



Lurline, in full costume, advanced into the illuminated zone.—Page 40.

A Place with the Stars

BY LAWRENCE REAMER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDWARD HOPPER

THOUGHTS of what her friends later described as her career never troubled Lurline Pomeroy's placid youth. She knew she had a voice, else she could never have sung at home nor in the church choir. Mrs. Pomeroy loved best to hear her in the loft of the First Unitarian Church, since her mind was not likely in that solemn place to wander off to questions of her duties as a hostess, such as the certainty of an adequate supply of blueberries for supper the next day or the assurance that the new hired girl from Boston had put the cot into the tower room as she had told her to. Andrew Platt also liked best to hear Lurline in church.

He must have shown especial pleasure

one Sunday else Betty Wilson would not have smiled at him so mischievously when they met two days later in the post-office.

"It really is a joy to watch you in church, Andrew Platt," she said, puckering her turned-up little nose. "I think some days you must be listening to the angels singing—or one angel anyhow."

"If you listened, Betty," he answered sternly, for humor was not Andrew's characteristic, "half as hard as you watch people at church, you would learn an awful lot that will do you good some time."

"If I loved to hear a bird sing so much as all that," was the Parthian shot as she turned at the door, "I'd get a cage and put her in it."

Andrew possessed already a comfortable cage for this song-bird. It stood back from the main road half a mile from the village. It had been the Platt homestead for several generations. Now it sheltered only Andrew; but its cool hallways, spruce with spotless matting and ornamented at intervals with sea-shells, its prim furniture and Biblical collection of prints, now awaited Lurline. She knew it.

"We'll just wait a little while, you and I, Andrew," she would say when this self-contained lover exhibited what might have been mistaken for impetuosity. "I must help mother a little longer. We have lots of time."

So life passed happily for the only dwellers in Highview interesting to readers of this chronicle. Especially during the winter months, when only occasional parties sought out Pomeroy's, was existence placid. Yet it was at this period of the year that the serpent came. There was nothing snaky about Mrs. Cabot Amory or any of the friends who motored up with her in the party from Boston. Yet the analogy holds.

"You have a voice," she said to the gentle Lurline after she had sung for these visitors, who were too sleepy after their long tramp in the winter air to settle down to auction. "I say you have a voice."

Lurline smiled amiably. She could not exhibit surprise at the news.

Mrs. Cabot Amory was vital. There was electricity in her tone and in her glances.

"When I say voice," she went on, sparkling with emphasis, "I mean a genuine voice, meant for the world, for the great public of every nation. You have such a gift, Miss Pomeroy. It would be a shame not to make use of it."

Lurline, who had planned her future to her own satisfaction, smiled amiably.

"I am sure of what I say," Mrs. Amory went on. "You're not the first musical genius I've brought out. There were two young violinists in East Boston that owe their careers to me. Then there was a pianist."

This artistic philanthropist might have added that few musical geniuses could

escape her once she got on their trail. She could smoke out the most elusive. But she was not by way of telling all she knew. Else she might have added that the geniuses of the violin were lost somewhere in the humble obscurity of vaudeville theatre orchestras, while the pianist was glad of the opportunity to earn his food and drink by grinding out the accompaniments to the cinemas exhibited in a dingy shack on the Maine coast.

"Such a voice," Mrs. Amory concluded, "belongs to humanity. You must cultivate it."

By this time Mrs. Pomeroy, attracted by the pontifical manner of the speaker, stood by Lurline with her arm through hers.

"You know Pettigiani-Butt?"

Rather indifferent ignorance on this subject gazed from the faces of the two women.

"Pettigiani-Butt is not only the best singing teacher in Boston, she is a real authority on the voice." Here the lady seemed to jump, as it were, with both her dainty, high-heeled slippers on the word "real."

The Pomeroy's, mother and daughter, still failed to reveal in their polite attention to the conversation of a guest any excitement corresponding to Mrs. Amory's eagerness.

"Do you know what Eames—Emma Eames—said to my brother-in-law, who knows a lot of the opera people and meets no end of musicians at the St. Botolph Club? Well, she said—and she didn't have to because she doesn't even know Pettigiani-Butt—she said that so far as she could see, nobody in Boston need go to Europe to study while there was such a teacher here. And Eames knows."

Still the spark would not ignite.

"And Farrar? She told a woman I met last year at York Harbor, one of a committee that asked her to sing in a charity concert at the Copley-Plaza—she couldn't do it though—that the one thing she regretted was that she had never known Pettigiani-Butt while she lived in Melrose."

Naturally the talk of these celebrities had its eventual effect on Lurline. Mrs. Amory, with the persistence of the hunter for undiscovered genius by which she

might still amplify her own importance, kept at her task.

An undeniable interest was awakened in Lurline's mind. Did this talent really mean all this experienced woman of the world, who talked with such familiarity of this great singer and that, was daily telling her? Of course, her ambitions had never allowed her, even under the visitor's most enthusiastic predictions, any aspirations to an operatic career. But if she studied, sang in concert, say, at the Symphony Hall, wouldn't the satisfaction of this experience after all be worth the trouble?

"Of course, dear," Mrs. Amory explained, "you could sing in concert if you wanted to. Look at Alma Gluck. But I wouldn't try to advise you. Leave it to Pettigiani-Butt. She can say, after she has heard a few notes: 'This is a voice for the opera,' or 'This is a voice for concert.'"

When the visit of the party was at an end and the three motors which were to carry them back to Boston stood before the door, Mrs. Cabot Amory lingered to give Lurline her card. She was to come to her some time within the month. She would have a little tea with only the most musical and appreciative people to hear her, and, most important of all, she would have a chance to meet the great Pettigiani-Butt, who, with the certainty of the three spinning sisters, would decide just how golden would be her future.

Andrew thought very little of the whole scheme. Even the predictions that Lurline brought back with her could not add a rosy hue to the plan.

"You sing well enough for us, Line, mother and me. What's going to come of all this? And where do I come in?"

"But, Andrew," Lurline's voice was as gentle as it ever had been, her smile as melting in its amiable womanliness, "you know you said you'd wait a year or two."

"Well, what does this, this old Mrs. What's-her-name want of you?" Andrew almost succeeded in counterfeiting bad temper.

Lurline dismissed the subject by putting her arm about his neck and telling him not to worry, that everything was going to be all right.

She was already enrolled as a pupil of Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt. That distinguished person seemed famous, intensively rather than extensively. Most people to whom Lurline spoke confessed they heard the name for the first time. On the other hand her admirers appeared to have heard much of her frequently.

"If you ask any musician," was Mrs. Amory's explanation, "you will then learn what Pettigiani-Butt really is in the professional world."

She tried the girl's voice not in her own studio but in the drawing-room of Mrs. Amory. The celebrated pedagogue must have ended her own singing days long before. Report was that they had been brief, but she retained a resemblance in at least one respect to a singer. She was bird-like, even if she suggested with her fingers, bony as talons, and her long nose like a beak, a bird of prey rather than a feathered vocalist. She had a bonnet, moreover, of a kind rarely seen in these years. It was flat, modestly decorated with a few heart's-ease scattered about on its shiny velvet roof and apparently attached to its wearer by strings which, for purposes of greater security, crossed in the back and tied under her chin. But the device, ingenious as it seemed, was in practice a failure.

At the first sensation of excitement the bonnet fell over backward. If the excitement of the wearer was not too great she slapped the headgear back in place with a practised wave of her hand. If the emotional crisis was prolonged, however, the bonnet rested on the back of the lady's neck until outside assistance restored it to its throne.

Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt shook hands with Lurline; then, while engaged in saluting Mrs. Amory, observed:

"She has the singer's throat."

She drew off her worn gray gloves, for she was to play Lurline's accompaniments.

"Let us hear a scale," she said from the piano-stool. "I call that the naked voice. It shows what the material is."

The girl stood by the piano singing after the scale some of the songs she had learned at home. The expert knew just enough of music to get through with the simple accompaniments. At last the music stopped.

"Christine Nilsson," proclaimed the sibyl. "At first I said: 'What is that voice? I thought I heard Emma Albani, my old friend.' But I said to myself: 'Pettigiani-Butt, listen carefully. You know you are wrong.' As I listened I suddenly recognized the timbre of Christine, with whom I sang so much in Italy. Mrs. Amory, you have brought Christine Nilsson back to the world. You are a wonderful discoverer of the musical genius."

The bonnet as a gauge of Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt's excitement slipped down her back. But she was still in control of her emotions, so one of the talons ascended, and, with the ease of long practice, slapped it down into place again.

Mrs. Amory looked deprecatingly self-conscious. Lurline, never having heard of either of these great ladies of operatic history, did not understand just how she had come through the test.

"You have a great future, young lady," the teacher said directly to her, pulling off the gloves a second time when she saw unmistakable signs of tea. "What a lucky teacher to have such a voice to train!"

So she returned to Highview as a pupil of this teacher who was certain to accomplish such wonders in developing her natural talents. Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt's own operatic career was shrouded in the mystery of the past. Yet there were still some who remembered the girl from a Vermont town who studied for several years at the conservatory, singing all the while in a church choir, and then went to Italy to begin her operatic career. It must have been brief, for she was soon seen again in Boston, taking again her former place in the choir to hold it for years. What contributed more importantly to her material comfort was marriage with Adam Butt, an official of the water department, who died some years afterward. Her grief could scarcely be described as a fat one, although there was enough of a legacy to maintain her modestly. She continued to teach, and, by degrees, the saga of her greatness attained a local acceptance, fiercely proclaimed by a few, if never wide-spread.

There were ample Pomeroy means for

Lurline's adventure, and Mrs. Amory talked vaguely of the wealthy men eager to lend financial aid to such artistic benevolences. The plan at first was for Lurline to journey to Boston and take two lessons a week. It soon became evident that she would have to move there for the winter.

"Cut it all out, Line," Andrew advised pathetically when the accumulation of sudden plans almost overwhelmed him. "Let's get married now. You can still help your mother in the summer. I'll get you a car of your own so you can come over to her at any time."

Lurline shook her head. "I've gone into it now, Andrew. I must stick to it for a while. It's February. In May I'll be back here and we'll be as much together as ever."

So she went with her mother to Boston. With the obstinacy so often united to amiability and sweetness of character she refused to listen to every departure from her plan that he, in his affection, suggested to her. In spite of occasional visits to Boston, he was lonely in the house he was waiting for her to share with him.

He showed his sense of desertion as he walked slowly along the road homeward at six o'clock one evening. Betty Wilson stood again on the steps of the post-office. She was waiting to help on his way the father now so ill with rheumatism that he could scarcely go to and fro every day to fulfil the duties of post-master.

"Hello, Andrew," Betty called out as she opened the door that he might lose no word of what she meant to say. "Do you remember what I told you about a singing bird? Aren't you sorry you didn't buy the cage and lock the door?"

Andrew trudged along without an attempt to answer Betty. She could be at times pretty fresh, although she was a nice girl. Yet he also felt, with a certain uncomfortable sensation, that she spoke the sense of the community in regard to Lurline and him.

The winter in Boston passed. When the Pomeroy's returned, Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt was with them. She was conducting the musical education of Lurline with

frenetic energy. In spite of the season, the black velvet bonnet came along with her. An old-fashioned parasol no larger than a soup-plate protected her from the sun. Half a dozen times a day her sensitive head-dress slipped its moorings and hung over the back of the gifted lady's neck. The greater part of every day was spent in an impromptu studio in the barn by Lurline and her teacher. Often the villagers lingered in its neighborhood to hear the strumming piano, the excited directions of the professor, and the thin, colorless cantillation of the girl.

Andrew realized he was losing in his struggle against the musical career. With all her New England shrewdness, Mrs. Pomeroy was falling under the influence of the teacher. Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt was indefatigable. Her energy was demoniacal. She neither slumbered nor slept at her task. She, of course, regarded Andrew in the light that honest suitors always stand in when they dare to lift their eyes to a possible musical star. They are anathema.

Europe came as the dramatic climax of the autumn. But why Europe? The opera-houses were closed by the war. Singers were crowding to these shores as fast as they could get here. Then why Europe? Lurline smilingly referred to her teacher for all explanations. Mrs. Pomeroy, who also appeared to be in favor of this usual plan, followed her daughter's example.

"In the first place," explained Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt, "it may be possible for Lurline to make her *début* somewhere. Besides, Europe gives a certain veneer to the singer, a certain *je-ne-sais-quoi* which is indispensable. Oh, yes, there must be Europe somewhere in every singer's training."

Then the velvet bonnet, having fallen from grace under the influence of its wearer's emotions, was vigorously flapped into place. Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt evidently wanted a trip to Europe.

That night Andrew, having brought Mrs. Pomeroy home from the parting on the Boston pier, was wandering in his usual deserted manner of these days to his own home. Betty Wilson was stooping to lock the door of the post-office.

"Father's so bad now," she explained, "that I've come down every day for two weeks to do his work for him. Looks like this cold spring weather was almost worse than winter for him."

She was a fine girl, courageous and loving, was Betty, even if she did love to tease a fellow once in a while; so ran Andrew's thoughts.

"What are you doing to-morrow, it's Sunday?" asked the man, who was walking with her a short way back along her road. "You can't be busy."

She had nothing to do in the afternoon when her father had eaten his dinner. She thought of going to church.

"I'll come around at three," was Andrew's substitute, "and take you out in my new car. We'll take a long ride."

And Lurline was little more than out of sight of land.

During the months that followed various reports came in the letters from Europe. Now Lurline was going to make her *début* at Monte Carlo in "Faust." Then the important event was to take place at Barcelona, and "Lucia di Lammermoor" was to be the medium. It was the teacher who supplied most of the information. Andrew heard so many different stories that he grew indifferent to all, especially as he had little idea of what all the excitement was about anyway.

"I want to know!" suddenly exclaimed Betty Wilson, who was still *in loco parentis* at the post-office, one morning, "Lurline Pomeroy's here. She and that old woman got back last night."

Andrew was still enough of the accepted suitor to hurry to the house. Mrs. Pomeroy confirmed the news. Lurline was so tired she had gone to bed. Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt explained where she was by walking directly into the room. Her bonnet trembled at the sight of him, heaved at the strings, and seemed likely to execute the usual manœuvre. The wearer's hand held it firmly in place, however, until the crisis was passed.

"I tell you, Mr. Platt"—she had never recognized him as a suitor of the girl and had rarely taken so much notice of him, although she now seemed to feel the need of explanation to somebody.

"Europe is no place to-day for a pure American girl. My, what a change from my day! Merit is the last thing in the world that counts. Talent, bosh—there was a wonderful voice like Lurline's, a beautiful girl with a repertoire of six operas. And I brought her home rather than have her put up with what a girl has to go through there now."

Of course, Andrew did not have the slightest idea whether Lurline knew six operas or not. But her teacher perfectly well knew that she didn't. She had learned the principal arias in them with comparative surety, but there was still much of which she knew nothing.

Lurline seemed pale when she came into the room to greet him. He wondered why she should be so tired and have such deep rings under her eyes after her long sleep.

"Now you're going to stay at home, girl, aren't you?" he said, moving close to her that he might reach his arm about her neck. "Stay home and let me love you for a while anyhow."

Lurline submitted prettily. She was going to Boston the next day, however, and then to New York. Andrew sighed discontentedly. Their departure was postponed for several days that Lurline might give a concert for the Red Cross, on which Mrs. Pomeroy's heart seemed irretrievably set. The basement of the First Unitarian Church was crowded. The girl sang all the arias her teacher had drilled her in.

Mrs. Cabot Amory, who at one time had been the active god in the machine controlling Lurline's destiny, had now disappeared. Her interest, at least in the girl, was entirely satisfied. Protégées must become promptly great to occupy such important attention after the first exciting splash of discovery. Indifferent as she had become to the fortunes of this reincarnation of Christine Nilsson there was a blind 'cellist in Lowell of whom her friends were beginning to hear a great deal.

So the girl and her mother passed through Boston without recognition. The old woman still worked with her frenzied energy. She spent so many hours in the girl's training every day. She spoke of having sacrificed her other pupils.

Whether or not she ever had any, none was visible. She wrote to agents, bombarded the opera companies for a hearing, and kept up a sputtering energy which appeared to accomplish little. Lurline's preparation, extending a little over a year, had not been, in reality, long enough to accomplish much. The Pomeroy resources were not yet exhausted. There was still enough to keep Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt's velvet bonnet intermittently disturbed.

Lurline aided her teacher. She stood endlessly at the piano. She smiled and pirouetted, despaired, or raved as the dramatic intent of the operatic scenes demanded. Thin and tired-looking, a spot of red burned feverishly on each cheek. She accepted unquestioningly the explanations of her teacher. The stronger mind of the older woman dominated her own.

It was she who brought her eventually to the Metropolitan Opera House for an audition. These tests of voices took place every second Tuesday afternoon. Ambitious singers of all kinds were there: women who had known long years of routine in Europe; girls who were just out of the studio and ought to have been there still; all kinds and conditions of adherents of the art vocal had gathered in the gloomy vastness. At an upright piano sat the accompanist with a bunch of electric lights to relieve the darkness.

A black-bearded man with an expression of intense boredom occupied an orchestra seat remote from the applicants. A thin-faced man sat near him. He was an eminent conductor. Between the two, and, speaking now to one and now to the other, was a smooth-faced man with eyeglasses who seemed to defy anything in creation to interest him, so thorough was the *ennui* of his manner. One after the other the women progressed from the orchestra or arose from the places they occupied on the stage to sing at the piano. Her teacher arose when Lurline's turn came and also walked to the piano. The accompanist stared.

"One is enough," he observed.

She handed him some sheets of music. "'Faust,' first, please. It is her favorite rôle."

He began the opening phrases of the

Jewel Song. Lurline assumed a theatrical pose. She stood as her teacher had told her she must, hands crossed at her waist and her arms akimbo, so that thin elbows stuck out conspicuously. A simper was on her face.

"What have we got here?" the bored man with glasses asked of his comrade.

The light cast cruel shadows on the girl's thin face. She was not without cosmetics, which added to the touching grotesqueness of her looks. In a voice, always more or less colorless and now sadly worn by the relentless practice on false principles and the effort to increase its volume beyond all its natural capacity, she began the song.

"O Dieu, que des bijoux," she went on, amateurishly executing the florid runs and ending finally on the high note quite off the key.

"Thank you!" came from the darkness of the auditorium.

Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt dashed out into the circle of light. "But Miss Pomeroy has other arias here," she began. Another woman was already advancing to take her place at the piano. The teacher stared. Lurline seemed in a trance.

"Would you mind," asked the musician politely, "making way for this lady?"

It was only then that Lurline moved from the assumed attitude. Her teacher grasped her wrist and the two women moved out of the ring of light into the dark corners of the stage. Another voice was already singing the Gounod music as they passed out of sight.

"He has our address, the manager's secretary has," Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt whispered to Lurline. "Of course, we will hear from him. I watched them, and the one with the glasses turned and said something to the other as soon as you came on the stage."

It was the next week that Lurline went through the same test before another manager. He carried a troop of warbling bedouins over the country, paying them barely enough to live on and working them so hard that he needed an entirely new supply every year. He had no opera-house, so heard the aspirants to the diminished operatic glories he was able to provide in a concert-hall. Mrs.

Pettigiani-Butt was very much encouraged because, after hearing Lurline in the "Air de Bijoux," he allowed her to sing also "Ah, fors é lui." He explained this interest to the accompanist by saying he wanted to hear if she really was as bad as he thought.

Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt was fertile in apologies. She had to have some explanation of these repeated failures after all the grandiose predictions of two years. Yet it must be said that she had for the victims of her machinations this time two souls guiltless of all suspicion of self-interest and ignorant of the world that lay beyond their Connecticut hills.

Nor was the old schemer to be looked upon as designing in an evil sense. It flattered her vanity to have a pupil that she could carry from one impresario to another and whose future she could discuss with musical agents. She lived again in an atmosphere of professional activity that had not blown for years against the dingy windows of her modest flat in Boston.

"Lurline, you need the stage," was her sudden declaration to the girl one morning. "Often has Christine Nilsson, whom you so resemble, said that a singer of dramatic temperament like yours could never show what she could do without the help of illusion. You need theatre to appear at your best. Then we will hear what these men have to say."

A few days afterward Lurline stood in the atelier of a costumer. He was making the first dress for "Marguerite" of the old-fashioned kind that nobody had ordered in years. The long train of white cloth, the bodice of the same material buttoned up the back, and the high collar were popular in this opera forty years before. The leather girdle and bag, the yellow wig, with two long strands of plaited hair falling down her back—this was the incarnation of Goethe's heroine as the first audiences to hear Gounod's music had gazed on her. It had a decided psychological effect. The girl felt the fulfilment of her ambitions a little nearer when she looked at herself in the wig and dress. Surely the end could not be far off when she had come to the need for such tools of her art.



An east wind was sweeping through the street.—Page 40.

In the sitting-room of their modest quarters in an apartment-hotel, Lurline indulged in these hopeful thoughts. There were still traces of her regular beauty in the face that had lost none of its amiability and loveliness of expression. Yet she looked sadly worn. Only in the

middle twenties, she might already have passed years in the career she was planning to enter. Her faded blue eyes had already an expression of ineffable weariness.

But the eyes of Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt burned with the unquenchable fire of

her energy. She again assailed the Metropolis Opera House. She haunted the place. When her letter brought a polite intimation that one audition only was considered necessary, she called in person to explain that Miss Pomeroy had been too ill to do herself justice. When she could no longer gain admittance to the office of the secretary, he found her awaiting him in the morning outside his office. When he declined at that hour he found her with the patient Lurline on this occasion waiting to intercept him on the homeward path. Following the line of least resistance, he at last succumbed. It could do no harm. Then anything was better than this old woman on his doorstep.

Again the electric lights made a ring of white in the blackness of the empty stage. Lurline's turn came. Already the accompanist at the teacher's request was playing the opening notes of the Jewel Song again. Suddenly Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt rushed into sight out of the darkness. She stooped to place on the stage a small gilded casket. The same judges, sitting in the orchestra seats, stared in astonishment. At last they were interested in what was going to happen.

Lurline, who had dropped into a chair at the darkest corner of the stage, was by degrees released, with the aid of her teacher, from the draperies in which she was closely wrapped. She was revealed in the shadows dressed in the old-fashioned costume of Goethe's heroine. The music continued. Her teacher, walking a few feet before her and indicating the hesitating, artificial gait at which "Marguerite" should advance, led the girl, before she disappeared into the darkness again, almost to the centre of the stage.

Then Lurline, in full costume, advanced into the illuminated zone. The few lights fell in irregular splotches on this odd figure. The rouge seemed to leap from her cheeks. The black marks over her eyes exaggerated their slight color. The other girls waiting to be heard sprang up in their seats to stare, snickered audibly, or gazed in silent apprehension of some near evil at this strange figure. Lurline seemed surprisingly self-possessed. She stooped to open the gilded papier-mache

casket and took out the mirror, after she had slipped the imitation pearls about her neck. Just as constrainedly, with the same worn, lustreless tones, and the same amateurish technique, she sang the aria.

"Thank you," came again from the cavernous blackness of the auditorium. Had not the effort to smother laughter been audible in the tone?

Her teacher received Lurline when she had returned to the region of darkness. She slipped a long cloak over her shoulders. Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt strained her ear at every sound. She had confidently believed that the officials of the opera-house would rush back to congratulate her and immediately begin to bargain for Lurline's services. With deliberate delay she enclosed the girl in scarfs and veils until every trace of her costume was concealed. But not a word was spoken. They slowly found their way out the side door. An east wind was sweeping through the street. Even the older woman felt it, and pulled up her worn fur about her neck. No taxi was in sight. Lurline, shaking with a cough that the damp gale striking her warm body had caused, sought refuge in the shelter of the glass storm-doors until her teacher appeared triumphantly in a cab.

The two awaited somewhat more eagerly than usual a word from the opera-house. The ambulant entrepreneur had absolutely refused to be caught by the persistent Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt. He had taken to the road to discipline his bedouins and was free from her onslaughts. Lurline, coughing to such a degree that her practice was temporarily omitted while she confined herself to dramatic action, grew soon too weak to be other than listless about the event of her experiment in costume. Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt had not let the operatic grass grow under her feet. One morning she came up from breakfast—Lurline was too weak that day to arise from the lounge—waving triumphantly a letter.

"Bimbini wants you," she exclaimed. "The great Alfonso Bimbini of the Chicago Opera wants you. Listen."

Then she read a coldly formal announcement that Miss Pomeroy could be heard at one of the auditions on a date



"When could I travel, do you think?"—Page 42.

they might settle later, although the management could hold out no encouragement, as the company was already complete for next season.

"They always say that," the professor interrupted, "so they can get you cheap when the time for business comes."

Lurline lay back on the pillow placidly following the older woman's words. The

letter had been the result of the usual invincible process of nagging and pestering.

"When will you be able to start to Chicago?" she asked suddenly with the old fire of energy in her eye. "This is Tuesday. How about Thursday? I'll telegraph and then have the porter get the berths."

By night the girl was obviously ill.

The cough racked her thin frame. An ominous glow came and went on her cheeks. The doctor, summoned for them by the hotel, found her fever high.

"When could I travel, do you think?" she asked feebly as he sat at the rickety table writing out a prescription.

"Travel?" he asked in astonishment.

"She must go soon to Chicago," explained her teacher.

"No, no," emphatically corrected Lurline, with such sudden positiveness that the other woman stared at her. "I want to go home—as soon as possible."

He shook his head. She must wait until the next morning, when he would call. She was limp and weak then, but the drugs had lessened the fever. She seemed to gain some strength during the day. Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt had written Mrs. Pomeroy that Lurline would soon be home for a few days' rest.

Lurline, who had dictated the letter, suddenly said:

"Ask Andrew to meet me."

The writer paused in surprise for a second. Lurline had not mentioned his name in months, nor had any letters passed between them.

With a determination that seemed impossible to the frail girl, she set herself to the task of gathering strength for the journey. She never spoke of music. Her teacher was silent on the subject. At the end of a week they started to Boston. As the train moved out of the station the spirit of the veteran warrior could no longer be repressed.

"What a piece of bad luck!" she observed to nobody in particular. "And Bimbini wants you so in Chicago."

But Lurline heard her. She gave her a singularly intense look that must have gone through the old woman. She was silent. In the cold South Station was only Mrs. Pomeroy.

"And Andrew?" asked the girl, after her mother had enclosed her in an embrace of infinite tenderness.

"He couldn't come," was the simple response.

Mrs. Pomeroy led Lurline into the room she had occupied in the old house. It was still ornamented with the trinkets of her girlhood. The fatigue of the journey had caused her to begin coughing again. Her mother helped her to bed. She patted the pillow under her head.

"I'll get some tea and toast, darling," she said, "but be back in a minute."

"Tell me first," she said, drawing her head down close to her lips. "Where was Andrew to-day?"

There was a minute—oh, such a long minute—of silence. Then, in tones of cheerful indifference, came the words:

"Didn't you know, Lina, he and Betty Wilson were married yesterday? They're on their wedding trip."

The snow fell heavily that night. It continued all the next day. Then the cold sun came. The blind was raised for Lurline to look out from her bed. So she saw the world for the last time as pure and white as she had always supposed it to be.

It was frozen hard when the day came for the procession to the cemetery. The few mourners that gathered in the living-room were delayed. Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt was made late by the storm. She entered carrying a huge box. With as much solemnity of demeanor as she could summon, she went straight to Mrs. Pomeroy, lingering still by Lurline's bed.

"I have brought her 'Marguerite' costume," she whispered dramatically to the dead girl's mother. "I think she—I think Lurline ought to wear it. You know 'Marguerite' was her favorite rôle."

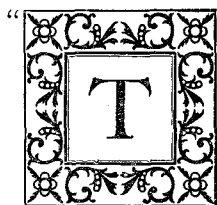
Mrs. Pettigiani-Butt spoke as if she believed it.



Lilies and Languors

BY EDMUND LESTER PEARSON

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD BOOKS



O give a work of pure moral sentiment, united with the most elevated literary character, has been the aim. Grace in the style and refinement in the ideas, were inseparable from such a plan."

So wrote the editor of "The Opal: A Pure Gift for the Holy Days," when that chaste volume appeared in 1848. And as she penned these sentences (I am sure she "penned" them, and doubtless with the quill of a turtle-dove) she composed a text for that flock of literary lambs, that mincing series of gift-books which raged—mildly—in America for about thirty years, beginning in the days when our grandmothers were young.

What a flower-garden of gentility they were, with names like so many sweet symphonies! "The Aloe" and "The Harebell," "The Lily" and "The Violet," "The Hyacinth" and "The Laurel"—their titles soon exhausted all the floral names which seemed sufficiently languishing and melodious. "Hark how the l's ripple through!" So there was "The Ladies' Gift" and "The Ladies' Keepsake" and "The Ladies' Manual" (of "moral and intellectual culture") and "The Ladies' Wreath," and ever so many others beside—all for ladies. The changes were rung on "Casket"—that atrocious word which was so strangely fascinating in the early decades of the nineteenth century. There were "The Casket," and "The Casket of Gems," and "The Casket of Love." There were "Dew Drops of the Nineteenth Century" and "Drops from Flora's Cup, or the Poetry of Flowers." There was "The Pearl, or Affection's Gift," and probably one named for each of the precious stones. "The Snow Flake," "The Offering to Beauty," "The Gift of Sentiment," and "The Rose of

Sharon" (most redoubtable of all for its longevity) fairly represent some of the other titles which appealed to one phase of public taste in the period when young ladies are supposed to have spent hours each day repeating the words "prunes and prisms," to make their mouths small, and when nobody went to bed, but everybody retired.

The origin of the gift-book and the literary annual has to be blamed upon Europe. They soon spread to England, where the first of them appeared in 1823. Within ten years there were sixty-three of them coming out annually, but by 1857 the fad had perished. In America the stream of these delicate volumes arose in 1826, swelled to a flood during the time of the war with Mexico, when about sixty were published each year, and ran dry before the Civil War broke out. Mr. Frederick W. Faxon, whose bibliography of this odd by-path of literature has an introductory chapter distinguished for its genuine appreciation of the gift-book, writes: "By 1860 the American literary gift-book was practically a thing of the past, henceforth only to be found in attics, or second-hand stores."

But how many attics and stores, how many old trunks and boxes, old walnut bookcases and what-nots, contain them to this day! Few are the families which could not unearth a copy of "The Christian Diadem" or "The Moss Rose" or "The Mourner's Chaplet." We may picture Christmas Eve at the "residence" of an American family in 1847—dozens of side-whiskered young gentlemen converging upon the elegant mansion, each with a copy of "The Gift of Friendship" or of "The Young Ladies' Offering" or of "The Annualette," for the modest maiden whom he desired to please. And she, with her perpetually downcast eyes—if we are to believe the pictures in the annuals—must have swooned under the weight of