

SEVEN

Tableaux cultureaux

Music and Musicians – Greasepaint and Oils – *Belles-lettres* – ‘where bells have knoll’d to church’

~ Music and Musicians ~

Both Prince Albert and Duke Ernst II had been fine if minor composers, while Albert, also possessed of an excellent bass voice, had been a judicious and vigorous promoter of new music of the highest quality. Schubert’s ninth symphony, Bach’s *Passio secundum Matthæum*, and several works by Mendelssohn (Albert’s friend) received their first performances in England under his direction by the court choir and orchestra he founded by expanding Victoria’s existing private band. This musical talent was strictly Saxe-Coburg Gotha, traceable to the brothers’ distant ancestor Ernst, Landgraf von Hessen-Darmstadt, who had been born in the Schloss Friedenstein to become a noted composer, establishing Darmstadt as a great musical centre after 1709. Albert passed this genetic inheritance on to Affie and Beatrice, but quite dramatically not to any of his other children. Indeed, it had been in order to impress his father that Affie first took up the violin in secret, one day to delight him with an impromptu recital.

Affie’s most active involvement with music would be with the Royal Albert Hall (R.A.H.), for whose foundation he presided over the Executive Commission in 1866 to obtain a Charter of Incorporation, becoming vice-president of the Corporation in 1871 and president in 1886. The Amateur Orchestral Society (A.O.S.) was founded in 1872 for the purpose of giving three regular concerts each year at the R.A.H., comprising dedicated and talented amateurs under professional direction. The first conductor appointed to it was Arthur Sullivan, with Affie as leader of the orchestra in addition to his administrative duties. A friendship had already by this time developed between conductor and leader, ‘a friendship woven in a common bondage to music ... a friendship without royal condescension, the intimacy of two kindred souls’, as Sullivan described it.¹

Indeed, Affie and Sullivan, although very different – even antithetical – in character were immediately drawn to each other on their first formal meeting in 1863. This was when the young composer was first drawing attention to himself as the writer of the incidental music to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, conducted by August Manns at his popular Saturday Concerts at the Crystal Palace. Three years later, he collaborated with Francis Burnand of *Punch* on an adaptation of *Box and Cox*, an existing popular comic play, for which Sullivan provided an improvised piano accompaniment. They renamed the result *Cox and Box* and performed it at various private all-male smoking parties, and it was at one of these that Affie, now duke of Edinburgh, first met Sullivan informally. Burnand made only the most oblique of references to this when he subsequently noted that it had been Sullivan who had been brought before Affie. However, he also noted that Affie ‘was, as most of us remember, an enthusiastic

musician, and frequently, for quiet practice on the violin, he would drop into Arthur Sullivan's in the most informal way'.²

Affie's naval duties, and in particular his two lengthy cruises, would interrupt the growing friendship, but after May 1871 the two men corresponded frequently and often met, both being concerned with the establishment of a truly English musical tradition. Throughout the early spring of 1872, Affie discussed with Sullivan all the various details concerning the exhibiting of new designs for valved brass instruments at the Fine Arts, Machinery, and Raw Materials international exposition at South Kensington (1 May to 19 October), which Affie would formally open. He valued and respected Sullivan's opinion on musical matters, and to discuss his theories on this and other musical themes he wrote candidly that 'I shall be delighted to see you any time you can call at Clarence House ... the best time to find me at home is from 1:45 to 9pm'.³ Sullivan accepted the invitation, and this was the commencement of what he called 'friendship without royal condescension'. Casual, unaffected invitations would be frequent for nearly a decade, with Sullivan making numerous journeys to Clarence House, Affie reciprocating with visits to Sullivan at his home at 8 Albert Mansions, Victoria Street, and after 1881 a little further up the same street at 1 Queen's Mansions.

Affie was also of practical assistance to Sullivan. It was he who obtained for Sullivan his dual role as principal and principal professor of composition at the National Training School for Music (the precursor to the Royal College of Music) after he opened the building on 17 May 1876. Sullivan would keep both posts until his retirement in 1881. This close relationship between Affie and Sullivan would one day prove to have the most tragic consequences both for Marie's friendship with Sullivan and her marriage to Affie.

There is no doubting Affie's musical talent, and numerous memorialists testified to this in later years. Lord Brooke, heir to the earldom of Warwick, was one. He visited Affie and Marie at Eastwell Park in May 1881, shortly after his marriage to Frances Maynard, the woman who would one day become a leading socialist agitator and one of Bertie's many mistresses, noting that Affie was 'intensely musical and a skilled violinist'.⁴ It is hardly credible that Sullivan, who was indeed largely unaffected by royal sycophancy, would have suffered him to lead an otherwise excellent orchestra under his direction if he had not been perfectly capable of so doing.

This talent was recognized internationally. On 28 June 1888, the Executive Committee for the International Exposition, held in Bologna from 6 May, honoured him with a special diploma for his contribution to the performance and appreciation of music. This award was presented to him through the auspices of the Italian Exhibition at West Brompton, held from 12 May to 31 October. Affie also travelled to Vienna from Devonport to be present at the opening of the International Exhibition of Music and Drama on 7 May 1892. This major event, held under the auspices of Princess Pauline von Metternich and opened by Emperor Franz Josef, included a British section, of which Affie was president.

Marie was aware of Affie's musical talents before she married him. Tenniel's cut of Affie serenading Marie from his boat by the Winter Palace was probably rooted in a genuine incident involving Affie's sole musical composition, the *Galatea Valse in F*. At some point aboard the *Galatea* between the spring of 1867 and May 1871 (or just possibly while ashore from June to November 1868), he composed a simple but attractive melody on his violin for which he laid down a piano accompaniment after the end of the second cruise. This accompaniment was then divorced from the violin solo before being slightly rearranged and published in London in 1872 with a

dedication to ‘Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales’, on whom Affie had a well known crush at the time.

The intrinsic merits of the *Galatea Valse* were immediately recognized, it being highly romantic and melancholy with an emotionally acute use of rising chromatic passing notes. More technically accomplished versions began to appear at once. Frederick Godfrey, bandmaster of the Coldstream Guards since 1863, published two arrangements in 1872, one for full military band and the other for piano and military cornet. In 1873, the Wiesbaden-born pianist, composer, and clarinetist Joseph Rummel (in London since 1870) published a more serious piano version extending both Affie’s introduction and the subsequent ‘tempo di valse’. In the same year, an anonymous arranger published a version for two pianos, deliberately less pianistic than the Rummel version in order that any two well-bred young ladies could play it during a musical evening at home.

The sudden popularity of Affie’s composition suggested to him the possibility of producing a full orchestral version, and (almost certainly with Sullivan’s assistance) this was completed early in 1873. The world première took place at Gotha on the evening of Friday 7 March at the instigation of Duke Ernst at his father’s *Hoftheater* one year before its official publication in London in 1874 to coincide with Affie’s return from Russia. In this version, the introduction was slightly reduced but the ‘tempo di valse’ increased still further, making it a substantial musical composition. Thereafter, the *Galatea Valse* became a quasi-anthem during Affie’s lifetime, performed in his presence whenever practicable, and on all official visits after his succession to Saxe-Coburg Gotha.⁵

For her part, Marie had grown up in the musical centre of Russia that had been turned into one of the principal musical attractions of Europe by a highly cultured nobility. The pianist Anton Rubinstein founded the Imperial Musical Society in 1859 and the St Petersburg Conservatory of Music three years later, among whose first graduates was Pëtr Chaikovskii. Five years later, the capital was dominated by the Slavophil and somewhat ironically dubbed Moguchaia Kuchka (‘Mighty Handful’, or sometimes ‘Mighty Five’), with the Pan-Slavist critic Vladimir Stasov as the official sixth member. The five composers were Mili Balakirev, Aleksandr Borodin, Modest Mussorgskii, Aleksandr Rimskii-Korsakov, and Tsezar Kui (who later Frenchified his name against Stasov’s advice), who were all destined to attain international recognition within a decade.

Rubinstein had found a passionate patroness in Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna. In addition to co-founding the society and conservatory with Rubinstein, the grand duchess arranged soirées for the imperial family after 1848 at which he performed. It was she who encouraged Marie to take informal lessons with Rubinstein between 1862 and 1867 while he was director of the conservatory, and Marie even occasionally played at these soirées for her family, sometimes with Rubinstein present. Lady Randolph Churchill subsequently recalled that Marie was ‘an excellent musician, Rubinstein once said of her, so she told me, “Vous ne jouez pas si mal pour une Princesse”’,⁶ which was certainly a fine backhanded compliment if ever there was one. In June 1881, Rubinstein would visit Marie at Eastwell Park and play duets with her, more than an attenuated measure of respect from the master to his former pupil.

In order to indulge in casual sniping at their musicality, writers have enjoyed quoting – without either critical faculty or musical knowledge – two particular comments on Affie and Marie by the Ponsonbys that demand closer investigation. After a dinner at Abergeldie in Scotland in 1871, Henry Ponsonby wrote his wife Mary – a Liberal-inclined former maid-of-honour to Queen Victoria – that Affie

played the violin accompanying a man at the piano: ‘Anything more execrable I never heard. They did not keep time ... and the noise ... [was] abominable ... I quite agreed with G[ladstone] that it was a relief when we got away from that appalling din’.⁷ For her part, Mary Ponsonby wrote her husband on 10 January 1875 describing a dinner at Frogmore at which both Marie and Affie were present. Marie attempted to play a duet with a (male) guest, ‘but it was bad, so very bad that nobody pretended to listen ... the whole society turned their backs and talked’ until a lady guest performed a solo work. Affie ‘was rather astonished’ when another guest informed him that ‘he would never play the fiddle if he only practised once a month’. Affie’s reaction was to enter ‘into a disquisition’ with Henry Ponsonby’s mother ‘upon violins, showing her his. He amused Madame Neruda [Vilemína Norman-Nerudová] very much the other day by saying “I use this rosin for my bow when I play in an orchestra and that when I play alone”. She was on the point of saying, “What a pity they haven’t a rosin for playing in time!”’⁸

Leaving to one side the rudeness of a philistine English aristocratic audience and the obvious sneer (however amusing) of a professional violinist at the expense of an amateur, some important observations need to be made. Marie’s companion at the piano has not been positively identified, but the man who accompanied Affie was Count Géza Zichy, a Hungarian pianist and composer – a pupil of Franz Liszt – who had lost his right arm after a riding accident aged fourteen. He subsequently made a name for himself by pioneering left-hand techniques, but it is difficult to see what work in 1871 he and Affie may have attempted successfully. It requires years of close knowledge of a fellow musician before a fruitful partnership can evolve, and throwing two musicians together after a dinner and expecting fireworks is hardly the best way to begin, and is besides naïve. Commentators with little musical knowledge or skill – and this includes the Ponsonbys – should have left the subject alone.

However, this does not mean that there was no room for improvement in both cases, as there always is for any musician, professional as well as amateur. In 1875, during her first journey home after her marriage, Marie noted that for her mother’s birthday (27 July/8 August) ‘we had a family concert ... Alfred has improved on the violin, having played much with my brother’s teacher’.⁹ As for herself, Marie was clearly not a first-class sight reader: ‘Please tell Beatrice that I am taking music lessons almost every day and making great progress in reading at sight’.¹⁰

Marie’s first introduction to English music was in fact Russian – a performance of the polonaise from Glinka’s *Zhizn’ za tsaria* played for her as she entered the banqueting hall on the evening of her arrival at Windsor Castle. Her first conventional introduction took place on 15 March 1874 at a dinner in Windsor Castle, with a selection of music performed by the band of the Grenadier Guards under Daniel Godfrey (Frederick’s brother), their bandmaster since 1856, arranged as follows:

	God Save the Queen	
	God Save the Tsar	
	Preobrazhenskii March	
Doktrinen Waltz op.79 (1872).....	Eduard Strauss	
L’étoile du nord (1854) [selections].....	Giacomo Meyerbeer	
Quadrille on English Nautical Melodies.....	Daniel Godfrey	
La fille de Madame Angot (1872) [overture].....	Charles Lecocq	
Pietro il grande (1852) [Danse di Mateloti].....	Louis Jullien	
Fiorita et la reine des elfrides (1848) [selection].....	Cesare Pugni	
Isidore Waltz.....	Daniel Godfrey	

This was the sort of light confection that would become all too familiar to Marie at royal occasions – and not only at those events where the music was intended to serve merely as decorative wallpaper behind the dinner table. She later confessed that she found English military bands ‘very “*médiocre*” and play such indifferent things without any “*entraîn*”’.¹¹

Marie may have become very soon confirmed in this conviction by experiencing a growing sense of unwelcome *déjà entendu* exactly two months later when dining at Marlborough House with her father:

God Save the Tsar
Preobrazhenskii March
Zhizn’ za tsaria (1836) [selections].....Mikhail Glinka
Isidore Waltz.....Daniel Godfrey
Regimental March of the Russian Horse Guards
Chilpéric (1868) [selections].....Hervé
King Candoni March.....Chlebnikov
Konyok gorbunyok (1864) [selections].....Cesare Pugni

There may have been more Russian elements in this selection arranged for the sake of the tsar, but it was still second-rate, relying heavily on comic opera and inferior imitators: why Hervé and not Offenbach? It should be noted, however, that Bertie – who would not have known world-class music if it horsewhipped him in Windsor Great Park – had hosted both these occasions, and no doubt the programme had been designed to reflect his very mediocre taste. When the pianist Ignacy Paderewski met Bertie he was not impressed, remarking with pointed understatement that he was ‘not very musical’, although his opinion of Alix and Victoria was better.¹² Nevertheless, Marie would find to her annoyance that the standard of public music making in England elsewhere at this time was with certain exceptions not very much higher.

Marie’s comment to her father that the concerts at the R.A.H. were ‘all ecclesiastical’ and ‘rather boring’ requires some explanation. The Royal Albert Hall Choral Society (R.A.H.C.S.) was founded in 1871 by Lord Wilton, the deputy music commissioner, with the same brief as the A.O.S., attracting no fewer than 1,400 singers by 1873 when Joseph Barnby was appointed professional choir master. There was not a great deal of secular choral music in the nineteenth century to choose from, while amateurs are at least as capable of giving uninspired programmes and poor performances as their professional counterparts. Marie therefore experienced an inordinately high number of such concerts as a result of the administrative policy at the R.A.H., the venue with which she had at first most contact through Affie.

The R.A.H. was an artistically credible venture but not financially successful in its early years. When Marie first knew it, there was music six nights each week: ballads on Mondays, English music on Tuesdays, classical repertoire on Wednesdays, oratorio on Thursdays, Wagner every Friday, and popular light music on Saturdays. In spite of this attempt to please every taste, these concerts were poorly attended, and in the following year musical performances had been reduced to two nights each week, with Saturday still devoted to light music. The English nights were abominable, and even Sullivan dreaded them, writing to the Czech pianist Wilhelm Kuhe who wished him to conduct in London: ‘I hate “English nights” & prefer being put somewhere else. I will come to conduct something ... but not an English night’.¹³ Even potential money-spinners failed. Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* (1874) was first performed in England at the R.A.H. four times in May 1875, conducted by the composer. It was so

artistically successful that eventually sixty-two performances of the work were given – but still at a total loss to the committee of over £6,000.

Marie attended several concerts in between Bertie's two dinner parties. On Tuesday 17 March 1874, she and Affie were at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, to see a performance of Rossini's two-act tragic melodrama *Semiramide* with Therese Tietjens (three years short of retirement) in the title role. The cast was entirely Italian under Sir Michael Costa, the Neapolitan-born naturalized British conductor.

Two days later and without Affie, Marie attended the London première at the R.A.H. of Sullivan's oratorio for choir and orchestra *The Light of the World*, first performed the previous August in Birmingham. This was Marie's first visit to the venue, and the oratorio had been prefaced for her benefit with a performance of God Save the Tsar arranged for choir, orchestra, and military band. This was one of the few financially successful concerts of the decade, but, since Marie's comment followed it, perhaps she had not been impressed and had this oratorio in mind when writing to her father before his state visit. *The Light of the World* was based on the idea of *Christus salvator mundi* inspired by Holman Hunt's pre-Raphælite painting of the same name, and it had a confused text by Sullivan drawn largely from Scripture. It was a flawed attempt at serious composition for which Sullivan was simply not equipped, although there would be other reasons for her antipathy towards Sullivan.

On 14 April 1874, for Princess Beatrice's fourteenth birthday on the Isle of Wight, the band of the Royal Marine Artillery played the following programme on the terrace of Osborne House during luncheon, a slightly more adventurous one than Marie had yet experienced with the royal family:

La circassienne (1860) [overture].....Daniel Auber.
Wiener Kinder waltz op.61 (1858).....Josef Strauss
Marco Visconti (1853) [extracts].....Errico Petrella
Andante favori in F (1803).....Ludwig van Beethoven.
La sonnambula (1831) [extracts].....Vincenzo Bellini
Galatea Valse (1872).....Duke of Edinburgh.
Eli oratorio (1855) [march].....Sir Michael Costa

This would have been Marie's first introduction to Frederick Godfrey's arrangement of Affie's waltz.

On the evening of the following day, Charles Hallé, the pianist and conductor of German birth who since 1858 had directed his own orchestra in Manchester, was invited to give a piano recital before the royal party, playing the sonatas by Beethoven and Schubert with which he had made his reputation. On Monday 4 May, Affie and Marie were again at Drury Lane to see and hear Tietjens, this time as Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio* in an Italian-German co-production. Having missed all the earlier dates, and finding that Costa and the Drury Lane management had put on an extra night of this successful production, Marie petitioned Queen Victoria to take Beatrice with her 'for she admires so good music'.¹⁴

The following day, the Edinburghs were at the R.A.H for a performance of Verdi's *La traviata*, now socially acceptable after somewhat scandalous beginnings, and Marie's favourite Italian opera. It was conducted by Costa and marked the debut of the Italian soprano Imogen Orelli as the courtesan Violetta Valéry, of whom the *Illustrated London News* (9 May) wrote 'the lady made but little impression, and we must await further opportunity for estimating her power'. The opportunity never materialised, and she soon disappeared into obscurity. One month later, Marie was at

the St James's Hall, Piccadilly, to see Hallé again, conducting the Hallé Orchestra on its British tour. She also attended a private concert at the 'beautiful Grosvenor House' given by the duke of Westminster.¹⁵

The arrangements for the state concert at the R.A.H. in honour of Aleksandr II provide an interesting contrast with those for Marie's wedding. An extraordinary meeting of the R.A.H. Council was held on 22 April 1874 announcing a special committee 'to consider and carry out all the arrangements necessary' for the concert. When formed, it comprised Affie, Lord Clarence Paget, Charles Freake, Warren De La Rue, and John Donnelly. There was not a professional musician among them – Paget was an admiral, Freake a builder, De La Rue a scientist and inventor, and Donnelly a major in the Royal Engineers. The only musician the committee resolved to consult was Sullivan, since he would participate actively in the concert. Marie was not officially consulted, although it is probable that Affie asked her advice on the Russian content of the programme. She may have suggested the inclusion of traditional Romanov welcome of the polonaise and chorus from *Zhizn' za tsaria* (arranged for this occasion by Sullivan), which would not herald the tsar's entry but fall between the organ solo and Sullivan's *Te Deum*.

Since it was already known that 'the Emperor of Russia would be present at the second part of the concert' and not before, there were only seven sections for the committee to consider:

1. On the arrival of His Imperial majesty the (Russian) National Anthem to be performed as on the occasion of the first visit of HRH the Duchess of Edinburgh with full choir, orchestra, military band and drummers.
2. Sacred Quartette from Russian church music – choir unaccompanied.
3. Song by singer engaged for the first part of the concert.
4. Part-song (glee) by choir unaccompanied.
5. Solo on the organ. Mr Best.
6. Selection of Russian music accompanied by the choir.
7. The latter part of Mr A. Sullivan's 'Te Deum', with choir, orchestra, military band and organ.¹⁶

Affie had seen both Barnby and Sullivan before presenting this outline to the committee, and no doubt Barnby also had been consulted about its content.

At the second meeting, held on 28 April, it was resolved that Barnby would be the principal conductor while Sullivan 'be requested to conduct two pieces of music by "special desire"' (Glinka's polonaise and his own *Te Deum*). It also resolved that the orchestra be provided, and the concert promoted, by Novello, Ewer & Company, the London firm of music publishers who had recently begun to promote concerts, and also that during the interval the band of the Grenadier Guards should play something under Daniel Godfrey. It further resolved that Barnby should be the one to communicate with Affie 'in order to complete the arrangements of the programme', that the musicians should be in full dress, and that the public 'be invited to come in uniform or Court Dress'.¹⁷ The prices were as follows:

Amphitheatre Stalls.....	2 Guineas
Arena.....	1_ gns.
Box, Grand Tier 10 persons.....	30 gns.
Box, 2 nd Tier 5 persons.....	12 gns.
Loggia 8 persons.....	20 gns.

Balcony Stalls (front row).....1 gn.
 Balcony Stalls (other rows).....10/6d.
 Gallery (Promenade).....5/-

The concert was a rare success in the history of the R.A.H., costing £670 0s 4d to stage and returning nearly four times that amount in profit.

The musical content may have left a lot to be desired, but the committee did well to employ some of the greatest musical talents of the age. Therese Tietjens was the undoubted star of the evening, commanding a fee four times that of her female colleague Janet Patey, who was considered to be the best contralto of her generation. William Cummings, a leading voice in oratorio, sang the solo tenor parts, while the Irish bass Allan Foli completed the vocal cast. William Best, one of the finest organ virtuosos of the century (he had inaugurated the vast four-manual R.A.H. organ in 1871), had been specially invited to share the organ music with John Stainer, organist at St Paul's Cathedral.

The unusually high seat prices did not deter customers, since then as now people were willing to pay in order to see (and perhaps more especially to be seen with) international royalty. But there were problems brought on by that habit peculiar to British audiences of not only arriving late but also leaving early. The Halleluja Chorus from Händel's *Messiah* was sung again as an addition to the fourth part of the programme, and this was considered too much for many of those who had attended the first half of the concert in which the entire oratorio had already been sung. *The Times* of 19 May described the auditorium by this stage as 'three-quarters empty ... [with] nobody left to cheer but the chorus'.

Sullivan regarded Marie's pianism as highly as Rubinstein. He was himself a fine pianist and spent a great deal of time at Eastwell Park – a fact that would one day prove irksome to Marie but which was still a welcome fact in the 1870s. On 12 January 1876 (Orthodox New Year's Eve 1875), Sullivan wrote to his mother: 'The Duchess and I played some duets after dinner – Schubert's marches. She plays extremely well'.¹⁸ Indeed she must have done, for the two marches they performed were the *Grand marche funèbre* in C minor composed on the death of Tsar Aleksandr I in 1825, and its companion work the *Grand marche héroïque* in A minor composed for the coronation of Tsar Nikolai I in 1826.

The deterioration in the relationship between Marie and Sullivan was made tragic because the underlying cause of the decay would be Sullivan's obsessive need to become Affie's amateur marriage guidance counsellor (counselling with extreme prejudice), and not due to any personal animosity between them. Initially, Sullivan had been very happy for his royal friend at the announcement of his marriage, writing him a long congratulatory letter to which Affie replied from Jugenheim: 'I only hope that the interruption which my happiness caused in your work will not have been a long one & and that the solemn introduction to the second part [of *Light of the World*] has since been born to the world'.¹⁹ Visits to Eastwell Park were even occasionally lengthy. Sullivan arrived for one early visit on 27 November 1874, and he was still there on 10 December when he wrote his 'English nights' letter to Kuhe. It was bitterly cold, and Sullivan described how Affie, Marie, Lady Emma Osborne, and John Clarke immediately ushered him into the library where they plied him with sherry and bitters before Affie escorted him to his room.

The carefree early days were captured by a journalist for Boosey's *The Musical World*, England's first comprehensive Saturday musical periodical to include personal reportage. Sullivan was interviewed at his Pimlico home in the winter of 1875:

Mr Arthur Sullivan is a great favourite in the happy family of ‘the Edinburghs’. He hangs in his study a memento of the Duchess’s kindly feeling for him. It is not a very elegant article – only a rough and ready ‘butterfly cachet’; but it is highly prized, for the Royal and Imperial Princess made it herself ... [Sullivan] formed one of a party of moth-hunters ... He went out with the intention of being a mere spectator. The Duchess noticed his empty hands. She challenged him. ‘I have no net’, Sullivan pleaded. Bidding the party wait, she returned indoors, improvised a net ... and presented it to the English maestro. If Arthur Sullivan ever becomes great, the net will be historic.²⁰

Or, as another journalist put it when running the story:

The Duchess, courteously requesting the party to delay for a few minutes, ran to her boudoir, and before the ladies-in-waiting could come to her assistance, had improvised a net, attached it to a handle, and was back on the hall door steps presenting it to the favoured owner ... [who] elevated [it] to the highest place of honour [over his mantelpiece].²¹

Had Marie and Sullivan remained friends, these reports would almost certainly have been proved right respecting the improvised butterfly net. As it was, it probably had been consigned to the flames long before Sullivan became ‘great’.

On 29 January 1876, the R.A.H. council resolved to prepare a special concert for the A.O.S. outside its normal routine, billing it as a ‘Grand Miscellaneous Concert’. Affie would lead and – for one item only – conduct at his own request after Queen Victoria had ‘expressed a wish to be present at a concert in the Royal Albert Hall’. This would be another successful venture, largely due to the rarity of the queen’s presence, costing £976 0s 7d to stage and generating an income of £1,765 6s.²² Once again, the artistic quality was high. Albani, the English soprano Zaré Thalberg, Patey, and Foli were joined by the popular tenor Edward Lloyd. The concert took place on Friday 25 February at four o’clock and was conducted by Barnby and his assistant George Mount. Affie and Marie were long-standing box-patrons at the R.A.H., and Marie was present on this occasion in the ‘Edinburgh Box’.

Marie also attended the fifth and final A.O.S. concert of the season on Saturday 5 May, with Loosy joining her in the Edinburgh Box. Five thousand people paid to see Affie lead the orchestra in Mendelssohn’s most popular symphonic work, the Symphony No.4 known as ‘The Italian’ (composed during a tour of Italy), followed by his equally popular Piano Concerto in G minor (written during the same Italian journey). A song from Verdi’s *Don Carlos* was sung by the German soprano Bianca Blume as an interlude, and the concert concluded with a recital by Affie on the solo violin with the Trieste-born London-based pianist Alberto Randegger accompanying one of his vocal students from the Royal Academy of Music. ‘Both singer and violinist showed a slight nervousness at the beginning of the serenade’, noted *The Times* three days later, ‘but this quickly disappeared, and the result of their united endeavours was greeted with cheering and applause’. As an encore, Affie and Randegger performed an arrangement of the original version of the *Galatea Valse*.

It was one of the aims of the R.A.H. to provide Londoners with a venue in which extraordinary musical events could be staged at a price affordable to all but the destitute. On 21 March 1877, the council undertook one of the most ambitious events of the century when it resolved to invite the 240-strong Bayreuth Festival Orchestra and Chorus to give a series of six Wagner concerts between Monday 7 and Saturday 19 May. The orchestra would be led by August Wilhelmj (who would end his life as principal professor of violin at the Guildhall School of Music) and conducted by Hans Richter, the Austrian mæstro at the Vienna *Hofoper* since 1875. Wagner would also attend and occasionally conduct, although most of the time he would sit in a throne-like chair on the side of the stage facing his audience, emulating his own portrait of

Wotan supervising the slain in Valhalla. His only previous visit to England (1855) had been a financial and musical disaster, with a campaign of hostility waged against him by the general and musical press. Twenty-two years later, however, Wagner was widely appreciated – even in England – as the world’s greatest living musical genius. And although the visit would once again prove to be a financial disaster, it at least would be universally hailed as an enormous critical success.

Marie’s musical life around the time of the Wagner Festival was intense. She arrived at Windsor Castle on Monday 23 April where, six days later, in St George’s Chapel she attended an organ recital given by Sir Herbert Oakeley, recently appointed Queen’s Composer for Scotland. The programme is interesting for the final piece:

Prelude [adaptation by Oakeley of motet].....Jacob de Brouck.
 Ode for St Cecilia’s Day (1739).....Georg Händel.
 Organ concerto op.4 no.2 (1738) [allegro].....Händel.
 Solomon (1749/59) [Nightingale Chorus].....Händel.
 Judas Maccabæus (1747/58) [Hail Judea].....Händel.
 Aria: Jesu, meines Glaubens Zier BWV 472....Johann Sebastian Bach.
 Motet: Ave verum corpus (1791).....Wolfgang Mozart.
 Chorale: Evening and Morning.....Herbert Oakeley.
 Edinburgh March (1874).....Oakeley.

Before Oakeley played the ‘Edinburgh March’, he rose from the organ, turned to his royal audience and announced that it had been composed for and dedicated to ‘Her Royal and Imperial Highness the Duchess of Edinburgh’. More accurately, it was an organ transcription of his orchestral work *Edinburgh Festival March*, which had been composed to mark Affie’s return to England with his bride.

On Tuesday 1 May, Marie left Windsor Castle with Beatrice and Prince and Princess Christian to see Albani in one of her finest roles, that of Amina in *La sonnambula* at the Italian Opera, Covent Garden. Three evenings later, she was at Covent Garden again, this time to see Zaré Thalberg repeat her début success of 1875 as Zerlina in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, a performance *The Times* described on 7 May as ‘having ripened into something nearly perfect’.

Marie returned to Windsor Castle for a few days before her journey back to London with Leo for the opening night of the Wagner Festival. Richter began the programme by conducting the *Kaisermarsch*, a work for male voices and orchestra Wagner had written to commemorate the formation of the Second Reich in 1871. He continued with the vigorous overture from the tragic opera *Rienzi, der Letzte der Tribunen* then three extracts from the romantic opera *Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg*. Wagner then conducted two excerpts from *Das Rheingold*, the first part of his monumental music drama *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. These were the opening scene in which Alberich – the bass-baritone and former postal official Karl Hill – steals the gold ring from the Rhine maidens, and the closing scene of the entrance of the gods into Valhalla. *The Times* of 9 May thought this last section ‘best of all’.

Leo stayed with Marie at Clarence House, and both returned to Windsor Castle on the following noon, travelling together to Cumberland Lodge where Prince and Princess Christian had arranged a privileged private recital for Marie in which Rubinstein accompanied the Breslau-born baritone Georg Henschel. Henschel, soon to become a British national and an important figure in the British musical world, had given his English début on 19 February singing Händel and Schubert to become one of the ‘lions’ of London in 1877.

The Cumberland Lodge recital had followed on from a performance given at Windsor Castle for Victoria and a few ladies-in-waiting. On that occasion, after a gentle introduction of Chopin nocturnes, the pair performed Liszt's furious transcription of Schubert's song *Erlkönig*, based on Goethe's sinister ballad telling the story of a father galloping through a stormy night with his sick son to escape the clutches of the elfin king. Victoria, noted Henschel, gradually moved her chair further and further away from the doomed instrument and the steam-thresher technique of Rubinstein, whose long career (like Liszt's) was littered with the many corpses of destroyed pianos. The programme at Cumberland Lodge closely followed that given at Windsor Castle

On Saturday 12, Marie and Beatrice returned to London to attend the afternoon session of the Wagner Festival. *The Times* two days later noted that the concert had been 'heavily attended' due to the 'distinguished patronage' that had been announced in advance within its own pages, and that this had been in spite of the weather 'which could not have been less favourable'. Once again, there was an excerpt from *Tannhauser* (the Grand March) followed this time by a selection from *Die Walküre* (the second part of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*) including the celebrated flight of the chariots carrying the slain to Valhalla. *The Times* believed the programme ought to have been reversed: 'After the first part attention flags; and while the most extraordinary things go on, the audience are leisurely departing. Thus many lost one of the most magnificent performances ever listened to of a truly magnificent piece of orchestral music'. Marie and Beatrice, needless to say, remained until the end, seated in the Edinburgh Box.

On Thursday 17 May, Marie met Wagner when he honoured the royal family with his august presence at Windsor Castle, but sadly there is no extant record of what passed between them. Two days later, she returned to Clarence House, going that evening again to Covent Garden to see Albani, this time in the title role of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. On 6 June, the R.A.H. council resolved to extend the Wagner Festival to include two further concerts; perhaps Marie would have gone a third time, only by then she had left the country. Queen Victoria wrote in her journal on the evening of Wagner's visit to Windsor Castle that she had seen 'the great composer Wagner, about whom the people in Germany are really a little mad ... He was profuse in expressions of gratitude, and I expressed my regret at having been unable to be present at one of his concerts'.²³ For 'unable' one should here read 'unwilling'. Victoria's taste was rather for Meyerbeer and Mozart, but her prejudice would be swept away in an instant in 1899 (virtually a death-bed conversion) when she actually saw and heard a Wagner work for the very first time – Jean de Reszke as Lohengrin at Covent Garden.

Marie's visits to the R.A.H. became less frequent following the Wagner festival, but she did attend a very special concert on Saturday 20 December 1879. This was an A.O.S. benefit in aid of the German Hospital, founded in 1845 off Graham Road in Dalston near London Fields. Mount conducted, and Affie led with Bertie and Alix joining Marie in the Edinburgh Box for a very ambitious (perhaps over-ambitious) programme opening with Károly Goldmark's symphonic poem *Ländliche Hochzeit* (1877), a rustic work steeped in the folk traditions of his native Hungary, and the equal in merit of Liszt and Wagner. This was followed by the overture to *Fidelio* and then Weber's *Konzertstück* (1821) for piano and orchestra, featuring Hallé thrilling the audience with the octave glissando and spectacular leaps the work requires.

The concert concluded with a number of brief 'fireworks'. There were two violin performances by Norman-Nerudová, one of several members of a celebrated

Moravian musical family who ten years later would marry Hallé. She played on a 1709 Stradivari purchased for her three years earlier by Affie in conjunction with the 1st Earl of Dudley and 5th Earl of Hardwicke for £500 – perhaps it was as well that the year before that she had kept her ‘rosin for playing in time’ remark to herself. The American mezzo-soprano Amalia ‘Minnie’ Hauk, now a popular Carmen and Manon, sung the amusing *Echoliéd* (a clever party piece mimicking echoes in a valley) originally written for Jenny Lind by Karl Anton Eckert of Berlin, who had just died. She then sang one of the countless saccharine arrangements of Gounod’s already mawkish *Ave Maria* with Affie accompanying her. A young German soprano followed, singing first Brahms’s sugary *Lullaby* and then one of the many songs by Sir Julius Benedict, the Stuttgart-born naturalized British composer and conductor who emerged to accompany her at the piano and then remained at the keyboard to accompany Henschel in two songs.

No doubt the German Hospital was grateful for what would prove to be a financial success, but Marie may have agreed with *The Times* two days later that ‘The orchestra of amateurs ... attacked the various pieces assigned to it with a vigour which showed at least a deep interest in, if not an absolute mastery of, the art of music’. Hauk explained how her part in the concert had come about:

At Marlborough House I had the honour of being presented to the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, whom I met quite frequently in after years. The Duke, being a very capable violinist, expressed the wish ... to play Gounod’s ‘Ave Maria’ as an obligato to my singing. At the time I was delighted ... but I never thought for a moment that I should fulfil that wish before an audience of six thousand persons. A concert was announced ... and the Duke intimated that if I was willing to sing ... it would be a pleasure for him to accompany me. We had a short rehearsal, but when our number came, instead of accompanying me on the platform he modestly went into the orchestra and took his seat among the other musicians, where he played the obligato.²⁴

Henschel did not describe the concert he gave at Cumberland Lodge, but he did recall another he gave before Affie and Marie at Clarence House late in 1881 when he accompanied himself at the piano. Affie asked him to sing an aria from Albert Lortzing’s comic-opera *Zar und Zimmerman, oder Die zwei Peter* in which Pëtr I sings of his own life:

In the last stanza he thinks of the end. The strife over, a monument of stone will be all his reward, where he craves one in the hearts of his people ... Well, imagine my feelings when ... the Duke asked for that Czar’s song! How *could* I sing it, with the Duchess, the daughter of the good and kind Czar Alexander, whose cruel assassination ... sent a thrill of horror and indignation and compassion throughout the civilized world, sitting there in front of me? For a moment I was dumbfounded. I attempted to excuse myself, pretending not to know the song by heart. ‘Why, Henschel’, the Duke exclaimed, ‘it was only a fortnight ago I heard you sing it at St James’s Hall!’ ... Suddenly I had an inspiration: I would sing only two stanzas, and by melting the second and third into one evade at least the allusion to that ‘sad monument of stone’. Extremely happy to have found a way out of the dilemma, I sat down and sang, imagining, however, I could feel the fine, serious features of the Duchess grow more serious with every bar.²⁵

Henschel went on to state that Affie was still not satisfied, insisting that the omitted stanza be sung, explaining that the public subscription for a monument to Marie’s father had been concluded. Henschel was under the impression that Affie would have commanded him to give an ‘unabbreviated’ second rendition of the aria had not the lateness of the hour prevented it. Affie’s insensitivity at insisting on it when it had so clearly upset Marie is extraordinary to note.

Marie's enforced exile changed many of her attitudes to England and British cultural life – or, rather, her interest in making any effort to appreciate it. A few months after her return from Malta, on 11 May 1879, she wrote in a letter from Clarence House: 'For all our amusement we go to the theatre, often; we suffer "charity concerts" and mediocre painting exhibitions, give dinners on Sundays that are quite boring enough, and stay mostly at home'.²⁶ Affie gradually withdrew as orchestral leader of the A.O.S. as naval and drinking obligations increasingly interfered with his musical life. There is no record of Marie attending any of his public performances in England after the German Hospital benefit, although his final official concert (excluding those on Malta) took place in 1882.²⁷ In that year, on Saturday 13 May, at the Floral Hall adjoining the Covent Garden theatre, the A.O.S. combined with the Royal Italian Opera to give a charity concert in aid of the Royal College of Music, at which Affie was called on to play two works: the *Legenda Valacca* by Gaetano Braga, which was originally scored for soprano and cello obbligato and popularly known as the 'Angel's Serenade', but was here arranged for violin with Affie accompanying the Swedish soprano Kristina Nilsson; and another arrangement of Gounod's *Ave Maria* in which Affie accompanied Albani. This *Ave Maria* was repeated one week later at the R.A.H. at a concert in aid of the West End Hospital for Diseases of the Nervous System at 73 Welbeck Street, with Affie accompanying the French soprano Marie Roze. Two Marys certainly, but no Marian trinity, for although Marie was in London she did not attend either performance.

Marie was not ill, nor was she taking a rest from concert going. On Tuesday 23 May, she was at Covent Garden with the sick but restless Marie Erbach to hear Patti as Doña Leonora and Nicolini as Manrico in Verdi's *Il trovatore* under Patti's favourite conductor, Enrico Bevignani, returned to the Royal Italian Opera after an absence of five years. On Friday 26, however, Affie and Marie were together at Buckingham Palace for a state concert to hear orchestral and vocal music – sung by Nilsson and Albani – by Wagner, Schubert, Berlioz, Rubinstein, Gounod, Donizetti, Balfe, Rossini, and of course Sullivan. This time it was the queen who was absent, as she was at Balmoral.

Marie also agreed to become co-patron of concerts she did not attend, such as that held at St James's Hall Piccadilly on Friday 23 June 1882 in aid of the English Church in Paris. She was also patroness of a concert given at Londonderry House in Park Lane in aid of the 'Distressed Ladies of Ireland' on Saturday 1 July. It undoubtedly pleased Marie to be involved with this second concert – held at the London home of the Anglo-Irish marquesses of Londonderry – since her sympathies were very much with Ireland, although she could not attend the concert.²⁸ This second concert also included a performance of the Gilbert and Sullivan one-act success *Trial by Jury*.

Some choral events Marie clearly enjoyed. In 1871, Barnby and the rector of St Anne's, Soho, began the annual tradition of presenting Bach's *Passio secundum Ioannem* every Good Friday, which she, Alix, and Bertie attended in 1883 (23 March), seated at the front in a church 'filled to overflowing' (*Illustrated London News* 31 March).

On 17 February 1883, the R.A.H. council received a request from Sir Andrew Lusk, President of the London Sunday School Choir, to use the hall for a major charity concert in aid of the Royal College of Music. Having risen from the ashes of the National Training School for Music, this would be opened by Bertie on 7 May. The concert was held on Wednesday 4 April at eight o'clock, conducted by the choral director Luther Hinton. The concert opened with the customary performance of

Aleksei L'vov's *God Save the Tsar* for Marie's benefit at Lusk's request, in an arrangement by Hinton for choir and organ. Two works by Sir William Bennett followed: the quartet for solo voices 'God is a Spirit' from the cantata *The Woman of Samaria* and his *Ave Maria* ('A Meditation on a Prelude by Bach') 'exquisitely rendered' (*Illustrated London News* 14 April) by Lucia Carreras accompanied by Marie Schumann on the violin and her sister Louisa on the piano. The anthem 'Lord, for Thy tender mercy's sake' by John Farrant of Salisbury Cathedral was followed by the glee 'Oh, taste and see!' by Sir John Goss, then 'Lift up your hands' by Edward Hopkins. There was much else besides, with extracts from the works of Verdi, Daniel Auber, Samuel Webbe the Elder, Richard Stevens, George Root, Benedict, Ciro Pinsuti, and of course the ubiquitous and ever-present Arthur Sullivan, by now considered to be the most popular musician in England.

The next day, both Affie and Marie attended a performance of *Fidelio* at Drury Lane produced by the Carl Rosa Opera Company, with Marie Roze as Leonora, who 'fully justified the praises that had been bestowed ... during [her] recent provincial tour' (*Illustrated London News* 7 April).

On Wednesday 11 April, Marie was back at the R.A.H. for a performance of Hector Berlioz's 'légende dramatique' *La damnation de Faust*. This striking work was based on parts of Goethe's masterpiece with Berlioz's own additions, failing at its première in Paris but subsequently well received in St Petersburg, Berlin, and London. It was performed by the R.A.H.C.S. under Barnby with Dr Stainer at the organ. The four soloists were Lloyd as Faust, Santley as Wagner, the mezzo-soprano Anna Williams as Margarete, and the bass Henry Pyatt as Mephistopheles.

Marie's final musical experience before her departure to Malta was a major royal event. On Friday 26 March 1886, the R.A.H. presented a royal command performance of Gounod's *Mors et Vita*, a sacred cantata for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra composed in London the previous year. Queen Victoria would be present for the first time since 25 February 1876. The additional royal guest list included Liko and Beatrice, Loosy, and the duke and duchess of Connaught. Affie was already at sea, but the *Illustrated London News* noted (6 March) that Marie 'occupied her own box with her children'. As usual, Barnby conducted, with Stainer at the organ. The four soloists were Albani, Patey, Lloyd, and Santley, supported by a choir of 800 vocalists.

Some of Marie's Malta experiences have already been related, as also the reason why they cannot be included in this particular study. However, a rare performance given by Affie on the island should be noted. On Friday 28 January 1887, a benefit concert was held in the ballroom of the governor's palace for pensioned soldiers and sailors, cared for in a special home. According to the *Malta Times* (5 February), it was 'The most successful concert of the season' and had to be repeated on the following day by public demand, raising in total a sum of £96 for the designated charity. In addition to conducting Sullivan's incidental music to Henry VIII, Affie gave a solo performance of Handel's celebrated *Largo*, in which he 'displayed exquisite touch and finish ... earning the warm appreciation of his listeners'. The *Malta Standard* was equally enthusiastic, describing (3 February) the performance as one that 'afforded the auditors a pleasure as great as it was rare, the violin solo was most beautifully rendered'. It is a pity that Marie's shy disposition did not permit her to break with protocol, even on Malta.

Following her final return from Malta, Marie attended the first performance of Frederic Cowen's four-act romantic-heroic opera *Thorgrim* (based on an Icelandic saga) at Drury Lane with Affie and Bertie on 22 April 1890. Cowen himself conducted, with the Irish tenor Barton M'Guckin as Thorgrim, supported by the

American soprano Zélie de Lussan and the London-born bass-baritone Frank Celli. For Marie, this must have been appeared as another example of English music attempting to enter the world arena and failing. Cowen, a pianist, composer, and conductor, was, like so many of his countrymen, once promoted as practically the ‘next Beethoven’ by *The Times* in 1880 but, like those fellow countrymen, he inevitably fell somewhat short of the target. Hermann Klein, the music critic for the *Sunday Times*, had been present at this performance of *Thorgrin*, later remembering that ‘despite a cordial reception ... [it] failed quite to hit the mark’.²⁹

England at this period of Marie’s life had still not recovered from the death of Henry Purcell in 1695. His demise effectively ended nearly three centuries of world-class music making that would not be revived in even its second-rate guise until the genius of Edward Elgar presented itself before the world in the final years of Queen Victoria’s reign. It was with considerable justification that a German music critic subsequently (1904) characterized England as ‘Das Land ohne Musik’ – the land without music. Paolo Tosti, the Italian song composer and singing teacher, explained his eventual settlement in England as singing instructor to the royal family, in 1880, to the Franco-Italian æsthete Count Primoli in 1897, who stated it thus:

Tosti decided that it was time to seek his fortune in the country where music is not an innate need but a luxury, not a wild flower which blossoms everywhere, but a hothouse bloom which is purchased at great cost – and, singing as he went, he left for England.³⁰

Or, as Wingfield-Stratford must have decided by the 1890s, ‘a people whose deepest instincts forbid them ever quite to let themselves go, ever to trust unreservedly to their inspiration, will never breed musicians’.³¹ Hawk, who had given her debut performance as Carmen in London in 1878, reckoned that, musically, ‘it takes the average Englishman some time to understand and digest anything that is new to him or out of the common’.³²

Richard Dana, the young American living in London for two years from 1875, gave a perceptive view of the musical times in his diary on 9 June 1876:

While the English generally are not a musical race and many of them do not know whether a band is in tune or not, and many, both men and women, with good voices lose the pitch, yet there are in London especially some of the most highly cultivated musical people that are to be found anywhere in the world.³³

True, but most of these ‘highly cultivated musical people’ were either visiting musicians or immigrants playing Continental music, like Henschel, who also smiled at England’s almost total dependency on what he called ‘imported’ music and musicians. And as though to demonstrate this point, on the following day Dana went to Langham Hall on Great Portland Street to hear Beethoven’s ‘Kreutzer’ violin sonata for piano and violin, with Ludwig Breitner (a pupil of Rubinstein and Liszt) at the piano and Guido Papini (Italian royal court violinist now settled in London) on the violin.

But, as a performing musician, Marie did not have to visit English concert halls to satisfy her cultural needs. In common with most Victorians during the period not entirely unhappily dubbed ‘the plague of pianos’, Marie would create most of her music at home, either herself or at private recitals given by invited musicians. She had two pianos at Eastwell Park, two at Clarence House, and later two at San Antonio Palace (those removed from Eastwell Park), where she would perform solo, duets with a guest, four-hands at one piano, and even eight-hands on two. For duets and

four-hands her co-musicians were usually either her principal lady-in-waiting and friend Lady Mary Fitzwilliam or Lady Randolph Churchill, while for eight-hands almost any lady could be invited to participate to make up what she referred to as a 'quartette'. Although this was the usual spelling of 'quartet' at the time, Marie certainly intended a feminine inflexion. Men were, however, on rare occasions permitted to participate. But clearly Marie preferred to play the piano by herself, confessing in 1884 that there was 'nothing I dread so much' as playing eight hands 'as it goes on without stopping ... but they cannot do without me!'³⁴

There is no doubting either the identity of Marie's greatest musical idol or that of his – for her – most significant work. In 1882, she travelled twice to Bayreuth in Bavaria for both the world première and the last performance that season (26 July and 29 August) of Wagner's swansong *Parsifal*, which he had begun in 1876 shortly before his purpose-built opera house had to close for six years for financial reasons. There were altogether sixteen performances of *Parsifal* (written expressly for Bayreuth) conducted by Hermann Levi (Wagner's ideal *Parsifal* conductor) that season, but Wagner himself emerged during the final performance to conduct the last scene from Act III. The chorus and orchestra had been provided by the Munich *Hofoper* at the command of Ludwig II of Bavaria.

The maverick philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche loathed *Parsifal* for what he saw as its sanctimonious themes of Christian redemption, and certainly Marie required several years before she could consider it the intense masterpiece that it undoubtedly is. These 1882 performances led her to remark that *Parsifal* was 'very interesting and some of it really fine',³⁵ which was hardly an ecstatic endorsement, even if she had been writing to Queen Victoria. Nevertheless, she went a second time to Bayreuth for the first performance the following July. Wagner had died at Venice on 13 February, and Marie wrote more openly to Lord Wolseley about what had been essentially a memorial experience:

It [*Parsifal*] is really beautiful and impressed one deeply ... one really does not know from where proceed such heavenly sounds ... The whole mysticism and highest religious ideas of the middle ages are given in it ... The silence and attention of the audience is also very remarkable, not a sound, not a whisper, no applause ... The voices of the singers ... enter thoroughly into their parts and never seem absent for a moment ... the accompaniment of the orchestra is perfection.³⁶

Clearly, what Nietzsche detested about *Parsifal* Marie adored, and she attended the last performance in August 1888 with Countess Tolstaia, finding it 'respectfully beautiful'.³⁷ This was some improvement on Marie's first assessment to Victoria (even if still restrained for the benefit of the confirmed Mozartienne), and she was now even anticipating her next visit, writing Victoria in the following year that she was 'greatly looking forward' to the 'last representation' of the 1889 season.³⁸ It is possible that Marie would have gone more often even than this, but due to Wagner's own wishes and a copyright contract, *Parsifal* could not be staged anywhere outside Bayreuth until 1914.

Marie retained her deep love of Wagner for the rest of her life, but what might this suggest about her musical tastes in general? At the same time that she was writing to Wolseley about Wagner, she was brooding on the death of a close lifelong Russian woman friend, painfully revealing that 'for a person like myself, who lives entirely in the past, [mourning] is an aggravation of sorrow which few people with a prosaic ... turn of mind can hardly conceive'.³⁹ Although always carefully internalized, this concentration on the past is one of Marie's most obvious principal characteristics, and

it may seem only natural that she should admire so passionately the only nineteenth-century composer entirely uninterested in the present.

But perhaps this attitude was not quite commendable. If on the one hand Marie admired a composer such as Wagner whose music was of the highest quality, on the other she seems to have denied for herself the enormous quantity of exiting new sounds available to her throughout the extraordinary and unmatched cultural era in which she lived. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, of course, but it is nonetheless a fact that there is no evidence that Marie attended concerts of music by Mahler, Bruckner, Richard Strauss, the so-called French impressionists such as Debussy, Satie, and Ravel, or – as she certainly might have done later in life – Schönberg or even Stravinskii. Marie's musical tastes were therefore of the highest order, but nevertheless thoroughly conservative and never progressive; quite simply, as she put it, she preferred the past.

Any doubts that this was so are dispelled by Marie's last recorded musical experiences in London shortly before the outbreak of the Great War. She was at Covent Garden on Thursday 18 June 1914 to see the Mancunian mezzo-soprano Louise Kirkby-Lunn as Delilah in Saint-Saëns's three-act *Samson et Dalila* under the Venetian conductor Giorgio Polacco. Although Saint-Saëns was still alive, he was almost eighty and this opera – his most successful – had been first produced at Weimar during the ninth Russo-Turkish War. On the following day, Marie was at the same theatre to see Polacco conduct the Bohemian soprano Emmy Destinn as the geisha Cio-Cio-San in Puccini's *La Madama Butterfly*. Even aged fifty-six, Puccini was therefore the youngest world-class contemporary composer whose music Marie is known to have experienced, and although this opera was first produced at La Scala in Milan as recently as February 1904, it can hardly be described as anything other than thoroughly retrospective in style. One year earlier than these visits, in May 1913, the Stravinskii/Diaghilev/Nizhinskii production of *The Rite of Spring* had given rise to a riot in Paris. In 1914, it was still causing audiences in France and England either revulsion or wild enthusiasm that in either case was establishing Stravinskii as the new voice of the century; but clearly it was not a voice that had anything worthwhile to say to Marie.

~ Greasepaint and Oils ~

A study of Marie's visits to the theatre and the 'mediocre painting exhibitions' she referred to reveals a more eclectic taste than that which she displayed in music. However, the plastic arts present problems since, unlike with concert venues and theatres, royalty were disabled by protocol from entering public art galleries during normal hours. There is also the additional problem of disentangling official art commissioned from artists in royal pay from genuinely independent taste. Joseph Boehm (Viennese-born sculptor-in-ordinary to Queen Victoria), Laurits Tuxen (official painter to the royal court of Denmark), Heinrich von Angeli (Viennese-born court painter to Victoria), and Karl Sohn (Düsseldorf-born professor of portraiture at the painting academy there and Victoria's court painter from 1883) all produced a likeness of Marie.

Marie admired her Crimean portrait by Richter of 1873. She and Affie visited the Royal Academy on Thursday 30 April 1874 where it was on display for those who were not invited to meet the real thing at Buckingham Palace. Marie thought the Academy that year was 'very good', noting that Richter's portrait 'is much admired'.⁴⁰ But Marie also held opinions on official royal art that ran contrary to what was thought in higher circles. Angeli was commissioned to produce portraits of all Victoria's children and their spouses throughout 1875, reckoning him 'a great artist', 'honest and *unflattering*', and reckoning that Marie's portrait would be 'quite excellent'.⁴¹ But Marie wrote back after receiving it that she thought it 'not a pleasing likeness though a very fine painting!'⁴² Whether Marie objected to Angeli's '*unflattering*' approach is not known, but since she clearly appreciated his technical mastery, and disliked having her features painted, this may be the case.

Perhaps one of the 'mediocre' artistic occasions took place on 24 March 1874 when forty boys from Christ's Hospital in Horsham exhibited their drawings at Buckingham Palace for royal inspection (an annual event). One week later, Marie visited Boehm's studio to oversee the production of a bust that he was preparing of her. Perhaps she was not much impressed by the result, as it later turned up at the Clarence House auction (unpriced) in 1901. On 6 June, she and Affie paid an official visit to the School for Art Needlework in Sloane Street, where ladies of fashionable families learned how to cross-stitch to produce rugs, carpets, chair seats, cushions, bell-pulls, curtain borders, and pelmets for their present and future homes.

On 18 May 1875, the Edinburghs visited the Exhibition of the Society of Painters in Water Colours at the Gallery at 5 Pall Mall East. This (and all other such occasions) was of course a private viewing, and Marie's opinion of it (and perhaps all these recent visits) was summed up a few days later: 'We have been to several exhibitions of pictures but nothing in particular'.⁴³

Marie's saw her first play in London on Thursday 18 March 1875, when she and a small suite attended an evening performance of *Lady Audley's Secret* at the Globe Theatre in Newcastle Street, Strand, recently opened (28 November 1868) as one of the 'Rickety Twins' (along with the *Opéra Comique* of 1870). The original novel by Mary Elizabeth Braddon had been published in 1862 as a superior detective work in the style of Wilkie Collins and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, dealing with bigamy, an attempted murder believed actual, and considerable internecine quarrelling and deception. Unfortunately, the 1863 dramatization by the comic actor and minor playwright Colin Hazlewood did not do it justice, and the result resembled a sententious farce rather than serious drama. This deficiency was diagnosed but not cured, and the performance was followed appropriately enough by the burlesque of

Blue Beard (1874) by Henry Brougham Farnie, the Scottish librettist and translator who provided English texts for Continental comic-opera. *Blue Beard* starred two of the best burlesque players of the day, however: Lionel Brough and Lydia Thompson.

Marie must have admired Thompson as she saw her again on 17 February 1876 at the Criterion Theatre on Regent's (Piccadilly) Circus (a brand-new underground venue that had opened in March) in the French-style farce *Piff-Paff*. This farce – also known as 'The Magic Armoury' – was a 'pasticcio extravaganza' (based on *Le roi matapa*) written by Farnie and Alfred Murray the previous year; it had failed dismally two weeks before Marie saw it, to be hastily rewritten and relaunched with considerable success.

A somewhat more independent artistic experience for Marie took place on 3 May 1877, when she and Beatrice visited the Fine Art Society Gallery in New Bond Street to see an exhibition of the works of the young Elizabeth Thompson held under the auspices of the Society of Female Artists. Thompson was perhaps a good deal better than 'mediocre'. Her work was highly praised by no less a monumental arbiter of Victorian taste than William Ruskin, who had approached her work with the extreme prejudice of a man who believed that no woman could paint anything worthwhile, but who left her exhibition with the conviction that the paintings must have been executed by an Amazon. In her memoirs (1922), Thompson described how at these Bond Street exhibitions a woman had to be escorted out by her husband, in tears, while an old soldier was visibly shaken at the sudden shock of being transported back to Balaclava. But even here there may have been an element of duty about the visit. Thompson, who had studied in Rome and Florence, had become England's foremost exponent of military art after her most celebrated Academy Exhibition war painting *The Roll Call: Calling the Roll after an Engagement, Crimea* (1874) had been purchased by Queen Victoria, since when her work had become a 'must see' for members of the royal family. Among the paintings Marie saw were *Quatre Bras* (1875), *Balaklava* (1876), and *Inkermann* (1877). Consolidating her unusual passion for all things military, shortly after this exhibition Thompson married the then Major William Butler.

The Russo-Turkish War altered even Marie's taste for English culture, and she experienced little of it for many months. An immediate concern on returning from Malta was Boehm's bust of Affie, which by the spring of 1879 'has not yet been begun, as he suffers so much from rheumatism and can't work just now. We went about it to him ourselves'.⁴⁴ On 29 July, Marie visited the Wallace Collection at Hertford House in Manchester Square. This great and unique private art collection, built up by the earls and marquesses of Hertford (and latterly the Fourth Marquess's natural son Sir Richard Wallace), had been moved to London in 1871. Some of it was destroyed by fire in 1874 when the collection was being exhibited at the Bethnal Green Museum, but Hertford House nevertheless contained some 700 paintings and other treasures. These were mostly eighteenth-century French works (particularly Jean Watteau, Nicolas Lancret, François Boucher, and Jean Fragonard) as well as English portraits of the same period. Marie was 'quite enchanted with it'.⁴⁵

Marie confessed that the only cultural pursuit she was able to enjoy during the summer after her return was the French theatre, which was 'quite excellent and the plays are interesting and good'. She recommended that Beatrice see the three plays she had just seen: *L'Ami Fritz*, *Le Marquis de Villemer*, and *Hernani*, although this last she thought perhaps not quite (in French) "'visible" for a young girl'.⁴⁶ *L'Ami Fritz* (1864) was a collaborative effort by two Alsatians, Émile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrian, who had produced a new dramatization of this play in 1877. It was a pleasant if sentimental story of a confirmed and grumbling bachelor

'reconstructed' by the love of a woman. *Le Marquis de Villemer* was an 1864 dramatization by Georges Sand of her undistinguished novel of the same name published four years earlier. The most interesting play was *Hernani*, the seminal romantic poetic drama by Victor Hugo telling the story of a sixteenth-century Spanish grandee who wants to marry his ward, but who is in love with the dashing bandit of the title. When *Hernani* was first performed in Paris in February 1830, it created a furore and a virtual civil war between romantics and anti-romantics.

Marie returned to London from Windsor Castle on Monday 22 May 1882 to see Marie Erbach, going with her to New Bond Street to view more battle paintings, this time by Alphonse de Neuville who had gained celebrity status by chronicling the Franco-Prussian and Anglo-Zulu wars. She then went to Conduit Street to see the deeply religious and melancholy canvasses of the Hungarian master Mihály von Mukácsy (an anti-Impressionist), before going to the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly to admire the minor fringe-Impressionist Jean Tissot, resident in London since 1871 but destined shortly to return to Paris. In the evening, the two cousins made their way to the Royal Comedy Theatre in Panton Street, Haymarket (opened the previous year), to see a burlesque adaptation of *Boccaccio* with Brough, Kate Munroe, and James Taylor leading the cast.

Marie's interest in art education continued, and she allowed herself to be registered as co-patron of Baroness Burdett-Coutts's four-day bazaar commencing on Friday 26 June held at Humphrey's Hall on Kensington Road (Knightsbridge) in aid of the extension there to the Female School of Art located in Bloomsbury. But she could not be present, as she had already left for the Continent with Marie Erbach.

Such a performance as *Boccaccio* would not have been acceptable to everyone, and clearly Marie was no prude – at least not where the theatre was concerned. On Thursday 29 April 1886, Lord Wolseley and a few of his friends paid an impromptu visit to Clarence House where he found Marie preparing to go to Her Majesty's Theatre to see Sarah Bernhardt as Marguerite Gautier in the first performance that season of *La Dame aux camélias*, a role she first took in 1880. This very *risqué* play – dramatized by Alexandre Dumas *fils* in 1852 from his own earlier novel about the Parisian *demi-monde* – had been the inspiration for Verdi's *La traviata*, as noted Marie's favourite Italian opera. Bernhardt had begun her brief English tour with four performances of Sardou's *Théodora* beginning on 24 April, to be followed by *La Dame aux camélias*; the company was her own and entirely French.

The choice of play had been Marie's, and she invited Wolseley and his friends to join her, which they did. Although Wolseley found Bernhardt 'wonderful', he could not understand the interest in a play from the French early *réalisme* school with its almost scientific analysis of vice. 'How low men & women have fallen to like such representations of vice ... which to low minds and depraved individuals gives it seemingly a sort of depraved glamour ... how I wept inwardly to think that my own countrymen had come to admire the low indecencies that on the Paris stage interest Frenchmen so keenly'.⁴⁷ *The Times* on the following day was also critical, although not of the content but of the quality of the performance: 'Time is not dealing kindly with Sarah Bernhardt ... The company is not a very capable one'. But the paper did notice that 'the house last night was a fashionable one, and included the Duchess of Edinburgh and suite'. Whether being regarded as some kind of trend-setter would have amused or annoyed Marie is a moot point; doubtless, however, her attending such a play would have been considered by her conservative peers as another example of her (at best) Continental eccentricity or (at worst) foreign degeneracy.

Marie was a great admirer of the melodramatic actor-manager Wilson Barrett, whom she saw several times during his five-year tenure of the Princess's Theatre on Oxford Street from 1881. One of his most famous characterizations would be what Missy called 'Lord Harry' (properly Harold Armytage) in Sims's *Lights o'London* (1881). She and Marie saw this several times at the Olympic Theatre on Wych Street at the lower end of Drury Lane, which had been entirely rebuilt and opened by Barrett on 4 December 1890. There were fifty-two performances of *Lights o'London* between 9 February and 11 April 1891, and after Marie's stay with Affie at Devonport, she and sixteen-year-old Missy returned to Clarence House and 'Lord Harry'. 'This gross farce made us laugh till our sides ached', Missy recalled, but noting that her mother tired of her two eldest daughters wishing to see it all the time and eventually 'sent us to see *Charley's Aunt* instead'.⁴⁸

Charley's Aunt was a highly popular blend of innocuous amorous titillation and equally mild satire on the social mores of the day, and the mercenary ambitions of 'society', written by Brandon Thomas. The play opened for the first time at the Royalty Theatre in Dean Street, Soho, in December 1892 where it ran for the following four years, with William Penley as Lord Fancourt Babberley (a prelude to more than a century of very successful productions). Once again, Marie saw this play on her return to Clarence House after having visited Affie at Devonport in November 1892; she must therefore have been one of the first to have seen it.

Marie enjoyed Shakespeare as much as farce and light drama. She attended Henry Irving's celebrated 1888 revival of his 1875 production of *Macbeth*, with Ellen Terry as his queen, which opened for its run at the Lyceum Theatre, Wellington Street, on 29 December, with incidental music by Sullivan. She saw this in company with Affie in the following year before leaving for the Continent in June. Missy – who did not attend this performance as she claimed – recalled that neither of her parents approved of Irving for his mannered gait and elocution, which were indeed two of his acknowledged defects as an actor. This production was either loved or loathed by the critics, who had much to say about Terry's idiosyncratic portrayal of Lady Macbeth, which even Irving criticized. However, Terry's costume – inspired in part by a dress worn by Lady Randolph Churchill – became a major talking point, and was immortalized in an 1889 portrait by John Singer Sargent.

But these deficiencies did not prevent Marie from seeing Irving and Terry again. This time certainly with Missy, she saw Irving as the Stuart king in a production of *Charles The First* by William Wills (the official 'Dramatist to the Lyceum') written in 1872 but revived between 5 January and 25 March 1891, the same time as *Lights o'London*. Terry's copious and genuine tears in the last act, as the king was led to his execution, was a hallmark of the production, a reaction bordering on the histrionic that the audience waited to see but which Terry herself regarded as an excess she was unable to control.

Shakespeare was Marie's Wagner of the pure stage. On Thursday 28 February 1884, she had gone to Covent Garden to see the opening night of *Othello*. This was an Italian production under the celebrated Milanese actor Tommaso Salvini, who took the lead role, one he had made his own since 1856. Although Salvini's company had performed in English, Marie would go even to German language productions of Shakespeare in Coburg.

Shakespeare was one matter but Shakespeareans sometimes quite another. An amusing incident occurred in Coburg in the summer of 1883 when Affie attempted to bring a young actress back to the Palais Edinburgh after seeing her perform at the Coburg theatre:

A very pretty actress from Berlin has been acting here. The Duke made her acquaintance ... [and] wanted me to [meet her], but I steadfastly refused ... I told him ... I would never receive an actress under my roof ... Nowadays, in our dissolute English society ... royalty is ready to receive the lowest of the low and to associate with actors ... I cannot get over the fact, that at a big ball this year in London, the Princess of Wales was sitting at supper next to Irving ... Where are we driving to, what will be the end of English royalty followed by English Society?⁴⁹

However, such an extreme outburst requires some considerable explanation. It should be obvious that Marie's impulsive judgmental attitude was rooted in anger (and not a little misplaced spontaneous jealousy) rather than any genuine antipathy to the society of actors. After all, she herself was the greatest critic of what she regarded as the elitism and pretentiousness of the English court, and she was accustomed to dancing with carpenters at Eastwell Park. In any event, Bertie was by this time a personal friend of Irving, having invited him to a large dinner at Marlborough House on 19 February 1882 at which a number of other theatrical luminaries had also been present. Irving's presence there the following summer was not therefore unusual.

More importantly, this is the period when Bertie was still openly associated with Lillie Langtry, and perhaps Marie was concerned that Affie, now approaching forty, was, in common with so many men in mid-life, suddenly thinking of emulating the childish antics of his elder brother. On the surface this may have appeared somewhat hypocritical considering that she was in the habit of associating with 'clever men'; but of course these were physically innocent emotional and intellectual flirtations, something she knew Affie to be incapable of but perhaps always feared he might experiment with. Marie's remarks are therefore not to be taken too seriously, and are more interesting for what they say about the poor light in which the acting profession was still viewed, culminating in the extraordinary commotion engendered in 1895 when Irving became the first actor to be knighted. There was a novel fear at the time that was perhaps best expressed in a celebrated and prophetic line from Gilbert's libretto to *The Gondoliers* (1889) when Don Alhambra del Bolero sings (II 371-72): 'When every one is somebodee, / Then no one's anybody!' Marie's attitude was risible only to a twenty-first-century mind, living as it does in an age of mediocrity when everyone is apparently 'somebodee' and indeed no one is anybody at all.

With the theatre and the plastic arts the same conclusion must be drawn as with music. Marie's standard of taste was high but on the whole reactionary. There is no evidence that she appreciated even the Impressionists, let alone post-impressionism or the German Expressionists; she might even have experienced Dadaism and Vorticism in the years leading up to the Great War, but she seems not to have done so in any appreciative sense, although this does not of course mean that she was unaware of what these artistic movements were. With drama, apart from contemporary light works, she appears not to have attended any plays by the younger generation of playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, or Anton Chekhov – let alone any by Oscar Wilde. When Marie had confessed that she lived in the past, she was not employing an idle turn of phrase but revealing a central and essential characteristic of her innermost nature.

~ *Belles-lettres* ~

Marie appointed her first private secretary, Dmitrii Kolochin, to his position on 5/17 January 1874. ‘Kolochin appears a very suitable appointment’, noted Loftus. ‘I do not know him personally, but he is highly spoken of’.⁵⁰ Suitable though Kolochin may have been, his appointment was the cause of a further, albeit minor, diplomatic discord during the marriage as a result of a *faux pas* on the part of the Russians. An elaborate clause in the marriage treaty gave Marie the right to appoint whomsoever she wished to her personal staff. However, she first required the formal consent of Queen Victoria, and although in practice this was a *pro forma* procedure, in the case of Kolochin the appointment was to be gazetted in St Petersburg without such prior consent. This would give ‘the unfavourable impression in England that the Emperor of Russia [could] make any appointment to the Court of an English Princess’.⁵¹ After a hurried interview with Aleksandr, it was agreed with Loftus that Marie should immediately telegraph Victoria for her (essentially rubber-stamped) consent. As a Russian obliged to live in England, the appointment also had to be ratified by Granville at the Foreign Office. Naturally enough, with all protocol having been in the end duly observed, neither he nor the queen raised any objections.

However, Kolochin did not long survive his foreign appointment, returning to Russia after a few years. His replacement, George Frederick Bambridge, was found living with two brothers in a humble property at 22 Spencer Road in Battersea, having been born in New Zealand; Bambridge would serve Marie in this capacity until, as dowager duchess, her attenuated position meant that she no longer required him.

Perhaps Bambridge was not (at least to begin with) the best private secretary in London, since it had been he whom Marie had instructed to find a copy of John Abercrombie’s work for Leo and who had reported no success. Bambridge had clearly not consulted Robert Harrison, principal librarian at the London Library, because Harrison could have looked in his own forthcoming fifth edition of the library catalogue (in progress since 1875) and told him that he had copies of both Abercrombie books by 1865 – the tenth and twelfth editions of the earlier work, and the sixth and seventh editions of the later one. Evidently, Marie was as unfamiliar with the library structure in her new country as her antipodean private secretary.

Reading books was *à grande passion* for Marie, and not simply something to be done when not otherwise occupied; it was a passion for which she made considerable time in her life. She was constantly recommending books to others when not actually lending them, and sometimes exchanging books as she did with Fortescue. She was always keen to help others with their book problems, as she did in the summer of 1888 with Ralph Milbanke-Huskisson, a professional diplomat appointed chargé d’affaires at Coburg in 1887, a position he would hold for the following five years. A Harrovian whose principal recreations were riding and shooting, Milbanke nevertheless displayed a keen interest in Russia, and within a few months of taking up office he recognized in Marie a masculine intellect, subsequently often borrowing material from her extensive Coburg library. Unfortunately, Marie had only a very limited selection of books on Russia in English, and although Milbanke could read German and French, he naturally preferred books in his own language:

Mr Milbanke ... has devoured the books that I lent him, and would like to have some Russian historical memoirs on the reigns of Ekaterina, Pavl, and Aleksandr I. Can you make me a brief list of some books [in English] that might interest him? The last one I gave him was Stead’s work on Russia, which interested him a great deal.⁵²

What is particularly remarkable about this letter is its revelation that Marie had a copy of Stead's *Truth About Russia* in her library at Coburg within eighteen months of it having been published in London. Regrettably, what she thought about his optimistic remark concerning her marriage to Affie and its happy promise of good Anglo-Russian relations has either been lost or was not recorded.

Missy stated that her mother 'was a wonderful conversationalist and could keep a whole table amused',⁵³ which art had been witnessed on numerous occasions. But it requires knowledge to raise conversation above the level of amusing gossip concerning persons and inanimate things, and this was something Missy never quite mastered. Intelligent conversation is the child of learning, and learning that of reading, while reading properly (not newspapers) is a lengthy and arduous process. Marie despised no society more than that so often foisted onto her by a semi-educated aristocracy filled with inflated notions of its vain pursuits: 'Please forgive me my long silence', she began one letter in the winter of 1885:

the thing is, that at this moment we have more or less the whole world to receive, and nearly always accompanied by some Highness or other, whose august presence deprives me of my freedom. One female Highness sits listening to herself, while the male Highnesses annoy me intensely and mercilessly with the pleasures of the hunt that occupy them the whole day long.⁵⁴

She detested with a real passion all the absurd formalities of her age that restricted her reading time. She especially loathed the 'endless luncheons ... another hour lost and gone', the 'dreadful 8 o'clock dinner with all its formalities' and 'the worst of all bores ... a good breakfast!'.⁵⁵ She confessed that she would like to eat all her meals in under half an hour so that she could read books instead.

Marie also enjoyed reading books aloud to others, and not only to those such as Leo who were invalids but also to her children. She read often for them when they were small, particularly the stories of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen – 'The Little Mermaid' was apparently their favourite. But she also read aloud to them well into adulthood, going through all three volumes of *La guerre et la paix: Roman historique traduit...par une Russe*, published in Paris in 1884, to the twenty-six-year-old Missy at Rosenau in the summer of 1901:

In the evening I am reading 'War and Peace' to her [Missy] in the excellent French translation by, I think, Princess Paskevich. I have bought other books, by Staniukevich, and find his sea-tales utterly absorbing – knowing so much about the sea and sailors I can appreciate all his references to life aboard ship.⁵⁶

A living author and the sea-loving son of a noted admiral under Nikolai I and Aleksandr II, Konstantin Staniukovich had published his hugely successful *Sea Tales* in 1888 after having worked on them for two decades. Undemanding as works of literature, they have nonetheless retained a position of pre-eminence in Russian culture for their vigorous and atmospheric depiction of life at sea.

Missy declared that her mother 'spoke perfect English, but preferred French, declaring that it was by far the most elegant language and that a beautiful letter could only be written in French'.⁵⁷ This was true, since most of Marie's letters other than to Queen Victoria and her English recipients were written in perfectly elegant French. However, Missy also declared that she (Missy) loathed the language and never acquired it properly. If this is true, she cannot have appreciated much of her mother's efforts with Tolstoi.

Marie had done more than simply read French to her children, although she was not infallible even in this. 'I have entirely taken the children's French lessons into my hands', she informed a friend in 1888. 'I spent two hours every morning over this laborious instruction ... It has done me a lot of good, as I was beginning to forget my French grammar'.⁵⁸ Marie spoke several languages well apart from Russian – German, French, and English – and also knew some Latin and Modern Greek. In 1885, she began to read books in Italian 'to get familiar with that beautiful language'.⁵⁹

Marie may have spoken good grammatical English (although Wolseley detected a distinct accent) but she certainly did not write it. 'I cannot write very well in English', she confessed to Wolseley, 'my only wish is to express clearly all I want to say'.⁶⁰ Kolochin and Bambridge were of course responsible for most of Marie's official letters during her time in England, including those to members of staff who were not also friends, and these are adequate enough if invariably perfunctory. Stylistically, however, her personal correspondence is unremarkable. In common with so many of her sex at that time, she employed with excessive frequency the adjective 'nice' in its less proper sense.⁶¹ Still more annoyingly, in almost every letter she ever wrote she felt the need to stress her quiet, uneventful life and lack of interesting things to say before going on to describe a most active life and say the most interesting things.

Marie's English letters are not by any means free of the most careless solecisms – in particular the subtle inflexions of syntax belying her foreign origins – while in any language she was capable of succumbing to the widespread bad habit of her age of cross-writing when requiring to say more than her letter sheets could support. Thus she violated Lewis Carroll's ninth Rule outlined in *Eight or Nine Wise Words about Letter-Writing* (1889) in which he coined the original proverb 'cross-writing makes cross reading' (an observation with which this author fully concurs). Marie occasionally contravened other Carrollian literary precepts, such as not dating her letters or (worse still) dating by month or day alone, although she adhered to others and redeemed herself by always writing legibly, never wasting undue letter space by apologizing for tardiness, and invariably signing her letters clearly.

~ ‘where bells have knoll’d to church’ ~

One of several aspects of Marie’s life where Missy did great harm concerns the matter of religion. The principal offending passage in Missy’s memoirs ran as follows:

My mother had been very severely brought up, and she herself had strict ideas upon education and behaviour ... The tremendously severe upbringing she had received, the care expended upon her that her education and instruction should be in every way complete, the great and somewhat oppressive influence her own religion ... had upon her, all went to make her dissatisfied and critical with herself. Outwardly she may have appeared haughty ... but inwardly she was humble, always tormenting herself, tortured with the idea that she had never lived up to the ideal set for her by her parents and those who had educated her ... She clung to her Church with all her soul, and no matter in what house she lived, a little Orthodox chapel was erected in some corner of it, and she always kept in her service a Russian priest and two chanters who followed her wherever she went.⁶²

Missy’s memoirs began in 1875 with her own birth and said nothing substantive about her mother before her marriage to Affie (which Missy ante-dated to 1873), confirming what any intelligent reader might soon suppose – that she knew nothing whatever about her mother’s early life.

Missy, like all Marie’s surviving children, was born into the Anglican Church and raised, initially, according to the celebrated popular precept that if you do not trouble it, it will not trouble you. Then as now, some Anglicans in England believed that they had a vague idea of what it meant to be a Roman Catholic; but very few (then as now) had any idea what it meant to be Orthodox, while many did not pretend to know since they did not realize such a thing existed. Missy did know, of course, but on her own admission she was neither intellectual nor particularly religious and at the same time entirely uninterested in theological issues. She was ignorant of Orthodoxy in her youth, and clearly she learned nothing more about it over the following forty years, in spite of the fact that she became queen of an Orthodox nation.

By tradition, every Russian household maintained by the 120,000,000 Russians in the 1870s would have had one corner of a room set aside as an area for prayer and contemplation, or even just instinctual reverence for superstition and ethnic tradition. The corner would contain eikons, candles or oil lamps, an eikonostasis, photographs of departed loved ones, and incense. It also was, and remains, customary for all Orthodox (whether noble or *muzhik*) to place a single particular eikon in the upper corner of every room in the house (whether palace or cottage) not so much that the saint or saints depicted can ‘look down’ but so that those below can ‘look up’.

How such a ‘Holy Corner’ would differ from household to household was a matter purely of economics. Wealthy families would have a permanent eikonostasis, poorer ones a sheet that could be drawn across to conceal the eikons. There is no doubt that Marie’s was impressive, particularly at Eastwell Park. ‘I am so happy to have a Russian chapel next door to the house in a small building built expressly for Mama’s arrival with a room for the church and several nice rooms for gentlemen [guests]’.⁶³ Missy recalled that her mother ‘would take us into her little chapel, where ... we stood gazing as in a trance at the precious icons, at the wondrous three-doored screen which shut off the altar, inhaling the heady fragrance of the incense and listening ... to the grave, soul-stirring Russian chants’.⁶⁴ Marie’s ‘chapel’ was different from other ‘Holy Corners’ only in kind, not in principle. It was decorated to remind her of the exact same arrangement at the summer palace in the Crimea: ‘Your pretty tapestry on which you worked for so many hours adorns my charming chapel and suits it wonderfully well. I don’t know how I would have done without it since the chapel is

in the style of the one at Livadia, which is why it was necessary to ask you for such a difficult one'.⁶⁵

At Clarence House there was no such elaborate arrangement, for which in any case there would have been insufficient space. The presence in London of the Russian chapel on Welbeck Street seems to have caused Missy some considerable confusion in later life; it is unlikely that she ever set foot in it, and perhaps she knew nothing at all about it. The property belonged to the Russian embassy and was used by it to house visiting diplomats and dignitaries from Russia. It therefore had a room set aside for Orthodox services, and it maintained a resident clergy.

This arrangement was soon considered insufficient for a growing diplomatic presence in London, and in April 1865, a new chapel was opened that had been carved out of the centre of the building. The new chapel was fifty feet in length with four arches forming a quadrangle, each side twenty feet in diameter. Above this, a false dome twenty-one feet in diameter served as a skylight, the whole giving a passable impression of a solid Byzantine church of the medieval period, the eikons having been painted by religious artists of the St Petersburg Imperial Academy of Arts. The entire building work had been undertaken by James Thomson (architect of Cumberland Terrace and Place), but under careful instruction from nobles and ecclesiastics in Russia.

A member of the White (married) clergy usually runs an Orthodox parish church, with a deacon or sub-deacon to assist, while choirs or chanters are not normally drawn from the clergy but the laity, their size depending on availability. The arrangement was no different at Welbeck Street. Russian-born Archpriest Evgenii Popov and Deacon Vasilii Popov (his eldest son, who had been born in Denmark) staffed the new chapel from 1865. Father Popov had long been resident in London, where his wife had died and where his daughter had been born in 1844. Vasilii Popov had married a Russian girl in 1870, and in the following year the young couple had a son who was named after his grandfather, and who would soon be groomed to enter the church.

The Popovs became firm friends of the Edinburghs and were happy to do their parochial duties for the duchess. In Orthodox tradition, this would have included numerous visits to Marie's domestic chapel for the moleben (a thanksgiving service not dissimilar to the *Te Deum*), panihida, annual blessing of the house, and so forth. Again, there was no difference between this and what thousands of hard-working parish priests were doing throughout Russia and beyond wherever a Russian community had become established. Far from keeping 'in her service' a Russian priest and 'two chanters', Marie had no claim over these ecclesiastics beyond what it was her right to have as an Orthodox Christian. Indeed, during his stay at Eastwell Park over Orthodox New Year's Eve 1875, Sullivan noted that Vasilii Popov had to come down from London just to conduct the evening service before returning on the following day after Divine Liturgy.

The 'two chanters' Missy mentioned were actually members of the Russian community in London at a time before the Bolshevik Revolution and therefore when this community was still relatively small and insufficient for a full choir. One of these was Nikolai Orlov, who was also employed in the chancery of the Russian embassy as a minor clerk. For nearly ten years he lived at 3^A Bleisho Road, Lavender Hill, Battersea, with his wife and later a son while travelling between the embassy, Welbeck Street, Clarence House, and Eastwell Park. His employment at the embassy was minor and not full time, but as the rest of his time was given over to singing for the chapel attached to the embassy, he was considered to have diplomatic privileges, which even exempted him from having to pay local Parish Rates.⁶⁶

In 1874, Vasilii Popov, who had been elevated to archpriest so that he could serve Marie while his father ran Welbeck Street, became Marie's private confessor, remaining in that position until his death. For Missy, a Protestant ignorant of all the facts in the matter, this must indeed have appeared as something close to religiomania, although for an Orthodox it was simply the accepted way of life.

Unfortunately, great tragedy was to come to the Popov family. Archpriest Evgenii often travelled to Russia, leaving for St Petersburg in October 1875; he never returned, dying there as a result (it seems) of an accident. 'We have been greatly grieved by the death of Father Popoff', Affie wrote Tolstaia on 9 November a few days after receiving news of the death, 'his son who was here yesterday was terribly upset'.⁶⁷ Archpriest Vasilii Popov now took over the running of the Russian chapel, but he did not long survive his father. Suffering from excessively high blood pressure, he was struck down by a cerebral hæmorrhage on 12 March 1877. He passed into a coma, but three days later began to experience chronic traumatic epilepsy, from which he did not recover, dying in his room at Welbeck Street on Monday 19 March. Four days later, he was buried in Kensal Green cemetery in the presence of his wife, seven-year-old son, and a small group of mourners. Regrettably, this group could not include either Affie or Marie as the duke was aboard the *Sultan* and the duchess trying to decide whether it was yet safe to leave Malta for England.

The chaplaincy at Welbeck Street now passed to a different family, but not immediately. There was no permanent chaplain for two years while the post functioned as a locum-tenency, with the temporary chaplain, Archpriest Evgenii Smirnov, being permanently appointed in 1879. Smirnov had been born in Reval and married Zenaida Nikolaevna in St Petersburg in 1874 shortly after Marie's own marriage, and the couple had a two-year-old son when they arrived in London to take on his new position. A second son would be born in 1882, but Zenaida nevertheless took up her many duties as the wife of a parish priest with alacrity and dedication. She would have been aware that her husband had a lengthy family history connected with London, as Smirnov was descended from the secretary to the Russian embassy in the 1840s and, before him, the chaplain to the Russian embassy in the 1820s. As much from necessity as by tradition, Smirnov also took over his predecessor's duties as Marie's private confessor, in which capacity he would serve her for the rest of her period in England.

Thus, by the time Missy was ten years old, she would have seen what perhaps to her childish eyes and imagination appeared to be an army of Russian clergy coming in and going out of Clarence House and Eastwell Park – 'wherever she [Marie] went', as Missy put it. But of course it had been nothing of the kind, and Smirnov was in fact the last resident clergyman Missy would have seen. Indeed, he outlived Marie, dying at Welbeck Street still a working priest on 4 January 1923, having lived to see the establishment of the great Russian cathedral of All Saints at Ennismore Gardens in Knightsbridge at the time of the great influx of refugees from Bolsheviki Russia.

Marie's church attendance and religious views are similarly undramatic, although she was without question a traditional and conventional believer, as well as entirely faithful to Orthodox Christianity – facts that were unfashionable in Missy's middle age and rather derided. Orthodox Passion Week she took as seriously as any Anglican or Catholic, and her first in England (commencing Monday 24 March/6 April 1874) she declared would be attended by her 'every day'. However, being at the time pregnant, she certainly had no intention of becoming a martyr to the finer precepts of church practice and would not stand throughout the long services but 'sit nearly the whole time'.⁶⁸

Marie attended Greek Orthodox services several times. John Oldrid Scott, a British architect who had designed several Anglican and Catholic churches, had laid the foundation stone for the Greek cathedral of Hagia Sophia on Moscow Road in Bayswater in 1874 for the benefit of the large Greek community of North Kensington. Although it would not be completed until 1882, it was ready for services when Marie attended Divine Liturgy on the morning of 18/30 July 1879. By this time, the striped exterior of yellow and red brick was complete, as were the marble and mosaic interior decorations in the traditional restrained Byzantine style of the middle ages. Marie thought ‘the new Greek church ... very big and fine and the service was very good’, although her ignorance of New Testament Greek meant that she ‘certainly [did not] understand it’.⁶⁹ She also dropped in on a Greek service while at Zara in Dalmatia during one of her Mediterranean cruises, a service that in the tradition of Orthodoxy was given in the local language:

I went to a service conducted the same way as ours, only the singing is dreadful, like everywhere in the East. The church language is old Slav and therefore exactly the same ... but I cannot understand ... the people ... the pronunciation is so different to the Russian.⁷⁰

Marie’s views on some Russian habits were correctly rooted in their Christian elements rather than the common misperception in the West, where their origins were misrepresented as tribalism. In one such case the matter concerned the naming of children. When an English woman friend told her that she had chosen a single Christian name for her new-born son, Marie was impressed: ‘John is an excellent name and how right you are not to hang on to this one a quantity of others, which are generally so unchristian, that they always shock me. But such is our Russian habit ... [of] one patron saint!’⁷¹ Nevertheless, as Marie would make clear enough in years to come, she was entirely pragmatic when it came to matters concerning the style of religious worship, and she never either claimed for herself special knowledge of the Divine or for Orthodoxy primacy in the wider Christian tradition.

NOTES and REFERENCES to Chapter Seven

¹ *Sullivan and Flower* 71.

² *Burnand* ii 364.

³ PML *Sullivan papers* 106104, Affie to Sullivan 14 Mar. 1872.

⁴ *Warwick* I 89.

⁵ For example, the orchestral version was played for his benefit during an official visit to Munich in 1894, while Godfrey's band version was given an impromptu performance at the Kurpark in Bad Kissingen on a July evening in 1896 when Affie and Marie visited the spa town unofficially.

⁶ *Cornwallis-West* 181.

⁷ *Ponsonby II* 87.

⁸ *Ponsonby III* 80-1.

⁹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1457, Marie to Queen Victoria 30 Jul./11 Aug. 1875.

¹⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1520, Marie to Queen Victoria 2/14 Jul. 1877.

¹¹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1063, Marie to Wolseley 6 Aug. 1883.

¹² *Paderewski* 194.

¹³ BL Ms Add. 42578 f.212, Sullivan to Kuhe 10 Dec. 1874.

¹⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/ 1436, Buckingham Palace to Windsor Castle.

¹⁵ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1438, Marie to Queen Victoria 6 Jun. 1874.

¹⁶ RAH *Minute Book* 2 ff.199-204.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* ff.205-7.

¹⁸ *Lawrence* 91-2.

¹⁹ PML *Sullivan Papers* 106106, Affie to Sullivan 17 Jul. 1873. Affie further expressed the sincere wish that he might be back in England in time to travel to Birmingham for the first performance of the oratorio on 27 August, which he was able to do on his way to Balmoral.

²⁰ *The Musical World: A Weekly Record of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence*, 3rd Series (1842 *et seq.*) LIII 45, 6 Nov. 1875.

²¹ *Jacobs* 108.

²² RAH *Minute Book* 4 ff.78-80, 100.

²³ LQV II ii 537.

²⁴ *Hauk* 176.

²⁵ *Henschel* 217-19.

²⁶ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Clarence House to St Petersburg.

²⁷ However, Affie regularly held what he called 'smoking concerts' in one of the large administrative rooms at the R.A.H. at which gentlemen only would listen to music before enjoying a communal smoke afterwards. Affie occasionally performed at these events for years after he had retired from the concert platform.

²⁸ On 18 August 1884, Marie wrote Tolstaia that Affie would be going to Ireland for one week 'because the inhabitants wanted to see him'; this was an unfortunate delay before his return to England from the Mediterranean but necessary 'to produce a good effect in this poor country so mistreated, so scorned by the inhabitants of Great Britain' [HL MS 62 MB1/U24, Birkhall (Scotland) to St Petersburg]. During this visit, which took place at the end of August, Affie visited Lord Spencer, viceroy of Ireland since 1869, at the vice-regal lodge in Dublin. He must have taken his violin with him, because he was heard by Major Alfred Turner, the commissioner of police, who reckoned him to be 'a very skilful violinist' [Turner 71]. Turner also noted that an Irish satirical journal had represented Affie serenading 'Erin', as the female personification of Ireland, on his arrival.

Affie had been to Ireland twice before. On 5 June 1872, he formally opened the Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition in Dublin. Following the passing of the Seed Supply (Ireland) Act [1 March] and the Relief of Distress (Ireland) Act [15 March] 1880, he participated in the ensuing world-wide relief efforts as commander of a squadron distributing seed potatoes in the districts of Mayo and Galway, visiting cottages, talking with tenants, and presenting them with tickets that could be exchanged for blankets. Affie made a favourable impression on the locals, having great sympathy both for the plight of the tenant farmers and the aims of the Irish Land League founded the previous October.

²⁹ *Klein* 286.

³⁰ *Richardson* 225.

³¹ *Wingfield-Stratford* 194.

³² *Hauk* 163.

³³ *Dana* 309.

³⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1087, Marie to Queen Victoria 3 Feb. 1884.

³⁵ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1613, Marie to Queen Victoria 10 Sep. 1882.

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- ³⁶ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1062, Coburg to London 29 Jul. 1883.
- ³⁷ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1651, Marie to Queen Victoria 28 Aug. 1888.
- ³⁸ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1664, Rosenau to Osborne 15 Aug. 1889.
- ³⁹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1062, Coburg to London 29 Jul. 1883.
- ⁴⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1436, Marie to Queen Victoria 1 May 1874.
- ⁴¹ *Longford: Loosy* 198-9.
- ⁴² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1465, Marie to Queen Victoria 17 Jan. 1876.
- ⁴³ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1454, Marie to Queen Victoria 22 May 1875.
- ⁴⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1559, Marie to Queen Victoria 23 May 1879. But Marie did admire Boehm, reckoning that his memorial statue to John Brown at Balmoral (with its painful inscription by Tennyson) was 'quite excellent: such extraordinary likeness and a fine work of art' [RA VIC/Add. A 20/1626, Marie to Victoria 10 Aug. 1884].
- ⁴⁵ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1561, Marie to Queen Victoria 30 Jul. 1879.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ HCL W/P 15/20, London to the Isle of Wight 30 Apr. 1886.
- ⁴⁸ *Marie of Romania* i 67.
- ⁴⁹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1068, Marie (Coburg) to Wolseley 27 Sep. 1883.
- ⁵⁰ PRO FO 97/462, Loftus to Granville 6/18 Jan. 1874.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Loftus to Granville 9/21 Jan. 1874.
- ⁵² RIG unsigned fragment 8°x 4, Coburg to [?] [April 1890].
- ⁵³ *Marie of Romania* i 29.
- ⁵⁴ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Eastwell Park to St Petersburg Nov.-Dec. 1885.
- ⁵⁵ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1065, Marie (Coburg) to Wolseley 13 Aug. 1883.
- ⁵⁶ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Coburg to St Petersburg 28 May/10 Jun. 1901.
- ⁵⁷ *Marie of Romania* i 30.
- ⁵⁸ RA VIC/Add. U 181/22, Marie to Lady Harriot Poore 10 May 1888.
- ⁵⁹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1109, Marie to Wolseley 3 Sep. 1885.
- ⁶⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1048, Osborne Cottage to London 28 Dec. 1882.
- ⁶¹ No one has put this better than Henry Fowler in his *Modern English Usage*: 'Nice ... has been too great a favourite with the ladies, who have charmed out of it all its individuality and converted it into a mere diffuser of vague and mild agreeableness'. To be charitable, Marie of course learned this bad habit from her English teachers and her English contemporaries; she used the word just twice before her marriage (in extant correspondence) but thereafter with increasing frequency until, like an infestation of silverfish under a old bathroom tub, there was one in every paragraph.
- ⁶² *Marie of Romania* i 16-17.
- ⁶³ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1448, Marie to Queen Victoria 30 Nov. 1874. This extension had been constructed mostly of corrugated iron and was sold off in 1886 for £160 during the Eastwell Park sale, after which it was dismantled and taken away by the new owner.
- ⁶⁴ *Marie of Romania* i 17.
- ⁶⁵ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Clarence House to Switzerland 11 May 1879.
- ⁶⁶ For this complex case, which was dealt with from late 1883 to early 1884 at the highest ministerial and judicial level, see PRO HO 45/9637/A 31360. The amount Orlov refused to pay was £4. 0s. 2 d. Orlov subsequently did well for himself, being appointed a professor of Russian at King's College, London, in 1889 (remaining in that position until his death) at the same time moving to a spacious apartment in Kensington.
- ⁶⁷ HL MS 62 MB1/U24, Eastwell Park to St Petersburg.
- ⁶⁸ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1434, Marie to Queen Victoria 5 Apr. 1874.
- ⁶⁹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1561, Marie to Queen Victoria 30 Jul. 1879.
- ⁷⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1645, Marie to Queen Victoria 26 Sep. 1887.
- ⁷¹ RA VIC/Add. U 181/3, Marie to Lady Harriot Poore 18 Jan. 1886.