



# CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUG. 5, 1870.

No. 51.

## AFTER THE LESSONS; OR, TRUE LOVE REQUIRED.

### CHAPTER I.

Friday! It was pleasant to wake to the conviction that another Friday had come round; the best and happiest day to me of all the busy six. Not that the work was easier, quite the contrary, but the lessons were not wearisome. And this was why: before twelve o'clock I looked on to the happy hour that was coming then. After twelve the glamour of that happy hour was upon me. Perhaps, independent of that one hour, mine was a hard dull life—teaching, teaching, late and early and with no prospect of a rest. Mine were no well-paid music lessons, given at my own house or within a short drive, but whole days spent in short railway journeys, and long walks, and hours of sitting at the same piano in a ladies' school.

My mother and sister, in their little country cottage, lived simply and quietly; and I, in my own necessary town rooms, left many a longing unsatisfied and many a wish ungratified; but withal it was only by constant work that we could live, and there were many quarters when constant work was not forthcoming. Sometimes when a discontented feeling arose that nothing could surely be harder than to try—as I so often had to do—to teach a hopeless child who had no note of music in her nature, I would remember bitterly that I knew one thing was harder still, and that was having none to teach. But this was Friday, and I would be happy—wild and hopeless as it was—for this one day.

I brushed the thick dark curls that nobody cared for, caring to hide the grey hairs that nobody grieved to see; drew on my Friday gloves which I always drew off again with a consciousness of having wasted them on nobody, and walked down the quiet streets, stopping at last before a large green door up three steps. I looked at my distorted visage for a moment in Miss Berry's shining brass plate, and rung the bell.

My comprehensive bow took in a dozen young ladies whom I passed in various stages of being put an end to, or, as the brass plate more delicately termed it, 'finished'; and then I entered the music room, where the mild little German governess was sitting in her apparently normal position, and tating as only necessity or a weak brain can tat. I knew she was there to chaperone my pupils; and she did it too in her silent and serene manner; but I did not object, why should I? At twelve o'clock I talked freely and listened willingly; and though she might watch, and listen too, in her unoffending way, nobody else cared; so, why should I?

Twelve o'clock struck, and with a glad heart I dismissed the only real musician among all Miss Berry's 'chereseleves,' and strolled across to speak to the little Fraulein. Nobody should see that I was nervous when the door opened, as it did after some minutes. She came in, a tall, slender girl of seventeen, with a rich, bright brunette complexion, large dark, liquid eyes, and a bewitching smile, for ever hiding or disclosing the gleaming little teeth. She advanced and held out her hand. Of all my pupils at Miss Berry's she was the only one who greeted me so. A bow was all I generally gave, or received; but Marie Souve, the highest, the proudest, the most hard to manage, always met me with a frank greeting, which in itself, in spite of all after conduct, acknowledged our equality and friendship.

'You have kept me waiting, mademoiselle, as usual,' said I. 'Why you do always do so?' 'Only ten minutes, monsieur,' she replied.—'I thought all musicians required an interval of ten minutes between the parts.'

'But I have so often spoken of this,' said I. 'What were you doing to-day?' 'I was getting my music, and— She paused a moment, then went on demurely, 'I stayed to play the three bars' outside to save your time.'

'Please don't let me have a repetition of it,' said I. 'Are you ready and musical?'

'Most musical,' she replied; 'but unfortunately, most melancholy, too.'

'That is unusual, is it not?' I said. 'Your life seems generally bright enough.'

'My life, monsieur, hitherto has flowed on smoothly as—'

'As your music,' I suggested; 'for if my favorite had one failing it was a perfect inability to play any one piece through smoothly and properly.'

'As my music; yes,' she continued, gravely; 'but now I have come to an accidental, and I don't know what to say to it.'

'Say nothing,' said I. 'Play it, and pass on.'

'But unfortunately it obliges me to pass on to another piano,' she replied, 'and to— to lose my master.'

I looked straight into her eyes, for it was not always that I knew whether she was in jest or not.

'Are you joking?' I asked.

'No,' was the reply; 'papa is come for me, and I am really going home to France to-morrow,' she replied. 'Don't girls generally go home when they leave school?'

'But this is sudden,' said I.

'Oh, no, only a week or two before my time,' she replied; 'I was to leave at midsummer, you know.'

Know! how was I to know? She told me nothing in earnest, nothing that she meant. My very lips were pale, and she was looking at me; what could I do?

'Will you begin to play if you please, Miss Souve?'

'I must give little Fraulein a kiss first,' said she. 'She is quite sorry to lose me; and indeed I wish I were not going so soon.'

I was grateful to her for turning away and for staying so long, and I tried not to feel hurt that she took her seat with the old, merry, defiant face.

The lesson was given and received in silence. I marked the fingering, and tapped impatiently at the wrong notes—they seemed to come even oftener than ever—but I could not talk, try as I would. This was the last time I might sit beside her, might speak to her as I loved to do, with a friend's ease and a master's privilege.—Henceforth her life would be far enough apart from mine; she with her wealth and beauty; I, with my work, and cares; and our two paths would never cross again. I thought all this with a beating heart at that last lesson; then the clock struck, and I started.

'You may go, mademoiselle.'

She rose, collected her music, then stood with the portfolio under her arm.

'I have not enjoyed this last lesson, monsieur.'

'Nor have I,' said I.

'Then why did you make it so unpleasant?' she asked.

'I did not intend to—when you came in.'

'You never even said you were sorry monsieur. Any one else would have said so in courtesy.'

'I cannot say things in courtesy,' I replied.

'I suppose not; at any rate you never try,' said she; and her eyes danced with fun. 'I am much more gracious. I tell you I shall be very sorry to leave you. I hate bidding good-bye, and no one will ever miss me half so readily as you, Mr. Rikhart; no one will scold me half so energetically as you. What shall I do?'

'Perhaps you will not need it then,' I replied.

'But to you that makes no difference,' she said. 'I have been gentle and obedient to-day, I'm sure; yet you frown upon me now. Do you like France, monsieur?'

She rested her music on the back of a chair, leaning upon it, and turned to me with a question suddenly and saucily.

'I hate it,' I replied.

'Do you?' said she; 'for the reason, perhaps, that Nelson did?'

'I don't know his reason,' I said.

'Withdraw your opinion, expressed the other day, that I know nothing but poetry, and I will tell you,' she said.

'Did I ever say that, Miss Souve?'

'Does it not rankle within me day and night, and consume my very life?' said she. 'Ah, a little smile at last. Do you like smiling, monsieur?'

'Are you going to say one serious word to me to-day?' I asked. 'My time is flying.'

'Not any faster than mine,' she replied. 'I am going to tell you—and you can never say I gave you no instruction—when Nelson was asked why he hated the French so bitterly, he bowed, so—' Pardon, gentlemen, but my mother did.' 'What do you think of this filial piety?—Did your mother hate the French?'

'Mademoiselle Souve, you must go and send some one else to me.'

'An English girl, I suppose, you hate the French ones so.'

It flashed across me for the first time what I had said—said to a French girl—and to the one I loved best in all the world. I drew back, half ashamed, half proud.

'Do not tempt me to retract,' I said.—'Though I said it blindly, I only hate them because they claim, and take away the only brightness of my wretched life. You should not tempt me to hurt you.'

She threw a quick glance over to the German governess, whom I did not care to follow; then, with her music in her left hand, she held out the right to me, saying, 'Fate will be sure to cross our paths again, Mr. Rikhart. Farewell, until then.'

'Fate does many odd and capricious things,' I replied; 'but she is hardly likely to elevate me to the peerage, or shower gold upon my way; when she does, we may meet. Farewell until then.' I changed my tone suddenly; I felt my voice was growing tremulous. 'You will keep your music, mademoiselle; you will not let it all slip by with the memory of this time.'

Her clear soft eyes looked straight into mine as she replied, 'I shall not forget my music master, nor his lessons, if I can help it.'

The last few words, added out of pure mischief, provoked me to say carelessly, 'Would you ever do anything to please anybody?'

'I never succeed, you see, monsieur. I do try.'

'I would give up trying, then,' I laughed.—'Your mode of trying, you see, is peculiar, mademoiselle.'

'Mr. Rikhart, you must really be very glad my lessons are over. You always said I was your slowest pupil. I hope a better one will take my place.'

'That one never will or can,' I replied.

The words were uttered thoughtlessly. Had I considered for a moment, they would not have been spoken.

'Your time is up, Miss Souve; good-by. I know it would be useless, else I would ask you to remember as much of what I have taught you with care and difficulty,' I added.

She made me a *naive* little curtsey, and the corners of her mouth were puckered with an amused smile.

'You pay me compliments at parting, monsieur.'

'You will have praise enough from others presently,' said I.

'Shall I?' she said. 'That sounds encouraging, more so than your usual pieces of intelligence.'

'But you know,' said I, 'you have treated both my orders and my wishes with invariable disregard since the first time I saw you.'

'And how did I treat them before that?' she asked. 'Oh, how savage your face is growing, monsieur! True, musicians never feel in the slightest degree moved from the lofty indifference which belongs to genius by school-girls' jokes; I remark it always in their biographies. Now, will you listen while I tell you one thing before I go?—and I am going in a moment, because you turned me out of the room.'

'Well?' said I.

'I'm glad all's well with thee,' said she; 'that encourages me to continue my reply. As to remembering your scoldings and lectures, and raps upon the piano, and your continual contra-

dictions, I think I shall for a long time. As to remembering your directions as to fingering and advice regarding studies and scales, why—to describe it with moderation and in my native tongue, 'Je voudrais, mais je connais pas;'' and with a wital toss of her dainty little head she left me.

There were other lessons to be given, others to talk to and direct, and to whom all my attention must be devoted, and I must not think, or my heart would break. Never again! that was the burden of my thoughts and heart-beats. Never again! and the day's work went on, and the quietness of night seemed near coming. To those who do not know the aching, weary pain of being left to the dull, unchanging routine of a life from which the light has gone, it would seem impossible to describe it; to those who do, what need to try? I like to pass over the dreariness of that time.

### CHAPTER II.

Four years went by, bringing changes in other homes, but none in mine. The work went on year after year; and because I had no end to work for, the increase of fame and prosperity mattered little to me.

Four years, I say, had passed since I had lost my favorite pupil, and no one had taken her place. The bright, winning face lived with me in my dreams, hopelessly far away in the present, but with the old pleasant reality in the past; and mine was a quiet, busy, dreamy life, with but little of the hope and ambition of other men's.

It was a dark and wet November night; my day's teaching was over, and in my dressing-gown and slippers, I sat lingeringly over my solitary dinner with a book beside me, (for I had little time for reading except during my meals and late at night,) when the servant entered with a small note, sealed with a crest almost as large as itself. I opened it carelessly. I had many to open in the course of the day, and glanced at the signature. Then my eyes seemed to burn as I eagerly read the words—

'Dear Sir,—My grandmother, with whom I am staying, is giving a private concert here to-morrow, and the conductor she has invited has been taken suddenly ill. They were in great distress about it when I arrived yesterday, and I instantly thought you might be induced to undertake the arduous task of correcting and directing a few amateurs. The notice is very short, but I don't think my old master will require more. If you will oblige us, may I ask you to return in the carriage to the rehearsal to-night?'

'I am, dear sir, yours,

'MARIE SOUVE.'

If I would go! What was the short notice to me? It was best, for I could hardly have borne a long one. The old name was unchanged. It was only when I saw it so that I knew how deeply hope was buried in my old dream.

My voice would not sound cool and indifferent as I sent down word I would be ready in ten minutes, and my hand shook as I folded the little note and put it carefully away. Then, leaving my half-eaten dinner, I went to dress. My best dress suit would do for the rehearsal, and I could have a new one in time for the concert; and I tried to make it clear to myself that it would have been necessary in a few days in any case.

I will own that I stood rather long before the glass that night, and wondered whether any other man so young had such a careworn face and so much grey among his hair. But the thought came hastily, 'no one will notice.'

The carriage took me rapidly to a beautiful house in the most fashionable square in London, and I was ushered at once into a long, handsome music-room, at one end of which stood a piano, two harps, and various other instruments. There was a group about the fire at that end, ladies in gay evening dresses, and gentlemen in costumes which had the mortifying effect of making mine look—well, at best, rather acquainted with wear. From the group an old lady at once advanced to me.

'Mr. Rikhart,' said she, 'I feel that you have favored us indeed by coming on so short a notice. I could not have asked it of a stranger,

as you are to me in all but name—that of course I am familiar with.' She meant in my capacity of musician; fool to let my heart beat so at any other thought! 'Mademoiselle Souve assured me you would unhesitatingly say no if you would rather not undertake it, and I do hope your reputation will not suffer through our stupidity.'

'I willingly risk my slight reputation, my lady,' I replied, bowing, in acknowledgment of her gracious little speech; 'and I will tell you whether it is likely to suffer after the practice.'

I had looked in vain among the faces there for one I should have known so soon. It was not there.

'If you please,' continued the lady, 'we will try the overture.'

I tried not to watch the door; not to look and long for any one to come, and I think I succeeded. I grew anxious over the music as usual, heart and soul seemed in it; perhaps they were; and I lost myself in my intense desire for its perfection and success, until at last the practice was over, and I stood talking of the programme.

'If you will allow me,' I said, 'I will add a cornet part in the selection from "Guillaume Tell." It will be an improvement, if you will try it over in the morning, Lord Hume,' addressing the cornet player.

'With pleasure,' he replied; 'but how shall I get it in time?'

'I will write it now,' said I, 'before I leave, and give it to you; then is the programme complete?'

I tried to ask it carelessly, and looked into the fire for fear my eyes should tell their anxiety.

'I think so,' replied Lady Winter, 'unless Mademoiselle Souve consents to sing, as we wish.'

In the old times she had not been allowed to learn singing, but I knew she had a rich clear voice from the way she spoke and laughed; and so some one else had taught her, and she perhaps repaid her, and she never would repay mine!

'Is she unwilling?' I asked, still without looking up.

'She said she would try a song over to-night,' was the reply; 'but now she declines to come in at all. Mr. Rikhart, you will come to my morning-room to write that music, and I will send refreshments there, as you will not come in to tea.'

I would not think, nor wonder at Marie's absence. I would write the part. What else had I to do in that house?

I did not often sit down to arrange in my best dress-suit, which might have been the reason I was so long, and the notes seemed so difficult to harmonize. It did not signify—I was alone, and kept no one waiting. I dare say they thought I was gone, if they thought of me at all. I sipped my wine often, otherwise, I left the tray undisturbed. I was bearing the end of my task at last, when I heard, through the half open door, a merry voice, apparently on the stairs, a little way below the door, raised as it addressing some one above.

'Marie, are you going down at last, you quiet child? Why did you never come to see our new conductor?—your own importation too!—and why didn't you tell us what to expect? Why there won't be a more perfect gentleman in all the room to-morrow.'

A voice answered that sent the warm blood thrilling through my veins—'Did you expect a savage?'

'But you told us he was just like all other musicians.'

'And was I wrong? I am very sorry.'

'He is uncommonly unlike the masters of my experience. At any rate, did you like him, Marie?'

'If you know me at all,' she replied, 'you know how much liking I should spend on anything relative to music lessons.'

I don't know what I ought to have done, but, like a coward, I bent over the writing that was finished with eyes that saw nothing. I don't know how long it was before Lord Hume came in for the music; then I dismissed the cab that