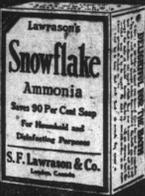


**Snowflake**  
THE FULL STRENGTH  
Ammonia

It softens the water in the washing machine and makes the clothes so white and clean.



**"Flowers of the Valley,"**

OR  
**MABEL HOWARD, OF THE LYRIC.**

CHAPTER XVIII.  
THE NEW SINGER.

"But you will let me help you, Mabel!" he pleaded, limping to her and crouching at her feet. "If you knew how happy it would make me! Happy? I should be the proudest and happiest creature in London. Do you can pay me back!"

Iris laid her hand—it trembled—up on his head and smoothed the fair, silky hair.

"No, Paul; I can't do that! What! and she forced a laugh. "A great, strong girl live upon the hard-earned wages—!" She paused, for his face had grown white.

"I know I am not worthy to offer it to you," he stammered. "You and I are so different!"

"Worthy?" she said. "You are a prince, Paul! Different? Yes, I should think we were; you are a musician who will some day be great and famous, while I am just a useless creature who cannot earn her own living. And you will not let me help you?" she said, almost pleadingly.

"No, Paul," she replied, gently; "not that way! You have helped me already. You have been a good and true friend! What should I have done, where should I have been, without you? But not that you! Paul, I couldn't! No! But, Paul, notwithstanding your gruesome picture, I am afraid it will have to come to the needlework!"

"There must be some other way," he said, sadly and anxiously.

"There may be," assented Iris, cheerfully, though her heart ached under the load of apprehension, "but I can't think of any. Never mind. Don't let us talk about it any more this evening. See! I'm spelling your practice! Go on, and let me hear something more of the new opera!"

"He took up the violin reluctantly and commenced to play.

"It is poor stuff!" he exclaimed, presently.

"What?" said Iris, for she had scarcely been listening, and her thoughts had wandered off to her own troubles.

"It is poor stuff!" he repeated, with gentle contempt. "You know the plot, Mabel!" He had told Iris, but she had forgotten it. "The heroine is a poor girl who is really the daughter of a prince, and she is accused of being a witch, and put in prison, and the young man helps her to escape, and marries her, and he is the king of a neighboring estate in the region. This is the song she sings in prison. I've got to accompany it on my violin. It ought to be a very good song under such circumstances, oughtn't it? But this is it!" and he played it.

"It is not very grand," said Iris.

"No!" he assented; "that is what Miss Alfred says."

"Who is Miss Alfred?" said Iris.

"Our leading lady," he replied. "She always takes the parts of the heroine. She is very pretty, and has a nice voice, but she knows no more of music than—that that chair."

"And it ought to know a great deal, seeing that it has heard you play so often, Paul!"

He smiled.

"How beautifully you say those things, Mabel. No one but a lady could say them so sweetly."

"And no one but a born courtier could say such handsome compliments, Paul! But I don't think much of the lady's song, as you say."

"No!" he said, musingly. "Now see!

Suppose she were to sing something like this!"—and, shouldering his violin, he played an exquisite air, so plaintive and thrilling that Iris leaned forward and listened breathlessly.

"Oh, Paul, how beautiful! Where did you get that?"

"I don't know," he said, simply. "It came to me while I was playing the other."

"You composed it?" she said, in an intense voice. "Paul, what did I say? You are a great musician!"

"You like it? I wish Miss Alfred were going to sing it instead of the other."

Iris rose and took the score from the music stand, and hummed it over.

"Now, play your own," she said, almost imperatively.

He did so.

"Again!" she said, and, as he began to play, she opened her lips and sang the air. She sang well within herself, indeed, quite softly and easily; but the boy's amazement was visible in his face, and in the quivering of his bow. It was only with a great effort that he could continue playing. When the song was finished he lowered his violin and stood regarding her, pale and panting.

"Mabel!" he exclaimed.

Iris looked at him calmly.

"Well, Paul?"

"Mabel! You can sing like that! Why—why—you have the voice of an angel! You take in needlework! who can sing like that! Oh, why—why didn't you sing to me before?" and he limped toward her, his musician's eyes all aglow, his face flushed.

Iris looked at him wonderingly, and half-ashamed at his enthusiasm.

"I've had no heart for singing, Paul; besides, I have done, where should I have been, without you? But not that you! Paul, I couldn't! No! But, Paul, notwithstanding your gruesome picture, I am afraid it will have to come to the needlework!"

"There must be some other way," he said, sadly and anxiously.

"There may be," assented Iris, cheerfully, though her heart ached under the load of apprehension, "but I can't think of any. Never mind. Don't let us talk about it any more this evening. See! I'm spelling your practice! Go on, and let me hear something more of the new opera!"

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"How beautifully you say those things, Mabel. No one but a lady could say them so sweetly."

"And no one but a born courtier could say such handsome compliments, Paul! But I don't think much of the lady's song, as you say."

"No!" he said, musingly. "Now see!

"Yes!" he exclaimed, limping up and down the room; "I, Paul Foster, have found the great singer of the present day. I shall never be anything better than the third violin at the Lyric, but you will be the Queen of Songs!—famous and important; and the world will say: He, Paul Foster, found her and gave her to us!"

"Nonsense!" said Iris, trying to laugh. "What do you mean, Paul?"

"What do I mean?" he repeated, excitedly. "I mean that you must get an engagement, at once, I will get it for you. They will listen to me, small and crippled as I am, for they know I know a voice when I hear it! You must get an engagement, not at the Lyric—at the Opera itself! And all the world will come and hear you, and go away to sing your praises—" he stopped for want of breath, and in an expression which had come into Iris' face. It was an expression of shrinking so intense as to be almost one of horror.

"Oh, Paul!" she breathed.

"What is the matter?" he exclaimed; "what have I said?"

Iris was silent. Through her mind flashed her mother's history. Her mother had been a great singer, and her greatness and her fame had been her ruin, and Iris' also. Could she follow in that mother's footsteps? Besides, if she went on the stage, would not Heron Coverdale find her—would not the story of her shame become public?

"What is the matter?" he demanded again, excitedly.

For him, the born artist, the mean and narrow room had resolved itself into the crowded theatre, and in his mind's eye he saw the girl, the lady, he adored with an adoration like that of a devotee, the object of an applauding crowd, famous, crowned, the Queen of Songs! He could not understand her hesitation, her evident shrinking.

"Why do you look like that, Mabel?" he said, pale and excited. "Do you think that what I tell you is not true? It is true! I will stake my soul on its truth! Let me speak to Mr. Stapleton, the manager of the Lyric—"

"No, no!" she said, white to the lips; "I could not, Paul!"—she went on, gently, for his face had fallen—"don't think me ungrateful, but what you say could never be! I—I could not sing at a theatre. Don't ask me why, it is too sad a story, and—and there are other reasons. I could not sing to the public; but, she added, sweetly, "I'll sing to you. Take your violin, and let me sing that song of yours again, and see, I'll play it on the piano at the same time."

He stared at her.

"And you have only heard it once! Heavens!"

She motioned to him to begin, and he commenced.

Stimulated by the praise he had given her, she, as was only to be expected, cried herself to the utmost, and sang as if her heart, her life, were in the song. They had reached about the middle of it when the door opened and Mrs. Barker appeared.

She was followed closely by a middle-aged man, dressed in the height of the prevailing fashion, and wearing a white beaver hat.

Mrs. Barker was about to announce their presence in a loud voice, for Paul and Iris' backs were turned toward her; but the man held up his hand warningly, and, gently pushing her back, closed the door and leaned against it.

He stood perfectly motionless for a moment; then, after he had looked at Iris, he took off his hat.

When the song had finished, Paul broke into fresh raptures.

"Oh, it is magnificent!" he exclaimed. "Never, never have I heard anything like it. Oh, Mabel, Mabel! all the world is at your feet, and you can hear it!"

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the stranger.

They both turned hastily, and Paul exclaimed, in a tone of surprise and confusion: "Mr. Stapleton!"

The stranger waved his hat, and the diamond rings, with which his soft, fat hand was liberally furnished, flashed.

"How do you do, Paul?" he said. "Hope I don't intrude?"

Paul bowed, and stammered out something.

"This is Mr. Stapleton," he said to Iris.

Mr. Stapleton bowed and waved his hat.

"Paul's sister, I presume?" he said, but in a very different tone to that which he had used to Paul, for, as Iris rose and stood calm and self-possessed, the manager, a man of the world, saw at a glance that he was in the presence of a lady.

"No, no," put in Paul, quickly; "she is not my sister; she is Miss Howard—Miss Mabel Howard!"

"Charmed to make Miss Howard's acquaintance!" said the manager, with another bow. "Sorry to intrude at such a time, but business is business, Miss Howard, and I am, alas! a business man!" and he smiled.

He was fat and pompous, and his smile was self-satisfied and uncourteous, but it was good-natured and pleasant; and Iris, who had never met this kind of the genus homo before, bowed, and "I've come at an awkward time, I'm afraid," he said, advancing to the center of the room, which his well-clothed, jeweled presence seemed to fill. "But I've come on business. Well, what do you think of the new opera, Paul?"

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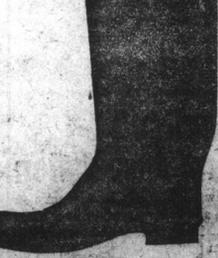
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Made from finest grades of English Tweeds and Worsted; fitted with strong bib and knitted ear bands; in Brown, Grey and Navy.

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Brown Capeskin Gloves, stitched with outside seams, that always give a stylish as well as neat appearance.

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**"Big Katch" Rubber Boots**  
Best Rubber on the market today. Only  
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Very pretty patterns, extra large pieces, of a nice heavy weight, suitable for covering quilts, rugs and making children's dresses. This Cotton is a snap at this low price.

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33 ins. wide. Splendid patterns, white grounds with blue and pink stripes. This Cotton is very serviceable for many uses.

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