

Nanon

[Opéra comique, in three acts; text by Zell. First produced in Vienna in 1877.]

PERSONAGES.

Marquis de Marsillac. Hector, his nephew. Marquis d' Aubigné, King's chamberlain. Bombardine, his henchman. Louis XIV. Mons. l'Abbé. Nanon, mistress of the Golden Lamb. Ninon de l'Enclos, a famous beauty. Mme. de Frontenac, } Countess Houliers, } Ninon's friends. Gaston. Mme. de Maintenon, King's mistress.

[Country relatives, peasants, soldiers, courtiers, ladies, etc.]

The scene is laid in Paris; time of Louis the Fourteenth.

The first act opens at the inn of the Golden Lamb, near the gates of Paris, kept by Nanon, who has become so famous for her wit and beauty that the Marquis de Marsillac, director of the Royal Theatre, takes his nephew Hector there to see her. Thither also goes Ninon de l'Enclos, the famous beauty, to get a sight of Nanon, who, she suspects, has attracted the attentions of her own lover, the Marquis d'Aubigné. She is told that Nanon is to be married to Grignan, the drummer, and returns to the city with her suspicions allayed. Grignan, however, is in reality the Marquis, who, in the disguise of a drummer, intends to abduct Nanon. After a serenade to her she surprises him with a proposal of marriage; but when everything is ready for the ceremony, the Marquis secures his own arrest by his Colonel on account of a duel. While grieving over the arrest, Nanon receives a ring and some friendly assurances from Gaston, the page of Ninon de l'Enclos, and thereupon turns to her for help in rescuing the supposed Grignan from death, which is the penalty for duelling.

The second act opens in Ninon's salon. Marsillac, his nephew, and an Abbé, who is one of Ninon's lovers and confessor of Mme. de Maintenon, are present at a ball, likewise D'Aubigné, who is reproached by Ninon for having remained away so long and forgotten her birthday. To escape embarrassment he sings to her the same serenade he had sung to Nanon. Shortly afterwards Nanon arrives to seek Ninon's aid in saving Grignan. In the mean time D'Aubigné, jealous of Hector, because he pays court both to Nanon and Ninon, challenges him, and they hurry into the latter's garden and settle their quarrel with the sword. During their absence Marsillac, who has noted Grignan's serenade, also sings it, accompanied by the musicians of the court chapel, but is only laughed at for his trouble. When D'Aubigné returns from the duel, he is asked to clear up the mystery of this song; but before he can do so the guard, who has seen the duel, enters and arrests Hector, who has been wounded and refuses to give the name of his opponent.

The third act opens in the private chapel of Mme. de Maintenon, where the Abbé sings to her the same serenade in the form of a hymn. Marsillac appears to ask for Hector's pardon, and receives it when it appears that D'Aubigné was the challenging party. D'Aubigné thereupon congratulates her upon her birthday with the serenade, and Marsillac repeats it. Ninon and Nanon next appear to intercede for their lovers, D'Aubigné and Grignan. The King presents Nanon with the life of Grignan, and she in turn, recognizing Grignan, presents the pardon to Ninon. Touched by her generosity, Grignan offers Nanon his hand, and Mme. de Maintenon, who is somewhat uneasy at the King's evident admiration for Nanon, gives her consent and she is made Marquise d'Aubigné.

The music of "Nanon" is gay and brilliant throughout. The principal numbers are the serenade, a minstrel's song, as it is usually designated, "Ah! what a Joyful Day is this; I am so Full of Glee," which is heard in various forms in all three acts; the opening drinking-choruses; Nanon's ballad, "Once before this Tavern straying"; the jolly chorus of

the country relatives, "Here we come in Troops of Dozens, Uncles, Nephews, Aunts, and Cousins"; Gaston's ballad, "All that Frenchmen now will heed"; Hector's song, "Young appearing," in the second act; and the lively concerted finale of the last act.