LAKMÉ: OPERA IN THREE ACTS

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Lakmé: Opera in Three Acts by Léo Delibes

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LÉO DELIBES

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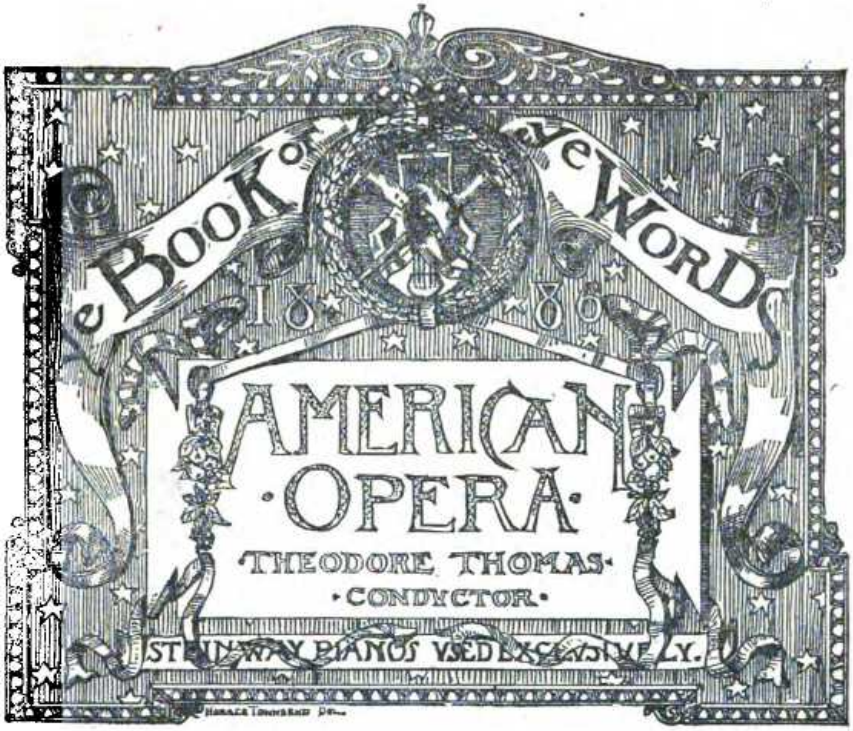

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Music by LEO DELIBES.

CHARLES D. KOPPEL, Publisher, 23 Park Row,
NEW YORK.

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TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED FOR THE

AMERICAN OPERA COMPANY.

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ARGUMENT.

THE action of "Lakmé" progresses in India, and the opening incidents of the opera occur near the abode of Nilakantha, a brahmin, who, with his followers, still abhors the invading race. Gerald and Frederick, officers in the British army, with Rose and Ellen, English ladies visiting the East, while strolling in the environs desecrate the sacred grounds by their presence. Being brought to a sense of their intrusion, they depart, but Gerald remains for the purpose of sketching the design of some jewels which have been forgotten in the garden by Lakmé, the brahmin's daughter. Lakmé now enters, and her beauty at once wins Gerald's heart. Some love passages follow, but they are rudely interrupted by the sudden return of Nilakantha. It is death for a foreigner to profane consecrated soil, and Lakmé hastens her lover's departure. He leaves unseen, but Nilakantha finds traces of his visit, and the curtain falls upon the Indian's oath of vengeance. In the second act, the scene is shifted to a neighboring city, where a great festival is in course of celebration. Nilakantha and Lakmé disguised as penitents, mingle with the throng, the brahmin intent upon discovering the author of the sacrilege. He commands Lakmé to sing, and the voice of the loved one makes Gerald reveal himself. His doom is sealed. Night comes on, and when the crowd has scattered and the public square is deserted, Nilakantha strikes Gerald down. Lakmé, however, has seen the deed, and with the aid of Hadji, a faithful attendant, she bears the young man, who is not mortally wounded, away. This episode brings the second act of the opera to a close. When the curtain rises upon the third, it discloses a forest view, with Gerald, who has been restored to health and strength through Lakmé's care, slumbering at the maiden's side. The couple once more exchange assurances of undying love. A chorus of voices is heard in the distance. It is sung by a procession of young people on their way to taste the sacred waters which are said to make love perennial. Gerald and Lakmé must essay their powers, and the girl goes forth to fill a cup at the holy fount. While she is absent, Frederick re-appears to Gerald, who has long been missing, and recalls him from romance to reality. The regiment is about to march away, and Gerald must be at his post. He promises to answer the roll-call after having bidden farewell to Lakmé. Frederick accepts his friend's word and leaves him. Lakmé returns with the sacred water. As Gerald is about to put the cup to his lips, however, the sound of drum and fife reaches his ears. He starts and Lakmé, at a glance, understands everything. In quiet but o'ermastering despair, she gathers some poisonous flowers and expresses their juice between her teeth. Death follows in a few minutes, the heart-broken creature expiring in Gerald's arms as Nilakantha and his followers enter and behold the sorrowful picture.

CHARACTERS.

LAKMÉ.
NILAKANTHA, her father.
GERALD, FREDERICK, } Officers of the British Army.
ELLEN, ROSE, } Daughters of the Vice-Roy.
MRS. BENTSON, Governess.
MALLIKA.
HADJI.
A FORTUNE TELLER.
A CHINESE MERCHANT.
A SEPOY.

Hindoos, English Officers and Ladies, Sailors, Bayaderes, Chinamen, Musicians, Brahmins, etc.

The action progresses in our time, in one of England's possessions in India.

LAKMÉ.

ACT I.

[*A very shady garden, in which all the flowers of India grow in profusion. At back a low-built house, half hidden by the trees. A moulding representing a lotus over the entrance door, and farther on a statue of Ganesa—an idol with an elephant's head, and the Goddess of Wisdom—imparts to the mysterious dwelling the appearance of a sanctuary. At back, the commencement of a stream that wanders away and disappears amid tropical growths. The garden is surrounded by a slight fence of bamboo work. Day is dawning.*]

[*Hadji, Mallika, Nilakantha and Hindoos enter as the curtain rises. Hadji and Mallika open the garden gate to some Hindoos, male and female, that enter devoutly.*]

Chorus.

Lo, 'tis the hour appointed
When the plain, incense breathing,
With the dawn's fire anointed,
Now hails the rising sun.
May our pray'rs in communion
Calm the wrath ever seething—
Lull the wrath of great Brahma,
Till his kindness be won!

Nilakantha.

[*Coming from his dwelling.*]

Thrice be their joys increas'd, whose homage here is given
To the forsaken priest, outraged, jeered at and driven!
We shall the fury assuage
Of those that hate us, our victors;
They have cast our gods in rage
From their sacred temples olden.
Yet Brahma over each head
His vengeance holds as the thunder,
And when it bursts forth so dread
Shall our bonds be rent asunder.
In my blest retreat, to-day,
Is the light of heaven straying,
And I feel, I own its sway,
When I hear my daughter praying.

[*Enter Lakmé. Before she appears her voice is heard in the Brahmin's dwelling. All the Hindoos prostrate themselves.*]

Lakmé.

Thou Dourga bright!
Thou Siva pale!
Mighty Ganesa!
Ye, from Brahma's life,
We hail!

[*As the sacred chant finishes, Lakmé appears on the threshold of the house and mingles her prayer with that of the throng.*]

Nilakantha. [*To Hindoos.*]

Go ye in peace, the homeward path now wend,
Morning's pray'r repeating. Away! On all God's love descend!

[*Exeunt all except Lakmé, Nilakantha and Lakmé's two attendants.*]