

**THE STORY OF A GENIUS:  
FROM THE GERMAN OF  
OSSIP SCHUBIN**

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The Story of a Genius: From the German of Ossip Schubin by Ossip Schubin & E. H. Lockwood

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**OSSIP SCHUBIN & E. H. LOCKWOOD**

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ENGLISHED BY  
E. H. LOCKWOOD

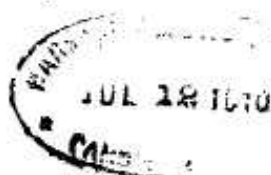
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*The Story of a Genius*

## The Story of a Genius

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### I

MONSIEUR ALPHONSE DE STERNY will come to Brussels in November and conduct his Oratoria of "Satan."

This short notice in the *Indépendance Belge* created a general sensation. The musicians shrugged, bit their lips, and sneered about the public's injustice toward home talent. The "great world,"—between ourselves the most unmusical "world" in the universe,—very nearly stepped out of its aristocratic apathy. This is something which seldom happens to it in artistic matters, but now, for a whole week it talked nothing but de Sterny: of his octave playing a little, and of his love affairs a great deal. In autumn Brussels has so little to talk about!

Alphonse de Sterny had been in his day a great virtuoso and a social lion. Reigning belles had contended for his favor; George Sand was said to have written a book about him, nobody knew ex-

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actly which one; the fair Princess G—— was supposed to have taken poison on his account. But five years before the appearance of this notice in the *Indépendance Belge*, de Sterny had suddenly withdrawn from the world. During that time he had not given any concerts, nor had he produced any new piano pieces, in his well-known style, paraphrases and fantasies on favorite airs.

Now, for the first in that long interval his name emerged, and in connection with an Oratorio!

De Sterny and an Oratorio!

The world found that a little odd. The artists thought it a great joke.



## II

It is November fifth, the day on which the first rehearsal of "Satan" is to be held, under the composer's own direction.

In the concert hall of the "Grand Harmonie" the performers are already assembled. In honor of the distinguished guest half a dozen more gas jets are burning than is usual at rehearsals, yet the large hall with its dark auditorium and the dim flickering light on its stage, has a desolate, ghostly air. A smell of gas, dust and moist cloth pervades the atmosphere.

A grey rime of congealed mist clings to and trickles down the clothes of the latest arrivals. One sees within the hall how bad the weather must be without. The lusty male chorus, with their pear-shaped Flemish faces, their picturesque soiled linen, and their luxuriant growth of hair, knock off the clay from their boots and turn down the legs of their trousers. The disheveled female chorus, on whose shoulders the locks are hanging out of curl, complain of indisposition, and exchange cough lozenges. The members of the orchestra work away sulkily on their instruments. Across the dissonance of the

thrilling fiddles darts the sharp sound of a string that breaks.

Two dilettanti have slipped in by favor. One is a young piano teacher of German extraction, who raves about the music of the future. The other is an amateur, well known in Brussels by the nickname of "l'ami de Rossini."

The instruments are tuned; here and there a violin practices a scale. The gas jets chirp faintly. The male chorus stamp their feet to keep warm, and rub their red knuckles together. De Sterny is letting himself be waited for.

The friend of Rossini makes up to the lady soloists.

"Madame," he says to the Alto, whose engagement at the "Monnaie" he had helped to bring about, "Madame, I pity you. De Sterny is an exponent of this new music of the future. His compositions are among the most ungrateful tasks ever set the human throat. One only needs to sing them to expiate by penance all one's musical pleasures."

"You are too severe, monsieur," said the Alto. "No one can wonder at the 'friend of Rossini' for hating the music of the future, and I grant that some numbers of this Oratorio are quite astonishingly dull. But with some of the others, monsieur, I predict that you will have to confess yourself in sympathy."

"I, confess myself in sympathy with the music of the future!"

"Well, well," said the Alto, soothingly, "up to a certain point I agree with your aversion, but you must grant all the same that Wagner and Berlioz are composers of genius, and that the music of the future has opened new regions of art."

"What has it opened? A parade ground for pretentious mediocrity! I'll grant this much, that Wagner and Berlioz are ill-doers of genius. But the 'school!' and this new invention they call descriptive music! An insurrection of fiddles screaming over against one another! and they give it names. 'Battle of the Horatii'—'Eruption of Vesuvius'—so that the audience may have something to think about since they can't feel anything, except headache!"

L'ami de Rossini laughed very much at his own joke.

"H'm!-m! and this fine work of de Stern's," he began again, "I suppose it consists of splendid paraphrases upon poverty of thought."

"The 'Satan' contains pearls which will enchant you," replied the Alto. "But see—here comes de Stern! I commend the 'Duet of the Outcasts' to your attention."

Followed by the capellmeister and a little group of intimate admirers, Alphonse de Stern