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FOR FURNITURE UPHOLSTERY

Vol. 42

# Sunset

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Mrs. Mabel Farrington Gifford has cured thousands of San Francisco school children of defective speech. She is now training teachers to rid shell-shocked soldiers of speech defects. Sympathy is an aid in her science—she was once a stammerer herself

**T**SIANINA—artist and idealist, granddaughter of a Cherokee chief and born and bred on an Indian reservation—is going to France. To the soldiers overseas she will sing the songs which have made her well known on the concert stage of this country. Happy in her mission, Tsianina sees another long step on the road of her ambition to bring about a better understanding between her race and the white people.

Of pure Indian blood, Tsianina does not know her exact age. No birth records are kept in the reservations. Twenty-eight is the acceptable age for service abroad, and she believes herself to be that old. Her birthplace was near Muskogee, Oklahoma, and she was educated at the Eufaula Indian School. Leaving school at the death of her mother, she and her brothers found that they had been mysteriously dispossessed of their lands, a happening which did not increase their already scant confidence in the white race. Tsianina had her way to make in the world. Opportunity came to go with a family to Denver, where, still pondering the way to choose across the rough country of self-support, so few trails of which were open to a girl of her race, chance led her to a music teacher who recognized the possibilities in her rich mezzo-contralto tones.

"I had no money," Tsianina said, "but when he made me an offer to give me lessons with the chance of repayment later, and found some one to make me an allowance on which to live while I studied, it gave me confidence. At the end of three years I was deeply in debt but the money obligation has all been cleared."

This was the beginning of the career of the only Indian public singer. Cadman's opera, "Shanewis," produced last winter by the Metropolitan Opera Company, is the story of Tsianina, who drilled Sophie Breslau in the leading role.

Her entrance into music was the means of creating the Indian girl's confidence in the white people and her dream to make

them understand her race. "I doubt if my change in feeling could ever have been established except through the medium of an art," Tsianina said. "When I began my work I had all the traits common to my race, particularly to its women. I had the superstitions, the reticence, the feeling of being crushed by new conditions. All this I had to overcome. In my work in France I shall sing only Indian songs. I want everybody to know that we have music to express all emotion. We have songs for everything in our lives, each commonplace of our day. The first thing the Indian does on waking is to greet the sun with a song—the sun, which he believes to be the mother of all life."

Tsianina has always worn the Indian dress of beaded skins, except when she was at the Government school where a uniform was required. "And I always shall," she said. "The thing I wish most to do—and my music is only a means to that end—is to prove to my people the possibility of holding fast to the best of our own racial habits and traits—our freedom, our straightforwardness, our feeling for all things in nature, the trees, the rocks, the stars—while accepting the best of what civilization has to offer."

Tsianina has two brothers with the United States army. She is proud that they enlisted, proud of all the men of her race who are in the war as comrades of the whites.

EVA CHAPELL.



**I**T is to be doubted whether any other human being who started life with a serious defect ever did more, after being cured of it, to rid the world of similar defects, than Mabel Farrington Gifford has already done; and yet she is practically at the beginning of her career. Handicapped as a stammerer, Mrs. Gifford was sympathetically equipped after her own cure to relieve others. Adding skill to sympathy, she has cured thousands of defective speech, developed the treatment of stammering from a primitive make-

shift to an exact science and is at present training teachers to rid shell-shocked soldiers of the speech defects from which a great number suffer. She has been asked by Major Charles W. Richardson, in charge of the United States Division of Special Hospitals and Physical Reconstruction, to send him the name of each competent graduate she turns out and co-operate with the Surgeon-General's office in other ways.

As a young girl, living in Los Angeles, she determined to rid herself of stammering. She journeyed to Buffalo, where she took treatment in the Natural Speech Institute, then perhaps the most famous school for stammerers in America. There she secured some relief but was not entirely cured. Abdominal breathing and schooling in measured enunciation summed up the treatment in those days when only a small percentage of speech defectives were completely relieved. These methods did not satisfy Miss Farrington—as she then was. She returned to Los Angeles and opened there a branch of the Buffalo school. But she said to herself, "There is a big psychological factor back of all this," and set out to discover it. She found that stammering is not a result of ordinary nervousness, as was supposed, but a definite disease or defect due to disturbance in the functioning of auditory speech centers. So she began to train these centers, working out original exercises to give her patients conscious control of the outer speech mechanism. Next came exercises in silent memory-images of perfect speech, i. e., she first trained the muscles and nerves—then the brain, bringing about perfect co-ordination, developing dormant, arrested faculties into healthy normal action.

During past years she has studied with many great teachers and has done an amazing amount of work in treatment and instruction. In 1916 she opened trial clinics in the public schools of San Francisco and Oakland, treating several hundred cases with success. But when she suggested to the San Francisco Board of Education a department for the treatment of defective speech, Mrs. Gifford was smilingly informed that she would not have enough cases to keep her busy. A test survey, however, was made and to the amazement of educational directors some fifteen hundred children were culled from the mass as pronounced specimens of defective speech. Eight hundred more were found in Oakland. The school board's objections were apologetically withdrawn and since that time Mrs. Gifford has organized a very effective system of treatment. The San Francisco school district is divided into five centers, which she visits regularly. In the past year and a half she has probably relieved and cured thousands of children, for under the age of fourteen corrected speech is practically certain. Patients of all ages are cured in the ratio of eight out of ten.

Perhaps the most interesting work contemplated by Mrs. Gifford in the near future, aside from that relating to soldiers, is the elimination of foreign accents in the public schools. She is now planning to train teachers for special instruction in English pronunciation in districts where foreign residents abound. This is a work not before attempted and promises to prove immensely important within the next few years. LOUIS J. STELLMAN.