

ADVANCE OF GRAND OPERA IN AMERICA

THE TIME NEAR AT HAND WHEN EVERY CITY, LIKE EUROPE, WILL BE PROVIDED WITH THE BEST OF MUSIC

GRAND opera, with all its ennobling possibilities, has now reached the point of progress in the United States where it will soon become just as thoroughly an institution as it is in the countries of Europe.

With the opening of Hammerstein's third season in New York, the enlarged season of the Metropolitan company in New York, under new management; the dedication of new temples of grand opera in Philadelphia and Brooklyn, and the coming of a dozen companies to tour the country, and give the blessings of music to cities that have not yet attained to the dignity of having their own permanent institutions, grand opera this season may be said to show the most remarkable advance in the history of the new world.

The development is important from more than the musical standpoint. It is a splendid demonstration of the constant advance of culture in the new world. It used to be the favorite charge of the old world that the only interest possible to the American people was the pursuit of the all-powerful dollar. In the earlier stages of the national history there was excuse for the charge. The pioneer, the man developing a new world, must first look to the essentials. The luxuries can wait till he has established the means to get food and shelter, and if sometimes Uncle Sam has shown too great an interest in developing his wealth, his experience has been only that of every new country.

But that stage is now past, and the demand of the people for the refinements of life has manifested itself musically in a way that bids fair to develop an enormous patronage in this country for the works of the great masters of music.

Grand opera in the United States is perhaps a century old. The first notable singer who came to these shores to show the barbarians of the new world the ultimate possibilities of the vocal art was the great Yalibran. Then came Jenny Lind, Patti, Nilsson, Brignoli, Mario, Campanini, Carl Formes, etc., but all of them had to be billed like a circus in order to get patronage.

In fact, it was the most noted showmen in the history of the new world who handled the tour of Jenny Lind when the Swedish nightingale came to the United States.

And P. T. Barnum used the methods to interest the public that he would have called into play had he been trying to draw a crowd for the white elephant. In every city to which he went the tick-



HAMMERSTEIN'S GRAND OPERA HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA. WHEN FINISHED, THIS WILL BE THE FINEST HOME OF GRAND OPERA IN THE WORLD.

lighter music a fair percentage of more ambitious numbers a greater reward of attendance was always obtained.

In this manner every year saw a growing demand for music, and Europeans in the United States were astonished at the growth.

Oscar Hammerstein contributed his share. His scheme that looked suicidal. When he announced his intention of giving grand opera in opposition to the long established and powerful Metropolitan forces, men thought he was crazy; but the success of his project developed that there were ample patrons to support two seasons of grand opera. The impresario has every confidence that he will emerge a winner, and the advance sale of seats thoroughly bears him out.

That is the plan on which he is now working. He commenced with Philadelphia because its proximity to New York made the experiment less expensive. He built a magnificent opera-house at his own risk. He has engaged a separate chorus and orchestra, and nearly all the minor roles have two exponents, so that the ventures are almost entirely independent.

Yet in spite of the outlay, the impresario has every confidence that he will emerge a winner, and the advance sale of seats thoroughly bears him out.

If the Philadelphia venture succeeds, as it seems destined to, a host of similar projects on varying scales of magnitude are sure to follow.

Then the United States will gradually fall into the position of Europe, where every city has its own opera-house and company.

Some of these opera-houses are included among the most noted buildings in Europe. The Grand Opera in Paris is the boast of the nation. Napoleon III built it, and so anxious was he that its magnificence should be the wonder of the art world, that he not only made it a building of imperial magnificence, but he also caused houses all around it to be leveled to the ground in order that nothing should break the view of this masterpiece of architecture.

Covent Garden, in London, is less magnificent, but it has a notable history, all the stars of a generation having appeared there. La Scala, Milan, is famous as the home of Italian music; the Prince Regent in Munich, the Royal Opera in Berlin, and the opera-houses in Vienna and St. Petersburg, are noble buildings. He who



THE GRAND OPERA HOUSE, PARIS.



THE GRAND OPERA HOUSE, BERLIN.



ets were auctioned off, and in the midst of the popular hysteria men paid as high as \$500 a seat for the privilege of getting the notoriety of having been the initial purchaser.

Lind had an enormous success, but it can hardly have been called a gain for the cause of music, for a large number of her hearers were attracted by the excitement or by the desire to boast of being present at the performances of the reigning sensation.

The coming of all the other noted songbirds down to within say a couple of decades ago was attended by similar manifestations, and it cannot be that their appearances helped much toward the creation of a higher taste.

It was not until grand opera began to take on some suggestion of permanency that a clientele worth while began to come to the front. The Metropolitan Opera House, in New York, was the first institution of the kind.

Its scale was lavish. It represented the toy of a number of fabulously wealthy New Yorkers.

For their pleasure Mapleson, Abbey, Schoffel, Grau and Conried ransacked the musical capitals of Europe and captured the greatest songbirds in the world.

It had formerly been the experience of Americans in hearing opera to have one great singer, the remainder of the cast made up of saddest apologies.

But the Metropolitan Opera House altered that.

Every role had to be in the hands of the most noted songbird in his or her special line.

For the first time came the phenomenal line-ups, which at one period included Gerster, Campanini, Schalchi, Maurer, Tamagno, Nannetti, Gallati, Di Anna; then later a new regime, with Minna, Emma, Calve, Nordles, Sembrich, Alvarez, the two de Reszaks, Plancon,



THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE, NEW YORK.

Maurer, Caruso, Schumann-Heink, etc.

The splendor of these performances, and the money it cost to hear them, still kept them a little beyond the reach of the populace, but the excitement they created finally developed a very distinct desire among the general public for a grand opera that should be less costly, and for which it would be possible for them to get casts at a price within the reach of all.

The demand. The Tivoli in San Francisco, the Castle Square in a number of Eastern cities, Savage, Gustav Hinrichs with a Summer campaign covering many years in Philadelphia, and a host of smaller traveling companies, began carrying to the people the works of the divine masters of melody—Verdi, Gounod, Meyerbeer, Puccini, Wagner, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Rossini and a host of others.

Entertaining theatrical managers saw

The pleasure parks helped in the work, for it was found that by mixing with the



LA SCALA OPERA HOUSE, MILAN.

would hear Wagner's music drama at the master's home journeys to Bayreuth. The gradual accumulation of similar musical shrines in the United States is destined to work wonders for the culture of the nation.

"The Papers."
Chicago Evening Post.
The curtain rose, the villain crept
With little and stealthy tread;
"Thou papers in my clutch are kept!"
He confidently said.
The heroine came in and sighed—
(Ah, she was fair to see,
All golden-haired and aureoled,
As pretty as could be.)
Her gray-haired father tottered in,
The villain seized his arm
And hissed with wicked, Swedish grin:
"Your daughter or your farm?"
"No! Back you scoundrel!" cried her pa,
"Take not my girl of hand!"
The villain sidled out; we saw
The papers in his hand.
Then came the hero, and he clasped
The daughter in his arms;
He little thought that then he grasped
Three acts of dire alarm.
The villain sidled out; we saw
There was a sudden thud;
The hero was felled by the law,
Slashed by his father's blood!
The hero in his prison cell
Was doomed then to be hung,
But in a costume very swell
The girl the jail doors swung
Just when the sheriff came for him—
They said that he might leave;
She held in fingers white and slim
"The papers"—his retrieve.
And now "the papers" gathered fast,
One was a dead alight in the past,
One a receipted bill.
In one the villain had confessed
A lengthy list of crimes;
Of villain he had been the best
In this and other crimes.
And yet the villain held them all—
The crafty, wicked wretch;
But that act, the avenged jail!
Behold what fate will fetch
The comic Dutchman dips his hand,
The villain is despoiled;
The happy couple proudly stand—
"The papers"—he is foiled!

In London more fires occur on Saturday than any other day of the week, and more in August and December than in any other months.