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"SHORT MUSICAL STORIES"

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The *Strand Musical Magazine* was first published in January 1895 and continued through December 1897. Each monthly issue contained from sixty-four to eighty pages at a cost of sixpence. The first twenty or so pages were devoted to articles and short stories. The remaining pages contained various songs complete with music, and musical pieces — usually for piano. A feature included at irregular intervals was the *Short Musical Stories*. This book contains these fictional musical tales from the 1896 and the 1897 magazines. April 1897 was the last issue to include a story.

SHORT MUSICAL STORIES

MUSIC HATH CHARMS BY C. H. PALMER

The skill of the suburban jerry-builder has seldom been more conclusively demonstrated than in the construction of Laurel and Laburnum Villas. These twin residences were like to a double cherry, seeming parted, with yet a union in division; but the division — that is to say, the party-wall between them — was of a thinness so entirely Japanesque that it served to facilitate rather than to obstruct the passage of sound.

This circumstance was the more unfortunate because although the Hogbins, who dwelt in Laurel Villa, were of the comfortable bourgeois type, and the de Carteret Canteloupes, who abode in Laburnum, set up for being aristocrats of intellect and taste, yet both families were addicted to music, and a wall of the thickness of the Tower of London would not have been any too much to ensure harmony between them.

Hogbin *père* was peculiarly sensitive to the disadvantages of this proximity, for, while very fond of music in his own way, what he said was, "Give him tune," and what he got from the next door consisted of polyphonic combinations of, to his mind, a distracting character. So it happened that whenever Fanny de Carteret Canteloupe went upstairs in the evening for "a nice quiet practice," and ploughed her way steadily through seventeen pages of a "Grotesquerie Funambulesque," or something else of the kind constructed on the most recent model, the good man next door would writhe behind his evening paper, and finally fling the paper from him in rage and despair.

"This is too much for weak human nature," he cried one evening after a quarter of an hour of the Canteloupe piano. "I almost wish I had been born deaf. How much longer will that terrible girl continue practising?"

"She's generally good for two hours when she commences with that piece," said Caroline, the daughter of the house, who was critically examining a design for a bicycle suit.

"I wouldn't so much mind it if it were real music," continued Mr. Hogbin; "but it ain't. Music is tune and tune is music. I defy you, my dear, or anybody else, to contradict that." And he glared defiantly at his wife.

Mrs. Hogbin, who had been furtively shedding tears behind a novelette, started at this abrupt address. "Lord bless me, John!" she said, "I didn't say it was music and didn't think it."

"Whether you did or not," returned her implacable husband, "makes no difference, and its of no use calling it art either. Slap-dash smashing can't be art. Why, a cat on roller skates would get about the same effect out of the key-board."

"I shouldn't wonder, love," said his wife soothingly, "though 1 must say I never heard one, even at the Christys. Lina, my dear, play something to your father, his nerves are all on edge-like. Something sensible from Balfe, or Gilbert and Sullivan, and play loud so as to drown those Canteloupes. De Carteret, indeed!"

Although Miss Caroline said "Oh, bother," under her breath, still, being a good-natured girl, she sat down at the piano, and, under the soothing influence of the "Yeomen of the Guard," Mr. Hogbin began to recover his equanimity. Unfortunately he was only preparing for himself a still worse experience.

No sooner did the sound of the Hogbin instrument reach the refined ears of Fanny de Carteret Canteloupe than she tossed her head angrily, and turning to her brother Wembley, who happened to have strolled into the room, said, "Wembley, get your 'cello; those horrid people next door have begun again. We must play the creatures down."

Wembley, who prided himself upon his saturnine humour, modelled upon Lytton's novels, replied, "All right, Fanny, we will dish the hogs up with Wagner sauce."

So just as papa Hogbin was congratulating himself upon his victory, the first deep groan of the 'cello shook the party wall. "Heavens and earth!" cried the tortured man, starting from his chair, "this is simply beyond endurance. I am going out for a walk. I shall be back in one, two, three hours. Don't wait for me." And he fled from the room and the house. His daughter laughed and ceased playing, but Mrs. Hogbin burst into tears and declared that it was a burning shame a man should be driven out of his own home by the unearthly noises produced by their underbred neighbours.

Thus the de Carteret Canteloupes triumphed; but they did not always triumph, for on the following Wednesday, when they gave their usual weekly musical "At Home," Mr. Hogbin seized the opportunity of re-hanging all the pictures in the dining-room, and so vigorous was his knocking of nails that the concert next door was brought to an abrupt conclusion. Naturally these uncomfortable relations produced a feud of quite Corsican ferocity between the two families. If Fanny de Carteret Canteloupe or her widowed mother met any of the Hogbins out of doors, they would sniff and smile pityingly. If, on the other hand, Mr. Hogbin saw a Canteloupe approaching a quarter of a mile away, he would cross the road in a pointed manner.

As for Caroline Hogbin, she passed her neighbours with her nose at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the bare sight of them always put Mrs. Hogbin into such a fluster that she nearly fainted from indignation. Thus was music a breeder of discord between two otherwise amiable households.

The only weak spot in the Canteloupe armour was Wembley, for this youth had cast his eye upon Caroline Hogbin and found that though she was a daughter of the Philistines, she was passing fair. He also conveyed his appreciation by numerous glances, which Caroline interpreted very correctly. The idea of captivating such an important member of the enemy's camp filled Miss Hogbin's mind with pleasure, and perhaps it was not without design that she took to pacing pensively in the garden in the dusk of the summer evenings. On two successive occasions did Wembley de Carteret secretly watch these maiden meditations, but on the third he could resist no longer, and mounting a stool, popped his head over the wall.

"Miss Hogbin," he whispered. But the young lady heard not. She was standing well in the moonlight, lost in contemplation of the stars. "How ethereal she looks," thought the enamoured Wembley; and then he whispered again, louder, "Miss Hogbin."

"Who calls?" cried the maiden, starting and looking everywhere but at Wembley's head, which was a very conspicuous object on the top of the wall.

"It is I," said the young man, "Wembley de Carteret Canteloupe, you know. It's — it's a fine evening, isn't it?"

"Oh!" cried Caroline, "how dare you speak to me? Don't you know that we detest and despise all of you?"

"I know our houses are at variance," replied Wembley, gloomily; "but what of that? Romeo spoke to Juliet under similar circumstances, and why not a Canteloupe to a Hogbin? Do you know, Miss Caroline, you look exactly like Juliet with the moonlight on your hair."

"I don't know that you have any right to make comparisons about me. Mr. Canteloupe," said the young girl, much flattered.

"I am an artist," replied Wembley, adjusting his *pince-nez*, "and as such possess an indefeasible right to speak about the beautiful — when I see it."

Miss Hogbin began to think that young Canteloupe had most distinguished manners. "Ah," she said, regretfully, "It's a pity you make yourselves so disagreeable next door. Why do you do it?"

"Pardon me, Miss Hogbin, it is not a question of being disagreeable or otherwise. We are musicians. We do but follow our vocation. As the poet says, 'We play because we must, and pipe but as the linnet sings.'" Wembley's quotation was more apt than correct, but it answered its purpose.

"If you would only confine yourselves to piping," sighed Caroline, "we might put up with it — at a pinch. But the fiend who plays the 'cello makes life impossible. Papa calls his instrument the blood-curdler. Excuse my frankness."

"Certainly," returned Wembley, with a wry smile; "especially as I myself am the fiend who plays on the blood-curdler."

"Oh, I am so sorry — I didn't know. But if you would only leave off playing the 'cello we should be so much obliged; couldn't you take up with something quieter — the mandoline or the fairy bells, say?"

Wembley shook his head despairingly. "It is so hard to make you understand; but I will try. Don't you see that I am an artist? I and my 'cello are one, it is part of my life. If I would I could not change even for a nobler instrument let alone a mandoline. You might as well ask Paderewski to give up the piano and begin to study the mouth organ. It would be an insult. But you know no better. I wish I could persuade you to leave the ranks of the Philistines and become one of us."

At this interesting juncture the voice of Mr. Hogbin was heard calling aloud, "Where are you, Caroline? I want you to try over that new song with me." And Caroline, with a wave of the hand to the young man, darted into the house.

"Confound the fat old Vandal," muttered Wembley. "I suppose he's about to bawl incessantly for the next half-hour. It will be too hideous. I've a good mind to start my 'cello. But no; it might annoy her. I'll go for a bicycle ride instead."

From the date of this romantic interview Caroline Hogbin's attitude towards the de Carteret Canteloupes began to be modified. Under the influence of the cultured Wembley, who lost no opportunity of improving her mind, she began to discover within herself high artistic yearnings of which she had not previously been aware. Dimly she commenced to recognise, as Wembley put it, the "mixed horror and delight" of a Sonata by Crotchetofski and the way in which a Nocturne of Chopin's resembled "a steel-blue soul floating through a firmament of fireflies." She couldn't quite puzzle it all out, but she fancied she had the clue and might in time be able to trace with ease and certainty the connection between a passage in octaves for both hands and a blood-red sunset, and between a series of diminished fifths played pianissimo and anguish too deep for tears.

To these high truths did Caroline seriously incline, and under their spell she grew to detest playing airs from what Mrs. Hogbin called Gilbert and Sullivan, and to hate accompanying the robust patriotic ballads favoured by her sire; and when that gentleman, in pursuance of his musical studies, began to cultivate the ocarina, she protested aloud.

"My dear girl," said her father, with a twinkle in his eye, "the ocarina is a pleasant and melodious instrument; the joy of the simple Tyrolese peasant. Why shouldn't I practise it?"

"Why, dad," returned his daughter, "you know you only do it to annoy the Canteloupes."

Here Mrs. Hogbin interposed hotly, “And why shouldn’t your father annoy the Canteloupes if he wants to? You are an unnatural child, Caroline, to side with Canteloupes against your own flesh and blood. But I know why you do it; you have been talking to that shockheaded lout of a fiddling idiot, young Wembley.”

“What! the proprietor of the blood-curdler?” asked her father, astonished.

“Yes, the pert minx! See how she blushes.”

At this point Caroline, crying out that it was a shame, darted out of the room. Mrs. Hogbin smiled, settled herself comfortably, and looked at her husband.

“Now, my dear, you can go on with your ocarina.”

But Mr. Hogbin shook his head and laid down the agreeable instrument on which he had been performing. “If Caroline’s gone over to the enemy,” he said, dolefully, “you and I may as well give in, old lady.”

A burst of music from next door in which the pianoforte and the ’cello seemed to blend in a paean of triumph accentuated the bitterness of these words of surrender. Burning with indignation, Mrs. Hogbin started to her feet, and cried with all the spirit of a Boadicea, “We’ll never give in! Pick up your ocarina, John, and I’ll play your accompaniment.”

Then began a truly Homeric struggle, and the thin party wall vibrated through all its breadth to the sounds of strife. But the Hogbins were determined and performed with such vigour and spirit, and such noble indifference to time and tune, that the Canteloupes had to confess themselves vanquished. The ingenious Wembley drew a long wail of agony from the strings of his violoncello, and thereupon the Canteloupe duettists retired from the competition.

However, even the Hogbins felt that it was a cheap triumph, and when the lady had struck a last stumbling chord on the piano, and her husband had extracted a final shrill locomotive shriek from his ocarina, he threw the instrument of torture away in disgust, and said, “Shut up, my dear, we’re lowering ourselves to their level,” which curiously enough was the very same remark that Fanny de Carteret Canteloupe made at the same moment on the other side of the partition.

And for three whole days the silences of Laburnum and Laurel Villas were unbroken by music of piano, ’cello, or ocarina, or even of the vox humana.

During those three days Caroline Hogbin and Wembley de Carteret Canteloupe had one or two interviews over the garden wall, and they agreed upon a plan of action. In pursuance of that plan Wembley called upon Mr. Hogbin on the fourth evening after the reign of silence had set in, much to the astonishment of that gentleman, and still more so to that of Mrs. Hogbin, who considered the young man’s intrusion an act akin to sacrilege. But Wembley, as becomes the bearer of the olive branch, was not discouraged.

"My dear sir," he began, "I am afraid our family, myself included, have occasioned you some annoyance."

"Oh, a mere bagatelle!" returned Mr. Hogbin, with fine irony.

Wembley shook his head with an amiable smile. "It's a true bill, I fear, on both sides; and now we are being punished for it. We are all fond of music, and this monotony of silence, unbroken by sweet sounds, is oppressive. Don't you feel it that way?"

"Very much so, thank you."

"I have done what I could. I have moved the piano. I have warned my sister not to use the loud pedal: I have even muffled the strings of my violoncello."

"The blood-curdler?"

"As you please; you are an agreeable humourist. But I am afraid it's of no use ; the party walls are so thin."

"That rascally builder."

"You define him exactly. On the other hand, men of our musical temperament cannot bear to live in silence. I am here to suggest a compromise."

"Trot it out."

"I suggest that we have two small blackboards."

"Blackbirds?"

"No; things that you write on with chalk. We will hang ours on the apple-tree; you can fix yours to the permanent clothes-prop."

"I prefer the apple-tree."

"You are welcome; we will appropriate the clothes-prop. On these boards we will each write out our little musical programme for the day. You can have first choice, say, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. We will open the ball on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. See?"

"Sunday being an off day."

"Exactly. Now see how well it will work out. I shall write 'Mr. and Miss de C, Piano and Cello, Six till Eight'; you will then know what to expect."

"We shall indeed."

"On the other hand you will write, 'Mr. Hogbin, Penny-whistle from Seven till Nine.'"

"Excuse me, I shall write 'the Ocarina.'"

"A thousand pardons. But don't you think it a good idea?"

"Excellent. I shall go for a walk when you play your 'cello."

"And I can bicycle out of reach of your ocarina."

"Agreed. But one word more. I am thinking of studying the cornet à piston."

"My dear sir, with all the pleasure in life."

"You are a young man of sense. After that I shall perhaps devote a little attention to the trombone."

"A most sympathetic instrument."

"I respect your intelligence. We ought to have known each other before."

"We will make up for lost time. *Au revoir!* I will send round your blackboard."

"One moment before you go. What do you think of the American organ?"

"Words cannot express my appreciation of it."

"I shall get one. And the Chinese fiddle?"

"A celestial thing."

"I shall lay one in. Good-bye. I start on Monday with the cornet."

"Anything, anything. Two cornets if you like. Good-bye," and the bewildered Wembley rushed from the room, leaving Papa Hogbin almost convulsed with suppressed laughter.

For some weeks the agreement worked fairly well. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings Wembley would stroll down the garden to inspect the Hogbin programme hung up on the apple-tree, and on other days Mr. Hogbin would trot round to gaze on the Canteloupe *Menu* affixed to the clothes-prop. Sometimes they would meet and discuss the weather and the political situation — anything but music — and became quite friendly. There were occasional hitches, it is true. One time the rain almost obliterated the Canteloupe bill of fare, on another occasion a prowling cat upset the Hogbin's blackboard. Still they got on pretty well until Mr. Hogbin actually did buy a cornet, and at the awful notes of that trumpet the war broke out afresh.

It was terminated by Caroline entering upon an engagement on her own account and becoming the affianced bride of Wembley de Carteret Canteloupe. The young gentleman's name and the distinction with which he wore his *pince-nez* were too much for her fidelity to her house. They were married, and Mr. Hogbin cheerfully gave up his house to them and went to live in a cottage on a common. Here he practises impartially on the cornet, the Chinese fiddle, the ocarina, and the zah-zah, and Mrs. Hogbin plays all his accompaniments.

And there is music in Laburnum and Laurel Villas morning, noon, and night, and between them they give musical "At Homes" six nights a week. Young Mrs. Wembley de Carteret Canteloupe is now almost as good as her husband at explaining the connection between muted violins and moonlight on Lake Como, or between a string of chromatic chords and a soul's yearning for a higher life. And thus happily ended a musical feud, which, had not Cupid intervened, might have terminated in the Law Courts.

THE FORBIDDEN MELODY

A cool, shady drawing-room, with long French windows opening into an old-fashioned garden, the scent of roses everywhere, mingled with a faint odour of pinks, stocks, and out-of-date flowers, that was wafted across from a gorgeous border on the other side of a grassy lawn — and a pretty girl seated at a piano with her dark eyes fixed dreamily on the keys, completed a picture that was beautiful already. For a moment, Jack Atherstone — or, to give him his proper title, Captain John Noble Atherstone, of the "Queen's Bays"— stood watching his *fiancée* with a radiant face. The afternoon sun glinted on the soft curls at her neck, and brought into relief the pure outlines of her girlish figure; and it seemed to him that each day that brought him to her, made her fairer in his eyes.

She was absorbed in the thing she was playing — a strange old air, soft and subtle, that began with a wail, as of the wind in trees, and ended in a sigh. He listened, fascinated for a moment, and then he suddenly shivered. He felt chilly, and became aware that a slight breeze had arisen and was stirring about the garden.

He went forward through the window into the room. "Leila, sweetheart," he said, bending to kiss her, "why are you so fond of that horrible thing? It makes me feel creepy, and, in the words of the classics, 'gives me the hump!' I could almost imagine that something uncanny was near us. Not being superstitious, I can't account for this; but it is so."

"You silly old thing," replied Leila, candidly. "I believe that in your heart of hearts you are superstitious after all. One can't charm snakes here."

"No, only mere men," put in Jack.

"It is a *beautiful* air. Where is your ear for music? This melody was used by the snake charmers in India to lure the snakes from their holes — at least, so my old ayah used to say; and when I was a tiny child she would sit and sing it to me over and over again with a peculiar monotonous intonation, until I got drowsy and fell asleep. Somehow — I suppose, from hearing it so often, I have never forgotten it, and now, whenever I am worried with household cares — those gnat-stings of daily life that you men do not suffer from — I go and play the old melody, and it seems to soothe me. I've improvised a variation to it, but as you dislike it so much, I will not torture you."

"No, I don't like it," he said, "and when we are married I shall ask you not to play it any more — strictly forbid it, in fact," trying to frown, and failing dismally. "You've no idea how stern I can be," he added. "I can be over-poweringly dignified if I like. You've never seen me preserve an austere silence, have you?"

Leila laughed mockingly. “I never knew you keep silence at all,” she said; and then she promptly disappeared in search of a garden hat.

Leila’s father, Colonel Leigh, V.C., of Indian Mutiny fame, had not long returned from India. Years ago he had been a happy man, but the sufferings and anxieties of the terrible Mutiny had been too much for his delicate wife, and when she died the world became suddenly very grey and very cold, and in the excess of his grief he plunged wildly into the distractions of army life, fearing each unemployed moment that might bring back hopeless thoughts of her.

Leila had been sent home when she was quite young, growing up under the care of a loving grand-dame until her father was able to return; and when at length he started on his homeward journey, a letter at one of the ports informed him that, subject to his approval, Leila had betrothed herself to an old playmate of hers, Jack Atherstone. Colonel Leigh found no objection to offer to the engagement, but stipulated that the marriage should not take place so soon as Jack wished, as he thought he could justly claim his child’s company for a few months before he yielded her to him for ever.

But suddenly, and almost without any warning, Atherstone’s regiment was ordered to Bombay, and as the young man was unwilling to go without his wife, the Colonel was reluctantly obliged to consent to a speedy marriage.

Life in India is not the best thing in the world for a delicate constitution, but if Leila was not delicate, she was at least unused to the unending stare of a cloudless tropical sky; and as she began to feel languid and listless, and Captain Atherstone saw with dismay the weary look grow upon her face, he gladly availed himself of the offer of the Colonel’s wife to send her away to the hills. Leila raised strong objections to leaving without her husband, but his promise that he would join her shortly reconciled her to the arrangement.

A week amongst the hills restored the colour to her cheeks and the old buoyancy to her step, and when the day on which she expected Jack came at last, she was as bright and well as when he first put her on board the liner that brought her to Bombay.

She waited with restless impatience for the sound of his horse’s hoofs. For the first time since her arrival she felt lonely. The bungalow was solitary, at some distance from any other, and the servants moved about in a peculiar noiseless way that made the silence ten times more distinct. She was almost unhappy, until her eyes fell upon the piano, and she sat down to conjure up old recollections by a means that had not failed to pass away many weary hours before. She became absorbed in the music. The sun began to glint through the trees in long glittering shafts, and a spell seemed to wrap the afternoon.

One after the other each piece touched some chord, roused some slumbering memory of "auld lang syne," and for a moment she seemed to be living again in her far away childhood's days The old scene, the Indian home of her early youth, rose before her. She remembered how the long shadows crept slowly up when the sun faded away over the hills. She remembered how the last gleam of light used to creep under the verandah, and startle the bright colours of her old ayah's dress; and the recollection of the faithful nurse's dusky face came fresh and clear, and it almost seemed as if she heard once again the monotonous intonation that had summoned sleep from the midst of the shadows that lurked mysteriously under the dark trees outside.

Unconsciously her fingers began straying in search of the fascinating melody. The old notes came quickly to her touch, and half in a dream she watched her fingers wander lazily over the keys. The music and the memories it awakened absorbed her, so that she did not hear a faint rustling in the shadow, coming nearer and nearer, nor see the long sinuous body with glittering scales where the fading sunshine fell upon it, gliding slowly over the matting, nor see its wicked upraised head swaying gently to and fro in measured rhythm. The music held her spellbound, and she was deaf also to the sound of stealthy footsteps that crept along the verandah.

A dusky face peered at her from out of the shadow. It bent eagerly forward with narrowed, glittering eyes, and watched the scene with fascinated interest. As the snake moved to and fro to the rhythm, so moved the man in the shadow — to and fro, to and fro, as if he were beating time, with moving lips that seemed to be muttering an incantation, and his eyes were fixed on the snake.

Suddenly the music stopped with a crash. Leila's hands fell to her side, and in a flash the snake, disturbed by the abrupt ending of the fascinating strain which had held it spellbound, darted its venomous sting into the white wrist so near it. With a startled scream Leila turned round just in time to see the hideous reptile disappear through the bungalow doorway. For a moment, paralysed with fear, sick and horror stricken, she stood motionless and cold; then she fell senseless to the ground.

At the same moment there were noises outside. The man darted from his hiding place and, rushing forward, bent excitedly over her prostrate body. He went down on his knees, beating his head and crying out alternate curses and prayers in jumbled Hindustani. When he ceased his mutterings he lifted her wrist and looked at the small red spot that already seemed to be growing black.

As he did so a voice outside called "Leila!" and he started to his feet to see Captain Atherstone coming through the doorway.

At first Jack saw only his wife lying senseless on the floor, and he rushed forward. Then he became aware that a strange native was bowing and salaaming before him, and muttering something unintelligible concerning music and snakes. He leaped to his feet and seized the man by the throat.

"What have you done?" he demanded. But the man wriggled out of his grasp and pointed to the spot on the wrist.

Jack rushed to the door and hastily summoned the servants. "The doctor!" he shouted. "The doctor, for your lives!" He lifted Leila and put her on a couch. Then he tried to restore her to consciousness by pouring water on her face, the native meanwhile standing watching with a supercilious sneer on his dark face. Suddenly he moved.

"She will die, sahib," he said.

Jack turned upon him angrily. "You hound!" he shouted hoarsely. "Get out of this. Go! do you hear?" as the native did not stir. "I tell you to go."

"Yes, sahib," the man answered coolly; but he made no effort to move.

Jack strode over to him. "Go," he cried breathlessly, "or — no — wait," he added, suddenly growing calm and speaking from between his teeth. "There's some foul play here, and, my God! you shall suffer for it."

"No, sahib," replied the man salaaming. "No foul play, sahib. The memsahib play the air — the one air; she stop, and the snake bite. No foul play here, sahib. But she will die."

Leila opened her eyes. "What is the matter?" she said.

She put her hand to her head. Everything was swimming before her eyes. She could scarcely see Jack, but the native's dark face behind him reminded her of something. She stretched out her arms to her husband and clung to him convulsively.

"The snake!" she cried, in a hoarse whisper. "Oh, Jack, it has bitten me."

"I know it, darling," he replied; "but I've sent for the doctor, and it will be all right. It is nothing — nothing much, sweetest. You will be well presently."

"But I am so cold — ugh! — and that man, Jack, who is he?"

"He?" Jack looked helplessly at the native. "I — I don't know. He — came —"

"I am only a snake charmer," said the man. "I saw the snake bite. It was the music — he come in to listen. But the memsahib stopped too suddenly, and he bite."

Jack began to understand. "It was the melody, Leila," he said, excitedly. "Do you remember — your old ayah? Ah, that accounts for it. You charmed the snake. Oh, my dearest, why did you do it?"

At this moment the doctor came up. His quick eyes took in the scene in a moment, and he went quickly to Leila. He shook his head over the little red spot on her wrist, and was a long time taking her pulse. It seemed to Jack that he was wasting time —trifling it away.

"Brandy," he said at last, "give her brandy, and make her walk about. Keep her moving. I — I am afraid I shall have to come and see her again — in an hour — or half an hour. I will come back." He gave her a dose from a phial he had in his hand, and was about to take Jack out of the room, when some words which fell from the native's lips arrested his footsteps.

"*I* can cure her, sahib," he said. "I can do it, but not he," pointing to the doctor. "I can cure the memsahib if she will play the melody." Jack stared at the man.

"Cure —" he faltered. "You, doctor, can't you — can't you cure her?" The doctor did not meet his eyes.

"*I* can do it, sahib," the native broke in, "but I want the air — the melody. Let the memsahib play the melody, and I will cure her and spoil the snake."

"Are you mad?" said Jack at last. Then he turned suddenly to the doctor. "For God's sake, tell me the truth," he cried, in a whisper. "Can't you — can't you do anything? Speak out, man."

The doctor laid his hand upon his shoulder. "My dear fellow," he began, "try to calm yourself. Your wife —"

"I can do it," cried the native aloud, heedless of Leila's white face amidst the cushions. "I can do it, Let me try. The poison is in the memsahib, black, horrible. I can collect it, and drive it forth. I will do it, but let the memsahib play the air."

"It is madness," said the doctor, "foolery; but I have seen these fellows do strange things sometimes, and it will not hurt her. She must move, and be kept awake. Let him try." Jack's heart sank down and down; the doctor, then, gave her up to this madman?

He went over to her, and took her in his arms. She was half unconscious. "Leila, dearest, rouse yourself."

The doctor came up, and shook her, and half dragged her across the room. He succeeded in rousing her, and then he turned to the native. "Now," he said, "I know that some of you fellows can perform wonderful cures, and you shall try your skill on the memsahib. But I warn you if there is any foul play you shall suffer for it. If you do not cure her, you die yourself. You hear?"

The native bowed. "Yes, sahib," he said. "Let the memsahib play the melody. I am a snake charmer; I want the air. It lures the snakes from their holes as no other music will do. It is forgotten, lost, and I have sought it for years until I passed and heard it. Then I saw the memsahib with the music, the snake; and then the too quick stop, and the swoon, and then I knew she was bitten. Let her play, quick."

Jack almost carried her over to the piano. "Play the melody," he said.

She understood, and her hands began slowly wandering over the keys. The notes came faint and feeble at first. Every vestige of colour had gone from her face. Her very finger nails were grey, and as she played, her lips moved unconsciously. Her hands seemed to struggle automatically with the keys, but as she went «n some of her old spirit began to creep into the music.

The doctor paced restlessly up and down the room, watching the native with keen eyes. He had taken out a packet of herbs, and was busy mixing something. When he had done it, he got up and went over towards Leila. A light sprang into his face. His body began to sway backwards and forwards. He commenced a sort of silent prance, keeping time to the mad air — the strange monotonous strain that was beginning to make Jack feel sick and cold, as if already the snake had returned, and was creeping with its slow tortuous crawl towards him. He looked round nervously and shuddered, and the doctor, staring out into the night, shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"What foolery," he began; but he stopped suddenly. Good heavens! did he really hear the sound of running water? Surely something was rustling the bushes outside! He shivered and turned away from the darkness that had spread outside, to the interior, which was dimly lit by a single swinging lamp.

The native was still swaying and bending to and fro to the music, and Leila had suddenly awakened and was playing rapidly. Notes succeeded each other in quick succession. There were strange twists and runs, and many rapid movements, through which the air ran with incessant monotony.

Even Jack was motionless under the spell, and suddenly the doctor caught his breath with a gasp. A long, shining, crawling thing was gliding slowly along the matting, creeping silently across the line of light that fell from the lamp.

The doctor went back, step by step, as the thing advanced. The music went on, nearing the end. Leila was growing faint, and the notes began to drag. The snake lifted its swaying head and held it for a moment motionless. The next instant the native had stepped backward and pinioned it, and when he rose he held a sack that was shaking with the movements of the writhing thing within it.

The music stopped and Leila fell forwards. The native seized the potion he had prepared and forced it between her clenched teeth. For a moment she struggled. Then the cup was empty, and the colour began to reappear in her face.

Many days elapsed before Leila recovered from the shock, or cared to speak about her narrow escape from a terrible death. But no further promise was required to keep her from playing what Jack's instinct had warned her against: THE FORBIDDEN MELODY.

THE STORY OF AN OPERETTA BY C. H. PALMER

It was a bitterly cold morning. The snow lay thick upon the hill-side, and hung in heavy masses on the fir trees that crowned its summit. Indeed, so far as the eye could reach, hill and valley were draped in white, and the streams lay arrested in the grip of an iron frost. Above, the sombre grey clouds, hanging low over the landscape, were little relieved by the melancholy dawn which was slowly brightening in the east.

Notwithstanding the season was such that a houseless dog would have been entitled to pity, the little wood on the top of the hill was full of life. Men were crawling from under various improvised shelters and stamping about to put warmth into their chilled limbs. Others were busy lighting fires and preparing for breakfast. These men were clothed in no regular uniform, and might from their appearance have been a collection of bandits, but the orderly stacks of arms and the discipline that evidently prevailed showed that they belonged to a military force. They were, in fact, a regiment of irregulars co-operating with General Chanzy's ill-fated army of the Loire in its vain attempt to relieve the siege of Paris during the winter of 1870.

One of these Franc-tireurs [free-shooters], a tall, handsome man, muffled up to the eyes in a thick greatcoat, wriggled out eel-fashion from beneath a low, crazy tent, and rising to his feet shook himself like a great sheep dog. "Ugh!" he exclaimed, glancing round with a shudder, "this is an extraordinary position for a musician to be placed in. One has to fight for one's country, of course — that's understood, but one's country might return the compliment by looking a little more pleasant. La Belle France, indeed! Humph! However, it's all the fault of those pigs of Germans. Pierre, my son, is the coffee ready?"

The rough peasant he addressed turned round with a grin, and handed him a tin mug. "Monsieur the composer finds the weather unpleasant?" he asked.

"Diantre! what do you expect? I am not a wolf, my good friend." He drank his coffee with great gusto, and began munching the piece of dry bread which was the regulation breakfast among the Franc-tireurs. Although suffering considerable physical discomfort, he was cheerful enough in mind — indeed, an obstinate, cheerfulness was characteristic of Raymond Delorme. Still addressing Pierre, he continued, "And what, oh! son of the soil, is the programme for to-day? Are the Germans in the cast? They would make a welcome diversion. For my part, I am tired of straying over the country like a lost sheep. I want a change — a little fighting, for example."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth before a sharp report rang out from the foot of the hill, and was followed by another and another to right and left, rudely violating the stillness of the early morning. Pierre munched his crust quite undisturbed. "The Germans have dropped in to breakfast," he said, calmly.

Delorme, on the other hand, was greatly excited; his eyes sparkled, and he hastily detached his rifle from the stack. “At last, we shall have some fun,” he muttered; but even in his excitement he was mapping out in his mind the plan of a cantata to be called “War.”

Little flashes of flame came and went like will-o’-the-wisps in the thicket in front of them. The isolated voices of the rifles blended now into a hoarse, stuttering chorus. Strange insects in the shape of German bullets buzzed above their heads, shaking down handfuls of powdery snow from the overhanging branches. Outposts, breathless with running, dashed into the camp, all but two of their number, who had been bagged by the Germans and stayed behind. The note of a bugle, breathing a gay defiance, echoed through the wood, and the men stood to their arms. Most of them were anathematising the enemy for disturbing their meal, but there was no sign of fear. In a few moments every tree along the line of front sheltered its man, and the muzzles of the rifles peeped out from among the thick bushes.

“Partridge shooting commences,” said the grim Pierre, who stood next to Delorme. “You will see them rise directly. I hope Monsieur the composer is enjoying himself!”

A bullet tore the bark from the tree just above Delorme’s head. He dodged involuntarily, never having been under fire before. This irritated him. “Are we never going to return these gentlemen’s polite attentions?” he cried to Pierre.

“In good time. Our colonel arranges these little affairs. Perhaps he has not quite finished his breakfast yet.” Meanwhile the war cloud in front of them thickened. Under cover of the smoke the enemy deployed in force, and a hail-storm of lead sang through the trees. Then the wood spoke back with a savage growl of musketry, and Delorme became so absorbed in loading and firing his *chassepot* that he could think of nothing else — indeed, there was small room for thought amid the deafening din and blinding smoke. Presently, however, the firing in front slackened, and a puff of wind, which tore the fleecy smoke from the hill-side, revealed the Germans retreating. In his enthusiasm at this apparent victory, Delorme sprang from behind the sheltering tree and waved his cap. The next instant he was lying on his back, staining the snow with his blood. Pierre looked down upon him with a perfunctory pity. “Good-night to Monsieur the composer” he said; “it is regrettable that he could not see a little more fighting before he died. He seemed fond of it.”

Delorme, however, had not yet passed the Great Divide. He had been struck by two bullets. One a nearly spent ball had been arrested by the manuscript of an operetta which he carried beneath his tunic, and the other had lodged in the upper part of his thigh. These two leaden messengers had simply erased twenty-four hours from his life, and when he came back out of the void he found himself staring up at the ceiling of a little white-washed room, in the corner of which a grey-haired old lady was placidly knitting.

The wounded man endeavoured to grasp the facts which these surroundings indicated, and failing utterly, said in a weak voice to the old lady, "Madame will perhaps tell me if I am still in France — or in some other country — or world."

The old lady looked up sharply. "Ah! So Monsieur has come back to his senses. He will now take some soup. That is the order of the doctor. In a moment I will bring it, meanwhile I beg of Monsieur not to excite himself." She hobbled out of the room without another word, leaving Delorme to stare helplessly about him.

"Certainly I must be bewitched," he said to himself; "for if that is not a fairy god-mother, I don't know the species. But what was that sound — a fresh enchantment?"

A song, sung in a singularly pure and fresh young voice fell refreshingly on his ear and roused his dormant memory. "Surely," he thought, "I know that air. Yes, by Jove, it is from my own operetta — Marion's Love Song — and not yet published. Then how on earth?" He moved impatiently, and his wounded leg gave him a sharp twinge.

"My wound is real enough at least," he murmured, and fell again into a half-stupor. He was roused by a deliciously soft and cool touch upon his forehead, and opening his eyes languidly saw bending over him the anxious face of a young girl. "A pretty girl!" thought Delorme; "then it must be France I am in after all."

"Forgive me for disturbing you," said she; "but you really must not go off again just yet. Monsieur will now immediately open his mouth." Mechanically Delorme obeyed, and the dexterous damsel succeeded in making him swallow several mouthfuls of soup. Then she sat down and looked at him critically.

"That will do for the present," she said. "Yes, you are certainly better — much better. Hush! don't speak; it's bad for you. Quite so. You want to know where you are, I can see that by your eyes. Well, you were found half-smothered in snow on the top of the hill yonder. The snow had staunched your wounds, and you were still breathing. Then you were carried down to our little town of D—— and brought to the mayor's house. I have the honour to be the mayor's daughter, and at present your nurse. I am accustomed to be obeyed in office — all our family are. So you must be obedient and silent."

"Tyrant!" gasped Delorme; "I must speak. Who was singing that song just now, and where did she get it?" The girl flushed and hesitated, and then laughed.

"I suppose I must humour you by confessing," she said. "Well, the singer was I, and the song I found in a very disreputable-looking manuscript, which I am told you wore as a waistcoat — possibly it saved your life. It is a lovely song, nevertheless. That's all. If I have done wrong you must get well before you allow yourself the pleasure of being angry with me. Just now you are too weak."

Delorme smiled. “I am not angry. Quite otherwise. You have a beautiful voice and a fine ear, and I am glad you liked the song. I composed it myself.”

The mayor’s daughter looked at him with admiration. “It is a great good fortune for me to have met a composer,” she said simply, “especially a wounded one. But you must get well quickly and rescue from danger all those beautiful tunes you have got in your head.” Whether this adjuration had anything to do with the event is not known, but certainly from that time forward Raymond Delorme began to mend rapidly, and a mutual interest which only required a little opportunity to ripen into a warmer feeling sprang up between himself and Lisette Marteau, the daughter of his hostess.

Lisette was passionately fond of singing, and ambitious of appearing on the stage — an ambition which the slender means of her respected, but somewhat impecunious father, the mayor, rendered it difficult to gratify. Besides, who could think of singing and acting while hordes of Germans were defiling the country? So Lisette would say to herself, and then she would trip upstairs and have a long chat with Delorme about art and artistes and the management of the voice, excusing herself with the thought that the composer having nearly died for his country, was privileged to talk a little shop now and then.

One day, however, before Delorme had recovered sufficiently to leave his bed, he heard an unusual stir about the house. There was a great banging of doors, the noise of heavy footsteps, and the jingling of metal. Then quiet reigned for a space, but was followed by a deep humming like that of a Brobdignagian bee. Delorme, listening intently, managed at last to detect the tune of the *“Wacht am Rhein”* beneath the overlayers of sound. The irrepressible Teuton was on hand again!

Presently old Madame Marteau crept cautiously into his room and informed him with tears in her eyes that the town was full of Germans and that a Bavarian lieutenant of colossal proportions — “a monster of a man,” said the poor lady — had been quartered in their house. “Pray heaven!” she cried, “that this German giant, who was too big to live in an ordinary house and ought to dwell in an amphitheatre or a cathedral, would not discover Monsieur;” for the absurd objection of the “Pickle-helmets” to independent fighting on the part of French gentlemen was apt to lead to serious consequences. In other words, the brutal truth was that Franc-tireurs were liable to be shot when caught.

Later in the day Lisette brought further information. The German — Van Buren — had wanted to search the house, but desisted on being told that the only other occupant was her sick grandfather, who might die if disturbed. But he was suspicious, and his conduct gave her much anxiety. If she had known that Van Buren was at that moment carefully examining a *chassepot* rifle he had hunted out, she would have been more anxious still.

Delorme took the matter lightly. “Don’t worry, Lisette,” he said; “if I am to be shot again, I must be; but I wish they would let me finish my operetta first.”

Lisette sighed and said nothing, but she was determined to baffle the inquisitive Bavarian. Unfortunately, the Lieutenant took it into his head to fall in love with the handsome French girl, and being a thorough man in all he undertook, began to follow her about with the dogged persistency of art enamoured elephant. One afternoon Delorme was disturbed by a scuffle outside his room, and the gruff" voice of the German, exclaiming, “I must have a kiss, or I will disturb grandpapa.”

A minute later the door was thrown rudely open, and with a great clatter of spurs Van Buren entered. He glanced sharply at Delorme, who was sitting up in bed with a music-score in front of him. “So,” he said, “this is the aged invalid — the afflicted grandfather who must on no account be disturbed!”

“At your service, Lieutenant,” answered Delorme, calmly.

“Mademoiselle,” continued Van Buren, turning to Lisette, who was wringing her hands in great distress, “I would be alone for a few minutes with your elderly relative, who, it seems, is a musician, and Heaven knows what else besides.”

The young girl marched out with head erect and eyes flashing, and as soon as she reached her room, flung herself upon the couch and burst into tears.

Van Buren took a seat and gazed steadily at Delorme, who returned his look without flinching. “I found your chassepot down below,” said the German.

“Yes?”

“You are not an officer, or even a regular soldier,” continued Van Buren, glancing round the room, “for you have no accoutrements. You have been fighting and have been wounded. To save trouble you may as well admit that you are a Franc-tireur.”

“I see,” said Delorme, with a smile, “that it is vain to attempt to hide anything from your perspicacity — even a chassepot.”

“You will understand, then, that as soon as you are well enough it will be my duty to have you shot.”

“And your sense of duty is stimulated by the thought of Lisette Marteau.”

Van Buren flushed. He did not like being accused of jealousy, more especially as the accusation was true; and, to cover his confusion, lapsed into brutality, “I speak as a German officer whose duty it is to rid the country of such brigands. And now I reflect, I do not see why you should not be shot immediately; it would save you a lot of suspense and the trouble of getting well also. Three or four men can carry you out on a mattress and get the affair comfortably over before dinner.”

Somewhat to the astonishment of the German, Delorme burst into a laugh.

"I assure you it is no matter for laughter," said Van Buren, testily.

"I know it. But you are such a droll companion. There is one favour, however, which I would ask you; give me two days to finish my operetta."

Van Buren looked interested, for, like most of his nation, he was of a musical turn. "So you are a composer. Let me see the score; but I warn you if it is poor stuff you will be shot in three hours. Composing bad music is worse than being a Franc-tireur."

"It is not Wagner," said Delorme, handing him over the manuscript. "Yet I venture to think that it is not entirely despicable. But see for yourself."

Van Buren took the big roll of paper eagerly and glanced rapidly at portions of it, here and there pausing to hum a phrase of an air in his big bass voice. In ten minutes he had made up his mind, and, gathering the manuscript together with military precision, returned it to the composer. "You have a small gift of melody," he remarked, "and some idea of orchestration — not much. Therefore, you shall have two clear days to complete your operetta. What is more, I promise that after your death I will have it produced in Berlin."

"You overwhelm me with kindness; but I intend to leave it as a legacy to Lisette Marteau."

"That will suit me very well, for as Lisette's future husband, I shall take charge of herself and of all her possessions. Au revoir! my friend, and work hard at your music. It may encourage you to remember that Mozart composed his own requiem. But make no mistake about the shooting. I must do my duty, though it's unpleasant, of course."

"I understand all your motives and appreciate them. And now, as I have not much time to waste, you will excuse me if I ask to be relieved of your society for the next two days."

"You are an irritable fellow," said the Lieutenant, rising; "but as you have only forty-eight hours left to annoy people in I will humour you. Auf Wiedersehen!"

He clattered out of the room, leaving Delorme wavering between mirth and indignation, but he had no illusions as to Van Buren's intentions, and very soon a profound melancholy obtained possession of him. Then he took up his score again, and presently lost all thought of the dismal future, and even of Lisette, in the entrancing delights of composition. Never had his brain seemed more fertile, his imagination more prolific. He worked unceasingly until the light of the short winter day began to wane, and mother Marteau forcibly removed his ink and paper. Then he took the sleeping draught she gave him, and for some hours lapsed into insensibility.

When he awoke it was daylight again, and he resumed his work with feverish eagerness. So rapid had been his progress on the previous day that there was now not much left to do, and after three hours of absorbing labour he wrote “finis” at the foot of a page and leaned back on his pillow exhausted, but triumphant. He had put all he knew into the little piece. He had enriched it with gems of melody, with delicate *nuances* of orchestration. He was to die in a few hours, but he was almost indifferent to his fate: he could trust Lisette to see that his music got into proper hands, and then — Delorme smiled as he thought of the applause, the encores, the glory that were to be his — after death.

The loud menacing roll of a drum startled him from his reverie. With a vague hope in his heart, he dragged himself painfully to the window. The winding street was full of the light-blue uniforms and brass-mounted helmets of the Bavarian soldiery, and the morning sun sparkled along a line of bayonets. A bugle sounded far in front. Rank after rank the long column got into motion, and the rough cobbles echoed with the heavy tramp of marching feet. A reckless citizen at an opposite window flung up his night-cap and shouted “Vive la France,” but the Germans were too busy to be annoyed at trifles. Then Lisette dashed into Delorme’s room.

"Thank the bon Dieu, they are gone, and he has gone with them.”

“Vive la France,” gasped the composer, “but he — he may come back.”

“Ah! but *you* won’t, for we are going to hide you safely, mother and I.”

“I owe my life to you, Lisette,” said Delorme, taking her hand, “to you — and to the operetta.”

The eddy of war that had whirled Van Buren away from the little town did not bring him back again; but two years later, when even the frantic folly of the Commune was but a memory, and Delorme’s music and his wife’s singing were the talk of Paris, the composer and the Teuton met on the boulevards.

“Until last night,” observed Van Buren, when the pair were sitting over their coffee, “I always regretted my neglect of duty in not having you shot.”

Delorme laughed gaily. He was in excellent spirits. “I suppose it was a mistake from your point of view. But why did you change your mind last night?”

“Monsieur,” said the Lieutenant, lifting his hat politely, “I had the pleasure of listening to your operetta.”

CROCHETS AND QUAVERS – A MUSICAL FAIRY STORY BY Roden Bankes

Slowly two little hands went wearily up and down the keys of a schoolroom piano, whilst the white notes gave out their sounds in a series of jerks as each one was successively thumped upon by the fingers belonging to those tiny hands, a louder sound than usual coming when the thumb was twisted under in an indescribable manner to take its turn in the ascending scale of C major.

Would she never be told to stop, Millie wondered, as up and down the piano her poor little hands tumbled, so tired, oh, so tired, until finally two big spots dropped, the precursors of such a flood of tears, that Miss Marsh was startled out of the reverie in which she had been indulging, and took poor tired little Millie in her arms. Then, when the worst of the storm was over, the little girl told her teacher how "she hated music with all her heart."

"What, Millie! really and truly, when you sat for hours by mother's side listening to her playing. You didn't hate it then."

"Ah, but that was quite different; mother does play so beautifully!" answered Millie.

"Yes, dear; but she never could have done so if she had not begun exactly as you are doing now; and you know how anxiously she keeps asking how Millie is getting on with music."

Yes, Millie did indeed know that, and she was very anxious to please that dear mother out in India by getting on as well as possible, and so be able to play quite nicely when she came home next time. But it was so hard to learn all about those black and white notes, and her hands grew so tired when she tried to move them up and down the piano.

Miss Marsh was not unkind, and it struck her this morning that perhaps she had taxed those tiny hands a bit too much, so the half-hour ended in a talk, and she left Millie with a brighter face and a promise that she would try to learn all about crotchets [quarter notes] and quavers [eighth notes]. The afternoon was wet, nurse had gone home, and auntie was lying down with a headache, so Millie had the nursery all to herself. Putting her own little chair near the bright fire she opened her music book to try her best to learn the next day's lesson. She began: "The semibreve is equal in time to two minims, four crotchets, eight quavers," and then she leaned back in her chair to think it out, when such a wonderful thing happened.

The nursery was filled with the most beautiful music Millie had ever heard, and after listening for some time, she discovered the sound came from the floor, which was really made of the notes [had become the keyboard] of a huge cottage piano, the largest she had ever seen. Moving over the floor, some slowly, some quickly, were little black and white boys, and the child saw that it was these little fellows who made the sounds by stepping upon the different parts of the floor. Though some of them skipped about so merrily, there was no confusion.

Presently a beautiful lady appeared with as sweet a face as her own mother's. Her garments sparkled in true fairy fashion, and the wand in her hand was made of the brightest silver. "Well, little girl," she sang in a soft voice, "what do you think of my little soldiers?"

"Oh, they are wonderful!" cried Millie, excitedly. "Do you tell them what to do? I wondered how they knew."

"That was a review of my little troop. The drilling is another matter which, perhaps, you would like to see?"

"Yes, please," answered Millie.

"Where shall I put you to be quite out of the way, and at the same time in a place where you will be able to see everything? I know," the Queen answered after a pause. "You shall sit down on one of the candlesticks of my big piano, and then you will have a double advantage, as you will presently see." Millie felt herself lifted up on to a huge candlestick, where there was plenty of room for a comfortable seat, and where she felt quite secure, with her left hand holding the receptacle for the candle, while with the right she could easily hold the top of the piano, which was open, and so could look inside at the wires and hammers she had never seen before.

"Until the drill hour arrives I will tell you something about pianos which, perhaps, you will like to know. The name comes from the Italian words *piano*, meaning soft, and *forte*, loud. The inside is composed of strings — or, if you like it better, we will call them wires — and hammers, covered with felt, which hit these wires in such a way that the performer can make either loud or soft sounds as he likes, and this gave rise to the name. The first pianoforte seen in England was made by an English monk living in Rome, and, of course, since then, pianos have constantly been improved by English makers, who have also made the latest inventions. Now look inside, and I will touch the notes with my wand whilst you watch the hammers hit the wires."

This Millie enjoyed for several minutes until the Queen raised her wand and told her she would introduce her various kinds of soldiers to her. "First comes my most important one, the *Semibreve*, and I dub him Commander-in-Chief and Generalissimo of my Forces; he is so steady and dependable. Though perhaps not generally present in the middle of a review, he scarcely ever fails to come in at the end, and is certainly within call when he is wanted." Semibreve here bowed solemnly and stepped on the first line of the treble stave. He was decidedly fat and good tempered looking, and his voice was loud and sonorous. His dress was a suit of transparent armour, which came over his feet in such a funny way that Millie could not see he had any. "He is a very fine-looking old man," she whispered; "but I wonder he is the *most* valuable."

"Ah, my child, I thought you would tell me that. However, perhaps after seeing the others you will appreciate him as he deserves." Upon this the Semibreve made another profound bow and departed, and in his place came two fellows a little taller, dressed in the same kind of armour, but each holding a straight stick in his hand.

"These are two *Minims*, my Majors, Millie," said the Queen as they bowed, very respectfully it is true, but not quite so profoundly as the Semibreve. "These men help me a good deal, but it takes these two to do the work of one Semibreve." And first one stepped on to the pianoforte, the other taking his place as soon as the first one's breath was gone, which Millie soon perceived was exactly in half the time the Semibreve's voice sounded, so that these two just made up the time he was on the pianoforte. Then they, too, bowed and departed.

And now four little boys appeared, dressed altogether in black armour, and holding black sticks in their hands. "Oh, these are funny little blackamores!" exclaimed Millie. "And four of them, too."

"These are *Crotchets* — the Captains in my army," was the answer, as each gave a short, stiff bow, and each in turn stepped to his place; but their breath was shorter than the Minims even, and it took the four to equal the Semibreve in sound. "I like these," said Millie, after they had left. "They march along so briskly, like real little soldiers, though they are black.

But, oh, these have flags! I would rather be one of these and carry a flag." But these eight *Quavers*, as the Queen called them, seemed in a most decided hurry, and only just remembered in time that they must bow to her before they tried to make their music; and their steps were very quick and eager, as it took all the eight, one after another, to make the Semibreve's long-drawn sound, and they made their exit in the same hasty fashion.

Millie's eyes were glistening with delight, so the Queen said nothing, and presently, at a quick march indeed, came sixteen *Semiquavers*, in the same black armour, but distinguished from the Quavers by two flags on the top of their sticks, one below the other. The bow these gave could certainly not be called more than a friendly nod, and Millie was almost surprised that they were not called back to make a more respectful salute; but there was no time for this as they ran over the keys eagerly one after the other (and yet each had time to sound distinctly) in the time that the Semibreve and the rest had done their work.

As they all bustled off Millie thought no one could be quicker than the sixteen Semiquavers, when, to her surprise, she saw quite a small army of blacks coming towards them, and these had three flags, one below the other, on their sticks, and these were even in a greater hurry than the last. "But of course they are," Millie reflected, "for there are actually thirty-two of these. However will they all manage?"

Well, they lost no time to begin with, and merely gave the Queen a quick glance, as much as to say, "We are all here, you see," and then began their scamper over the keys, which made up the merriest jingle imaginable. Then with another hasty glance towards their Queen, the *Demisemiquavers* ran away, and Millie felt her treat was over, so she asked, rather mournfully, "If there were not any more?"

"Ah! I am glad to hear that question, because it shows me you are not like a little girl I heard this morning saying she hated music." Though Millie was hanging down her head and looking rather ashamed of herself, the Queen went on, "No more to be drilled to-day, but there is just a sort of reserve force I have for emergencies of sixty-four *Hemidemisemiquavers*, who are quicker than the last even, and have *four* flags, but it is seldom I need these. And there is one, too, who is slower and steadier than the Semibreve, but he has crutches, and is on sort of half-pay, so he only helps me in church music, and I name him *Breve*."

"Well, it must take a lot of drilling to make all those men with flags do their steps properly," remarked Millie, "and though I do like to see them run about so quickly, they are not so respectful as those who are slower."

"No; the different kinds of Quavers are a little difficult to bring into subjection, but once got fairly under and drilled regularly after, they need not be troublesome again. A hint worth remembering, my little friend." At a signal from their Queen, the army of Semibreves, Minims, Crotchets, and Quavers came forward and went through a series of maneuvers so wonderful that Millie was entranced as she watched the mimic army from her point of vantage. The harmony between the different kinds of soldiers was perfect, and their voices floated up to her very sweet and clear as they sang the following rhyme for her amusement.

"To obey the Queen and to give her pleasure, The Semibreve treads in a stately measure;
Whereas, if she wishes a quicker song, The Minims, in twos, just march along;
And the Crotchets, exactly the Minim's double, In fours they march and give little trouble.
But the Quavers are bent upon flags unfurling,
And eight of them hurry up twisting and turning;
While the sixteen others who come up after, Turn everything grave into mirth and laughter;
And with pennons three of the thirty-two, The Demisemiquavers have much to do."

The music died away, and the mimic soldiers with their Queen faded from sight, and the nursery became distinct once more; but the fire had burnt low in the grate, and evening was creeping on, whilst Millie rubbed her eyes and wondered what had happened. With the fairy scene fresh in her mind, she glanced at the music-book on her lap, exclaiming in delighted accents, "Joy of joys! I have learnt my lesson, and the relative value of Crotchets and Quavers. Won't Miss Marsh be glad!"

AN UNFORTUNATE SUCCESS BY Jan L. Lawson

Told by Miss Adeline Dacre, the celebrated singer, chiefly for the amusement of her adopted nieces — Minka and Adelaide. [Editor's note: All the people in the story, including those of the Dacre family, are fictional characters.]

You girls are always asking me to explain how it is that my name is the same as your mother's maiden name, and as you are never satisfied with any explanations, I am going to write down the whole story, such as it is, for you. Years, and years, and years ago, Adeline Dacre and I came to London with contralto voices in our throats, a few introductions in our hands, and a few five-pound notes in our pockets, to make our fortunes. But, alas! hopes are not hopsacks, nor for the matter of that are they money-bags, and the brilliant triumphs we had been nerving ourselves to undergo were long in coming.

True, I got some teaching in a suburban ladies' seminary, and Adeline obtained work in another establishment; but the great *furore*, the taking of musical London by storm, the consigning of all other contraltos to oblivion — well, these things were but a dream. One thing did come off regularly every week, and that was the presentation of our landlady's bill and the discussion, polite on both sides, but increasingly distant, as to our prospects of settling arrears and keeping up prompt payments.

One dreary November day I was sitting alone at dusk. My reverie as I sat waiting for Adeline was neither poetic nor tender. It was a long, sad dream, with £ s. d. at the top of it, and a balance on the wrong side at the other end.

However, sadness and worry and financial troubles were all banished when she came in. She tumbled upstairs, burst into our little sitting-room, all roses and white, with her sealskin hat falling back on to her glistening hair, and, before I could ask the cause of her excitement, she had dropped down on the hearthrug, and gripping both my hands cried, "O, Monkey, I believe I've got an engagement." My real name was Mary Baker, but Adeline always called me "Monkey." I am afraid it was my brown face and snub nose that first suggested the name to her mischievous mind. She went on telling me about the prospective engagement. Lady Louisa Framlingham had been very kind, and she had spoken to her brother-in-law, who had spoken to Mr. Boyce Jones, who had written down Miss Adeline Dacre's name and address, and promised to give the young singer an engagement should he have an opportunity of doing so.

"You're feverish, Adeline," I said, "how foolish of you to get so excited. You must not take cold, dear, if you are going to sing to Mr. Boyce Jones."

"I don't think it's cold, but I do feel queer, my back aches and my head aches."

"You had better go to bed, child, and I'll make you some hot tea and toast."

She rebelled, of course, but I persuaded her, and did my best to make a tempting meal for her out of our scanty stores. She would scarcely touch the food, however, and I went to bed, feeling rather anxious about her. All night she tossed and turned, and in the morning she was in a burning fever.

I watched her anxiously that day, and reduced my ready cash by getting her a little fruit and beef tea. In the evening her mind began to wander, and I sent for a doctor. He came, a mild-mannered kindly old man. He told me not to be alarmed, that there was no danger, but that her strength must be kept up.

"Get her to take plenty of nourishment," he said, and I thought I saw him glance dubiously at the little chiffonier. "I am afraid," he went on, smiling kindly, "that young ladies like you never take proper care of yourselves. Tea? Eh? And buns? That won't do, you know. Make her some good, strong beef-tea, or good soup; if your landlady can't make it, get it from the confectioner's. She'll be very weak when the delirium has gone."

I came back to our little room, and with a heavy heart sat down to put on my boots. I thought I would go to the ladies' school where Adeline taught, and beseech an advance of a few shillings. I had just one shilling left in my purse, and I knew Adeline had none.

And just then there came a loud double knock at the door, and a gentleman, whom I had never seen before, walked quickly into the room. I promptly recognized the face of my visitor. I had seen it in the illustrated papers more than once. It was that of Mr. Boyce Jones, the conductor of the Harmonic Concerts.

He spoke at once in a quick business-like way. "Miss Dacre?" he said, with a slight bow and smile, and went on at once; "I must introduce myself. My name is Boyce Jones. My friend, Colonel Framlingham, mentioned your name to me. Now I am in a little dilemma. Madame Querrelloso has unfortunately been taken ill with the influenza, and cannot sing to-night at the Harmonic Concert. Are you disengaged, and can you take her place and sing her songs? I can't alter the programme."

"What are the songs?"

"'Ah rendi mi,'" he said, pulling a programme out of his pocket, "and 'Nobil Signor;' now what do you say?" He stood in front of me, waiting for an answer; then, as I hesitated, he shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "You will have the usual fee to beginners," he said, grimly, "five guineas. Can you sing the songs?"

That decided me. "Yes," I said; "I can sing them."

"Will you sing them over now?"

I looked at the folding-doors, and thought of Adeline. "I've a friend lying very ill," I said, "but I will come to your house, or anywhere, and sing to you."

"Be at the Royal Academy at two o'clock sharp," he said; "now I must be off. Good morning, Miss Dacre." He bowed again with a bright kind smile, and was hurrying down the stairs before I had time to think. When he had gone I sat down to collect my thoughts. Five guineas! That was my first thought, soup and champagne, and the landlady paid, and Adeline well again; ah! but poor Adeline would be so disappointed. It was her engagement; but as she could not fulfill it, was I wrong in taking her place?

At two I went to the Academy and sang the two airs to Mr. Boyce Jones. He was perfectly satisfied with my performance. At the end of the rehearsal he said, thinking to please me, "I've had a slip printed and put in the programme, announcing your name, Miss Dacre. I don't think you need be nervous at all, and I wish you a great success," he added, shaking me kindly by the hand. "Don't be afraid of the Queen. Her Majesty is the kindest of critics."

When I got home I called up the landlady. I told her that I was engaged to sing that evening before the Queen, and that my fee would enable me to settle her account. Upon hearing this she became amiability itself; she gladly consented to lend me two shillings to pay my cab, promised to take great care of Miss Dacre, and finally sent out, at her own expense, for a mutton chop and some stout, to make me an early dinner. I gave her strict orders that she was not to tell Adeline that I was going out.

I was quaking with nervousness as I entered the artists' room. Mr. Boyce Jones came forward and shook hands with me, saying something kind and encouraging. Then he introduced me to Madame ——, the great soprano. Madame was affable, and encouraged me not to be nervous by detailing that she fainted dead away just before her first appearance in Milan. The overture, and the quartette, and a bass solo were over, and Mr. Boyce Jones looked at me. I rose and went towards the door; my feet felt like ice, and my hands were like lumps of live coal. My head was a blank. Mr. Boyce Jones took my hand, wisely keeping silence; if he had said, "Cheer up!" I think I should have emulated Madame's example, and fainted away.

I went up five steps, and knew I was before a great audience. I dared not look up, but I looked at Mr. Boyce Jones as he stepped into the conductor's desk. He gave me a kind smile, and a nice, familiar little nod. Then the orchestra began, and I tried resolutely to think of my song; then I thought of Adeline and the five pounds, and then suddenly my brain cleared and I began my song. Before I had got half way through I knew that I was singing well, my very best, yet when I had done, I had one moment of agony and doubt, then the applause burst out, and I knew I had made a success.

Over and over again I bowed my thanks, all the artists were gathered round the steps, clapping their hands. Mr. Boyce Jones beamed on me, and Madame gave me a kiss, and insisted on my accepting the second bouquet which had just been brought for her. I was pleased, I was happy, there seemed nothing unpleasant to be thought of. Mr. Boyce Jones came up to me and introduced two gentlemen, Mr. Ward and Mr. Thomson. They congratulated me, and asked me questions about my master and my birthplace. They both said that they hoped to hear me sing very often that season. Afterwards Mr. Boyce Jones told me that they were eminent critics.

I got a warm reception when I went up to sing my second song. I was not so frightened, and dared to look at the audience more. I saw some ladies and gentlemen sitting in front with a little table before them, and knew they were the royal party.

I was encored, and Mr. Jones bade me sing again, and when I came down to the artists' room at last, every one present shook hands with me and poured out their honest congratulations. Mr. Boyce Jones helped me on with my cloak, and then put a packet into my hand. "Good night, Miss Dacre, good night, and thank you. 1 have been so pleased. You have made a great success. You will sing for us again, I hope. Oh! and, Miss Dacre, I have ventured to make a little alteration in our terms. Here is your cab. Good night." I thanked him, and when I was in the cab I opened the packet and blessed his kind heart, for there, beside the cheque for five guineas, were five golden sovereigns and two fat half-crowns.

Now for the soup and the champagne. But where was I to get them? All the shops were shut. I stopped the cab, and consulted the driver. He was the good old-fashioned cabman, with seven or eight little capes and a very red face and a shiny hat. I told him I wanted some soup, and he suggested that the parish soup-kitchens were closed. I said that I didn't want parish soup; I wanted good soup, and he must look out for a coffee-house or some such place. "You must go to some hotel," I said at last, in desperation. "I must take some soup home; it's for a lady who is very ill, and she may die if I don't get it."

He mounted in front again, and we rumbled off. Presently he got down again, and coming to the window, said, "Look here, miss, there's a place were I often drives young ladies and gents to — where they has their suppers after the theatre, and I know they keeps lots of soup there; I see a ticket in the window with soups and ices on it."

"Go there, then," said I, and we went. The place looked like a restaurant; there were double swinging glass doors, and further in there were green-baize doors, with an oval of glass in the top of each. When they opened to let some gentlemen out, I could see the lights and the flash of damask and cutlery.

"You go in," I said to my Jehu, "and say that I want a basin of their best soup. Never mind the price." He obeyed. I saw his capes pass through the glass doors and then through the baize. But he quickly reappeared, and behind him a gesticulating, swearing, screaming French waiter.

"'Taint any use for me to speak to 'em, miss. They're froggies; can't understand English." I was determined to take back the soup for Adeline; besides, I was hungry myself by this time. I got out of the cab and passed through the glass doors. The sound of many voices, of laughter, and of clattering crockery came through the baize doors. I heard a French voice giving orders for supper; then I pushed open the doors and stood in the room, green silk, pink roses, and all.

All down each side were tables at which gay parties appeared to be enjoying their supper. I was not made any happier by hearing my name, at least my adopted name, pronounced in a tone of surprise, and, turning, I saw Mr. Boyce Jones with Mr. Ward and Mr. Thomson sitting at a table near the door.

"Miss Dacre!" It was Mr. Boyce Jones who spoke. "You here! alone. Have you come to meet anybody?"

"No, I want some soup."

"Sit down here, Miss Dacre," said Mr. Ward. "I'll get you some soup."

"You don't understand," I said, turning piteously to Mr. Boyce Jones for help; "*you* know. It's for my friend. It's Adeline — at home — she is ill and she must have soup, and I hadn't any money till I got yours — and ——"

"All right," said he, very promptly. "I think I understand. You want to take some soup home to your friend?" I nodded, tears were standing in my eyes, and if I had spoken I should have burst out crying.

"Sit down here one minute; no, you had better go to your cab. Ward, take Miss Dacre out, while I see if I can get what she wants." Mr. Ward offered me his arm and I thankfully got into my cab, while Mr. Boyce Jones went towards the bar. Ah! you girls have been to restaurants with your father often, but in those days things were very different, and I was bitterly mortified at having been seen in such a place.

I think Mr. Ward meant to console me. As he stood by the cab door he asked me if it was my sister who was ill.

"No," I said, half crying, "she isn't my sister, she's Adeline Dacre, my friend, and she's very ill."

"Adeline Dacre," said Mr. Ward, very much puzzled, "but your name is Adeline Dacre, isn't it?"

"Yes, no, at least sometimes. Oh I here's Mr. Jones. Oh! how kind."

Mr. Jones appeared with two waiters bearing curious-looking parcels. "It's all right, Miss Dacre, I've got you some soup and some game pie and some champagne. Will that do? Never mind that," as I held out my purse. "I've given your address, and you can pay for the things when the man calls for the dishes. I hope your friend will be better soon. Good-night." And the kind-hearted fellow shut the cab door and turned away.

But my cabman was carefully adjusting his rug, and before he jerked the vehicle away towards home, I heard Mr. Ward say, with a loud laugh, "Her friend, indeed! Why, the little minx wanted some supper for herself."

When I got home I slipped off my dress and wreath before I went into Adeline's room. She was quieter and cooler. I gave her wine and soup, and presently saw her fall into a quiet sleep. In the morning she was refreshed and much better. I told her that I had been able to earn some money and that we were on even terms with the landlady. So, worry being removed, she spent two more days in bed enjoying the quiet and rest and the good things I was able to give her.

On the third day, which was Saturday, she begged the doctor to let her get up and lie on the sofa. On her promising to be good and to avoid draughts and chills, permission was given, and when I went out about mid-day she was snugly tucked up by a big fire reading a novel. I lingered chatting, after I had my bonnet and shawl on (we wore shawls in those days), and I remember thinking how childish and pretty she looked in her soft warm "house dress," as we used to call them, with her pretty golden hair twisted into a Hebe-like knot at the back of her head. She looked up as I said, "Good-bye, my chicken, keep warm," and blew me a kiss for answer.

I was out some three hours, teaching. When I came back I met Mr. Boyce Jones at the corner of our street. He greeted me pleasantly and said he was just going to call on me, to ask me to sign an agreement for a series of concerts. Oh, what a coward I felt, for now I knew the explanation must come. I had never intended to keep the Harmonic Concert a secret from Adeline, but the doctor warned me strongly not to excite her in any way. I knew that I should have to confess my deception to Mr. Boyce Jones, but how was I to manage it? I behaved, as usual, with reckless impetuosity. "Won't you come in then, and have a cup of tea. Mr. Jones, I have a confession to make to you."

"I'll come in with pleasure," said he, smiling, "but I can guess your confession."

"Can you?"

"Yes, of course, you wanted the game pie and champagne for yourself, and your sick friend was a fiction. Come, now, Miss Dacre, don't bother about that; you are not the first good artist who has been short of cash and come to the verge of hunger."

We were on our doorstep. What he intended for good-natured banter stung me like an insult. I rang, and before we were admitted I had just time to turn and say majestically, "Mr. Boyce Jones, you are mistaken."

Then the slovenly housemaid opened the door and we passed in. In our parlour overhead there was an ominous sound of pacing feet, and I walked upstairs with a chill at my heart. I opened the door. The floor and table were strewn with newspapers, and among them, erect and angry, stood Adeline.

"You have come back," were her first words; "you have dared to come back. *What is this?*" pointing to a daily paper, "what is this? Do you dare to face the evidence of your own treachery. Listen! What does this mean ? 'The musical world is the richer by the appearance of Miss Adeline Dacre. Her glorious voice and expressive — ah, bah!' Now this, 'Mr. Boyce Jones is to be congratulated on obtaining the services of so brilliant a *débutante*.' And here again ——"

"Adeline," I said, "this is Mr. Boyce Jones."

She took no notice, of my interruption, but went on. "You, who called yourself my friend, you have robbed me, deceived me, you have ruined me. You stole my name, you stole my engagement, and I daresay you stole my money." Then, she turned towards Mr. Boyce Jones. "So *she* told you *she* was Adeline Dacre, and you engaged *her*! That creature Adeline Dacre! That creature to go and sing before the Queen. Why, that is Monkey Baker!" The concentrated indignation and scorn she put into the last words as she pointed her finger at poor me were quite alarming.

Mr. Boyce Jones tried to make peace. "I quite understand the mistake," he said suavely. "I called here and saw Miss Baker, I asked her to sing, and she accepted. I don't speak very distinctly when I am in a hurry, and Miss Baker thought I said Baker not Dacre. The two names are very much alike."

Adeline made an impatient exclamation, but I began to speak, and they listened. I spoke slowly for there was an uncomfortable lump in my throat.

"No," I said, "I did not mistake the names, and I won't pretend that I did. I knew that it was Adeline Dacre who had been recommended to you by the Framlinghams, but when you came she was ill in bed. I had only a shilling left. I did not want to take her name, but I was afraid you would not engage me. When you said it was five guineas I thought of her, and the soup and wine the doctor said she was to have, and I thought I could earn the money for her."

Adeline tried to speak but I motioned her to silence. "Here," I said opening my desk, "is your cheque for five guineas, I have not changed it as I could not sign your name, and I intended to confess to you both what I had done. I meant you no harm, Adeline; I thought that I was only going to sing as a substitute. I am very sorry I deceived Mr. Jones about my name, and I am very, very sorry that I — that I made a success."

I could say no more. Mr. Jones began to speak, and I heard his voice when I had gone into our bedroom and shut the door. I don't know what he said, but I know that his brilliant *débutante* buried her face in her pillow and wept.

I can't tell you, girls, what Mr. Boyce Jones said to Adeline that afternoon, you must ask your mother. I daresay she remembers; anyhow, when I came into the room later she spoke quietly, and said she was sorry she had been so angry. She told me that Mr. Jones had promised her an engagement, and that he advised her to take the name of Angela Dacre, and we might pass as sisters. I replied that I wished her every success, but that I, on my part, had firmly made up my mind never to sing another note in public as long as I lived. I intended to make a living by teaching.

Mr. Boyce Jones did give Adeline, or rather Angela, an engagement, and, indeed, he took the most remarkable interest in her. He insisted on thoroughly coaching her himself in every song she sang, and she was always going to rehearse something with him, or else he was teaching her at our own rooms. I told him of my decision and he tried to persuade me against it. However, finding me firm, he very kindly got me a great deal of teaching, so that for the next few months I was very busy and constantly out.

One afternoon in March I came in from my work, and there very cosy by the fire sat Mr. Boyce Jones, and on the floor beside him, with her fair head leaning very comfortably on his arm, was Miss Angela Dacre. She jumped up and came to kiss me, saying as she did so, "Monkey, dear old Monkey, you can keep my rubbishy old name, dear, and you are to sing next Wednesday at the Harmonic. You made the name, dear, and you are to keep it."

I looked at Mr. Boyce Jones, who had risen and was holding out his hand to me. "It's true, Miss Dacre, we have settled the question of names; you are to keep Angela's for she has promised to share mine."

So that's the whole story, girls, except that when 1 was to stand godmother to you, Minka, your mother would not call you Adeline, but insisted on Minka, as, she said, it was the nearest human name to my old name of "Monkey."

THE DEAFNESS OF CHRISTINA BY C. H. Palmer

Christina Phillipson arose one May morning with a keen sense of disaster upon her. She drew the blind back. The spring sunshine flooded the little suburban street in which she lived. Quiet and peaceful enough it looked, so much so that a passing milkman, wonderful to relate, refrained from disturbing it with his yells and clatter. At least Christina did not hear him.

Slowly she proceeded to dress, and still present with her was a sense of apprehension and anxiety. She did not feel very well either, and there was a faint buzzing at the back of her head. Her movements she fancied were singularly noiseless that morning, or else she was very much abstracted. She did not even remember to have heard the plash of the water as it fell from the jug into the basin. She wondered for a second or two with an idle half-formed wonder, and then passed down in softly-falling felt slippers to her little sitting-room. There was a conspiracy of silence abroad, it seemed, for even the stairs of the ill-built house forgot for once to creak.

Christina rang the bell for breakfast, and rang twice for she did not catch the first faint tinkle. The servant who brought in the tray looked cross, and Christina noticed that she did not respond to her "good morning." With a faint sigh over the capriciousness of servants, Christina poured herself out some tea. There was a queer feeling upon her, such a feeling as might well be experienced by one under a spell or suffering from that impairment of consciousness which attends the bewitched. And ever at the very back of her head there went on a busy ceaseless buzzing. "What a depressed fool I am," she thought to herself and laughed aloud. And her laugh seemed to her to sound as if it came from her brain. "Really," reflected Christina again, "I never remember to have felt so odd in my life before. I will play a little to set my nerves in order."

She moved towards the pretty little piano that stood in the corner of the room, but stopped with her hand on the lid, seized by a sudden and unaccountable fear. With a quick, resolute movement she flung the lid back and struck a full chord with both hands on the keyboard. There was no sound, and although she struck again and again the dreadful silence of the room remained unbroken. Then Christina recognized that she had become stone deaf, and sat down with a scared face to try and realise what it meant for her.

It meant a good deal — in fact, so much that she considered seriously whether under the altered conditions it would be worth while to continue living. Music had been to her the central fact of life around which everything else in her world revolved. Now the centre had been torn away, chaos was come again.

Never to hear music more! Harmony, melody, rhythm, the exquisite cadence of the human voice, the witchery of the orchestra, the divine solemnity of the organ, even the sounds of nature — the whisper of the wind, the waves beating on the shore — all to be henceforward but a fantastic mockery. She could not bear to think of it. Her very soul seemed to be stifled.

Then came a glimmer of hope. The sentence might not be final. She would consult a specialist at once. By chance she had heard of such an one. Gathering together her small stock of ready money she dressed hastily and set forth. The streets as she passed through them were a nightmare. Carts, carriages, cabs passed without a sound, a horrible noiselessness had fallen upon the noisy thoroughfares. The failure of one slight link in the mechanism of sense had in a moment reduced the world to a dumb show. Some one in the omnibus spoke to Christina, and she flushed painfully and touched her ear.

She got very little consolation from the expert who examined her, in exchange for the two guineas she paid him. He gave her to understand that there was some affection of the auditory nerve. The trouble might perhaps be localized as a result of an operation. Whether the operation would be successful was uncertain, but it was bound to be dangerous and expensive. Christina possessed the profound horror of physical pain, which so often, and not quite worthily, distinguishes the artistic temperament. She shrank from having this doubtful experiment practised upon herself, and left the gloomy house in Harley Street as despairing a damsel as could be found at that particular moment in the County of London — which is saying much.

During the next few days of hopeless misery, Christina suffered incredibly. The piano seemed to mock her; the few friends who called tortured her almost to distraction by shaking their heads and writing condolences on scraps of paper, or by using the deaf and dumb alphabet to convey bald platitudes concerning resignation. In the extremity of her despair poor Christina determined to isolate her life from all the ties that had grown up around it. She felt that she would be more comfortable in a country cottage than in London. There at least she need not be mocked and distressed by having her calamity brought home to her at every turn.

It was not difficult for her to so order her affairs as to attain the solitude she desired. A small annuity sufficed for the life she intended to lead, and death had freed her from all obligations of relationship. But there was one tie which it hurt her to break. This was nothing less than a marriage engagement of a year’s standing with a young engineer, who was at that time seeking in South Africa the means to make matrimony feasible.

For herself, Christina felt that, stricken as she was, marriage was impossible. In a farewell letter to her engineer she explained her views on this point and bade him forget her as soon as he conveniently could. David Fraser received that letter while, stretched out with fever in a miserable mining camp. It very nearly completed the work which the fever had well begun, but that was a chance that had not suggested itself to Christina.

Having so far met, as she thought, the exigencies of the situation, Christina moved herself and her belongings to a small cottage in Devonshire, lying a mile or two out of Plymouth, and prepared, in company with an old lady from whom she rented the rooms, to face the task of living out the rest of her life.

For a while the beautiful aspect of the country, then reddening under the first flush of autumn, soothed and consoled her, but presently a chance meeting with an old fellow student of music revived again in all its intensity the trouble of the imprisoned sense, and once more Christina lapsed into a dull despair. The sympathetic, kindly Vicar of the place, himself an accomplished amateur musician and as such keenly appreciative of the calamity that had befallen Christina, sought her out. By this time she had acquired the pitiful skill of reading words by the motions of the lips.

"You must be brave," she could perceive he was saying to her, "and resigned."

"Would you be?" she asked.

"I should try," he answered, sticking to his guns, "and with help, perhaps succeed."

Christina smiled and shook her head.

"You are not the only, one, you know," continued the Vicar, disconcerted and blundering in his effort at consolation; "there have been others — Beethoven."

"Beethoven!" broke in the girl, hotly; "I have been reading about him lately, and here is what he said himself, 'What a humiliation when anyone standing beside me could hear at a distance a flute that I could not hear, or anyone heard a shepherd singing and I could not distinguish a sound! Such circumstances brought me to the brink of despair, and had well nigh made me put an end to my life — nothing but my art held my hand.' That is how Beethoven felt about it, and he *had* his art you see — the consolation of composition. But what have I? A little mechanical skill and a passionate love for music — now become a curse to me. I tell you candidly, Vicar, that it is sheer cowardice that prevents me from taking my life."

The Vicar tried to look shocked, but only partially succeeded. "It's very sad," he said, simply, "but patience is the only weapon we poor mortals have against fate — that and time."

She spoke with great bitterness. “And deadly dreary weapons they are! But by all means let us console ourselves with our own imperfections — the impossibility of retaining a sharp edge to our impressions. In time, perhaps, I may become dull enough to forget that there is such a thing as music — or heaven. Possibly with care I may make even further progress towards vegetation.”

The good clergyman not being able to make anything of her mood beat a retreat. He was not a man, however, to sit down easily under a rebuff. Christina Phillipson interested him personally, and the problem of her life interested him still more. He determined, if possible, to find some tolerable solution of that problem. It was under the pressure of his urgent advice that the girl resumed her pianoforte practice. The movements of her fingers over the keyboard helped, she found, to reproduce the score in her mind, and she took to playing for hours at a stretch, until the old Devonshire dame who kept the house was almost fain to wish she were deaf too.

But in spite of this solace and in spite of the helpful Vicar and his admirable wife, and all the soothing influences of rural life, Christina became more and more restless and unhappy, and when the landscape grew white under a hard winter and the blue summer seas changed to an iron-grey, she fell into so despondent a state that her friends at the parsonage became seriously concerned for her.

And then an event happened which once more changed the course of her life. Returning one afternoon from a brisk walk which had lent a touch of colour to her pale cheeks, she was met at the doorway by her old duenna.

“There’s a visitor to see you, Miss,” she remarked, with a half-smile.

Wondering a little as to the identity of this afternoon caller, Christina passed into her little room. A man sat with his arm resting on the table and his head bent. His back was turned towards her, but she realised in an instant that here was her lover returned.

“David!” she exclaimed, involuntarily.

David Fraser started to his feet. “I have found you,” he cried, and held out his hands.

But the girl did not immediately respond, and for a moment or two they regarded each other with mutual pity. Fraser was wasted by sickness, and the seal of a great sorrow had left its mark upon Christina. She had borne her trouble dry-eyed up till then, but the sympathy expressed in her lover’s face was too much for her, and she broke into a flood of tears.

David Fraser was not the man to neglect his opportunity. He took her hand in his. “Christina,” he said “we want each other, you and I. Your deafness matters nothing. My life has been shaken to its foundations. I need your help to strengthen it.”

He struck the right note, not the note of pity, but that of appeal. Christina watched the words form on his lips and hope arose in her heart.

"Are you sure you want me?" she asked, and added hastily, "but for both our sakes, for Heaven's sake, do not say 'yes' out of compassion."

And Fraser made answer in the immemorial fashion.

* *

Eighteen months had passed and Christina sat with her first-born child in her arms. Languidly she watched the June roses nodding at the open window, and then her eyes fell upon the sleeping child. In a moment the old trouble swept over her like a flood.

"My God!" she cried in despair, "never to hear his voice, never! never!"

And then faintly, feebly, far away, it seemed in some dim court of her brain, there arose a fine thread of sound.

Christina listened with parted lips and eyes dilated — listened with her whole soul. She rose to her feet, her face turned towards the child, which moved restlessly in its sleep. The trembling hope in her breast grew firmer. Her husband entered the room. "David! David!" she whispered, holding the child towards him, "I hear the cry of our child."

And so Christina passed once more into the world of sound.

THE GENIUS OF THE FAMILY BY Arnold Strong

"Ah! yes, he can play — my Son — he has the touch, the genius, the spirit. See how he reads the score! how quick his little fingers skip among the big keys! Softly! my Child, softly! — with expression. Brava! So is good, La! la! la! la! Time, Sweetheart, time! Yes, he will be great one day, he will make famous the name of Rosenbaum. Ha! the lovely scherzo! Well done, little fairy fingers! It is settled, my Woman; Hans shall be a musician. He shell go to Munich, to Vienna, and to other places, and I, his poor old Father, will sell dinners and ice-creams and pay his expenses. One day he will become a great master, a virtuoso, and then we need no more sell dinners and lemonade, and we can go to concerts and operas every day."

It was a Sunday morning, and the Restaurant Rosenbaum, situated in a savoury street off Soho, was closed for a time. In the gaudily furnished sitting-room above, the proprietor, a great good-natured Austrian, was resting his capacious person in a wicker arm-chair. A deep content filled his soul. Through the smoke spirals that rose from his china pipe he caught glimpses of his plump and placid English wife seated opposite him. But his eyes were constantly turning in almost tearful admiration to the corner where his eight-year-old son, perched on a counter stool, was playing the piano with a deftness and facility indicating almost Mozartian precocity.

Without finishing the piece, the child suddenly ceased playing, and turned his dark Bohemian face with its blue English eyes towards his father. Rosenbaum held up a big piece of chocolate. "Play on, you wicked little wonder-child," he said, "play more, and I give you this." But he had no time to give it, for ere he could complete the sentence his impish son had darted across and snatched the sweetmeat from his hand.

"Naughty Hans," said his mother, looking grave, "come here to me, and I will box both your ears for you." But Hans preferred to eat chocolate behind his father's back, and said so. "It is his genius," said the fond father, laughing, "he is so full of it. Only stupid boys are quite good always. Eat your chocolate, demon of a child, and keep your ears out of danger."

The wife shook her head, however, and privately determined that Hans should not escape his ear-boxing, while Rosenbaum, leaning back in his chair, began to calculate the number of dinners and ice-creams it would be necessary to sell in order to support a musical student at Munich or Vienna. When, presently, he assisted Gottlieb, the head and only waiter, to take down the shutters for the afternoon's trade, he said to that trusty servitor, "Gottlieb, my faithful one, we must work hard for ten — twelve — years, and get much money so that we can make a good musician of my wonderful Hans."

Gottlieb, who was as proud of the boy as if he had been his own son, set down a shutter in order to be at liberty to clap his hands. "Good! good! master," he cried. "Ha! how I will work for the dear Hans;" he paused, and added thoughtfully, "we might give a little less ice-cream for twopence."

The resolution made on that Sunday afternoon was carried out to the letter. The two worthies worked hard and well in the Restaurant Rosenbaum. The business increased, additional premises were taken, and money began to accumulate in the bank for the education of the gifted Hans. Meanwhile, that young gentleman rewarded his devotees by developing what promised to be a wonderful voice, but his mother was not so pleased to notice that the fantastic strain in his character developed also. Rosenbaum, however, was blind to everything but the wonderful talent displayed by his offspring. The prizes the boy took at the music school more than compensated, in his mind, for the scrapes he got into at home. To all the complaints of his wife on the subject, Rosenbaum had the one stock answer, that it was genius, and that you could no more have genius without eccentricity than you could have ice-creams without ice.

And so time went on, and Mrs. Rosenbaum died, thus removing the one check on the eccentricity of genius, and Rosenbaum himself grew bald, and Gottlieb grew rotund, and Hans became tall and handsome and extremely picturesque, and withal a most excellent musician. And when the lad reached the age of seventeen, and the time was ripe for the finishing continental touches to be administered to his education, poor old Rosenbaum bade farewell to him on the railway platform with tears in his eyes, and would have fallen on his son's neck and wept upon his shoulder but for the horrid repressive manners of the English. His son set him a good example of self-control, for he was perfectly unconcerned and smoked a cigarette with inimitable aplomb.

"You will work, Hans, will you not?" said the grief-stricken parent. "You will have the best masters and spare no expense."

"You may reckon on that, Dad," replied his son with a meaning smile, "you may quite count on it. But the train is just moving. Bye! bye! Governor, and don't neglect the business." He sprang laughing into the carriage, and Rosenbaum still heard his light laughter as the train rolled out of the station.

He stared with misty, wistful eyes after the dwindling carriages, and shook his head slowly. "It is all his genius," he said to himself, "yes, I know that, I know it well; but — genius is rather hard sometimes." Still, when he got back to the restaurant his mind had again reverted to the future triumphs that awaited the House of Rosenbaum in the person of Hans the Magnificent, and he said to Gottlieb, "Dear old one, we must work harder than ever, for I think it will cost much money to keep our Hans in Vienna."

And Gottlieb, fired with a noble enthusiasm, wiped down six marble-topped tables in succession without stopping. Little did either of them anticipate at that moment that seven long years were to elapse before they were to set eyes on Hans again.

So it fell out, however. The lad wrote frequently at first, and always added a request for money. Money for fees, for professors, for journeys, for personal expenses. He was never at a loss for an excuse, and seeing that his requests were unhesitatingly complied with he gradually stretched his demands so far beyond the limits of the reasonable into the region of pure extravagance, that Rosenbaum was forced at last, much against the grain, to pin him resolutely down to his allowance. Thereupon Hans sulked, and for a time no letters arrived bearing the welcome post-mark of Vienna. Then came one or two containing the old sordid cry for more money, which being refused, the correspondence on the side of Hans ceased altogether, and presently even his own letters came back to the sorrowing Rosenbaum. The lad had quitted Vienna without leaving a trace as to his whereabouts.

Even the most doting parent could scarcely attribute ingratitude so vile to the eccentricity of genius. Rosenbaum was cut to the soul, and when privileged habitués of the restaurant asked him how the genius of the family was getting on, he would shake his head and shout savagely down the pipe communicating with the cook.

Then came a period of intense though sorrowful triumph. The German correspondent of an English newspaper came out with a glowing account of a new tenor who had taken the cognoscenti of Dresden by storm. With feverish eagerness the restaurant proprietor searched down the column for the name. Yes! yes! there was no mistake: it was Hans Rosenbaum, his own son, who was now recognized as a mighty singer and a real genius — though an ungrateful one.

Rosenbaum sat down and wiped his face with his apron. “Gottlieb,” he said, huskily, “pour out two glasses of wine.” The waiter hastened to do so, looking at his master the while with the eye of an expectant terrier.

“And now, my Gottlieb,” cried the proprietor, holding his glass aloft with unsteady fingers, “drink! drink! to our little Hans. He has come, Gottlieb, he has arrived. He has sung to those peoples of Dresden, and they have gone mad with joy. He is great, he is a genius, he has — what they say here? — took the cake — he will draw two, three hundred pound a week. Yes, and all the time he is my little Hans whose fingers I used to watch when he play the piano. Drink! Gottlieb, to our Hans, our fine beautiful Hans — though he has forgot his poor old Father.”

Two days afterwards there was dispatched from the Restaurant Rosenbaum to the great singer at Dresden a humble letter of congratulation. It was a combined effort on the part of Rosenbaum and Gottlieb, and it had taken hours to produce. Its tone of child-like triumph, the yearning deferential affection that ran through every line of it, might have moved even a newspaper reporter, but it completely failed to touch the heart of the Dresden singer. His reply — when it came to hand, which did not happen until after a leisurely interval — was quite amazingly unfilial.

Hans regretted that he had not chosen another name to sing under. He gave it as his opinion that in the matter of supplies his father had not come up to the standard which ought to regulate the notions of well conducted parents. This shortcoming rendered it easier for the writer to suggest that they should consign to oblivion a relationship which had now become mutually embarrassing. He promised, however, to dine once, strictly incognito, at the restaurant whenever he passed through London.

It was late in the evening when Rosenbaum received this letter. He read it through with feverish haste. Then he sat down, threw his apron over his head, and remained quite passive for at least ten minutes. Gottlieb picked up the letter which had fallen from his hand, and when he had read it gave vent to a strong South German imprecation, and went through a most expressive pantomime intended to represent the scientific pulling of the writer's nose. Presently, Rosenbaum looked up, and there was something in his face that Gottlieb had never seen there before.

"Put the shutters up, Gottlieb," he said, "it is all over now. I have headache and will go to bed." He trudged wearily upstairs carrying the letter in his hand. Left alone, Gottlieb danced round a marble-topped table with a knife in his fist, then suddenly threw down the weapon and began to snivel. "The wicked Hans!" he cried, "the horrible demon-child. He break the poor old man's heart."

Heart-broken or not, Rosenbaum continued to exist, but his brow was always clouded, he took no delight in his restaurant or in anything else; and Gottlieb, the sunniest-hearted waiter in all London, often felt a lump rise in his throat when he contemplated the woebegone aspect of his master.

For a while the papers were full of eulogies of the new tenor, and then there came a sudden and unaccountable silence. Rosenbaum, who read secretly every critique he could find about his son, wondered dully what could have happened. There were rumours of dissipation, of a neglect to fulfill engagements, but the only definite fact ascertainable was that a rising star in the operatic firmament had suffered a complete and mysterious eclipse.

Then followed a dull time in the Restaurant Rosenbaum. The zest had departed from the life of the proprietor, and the ring of hair which fringed the bald spot on his head grew greyer and greyer. Even Gottlieb had small comfort in those dark days, and so the time dragged wearily on until the year drew towards an end and brought with it, for London, a wet and stormy Christmas Eve.

The restaurant was closing early, albeit the festival to be observed was one which lends additional poignancy to the horror of family feuds, making a man realize with double force that "To be wroth [angry] with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain." [from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *Christabel*.]

Still Christmas was Christmas, and as such inexpressibly sacred to the heart of the Teuton, and so the Restaurant Rosenbaum was closing early. "Gottlieb," said the proprietor, "we will shut the house and then we will have a little supper and a bottle of wine to celebrate the time of year, and afterwards, who knows, perhaps a game of dominoes."

A fair-haired and fair-faced niece of Rosenbaum's who had been promoted to keep the books of the establishment, descended from her little glass pulpit and advanced to warm her hands at the fire-side. "If only Hans were here," she remarked, inadvertently, "how happy we should all be." Gottlieb frowned and made a deprecating movement with his hands. Outside the wind howled through the streets and dashed the mingled sleet and snow against the windows of Soho. The ferocity of the climate appealed to Gottlieb's imagination.

"How shocking the English winter is," he said, and then paused and pricked up his ears to listen. A quavering voice, and yet a young voice whose lustihood of youth had not been quite eclipsed by the hoarseness of dissipation, was singing a Christmas carol in the bleak street. As Gottlieb listened memory stirred within him, and with it a great wonder and a growing certainty. He stole softly to the door and disappeared.

Rosenbaum, too, had heard the song, but his ears were not so keen as Gottlieb's, and it awoke no recognition in his mind, only in his heart the old sorrow seemed to revive. He busied himself about his duties and hummed with resolute cheerfulness. Presently he was roused by a tap on his shoulder, and turned to find Gottlieb looking at him with a white face and shining eyes. Beside the waiter stood a tall nondescript object which streamed with wet from every corner of its sodden garments, and shook as if with an ague.

"I have brought him back," said Gottlieb; "here. Master, is our genius." And that was how Hans the Magnificent returned to the parental roof.

There are some situations in life in which the only refuge from overwrought feeling is to be found in the essentially commonplace. This was one of them. For a moment Rosenbaum gasped like a stranded fish, then he said peremptorily, “Take off his coat, Gottlieb, and give him much beef and beer.”

The poor famished wretch slunk towards the fire, and, without a word, fell like a wolf upon the viands which Gottlieb hastened to provide. Hunger for a while had shut the door on shame. Rosenbaum watched him at first with louring brows [frowning], but his face relaxed with every mouthful his wretched son devoured. He noted the lines which want and dissipation had written on the face of the youthful genius, and a growing pity began to overwhelm the sense of his own injuries. “After all,” he said to himself, “he has suffered and he has come back to us: that is the great thing.”

At length Hans had finished his meal, his shrunken limbs relaxed in the warmth of the blazing fire, and with the satisfaction of his physical needs he awoke to a sense of his position. He looked at his father, and for the first time remorse and natural affection began to stir in his undeveloped heart; with them came, too, a touch of manliness.

”Father,” he said, “you have, I think, saved my life, and I thank you; now I will go. I am not fit to stay here, even if you would have me. Goodbye all, and forgive me if you can.” There was a touch of the theatrical in his leave-taking, but at bottom the feeling he showed was genuine enough. The warm-hearted Gottlieb melted, and he sprang to bar the door. Rosenbaum rose and laid a heavy hand on his son’s shoulder.

“No, Hans,” he said, “you are mine again now, and you shall not go. Stay until you are well, and when you have made a fresh start and are once more famous, then you can forget again your poor old Father.”

“Never!” cried Hans, passionately, “never! I swear. It is enough to have been once in one’s life a monster of ingratitude.” After all it was a happy Christmas that they spent that year at the Restaurant Rosenbaum.

And when, two years later, Hans actually did with his father’s help regain his former position in the world of music, and a dinner was given to celebrate the event, the singer stood beside the old man and said, raising his glass, “Ladies and Gentlemen, I drink to the best and kindest father man ever had.”

Rosenbaum glanced up at him with inexpressible pride and affection, and muttered to himself, “Ah! he’s great, my Hans, and at last he is good also. It is his genius that is ripe now, and no longer troubles him as it did in the growing time. It is hard sometimes to be the father of a genius, but it pays if one waits, and happiness is worth waiting for.”

He turned to Gottlieb who sat beside him. Gottlieb smiled an appreciative smile, and wagged his head as he thought that at last his beloved master had got his reward.

THE HIDDEN HARMONY BY A. W. Durrant

"Now, girls," said the Baroness Villarmi to the members of her Ladies' Orchestra, "you really must try to put a little more life into your playing to-night. I've just seen Mr. Hartley, the Manager of the Empress Theatre, you know, and he's going to give us a three months' engagement after we've finished here, if he likes our playing — and our looks," the Baroness added, sententiously. "So mind you make up well to-night. Not quite such gorgeous cherry lips as usual, Dickie, and for goodness' sake, Ellie, do get someone to make you look a little less like a whitewashed statue. 1 declare, I believe you're afraid of rouge — it isn't injurious to the morals, I assure you, dear. Now, you little silly, you needn't look so cut up, I'm not scolding you. Here, Dulcie will make your nose a bit more life-like, won't you, Dulcie? Come, look sharp, girls, or you'll keep the stage waiting, and you know what that means, don't you?"

So Dickie, the cornet player, and Ellie, the drummer, flushed up, and, the latter with the assistance of Dulcie, the Leader, endeavoured to carry out the Baroness's special instructions; while the rest of the Orchestra fell to decorating themselves with even more zeal than usual, which is saying a very great deal indeed.

The International Ladies' Orchestra was fulfilling an important engagement at the Royal Classic Theatre, having to appear on the stage in a couple of scenes of that remarkably successful Burlesque, "The Tuft-hunters." One of the scenes in question was in the first Act, and was called "A Dream of Delight," while the other, which was in the last Act, rejoiced in the taking title "The Battle of the Arts." Neither of them, it is hardly necessary to mention, had anything whatever to do with the plot, which was a feeble, unobtrusive little thing, scorned alike by librettist and composer.

The Band, it must be confessed, had very little to do in the way of playing. When their call came, they simply marched down the centre of the stage between two rows of envious chorus girls, who murmured unpleasant things as they passed to the front, where they played "Bobby's the Boy for Me" with much verve, and then marched back again amid deafening applause. When they took the stage for the second time, they banged out with all their, might the bombastic patriotic song "England Against the World!" which was received with little less favour than its predecessor. To leave the stage, they would, on each occasion, have to squeeze past a host of oncoming choristers, and to run the gauntlet of half-a-dozen scene-shifters; rough, reckless individuals, these latter, always in a tearing hurry, and utterly devoid of respect for life or limb.

"Ugh! the brute!" exclaimed Dickie, one night, mournfully surveying a little strip of torn lace which fluttered from her shoulder as she scrambled upstairs with the others to their dressing-room.

"Who did it?" asked Ellie, in a sympathetic, but tired voice.

"Why that great ugly elephant of a man who tried to flatten us out under one of the marble columns of the Palace he was fixing. I'd like to —"

"It's perfectly disgusting," broke in Dulcie, "to think that we get a double encore for that abominably low comic song, when we know perfectly well that if we gave them something worth listening to they'd go to sleep. Bah! Howl a plantation song at them and let off half-a-dozen chords on a buzzy banjo, and you'll bring down the house. And it needn't even be in tune; half a tone is nothing to them," she added with a fine scorn. "I think I shall give up playing the fiddle and go in for tickling the mandoline."

"Oh, Dulcie," exclaimed Ellie with much concern, "you don't mean it, do you? You play so beautifully; Alf is always raving about it."

"Ellie!" cried Dickie with mock pathos, "Tea, tea, or we perish!"

"Why, I declare, Ellie," remonstrated another, "if you haven't forgotten to put the kettle on!"

"Oh, dear," sighed Ellie, as she rose from the property box, upon which she had dropped when she entered the room. "Who's got the kettle?" she asked querulously.

A search forthwith ensued amongst boots, and umbrellas, and mackintoshes thrown haphazard on and around the boxes lining the walls of the room. In defence of the character of the ladies of the Orchestra for tidiness, it must be explained that the room was woefully deficient in the matter of clothes pegs, and everything else, indeed, which makes for comfort or even convenience.

"I believe I saw it somewhere when I came in," said Lucy, the cellist, with a certain amount of conviction in her tone, and she accordingly started vigorously searching for the kettle with the others

"Huh! I should think you had indeed!" ejaculated a voice from the end of the room, and Trissy, the flautist, held up the missing kettle which had been temporarily turned into a flower vase by Lucy herself.

"Well!" said Trissy incisively to the offender, "you have got a head!"

"And so has a pin," added Dickie, "and I know which is the most useful."

"There you are," cried the culprit triumphantly, not a whit abashed by the scorn levelled at her, "I knew I'd seen it somewhere! I'm —" A round of laughter, in which all joined except Ellie, cut off the remainder of the sentence.

The rescued kettle was handed to the disconsolate Ellie, who placed it on the top of the wire globe covering one of the gas jets, by which the dressing-room was lighted. She then threw a few spoonfuls of tea into a large brown earthenware teapot, and sank down in her former position on the chest.

"Hullo, Ellie, what's up?" asked Trissy kindly, sitting clown by her side.

"Oh, nothing," replied Ellie, "it's so stuffy here, and I — I —"

"I believe that fellow Alf has been upsetting you again," said her interrogator severely. "Look here, dear." she continued in a motherly tone, "you take my advice, and don't trouble your head so much about him. He's young, and young fellows now-a-days don't know what they mean half their time, and don't mean what they say the other half!"

Ellie turned away from her philosophical adviser, and for a moment or two did not speak. Suddenly there was an ominous rumble at the other end of the room as of distant thunder. It died away, and Ellie murmured a half-indignant reply to Trissy.

"It wasn't his fault," she began, "it's —"

But the rumble again commenced, and almost immediately developed into a storm. "Mrs. Trimley! Mrs. Trimley!" resounded through the room in a huge voice charged with direful threatenings. The voice came from a personage of majestic mien, to wit, Mrs. Robinson, the trombone player, who stood five feet eleven in her stockings, and whose physical proportions generally can only be described as colossal. Her aspect was. terrible in the extreme, as she turned to the girls, and asked in tragic tones, "Where is that dresser?"

"Ha! ha!" whispered the sprightly Dickie, "there's Minerva on the trail of the Earwig again."

At that moment the door opened, and a wizened little woman crept hurriedly and apprehensively into the room. She was very thin, and her face was shrivelled like scorched parchment, while her hair, what there was of it, stuck up in two little tufts, one on each side of her head. She crawled along the floor rather than walked, and altogether the epithet "Earwig" seemed ridiculously appropriate. Her official position was that of "dresser," but she did more for the young ladies in running errands than in assisting them to dress. Indeed, with the exception, perhaps, of Ellie, who had never been in a similar engagement before, they all seemed quite capable of making themselves look as fascinating as the boundless resources of rouge, powder, cosmetics, and the like mysterious accessories of the dramatic toilette could make them.

"Abandoned woman!" roared Minerva,, as she caught sight of the Earwig. "Am I," and she drew herself up to her full height, "am I to see others drinking tea by the gallon, and to faint for the want of a drop of stout?"

She certainly did not look, nor sound, in the least degree like fainting, but the bare suggestion conveyed such a wealth of weird horror to the imagination of the Earwig, that she turned and fled. In five minutes she was back again bearing a tankard which she tremblingly proffered to the indignant Minerva. In an incredibly short time, all that remained of the storm was a little foam in the bottom of the tankard.

The conversation between Ellie and Trissy, however, had been effectually interrupted, and it was not resumed. Ellie finished her tea, but still sat on her box moodily engrossed in her thoughts. Once or twice she looked up, as if she were waiting for something. Presently the girls began to troop out of the dressing-room to get a breath of fresh air before dressing for the last Act. This they were allowed to do only by special permission of the Stage Manager, who was a personal friend of the Baroness. At last they were all gone except Dulcie, who had been putting fresh strings on her violin. She was just pinning her hat on when Ellie again raised her head, and, seeing only Dulcie, rose with a peculiar little movement of mingled diffidence and determination.

"Dulcie," she said hesitatingly, "you know how fond Alf is of the violin —"

"Oh, goodness," returned Dulcie, petulantly, "what a relief it would be if you married Alf; you wouldn't be eternally thinking about him then. It's Alf this and Alf that, until I'm perfectly tired of hearing the name. It isn't good for any girl to be wrapped up so much in a young fellow, not even if he were a saint; and I never yet met a young man whom I should ever mistake for a saint. Now look here, Ellie, you take my advice and go and have a jolly good flirt with some other young saint, and then you won't mope about all day as you do now."

"1 couldn't," answered Ellie simply. She was silent for a moment or two, then, pressing her hands lightly against her bosom and slowly shaking her curly head, she repeated, with the ghost of a smile on her lips, "I couldn't. I couldn't do that, Dulcie." Dulcie shrugged her shoulders and looked out of the window.

"But," continued Ellie, "I didn't mean — that is, I wanted to ask you to do me a great favour. You know Alf is always saying how enchanted he is with your playing, and," she hurried on as if in fear of another interruption, "well, it's made me so unhappy, not because he likes your playing so much, dear, but because I can't do anything except rattle away on that detestable drum. So I — I thought I would try to learn the violin myself." She stopped short as if she had said something desperately wicked, and gave a quick, sidelong glance at Dulcie.

That young lady, however, merely responded with an inquiring "Well?"

"So I've been practising ever since. Only," Ellie went on disconnectedly, "I haven't told him, nor anyone else besides my sister, and I had to tell her because I practised in my bedroom, and she sleeps with me. And, of course, I don't know how I'm getting on. You see, if I went to a violin class everybody would know about it, and if I shouldn't be able to play well after all, why I'd sooner die than Alf should hear of it. So I thought that perhaps tomorrow between the Acts you wouldn't mind telling me if it is worth while for me to go on with it."

As she spoke her face wore such a pleading, anxious expression that Dulcie could not help being struck by it. She looked keenly at Ellie for a moment or two, and then said somewhat abruptly: "All right, you can use my fiddle if you like."

"Thank you, thank you so much," cried Ellie gratefully. "I do so hope you will be able to tell me that I shall get on with it. I don't mind how much I practise. I've done three hours every day since soon after Alf first heard you play, nearly a year ago. Of course I'm slow at it, I know that, but if —"

"And you haven't had a master?" interjected Dulcie. "As to going to a class to learn the fiddle, you might as well try to learn to sing in a thunderstorm. Well, we shall see to-morrow." And with that she went out. Ellie had brightened up considerably when her request was granted, and she now rose from her seat, and, having put on her jacket and hat, followed Dulcie down the narrow staircase into the street.

The band surpassed itself that night. The audience was uproarious in its applause. Mr. Bartley, of the Empress Theatre, was delighted, and the Baroness was beaming with satisfaction. "Dear girls," she gushed as they left the stage, "you all played and looked like angels!"

Dickie sniggered audibly, and motioned with her cornet towards Minerva's portly form toiling laboriously up the stairs. "Look," she whispered irreverently to Trissy, "look at the angel doing a waft. She'll want an outsize in snowy pinions, won't she?" The laughter which followed this sally, however, was checked by Minerva herself, who, continually haunted by the idea that she was not always treated with due respect by the more frivolous of the girls, and hearing the sound of mirth close behind her, turned and glowered suspiciously on the culprits.

The dressing-room reached, the usual race to be first out ensued, with the usual result, namely, that Ellie was at the stage door before any of the others had descended to the second landing. Ellie hoped to find Alf waiting for her, but she was disappointed. She did not feel greatly surprised, for of late she had become painfully aware that his affection for her was rapidly cooling down.

Alf was an average young man, with ideas rather above the average. He took in the "Literary Critic" every Thursday, and read it religiously from beginning to end. In like manner, he laboriously studied the "Musical Résumé" every Sunday. And as he had never made the acquaintance of the first principles of either literature or music, it will surprise no one to learn that while he could descant in most profound fashion on the demerits of the Decadent Movement, he was absolutely ignorant of the simplest rules of Composition. He could discuss Wagner and the peccadilloes of the new Italian School *ad libitum*, or rather *ad nauseam*, but he could not. for the life of him, have told you what consecutive fifths were. To give him his due, however, he would doubtless have, admitted, in somewhat inflated language, that he knew nothing of the "mere mechanics of art," which he "left to those who had no soul for the subtle mysteries of beauty." Of course, his own soul, to use his own words again, was in "transcendent harmony with the spirit of the sublime and eternal," whatever that may have meant. Anyhow, he used to pour it out by the hour into Ellie's little ears, which were pink and pretty enough to have deserved a far better fate. Alf was, in short, one of a very large and unhappily growing class of young people of the present day, and "While overfeeding, like the rest, his wit with reading," [from Matthew Arnold's poem *The Second Best*.] earned as little profit to either head or heart as any of them.

Now Ellie's nature was the direct antithesis to Alf's. She was as simple and open as the day. Her little curly head was too much occupied with her immediate duties and interests to share in Alf's high-flown and futile ideas. She was always trying to understand his enigmatical utterances, and often used to lie awake for hours, knitting her brows over some dark saying of his, which, if she had only known, was usually a garbled version of a technical critique, through which he had just skimmed, and of the real meaning of which he had a scarcely less hazy idea than she herself. To-night, however, although he came up just as Ellie was starting for home in despair, the Decadent Movement and the new Italian School urged on their wild careers unchecked. In fact, after the first greetings were over, and on Alf's side they were very mild indeed, no word was spoken for several minutes. Then. Ellie, in a low, tremulous voice; said, "You were a little later than usual, to-night, Alf."

Alf took no more notice of the sweetly administered rebuke than to reply, somewhat indifferently, "Er, ye-es. I happened to see Dulcie, and, of course, had to hand her into, her bus. That made me a bit later than I should have been otherwise." He did not think it necessary to add that he had been, waiting round the corner of the theatre, out of sight of Ellie, for fully ten minutes before Dulcie appeared.

For some little time Ellie was silent. Then she turned impulsively to Alf and gazed at him steadily. Alf was looking the other way, or he would have seen that his little companion's face was white and drawn, and that on her soft brown eye-lashes tear-drops were sparkling in the gaslight.

"Alf," she said, quaveringly, and then had to. stop to gulp down a sob that had risen in her throat. "Alf, I begin to be afraid that you are getting tired of me." And her words must have been literally, true, for as she gazed her face wore the expression, of hopeless terror that sometimes comes over the living when in the presence of the dead. And then, as she turned her head and looked straight in front of. her, she said to herself in a scarcely audible murmur, "What if it should be so?"

Alf could see that she was strangely moved. Yet he gave her no direct answer. "I don't," he said in an aggrieved tone, "I don't quite see why you should say that. I —"

But Ellie had suddenly stopped. Curiously enough, she was quite calm now. "Alf," she said, and her voice was clear and steady, "Alf, think it over, and write to me, telling me whether you still —" she caught her breath but went on bravely, "love me, or — or not. Write to me when you get home," she continued hurriedly, to check an interruption which he was about to make, "I couldn't bear to *hear* you say it was all over. Good-night, good-night, dearest," she cried abruptly and sped away, leaving Alf staring after her with astonished eyes.

Dulcie's verdict on the merits of Ellie's violin playing was not pronounced the next day after all, for when the girls were assembled in the dressing-room, Ellie crossed over to Dulcie, and said constrainedly, "I won't trouble you about it, Dulcie, at least, not to-day. Besides, I don't fancy somehow that I shall go on with it. And I don't feel quite the thing to-day, either." "And you certainly don't look it," replied Dulcie, brusquely. "What's the matter? Headache?"

"Yes," responded Ellie wearily, "I didn't get much sleep last night," and without saying more, she walked back to her place. Dulcie, glancing after her, saw her drop on her property box and bury her face in her hands.

"Look at that," whispered Dickie, who was close by, to Trissy, "that precious Alf of hers has been upsetting her again, I can see. I'd like to ram my cornet down his throat," she continued grimly. "I've a great mind —"

"You've a great mind!" sarcastically repeated Florinda, who had heard only the last two or three words of Dickie's denunciation. Florinda played the piccolo; she also affected poetical tendencies, which, however, were not as a rule encouraged by her outspoken colleagues. "That piece of interesting information," she went on mincingly, "ought to be published far and wide, 'from Greenland's icy mountains, to India's coral strand.'" [from Reginald Heber's hymn *From Greenland's Icy Mountains*.]

"India's coral Fleet Street!" was Dickie's derisive response, and in the passage of arms which ensued, Ellie and her troubles were soon forgotten. The combat was still in progress when the word was given for them to appear on the stage. Down they all trooped, the call boy following them to the foot of the stairs.

"I say, Miss," he said to Dulcie, as she was going on, "where's the one what plays the little drum? because I've got a letter for her." Before Dulcie could reply, Ellie came running down. With feverish haste, she seized the letter from the boy's hand, and half turned as if to go upstairs again in order to read it. At that moment, however, the Baroness called out impatiently for her and Dulcie to go on the stage. "Tut, tut," she muttered as she caught sight of Ellie's face, "that girl's ridiculous nose!"

The rest of the band were already in their places, and as the chorus girls did not assemble until some minutes later, the space behind the scenery at the side of the stage was quite clear. Ellie, at the sound of the Baroness's voice, thrust the letter into the bosom of her costume, and she and Dulcie started forward. Just before they came in view of the audience, however, a startled shout rang out from high up in the wings above them:

"Look out there!" Almost before the words were uttered there was a cracking sound, and a large piece of wooden framework came crashing down. Dulcie had darted back at the first sound of the warning, but Ellie had been so absorbed in her letter that she had heard nothing, and so had gone on without a thought of danger. The next moment she lay motionless under the fallen mass. The audience could not, of course, see that anyone had been hurt, nor could any of the girls on the stage with the exception of Minerva, who was quite in the rear, and who immediately rushed to Ellie's assistance. Clearing the debris off the unconscious girl with the help of Dulcie and of a scene-shifter, Minerva took her up and carried her to the dressing-room.

In the meantime, Dulcie sent the scene-shifter post haste for a doctor, and the dresser for some brandy. Then, when Minerva had laid her poor burden on the floor, Dulcie supported Ellie's head on her knee, while Minerva commenced bathing her temples with Eau-de-Cologne. Not a moment had elapsed, however, before the boisterous strains of "England Against the World" burst into the room. The remaining members of the band were banging out the noisy tune as loudly as they could, evidently trying to make up in volume of sound for the loss of accuracy and tone occasioned by the absence of their leader [Dulcie]. "Shut that door!" cried Dulcie peremptorily. Minerva did so, but had hardly returned to her task when footsteps were heard ascending the stairs.

"Please God it's the doctor!" ejaculated Minerva. But it was not. It was only the Stage Manager come to see whether Ellie's injury was sufficiently serious to warrant the continued absence of two of the performers as well as of herself. One glance at the still white face more than satisfied him on that score, and he simply said in a whisper, "Has anyone gone for a doctor?"

Minerva nodded, and the Stage Manager stood by silent and sympathetic. Another minute, and the dresser came in and, following hard on her heels, all the other girls in the band, which had already finished its turn. But the Stage Manager was too quick for them, and, telling them to go to one of the other dressing-rooms, closed the door in their expectant faces.

"Poor child, she do look terrible bad," murmured the dresser as she handed the brandy to Minerva, who, with trembling hand, poured a little between Ellie's bloodless lips. To the great joy of the anxious watchers Ellie's eyelids fluttered a little and then opened. For an instant she seemed to be collecting her thoughts, then her hand went up to her neck, and her fingers fumbled ineffectually at the trimming of her costume.

"She wants more air," exclaimed Minerva, "undo her tunic." But Dulcie in a flash divined Ellie's desire, and drew from her bosom the fateful letter. Tearing open the envelope, she gave the enclosure into Ellie's eager but feeble grasp.

With painful exertion the suffering girl raised the letter to her eyes, and gazed at it intently for a moment or two. Then she looked up piteously at Dulcie, who bent over her, and asked, "What is it, dear?"

"I — I can't read it — I can't see," Ellie gasped, and the tears rolled slowly down her cheeks.

"I'll read it to you, dear," Dulcie said gently, and taking the letter hastily scanned its contents. It was short, very short, and Dulcie read it through at a glance. And this is what she read.

"Dear Ellie, After our interview last night, I have arrived at the conclusion that you have failed to inspire me with sufficient affection and admiration to warrant me in continuing to look upon you as my future wife. Of course, I shall always remember you with esteem, and credit you with the best of intentions. — Yours sincerely, Alf."

A look of surprise shot across Dulcie's face. It was quickly displaced by an expression of unutterable indignation and contempt. Then she glanced at Ellie's anxious, pallid face, and bending down, she whispered distinctly in the little white ear.

"My Darling Ellie, I am grieved to have given you any cause to doubt my affection for you. Believe me, dearest, I love you as truly and fondly as even you could wish. — Your own devoted, Alf."

"And there are the kisses," Dulcie cried, brokenly, and impulsively kissed Ellie's damp forehead again and again.

A look of radiant happiness overspread Ellie's face. With a sudden effort, she raised her head, and, grasping the letter, pressed it to her lips. A thin purple stream trickled from between them over its cruel words, and she fell back in Dulcie's arms — dead.

THE SCHWABENBERG ORGANIST BY J. F. Rowbotham

The post of organist in the little town of Schwabenberg, in Germany, was strictly hereditary, and descended from father to son with the greatest punctuality and routine. It used to be the saying in Schwabenberg that there were only two people in the Duchy who could reckon for certain on a patrimony for their son and heir: these were the organist and the Grand Duke, since the laws of succession and entail were as hard and fast in one case as in the other. The organist's son got the organ, and the Grand Duke's got the coronet, both of which things brought a competence in their train.

The post of organist in the town of Schwabenberg was worth about five hundred thalers a year, and was consequently as highly esteemed as any post of the kind in Germany. These were the days when a great musician like John Sebastian Bach thought he was very well paid with £30 per annum, "along with firewood and occasional gratuities;" so that the organistship of Schwabenberg, which was worth quite £80, that is to say, nearly treble the aforesaid amount — was a lucrative post, coveted by many a poor player throughout Germany, though coveted in vain, since, as we say, it was as hereditary and of as immutable a succession as the throne of the Grand Duke himself.

The hereditary organist of Schwabenberg was Rudolph Mannheimer, who was now a very old man; and the law of succession, which had operated so potently during his lifetime and that of his ancestors for generations past, was likely to undergo a peculiar development in his case, inasmuch as he had no son to whom to bequeath his manual and pedals, but only a daughter — his only child, and reputed with reason the prettiest maiden in the duchy. The Duke's steward and the Duke himself, to whom the peculiar hereditary difficulty connected with Rudolf had been familiar for a long time past, had searched the archives of the Grand Duchy of Schwabenberg, to discover what precise course ought to be taken in so anomalous a dilemma, and they had discovered a precedent for its solution. "In 1514," so ran the old German record, — "Christian Mannheimer, the organist of the Grand Duke's chapel and of the town of Schwabenberg" (both duties be it noted lay included in the court organist's functions), "being without heirs-male to whom he could bequeath his organ-stool and instrument, the Grand Duke decided that Margaret Mannheimer, his only daughter, was the proper person to inherit the organ, but she being a female, and a man being necessary for the post, her husband (who was Ludwig Mannheimer, her cousin) should succeed in due course to the post of organist, and by this means His Grace, the Grand Duke, justly and impartially solved this great problem."

Relying on this precedent the present Grand Duke had intimated that same necessary condition to Rudolf Mannheimer, but with the additional proviso, that as the old man's playing had been very bad of late, and he was determined not to put up with bad music if he could get better, the post of organist should be offered to public competition, and the successful competitor should marry Emily Mannheimer.

"By this means," said the Grand Duke, who thought the solution of the difficulty an excellent one, "I shall keep the appointment in your family, Rudolf; I shall provide a home for yourself, and I shall secure an accomplished husband for your daughter. And how do you like the idea?" he added, turning round to Emily Mannheimer.

Emily confessed, with many blushes, that she was not averse to the proposal, for as a matter of fact the matter had been pretty well settled between her and Fritz von Osterode, who was one of the lords-in-waiting at the Grand Duke's court. It was mainly owing to Fritz's influence that the Grand Duke had come to this remarkable decision. For Fritz had heard that various Mannheimers in various parts of Germany had been applying for the coveted post, and urging their claims of relationship as the ground for their appointment, coupled with their exceeding willingness to marry Emily. In order, therefore, to disappoint them, he had persuaded his royal master to offer the post for public competition, in the hope, which was almost a complete assurance, that he should win the prize, gain the organ, and marry Emily, the greatest prize of all.

As a matter of fact, the young man had every chance. He was a most accomplished organist, and had for years past been the pupil of old Rudolph Mannheimer, in point of playing being far superior to his master. Emily was a quiet retiring girl, and had only one great friend in the place, a woman called Etelka Friedlander, to whom she opened her heart.

"I think," replied Etelka to Emily's oft-repeated question, "that Fritz is sure to come off victorious in the contest. Keep your mind easy, my dear. You know I am a good judge of music, and I can assure you that I never heard any playing like Fritz's either in Dresden or Prague, or Berlin or Vienna. There is only one organist that I know of who plays better, and that is the great organist of Osnabruck, and I don't think it at all likely that he will appear on the scene. So keep your mind easy, my dear, keep your mind easy, and I will answer for it, Fritz will be yours."

Any other fate was too dreadful for Emily to contemplate. She became uncontrollably anxious as the day for the competition drew nearer, and Etelka having to go to visit her sick parents in a neighbouring town, she was left to her own hopes and fears. The day of the contest at length arrived, and organists from all parts of the Fatherland assembled to compete for the coveted post of court organist of Schwabenberg.

There were competitors of all kinds, from old gaitered [wearing a type of ankle-high shoe] organists with spectacles on nose and waistcoats liberally besprinkled with snuff, to the young swash-buckler virtuosos, with swords at their sides and powdered wigs, who looked more like courtiers than poor players, and who (the Schwabenberg maidens whispered as they saw them pass along the street) were certainly fitted to be organists at court.

There was a sworn jury of musicians to decide on the merits of the competitors, and the Grand Duke himself sat in his private pew in the court chapel, which was more like an opera box, overlooking the altar, in order that he too might assist in the arbitration; in fact, the final decision rested with him. One after another the competitors played — there were all sorts of styles, for each player was allowed to choose any piece he pleased for his performance, and on the merits of that he was judged.

At last Fritz von Osterode stepped forward to the organ, and at once his superiority over the other players was manifest. The ease of his execution, the brilliancy of his combinations of stops, the dexterity of his pedalling — all combined to give him the supremacy, an easy supremacy among the crowd of performers.

The contest was well nigh over. Fritz had finished his selection. The judges were unanimous in their verdict in his favour, and the Grand Duke was just rising to pronounce him the successful aspirant, when a confusion arose at the church door, and a loud voice was heard exclaiming, “I am not too late. The competition is not over till four, and there remain a few minutes. I claim the privilege and the leave of the Duke to enter the contest;” and without any more preamble the figure of a big man strode up the church and seated itself at the organ.

“He is within his rights,” remarked the Duke, sitting down once more. “We must give him leave to play.” No sooner had he uttered these words than he turned pale with astonishment. Such a peal of brilliant voluminous sound poured forth from the organ as surely had never issued from instrument before. It swept through the air and intoxicated the senses of all who heard it with rapture. But before the listeners could recover from the effect of the mighty impression thus made on them the performer changed his note, and broke into the most plaintive and passionate music. Anon, he suddenly changed to the peal of a triumphal march, and torrents of glorious sound rolled from the organ, so that not only the people who sat in the church, but the very judges, and, last of all, the Grand Duke himself, stood up clapping their hands and crying that this man was the victor of the competition.

Alas for poor Emily! The mere thought of having such a person for her husband and losing her beloved Fritz, was misery and torture to her. What was to be done? This question was asked with equal pertinacity by Fritz himself, who saw all his hopes dashed to the ground. All the people were surrounding the victorious stranger, who now stood in the centre of the church, speaking and laughing first with this one and then with that, while the Grand Duke, who had already pronounced him the conqueror, was descending from the ducal pew to congratulate him likewise. He had announced himself as Herr Schultz, from Breslau, and his name began to ring around in a manner most irritating to Fritz and most heartbreaking to Emily.

They soon joined one another in the cloisters of the chapel, which led outside the Duke's pleasure grounds. "My dear," said Fritz, "what is to be done? I have lost you — unless you give up your home and your father, which I would not ask you to do."

"The dear little house," sighed Emily, "where my dear father is so pleased to spend his declining years — the little annuity which falls in so regularly, and is so welcome to him — and, above all, the position, the honour of being Court organist, or at least of having it in his family, that he can walk about with cocked hat as one of the Duke's officials. To take away all this from him would be to kill him. And yet what a cost must I pay for it? I must marry that Schultz. Oh, I never can," she cried, clinging close to Fritz, and hiding her face in his bosom as he caressed her. "I cannot do it, and yet not to do it will kill my father."

"I know what I will do," cried Fritz suddenly. "I will challenge him to a duel."

"Ah! you must not do that," exclaimed Emily. "You are not so expert with your rapier. He might kill you."

"I do not mean a duel of swords. I mean a duel of music," returned Fritz. "I will practise diligently for some time- to come, until I can perform feats of execution that will eclipse those of this Herr Schultz, and then I will defy him to a contest, and beat him." The idea struck them both as a good one. If it did not solve the difficulty, at any rate it had the advantage of putting off the evil day, and in the midst of their misery even this was something.

When Herr Schultz received the challenge, which was delivered shortly after the above colloquy, he burst out spluttering and swearing. "*Gott im Himmel*," he cried, "this is *lacherlich* [ridiculous]. Here, have I been adjudged victorious, only to toss away my prize and enter the lists with this young spitfire, whom I have already beaten? No! A thousand times, no!"

"But they will say, if you refuse him, Herr Schultz," suggested one of his numerous admirers (for all the musical talent in Schwabenberg was now clustering round the successful hero), "they will say that you are afraid of him. They will say that perhaps you gained your victory this time by accident, and that you shrink from offering yourself to the risk of being beaten by entering a new contest."

"If they say that then," roared Schultz, "I will meet him any day he chooses, within a reasonable time, for a public trial of skill. For I cannot wait here long; I must return to Breslau in order to put my affairs in order there, preparatory to returning here for good to settle and claim my pretty bride."

The day of the second contest arrived. The two rivals drew lots for precedence in playing, and the lot was in favour of Fritz. His performance was pronounced admirable, and his skill was noticed to have improved very much in the interim. But as soon as Herr Schultz placed his magical fingers on the organ, once more the instrument awoke to miraculous tones such as had never been heard before, and once more the organist of Breslau was pronounced victorious.

"I can stay no more, I need stay no more," he said as he descended from his stool into the body of the church, "to waste my time in idle experiments such as these. I have fairly won my prize now twice over, and I intend to claim it. I leave for Breslau at once, and when I have settled my affairs there I shall return here and begin my new life as organist, and also my new domestic career as husband of Fraulein Emily Mannheimer." Emily revolted at the hideous leer with which he favoured her as he uttered these words, and her face became the picture of misery and despair.

"It is a pity," said some, "that the Grand Duke has made such a condition."

"He never believed that any one else but Fritz von Osterode would win her," was the reply. "It was on that account that he proposed the plan. Be assured he will find some way out of the difficulty."

But the Duke did not condescend to have anything to do with it. He was appealed to by Fritz von Osterode. He was pathetically entreated by Emily, but all to no purpose. People thought — and they were right — that the Grand Duke admired Schultz's playing, and did not see why, for the sake of sparing a young girl's feelings, he should deliberately deprive himself of the best music he could ever have in his private chapel.

Such was the state of things in Schwabenberg, and the time drew nigh when Herr Schultz would return from Breslau to claim his bride and his post of organist. The misery of the lovers was extreme.

"We have tried everything, my dear," said Emily to Fritz. "We have thought over every conceivable plan, and no light appears in the darkness. There is yet one person whom I would fain consult, and that is Etelka Friedlander. She told me she would always help me in any difficulty, and here is one which demands the utmost help which it is in her power to give. How I wish she were here! but as she is not, how I should like to go to Weimar to see her!" There was no such thing as the penny post in those days. A letter meant two or three marks, and poor people seldom wrote letters. Etelka Friedlander had therefore never been informed of the result of the contest at Schwabenberg, and was still under the idea that everything had gone well with her young friend. To her surprise, one day, as she was out in Weimar making purchases, she saw the carrier's cart come in from the country, and seated in it poor Emily and Fritz, looking as miserable as human beings can.

They soon told her their tale, in which she seemed very much interested, and after listening awhile she replied, "It is just possible that this man Schultz may be the very organist of Osnabruck of whom I told you. If so, it were idle and hopeless for Fritz ever to attempt to compete with him. Nay, from the very first he might have spared himself the trouble. But the man says he comes from Breslau. Well, he may be telling a falsehood; though, of course, he may be speaking the truth. I know not exactly what course to take; but I think it will be best for you, my dear, to let things go on."

"And be married to the monster?" shrieked Emily.

"That remains to be seen," replied Etelka Friedlander. "Let the banns be put up — the ceremony arranged — and let me be your bridesmaid. I will support you through the ceremony, and see if I can stop it."

Such profound confidence did Emily have in her old friend's wisdom and discernment, that she quite fell in with her suggestion, though Fritz looked very blank at the mere prospect of his beloved Emily being led to the altar by any man but himself.

"I am sure all will be well," said Emily, on the way home.

"How if it is not well? What shall I do?" objected her lover.

"Can you propose a better plan?" asked Emily.

"I cannot," he replied.

"Let us take then the only plan we have, and hope for the best. For beyond hope and confidence we seem to have little."

The wedding-day was duly fixed, which was to see the post of organist handed to Herr Schultz, of Breslau, and the pretty Emily Mannheimer converted into Emily Schultz, a by no means euphonious change, as some of her friends remarked.

"The change in name is as bad as the change in life for her," said others, sympathetically. "Poor girl! 1 believe it will kill her."

The wedding was in the Grand Duke's private chapel. The bridegroom was there early, and, with a number of his admiring friends around him, played the wedding march while the bride and her party entered the church. Poor Emily was as pale as death. Fritz was one of the group attending her, but his condition seemed to be worse than that of the bride. The only one of the party who seemed to retain her composure was the bridesmaid, who wore a long white veil like the bride herself, nearly concealing her features from view.

The clergyman advanced from the altar and began the service, which was broken by the convulsive sobs of Emily, and occasionally interrupted by the impatient mutterings of Fritz, who, standing behind with his hand on his sword hilt, seemed ready to rush on Schultz and impale him directly the fatal words came to be uttered which were to make him and his beloved Emily one.

The ceremony proceeded to that critical point, and the clergyman enquired of Schultz if he took Emily Mannheimer to be his wedded wife. Schultz replied loudly in the affirmative. The minister then turned to Emily, and asked her if she took Herr Joseph Schultz to be her wedded husband. To the surprise of all a clear ringing response came, not from the bride herself, but from the bridesmaid, "I do," and throwing off her veil, Etelka confronted the bridegroom and the assembled company.

"Hear me," she cried, as the tall man quailed and blanched before her. "Hear me, reverend minister, and all you assembled here. I too was an organist's daughter; like Emily Mannheimer, I too had to take as my husband the best player in a public competition. This man was the successful competitor. He was young then; so was I. I loved him and married him willingly, and he took my father's post and entered into my father's house. But after living with me awhile, his ambition tempted him to Osnabruck, where was a more important post with a similar condition attaching to it — that he should marry the organist's daughter. Knave that he was, he scrupled not to enter the contest, and to desert me. But I followed him to Osnabruck and denounced him, frustrating his bad and dishonourable intention. Since then he abandoned me entirely, and years have passed since I saw him. I see him for the first time again to-day, and I beseech you, my Lord Duke, to put a stop to his part in the ceremony, and to allow Fritz von Osterode, who is an excellent organist, an honourable youth, and well-beloved by Emily Mannheimer, to take his place."

"Well said," cried the Grand Duke, "and so let it be! Minister, finish the ceremony between the young pair, and Fritz shall be my organist in future. With regard to Herr Schultz, what do you desire, Etelka Friedlander?"

"That he may be recognised as my husband once more, if he will leave his evil ways," replied Etelka; "but if not, that he shall depart to Breslau, where he came from, and leave me in peace as he found me."

Such was the end of the Schwabenberg organist competition, and the Grand Duke, having so nearly made a poor maiden miserable for life, determined that he would never have another similar contest. But, indeed, there was no need to do so; for the host of chubby rosy children, who arose in the home of Emily and Fritz von Osterode, comprised nearly half a dozen budding organists among their number, ready to take the place of their handsome father when old age and infirmity rendered him incapable of his duties.

As to what became of Herr Schultz, chronicle does not say, but it is conjectured that he settled permanently at Breslau, for Etelka Friedlander, who was always one of the chief personages in the household of Emily and Fritz, remained Etelka Friedlander and not Schultz, until her dying day.

THE STRADIVARIUS BY Mildred Finlay

A tall, thin, dowdy girl, with a faded blouse and draggled skirt. Her face was plain and very white, her pale carroty hair strained off her high forehead into a scanty round knot at the top of her head. She wore a scarf over her shoulders, crossed on her bosom. There was something weak in the chin; the mouth was pale and very sensitive, drooping at the corners. She was freckled. Pale green eyes looked dully out from under faint, reddish brows and lashes. Martha was not beautiful; her hands were long, and thin, and freckled, her feet large, her nose nondescript, and cheekbones high. She looked a very ordinary girl. A profound dejection had settled on her face, dragging down the corners of her mouth, her one redeeming feature.

"Come and peel the potatoes, Marty," called her mother's voice, and she went indoors. As she sat on the little three-legged stool at the kitchen door, a blue apron tied round her waist, on her lap a tin, into which she peeled the potatoes, her eyes almost sullenly downcast, she looked worse than commonplace — she was uninteresting. But her mind was far from her potatoes; it was upstairs in her little attic, looking within a black coffin-like case lined with blue. Her mind's eye saw a violin. The wood was old and ripe, and dark in colour: it was a true Stradivarius.

Her thoughts wandered back to the first time she had ever heard and seen it. She was then a dowdy child of thirteen, seated in her place in church, and suddenly a beautiful wailing note, full and strong and thrilling, came from the choir; a man was playing — the new violinist — a man with shaggy hair and dark, strange eyes. Oh! that music, how it crept into the heart of the ugly girl! When she got home, she took up the cheap little violin her big brother had brought her from the fair, and on which she was accustomed to finger out simple tunes, and tried to make it produce sounds like those she had heard. But though she drew the flabby bow so tenderly against the old strings, that sublime, full beauty did not even echo in her longing ears.

That evening she escaped down to the little cottage where the new violinist had been installed the previous week, and listened. Yes, there were the soul-stirring strains within! Martha stood on tiptoe beside the geranium-trimmed window. There sat the old man beside the empty hearth, his eyes shut, drawing the bow lovingly across the strings. Something dragged Martha to the open door, and she stood on the step, looking in, listening intently. It was a simple melody of Mozart; she had never heard anything like it before. She crept in almost unconsciously until she stood just before the player, her lips apart, her eyes shining.

The melody was finished; the old man opened his eyes to tighten a string, when they fell upon the figure before him. He stared — she stared. Then he spoke, in a very soft voice and foreign accent, "What do you want, my child?"

"Oh!" she implored, clasping her bony little hands, "only to listen. Oh! don't send me away! I won't talk or worry. Oh, sir, I never heard nothing like it before, please," and out came a dirty little ball of a handkerchief to wipe away the quick tears. He drew the bow across the strings, and the mellow sweetness of the sound brought the tears to Martha's pleading eyes.

He finished, and sat, a smile on his kind face. "Dost like, little one?"

"Oh, sir!" ——

"Would'st thou like to learn to play, even like that?"

She gasped. His kind words, however, soon led her to tell, blushing, about the little violin which Ben had brought her.

"Can'st play 'The Blue Bells of Scotland?' Wilt play to me now, on my violin?"

"Oh, I daren't."

"Come, take it in thy little hands; thine arms are short as yet, my little maid, but it will do. Come, hold thy hand so, and thy bow so; do not be afraid — now, play."

The trembling little red hand drew the bow across the strings. They gave out a sweet, full sound. Encouraged by its beauty, she played, faltering a little, and without much execution, but with great sweetness and expression, 'The Blue Bells of Scotland.'

"Good! Who taught thee, little one?"

"No one, sir, I picked it out."

"And it is faultless! Can'st play a tune if I sing it?"

"I will try."

"Hark, now, and listen well." And in. a clear voice he sang 'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill.' "Play, now, little one." Her nervousness had gone, and she was only happy. Slowly she played it over, but faultlessly.

"Ah!" he cried, triumphantly, "not one note wrong, the time perfect. Little angel, thou hast a seraph's ear. 1 shall teach thee to play, and thou shalt be a great musician!"

And after that, every day when her work was done, she would run down to the little cottage, and he would teach her how to handle the bow and the strings, and how to play from music; and he played her accompaniments on an old cottage piano.

He told her to call him Draoûl Dras.

One evening, on the day she was seventeen, she finished playing to him an adaptation of one of Beethoven's symphonies for piano and violin, and he sat silent for some moments.

Then, suddenly, “Little one! Wilt thou be my wife, and I will bring thee out into the world? Come with me. I had thought my life and glory were finished, but thou shalt make them live. Never has the world heard such execution, such fire, and sweetness, and mellowness!” Her young heart was all wrapped up in her music, but had not he given her that music? “Thou shalt rule the world with a bow for a sceptre, and Stradivarius for a throne. Come with me, little angel!”

She answered “Yes.” A new world was opened before her.

He sank back into his chair. “I am tired, my heart is weak; I become too excited. Oh, little angel, child Martha, we shall rule the world together, we two, through the strength of music. Come, lay the old Strad by, thou must be going. Good night, little one, thou shalt be Queen.”

Next morning he was found dead in his chair, beside him his beloved Stradivarius, and on it a piece of paper, on which was written, “For the little angel; her sceptre, to rule the world.”

“Heart disease,” the doctor said. It was a great loss for Martha, but she could bear it — she had the Stradivarius. So the time passed on till she was nineteen, and then there came to the village a great musician, to recruit his health.

He heard Martha play, one day, as he passed her parents’ cottage. He went in, and she played to him, and he offered to take her out into the great world, to London. But her parents did not wish it. They were ordinary, steady-going folk, who called music “trash” and their daughter “demented;” they did not believe in all the great musician told them of London and of the money Martha would earn. They had in view for her an excellent “parti” [marital match] — one Jem Saunders, a mill-hand, who was in receipt of excellent wages and had “prospects,” and was very much enamoured of Martha, although he too called her music “trash.” Martha had liked him well enough before the musician came, but now — ah, now!

“Martha! Have you done those potatoes?”

“Yes, mother.” The weary expression settled on her face again, and she went in to set the table for tea. In the evening Jem came, and tallied awkwardly about the early spring and the crops.

“I’ll play to you, Jem,” she said suddenly.

“Will you not talk, Marty?”

“I’m done talking; I’ll go fetch my violin.”

She stood in the old kitchen, with its red-tiled floor and wide chimney. A bright fire lit up the dusky room. Her father and mother sat on either side of the hearth, the latter with her knitting. Ben was whittling something outside. Jem sat by the table. The fire-light flickered on the girl's face and chin and throat, lighting up her hands and the violin.

She played a wild, weird melody, which came from the very inmost recesses of her inspiration. Slow at first, like a funeral march, sad, and in a minor key. Then louder and quicker, in triplets first and then arpeggios; louder, louder, quicker, quicker, hurrying, rushing, rising, agitato, wilder and wilder; then suddenly it fell into a sweet, penetrating minor melody — first simple, then with delicate variations; voices singing, footsteps pattering, but all with that touch of sweet sadness. It stopped suddenly on a pizzicato note — a rest — then suddenly, in a major key, a wild, mad, triumphant dance, laughter and song, tinkling of glasses, the sounds of a brass band, all mingling — in the midst of it all a scream. Then the first melody mingled with the wild exultation until it devoured it; it died back into the solemn funeral strains, then changed once more from minor to major — a wild shout of joy, sweet, singing jubilation like angels' voices, rising and falling like a bell, now all the melodies seemed to mingle and be weaved in one. Above all sounded the angels' song. It ended in one clear, triumphant note of wild exultation.

Silence fell. Nothing but a plain, round-shouldered, insignificant girl in a cotton dress, holding a bit of hollow wood strung with catgut.

"Well," said [her father] Hopkins' voice, breaking the silence, "I can't see as how you can make head or tail of that, my girl. It's all noise, as what I can see."

"It was beautiful," called Ben, from the yard.

"Very pretty," said Jem.

"Martha, if you're going to do *that* all your life, you're not my daughter," said her mother.

"Marty," pleaded Jem, "will you come for a walk with me on the common? There's a full moon to-night. Do come, Martha."

"Go, lass," said her father.

"Yes, I'll just put away my violin."

In a few moments Martha was out on the common, on Jem's arm. He broke the silence by suddenly bursting out with — "You know why I've asked ye to come, Marty — it's just to ask you, is it 'yes' or 'no'?"

"Please, Jem," she said, timidly, "don't ask mc now. I don't know what to say, Jem." Her voice faltered.

"Listen, Marty. I've waited three years for you, and I'll wait another three, if I must. But I'm just going to get an advance at the mill, and we might take that little cottage as old Dras was in — you remember?"

"Ay, Jem." Before she went to bed she took the violin out of its case and kissed its ivory pegs, and stroked it lovingly before she laid it down.

Next morning, on her way back from market, her mother stopped at the house where the musician was staying, and asked to see him. Then she performed what she always considered the great "coup" of her life.

"That'll have settled it," she thought, as she trudged home, her basket heavy on her arm. "I said as she'd made up her mind to marry an honest man, and leave London alone. I'll see to it as she no gives Jem 'nay' for an answer."

When she got home she told her daughter of what she had done, a triumphant glow diffusing her rubicund countenance. To her astonishment, Martha — the meek Martha — turned round savagely upon her.

"Mother! you never said that! It's a lie! I *am* going, and I *shall* go — so, there! I'll go and tell him now, just now! Mother, you'll kill me between you! What have I ever done to be so worrited [troubled]?"

"What have I done to have a demented hussy of a daughter?" demanded her parent.

"Done! you've done nothing to make me any happier, mother; you want me to do as you say, and say it's for my happiness. I tell you I'm going to London. I must, I must," she panted and gasped, "I'm going to tell him so, now, I'm going — " She took her bonnet off the peg, and started, almost at a run.

"He's out — the girl said as he'd be out all afternoon," reflected her mother, looking after the retreating figure, "so she may tell the four walls of his room. Impudent hussy!" But as she bustled round, setting her table for the midday meal, it occurred to her that the musician would come back [to his room], and then all her work might be undone. "Little fool, she'll go back, like enough, till she finds him in. Now, if I get rid of that old fiddle of hers, she'll soon get over her silly fit."

She went up into the little room and opened the violin-case. There lay the Strad, rare and precious, nestling on the blue lining of the case. With a rough hand, she took out the friend that her daughter treated so tenderly. "Well!" she ejaculated, as she looked at it, "I can't understand the hussy. A dirty old bit of wood with two holes in it, and some old string — all going to powder, too, I declare! It'll be a blessing to burn it. She need never know; she'll think as 'twas stolen. And these here pegs, what're they for? Well, well! The girl's demented! That old man bewitched her, I'll be bound. Folks do say as he was a wizard, or such like."

So soliloquising, she went into the kitchen, and — O, desecration! — threw the masterpiece upon the open hearth. Presently Martha came in, and walked hurriedly through, without glancing at her mother, who stood before the fire. The ripe wood had well caught, and was in a blaze, when suddenly the kitchen door was thrust open, and Martha rushed in.

"Mother, where's my Stradivarius?"

Her mother did not reply, but something in her daughter's white face frightened her. A flame sprang up from the burning wood. The girl saw it, and thrust her mother aside. Then she saw the ivory pegs licked by the flame. Without a word she snatched from the fire the charred remains of what had been a masterpiece, now only a bit of burnt wood, and with it in her apron went to the door. As she went out, she turned to her mother a face that even that unimpressionable woman could never forget.

"Mother, I curse you!"

The woman stood alone in the kitchen, staring at the door where, a moment before, her daughter had stood.

"I curse you." The words sounded horrible to her. She sat down, trembling, looking straight before her, stupidly. Presently, wiping her eyes, she rose, and went with a heavy step up to Martha's little room. She knocked. There was no answer. The woman's heavy underlip trembled as she knocked again, this time saying, tremulously, "Marty!" No answer. "Marty, girl! Open to your mother!" Still nothing but the twittering of the birds outside. "I'll break open the door." She waited, it was not opened from within, and she carried out her threat.

Martha was lying, face downwards, on the little folding-bed. Her mother advanced on tiptoe, her eyes red, the corners of her mouth drooping.

"Marty! 'Twas for your good, girl. Say, now, as you'll marry Jem, and live in the little cottage, and forget this nonsense, and make us all happy. Come, do it, now." She wound one arm coaxingly round the girl.

"Mother! My violin!"

"You'll have little children instead of an old violin, Marty, dear. Come, dear Marty, don't disappoint us all. Jem will come this evening; say 'yes' to him."

"Very well, mother. 'Tain't no good, now my violin's gone."

In the evening Jem came to tea, and after tea, as they sat round the hearth, he said, "Play us something, will you, Marty?"

"Marty ain't going to do that nonsense no more, eh, Marty?" said her mother in triumph. "Now's your chance, Jemmy!"

Martha's heart-strings tightened. Her whole soul was overflowing with furious, melancholy music in a minor key. It must be hushed for ever now. Her Stradivarius — oh, her violin!

"Well, Marty, have you got your answer?" asked the young man.

"Yes, Jem."

"It's 'yes,' then, truly, Marty?"

"Ye-es, Jem."

How they all rejoiced there in the firelight. Martha's face was like a white, freckled mask.

"You don't seem happy," whispered her lover.

"Yes, Jem, I'm very happy."

And the following week the great musician went away; and that is how the world lost a rare and a great genius.