

language of a policeman, not to say a truck driver:

"Get up," said the Eternal to Joshua, "why are you lying on your face there?"

Sometimes the change seems almost without any purpose except that of sacrificing the rhythm. In one of the most affecting scenes in all literature Dr. Moffatt makes David, in lamenting for the death of his handsome, unprincipled, and wayward son, say:

O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! O that I had died instead of you, Absalom, my son, my son!

Has anything—even clearness—been gained by the substitution of that for those English words that seem almost to have come straight from the heart of the broken father:

O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

No version is likely ever to take the

place of that translation which has become a monument of English prose. Dr. Moffatt could have had no thought that his version would ever do so. His purpose will have been achieved if it leads people to re-read the Bible, if it helps them to realize that the Bible that English people read is, after all, a translation, and that therefore literalism is a mockery, and if it brings them back to the familiar version with a new understanding of its meaning and a new sense of its literary beauty.

## Giacomo Puccini As I Knew Him

By CHARLES HENRY MELTZER

I FIND it hard to realize that Puccini has passed on. It seems only yester-eve that I was seated near him, at a table in the foyer of the Metropolitan, drinking to his "Madama Butterfly" and listening to a now dead and buried German member of the Metropolitan administration congratulating its composer, in a French speech which, as I recall the facts, I had invented for him.

Puccini had been so close to us that he seemed part of Broadway. Even now, setting aside such celebrities as Mr. Kern and Mr. Berlin, musically speaking he is the most popular composer in this country.

Broadway, to be sure, has more than an inkling nowadays of Verdi and Massenet. To some—a few—on the White Way, Wagner is not, as long ago, unknown. But next to jazz (which is soon, they say, to come into its kingdom in the most famous of the world's opera houses) extracts from "La Bohème" and "Butterfly" and "Manon Lescaut" and "La Fanciulla del West" are the pet titbits of enlightened Broadwayites.

We could have better spared a greater man. I write this seriously; deeply regretting one whose flow of melody I loved, whose piquant harmonies have charmed me often, and whose progressions have reminded me at times of composers whom I swear by. Among them, Debussy.

Once, when I was visiting him at his Italian country house, Puccini pointed to a score of "Pelléas" upon his piano and drew my attention to the analogies between certain passages in that masterpiece and others in one of his own operas.

"I am never without 'Pelléas,'" said he, "but I have not imitated Debussy. What a pity," he went on, "that Debussy had not the gift of melody!"

I ventured the remark that Debussy had repressed much of his tendency to indulge in song. But Puccini smiled. "If one has melodic inventiveness," said he, "one is not likely to repress it. One must express it."

He was then engaged on the second act of "La Fanciulla," his expression of "The Girl of the Golden West," the least successful of his mature achievements. To oblige me he sat down and played the mellifluous music which he had composed for the episode in which the miners take up a collection for a stranded exile. And then he told me a few things about his operas.

"I never," he declared, "attempt much in the way of local color. In 'Butterfly,' for instance, only two melodies are Oriental. I try chiefly in my music to be human."

And he was human to a fault, though humanity to him was rarely cerebral, and more rarely spiritual. He had the Italian outlook upon life and feeling. To him a man or woman was, before everything, a sensuous being; capable at the highest of hot passion, and incapable of the nobler kinds of tragedy. His music was the outpouring of a spontaneous nature. Not without charm—it had charm and to spare, in its own way. And that, perhaps, was why it was so popular, as the music of d'Indy and Strauss and Verdi, at his finest, in "Falstaff" and "Otello," may never be popular.

Simple and straightforward in his art, by contrast with the modernists who have followed in the footsteps of Debussy, without surpassing him, Puccini put grace, fluency, and sweetness into his music. Much that seemed strange to us when we first heard it, after a long spell in turn of Gounod, Verdi, and Wagner, was due (though he did not acknowledge it, unless to his intimates) to the influence of the Russians, to the example of

Catalani (whom he had helped, they say, to ostracize in Milan), and to the scales of the old Church composers. Of his few operas (he wrote only eleven, including three one-act works which were performed about four years ago at the Metropolitan and a "Turandot" which is announced at the Scala), the one which may live longest is "La Bohème," a delightful setting of Henri Murger's "Scènes de la Vie de Bohème," well known to most of us. Puccini's comparative sterility was due less to his want of creative power (though he composed slowly and, unspurred by necessity, as his fancy prompted) than to the difficulty which he found in discovering good—or at least suitable—libretti. One day as I talked with him in Paris, after he had been idle full four years for want of a good theme, he deplored the rarity of Italian librettists. The last on whom he had counted, Luigi Illica, had gone to pieces; and he had ceased to have confidence in American subjects. The rebukes administered to him after he had wrestled with "La Fanciulla" ("The Girl of the Golden West") had discouraged him. But for that I might have induced him (as I was asked to do at the time) to write music for an adaptation of Bret Harte's "M'liss."

For a month or two he set his mind on Ouida's story of "Two Little Wooden Shoes." Wisely, he turned from that to more promising themes and gave us, notably, a comic master work in his "Gianni Schicchi," which, had it been made intelligible to this public by the use of English words, would no doubt have prospered.

As for the man, he was, above all, a country gentleman. He spent much of his time, of course, like other Italian composers, between Rome and Milan. His real home for many years was an ugly but commodious country house at

VIA VERDI, 4,  
MILANO.

Carissimo Mr. Meltzer  
Eccole lo scenario  
di "Mliss" -  
Parto per Roma  
dove rimarrò 10 giorni  
circa. Per ora non  
ho trovato nulla per  
il nuovo libretto.

G. Puccini

1.6.11

TRANSLATION

Via Verdi 4, Milan.

Dear Mr. Meltzer:

Here is the "Mliss" scenario.

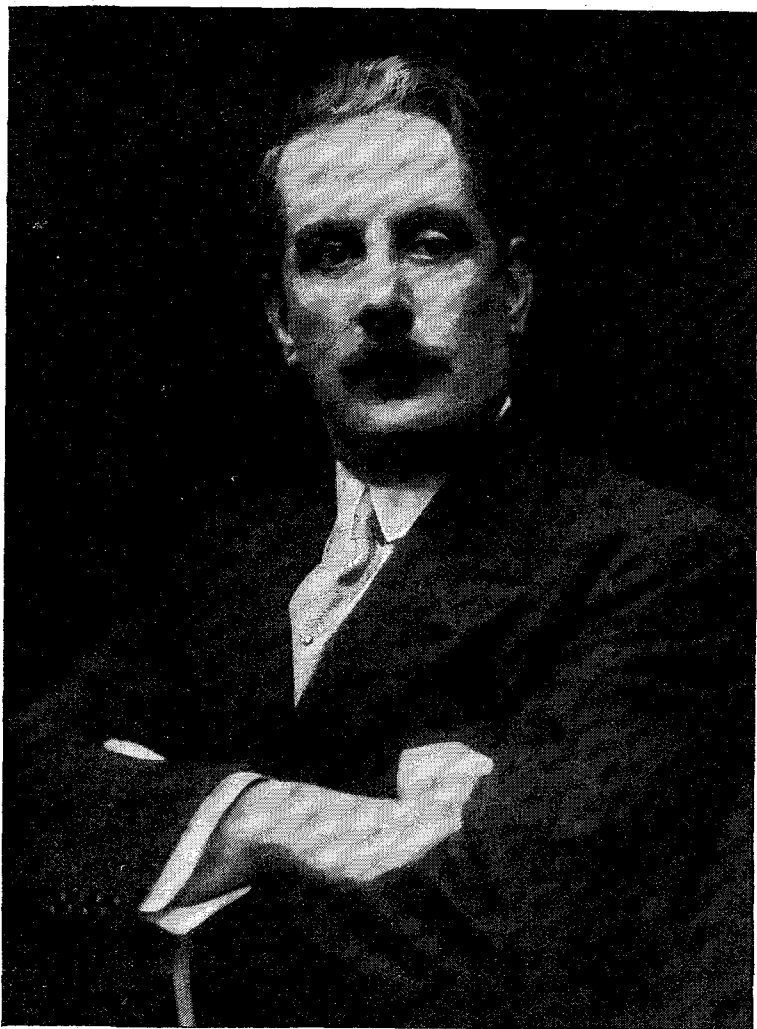
I am leaving for Rome, where I shall remain about 10 days. So far I have not found anything for a new libretto. Greetings from

Yours faithfully,

G. PUCCINI.

1.6.11.

(June 1st, 1911.)



(C) Mishkin

Giacomo Puccini

Torre del Lago, near Viareggio. There he had leased or bought a lake, backed in the distance by the lofty Apennines. And there he loved, when he was not composing, to go duck and quail shooting. Close to his house, which was plainly furnished, I remember a small orchard full of the most luscious pflums. Wild woods, well stocked with game, including boars, stretched round about, and through the sunlit air, ten miles away, the Pisan Tower and the Cathedral just beyond were clearly seen. Adjoining his study, a bare room with brown-yellowish walls, was a small armory of fowling-pieces of which he was very proud. Here Giacomo Puccini lived at ease, safe in the assurance of the large royalties which flowed into him from his publishers, and declined to hurry work he had in hand. I have often wondered whether his fame as a musician spelled more to him, or less, than his comfort and rusticity.

His legacy to art we can judge already. Besides the one-act opera entitled "Le Villi" (composed under the influence and at the advice of his master, Ponchielli) we owe to him, in the order

named, a failure, "Edgardo," not performed here; "Manon Lescaut" (which some regard as his best work); "La Bohème;" "Tosca;" "Madama Butterfly;" and "La Fanciulla del West;" besides a trilogy, unrelated as to the themes, but produced at the same time, including "Gianni Schicchi" and his promised "Turandot." How long they will remain in the repertory of the more important opera houses, who knows? I am not infallible, yet I venture the prediction that fifty years from now none of his operas, with the exception of "La Bohème" and maybe "Manon Lescaut," will be sung outside of Italy. Puccini himself would have been the last to rank any of them with the best works of Verdi or even Donizetti. Yet to his contemporaries, and especially to Americans, they have joy and cheer. I can hardly conceive of a more agreeable *apéritif* in music than a selection from "La Bohème," or a more soothing aftermath to a good dinner than the long love duo in the first act of "Butterfly."

In passing, I may mention one effort which he destroyed. It was based on the tragedy of Marie Antoinette, and he

burned it because, as he confessed to me with characteristic frankness, "it did not begin to be interesting till near the end." He would speak with lightness of his early works, "Le Villi" and "Edgardo," and tell you that he dated the commencement of his career from the production of his "Manon Lescaut."

To quote from his own lips, Puccini was, first and foremost, a dramatic composer. Inspiration seldom came to him till he had seen, or imagined vividly, some drama or dramatic situation. Hence while in America he spent many nights in the Broadway theaters, hunting for subjects as diligently as at Torre del Lago he went duck-hunting.

In Giacomo Puccini we mourn a composer to whom countless thousands owe much pleasure of a kind, and a plain-sailing soul, free from the conceits which too often make musicians unsupportable to the non-musical, and always human. His feet were firmly planted on the earth, his eyes were bent, not on the stars above, but on the world around him—the world which he knew best and could interpret, tunefully and with eloquence, if not greatly.

# America's Concern in the Chinese Brawl

By UPTON CLOSE

Is the alliance of Japan, Russia, and China to be the fruit of China's internecine strife? If it is, what will Uncle Sam do about it?

WITH the moral and probably the financial support of Karakhan, Soviet Russia's Envoy to the Far East, two notable Chinese Christians, a statesman and a soldier, have carried out a coup which puts a period to the Chinese Republican experiment, and which places them in control of Peking's military and international affairs. The statesman is C. T. Wang, American university graduate, former General Secretary of the Chinese Y. M. C. A., member of Sun Yat-sen's first Republican Cabinet, pioneer of China's spinning industry at Shanghai, outstanding Chinese diplomat at Paris and Versailles, Special Commissioner who received the Shantung Railway and Tsingtao back from Japan, negotiator of a rejected treaty with Russia. The soldier, more often mentioned in the news despatches, is Feng Yu-hsiang, China's Christian general, who rose to prominence under Wu Pei-fu, only to throw him over in this crisis.

Chinese Christians—protégés of the American Y. M. C. A. and Methodist Church—working under the encouragement of an Armenian who is the representative of Communist autocracy, might be thought paradoxical enough. But there are more paradoxes to follow. From the days of the Japanese invasion of Shantung, C. T. Wang has been the outstanding protagonist in diplomacy for China's rights under Japanese assault. Chang Tso-lin, ex-bandit King of Manchuria, has been known for his acquiescence in Japanese penetration—at times he has been regarded as a Japanese agent. Wang's Christian associate Feng fought the most bitterly of all Wu Pei-fu's commanders against the Manchurian Chang two years ago, and it was his division that crushed Chang's flank and sent him fleeing back beyond the Great Wall. And yet to-day it is Wang and Feng who have made possible Chang's re-entry into Chinese affairs by treacherously taking Wu Pei-fu in the rear as Wu was holding the passes at the Great Wall.

## *Where Wang is Cock o' the Walk*

TO-DAY Wang sits in the grand Foreign Office in Peking, having absorbed the powers of President and Cabinet. He is having his day of gloating over his rivals in China's diplomatic clique: W. W. Yen and Wellington Koo, whom his supporter General Feng has

thrust aside with force. Yet Wang is too widely experienced a man to be actuated alone by motives of jealousy. His quarrel with his rival diplomats has been their subservency in foreign affairs to England and America. He has seized this opportunity to attempt a gigantic—an amazing scheme. And China's Cromwell, who handles the military side, holds Peking and watches Chang Tso-lin's Japanese-equipped Manchurian and White Russian regiments march past Peking toward the Yangtze Valley, where Wu Pei-fu's lieutenants make a last stand for the régime of democratic experiment, and its attendant disruption and corruption.

## *The Russian Model Preferred*

C. T. WANG, one of the originators of the democratic experiment in 1911, still a young man, is thoroughly convinced of the unadaptability of party government to China. He has followed Sun Yat-sen in his belief that Soviet Russia supplies the suggestion for a more workable type of democracy, founded on the ancient Chinese self-governing units of guild and village commune, with a dictatorship or autocracy in charge of national affairs. In international relations he believes that it is time for China to cut loose from the hegemony of the Peking diplomatic corps, and particularly of the British and American Legations. And yet no one better understands or is more friendly to Americans and Britons.

How are Wang and Feng going to utilize the Japanese-influenced Manchurian despot whom they have let into China? Thus far the only factor for union since their coup has been a mutual cause against Wu Pei-fu. If Wu fights to the bitter end, he may compel his Peking and Manchurian opponents to hang together long enough to effect an understanding on fundamental questions. Wu is not the type that takes ship for Japan at the first reverse. His stubbornness in defeat may cause him to be of this peculiar service to his enemies.

What does a compromise between the Christian soldier and statesman and the Manchurian ex-bandit King imply? Internationally it implies a division of political influence in China between Russia and Japan. Japan and Russia must either quarrel over this or come to an understanding. To such an understanding China would be third party.

And the predicted tripartite alliance of Pacific Asia would be born. It would inevitably be anti-American in spirit. Such a development would be an event of the first magnitude in America's history.

Sooner or later it must come, and it will come out of developments in China, whether of the present crisis or not. We are only at the climax of the present drama, and further sudden reversals of situation may take place, *à la Chinois*, in its *dénouement*. However it turns, Japan and Russia, or Japan alone, will benefit. America will correspondingly lose.

The open door will swing. International equilibrium on the Pacific will be upset. The former is more an American fetish than a fundamental matter for American trade. If America's trade with Japan proper and Manchuria be taken as an index, China under Japanese control will do as much business with us as China free. American capital would have to share dividends. But it would also share risk. And it has shown that it leans to safety rather than boldness.

## *Something We Cannot Afford to See*

IT is the second factor—equilibrium of power on the Pacific—that matters. Three years ago the American Government summoned a conference of nine Powers in Washington, its chief motive being to make the Pacific safe from military competition and insure the equilibrium of the Pacific Powers. Which, to speak directly, meant to make China safe from Japan. Theoretically the American doesn't give a hang what becomes of China. But in the last resort he cannot endure to see the Chinese storehouse of man power and materials open to the use of a third party. In the Washington Conference Japan submitted gracefully, and signed mutually self-abnegative agreements drafted particularly with her in mind, committing herself to "refrain from" taking advantage of conditions in China in order to seek special rights or privileges which would abridge the rights of subjects or citizens of friendly states, and from countenancing action inimical to the security of such states.

Americans settled back with their usual gratified sigh: "Well, that's that. Now we can think of something else."

The Nine Power Treaty made at Washington is as toothless as a new-born babe—as unenforceable as a marriage