

ESPIRITU SANTO

By Henrietta Dan Skinner.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Characters in the story.—Adrien and Theodore Daretto—the former, a young baritone singer, possessing a voice such as only angels are supposed to have. Madame Holstein, the mother of the singer, a great soprano singer. Ramon Eugenio Disler, his father, a professor of mathematics at the Lycee Louis la Grande. Carmelo, a violinist from the Conservatoire. Chapter I.—The Past of Penelope. The church of St. Thomas d'Aquino, Paris. Adrien and Theodore Daretto the singers. The former, Ramon Disler and his daughter, Espirita. The latter, the young boy, the little flower of the stage, who is named, Espirita. Chapter II.—Closer acquaintance of the preceding characters. Casimir goes with the violin to the Opera's tour throughout Europe and the United States. Adrien accompanies him on the first tour. Chapter III.—Adrien finds an old friend, Don Luis de San Roque. Theodore meets Espirita. Chapter IV.—Theodore in his boyish days in love with Espirita. Chapter V.—Madame Delaponte endeavours to persuade Adrien to marry. She leaves. Madame Delaponte leaves Paris for five years. Chapter VI.—Theodore goes to his elder brother, Don Luis. Chapter VII.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter VIII.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter IX.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter X.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XI.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XII.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XIII.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XIV.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XV.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XVI.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XVII.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XVIII.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XIX.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XX.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XXI.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XXII.—Adrien goes to his father's home. Chapter XXIII.—Adrien goes to his father's home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

* There shall be joy before the Angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.—Gospel.

But unalloyed happiness is rare on earth, had even Casimir and Teodoro had their crosses. The first news that greeted Adrien on arriving in Paris was that "Sintram" had been taken out of rehearsal. An opera by a French composer had been substituted, in which Miss Carson had the principal role. The management explained that "Cordelia" had made Miss Carson the rage in Paris and that the public was clamoring for her, and they feared that under the circumstances "Sintram," in which she had no part, would not be well received. Some of the journals stated, however, that the libretto of "Sintram" was a failure, and that the opera stood no chance of success either dramatically or musically. Teodoro had worked himself up to a fine frenzy of indignation over these articles. "The idea," he exclaimed, "of a two penny dilettante like Oglelaire setting himself up to condemn your poetry and Casimir's music, which the greatest artists and critics in Paris have declared to be of the very highest order! Why, some of them just rave over the excerpts that have been privately given. Of course, he is engaged to the little Carson, and it is natural that he should do all that money and newspaper influence can do to push her to the front. But do you know, Adrien, I think he must have some special grudge against you besides?" "Do you think so?" remarked Adrien, indifferently. "Oh, I suppose you refer to those articles that appeared about me last summer. But do not worry, Teo. I do not think he can do me any serious harm." It was true that Daretto's popularity with the general public had suffered no diminution from these insidious attacks on his private character, and among his friends they had aroused only indignation and contempt for the unknown writer. But Adrien had suffered more keenly from them than he was willing to admit to any one but Messignore Lanson. Although his assistant painted him in blacker colors than he deserved, there was still sufficient substratum of truth underlying the accusations to make them practically unanswerable. His humiliation was intense. How could he be in the face of these things, hope to have any influence for good among the youth of Paris? How could he carry on the modest apostleship that his confessor had planned for him? If his life was no longer unworthy, at best it seemed useless enough. But he must not burden Teo with his despondencies, for Teo's reports from the little home that interested him were not encouraging. He too had his burden. Espirita looks so pale and tired," he confided to Adrien. "It is awfully hard for her there. At her grandmother's she managed everything, but of course Disler's wife looks on her as an intruder and does not let her have any authority. The wife is a silly, even vulgar creature, without an idea beyond dress and jewelry and bonbons. Disler provides her with everything she wants, in a desperate sort of way,

even when there almost nothing to eat in the house. I suspect that he knows that she is bound to have these things, and that when he ceases to be able to give them to her she will find some one else who can. It is awfully sad. He feels his terrible mistake, but I cannot help respecting him for bearing it as he does. Sometimes I think he would be tempted to let her go if it were not for the child. It is a sickly little fellow with great pathetic eyes, and he simply adores it. She is just the sort of a mother you would imagine. Oh, it is no place for Espirita; and yet when I tell her so she says, in her angelic way, 'It is worse for my father than it is for me, and I believe that without me the little boy would die.' It is true, and I can have nothing more to say. The poor baby was simply dying of neglect, and she has saved its life and brought it a little bit of sunshine and happiness." Adrien frequently drove out to see Madame Valorge, who confirmed everything that Teodoro said. Now that Disler had once broken the ice he talked freely to his mother-in-law, and she knew even more of his affairs than Espirita. "It is no place for my poor little Espirita," she sighed, "and yet her father is happier for having her there, and the boy is happier and better for her gentle care. Who knows but that may in time win even his vain, selfish woman's heart? But I have little hope of it. Six years of an equivocal position, in which her vanity and extravagance have gone on unchecked, has almost destroyed any spark of witely and womanly feeling in Leonine. Poor Ramon! He had been very, very weak, but he is suffering for it so keenly and yet so patiently that I feel as if his fault were already expiated. I am most anxious about my little girl. It is hard for her to have to see all this." "Poor little Espirita! poor little dove!" murmured Adrien. "No wonder you say it is no place for her! No wonder Teodoro chafes under the necessity of seeing her under this position!" "I see no way out of it at present," sighed Madame Valorge. "But of course her life must not be sacrificed forever—this is a mere temporary expedient, and we may be able before long to devise some better arrangement for this unhappy home." Teodoro was now singing for the first time at the Grand Opera, in the absence of Lemaitre, who had been engaged to sing at Wagner roles at the leading German theatres until the opening of the spring season at Covent Garden. If Adrien had had any doubts as to Teodoro's capacity for heroic roles they were quickly dispelled. The young man seemed born to the part of lyric star, but in tragedy he was transcendent. His very youth and beauty seemed to lend a certain godlike splendor and immortality to his creations. There was a dignity, a maturity, a grandeur about his impersonations of Vasco de Gama and Jean de Leyde and Radames, of Sigurd and Samson and the Cid, that even men of advanced years did not surpass; and through every the whole was the translucent veil of idealism and poetic illusion. Without effort, without apparent study, he seemed in very truth to be the character he was enacting. The noble young voice seemed inexhaustible in volume and range—it whispered in dreamy tenderness that floated into every heart, or it rang out with heroic fire that kindled the spirits of his audience to the white heat of enthusiasm. He flashed into the operatic firmament with meteoric splendor, leaving a trail of glory in the memory of his hearers. Adrien fairly trembled. "It is too perfect, too glorious, for this frail world," he thought, lost in admiration that was almost awe. "It seems as if something must happen." Teodoro appeared not to work as others worked to attain his ends, but he had a method and a teacher that the world at large knew not of, though Adrien knew. The young man simply lived and breathed with his heroes; he put himself in their place, his heart throbbled as theirs had throbbled, he loved and suffered as they loved and suffered. He even knew the passions of hatred and revenge in dream-land, and this dream-land accompanied him everywhere. It was about him when he walked in the streets, when he dined or drove, walking or sleeping. It had been the playground of the gentle, lonely, motherless boy. He lived and breathed in the atmosphere of opera; its heroes were his heroes. History and poetry and tales of adventure contained in his school studies, and the legends of Charlemagne and Orlando, of Rollo and Tancred, of the Round Table and the Holy Grail; the adventures of Herodotus, of Marco Polo, of Vasco de Gama, of Magalhaes and Pizarro; the dramas of Shakespeare, of Schiller, of Racine and Corneille, of Eschylus and Sophocles; the poems of Ariosto, of Tasso, and Alfieri, of Lope de Vega and Calderon, and the tales of Manzoni and Scott—these were the things upon which his childish soul had fed till they were to him realities and the actual world about him an impertinent interruption. By birth and education seven tongues contained of poetry and heroism, were at his command. The language of Spain was that of his nursery; France, that of his boyish studies; German he learned at his Austrian mother's knee, and Italian from the lips of father and brothers before he was able to read. English, Greek, Latin had formed part of the curriculum of his school studies, and he had acquired them with an astonishing facility aided by the fascination their literature had for him. Hand in hand with imagination he had trod the heavenly figure of music. Every vision of chivalry, every tale of adventure, was wedded in the boyish mind to the tones of Casimir's piano, of Savorio's violin, or of Adrien's rich and manly voice. He had heard only the best, he had nothing to unlearn. Casimir had spoken to him of wondrous harmony and beautiful modulations, Savorio had illustrated the exquisite workmanship of a perfect techniquo,

Adrien had formed the singer, and from the time he had first piped a childish treble, Teodoro had never known what it was to do otherwise than phrase musically, breathe properly, and place his hands correctly. When the voice of manhood developed he had nothing more to learn. The rules of art were his own; the leading operas he knew by heart, even in their most difficult instrumentalities; and the fire of his own genius was ready to flame forth when the torch of opportunity should be applied. All these had been his teachers, and there was yet another—the gentle figure of a young girl living in a shabby fourth-floor apartment in an unfashionable quarter of the city, toiling at common household occupations, not knowing one note of music from another, and never having seen an opera in all her short life of seventeen summers. But Espirita shared his dream-land; his theories from her—all that he knew and loved were also dear realities to her. She knew the story; she knew every slightest detail of every opera that Teodoro sang—every hope and fear that agitated the hero's breast, every woe or bliss of the heroine. She felt instinctively, when Teodoro sang to her, all that he meant to express, and that it completed the beautiful dream. Had he failed to make the impersonation fit the dream, her sensitive soul would have recoiled, even as a sensitive ear quivers under the shock of a discordant tone. She was his truest inspiration, his subtlest critic. They were all in all to each other, these two young lives, for Espirita needed the encouragement of his tender devotion, even as he needed this pure shrine to worship at. Her life had so little in it of all that usually surrounds youth. A careworn, anxious father to sustain and cheer; the constant companionship of a selfish, silly, complaining woman to endure the unrelenting care, night and day, of a sickly and fretful although precocious and sensitive child; and a continual round of homely duties made difficult by the necessities of rigid economy and the constant friction of divided interests—these were the things that would have broken and saddened the tender spirit, and slight frame without the infusion of sunshine and strength and joy and regard that Teodoro's daily visits brought to the shabby little home. Occasionally there were other bright spots in the weary life. There were the Sundays when her father was at home, and she could take the little Maxime with her to Passy, where he and the kitten in the little garden, and she could sit by dear grandmamma's side and feel like a truly little girl again. 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