

## A MEMORY OF JENNY LIND'S FIRST AMERICAN APPEARANCE

Thrilling Scenes at Castle Garden When She Made Her Début  
Here in 1850—Amusing Impressions of a Lay Critic from  
New Hampshire Found in a Letter Written at the Time

THE *Deseret Evening News* of Salt Lake City told not long ago the story of some old letters written by a man visiting New York 66 years ago, to his home in Durham, N. H., one of them containing the following account of hearing Jenny Lind sing at her first concert in the United States, in the old Castle Garden on the evening of Sept. 20, 1850. The son of the writer, re-reading the letter recently, formed the decision to make it public. The letter follows:

My Dear Ones—You have heard something about Jenny Lind, I doubt not. Everybody is talking about Jenny Lind, and I will tell you about her first concert, which I attended at Castle Garden. I saw some person pay \$10 for a slip of paper; that person was myself. If you ask what I got for my \$10, I will tell you that I got a ticket to Jenny Lind's concert, and it is no small matter to have a ticket of that kind. When one puts his hand into his pocket, he is apt to feel comfortable if he finds money there; but when he finds a ticket to Jenny Lind's concert he feels proud and happy.

He says to himself: "Now I shall know all about it. I shall see that Swedish girl who came far o'er the sea to sing to the American people. I shall hear that wonderful voice, the like of which was never heard before. I shall have an opportunity to comprehend why it is that great multitudes of people follow up and down the nation wherever she moves, so that not any great king or queen, not even any commander of victorious armies, was ever since the world began, beset with such shouts of human applause and scenes of triumph as the modest young woman."

### The Scene at Castle Garden

With such thoughts teeming, I found myself on my way to the place called Castle Garden, on the beautiful bay of New York. It was destined originally, I am told, for a military fortification, but has been converted into a place for large public assemblages and exhibitions, and fitted up in the manner of an amphitheater. Here was the place

where the voice of the world-famous Jenny Lind was to be heard, exciting into a wild tumult and ecstasy the countless auditory, and moving off into dying cadences over the tranquil waters of the bay. Here I found many thousands of people, all provided with tickets like my own, and apparently in as much expectation as I was. A fine display of lamps and other contrivances formed to elevate the spirits of and awaken the torpid portions of the animal system to the lively sense of enjoyment. I am not sure but the sight of so many animated countenances of both sexes, and so many ornaments and decorations, would have you forget that you came for any other purpose than to behold the spectacle.

I had time to look about me only for a few moments before there came on the stage what is called the orchestra. It consisted of sixty men with instruments of music. I do not know how many different kinds of instruments for making music there are in the world, but I never before saw such a variety together. There were many of them queer-shaped things, and made of themselves the oddest kind of noises. There was a great corpulent grandpa fiddle, another not quite as heavy and masculine, which gave out matronly tones by turns deprecating and soothing; and the whole family of younger fiddles, whose business it seemed to be to keep up such a frolic of sounds as to prevent the more aged fiddles from going to sleep, and to tease them and make them worry themselves, as old people will sometimes do.

### The Flute That Misbehaved

There were flutes—white, black and mulatto—some of which seemed to have got their growth and some not. There was one very little one that cut up as many antics as a rope dancer—and amused me very much—it was in excellent high spirits. They could not keep it making the same sort of noise with the flutes that knew how to behave.

One man had a great hollow serpent and made his share of the music by blowing in the serpent's tail. If the serpent had been alive, perhaps biting the tail would have answered as well. When Satan wished to charm and betray the mother of mankind, he took upon himself the form of a serpent; but I think his voice must have been pleasanter than that of the serpent of Castle Garden, or he could not have been successful.

The key-bugle and the French horn were also in the orchestra; and I know of nothing which stirs the blood more than the sound of the bugle. It ranges from the low soft notes of a mother's lullaby to the clear, wild ecstatic ring which kindles the fire of battle among armed men, and makes them smile at death. Do you remember, my children, when we were riding among the White mountains of the Granite State one beautiful night, how we stopped to hear the clear notes of a key-bugle at Echo Lake—how its clear sounds penetrated the recesses of the great mountains and hills, and floated away over valleys, saluting each other from echoing peaks, until the air became vocal, and the silver rays of the moon seemed emanating from some melodious sphere?

One individual had in the orchestra a metallic instrument, which was made to stretch like a spyglass, only it was much longer than a spyglass and shaped like other instruments, after its own fashion. They called it a trombone, or something of that sort. It produced a quality of sound similar to that produced by tearing a very strong piece of cloth, only different in degree. It may, for aught I know, be a great favorite with dry goods merchants.

### One Sound Missing

Not to prolong my description of the orchestra I will simply say that it had the means of producing an immense variety of sounds—grotesque and natural, infernal and divine, so that, among them

all—scarcely any heart could fail to be stirred—scarcely any amateur of noises fail to be gratified. I noticed, however, the absence of anything resembling the bray of a mule, and could not help a momentary speculation in my own mind as to the probable effect of introducing that sonorous animal as one of the members of the orchestra. It is a wonder how such a tribe of instruments could be made to get along amicably together.

There was, however, Signor Benedict, who had but to make a gesture and they would do anything he pleased, as docile and obedient as the ponies in a circus; and their voices were at times so harmonized and blended—so aboundingly rich and transcendent—as to fill the most sluggish and besotted nature with a new life. For myself, I seemed suspended between darkness and glory, hardly knowing whether I was in the body or out of the body, in heaven or on earth.

There came a pause in the music, and Signor Belletti appeared upon the stage to sing. He is what is called a baritone singer—that is, his voice is between bass and tenor—and he is reputed to be a great singer, perhaps the greatest in that particular style, in the world. Now you see what I got for my \$10. In the first place, a consciousness of being about to hear the renowned songstress; in the second place, a most magnificent and animated show; in the third place a chance to hear an orchestra of rare amplex and excellence; in the fourth place, I heard the great baritone singer himself, no small wonder. But the highest effect in tragic representation is usually reserved for the fifth act; and it was the same of the value obtained by me for my money on this occasion. Too many fine things—enough in themselves to satisfy a more than ordinary expectation—only deferred and heightened the looking forward of the immense assemblage for the greater wonder yet to appear. We obtain our highest conception of the prowess of Achilles from the fact that he was greater than Hector; and what would you be prepared to think of a Swedish girl for whom all these immense preparations—and these great musicians were only subordinates and accessories.

### Jenny Lind Appears

Signor Belletti closes his part and disappears. Everyone knows that the time is at hand when Jenny Lind herself will come forward—she for whom 50,000 people had thronged the coast of England to give their parting salutations and invoke propitious gales to waft her to our republican shores. During the few moments preceding her appearance the silence was so great as to be absolutely intense.

Behold, there she is! There is Jenny Lind! I am sure I cannot tell why we all rose to our feet and saluted her, by a common impulse, with all sorts of extravagant demonstrations of welcome. Perhaps we made fools of ourselves, and then, again, perhaps we did not succeed in making a fool of her. It was some time before the audience would cease shouting and applauding and allow her to sing. She was very much affected by the warmth of her reception, and was pale and agitated. If she could have been alone for a few moments I think she would have cried, but she had no opportunity to cry, and so she sang.

I have seen distinguished singers before Jenny Lind, who were well worth hearing and very famous, and who could with effect execute successfully difficult music; and I suppose their bendings and contractions of muscles a necessary part of the performance. But with Jenny Lind it had the appearance of singing itself. She but yielded to an internal compulsion. She breathes back to the multitude the superlative emotion excited by music, which they could never utter, and for which the child of song can only find expression. There is subsidence of the flood of melody—a low, soft breathing of sound, executed only by the sweetest instruments, and addressed only to the tenderest affections of our nature; but its living interpreter, the voice of the Swede—more soft, more delicate, more articulate—floats with it, and envelops the senses in a delicious dream. The tide rises, wave after wave sweeps and swells; the heavy instruments of the orchestra pour their loud strains, and all unite in magnifying the power of the storm; yet high over all, mistress of herself and queen of the tempest, is heard the unbroken song of the Swede. I will not dwell upon particular fea-

tures of her performance, and I would not like to attempt a musical criticism, having neither taste, capacity nor experience for it. My only purpose is to give you a leisure hour by offering you a general idea and comprehension of the matter. I am willing to take for granted that music which pleases me and everybody else is good music. I am not sure but that I have heard voices quite equal to hers, perhaps superior in some particular tones, but never one that approached it in compass, or power, or general effect.

### A Sense of Completeness

What struck me with pleasure, quite distinct from the quality of any given note or bar, was a sense of completeness in every part of her performance. Every sound and movement appeared to be precisely what she intended it should be. My belief is, that she was particularly formed by her Creator in two respects. She was endowed with a wonderful voice and rare musical capabilities, and in addition to these, an insuppressible longing for the perfection of highest art; and she probably unites in herself the nearest approach to perfection, both of nature and art, that has yet been seen. In the midst of the orchestra she is in the position which she feels to have been designed for her by providence; there she lives—there she is happy and at home.

Tell mother not to be uneasy, I am trying to avoid all extravagances in regard to Jenny; and more than all that, Jenny was never born to do mischief. Her good sense and modesty win as much praise as her music, and she stands on the dizzy heights of fame. She sings because a power which may not be resisted bids her sing. It is her nature to sing, and she cannot help it.

### All for Charity

The vast sums of money gained from her concerts rest not in her coffers. She was one of the poor children of Sweden, and this money all goes to educate the poor children of her native land. So unselfish and pure, what more is wanting to complete the ideal? Will not the people of Sweden erect her monument higher than that of Gustavus? Will not her name and her transcendent qualities become a tradition and a proverb on those northern shores? And will she not be heard forevermore in the great mystic hall of Odin?

But here I think I must stop. I can, after all, give you no adequate idea of the excellence of her singing until I get back to Durham and sing the pieces all over to you myself; even then I shall have no orchestra to accompany me. I wish that you could have seen 7000 or 8000 of us throwing bouquets, hats, handkerchiefs in the air and upon the stage, with a view to express in some faint manner "the truth that was in us." At the close of the concert Mr. Barnum was called out and announced the purpose of Jenny to give every cent of the \$10,000 earned by her brilliant success that evening to various charitable objects in New York; whereupon another storm of approbation well nigh lifted the roof from its fastenings. In this last I did not join, but reserved my voice, thinking it probable she would soon send me a basket of oranges or some such matter to take home to you. But she must have forgotten it.

Well, I am \$10 out of pocket. I could not hear Demosthenes speak or see Napoleon win a battle—and so I went to hear Jenny Lind sing.

### A Time for Patriotic Music

The present high tide of Americanism ought to make some valuable contribution to our patriotic music, says an editorial in the *New York Tribune*. But as yet there has emerged into public favor nothing more important than that jingle which runs: "America, I love you, you're like a sweetheart of mine." This ridiculous and maudlin caricature of patriotic sentiment, fit only for the vaudeville stage, is a revelation of the burlesque into which both popular music and poetry have degenerated in this country. The fact that such a song as this should spring into popularity at a time when men are discovering in patriotism a new grandeur and seriousness shows that as a people we are neglecting one of the most necessary requirements for national greatness—an intelligent and nation-wide interest in the arts.



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