

AN OPERA HERO

By Arthur Warren.
Boston Herald.

The true story of Richard Armor has never been told. Armor's friends to man confound him not to make the mistake. The women thought it courageous and fine-spirited in him, but nobody valued their judgment, because women like armor and they don't know the Great practice.armor of me, which is to put by a fortune or acquire respectability in a government office, a learned profession, or a wholesale trade. The men said that armor would be a fool to give up the bar. But Richard was young, and he replied that he would be a fool if he didn't. He had never done anything there worth speaking of. Two years of it had shown that fate had shunted him down the wrong road, he said. And then, to the infinite scandal of his father, the judge, and of his mother, who was a Delart, and of his many brothers and sisters, who had some of the narrowness and all the pride of both stocks, armor declared that he had thrown over the law and was going on the stage.

That was a year or two before the theater had found salvation in the eyes of the minor clergy and fashionable hostesses. So armor's doom was settled, and he went forth to meet it with an assurance that was criminal in the eyes of the right-minded.

He had a voice to justify him. He was the best known of the amateurs and he had often thrilled the elegant congregations at the Church of the Holy Precosco. But the more he sang, and the better he sang the less were clients inclined to trust him with briefs. When the fact was borne in upon him, he made the announcement which evoked the jeers of his friends and the tears of his family. He came to the voice to Paris to train it, but before he went we gave him a dinner, wishing him joy of his tomfoolery, and in return he made FitzGibbon, the chairman, a present of his practice and good will. You see, we really thought armor a fine fellow.

"You shall all have stalls at the opera," said he, "when I make my debut as Faust."

He was really a fine fellow. Two years ago he had returned from Paris and made his debut, but not as Faust. He appeared as a concert and oratorio singer, and with the usual luck. He did not subscribe to the musical journals, nor pay them for printing portraits, so they told him he had better return to his teachers and learn the rudiments of his profession. The critics of the great dailies were more generous. They said he was a conscientious and intelligent artist, who would probably make some success as a ballad singer. At the end of the first week he disappeared, but in the following autumn he was heard of as principal tenor in a provincial touring company, singing in "Madame Favart," "Les Cloches de Corneville" and "La Grande Duchesse." It was Hector Strobeel's company. When we heard of this said, "This is the end of armor's ambition."

There was no call for surprise. The affair was working out as everybody had anticipated. And, of course, everybody was satisfied with his own part, though there was some resentment. Why should my friend have thrown away his splendid chances in order to go monkeying about in provincial cities, painted up to the eyes and warbling the inanities of opera? And opera bouffe at that! Grand opera would have been bad enough. But this! Fancy a grown man earning his livelihood by simulating passion to the measured beat of a bald-headed conductor, and death to the accompaniment of trombones. But I am only a lawyer and have no imagination for these things.

It was a thousand pities. armor was the handsomest man of his time and I am bold enough to say one of the most gifted—in everything but law. He had the best manners of any man I have known, the grace of his old French line grafted on our sturdy Anglo-Saxon stock. You never saw a more striking face or a franker one, nor when you come to a more wholesome man. If I were asked to name my ideal of a gentleman I should say Richard armor, at once. Manly as he was, he had a way of winning every one. I think he never had an enemy, unless it was Hector Strobeel.

It was a stupid thing for armor to take up with that life. If he could have gone to the top of the tree there might have been some excuse for the eccentricity. But on his tree there is no lower branch worth climbing to. That is counsel's opinion.

One day I met him in the Strand. "Congratulations, dear boy," he cried. "I'm going to America with Strobeel."

"And what do you do there?" "Oh, the same things opera bouffe, opera comique—what you like."

"But I don't like it," said I. "When we were chums you were a sensible creature, now you're—"

"I've heard all that before, old man," he said, gravely.

"But your grand opera—your 'Faust' and 'Romeo.'"

"Oh, one has to work up to those things. You shall hear me sing them yet."

"Do you expect me to go to America for that pleasure?" said I, with half a sneer.

"Croaker! I shall sing 'Faust' at Covent Garden within five years."

"No, de Riezke will sing the Devil."

"I never heard of a man working up" as you call it, to grand opera by way of 'Dorothy' and 'Mme. Angot' and 'La Jolie Parfumeuse,'" said I. I thought it best to be pleasant.

"Didn't you? Well, you shall hear of it, then. A man must take his chances and Strobeel is giving me mine. I shall never forget Strobeel."

And then we shook hands and parted.

Six months afterward I received armor's wedding cards, and a newspaper giving an account of the marriage. "Now," said I, "Dick has done for himself. He's finished." He had married a girl in Strobeel's company, over there in the states. He might at least have married out of "the profession." But there's no accounting for the deeds of a man with a voice, Richard had occasion to write me a letter about an occasion of the opportunity to throw some light on his romance. It was a genuine romance of the opera sort, the kind of thing a man like armor would let himself in for. There was an enchanting singer in the company. Her name was Kate Landon, and he fell in love with

her. Strobeel fell in love with her, too. Strobeel got sulky and jealous when he found that my attentions were favorably received," wrote armor to me. "He said queer things about me, hoping that Kate would hear of them. I made him repent, and then I proposed and was accepted. When Strobeel heard that he tried to shake my nerve one night when I was singing a new part, and he packed some Bowery ruffians in the gallery to hoot me. He wanted to discredit me and drive me out of my calling. But he had mistaken his man. I made such a success that I was at once offered an engagement by another manager. So I left Strobeel at once, and he came to London again, with the wish of his heart expressed and sealed in a contract. He was to sing in grand opera at Covent Garden. But they gave him only one part, and he sang that three or four times on off nights, and it was a pretty good thing for him, for he got no more than a couple of guineas for his part, and he had no influence with opera managers. They don't buy guinea stalls and subscribe for expensive boxes; they don't make a singer fashionable. An ordinary singer's fashionable. armor used to say, you don't get on. I have heard men say the same thing about the bar. But I am not telling tales about my own profession.

In the next winter armor got on well enough at St. James's hall and such places, and while the hostesses of the West End discovered him, and paid him many guineas to sing in their drawing rooms. I forgot to say that his wife had retired from the stage. But I haven't forgotten that she was a delightful little woman with more tact than a corps of ambassadors. She worked for Richard in a thousand and forty ways, giving little luncheons, going to receptions, getting introductions, manipulating influence. And these things make the difference between success and failure in London, unless you have a God-given genius. I don't believe armor had it, but I don't mind acknowledging that about this time I discovered that he sang superbly. Others found it out, too, and began to talk of him at Mayfair dinners. The talk reached to Covent Garden and Fleet street, and the rising star was offered something decent for the next season's opera. That was just after he had made a hit at St. Petersburg. London never knew of a singer. If armor had put a "skit" or a "mimic" at the end of his name he might have won the battle sooner.

It was a stirring night at Covent Garden when armor made his first appearance there as a singer. He sent the promised stalls to the Temple. His success that night was unquestioned. The critics asked, "Where comes this man?" as if they had never heard of him before. Some of the superior-minded—the young men of the younger set—said that armor hadn't the classic touch, that his style sometimes suggested a hero of opera comique. But the critics are of no consequence when a man has the power of Richard armor, who can sing quite as much about singing as they did. And, besides, he could act. For some superior minds, this is an unpardonable offense in an operatic hero. But the curtain fell that night to hearty applause. Strobeel, who had gone to America offering armor starting terms for a season. The offer was declined.

"Don't be a fool," said I. "Make your hay while the sun shines. Your theatrical people are improvident. Who knows how long your voice will last?"

"You ought to be a newspaper man," armor answered, "since you know so well what is best for singers. I declined Strobeel's offer for very good reasons. First, because he hasn't apologized; second, because if he came on his knees I couldn't accept his offer. I'm already engaged in Paris and Vienna, and the czar has commanded me to sing again at Petersburg."

We were at armor's flat in Paris, feasting in honor of the London triumph. The new singer had made his home there, and had put every penny he possessed into fitting it. "I must have the right surroundings," said he. "They are necessary to me. And people judge you by these things. Besides, I want to see my father and the children." It was four years since he had carried off Kate Landon from the wrathful Strobeel. He had earned his right to comfort. And, by the way, I don't wonder at Strobeel's wrath.

armor was in Paris and all the family, had come around. The third course had come round. Everybody came round. Stage people had become fashionable by that time. We used to be content with buying their photographs, but now we had the originals to dinner.

The new star blazed over the continent. He was absent a year. He was working hard. He was convincing Europe that an Englishman could sing as well as a Hungarian or an ex-ambassador of Gaul. But he had not yet reached the top of his profession. Another season would put him there with its new roles and fresh chances. I knew a little about his art, but I could see that in ten years he would be a rich man. He was putting his business into my hands, and so the matter was settled. I ran over to Paris the autumn he returned from Russia. He was to sing at the Grand opera house for the first time in Europe. It was a fete night. The public was waiting at an Eastern potentate, and all the world would be there in diamonds, and red ribbons, and sparkling colors. It was a singular honor, or for a foreigner, and above all a Briton, to have been selected as the chief singer of the night. For, although the French talk a good deal about art, they think a good deal more of patriotism. armor had the ball at his foot. He had now only to send it to the goal.

It was in Paris three days before the event, and there were a quite a quite a cheer and feasted by the lovers of liberty. I also wanted a word with Richard on business. But I couldn't manage that.

"I'm singing every night, during these festivities," he said. "State concerts, municipal soirees, receptions at the minister's."

"And in the daytime?" I queried.

"All day my hands are full."

THE GREAT STORE.

Dress Goods Bargains
Beautiful patterns in Dress Goods. New as the morning, pretty as the rainbow, rich in



designs. Styles for every taste, and prices a third to a half lower than elsewhere.

One case of Fancy Plaid Suits for children's school dresses and waists, very handsome colorings and a great bargain if we said 10c. Special today at 6c.

Today at 15c

Guaranteed All-Wool Serges in blue and black only; very fine French quality, fully worth 50c. Special today at 24c.

Fancy Check Suits, 24 inches wide; ten distinct styles to choose from, worth 50c. At 29c.

Silk and Wool Armure Plaids, fully worth 75c. Today at 39c.

48-inch All-Wool Covert Cloth, in complete assortment of colors, sold regularly at \$1. Today at 69c.

RIGHT OF WYOMING ENTRANCE.

Domestic Bargains

Some great bargain-giving in Domestic. We lead the world in price-cutting. We lead the world in Domestic selling. To prove it, read these prices:

200 pieces of Fancy White Check or Plaid Nainsook, in a number of handsome designs. Special at 43c.

100 pieces of Apron Gingham and Dress Calicoes; large assortment of patterns. Special at 25c.

10 cases of Best Quality Apron Ginghams, in different checks and colors. Special at 35c.

2 cases of Extra Fine Quality Outing Flannels, very handsome designs, worth 10c yd. Special at 5c.

100 pieces of Bleached Crash, 18 in. wide, with red border, extra quality. Special at 23c.

500 dozen Full, Regular Size, Hemstitched and Plain Pillow Cases—best grade of muslin, worth 15c each. Special at 10c.

Full, Regular Size Sheets, made from first quality bleached muslin. Plain, 34c. Hemstitched, 43c. Every one of them worth double.

RIGHT OF LACKAWANNA ENTRANCE.

THE GREAT STORE.

Unprecedented Money-Saving Opportunities

COME WITH TODAY'S GREAT BARGAINS HERE. PRICES ON GOODS THAT WILL BRING THE GREAT BUYING PUBLIC FROM THEIR HOMES IN CROWDS. SUCH BARGAIN-GIVING HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN ON A WEDNESDAY BEFORE. WE AIM TO MAKE THIS ONE OF THE GREATEST DAYS OF THE WEEK FOR TRADING. YOU'LL FIND IN EVERY DEPARTMENT OF THE STORE INDUCEMENTS FOR SPENDING MONEY—AND SAVING MONEY, COME DOWN TOWN WITH A DOLLAR—GO HOME WITH TWO DOLLARS' WORTH OF GOODS. THAT'S A FAIR ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY. QUALITY IN EVERY ARTICLE—THE BEST. AND ABOVE ALL—LOWEST PRICES EVER KNOWN IN RETAIL TRADING—HERE OR ELSEWHERE.

Don't Miss This Great Wednesday Bargain Sale.

Hosiery Bargains
Great day for hosiery, this one. Just about enough of the lots advertised to last until night; but the early comers will get the pick of the choicest lots:

Men's, Women's and Children's Fast Black Super-fine Quality Hosiery, in a complete line of sizes, worth at the least 15c pair. Today at 6c.

Women's Extra Fine Quality Lisle Thread Hosiery, Richelieu ribbed, superior fast-black, worth 35c. Today, special at 24c.

Women's High-Grade, Fleece-Lined Fast Black Hosiery—none better at any price. Special at 31c.

Notions.
If you can't think of what you want, come to the Notion Department—you're sure to find it there. It's the most complete department you ever saw—or ever will see, except here.

Popular Seamless Dress Shields, pair 4c

English tape—assorted— $\frac{1}{2}$ gross 5c

Shell Side Combs, pair 5c

Sperm Machine Oil—bottle.... 5c

Fancy Garter Elastic—yard.... 5c

Whalebone Casing, 6 yds. for. 5c

Brush Skirt Facing, yard 6c

Cube Toilet Pins, (large), per cube..... 6c

Kid Covered Side Steels, pair.. 6c

Ivory Tip Dress Stays, dozen.. 6c

Dr. Warner's Corset Clasps, pair 9c

Twilled Tape, 10 yds. for10c

Silk Whalebone Casing, 9 yds. for10c

Waterproof Dress Facing, yd.12c

Bias Velveteen Binding, 2 in. wide, first quality, 5 yds. for.15c

Celluloid Corset Protectors, pair19c

Silk Skirt Ruffling, yard25c

MAIN FLOOR—MAIN AISLE.

Perfumeries
The best makers contribute to the stock—complete in every detail. All new and fresh goods—something to remember when buying perfumery.

Bradley's triple essence of Woodland Violet, put up in fancy bottles. Special at 25c

Bradley's Toilet Extract—large size bottle—assortment of odors. Special at 25c

Toilet Soap
"Violette Savon"—a very delicate French perfumed soap—put up in fancy box—3 cakes in a box. Special at 25c

MAIN FLOOR—CENTER AISLE.

Carpets
Tapestry Brussels, made, laid and lined, per yard... 60c

Body Brussels made, laid and lined, per yard...\$1.00

Best Moquette made, laid and lined per yard 85c

THIRD FLOOR.

SPECIAL FACILITIES FOR GIVING PROMPT AND CAREFUL ATTENTION TO ORDERS BY MAIL, TELEPHONE OR TELEGRAPH.

Jonas Long's Sons.
The Great Store.

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THE GREAT STORE.

Furniture Bargains
Tremendous Furniture selling here in January. Think of it! Values of a lifetime



during this week's sale. Two items this morning—judge many others by them:

Antique Bedroom Suits, 11 pieces; Dresser, with 24x30 bevel glass, serpentine top and two swell drawers; handsomely carved bed; wash stand with splasher back; good soft top mattress; good woven wire springs; two feather pillows; two cane seat chairs; one cane seat rocker; center table, 24 in. top. HERE'S the actual worth of this set, individually:

Dresser... } \$27.50
Bedstead..... }
Washstand..... }
Table..... 1.25
Chairs..... 2.10
Rocker..... 1.80
Springs..... 2.85
Mattress..... 2.98
Pillows..... 2.98

Total.... \$41.55
During this last January week the suit complete for \$29.00 and you'll marvel at its elegance and cheapness.

Chiffoniere
Built of handsome solid polished Oak, with five large drawers, worth at least \$5.50. Very special at \$3.49.

FOURTH FLOOR.

Curtains and Draperies
Match these LOW prices on Curtains and Draperies in any store in this country—but you can't. Quality's the best—always.

Real French Fish Net Curtains, 3 1/2 yards long; very desirable artistic designs, worth \$1.75. at 98c

Saxony Net Lace Curtains, beautiful designs and superb quality, worth \$4.50. at \$2.49

Tapestry Portieres, full width and length, knotted fringe at both ends; large line of colors, worth \$3.00. at \$1.98

French Fish Net, fifty in. wide; fully worth 25c yd., at 16c

THIRD FLOOR.

Aprons
Extra large size; good quality cambric, wide hem and tucks, embroidered and ruffled edges. About 100 styles, all told, including a lot of Tea Aprons. All at 21c

MAIN AISLE.

"But this business must be settled," I insisted.

"Let it wait till after Thursday; that's the opera night."

"Let me see your account," I said emphatically. "You look a wreck."

"Nonsense," said he and he batted for the Elipse.

I sought Mrs. armor and conjured her to urge her husband to spare himself, and to sign the papers I had brought with me. "There's so much at stake on Thursday," I reminded her.

"I know that," she said, "but Richard never thinks of himself."

"Well, he ought to," said I, with some heat. "The only unspokenable idiot in the world who would sacrifice himself for this mountebank, said I, pulling on my coat."

armor lighted a cigar, and said, with a laugh: "I've the constitution of an ox, and you forget that Strobeel gave me my chance."

"Very well. You have only one day more. Tomorrow will be Wednesday. You sing at the opera on the following night. I hope you'll be sensible."

"I don't lack advice," said he. "All the same I went off in a huff. 'All the same,' I murmured, as I tumbled into the thin sheets of the Continental."

I had planned a little dinner at Rigby's for the Wednesday night. But armor wouldn't come, so I went melancholy at the Moulin Rouge. It's the most depressing place I know of, after Monte Carlo.

On Thursday morning I wired armor: "Are you all right?"

"Right as a trivet," came the reply. "I shall be in my best form tonight."

At 6 o'clock there was another message from armor.

"Come, Strobeel died this afternoon." I hastened to Dick's. He was in his room, resting, his wife said. "He is sadly overcome. Not that he cared so much for Strobeel. But the shock of the man's death was terrible. He died in a convulsion. Richard was with him trying to comfort him, and he set up with Strobeel after the concert at the Trocadero last night."

"Several hours. I could not induce him to rest. Strobeel was in great pain."

"Will your husband sing tonight?"

"Indeed he will. He is perfectly well, he says, only drowsy, intolerably drowsy."

"Good! Then he will rest. But what can I do?"

"Cheer us up a little, and take me to hear Richard make his best effort at the opera tonight. I have a box. I must go, in spite of this—this horrible affair. I must go for Richard's sake."

"Of course, you must."

"We couldn't dine at home, where Strobeel was lying dead, so we went to the Cafe de la Paix. armor in singer fashion, had eaten a light and early meal, and was now in his dressing room at the opera."

I said, when we had taken our places in the opera house: "You might have had several friends here tonight, Mrs. armor. There's plenty of room in the box."

"Oh, no," was the little woman's quiet answer. "I am nervous enough on Richard's account, as it is. The chatter of other people would disturb me. If it hadn't been for this—this awful thing, I would have come alone."

"But don't think of that." I did my best to distract her thoughts from the hideous tragedy.

"I can't help thinking of it," she said.

"There's that dead man in our house, and here are we making merry at the opera, on a gala night."

"I'll do my best to cheer you up. But I managed to divert her a little by commenting on the brilliant audience. It was all Paris, of course. All the men in uniform, of regular of some sort, all the women in miraculous gear. All the jewel shops, and ribbon shops and flower shops of Paris had emptied their store into the opera house that night."

"A glorious affair, this," I whispered to Mrs. armor.

"Wonderful. I hope Richard isn't nervous!" she said.

She scribbled a little note and sent it round to him.

"He wouldn't let me go behind to-night," she said. "He is always so nervous at a premiere that he can't bear to talk to anyone, not even to me."

"I'm afraid you are rather nervous, too," I said.

"I suffer acutely whenever he sings a new part, or even a new song. Not that I have any fear on his account—but you know what it means—or I suppose you don't."

"I'm a bit queer myself," said I. "Ah, there are the great folks."

Into the state box came the president of the republic and the potentate from the East, with a glittering company of attendants. The audience rose, and ap-

plauded; the orchestra struck up one national air and then another, and then rolled out the overture.

"Now," said I, as the curtain rose.

When armor came on he was courteously applauded. There was no enthusiasm in the reception. The audience had hardly recovered from staring at the Eastern potentate. It was clear that the new tenor would have to fight his way. I was watching him closely with the glasses, I half fancied I could see a shade of disappointment cross his face when the brief clatter of applause subsided. But it was for an instant only, and a flash of determination followed it, as if armor were thinking, "I'll make you rise and cheer me before the end."

But, of course, I never knew that.

"He is master of himself," said I, leaning over to his wife.

She nodded, as if to say he was always that.

What happened is well enough known. Everybody is familiar with the outlines. The papers were filled with them. But I am trying to make known why it all happened. That justice ought to be done to Richard armor. They said—but no matter what they said, and I will not delay for a description of his marvelous triumph, for it was an unquestioned triumph. I raised armor at once to the level of the greatest singer of the age. After the famous scene where he poured out his heart in song there was a mighty burst of cheering. The great pack of humanity gave itself over to a wild demonstration of enthusiasm. The president rose in his box and flung a bouquet at armor's feet. The eastern potentate stripped a jewel from his coat and tossed it to the stage. The audience rose and clamored in an ecstasy of delight. I, too, was seized with the infection. I was proud of my friend. "This is worth living for—to win like this," said I. "It's something, after all, to be an operative hero!" I found myself shouting in the tumult, alternately smiting my hands and waving my handkerchief, as everybody else was doing in a half-mad way. And armor, armor standing on the flower-strewn stage, modestly bowing his thanks. This must have gone on for five minutes, and, then, while the cheers were still rising, Richard fell forward with his face among the others, and the curtain dropped.

"He fell too soon. Is it new business?" said I, turning to his wife.

"But she was not in the box. The door was open. I heard some one run, gasp-

ing through the lobby. I darted out, and could see Mrs. armor running along the sweeping curve of the house toward the stage. I followed, calling to her and wondering what had happened. People were bustling out from the doors, not as usual between an entire act, but in a hubbub. I heard a man say "ill," another "fainted," and a woman moaned "dead!" And all the while I was rushing through the crowd after Kate armor, I saw her pass a guard and go through the stage. But the door was shut in my face.

Something had happened to Richard. But what? The guard said nothing, knew nothing. The house was filled with rumors. At last I satisfied the door-keeper that I was armor's friend, and he pushed me through to the stage. They had borne armor away to the artist's salon, where he was lying unconscious, with his head pillowed in his wife's arms. A physician rose from a stooping posture as I entered.

It was only a look I gave him.

The physician pressed his forefinger to his lips.

The sobbing woman and I were left alone with the dead.

A clot of blood in the brain. The medical report was more learnedly expressed, but that was the meaning of it.

"These operatic heroes lead such unnatural lives," said a preacher next day.

It was long afterward that the nurse showed me the razor with which Strobeel tried to kill himself in his delirium. I could understand armor's self-sacrifice, and the shock. The strain of it I already knew. But I don't understand why fate takes such men out of the world before their time.

EXPLAINED.

"What time of night was it when you saw the prisoner in your room?" asked the defendant's attorney in a recent suit.

"About 3 o'clock."

"Was there any light in the room at the time?"

"No, sir. It was quite dark."

"Could you see your husband at your side?"

"No, sir."

"Then, madam," said the attorney triumphantly, "please explain how you could see the prisoner and could not see your husband."

"My husband was at the club, sir."