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The Musician

Eugen never spoke to me of the beautiful girl who had behaved so strangely that evening, though we saw her again and again.

Sometimes I used to meet her in the street, in company with the dark, plain girl, Anna Sartorius, who, I fancied, always surveyed Eugen with a look of recognition. The two young women formed in appearance an almost startling contrast. She came to all the concerts, as if she made a music study—generally she was with a stout good-natured-looking German Frau, and the young Englishman, Vincent. There was always something rather melancholy about her grace and beauty.

Most beautiful she was, with long, slender, artist-like hands, the face a perfect oval, but the features more elegant than regular; sometimes a subdued fire glowed in her eyes and compressed her lips, which removed her altogether from the category of spiritless beauties—a genius for which I never had the least taste.

One morning Courvoisier and I, as we stood just within the entrance to the theatre orchestra, saw two people go by. One, a figure well enough known to everyone in Elberthal, and especially to us—that of Max von Francus. Did I ever say that Von Francus was an exceedingly handsome fellow, in a certain dark, clean-shaven style? On that occasion he was speaking with more animation than was usual with him, and the person to whom he had unbent so far was the fair Englishwoman—that enigmatical beauty who had cut my friend at the opera. She also was looking animated and very beautiful; her face turned to his with a smile—a glad, gratified smile. He was saying: "But in the next lesson you know—"

They passed on. I turned to ask Eugen if he had seen. I needed not to put the question. He had seen. There was a forced smile upon his lips. Before I could speak he had said:

"It's time to go in, Friedel; come along!" With which he turned into the theatre, and I followed thoughtfully.

Then it was rumored that at the coming concert—the benefit of Von Francus—a new soprano was to appear—a young lady of whom report used varied tones; some believable facts, at least, we learned about her. Her name, they said, was Wedderburn; she was an Englishwoman, and had a most wonderful voice. The Herr Direktor took a deep interest in her; he not only gave her lessons, he had asked to give her lessons, and intended to form of her an artist who should one day be to the world a kind of Patti, Lucia, or Nilon.

I had no doubt in my own mind as to who she was, but for all that I felt considerable excitement on the evening of the Hauptprobe to the "Verlorenes Paradies."

Yes, I was right. Miss Wedderburn, the pupil of Von Francus, of whom so much was prophesied, was the beautiful, far-from-looking English girl. The feeling which grew upon me that evening, and which I never found reason

afterward to alter, was that she was modest, gentle, yet spirited, very gifted, and an artistic by nature and gift, yet sadly ill at ease and out of place in that world into which Von Francus wished to lead her.

She sat quite near to Eugen and me, and I saw how alone she was, and how she seemed to feel her loneliness. I saw how certain young ladies drew themselves together, and looked at it was then that I first began to notice the silent behavior of women toward each other, and the more I have observed, the more has my wonder grown and increased, and whispered behind their music, and shrugged their shoulders, when Von Francus, seeing how isolated she seemed, bent forward and said a few kind words to her.

I liked him for it. After all, he was a man. But his distinguishing the child did not add to the delights of her position—rather made it worse. I put myself in her position as well as I could, and felt her feelings when Von Francus introduced her to one of the young ladies near her, who first stared at him, then at her, then inclined her head a little forward and a little backward, turned her back upon Miss Wedderburn, and appeared lost in conversation of the deepest importance with her neighbor. And I thought of the words which Karl Linders had said to us in haste and anger, and after a disappointment he had lately had, "Das Weib ist der Teufel." Yes, woman is the devil sometimes, thought I, and a mean kind of devil, too. A female Mephistopheles would not have damned Gretchen's soul, nor killed her body; she would have left the latter on this earthly sphere, and damned her reputation.

Von Francus was a clever man, but he made a grand mistake that night, unless he were desirous of making his protégée as uncomfortable as possible. How could those ladies feel otherwise than insulted at seeing the man of ice so suddenly attentive to a nobody, an upstart, and a beautiful one?

The probe continued, and still she sat alone and unspoken to, her only acquaintance or companion seeming to be Fraulein Sartorius, with whom she had come in. I saw how, when Von Francus called upon her to do her part, and the looks which had hitherto been averted from her were now turned pitilessly and unblinkingly upon her, she quailed. She bit her lip; on her, she trembled. I turned to Eugen with a look which said volumes, sat with his arms folded, and his face perfectly devoid of all expression, gazing straight before him.

Miss Wedderburn might have been satisfied to the full with her revenge. That was a voice! such a volume of pure, exquisite melody as I had rarely heard. After hearing what, all doubts were settled. The gift might be a blessing or a curse—let everyone decide that for himself. Everyone's style of thinking, but it was there. She possessed the power which put her out of the category of commonplace, and had the most melodious "Open Sesame" with which to besiege the doors of the courts in which dwell artists—creative and interpretive.

The performance finished the gap between her and her companions. Their looks said, "You are not one of us." My angry spirit said, "No; you can never be like her."

She seemed half afraid of what she had done when it was over and shrunk into herself with downcast eyes and nervous quivering of the lips at the subdued applause of the men. I wanted to applaud, too; but I looked at Eugen. I had instinctively given him some share in the affairs of this lovely creature—a share which he always strenuously repudiated, both tactfully and openly.

Nevertheless, when I saw him, I

abstained from applauding, knowing, by a lightning quick intuition, that it would be highly irritating to him. He showed no emotion; if he had done, I should not have thought the occasion was anything special to him. It was his absurd gravity, stony inexpressiveness, which impressed me with the fact that he was moved—moved against his will and his judgment. He could no more help approving both of her and her voice than he could help admiring a perfect, half opened rose.

It was over, and we went out of the hall, across the road, and home. Sigmund, who had not been very well that day, was awake and restless. Eugen took him up, wrapped him in a little bed-gown, carried him into the other room, and sat down with him. The child rested his head on the loved breast and was soothed.

She had gone; the door had closed after her. Eugen turned to me, and took Sigmund into his arms again.

"Mein Vater, who is the beautiful lady? and why did you speak so harshly to her? Why did you make her cry?"

The answer, though ostensibly spoken to Sigmund, was a revelation to me.

"That I may not have to cry myself," said Eugen, kissing him. "Could the lady make thee cry?" demanded Sigmund, sitting up, much excited at the idea.

Another kiss and a half laugh was the answer. Then he bade him go to sleep, as he did not understand what he was talking about.

By and by Sigmund did drop to sleep. Eugen carried him to his bed, tucked him up and returned. We sat in silence—such an uncomfortable, constrained silence as had never before been between us. I had a book before me. I saw no word of it. I could not drive the vision away—the lovely pleading face, the penitence. Good Heavens! How could he repulse her as he had? His repeated request that he would take that money—what did it all mean? And, moreover, my heart was sore that he had concealed it all from me. About the past I felt no resentment; there was a secret there which I respected; but I was cut up at this. The more I thought of it, the keener was the pain I felt.

"Friedel!"

I looked up. Eugen was leaning across the table, and his hand was stretched toward me; his eyes looked full into mine. I answered his look, but I was not clear yet.

"Forgive me!"

"Forgive thee what?"

"This playing with thy confidence." "Don't mention it!" I forced myself to say, but the sore feeling still remained. "You have surely a right to keep your affairs to yourself, you choose."

"You will not shake hands? Well, perhaps I have no right to ask it; but I should like to tell you all about it."

I put my hand into his.

"I was wounded," said I, "it is true. But it is over."

"Then listen, Friedel!"

He told me the story of his meeting with Miss Wedderburn. All he said of the impression she had made upon him was:

"I thought her very charming, and the loveliest creature I had ever seen. And about the trains. It stands in this way. I thought a few hours in her society would make me very happy, and would be like—oh, well! I knew that in the future, if she should ever see me again, she would either treat me with distinct politeness, as an inferior, or, supposing she discovered that I had cheated her, would cut me dead. And as it did not matter as I could not possibly be an acquaintance of hers in the future, I gave myself that pleasure then. It was turned out a mistake on my part, but that is nothing new; my whole existence has been a monstrous mistake. However, now she sees what a child's nature was under my fair-seeming exterior, her pride will show her what to do. She will take a wrong view of my character, but what does that signify. She will say that to be deceitful first, and unkind afterward, are the main features of the German character, and when she is of Cologne on her honeymoon, she will tell her bridegroom about this adventure, and she—"

"There! You have exercised your imagination quite sufficiently. Then you intend to keep up this farce of not recognizing her? Why?"

He hesitated, looking as nearly awkward as he could, and said, a little constrainedly:

"Because I think it will be for the best."

"For you or for her?" I inquired, not very fairly, but I could not resist it.

Eugen flushed all over his face.

"What a question!" was all he said. "I did not think it such a remarkable question. Either you have grown exceedingly nervous as to your own strength of resistance, or you fear for hers."

"Friedel!" said he in a cutting voice, "that is a tone which I should not have believed you capable of taking. It is vulgar, my dear fellow, and uncalled for; and it is so unlike you that I am astonished. If you had been one of the other fellows—"

I fired up.

"Excuse me, Eugen, it might be vulgar if I were merely chaffing you, but I am not; and I think, after what you have told me, that I have said very little. I am not so sure of her as if she were distressed at your despising her."

"Pre-post-ter-ous!"

"If you can mention an instance in her behavior this evening which looked as if she were desirous of snubbing you, I should be obliged by your mentioning it," I continued.

"Well—well!"

"Well—well! If she had wished to snub you she would have sent you that money through the post, and made an end of it. She simply desired, as was evident all along, to apologize for having been rude to a person

who had been kind to her. I can quite understand it, and I am not sure that your behavior will not have the opposite effect to that you expect."

"I think you are mistaken. However, it does not matter; our paths lie quite apart. She will have plenty of other things to take up her time and thoughts. Anyhow, I am glad that you and I are quits once more."

So was I. We said no more upon the subject; but I always felt as if a kind of connecting link existed between my friend and me, and that beautiful, solitary English girl.

The link was destined to come yet closer. The concert was over at which she sang. She had a success. I see she has not mentioned it; a success which isolated her still more from her companions, inasmuch as it made her more distinctly professional and them more severely virtuous.

One afternoon when Eugen and I happened to have nothing to do, we took Sigmund to the Grafenburg. We wandered about in the fir wood, and at last came to a pause and rested. Eugen lay upon his back and gazed up into the thickness of brown-green fir above, and perhaps guessed at the heaven beyond the dark shade. I sat and stared before me through the straight, red-brown stems across the ground.

"With shudders from the pining umbrage tinged."

to an invisible beyond, which had charms for me, and was a kind of symphonic beauty in my mind. Sigmund lay flat upon his stomach, kicked his heels, and made intricate patterns with the fir needles, while he hummed a gentle song to himself in a snail, sweet voice, true as a lark's, but sadder. There was utter stillness and utter calm all around.

Presently Eugen's arm stole around Sigmund, and drew him closer and closer to him, and they continued to look at each other until a mutual smile broke upon both faces, and the boy said, his whole small frame, as well as his voice, quivering: "I love thee."

A light beamed into the father's eyes; a look of pain followed it quickly.

"And I shall never leave thee," said Sigmund.

Eugen parried the necessity of speaking by a kiss.

"I love thee too, Friedel," continued he, taking my hand. "We are very happy together, aren't we?" And he laughed placidly to himself.

Eugen, as if stung by some tormenting thought, sprang up, and we left the wood.

Oh, far-back, bygone day! There was a soft light over you, shed by a kindly sun. That was a time in which joy ran a golden thread through the gray homespun of everyday life.

Back to the restoration at the foot of the berg, where Sigmund was supplied with milk and Eugen and I with beer, where we sat at a little wooden table in a garden, and the pleasant clack of friendly conversation sounded around; where the women tried to make friends with Sigmund, and the girls whispered behind their coffee-cups or beer glasses, and always happened to be looking up at my eyes riveted that way. Two poor muskies, and a little boy; persons of no importance whatever, who could scrape their part in the symphony with some intelligence and feel they had done their duty. Well, well! It is not all of us who can do even so much.

I know some instruments that are always out of tune. Let us be complacent where we justly can. The opportunities are few.

We took our way home. The days were long, and it was yet light when we returned and found the reproachful face of Frau Schmidt looking for us, and her arms open to receive the weary little lad, who had fallen asleep on his father's shoulder.

I went upstairs, and, by a natural instinct, to the window. Those facing it were open; someone moved in the room. Two chairs of a piano were struck. Someone came and stood by the window, shielded her eyes from the rays of the setting sun which streamed down the street, and looked westward. Eugen was passing behind me. I pulled him to the window, and we both looked—silently, gravely.

The girl dropped her hand; her eyes fell upon us. The color mounted to her cheek; she turned away, and went to the interior of the room. It was May Wedderburn.

"Also!" said Eugen after a pause. "A new neighbor; it reminds me of one of Andersen's 'Marchen' but I don't know which."

BOOK IV.

CHILDREN OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

The story of my life from day to day was dull enough, same enough, for some time after I went to live at the Wehrhahn. I was studying hard, and my only variety was the letters I had from home, not very cheering, those. One, which I received from Adelaide, puzzled me somewhat. After speaking of her coming marriage in a way which made me sad and uncomfortable, she condescended to express her approval of what I was doing, and went on:

"I am catholic in my tastes. I suppose all our friends would faint at the idea of there being a singer in the family. Now, I should rather like you to be a singer—only be a great one—not a little two-enny-half-penny person, who has to advertise for engagements."

To be continued.

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Says New York is in Danger.

New York, Jan. 7.—The Merritt joint legislative commission of enquiry adjourned since the yesterday still with no word from the missing city chamberlain, Charles H. Hyde, who is a Nova Scotian. An evening paper offered a reward of \$10 for the first person to give information of his whereabouts, providing he does not publicly appear at his office before Jan. 15.

Harold Herriek, president of the Niagara Fire Insurance Co., a witness, told the committee that New York may yet see such a fire as devastated San Francisco.

"A holocaust in New York," he said, "is quite within the bounds of possibility. We have an excellent fire department, and an efficient chief, and thus far they have jumped on every fire and put it out; but no fire department ever existing subdued a conflagration once it got under way. It only ceased when it reached a natural obstacle."

"If New York has a fire like San Francisco, God help us. There would not be a solvent insurance company left in the world. No one could compute the billions of loss."

Hurried, cheap construction by speculators, and poorly installed heating plants, said Mr. Herriek, were responsible for one-third of all fires, and a greater share of their spread.

"But in the city of Hamburg," he continued, "where they won't tolerate poor construction, there has not been a fire that spread outside the house in which is started since 1842."

Tie-Up In Lumber Yards.

Ottawa, Jan. 7.—A tie-up of the Booth lumber business for two days resulted from a delay on the part of the C.P.R. in allowing the G.T.R. to use a quarter of a mile of track at the Chaudiere terminal. The Railway Commission ordered the G.T.R. off a viaduct, and to get in on the level, the C.P.R. line was necessary.

Last night a temporary agreement was got. Immediately work was started, and continued till the last of the waiting cars had been sent on its way. Specially augmented crews worked all night to do this, the railway sparing no effort to relieve the congestion. One hundred and seventy-five flat lumber cars had lain idle and 40 of Booth's teams stood in the stable while the dispute lasted.

Palatial Varsity Club.

Toronto, Jan. 7.—Proud varsity students will before long be able to show their friends one of the finest college club buildings on the continent. President Falconer made the first official announcement yesterday regarding the students' club building, a magnificent gift of the Massey estate, and of which the plans are already made. The building will cost from \$300,000 to \$500,000, and will have a gymnasium with modern equipment, smoke rooms, billiard rooms, lounging rooms, a library and dance hall.

Work will be started as soon as the weather permits in the spring, and along with the work of excavation will go the old gymnasium, which is fast becoming antiquated.



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