

Kathryn's Opportunity.

(Elizabeth Robbins, in the 'Presbyterian Banner.')

'Quite an honor, isn't it?' said Kathryn's father. 'How did it come about?'

'Through Mrs. DeMont. She is acquainted with everybody and has influence.'

'Think what it will be for Kittie,' said Kathryn's sister, enthusiastically, 'accompanist to the great 'cello player,' and at the Associated Charities Concert! Everybody will be there.'

'It is Kittie's ambition to be a second Paderewski, and this is the first step, I suppose,' said Kathryn's brother.

Aunt Jane shook her head disapprovingly. 'Kittie isn't out of High school yet,' she said, 'and even if she were the chance should be given to some girl who will have to make her living by music and needs the opportunity to make herself known.'

'Reverses may come and I may have to earn my living,' Kathryn returned, lightly.

'What shall you wear, Kittie?' her sister asked.

Aunt Jane said the new dress Kittie had just had would answer very well, but she was overruled by the others, who declared that for such a special occasion nothing less than a gown made especially for it would do.

Then they were told that the table was waiting, and they all adjourned to the dining room.

Kathryn lay awake a long time that night, thinking of the concert. She wondered if her name would be on the programme, and thought how well it would look printed in full—Kathryn Sloane Spencer. She imagined her sensations when she should take her place at the piano and face the audience. She speculated as to what might be the outcome of this introduction to the public and resolved that she would work hard to do herself credit. Then she fell to planning the new gown, and dropped asleep at last trying to decide which of two ways she should have it made.

There was some delay in getting the music of the accompaniment, and when it did come and Kathryn ran it over she was disappointed to find in it so little chance for display. Nevertheless, she set to work diligently, determined to make the very most of it. Mornings, afternoons, and evenings she practiced till her brother Phil declared, laughingly, that the whole family and all the neighbors would have that particular music printed indelibly on the tablets of their memory.

The concert was little more than a week distant, and Kathryn had begun to think herself nearly perfect in her rendering of the accompaniment, when it happened one day that a hard rain began just as school was closed, and Kathryn, being unprovided with macintosh or umbrella, took a car home. Several other girls did the same, and among them was Margaret Eastman, a classmate of Kathryn's. Margaret was called odd, but only for the reason that she was very reserved, gave her whole time to study, and seemed not to care to make friends with anyone.

The car had hardly started when it had to stop—for a considerable time as it proved—because of some obstruction on the

track. The person next Kathryn went out, and greatly to Kathryn's surprise Margaret Eastman left her own seat and came and took the vacant place. 'I heard you were to play at the Associated Charities concert,' she began at once; 'is it so?'

'Do you play?' Kathryn asked, when she had answered the question. Margaret replied that she had played ever since she was tall enough to reach the keys of the piano standing on her tiptoes, and after she added that it was her greatest ambition to excel as an accompanist there were no pauses in the conversation.

Neither noticed when the car started, and so interested did Margaret become in the interchange of ideas and experiences that she was carried several blocks beyond the corner where she should have got out, before she thought. 'I don't care,' she laughed, 'it is worth getting wet to meet with someone who likes music as well as I do.'

Kathryn was thoughtful and troubled after Margaret left her; conscience had suddenly demanded a sacrifice on her part, and it didn't seem as if she could bring herself to make it. She had always known in a vague way that the Eastmans must be poor, but till now it had made little impression on her mind. Margaret, all unconsciously, had shown how intensely she longed to help in the support of the family. 'I have two pupils already,' she confided, 'and there are two more I think I could get if I had the time for them. I want to leave school and give myself wholly to music, but mother will not consent to that, she says I must graduate whatever happens. It is only a little while now. I have set down the number of days, and I check off one every night, I am so impatient to begin really to earn my living. If I could only be sure of pupils enough,' she added, with a little anxious frown.

'But I thought you wanted to be an accompanist,' Kathryn had said.

'So I do, and so I mean to be,' Margaret had answered, 'but you see I have no friends at court. My father taught me while he lived, and my only other teacher has gone abroad, so that I have almost no acquaintance with musical people. No, I shall have to plod along and keep on practicing, and hope for some lucky chance to make an opening for me—in the dim distance of the shadowy future, when I get to be old and gray-headed and wear spectacles.'

She had spoken lightly, but Kathryn felt the seriousness beneath and there had flashed into her mind the thought that if it were Margaret who was to play at the concert, what a help it might be to her.

She put the thought aside, but it would return. She argued that she ought not to be expected to give up her opportunity, that very likely Margaret could not play well enough, and that even if she could the committee would not consent to any change so late in the day.

It was a severe struggle while it lasted, but before she slept that night, Kathryn's better self had triumphed. Early in the morning she went to see Mrs. DeMont. At first that lady declared she would not countenance anything so utterly preposterous, but when she saw how much in

earnest Kathryn was she relented. 'I don't like the idea at all,' she said, reluctantly, 'but if you insist you must contrive some way for me to hear the girl play. Tell her you are coming here after school to try the new piano, and ask her to come with you.'

The plan worked, and when Margaret sat down to the new piano, and not only played a difficult piece of music at sight, but played it with taste and expression, Kathryn knew there was no question of her ability. Mrs. DeMont went with them to the door. 'I don't think there will be any trouble about that matter you spoke of,' she said to Kathryn, 'but I will make sure and let you know very soon.'

The message came the next morning, while Kathryn was at breakfast, and she overtook Margaret on the way to school and told her about it.

Margaret flushed, and then turned pale. 'It is very, very kind of you, Kathryn,' she said, with feeling, 'but—it wouldn't be just. I cannot let you do it.'

It took Kathryn a long time to persuade her, but she succeeded at last, and Margaret carried the music home with her when she went.

Kathryn resumed her regular practice with a feeling of despondency. Life was somehow dull and uninteresting, and nothing seemed worth while.

When the new dress came from the dressmaker's, Kathryn's sister, who was an authority in such matters, pronounced it 'A poem—a poem in brown,' and Kathryn admired it a little sadly, thinking of how she had expected to shine in it. Then she brightened suddenly. 'Auntie,' she exclaimed, 'why couldn't I give the dress to Margaret? She is almost exactly my size, and it would be even more becoming to her than to me, because she is lighter. You know you said yourself that I didn't need it.'

'I think it is an excellent idea,' Aunt Jane agreed, heartily, 'if you can make her take it.'

'She is proud,' Kathryn admitted, 'but I will send it to her by express, with a note saying only that it is from a friend, and then, knowing she cannot return it, she will perhaps feel less unwilling to accept it.'

The dress was sent that evening, and as Margaret stayed away from school after this to practice, Kathryn did not see her again till the evening of the concert.

The immense hall was crowded with people, and as Kathryn settled into her seat beside her father and glanced around her she thought a little regretfully of what a privilege it would have been to play before so many.

The entertainment consisted of both vocal and instrumental music, and though Kathryn enjoyed everything on the programme with the keen delight of a true music lover, she yet waited with something like impatience for the number in which she was to have taken part.

It came at last, near the end of the evening, and in the hush preceding it Kathryn bent forward, eager to catch the first glimpse of Margaret.

Ah, here she came! And she was wearing the new dress. How it became her, and how dignified she looked! Kathryn had always before thought of Margaret