

the most patient and faithful of victims to the most worthless and profligate of husbands, they condescended to bestow upon her a certain degree of gracious patronage, for which she was pathetically grateful. When Gordon Ormerod died, his widow mourned him with passionate grief, as though she had been deprived of a treasure, instead of being relieved of a burden, and then turned to her only child for consolation. It was the general opinion in the Ormerod family that Berenice was an extraordinary girl, and certainly she differed greatly from her pretty, girlish cousins, not only in the possession of a glorious voice, whose strength, flexibility, and sweetness, astonished all who heard it, but also in a tenacity of purpose and strength of character, rare in one so young. After some hesitation, the Ormerods finally concluded that a veritable swan had found its way into their very commonplace flock. Berenice listened silently, pondered over their comments, and when it appeared to her that the right moment had come, spoke. It was to an old bachelor uncle that she addressed herself. The very best training that the continent could afford would be requisite for the development of her voice; her mother's scanty pittance was miserably insufficient for the purpose; would Uncle Ben advance her the means to carry out her plans? She would repay him, if prosperity crowned her efforts, and no doubt of her ultimate success ever crossed her mind. Shrewd business man as he was, Uncle Ben was impressed by the girl's courage and determination: then what a triumph for the family to count a celebrated *cantatrice* among its members. He finally agreed to allow his niece an income for six years, which would allow her time to complete her studies, and to start fairly in her profession as a singer. 'So you see Berenice's fortune is in her throat,' Mrs. Ormerod would remark, with her nervous hysterical laugh, and Robert Howe always assented, with a sympathetic

fervour which won him favour in the mother's eyes.

Having plenty of time at his disposal, it happened that Mr. Howe spent many hours with his neighbours. Berenice had little leisure, she was unwearied in the pursuit of her art, but at least he could always see her, and sometimes hear her. The conversation was always carried on between the mother and her guest, Mrs. Ormerod, volatile and excitable, Robert languidly interested, the lady passing in swift transition from the heights of exultation to the depths of feeble despair, dwelling upon the glories of the Ormerod family, mourning over her past troubles, or describing, in glowing colours, the splendid destiny of her daughter. The young man sometimes tried to hint at his own hopes, but being modest and, perhaps, over-sensitive, he was easily silenced by Mrs. Ormerod's superior volubility. All her own plans and projects were so much more interesting than those of any other person could possibly be, that she felt no hesitation in cutting Robert short in the midst of his most animated disquisition upon literature or art; and he accepted the rebuff meekly, for did not Berenice sit apart, absorbed in her own thoughts, a being surrounded, in Robert Howe's imagination, by a halo of soft romance and mystery?

It was not until the end of the Ormerods' sojourn in Kleinstein had arrived, and Berenice, accompanied by her mother, acting upon the Maestro's advice, had decided upon proceeding at once to England, that the young man discovered the fact that this girl was the one woman in the world to him. The knowledge awakened him to a fuller consciousness of life than any of which he had ever dreamed, setting all existence to a sound of harmony, sweeter than pleasure, keener than pain. He was naturally sanguine, he perceived that he had no rival; so in silence he cherished his passion, content to breathe the same air, hopeful, yet