

TO STELLA.

(Translated from Victor Hugo.)

Thy form I pressed: 'twas quivering
Like reed by Zephyr stirred;
Thy bosom trembled like the wing
Of a young bird.

Allent long time we watched the day
That died in heaven above;
What feeling did we both betray?
'Twas love, deep love.

Like some fair Spirit of romance
Thou didst illumine the night,
And bend on me a starry glance,
That dazed my sight!

Montreal.

GEO. MURRAY.

HOW DOT BECAME A SINGER.

The church was vast and dim. The air was fragrant with pine boughs, and over the golden cross of the chancel hung heavy wreaths of box and fir. A solitary light shone in front of the organ.

Little feet were heard on the stairs leading to the orchestra. A door in the organ case opened quietly and was about to close, when a voice was heard:

"Is that you, Dot?"

"Yes, sir."

"What makes you come so early? It is nearly an hour before the rehearsal begins. I should think the little bellows room would be a rather lonely place to wait an hour."

"I always come early," said the boy, timidly.

"So I have noticed. Why?"

"Mother thinks it best."

"Come out here and let me talk with you. I have sung in the choir nearly a year, and have hardly had a glimpse of you yet. Don't be bashful! Why, all the music would stop if it were not for you, Dot. Our grandest Christmas anthem would break into confusion if you were to cease to blow. Come here. I have just arrived in the city, and have come to the church to wait for the hour of rehearsal. I want company. Come, Dot."

The little side door of the organ moved; a shadow crept along in the dim light towards the genial-hearted Tenor.

"Do you like music, Dot?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is that what makes you come so long before the rest?"

"No, sir."

"What is it, then?"

"I have a reason—mother would not like to have me speak of it."

"Do you sing?"

"Yes, at home."

"What do you sing?"

"The parts I hear you sing."

"Will you sing for me?"

"Now?"

"Yes."

"I will sing, 'Hark, what means'?"

"Rossini—an adaptation from 'Cujus Animam.'"

The boy did not understand.

"Well," said the Tenor, "I beat time—now, Dot."

A flute-like voice floated out into the empty edifice, silvery, pure, rising and falling through all the melodious measures of that almost seraphic melody. The Tenor leaped to his feet, and stood like one entranced. The voice fell in wavy cadences: "Heavenly Hallelujahs rise." Then it rose clear as a skylark, with the soul of inspiration in it:

"Hear them tell that sacred story,

Hear them chant—"

The Tenor with a nervous motion turned on the gas-light.

The boy seemed affrighted, and shrank away towards the little door that led to the bellows room.

"Boy!"

"Sir!"

"There is a fortune in that voice of yours."

"Thank you, sir."

"What makes you hide behind that bench?"

"You won't tell, sir?"

"No; I will befriend any boy with a voice like that."

The boy approached the singer and stood beside him.

He said not a word, but only looked toward his feet.

The Tenor's eyes followed the boy's.

He saw it all, but he only said, tenderly.

"Dot!"

A chancel door opened. An acolyte came in, bearing a long gas-lighter; he touched the chandeliers and they burst into flame. The cross glimmered upon the wall under the Christmas wreaths; the alabaster font revealed its beautiful decorations of calla lilies and smilax; the organ glowed with its tall pipes, and carvings and cherubs.

The first flash of light in the chancel found Dot hidden in his little room with the door fast closed behind him.

What a strange place it was! A dim light fell through the open carvings of the organ case. Great wooden pipes towered aloft with black mouths—like dragons. Far, far above in the arch was a cherub, without a body—a golden face with purple wings. Dot had looked at it for hours, and wondered.

He sat looking at it to-night with a sorrowful face. There were other footsteps in the church, sounds of light, happy voices.

Presently the bell tinkled. The organist was on his bench. Dot grasped the great wooden

handle; it moved up and down, and then the tall, wooden pipes with the dragon mouths began to thunder around him. Then the chorus burst into a glorious strain, which Dot the year before had heard the organist say was the "Midnight Mass of the Middle Ages."

"Adeste fideles,
Laeti triumphantes,
Venite,
Venite,
In Bethlelem!"

The great pipes close at hand ceased to thunder. The music seemed to run far away into the distance, low, sweet and shadowy. There were sympathetic solos and tremulous chords. Then the tempest seemed to come back again, and the luminous arch over the organ sent back into the empty church the jubilant chorus;

"Venite adoremus,
Venite adoremus,
Venite adoremus,
Dominum."

After the anthem there were solos. The Tenor sang one of them, and Dot tried to listen to it as he moved the handle up and down. How sweet it sounded to Dot's ears! It came from a friendly heart—except his mother's it was the only voice that ever spoke a word of sympathy or praise to the poor bellows boy.

The singers rested, laughed and talked. Dot listened as usual in his narrow room.

"I came to the church directly from the train," said the Tenor, "and amused myself for a time with Dot. A wonderful voice that boy has."

"Dot?" said the precentor.

"Yes; the boy that blows the organ."

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten. I seldom see him," said the precentor.

"Now, I think of it, the sexton told me some weeks ago that I must get a new organ boy another year; he says this one—Dot you call him?—comes to the church through back alleys, and goes to the bellows room as soon as the church is open and hides there until service time, and that his clothes are not decent to be seen in a church on Sunday. Next Sunday begins the year—I must see to the matter."

"He does his work well!" asked the Alto, with a touch of sympathy in her voice.

"Yes."

"Would it not be better to get him some new clothes, than to dismiss him?" she asked.

"No. Charity is charity, and business is business. Everything must be first-class here. We cannot have ragamuffins creeping into the church work. Of course, I should be glad to have the boy supplied with clothes. That is another thing. But we must have a different person in the bellows box. The sexton's son is bright, dresses well, and I have no doubt would be glad of the place. Now we will sing the anthem, 'Good will toward men.'"

The choir are ready. The organist tinkled the bell, and bent down on the pedals and keys. There was a ripple of music, a succession of short sounds, and—silence.

The organist touched the knob at the side of the key-board, and again the bell tinkled. His white hands ran over the keys, but there issued no sound.

He moved nervously from the bench, and opened the little door.

"Dot?"

No answer.

"The boy is sick or faint."

The Tenor stepped into the room and brought out a limp figure.

"Are you sick, Dot?"

"Yes, sir; but what will become of mother?"

"He heard what you said about dismissing him," said the Alto to the precentor.

"Yes, but the sexton was right. Look at his shoes—why, his toes are sticking through them."

"And this bitter weather!" said the Alto, feelingly.

"Can you blow, Dot?"

"No, sir; it is all dark, sir. I can't see sir. I can't but just stand up, sir. You won't dismiss me, sir, mother is lame and poor, sir—paralysed, sir; that's what they call it—can't use but one hand, sir."

"This ends the rehearsal," said the precentor, in an impatient way. "Dot, you needn't come to-morrow, nor till I send for you. Here's a dollar, Dot—charity—Christmas present."

One by one the singers went out, the precentor bidding the sexton have a care that Dot was sent home.

The Alto and the Tenor lingered. Dot was recovering.

"I shall not hear the music to-morrow. I do love it so."

"Yes, poor child, you shall have your Christmas music to-morrow, and the best the city affords. Do you know where Music Hall is, Dot?"

"Yes, lady."

"There is to be an oratorio there to-morrow evening—'The Messiah.' It is the grandest ever composed, and no singing in America equal to it. There is one chorus called the 'Hallelujah Chorus'—it is wonderful; the man who composed it thought he heard the angels singing and saw the Lord of Heaven, when he was at work upon it; and he is to be the first tenor singer, and I am going to sing the alto—wouldn't you like to go, Dot?"

"Yes, lady. Is the man who composed it to be the tenor singer—the one who heard the angels singing, and thought he saw the Lord?"

"No, Dot. He is to be the tenor singer."

"I, Dot," said the Tenor.

"I have a ticket for the upper gallery which I will give him," said the Alto. "A friend of mine bought it, but I gave her a seat on the floor, and kept this for—well, Dot."

The Tenor talked low with the lady.

"Here is a Christmas present, Dot." He handed Dot a bill.

"And here is one for your mother," said the Alto, giving Dot a little roll of money.

Dot was better now. He looked bewildered at his new fortune.

"Thank you, lady. Thank you, sir. Are you able?" The Alto laughed.

"Yes, Dot. I am to receive a hundred dollars for singing to-morrow evening. I shall see you, Dot, under the statue of Apollo."

The sexton was turning off the lights in the chancel. He called Dot. The church grew dimmer and dimmer, and the great organ faded away in the darkness. In the vanishing lights the Alto and Tenor went out of the church, leaving Dot with the sexton.

It was Sabbath evening—Christmas.

Lights glimmered thickly among the snowy trees on Boston Common; beautiful coaches were rolling through the crowded streets.

Dot entered Music Hall timidly through a long passage through which bright, happy faces were passing, silks rustling, and people moved sedately and slowly, and into which the crowds on the street seemed surging like a tide. Faces were too eager with expectation to notice him or his feet. At last he passed a sharp angle in the long passage, and the great organ under a thousand gas jets burst upon his view. An usher at one of the many lower doors looked at his ticket doubtfully.

"Second gallery—back."

Dot followed the trailing silks up the broad flight of stairs, reached the top, and asked another usher to show him his seat. The young man whom Dot addressed had that innate refinement of feeling that marks a true Boston gentleman. He gave Dot a smile, as much as to say, "I am glad you can enjoy all this happiness with the rest," and said:

"Follow me."

His manner was so kind that Dot thought he would like to speak to him again. He remembered what the Alto had said about the statue of Apollo, and as the usher gave him back his check and pointed to the number on his check and the seat, Dot said:

"Will you please tell me, sir, which is the statue of Apollo?"

The usher glanced at the busts and the statues along the wall. He answered, kindly:

"That is the Apollo Belvedere."

Dot thought that a pretty name, it did not convey to his mind any association of the Vatican palace, but he knew that some beautiful mystery was connected with it.

And now Dot gazed in amazement on the scene before him. In the blaze of light the great organ rises resplendently, sixty feet in height, its imposing facade hiding from view its 12 thousand pipes. People are hurrying into the hall, flitting to and fro: young ladies in black silks and velvets and satins; old men—where were so many men with white hair ever seen before? stately men with thin faces, bald—teachers, college professors. Tiers of seats in the form of half a pyramid rise at either end of the organ. These are filling with the chorus—sopranos and altos in black dresses and white shawls, tenors and basses in black coats, white neck-ties and kids. In front, between the great chorus, rises a dark statue, and around this musicians are gathering—players on violins, violas, violin-cellos, contra basses, flutes, oboes, bassoons, trumpets, trombones, horns; the pyramidal seats fill; the hall overflows; the doors are full. The instruments tune. A dark-haired man steps upon the conductor's stand, he raises his baton; there is a hush, then half a hundred instruments pour forth the symphony.

Dot listens. He has never heard such music before; he did not know that anything like it was ever heard on earth. It grows sweeter and sweeter:

"Comfort ye."

Did an angel speak? The instruments are sweeter now:

"Comfort ye my people."

Did that voice come from the air?

Dot listens and wonders if this is earth:

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, saith your God."

Dot sees a tall man standing alone—in front of the musicians—it is he that is singing? Dot gazes upon his face with wide eyes. It is he—and he is the tenor who had befriended him the night before.

What music followed when the chorus arose and sang:

"Every valley shall be exalted."

Dot hears the music sweep on, and he feels, as all feel, that the glorious Messiah is about to appear. He sees a lady in white satin and flashing jewels step forward; he hears a ripple of applause, and a voice full of strength and feeling sings:

"O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, say unto the cities of Judah: Behold your God!"

Dot knows that voice. Will indeed she lift her eyes to meet him?

No, she does not. She sits down, the hall ringing with applause. She rises, bows, but she does not look towards the statue of Apollo, near which Dot is sitting.

Dot hears dreamy music now, more enchanting than ever before. The great audience do not stir, or move a fan, or raise a glass. It grows more ethereal; it seems now but a wavy motion in the air. He hears a lady near whisper:

"The Pastoral symphony."

The Alto has risen again. She stands out from the great chorus—what a beautiful figure! The dark-haired man lifts his baton; the lady turns her face toward the upper gallery. Her eyes wander for a moment; they rest on—Dot.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd and he shall gather the lambs with his arm, with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young, and gently lead those that are with young."

There was no applause now. Tears stood in the Alto's eyes—tears stood in the eyes of every one. There was a deep hush and tears, and in the silence the Alto stood looking at—Dot.

There was a rustle in the hall—it grew. The silence was followed by a commotion that seemed to rock the hall. The applause gathered force like a tempest.

Then the beautiful lady looked toward Dot and sang again the same wonderful air, and all the hall grew still, and people's eyes were wet again.

The Hallelujah Chorus with its grand fugues was sung, the people rising and standing with bowed heads during the majestic outpouring of praise.

It is ended now—faded and gone. The great organ stands silent in the dark hall; the coaches have rolled away, the clocks are striking midnight.

"I have come to congratulate you before retiring," said our Tenor to the Alto, as he stepped into the parlour of the Revere House. "To-night has been the triumph of your life. Nothing so moved the audience as 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.'"

"Do you know to what I owed the feeling that so inspired me in that air?"

"No."

"It was poor little Dot in the gallery. You teach music do you not?"

"Yes."

"You are about to open a school?"

"Yes."

"Give Dot a place as office boy—errand boy—something. It will lift a weight from my heart."

"I had thought of it. He has a beautiful voice."

"I will try and get him a place in the choir."

Fifteen years have passed. The old Handel and Haydn Society have sung "The Messiah" fifty, perhaps sixty times. The snows of December are again on the hills. The grand oratorio is again rehearsing for the Sabbath evening before Christmas.

A new tenor is to sing on the occasion—he was born in Boston, has studied in Milan, and has achieved great triumphs as an interpreter of sacred music in London and Berlin.

The old hall is filled again. The symphony has begun its dulcet enchantment; the tenor, with a face luminous and spiritual, arises, and with his first notes thrills the audience and holds it as by a spell:

"Comfort ye."

He thought of the time when he first heard these words. He thought of the hearts whose kindness had made him a singer. Where were they? Their voices had vanished from the choirs of earth, but in spirit those sweet singers seemed hovering around him.

"Comfort ye my people."

He looked, too, towards the Apollo on the wall. He recalled the limp bellows boy who had sat there sixteen years ago. How those words then comforted him! How he loved to sing them now!

"Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned."

It was Dot.

HUMOROUS.

WHEAT is "thrashed" for the purpose of getting out the grain; the school-boy is "thrashed" to get out the chaff.

TEACHER—"Why are ships called 'she'?" Boy (precociously alive to the responsibilities of his sex)—"Because they need men to run them."

"NEURALGIA" is the charming name borne by a charming girl. Her fond mother found it on a medicine bottle, and was captivated by its sweetness.

AN old lady who has several unmarried daughters feeds them on fish diet, because it is rich in phosphorus, and phosphorus is the essential thing in making matches.

THIS is the alliterative statement of an American paper concerning a farmer who gained the first prize in a cattle show, and died from joy the same evening—"He as boast the best beast bust last night."

AT one of our country schools, the question was asked, "Who is at the head of the United States Government?" And every boy in the class promptly answered, "Sitting Bull."

LITTLE DUNCE (looking up suddenly from her history-book): Oh, mummy, darling I do so wish I'd lived under James the Second! Mamma: Why? Little Dunce: Because I see here that education was very much neglected in his reign.—Punch.

AN Englishman who went to see an Irish friend knocked at the street door, and asked, "Does Mr. McGuire live here?" "He does, sir; but he's dead!" "When did he die?" "If he'd lived 'till to-morrow, 'was the response, 'he'd have been dead a fortnight."