

The American Girl in Opera

"An American Girl Studying in Europe Should Live in a Private Family of the Middle Class and Never Speak Nor Think in English."

"Schools for Voices Here Offer No Such Apprenticeship as Those on the Continent."

"When Successful, the American Girl Has Earned Every Bit of Her Glory."

The How and the Why of Her
by **Theodora Bean**

"I Took Dramatic Training and Worked as if My Whole Career Depended on My Ability to Act—Madame Calve Had the Ideal Combination of Singing and Acting."

"My Husband Is My Best Critic. I Permit Him to Take Life Seriously—for Me."

"I Am a Contralto, Who Never Tried to Be a Soprano."
—Madame Cahier

WHY do so few American girls arrive in opera? They possess voices equally as good in power and tone as the European, study with the same masters on the Continent, yet the Europeans are chosen by impresarios and the Americans are left to pursue the battle for Metropolitan recognition and opportunity.

Paris, Munich, Vienna, Berlin, are full of girl students admirably equipped, yet nothing much is left for them except studying on, hoping on, cloaking their tragedies, stifling their disappointments.

Nearly all who have been given a chance have made good, but the number is amazingly small when one considers how many there are of them and how constant is the demand for voices here.

This was the burden of a thought I brought to Mme. Charles Cahier, Indianapolis born and bred, who went to Europe, worked ardently, became a leading member of the Imperial and Royal Court Opera in Vienna, the Royal Bavarian Prince Regent Theater, Munich, and now is under contract with the goal of all opera persons, the Metropolitan Opera House.

"When a girl takes up her life in Europe she doesn't realize her handicap from the start, but she makes her struggle harder than it otherwise might be," said Madame Cahier. "She goes to live in an American pension and visits only the homes in the American colony. She is tied up by the traditions she was accustomed to at home, and in no way gets into the atmosphere of the place. She is not adjusting herself or fitting herself for singing the operas of a foreign language, a foreign role. When she sings she is not a part of the role; she is a decoration or an instrument, and that's all."

Getting the Atmosphere.
"What should she do?"

"She should live in a private family of the middle class and never speak a word of English. She should think even in the language of the country, study its history, customs, and accumulate the atmosphere and knowledge necessary for her equipment."

"Then she will actually know what she is expressing in German, French, Italian," she went on. "And she shouldn't undertake any opera unless she is familiar with its language, its purpose, its possibilities."

"Does the fact that she holds onto her American name interfere with her success?"

"I think it does. It is a cruel thing to confess that from Americans not much is expected, and the girl has the double fight of overcoming that, of winning out on her own account and of showing herself an artist irrespective of birth."

"You may rest assured that when American girls are successful over there," she continued, "they have earned every bit of their glory, and when they are chosen to sing here they may regard it as almost phenomenal."

"Foreign voices are more thoroughly trained—foreign artists have the satisfaction of knowing nothing has been left undone in their preparation. When a woman is ready there for opera training she has passed through years of toil, but she knows what she is about. The schools for young voices here offer no such valuable apprenticeship."

Madame Cahier has a perfectly good right to speak with authority. She has sung the big contralto roles in German, French and Italian operas.

"I am a contralto who never tried to be a soprano," she explains.

Utility of a Husband Critic.

Madame Cahier proceeded: "Possibly the girls we are speaking about are not

surrounded by the right sort of critics. I believe in criticism. Not thoughtless, explosive praise, but real criticism."

This wasn't spoken as a cue, but it served as one, as at this point the studio was brightened by the entrance of M. Cahier, "my husband," a genial, big fellow and a real rooster for "madame."

The critic of the hearth? M. Cahier, I was told, is not only a freelance critic, but his sympathies are so earnest and real that he holds the record for husbands of Metropolitan Opera-House prima donnas.

When Madame Cahier has a throaty gasp on the eve of a performance M. Cahier has congestion of the larynx. When the opera is over M. Cahier has weariness and temperamental relaxation.

The approach of a first night is heralded by M. Cahier's disposition to neurasthenia, mild fever, cold chills and artistic trembling.

Madame Cahier permits him to worry and grow wrinkles if he must. She is used to singing, but somehow M. Cahier never will be quite broken to opera.

He is almost amateurish in his zealous devotion to the family art, and admits he cannot get over it. He cannot overcome his tendency to take his wife's work seriously.

That he is a worth-while critic you have Madame Cahier's word.

"Do you like real critics around the house?" I asked of Madame Cahier. "Are they peaceful elements?"

"Yes. Before I had him my mother and sisters were the discoverers of the good and bad in me. Great friends who listen and applaud are not critics; they say all one does is perfect, that no one ever equaled the effort before in execution, style, quality. Such things mean death to an artist."

Correcting His Wife.

"I never expressed an opinion without telling why," spoke up M. Cahier.

"You know why?" I put to him.

"Oh, he knows why," responded Madame. "He knows music thoroughly."

"Do you sing or accompany your wife?" I asked of the husband.

"Certainly not. If two artists in the same line marry one is a fool. I write for a living."

"Yes, and when he is pounding on a typewriter he knows all I am doing at the piano and interrupts me with suggestions, all of which have been beneficial to me."

"A sort of conjugal coach," I ventured.

"No. A friend; an understanding, wise friend," answered Madame Cahier.

I really didn't intend this to be a man's interview or a little first aid to the Only Their Husbands' Club, but prima donnas' husbands have a way of sliding gracefully into household conversations.

Madame Gadsch's husband has it; so has Jeanne Maubourg's and Ethel Parks' and Madame Delina's and Madame Calve's; but not Madame Alda's Signor Gatti-Casazza. He is the one shrinking anemone among the other halves of divas. He is not a "comrade" in the statehood of voice promoting.

M. Cahier has an additional responsive note—he is quick on his feet when the telephone rings, and it was during a "call" lapse that I got another moment for questions and answers.

"Did you have an idea of a future in opera when you were singing in the best concerts in Indianapolis?" I asked.

"No, not at all. Curiously, I never thought of the opera—they call it 'grand' opera in Indianapolis. I was quite content to study, sing in the choir and make my voice agreeable to my friends,

too sudden or perhaps a shade too rough, but you need not have slapped me as you did, Clothilde."

"Oh, but I immediately apologized."

"Yes, to be sure, you immediately apologized. You have been well trained and you apologize the moment you forget your training. That, however, did not mend matters, for I had thus learned, once for all, and brutally, that you did not love me."

"I wished to be honest."

"I committed a very foolish, but perhaps a pardonable mistake. I urged you, I pleaded with you. It did not help me. Of course, it did not and could not help me, so I had to make the best of it."

"You certainly have done so."

"And you reproach me with it?"

"I am your wife."

"But, my dear, one has the right to be, illogical only when he or she loves. You have not that right. You claim privileges, but on what grounds? You make demands without offering anything in return. For every privilege there is a corresponding duty. However, I do not ask for mere duty when I have a right to expect love."

"But you have no right to deceive me."

"That is an open question, but let us not discuss it. Suffice it to say that I have not done so."

"You lie!"

"Kindly avoid such forcible expressions. Throw me out if you like, but do not insult me. Occasionally it did look as if I had and I took pains to keep up appearances. Why should I? Of course, there were suspicious entertainments in which I took part."

"Yes, I am smiling at you, and shall



HAPPILY MARRIED A NAIVE TALE BY BALDWIN GROLLER

THEY had been happily married a year. Happily married! What a commonplace phrase. Another family settled, another household, if there be a household, but what then? Any girl is happily married when she gets a husband, and very often the emphasis is laid on the word "married."

In order not to conflict with the facts let us then omit the word "happily," and say that they had been married a year. They were lingering at the supper table, though the servants had already cleared the table. Stealthily she loosened her corset, while he leaned back comfortably in his armchair, lighted a cigar and picked up his evening paper.

He had not strayed far into the intricacies of the Moroccan question when something happened that was not especially conducive to his quiet enjoyment of the evening paper; she began to sob, suddenly, eruptively, passionately, as if her heart would break.

It is a trying thing to see a woman cry. Not every man can do it with dignity. If a woman weeps softly to herself and with a visible disposition and desire to conceal her sorrow, it is still very difficult to watch her calmly. When the paroxysm of grief, however, is wild and unrestrained, the man is sure to lose his equanimity. It is like having a glass of wine upset in one's immediate vicinity, a full glass, to be exact with the imminent prospect of a wedding. It is time to leap to one's feet.

While this may be psychologically

accurate enough, there are exceptions to every rule. Our friend, the reader of the evening paper, being perhaps an unusually stolid sort of a brute, did not appear perturbed. He merely glanced over the edge of the paper and asked lollily:

"What's the matter now, Clothilde?"

She summoned all her strength of character and dried her tears. She could not weep before him. Not before him. She forced herself to be calm and coldly remarked:

"This cannot go on, Teddy. It must end here and now."

"Immediately? At 10 minutes after 10? Why?"

"I cannot stand it. I must leave you."

"I warn you that the janitor is more punctual in locking up at 10 than in opening when one is late coming home."

"I shall go tomorrow."

"Why go at all?"

"Because I can stand it no longer. This is no life; it is one prolonged agony!"

"You misunderstand my question. If we must part it would be much simpler for me to go. You could stay in your comfortable home. I can take care of myself very easily."

"I am sure of that."

"Is that meant for a reproach? Would it not be best for us to discuss our differences calmly and without cutting remarks? Why do you wish to go?"

"Because you are deceiving me and because you no longer love me."

"How very odd! And does that move you to tears?"

"Why should it not?"

"But please consider the history of our marriage!"

"I warned you not to marry me."

"You certainly did, but I refused to take the hint. My life's happiness seemed in the balance and I loved you more than life itself."

"And now you blame me for having consented?"

"I do not blame you, but perhaps it would have been better if you had refused me."

"My parents talked me into it and you threatened to shoot yourself."

"I acted very foolishly, I admit. I should not have said that to you, though perhaps I might have done it. You were the love of my heart, Clothilde, and I really believed—oh, how long ago that was—that I could not live without you. And still I say that you should not have consented; both of us might have been better off now."

"At any rate, I did not deceive you."

"No, you did not; I deceived myself."

"You?"

"I thought I hoped, that I would in time succeed in winning your love. That was my mistake—my one great mistake."

She pressed her handkerchief to her eyes, but did not sob. He continued:

"Remember our wedding trip. We had a private compartment. When finally we were alone, I kissed you passionately. It might have been a lit-

tle, but you need not have slapped me as you did, Clothilde."

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"Yes, I am smiling at you, and shall

"Entertainments with ladies, and such ladies at that!"

"Quite right, occasionally a very motley crowd. Still, there were some very fine ones among them, superlative specimens."

"I do not ask for details."

"But I consider it necessary to give you these details—superlative specimens, and yet I am able to sit here and tell you that I have never lied to you, and am not lying even now. You smile incredulously. I do not ask you to rely on my morals or on my conscience, for perhaps I have no conscience."

"Indeed, I have never noticed anything like that about me; but I have something I call a heart, and I have a little good taste. I admit that I have gone to see sights, strange sights, tempting sights. It would not have been surprising under ordinary conditions if—but they left me altogether unmoved."

"That is easy to say."

"I repeat, not because I was too moral, but because these things were not good enough for me. I always wondered how one could be so devoid of good taste as to be carried away with them. If one has at home—well, I do not care to compliment you, Clothilde, now that we are at the crossroads, but a comparison simply forced itself upon me."

"How stupid, how depraved a man must be to be charmed by them! You will it otherwise, however, and now you complain. Oh, yes, you have been honest, very honest, though I might have gone to the devil in spite of your honesty."

"I must tell you, Teddy, now that it is too late and we are to part, I have not been honest with you, not for a long time. Are you smiling at me?"

"Yes, I am smiling at you, and shall

do so again if you repeat it. Bring me a hundred witnesses and I shall laugh at them. You decide any one? Why, you simply could not. It is not in you; you could not do it if you tried. If you wish to torture me seek out some other bugaboo. You had something better in your repertory; your indifference was quite effective."

"I did not mean it in that way, Teddy. You are right. I have not been unfaithful to you, nor can I now allow myself to be deceived and cast aside."

"What did you mean, then? Tell me."

"You may as well know; I was honest when I told you that I did not love you. And then it came over me after all, little by little, I don't know how. It came over me and it surrounded me and it filled me. And it was here at last, the great all-embracing love that I had never known."

"It was something new, something terrible, something blissful in my life; and I was dishonest, inasmuch as I tried to conceal it; and I would not confess it because I was ashamed. How I worried about you when you were away, how tenderly I dwelt on you in my thoughts, how I have longed for one kind word! But you failed to notice the change."

"Are you quite sure?"

"You noticed nothing, you did not care to see. While I was yearning for you, you were spending your time with some worthless —"

"Perhaps it is not as bad as all that."

"It is bad enough, and I am through with you. I am disgusted with you."

"You speak as though you had proofs against me."

"Here are the proofs—a pile of them. The pink letters! You have been writing, eh?"

"I had a right to spy when my life's happiness was at stake. As a matter of fact you did not take any pains to cover your tracks. I found them in the waste basket. Was it not better that I should have found them than to have the servants chortle over them? It was very vulgar of you to leave them there."

"Are you willing to read them to me?"

"No."

"Have you the 12 letters all there together, and nicely arranged by date?"

"Yes."

"Then do me one last favor and read me the first one in each letter; you will find it underlined in each instance. I shall note the words down as you read."

"She read."

"Very funny—how—easy—it—is—to-fool—my-poor—little—wife."

A moment later she was weeping in his arms, and at last they were really and truly "happily married."

The Dignity of Press Work.

A young woman who was acting as newspaper correspondent at a fashionable hotel did not consider herself a reporter and never referred to herself as such. In talking with one of the women guests she spoke of doing "press work" for the hotel.

The woman hesitated a moment, then said: "Don't you find it hard?"

Another pause, then the bewildered guest put her question: "Do you do the work in your room or in the laundry?"

"The young woman is trying now to make up her mind just what she had better call herself—New York Sun."