

The Marriage of Jeannette

[Opéra comique, in one act; text by Carré and Barbière. First produced at the Opéra Comique, Paris, February 4, 1853; in New York, in 1861.]

PERSONAGES.

Jean. Jeannette. Thomas. Petit Pierre.

[Chorus of peasants.]

The scene is laid in a French country village; time, the last century.

Nothing could be simpler than the story of Massé's little opera, "Les Noces de Jeannette" ("The Marriage of Jeannette"), which was first given in this country in 1861, with Clara Louise Kellogg and M. Dubreul in the two principal parts, and twenty-five years later was a favorite in the repertory of the American Opera Company, under the direction of Theodore Thomas, who produced it as an after piece to Delibes' two-act ballet, "Sylvia." The story concerns only two persons. Jean, a boorish rustic, falls in love with Jeannette and proposes marriage. On the wedding-day, however, he suddenly changes his mind, and just as the notary hands him the pen to sign the contract, takes to his heels and runs home. Jeannette follows him up to demand an explanation, and pretends that she will not force him to marry her. In lieu of that she asks him to sign another contract from which she will withhold her name just to show that he was willing to do so. She furthermore promises publicly to reject him. When he has signed the new contract, she suddenly changes her mind also, and declares they are man and wife. In his fury Jean breaks up nearly everything in the house before he goes to sleep. The next day in his absence Jeannette provides new furniture from her own store, places things to rights again, sets the dinner, and awaits Jean's return. When he comes back

again, he is in more tractable mood, and seeing what Jeannette has done acknowledges her as his wife.

This simple story the composer has framed in a dainty musical setting, the principal numbers being the song "Others may hastily marry," sung by Jean after his escapade; Jeannette's pretty, simple melody, "From out a Throng of Lovers"; Jean's vigorous and defiant "Ah! little do you fancy"; the graceful song by Jeannette, "Fly now, my Needle, glancing brightly"; her brilliant and exultant song, "Voice that's sweetest"; and the spirited unison male chorus, "Ring out, Village Bells," that closes this refined and beautiful work.