her art, and has not up to this moment been tempted to make a trade of it; she has never heretofore given a thought to what her delicious notes—precious pearls, which she lavishes with such happy bounty—might bring her in per annum. Different from the majority of contemporary singers, money questions are the last with which she occupies herself; her demands have hitherto been extremely modest. Added to this, the sincerity and trustworthiness of her character, which amounts almost to singularity, are acknowledged by all who have any dealings with her.”

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After the greatness of the artist had fairly-been made known to the public, the excitement in Paris was extraordinary. At some of the later concerts more than a thousand applications for admission had to be refused, and it was said that two theatres might have been thronged. Alboni was nearly smothered night after night with roses and camellias, and the stage was literally transformed into a huge bed of flowers, over which the prima donna was obliged to walk in making her exits. An amusing example of the *naivete* and simplicity of her character is narrated. On the morning after her second performance, she was seated in her hotel on the Boulevard des Italiens, reading the *feuilletons* of Berlioz and Fiorentino with a kind of childish pleasure, unconscious that she was the absorbing theme of Paris talk. A friend came in, when she asked with unaffected sincerity whether she had really sung "*assez bien*" on Monday night, and broke into a fit of the merriest laughter when she received the answer, "*Tres bien pour une petite fille.*" "Alboni," writes this friend, "is assuredly for a great artist the most unpretending and simple creature in the world. She hasn't the slightest notion of her position in her art in the eyes of the public and musical world."

### III.

*Mme.* Alboni's great success, it is said, made M. Vatel, the manager of the Italiens, almost frantic with disappointment, for, acting on the advice of Lablache, he had refused to engage her when he could have done so at a merely nominal sum, and had thus left the grand prize open to his rival. Her concert engagement being terminated, our prima donna made a short tour through Austria, and returned to Paris again to make her *debut* in opera on December 2d, in "*Semiramide*," with *Mme.* Grisi, Coletti, Cellini, and Tagliafico, in the cast. The caprice of audiences was never more significantly shown than on this occasion. Alboni, on the concert stage, had recently achieved an unmistakable and brilliant recognition as a great vocalist, and on the night of her first lyric appearance before a French audience a great throng had assembled. All the celebrities of the fashionable, artistic, and literary world, princes, Government officials, foreign ministers, dilettanti, poets, critics, women of wit and fashion, swelled the gathering of intent listeners, through whom there ran a subdued murmur, a low buzz of whispering, betraying the lively interest felt. Grisi came on after the rising of the curtain and received a most cordial burst of applause. At length the great audience was hushed to silence, and the orchestra played the symphonic prelude which introduces the contralto air "*Eccomi alfin in Babilonia.*" Alboni glided from the side and walked slowly to the footlights. Let an eye-witness complete the story: "There was a sudden pause," says one who was present; "a feather might almost have been heard to move."



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The orchestra, the symphony finished, refrained from proceeding, as though to give time for the enthusiastic reception which was Alboni's right, and which it was natural to suppose Alboni would receive. But you may imagine my surprise and the feelings of the renowned contralto when not a hand or a voice was raised to acknowledge her! I could see Alboni tremble, but it was only for an instant. What was the reason of this unanimous disdain or this unanimous doubt? call it what you will. She might perhaps guess, but she did not suffer it to perplex her for more than a few moments. Throwing aside the extreme diffidence that marked her *entree*, and the perturbation that resulted from the frigidity of the spectators, she wound herself up to the condition of fearless independence for which she is constitutionally and morally remarkable, and with a look of superb indifference and conscious power she commenced the opening of her aria. In one minute the crowd, that but an instant before seemed to disdain her, was at her feet! The effect of those luscious tones had never yet failed to touch the heart and rouse the ardor of an audience, educated or uneducated." Alboni's triumph was instantaneous and complete; it was the greater from the moment of anxious uncertainty that preceded it, and made the certainty which succeeded more welcome and delightful. From this instant to the end of the opera, Alboni's success grew into a triumph. During the first act she was twice recalled; during the second act, thrice; and she was encored in the air "In si barbara," which she delivered with pathos, and in the cabaletta of the second duet with *Semiramide*. She followed in "La Cenerentola," and it may easily be fancied that her hearers compensated in boisterous warmth of reception for the phlegmatic indifference shown on the first night.

The English engagement of *Mlle.* Alboni the following year at Covent Garden was at a salary of four thousand pounds, and the popularity she had accomplished in England made her one of the most attractive features of the operatic season. Her delicious singing and utter freedom from affect that savored of mannerism or affectation made her power of captivation complete in spite of her lack of dramatic energy. She sang in the same company with Grisi, Persiani, and Viardot, while Mario and Tamburini added their magnificent voices to this fine constellation of lyric stars. When she returned to London in 1849, Jenny Lind had retired from the stage where she had so thoroughly bewitched the public, and *Mlle.* Alboni became the leading attraction of Her Majesty's Theatre, thus arraying herself against the opera organization with which she had been previously identified. Among the other members of the company were Lablache and Ronconi. *Mlle.* Alboni seemed to be stung by a feverish ambition at this time to depart from her own musical genre, and shine in such parts as *Rosina*, *Ninetta*, *Zerlina* ("Don Giovanni") and *Norina* ("Don Pasquale"). The general public applauded her as vehemently as ever, but the judicious grieved that the greatest of contraltos should forsake a realm in which she blazed with such undivided luster.



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It is difficult to fancy why Alboni should have ventured on so dangerous an experiment. It may be that she feared the public would tire of her luscious voice, unperturbed as it was by the resistless passion and sentiment which in such singers as Malibran, Pasta, and Viardot, had overcome all defects of voice, and given an infinite freshness and variety to their tones. It may be that the higher value of a soprano voice in the music market stirred a feeling in Alboni which had been singularly lacking to her earlier career. Whatever the reason might have been, it is a notorious fact that *Mlle.* Alboni deliberately forced the register upward, and in doing so injured the texture of her voice, and lost something both of luscious tone and power. In later years she repented this artistic sin, and recovered the matchless tones of her youth in great measure, but, as long as she persevered in her ambition to be a *soprano*, the result was felt by her most judicious friends to be an unfortunate one.

A pleasant incident, illustrating Alboni's kindness of heart, occurred on the eve of her departure for Italy, whither she was called by family reasons. Her leave-taking was so abrupt that she had almost forgotten her promise to sing in Paris on a certain date for the annual benefit of Filippo Galli, a superannuated musician. The suspense and anxiety of the unfortunate Filippo were to be more easily imagined than described when, asked if Alboni would sing, he could not answer definitively—"Perhaps yes, perhaps no." He sold very few tickets, and the rooms (in the Salle Hera) were thinly occupied. She, however, had not forgotten her promise; at the very moment when the matinee was commencing she arrived, in time to redeem her word and reward those who had attended, but too late to be of any service to the veteran. Galli was in despair, and was buried in reflections neither exhilarating nor profitable, when, some minutes after the concert, the comely face and portly figure of Alboni appeared at the door of his room. "How much are the expenses of your concert?" she kindly inquired. "*Mia cara*," dolorously responded the beneficaire, "*cinque centifraci* [five hundred francs]." "Well, then, to repair the loss that I may have caused you," said the generous cantatrice, "here is a banknote for a thousand francs. Do me the favor to accept it." This was only one of the many kind actions she performed.

*Mlle.* Alboni's Paris engagement, in the spring of 1850, was marked by a daring step on her part, which excited much curiosity at the time, and might easily have ended in a most humiliating reverse, though its outcome proved fortunate, that undertaking being the *role* of *Fides* in "Le Prophete," which had become so completely identified with the name of Viardot. It was owing as much, perhaps, to the insistence of the managers of the Grand Opera as to the deliberate choice of the singer that this experiment was attempted. Meyerbeer



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perhaps smiled in his sleeve at the project, but he interposed no objection, and indeed went behind the scenes to congratulate her on her success during the night of the first performance. Alboni's achievement was gratifying to her pride, but it need not be said that her interpretation of *Fides* was radically different from that of *Mme. Viardot*, which was a grand tragic conception, akin to those created by the genius of Pasta and Schroeder-Devrient. The music of "Le Prophete" had never been well fitted to Viardot's voice, and it was in this better adaptation of Alboni to the vocal score that it may be fancied her success, such as it was, found its root. It was significant that the critics refrained from enlarging on the dramatic quality of the performance. *Mlle. Alboni* continued her grasp of this varied range of lyric character during her seasons in France, Spain, and England for several years, now assuming *Fides*, now *Amino*, in "Sonnambula," now *Leonora* in "Favorita," and never failing, however the critics might murmur, in pleasing the ultimate, and, on the whole, more satisfactory bench of judges, the public. It was no new thing to have proved that the mass of theatre-goers, however eccentric and unjustifiable the vagaries of a favorite might be, are inclined to be swayed by the cumulative force of long years of approval. In the spring of 1851, *Mlle. Alboni*, among several of her well-established personations, was enabled to appear in a new opera by Auber, "Corbeille d'Oranges," a work which attained only a brief success. It became painfully apparent about this time that the greatest of contralto singers was losing the delicious quality of her voice, and that her method was becoming more and more conventional. Her ornaments and fioriture never varied, and this monotony, owing to the indolence and *insouciance* of the singer, was never inspired by that resistless fire and geniality which made the same cadenzas, repeated night after night by such a singer as Pasta, appear fresh to the audience.

*Mlle. Alboni's* visit to the United States in 1852 was the occasion of a cordial and enthusiastic welcome, which, though lacking in the fury and excitement of the "Jenny Lind" mania, was yet highly gratifying to the singer's *amour propre*. There was a universal feeling of regret that her tour was necessarily a short one. Her final concert was given at Metropolitan Hall, New York, on May 2, 1852, the special occasion being the benefit of Signor Ardit, who had been the conductor of her performances in America. The audience was immense, the applause vehement.

The marriage of Alboni to the Comte de Pepoli in 1853 caused a rumor that she was about to retire from the stage. But, though she gave herself a furlough from her arduous operatic duties for nearly a year, she appeared again in Paris in 1854 in "La Donna del Lago" and other of the Rossinian operas. Her London admirers, too, recognized in the newly married prima donna all the charm of her youth.

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In July, 1855, she was at the Grand Opera, in Paris, performing in "Le Prophete," etc., with Roger, having contracted an engagement for three years. In 1856 she was at Her Majesty's Theatre with Piccolomini, and made her first appearance in the character of *Azucena* in "Il Trovatore." Her performances were not confined to the opera-house; she sang at the Crystal Palace and in the Surrey Music Hall. In October she was again at the Italiens, commencing with "La Cenerentola." She then, in conjunction with Mario, Graziani, and *Mme. Frezzolini*, began performing in the works of Verdi. "Il Trovatore" was performed in January, 1857, and was followed by "Rigoletto," which was produced in defiance of the protestations of Victor Hugo, from whose play, "Le Roi s'amuse," the libretto had been taken. Victor Hugo declared that the representation of the opera was an infringement of his rights, as being simply a piracy of his drama, and he claimed that the Theatre Italiens should be restrained from performing it. The decision of the court was, however, against the irascible poet, and he had to pay the costs of the action.

But why should the reader be interested in a yearly record of the engagements of a great singer, after the narrative of the early struggles by which success is reached and the means by which success is perpetuated has come to an end? The significance of such a recital is that of ardent endeavor, persistent self-culture, and unflagging resolution. *Mme. Alboni* continued to sing in the principal musical centers of Western Europe till 1864, when she definitely retired from the stage, and settled at her fine residence in Paris, midst the ease and luxury which the large fortune she had acquired by professional exertion enabled her to maintain. She occasionally appeared in opera and concert to the great delight of her old admirers, who declared that the youthful beauty and freshness of her voice had returned to her. Since the death of her husband she has only sung in public once, and then in Rossini's Mass, in London in 1871.

Both the husband and the brothers of *Alboni* were gallant soldiers in the Italian war of independence, and received medals and other distinctions from Victor Emanuel. *Mme. Alboni* in private life is said to be one of the most amiable, warm-hearted, and fascinating of women, and to take the deepest interest in helping the careers of young singers by advice, influence, and pecuniary aid. In social life she is quite as much the idol of her friends as she was for so many years of an admiring public.

## JENNY LIND.



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The Childhood of the "Swedish Nightingale."—Her First Musical Instruction.—The Loss and Return of her Voice.—Jenny Lind's Pupilage in Paris under Manuel Garcia.—She makes the Acquaintance of Meyerbeer.—Great Success in Stockholm in "Robert le Diable."—Fredrika Bremer and Hans Christian Andersen on the Young Singer.—Her *Debut* in Berlin.—Becomes Prima Donna at the Royal Theatre.—Beginning of the Lind Enthusiasm that overran Europe.—She appears in Dresden in Meyerbeer's New Opera, "Feldlager in Schliesen."—Offers throng in from all the Leading Theatres of Europe.—The Grand *Furore* in Every Part of Germany.—Description of Scenes in her Musical Progresses.—She makes her *Debut* in London.—Extraordinary Excitement of the English Public, such as had never before been known.—Descriptions of her Singing by Contemporary Critics.—Her Quality as an Actress.—Jenny Lind's *Personnel*.—Scenes and Incidents of the "Lind" Mania.—Her Second London Season.—Her Place and Character as a Lyric Artist.—Mlle. Lind's American Tour.—Extraordinary Enthusiasm in America.—Her Lavish Generosity.—She marries Herr Otto Goldschmidt.—Present Life of Retirement in London.—Jenny Lind as a Public Benefactor.

### I.

The name of Jenny Lind shines among the very brightest in the Golden Book of Singers, and her career has been one of the most interesting among the many striking personal chapters in the history of lyric music. It was not that the "Swedish Nightingale" was supremely great in any chief quality of the lyric artist. Others have surpassed her in natural gifts of voice, in dramatic fervor, in versatility, in perfect vocal finish. But to Jenny Lind were granted all these factors of power in sufficiently large measure, and that power of balance and coordination by which such powers are made to yield their highest results. An exquisitely serene and cheerful temperament, a high ambition, great energy and industry, and such a sense of loyalty to her engagements that she always gave her audience the very best there was in her—these were some of the moral phases of the art-nature which in her case proved of immense service in achieving her great place as a singer, and in holding that place secure against competition for so many years.

The parents of Jenny Lind were poor, struggling folk in the city of Stockholm, who lived precariously by school-teaching. Jenny, born October 6, 1821, was a sickly child, whose only delight in her long, lonely hours was singing, the faculty for which was so strong that at the age of three years she could repeat with unflinching accuracy any song she once heard. Jenny shot up into an awkward, plain-featured girl, with but little prospect of lifting herself above her humble station, till she happened, when she was about nine years old, to attract the attention of Frau Lundburg, a well-known actress, who was delighted with the silvery sweetness of her tones. It was



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with some difficulty that the prejudices of the Linds could be overcome, but at last they reluctantly consented that she should be educated with a view to the stage. The little Jenny was placed by her kind patroness under the care of Croelius, a well-known music-master of Stockholm, and her abilities were not long in making their mark. The old master was proud of his pupil, and took her to see the manager of the Court theatre, Count Puecke, hoping that this stage potentate's favor would help to push the fortune of his *protegee*. The Count, a rough, imperious man, who mayhap had been irritated by numerous other appeals of the same kind, looked coldly on the plainly clad, insignificant-looking girl, and said: "What shall we do with such an ugly creature? See what feet she has! and then her face! She will never be presentable. Certainly, we can't take such a scarecrow." The effect of such a salutation on a timid, shrinking child may be imagined. Croelius replied, with honest indignation, "If you will not take her, I, poor as I am, will myself have her educated for the stage." Count Puecke, who under a rough husk had some kindness of heart, then directed Jenny to sing, and he was so pleased with the quality and sentiment of her simple song that he admitted her into the theatrical school, and put her under the special tuition of Herr Albert Berg, the director of the operatic class, who was assisted by the well-known Swedish composer, Lindblad.

In two years' time the young Jenny Lind had created for herself the reputation of being a prodigy. It was not only that she possessed an exquisite voice, but a precocious conception and originality of style. Her dramatic talent also showed promising glimpses of what was to come, and everything appeared to point to a shining stage career, when there came a crushing calamity. She lost her voice. She was now twelve years old, and in her childish perspective of life this disaster seemed irretrievable, the sunshine of happiness for ever clouded. To become a singer in grand opera had been the great aspiration of her heart. Her voice gone, she was soon forgotten by the fickle public who had looked on this young girl as a chrysalis soon to burst into the glory of a fuller life. It showed the resolute stuff which nature had put into this young girl, that, in spite of this crushing downfall of her ambition, she continued her instrumental and theoretical studies with unremitting zeal for nearly four years. At the end of this period the recovery of her voice occurred as abruptly as her loss of it had done.

A grand concert was to be given at the Court theatre, in which the fourth act of "Robert le Diable" was to be a principal feature. No one of the singers cared for the part of *Alice*, as it had but one solo, and in the emergency Herr Berg thought of his unlucky young *e/leve*, Jenny Lind, who might be trusted with such a minor responsibility. The girl meekly consented, though, when she appeared



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on the stage, she shook with such evident trepidation and nervousness that her little remaining power of voice threatened to be destroyed. Perhaps the passion and anxiety under which she was laboring wrought the miracle. She sang the aria allotted her with such power and precision, and the notes of her voice burst forth with such beauty and fullness of tone, that the audience were carried away with admiration. The recently despised young vocalist became the heroine of the evening. Berg, the director of the music, was amazed, and on the next day acquainted Jenny Lind that he had selected her to undertake the *role* of *Agatha* in Weber's "Der Freischutz."

This was the first character which had awakened our young singer's artistic sympathies, and toward it her secret ambition had long set. She studied with the labor of love, and all the Maytide of her young enthusiasm poured itself into her impersonation of Weber's beautiful creation. At the last rehearsal before performance, she sang with such intense ardor and feeling that the members of the orchestra laid aside their instruments and broke into the most cordial applause. "I saw her at the evening representation," says Fredrika Bremer. "She was then in the spring of life—fresh, bright, and serene as a morning in May; perfect in form; her hands and her arms peculiarly graceful, and lovely in her whole appearance. She seemed to move, speak, and sing without effort or art. All was nature and harmony. Her singing was distinguished especially by its purity and the power of soul which seemed to swell in her tones. Her 'mezzo voice' was delightful. In the night-scene where *Agatha*, seeing her lover coming, breathes out her joy in rapturous song, our young singer, on turning from the window at the back of the stage to the spectators again, was pale for joy; and in that pale joyousness she sang with a burst of outflowing love and life that called forth not the mirth, but the tears of the auditors."

Jenny Lind has always regarded the character of *Agatha* as the keystone of her fame. From the night of this performance she was the declared favorite of the Swedish public, and continued for a year and a half the star of the opera of Stockholm, performing in "Euryanthe," "Robert le Diable," "La Vestale," of Spontini, and other operas. She labored meanwhile with indefatigable industry to remedy certain natural deficiencies in her voice. Always pure and melodious in tone, it was originally wanting in elasticity. She could neither hold her notes to any considerable extent, nor increase nor diminish their volume with sufficient effect; and she could scarcely utter the slightest cadence. But, undaunted by difficulties, she persevered, and ultimately achieved that brilliant and facile execution which, it is difficult to believe, was partially denied her by nature.



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Jenny Lind's tribulations, however, were not yet over. She had overstrained an organ which had not gained its full strength, and it was discovered that her tones were losing their freshness. The public began to lose its interest, and the opera was nearly deserted, for Jenny Lind had been the singer on whom main dependence was placed. She felt a deep conviction that she had need of further teaching, and that of a quality and method not to be attained in her native city. Manuel Garcia had formed more famous prima donnas than any other master, and it was Jenny Lind's dream by night and day to go to this magician of the schools, whose genius and knowledge had been successfully imparted to so many great singers. But to do this required no small amount of funds, and to raise a sufficient sum was a grave problem. There were not in Stockholm a large number of wealthy and generous connoisseurs, such as have been found in richer capitals, eager to discover genius and lavish in supplying the means of its cultivation. No! she must earn the wherewithal herself. So, during the operatic recess, the plucky maiden started out under the guardianship of her father, and gave concerts in the principal towns of Sweden and Norway, through which she managed to amass a considerable sum. She then bade farewell to her parents and started for Paris, her heart again all aflame with hope and confidence.

## II.

Manuel Garcia received Jenny Lind kindly, who was fluttered with anxiety. The master's verdict was not very encouraging. When he had heard her sing, "My good girl," he said, "you have no voice; or, I should rather say, you had a voice, but are now on the verge of losing it. Your organ is strained and worn out, and the only advice I can offer you is to recommend you not to sing a note for three months. At the end of that time come to me, and I'll see what I can do for you." This was heart-breaking, but there was no appeal, and so, at the end of three wearisome months, Jenny Lind returned to Garcia. He pronounced her voice greatly strengthened by its rest. Under the Garcia method the young Swedish singer's voice improved immensely, and, what is more, her conception and grasp of musical method. The cadences and ornaments composed by Jenny were in many cases considered worthy by the master of being copied, and her progress in every way pleased Garcia, though he never fancied she would achieve any great musical distinction. Another pupil of Garcia's was a *Mlle. Nissen*, who, without much intellectuality, had a robust, full-toned voice. Jenny Lind often said that it reduced her to despair at times to hear the master hold up this lady as an example, all the while she felt her own great superiority, the more lofty quality of her ambition. Garcia would say: "If Jenny Lind had the voice of Nissen, or the latter Lind's brains, one of them would become the greatest singer in Europe. If Lind had more voice at her disposal, nothing would prevent her from becoming the greatest of modern singers; but, as it is, she must be content with singing second to many who will not have half her genius." It is quite amusing to note how quickly this dogmatic prophecy of the great maestro disproved itself.



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After nearly a year under Garcia's tuition she was summoned home. The Swedish musician who brought her the order to return to her duties at the Stockholm Court Theatre, from which she had been absent by permission, was a friend of Meyerbeer, and through him Jenny Lind was introduced to the composer. Meyerbeer, unlike Garcia, promptly recognized in her voice "one of the finest pearls in the world's chaplet of song," and was determined to hear her under conditions which would fully test the power and quality of so delicious an organ. He arranged a full orchestral rehearsal, and Jenny Lind sang in the *salon* of the Grand Opera the three great scenes from "Robert le Diable," "Norma," and "Der Freischutz." The experiment vindicated Meyerbeer's judgment, and Jenny Lind could then and there have signed a contract with the manager, whom Meyerbeer had taken care to have present, had it not been for the spiteful opposition of a distinguished prima donna, who had an undue influence over the managerial mind.

The young singer returned to Stockholm a new being, assured of her powers, self-centered in her ambition, and with a right to expect a successful career for herself. Her preparation had been accompanied with much travail of spirit, disappointment, and suffering, but the harvest was now ripening for the reaper. The people of Stockholm, though they had let her depart with indifference, received her back right cordially, and, when she made her first reappearance as *Alice*, in "Robert le Diable," the welcome had all the fury of a great popular excitement. Her voice had gained remarkable flexibility and power, the quality of it was of a bell-like richness, purity, and clearness; her execution was admirable, and her dramatic power excellent. The good people of Stockholm discovered that they had been entertaining an angel unawares. Though Jenny Lind was but little known out of Sweden, she soon received an offer from the Copenhagen opera, but she dreaded to accept the offer of the Danish manager. "I have never made my appearance out of Sweden," she observed; "everybody in my native land is so affectionate and kind to me, and if I made my appearance in Copenhagen and should be hissed! I dare not venture on it!" However, the temptations held out to her, and the entreaties of Burnonville, the ballet-master of Copenhagen, who had married a Swedish friend of Jenny Lind's, at last prevailed over the nervous apprehensions of the young singer, and Jenny made her first appearance in Copenhagen as *Alice*, in "Robert le Diable." "It was like a new revelation in the realms of art," says Andersen ("Story of my Life"); "the youthful, fresh voice forced itself into every heart; here reigned truth and nature, and everything was full of meaning and intelligence. At one concert she sang her Swedish songs. There was something so peculiar in this, so bewitching, people thought nothing about the concert-room; the popular melodies uttered by a



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being so purely feminine, and bearing the universal stamp of genius, exercised the omnipotent sway—the whole of Copenhagen was in a rapture.” Jenny Lind was the first singer to whom the Danish students gave a serenade; torches blazed around the hospitable villa where the serenade was given, and she expressed her thanks by again singing some Swedish airs impromptu. “I saw her hasten into a dark corner and weep for emotion,” says Andersen. “Yes, yes! said she, ‘I will exert myself; I will endeavor; I will be better qualified than I now am when I again come to Copenhagen.’”

“On the stage,” adds Andersen, “she was the great artist who rose above all those around her; at home, in her own chamber, a sensitive young girl with all the humility and piety of a child. Her appearance in Copenhagen made an epoch in the history of our opera; it showed me art in its sanctity: I had beheld one of its vestals.”

Jenny Lind was one of the few who regard art as a sacred vocation. “Speak to her of her art,” says Frederika Bremer, “and you will wonder at the expansion of her mind, and will see her countenance beaming with inspiration. Converse then with her of God, and of the holiness of religion, and you will see tears in those innocent eyes: she is great as an artist, but she is still greater in her pure human existence!”

“She loves art with her whole soul,” observes Andersen, “and feels her vocation in it. A noble, pious disposition like hers can not be spoiled by homage. On one occasion only did I hear her express her joy in her talent and her self-consciousness. It was during her last residence in Copenhagen. Almost every evening she appeared either in the opera or at concerts; every hour was in requisition. She heard of a society, the object of which was to assist unfortunate children, and to take them out of the hands of their parents, by whom they were misused and compelled either to beg or steal, and to place them in other and better circumstances. Benevolent people subscribed annually a small sum each for their support; nevertheless, the means for this excellent purpose were very limited. ‘But have I not still a disengaged evening?’ said she; ‘let me give a night’s performance for the benefit of those poor children; but we will have double prices!’ Such a performance was given, and returned large proceeds. When she was informed of this, and that by this means a number of poor people would be benefited for several years, her countenance beamed, and the tears filled her eyes. ‘It is, however, beautiful,’ she said, ‘that I can sing so.’”

Every effort was made by Jenny Lind’s friends and admirers to keep her in Sweden, but her genius spoke to her with too clamorous and exacting a voice to be pent up in such a provincial field. There had been some correspondence with Meyerbeer on the subject of her securing a Berlin engagement, and the composer showed his deep interest in the singer by exerting his powerful influence with such good effect that she was soon offered the position of second singer of the Royal Theatre. Her departure from

Stockholm was a most flattering and touching display of the public admiration, for the streets were thronged with thousands of people to bid her godspeed and a quick return.



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The prima donna of the Berlin opera was *Mlle. Nissen*, who had been with herself under Garcia's instruction, and it was a little humiliating that she should be obliged to sing second to one whom she knew to be her inferior. But she could be patient, and bide her time. In the mean while the sapient critics regarded her with good-natured indifference, and threw her a few crumbs of praise from time to time to appease her hunger. At last she had her revenge. One night at a charity concert, the fourth act of "Robert le Diable" was given, and the solo of *Alice* assigned to Jenny Lind. She had barely sung the first few bars when the audience were electrified. The passion, fervor, novelty of treatment, and glorious breadth of voice and style completely enthralled them. They broke into a tempest of applause, and that was the beginning of the "Lind madness," which, commencing in Berlin, ran through Europe with such infectious enthusiasm. During the remaining three months of the Berlin season, she was the musical idol of the Berlineese, and poor *Mlle. Nissen* found herself hurled irretrievably from her throne. It was about this time, near the close of 1843, that *Mlle. Lind* received her first offer of an English engagement from Mr. Lumley, who had sent an agent to Berlin to hear her sing, and make a report to him on this new prodigy. No contract, however, was then entered into, Jenny Lind going to Dresden instead, where her friend Meyerbeer was engaged in composing his "Feldlager in Schliesen," the first part of which, *Vielka*, was offered to her and accepted. She acquired the German language sufficiently well in two months to sing in it, but it is rather a strange fact that, though *Mlle. Lind* during her life learned not less than five languages besides her own, she never spoke any of them with precision and purity, not even Italian.

### III.

After an operatic campaign in Dresden, in the highest degree pleasant to herself and satisfactory to the public, in which she sang, in addition to *Vielka*, the parts of *Norma*, *Amina*, and *Maria* in "La Figlia del Reggimento," Jenny Lind returned to Stockholm to take part in the coronation of the King of Sweden. Her fame spread throughout the musical world with signal swiftness, and offers came pouring in on her from London, Paris, Florence, Milan, and Naples. This northern songstress was becoming a world's wonder, not because people had heard, but because the few carried far and wide such wonderful reports of her genius. Her tour in the summer of 1844 through the cities of Scandinavia and Germany was almost like the progress of a royal personage, to which events had attached some special splendor. Costly gifts were lavished on her, her journeys through the streets were besieged by thousands of admiring followers, her society was sought by the most distinguished people in the land. The Countess

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of Rossi (Henrietta Sontag) paid her the tribute of calling her “the first singer of the world.” After a five months’ engagement in Berlin, the Swedish singer made her *debut* in “Norma,” at Vienna, on April 22, 1845. The Lind enthusiasm had been rising to fever heat from the first announcement of her coming, and the prices of admission had been doubled, much to the discomfort of poor Jenny Lind, who feared that the over-wrought anticipation of the public would be disappointed. But when she ascended the steps of the Druid altar and began to sing, then the storm of applause which interrupted the opera for several minutes decided the question unmistakably.

After a brief return to her native city, she reappeared in Berlin, which had a special claim on her regard, for it was there that her genius had been first fully recognized and trumpeted forth in tones which rang through the civilized world. She again received a liberal offer from England, this time from Mr. Bunn, of the Drury Lane Theatre, and an agreement was signed, with the names of Lord Westmoreland, the British minister, and Meyerbeer as witnesses. The singer, however, was not altogether satisfied with the contract, a feeling which increased when she again was approached by Mr. Lumley’s agent. There were many strong personal and professional reasons why she preferred to sing under Mr. Lumley’s management, and the result was that she wrote to Mr. Bunn, asking to break the contract, and offering to pay two thousand pounds forfeit. This was refused, and the matter went into the courts afterward, resulting in twenty-five hundred pounds damages awarded to the disappointed manager.

Berlin enthusiasm ran so high that the manager was compelled to reengage her at the rate of four thousand pounds per year, with two months’ *conge*. The difficulty of gaining admission into the theatre, even when she had appeared upward of a hundred nights, was so great, that it was found necessary, in order to prevent the practice of jobbing in tickets, which was becoming very prevalent, to issue them according to the following directions, which were put forth by the manager: “Tickets must be applied for on the day preceding that for which they are required, by letter, signed with the applicant’s proper and Christian name, profession, and place of abode, and sealed with wax, bearing the writer’s initials with his arms. No more than one ticket can be granted to the same person; and no person is entitled to apply for two consecutive nights of the enchantress’s performance.” Her reputation and the public admiration swelled month by month. Mendelssohn engaged her for the musical festival at Aix-La-Chapelle, where he was the conductor, and was so delighted with her singing that he said, “There will not be born in a whole century another being so largely gifted as Jenny Lind.” The Emperor of Russia offered her fifty-six thousand francs a month for five months (fifty-six thousand dollars), a sum then rarely equaled in musical annals.



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The correspondent of the "London Athenaeum" gave an interesting sketch of the feeling she created in Frankfurt:

"Dine where you would, you heard of Jenny Lind, when she was coming, what she would sing, how much she was to be paid, who had got places, and the like; so that, what with the *exigeant* English dilettanti flying at puzzled German landlords with all manner of Babylonish protestations of disappointment and uncertainty, and native High Ponderosities ready to trot in the train of the enchantress where she might please to lead, with here and there a dark-browed Italian prima donna lowering, Medea-like, in the background, and looking daggers whenever the name of 'Questa Linda!' was uttered—nothing, I repeat, can be compared to the universal excitement, save certain passages ('green spots' in the memory of many a dowager Berliner) when enthusiasts rushed to drink Champagne out of Sontag's shoe.... In 'La Figlia del Reggimento,' compared with the exhibitions of her sister songstresses now on the German stage, *Mlle. Lind's* personation was like a piece of porcelain beside tawdry daubings on crockery."

Jenny Lind's last appearance in Vienna before departing for England was again a lighted match set to a mass of tinder, it raised such a commotion in that music-loving city. The imperial family paid her the most marked attention, and the people were inclined to go to any extravagances to show their admiration. During these performances, the stalls, which were ordinarily two florins, rose to fifty, and sometimes there would be thousands of people unable to secure admission. On the last night, after such a scene as had rarely been witnessed in any opera-house, the audience joined the immense throng which escorted her carriage home. Thirty times they summoned her to the window with cries which would not be ignored, shouting, "Jenny Lind, say you will come back again to us!" The tender heart of the Swedish singer was so affected that she stood sobbing like a child at the window, and threw flowers from the mass of bouquets piled on her table to her frenzied admirers, who eagerly snatched them and carried them home as treasures.

On her departure from Stockholm for London, the demonstration was most affecting, and showed how deep the love of their great singer was rooted in the hearts of the Swedes. Twenty thousand people assembled on the quay, military bands had been stationed at intervals on the route, and her progress through the streets was like that of a queen. She embarked amid cheers, music, and tears, and, as she sailed out of the harbor, the rigging of the vessels was decorated with flags, and manned, while the artillery from the war vessels thundered salutes. All this sounds like exaggeration to us now, but those who remember the enthusiasm kindled by Jenny Lind in America can well believe the accounts of the feeling called out by the "Swedish Nightingale" everywhere she went in Europe.



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When *Mlle.* Lind arrived in London, she was received by her friend Mrs. Grote, wife of the great historian, and for several weeks was her guest, the most distinguished men and women calling to pay their respects to the gifted singer. She secluded herself, however, as much as possible from general society, and it may be said, during the larger part of her London engagement, lived in seclusion, much to the disgust of the social celebrities who were eager to lionize her. Lablache, the basso, was one of the first to hear Jenny sing. His pleasant criticism, "Every note was like a perfect pearl," got to her ears. The *naïve* and charming jest by which she made her acknowledgment is quite worth the repeating. Stepping to the side of Lablache one morning at rehearsal, she made a courtesy, and borrowed his hat from the smiling basso. She then placed her lips to the edge and sang into its capacious depths a beautiful French romance. At the conclusion of the song, she ordered Lablache, who was bewildered by this fantastic performance, to kneel before her, as she had a valuable present for him, declaring that on his own showing she was giving him a hatful of "pearls." Lablache was so delighted by this simple and innocent gayety that he avowed he could not be more pleased if she had given him a hatful of diamonds.

### IV.

Mr. Lumley had prepared the English public for the coming of *Mlle.* Lind with consummate skill. The game of suspense was artfully managed to stir curiosity to the uttermost. The provocations of doubt and disappointment had been made to stimulate the musical appetite. There was a powerful opposition to Lumley at the other theatre—Grisi, Persiani, Alboni, Mario, and Tamburini—and the shrewd *impresario* played all the cards in his hand for their full value. It had been asserted that *Mlle.* Lind would not come to England, and that no argument could prevail on her to change her resolution, and this, too, after the contract was signed, sealed, and delivered. The opera world was kept fevered by such artifices as stories of broken pledges, long diplomatic *pour parlera*, special messengers, hesitation, and vacillation, kept up during many months. Lumley in his "Reminiscences" has described how no stone was left unturned, not a trait of the young singer's character, public or private, left un-*exploite*, by which sympathy and admiration could be aroused. After appearing as the heroine of one of Miss Bremer's novels, "The Home," the splendors of her succeeding career were glowingly set forth. The panegyrics of the two great German composers, Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, were swollen into the most flowing language. All the secrets of Jenny Lind's life were made the subjects of innumerable puffs by the paragraph makers, and her numerous deeds of charity were trumpeted in clarion tones, as if she, a member of a profession famous for its deeds of unostentatious kindness, were the only one who had the right to wear the lovely crown of mercy and beneficence. All this machinery of advertisement, though wofully opposed to all the instincts of Jenny Lind's modest and timid nature, had the effect of fixing the popular belief into a firm faith that what had cost so much trouble to secure must indeed be unspeakably precious.

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The interest and curiosity of the public were, therefore, wrought up to an extraordinary pitch. Her first appearance was on May 4, 1847, as *Alice*, in “Robert le Diable,” a part so signally identified with her great successes. “The curtain went up, the opera began, the cheers resounded, deep silence followed,” wrote the critic of the “Musical World,” “and the cause of all the excitement was before us. It opened its mouth and emitted sound. The sounds it emitted were right pleasing, honey-sweet, and silver-toned. With all this, there was, besides, a quietude that we had not marked before, and a something that hovered about the object, as an unseen grace that was attired in a robe of innocence, transparent as the thin surface of a bubble, disclosing all, and making itself rather felt than seen.” Chorley tells us that Mendelssohn, who was sitting by him, and whose attachment to Jenny Lind’s genius was unbounded, turned round, watched the audience as the notes of the singer swelled and filled the house, and smiled with delight as he saw how completely every one in the audience was magnetized. The delicious sustained notes which began the first cavatina died away into a faint whisper, and thunders of applause went up as with one breath, the stentorian voice of Lablache, who was sitting in his box, booming like a great bell amid the din. The excitement of the audience at the close of the opera almost baffles description. Lumley’s hopes were not in vain. Jenny Lind was securely throned as the operatic goddess of the town, and no rivalry had power to shake her from her place.

The judgment of the musical critics, though not intemperate in praise, had something more than a touch of the public enthusiasm. “It is wanting in that roundness and mellowness which belongs to organs of the South,” observed a very able musical connoisseur. “When forced, it has by no means an agreeable sound, and falls hard and grating on the ears. It is evident that, in the greater part of its range, acquired by much perseverance and study, nature has not been bountiful to the Swedish Nightingale in an extraordinary degree. But art and energy have supplied the defects of nature. Perhaps no artist, if we except Pasta, ever deserved more praise than Jenny Lind for what she has worked out of bad materials. From an organ neither naturally sweet nor powerful, she has elaborated a voice capable of producing the most vivid sensations. In her mezzo-voce singing, scarcely any vocalist we ever heard can be compared to her. The most delicate notes, given with the most perfect intonation, captivate the hearers, and throw them into ecstasies of delight. This is undoubtedly the great charm of Jenny Lind’s singing, and in this respect we subscribe ourselves among her most enthusiastic admirers.... She sustains a C or D in alt with unerring intonation and surprising power. These are attained without an effort, and constitute another charm of the Nightingale’s singing.



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“In pathetic music Jenny Lind's voice is heard to much advantage. Indeed, her vocal powers seem best adapted to demonstrate the more gentle and touching emotions. For this reason her solo singing is almost that alone in which she makes any extraordinary impression. In ensemble singing, excepting in the piano, her voice, being forced beyond its natural powers, loses all its beauty and peculiar charm, and becomes, in short, often disagreeable.... Her voice, with all its charm, is of a special quality, and in its best essays is restricted to a particular class of lyrical compositions.... As a vocalist, Jenny Lind is entitled to a very high, if not the highest, commendation. Her perseverance and indomitable energy, joined to her musical ability, have tended to render her voice as capable and flexible as a violin. Although she never indulges in the brilliant flights of fancy of Persiani, nor soars into the loftiest regions of fioriture with that most wonderful of all singers, her powers of execution are very great, and the delicate taste with which the most florid passages are given, the perfect intonation of the voice, and its general charm, have already produced a most decided impression on the public mind. By the musician, Persiani will be always more admired, but Jenny Lind will strike the general hearer more.”

Another contemporaneous judgment of Jenny Lind's voice will be of interest to our readers: “Her voice is a pure soprano, of the fullest compass belonging to voices of this class, and of such evenness of tone that the nicest ear can discover no difference of quality from the bottom to the summit of the scale. In the great extent between A below the lines and D in alt, she executes every description of passage, whether consisting of notes ‘in linked sweetness long drawn out,’ or of the most rapid flights and fioriture, with equal facility and perfection. Her lowest notes come out as clear and ringing as the highest, and her highest are as soft and sweet as the lowest. Her tones are never muffled or indistinct, nor do they ever offend the ear by the slightest tinge of shrillness; mellow roundness distinguishes every sound she utters. As she never strains her voice, it never seems to be loud; and hence some one who busied himself in anticipatory depreciation said that it would be found to fail in power, a mistake of which everybody was convinced who observed how it filled the ear, and how distinctly every inflection was heard through the fullest harmony of the orchestra. The same clearness was observable in her pianissimo. When, in her beautiful closes, she prolonged a tone, attenuated it by degrees, and falling gently upon the final note, the sound, though as ethereal as the sighing of a breeze, reached, like Mrs. Siddons's whisper in *Lady Macbeth*, every part of the immense theatre. Much of the effect of this unrivaled voice is derived from the physical beauty of its sound, but still more from the exquisite skill and taste



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with which it is used, and the intelligence and sensibility of which it is the organ. *Mlle.* Lind's execution is that of a complete musician. Every passage is as highly finished, as perfect in tone, tune, and articulation, as if it proceeded from the violin of a Paganini or a Sivori, with the additional charm which lies in the human *voice* divine. Her embellishments show the richest fancy and boundless facility, but they show still more remarkably a well-regulated judgment and taste."

*Mlle.* Lind could never have been a great actress, and risen into that stormy world of dramatic power, where the passion and imagination of Pasta, Schroeder-Devrient, Malibran, Viardot, or even Grisi, wrought such effects, but, within the sphere of her temperament, she was easy, natural, and original. One of her eulogists remarked: "Following her own bland conceptions, she rises to regions whence, like Schiller's maid, she descends to refresh the heart and soul of her audience with gifts beautiful and wondrous"; but, as she never attempted the delineation of the more stormy and vehement passions, it is probable that she was more cognizant of her own limitations, than were her critics.

She was not handsome, but of pleasing aspect. A face of placid sweetness, expressive features, soft, dove-like-blue eyes, and very abundant, wavy, flaxen hair, made up a highly agreeable *ensemble*, while the slender figure was full of grace. There was an air of virginal simplicity and modesty in every movement which set her apart among her stage sisters. To this her character answered in every line; for, moving in the midst of a world which had watched every action, not the faintest breath of scandal ever shaded the fair fame of this Northern lily.

The struggle for admission after the first night made the attempt to get a seat except by long prearrangement an experience of purgatory. Twenty-five pounds were paid for single boxes, while four or five guineas were gladly given for common stalls. Hours were spent before the doors of the opera-house on the chance of a place in the pit. It is said that three gentlemen came up from Liverpool with the express purpose of hearing the new *diva* sing, spent a week in trying to obtain seats, and returned without success. No such mania for a singer had ever fired the phlegmatic blood of the English public. Articles of furniture and dress were called by her name; portraits and memoirs innumerable of her were published.

During the season she appeared in "Robert le Diable," "Sonnambula," "Lucia" "La Figlia del Reggimento," and "Norma," as well as in a new opera by Verdi, "I Masnadieri," which even Jenny Lind's genius and popularity could not keep on the surface. At the close of the season, her manager, Lumley, presented her a magnificent testimonial of pure silver, three feet in height, representing a pillar wreathed with laurel, at the feet of which were seated three draped figures, Tragedy,

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Comedy, and Music. Her tour through the provinces repeated the sensation and excitement of London. Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Dundee vied with the great capital in the most extravagant excesses of admiration, and fifteen guineas were not infrequently paid for the privilege of hearing her. For two concerts in Edinburgh *Mlle.* Lind received one thousand pounds for her services, and the management made twelve hundred pounds. Such figures are referred to simply as affording the most tangible estimate of the extent and violence of the Lind fever.

### V.

Yet with all this flattery and admiration, which would have fed the conceit of a weaker woman to madness, Jenny Lind remained the same quiet, simple-hearted, almost diffident woman as of yore. The great pianist and composer Moscheles writes: "What shall I say of Jenny Lind? I can find no words adequate to give you any idea of the impression she has made.... This is no short-lived fit of public enthusiasm. I wanted to know her off the stage as well as on; but, as she lives at some distance from me, I asked her in a letter to fix upon an hour for me to call. Simple and unceremonious as she is, she came the next day herself, bringing the answer verbally. So much modesty and so much greatness united are seldom if ever to be met with; and, although her intimate friend Mendelssohn had given me an insight into the noble qualities of her character, I was surprised to find them so apparent."

From a variety of accounts we are justified in concluding that never had there been such a musical enthusiasm in London. Since the days when the world fought for hours at the pit-door to see the seventh farewell of Siddons, nothing had been seen in the least approaching the scenes at the entrance of the theatre on the "Lind" nights. Of her various impersonations during the season of 1847, her *Amina* in "Sonnambula" made the deepest impression on the town, as it was marked by several original features, both in the acting and singing, which were remarkably effective. Her performance of *Norma* was afterward held by judicious critics to be far inferior to that of Grisi in its dramatic aspect; but, when the mania was at its height, those who dared to impeach the ideal perfection of everything done by the idol of the hour were consigned to perdition as idiotic slanderers. Chorley wrote with satirical bitterness, though himself a warm admirer of the "Swedish Nightingale": "It was a curious experience to sit and to wait for what should come next, and to wonder whether it really was the case that music never had been heard till the year 1847."

*Mlle.* Lind passed the winter at Stockholm, and it is needless to speak of the pride and delight of her townspeople in the singer who had created such an unprecedented sensation in the musical world. All the places at the theatre when she sang fetched immense premiums, especially as it was known that the professional gains of Jenny



Lind during this engagement were to be devoted to the endowment of an asylum for the support of decayed artists, and a school for young girls studying music. When she left Stockholm again for London, the scene was even more brilliant and impressive than that which had marked her previous departure for England.



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The "Lind" mania in the English capital during the spring of 1848 raged without diminution. The anecdotes of her munificent charity, piety, and goodness filled the public prints and fed the popular idolatry. She added to her repertoire this season the *roles* of *Susanna* in Mozart's great comic opera, *Elvira* in "Puritani," *Adina* in "L'Elisir d'Amore," and *Giulia* in Spontini's "Vestale." As *Giulia* she reached her high-water mark in tragedy, and as *Adina* in "L'Elisir" she was deliciously arch and fascinating. After the opera had closed, she remained in England during the summer and winter, owing to the disturbed state of the Continent, and gave extended concert tours in the provinces, for which she received immense sums of money. Many concerts she also devoted to charitable purposes, and splendid acknowledgments were made as gifts to her by corporations and private individuals in recognition of her lavish benevolence. Jenny Lind had now determined to take leave of the lyric stage, and in the April season of 1849 she gave a limited season of farewell performances at Her Majesty's Theatre. The last appearance was on May 10th in her original character of *Alice*. The opera-house presented on that night of final adieu one of those striking scenes which words can hardly depict without seeming to be extravagant. The crowd was dense in every nook and corner of the house, including all the great personages of the realm. The whole royal family were present, the Houses of Parliament had emptied themselves to swell the throng, and everybody distinguished in art, letters, science, or fashion contributed to the splendor of the audience. When the curtain fell, and the deafening roar of applause, renewed again and again, had ceased, Jenny Lind came forward, led by the tenor Gardoni. She retired, but was called again in front of the curtain, and bowed her acknowledgments. A third time she was summoned, and this time she stood, her eyes streaming with tears, while the audience shouted themselves hoarse, so prolonged and irrepressible was the enthusiasm.

Now that the "Lind" fever is a thing of the past, it is possible to survey her genius as a lyric artist in the right perspective. Her voice was of bright, thrilling, and sympathetic quality, with greater strength and purity in the upper register, but somewhat defective in the other. These two portions of her voice she united, however, with great artistic dexterity, so that the power of the upper notes was not allowed to outshine the lower. Her execution was great, though inferior to that of Persiani and the older and still greater singer, Catalani. It appeared, perhaps, still greater than it was, on account of the natural reluctance of the voice. Her taste in ornamentation was original and brilliant, but always judicious, a moderation not often found among great executive singers. She composed all her own cadenzas, and many of them were of a character



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and performance such as to have evoked the strongest admiration of such musical authorities as Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, and Moscheles for their creative science. Her pianissimo tones were so fined down that they had almost the effect of ventriloquism, so exquisitely were they attenuated; and yet they never lost their peculiarly musical quality. As an actress Jenny Lind had no very startling power, and but little versatility, as her very limited opera repertory proved; but into what she did she infused a grace, sympathy, and tenderness, which, combined with the greatness of her singing and some indescribable quality in the voice itself, produced an effect on audiences with but few parallels in the annals of the opera. It is a little strange that Jenny Lind would never sing in Paris, but obstinately refused the most tempting offers. Perhaps she never forgot the circumstances of her first experience with a Parisian *impressario*.

It was at Lubeck, Germany, where she was singing in concert in 1849, that she concluded a treaty with Mr. Barnum for a series of one hundred and fifty concerts in America under his auspices. The terms were one thousand dollars per night for each of the performances, and the expenses of the whole troupe, which consisted of Sig. Belletti and Julius Benedict (since Sir Julius Benedict). The period intervening before her American tour was occupied in concert-giving on the continent and in England. The proceeds of these entertainments were given to charity, and the demonstrations of the public everywhere proved how firmly fixed in the heart of the music-loving public the great Swedish singer remained. Her last appearance before crossing the ocean was at Liverpool, before an audience of more than three thousand people, when the English people gave their idol a most affecting display of their admiration.

## VI.

Mr. Barnum, no mean adept himself in the science of advertising, took a lesson from the ingenious trickery of Mr. Lumley in whetting the appetite of the American public for the coming of the Swedish *diva*. He took good care that the newspapers should be flooded with the most exaggerated and sensational anecdotes of her life and career, and day after day the people were kept on the alert by columns of fulsome praise and exciting gossip. On her arrival in New York, in September, 1850, both the wharf and adjacent streets were packed with people eager to catch a glimpse of the great singer. Her hotel, the Irving House, was surrounded at midnight by not less than thirty thousand people, and she was serenaded by a band of one hundred and thirty musicians, who had marched up, led by several hundreds of red-shirted firemen. The American furore instantly took on the proportions of that which had crazed the English public. The newspapers published the names of those who had bought tickets, and printed a facsimile of the card which admitted the owner to the concert building.



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The anxiety to see *Mlle. Lind*, when she was driving, was a serious embarrassment to her, and at the "public reception" days, arranged for her, throngs of ladies filled her drawing-rooms. Costly presents were sent to her anonymously, and in every way the public displayed similar extravagance. On the day of the first concert, in spite of the fierce downpour of rain, there were five thousand persons buying tickets; and the price paid for the first ticket to the first concert, six hundred dollars, constitutes the sole title to remembrance of the enterprising tradesman who thus sought to advertise his wares.

Nothing was talked of except Jenny Lind, and on the night of the first appearance, September 11th, seven thousand throats burst forth in frantic shouts of applause and welcome, as the Swedish Nightingale stepped on the Castle Garden stage in a simple dress of white, and as pallid with agitation as the gown she wore. She sang "Casta Diva," a duo with Belletti, from Rossini's "Il Turco in Italia," and the Trio Concertante, with two flutes, from Meyerbeer's "Feldlager in Schliesen," of which Moscheles had said that "it was, perhaps, the most astonishing piece of bravura singing which could possibly be heard." These pieces, with two Swedish national songs, were received with the loudest salvos of applause. The proceeds of this first concert were twenty-six thousand dollars, of which Jenny Lind gave her share to the charitable institutions of New York, and, on learning that some of the members of the New York orchestra were in indigent circumstances, she generously made them a substantial gift. Her beneficent actions during her entire stay in America are too numerous to detail. Frequently would she flit away from her house quietly, as if about to pay a visit, and then she might be seen disappearing down back lanes or into the cottages of the poor. She was warned to avoid so much liberality, as many unworthy persons took unfair advantage of her bounty; but she invariably replied, "Never mind; if I relieve ten, and one is worthy, I am satisfied." She had distributed thirty thousand florins in Germany; she gave away in England nearly sixty thousand pounds; and in America she scattered in charity no less than fifty thousand dollars.

To record the experiences of the Swedish Nightingale in the different cities of America would be to repeat the story of boundless enthusiasm on the part of the public, and lavish munificence on the part of the singer, which makes her record nobly monotonous. There seemed to be no bounds to the popular appreciation and interest, as was instanced one night in Baltimore. While standing on the balcony of her hotel bowing to the shouting multitude, her shawl dropped among them, and instantly it was torn into a thousand strips, to be preserved as precious souvenirs.



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Jenny Lind did not remain under Mr. Barnum's management during the whole of the season. A difficulty having risen, she availed herself of a clause in the contract, and by paying thirty thousand dollars broke the engagement. The last sixty nights of the concert series she gave under her own management. In Boston, February 5, 1852, the charming singer married Mr. Otto Goldschmidt, the pianist, who had latterly been connected with her concert company. The son of a wealthy Hamburg merchant, Mr. Goldschmidt had taken an excellent rank as a pianist, and made some reputation as a minor composer. *Mme.* Goldschmidt and her husband returned to Europe in 1852, this great artist having made about one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in her American tour, aside from the large sums lavished in charity. After several years spent in Germany, M. and *Mme.* Goldschmidt settled permanently in London, where they are still residing. She has frequently appeared in concert and oratorio till within a year or two, and, as the mother of an interesting family and a woman of the most charming personal character, is warmly welcomed in the best London society. It must be recorded that the whole of her American earnings was devoted to founding and endowing art scholarships and other charities in her native Sweden; while in England, the country of her adoption, among other charities, she has given a whole hospital to Liverpool, and a wing of another to London. The scholarship founded by her friend Felix Mendelssohn has largely benefited by her help, and it may be truly said that her sympathy has never been appealed to in vain, by those who have any reasonable claim. Competent judges have estimated that the total amount given away by Jenny Lind in charity and to benevolent institutions will reach at least half a million of dollars.

### SOPHIE CRUVELLI.

The Daughter of an Obscure German Pastor.—She studies Music in Paris.—Failure of her Voice.—Makes her *Debut* at La Fenice.—She appears in London during the Lind Excitement.—Description of her Voice and Person.—A Great Excitement over her Second Appearance in Italy.—*Debut* in Paris.—Her Grand Impersonation in "Fidelio."—Critical Estimates of her Genius.—Sophie Cruvelli's Eccentricities.—Excitement in Paris over her *Valentine* in "Les Huguenots."—Different Performances in London and Paris.—She retires from the Stage and marries Baron Vigier.—Her Professional Status.—One of the Most Gifted Women of any Age.

#### I.

The great cantatrice of whom we shall now give a sketch attained a European reputation hardly inferior to the greatest, though she retired from the stage when in the very golden prime of her powers. Like Catalani, Persiani, and other distinguished singers, she was severely criticised toward the last of her operatic career for sacrificing good taste and dramatic truth to the technique of vocalization, but this is an extravagance so tempting that but few singers have been entirely exempt from it.

Perhaps, in these examples of artistic austerity, one may find the cause as much in vocal limitations as in deliberate self-restraint.



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Sophie Cruvelli was the daughter of a Protestant clergyman named Cruwell, and was born at Bielefeld, in Prussia, in the year 1830. She displayed noticeable aptitude for music at an early age, and a moderate independence with which the family was endowed enabled *Mme. Cruwell* to take Sophie, at the age of fourteen, to Paris that she might obtain finishing lessons. *Permarini* and *Bordogni* were the masters selected, and the latter, who perceived the latent greatness of his pupil, spared no efforts, nor did he spare Sophie, for he was a somewhat stern, austere teacher. For two years he would permit her to sing nothing but vocal scales, and composed for her the most difficult *solfeggi*. *Mme. Cruwell* then returned to Paris, and insisted that her daughter had made sufficient progress in the study of French and music, and might very well return home. *Bordogni* indignantly replied that it would be criminal to rob the musical world of such a treasure as the *Fraulein Cruwell* would prove after a few years of study. The mother yielded, saying: "If my daughter devotes herself to the stage and fully embraces an artistic career, we may endeavor to submit to further sacrifices; but, if merely destined to bring up a family, she has learned quite enough of *solfeggi*; her little fortune will all be swallowed up by her music lessons." It was thus settled that Sophie should become a singer, and, in accordance with *Bordogni's* advice, she proceeded to Milan, Italy, to complete her musical studies.

But a dreadful discovery threw her into despair when she arrived at her new quarters—she had lost her voice. Not a sound could be forced from her throat. Sophie was in despair, for this was, indeed, annihilation to her hopes, and there seemed nothing in fate for her but to settle down to the average life of the German housewife, "to suckle fools and chronicle small beer," when, on the eve of departure for Bielefeld, *Signor Lamperti*, the famous teacher, announced himself. The experienced maestro advised them to wait, reasoning that the loss of voice was rather the result of fatigue and nervousness than of any more radical defect. It was true, for a few days only had passed when Sophie's voice returned again in all its power. *Lamperti* devoted himself assiduously to preparing the young German singer for her *debut*, and at the end of 1847 she was enabled to appear at La Fenice, under the Italianized name of *Cruvelli*, in the part of *Dona Sol* in "Ernani." This was followed by a performance of *Norma*, and in both she made a strong impression of great powers, which only needed experience to shine with brilliant luster. The fact that her instructor permitted her to appear, handicapped as she was by inexperience and stage ignorance, in *roles* not only marked by great musical difficulty, but full of dramatic energy, indicates what a high estimate was placed on her powers.



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Mr. Lumley, the English *impresario*, was at this time scouring Italy for fresh voices, and hearing *Mlle. Cruveili*, secured her for his company, which when completed consisted of Mmes. Persiani and Viardot, Miles. Alboni and Cruveili, Signori Cuzzani, Belletti, Gardoni, and Polonini. *Mlle. Cruveili* was now eighteen, and in spite of the Lind mania, which was raging at white heat, the young German cantatrice made a strong impression on the London public. Her first appearance was in "Ernani," on February 19, 1848. The performance was full of enthusiasm and fire, though disfigured by certain crudities and the violence of unrestrained passion. Her voice, in compass from F to F, was a clear, silvery soprano, and possessed in its low notes something of the delicious quality of the contralto, that bell-like freshness and sonority which is one of the most delightful characteristics of the human voice. Her appearance was highly attractive, for she possessed a finely molded figure of middle height, and a face expressive, winning, and strongly marked. She further appeared as *Odabella* in "Attila," and as *Lucrezia* in "I Due Foscari," both of which performances were very warmly received. During the season she also sang in "Nino," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Il Barbiere," and "Nozze di Figaro." Her *Rosina* in Rossini's great comic opera was a piquant and attractive performance.

## II.

The prevalence of the Lind fever, which seemed to know no abatement, however, made a London engagement at this period not highly flattering to other singers, and *Mlle. Cruveili* beat a retreat to Germany, where she made a musical tour. She was compelled to leave Berlin by the breaking out of the Revolution, and she made, an engagement for the Carnival season at Trieste, during which time she gave performances in "Attila," "Norma," "Don Pasquale," and "Macbeth," and other operas of minor importance, covering a wide field of characters, serious and comic. In 1850 we hear of *Mlle. Cruveili* creating a very great sensation at Milan at La Scala. Genoa was no less enthusiastic in its welcome of the young singer, who had left Italy only two years before, and returned a great artist. No stall could be obtained without an order at least a week in advance.

In April, 1850, she made her first Parisian appearance at the Theatre Italien in Paris, under Mr. Lumley's management, as *Elvira* to Mr. Sims Reeves's *Ernani*, and the French critics were highly eulogistic over this fresh candidate for lyric honors. She did not highly strike the perfect key-note of her genius till she appeared as *Leonora* in "Fidelio," at Her Majesty's Theatre, in London, on May 20, 1851, Sims Reeves being the *Florestan*. Her improvement since her first London engagement had been marvelous. Though scarcely twenty, *Mlle. Cruveili* had become a great actress, and her physical



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beauty had flowered into striking loveliness, though of a lofty and antique type. Her sculpturesque face and figure, her great dramatic passion, and the brilliancy of her voice produced a profound sensation in London. Her *Leonora* was a symmetrical and noble performance, raised to tragic heights by dramatic genius, and elaborated with a vocal excellence which would bear comparison with the most notable representations of that great *role*: "From the shuddering expression given to the words, 'How cold it is in this subterranean vault!' spoken on entering *Florestan's* dungeon," said one critic, "to the joyous and energetic duet, in which the reunited pair gave vent to their rapturous feelings, all was inimitable. Each transition of feeling was faithfully conveyed, and the suspicion, growing by degrees into certainty, that the wretched prisoner is *Florestan*, was depicted with heart-searching truth. The internal struggle was perfectly expressed."

"With *Mlle. Cruvelli*," says this writer, "*Fidelio* is governed throughout by one purpose, to which everything is rendered subservient. Determination to discover and liberate her husband is the mainspring not only of all her actions, and the theme of all her soliloquies, but, even when others likely to announce her design in any way are acting or speaking, we read in the anxious gaze, the breathless anxiety, the head bent to catch the slightest word, a continuation of the same train of thought and an ever-living ardor in the pursuit of the one cherished object. In such positions as these, where one gifted artist follows nature with so delicate an appreciation of its most subtle truths, it is not easy for a character occupying the background of the stage picture to maintain (although by gesture only) a constant commentary upon the words of others without becoming intrusive or attracting an undue share of attention. Yet *Cruvelli* does this throughout the first scene (especially during the duet betwixt *Rocco* and *Pizarro*, in which *Fidelio* overhears the plan to assassinate her husband) with a perfection akin to that realized by *Rachel* in the last scene of 'Les Horaces,' where *Camille* listens to the recital of her brother's victory over her lover; and the result, like that of the chorus in a Greek drama, is to heighten rather than lessen the effect. These may be considered minor points, but, as necessary parts of a great conception, they are as important, and afford as much evidence of the master mind, as the artist's delivery of the grandest speeches or scenes."

"*Mlle. Cruvelli*," observes another critic, "has the power of expressing joy and despair, hope and anxiety, hatred and love, fear and resolution, with equal facility. She has voice and execution sufficient to master with ease all the trying difficulties of the most trying and difficult of parts."

*Norma* was *Sophie's* second performance. "Before the first act was over, *Sophie Cruvelli* demonstrated that she was as profound a mistress of the grand as of the romantic school of acting, as perfect an interpreter of the brilliant as of the classical school of music." She represented *Fidelio* five times and *Norma* thrice.



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Her features were most expressive, and well adapted to the lyric stage; her manner also was dramatic and energetic. She was highly original, and always thought for herself. Possessing a profound insight into character, her conception was always true and just, while her execution continually varied. "The one proceeds from a judgment that never errs, the other from impulse, which may possibly lead her astray. Thus, while her *Fidelio* and her *Norma* are never precisely the same on two consecutive evenings, they are, nevertheless, always *Fidelio* and *Norma*.... She does not calculate. She sings and acts on the impulse of the moment; but her performance must always be impressive, because it is always true to one idea, always bearing upon one object—the vivid realization of the character she impersonates to the apprehension of her audience." So much was she the creature of impulse that, even when she would spend a day, a week, a month, in elaborating a certain passage—a certain dramatic effect—perhaps on the night of performance she would improvise something perfectly different from her preconceived idea.

Her sister Marie made her *debut* in Thalberg's *Florinda*, in July, with Sophie. She was a graceful and charming contralto; but her timidity and an over-delicacy of expression did not permit her then to display her talents to the greatest advantage. The brother of the sisters Cruvelli was a fine barytone.

### III.

At the close of 1851 Sophie went again to the Theatre Italien, and the following year she again returned to London to sing with Lablache and Gardoni. During this season she performed in "La Sonnambula," "Il Barbiere," and other operas of the florid Italian school, charming the public by her lyric comedy, as she had inspired them by her tragic impersonations. Cruvelli had always been remarkable for impulsive and eccentric ways, and no engagement ever operated as a check on these caprices. One of these whims seized the young lady in the very height of a brilliantly successful engagement, and one day she took French leave without a word of warning. The next that was heard of Sophie Cruvelli was that she was singing at Wiesbaden, and then that she had appeared as *Fides* in "Le Prophete" at Aix-La-Chapelle. Cruel rumors were circulated at her expense; but she showed herself as independent of scandal as she had been of professional loyalty to a contract.

Sophie Cruvelli's engagement at the Grand Opera in Paris in January, 1854, filled Paris with the deepest excitement, for she was to make her appearance in the part of *Valentine* in "Les Huguenots." The terms given were one hundred thousand francs for six months. Meyerbeer, who entertained a great admiration for Sophie's talents, set to work on "L'Africaine" with redoubled zeal, for he destined the *role* of *Selika* for her. A fortnight ahead orchestra stalls were sold



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for two hundred francs, and boxes could not be obtained. The house was crowded to the ceiling, and the Emperor and Empress arrived some time before the hour of beginning on the night of "Les Huguenots." Everywhere the lorgnette was turned could be seen the faces of notabilities like Meyerbeer, Auber, Benedict, Berlioz, Alboni, *Mme. Viardot*, Mario, Tamburini, Vivire, Theophile Gautier, Fiorentino, and others. The verdict was that Cruvelli was one of the greatest of *Valentines*, and Meyerbeer, who was morbidly sensitive over the performance of his own works, expressed his admiration of the great singer in the most enthusiastic words.

Soon after this, she appeared as *Julia* in Spontini's "Vestale," and, as a long time had elapsed since its production, there was aroused the most alert curiosity to hear Cruvelli in a great part, in which but few singers had been able to make a distinguished impression. She acted the *role* with a vehement passion which aroused the deepest feeling in the Parisian mind, for it was a long time since they had heard an artist who was alike so great an actress and so brilliant a vocalist. One writer said, "She is the only cantatrice who acts as well as sings"; said one critic, "She would have made a grand tragedienne." Fickle Paris had forgotten Pasta, Malibran, and even *Mme. Viardot*, who was then in the very flush of her splendid powers.

### IV.

From Paris *Mlle. Cruvelli* went to London, where she sang an engagement at the Royal Italian Opera, making her opening appearance as *Desdemona*, in the same cast with Tamburini and Ronconi. Her terms during the season were two hundred and fifty pounds a night. Her other parts were *Leonora* ("Fidelio"), and *Donna Anna* ("Don Giovanni"), and the performances were estimated by the most competent judges to be on a plan of artistic excellence not surpassed, and rarely equaled, in operatic annals. *Mlle. Cruvelli* revived the Parisian excitement of the previous season by her appearance at the Grand Opera, as *Alice* in "Robert le Diable." The audience was a most brilliant one, and their reception of the artist was one of the most prolonged and enthusiastic applause. She continued to sing in Paris during the summer months and early autumn, and was the reigning goddess of the stage. All Paris was looking forward to the production of "Les Huguenots" in October with a great flutter of expectation, when Sophie suddenly disappeared from the public view and knowledge. The expected night of the production of "Les Huguenots" on a scale of almost unequalled magnificence arrived, and still the representative of *Valentine* could not be found. Sophie had treated the public in a similar fashion more than once before, and it may be fancied that the Parisians were in a state of furious indignation. Great surprise was felt that she should have forfeited so



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profitable an engagement—four thousand pounds for the season, with the obligation of singing only two nights a week. She had abandoned everything, injured her manager, M. Fould, and insulted the public for the gratification of a whim. No adequate reason could be guessed at for such eccentricity, not even the excuse of an *affaire de coeur*, which would go further in the minds of Frenchmen than any other justification of capricious courses. Her furniture and the money at her banker's were seized as security for the forfeit of four thousand pounds stipulated by her contract in case of breach of engagement, and her private papers and letters were opened and read.

About a month after her sudden flight, M. Fould received a letter from the errant *diva*, in which she demanded permission to return and fill her contract. M. Fould consented, and accepted her plea of "a misunderstanding," but the public were not so easily placated, and when she appeared on the stage as *Valentine* the audience hissed her violently. Sophie was not a whit daunted, but, confident in her power to charm, put all the fullness of her powers into her performance, and she soon had the satisfaction of learning by the enthusiasm of the plaudits that the Parisians had forgiven their favorite.

Sophie Cruvelli continued on the stage till 1855, and, although her faults of violence and exaggeration continued to call out severe criticism, she disarmed even the attacks of her enemies by the unquestionable vigor of her genius as well as by the magnificence of a voice which had never been surpassed in native excellence, though many had been far greater in the art of vocalization. Her last performance, and perhaps one of the grandest efforts of her life, was the character of *Helene* in Verdi's "Les Vepres Siciliennes," the active principal parts having been taken by Bonnehee, Gueymard, and Obin. The production of the work was on a splendid scale, and the opera a great success. "The audience was electrified by the tones of her magnificent voice, which realized with equal effect those high inspirations that demand passion, force, and impulse, and those tender passages that require delicacy, taste, and a thorough knowledge of the art of singing. No one could reproach *Mlle. Cruvelli* with exaggeration, so well did she know how to restrain her ardent nature." "Cruvelli is the Rachel of the Grand Opera!" exclaimed a French critic. From these estimates it may be supposed that, just as she was on the eve of passing out of the profession in which she had already achieved such a splendid place at the age of twenty-five, a great future, to which hardly any limits could be set, was opening the most fascinating inducements to her. The faults which had marred the full blaze of her genius had begun to be mellowed and softened by experience, and there was scarcely any pitch of artistic greatness to which she might not aspire.



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Rumors of her approaching marriage had already begun to circulate, and it soon became known that Sophie Cruvelli was about to quit the stage. On January 5, 1856, she married Baron Vigier, a wealthy young Parisian, the son of Count Vigier, whose father had endowed the city of Paris with the immense bathing establishments on the Seine which bear his name, and who, in the time of the Citizen King, was a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and afterward a peer of France. *Mme.* Vigier resides with her husband in their splendid mansion at Nice, and, though she has sung on many occasions in the salons of the fashionable world and for charity, she has been steadfast in her retirement from professional life. She has composed many songs, and even some piano-forte works, though her compositions are as unique and defiant of rules as was her eccentric life.

Sophie Cruvelli was only eight years on the operatic stage, but during that period she impressed herself on the world as one of the great singers not only of her own age, but of any age; yet far greater in her possibilities than in her attainment. She had by no means reached the zenith of her professional ability when she suddenly retired into private life. There have been many singers who have filled a more active and varied place in the operatic world; never one who was more munificently endowed with the diverse gifts which enter into the highest power for lyric drama. She had queenly beauty of face and form, the most vehement dramatic passion, a voice alike powerful, sweet, and flexible, and an energy of temperament which scorned difficulties. Had her operatic career extended itself to the time, surely foreshadowed in her last performances, when a finer art should have subdued her grand gifts into that symmetry and correlation so essential to the best attainment, it can hardly be questioned that her name would not have been surpassed, perhaps not equaled, in lyric annals. A star of the first magnitude was quenched when the passion of love subdued her professional ambition. Sophie Cruvelli, though her artistic life was far briefer than those of other great singers, has been deemed worthy of a place among these sketches, as an example of what may be called the supreme endowment of nature in the gifts of dramatic song.

### **THERESA TITIENS.**

Born at Hamburg of an Hungarian Family.—Her Early Musical Training.—First Appearance in Opera in “*Lucrezia Borgia*.”—Romance of her Youth.—Rapid Extension of her Fame.—Receives a *Conge* from Vienna to sing in England.—Description of *Mlle.* Titiens, her Voice, and Artistic Style.—The Characters in which she was specially eminent.—Opinions of the Critics.—Her Relative Standing in the Operatic Profession.—Her Performances of *Semiramide* and *Medea*—Latter Years of her Career.—Her Artistic Tour in America.—Her Death, and Estimate placed on her Genius.



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### I.

Theresa Titiens was the offshoot of an ancient and noble Hungarian family, who emigrated to Hamburg, Germany, on account of political difficulties. Born in June, 1834, she displayed, like other distinguished singers, an unmistakable talent for music at an early period, and her parents lost no time in obtaining the best instruction for her by placing her under the charge of an eminent master, when she was only twelve years of age. At the age of fourteen, her voice had developed into an organ of great power and sweetness. It was a high soprano of extensive register, ranging from C below the line to D in alt, and of admirable quality, clear, resonant, and perfectly pure. The young girl possessed powers which only needed culture to lift her to a high artistic place, and every one who heard her predicted a commanding career. She was sent to Vienna to study under the best German masters, and she devoted herself to preparation for her life-work with an ardor and enthusiasm which were the best earnest of her future success.

On returning to Hamburg in 1849, she easily obtained an engagement, and with the daring confidence of genius she selected the splendid *role of Lucrezia Borgia* as the vehicle of her *debut*. *Mme. Grisi* had fixed the ideal of this personation by investing it with an Oriental passion and luxury of style; but this did not stay the ambition of the *debutante* of fifteen years. Theresa at this time was very girlish in aspect, though tall and commanding in figure, and it may be fancied did not suit the ripe and voluptuous beauty, the sinister fascination of the Borgia woman, whose name has become traditional for all that is physically lovely and morally depraved. If the immature Titiens did not adequately reach the ideal of the character, she was so far from failing that she was warmly applauded by a critical audience. She appeared in the same part for a succession of nights, and her success became more strongly assured as she more and more mastered the difficulties of her work. To perform such a great lyric character at the age of fifteen, with even a fair share of ability, was a glowing augury.

This early introduction to her profession was stamped by circumstances of considerable romantic interest. A rich young gentleman, a scion of one of the best Hamburg families, became passionately enamored of the young cantatrice. After a brief but energetic courtship, he offered her his hand, which Theresa, whose young heart had been touched by his devotion, was not unwilling to accept, but the stumbling-block in the way was that the family of the enamored youth were unwilling that his future wife should remain on the stage. At last it was arranged that Theresa should retire from the stage for a while, the understanding being that, if at the end of nine months her inclination for the stage should remain as strong, she should return to the profession. It was tacitly a choice between marriage and a continuance of her professional ambition. When the probation was over, the young cantatrice again appeared before the footlights, and the unfortunate lover disappeared.



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The director of opera at Frankfort-on-the-Main, having heard *Mlle. Titiens* at Hamburg was so pleased that he made her an offer, and in pursuance of this she appeared in Frankfort early in 1850, where she made a most brilliant and decided success. Her reputation was now growing fast, and offers of engagement poured in on her from various European capitals. The director of the Imperial Opera at Vienna traveled to Frankfort especially to hear her, and as her old contract with the Frankfort *impresario* was on the eve of expiration, and *Mlle. Titiens* was free to accept a new offer, she gladly availed herself of the chance to accept the opportunity of singing before one of the most brilliant and critical publics of Europe. She made her *debut* at Vienna in 1856, and was received with the most flattering and cordial approbation. She appeared in the *role* of *Donna Anna* ("Don Giovanni"), and at the close of the opera had numerous recalls. Her success was so great that she continued to sing in Vienna for three consecutive seasons, and became the leading favorite of the public. The operas in which she made the most vivid impression were "Norma," "Les Huguenots," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Le Nozze di Figaro," "Fidelio," and "Trovatore"; and her versatility was displayed in the fact that when she was called on, through the illness of another singer, to assume a comic part, she won golden opinions from the public for the sparkle and grace of her style.

## II.

The English manager, Mr. Lumley, had heard of *Mlle. Titiens* and the sensation she had made in Germany. So he hastened to Vienna, and made the most lavish propositions to the young singer that she should appear in his company before the London public. She was unable to accept his proposition, for her contract in Vienna had yet a year to run; but, after some negotiations, an arrangement was made which permitted *Mlle. Titiens* to sing in London for three months, with the express understanding that she should not surpass that limit.

She made her first bow before an English audience on April 13, 1858, as *Valentine* in Meyerbeer's *chef d'oeuvre*, *Giugliani* singing the part of *Raoul* for the first time. She did not understand Italian, but, under the guidance of a competent master, she memorized the unknown words, pronunciation and all, so perfectly that no one suspected but that she was perfectly conversant with the liquid accents of that "soft bastard Latin" of the South. Success alone justified so dangerous an experiment. The audience was most fashionable and critical, and the reception of the new singer was of the most assuring kind.



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The voice of *Mlle. Titiens* was a pure soprano, fresh, penetrating, even, powerful, unusually rich in quality, extensive in compass, and of great flexibility. It had a bell-like resonance, and was capable of expressing all the passionate and tender accents of lyric tragedy. Theresa Titiens was, in the truest, fullest sense of the word, a lyric artist, and she possessed every requisite needed by a cantatrice of the highest order—personal beauty, physical strength, originality of conception, a superb voice, and inexhaustible spirit and energy. Like most German singers, *Mlle. Titiens* regarded ornamentation as merely an agreeable adjunct in vocalization; and in the music of *Valentine* she sang only what the composer had set down—neither more nor less—but that was accomplished to perfection.

As an actress, her tall, stately, elegant figure was admirably calculated to personate the tragic heroines of opera. Her face at this time was beautiful, her large eyes flashed with intellect, and her classical features were radiant with expression; her grandeur of conception, her tragic dignity, her glowing warmth and *abandon* rendered her worthy of the finest days of lyric tragedy. She was thoroughly dramatic; her movements and gestures were singularly noble, and her attitudes on the stage had classical breadth and largeness, without the least constraint.

As *Leonora*, in “*Trovatore*,” she was peculiarly successful, and her *Donna Anna* literally took the audience by storm, through the magnificence of both the singing and acting. In June she made her appearance as *Lucrezia Borgia*. The qualities which this part demands are precisely those with which *Mlle. Titiens* was endowed—tragic power, intensity, impulsiveness. Her commanding figure and graceful bearing gave weight to her acting, while in the more tender scenes she was exquisitely pathetic, and displayed great depth of feeling. “*Com’ e bello*” was rendered with thrilling tenderness, and the allegro which followed it created a *furore*; it was one of the most brilliant *morceaux* of florid decorative vocalism heard for years, the upper C in the cadenza being quite electrical. At the end of the first and second acts, the heartrending accents of a mother’s agony, wrung from the depths of her soul, and the scornful courage tempered with malignant passion, were contrasted with consummate power. It was conceded that Grisi herself never rose to a greater pitch of dramatic truth and power.

*Mlle. Titiens* was unable to get an extension of her *conge*, and, much to the regret of her manager and the public, returned to Vienna early in the autumn. Instantly that she could free herself from professional obligation, she proceeded to Italy to acquire the Italian language, a feat which she accomplished in a few months. Here she met Mr. Smith, the manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, and effected an arrangement with him, in consequence of



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which she inaugurated her second London season on May 3, 1859, with the performance of *Lucrezia Borgia*. *Mlle. Titiens* sang successively in the characters which she had interpreted during her previous visit to London, adding to them the magnificent role of *Norma*, whose breadth and grandeur of passion made it peculiarly favorable for the display of her genius. Near the close of the season she appeared in Verdi's "Vepres Siciliennes," in which, we are told, "she sang magnificently and acted with extraordinary passion and vigor. At the close of the fourth act, when *Helen* and *Procida* are led to the scaffold, the conflicting emotions that agitate the bosom of the heroine were pictured with wonderful truth and intensity by *Mlle. Titiens*." From London the singer made a tour of the provinces, where she repeated the remarkable successes of the capital. At the various musical festivals, she created an almost unprecedented reputation in oratorio. The largeness and dignity of her musical style, the perfection of a voice which responded to every intention of the singer, her splendor of declamation, stamped her as *par excellence* the best interpreter of this class of music whom England had heard in the more recent years of her generation. Her fame increased every year, with the development of her genius and artistic knowledge, and it may be asserted that no singer, with the exception of *Grisi*, ever held such a place for a long period of years in the estimate of the English public.

### III.

During the season of 1860 she added fresh laurels to those which she had already attained, and sang several new parts, among which maybe mentioned Flotow's pretty ballad opera of "Martha" and Rossini's "Semiramide." Her performance in the latter work created an almost indescribable sensation, so great was her singing, so strong and picturesque the dramatic effects which she produced. One of the sensations of the season was *Titiens's* rendering of "Casta Diva," in "Norma." Though many great vocalists had thrilled the public by their rendering of this celebrated aria, no one had ever yet given it the power so to excite the enthusiasm of the public. *Mlle. Titiens* performed also in the opera of "Oberon" for the first time, with great success. But the *piece de resistance* of the season was Rossini's great tragic opera. "In *Titiens's Semiramide*," said a critic of the time, "her intellectuality shines most, from its contrasting with the part she impersonates—a part which in no wise assists her; but, as in a picture, shadow renders a light more striking. In the splendid aria, 'Bel Raggio,' the *soffeggi* and fioriture that she lavishes on the audience were executed with such marvelous tone and precision that she electrified the house. The grand duet with *Alboni*, 'Giorno d'orrore,' was exquisitely and nobly impressive from their dramatic interpretation of the scene."



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In 1861 *Mlle. Titiens* made an engagement with Mr. Mapleson, under whose control she remained till her career was cut short by death. Associated with her under this first season of the Mapleson *regime* were *Mme. Alboni*, the contralto, and Signor Giuglini, the tenor. Her performance in the “*Trovatore*” drew forth more applause than ever. “*Titiens* is the most superb *Leonora* without a single exception that the Anglo-Italian stage has ever witnessed,” wrote an admiring critic. Among other brilliant successes of the season was her performance for the first time of *Amelia* in Verdi’s “*Un Ballo in Maschera*,” which was a masterpiece of vocalization and dramatic fire. The great German cantatrice was now accepted as the legitimate successor of *Pasta*, *Malibran*, and *Grisi*, and numerous comparisons were made between her and the last-named great singer. No artists could be more unlike in some respects. *Titiens* lacked the adroitness, the fluent melting grace, the suavety, of the other. “But,” one critic justly remarks, “in passionate feeling, energy, power of voice, and grandeur of style, a comparison may be established. In certain characters *Grisi* has left no one to fill her place. These will be found mostly in *Rossini*’s operas, such as *Semiramide*, *Ninetta*, *Desdemona*, *Pamira* (*L’Assedio di Corinto*), *Elene*, etc., to which we may add *Elvira* in ‘*I Puritani*,’ written expressly for her. In not one of these parts has anybody created an impression since she sang them. They all belong to the repertoire of pure Italian song, of which *Giulietta Grisi* was undoubtedly the greatest mistress since *Pasta*. That *Mlle. Titiens* could not contend with her on her own Ausonian soil no one will deny. Her means, her compass, her instincts, all forbade. There is, however, one exception—*Norma*, in which the German singer may challenge comparison with the Italian, and in which she occasionally surpasses her. In the French and German repertoire the younger artist has a decided advantage over the elder, in possessing a voice of such extent as to be enabled to execute the music of the composers without alteration of any kind. Everybody knows that *Mlle. Titiens* has not only one of the most magnificent and powerful voices ever heard, but also one of the most extraordinary in compass. To sing the music of *Donna Anna*, *Fidelio*, *Valentine*, etc., without transposition or change, and to sing it with power and effect, is granted to few artists. *Mlle. Titiens* is one of these great rarities, and, therefore, without any great stretch of compliment, we may assert that, putting aside the *Rossinian* repertoire, she is destined to wear the mantle of *Grisi*.”



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In no previous season was *Mlle. Titiens* so popular or so much admired as during the season of 1862. Her most remarkable performance was the character of *Alice*, in Meyerbeer's "Robert le Diable." "*Mlle. Titiens's* admirable personation of *Alice*," observes the critic of a leading daily paper, "must raise her to a still higher rank in public estimation than that she has hitherto so long sustained. Each of the three acts in which the German soprano was engaged won a separate triumph for her. We are tired of perpetually expatiating on the splendid brightness, purity, and clearness of her glorious voice, and on the absolute certainty of her intonation; but these mere physical requisites of a great singer are in themselves most uncommon. Irrespectively of the lady's clever vocalization, and of the strong dramatic impulse which she evinces, there is an actual sensual gratification in listening to her superb voice, singing with immovable certainty in perfect tune. Her German education, combined with long practice in Italian opera, peculiarly fit *Mlle. Titiens* for interpreting the music of Meyerbeer, who is equally a disciple of both schools."

### IV.

*Mlle. Titiens* was such a firmly established favorite of the English public that, in the line of great tragic characters, no one was held her equal. The most brilliant favorites who have arisen since her star ascended to the zenith have been utterly unable to dispute her preeminence in those parts where height of tragic inspiration is united with great demands of vocalization. Cherubini's opera of "*Medea*," a work which, had never been produced in England, because no soprano could be found equal to the colossal task of singing a score of almost unprecedented difficulty in conjunction with the needs of dramatic passion no less *exigeant*, was brought out expressly to display her genius. Though this classic masterpiece was not repeated often, and did not become a favorite with the English public on account of the old-fashioned austerity of its musical style, *Titiens* achieved one of the principal triumphs of her life in embodying the character of the Colchian sorceress as expressed in song. Pasta's *Medea*, created by herself musically and dramatically out of the faded and correct commonplace of Simon Mayer's opera, was fitted with consummate skill to that eminent artist's idiosyncrasies, and will ever remain one of the grand traditions of the musical world. To perform such a work as that of Cherubini required Pasta's tragic genius united with the voice of a Catalani, made, as it were, of adamant and gold. To such an ideal equipment of powers, *Titiens* approached more nearly than any other singer who had ever assayed the *role* in more recent times. One of the noblest operas ever written, it has been relegated to the musical lumber-room on account of the almost unparalleled difficulties which it presents.



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It is not desirable to catalogue the continued achievements of *Mlle. Titiens* season by season in England, which country she had adopted as her permanent home. She had achieved her place and settled the character of her fame. Year after year she shone before the musical world of London, to which all the greatest singers of the world resort to obtain their final and greatest laurels, without finding her equal in the highest walks of the lyric stage. As her voice through incessant work lost something of its primal bloom, *Mlle. Titiens* confined her repertory to a few operas such as "Trovatore," "Norma," "Don Giovanni," "Semiramide," etc., where dramatic greatness is even more essential than those dulcet tones so apt to vanish with the passage of youth. As an oratorio singer, she held a place to the last unequaled in musical annals.

In 1875 *Mlle. Titiens* visited America, on a concert and operatic tour which embraced the principal cities of the country. She was well received, but failed, through the very conditions and peculiarities of her genius, to make that marked impression on the public mind which had sometimes, perhaps, been achieved by artists of more shallow and meretricious graces. The voice of *Mlle. Titiens* had begun to show the friction of years, and though her wonderful skill as a vocalist covered up such defects in large measure, it was very evident that the greatest of recent German singers had passed the zenith of her fascination as a vocalist. But the grand style, the consummate breadth and skill in phrasing, that gradation of effects by which the intention of a composer is fully manifested, the truth and nobility of declamation, that repose and dignity of action by which dramatic purpose reaches its goal without a taint of violence or extravagance—in a word, all those great qualities where the artist separates from the mere vocalist were so finely manifested as to gain the deepest admiration of the *cognoscenti*, and justify in the American mind the great reputation associated with the name of *Mlle. Titiens*. On her return to Europe, she continued to sing with unimpaired favor in opera, concert, and oratorio, until she was seized with the fatal illness which carried her off in 1879. Her death was the cause of deep regret among musical circles in England and on the Continent, for she left no successor in the line of her greatness. So far as any survey of the field could justify a judgment, liable at any time to be upset by the sudden apparition of genius hitherto hampered by unfavorable conditions, *Mlle. Titiens* was the last of that race of grand dramatic singers made splendid by such beacon lights as Pasta, Malibran, Schroeder-Devrient, Grisi, and Viardot-Garcia.

THE END.