

Ha! Artistic Temperament and Cruel Laws Clash Again!

The Italian Courts Excused Maestro Toscanini for Smashing His Baton on a Musician's Head—Will Our Morality Laws Be Softened to Save Baklanoff the Grand Opera Baritone and His Sweetheart Mlle. Amazar, the Pretty Soprano?

ON this page last Sunday was printed the interesting decision of the Italian courts—that a great musical genius was irresponsible in the moments of ecstatic musical exaltation.

Great musical genius bespeaks the superman—and the ordinary laws of the land must not be applied to a superman! Thus the courts of Italy have just ruled in the case of the famous musical genius, Toscanini, who struck at a member of his orchestra with his baton, broke the man's violin bow and drove the corner of the broken bow into the unfortunate player's eye. And Toscanini was freed of responsibility for his outburst of artistic temperament because it was held that great musicians are not responsible for what they do under the exaltation of their genius.

The decision was fully supported by scientific psychological reasons. The latter apply with equal force to the many acts of violence and eccentricity, often verging on insanity, which have been committed by men of genius and great talent in all ages.

This remarkable decision, as explained last Sunday, was rendered during the trial, at Turin, of an assault charge against Arturo Toscanini, the world-famous orchestral conductor, who is so well known in the United States. The maestro was charged with assaulting the violinist during a rehearsal of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at a local opera house.

Thus laws which most of mankind must submit to need not apply to musical genius. Laws which are just, proper and necessary for the rest of us are cruel and oppressive to those whose artistic temperament overcomes them.

So the Italian courts have held—will American courts take such a view? And there is now at this moment a very interesting example of artistic temperament which has come into headlong clash with American laws. It is a "romance" of two Grand Opera stars—the popular Russian baritone, Georges Baklanoff and Mlle. Elvira Amazar, the very pretty soprano. Will the American immigration laws be applied to force the deportation of the pair or will they be prosecuted under the stern "white slave" law? Or will the plea of artistic temperament excuse them?

Mr. Baklanoff is regarded as a master of the vocal art. He is a man of intense artistic temperament. The arguments that Professors Lombroso, Pastor and other psychologists have advanced concerning the eccentricities of genius clearly apply to him.

Baklanoff in 1915 sang the very exacting baritone role of Iago in Verdi's "Otello" at the Manhattan Opera House. It suited his temperament. He interpreted the character of the famous monster of hate and treachery with wonderful insight. In all things, Baklanoff displays the fire and originality which are so characteristic of Russian artists.

Elvira Amazar is a charming little Russian woman, turned twenty-two years of age, with golden hair, a reticent nose, blue eyes and a dainty figure. She has been closely associated with Baklanoff for five years, as she admits, and the rights of his wife and seven children in Russia did not disturb their perfect artistic communion.

By profession Mlle. Amazar is a coloratura soprano, who sings in grand opera and has also won much success in concerts by her rendering of Russian folk-songs and other interesting musical pieces. And now the American law enters the lives of these temperamental persons and will decide whether great artists are to be excused from the penalties that apply to ordinary persons.

Mlle. Amazar says that the great genius Baklanoff promised to marry her, but has made no effort to do so. In a moment of jealousy or despair she caused his arrest at Chicago the other day by the Federal authorities for bringing her to this country when he had a wife and seven children living in Russia. She had discovered that this was wrong under the American law, but she had, perhaps, forgotten that it was also wrong for a woman to come to this country under the same circumstances.

She was, therefore, arrested herself on a similar charge. Both were released on bond after hearings had begun. The Secretary of Labor in Washington will eventually

ually decide if the evidence warrants their deportation or if they are entitled to special consideration on artistic grounds.

And if Secretary Wilson should decide that they may remain in this country for artistic and other reasons, will it not then become the duty of the United States District Attorney in Chicago to prosecute Mr. Baklanoff under the Mann "White Slave" Act for taking his inspiration from State to State without a marriage license?

On the evening after his arrest Baklanoff sang Guido in "Mamma Vanna" with Mary Garden. A critic writing of this performance said:

"Mr. Baklanoff was in his most fiery mood and never played Guido with such fervor as he did last evening. He gave out the impassioned phrases with a volume and intensity that carried across the footlights in convincing fashion."

Mlle. Amazar told a pitiful story of how she had been treated by the gifted baritone. According to her, he had not only brought her to this country when he had a wife and seven children in Russia and broken his promise to marry her, but had treated her of late very coldly and, finally, as a crowning indignity, had allowed her to be thrown out of the opera house when she merely wished to sit and listen to his golden voice. Apparently something interesting had happened to change the direction of the great genius's affections.

"When I became part of the heap of forsaken women," said little Mlle. Amazar, "I was looked upon as nothing at all, and so treated. It had been known that we were all in all to each other and would be married—certainly. People began to treat me coldly."

"The terrible truth came to me the night of his debut. I went to the manager of the opera and asked for a ticket. He said to me: 'Only relatives and friends of the artists may have tickets.' Relatives and friends? What did that make of me? I almost died on the spot."

"But I bought a ticket. I want you to know, and I went to the opera, and then what do you suppose this manager did? He sent an usher to me to ask to see the ticket. Asked me where I got it. Oh, oh! I left the opera house then and there."

"I waited for Mr. Baklanoff. He came home to me at four that morning. I stormed. I raged. I begged him to save

me from such humiliation, but he just spread his hands and was silent. He said he could do nothing. It was then that I decided to talk to the Federal authorities."

Mlle. Amazar also told the romantic story of her first meeting with Baklanoff.

"Georges Baklanoff and I met five years ago in Petrograd," she said. "I was only eighteen, but was singing at the opera. I was rich. I had a gorgeous home and a fortune of close to a million—which the revolution has taken."

"And when I met Georges Baklanoff he was in his late thirties, handsome, very attractive and a growing favorite at the opera. He had been living away from his wife for a number of years."

"He had come to a dinner at my house one night and some time after we found ourselves in love. I planned to go away with him, because we could not be together in Petrograd where everyone knew us."

"We went to Kieff. But before I went with him another woman came to me. She is a very great artist at the opera there. She had been his previous love. She still loves him, and she warned me. She said that after her there had been a ballet girl, a Frenchwoman and a Creole, and they had all been thrown aside like—like rags."

"But I went with him and I now know what the other meant. He promised me—promised me absolutely—that he would divorce his wife and marry me, and for five years I waited. We at times quarrelled dreadfully, but we always were reconciled again."

"And, of course, there have been other women during that time. It is like that at the opera. The moment a man's real sweetheart has turned her back he will make love to a chorus girl, anyone who strikes his fancy."

Then Mlle. Amazar made startling accusations that various officials of the opera, including Alexander Kahn, secretary of Director Campanini, had taken money from Baklanoff.

Mr. Kahn, in a statement denying these accusations, said:

"The woman has hated me long. I have had nothing to do with her. Baklanoff's life has been one misery after another and he was afraid of his life. She has threatened to shoot me."

Mr. Baklanoff made an effort to defend himself against some of Mlle. Amazar's charges and explain why he did not marry her. Unfortunately he was not assisted by that learned professional psychologist who explained why geniuses are not re-

sponsible for their conduct like ordinary people, and thereby secured Toscanini's acquittal by an Italian court.

"I would be delighted to marry Mlle. Amazar," said Baklanoff, "but how can I? I don't know whether I am married or not. I have written to my wife many times, but have never received a reply."

"I did not bring Mlle. Amazar here from Russia. She loves me, yes, but she is so jealous. Even against the walls, a bureau, anything at all, she can get jealous. And not only against me, but against my friends, my art, my walking-stick—what can one do?"

"I can't jump into marriage, and maybe into bigamy. I came here to sing for the Boston Opera Company, and when I went under I came to Chicago."

As a preliminary expression of American morality Mr. Baklanoff was requested to vacate the rooms he occupied at the Congress Hotel with Mlle. Amazar.

This is not the first falling out that has occurred between Baklanoff and Mlle. Amazar. Experience shows that temperamental storms are an almost inevitable part of the atmosphere that surrounds musical genius.

In 1917, before the New York Supreme Court, Mlle. Amazar sued Baklanoff for \$25,000 damages for assaulting her on a train. She said that while riding on a private car from San Francisco, Cal., to Portland, Ore., Baklanoff, without any cause, struck her in the face with his clenched fists and blackened one of her eyes, and then kicked and beat her, causing abrasions on her nose and mouth. Perhaps he was thinking of a new role. She suffered great pain and had to have a doctor and nurse. The assault, she speci-



Georges Baklanoff, Baritone of the Chicago Grand Opera Company, in "Tosca."

lips, according to the Parisian fashion. She also favors very short skirts, at least ten inches from the ground, and she recommends all these fashions warmly to American women.

Baklanoff, in becoming involved in so many sentimental complications, displays strikingly the typical peculiarities of musical genius set forth by that analyst of genius, Professor Cesare Lombroso.

One of the supreme examples of the irresponsibility of musical genius is Richard Wagner. He annexed the wife of his warmest musical friend and admirer, Hans von Bulow. Those who understand Wagner feel that he was forced to act in this way by his temperament, that he should not be blamed, and that he cannot be held responsible for an act which would be reprehensible or punishable in ordinary men. Will such principles be admitted before American law courts?

Endless instances could be given of the

Mlle. Elvira Amazar.

This Is the Cozy Bundle the Russian Baritone Baklanoff Brought Over on the Steamer with Him and Has Been Carrying Around the Country for Five Years During His American Grand Opera Tour, So Mlle. Amazar Confesses.



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