



*From a photograph
by Marceau, New York*

OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, IMPRESARIO

BY ACTON DAVIES

THE VARIED CAREER OF A RUNAWAY GERMAN BOY WHO BEGAN HIS LIFE IN AMERICA AS A CIGAR-MAKER AND IS NOW IN THE PUBLIC EYE AS FOUNDER OF THE NEW MANHATTAN OPERA-HOUSE

NO matter from what point of view one regards Oscar Hammerstein—whether as a builder of theaters, an operatic impresario, a composer of comic operas, an inventor of cigar-machines, or merely as a fighting man, always willing and ready to stand up for his rights

—the sheer force of his personality and the innate sense of humor in the man are the two points that make the greatest impression.

On a recent night, late in November, when I climbed to the very top of the Victoria Theater, where he has a hall

bedroom, reserved for himself even on those crowded nights when the "Standing-Room Only" sign is in evidence down-stairs, I found him gathering his household gods together preparatory to taking flight to his new domicile in the Manhattan Opera-House.

"You see," said Mr. Hammerstein, "I always make it a point to live in the

"I am not joking when I say that I always live in one of my theaters. Why shouldn't I, after all? All my boys are married and settled, my unmarried daughter is studying music in England, and my wife lives with her there, and as I have always made it a practise to be Johnny-on-the-spot in all my business ventures, here I am *planté là*, always



THE NEW MANHATTAN OPERA-HOUSE, WEST THIRTY-FOURTH STREET, NEW YORK

theaters I build; then, whatever my losses may be, I save room-rent, anyway. One of my main ideas in building theaters was to get a place where I could be absolutely alone, far away from the madding crowd, where I could write a comic opera or invent a new cigar-cutting machine just on the spur of the moment, as the spirit moved me. And when I built this particular theater, the Victoria, and produced that comic opera, 'The Jersey Lily,' there, I assure you," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "I was never so much alone in my life. Our audiences were never larger than an augmented orchestra. But that's all changed, of course, since I let the educated dogs and trained monkeys come in.

maintaining the *entente cordiale* with my janitor.

"Since you want to interview me, I am perfectly willing to talk about anything except grand opera. You see grand opera is rather a tender subject in my family just now. My boy Willie, who has made such a huge success of the Victoria, here, feels that I am breaking faith with his erudite elephants and trained gorillas by rushing into the impresario business, as I now intend to do.

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

"However, time well tell us more about that. My motto in life has always been, 'The only road to success is to make every preparation for failure,'

so if I fail this time—well, it won't be a new experience. My experience in building theaters has made me immune to that sort of thing.

"Don't ask me too much about my ancestors. If I went back far enough, I am sure I should find that they were very humble persons, who sold shoe-strings, or something like that. All I know is that my father was a very rich man, a Berlin produce-merchant, with an awful temper, which, I fear, in a modified form his son has inherited from him.

"One great thing my father taught me, and that was how not to bring up children. I was one of the awful examples. He had great ambitions for me, and from the time I was eight years old I was in the hands of tutors and teachers from morning till night. At eight o'clock, it was algebra; at nine, Latin; at ten, Greek, until by two o'clock poor little Oscar's head was all of a muddle. At two o'clock a special teacher came to teach me to play the flute. My father knew nothing about that; it was my mother's wish that I should learn this instrument of torture, and I shall never forget how I earned the first real spanking in my young career—the morning when, at my mother's request, I crept into my father's bedroom and awakened him with the strains of 'When the Swallows Homeward Fly.'

"I have never appreciated the flute from that day to this; and subsequent proceedings also turned me against the violin. Nowadays, I can never look a violin in the face without blushing. I stole a violin once, and this is how it happened: I was very nearly sixteen years old. As we grew older, my brothers and I became more and more afraid of our father. His temper was frightful. The only real service he ever did us as children was always to blow his nose violently when he entered the front door. This was our signal to run to cover.

AN UNUSUAL USE FOR SKATE-STRAPS

"One Christmas I was given a pair of skates, one of those old-fashioned pairs with long straps to them. I slipped out one afternoon and went skating. On my return, my father was waiting for me at the door. He didn't say a word, but

took the skates out of my hand, wrenched the straps away from them, and after he had conveyed me to his bedroom, beat me so unmercifully with the straps that I swore then and there not to stay in his house another day. My mother was my only banker, and under the circumstances I did not dare go to her for money. In the drawing-room, where I was subsequently locked up, there were only a grand piano, some valuable pictures, and my father's violin. I picked up the violin and crawled out of the window. I went to a pawn-shop, and received thirty dollars for it. That thirty dollars of stolen money was really the foundation of my fortune, although in justice to myself I should say that years later, before my father died, I sent him from America the finest violin that money could buy. I never saw him again, though, and I fear that to his dying day he looked on me as a hopeless young scoundrel.

"With the thirty dollars in my pocket, I made my way to Antwerp, and there took passage on a sailing vessel—the old Isaac Webb—for America. I shall never forget that trip. After what to me seemed to be about six weeks, we suddenly sighted land, and I prepared to disembark on American soil. To my dismay, however, I found that we were only off the coast of Ireland. From that day to this I have always had a grudge against the Irish, as you may have noticed in some of my fights with the police.

A FRESH START IN AMERICA

"It was the autumn of 1865 when I landed in New York, and three hours after I put foot on American soil I was standing in front of M. W. Mendel Brothers' factory, on Pearl Street, reading a sign which read: 'Cigar-Makers Wanted. Paid While You Learn.' I applied for a position, and was told that until I had learned my business I could draw on the firm for the amount of two dollars a week.

"On that amount of money I lived in New York for nearly a year. Then my salary was suddenly raised. You see I was a restless sort of boy, and was never quite content to do my work exactly as the other men did. Although my

hands might be busy, I couldn't keep my brain still. During those first six months I made an invention of my own which has since practically revolutionized the method of making cigars. The members of the firm were quick to realize my usefulness, and in a comparatively short time I was earning a fine salary. As soon as I left the factory at night I started writing articles on tobacco and the making of cigars. These articles were snapped up readily by several trade-journals, and in 1870, just five years after my landing, I found myself the editor of the *United States Tobacco Journal*. Meanwhile, I had been turning out new processes for cigar-making. I was the first man to hit on the compressed-air process, and it was through my efforts that the cigar industry was carried from the tenement-houses into open-air factories.

HE PLEADS GUILTY TO WRITING MUSIC

"All this time the musical bee was still buzzing in my bonnet. You see, that's one of my failings; I have to write music whether they convict me or not. Through my musical atrocities, I was thrown into contact with a number of theatrical and musical personages. They did not seem to be crazy about my music, but they all liked me. Late in the seventies, I took a lease of the old Windsor Theater, on the Bowery. There I produced a German farce with an unpronounceable name.

"I don't remember a great deal about it, except that there was in it a knight errant who was supposed to die of hunger on the stage. I was just beginning to get 'onto' the American methods of advertising, so, as the play was not drawing as well as I had expected, I went out on the Bowery one night and hired the hungriest-looking little boy that I could find to come and sit in one of the boxes. In the box with the little boy I put a dozen apples, some crullers, and a custard pie, and I informed him that, as soon as the knight errant began to die of hunger, if he would only throw these victuals on the stage I would give him fifty cents after the performance. Then I went behind the scenes to await developments.

"Finally the scene came, but no apples,

no crullers, no custard pie! I rushed furiously into the box for an explanation, and there in one corner, curled up in a chair, was the little rat, fast asleep. He had eaten them all and succumbed!

"While at the Windsor, I became a great friend of Mr. Adolph Neuendorff, who was then the manager of the Thalia. He and I went into partnership, and took the Germania Theater, which is now Tony Pastor's, on Fourteenth Street.

"About this time, in the Berlin papers, I read a good deal about a young stage-manager, named Heinrich Conried, who was also said to be a very fair tragedian. On my advice, Mr. Neuendorff imported him to this country, and he appeared with great success in 'Der Meineidbauer'—'The Perjured Farmer.' Mr. Conried and I had our quarrels even in those days, but I have always said he was a great tragedian. Then Mr. Conried left us and went into the opposition business. He rented the theater which is now Keith's, and brought over Pössart. This venture was not so very successful; but a short time later, when Wallack's Theater moved up-town, Mr. Conried took the Star, and made a good deal of money there, presenting Baumann's Monkey Circus. So, you see," added Mr. Hammerstein, with another droll smile, "honors are easy between us when it comes to the variety business.

HOW HE LEARNED GRAND OPERA

"All through these years I was an ardent lover of grand opera. Even before I made money, I used to be one of the regular gallery-gods in the Academy of Music. Although few people may believe it, I really am an encyclopedia of grand opera. I then built the Harlem Opera-House, and opened it with grand opera. My chief stars were Lilli Lehman and Perotti, and Walter Damrosch was my conductor. Then came the Columbus Theater, which I built on the same street. Emma Juch was one of my chief attractions there.

"Then 'Cavalleria Rusticana' made its great furor in Europe, and as nearly every American manager announced that he had the sole rights for America, I decided to produce it at the Lenox Lyceum. After that came the Deluge, or, in other

words, the Manhattan Opera-House, which was later known as Koster & Bial's. Within a short time I had as attractions there Meyerbeer, Mrs. Beere, and lager-beer; for, beginning with grand opera, I followed with Mrs. Bernard Beere's first engagement, and then came down to common beer and skittles when Koster & Bial took the lease.

"After that," said Mr. Hammerstein, with a portentous sigh, "I built Olympia. But we all have our sorrows. Don't let us talk about that. Then in due course came the Victoria, the Republic—since rebuilt, rechristened, and made an immense success by Mr. David Belasco—and now my greatest venture of them all, the new Manhattan Opera-House. What I shall do next I don't know. Probably my opera-singers will keep me busy for a few months, anyway.

"You see, I'm rather a curious man. I don't know the sensation of satisfaction, any more than I know the sensation of regret. I don't live for yesterday, but only for to-morrow. I don't drink, I have never played a game of cards in my life, I have no automobile—although I have several horses that my coachman tells me he gets a great deal of satisfaction out of. When I find that I have no money in my pocket I go to the box-office and draw three dollars, and it lasts me so long that it really makes me feel ashamed of myself. I couldn't possibly tell you how many fortunes I have made and gone through in my building ventures, and if I were to assure you of how many more I am going to make before I die it would merely sound ostentatious. So, there you are! That's Oscar Hammerstein."

THE NEW HOUSE

Now are the builders gone;
 Waiting the new house stands,
 For the last, last touch is on
 From the last, last workman's hands;
 Spotless and clean and sweet
 From rafter to tiniest thole—
 But a structure still incomplete,
 Waiting the birth of a soul!

Straight are its walls, without;
 True are its rooms, enclosed,
 Plastered and planed about
 As the craftful plans disposed.
 That its body may perfect be,
 Long have its builders toiled;
 You, who will enter, see
 That a soul be its unsoiled!

You, whose faces will peer
 Out from its casements wide;
 You, who partake of, here,
 What the arm and brain provide;
 You, who will slumbers know,
 Who will tread each floor and stair,
 Whose children shall upward grow,
 Take care of this house—take care!

Yours to awake, inspire,
 From cellar to roof above,
 With lamplight and warmth and fire,
 Laughter, and tears, and love;
 With labor and aims afar,
 With cheer when the day is through;
 Yours is to make, or mar—
 For the soul of the house is *you!*

Edwin L. Sabin

THE PIANO

BY DOROTHY CANFIELD

AUTHOR OF "THE RESCUE," "THE STORY OF RALPH MILLER," ETC.

IT was characteristic of Frederika's relentlessly keen self-analysis that one of the most intolerable elements of her misery was the banality of the situation. Following every step of the wretchedly familiar mental pilgrimage came the conviction of the total lack of novelty in her sensation. It was as though the aridity of her outward life penetrated to the center of her being, and she could not even suffer but in a worn-out and threadbare fashion.

The very setting of the scene was platinuously appropriate, she reflected, as she looked about the little room, bare but for the grand piano, and noted that the fire at her husband's feet had smoldered out into white ashes. Her thin, handsome face did not move from its expression of lassitude as this detail claimed her attention, although her unspoken comment was acrid: "Just the thing a second-rate French novelist would put in as a cheap and trivial bit of symbolism."

Her eyes rested long on her husband after this, in a distastefully minute survey of his figure, relaxed in his armchair, his neck bulging out in a red roll in spite of the unloosened collar of his uniform. She noticed how the straight, severe lines of his officer's tunic brought out the ugly lines of a too large waist, and she remembered, still with no outward change in her spiritless face, that ten years ago she had thought a uniform a becoming garment, which gave color and character to military life, alone in a commercial age.

And yet she had not been a young girl, ignorant and inexperienced, when she married. She had thought that she recognized unmistakably the call of love as stronger than the rights of her art, that the humanity in her was more vital

than music. She had fancied that she knew life and that she could weigh what she was going to give up, definitely, against what she was getting. The dry, commercial aspect of her phrase suddenly came to her, and her inexorable sense of justice, even to herself, made her retract. It was not only what she was to get from Dick that had influenced her, it was what she could give the rough, silent giant; it was the great and joyous sacrifice of a brilliant musical career to his interests; it was the rare and romantic chance to prove herself worthy of a mighty love and capable of returning it by giving up all that meaner folk hold precious—ease, variety, money, reputation, success, her name golden for all music-loving souls. She had thought all that of little avail beside the inextinguishable fire of affection and devotion she felt within her for Richard Farrington. At this for the first time her mouth twisted into a wry smile, and she looked again at the heap of white and gray between the andirons.

And how equally insignificant was the extinguishing of either fire to the sleeping man! Another, even if he slept, would awake, shivering, and feel the chilly desolation of the room and of her heart, but Dick would rouse himself only to go to bed so that he could be fresh for reveille in the morning, that hateful call to action in the bald light of dawn which had grown so unbearable to her. And then he would be out all day on the drill-ground, blustering paternally over his recruits, and filling in vacant moments with the childishly detailed accounts of every breath drawn on the little remote Western post which the government at Washington exacted and Dick delighted to make out. And in the evening he would come back to the ill-