

absence of affectation that it was impossible either to smile or to take offence at them. Helen regarded him gravely.

"There were two or three superb concerts this winter. I thought of you. I wished you had come in—"

"Did you take that trouble?" he asked eagerly.

"I don't think I ever heard Schubert played better in my life," she went on, without noticing the interruption. "Schoeffelowski does do the Serenade divinely."

"I used to care for that more than for any other music in the world, I think," he answered slowly.

"I play poorly," said Helen, "and I sing worse, and the piano is rented of a Windover schoolgirl. But I have got some of his rendering by heart—if you would care for it."

"It is plain," replied Bayard, flushing, "that I no longer move in good society. It did not even occur to me to ask you. I should enjoy it—it would rest me more than anything I can think of. Not that that matters, of course—but I should be more grateful than it is possible for you to understand."

Helen went to the piano without ado, and began to sing the great serenade. She sang with a certain sumptuous delicacy (if the words may be conjoined) by which Bayard found himself unexpectedly moved. He sat with his hand over his eyes, and she sang quite through.

"Komm beglücke mich?
Komm beglücke mich!"

Her voice sank, and ceased. What tenderness! What strength! What vigour and hope and joy, and—forbid the thought!—what power of loving, the woman had!

"Some lucky fellow will know, some day," thought the devotee. Aloud he said nothing at all. Helen's hands lay on the keys; she, too, sat silent. It was beginning to grow dark in the cottage parlour. The long, lace curtain blew straight in, and towards her; as it dropped, it fell about her head and shoulders, and caught there; it hung like a veil; in the dim light it looked like—

She started to her feet and tossed it away.

"Oh!" he breathed, "why not let it stay? Just for a minute! It did nobody any harm."

"I am not so sure of that," thought Helen. But what she said was:

"I will light the candles."

"Do you want me to 'thank you'?" asked Bayard in a low voice.

"No," said Helen.

"I must go," he said abruptly.

"Mother will be back," observed Helen, not at her ease. "And father may come home any minute."

"Very well," replied Bayard, seating himself.

"Not that I would keep you!" suggested Helen suddenly.

He smiled a little sadly, and this time unexpectedly rose again.

"I don't expect you to understand, of course. But I really ought to go. And I am going."

"Very well," said Helen stiffly, in her turn.

"I have a—something to write, you see," explained Bayard.

"You don't call it a sermon any more, do you? How delicious! Do go and write it, by all means."

"You are not a dull woman," observed Bayard uncomfortably. "You don't for an instant suppose I want to go? If I stay, will you sing the Serenade to me—all over again?"

"Not one bar of it!" replied Helen promptly.

"You are the wiser of us two," said Bayard, after a pause.

"I am not a free man," he added.

"Return to your chains and your cell," suggested Helen. "It is—as you say—the better way."

"I said nothing of the kind! Pardon me."

"Didn't you? It does not signify. It doesn't often signify what people say—do you think?"

"Are you coming to see my people—the work? You said you would, you know. Shall I call and take you, some day?"

"Do you think it matters—to the drunkards?"

"Oh, well," said Bayard, looking disappointed, "never mind."

"But I do mind," returned Helen, in her full, boylike voice. "I want to come. And I'm coming. I had rather come, though, than be taken. I'll turn up some day in the anxious seat when you don't expect me. I'll wear a veil, and an old poke bonnet—yes, and a blanket shawl—and confess. I defy you to find me out!"

"Miss Carruth," said the young preacher with imperiousness, "my work is not a parlour charade."

Helen looked at him. Defiance and deference battled in her brown eyes; for that instant, possibly, she could have hated or loved him with equal ease; she felt his spiritual superiority