Lippincott's monthly magazine.
Philadelphia, Pa. : J.B. Lippincott Co., 1886-

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EUTERPE IN AMERICA.

WE all know her well. She is the most condescending of the Muses, and there is scarcely a house where she does not visit, coming informally early in the morning, dropping in during the afternoon, spending a friendly evening; and this so frequently that it may be said she belongs to the family. Her altars, square, grand and upright, are in every house; her priests and priestesses, emotional, high-classical and metronomical, are counted by thousands, and her votaries, young and old, real and hypocritical, by tens of thousands. There can be no doubt that Euterpe is a popular goddess, for her banner waves from every school-house in this school-house-dotted land, from the circus-tents, the chapels, the concert-halls and the beer-gardens: it marches with the star-spangled banner across the Plains and waves from the bows of our vessels under the union jack. There can be no doubt that Euterpe is a reformer, for she has her organs everywhere to sound her praises; printers take her notes and scatter them in sheets through the land; in accordance with her sharp laws there is harmony from North to South; our national brass is toned down, our national swell beaten flat, our independent air in a measure subdued, the absurd crotchets of our military band with its major and staff forced to a thorough change of base, and the quavering symbols of school-girl attempts—of minor importance perhaps, but still menacing future dissonance—laid at rest to pursue the natural tenor of their way in a scale suited to their powers. In spite of these public duties, however, Euterpe has a strong taste for domestic life, and dearly loves the family circle: we too love her in her home-dress, and although we seek her at court and admire her robes of state, most of us like her better when she comes for an informal evening, and takes a chair at our hearthstone. She enjoys hearing us talk of her priests and priestesses, praise for the past, hope for the future, and gossip for the present; she likes to hear us revive the memories of Malibran, Mario, Alboni and Lind, and prophesy wonderful things of young voices just beginning to chirp in various parts of the country; but above all she loves to hear us gossip about Nilsson, Lucca and Kellogg, Capoul, Wachtel and Karl, as well as the other ministering spirits, vocal and instrumental, who now serve in the worship of her temple. Then she takes off her gloves and helps us, inspiring our timid solos and strengthening the faltering chorus, until confidence revives and we join in, grandfathers, grandmothers, babies and all, with an enthusiastic enjoyment which thrills through the ears down into the very heart.

Songs are like people—we have to make acquaintance with them. Now and then there is love at first sight, but in every-day life sudden emotion is rare, and we open our hearts slowly. We hear a song the first time, and vaguely like or dislike it: after a repetition our feelings define themselves more clearly, and gradually the impression grows and fixes itself for ever. Some of us, it is true, are indolent enough to follow public opinion, and admire or dislike according to its fickle judgment: others among us are so egotistical that they must perforce disagree with everybody, and prove their fastidious taste by scorning any melody which is popular—dreadful word!—and by declaring their admiration for the uninterpreted rhapsodies of some musical maniac, whose meaning, if he ever had any, is too deep for human comprehension. But the honest man will judge for himself: he will not pretend to love a stranger at first sight, but having tried him and found him congenial, he will then give him a place in his esteem—a place from which he would no more turn him out than he would discard an old friend because of his age. Old music and old friends! even if old-

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fashioned, a true heart loves them still. Who does not know some lullaby which is always sweet because mother sang it? —some hymn which always brings hot tears because it was softly chanted when the dearest one of all lay cold before us, and its strains mingled with the dreadful realization that we should never see those dear eyes, never hear that voice or listen for that step again on earth? Who does not know some stirring melody which brings back the old camp-ground, the march and the musical echoes of the war, or some love-song whose unexpected chords will rouse even now the old-time blush, the old-time thrill that swept over us when some one sang it so many years ago? "China" is full of memories, "Love's Young Dream" will never grow old; and, not to go so far back, was there not a time when we thought "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp!" the essence of martial music? And so it was when a whole regiment sang it, when two thousand marching feet kept time to it, and when more than two thousand hearts echoed its words as the waving handkerchiefs said good-bye.

Once a gay party sat on the hurricane-deck of a steamer gliding away from the island of Mackinac. The sun was setting, a red glow lingered at the western gate of the Straits, and the outline of the little fort stood out against the sky: we heard the evening gun echoing over the water; we saw the flag lowered; and then a single voice rose in the air from the deck below, singing that sweet old song, the "Isle of Beauty."

> Shades of evening, close not o'er us—
> Leave our lonely bark a while:
> Morn, alas! will not restore us
> Yonder dim and distant isle,

sang the voice, and involuntarily we all turned to gaze back at the darkening island.

> Absence makes the heart grow fonder:
> Isle of beauty, fare thee well!

chanted the voice in all the pathos of tears restrained, and our mirth was hushed. Some one was saying "Farewell!" some one was looking back with sorrowing eyes toward the receding shore, some one was passing through one of those partings that leave a scar behind. Silently we watched the island fade away —a bold headland, a dark spot, a blur, a speck, and then nothing but misty water. We did not see the singer, we knew not who she was, but the song haunted us for many a day. Some months afterward we learned that it was sung by a young girl who was going South in the vain quest for health, leaving the island and a soldier-lover behind her, and gazing back with longing eyes as the steamer bore her away for ever. It seemed to us that a premonition must have filled her heart as she sang, and the notes of the song even now recall a vision of the fading shores, and I hear the sweet voice singing its last farewell.

A limited knowledge of music is now considered an essential part of a young girl's education, and the daughters of our land study music as inevitably as they study French. Go into any boarding-school, and the sounds of conflicting pianos and voices will greet your ear. Go into any house where there are daughters, and you will find piles of sheet-music covering the piano, the stand and the table, while as a side remark it may be noted that the pages are generally in hopeless confusion—a ballad under cover of a cavatina, quadrilles interleaved with oratorios, and heavy sonatas frigidly uncomfortable in the company of frothy waltzes from the latest opera bouffe. In some seminaries the favorite music-teacher is a German, and forthwith all the scholars are introduced to the classical composers, and come forth well drilled in Beethoven and Mendelssohn, Bach and Schumann; they read *Charles Auchester* and form sonata clubs; if they live in the country, they look forward to the annual tours of Theodore Thomas and the Mendelssohn Quintette Club—if they live in New York, they attend the Philharmonics. Other seminaries employ an Italian, and the young buds are therefore expanded under the blaze of Italian music, coming home in full bloom, carrying arias and cavatinas in their hearts, with which they astonish their parents and develop the utmost power of their lungs. These young prima don-

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nas are devoted to Italian opera, and identify the music with their favorite tenor: they hear a new song sung by some great cantatrice, and rush to buy it the very next day, fired by an ambition which does honor to the national fearlessness. Their only grief is that Edwin Booth does not sing. *Hamlet* as an opera, with Booth and Nilsson—imagine it!

There are also many young ladies who have not been trained in either the German or Italian school of music, but, having received instructions from American teachers, come forth with a *pot-pourri* of all nations — a little German, a little Italian, some French, a touch of sacred music, a spice of Scotch ballads, and, last of all, some negro melodies. These singers are perhaps more purely national than the others, for American music at present is but a *pot-pourri*. There are signs of better things, and here and there some melody like Pease's "Miller's Daughter," worthy to take rank with the best of the Old-World songs; but in a broad sweep over the country we find no original national airs save the negro melodies, so called. And, after all, why should they be scorned? Many of them are full of sweetness, others have a wild pathos peculiarly their own, and others still are so rhythmical that the hearer feels as though he was turning in one of the slow-moving tropical dances which perhaps inspired the simple melody. "La Savane," arranged by the wonderful hands of Gottschalk, produces this effect, and his well-known "Banjo" is part of the same phase of feeling. There is a pathos in the air of "Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground" that lingers with the hearer long after the song has died away, and the selection of "Old Folks at Home" by the greatest singer who has of late visited America shows that the negro melodies are recognized as national airs by the musical world. During the war some of the most stirring tunes came up from the South, particularly from the Mississippi River: they were wild and peculiar, the melody and time difficult to catch, and yet haunting the ear persistently. They seemed to have no names, they never appeared in print, but many a returned soldier whistles their fragments, and vainly tries to put them together or recall the minor chords with which they ended. "Dixie," an old Southern melody, was captured and brought North by force, but we cannot domesticate the tune: it is always fleeing "away down South, in the land of cotton," and baffling us with its persistent determination "to live and die" in its distant home. Is it not somewhat remarkable that since the war no new negro melodies have appeared? Some miserable imitations, with all the faults and none of the beauties of the old tunes, have been produced, but these are so evidently manufactured that they do not deserve a place by the side of "Ole Virginny" and "Kentucky Home." Let us hope that time will bring us more of these primitive melodies, so characteristic of Southern America, and that as the West develops the music of the Plains and the Sierras will rise into being, and be found worthy of the wonderful land of its birth.

Music is a real pleasure to the large majority of our population. Those who cannot enjoy it are to be pitied as having lost a sense. If these unfortunates are wise, they will not obtrude their deficiencies, but devote themselves to cultivating their other talents—and they generally have others—as a compensation. But when they persist in talking during the performance of a perfect sonata, or rustling in and out of a concert-hall when the audience are listening in breathless delight to some enchanting voice, then they should be regarded as disturbers of the public peace, and put under bonds. The real music-lovers, however, so far outnumber those who have no "ear"—as the popular phrase clearly expresses it—that Americans may be called a musical people. Not only do they freely lavish money to attract the stars of other skies, but they have some promising young starlings of their own, asteroids in numbers, and a milky way of lesser lights extending from Maine to California. How often are we entertained with "a little music" during our evening-parties! Is there a village so small that it

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holds not its aspiring soprano and romantic tenor? Music in the home circle also affords us much pleasure. The little group around the piano; friends attracted by kindred tastes; winter nights when in the glow of the fire and light of the chandelier many voices join in some gay chorus; summer evenings on the piazza or floating down the river, when, half in moonlight, half in shadow, the harmony of some plaintive duet rises in the still air.

But there is a funny as well as a romantic side to this home music, and the audience, composed of non-singing people, is often amused by the vagaries of the performers. There is, for instance, a musical publication called *The Opera Chorus-Book* which possesses great powers of attraction for our amateurs, especially those beyond the limits of the large cities. Around this talisman they gather with busy interest, and, after a few bars of the "Phantom Chorus" or "Night's Shade no Longer," from *Moses in Egypt*, they settle down upon "Oh Hail Us, Ye Free," from *Ernani*. The lady who plays the accompaniment kindles into enthusiasm at the sight of the heavy black files of notes, and when the signal is given starts off with all her might, determined to win the race in spite of the desperate efforts of the soprano or the roaring of the heavy bass. The opening burst of "Oh ha-a-a-a-il us" is promising, and decidedly in the spirit of the direction at the top of the page, "con brio." The "tempest, the breeze" is a little wavering, and the "wandering winds" would fall into dire confusion were it not for the close-following accompaniment, which pushes them onward at a fearful rate toward the "lightnings" that "lit our path" and the "thunders" that "spake in wrath," until in breathless speed the "fearful breakers" are attained, and each singer pretends not to notice the utter demoralization of the forces. They have got there, no matter how. Then follows the bass solo, and the happy youth to whom it is allotted swells forth on the "monarch o-o-o-ak" with all his strength until the accompaniment, having finished the octaves, trips him up and drives him on again toward the general maelstrom beginning with "farewell to these bowers," where the parts are never known to keep time with each other, and where the only distinguished feature is the bass, who, "ma-adly gla-ad in stor-ormy glee," keeps roaring on to the tumultuous end, drowned out at last, however, by the triumphant accompaniment in thirty-four octaves with the loud pedal down.

Amateurs seem to find great pleasure in fragmentary singing and playing. "I don't remember exactly how it begins, but it is something like this: 'Tum-ti-tum, tum-ti-tum, tum, tum.' And the end is so lovely—just this chord: 'Te-tum.' It harmonizes so beautifully with the whole!" But as the hearer has not heard the whole, he cannot appreciate the beauty. "Have you heard that sweet little thing from *Dinorah?* I do not know it all, but there is one strain that will give you an idea;" and then follow a few notes, cut off in the middle, with no beginning. This interrupted music is very exasperating to listeners, but amateurs have an especial fondness for it, and seldom or never condescend to begin with the opening note and continue faithfully to the end, as the composer probably intended when he gave his loved melodies to the public. Human nature—at least ordinary human nature—loves completeness, and desires a recognized beginning and end to everything. This fragmentary, half-finished music may be interesting to the performers, but to the majority of listeners it is as exasperating as reading a chapter in an exciting novel and then losing the book, or tasting a dainty dish and then being called away suddenly with only the taste to comfort yourself with.

To be a good accompanist is an art by itself. Few pianists know how to subordinate the accompaniment to the voice, and the simple ballad is often marred by loud octaves, or the florid cavatina rendered ineffective for want of a firm and appreciative piano support. In home music the listener is often obliged to imagine the accompaniment, which is suddenly found wanting in the middle of a

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chorus, and during a solo the singer often contents herself with a random chord here and there, changing the effect, and leaving out the delicate shades of expression upon which the characteristic beauty of the air may depend. Among many singers in a large town, one was the favorite with all hearers because of the perfect finish of her accompaniments. Her musical taste was perfect, but her voice, although silvery, was surpassed in power and rich fullness by all the rest; and yet there was a charm in her singing peculiar to itself, and inimitable. This effect was principally owing to the grace of her accompaniment; her touch brought out each note with delicate clearness; she interpreted the composer's idea with exact appreciation, and from the opening to the final chord all was as exquisitely finished as the setting of a royal gem.

Expression is the life of music, whether vocal or instrumental, but the term has as many meanings as there are tastes to be suited. Persons who contract their voices into the finest possible thread of sound, so that you can scarcely hear the long-drawn whispers, are said to sing with "so much expression." Others who select a dreary monotone, rising now and then to a wail, are described as "bringing tears to your eyes;" which indeed they do. Others who alternate between the softest whispers and the loudest shrieks are considered "thrilling," and they merit the adjective if a quiver of every nerve in the body may be called a thrill. It has been said that we should never sing music which we cannot feel: those who have not suffered should not attempt to interpret the songs of suffering, and those who have not loved should not try to express the mystic meaning of love-songs. But this rule is too narrow. It is only applicable to those singers who are devoid of imagination. True musicians identify themselves with the character of a song as a great actor throws himself into his part, and the perfection of the rendition in either case is in exact proportion to the power of imagination.

A party of friends arrived at a country residence, and before going to their rooms paused a moment by the fire in a small parlor near the drawing-room. A few chords on the piano attracted their attention, and presently a voice broke forth in the stirring old song, now too seldom heard, "Bonnie Dundee:"

To the lords of Convention 'twas Claverhouse spoke:
"Ere the king's crown go down there are crowns to be broke;
So each Cavalier who loves honor and me,
Let him follow the bonnet of bonnie Dundee.
Come, fill up my cup, come, fill up my can;
Come, saddle my horses and call up my men;
Come, open the West-port, and let me gae free,
And it's room for the bonnets of bonnie Dundee."

Dundee he is mounted, he rides up the street:
The bells are rung backward, the drums they are beat;
But the provost, douce man, said, "Just e'en let him be;
The town is well rid of that deil of Dundee."
As he rode down the sanctified bends of the Bow,
Each carline was flyting and shaking her pow,
But some young plants of grace, they looked couthie and slee,
Thinking, "Luck to thy bonnet, thou bonnie Dundee!"

He spurred to the foot of the high castle-rock,
And to the gay Gordon he gallantly spoke:
"Your Grace in short space shall have tidings of me,
Or low lies the bonnet of bonnie Dundee.
There are hills beyond Pentland, and streams beyond Forth;
If there's lords in the Southland, there's chiefs in the North;
There are wild dunnie-wassels, three thousand times three,
Will cry, 'Hey for the bonnet of bonnie Dundee!'

"Away to the hills, to the woods, to the rocks!
Ere I own a usurper I'll couch with the fox;
And tremble, false Whigs, though triumphant ye be,
You have not seen the last of my bonnet and me."
He waved his proud arm, and the trumpets were blown,
The kettledrums clashed, and the horsemen rode on,
Till on Ravelston craigs and on Clermiston lee
Died away the wild war-note of bonnie Dundee:
"Come, fill up my cup, come, fill up my can;
Come, saddle my horses and call up my men;
Fling all your gates open, and let me gae free,
For 'tis up with the bonnets of bonnie Dundee!"

The inspiring words seemed to fire the notes, the voice rang out in wild melody, and transported us back to the old days when the Cavaliers galloped through Scotland, and the very accompaniment so entered into the spirit of the air that we seemed to hear the horses' hoofs and see the waving of the riders' plumes over the heather-brae. Some hours afterward we were introduced to

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the singer. We expected to see a vigorous, animated woman, with fire in her eyes and bloom in her cheeks—a very martial maid able to mount and away, to lead an army by the power of her personal enthusiasm. We saw a girl of quiet aspect, pale, delicate and retiring, her little hands too slender for the bridle, her form too fragile for a horseback ride, and her manner timid to a fault. Her life had known nothing more exciting than the little round of events in a still country village, and yet, by mere force of imagination, this child had annihilated time, space and her very identity, and over the Scottish hills, galloping free, rode after the bonnets of bonnie Dundee.

American gentlemen are agreeable, and even chivalrous, but they are, alas! deficient in sentiment. They cannot design and execute a real serenade: they have neither the romance nor the musical ability. Their imagination soars not beyond a brass band in an omnibus wagon at so much an hour, whereas an ideal serenade is a very romantic and even mysterious affair. It requires a moonlight night, a solitary cavalier wrapped in a mantle, a tenor voice mingling with the tones of a guitar, a vine-draped casement above, disclosing an outline, a white hand and two starry eyes. In the hearts of our young girls, even the much-maligned girls of the present day, lingers a genuine love of romance. They would willingly supply the vine-draped casements, the starry eyes, and even furnish the guitars, if cavaliers could be found to enact the rest of the scene. But the cavaliers of the period are not skilled in guitar accompaniments; they are unacquainted with love-songs; and, like Willis's Cupid, they "mightily like their ease." Perhaps the grass is wet—perhaps there are dogs. Happy thought: stay at home. The old-fashioned serenade, therefore, is no longer heard save on the operatic stage. Its successors are the brass band and occasional merry excursions from house to house, when the moonlight calls young hearts abroad, and music bursts forth involuntarily, the language of the summer night. Upon the piazza of a cottage in a large Western town there gathered by chance one evening a band of friends, young ladies and young gentleman of congenial musical tastes, and, tempted by the moonlight, some adventurous spirit proposed a serenading excursion. It was late, but the hour added a charm to the idea, and forth they sallied, two and two, through the quiet streets, reaching at length a stone mansion, where, after cautiously gliding over the grass, they took a position near the lighted windows of the family sitting-room, and opened the performance with "There's Music in the Air," the repetition of the four last lines, *pianissimo*, being considered a thrilling tenor effect. When the last faint sound had died away the singers waited for applause. None came, and an ominous silence reigned. "Try something a little louder," suggested a basso, and "Vive l'Amour" was given with original verses of a humorous nature. Still the same silence. "They are waiting until we have finished: they are afraid we may stop if they applaud," said a soprano. "Do sing 'Upidee!'" pleaded a musical Freshman, and that melodramatic poem was accordingly chanted in rollicking chorus, verse after verse, the insane "yah, yah, yahs," and all, until one of the gentleman, who had advanced nearer the windows, suddenly rushed back with horrified haste, and seizing the sopranos by the arms hurried them down the lawn toward the street, the rest following pell-mell, in wondering alarm. "What was it? what was it?" they cried. "All at family prayers, windows wide open, old gentleman reading at the top of his voice, but you drowned him out with your yahs!" gasped the youth; and the appalled serenaders listened to the tale in speechless horror.

A blight had fallen on the band, and several voices suggested returning home: it was suddenly discovered that the ladies were hoarse, the night cool and the small hours approaching. But the more daring spirits scorned such pusillanimous conduct. "Let us go and serenade Sir Lancelot," they said. This was a tempting proposition. Sir Lancelot was a gallant

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youth of ancient family, whose prowess and knightly beauty had dazzled all eyes. His palatial halls and the Lake diamonds were as yet without a mistress, and visions of a cordial welcome and a carpet dance floated before the eyes of the lady singers. After a long walk to the suburbs of the town the hall towers appeared, and stealing across the broad lawn the serenaders took up a position between the house and a cluster of bushes on the right. The windows of the parlor were lighted, but the closely-drawn shades prevented all prying glances, and the singers, after consultation, decided to open the concert with the Fishermen's Chorus from *Massaniello*. This finished in spirited style, all eyes turned toward the windows, but they remained undisturbed.

"Let us try 'Love's Chidings,'" suggested a sentimental blonde, but the windows had no feeling, to see them almost kneeling, their musical affection revealing, and remained impassive.

"Come, let us go," said Miss Black-eyes. "Lancelot is asleep in his chair, I presume. You know *I* always thought him somewhat prosy."

"Perhaps he is in the back part of the house," pleaded Miss Blue-eyes: "let us try some military air."

So the "Sabre de Mon Père" was given, followed by "Marching Through Georgia," for the war was at that time a vivid memory. Still no response. "Strange he does not appear!" murmured Blue-eyes.

"Oh, *he* doesn't care for military music," observed a tenor: "he wasn't much of a soldier."

"How can you say so," exclaimed Blue-eyes indignantly, "when you know he was severely wounded, and promoted on account of bravery during action?"

"On account of money in pocket," suggested a basso.

"The wound was in his imagination, I suspect," added a tenor.

"The fault *I* find in Lancelot is his intense conceit: he really thinks he is handsome," remarked Miss Carnation.

"Handsome! with that nose!" cried Miss Bluebell.

"If he knew how to talk we could pass over the nose; but he has absolutely no conversation," said Miss Lily, whose eyes were wet with tears of disappointment as she spoke.

"I confess I am sorry," said honest little Daisy: "I hoped for a dance."

"Dance!" echoed all the ladies in high indignation: "you do not suppose we *dreamed* of such a thing as entering his house?"

"Hallo!" exclaimed a tenor who had stepped nearer the bushes to gather a flower, "what's this?"

"Hush! hush!" whispered an agonized voice under the branches: "don't say a word, but stoop down here a moment."

A few seconds later, and the tenor in wild haste hurried the party across the lawn, out the gate and down the street, refusing to answer any questions, and preserving a mysterious silence as to the cause of the sudden retreat. But the way was long, the ladies persistent, and the unfortunate youth was tortured by the weight of displeasure and scorn heaped upon him by the inquisitive daughters of Eve. At length his sister added the last straw: "One would think you were a silly school-boy, Tom!"

"Very well, ladies," stammered the browbeaten victim, "if you must know, here it is. Sir Lancelot has a bathhouse down the hill, and he was just coming back, somewhat — ah, somewhat *deshabillé*, when he saw us at the gate and dived under the bush."

The gentlemen burst into a roar of laughter, peal after peal, until they were exhausted.

"Lancelot has heard the truth, for once," they said at length. "Prosy, is he, Miss Black-eyes?"—"Conceited, Miss Carnation?" — "Handsome! with that nose! Miss Bluebell?"—"Absolutely no conversation, Miss Lily?"

The ladies groaned in spirit. They gave no more moonlight serenades. Blue-eyes smiled.

CONSTANCE F. WOOLSON.

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