

Joseph O'Mara

By ROBERT POTTERTON, additional information from
MRS. E. O'MARA CARTON.

This article was originally published on pages 33-42 of The Record Collector, vol. XIX, nos. 1 & 2 (March 1970), a monthly magazine issued from Ipswich, in Suffolk, England, and which has apparently ceased publication since. Robert Potterton (since deceased) was resident in Dublin (Clyde Road and Adelaide Road) about this time, and Mrs. Eileen O'Mara Carton (died 1973) was a daughter of Joseph O'Mara; the Society is grateful to the two families for permission to republish this article. (The last paragraph and the O'Mara discography were apparently written and compiled by J. F. E. Dennis, the magazine's editor.) For the photographs which accompany this article we are indebted to our members Mrs. Mary O'Mara and Richard Coughlan for the tenor as Romeo (Illus. 3) and Lohengrin (Illus. 5) respectively, and to Garrett Carton, son of one of the co-authors, for the others (Illus. 1, 2 and 4).

—E.R. Hon Editor.

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Joseph O'Mara was born in Limerick, Ireland on July 16th, 1864, the second youngest of a family of thirteen. His father was the owner of a large bacon factory, still working there. His mother died when he was fourteen, but he clearly remembered her beautiful voice which, though untrained, was full of purity and sweetness. She often sang the old folk songs, which imbued him with a love of singing.

Joseph sang in the church choir at Limerick as a youth and from the encouragement received from his teachers and friends, decided that singing was his vocation. His father wished him to go into the family business, but after leaving the Jesuit College Joseph decided to go to sea, after one voyage in a Cunarder, altered his mind and entered the family business; he sang in the choir of St. Michael's, Limerick. Seeing a notice of a forthcoming examination for a scholarship at the Royal College of Music, London, without telling his father he crossed over to London and presented himself for examination.

About thirty candidates turned up and of these, three were asked to return the following day for further audition. O'Mara was the first to sing and Sir George Groves asked the young man whether, in the event of his getting the scholarship, his father would be able to support him during his career at the college. O'Mara's Irish blood took violent offence at what he considered a Saxon insult and the examiners were highly amused; O'Mara said his father could support every student in the college! However the examiners seemed to be satisfied with his singing and as he was leaving the room, one of them put the fatal question "You are quite sure, Mr. O'Mara, that your father will pay everything necessary?" Unguardedly O'Mara answered, "Oh! I have no doubt he will if I ask him," and then had to admit that he had come over without his father's knowledge. He afterwards said "I do not know that I would have won the scholarship, but certainly the doubt about my father's willingness to support me destroyed any chance I had".

However he had done well enough to justify him in thinking that he might succeed as a singer. He told his father all that had happened and asked permission to follow his natural bent. His father was very good about it, pointing out that he was by no means robust, that a singer's life was essentially hard and precarious and that in view of Joseph's roving disposition, this might be only a passing fancy. However in the end he gave permission.

Fortunately, just at this time, O'Mara fell in for a small legacy, so feeling very independent he set off for Milan on New Year's Day, 1889. There he studied under Signor Moretti for two years.

For business reasons O'Mara had to return to Limerick in 1891. Hearing of a new opera being put on by D'Oyly Carte in London he wrote for an audition. This was arranged and took place before Sir Arthur Sullivan. What must have been O'Mara's delight and amazement when he was then and there engaged to share the title rôle with Ben Davies—then England's greatest tenor. In later years he often spoke of the great kindness and encouragement he received from Mr. Davies. D'Oyly Carte built the Royal English Opera House, Cambridge Circus, now the Palace Theatre and opened it with "Ivanhoe" on Jan. 31, 1891 with Ben Davies. O'Mara was in the alternative cast and first sang on Feb. 4. The work ran for 153 performances and was followed by "Basoche" in English translation, after which the project folded up. O'Mara's voice attracted great notice and he received many engagements for concerts. He returned to Milan for further experience in Italian opera. He also had instruction from Perini and Edwin Holländ.

In 1893 whilst on holiday in Ireland O'Mara received a telegram from Sir Augustus Harris asking him to call on him at once. O'Mara lost no time and was told he was wanted for Italian Opera and was engaged to sing in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Faust*, apparently without rehearsals, this resulting in a contract for Sir Augustus' Italian Opera tour of the British Isles. O'Mara sang the tenor rôles in *Pagliacci*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Carmen*, *Lohengrin* and *Meistersinger*. Signor Sepelli was the first conductor and the youthful Landon Ronald, Maestro di Piano and second conductor, in which capacity he remained for several years, both on tour and at Covent Garden.

The Irish "Freeman's Journal" files note that the October 1893 works included "I Rantzau", "Amico Fritz", "Philemon and Baucis" and "Carmen"—in which the Toreador song was hissed! despite having Giulia Ravogli and O'Mara in the cast. The company was again in Dublin's Gaiety Theatre for two weeks commencing Oct. 1, 1894, when the works included "Falstaff", "La Navarraise", "Orfeo", "Philemon and Baucis" and "Carmen", two performances of this, Olitzka in the title part for one and Ravogli the other, both with O'Mara.

In 1896, Sir Augustus, at the same time that he had a season of Italian opera at Drury Lane, arranged to produce "Shamus O'Brien" at the Opera Comique. Both the composer Sir Charles Stanford and Harris decided to offer the tenor rôle to O'Mara. As it was almost entirely an acting part and not yet believing in his histrionic powers, O'Mara refused. Sir Augustus was highly indignant and spoke of young puppies who did not know on which side their bread was buttered. Rather than be thought ungrateful, O'Mara said he would play the part if Sir Charles would write in a special song for him. This is how "Oh! Ochoe when I used to be young" came to be written. The work was first performed on March 2, 1896, the principals being Louise Kirkby Lunn, C. McGrath, O'Mara, Denis O'Sullivan, W. H. Stephens and Frank Fisher, Henry Wood conducted. It played some months in London then toured the principal cities of England, Scotland and Ireland before going to America, the "Kitty" was by then Miss Lucy Carr Shaw, sister of G. B. Shaw. Before going to America O'Mara married a Miss Power from Waterford.

In the summer of 1897 the O'Maras returned to Ireland for their holidays, and afterwards to London for a series of concert engagements. In the Autumn of 1897 they returned to America where Joseph took the tenor lead in "The Highwayman". Here again O'Mara's voice plus acting ability made a great impression and he was offered a very attractive further engagement, but he longed to be nearer to Ireland, so refused with regret and returned to London in the Spring of 1899. Here he found that the age of Oratorios, concerts and

musicals “at homes” was at its height. He secured many engagements and sang in practically every house of note. One of these musical evenings was given by the Duchess of Manchester, at which O’Mara was introduced to Prince Edward, to be crowned Edward VII shortly afterwards. The artists at that evening’s concert were Madame Melba, Plancon, Kubelik, Paderewski, Landon Ronald and O’Mara.

O’Mara was associated with all the outstanding singers and instrumentalists of his day—Patti, Calvé, Jean and Edouard de Reszke, Tosti, Ysaye, Caruso, Mischa Elman, John Coates, Clara Butt, Kennerly Rumford, Sir Henry Wood, Alicia Needham, Hamilton Harty, Hermann Lohr, Blanche Marchesi, R. Forbes, Coleridge Taylor, etc.

But opera was really O’Mara’s first love and in 1902 he joined the Moody-Manners Company with which he toured for some years. This company was quite strong, from Germany came Herr Richard Eckhold, Wagner conductor who brought with him Toni Seiter as leading mezzo who (Irish Times) “Grappled bravely with the English words of Azucena and Amneris”—to the Rhadames of John Coates in the second work. Another conductor was the Italian Signor Sapio, and his wife Madame de Vere Sapio, late of the New York Metropolitan, who shared soprano leads with Fanny Moody. Philip Brozel was an outstanding Dutch tenor: two French mezzos were Rosina Benyon and Zélie de Lussan. O’Mara was with this company for the Autumn Opera Season at Covent Garden, August—September, 1902. He sang Firmiano in one new work, Pizzi’s “Rosalba” with Fanny Moody and Francis Maclennan. He was also in “Cavalleria” with Blanche Marchesi or Fanny Esty, shared seven “Fausts” with Coates with Moody or Esty, was Miles-na-Coppaleen in “Lily of Killarney” with Moody and in “Trovatore” with the same leading ladies. The following year he sang there in a work that had won a prize for a native opera, McAlpin’s “The Cross and the Crescent”, with Moody: it only had the one performance. He also sang in Carmen, Lohengrin, Maritana, Pagliacci, Romeo et Juliette with Moody, notable for the debut of Florence Easton as Stephano, Tannhäuser and Trovatore. In Dublin in 1903 he was the tenor lead in “The Tinker and the Fairy” by Esposito, at the time professor of piano at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, one of whose songs O’Mara also recorded. He was the first Enzo in Ireland with Blanche Marchesi as Gioconda and in 1908 the first Rudolph in “La Bohème”. Later he was the first to sing Cavaradossi in Ireland and in the same season was in the Irish premiere of “Samson et Dalila” with Z. de Lussan; this was very popular and had an alternative cast featuring Philip Brozel and Bessie Weir. Another Dublin premiere was “Eithne” by Robert O’Dwyer, in 1910.

However he returned to New York in 1908 to take the tenor lead in a musical “Peggy Machree”, when he received such favourable notices in the Press that two Dublin papers quoted from them at length:

“Joseph O’Mara in New York, The Irish Tenor’s Triumph” some striking appreciations from a Dublin paper, November, 1908.

“It is quite clear from the notices in the New York papers of Mr. Joseph O’Mara’s appearance at the Broadway Theatre in “Peggy Machree”, a musical play hitherto associated with the name of the late Denis O’Sullivan, that Mr. O’Mara has made a decided hit. All the organs of New York opinion with one voice acclaim the success of the famous Irish tenor and describe the enthusiastic reception accorded to him by New York audiences. The notice by Mr. Ashton Stevens in the “New York Journal” (evening paper) commences ‘There is an Irish Caruso at the Broadway and his name is Joseph O’Mara’ and goes on ‘In a ballad he can sing a sure straight note that hits the heart, he is a real tenor, something of the reedy sweetness of the clarinet, sweetness without cloying his treble voice. He is a virile singer and most of his music in ‘Peggy Machree’ is recruited from the good old

virile love songs of Ireland". Other papers, more restrained in tone, are equally strong in their appreciation of our famous tenor. The 'Journal of Commerce' remarks "One of Joseph O'Mara's first lines in 'Peggy Machree' is 'Ye'll not get such a welcome as that outside of Ireland', but the warmth of the welcome given him last night at the Broadway Theatre by the loyal Irish and others must have made him very doubtful of that statement, in fact, he said in a little curtain speech at the end of the second act that "It was worth coming from Ireland for" and he was presented with a wreath, a green one, with intertwined Irish and American flags. The "New York Press" heads its notice of the play "O'Mara's love songs thrill a big audience—Irish tenor captures Broadway". The "New York American" reviews the play under the heading "Joseph O'Mara a hit in new Irish play", and the "Sun" heads its notice "Joseph O'Mara a Star". "The World" describes Mr. O'Mara as the only Irish comedian of the present day, alleged or real, whose songs have the flavour of the shamrock and convey to his hearers the aspirations, hopes, joys and sorrows of the land from which he springs". The "New York Herald" whose criticisms are generally very highly valued, said "If there is any Irish Man, or Woman, in New York who was born in Ireland or whose ancestors were Irish, or who ever was in Ireland, that man or woman ought to go to Broadway Theatre, see and listen to Mr. O'Mara's presentation of Patrick Bidwell's new romantic musical comedy 'Peggy Machree', presented for the first time in this city last night. When the clever Irish actor was forced by an enthusiastic audience to make a speech at the end of the second of the three acts he remarked that he and his company had tried to present a play that was good, clean and wholesome. He might truthfully have added that they had been entirely successful". It is quite evident from these and other Press notices that Mr. O'Mara has created something like a furore in New York by his fine singing, not only among Irish residents but the entire American public."

From another Dublin paper: "Laurels for a Limerick man. Mr. Joseph O'Mara in 'Peggy Machree', chorus of praise from New York Press". "The Press of New York has waxed positively enthusiastic over Mr. Joseph O'Mara's first appearance at the Broadway Theatre in 'Peggy Machree'. 'The Tribune' says, Before the curtain was up ten minutes Mr. O'Mara had won his audience with his fine singing of 'The Ould Plaid Shawl' and when he sang Moore's tender melody 'Believe me if all those endearing young Charms' the applause was tremendous. In the second act he sang 'The Exiles Return' and 'The Birds Fly South'. The triumph of the night came when he gave, with fine spirit, the old martial song of 'The West's Awake'. These songs are of the nation, they are historic and so have a deep significance for intelligent Irishmen. What wonder, then, that the assemblage cheered Mr. O'Mara again and again. He responded with 'The Wearing of the Green' which he sang as only a good singer and a good Irishman can sing it. Here is what the "New York Press" says under the heading "O'Mara's love songs thrill a big audience". "Gallery and Orchestra went into ecstasies when the star let out his rich top notes in a sentimental solo about 'The Ould Plaid Shawl', this was early in the first act and it established O'Mara as one of the best ballad singers Broadway has ever heard. Naturalness and felicity mark his method, recall every popular actor that has walked the boards, in the united attractions, the charm of a voice full of feeling and quality and one may gain a notion of what delight Joseph O'Mara gives. The singer reached deep into every heart when he answered an encore in the last act with 'The Wearin' of the Green'. One has never heard the plaint of downtrodden Ireland put in such appealing tones as O'Mara sounds when he strikes the notes of that imperishable melody. The response to that ballad was fervent and clamorous and no part of the Broadway audience failed to register its appreciation. Another triumph for Mr. O'Mara and the artistic accomplishment of the evening was his 'Believe Me . . .', most tenors

have vocal convulsions when they try this intensely sentimental lyric but O'Mara's repression was fine. Nobody ever effected a better thrill than he inspired with the notes of Tom Moore's song. O'Mara had several other numbers that gave him full scope for a voice rare in its appeal. Each was greeted with approval, about the sincerity there could be no question". The 'New York Sun' says "A real breath of Ireland floated across the footlights of the Broadway Theatre last night when the romantic comedy with music 'Peggy Machree' had its first performance there. The little play brought back Joseph O'Mara as a star on the same stage where, a dozen or so years ago, his high clear tenor voice drew attention to him in 'The Highwayman' (1898). Since then he has been singing in Ireland where the keys of the various cities have been his."

In 1909 O'Mara returned to Britain and joined the Thomas Beecham Company, apart from concert work. The "Irish Times" reported on a 1909 concert "Mr. Joseph O'Mara, who received a hearty reception contributed a group of Irish songs: 'The Birds fly South', 'My Lagan Love' and 'The Heather Glen'. As a song interpreter his well known gifts are highly appreciated, the tenderness which he infused into the strains of 'The Birds fly South' sinking to the very faintest pianissimo sounds was a revelation to the audience and the singular brightness of his vocalism in 'The Heather Glen' evoked applause from every part. In the second part he gave 'Celeste Aida' with highly dramatic effect and was obliged to add an encore, 'I'll sing thee songs of Araby'.

In the Beecham-Season at Covent Garden, 1910 he shared Don José with Coates, sang the first "Tales of Hoffman" there, sharing the rôle with Walter Hyde, shared Faust with Bendinelli and Hyde and also sang Florestan. That year Beecham also revived "Shamus O'Brien" at His Majesty's Theatre, with Albers, Robert Radford, John Bardsley, Edith Evans, Caroline Hatchard and O'Mara. The "Irish Times" London correspondent wrote "Mr. Joseph O'Mara returns to play the part of Mike, the informer, and his fine voice was heard to the greatest effect. In the Begging Song he scored a real triumph and was several times recalled while a fine wreath of laurels was presented to him at the end of the act".

O'Mara formed his own concert party for touring, a report on a concert at the Town Hall, Ballina, Monday, 20th Feb., 1911 reads: "Mr. O'Mara is bringing with him one of the most accomplished Concert Parties that has ever visited Ireland. It includes, among other celebrated artists, Angelo Fronani, the great pianist and husband of Madame de Lussan". Another report ran "He was heard for the first time in "Eleanore" a ballad by Coleridge-Taylor which gave scope for O'Mara's well known powers and which was warmly applauded. In response to encores he rendered 'On the Road to Castlebar' with all its arch drollery in a way that was simply delightful and then, 'The Silver Ring' (Chaminade) with a depth of feeling that showed how he could, with equal success, interpret the gladness and the gloom of the human heart. In the second part Mr. O'Mara sang 'On with the motley' from Pagliacci with intensely dramatic effect and then, as an encore 'Believe me if all those endearing young charms', sung as one rarely, if ever, hears this old time favourite sung nowadays. And about the same time, from Ennis, after an absence of seven to eight years he "Sang with all his old charm and power. . .concluding the first part Mr. O'Mara gave a duet with Mr. Frank Rowe, the selection being 'Solenne in quest'ora' given with much power and expression. They had to respond to the calls, when they gave the well known duet 'The Moon hath Raised' with equal success".

In 1912 O'Mara formed his own opera company and toured with it until 1926, when, due no doubt to his Italian training his voice was still well preserved. He died a year later. After O'Mara retired the company was taken over by Cynlais Gibbs (who had been a tenor

in it) and run under his name. Still later it reverted to "The O'Mara Opera Company" and as such made its last appearance in Eire at the old Cork Opera House in 1934. O'Mara chose many Irish singers to support him in his company, among them Henry O'Dempsey the tenor, and his soprano wife Kathleen McCully; Florence Cahill mezzo, Jay Ryan and John Browne, leading baritone and bass. Another bass was Thomas Bevan, whilst Alphonso McCarthy and his two sisters had smaller rôles. Many of these were cast with O'Mara in the "Lily of Killarney" so that the opera had a true Irish flavour and the spoken dialogue was so very much more 'in the picture' than when English artists played the parts. In this work in the kitchen scene O'Mara always interpolated an Irish ballad, sometimes it was 'Oft in the stilly night' or 'Believe me if all those endearing young charms'; other times 'The Derry Air' in the setting commencing with the words "Would I were a tender apple blossom" and his rendering, full of pathos and great depth of feeling, touched all hearers. One always felt it was his singing and what he put into it, of heart and soul, rather than his voice as voice that thrilled one. It hadn't the great natural beauty of some other tenors, but at the same time one would always wish to listen longer to O'Mara than to others with so much less temperament. His voice was of course of the heroic or Heldentenor type that takes such rôles as Samson, Rhadames in Aida and the Wagnerian parts Tannhäuser and Lohengrin, etc. In the last named he was specially good.

For his first season in Dublin, October 1913, he opened singing Raoul in Mayerbeer's "The Huguenots". The company missed Dublin in 1914 but in February 1915 returned for two weeks with the special attraction of Zélie de Lussan as guest artiste in her great rôle of Carmen, which she sang three times, supported by O'Mara, Lewys James and Florence Morden. De Lussan had been singing the part since the 1880's and was now on her final tour and approaching her 2,000 representation. By 1919 the O'Mara Opera Company was so popular in Dublin that they were engaged for four weeks in February and another four in June and this continued for several years, despite the fact that the Carl Rosa Company also gave three weeks opera in the autumn. From this period onwards O'Mara produced many interesting works, notably Romeo and Juliet and Puccini's Manon Lescaut in which he sang himself; Mignon, The Masked Ball, La Wally (Catalani), Tristan, Orpheus (Gluck), Ruy Blas (Marchetti), and the Seraglio, in which a splendid bass, Joseph Griffin, sang Osmin. Another revival was Balfe's 'The Rose of Castile' which made quite a hit. It was put on several seasons and then, along with The Bohemian Girl, O'Mara one year revived a third Balfe work, The Puritan's Daughter, very well known in the last century along with many other, now totally forgotten, Balfe works. The year 1924 saw a complete novelty in Der Evangelimann by Kintzl, which had a splendid 'singing-acting' part for the great tenor. O'Mara produced it for a few seasons, but like The Jewess, a good part of its success was due to the singer's masterly art in the tenor rôle. According to Matt Byrne, when the O'Mara company visited Liverpool one year the local Rabbi went to see La Juive and was so thrilled by O'Mara's acting as the old Jew Eleazar that he presented him with a Jewish garment and jewelled dagger which O'Mara afterwards always wore when doing the rôle.

O'Mara was a great singing-actor. His Canio was unforgettable. With his heart-broken sobs he could, as the saying goes, 'tear passion to tatters' and never at the same time appear exaggerated in the very least; this is the hallmark of great acting. Like many artists who excel in tragic parts, O'Mara could also extract the last ounce of humour from rôles that lent themselves to mirth, like Myles-na-Coppaleen in the Lily of Killarney and Mike Murphy in Stanford's Shamus O'Brien. Sir Charles Stanford told of one occasion when he was conducting his opera and O'Mara was in quite exuberant form and so funny were his antics that Sir Charles became quite doubled up with laughter and unable to conduct. He had

to lay down his baton, the orchestra ceased playing and also commenced to roar with laughter along with the entire audience; and only when all had recovered and the uproar ceased could the opera proceed.

Yet the critic of the "Irish Times" February, 1918, Dublin, wrote: "Mr. O'Mara's 'Lohengrin' is to my mind one of his best parts, it is not a hurricane of passion like 'Tannhäuser', it demands a purer vocalism, a quiet dignity, a calm and spiritual character, and yet, at the back of it all, an abundance of reserve power. This is what we get from Mr. O'Mara, we never lose sight of the fact that his 'Lohengrin' has come from another sphere and that no earthly Prince has power to restrain him, O'Mara sang his music with such fervour".

In all O'Mara sang in 67 operas. He was a prodigious worker and had an exceptional musical memory. He could prompt either soprano, contralto, baritone or bass in any one of the operas in which he sang. Because of his great histrionic powers it was apparent that if ever he lost his voice he could have earned a good living as an actor. He judged the singing competitions several times at the Dublin Feis Ceoil and the Sligo Feis. For the opening night of Dublin Radio he sang a group of three songs—"The Willow Tree", "Turn ye to me" and "The Bard of Donegal".* Three late criticisms show that his powers had not deserted him in his late fifties;

"Irish Times" Dublin, 11/8/1924. Revival of "Shamus O'Brien".

"Mr. Joseph O'Mara, who had worked hard to good effect on the production as a whole probably made his own old part of Mike Murphy stand out last night more prominently than in the old production; in other words more prominently than it should in a well-balanced production. Last night of course a great deal depended on him, seeing that half the members of the cast were amateurs or, at least singers not experienced in stage work. for that reason no one can complain of his prominence, he was doing his best to make the opera appeal again and it was not for him to bring himself down to the level of less experienced members of the cast. His Mike Murphy had very pronounced characteristics and a brogue, as they say 'you could cut with a knife'. Clearly he enjoyed singing his old part again and it came to him very easily. His voice shaped itself, as it were, as in the old days when the notes were all well within the measure of his best tone and the tone came again to the shape. Seeing and hearing him last night it was easy to understand the popularity of the opera and the extent of Mr. O'Mara's reputation when both were at their biggest."

"Shaun the Post" 16/8/1924 "The Irish Times".

"Mr. Joseph O'Mara had evidently taken a good deal of care with his preparation of the part of "Shaun the Post" and did it full justice. In numbers such as his 'Leprechaun' song in the first act and the meditation in prison (where he sings the 'Londonderry Air', very beautifully set and also used as a theme at other places in the opera) and in the love duets Mr. O'Mara sang splendidly".

"Irish Times" Critique of "The Lily of Killarney", February, 1923 (The O'Mara Opera Company).

"It was Mr. O'Mara's 'Myles-Na-Coppaleen' that gave the native sparkle of pure wine to an enjoyable performance. Other men have played the part, and played it well, but Mr.

**Recte* "Donegal"? Maybe, but perhaps "Armagh" is intended—"The Bard of Armagh" was one of the tenor's favourite songs and that which he sung on 2RN, Ireland's first radio station, on the occasion of its official opening on the 1st of January, 1926.—E.R. Hon. Editor.

O'Mara lives it, body, soul and spirit during his few hours on the stage. Time, which weakens many things, has given to his art a wider scope, a finer finish, to see and hear him in the character of 'Myles' is to enjoy the fullness of creative art. Some hold that it is wrong to introduce into an opera any song which is not in the operatic score but, nobody who hears Mr. O'Mara's singing of 'Believe Me if All Those Endearing young Charms' will readily admit that it was out of place in Lily's kitchen, it became a portion of the picture. Mr. O'Mara's interpretation of the song would have delighted Thomas Moore and it was a lesson to all younger artists, he and the other artists were recalled again and again".

O'Mara died on August 5th, 1927 in Dublin. Unfortunately he made very few recordings, for obvious reasons the early ones are very rare and he was not satisfied with the two later efforts that I have traced. Fortunately the most important is again readily available on a re-issue.

THE JOSEPH O'MARA RECORDS

THE GRAMOPHONE COMPANY, London, 1902, March?

2-2061 An April Birthday, Landon Ronald composer, at piano. 7 in. 17½ cm.

2-2062 Friend and Lover, Landon Ronald composer, at piano. 7 in. 17½ cm.
(matrix 4144NB)

2-2567 SHAMUS O'BRIEN: Ochone! When I used to be young (Stanford) re-issue on MCK 501, Creators of Grand Opera, Vol. 2. 10 in. 25 cm.

THE GRAMOPHONE COMPANY, London, 1911, June?

Up the Heather Glen (Esposito) matrix ab 13623e.

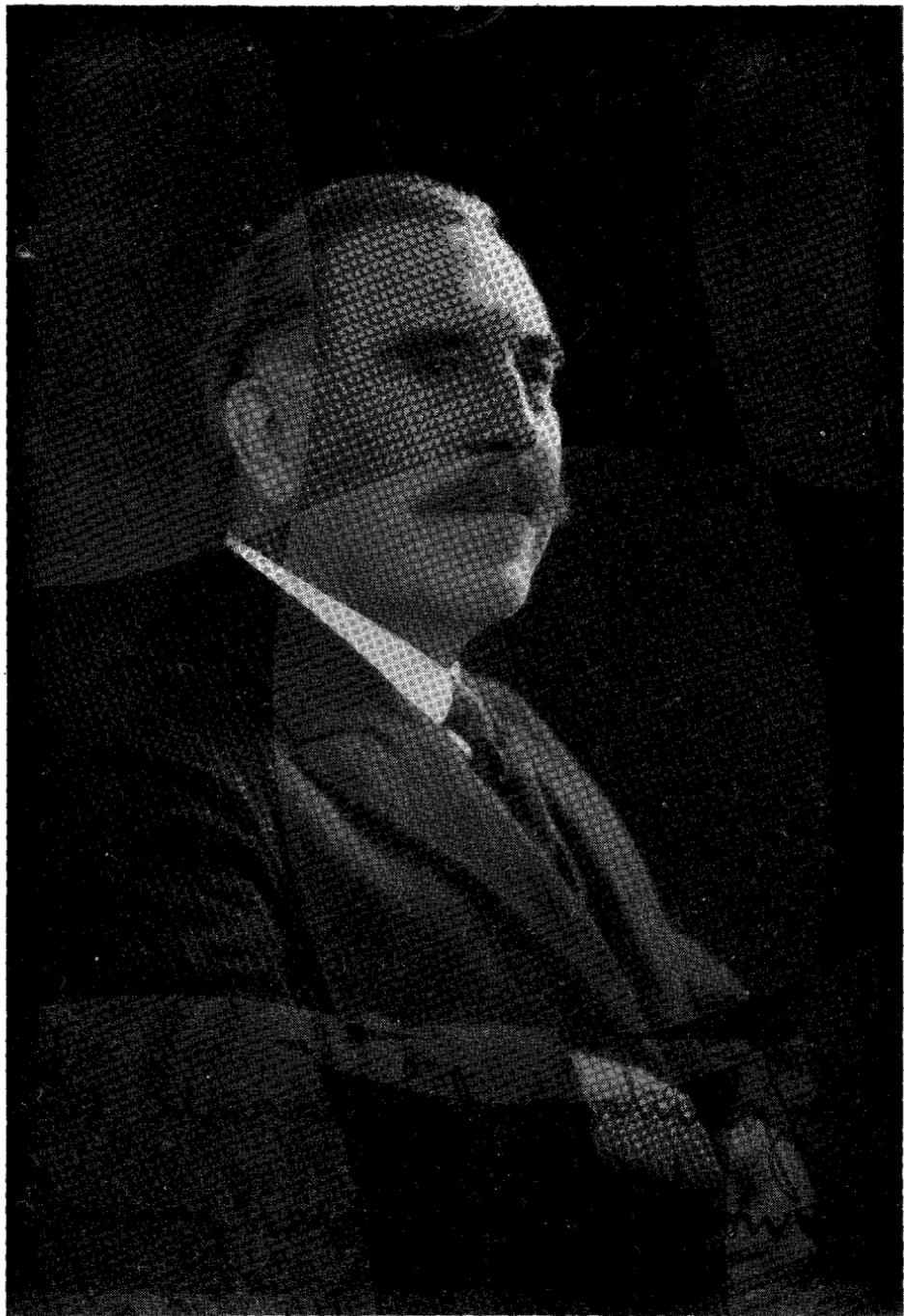
10 in. 25 cm. unpublished.

Eleanor (Coleridge Taylor?) matrix ac 50404.

12 in. 30 cm. unpublished.

POSTSCRIPT

Joseph O'Mara records are extremely rare and, it is generally agreed by all, do not do justice to his fine voice. The reason for the poor quality and their scarcity goes hand-in-hand: he had signed a long-term contract with The Gramophone Company which proved unable to record to his satisfaction and, unable to break the contract, he refused to continue recording after the first efforts in 1902 and the re-trials (never published) in 1911; in fact, whenever possible he destroyed any of his recordings which he came across! (Information from Mrs. Mary Mulvany, née O'Mara, a grand-daughter.)—E.R. Hon. Editor.





Illus. 2. Joseph O'Mara in the rôle of Pinkerton, in Puccini's "Madame Butterfly", a rôle he hated as he always considered Pinkerton an outright cad.



Illus. 3. Joseph O'Mara in the rôle of Romeo, in Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette".



Illus. 4. Joseph O'Mara in the rôle of Tannhäuser, in Wagner's opera of the same name.



Illus 5. Joseph O'Mara, with Sir Augustus Harris' Company, 1894-95, in the rôle of Lohengrin, in Wagner's opera of the same name; he chose this rôle, for which he was particularly famous, to make his farewell appearance when he retired in 1926.