

THE ORGANIST'S PUPIL

A Romance Based Upon a Love for Music

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER

I.

OF all those who had to do with the teaching of music in Blankhampton the parish organist took the first place. When I was a little lad I used to think that it was because the organist of the parish carried the prefix of Doctor before his name, but I found later that that was but one of the many illusions of childhood. For a while later more than one professor of music in the old city suddenly bloomed out in the same prefix, in hoods and other gewgaws, the social result thereof being absolutely nothing. So now, looking back from beyond maturity, I know that Dr. Elvington was the great power in musical circles in Blankhampton because he was Dr. Elvington, and not because he had taken a degree.

Now it happened that Dr. Elvington was sitting quietly in his study one day when his man servant came and told him that a lady was in the drawing-room and wanted to see him.

"Is there a fire in the drawing-room?" he asked.

"No, sir. As Miss Elvington has gone out to lunch and will not return until dinner-time I thought I would light the fire about six o'clock."

"I see—yes. Well, James, you had better show the young lady in here. Is it someone for me—not for my sister?"

"No, sir," said James—"she particularly asked for you."

The man withdrew, closing the door softly behind him. Dr. Elvington got up from his place at the desk and, crossing to the fire-place, stirred the already good fire into a better blaze. Then the door opened and James announced "Miss Silverthorne." The Doctor took a step forward, holding out his hand.

"How do you do?" he said.

There was a moment's pause.

"How do you do?" said Miss Silverthorne.

"Won't you sit down?" He indicated a comfortable chair on one side of the fire. "You—er—you wanted to see me?" he said, as he took possession of the one opposite.

"Yes, I—I want to play your organ."

"Oh—you do?"

"Yes. I—I think I may say that I want to take lessons on the organ, and I want to have the opportunity of practising on a big organ like Blankhampton Parish."

"Indeed! I see. You have studied the organ?"

"Oh, yes."

"With whom?"

"I studied with Holl of Utrecht," she replied.

Dr. Elvington dropped his hands between his knees. "So? A good man—a very good man."

A very good master. I could not stand the climate; I was only there a few months. Before that I was with Weirchhoffer, of Mensdorff-Meissen."

"Indeed! And did you begin with him?"

"Oh, no! She laughed so heart-whole and genuine a laugh that Dr. Elvington found himself laughing in spite of himself.

"No, I began with our old organist at home. He didn't know much, poor dear; not merely as much as my piano-master did, but he played very well. Then I went to Worcester for a while—we were living near Worcester—and I—I got a bit from him. Then I went to a little German town that you probably do not know anything about, where they had a very fine organ and a very fine organist—Rosenbaum of Meilingen, near Prague. After that I went to Weirchhoffer. He advised me; as I wanted to get towards home, to try Utrecht and Holl. I told you I couldn't stand the climate. I got fever; I didn't think it was good enough. I am living quite near to Blankhampton with my people, and I want now to come to you."

Now it must be confessed that Dr. Elvington had a sufficiently good opinion of Dr. Elvington, but the young lady's record somewhat took his breath away.

"You must have begun young," he said.

"I am twenty-two," she replied.

"That is not a great age to have done all you have done. I take it you must have been studying for at least six years?"

"Well, I have been studying the piano more or less since I was eight years old. I began tinkering about the organ when I was about fourteen. I have worked the last five years."

"I'm sure you have. Why do you want to come to me? Is it only because you want to practise on the parish organ?"

"Well, if I did I should consider it worth it," she said, in her somewhat abrupt fashion. "But, as a matter of fact, Dr. Elvington, I have heard you play more times than once. I know all about you. I—you have got something I want."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, you have got something I can't get," she said, smiting one gloved hand into the palm of the other. "I must get it. I don't care what it costs—in reason; but I must get that effect that you are able to get. I have tried—all yesterday I spent in the village church. I never went home till I was

the dining-room and see what we can do. Stay! Would you like to go across now into the parish and play for me?"

"Certainly; I should love it."

"Well, we'll take James with us. James blows sometimes when the regular man is not there. But it will be cold."

"Oh, no, I am never cold."

"Not even yesterday?"

"Oh! that was because I could not get my effect."

"Very good. Will you have anything before you go?"

"No, thank you. I had tea in the town. I—I only want the organ."

He looked curiously at her as she rose and stood in the full light of the electric lamp. She was slight and slim, rather tall than short, although she seemed quite a little girl beside his superior height and big, powerful frame. She was dark, with a pale, rather insignificant face, redeemed, however, by magnificent brown eyes. He knew enough to see that she was beautifully clad, that her furs were costly, that evidently she wanted nothing of this world's gear. He bent and touched the bell, and she in turn looked scrutinizingly at him.

"James," he said, when the door opened, "could you go across to the parish with me and blow for a little while?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Well, put a thick coat on, James."

"Thank you, sir."

"My man had the influenza a little while back. I am careful of him, he's such a good fellow," he said to the stranger.

"I like you for taking care of him," she said, flashing a glance at him. Then she looked up again. "You must have begun young?"

"I have never done anything else," he replied.

"What, as a little child you played—because you played?"

"I think so."

"It was there in you—you only had to open the door and let it out. It's there in me," she said, tapping her breast—"in me—in there—and I can't get it out. It cries—oh, it is dreadful—Let me out, open the door! I want to sing. I am a prisoner—I am fast; it is horrid in here, so dark, so desolate! I—I want to sing to the world. You can't sing when the door is locked and you can't turn the key."

"Well, we will try," he said. He brought his hand down on her shoulder. "I like you—you're a sister artist. You came here today as an ordinary pupil—"

"Yes."

"Well, I won't take you as such. I'll—but there, let us go across and see what we can do."

He turned out the lights in quite a prosaic fashion as she passed into the hall, took up his hat, and slipped into a huge fur-lined coat.

"I don't sport this coat in the open," he said, "I just keep it for travelling and sitting in the loft when it's awfully cold."

"Don't you have the loft warmed?"

"Yes—oh, yes; they call it warmed, but it's awfully cold all the same."

They entered the Cathedral by a little door which James was holding open.

"Lock it after you, James," said the Doctor.

"Yes, sir."

James had already turned up a single electric light, which burnt within the hood which screened the door from the wintry blasts and the noise of the outer world.

"This way," said he. He led her to the screen, opening a little almost-hidden door. "I will go first, Miss Silverthorne; these stairs are tricky."

As James had mounted the stairs he had turned on several small electric bulbs.

"Now, this is my perch," said the Doctor. "Is it like the others you know? I have never seen any of those organs on which you have studied."

"Yes, just the same. I think it has more room. May I sit here?" There was a velvet-cushioned seat at the base of the keyboard.

"Assuredly."

"It does not worry you to have anyone watch you play?"

"Not a bit. Now, you wanted the Marche Funebre?"

"Yes."

You know the Marche Funebre, my readers? If you do not, get it, learn it, study it. If you cannot, get someone else who can to play it to you—to play

(Continued on page 25.)



"And Myra Silverthorne played that wonderful melody."

Drawn by Miss E. McLaren.

frozen out. I—I can't get it—I must! I'm an enthusiast in my work—I must get it! It worries me; I can't sleep."

"Come, come!" he said. "Come, come! Not so bad as that. Now, will you come into the dining-room? I have an organ there—well, a small affair, fit for a house. It is there because that is the biggest room we have. Come and let me hear you play."

"On a small organ in a house?" She hesitated for a moment, then turned eagerly towards him. "Dr. Elvington," she said, "will you play Chopin's 'Marche Funebre'?"

"Yes, I will."

"Then I will play it after you. You will know enough of my technique to know that I am worth taking on as a pupil—that I shan't discredit you. You will know in an instant where it is that I fail. I hate failure. None of my house have ever failed—never for hundreds of years. Am I to be the first?"

"No, no—certainly not! But come, let us go into