

Random Notes of Life in London.

Another Half Day in the British Museum. Some Notable Concerts.

London, March 23.—Yesterday I went down to the British Museum again, and wandered through the two great libraries there, the Grenville and the King's library. There was much to look at there, though indeed to take one's time for days, but I had only a half day for it, so I looked at the most important things the longest and most glanced at the lesser wonders. I spent a great deal of time over the beautiful illuminated manuscripts in the Grenville, some of which are very, very old indeed, having been done way back in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. I have often read of these old works, and in many a way they are the same as the old ones which we see in the reading of the ancient works sitting all day long at the desks and writing and stenciling away so laboriously at their venerable works.

The leaves of these books are of vellum, which is almost as thick as pasteboard and sometimes the queer illuminations about the text of the books are wonderful things to have been done by the hand alone. Their bindings are heavy and thick, some being done in old leather and some in ivory and jewels and all of them in the queerest, heaviest manner possible. There were volumes and other old Bibles and scriptures and psalters, all most wonderful to see and enjoy.

In the Autograph Room. I passed beyond there to the autograph room where I lingered long over the autographs of some of the most famous people of history. There were the signatures of the Plantagenet kings, Tudor, Henry the Eighth, and of Elizabeth, and of James First, The Charleses and Cromwells were there also under letters of their own writing, and the ugly old Georges had their fingers in the pie as well, several of their old letters being there.

Of course all good and loyal Britishers come and gaze adoringly upon the handwriting of their loved Victoria which is here displayed in the following letter, written fifty-seven years ago, before her coronation, to the bishop whose duty it was to officiate at the affair. Here it is: "Right Reverend Father in God, We greet you well. Whereas the 20th day of June next is appointed for the solemnity of our royal coronation, these are to wit and command you (all excuses set aside to make your personal attendance on us, at the time above mentioned, furnished and appointed as in the following certificate, there to do and perform such services as shall be required and belong unto you, whereof you are not to fail. And so we bid you most heartily, farewell. Given at St. James's Palace, the ninth day of May, 1840, in the first year of our reign. Victoria R."

Other Notable Autographs. Peter the Great had a characteristic letter there, in Russian, and about ship-building, to which his autograph is appended. Frederick the Great, of Prussia, is seen in an autograph letter as is Napoleon Bonaparte as well. To pass from these royal people to others just as good and sometimes even better, there are letters of Sir Walter Raleigh, Goethe, Schiller, Voltaire, Rousseau, Moliere and numbers of other writers, besides some from the great statesmen of England in all times.

While looking among the autographs across an autograph letter of George Washington, written to the Earl of Buecher, partly on the principles which should guide the then young United States, viz: "To be little heard of in the great world of politics." "I believe it is the sincere wish of United America to have nothing to do with the large majority of those easily pleased and a few of the critical, but the best critics of London miss a great deal in him that is much to be desired in a really great pianist. His execution is almost perfect, but they say his tone is hard and noisy, and locate his feeling on every part of his anatomy. He is not, and never can be, as great a player as Paderewski, at that account. Our seats are very fine ones and I could see him beautifully, especially during his entrances and exits, and he looks very like a Jap, not at all like a German. His pictures flatter him dreadfully.

The greatest thing is his bow, which strictly carries out the Jap idea, as he bows, not slowly as men usually do, but with two of the funniest little jerks imaginable. He made a tremendous success the other night, having to respond to recall after recall, and must have bowed until he ached. I liked him myself, but do not know very much about piano and my taste may not be of the most critical variety in that direction. I dare say I am one of the "easily pleased," as the critics say.

A Human Canary. Clementine De Vere Sapio had been described to me long ago by one of my friends who had heard her, as a human canary. She failed to carry out the idea, however, for me, at which I was much disappointed, and I fancy the rest of the audience shared my feelings, for she was very coldly received indeed, none of her work being able to draw forth wild enthusiasm from even the most generous and "easily pleased." I was sorry for I have always understood her to be quite a pet in New York and I always like to see America coming out ahead.

On Friday afternoon I had the pleasure of listening to another of the famous pupils of that gifted woman, Mrs. Clara Schumann. Fraulein Hona Eibenschütz gave a very long and very trying recital, through which she came triumphantly. I was charmed with her and I like her better than I do Sauer, perhaps because she is such a brainy little woman—she is only twenty—and does Chopin so well, which I love. She had bouquet after bouquet, and was, indeed, at the last, literally overwhelmed by her lovely flowers. I saw Borwick, Fanny Davis and other old Schumannites there in the audience and they all seemed to rejoice in the work of their gifted little associate in study. Friday evening the English girl took us to St. Anne's, Soho Square, to hear the Bach passion music performed there by the choir, which is considered one of the finest in London. We enjoyed the music, of course, but not all of the singing of it, for I never will get used to these horrible little choir boys. To be sure they do look very sweet and angelic in their white frocks and with the big books in their hands and their faces lifted religiously to heaven, but there isn't one of a hundred of them with a voice capable of rendering a big, broad, fine sacred solo. A Cyril Tyler is a jewel; but there is only one Cyril Tyler and a couple of million of poor pipers with tired throats and hypertrophied vocal chords who ought to be turned out of the choir lofts and never invited back.

The little soprano soloist of the other evening was a torture to listen to, while the tenor, baritone and bass were beautiful, and the alto was a nice young man with a moustache. Disgusting! If I am ever at the head of the church of England I will decree that men may sing men's parts and be welcome to them, but women will sing women's parts, which will be vastly improved thereby, let us hope.

Enthusiasm for the Queen. The queen of England was in town a day or two this week to hold a drawing room at Buckingham Palace. London people are right loyal to her, and during the few hours of her residence in the city the flags were flying from the ends of all the poles in London. It looked quite gay, but they are all down now, for she has cruelly gone away again and left us here weeping. The great iron gates at Marble Arch and Cumberland Gate were opened for her carriages to pass through, and then closed tightly once more, as she is the only person for whom they are ever opened, the side gates sufficing for common humanity.

There was quite a display of soldiery and other red tunc at her arrival and the procession passed near us here, but I was to busy to go and see it. However, when she comes again I will try to see her, because she is the queen you know, and somebody to see, I suppose. The English are, as a rule, very jealous for their queen, though they may not seem so sometimes. Only the other day I was very sharply brought to look by one of the girls here because I had carelessly put a stamp upside down on a letter! The trouble was, she said, that some postmasters would hesitate before stamping a letter on which their dear sovereign's head was placed upside down. There can be no language of stamps here, I fear, as the one polite way is the only way for a stamp in this country and everyone is careful to get it right side up with care. Again, a jeweler will not polish the sovereign's head off of a sixpence or shilling for their queen, though they may not seem so sometimes. Only the other day I was very sharply brought to look by one of the girls here because I had carelessly put a stamp upside down on a letter! The trouble was, she said, that some postmasters would hesitate before stamping a letter on which their dear sovereign's head was placed upside down. There can be no language of stamps here, I fear, as the one polite way is the only way for a stamp in this country and everyone is careful to get it right side up with care.

Thursday afternoon we went to Steinway Hall to hear Sauer play, the famous violinist to her majesty, the queen of Spain. He gave a one hour recital which was very enjoyable indeed, and I suppose he will soon be, if he is not now, in great demand, as I never heard a more interesting programme of "cello before." He played several things of his own composition which were very Spanish and very like, besides giving us a varied number of other composers. He "took" beautifully, as he deserved to, for his work was almost faultless. The man is very handsome too, and has the most beautiful hands I ever saw upon a "cello, small white, beautifully formed and as strong as steel.

The First Philharmonic. We went from this concert to the first Philharmonic of the season, down at Queen's Hall, where the big orchestral things take place. Our Sir Alexander himself is the conductor of their famous orchestra, most of the members of which have played under his baton for years and years. There were several things of the Philharmonic series and we have tickets for them all, as they are among the best that can be listened to here. The soloists of the evening were Herr Emil Sauer, the "new" pianist, and Clementine De Vere Sapio, soprano. Not having heard either, I was very keen about it, you see, and set myself to listen with the keenest attention. The concert in London this season is wonderful and must be very gratifying to that gentleman himself, as it was only a year ago that he wrote from Germany to the Philharmonic directors offering to play for nothing at one of their concerts if they would only give him the opportunity of appearing under their auspices. His letter was not even answered, and he came on this autumn and made such a success during his eight recitals in London that he played the other evening for the Philharmonic men at a cost to them of about four hundred dollars. His success is what you might call a popular one. He pleases the large majority of those easily pleased and a few of the critical, but the best critics of London miss a great deal in him that is much to be desired in a really great pianist. His execution is almost perfect, but they say his tone is hard and noisy, and locate his feeling on every part of his anatomy. He is not, and never can be, as great a player as Paderewski, at that account. Our seats are very fine ones and I could see him beautifully, especially during his entrances and exits, and he looks very like a Jap, not at all like a German. His pictures flatter him dreadfully.

Spain's Past Impudence. Previous Occasions Upon Which Our Flag Has Been Insulted. From the Philadelphia Press. Forty years ago, during the Lopez Insurrection, when the Spanish frigate Ferrolano fired on the American steamer El Dorado, under President Pierce's administration, the Secretary of the Navy sent a fleet to Cuban waters with instructions that "if any officer of a ship of war be present when an outrage of the character mentioned is perpetrated on our flag he will promptly interpose and relieve the arrested American ship, prevent the exercise of the assumed right of visitation and repel the interference by force." Secretary Marcy at the same time notified the Spanish Minister that the shots fired at the El Dorado constituted "an act which, if done by the order of Spain or sanctioned by her, must be regarded as the assertion of a right to exercise a police authority over our commerce upon the ocean, which will be resisted at every hazard by the Government of the United States.

This vigorous language was used at a time when England still claimed and exercised the right of search; when we still conceded it for the suppression of the slave trade; when in four weeks, in 1858, thirty-three American vessels were boarded in West Indian waters by British naval vessels engaged in suppressing this traffic, and when within ten years Lord Palmerston, in the most truculent fashion, had reaffirmed the British right of search. Step by step our Government insisted upon the abolition of this right, grounding its argument on the decision by unanswerable logic of a great British admiralty judge, Lord Stowell, in 1817. By its action in the Trent case Great Britain abandoned the right of search altogether.

Spain the Only Insult. No nation practices it to-day. For twenty years the only power which has offered this insult to our flag is Spain. In 1875 the Virginias was seized. The Ellen Ripsh was boarded May 15, 1877; the whaler Rising Sun was visited and searched May 22, 1877. In March of the same year the Edward Lee was fired upon with "grapeshot, canister and shell." All these were "discovered," "regret" expressed, and orders telegraphed from Madrid to the Governor General of Cuba and Spanish naval officers to respect our flag and obey the provisions of the treaty of 1795, now just a century old, in which our vessels were protected from search or molestation except in case of war. Three years later, in 1880, occurred the case of Merritt, Newcomb, George Washington and Haskell.

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Let us turn aside and view another picture. In November, 1890, before the atmosphere, disturbed by the political cyclone which swept over this country, had been calmed, he who now occupies the proud position of governor of the state of Ohio, in a personal letter to the writer, uttered a sentiment and indicated a far-reaching statesmanship that will place him in the front rank of publicists. With the composure that characterized Neptune when, looking out upon the Mediterranean, he beheld his watery domains tossed and stirred up from their lowest depths by the winds which Aeolus had released to gratify the unrelenting hate of cruel Juno toward Aeneas, William McKinley declared: "The future is secure if we are wise and firm."

Wisdom and firmness, twin attributes of true statesmanship, are essential to prevent people from being carried about by "every wind of doctrine." For years the storm has raged. The ship of state has been tossed about like a toy on the billow deep. Untold millions of property and numbers of lives have been sacrificed, indescribable suffering and destitution have been produced, and the faith of mankind in the perpetuity of republican government under such circumstances, scarcely less trying than those existing during the stormy days of the great rebellion, has been put to the severest test. Amidst the fury of the storm and above the din of conflict comes forth the assuring declaration of Ohio's patriotic governor—"The future is secure if we are wise and firm."

True Conception of Statesmanship. This political oracle deserves to be placed by the side of that other oft-quoted, widely circulated statement of an honored Buckeye statesman, delivered under conditions of almost supreme despair, "God reigns, and the government at Washington still lives." Confidence in God, confidence in man, confidence in the right must enter into the true conception of the statesman. In the language of Tennyson, "On God and Godlike men we build our trust." Such men are towers of strength which stand four-square to all the winds that blow.

While we may not agree with the poet in his exalted tribute to the character of the Duke of Wellington, we may be justified in asking that his excellencies may descend to posterity, and that while the races of mankind endure, Let this great example stand before us as a warning to the young. And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure. —F. Fraiser Richard.

Thankery Silenced Carlyle. In her "After Five Years in India," Mrs. Wilson tells a story about Carlyle and Thankery. Several artists at the Royal Academy dinner, sitting in the neighborhood of these great men, were expressing their enthusiasm about Titian. "His glorious coloring is a fact about which I need not quarrel," said one. "And his glorious drawing is another fact about Titian," cried a second.

So they went on till Carlyle, who had been listening in silence to their rhapsodies, interrupted them by saying with a slow deliberation, which has its own impressive emphasis: "And here I sit, a man made in the image of God—who know nothing about Titian, and care nothing about Titian—and that's another fact about Titian."

Thankery was silencing Carlyle at the moment. He paused and looked courteously at Carlyle. "Pardon me," he said, "that is not a fact about Titian, but it is a fact—and a lamentable fact—about Thomas Carlyle."

A Hearty Salutation. From the London Lady. There is to be had an amusing anecdote about Mr. Trice's little five-year-old daughter, Viola, who was recently acting before the queen at Balmoral. Her majesty gave the child a lovely pearl and ruby brooch as a souvenir, and, pleased with Viola's dainty grace, held out her hand for the little girl to kiss. Viola, all unsuspecting, grasped the queen's hand and shook it heartily, and there was much amusement among those present.

Many Speakers of English. The English language is now spoken by 120,000,000 people. Though our language contains, according to Max Muller, some distinct words, the chaste and modest Milton used but 8,000 of them in his works, and even Shakespeare did not draw upon over 12,000.

Gathered in the World of Melody.

Interesting Notes About Musicians At Home and Abroad.

Some thoughts of a clever contributor to the Chicago Herald will interest many Scrantonians, even though they will not have the pleasure of seeing the Abbey-Grau company in their own city: "It has been predicted many times," he writes, "that the princely salaries paid opera singers and the enormous cost of the music-drama would probably lead to the utter collapse of these stupendous grand opera seasons. A company in which there are at least a dozen persons, each of whom receives a larger honorarium every season than is conferred upon the president of the United States by a grateful treasury department, is a pretty big problem for any manager to solve, particularly when he is remembered that this cost is only the beginning of an enormous outlay, or veritable bottomless pit of expense. Most of them have failed signally to elucidate that problem in a manner satisfactory to themselves or to those patronizingly called their creditors. Nye and Lindholm, of London; Marzani, Strakosch, Hess, the American Opera company management and then the German opera syndicate found the operatic Jordan a hard road to travel. This year the financial results are said to be better without any falling away in the artistic elements; and if Generalissimo Abbey is able to achieve so much when all the world is sitting in financial sackcloth and ashes, waiting for a coy millennium of prosperity that does not hasten its approach on account of any willing that may be heard in the land, he must be regarded as the chief of his clan."

That one opera text should cover such an array of distinction as is included in the performances of Maxine Plancon, the De Reszkes, Tamara, Scelchi, Melba, Eames, Nordica, Sanderson and many others of sterling value is a startling commentary upon the risks that must be assumed by those who enter upon this expensive business. The fact also suggests the desirability of the time for great and commanding organizations. One or two stars in a milky way of mediocrity will no longer suffice. The public is willing to pay big money for a show, but it is a sine qua non that the show should be big.

It is an interesting circumstance, and one calculated to stir something more than ordinary rages of national enthusiasm, that nearly all the important women in the company are of English speaking nativity, and most of them hail from America. Melba is an Australian, but Eames, Nordica, Sibyl Sanderson and De Lillian are all American. Maxine Plancon, Stripes that stand well at home, no matter what may be thought of them abroad. The preponderance of English-speaking divas in a French and Italian opera company is rather an odd circumstance, particularly in view of the fact that for many years the Latin countries have rather monopolized this function.

Just why the American men do not equal the American women in song is hard to determine, and yet it is true that not one of our tenor or bass class has ever won general distinction in the grand list of grand opera. Myron Whitney had given over singing "Tudor Than a Cherry," which was his battle piece—early in life he might have become a great basso. It would be interesting to know whether this failure is in the air or is due to some lacking quality in the men themselves. "Who can say?"

The ovation with which the musicians of Italy have greeted Mascagni's new opera, "Silvano," will, Philadelphia Record thinks, occasion a decided stir throughout the musical world. The influence of the school of young Italian maestros—Mascagni, Leoncavallo and Puccini—is its declared, certainly increasing, in Italy, the home of opera. If not in Germany and France. The triumph of "Silvano" is doubly notable in the fact that it has caused a deeper impression than either "L'Amico Fritz" or "I Rantzani," which followed the fame of "Cavalleria Rusticana." Despite the intensity of Leoncavallo's "Pagliacci," Mascagni has named the most promising of the new composers. The character of his new work can scarcely be determined from the meagre cablegram, but the absence of the customary chorus, while the cast is restricted to three singers only, would suggest in itself a farther stride away from the operatic traditions of the past and the foreshadowing of a distinctly new type. The Italian trio were at first hailed as Wagnerites; but the influence of Meyerbeer has recently been recognized in their music dramas. A new type, if evolved, would hardly be in the Wagnerian mode.

Engelbert Humperdinck, the oddly-named composer of the charming fairy opera of "Hansel and Gretel," was born in 1854, and studied music at Cologne and Munich and in Italy. For a year or two he was a professor at the Conservatorium of Barcelona, and in 1887 he returned to Cologne. He was an ardent Wagnerian, and in the festival weeks at Bayreuth is one of the most devoted visitors. Since 1889 he has belonged to the teaching staff of the Hoch Conservatorium at Frankfurt-on-the-Main. Still, his name would probably never have been heard of outside of his immediate circle but for the enormous success of his fairy opera, founded on the Grimm story. The music follows the style of Wagner; his influence is recognizable throughout, and even leading motives are not wanting. Nothing could be more powerful and touching in music than the evening blessing at the close of the second act, and though Humperdinck may be regarded as a disciple of Wagner, the musical critic of the Philadelphia Record thinks he has imbued his music with a very striking and unmistakable individuality.

The choir of the First Presbyterian church, to the number of twenty-five, was tendered a delightful reception at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Hunt, on Jefferson avenue, last Thursday evening. This is a most excellent way of showing one's appreciation of the services of a volunteer choir, and if more churches would follow the example of the First Presbyterian church in this respect, it would not be a difficult matter to keep a choir together.

The singing in Russia—that is, in the Russian church—is confined entirely to men. All the monks are singers. For a thousand years Russia has been searched for the best voices among the monks, and they are brought to the most important centers. As no person can become a priest in Russia, who is not the son of a priest (the parish priests being married), in nearly all the training has gone on from age to age.

The prominence of the persons having in charge the testimonial recital to Mr. Carter at Elm Park church next Monday evening, insures a great success. The large number who attended the recitals of the two seasons are anxious to show their appreciation of Mr. Carter's efforts. The programme is a very choice one, and the participants include the famous contralto, Miss Katherine Bloodgood, Miss Lillian Gutherie, soprano, Mr. Wooley, tenor, and Mr. Thomas, bass.

Organ-Fourth Organ Concerto. Handled Contralto—O Don Fatima from Don Carlos Organ-Selection from Tannhauser. Bass—(a) My Little Woman. (b) Osgood (c) English Hallel.

Soprano—Soleil from Les Huguenots. Organ—Fantasie De Concerto. Friedrich Tenor—The Sailor's Grave. Sullivan Organ—Religious March. Guilmant Contralto—(a) Disappointment. V. Harris (b) Pleading A.W.A. A. Foots Organ—Annie Laurie (varied). Buck Entrance by Linden street doors until 8 p.m., after which Jefferson street entrance. Let the offering be most generous as a mark of your appreciation.

Miss Bloodgood, the contralto, is a lady about 24 years of age and of a commanding appearance. So popular is her work and voice that this season's dates are filled. Her recent dates are with Mrs. Blunvelt at the Binghamton and Memphis festivals and the great Canadian festival at Toronto. Miss Bloodgood's first appearance in Scranton will be at Elm Park church next Monday evening.

Taille Moran is working hard for the success of the children's musical festival that will be held in this city in June. He expects to have in his chorus between 500 and 600 children, who will sing some splendid music. One chorus of over a hundred voices meets every Saturday afternoon at Conservatory hall, and other branches will soon be formed at Hyde Park, Providence, Dunmore and the South Side. There is no doubt whatever about the success of such an undertaking, for every one will want to see and hear the children.

Tomorrow will close the engagement of the quartette at the Second Presbyterian church, and W. C. Weedon, of New York, will take charge of the music for the coming year. Hundreds who listened to the charming and cultured voice of Miss Sess will miss her greatly. Mr. Tom Boynton, the tenor, has been engaged for another year. It is the purpose of forming a male voice quartette.

Mr. Chase, an organist, of Sedalia, Mo., has been engaged to succeed George Noyes Rockwell at the organ of the Second Presbyterian church, next Sunday. The announcement was made last Sunday at the services.

Quite a number of our local musicians are at work preparing for the Wilkes-Barre extended, which will be held in June. John T. Watkins is organizing a choir to compete for the chief prize.

The report that Mr. Carter had resigned his position at Elm Park church is without any foundation, and Miss Dreager will complete the year for which she was engaged.

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