

## A Lost Star.

(E. Craft Coburn in 'Union-Signal')

can't! Nothing but the same old thing day after day—washing—ironing—baking—sweeping—week after week, till sometimes I feel as if I should cry out against it all!

'And do you?' smiled Cousin Felicia.

'Do I what?'

'Do you cry out?'

'No, of course I don't.'

'Well, that's one point gained,' replied Cousin Felicia, cheerfully.

'I don't know what you mean.'

'Well, I'll tell you. Did it ever occur to you that wherever the Lord placed you you are doing the work he selected for you? And if he selected it, is it not his work? People make a great mistake when they speak of church work and missionary work as the only "Lord's work." All honest work that comes to your hand is his. Now, then, for the sacrifice, You find your life here very easy, do you not—too easy for your own comfort? You like it?'

'Easy, Cousin Felicia? Anything but that! I hate it—sometimes!'

'Then I cannot see but that you have the hard work and the sacrifice right here.'

A light dawned upon Ruth's face.

'I never thought of that,' she answered slowly. 'Then you think that if I take up my work cheerfully, because I believe that God meant me to do this particular work, I am doing what is required of me?'

'I do, indeed, dear child. When the Master means you to do something else he will show you the way. Take this line to heart, Ruth: "They also serve who only stand and wait." This one line has been more consolation to me than I can tell you.'

Ruth gazed at Felicia in wonder a moment, and then a swift intuition came to her.

'Are you, too, "waiting," Cousin Felicia?' she asked, in an awe-struck voice.

'Yes,' said Felicia, gravely, with a sigh.

'And I thought you were only—only—' burst out the girl, penitently.

'Only lazy and indifferent. Is not that it, Ruth?'

Ruth nodded, too confused to reply in words.

'Let me tell you about it,' went on Felicia. 'When I was younger I, too, wanted to do missionary work. My mother and father did not oppose me. They were quite willing that I should go out among the Indians for a time, as I desired. Then my mother was taken ill, and I could not leave her. I was all ready to go again after her death, when, three years ago, my father was stricken with blindness. I could not feel that the Lord called me to desert my own helpless father to look after strangers. Then he died, a year ago, a sob came into her throat, and I was free—only too free, to do my chosen work. And then, when I was all ready this spring to go out, I found myself obliged to come East to consult an oculist on my own account. He told me that absolute rest for my eyes was necessary. In fact, that exposure which would produce cold or strain of any kind would precipitate me hopelessly into my father's condition; but that with extreme care for a year or two I might ward off the trouble permanently. What do you think, Ruth? Have I not some "waiting" to do?'

And I thought you had everything—time, leisure, and money!' exclaimed Ruth. 'Well, Cousin Felicia we will "wait" together,' and Ruth softly nestled a loving cheek against her cousin's hand as they rose and turned again toward home.

Poverty is a school of the saints, but luxury trains even the wise to evil.

Evangel stood flushed with triumph behind the stage curtains, bending slightly forward, her opera cloak, hastily caught up to protect her throat, forgotten in her hand. Every nerve was an ear, eager to lose no vibration of the applause that thrilled her soul and body sharply, almost like pain.

It had been three years since she had bade farewell to this same audience previous to sailing for a course of study abroad, and this was the tribute to the self-denying effort to perfect her superb voice. It was a delicious moment—a prophecy of the future, when the great of all lands would yield to the magic of her voice, and she might even be the guest of royalty. She remembered the parting words of her Parisian teacher: 'Ah, Mees, zar ees non ambeesion too deesy for you. Make art seestar, lofer, and you sall be cemortal as Jenny Lind.'

It was only a few moments that she stood alone. Friends pressed about to offer proud congratulations, then above the hum of many voices, the slamming of closing opera chairs, the rustle and distraction of preparations for leaving the concert room, she heard from some one on the stage before the curtain a request that the audience be reseated. In surprise Evangel glanced at the friends nearest for explanation, but her silent question met only happy, mysterious looks in reply.

'Come with me,' a girlhood friend said, taking her hand and moving forward toward the curtain. Suddenly the bell rang and the curtain began to rise, while there was an animated movement among the friends behind her to the right and left, leaving the two young women standing alone. Evangel looked upon the crowd of expectant faces before her and then at the half-frightened, smiling face of the girl beside her, and whispered, 'What does this mean, Frances?'

'Wait,' was the only response, as the young woman lifted the cover from a box in her hand, took from it a wreath of roses, and placed it upon Evangel's head, saying clearly at the same time, 'We crown our Queen of Song.'

Then the air was rent with cheers, as Evangel, touched beyond the power of speaking, stood with girlish uncertainty as to what she ought to do written in her very attitude. But she did not need to do anything, for the curtain fell again, to her intense relief. Once more the friends pressed closely about her, joined by others from the audience.

'Our little girl will yet be heard of around the globe,' a white-haired gentleman said, taking her hand.

'Yes, she has entrancing expression and marvellous execution; she can be the lone star in the opera, if she chooses that field,' rejoined her friend, Frances.

I hope Miss Evangel may try that field, for at present our greatest singers are only quasi-great. The arpeggio in your last aria was marvellously done,' the musical critic of the city remarked, heartily.

'May I introduce Signor Palio?'

Evangel turned toward her aunt. The excitable little tenor could not wait for formalities, but bowing profoundly, exclaimed in broken English his rapture at hearing a voice once more that was equal to any score of the greatest oratorio. For an hour, Evangel, excited, static, listened to such words of praise, being introduced to friends of her friends, bowing, smiling, chatting until the numbers about her gradually decreased.

The Rev. Mr. Marsdon had been standing aloof from the crowd watching Evangel intently, but now the young assistant pastor of

the church to which she belonged came forward to speak with her.

'I am not a lifelong friend like many here—shall I say Evangel as of old?'

'Please do, Mr. Marsdon.'

'But I wish to voice my congratulations also. I know that you can rise to any place in the art of music which you may seek, but do not let fame be the only prize which you follow, lest it come between you and the uplifting of this poor, old world. Is your voice consecrated, Miss Evangel?'

Evangel felt instantly a bit of resentment toward the young minister, who for a year before her departure for Europe had been a valued companion in good works. She felt as if he would chide her in the joy of success, and his words rasped her nervously sensitive mind. She glanced into his face, about to reply lightly, but its earnestness and the remembrance of his own sacrifice of ambition and hope of wealth to become a poor under pastor of a great church made her pause. The hand of renunciation had stroked his brow, sweeping away the lines of self love, leaving only nobility and truest manhood.

'Mr. Marsdon, I have given some of my time and some of my money to humanity and to Christ, but I fear I have never thought of my voice as being of value except in the concert room. However, I am to try singing a solo in church next Sabbath, at the afternoon song service. Can you not come?'

'I thank you, Miss Evangel, but I have a funeral down by the wharf at that time. It is a sad case. The child was the mother's only daughter, and her last living relative. The girl was an invalid for several months, and the poor mother worked early and late to give her what comfort she could, beside being kept awake whole nights to care for the child. Sometimes,—he hesitated as if considering the sentence, he was about to speak, 'sometimes I think I become hard toward my race, but such heroism as this woman has shown leads me back to faith.'

'The distress of the Old World used to pain me so intensely, but in this country it does not obtrude itself. I nearly forget that there is such a thing as sorrow here.'

After a few more words Mr. Marsdon bade Evangel good-night, and her tired aunt hurried her away to the carriage in waiting, lest some other enthusiastic friend detain them longer.

Triumph and excitement had driven sleep from Evangel's eyes. She tossed wearily, trying to find repose she so much needed. But the throng still swarmed before her. She lived over and over again the excitement of her singing. The words of praise spoken to her repeated themselves like an irrefragable refrain till she became irritated and arose. She threw a steamer rug about her and sat down in a little white and gold rocking chair, breathing with a sense of relief as the cool fingers of the night soothed her throbbing temples.

It was too late for moonlight, but the stars, which always watch, were so serene they subdued and calmed her. She thought of the young minister's question. What would it mean? What would it require? Did it mean to give up her career? Ah, no! the voice was a gift to use—but used unselfishly—that is it.

She slipped from her seat upon her knees to think more earnestly, more devoutly, but suddenly a battle raged fiercely in her soul and she hid her face upon her arms. She saw it all. The world of wealth and luxury as it rode gaily to the opera house to spend a pleasant evening, gratified and enchanted by her voice and marvellous execution. She listened again to the encore calls and thrilled with exultation. She would have money