



TITLED ACTRESSES.

*How peers of England and other countries have sought their brides behind the footlights
—Famous stage beauties to whom marriage has brought coronets and castles.*

A SELLER of photographs, showing his collection of actresses and singers who had married men of title, said that his wares sufficiently refuted the supposition that men of high position were infatuated with the stage. "I have here photographs of dozens of duchesses and countesses and ladies born to high degree, but none of them is as pretty as the women who have married into the peerage from the stage. It is not the footlights that attract, but the beauty of the women who are seen behind them. It takes some charm to interest audiences, and the same charm works on the individual man."

Many members of the English peerage have an actress among their ancestresses. The young Earl of Craven, who married Miss Bradley Martin in New York two years ago, is one of them. His great grandmother, Louisa Brunton, was the daughter of the proprietor of the Norwich theater in the first years of this century. She went on the stage as a young girl, to help to support her family through some crisis in their fortunes. The Earl of Craven saw her, fell in love with her, and married her. Her relatives continued to manage and to act. Her brother, John Brunton, was a clever all round stock actor in his day, and his daughter, Mrs. Yates, was one of the best known actresses of the next generation. But Louisa Brunton was by no means the first English actress to wear a coronet.

Lavinia Fenton, one of her predecessors, was the daughter of a lieutenant in the navy, who deserted her mother, a girl in humble circumstances. Before her daughter's birth, the latter married the keeper of a coffee house, who seems to have been a very good natured person indeed. He discovered, when Lavinia was a small child, that she had a precocious talent for singing. Her ballads brought a great many people to the coffee house, but realizing what her voice might be to the child, he sent her to a teacher. Rumors of the coffee house singer had come to the ears of the manager of the Haymarket Theater, who

sent for her, and allowed her to sing for one evening the part of *Monimia* in "The Orphan." She took the town, and Riche, the manager of the rival playhouse, tempted her away by offering her the princely salary of three dollars a week.

About this time it occurred to Dean Swift that an opera upon life in Newgate prison would be an "odd, pretty sort of thing," and he suggested his dainty fancy to Gay. All the crowd of literary men about town of that day took a hand at helping Gay out with his opera, and telling him what an opportunity he had in making a character for so captivating an actress as the Fenton. The song beginning, "When You Censure the Age," was written by Swift; "As the Modes of the Court," by Lord Chesterfield; and Sir Charles Williams contributed "Virgins Are Like the Flower." The "Beggars' Opera" was a triumph. Robert Walker, who sang *Macheath*, became so much the rage, and was invited out so often, that he died of drink; but it was Miss Fenton as *Polly Peachum* who made the greatest success. Her songs were put on fans and screens, and were on every tongue. Her portraits were everywhere. So many men fell in love with her that there was a fear that she might be carried off, and the gilded youth of London formed a regular bodyguard to escort her to and from the theater.

Suddenly people began to notice that when *Polly* sang her affecting song,

For on the rope that hangs my dear
Depends poor *Polly's* life,

she looked toward one box. The chivalrous bodyguard melted away, and left *Polly* free to elope with the Duke of Bolton, who made her as much of a duchess as was possible while his wife lived. But Lavinia seems to have kept her friends. She is said by her contemporaries to have had much sense and wit, and a fine taste in literature. The first men of the day, men like Lord Granville and Lord Bathurst, were constantly at her table.

There is a story of a dramatic quarrel between the actress and the duke, on which

they decided to part. Miss Fenton went to dress for her journey, slamming the doors behind her; but when she reappeared it was in the dress of the *Polly Peachum* who had first captivated her lover, singing in her most pathetic tones, "Oh, what pain it is to part!" The duke, whose affection and sense of humor were both strong, between laughing and kissing her, begged her never to desert him.

They had lived together twenty two years when the Duchess of Bolton died. The duke at once married Lavinia, but soon left her a widow. Her own death, many years later, was thus announced by Sir Horace Walpole:

The famous *Polly*, Duchess of Bolton, is dead, having, after a life of merit, relapsed into her Pollyhood. Two years ago, ill at Tunbridge, she picked up an Irish surgeon. When dying, she made a will, leaving a thousand pounds apiece to her three sons, and nine thousand to the doctor.

Anastasia Robinson was the chief singer of Italian opera in London at the beginning of the last century. The ladies of her day were jealous of her, and their correspondence was full of flings at her. It was an open secret that she was married to Lord Peterborough, the commander who rivaled the military reputation of Marlborough; but he considered it beneath his dignity to acknowledge her as his legal wife. At the same time she presided over his great entertainments, to which all London came.

One night Anastasia brought matters to a climax. She declared that the tenor at the opera had insulted her, and Lord Peterborough went behind the scenes and made him yell for mercy. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote to a friend:

The second heroine has engaged half the town in arms, from the nicety of her virtue, which was not able to bear too near an approach of *Senesino* in the opera, and her condescension in her acceptance of Lord Peterborough for a champion, who has signalized both his love and courage upon this occasion, as in many instances *Don Quixote* did for *Dulcinea*. Poor *Senesino*, like a vanquished giant, was forced to confess upon his knees that Anastasia was a nonpareil of virtue and beauty. Lord Chesterfield, as dwarf to said giant, joked on his side and was challenged for his pains.

The flavor of the old town gossip still hangs about the story. But Lord Peterborough took Anastasia from the stage, and calling his friends together announced his marriage—an event which so much astonished his wife that she fainted.

Nelly Farren, "the most perfect fine

lady that ever graced a theater," was born in 1759, to a family of strolling players. As a child she used to carry a drum along the country roads, and beat it to attract spectators. She was still quite young when she made her way to London and became a favorite, first at the Haymarket and then at Drury Lane. She played all the characters in what we know as "old comedy," and she had for friends the most fashionable people of the day. When the Duke of Richmond gave private theatricals, Miss Farren was stage manager and general adviser. The public began to resent her penchant for aristocratic connections, and rhymesters told how—

She nods from the stage to her Stanleys and Foxes,
To let the house see she is known in the boxes.

Charles James Fox was in love with her, but considered that he would have ruined his prospects by marrying her. Miss Farren knew that the Earl of Derby was only waiting for his wife to die to marry her. It was solemnly told in the newspapers of the time that she never received the earl unless her mother was present. Finally the countess did die, and six weeks later Miss Farren married the widower. A daughter was born to her, who became Countess of Wilton.

Mary Katherine Bolton was another actress who made a success as *Polly Peachum* and won a peer. She belonged to a very respectable family, but was driven to the stage by poverty. Like most pretty actresses of the day, she was persecuted by the gay young men of the town. Lord Thurlow, nephew and successor of the Lord Thurlow who was George III's chancellor for fourteen years, was so much in love with her that all London knew it. The brothers Smith, the authors of "Rejected Addresses," published some verses encouraging his suit:

An actress? Well, I own 'tis true;
But why should that your love subdue,
Or bid you blush for *Polly*?
When all within is sense and worth,
To care for modes of life and birth
Is arrant pride and folly.

A *Polly* in a former age
Resigned the captain and the stage
To shine as Bolton's duchess;
Derby and Craven since have shown
That virtue builds herself a throne,
Ennobling whom she touches.

The encouragement seems to have been sufficient, for Lord Thurlow took their advice and made Miss Bolton his wife.

Harriet Mellon, who did much to bring

about certain conditions that are felt even today, was the child of a servant in a company of barnstormers in Ireland. Her mother, whose imagination took some bias from the dramas she was in the habit of hearing, and who played a little drama of her own, always called herself "the lieutenant's widow," although "Lieutenant Mellon" was as mythical a personage as *Mrs. Harris*. Little Harriet found her way to the stage, and after a while to Dublin. Here Sheridan saw her, and offered her a position in London, saying that he would send for her, and promptly going home and forgetting all about it. But Miss Mellon went up to London, and reminded him of his promise.

She had not been long on the stage before a little, shabby, ugly man might have been seen hanging about her dressing room door and waiting for her. Everybody in London knew him, and everybody smiled. It was the famous banker Coutts. There was gossip, of course. One story was that Miss Mellon would accept nothing from him, although he sought to lavish gifts upon her. Finding it impossible to persuade her to take any present, he induced her to purchase a lottery ticket. Then he placed a large sum in the hands of an agent, with instructions to tell Miss Mellon that she had won the capital prize. She believed it, if London did not, and sending for Mr. Coutts gave the money back to him, asking him to invest it for her.

To combat the gossipers, Mr. Coutts publicly declared that his interest in the young woman was entirely fatherly; and to prove this, he brought his daughters, the Marchioness of Bute, the Countess of Guilford, and Lady Burdette, to call upon her. But in 1814, when Mrs. Coutts died, he married Miss Mellon. He lived only a few years, and in dying, left his entire fortune to his second wife. He said to her, "I am sure that you will do more for my family than they expect, or I wish."

The young widow, whose fortune amounted to about six million dollars, was sought everywhere. Two years after her husband's death, she went with a party to visit Sir Walter Scott. The young Duke of St. Albans was one of the party, and shortly afterward Mrs. Coutts married him. But the Coutts millions went back where they rightfully belonged, and were left to Mr. Coutts' grandchild, the present Baroness Burdett-Coutts.

Miss Catherine Stevens, another *Polly*, married the fifth Earl of Essex in 1838, and was a well known character of her day. So

too was Dora Jordan, the morganatic wife of the Duke of Clarence, who afterward ruled England as William IV. Of Mrs. Jordan some poet said that "the words laughed on her lips." Though she lacked the elegance of Miss Farren, she had more than that actress' magnetism. She had a brilliant face, and a charming figure. Charles Lamb called her, "Shakspeare's woman." She lived with the Duke of Clarence for twenty years, and was almost heart broken when he finally separated from her. She had ten children, who were known as the Fitz Clarences. Their extravagance ruined her financially, and she died in poverty in France.

When Thackeray wrote the story of *Miss Fotheringay* and her ridiculous old father, he is said to have had in mind O'Neill and his daughter Eliza. O'Neill was the manager of a vagabondish company of barnstormers in the north of Ireland, and Eliza made her first appearance as the *Duke of York* in "Richard III." Chance brought her upon the Dublin stage. The *Juliet* of that day, Miss Walstein, refused to play one night unless her salary was increased. The manager heard of "the girl from the north," engaged her at a moment's notice, and presented Dublin with an idol, the greatest Irish actress since Peg Woffington.

When a London engagement was offered to Miss O'Neill she insisted upon taking her whole family with her; and John Kemble, won by her beauty and brogue, accepted her conditions. They called her a "hugging actress" in London. Macready said that she forgot everything in her assumed character, and that while she was an entirely modest woman she used nearly to smother him with kisses. George Ticknor, the American author, said that as a young man he sat in the pit and cried like a schoolboy when he saw the O'Neill act. She married a member of parliament who was afterward made a baronet, Sir William Wrixon Becher.

Macready also played with Helen Faucit, who married Sir Theodore Martin, the poet and author of the biography of the Prince Consort. One of Lady Martin's most charming characters was *Iolanthe* in her husband's poem of "King René's Daughter." She was the classic actress of the last generation. Her father was an actor and dramatic writer, and her mother an actress. She was a delicate child, and was taken away from school and left with books of her own choosing. One afternoon, when Helen was about sixteen, she went with her sisters to the theater, expecting to find her

father at rehearsal. The place was empty, as they supposed, and the girls gave a half burlesque performance of the balcony scene of "Romeo and Juliet." The manager of the theater saw them, and was so much impressed by Helen's *Juliet* that he offered her an engagement.

Lady Martin's success lay in her belief in the dignity of the stage, and her ability to uphold it. Her conceptions were original, and she was a great woman as well as a great actress.

In our grandfathers' days it seemed to be the expectation of every prima donna to marry a man of title. It was Henrietta Sontag who set the example. She was a German girl, born at Coblenz, and educated at Prague. She had beauty and rare talent, and when she appeared on the operatic stage her success was instantaneous. Kings and queens received her and made her costly gifts. Lord Clanwilliam, the English ambassador at Berlin, followed in her train so devotedly that he was called "Lord Montag." But in the height of her fame she married Count Rossi, an Italian who represented the kingdom of Sardinia in Holland. Before her marriage the King of Prussia ennobled Sontag by giving her the name of Von Lauenstein.

Maria Piccolomini, one of the singers who were hailed as successors to Jenny Lind, was from Siena. She made her greatest success in Verdi's "Traviata." She had been on the stage for only a few years when she married the Marquis Gaetano, and retired. She was a contemporary and a countrywoman of Marietta Alboni, who won a still wider fame, and who became the Countess Pepoli. Adelina Patti, our greatest singer of this age, was married as long ago as 1868 to the titled representative of an old French family, Louis Sébastien de Cabuzac, Marquis de Caux. A divorce separated them, and enabled her to marry Nicolini, the tenor, with whom she now lives at Craig-y-Nos, in Wales.

Christine Nilsson, when she was a Swedish peasant girl, always imagined that she was destined to great things, because she was the seventh child of a seventh child. She was born in the same year as Patti—1843—but to a different environment. One of her brothers learned to play the fiddle at the Swedish fairs, and he taught his little sister to accompany him. A magistrate who heard her play offered to have her taught music. Her earliest appearance in Paris was a failure, but all the world knows of her later success. She first married a M. Auguste Rouzoud, her marriage being

solemnized in Westminster Abbey by Dean Stanley. After her husband's death she became the wife of the Spanish Count Casa di Miranda.

Our American prima donna, Minnie Hauck, who first created the character of *Carmen*, is the wife of Ernst von Hesse-War'egg, who is a traveler and author as well as a German baron.

Taglioni, the famous danseuse, had a romantic life story. At the height of her success she married Count Gilbert de Voisins. She was past sixty, and a widow, when her fortune was swept away by the Franco German war, and in her old age she found a bare subsistence as a dancing mistress in London.

More than one member of a royal family has lost position through a marriage with an actress or singer. Thirty years ago the Archduke Henry of Hapsburg was one of the most brilliant and popular officers in the Austrian army. He ruined his prospects by marrying an actress named Leopoldine Hoffman. Until 1878 they lived in poverty on a little estate in the provinces; then the empress interceded for her kinsman, and the ban of disgrace was removed. The archduchess, as she is now recognized, is one of the elegant women of the capital.

Prince Alexander of Battenberg, brother to the Prince Henry who married Princess Beatrice of England, ended his political career by rejecting a royal princess of Germany and marrying Mlle. Loisinger, a singer who made a great *Gretchen* in "Faust."

Of late years several members of the British peerage have married singers or dancers, but they have not been of the class to which the earlier titled actresses belonged. Miss Dolly Tester, who was called "a jolly little thing" at the music halls of London, married the late Marquis of Ailesbury. Belle Bilton, who was also a music hall dancer and high kicker, is now the Countess of Clancarty. She was the daughter of a sergeant in the English army, and her natural destiny would have been to marry a soldier and become one of those camp following women of whom Rudyard Kipling tells us. Instead she has a coronet and a castle in Ireland.

Another recent promotion from stage to peerage is that of the Countess of Orkney, who as Connie Gilchrist was one of the first famous galaxy of "Gayety girls" that dazzled the London youth of ten or fifteen years ago. She had no pretensions to histrionic ability, her specialty being a skip-

ping rope dance; but she was pretty of face and figure, and her photograph was in all the London shop windows.

The latest addition to the ranks of titled actresses is May Yohe, an American girl who made a hit in London burlesques, and married—or at least is said to have married—Lord Francis Hope. Born a Pelham Clinton, son of the sixth Duke of Newcastle, Lord Francis took the name of Hope together with several million dollars left him by an aunt. He succeeded in spending his for-

tune with record breaking speed, but he has another in prospect, as he is heir presumptive to the ducal title and the great estate now held by his elder brother, a childless cripple.

But to actresses of the grade of the Testers, Biltons, and Yohe, marriage to a peer brings no such honors as it brought to the old time queens of the stage. It sets them only a very little nearer to social recognition than they were when they danced behind the footlights.

Morris Bacheller.

AN INFERENCE.

"Oh, dear!" With mock dejection,
And traces of a pout,
She holds for my inspection
A tiny blucher out.

I see a dragging shoelace,
An ankle trim and neat,
An instep arching in to grace
The daintiest of feet.

This makes the fifth time, surely,
That I have bended low,
And tied that string securely
Into a double bow.

To hint it might offend her;
But I am satisfied,
If her foot were less slender,
That shoestring would *stay tied*!

LOST.

Lost—a heart; on Broadway,
Near Thirty Second Street;
The loser will gladly pay
A reward, and be discreet.

Of little value except
To the owner of the same,
Who hopes, if it is kept,
The finder will send her name.

No questions, on return
By a girl with a Psyche head,
And lips which make one yearn
To press their tender red.

Lost—a heart; on Broadway,
In the clang of cable cars,
In the rattle of truck and dray—
She may know it by its scars!

Harry Romaine.