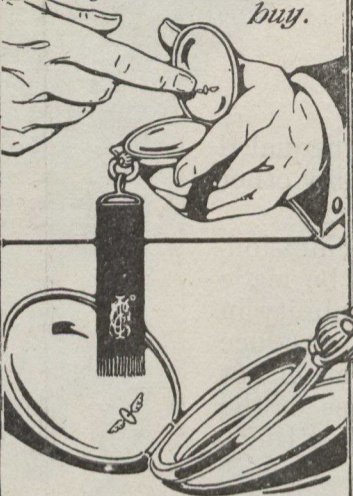


THE ORGANIST'S PUPIL

(Continued from page 6.)

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it over and over again. And then you will understand something of what those two were feeling that dull November evening—just those three souls alone in that vast Cathedral. I think that Dr. Elvington played as he never played in his life before. You know musicians do not want crowds. They play to one soul, and there was that soul huddled up against the end of the keyboard, watching—watching every turn of wrist, every movement of fingers, with the tears running down her cheeks.

"Why," he said, "are you crying! My dear child, you take it all too seriously."

"Can one take music too seriously?"
"Oh, yes." He gave a sigh. "I am sorry I indulged you. Now, let me hear what you can do."

"I can't get it," she said. She snatched a little cambric handkerchief from her bosom and fiercely dried her eyes. "I—I beg your pardon for being so stupid. You don't know what it is to me. I can't get it—I—yes, I will play to you. You will understand, you will know just the want there is—the blank in my soul—the something wrong about my fingers—something contrary about the keys—I—"

"Well, don't talk about it. Let me hear what you can do. Now, James!"

And so they changed places, and he sat in the velvet-cushioned chair watching her, watching critically, scrutinizingly. And Myra Silverthorne played that wonderful melody from beginning to end, and she gave a little sob as she finished.

"Do you—don't you see?" she said. "I—I can't do it—I shall never do it. I can't get it."

"I know what you mean," he said. "I don't know that you haven't got it better than I."

"Oh, no!"
"I don't know. I am too near to hear as I want to hear. If I go to the other end of the nave will you play it again?"

"Of course."
So he left her, and she heard his footsteps going down the little winding stair, heard him cross the great, echoing space under the lantern tower, and presently he spoke from the far end of the great nave.

"Now," he said, "go on."
And so she played it again, and Dr. Elvington came back into the loft.

"Miss Silverthorne," he said, "it would not be honest to take you as a pupil. You may come and study with me if you like, but not for money. You're an artist. If I can help you it will be an honour, but not—not for money."

II.

From that time the comradeship between Myra Silverthorne, and the organist began. Every afternoon she came in in time for Evensong, going straight up into the loft. Usually she played the Voluntary, sometimes the Anthem, almost always the Recessional. And then, when the Cathedral was once more deserted, there came a glorious half-hour of study. And then some days she would go home to the old house in the Close and have a cup of tea with Miss Elvington; and sometimes they would go down St. Thomas Street and share a little table at Bonner's. Then Miss Silverthorne's motor would be in readiness in its garage, and she would go back again into the wilds whence she had come.

"Dick," said Barbara Elvington, when she and her brother were lingering at the dinner table, "where does Miss Silverthorne live?"

"Miss Silverthorne? She lives at St. Agnes Priory."

"Has she ever asked you there?"

"No. I'm her—her maestro—no more."

"She has told you nothing about herself?"

"Nothing."

But, as a matter of fact, Miss Elvington did not see. She was completely in the dark. If I tell the truth, I must say that it worried her to have this little musical genius coming day by day out of the gloom and going back

into it like a fairy into fairyland. There was a look upon Dick Elvington's face which his sister had never seen there before.

"Dick," she said, "has it ever struck you that you ought to get married?"
He gave a great start. "I?"

"Yes. It—it has been all right as long as I was here to look after the house and see to everything, keep up your social position, and generally work hard for you; but when I am married, what are you going to do then?"

"I don't know. I never thought of it. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," he replied, glibly enough. "When is William coming down again?"

"He comes to-morrow night for a week. It will be his last visit, Dick, before we're married. I've been wondering and wondering—" She got up and came round to his end of the table. "Dick," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder, "follow my example, old boy—get married. Man was not meant to live alone, and an organ isn't quite the same thing as a wife. I know that you are wrapped up in yours, I know that your music has been your hobby and your profession and your love, but there will come a day, Dick, when you will find yourself alone, and you will wish that you hadn't given quite so many hostages to fortune. Take my tip, old dear, get married."

She did not wait for a reply, but went quickly out of the room. And Dick Elvington sat there thinking. Well, Bab was right. Bab was five years younger than he—only five-and-twenty—and yet in worldly matters she was always right. She was right this time. There was only one wife in the world for Richard Elvington—that other half of his soul, that sister artist, that slim genius of two-and-twenty from whom he could never have taken a farthing, to whom he had given all the genius that was in him. She would be his. She loved him. She would take Barbara's place in the roomy old house. They would be one soul, one artist, one genius, one perfect whole.

"I—I'll do it to-morrow," he said, aloud, and he banged his open hand upon the table till the glasses rang again.

They met as usual in the roomy organ loft the following afternoon.

"I will play the Voluntary," said he. And he played something of his own, something that had never seen the light, something that went straight from his heart to hers. And then, when the short service came to an end, he motioned her to take his place on the organ seat.

"The Marche Funebre," he murmured.

For quite a long time after the last notes sobbed away, echoing down the vast aisles of the mighty church, neither spoke. Then his hands stole towards hers.

"You—you have got it," he said.

"Yes?"
"Of course, you know you have." His hand closed over hers.

"I got it from you."

"If so, give me back what is mine. There is only one world for you and me. Let us dwell in it together."

"But you know so little about me."

"I know all that is best in you."

"Yes? But you always call me 'Miss Silverthorne.'"

"What!"
"I am Mrs. Silverthorne. I have always worn just my wedding ring."

"You—you are married?"

"I have been married."

"You are free?"

"Yes."

"A widow?"

"Yes."

"You loved him?"

"Did I? No—no, I think not. He was fond of me in a way, only in a way. It was not my way."

"How could anybody be fond of you in your way," said Elvington, possessing himself of her other hand, "excepting me?"



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