

coming," she said, beginning to brush out her long, thick tresses. "What is the anthem like?"

"Oh, beautiful, exceedingly! But, Frieda, what is distressing you? You surely weren't crying?" She threw herself at her friend's feet, and clasped her round the waist. But the girl did not respond; she still kept her face veiled with her hair. "Frieda, do please tell me, dear?"

For answer she threw herself down on the cushions and burst into tears. Her body shook with the violence of her sobs, and nothing Jenny could do would draw an explanation from her. At last she rose, and knotting up her dishevelled hair, went into the adjoining room without a word to Jenny. A spasm of pain crossed the girl's face; she divined only too well the cause of her friend's tears.

For eighteen months she had shared her all with Frieda Gooltdire, a fellow-student for whom she had conceived an ardent admiration, which on closer acquaintance ripened into affection. Frieda was her senior by a few years, a girl who resembled her in one respect only, that she was without relatives in the wide cold world. Affluence had indeed smoothed the lonely path for Jenny, but for Frieda it had been one long uphill struggle, until after much persuasion she had consented to share Jenny's home with her. And their life had been a happy one. But in this garden of Paradise lurked a serpent, which worked mischievously, instilling poison into its sweetest joys. To-night, in Jenny's absence, it had been stealthily at work.

In the afternoon the girls had sat over their tea-cups chatting, their hearts open without reserve to one another. Then Frieda took her Shakespeare, and in her mellow voice read their daily portion from the immortal poet. After which they sat for awhile in silence, Frieda with her arms round the other's slight frame, and her cheek against the girl's soft hair. A footfall in the quiet court below aroused Jenny.

"That is Dr. Lunn, I do believe, Frieda, and I must be gone."

She sprang lightly to the window and peered out. In a very short time she was hastening after him, and Frieda stood in the window watching them till the cathedral door swung to behind them. Then she threw herself on the sofa and inhaled the jasmine scent, while she waited till the music of the organ should reach her through the open windows. Presently the low sweet sound floated to her, and she breathed it in with a sigh of satisfaction. Then came like an angel's voice the notes of the young soprano. The May winds carried the sound to and fro. One moment it rushed in full and complete, the next it was wafted away again till it was a faint echo. Then it was that the serpent came and instilled poison into the girl's ears, so that the burst of pure music became a torture instead of a joy to her. Why, with all her labour and incessant study, could she not acquire the art her friend seemed to have without either? Why, with all her knowledge of music, of its science and literature, and with her full contralto, could she not sing? Her nature was not one easily overcome by difficulties. She plodded heroically on, stimulated by work as by a tonic, and seeing success in the horizon of the future. Only at times, when she heard Jenny's divine voice filled with soul, her heart misgave her, and jealousy cast a black shadow over her friendship. But rarely did she give way as she had done to-night. The intensity of her longing had reached too painful a climax to be endured silently. Jenny had never before seen her friend in tears, though her morbid moods were not unfrequent.

After the repulse she had received, Jenny sat for awhile by the open window gazing

with dim eyes on the quiet square, silvered with the moonbeams, and with the shadow of the cathedral spire across it. It was a rare May night, with warm breezes off the Severn and overhead a transparent summer sky. As she sat there the music of the anthem kept ringing in her ears, then with a sudden impulse she rose, and, opening the piano, began softly to play the accompaniment. It all seemed to come like a familiar song, though she had never seen the score. Presently she began to sing. In the dim twilight her glorious voice sounded ethereal, heavenly.

"O satisfy us in the morning with Thy mercy."

She sang on with heart and soul, and her song was a prayer. When she rose she found Frieda standing in the doorway, with her dark hair falling over her white nightgown. Her inmost being was moved with the music, and there was no room in her soul for sordid envy. Jenny stole to her side, and in a moment a pair of strong womanly arms encircled her and a cloud of hair covered her.

"Jenny, forgive me—pity me."

"Oh, Frieda, I would gladly give you my voice if I could."

"You little thing!" exclaimed Frieda, and her voice quavered. "If you only knew how unworthy I am of such love, Jenny," she added, with sudden earnestness. "Don't love me so much."

"And whom am I to love if not you, dearest?"

"Yourself—your voice."

"Frieda!" the clear voice rang out scornfully.

"You, dear child, you are so different from me!" exclaimed the other, as she drew her into the room and closed the door.

A month later and the scene was changed. The cathedral tower, with its quaint old world life, its river and jasmine scent, seemed like a dream of beauty amid the whirl of a London season. In a pretty study the two girls were at work, Frieda at her desk with her head buried in music scores, Jenny, looking pale and fragile, practising her scales at a beautiful semi-grand. The room was tastefully furnished, with etchings of famous pictures on the walls, and the windows were filled with blossoms. A bookcase, a music cabinet and the girls' writing-tables lent an air of serious study to the dainty sitting-room.

Presently Jennie ceased singing and rose from the piano. As the morning light fell full on her face, the dark shadows under the eyes, and the lines of suffering round the fresh young mouth became painfully apparent.

"Frieda, I am going out," she said, glancing half nervously at her friend.

"Going out at this hour!" exclaimed the girl, looking up from her work. "Why, it isn't ten yet. You don't go to the academy till twelve, and you have only practised fifteen minutes."

"I know; but I think the air might do me good, I don't feel very brilliant."

Frieda eyed her keenly.

"No, you don't look it. Shall I go with you?" she said, glancing reluctantly at her work.

Jenny caught the glance.

"No, certainly not," she said; "I am quite equal to going alone."

"But I am willing," continued Frieda, with a lingering hand on her pen.

The girl laughed and shook her head.

In a little while she was speeding away to Harley Street in aansom. She had been suffering so much of late that she felt compelled to consult a physician. Frieda was too absorbed in her work to give much heed to aught else. At times Jenny's pale face would arrest her attention, and she would anxiously inquire after her health and urge her to rest

more. But as a rule Jenny went her way suffering and unheeded because uncomplaining.

When the girl stood in the consulting-room of the great physician, her heart began to fail her and her ailments seemed to dwindle into mere toothaches. The room was cool and dark after the glaring heat of the streets, and her eyes sought in vain amongst the shadows for the oracle in his shrine. Then a deep voice said kindly—

"My dear, you look very ill, can I help you?"

A flood of colour rushed to the girl's face, and the tears welled up in her eyes. She saw a venerable grey head above her and a pair of small keen eyes, which seemed to shed beams of tenderness pity on her. As if in a dream, cool drops of fragrant water seemed blown by a soft wind on her face. But the kind eyes shone like beacon lights through it all. Then the dream vanished, and she found herself on the floor with her dress loosened at the throat and the great physician bending over her.

"You poor child," he said, stroking the hair on her bare head, from which the hat had been removed. After a little she was sufficiently herself again to describe to him her sufferings and to undergo an examination.

"And you are able to sing in this; it does not affect your voice?" he asked.

"No, it never interferes with my voice in any way. It is often a great relief to sing."

"Would you mind singing a few bars of some song, my child. I have no piano in the room. Perhaps you can manage without."

"Certainly," replied the girl, without shyness, for it came as naturally to her to sing as to speak. She thought for one moment, and then the music of one of Wagner's melodies came to her. She sang it well in spite of her weakness, and the old physician sat spellbound. Then he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"My dear," he said "we must try to save that beautiful voice."

"Why, Sir Arthur, do you think I shall lose it?" she asked, in a startled tone.

"No, my child, I don't think you will lose it until you lose life itself," and he turned to his desk with a shadow on his face. But the girl did not see him, and she sighed aloud with relief. Then he handed her the prescription, and said, "Remember all I have told you; fulfil my orders faithfully, and I shall see what can be done with you, my dear."

She thanked him and drew out her purse, but he put out his hand and snapped to the clasps.

"No, no, my dear, we never take fees from artists."

"But I am hardly an artiste yet, and besides I am able," pleaded the girl.

He smiled but shook his head. "I won't hear of it, my dear. In a fortnight's time you come again."

She looked into his fatherly eyes and felt her orphanage more acutely than ever yet. "Thank you," she faltered. He took her himself to the hall-door and saw her comfortably ensconced in a two-wheeler, while a row of crested carriages stood waiting for the quity which was within, impatiently expecting a summons to the great man's consulting-room.

That evening she confessed to Frieda her secret journey of the morning.

"Well, Jenny, I do think you might have trusted me enough to let me accompany you. You do everything for me and never give me a chance of doing the least thing for you," exclaimed the girl passionately.

"Forgive me, Frieda, but I was half afraid I might be imagining ill—that they were nothing to what many people endured. I was afraid the doctor might laugh at me, and you understand I would rather he did so alone," she added naively. "But you will have plenty