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A CHOIR SINGER.

BY MADELINE S. BRIGGS.

There are two sides to every question, as the best of reason demonstrates; but Marie Pirot, try as she might, could find only one side to the question of her engagement to Sydney Worth; and that, unfortunately for the lover, was the negative side.

Sydney, on his part, being a man, was logical enough to take in all the bearings of the case, and yet heroics enough to await Marie's decision with a courage worthy of a brown-eyed girl. In this trembling balance, however, was hung his hope of all earthly happiness, while he smoked his cigar and talked and walked about the world as usual.

"Take a week, only a week, for calm consideration," he had begged her, and then proceeded to enhance her calmness by daily letters of urgent pleading.

She and Sydney met occasionally as friends, and his eyes still told the same old story that was now forbidden of all other expression. As for Miss Pirot, she met the usual experience that falls to the lot of talented and gracious woman. She had hosts of male friends, quite an array of admirers, and always one or two ardent lovers who were much in the same case as Sydney himself—for it would seem even to the most disinterested observers that Miss Pirot's being, musical and harmonious as it was, had never yet responded to the master chord of all—the chord of Love!

But at last when the keynote of Marie's destiny was struck, and its flood of melody came pouring into her life like an overwhelming tide, neither the alto on one side of her, nor the bass on the other, nor even the organist, Lucy Crumm, who was her bosom friend, guessed that anything unusual had happened.

It came about in this very commonplace way: Old Brande, the regular tenor, was absent, for the first time in seven years, for the Tuesday night rehearsal. The choir had assembled, and stood about, waiting and wondering, and conferring on Mr. Brande a position apart from all other tenors on record by their genuine surprise at his delinquency, when there came suddenly up the choir staircase a tall and slim young man, very fair, with plenty of flowing blonde hair that hung in student fashion on his broad white collar. He spoke with a foreign accent, in a high musical voice, addressing Miss Pirot, who happened to be nearest to him, as he approached the organ: "Mr. Brande has sent me to sing—he is too much ill for this night, and also for Sunday he thinks. But if it is pleasing, I sing his part for all."

Miss Pirot only bowed and smiled, but did not speak. There was good reason for her silence. She had fallen in love with this young man, of whose existence she had been aware three seconds! It is not to be wondered at that, in the confusion of her senses, she had also, for the moment mislaid her voice.

'So very glad,' said Lucy Crumm, all animation, and reassured on the score of the quartet; 'but so very sorry to hear Mr. Brande is ill. Nothing serious, I hope? We were just wondering how we should manage. You read, I suppose?' Mr. Aiken, will you please hand—thanks. We intended to rehearse this quartet. All along here is Mr. Brande's part—the tenor's; the bass comes in next below; but of course you understand?'

'Oh, yes—yes!'

He was already humming through the bars of the music she had placed in his hand, like one sure of his ground.

'Miss Pirot?'

Miss Pirot started visibly, then walked over quickly to her place, with a heightened color. When had she ever before needed a summons to duty? No one appeared to notice her embarrassment, for all eyes were now fixed on the open books, and Miss Crumm's strong fingers were pressing the keys.

It was a wretched night; the rain fell in torrents, a chilly wind was blowing, the streets were wet and dismal, and Marie Pirot was walking under an umbrella with Gustave Wetzel and clinging fondly to his arm. The rain was blinding her somewhat, but her tears were blinding her still more—furtive, bitter tears, such as women often weep, unknown to all the world. The crowded street cars passed them every minute or two, but Marie had refused to ride. This was the last time they would ever walk together—the last of many, many times. She could not afford to shorten these few sad moments of parting and farewell. He had come to the choir that evening only to tell them that he had been suddenly called back to Germany and must sail in the morning; but he had staid and sang over with Marie some of the old duets, and now they were walking home together, slowly, through all the storm, by the way they had learned to know so well.

'I must thank you, Miss Pirot, for the kindness you have given to me always—to me a stranger; all these pleasant walks, and our music together. I shall often think of your lovely voice when I am far away.'

'We have indeed had pleasant times,' she answered, bravely and clearly, after a moment's pause. 'But why need you go if you have been—happy—here? Ah, you have not many regrets. You are glad, I think?'

'Indeed, I am glad,' and glad his face looked excited and eager. 'It is a grand opportunity that now offers. You can understand, if one has been planning long, and waiting, that one might be glad to see fulfilment later.'

'Yes,' said Marie. That one word only, and in her voice was the huskiness that comes with tears.

'I must leave you here,' she said, stopping suddenly at the corner of Fourth-avenue. 'I—I have some business to do—I will say good-night and good-by. I hope you may have a pleasant journey.'

'But surely not! I cannot leave you in this storm. Let me escort you where you wish to go—so dark, and such a rain!'

'I have my own umbrella here.' She raised it as she spoke. 'Thank you very, very much, but I prefer to go alone. And you know,' smiling strangely at him, 'I shall have to do without escort after this. You have been most kind—' she broke off suddenly, and busied herself with the fastening of her cloak, then held out her hand. 'Good by,' she said, abruptly.

'Good-by, Miss Pirot, if it must be so—if you wish it.'

'Oh, yes. Partings, I think, should never be prolonged. I hope you will have a good voyage. I hope you will be always happy. Good-by, Gustave.'

'*Auf wiedersehn, auf wiedersehn*, my beautiful, kind friend. I will write to you from the other side, and some day we surely shall meet again. Do not forget me in the time between.

But Marie had wrenched her hand from his and was gone, a dark, hurrying shape, down the lighted, rain-swept street.

. . . . . .

'Marie!'

Sydney Worth had come out of the opera after the second act and having buttoned his long rubber coat to the chin, was scudding up Fourteenth Street in an element-defying humor, when this word burst from his lips, in a tone of amazement. Marie Pirot had just passed him on the crossing at Fourth Avenue; a sudden backward tilt of her umbrella had shown him her face plainly, pale and strange, with that absorbed, unseeing look that mental suffering gives. Her swift step faltered an instant at the sound of his voice, and in that instant he was by her side.

'I knew I could not be mistaken,' he said, breathlessly; 'but you, of all people, and at this hour!' What in the world brings you into this region?'

He is holding her hand in his warm, friendly clasp, and looking down searchingly at her half-averted face.

'Oh, I was walking away from the furies,' she said, trying to speak lightly; 'but they have come with me. I think I really did no know where I was going. I only wanted to walk. Did you ever have that feeling, Sydney, that you were too unhappy to be quiet?'

'She asks me if I ever had that feeling! Ah, Marie, there are few feelings, born of unhappiness, that I have not had. You ought to know that, my dear.'

'But they pass away some time, don't they?' she asked, wistfully. 'People can't go on suffering—some change, some relief, must come.'

'I don't know,' he answered, with a long sigh. 'Perhaps, I have not found it out yet.'

'Oh, Sydney,' she said, passionately, with a wild burst of tears. 'Sydney, Sydney!' She laid her cheek on his shoulder, sobbing like a child.

By this time they had passed from the glare of Fourteenth-street, and were facing up-town again. He had taken the umbrella from her hand, and held its shelter between them and passers-by. Sydney's knowledge of suffering had made him very tender towards the pain of others. He allowed his companion to weep unquestioned, patting gently from time to time the little quivering fingers that clutched his arm.

'How good you are!' she stammered, whisperingly, at length. 'Oh, Sydney! how could you ever look at me again, if I have ever made you suffer—like this? I never knew it could be so terrible! I did not dream of what you felt when we parted; you were so noble and so good. You never made me understand how cruel—cruel—cruel—Oh, and you bore it all! I can pity you now!'

'Yes, dear!' he said, tenderly. 'I am glad to hear you say that. I am glad you have at least some pity to give me.'

'Oh, but you do not need any more. Surely you can't care still as you used to——'

'Oh, hush!' Sydney interrupted, very gently. 'Hush, my dear! hush, Marie! You have never understood my love if you think it could change or pass away in a few months or years.'

'And you do love me this minute—for—as you did then?'

'Always—always!'

'But if I should tell you that I had thrown my heart away, unasked, unsought—oh, so hopelessly and vainly! and if I should say to you, "Will you take my promise to be your wife—ah, not soon, but sometime, when I am a better and a happier woman?"—if I should ask you to accept the poor service of my life and let me try to love you—would that atone a little for the pain and trouble of the past?'

'Oh, Marie, you do not mean it!' His grasp tightened on her fingers. 'Do you think what you are saying?'

'Yes, yes, yes' if you will take my poor half-broken heart—but not yet!' she checked herself, piteously. 'I could not love you yet—by-and-by it all may come right. And, meanwhile, if you wish it, we can be engaged. You must stay near me, Sydney, and be good to me. Oh, help me! help me to live. You know how hard it is—how impossible it seems that joy or hope can ever come again!'

'You have given joy and hope to me, I know,' he said, in a low, happy voice. 'I am willing to wait for love—as long as ever you like, darling, for it's sure to come!'

'But think—oh, Fate is strange!—think, if I had not met you!' Marie leaned more closely on his arm.

'Fate knows what she is about,' Sydney answered, smiling down at the earnest, pale face. 'You were obliged to meet me. Under the circumstances nothing else could have happened.'

. . . . . .

'What!' Marie grasped Sydney's arm with both her hands.

'My dear girl!' He reined in the horse, and looked down at her white face in amazement. 'What is the matter?'

'Wetzel was his name?—and he went away?—when?—when?' she demanded, hurriedly.

'Wetzel was the name he gave. His real name is Wallace, I believe. He went away last Wednesday morning—the day after I met you in the rain.'

'That—was—the—man!' she said, in a low, breathless voice. She unclasped her hands from Sydney's arm, and pressed them over her face.

'The man? What man? Sydney stared quite wildly as he asked the question.

'Oh, the hero of my romance,' said Marie, slowly and bitterly—'the singer I fell in love with. You did not want to know my secret; you must know it now! That was the man! Who? Young Wetzel? Why where on earth, how on earth, did you come to be acquainted with him?'

'He sang with me for nearly three months in the choir.'

'Oh, I see! And you fell in love with his voice—no wonder!'

'I didn't!' she said, miserably; there might have been some excuse for that. I had never heard his voice when—when I fell in love—oh, not with him!—with a dream, a fancy! Could I have borne to look on his face, even much less love him, if I had known what I know now?'

'Well, then, the comfort is that you did not love him, after all, said Sydney, cheeringly. 'He only thought you did.'

'No, no, no!' she returned, vehemently. 'He never thought—He never dreamed—Oh, I could lie down here and die this minute—'

'Oh, not here!' said Sydney, deprecatingly. 'No one could die comfortably in a buggy. Could wait until I took you home, I know.'

But Marie did not smile.

'How contemptible I am!' she said slowly, with bitter emphasis. 'How I have fallen for ever in my own esteem! To turn away from a noble, generous nature like yours—a love such as few women might be honored in accepting, Sydney, I deserve your hate and scorn!'

'I am being praised, it seems, said Sydney, calmly. 'Quite right; but all the same, I can't hear my wife abused. And look here, Marie, I'm glad you did make such an awfully foolish mistake, because if you hadn't you never would have come to me.'

'Oh, do you really think so, Sydney?' she asked, blushing beautifully. 'Then I am glad, too!'

A Lucky Man.

—"A lucky man is rarer than a white crow," says Juvenal, and we think he knew. However, we have heard of thousands of lucky ones and we propose to let their secret out. They were people broken down in health, suffering with liver, blood and skin diseases, scrofula, dropsy, and consumption, and were lucky enough to hear of and wise enough to use Dr. Pierce's "Golden Medical Discovery," the sovereign blood purifier, tonic and alterative of the age.

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DANCING AND DANCING MASTERS.

Square Dances may be All Right, but Too Often the Corners are Cut Off.

From the New York Sun.

The Rev. R. S. Pardington of the Fleet-street Methodist Church, Brooklyn, talked about ancient and modern dancing last night. He said: "The ancient dance was always of a religious character, and the sexes never danced together. There is no similarity between the ancient and modern dance. The dance of the Bible was practised in the day daytime, and in the open air. Modern dancing masters usually are of not very reputable character. They come from France, buy a violin, a pair of slippers, and two paper collars, and set themselves up as polishers of American youth. When I was a pastor in Detroit I knew of four young girls who were ruined by dancing masters. Those who say dancing is an innocent amusement never have seen it in its objectionable features. The Chief of Police of New York says that three-fourths of the abandoned women of that city have been ruined by dancing.

"At a ball given in honor of Daniel Webster a dude approached him and asked if he ever danced, Mr. Webster replied: 'No, sir; I never had the ability to learn.' The Prince of Wales remarked, after Gen. Sherman's daughter had refused to dance a waltz with him, that he esteemed and honored her more than any other woman he had met in America. He afterward sent her an elegant piece of jewelry. You may plead for the square dance, but the difficulty is they will cut the corners off."

—If people, troubled with colds, will take Ayer's Cherry Pectoral before going to church, they will avoid coughing. The Pectoral soothes and heals the irritated tissues, and controls all disposition to cough. ed

Sensible Theatre Head-Wear.

Paris letter to London Truth.

Playgoers condemned by fate to sit this winter behind ladies in the pit of theatres will have a chance of seeing what goes on behind the footlights. Bonnets are doomed to descend from their present towering height, and it will be a confession of ripe age not to wear either a low Hungarian toque, richly embroidered with beads or metal, a bolero hat, or a Russian coif trimmed with fur and close-fitting, or a Pyrenean beret, à la belle Gabrielle, made of velvet and trimmed with a light tuft of feathers taking the aigrette form. This tuft goes by the name of floquet in the mountains on the Spanish frontier. The lovely Gabrielle adopted the beret or Pyrenean cap in compliment to Henry of Navarre, who was brought up in the mountains above Eau.

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