

## THE "ACADEMY" MONOPOLY

THE spirit of literary sectionalism has been quickened by certain public manifestations of what is called a literary aristocracy forming itself in New York. The body is not a new one, having been formed at least five years ago as an American Academy of Arts and Letters growing out of an older National Institute of Arts and Letters organized in 1898. The Academy troubled the country no more than sleeping dogs until quite recently, when an Eastern laudation of the Academy is followed by an ironical reply from the West. Prof. Brander Matthews says, in a recent issue of *The Outlook*, that "no competent observer could deny" that the membership in the "American Academy" "is truly characteristic of the best that the United States has to show in poetry and in fiction, in history and in the drama, in criticism and in scholarship, in music and in architecture, in painting and in sculpture." Mr. Charles Leonard Moore quickly follows this by an article in the *Chicago Dial*, which is not meant as a direct challenge to Professor Matthews, perhaps, but it matches his complacency by a delicate irony in referring to New York as having "made the country a present of a National Academy." The composition of this "Senate of Immortals," he thinks, is a matter for curious study. "There is a fair representation of New Englanders, and a few other exiles from the Great White Way; but the pomp and prodigality of New York genius is mainly in evidence." Here is the list of members so far standing on the roll:

E. A. Abbey	R. U. Johnson
C. F. Adams	John La Farge
Henry Adams	Henry C. Lea *
T. B. Aldrich *	Henry Cabot Lodge
John Bigelow	T. R. Lounsbury
E. H. Blashfield	H. W. Mabie
W. C. Brownell	Edward MacDowell *
John Burroughs	C. F. McKim *
G. W. Cable	A. T. Mahan
G. W. Chadwick	Brander Matthews
W. M. Chase	D. G. Mitchell *
S. L. Clemens	W. V. Moody
Kenyon Cox	John Muir
F. M. Crawford *	C. E. Norton *
D. C. French	T. N. Page
H. H. Furness	H. W. Parker
R. W. Gilder *	J. F. Rhodes
B. L. Gildersleeve	Theodore Roosevelt
D. C. Gilman *	Augustus Saint-Gaudens *
A. T. Hadley	Carl Schurz *
E. E. Hale *	E. C. Stedman *
J. C. Harris *	J. S. Sargent
Thomas Hastings	W. M. Sloane
John Hay *	F. Hopkinson Smith
T. W. Higginson	A. H. Thayer
Winslow Homer	Henry VanDyke
Bronson Howard *	Elihu Vedder
Julia Ward Howe	J. A. Ward
W. D. Howells	A. D. White
Henry James	Woodrow Wilson
Joseph Jefferson *	G. E. Woodberry

\* Deceased.

Doubtless New York could have done better by itself, had it not been too magnanimous not to let the rest of the country have a look in, observes Mr. Moore, who goes on:

"A good third of the names would probably be inevitable in any list of distinguished living



TRIPTYCH OF THE CRUCIFIXION IN LIMOGES ENAMEL.

Mr. Salting paid 1,550 guineas for the two outside panels (each  $9\frac{1}{2}$  by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in.) at the Amherst of Hackney sale in December, 1908. He already possess the center-piece. They are thus restored to their original form.

Americans. But the others could be matched and overmatched again and again.

"There is of course a good side to this glorification of group. New England in its best days was loyal to instincts of locality. It backed and cheered its intellectual athletes on, and the spirited runners felt the stimulus and sprang forward to win the prizes. New York deserves credit for taking care of its own. It reminds me of a story which my father used to tell, of a visit he paid with a companion to a friend's country house. The owner of the property had an idiot son; and my father, introducing his friend, said, 'This is Mr. Satterthwaite, Sammy. He is a Quaker. The Quakers, you know, are good people.' 'Yes,' said the idiot, 'good to themselves.' It used to be said that no Bostonian could escape

having a statue erected for him; and New York seems moving in the same laudable direction. But it can hardly expect that the rest of the country will bow down and worship its totems of a tribe.

"It is hard to conceive just what ideal the makers of this Academy had in view—just what kind of sheep they deemed acceptable, and just what kind of goats they thought undesirable. It includes men of affairs and publicists, but ignores some of our greatest. It admits a large number of artists, which is a commendable departure from the practise of the French Academy. It allows a number of college presidents, but disallows others as well and widely known. It ignores the Church, the Army and Navy, and the stage. Altogether the list is badly balanced and badly selected, and seems to be issued with the imprint of a prominent magazine."

We talk a great deal about democracy in America, says Mr. Moore, but it looks to him "as tho we were making a quiet, disguised, but determined effort to create an aristocracy." The idea is not abhorrent to the writer, who adds, "Quite right, in a way!" Going on:

"We begin to want some tangible evidence of the existence of the best. The idea of a society composed of people of achievement and renown begins to appeal to us. The movement is fluid as yet; it has not hardened into an official caste, a plutocracy, or a class of all the talents. Any effort toward directing this movement in the way of intellectual and spiritual superiority, and away from the worship of mere wealth, is good. Coteries and associations with intellectual trend are



CHINESE VASE.

One of the famous seventeen black, with plum-blossom decoration (Salting collection).



springing up all over the country. A bright woman once told me that she had just had a dream of heaven, and it was exactly like a meeting of the Contemporary Club in Philadelphia. Possibly she was an enthusiast, but she expressed a feeling of delight in high intercourse which I believe is becoming common."

## THE SINGER AND HER PUBLIC

OPERA-GOERS who hold in their hands the fate of singers may not like to be told that they do not know a good singer when they hear one, or, worse, that they do not know a bad singer when they hear one. The ease with which they may make or break a reputation possibly leads them to think they do know such elemental things as these, but Mr. W. J. Henderson, music critic of the New York *Sun*, assures us that opera-goers are "notoriously uncritical." He asserts that "they have stronger likes and dislikes than any other class of art votaries, yet they rarely give reasons for their preferences." Most of these devotees, he would have us believe, are deaf to any real appreciation of the art of singing, but are caught by "some quality of mere sound which appeals to their fancy." The irony of this for the enthusiastic opera-goer is that such "sounds" often "offend a cultivated ear." But the public, he goes on to say in *The Ladies' Home Journal* (January), "dearly loves to be astonished," forgetting that "the greatest art does not astonish, but rather awes by its simple and lofty publication of elemental truth." Mr. Henderson observes:

"Nothing is better known than the mere technics of singing, yet the operatic public appears to be utterly ignorant of them or to care nothing about them. It does not even demand that the voice shall be 'cultivated,' as the phrase goes. A cultivated voice should, at least, have one tone quality from bottom to top, like a good piano. Many opera-singers have upper registers that seem to belong to voices unrelated to the lower registers. The operatic public does not care. Hoarse, strident, screaming tones, mere noises, are accepted as readily as those of mellow beauty. Distortion of the curves of exquisite melodies by reckless chopping of the phrases passes without public notice. Blurred outlines, slurred passage work, false intonation, expression diametrically contrary to the significance of the text and to the nature of the melody, violent and unreasoning rushes from piano to forte and back, explosive treatment of flowing airs—all these things are, apparently, unnoticed by the operatic public. All it seems to ask is that here and there a note or two shall sound good to it, and that the singer shall from time to time reach a 'climax,' by which it means exhibit a vast deal of wind power and make the rafters ring."

From this point Mr. Henderson proceeds to review some of the leaders of song among us and indicates where each of them stands. Melba's voice is, in his opinion, the most beautiful heard by the present generation of opera-goers. "Only Patti's has excelled it, but Patti fairly belongs to the past." He writes:

"The purity of the natural quality of Madame Melba's voice is accompanied by an unusual amount of sonority. It is a wonderfully strong voice of its type. Its range is that of the typical colorature soprano, and the scale is perfectly equalized. As Walter Damrosch pertinently said, on the occasion of Madame Melba's American debut: 'There are no registers in that voice; it is all one register.' That is perfection in the scale. It is this perfection that makes the delivery of a sustained melody so beautiful as mere sound that we are prone to forget that it is deficient in vital warmth. Melba's singing has always lacked expressiveness, partly by reason of the quality of the tone and partly because of shortcomings in the temperament of the singer."

"In the treatment of the musical phrase, one of the most important elements of singing, Melba was formerly careless; but in recent years she has shown herself capable of high artistic achievement in this matter. No singer of our time has excelled her in the delivery of florid passages. Only one can be said to have rivaled her—namely, Sembrich. In the application of the nuances which go toward expression Madame Melba has not risen to the highest level. She has not the sensitive emotional organization which furnishes unerring instincts in this matter, nor has she that cultivated musicianship which goes so far toward supplying the deficiency. In short, Madame Melba is a splendid demonstration of how much

can be accomplished by a beautiful natural voice coupled with a highly developed technic and a respectable taste. . . . .

"Madame Sembrich has never enjoyed the same tonal equipment as Melba. The Polish singer's voice is distinctly smaller in power and volume, and it lacks that peculiar penetrating brilliancy which makes Melba's singing, especially in florid passages, so dazzling. On the other hand, Madame Sembrich's voice has a softer and mellow tint and is better suited to the expression of tender feelings. This voice never equaled Melba's in natural equality of its scale, but skill in its development has made the difference between the two in this matter practically imperceptible. In musicianship Madame Sembrich is the superior of all the other sopranos mentioned in this article. She sings not like a mere singer, but like a master singer. Her phrasing is perfect."

Tetrazzini's position, we are told, is won by astonishing the public. "Her fluent staccato, her wonderfully executed swell on high tones, and some other feats are topics of general comment." But—

"In the delivery of simple, flowing melody her singing is not that of a real artist. The breaks between her registers come out most unpleasantly, and her phrasing, which is usually in short and spasmodic groups, without consideration for the meter of the melody or the sense of the text, is a serious blot upon her delivery. Furthermore, the pallid color of her lower tones makes depth or tenderness of expression impossible. Persons of sound taste can not overlook the defects in Madame Tetrazzini's singing, nor forgive them for the sake of a few brilliant tricks, some of which are but imperfectly performed, and most of which are executed after unconcealed preparation. It is significant that her only lasting success has been made in the highly decorated 'mad scene' of Donizetti's 'Lucia.'"

Mary Garden is "not to be considered seriously" as a singer. For these reasons:

"Her voice is thin and acid in natural quality and her emission of tone shows little regard for the technics of vocal art. She succeeds best in parts calling for ingenuity in the preparation of pictorial features and for the arrangement of theatrical effects. She is first of all an actress; not one of high poetic ideals, but of profound skill in divining the beat of the public pulse. Like her master, Massenet, she understands the entire apparatus of the theater, and while she can not really sing such rôles as 'Thais' or 'Salome' she composes them with superb knowledge of effect and interprets them with irresistible cleverness. Her finest achievement is, without doubt, her *Melisande*, because in it the unmusical character of her vocal delivery works no harm, while her genius for pictorial delineation, for the graphics of the stage, rises to its finest heights. One has only to listen to her last scene in 'Louise' to realize that she is not a singer. One has only to observe her atmospheric first scene in 'Pelleas et Melisande' and her realistic dance in 'Salome' to realize that she is a pantomimist of extraordinary ability. But when people speak of Mary Garden as a 'musical artist' they show little respect for music or the technics of singing."

Geraldine Farrar is pronounced "overrated." Her voice is described as "a lyric voice with a leaning toward the dramatic character." But "she is a victim of the 'big-tone' habit; she sings most of the time too strenuously, and the result is that her piano is weak and deficient in control." Olivia Fremstad's technic "is largely composed of makeshifts necessitated by the forcing upward of her voice, but her interpretation is the product of inspiration and intelligence." Nordica and Gadski are summarized thus:

"Madame Nordica is the dean of the gild of dramatic sopranos now before the American public. She has a strong, penetrating, powerful voice which ranges easily to the high C. She has all her life been a close and intelligent student of vocal art, and she knows how to sing. Her voice has a bad spot just above the treble clef and her art has never enabled her to smooth over this break. It does not often mar her singing, however, and, doubtless, few hearers notice it. Madame Nordica has never achieved as much by the communicative force of a flaming temperament as by fine intelligence. . . . Madame Gadski must be set down, first of all, as a singer. She has a superb dramatic soprano voice, which has rounded out and matured gloriously since she first was heard in this country."