

the hirer of the sewing-machine for having been hard on two ladies who had seen better days.

The doctor listened quietly, but made no comment. Neither did he ask questions as to the time Mr. Cutclose had

been in the house before calling in aid. He was a prudent man, and left such enquiries for others.

"You shall go upstairs at once, doctor," said Mr. Cutclose. "There's an excellent person in charge. She

came at the very nick of time. Susan Meade her name is."

"I know her. She is most capable. We have met by other bedsides before now," was the doctor's reply.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTINE NILSSON.

By J. F. ROWBOTHAM, Author of "The History of Music."



ROMANCE colours the life of Christine Nilsson from her cradle. She came into the world amidst the lowliest and most unpromising surroundings, passed through numerous vicissitudes of fortune, gradually rose to be the favourite of all Europe, and ultimately terminated

her career as a countess. Such a round of experiences is not often vouchsafed to any single individual. One of the most remarkable

features of this gifted woman was her ability at every turn of fortune to accommodate herself to the new circumstances under which she was placed. Whether in the lowliest station in life or in the most exalted, she showed equal ease and adaptability to the conditions in which she moved, and those who know her at the present day as the Countess de Miranda, would not dream, unless they were expressly informed of the fact, what a chequered and even adventurous career Christine Nilsson has passed since the earliest days of her existence.

She was born at Wederslof, near Wexio, in Sweden, in 1843, and is therefore now nearly fifty years old. Her father was a peasant in that district, and occupied his time in the labours of the farm and in whatsoever work might be offered him, being employed in various capacities by the farmers of the district, and working hard with his hands to maintain his wife and children. He was an honest and God-fearing man, and the life of the little family seems to have been a very happy one in that village of Southern Sweden, where the grass is so brilliantly green, and where the air, despite the occasional rainstorms, is so fresh and clear. Christine from her earliest years manifested the greatest delight in listening to music, and having obtained possession of a violin, forthwith commenced to practise on it with an ardour which knew no daunting. Although she was almost entirely self-taught, she gradually acquired the true art of managing her instrument and a skill in its use which would stand very favourable comparison with that of the professional players in the town of Wexio. This skill and proficiency on her instrument was the fruit of hours of patient practice in the little cottage where she lived, from whose window the strains of the violin floating out upon the

footpath often attracted the attention and arrested the footsteps of passers-by. After having mastered the violin, the youthful musician betook herself to the flute—a strange instrument for a girl to fancy, if we consider the choice in connection with our own surroundings. Few young ladies of the present day who possess a piano in the drawing-room wherewith to satisfy their musical cravings, and who, if they wish for a change, could very easily substitute the graceful harp or the elegant guitar for the more common instrument, would care to take up such a thing as a flute for the delectation of their spare hours. According to the Greek legend, the goddess Minerva began to play on the flute, but very soon threw it away because it distorted her features. Such would doubtless be the opinion of most ladies. Christine Nilsson, however, took up the flute after she had learnt the violin for a very good and sufficient reason—because she had no other instrument in the house, or was likely to have. Swedish cottages do not abound in pianofortes, harmoniums, harps, or any other such instruments of luxury. The child found an old flute in the house, and was contented to play it. She very soon became a good flautist, practised the instrument as unremittingly as she had done the violin, and attained almost as great proficiency.

The circumstances of her family rendered it necessary that she should do something towards assisting the household, and her parents could imagine nothing better nor more likely to be profitable than that their talented child should exhibit her wonderful powers of music at the fairs and merrymakings in the neighbourhood. Christine herself was also strongly in favour of this idea, being naturally of a roving disposition, and preferring the constant change and excitement which such a method of livelihood offered to the humbler and more prosaic duties of labouring in the fields and the farm. Accordingly, she was but ten years old, or thereabouts, when one day, dressed in her gayest habiliments, with a few gaudy ribbons about her to heighten the effect of her fair young face, she appeared among the crowds at a village fair in the neighbourhood, and striking a few chords on her violin and commencing to sing, she very soon attracted a multitude around her. There was an abundance of stalls and booths to invite customers; there were platforms in front of tents, on which tumblers, mountebanks, and conjurers plied their trade; there were shows of giants, dwarfs, and animals; but the pleasantest sight in the whole fair, in the opinion of most people that day, was the young minstrel girl, with the sweet Swedish face and the wealth of long light hair, who stood in the centre of an entranced circle of hearers, singing melodious songs and accompanying herself on the violin. Her fame spread from fair to fair, and from merrymaking to merrymaking. No assembly in the neighbourhood was complete without her. "Little Christine" was the favourite of the whole district of Wexio, and to hear her singing, as much as to make purchases, the country folk would trudge many a weary mile

to fair after fair. When she was fourteen years of age, the Ljungby fair was held, at which she had played once or twice before, and where she was a great favourite with the country people. On this special occasion the enthusiasm was great, the applause was loud and long-continued. She played as she had never played before; she sang in a way to fascinate and render spell-bound all who heard her. Among others in the circle listening to her wonderful voice stood a Mr. Tornerhjelm, to whom the beauty of the singing came as a revelation undreamt of, unimagined. Being a man of great musical feeling, and, moreover, of considerable wealth, he deemed it his duty not to let such talents lie neglected, as neglected they certainly were in the surroundings of the poor country fairs, where alone they were witnessed. Accordingly, he made proposals to her parents that he should undertake her education, and having gained their consent, placed her in a school at Halmstad, there to learn the rudiments of ordinary education before devoting herself exclusively to music. Christine had never been at school before. It was, therefore, some time before she recognised the utility of storing her mind with all the knowledge which was now poured into it, all, too, of a most miscellaneous nature. She preferred playing the violin at the fairs of Wederslof and Ljungby. Nevertheless, she proved a very docile and industrious pupil, and in course of time was ready to proceed to Stockholm, where she was instructed in music in addition to other subjects of education. Her master here was Herr Franz Berwald. At the end of three years her musical culture was sufficiently far advanced to admit of her appearing at Stockholm as a singer. She sang before a large audience, and was received with great enthusiasm. That success did not make her vain. Although she suddenly found herself exalted from the position of a poor minstrel girl at country fairs to be the favourite singer of a great capital at the age of seventeen, she still imagined herself in need of more instruction, and declared that her voice was nothing compared to what it would become if she were to go to the great masters of Paris to complete her musical education. After some demur this was agreed to. The public were sorry to lose the sweet voice of so popular a singer almost immediately after they had begun to make its acquaintance, but as she was only seventeen years of age she was evidently not old enough to begin a great public career. The intervening years might therefore profitably be devoted to further education.

The two masters under whom she was placed in Paris were Masset and Wartel. The former was of great assistance to her, certainly, but the latter was the man from whom she received all the secrets of her art. Wartel was at that time the greatest teacher of singing in Europe. In speaking to a friend of his new pupil, Christine Nilsson, he praised above all things her docility. "Give me docility," said Wartel, thumping his fist on the table before him, "and I will make a piece of wood sing." Christine Nilsson's docility and

perseverance seem to have been unparalleled. Nothing that her master told her she ever forgot. Nothing which he bade her prepare did she ever omit incessantly to practise. She made such rapid advances under this celebrated master that in course of time she could exemplify every doctrine of his art. Wartel's method of instruction was the old Italian style, than which nothing more admirable has ever been devised in the world of music, and to the present decay of which must be attributed the growing dearth of really fine singers amongst us to-day. According to Wartel, in uttering a tone there was to be no compression whatever of the top of the throat. "It must remain open," he said, "in its highest notes. Nay, more; the higher the voice ascended, the more the throat must open." By this means a roundness, fulness, and depth was given to the tone, not attainable by any other means. This was the secret of Christine Nilsson's wonderful tone—a tone, we may remark, for which we in vain look among the singers of the present day. Another peculiarity of Wartel's method was to make his pupil sing all her scales and preparatory exercises with exceeding softness. Loud singing at the beginning of his instruction he entirely deprecated; and this secret of the art might be advantageously acted upon by many singing-masters at the present day. Every scale and exercise, also, he obliged her to sing from the lowest note ascending to the highest—not, as is so often the method employed, from the highest note first and thence descending to the lowest. Fortified by this admirable system of tuition, and with her own beautiful voice to emphasise and enhance the teachings of art, Christine achieved a perfection of singing which would have been obtainable in no other way. To use the words of her enthusiastic old master, "When she sang it was as if a skylark had clothed itself in human form, so crystal clear poured forth the fresh gay notes."

Her first appearance in Paris as a singer was a triumphant success. She was at that time a

girl of eighteen, with a slender figure draped in symmetrical proportions. Her features were delicate and regular. Her golden hair, of untold luxuriance, was sometimes allowed to pour in a sunny shower down her shoulders; at other times it was confined by a knot, thus freeing and displaying the graceful setting of her head and her shapely neck. With such personal attractions, in addition to the marvellous power of her voice, can we wonder that she took the susceptible Parisians by storm?

Her fame very quickly extended to England. Those who have heard her in oratorio in this country will confess to the marvellous impression which she could produce upon her hearers. In the domain of sacred music she stood without a rival in her generation, being the worthy successor in that field of Jenny Lind. To all earnest Christians, and, indeed, to all lovers of music, it was a constant source of delight, at the concerts at which she sang, to reflect that so much personal beauty and such consummate musical art were wedded to the deepest and devoutest faith in true religion. It was to her religious fervour almost as much as to her marvellous musical style that she owed the commanding position she very soon took up in this country as the exponent *par excellence* of sacred music. In the *Messiah*, her singing of such airs as "I know that my Redeemer liveth," "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," and other similar melodies, was marked by the depth of earnestness and holy enthusiasm. The songs became moral and religious lessons by the manner in which she sang them; and many a hearer went away after listening to her admirable declamation, with the words and their meaning as deeply impressed upon his or her heart as if the words had been the subject of a long and eloquent discourse. Such was the service of Christine Nilsson in the world of sacred music—her chosen domain, wherein she reigned supreme. Her success in this sphere of the musical art was but an additional evidence of a fact which neither the public nor singers themselves can refuse to acknowledge, viz., that

complete success in oratorio can only be obtained when depth of religious feeling is as firmly implanted in the singer's breast as admirable musical skill is present in her voice. The truth of this fact can be easily proved by many a one's individual experience of singers.

Christine Nilsson, now fairly embarked on the musical world of Europe, sang not only in Paris and London, but in every city in Europe, not omitting such out-of-the-way ones as St. Petersburg and Moscow. In both these capitals she was idolised by the public, and most particularly by the students of the universities, who, whenever she appeared in their town, held torchlight processions and other demonstrations in her honour. Once, in order to out-do all previous displays of enthusiasm, a large band of students took out the horses from her carriage and dragged the vehicle from where she had been singing to her hotel. Arrived there, they all lay down on the pavement, and she was compelled to walk over their prostrate bodies on the way from her carriage to the hotel steps. This, it seems, is the Russian way of paying utter and complete homage. Such a compliment has never been paid any other singer by these Muscovite enthusiasts. Christine Nilsson's visit to the United States was one of the most successful of her many pilgrimages through the Old and New World. Scenes of enthusiasm occurred without number, but we have not space to give the particulars. She was married at Westminster Abbey in 1872 to M. Auguste Ronzand, a French merchant. He died about ten years afterwards. In 1887 she married the Count A. de Miranda, at Paris. Paris is her favourite residence, now that she has completely retired from a public life. She still keeps up her music for her own pleasure and that of a large circle of friends; and one of the rooms in her house is papered from floor to ceiling with nothing but programmes, which form a complete series of souvenirs of all the occasions whereon she has sung in Europe and America.

THE "GIRL'S OWN" SHORTHAND CLASS.

III.—THE VOWELS.

LONG VOWELS.



WHEN careful practice has given you some degree of familiarity with the consonants, and enabled you to form them neatly and accurately with clean,

firm strokes—the thick strokes though they were drawn with a "B" pencil, and the fine ones as though put in with an "F"—it is time to turn your attention to the vowels. And I may say, in starting, that the keynote of phonography lies in the vowel sounds. It is much more difficult to recognise and identify the vowel sounds in the English language than those of the consonants, because in the use of consonants we do, with some few exceptions (such as *ph*, *gh*, etc.), generally give them the same sound wherever they occur. If a word begins with a "B," whether it is "bath," or "bun," "beauty," or "benefit,"

you know that "B" is to be pronounced in one particular way. But we give our five vowels such complicated work, that you have no assurance of that kind when they occur; and because an "e" is pronounced "e" in one word you cannot for a moment conclude that it will have that pronunciation next time you meet with it. Compare "equal" and "equity," "ear" and "early," "neat" and "great," "eight" and "eider," and you will see that to retain your "e" you must say, in defiance of the dictionaries, "e-quity," "e-arly," "gret," etc., instead of making use of five distinct vowel sounds in those eight words. One of the main peculiarities of provincial dialects lies in the different value of the vowels in various parts of England, so that we have "thought" made to rhyme with "gout," "our" with "tour" (or "tour" with "our"), or "bowl" with "cowl." The northern farmer makes two syllables of "teäm," and the Cockney talks about the "rileway." Now, in phonography, every vowel, like every consonant, has its own sound, and never by any chance has any other.

First come the six long vowels, of which *a*, *e*, and *o*, are familiar; *i* and *u* are diphthong (*i-e* and *yu*), and are therefore reserved for special treatment. Our English "a," when standing alone, is also really a diphthong (*a-e*);

but we give our phonographic *a* the simple sound which occurs in French and Italian, and in such words as "bake," "gate," "whale," etc., of *eh*. The other long vowels are *ah*—the soft foreign "a," as heard in "calf," "palm," "father"; the broad *aw*, as in "thought," "caught," "ball"; and *oo*—to be carefully distinguished from *u*—as in "root," "fool," "brute," and "moon." It is this uncertain pronunciation of the ordinary "u" which accounts for differences of opinion as to "Soosan" and "Suesan," "cucumber" and "kewcumber." On page 10 of the *Teacher* you will find that these six vowels are each expressed by means of a dot or a dash, written in certain positions with regard to the consonant. The first three, expressed by dots, are *ah*, *eh*, and *ee*; and the others, consisting of short dashes, are *aw*, *oh*, and *oo*; and they are distinguished as first-place, second-place, and third-place vowels, according as they are written at the beginning of the consonant (*ah* and *aw*), at the middle (*eh* and *oh*), or at the end (*ee* and *oo*). If the vowel is sounded before the consonant, as in "aim," "ought," and "oak," it is written before it; that is to say, the little dot or dash is at the top of a horizontal letter, or at the left-hand side of a sloping or perpendicular one. If the consonant is sounded first, as in "do," "bay,"