

not spoken since they had left the station, and Maria was grateful for his silence.

She felt cold and inert, and watched him dully as he found two cups and the tea-caddy. At last he spoke :

"While the water boils, let us try that new song——"

"Tomsk ! How could I sing ? "

"Try."

"No."

He opened the piano, clambered to the stool, and turned to her. "My heart," he said, "is worse, Miss Drello. I shall not live long. And before I die I want to hear you sing well."

"I shall never sing well," she returned, "and—oh, Tomsk, you must not die ! "

"I will not be called Tomsk," he growled crossly, opening one of the new songs.

"I beg you. pardon, Alexander Grigorovitch——"

"Sing ! " he thundered.

He began the accompaniment, and to please him, she rose and went to the piano, and sang. She sang on and on, her face flushed, her breath uneven with excitement, as he led her from one song to another, from one great aria to one greater still. Then, at last, he stopped. She had, and she knew it, never sung in that way in her life.

"Now, then," he said, one hand to his heart, "where is the famous 'lack' in your voice ? "

She could not answer. She knew that at last it had come, the thing that she had never been able to find. The quality that was to make her great.