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## Tschaikovsky And The Marriage That Failed.

At twenty-seven, Peter Tschaikovsky, composed of the "1812" Overture, "Chanson Triste," and much popular music, whom the Germans called a Russian and the Russians a German, wrote to his sister, "I am weary of life, and marriage holds no attraction for me—I am too lazy to woo, too lazy to support a family, too lazy to endure the responsibility of a wife and children."

There was little in Tschaikovsky to attract women. He was painfully shy and awkward; he was morbidly morose, and eccentric almost to the verge of insanity; and he was dogged to

the grave by ill-health. And yet, with all his unattractiveness, we find him engaged as a youth in two love-affairs. But in spite of all his avowed aversion to woman and wedlock, which we suspect was half affected, he was not to escape a great passion; and his hour of fate came with the arrival, in 1868, at the Moscow Opera of Desirée Artot, a Belgian singer, who is described as "a queen of grace and a queen of dramatic and lyric song." That she was thirty-five (five years his senior) mattered nothing. At the sound of her beautiful voice and a glance from her dark

eyes he was undone. "He tried to keep away," we are told; "they met by accident; she reproached him; he promised to call; then his inveterate timidity palsied him, till his friend Anton Rubinstein, the famous pianist, had to drag him to her rooms." And, thus caught finally and helplessly in Desirée's toils, he succumbed—a happy victim. But though he became engaged to her, he soon found the course of his love far from smooth. He insisted that she should give up her career for him. She and her mother stoutly objected to such a selfish stipulation.

**A Cold Parting.**  
But, though Tschaikovsky was willing to yield, the rift had come within the lute, and in January, 1869, Desirée left Moscow and her too exacting lover, "parting coldly from him." And a few weeks later news came to him that she had become engaged to a handsome Spanish baritone in her troupe, Padillari Ramos, whom she married in the following September. Thus Tschaikovsky found the cup of intense surprise as much as to his happiness dashed from his lips, to his grief. But, though his lady had played him false, it was long before he could expel her from his heart.

When, a year later, he heard that she was returning to Moscow to sing, he wrote to a friend, "She is coming here and I cannot avoid meeting her. The woman has cost me many a bitter hour, and yet I feel myself drawn towards her with such inexplicable sympathy that I await her coming with feverish impatience." At the first performance, his friend Kashkin says, "he was terribly excited, and kept his opera-glasses fastened on her always, though he was almost blinded by the tears that streamed down his cheeks." And nearly twenty years later—in 1888—when he met her again in Berlin, he wrote in his diary, "The personality of this singer is as irresistibly bewitching as ever."

**The Mad Marriage.**  
It was in 1876, when overwork had wrecked his nerves and he was bordering on insanity, that Tschaikovsky wrote to her brother, "I have resolved to marry, with whomsoever it may be—the resolve is beyond recall"; and in July of the following year Kashkin was amazed to find that he had carried his resolve into effect—an event of which he gave the following explanation to his friend and patroness, Frau von Meck:—"One day I received a letter from a girl I had known for some time. I learned from it that she loved me. The letter was couched in such warm, frank terms that I decided to see her. At our meeting I assured her that, in return for her love, I could give her nothing but sympathy and gratitude. But later I reproached myself for the carelessness of my action." Then, realizing that his refusal to marry her "would make her unhappy and possibly drive her to a tragic fate," he called again on her, frankly described to her all his faults of temper and character and his financial condition, and asked her again if she wished to be his wife. "Naturally," he continues, "her answer was 'yes.' The fearful agonies which I have experienced since that night are not to be expressed in words."

**An Impossible Spouse.**  
Within a month Tschaikovsky was running away from his impossible spouse and was writing to Frau von Meck: "I leave in an hour. A few days more of this and I swear I should have gone mad." After ten days' absence he screwed up courage to return to her; but within a week he was driven to an attempt at suicide—"standing up to his chin in ice-cold water, afraid to drown himself and yet hoping to catch a fatal pneumonia." Again he ran away—this time to St. Petersburg, where, on arrival, he "went into hysterics and was unconscious for forty-eight hours." And this time he lacked courage to face his purgatory again. He abandoned his wife for ever, and sought refuge and oblivion in foreign travel.

But if his experiment in matrimony had proved so tragic a failure, he found consolation in the last day of his troubled life, in 1893, in the loyal and affectionate friendship of his wealthy patroness, Frau von Meck—John O' London's Weekly.

## After School Begins.

Why did vacation go so fast?  
I think that it should be  
Ten times as long as it has been—  
But six from nine leaves three.

The days are far too warm for school  
Too warm, and fair, and fine;  
It is so hard to study now!  
But five plus four is nine.

This morning when I came to school,  
Two squirrels called to me;  
They were at play upon a wall—  
But eight less five is three.

And in an orchard that I passed,  
The ground was covered o'er  
With apples that have fallen off—  
But two times two is four.

And every stalk of goldenrod,  
As though it were alive  
Just smiled and beckoned me to stay—  
But five from ten leaves five.

And as I had to hurry here  
For fear that I'd be late,  
And lose, perhaps, my whole recess—  
How much, are six and eight?

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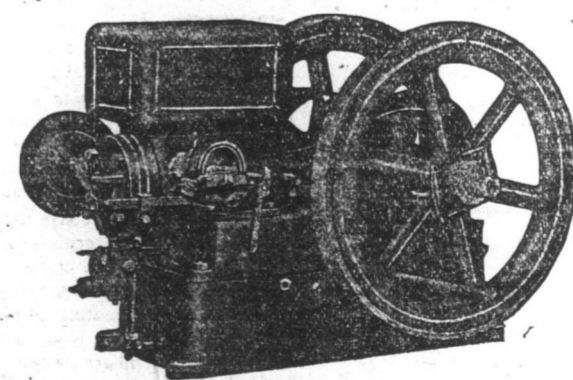
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