

## JENNY LIND.



IT has been observed by Emerson that the actual achievements recorded of great men often seem insufficient to account for the reputations they leave behind them; and he attributes this to what he calls the reserved force of *character*, which acts directly by "presence and without means."

It would be untrue to say of Jenny Lind that her artistic career did not fully justify her fame, for that career was quite Napoleonic in its splendid and unbroken success; her conquest of Europe was no less rapid and complete than that of the great world-shaker himself. Yet no one can read the recently published volumes of her memoirs without feeling that in her too was present that reserved force of which Emerson speaks. She was not merely one of the greatest operatic artists of her age, but an absolutely unique character and personality—a personality which found its highest expression, it is true, in her art, but which was always perceived, even by those who most appreciated her art, to be something quite independent of it, and impressed profoundly even those to whom music had nothing to say.

Among the latter was the late Dean Stanley, who was so entranced by Jenny Lind when he first met her in 1847 that he confessed that "great as is the wonder of seeing a whole population bewitched by one simple Swedish girl, it sinks into nothing before the wonder of herself." And Mrs. Stanley, the wife of the bishop of Norwich, who, unlike her son, was able thoroughly to appreciate music, declared that, wonderful as Jenny's singing was, she would rather hear her talk than sing.

It was this peculiar intensity of character, independent of and beyond her artistic genius, that, from her early girlhood, attracted to Jenny Lind the leaders of cultivated society wherever she went. A Swedish lady who knew her from childhood tells us that the impression left on her memory by the great singer was of one "possessed by a sort of sacred responsibility for her mission of art in its lofty purity, which she felt that God had confided to her." Even those whose business it was merely to review her performances on the stage never failed to observe that the wonderful impression which her singing and acting produced was due in large measure to the purity of soul which penetrated all her dramatic impersonations. Thus,

at Berlin, the critic Rellstab writes, "One sentiment pervades all her art-pictures, the spirit of holiness." Again, at Vienna, we are told, "She is the perfect picture of noblest womanhood." The same judgment was expressed everywhere. Indeed, the chief significance of the excerpts from contemporary critiques with which the memoirs abound, full of interest as they are for lovers of the lyric drama, will be missed by the reader who fails to appreciate the tribute which was constantly paid to the moral worth of her character, even by those who were mainly concerned with her artistic work.

As to that work, it is difficult, even with the help of elaborate descriptions of the effects she produced, for those who never heard her sing to form any real conception. Actors and singers cannot leave their work for the judgment of future generations, as authors, composers, and painters do. We may read of the exquisite sonority of Jenny Lind's voice; of her matchless shake; of her wonderful F-sharps, which so entranced Mendelssohn; of the sympathetic timbre which brought tears to the listener's eyes: but all this gives but little idea of the sensation which a single note would have produced on our own ears. And yet it is not difficult to perceive in the record of her career how consummate a genius she must have been, who, in the deliberate judgment of Mendelssohn, was "as great an artist as ever lived; the greatest he had known."

With the great composer, during the last two years of his life, Jenny Lind was on terms of affectionate intimacy, and the correspondence between them, now published for the first time, is full of interest. At this time Mendelssohn was composing the "Elijah," and he constructed the work so as to give prominence to the peculiar beauties of his young friend's voice, every separate note of which he had carefully studied. It is not surprising, therefore, that she should have felt a very special love and reverence for the music of the "Elijah," and that after her retirement from the stage she should have identified herself more closely with this oratorio than with any other musical work.

It is impossible in a short paper to say anything of the extraordinary succession of Jenny Lind's triumphs in all the art centers of Europe. The details of them, and the analysis of her method and effects, given in the memoirs will be studied with attention by all to whom music is a delight. But, strangely enough, one



of the most picturesque incidents of her operatic career in London has been almost entirely overlooked. In narrating what took place at Her Majesty's Theater on May 4, 1848, when the Queen appeared in public for the first time since the famous 10th of April in that year, the memoir merely says that the Queen's entrance was greeted with demonstrations of loyalty. What actually took place—and it was characteristic both of the Queen and of Jenny Lind—was this:

It was, indeed, her Majesty's first public appearance since the memorable Chartist day; but it was also the great artist's first appearance for the season on the boards where she had won unparalleled fame the previous year. Her Majesty entered the royal box at the same moment that the prima donna stepped from the wings upon the stage. Instantly, a perfect tumult of acclamation burst from every corner of the theater. Jenny Lind modestly retired to the back of the stage, waiting till the demonstration of loyalty to the sovereign should subside. The Queen, refusing to appropriate to herself what she imagined to be intended for the artist, made no acknowledgment. The cheering continued, increased, grew overwhelming; still no acknowledgment, either from the stage or from the royal box. At length, the situation having become embarrassing, Jenny Lind, with ready tact, ran forward to the footlights, and sang "God Save the Queen," which was caught up at the end of the solo by orchestra, chorus, and audience. The Queen then came to the front of her box and bowed, and the opera was resumed.

Jenny Lind's judgment of books, though undirected by anything like literary training, always showed independence and penetration. She was a devoted lover of Carlyle's writings, and the last book she read before her death was Mr. Norton's volume of the correspondence between Carlyle and Emerson. No doubt her admiration for the great denouncer of shams was largely due to the intense sincerity of her own character, which made it impossible for her to tolerate even those slight deviations from strict truthfulness which are seldom taken seriously, but are looked upon as the accepted formulæ of society. "I'm so glad to see you" would hardly have been her greeting to a visitor whose call was inconvenient or ill-timed. But, on the other hand, her downrightness of speech had nothing in common with that of *Mrs. Candour*; it carried no discourtesy with it, as is shown by the following anecdote, which is characteristic. One day,—it was many years after her marriage,—when she was staying with a relative of mine not far from Peterborough, she attended a service in the cathedral. The dean, who, probably without much critical mu-

sical judgment, thought the singing very perfect, was rash enough to ask Madame Goldschmidt how she liked his choir. She looked at him with a quiet smile, and replied with an emphasis which could not be mistaken, "Oh, Mr. Dean, your *cathedral* is indeed most beautiful!"

One matter which must be of interest to every lover of dramatic art, and which has been an enigma to many people, is now for the first time dealt with by one with authority to discuss the question. Why did Jenny Lind quit the stage at the moment of her greatest glory, and many years before her unrivaled powers had begun to suffer any decay? Some have perhaps reluctantly accepted the widely prevalent idea that she had come to regard the dramatic profession as an unholy thing which no pure-souled woman could remain in without contamination. Happily this notion can be entertained no longer. Her intimate friend Fröken von Stedingk with reference to it says: "Many suppose this resolution to be the result of pietism. Jenny Lind is as God-fearing as she is pure, but had pietism been the cause, she would not herself have gone to the play, which she declared she liked to do, to see others act." The fact is that to appreciate her motive for leaving the stage is to understand the whole character of the woman. Her distaste for it seems to have begun with her first great European success, and steadily grew as her fame spread. In 1840 she had lived for ten years a life of incessant hard work on the stage; yet in the following year she wrote from Paris, "Life on the stage has in it something so fascinating that I think, having once tasted it, one can never feel truly happy away from it." But in 1845, just after her transcendent success in Berlin, the idea of leaving the stage had not merely occurred to her mind, but had already become a fixed determination. Among the dominant notes of her character were love of home and craving for domestic peace. This craving was to a great extent satisfied while she remained at Stockholm, and especially during the time she lived with the Lindblad family. But when her destiny drew her in relentless triumph to Berlin, Vienna, Copenhagen, London, her domestic instincts were wrenched and tortured, and she found no compensation in all the glitter of her success. "I am convinced," said Herr Brockhaus, in April, 1846, "that she would gladly exchange all her triumphs for simple homely happiness." That was the secret of the whole matter. And so she formed the resolution to quit the stage forever, a resolution in which she never wavered from 1845, when it first took definite shape, till she carried it out in London in the summer of 1849.

She continued, however, to sing frequently in concerts and oratorio, generally for charity.





PHOTOGRAPHED AT CANNES, FRANCE, 1866.

ENGRAVED BY W. B. CLOSSON.

JENNY LIND-GOLDSCHMIDT.



One instance of her constant readiness to help any good cause is a treasured memory of a relative of my own. In 1861 this gentleman, on finding himself in need of funds for carrying on a work he was engaged in near the Victoria Docks, consulted the wife of the Bishop of London. "Why don't you ask Jenny Lind to help you?" she said, when he told his difficulty. "Simply because I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance," was his reply. "Oh," said Mrs. Tait, "I'll give you a letter of introduction." Jenny Lind gladly promised her help, and arranged for a performance of the "Elijah" at Exeter Hall. She had not sung in London for some years, and the excitement was intense. So great was the rush for seats that a letter actually appeared in the "Times" complaining that four hundred seats in the hall had to be sacrificed to—crinoline! and suggesting that ladies should dispense for the occasion with that fashionable ornament. The Bishop of London declared that on the evening of the concert his carriage was three quarters of an hour in the Strand before it reached Exeter Hall. He was well repaid, however, for the voice of the Nightingale, according to the "Times," was no less pure, no less powerful, no less bewitching, than when it first startled London fourteen years before. No doubt this was true, for in the opinion of the highest authority on the question, Madame Goldschmidt's voice, when she sang in the Rhine Festival as late as 1866, had not yet begun to show any signs of deterioration.

The published memoir does not deal with her life beyond the point where she quitted the stage in 1849, and therefore no account is given of her American tour in the following year. Needless to say, the Americans were not less anxious than usual to see and hear a visitor with a great European reputation. On one occasion two young men were so determined to see and speak to the *diva*, that they arranged to accomplish their purpose by stratagem. Having ascertained that she was in her sitting-room

in her hotel, they went quietly to the lobby leading to it, and there began quarreling in loud tones which became every minute more violent. At last, as they had hoped, the door opened, and the famous singer appeared, in evident perturbation, to find out the cause of the disturbance. Never was there a more successful peacemaker. With an apology to the lady for having given her any alarm, the combatants went off arm-in-arm, more than content with the result of their plot. There was, however, one young citizen of the Republic—perhaps not more than ten or eleven years old—who was less appreciative of fame and art. It must be remembered that it was under the guidance of Mr. P. T. Barnum that the "greatest singer on earth" was "doing the States." The young citizen in question was taken by his mother to hear Jenny Lind; and the parent was much struck by the look of absorbing interest in her son's face, which no doubt indicated an artistic soul. What was her feeling on leaving the concert-hall when, instead of any expression of rapturous delight, the boy said in a tone of relief, "And now, mother, let us go and see the fat woman."

The entire proceeds of the American tour, amounting to more than £20,000, were devoted by Jenny Lind to various benevolent objects. From the days of her early girlhood it had been her chief delight to use for the good of others the wealth which her genius brought her. She was ever ready to sing for a hospital, or a college, or a poor fellow-artist, or for the chorus, orchestra, or scene-shifters of the theaters where she appeared. "Is it not beautiful that I can sing so?" she exclaimed when she was told that a large number of children would be saved from wretchedness by a concert she had given for their benefit. The volumes which contain such a record might well bear the label which Jenny Lind's old Swedish guardian placed round the packet containing her letters to him, "The mirror of a noble soul."

Ronald J. McNeill.

## NOËL.

### I.

STAR-DUST and vaporous light,—  
The mist of worlds unborn,—  
A shuddering in the awful night  
Of winds that bring the morn.

### II.

Now comes the dawn—the circling earth,  
Creatures that fly and crawl;  
And man, that last imperial birth,  
And Christ the flower of all.

R. W. Gilder.