

replied; "they have preceded days of misfortune."

Then, as if to free herself from painful thoughts, she rose abruptly and went to the window, where Ebba saw tears flowing down the cheeks of her new friend.

In the meantime, notwithstanding the touching marks of affection given by the two neighbours to Therese, the latter evinced the greatest reserve in visiting them, and never came to see them unless at their pressing solicitations.

"We must insist upon it," said Ebba: "she is poor and unhappy."

And she lavished all the graces of her *naïf* mind to decide Therese to seat herself at their little table. When she saw her smile she was rejoiced. Stina could not sufficiently admire the good heart of her child.

"God will make her happy," she thought with delight, "or else happiness is not made for angels."

Hoffman, impatient to bring out his *protégé*, resolved not to wait for Weber's new work, and selected a *role* for her from the ancient repertory. Zerlina, in *Don Giovanni*, appeared to him wonderfully suitable for the blonde and charming Swede. He went himself to teach Ebba this part, from the magnificent work of Mozart. She learned to sing it in a few lessons.

"All that is necessary to occupy ourselves with now is the costume," said he. "As I know no better mantuamaker than the woman who is going to wear the robe, here is gold, buy the stuff, and cut it after the pattern I am going to draw for you."

He traced with a pencil the costume of Zerlina, told her the colours, and left six pieces of gold on the piano.

"You will make your *début* the day after tomorrow," said he, as he left.

Ebba was seized with fear and joy when she heard this great news. What! in two days her whole destiny would be decided! As Hoffman had promised her, glory and fortune, or shame and poverty! Not resigned, but fatal poverty! Agitated, feverish, she seated herself at the piano, left it precipitately, and went back to it again only to leave it anew. Her trembling hands could not strike the keys.

Therese entered.

"More resolution and courage is needed to make your *début* at the theatre," said she. "My child, if you give way to fear, you are lost. Combat it from this moment; it will have only too much power still in the moment of peril. Dear Ebba, let us see; sing me your *role*, or rather let me play it for you,"

She sat down to the piano and struck a few chords.

"What? you an excellent musician, and yet never proposed to play with me before?" asked Ebba, in accents of mild reproach.

"I had sworn never to put my fingers again on one of these fatal keys," replied Therese. In doing it now, dear child, I only discharge a duty for the generous compassion you have shown me. But let us leave all those thoughts," she interrupted with effort; "we will play and sing the *role* of Zerlina. I have often heard and seen it played by Donna Floréa, who, it is said, excelled in it. I can teach you some traditions about the manner in which it should be performed."

Indeed, Therese gave such good advice to Ebba that the next day, when Hoffman conducted his pupil to rehearsal, they could not stop admiring the progress the *debutante* had made since the preceding day.

When Stina brought back her young mistress, they found Therese cutting and sewing on the costume of Zerlina. Ebba showed all the joy of a child in trying on the pretty orange-coloured skirt and black velvet bodice. She looked at herself in the little mirror, smiled at herself, and then looked in the glass again. Therese, plunged in profound sadness, turned away her head many times to conceal her tears.

At last the great day for the *début* arrived. Early in the morning, Ebba rapped softly at the door of Therese.

Therese came to the door; her red eyes looked as if she had wept all night.

"Will you not come and pray with us, that I may succeed to-night?" said Ebba. "Stina and I are going to the church."

"Yes," replied Therese, "I am going to pray with you, Ebba; to pray for your happiness. One has need of prayers on entering the perilous career into which you so gaily precipitate yourself without foreseeing the dangers, or dreading its despair. But do not heed my words; I am suffering this morning, and know not what I say. Let us go to pray."

The three women proceeded to a neighbouring chapel, knelt and prayed with equal fervour for a long time. The last, who arose, was Therese.

When they left the church, Ebba put her arm within her friend's, and said, in her irresistible voice:

"You will not leave me all day, will you, dear Therese? You will accompany me to the theatre?"

"I!" exclaimed the stranger with terror. "I go with you to the theatre! I become a witness