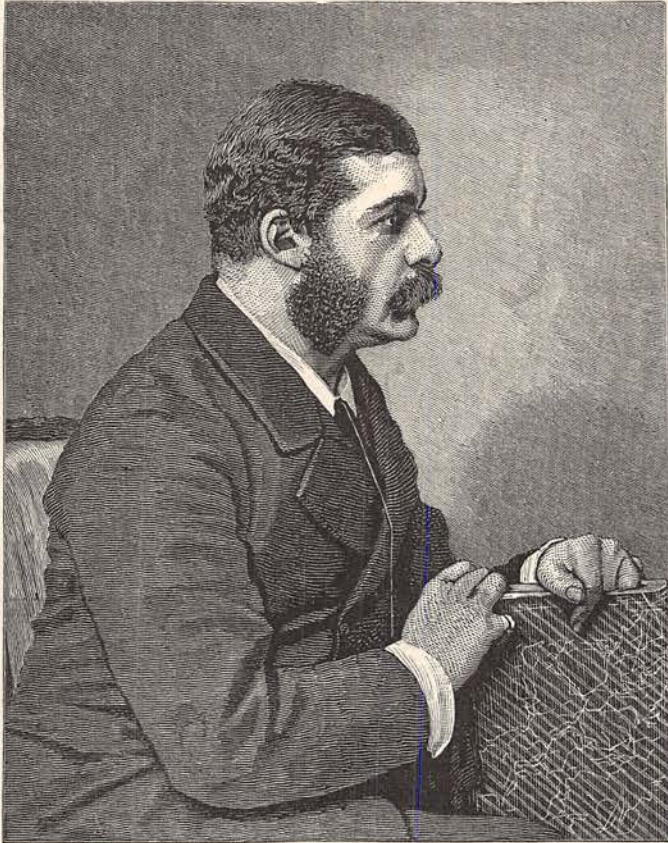


ARTHUR SULLIVAN.



ARTHUR SULLIVAN.

To BE born clever is good ; to be born lucky is better ; to be born both clever and lucky is best. Such was the double dowry with which Arthur Seymour Sullivan entered the world in 1842. Let me, however, begin with his grandfather, for it is probably because of this genial, but extravagant gentleman's existence, that England and the United States are to-day humming the airs of "Pinafore."

That "all partial evil is universal good," this reprehensible grandfather seems to prove. Had not he, an Irish squire, spent his patrimony in riotous living, enlisted in the army and shortly after died, his son would have lived like an Irish gentleman, probably would have married a squire's daughter, and brought up ordinary children in the ordinary way. Fortunately, no such bed of clover fell to the lot of Thomas Sullivan. Being very fond of music, and realizing

that he must work or starve, he adopted as a profession the art he loved, and eventually, through the influence of Sir Edward Paget, Governor of the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, he was appointed band-master of that institution. He married a lady of Italian parentage by whom he had two children, Frederic and Arthur. Born in London, Arthur, the younger son, was removed to Sandhurst at the age of three and there remained for ten years. Passing most of his time in the band-room, he practiced first on one instrument and then on another, and at ten years of age played on every wind instrument as well as upon the piano, which was taught him by his music-loving mother. Like most boys, Arthur had great talent for mischief. Being lost one day for five hours, he was found in an old college room, picking to pieces a venerable piano, in order to know

the secret of its construction. His favorite books were the lives of composers. Impressed with the idea that all musicians were educated either at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, or at Westminster Abbey, Arthur's aspirations soared in these directions. The father, however, was determined that his son should have, first of all, a good general education, and sent him to an excellent school in London, where the eleven-year-old boy led his master a sorry life. His career was one of mysterious disappearances. Where could the lad be? What dark deeds was he plotting? Investigation disclosed the pardonable crime of an irresistible fascination for Westminster Abbey. He finally persuaded his father to allow the master to take him to Sir George Smart, organist to the Chapel Royal. The old gentleman cordially welcomed Arthur, who, having a beautiful voice, sang to his own piano-forte accompaniment. So pleased was Sir George, that he at once sent the youthful aspirant to the Rev. Thomas Helmore, priest in ordinary to the Queen and master of the boys attached to the Chapel Royal. Subjected to various tests through which he passed successfully, Arthur was at once admitted to the Chapel Royal, his good luck finding for him the necessary vacancy. Living, as all the chapel boys did, with the master in a lovely old house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, Arthur's career was similar to that of all boys, plus an ever-growing devotion to music. After eighteen months' instruction, he wrote an anthem and showed it to Sir George Smart, who said it should be sung at the Chapel Royal. The young composer reveled in the seventh heaven of delight, thinking he had attained the acme of his desires. After the anthem's performance, the Bishop of London, Dean of the Chapel Royal, being told of its origin, sent for Sullivan, received him in the vestry after service, patted him on the head, and gave him ten shillings—an enormous sum in the lad's eyes. Success broadens vision, and he who had thought life bounded by an anthem now longed to browse in "pastures new." Six months later Sullivan saw an advertisement announcing a competition for the Mendelssohn Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music. This scholarship owes its existence mainly to Jenny Lind, who gave a great concert for its endowment, with a view to fostering composition. Fired with ambition, Sullivan obtained permission to enter the list of competitors, he being

again lucky in having attained 14 years, the youngest limit of age. There were twenty-four competitors, all of whom sent in original works to the examiners. Out of these twenty-four manuscripts the best two were selected for a second examination; Sullivan's was one of the two. The chairman announced that final judgment would be passed on the following day. It was a day of agony to Sullivan, greater agony than he has since experienced in more crucial periods. Study was impossible. Hour came, hour went, and at every sound his heart leapt into his throat. At six o'clock in the afternoon, the postman brought the expected letter that meant triumph or despair. Sullivan tore it open, read of his victory,—he, the youngest of the twenty-four boys,—and rushed to Mr. Helmore's study, where the good man received him with a kiss. This scholarship was then endowed with \$100 a year; which, thanks to Sullivan's exertions, has since been increased to \$450. The committee placed him at the Royal Academy of Music, in order that he might continue singing at the Chapel Royal, which he did for one year longer, when his voice broke. At sixteen, the committee sent him to Leipsic, where he studied three years, first as a Mendelssohn scholar, and later at the expense of his father, who allowed him an annual income of \$500. These were the happiest of days. A leading spirit among his comrades, Sullivan mingled hard work with constant visits to Dresden, where he divided his time between the opera and the picture gallery. Moscheles, his guardian, was also his banker, and required a strict account of expenditures. Fearing to be scolded if found out in his wanderings, Sullivan put down what was spent in Dresden to "pomatum and socks." This extraordinary consumption of two extraordinary articles astounded Moscheles. When the truth came to light, Sullivan's allowance was increased so as to admit of visits to Dresden without fear and without reproach. Moscheles held Sullivan in high esteem, as all who have read his letters know, and his ward speaks in grateful terms of the maestro's kindness.

While at Leipsic, Sullivan wrote a stringed quartette, which was played at the Conservatoire in the presence of Spohr. The tall old man, who died soon after, sent for Sullivan and, in congratulating him, exclaimed, "So young, and yet so advanced in art!" This effort was followed by symphonies, sonatas, and other works, some of which were per-

formed, but all of which have since been consigned to oblivion. The first positive gathering of Sullivan's forces was displayed in his eighteenth year. Looking about for inspiration, he turned to Shakspere, and, falling in love with "The Tempest," wrote music incidental to this airy masterpiece which was very successfully produced at the Gewandhaus, under the composer's baton.

Returning to England in 1861, Sullivan quietly pursued his studies, and in the following year brought out his illustrations of "The Tempest" at the Crystal Palace. Though both instrumental and vocal, the instrumental music predominated. The young composer created an honest sensation on that memorable Saturday afternoon, his gratification reaching its climax when, at the conclusion of the performance, he was met by Charles Dickens, who, on shaking him warmly by the hand, said, "I don't know much about music technically; but, as an ardent lover of it, I am delighted." On the repetition of this work the following Saturday, every London musician was present, attracted by curiosity to hear an unknown composer.

From this moment Sullivan's career became easy. At the early age of twenty, he entered the temple of art through the front door, flung wide open to receive him. He at once received a commission from Cramer & Co., for an opera to be brought out by the Pyne and Harrison troupe, the libretto of which, written by Chorley, was entitled "The Sapphire Necklace." Sullivan took great pains, but this serious Necklace in four acts never was heard, as bad luck dissolved the troupe. Sullivan's dislike to the book has prevented later production; but the overture is often played.

In March, 1863, all England was excited over the Prince of Wales's marriage with Alexandra, the Dane. Sharing the general enthusiasm, Sullivan wrote a wedding march, which on the eventful day was played by every military band and theatrical orchestra in the United Kingdom. Soon after, the loyal composer was introduced to the prince, since which time a warm friendship has existed between the two. About the same time, the Duke of Edinburgh, who is passionately fond of music, wrote to Sullivan for advice, and the interview which followed resulted in an intimacy which the duke's wanderings have never broken. Queen Victoria's second son is a violinist of sufficient excellence to play in an orchestra, and with practice would be still more proficient; moreover, his critical knowledge of music is sound.

Visiting Paris for the first time in 1863, where he had for companions Charles Dickens and Henry Chorley, Sullivan met Madame Viardot-Garcia and Rossini, both of whom were exceedingly kind. The latter invited the young musician to call whenever he liked—a privilege Sullivan frequently availed himself of. The old maestro took a warm interest in his enthusiastic visitor, played to him, and gave him valuable advice, especially with reference to dramatic music. One morning Sullivan found Rossini at the piano, trying a new composition.

"What have you been writing, Maestro?"

"A little piece, composed expressly for my dog. It's her birthday, and I always celebrate the occasion by composing a piece, which I dedicate to her, and of which she does me the honor to approve."

Sullivan took notes of his various interviews with Rossini, but unfortunately lost them. It is worth recording that Rossini believed that the young Englishman had great talent for dramatic music.

Going back to London fired by the recollection of Viardot's genius in Gluck's "Orpheus," and by the predictions of the great maestro, Sullivan determined to give his whole time to creation, feeling convinced that teaching, unless in exceptional cases, was incompatible with composition. On leaving Leipsic he was an excellent pianist, and could readily have taught that instrument; but, following the solitary example of Sir Michael Costa, he turned his back upon what would have been an easy road to a good income, preferring temporary poverty to paralysis of the brain. Sullivan could "hitch his wagon to a star" more readily than others, because, in addition to luck, he had the art of making friends. He was well educated and socially sympathetic, and found in Henry Chorley, George Grove, Sir Michael Costa, Tom Chappell and Henry Broadwood, staunch supporters, who did much to advance his interests.

Eager to master all departments of music, Sullivan undertook to write what has proved to be the last grand ballet produced in England. He states privately that he gave the final blow to choreographic art on British soil; but, in reality, "The Enchanted Isle" went beautifully, and was played with short operas at Covent Garden throughout the entire season of 1864. Sir Michael Costa assured Sullivan that this essay in unknown fields would give him great stage experience, as he would be forced to humor dancers, manager and carpenters. Before completing his

work, Sullivan learned the full measure of stage despotism. At one rehearsal, an old carpenter came to him, saying: "Mr. Sullivan, sir, that iron and slote which Mademoiselle Salvioni crosses the stage with doesn't work very easy. We want more time. Will you give us a few bars more music? *Give us something for the villincellers!*" And Sullivan at once prolonged the agony by giving the "villincellers" a chance to cover themselves with glory. All the parts of this ballet-music, with the exception of three numbers, were burned in the destruction of the first Crystal Palace.

The year 1864 also witnessed the production, at Birmingham, of Sullivan's cantata, "Kenilworth." It was not very successful, nor did it deserve to be, as the words were rubbish and the music weak. Mesdames Sherrington, Sainton-Dolby, Messrs. Santley and Cummings, could not save it; though had the tenor part been sung by Mario, as originally intended, a gentler fate might have befallen the cantata. After rehearsing, the great Italian fell ill and could not fulfill his engagement. However, there was wheat among the chaff. Sullivan did his best in the moonlight scene from "The Merchant of Venice," introduced in the masque which takes place before Queen Elizabeth. This *morceau* is frequently played by orchestras, and always with public approbation.

Sullivan's first great success in song-writing was in 1863, when he sold "Orpheus with his Lute" to Metzler for the insignificant sum of \$25. For several years past the publisher has realized an annual income of \$2,500 on his original investment. This popular composition was followed by a set of Shaksperian songs, including "O Mistress Mine," "The Willow Song," from "Othello," "Sigh no more, Ladies," and "Rosalind." All are admirable and are fast replacing the settings of former composers. Engaged by Novello to write church music, Sullivan gave much of his time in 1864 to this work. Returning to song-writing some months after, he produced "If Doughty Deeds," and "A Weary Lot," both sung by Santley. Later came the part song "Hush thee, my Baby," probably the most popular ever written. It had an immense sale, and as Sullivan had grown wise enough to keep a royalty on his works, he found a goodly fortune lying in wait for him. The ballad "Will he Come?" succeeded the part song.

To build better than one knows often befalls the cleverest. In 1866, there died

suddenly, Charles Burnett, a writer on "Punch," who left his family in sore distress. As usual, the ever-generous dramatic profession arranged a benefit, for which genial F. C. Burnand, whose thoughts are always happy, promised to collaborate a musical piece with Sullivan. However, within a week of the benefit, the unhappy collaborators had collaborated nothing. Living near each other, they were together going to church, when Burnand was seized with an idea. "Let's set 'Box and Cox' to music!" he exclaimed. "Happy thought! Book it," replied Sullivan. Both at once set to work, and in seven days the operetta was written, learned, rehearsed, and produced. A greater triumph never awaited so small a work. Words and music are admirable and their rendering by du Maurier (the draughtsman, so well known in "Punch"), Harold Power (a son of the Irish comedian, Tyrone Power), and Arthur Cecil, was excellent. Transferred from the Adelphi Theatre to German Reed's Entertainments, "Cox and Box" ran for five hundred nights, Arthur Cecil retaining his original character. Having recently witnessed a revival of this operetta, I do not hesitate to state that Arthur Cecil's creation is the finest thing of the kind I ever saw or heard. His singing of the charming "Lullaby Bacon" is exquisite, and his pantomime masterly. When England gives birth to such an artist, it is ridiculous to join in the prevailing fashionable chorus that France alone breeds actors.

A brilliant reception was accorded to Sullivan's Symphony in E, played first at the Crystal Palace in 1866, and repeated several times. In this same year, Sullivan was asked to write for the Norwich Festival, which takes place the first week in November, but, after accepting the flattering invitation, labored in vain. Desperate at failure, Sullivan threatened to give up the idea, but was deterred by his excellent father, who had ever been his best friend. "Don't throw away so fine an opportunity, my boy," he said. "Something will happen to inspire you. Wait." Something did happen: four days later, the kind and appreciative father died. On the evening of his funeral, the unhappy son sat at his desk, almost unconsciously writing on, and on, and on, taking no heed of day or night. In twelve days he composed and rehearsed an overture entitled "In Memoriam," dedicated to his father. It was warmly applauded, and is the first orchestral work in

which the organ is made prominent. This noble instrument adds greatly to the climax.

Then followed a concerto for violoncellos, played at the Crystal Palace by Signor Piatti, a master. Next came "The Contrabandista," an operetta for which F. C. Burnand supplied the libretto. The first act contains some of Sullivan's best work, but the second act fails to fulfill the promise of the first: both words and music need to be rewritten. 1867 witnessed the production of the overture to "Marmion" by the Philharmonic Society. 1868 chronicled the appearance at the Worcester Festival of Sullivan's "Prodigal Son," a short oratorio, finely rendered by Titiens, Trebelli, Sims Reeves, and Santley, and finely received by the silent but appreciative audience that thronged the Cathedral. The press was so unanimous in its approbation that this oratorio was repeated at the Crystal Palace by the same artists, and found a prominent place in the programme of the Hereford Festival of 1868.

In 1869, the Queen expressed a desire through Sir Arthur Helps, to possess a copy of Sullivan's works, whereupon the composer made a careful collection, bound it, and sent it to a sovereign who once sang prettily, and still does credit to her piano teacher, Mendelssohn. Victoria responded with an autograph letter of thanks, wherein she expressed her intention of becoming familiar with all the music of one who had given her such great pleasure. Sullivan devoted this year to song-writing. Concertos, oratorios, symphonies, may add greatly to fame, but they add nothing to incomes. To be asked to write for a festival is an honor without emolument, and, unless a composer be born with a gold spoon in his mouth,—a fate yet unknown,—he cannot long afford to labor for glory gratis. Songs bring Arthur Sullivan cake as well as bread and butter. These compositions are equally popular in the United States, but, owing to the absence of copyright, the composer has no share in the publisher's large profits. How long will this injustice last?

At the Birmingham Festival of 1870, Sullivan conducted his "Ouvertura di Ballo," which met with a warm reception, and is constantly played. Beginning with a stately polonaise, the *ouvertura* glides into a long waltz movement, and finishes with a brilliant galop, all in strictly symphonic form.

London, being in 1871 the scene of an International Exhibition, Ferdinand Hiller represented German music, contributing an

original overture; France sent Gounod with his rhythmic lamentation, "Gallia"; and England selected Arthur Sullivan, who produced a musical contrast between fishermen, their wives, and moorish pirates, entitled, "On Shore and Sea," the words being by Tom Taylor. The material point of interest in this clever composition was the introduction of real Moorish airs, souvenirs of the Moorish band, sent by the Viceroy of Egypt to the Exhibition of 1862. Deeply impressed by this Arab music, Sullivan took notes of it and incorporated these Eastern tunes with great effect.

Upon the Prince of Wales's recovery, in February, 1872, from a fever that had threatened to be mortal, a Thanksgiving Fête was held at the Crystal Palace, at which, by invitation of the Directors and with the Queen's sanction and encouragement, Sullivan produced a *Te Deum*, dedicated to his royal patron. With a chorus of 2,000, with an orchestra proportionately large, with the Guards' united military bands, with the great organ, with Titiens as soloist, and with an audience of 20,000, the effect was tremendous, especially at the climax when all these great forces were brought together. Our own city of Buffalo has given this *Te Deum* in its entirety, while there is never—or, at least, hardly ever—a state celebration at the Crystal Palace or Albert Hall, at which the last chorus is not given. Both the Czar of all the Russias and the Shah of all the Persians have listened to it, the latter being most impressed by the red costumes of the contralto singers and the blue costumes of the sopranos. (This highly cultivated monarch, whose march through Europe left havoc in its wake, heard entirely with his eyes.) The last rendering of the *Te Deum* chorus took place at the Trocadéro during the Paris Exposition of 1878, at the express desire, and in the presence, of the Prince who had inspired it.

Success with the "*Te Deum*" led Sullivan to turn his attention to severer work, and soon he became absorbed in his oratorio "The Light of the World," brought out in August, 1873, at the Birmingham Festival. For the first time in the history of music, the character of Christ was dramatized. This bold experiment caused Sullivan to await a verdict with great trepidation, as none could foretell the effect upon religious susceptibilities. The result, however, justified the experiment. The "Times" declared that since the production of "Elijah" under

Mendelssohn at Birmingham, in 1846, no work had created such a sensation. The audience listened in breathless silence until the close, and then burst into prolonged cheering. Ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and the nervous composer left the platform blinded with grateful tears. Twice since then has "The Light of the World" been repeated at Birmingham. It has been given twice at Manchester, Liverpool, Hereford, Brighton and London; once at Leeds and Dundee, and has also been heard elsewhere. Its greatest strength lies in the choruses.

The first work in which Gilbert and Sullivan collaborated was a burlesque, entitled "Thespis," written for the comedian Toole, who, having but two notes in his voice, was no easy subject for the composer. However, Sullivan overcame this difficulty, and "Thespis" ran one hundred nights. Of course the plot unfolds a Gilbertian conceit. The gods are supposed to have grown old, and people are dissatisfied; Jupiter's thunder no longer has the true ring; Diana objects to sitting up o' nights. At this juncture, Thespis and his troupe chance upon Mount Olympus; and, as the gods think they'd like to go below and see what is the matter, Thespis assures them that he and his company are equal to regulating the universe. Accordingly the gods retire, Thespis taking Jupiter's place, casting the leading lady for Juno, and his soubrette for Venus. The second act discloses the Thespians in their new rôles. Heaven and earth are convulsed; as Jupiter has turned on rain and forgotten to turn it off, a deluge is imminent; Apollo and Diana, being in love, insist upon going out together; Bacchus has moral scruples against grapes: he is a teetotaler, and will tolerate nothing stronger than ginger-beer. In the midst of topsyturvy the gods return, dethrone the Thespians and restore order. This most humorous idea is well carried out in the first act, but is weakly treated in the second, both book and music needing revision. The charming song, "Little Maid of Arcadee," originated in "Thespis."

1874 welcomed the songs of "Once Again," "Looking Back," and "O ma Charmante;" the first being the most popular, and the second having the steadiest sale of all Sullivan's compositions. In August, Sullivan visited the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh at Coburg. Evenings were made musical by him and Christine Nilsson, who chanced to be in town. One

night on going to the window, the Duchess exclaimed: "Oh, look here!" A thousand people, collected without a sound, stood listening with delight. In London, the concert outside would have been the louder of the two. On leaving Coburg, Sullivan received from the Duke the order of England's royal family.

The spring of 1875 gave birth to "Trial by Jury," which marked a new era in comic opera. Originating with Gilbert, the idea was considered by him and Sullivan so purely experimental that at the last rehearsal both feared an ignominious failure. They were doomed to happy disappointment, as it took the town by storm. Sullivan's elder brother, Frederic, who had been educated as an architect, but drifted naturally to the stage, made a great success as the *Judge*. For two years he lived in a big wig, and, alas! he died in it.

"Trial by Jury" was quickly followed by "The Zoo." Then came the song, "Let me Dream Again," written for Christine Nilsson, and since sung by every soprano in every English-speaking land. Public recognition was instantaneous. The sale of this song and of its successor, "Sweethearts," has attained 70,000 copies.

From 1875 to 1877, Sullivan devoted most of his time to organizing the National Training School of Music, opened by the Queen in May, 1876. About this time, the University of Cambridge bestowed upon Sullivan the honorary degree of Mus. Doc. That noble song, "The Lost Chord," was written in 1877, while he watched beside his dying brother's bed. The moment Sullivan sees words to his liking, conception of a fitting air is instantaneous,—the working out of it, however, occupying much time. The vocal part of "Looking Back" was written in half an hour; the accompaniment consumed hours.

After composing four numbers of incidental music for the revival of "Henry VIII.," at Manchester, Sullivan, toward the end of 1877, evolved "The Sorcerer," a comic opera, which ran until May, 1878. Though much more solid, it is less genial than its younger sister, "Pinafore," which Sullivan wrote between paroxysms of pain, as poor Tom Hood conceived his immortal jokes. The English composer aimed at bright melodies, determined that Offenbach and his school should not monopolize them, and got out of a sick bed to conduct the last rehearsal and first public performance. Most cordial was "Pinafore's" reception;

but neither Gilbert nor Sullivan predicted a long run. When the hot weather set in, the directors of the opera company for whom "Pinafore" was written became frightened, and talked of closing the theater; whereupon Sullivan, then directing the Covent Garden promenade concerts, placed the music of his opera on his programme, and public interest at once revived. The American furore has also been reflected in London, and the reign of this rhythmic satire goes on like Tennyson's brook.

In taking control of the Promenade Concerts in 1878, Sullivan made a complete revolution in the character of the music and the audiences. The former had been frivolous and the latter largely tainted with vice. Now, Covent Garden is the resort of respectable men and women, who listen to the best compositions. Pandering to vice cost the promoters \$15,000 during the season of 1877. Last summer, reform put \$10,000 into the promoters' pockets. It is possible, therefore, to make virtue a good pecuniary investment.

Appointed royal commissioner to the Paris Exposition, Sullivan gave the greater part of last year to glory rather than to remuneration. England, like the United States, expects every man to do his duty to his country for nothing. On bringing his mission to a successful issue, Sullivan found himself adorned with the Legion of Honor,

this rare decoration having cost him six months' hard labor and \$1,500 in expenses.

1879 records the production of a majestic song, inspired by Tennyson's "St. Agnes' Eve," a song too difficult and dramatic to be popular. Following the steps of Cambridge, Oxford in June conferred upon Sullivan the musical degree. The undergraduate heart went out to him, and the sacred organ of the Sheldonian Theatre actually played selections from "Pinafore." Undergraduates welcomed the favorite composer in the name of "his sisters, his cousins, and his aunts," and when a wag from their gallery answered Dr. Evans's solemn "*Placetne vobis domini doctores*" with the audacious query, "What, never?" even Dr. Sullivan, arrayed, unlike the lily, in gorgeous robes, was obliged to laugh.

In the autumn of this year, Mr. Sullivan goes to the United States with Mr. Gilbert, not only to produce a new opera, but to know more intimately a kindred people for whom he has high regard. Whatever those people do to him, let them refrain from offering him words for music. One thousand manuscript songs are now waiting to be set,—six thousand having been returned to despairing authors,—and as Sullivan does not average more than two songs a year, the present generation will have been five centuries in another and a better world before a glorified muse asks for "more."

HER CONQUEST.

MUSTER thy wit, and talk of whatsoever
 Light, mirth-provoking matter thou canst find:
 I laugh, and own that thou, with small endeavor,
 Hast won my mind.

Be silent if thou wilt—thine eyes expressing
 Thy thoughts and feelings, lift them up to mine:
 Then quickly thou shalt hear me, love, confessing
 My heart is thine.

And let that brilliant glance become but tender—
 Return me heart for heart—then take the whole
 Of all that yet is left me to surrender:
 Thou hast my soul.

Now, when the three are fast in thy possession,
 And thou hast paid me back their worth, and more,
 I'll tell thee—all whereof I've made thee cession
 Was thine before.