

## SOME YOUTHFUL REMINISCENCES OF ADELINA PATTI.



ADELINA PATTI is never tired of recalling the incidents of her early days in America. At Craig-y-nos she is wont, for the entertainment of her guests, to dive into the storehouse of her reminiscences, and will laugh

over each in turn with all the zest of one still a child in years; for, like many other women of Italian parentage, the great singer will ever remain a child in heart. It was not very long ago that, questioning her on those bygone times, she told me the tale in her own pretty spontaneous fashion, smiling half gladly, half sadly, as one memory after another arose before her.

"You ask me," she said, "what I can first remember. Indeed, I hardly know; but I can, at least, repeat all that my parents had to say of me from my cradle upwards. My dear mother declared that my first cry was a song in itself—a melodious call for help. But, for my part, I believe I cried just as shrilly as any other baby.

"Let me see, how can I first picture myself? I think the picture must be of a tiny girl with a pale face and very, very big black eyes, running down Broadway trundling a hoop. Oh, the pride and the fervour I put into my task! And I trundled my hoop well. Whatever I did I always put my whole heart into it. I am not sure that hasn't been the secret of my success all through life.

"After a while I can remember my father and mother taking me with them, night after night, to the opera-house, where they were engaged for a season, at New York. That remembrance is a vivid one. I used to watch their performance through a hole in the curtain, and the singers as they passed by often gave me toys and kisses, and filled my pockets with sweets. No other artist did I consider equal to my beloved mother. One great soprano who appeared for a few nights as 'star' must have thought me a strange little creature. She had just finished a long aria with a trill at the end, and was coming off the stage to the sound of tremendous applause, when I ran up to her, quite naïvely saying, 'Oh dear! how badly you did that trill! Not nearly close enough! Listen to me. There, this is the way!' I had not been taught how to 'shake,' but it came to me naturally, and I am told that trill was a very good one. After being put to my bed on my



ADELINA PATTI AT THE AGE OF EIGHT.

(From a photograph by H. A. Chapman, Swansea.)

return home from being at the opera, I used to hop out again when I was quite certain that my father and mother and everyone in the house had gone to sleep. I can see myself now, dancing and singing, dressed up in all the oddest costumes I could lay hold of. I was particularly fond of death scenes. 'Norma' was my favourite of all; and if satisfied with my own performance, I cried out, 'Brava! brava, Adelina!' and threw bouquets and wreaths at my own little bare feet. Those bouquets and wreaths were made of old newspapers.

"After a while my mother gave me lessons in the theory of music, and, as far as I can remember, I practised a few solfeggi with her. I was only seven years old when the opera company to which my father and mother belonged began to fail. I can recall how sad and anxious they both were; how money was wanting; and how at last one day I could bear my father's troubled face no longer. 'Don't sell your beautiful turquoise pin to help us, papa,' I said. 'I will help you. Let



me be a little singer. I am sure I sing well enough.' My father's eyes filled with tears at the thought. 'No, no,' he said. 'What you say is impossible.' But the idea had taken hold of me. I gave no peace to my family, until my appearance at Niblo's Gardens as a prima donna of seven summers was a *fait accompli*. My anxiety to be dressed like a 'real prima donna' was great; and to please me my mother braided my hair and powdered my tiny brown face. I don't think I was nervous or frightened; and when I came on to sing 'Una Voce' and the 'Sonnambula,' I was full of childish faith and hope. The bon Dieu was at my side. I became a great success from that moment. Money poured in at my every appearance at Niblo's Gardens, and my father and mother were once more at ease. I don't think there was a prouder heart in all New York than when a cosy red-brick house was bought with my earnings, and my whole family installed there. Ah! that house is standing now.

'You ask if, as a child, I ever heard the prima donna of a bygone time? Yes; I once heard Jenny Lind, and dear Alboni with the grand rich voice and wonderful method, and Henrietta Sontag. She sang like an angel from heaven. I can hear her now in the 'Dove Song,' from Mozart's 'Nozze di Figaro.' It was glorious. Of me she formed the opinion that I had been too early brought

out to succeed later on in life; but she was very kind to me, and when I left her she gave me a charming souvenir—a red fan which she had worn at her girdle. Then Mario and Grisi. Their *début* in New York was one of the excitements of my life. So eager was I to see and hear the King and Queen of Song, as my father and mother had taught me to

consider them, that I could think of nothing else for weeks before the grand event came off. I saved up my every cent to buy a bunch of camellias, which I intended to offer to Grisi as a proof of my admiration. At length the great day arrived, and I cannot tell you with what joy, what fear and trembling, I clung to my mother's skirts as we went together to the artists' room at the close of the performance to be introduced to the gifted couple. Tightly I clutched my bunch of flowers, and, with my eyes fixed on Grisi's face, advanced to lay my little tribute in her

lap. I cannot say whether Grisi, in the press of people around her, quite realised my breathless expectation. With a wave of the hand, she moved aside to speak to an acquaintance standing near by. Quivering with pride and disappointment, my fingers tightening on the precious offering, I turned away. Someone caught me in his arms. My eyes were too blinded with tears at first to realise who my champion was. But Mario himself proved the kind comforter. 'Give me the



MADAME ADELINA PATTI.

(From a photograph by B. Laure, Nice.)



flowers, little girl,' he whispered in his kind, gentle way, 'and I will always keep them for your pretty sake.'

"Years afterwards I met Mario and Grisi again, and we were all happy and friendly together. In my drawing-room, if you look inside my little glass cabinet, you will see a ruby brooch and a pair of long ear-rings which they gave me at the time of my marriage, and which I count among my most valued possessions.

"My childish recollections are chiefly bound up with my father and mother, whom I fairly adored. No man could have surpassed my father in courtesy and goodness, and as for my mother, there are few like her nowadays.

She was always most devout, and never missed going daily to church whatever might happen.

"Years later, when I appeared at Covent Garden to sing as 'Amina,' 'Lucia,' and other characters, with the success that you know, it touches me to remember how my mother would attend each performance, and afterwards offer me a little hint here and a little encouragement there. This mother of whom I had once stood in awe as a great artist, ended by standing a little in awe of me!

"But now, you see, I have reached the period when I was eighteen years old, and a full-fledged prima donna, so I must talk of childish recollections no more."



## THE ART OF WASHING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR HOME LAUNDRY."

### SILKS, COLLARS AND CUFFS.



IN the good old times before this art was a lost one, we had a cook who rejoiced in washing.

On my wedding-day—as I stood before the assembled household in my gown of soft, creamy silk—"the sparrow," as we always called Mrs. Jenkins, hopped round me in ecstasy. With her hands clasped on her bosom, her eyes round with admiration, and

her little feet hardly able to support her, she exclaimed in a voice trembling with awe—

"Wouldn't it look *lovely* with a squeeze of blue?"

This speech was a very high tribute from Mrs. Jenkins. It has passed almost into a proverb with our family. We have all laughed heartily over it during these succeeding years.

Now that I have become an adept in the art of washing, I am afraid I often look at a pretty material or delicate dress with an eye to that "squeeze of blue." It seems such a

pity that the rose pinks, the terra-cottas, and the lavenders should fade so quickly from our skirts, and ribbons, and cravats.

If Mrs. Jenkins's sight could have been prophetic, she might have seen the remnants of that soft pongee only yesterday in the wash-pot! After thirteen years of lying by, that wedding-dress has been cut up into blouses for my eldest girl and smocks for the baby.

In and out of the pot goes the erstwhile

"Raiment of maiden  
Fair and fine."

Yet it has never grown dingy or yellow. Mrs. Jenkins would have had it in rags long ago, but I treat my dear old friend with tender hands. Perhaps that is the reason it has lasted so long.

I generally wait until I have a goodly number of silk things that need washing. Then in a gallon bath of pure, cold, soft water I dissolve a teaspoonful of borax; this is my bleaching mixture. In it our blouses, handkerchiefs, and smocks are left soaking for some hours. Then a squeezing leaves behind a good deal of dirt, and the silks are transferred to a tub of warm water in which some soap-jelly has been lathered. This water must not be *too* hot, or the stuff will "yell," as my daughters say. Wash by *squeezing* again, only rubbing when wrists and collar-bands are more than ordinarily soiled.

In a little bottle ticketed and kept for such occasions I have some prepared gum. This is one ounce of best gum-arabic dissolved in a jar with half a pint of boiling water. It has