

MISS ROSSITER'S IDEAL.

Miss Rossiter sat alone in the library, gazing rather pensively into the fire. When the servant came with the lights she had sent him away, saying that she preferred sitting by the fire light, and now she leaned back luxuriously in her great easy chair, preparatory to the rather unusual indulgence of an introspective mood.

She could not be called introspective as a general thing, for she was far too busy with charities, flower missions, Tolstoi clubs, church and society in all their fullness, to allow herself the popular fad of self-analysis; and then there was Tom Rossiter, she had been engaged to Tom for nearly a year.

He was a dear good fellow, and was succeeding so well in his business, and yet—well, she was vaguely conscious that she had not been as deeply disappointed as an engaged girl should be, when she had received his note that day telling her he had been out of town unexpectedly and might not be able to return in time to see her that evening as he had planned.

She wondered it, after all, she did love him as she should.

She sighed a little and determined to allow herself the pleasure of feeling rather miserable upon this subject.

Tom was a dear, she thought, but it is only had a little more love and appreciation for the things she cared for.

Not that he was not all love and appreciation for her, she admitted to herself, for she knew that he considered her the very loveliest and cleverest girl in the world; still there was no denying that Tom was rather slow sometimes and so practical. She remembered how at the art exhibition they had stopped before a picture of the Impressionist school that it was the thing to admire. To be quite honest, she was not entirely sure whether she really understood and admired it herself, but she had heard so much talk about it from people whose judgment she held to be entirely above criticism that she had at last persuaded herself that to her, too, it was replete with life and meaning.

At any rate it was annoying to have Tom look at her in undisguised amazement as she praised its virtues, and to hear him exclaim: "That dabb! You surely don't admire that?" But then he was so penitent when she had explained it to him, and even if he did not understand, it was pleasant to hear him say: "You are the cleverest girl, Nan. I often wonder how you can care for a fellow whose only pretense to good taste is his love for you!" She remembered how, a few weeks ago, at a symphony concert, she had looked into Tom's face to see if in some degree he did not feel the joy of the music that flooded her soul.

He was fond of music, in his way, but he was candid enough to confess that a bright, pleasing bit of light opera brought far more pleasurable emotions to him than the most soulful melodies of the great masters.

On this particular occasion Miss Rossiter remembered that he had returned her rapt expression with one of anxiety, and had murmured tenderly: "What is it darling? Are you sitting in a draught?"

Oh, dear, it was always draughts, or something equally annoying to her. She wondered if she could choose for herself, what her ideal would be like.

She pictured to herself several types of her own creation finally wavering between a dreamy Burne Jones figure and a hero of the Chevalier Bayard type, so dear to most women. Then she remembered Tom's vigorous personality would persist in mixing itself up with her brain portraits until they were such a bad composition that in despair she gave up the personal appearance of her ideal.

Not that she cared so much for looks, she said to herself, but how pleasant it would be to have a lover who understood my every thought, who anticipated every wish, and who would know what I was about to say before the words were formed, whose knowledge was boundless, and whose soul would be in touch with all that was good and true and beautiful.

Oh, if she could but see such a one, she thought to herself, how she could unburden her soul to him.

Conversation would be a rapture, and how absorbing, how elevating, life with such a one would be! Just at this point in her reveries Miss Rossiter—who rather prided herself upon her "altness" under the most surprising and trying circumstances—gave a sudden start and exclamation.

She rubbed her eyes, and gave herself a little pinch to see if she could be dreaming. No, she was wide awake, and in the easy chair near her sat a man, a stranger to her.

Strange to say, she felt neither alarmed nor embarrassed, and after the moment of surprise at this sudden visitation she stole another look at her unexpected companion, who was gazing intently into the fire.

He was rather tall and slender, and his regular features and dark dreamy eyes were pleasant to look upon.

She had a vague impression of familiarity as she watched him, and a haunting resemblance to someone, perhaps a mere brain image, puzzled her.

Just then he turned toward her and smiled slightly.

"I do not wonder that you like to sit here," he said in courteous accents; "it is a pleasant room and gratifies one's esthetic sense. You like to watch the fire light glimmer through the room, now playing upon the gilt of the picture frames, or suddenly lighting for a moment some dusky corner; but, best of all, you like to watch the warm glow leap over that mumble 'Psyché.' You have a passion for color?"

"Yes," she said wonderingly; "but how did you know? Who are you?"

"There is no thought of yours that I do not know," he said; "and I came here in response to your wish. I am your long-lost friend, Miss Rossiter."

Miss Rossiter was silent for a moment and sat vainly trying to recall the theories that Herr Gundlach had advanced before the German club concerning kindred souls and affinities. If she remembered rightly he had seen that each soul had a kindred soul, but that sometimes these were limitators of time and space which in another world—but just here the stranger interrupted her thought by saying:

"Yes, that is true, but sometimes, under peculiar conditions, as to-night, time and space are as nothing and so it is that I am with you now."

He ceased speaking. Surely it was the opportunity of Miss Rossiter's life for unbounded soul revelations, but odd to relate, she felt strangely silent.

A number of naturally curious questions flitted through her brain, but she checked her thoughts a little guiltily, as it occurred to her that in all probability the stranger was cognizant of her thoughts, and might consider her inquisitive.

"No," he remarked politely, "I am not permitted to reveal the laws which govern me, nor can I tell how long I may be able to remain with you."

Then he really did not know what she was thinking.

She had never imagined how very perplexing it would be to constantly control one's thoughts; to put a check rein on them to quote Tom's language.

Now Tom had a special weakness for a dainty slipper, as she well knew, and forgetting for a moment that it was not Tom who sat there she looked up in apparent unconsciousness of any little feminine art, only to meet an amused smile in the stranger's eyes.

"Yes, most men like to see a pretty slipper," he commented benevolently. "A velvet ribbon placed ribbon, a flower in the hair, are to many arrows to the masculine heart. Little in the dream of the time and thought that have been given to what is called to them some unconscious little arrangement."

Miss Rossiter flushed angrily, and drew her foot back with a jerk. Really, this thing of laying bare one's every little thought was too much, and yet was it not exactly what she had wished for—to be perfectly understood?

Perhaps if she tried books the conversation might become more animated.

The stranger followed her glance as it rested on a small table near her, where several books were lying.

"You have been reading," he remarked. Ah, yes, I see—I see, Browning, Tolstoi, He smiled a little wearily.

"You, of course, have read them all," said Miss Rossiter, a little shyly, for she happened to think that "boundless knowledge" was one of her wished-for ideals attributes.

"Oh, yes," he answered. "You do not quite know which of you quite care for Tolstoi or not, do you?"

Now, this was indeed true, but as the president of an Ibsen club Miss Rossiter had never before faced the fact.

Still, she was a clever girl and accustomed to being looked up to as quite an authority in literary matters by her own special circle. Had not Dunning Jones, the most successful journalist in the city, told someone that Miss Rossiter was a very interesting girl, well read and up in everything? But before she could reply the stranger interrupted her once more, saying:

For the first time in her life the self-possessed, cultivated Miss Rossiter felt shy, crude and ignorant. She was really a

space are as nothing and so it is that I am with you now."

He ceased speaking. Surely it was the opportunity of Miss Rossiter's life for unbounded soul revelations, but odd to relate, she felt strangely silent.

A number of naturally curious questions flitted through her brain, but she checked her thoughts a little guiltily, as it occurred to her that in all probability the stranger was cognizant of her thoughts, and might consider her inquisitive.

"No," he remarked politely, "I am not permitted to reveal the laws which govern me, nor can I tell how long I may be able to remain with you."

Then he really did not know what she was thinking.

She had never imagined how very perplexing it would be to constantly control one's thoughts; to put a check rein on them to quote Tom's language.

Now Tom had a special weakness for a dainty slipper, as she well knew, and forgetting for a moment that it was not Tom who sat there she looked up in apparent unconsciousness of any little feminine art, only to meet an amused smile in the stranger's eyes.

"Yes, most men like to see a pretty slipper," he commented benevolently. "A velvet ribbon placed ribbon, a flower in the hair, are to many arrows to the masculine heart. Little in the dream of the time and thought that have been given to what is called to them some unconscious little arrangement."

Miss Rossiter flushed angrily, and drew her foot back with a jerk. Really, this thing of laying bare one's every little thought was too much, and yet was it not exactly what she had wished for—to be perfectly understood?

Perhaps if she tried books the conversation might become more animated.

The stranger followed her glance as it rested on a small table near her, where several books were lying.

"You have been reading," he remarked. Ah, yes, I see—I see, Browning, Tolstoi, He smiled a little wearily.

"You, of course, have read them all," said Miss Rossiter, a little shyly, for she happened to think that "boundless knowledge" was one of her wished-for ideals attributes.

"Oh, yes," he answered. "You do not quite know which of you quite care for Tolstoi or not, do you?"

Now, this was indeed true, but as the president of an Ibsen club Miss Rossiter had never before faced the fact.

Still, she was a clever girl and accustomed to being looked up to as quite an authority in literary matters by her own special circle. Had not Dunning Jones, the most successful journalist in the city, told someone that Miss Rossiter was a very interesting girl, well read and up in everything? But before she could reply the stranger interrupted her once more, saying:

For the first time in her life the self-possessed, cultivated Miss Rossiter felt shy, crude and ignorant. She was really a



very superior young woman, of lofty aims and ideals, but, being a very human and very charming person, she had her little limitations, all of which she would have confessed to you with refreshing candor.

Still she could not help wondering for a moment if life with a person who "thoroughly understood" her would, after all, be as helpful as life with someone whose love exaggerated her virtues and blinded him to her defects.

As she sat to her most intimate friend afterwards: "It never occurred to me before just how many of my so-called virtues were called out just because Tom thought I possessed them."

"You see, that touched me so, the implicit confidence in me, that I would implicitly proceed to cultivate all my supposed good qualities, so that I might keep my place in Tom's regard with greater satisfaction to myself."

This might refer to, however, she did not allow herself to so distinctly formulate the thought.

Once more she turned the conversation to books, to art and music. But what plea could there be in a conversation where the other party concerned knew before she spoke all that she would say. He even in his direct apology once for anticipating her.

"I cannot help it, you see," he said. "I came in answer to your wish, burdened with the confessions it imposed upon me. 'It does make conversation awkward, I admit, but we may as well make the best of it, for I am powerless to leave you, unless—'"

"Unless what?" said Miss Rossiter with more of the 'speed' the parting guest' her tone than was consistent with true politeness, but the stranger only smiled and looked once more into the fire.

A series of injury commenced to rankle in Miss Rossiter's mind. "And all because of a foolish wish, that I have heard a dozen girls make, my life is to be spoiled in this way," she thought. Perhaps Tom would not have loved her so deeply had he really understood her.

The past tense of that last thought sent a pang through her heart. Was she always to be tied to this dreadful mind reader of a realist ideal.

She supposed the only thing for her to do was to live upon such a high plane that she need not object or fear to be as a printed page for him to read.

And yet, oh, the weariness of the idea!

No more half severe, half coquettish lectures to Tom on his stupidity, always ending in increased adoration on his part, and increased affection on hers, for it always pleased her fancy, after having firmly established her claim to idealship in Tom's mind, to be so extremely gracious and penitently affectionate that the "large and appreciative audience of one," as Tom remarked, went home happy.

But all these old, happy times were over, she thought.

Such a deep pity for herself filled Miss Rossiter's mind that the great tears gathered in her eyes, and she had escaped from beneath the long lashes and was slowly rolling down her cheek, when two strong arms suddenly enfolded her and a sympathetic voice, Tom's voice, was saying: "What in the world are you dreaming about, you poor dear?"

Now Miss Rossiter was not as a rule wildly demonstrative, but upon this occasion her manner was warm enough to gratify the most ardent lover.

She clung to Tom, as if he had just been rescued from some dreadful calamity, and she feared to lose him again, and when he begged her to tell him what was the matter, that he "didn't understand," she exclaimed rather hysterically: "Oh, it is the beauty of it! I don't want you to understand, Tom, dear, and I'm so glad you don't. I don't think I ever care to be understood again. It was only a dream, and he's gone, thank goodness, but you never can know how I suffered."

Tom looked deeply puzzled at these seemingly random and incoherent remarks, but at her express desire forbore questioning her. Whatever it was she had dreamed the effect produced was that he had had a warmer welcome than ever before during their engagement, and he was satisfied.

At the next meeting of the German Club Miss Rossiter, who a few weeks before had read a stirring paper advancing the theory that some time on this earth there would be a golden age, when kindred souls would live in the full delight of realized ideals, read an equally stirring paper combating and utterly contradicting her own pet theories.

On the way home from the club Mrs. Denny, who prided herself on finding the sudden springs which produced action in her friends' minds, suddenly remarked: "Nan Rossiter, you have some reason for

so suddenly changing your mind about those theories of yours?"

"Yes," replied Miss Rossiter, with an inscrutable smile; "I have a reason, but that, as Kipling says, is another story, and one I refuse to tell."—Agnes Brown in Philadelphia Times.

Chinese in Buying Wives.

The Chinese of Australia, when they take a notion to marry, write to matrimonial agents in Hong Kong somewhat as follows: "I want a wife. She must be a maid—under twenty years of age, and must not have left her father's home. She must also have never read a book, and her eye-lashes must be half an inch in length. Her teeth must be sparkling as the pearls of Ceylon, her breath must be like unto the scents of the magnificent odoriferous groves of Java, and her attire must be from the silken weavers of Ka-lu-Ching, which are on the banks of the greatest river in the world—the overhanging Yang-tee-Kiang."

The price of a Chinese or woman delivered in Sydney is \$100, but two Chinese women only cost \$250; therefore, the Chinese import women in couples. The importer never sees the woman before they arrive, and then he generally selects the best one. The other is shown round to a number of well-to-do Chinese, and after they have inspected her she is submitted to what may be called public auction.

Dr. Parkhurst's Views of Theatres.

We commend these remarks of Dr. Parkhurst of New York to his brethren who believe—no doubt honestly—that the theatre is inevitably a short and greased chute to the sulphurous pit: "The theatre I believe in profoundly. As a means of intellectual stimulus and of moral uplift there is nothing with the possible exception of the pulpit, that could stand alongside of it as an engine of personal effort, provided only it would maintain itself in its proper character as the dramatic drama of strength."

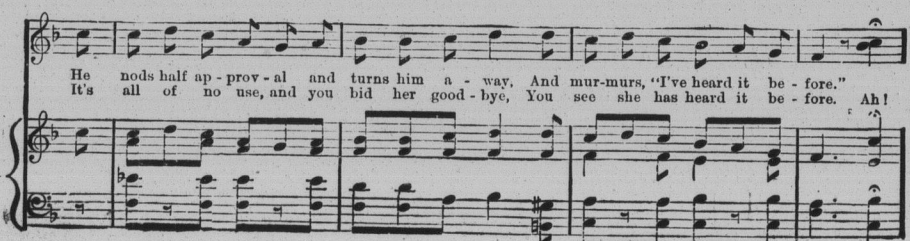
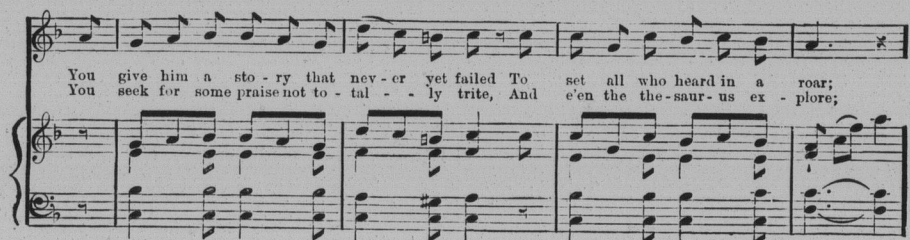
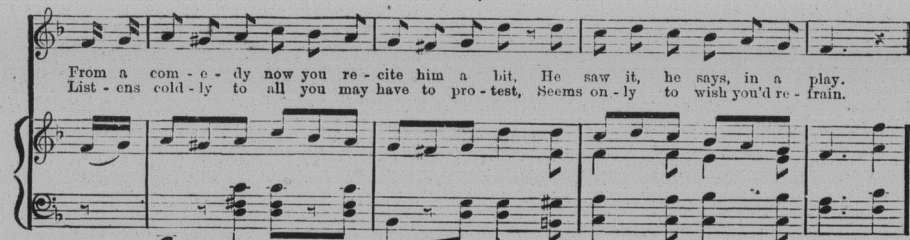
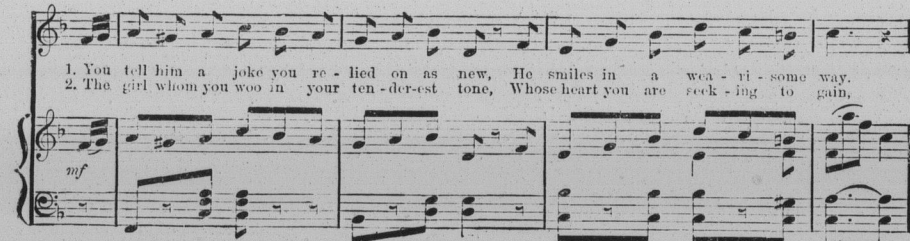
Personally, I would like at least once a week to get out from under the incubus of ordinary obligation and to yield myself intellectually and emotionally to the domination of dramatic power. I could live with a fresher life and could write and speak with a more recuperated vigor, I am sure."—Boston Journal.

THE MAN WHO HEARD IT BEFORE.

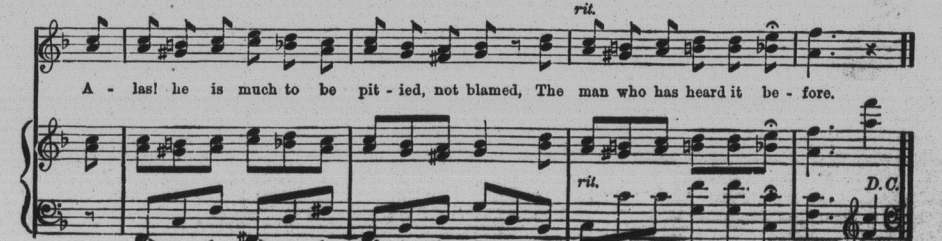
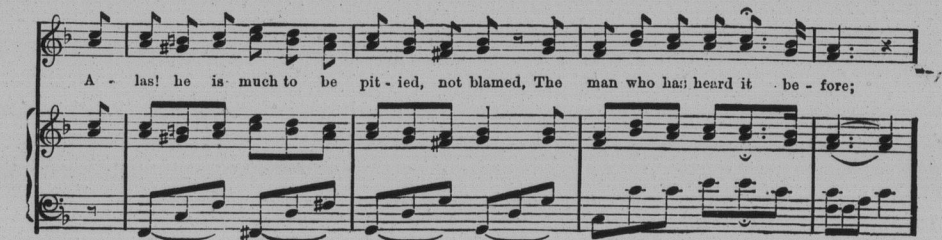
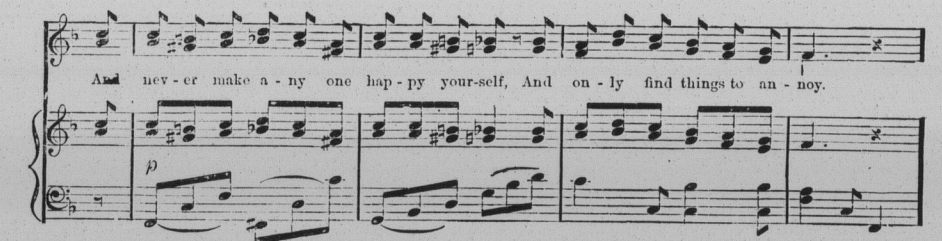
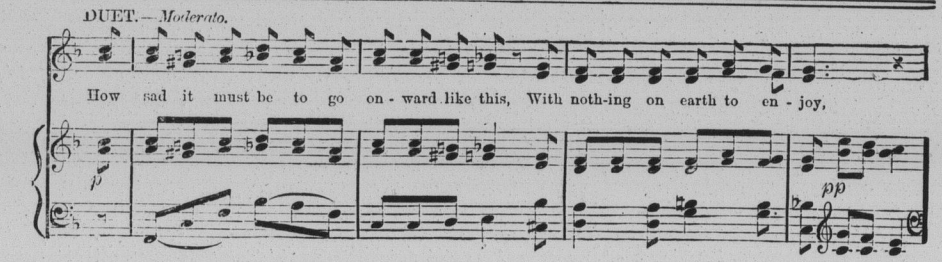
M. W. WALTER.

[SOLO AND DUET.]

EDWARD HOLST.



Copyright, 1896, by The New York Music Record Co.



The Man who heard it before.—B.