

BOYS AND GIRLS

The Lost Voice of Jeanette.

LEGEND OF THE CANARY BIRDS.

A Pretty Apologue of Spiritual Influence.

(John E. Hurlbut, in 'Springfield Republican.')

'Oh, dear me! oh, dear me!' wrote little Jeanette Bethencourt in her diary, 'it will be a dreadful thing to go way off to that rocky island in the ocean, but the king says my dear papa must go and conquer it for the crown; and I must go with him. What could he do without his sweetheart Jeanette?'

'That is myself, for since dear mamma died he calls me his little sweetheart, and tells me every day what a great big comfort I am to him. I tell him how he is a great big comfort to me. My! isn't he?'

'Oh, dear me! oh, dear me! I forgot all about my voice, that everybody says is wonderful. The king told papa that he should have the best musicians in his kingdom teach me until I could sing like an angel. I wonder how the angels do sing. I shall never know if I go way off to that rocky island where there is nobody to teach me. But I must go! I must go! Who would kiss and hug papa, sing for him when he is sad, laugh with him when he is glad? Oh, dear, me! I can't tell half the things I do for dear papa, and he says, "Sweetheart, you are my life, my love." Then, too, I would have everybody know that my papa is a great soldier. When he fights for the king, he always wins. He is a good man, too; he never talks wicked words, as my father confessor says the courtiers do. Nobody must tell this, but the king does when he is angry.'

'Oh, there is nobody in the world like my dear papa, and his little sweetheart must go with him. But—oh, dear me! when I told papa this, he said at first. "No, no! Why my sweetheart would die before she could get to the end of that long voyage on the ocean. Why, sweetheart," and he took me up in his strong arms, as he went on, "Do you know we do not go to play but to fight?" I did not try to answer him, I just hugged him tightly and kissed him ever so many times. Then all at once I thought of how I had seen the actress do on the stage; I jumped out of his arms, put my hand on my heart, and cried out, "Sir! would you break my heart? would you kill me?" Oh, how my papa laughed! He said, "Sweetheart, you shall go! You are a little angel, and I could not live without you."

'Oh, dear me! oh, dear me! I never thought about the king, or that he would mind my going away, but he did. When papa told him about it, he said, "That can never be. The whole court would miss her, and who would train her wonderful voice?" and papa said, His majesty added, with a very solemn look, "God gave your little girl her wonderful voice and she should use it for him."

'I have been thinking of that since dear papa told it to me; I asked my father confessor if God could not use my voice in that far away island if he wanted me to go there. The father did not know what the king had said; he replied, "Yes, my daughter." He told me of a great saint who gave up the glory and the pleasure of the court to go into the wilderness to serve the poor Indians. When I told the king of this, he seemed angry. He said the "father should mind the church and let me mind the court." I was real sorry I said it, then, for the father is so good to me I would not do him any harm for anything. I don't think I have now, for I made the king laugh, and when the king laughs, he is not angry. You see the king said to me when I last

sang for him, "You are the queen of song." I stood up straight then. Putting one hand on my heart, I lifted the other above my head, just as the actresses do, and I said in as deep a tone as I could make my voice speak: "Your majesty says I am the queen of song. The queen must be obeyed. I shall go with my papa." That was what made him laugh, but, dear me, he most cried when he bade me goodbye. We are at last started for that rocky island in a big ship that looked to me like a great bird with wings spread to fly away.

'I have so many presents from the king and the court that papa says I almost need a ship of my own to carry them all. The present I think most of is a lute that my music teacher gave me. I can play on it, and every evening I go on deck with papa and try to make my voice keep time with it. Last night, when I made the strings of the lute to vibrate,—oh, it was so strange! for all at once my voice did so too. The tone seemed to stop right in my throat and then to rise and fall as the white gulls flutter on their wings above the waves. Papa said, "That is wonderful, sweetheart; I never heard a human voice do that before."

'We have been on the island one month. The people who live here first fought against my papa, and I was afraid that they would kill him, but when they saw how good he was they stopped fighting. Now they have made him their ruler and do what he tells them is right. But I began to write in my journal to tell of a wonderful thing that happened yesterday evening.

'There are beautiful birds on this island, yellow as gold, and so tame that they come and sit on my window sill, where they chirp so sweetly, only they can't sing as some of the birds do in France. Last evening, as I was making my voice vibrate, and I can do so now until the whole air seems full of the tones, one little bird I love the best, the one I have named Sweetheart, tried to do so too. After a while he almost did it.

'I had made the tone as easy as I could, when I saw he was trying to imitate it; then I kept repeating it, and Sweetheart tried again until at last it came warbling out of his little throat just as it does out of mine. Oh, it was beautiful! wonderful; and since then the bird has come often, many times indeed every day, when I practice with him, and now he can sing as well as I can. The other birds, his mates, are trying also. Won't it be splendid when they can all sing, and the groves are filled with their wonderful song? I wonder if this is the way God wanted me to use my voice for him?

'It is a year that we have been on the island. I miss the king and the court ever so much, but I find plenty to do, for besides the training of my voice, and the birds, too, I have gone among the poor and sick people and helped them all I could. Then, too, my papa has made the people love him so much that they have been ready to do anything he tells them, and so he has opened a school for their children, and I am the teacher. Just think of that? Why, I am so little that I have to stand up straight to be as tall as some of my scholars. I could do that, but I could not look solemn and grave like father confessor. I tried hard to, and went in to see papa and began to talk to him as I was going to do when I taught the school.

'"Why, Sweetheart," he said, "are you ill?" and he looked so frightened that I felt a little laugh twitching at the corners of my mouth, and before I could stop it, away it went up my face, dimpling my cheeks and dancing in my eyes, and so in spite of myself I was laugh-

ing. When I told papa about it, he said, "Sweetheart, one laugh is worth a dozen cries," and so I laugh in my school, and the children do too, and my! how fast they learn, and how I love them, and my work. Papa says in a few years we shall make them as good and wise as many people in the world.

'I see that I wrote in my journal that I loved this people. That was two weeks ago, but I did not know how much I loved them; I do now because something has happened. The king sent one of his great musicians to see me, and when he heard me sing he said, "Mademoiselle," and he made me a very low bow, "you have a wonderful voice. His majesty, my noble sovereign, will be in ecstasy when he hears you and the court will do you reverence. Honor, wealth, all that you desire, will be yours. You must return with me to France."

'"Ah! but what will my dear papa do without his sweetheart? Can he go, too?" I asked. Then the great musician looked very solemn, just as I tried to look but did not. He did though! My! how solemn! and he made me another low bow. "My royal sovereign, the king, could not spare your honored father, for he could find no one to do his work here with this people." I know all that, and that my papa would never be willing to go, and that I should not either. What is honor and wealth and all that compared to love?—and the people here love me, all the children, the old people too; all of them, ever, ever so much. Why, when they heard that the king wanted to take me away, they came and begged me with tears not to go. One old man said, "Mademoiselle, you are the candle of our land," and an old woman who heard him said, "Candle, father! She is the sun, moon and all the stars." The children too—if they did not say much, they all cried as if their hearts would break, so that we could have no school till I made them laugh and shout by telling them that I should not go away unless the king took me by force. When I said that the big boys shook their fists in the air and said, "No king can do that. We will not let him. We will fight, we will die first."

'When the great musician heard all this, he said, "Alas! Alas! your wonderful voice will be lost to the world, for if one should die, he would not be more out of the world than you are in this lonely, dreary island." I told him it was not lonely to me with all these children and people to help and teach; and it was not dreary, but beautiful, with its ever blooming flowers, its tall trees, and palms that when they waved in the soft breeze seemed to be making a courtesy to me as their queen, its clear flowing streams that I loved to bathe in, and over all, like the great silk parasols the ladies used to carry at court, the sky bright and blue by day, and by night brilliant with stars that shone more brightly than diamonds that decked these ladies when the king gave his state balls.

'"Yes," he answered, "that may be so to you, mademoiselle, because you love the people, but for all that the court of France is the world, and if your voice is lost to that, it is lost to the world."

'Then it came to me in a minute. Why not send the king some of my birds that I have taught to sing, just as I do? That would be my voice singing in their songs. I told the great musician what I thought, and after he found that he could not move my papa nor myself in this thing, though my dear papa—just like him! Oh! he is such a dear, good, kind father! I do not believe any girl ever had a better one,—said, "Sweetheart, should you not obey the king, our sovereign, and go?" At which I felt a little hurt that my papa