

The Ladies' home journal.

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The Midsummer Story Number of
THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL

AUGUST, 1900

TEN CENTS



The American Girl in Society

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The Story of a Song



ONLY a little worn black book, so small it could be carried in one's pocket, and yet the faded writing tells the heart secret of a lone poet's life. It might still have lain at the bottom of that dusty pile of manuscript if I had not found my way into the old, obscure shop one afternoon of that never-to-be-forgotten summer in Vienna. And so I give it to the world. If any read with sympathy this story of a love which breathed into a song such tenderness that for all time it stands as the embodiment of all that is most beautiful in our human lives, then I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I was but the humble instrument of fate that placed within my hands this record.

What should I do without you, my beloved confidant! You are not to me pages of lined paper between two covers, but my inner self, to whom I unreservedly pour out my longings, my aspirations. To you only can I "give sorrow words" or voice my deepest joy. It makes no difference to you, dear little journal, that I am short of stature and of sight, round-shouldered, awkward in my manner and my gait. What care you that my face is homely and my speech halting? Those outward signs that make the man for most have never troubled you. You know the real Franz Steinert, his weakness and his strength, and art ever ready to receive his confidence, and you shall have it, best of friends. To you I'll think aloud. Have you forgotten this is January 31, and I am twenty-one? Think what a long, up-hill climb life has been to that little lad old Holzer taught to play and sing. Aye, but think again of all the joy that music has brought to him! How proud my dear old master was of all I did! I can remember once he gave me Bach's "Heart Ever Faithful" for a theme, and when I improvised and modulated into different keys he cried out with delight: "The boy has harmony in his fingers' ends."

What do I not owe you, faithful friend and teacher? Were you not the first to place within my hand the key to the deep-hidden mysteries of tone? I am convinced to-day will be the red-letter day of my life, for the Count's patronage must bring success. I wonder if he dreamed what his generous offer meant to me. Oh, if I could but overcome my agony of self-consciousness in meeting strangers! Each stumbling sentence that I utter makes me seem and talk more like an imbecile, but let me touch the keys of the piano and in an instant all my shyness vanishes. I am no longer the poor, obscure, struggling musician, but a mighty monarch, heir to the vast inheritance left by Handel, Haydn, Mozart.

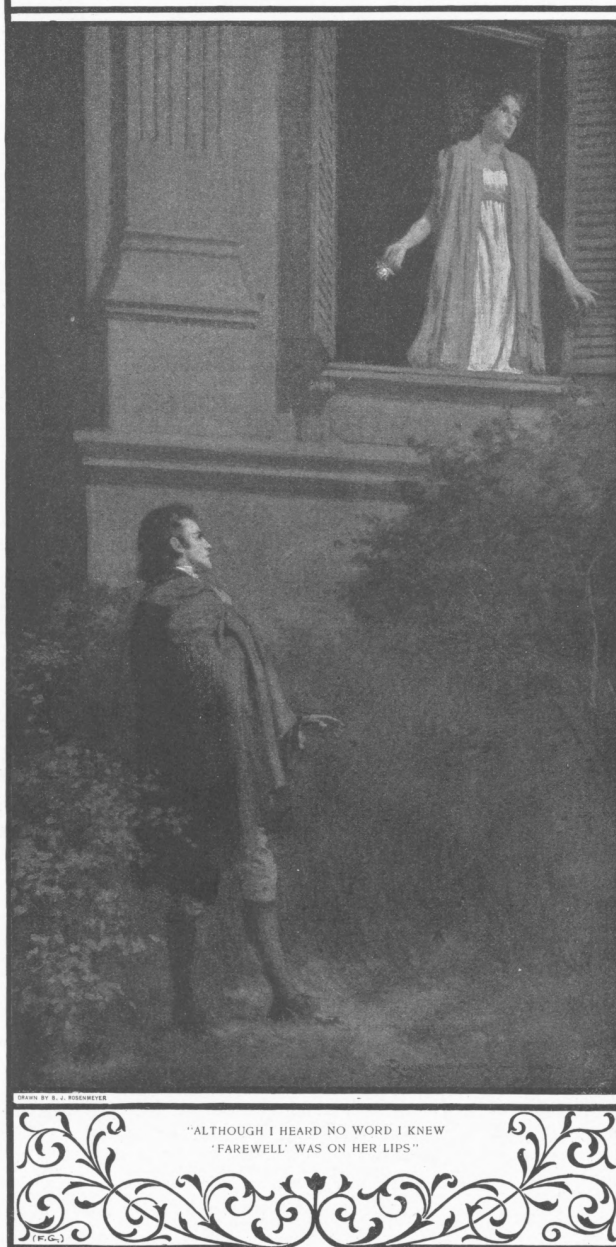
I tried to stammer to the Count my gratitude, but human speech fails to show what is in the heart. Only the language music speaks can adequately tell of disappointments, lofty desires, hope's fulfillment. He laid his hand upon my shoulder as I played, and then I came to know at once he felt the thanks I could not utter.

By the calendar it is a month (though I can scarce believe it) since that morning when, tremblingly, I tried to make a careful toilette for my first visit to my noble patron's, where I was to begin lessons in music to his daughters. My threadbare waist-coat and frayed linen never showed so plainly. I was an hour inking the seams of my coat and paring the edges of my cuffs. Finally I started for the palace, my heart thumping so loudly against my ribs that when I haltingly finished my inarticulate greetings to the Count I feared to hear him sternly ask the lackey, "What is that pounding?" While I was vainly struggling to command breath and words a fairylike apparition stood beside me. Her father said, with loving accent, "My daughter," but inwardly I questioned, "Can anything so exquisite be material flesh and blood?" There, seemed to be a gleam of sunshine in the half-darkened room. I looked, and found it was her smile. I heard a



SCHUBERT

BY
MRS.
HERMANN
KOTZSCHMAR



"ALTHOUGH I HEARD NO WORD I KNEW
'FAREWELL' WAS ON HER LIPS"

tender cadence, a strain so beautiful—it could only come from Heaven. Dumb and motionless I listened for it once again, and then I knew it was her voice.

How can I tell even you, my inner self, of all her graciousness of manner throughout these weeks, of all her love for what is best in music, of her keen appreciation of a thought expressed in tone? She seemed to know intuitively my lack of confidence, my blundering, stumbling speech, and that only with my fingers could I express my meanings. So one day laughingly she said: "I'll question you with words, and you make answer improvising; I'm sure I can interpret." And she did, reading each thought my fingers woke to life.

Days, weeks, months have passed I'm told, and yet I count time only by two hours each week. How short they are to hold the whole of life! Can I be I, who never looked with love upon a woman until now, and she as far above me as the stars, although not sharp and glittering like those distant orbs, but sympathetic, kind and true, my Lady Caroline!

What could have moved her so this morning? She seemed oppressed, and as she finished playing Beethoven's favorite Andante tears filled her eyes. "I love it, and seem to feel it in my heart," she murmured, "but when I play it sounds so cold, so harsh. Tell me the secret of your touch, my master," and she lifted up her eyes beseechingly to mine. For a minute's space I could not answer, for there rose before me my miserable, starved childhood, so unutterably different from hers who questioned me. I shivered as I seemed to see an ill-clad boy of twelve, in the early dawn of a bitter winter's day, making his way into the practice room, where no warmth nor ray of sunlight ever penetrated, and where his numb fingers could hardly call forth the tones he loved, and so hungry that even his loved music could not bring forgetfulness of that gnawing hunger. A wave of pity filled my heart for that desolate little lad, as though he were some other than myself, as I recalled the piteous letters he would write his brother, begging a few *krone*s with which to buy an apple or a bun to keep body and soul together. Then memory showed him to me yet again, older grown, but ever followed by relentless poverty, and looking down upon this dainty child of fortune, as she still questioned me with those deep eyes of Heaven's blue, I stammered: "You would know the secret of my touch? I studied in a school whose name I pray that you may never comprehend—the school of poverty. The masters who taught me all I know may come to you in later years, and if they do, their training, hard though it may be, will give you all you long for in your music."

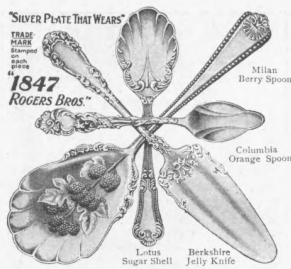
"Then I must wait for time; is that it, Master Steinert?" and she smiled roguishly. "I promise you when those stern masters come to me I'll tell you if they do me good, but enough of my poor self." Then pleadingly she added: "Please play for me, my friend. What inspiration has come to you since we last met?"

Oh, little book of mine, words are too poor to tell the sympathy, the encouragement, in her voice—her face. If God had only made her nearer to my level—what am I saying? Would I, if I could, drag her down to my poverty, my hedged-in life? No—never! She is my star, my queen, whom I shall ever worship. But I am human, and my heart cries out for her companionship, her help. The thought of her as always with me, friend, companion, wife—ah, no—such paradise is not for me.

While I stood trembling before her, speechless with love, she spoke again: "Surely you have something to show me, my master."

Hesitatingly, I drew a slip of paper from my pocket, saying: "Yesterday I was uneasy, restless, and in the evening, to bring sleep, I walked many miles; returning very weary, I stopped at a little wayside inn, and as I sat at table idly turning the leaves of a book some one had left there this line caught my eye, 'Hark, hark, the lark at Heaven's gate sings,' and

Original from
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 32)



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The Story of a Song Josiah and I Go a-Visitin'

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

instantly a melody sang itself to the words and I was compelled to write it down. I searched my pockets for a bit of paper, but could find none, so I used the bill-of-fare. Will you pardon me that I bring it to you as it is?"

Then without more words I played it to her; played as I never had before. She sat near me, and when I paused she did not speak, but with her eyes said, "More!"

"This I wrote and thought of you," I whispered, and I played "Who is Sylvia?"

When I rose to go it was my lady's turn to tremble. "I—I," she stammered, and in her confusion I grew strangely self-possessed. "I—long have wished to ask you why—why, as you have dedicated so many of your noble works to others, I alone am left unnoticed. Do you not think me worthy?" She glanced up shyly, while hot blushes covered neck and brow. My voice sounded far away as I said: "My lady, do you not know that everything I have ever done is already dedicated, in my heart, to you?"

The blow has fallen, little, speechless comforter. She is going from me. These few lines she has written take from me sunshine, life, and thrust me into that outer darkness whence there is no escape:

"Dear Master: In three days we leave for Hungary to pass the summer. Will you come and give one more lesson to your pupil?" C. E."

Mein Liebchen, thou art gone, and hast taken with thee all save honor. I did not speak though thou didst question me with thy sweet eyes, but yet my soul communed with thine, and it did seem that thy heart answered mine. Heart's dearest, couldst thou read aright, thou must have seen and known these months how dear thou art to me. I do not speak thy name alone within this little room without I fall upon my knees in reverence for thy goodness. Canst thou divine the pang it cost me that I must let thee go and never say, "I love thee?" And yet through all the bitter pain one thought brought comfort—rapture. It was this: that I, so poor that I dare not tell to thee in words the worship that I feel, yet have the power within me to express my love for thee in never-dying song. Yes! Yes! Immortal beloved, in my heart there sings for thee a song of songs that will live when we are gone; will live to tell the world the sacredness of man's love for woman, of my love for thee.

How many days I have neglected you, dear little book. I am so weary, so tired of this hopeless struggle, that something within me cries, "Take courage; it is not for long; your work is nearly done!" God grant it may be so, and yet that night, when underneath her window I stooped and lifted to my lips this faded rose her hand had thrown me, and read these words wrapped around the stem, I felt life held no deeper bliss:

"Beloved, I know well now the masters who taught thee so long ago the secret of thy thrilling touch and tone, for they are daily with me. Their names mean life, and they are called experience and love. What can I say to thee of thy dear song, whose melody still fills my soul, save that I tell me all I longed to know, and leaves me comforted though broken-hearted."

I read again and yet again her dear confession. I pressed it to my heart, my lips. Has it not been as water in the desert to my thirsty soul? Yet, ungrateful that I am, I crave more—all, and die because it cannot be. Those first days when my Caroline had gone my song kept ever ringing in my ears—the song that was to tell her how I loved—adored. At last there came a time when love could bear no more. "I must, I will go singing to her my song!" I cried in my despair. "At night when all is hushed and still, beneath her window I can ease my heart."

It was past midnight when I crept through the garden gate. Silently I stood a while beneath her window. "She sleeps," I murmured. "My lady sleeps, and in her dreams she does not know where love hath led my feet? Sleeping, her soul, untrammelled, must answer to the message that I bring. Music will link us, though apart."

Far off a whippoorwill waited in the forest depths. Yearningly I stretched my arms and breathed, "Where the darkling streams are creeping, dearest, let us go." Then love touched my voice and carried it on wings of glory unto my desire.

"All the stars keep watch in Heaven
While I sing to thee,
And the night for love was given—
Dearest, come to me."

A power from above filled me as I sang my swan song to my beloved. Was I awake? Was I not dreaming? I feel again the thrill with which I saw the outer blind move slowly back, and in the moonlight, grave and pale, there stood my Lady Caroline. Although I heard no word I knew "Farewell!" was on her lips and in her tear-dimmed eye. She stood an instant; then, as she reached to draw the blind that was to shut her face from me for evermore, there fluttered from her hand and dropped down at my feet this crushed white rose.

as another star, differin'. A dressmaker such as the world seldom sees wuz the prize Angenora held in her grasp, jest as honorable and useful as long as wimmen wear clothes, for the outside and inside both has to be 'tended to, Scripser provin' it as in the case of the platter. But Partheny couldn't understand, and wuz determined that her girl should foller success down the very same path Polly did. And so she wuz a staggerin' along that way so glorious to Polly, so hard and painful to Angenora, gropin' and stumblin' along, almost blind, for one eye had gin out entirely and the other wuz fallin' fast.

As I see the poor girl bent down over her book till her nose most touched it, with a strong pair of specs on, powerless to help her much, and knowin' that the gole wuz still distant and wouldn't do her much good after she reached it, for she wuz a goin' to leave it to once and glad to, I felt that it wuz my duty to remark to her Ma that it did seem too bad to see Angenora ruinin' her eyes and her health.

"Yes, but she must git her diploma," sez her Ma, "and she is backward in her geometry, and trigonometry, and Greek, and seven or eight more studies."

Sez I: "Trigonometry is honorable and desirable in lots of cases, and so is Latin and Greek, and the seven or eight more studies, but they hain't a goin' to help Angenora in her life work of dressmakin' nigh so much as eyesight and health. If they both fail her what has she got left?"

"Her diploma!" sez Partheny firmly. "She will have that if I live and she lives. After she passes in her studies then she can tend to her life work."

Sez I sadly: "I am afraid that she will pass sunthin' else, Partheny, besides her studies. I am afraid she will pass the road that leads to success, and future happiness, and usefulness."

"Well," sez her Ma, "she has got to git her diploma, anyway; I have jest slaved myself to death for it and for Reginald's education, and I can't be disappointed in this; she must have her diploma."

"Well," sez I, "most everybody has a gole in life, and they're all different."

I see that it wouldn't do any good to argy any more, and I hain't one to set out viflet roots on the cook stove and expect 'em to grow and blossom. But I felt deprested and feared the worst. And my most melancholy fears wuz realized. Angenora did git her diploma, but I may as well tell the end of the matter. The very day she passed in her studies the doctor told her that one of her lungs wuz gone, and he had gin up all hopes of savin' her eyesight. Her Ma got her diploma framed, but Angenora's eyes wuz so bad that she couldn't see it. And she sets there to home coughin' and cryin', helpin' her Ma by knittin' some an parin' potatoes and such, but is dretful irritable and onhappy, and frettin' all the time about her lost aim, the dressmakin' that she wuz cut out for, and dear to her as her heart's blood.

Ephrum's wife duz the best she can, but her health is failin', too, and they say that Reginald is snappish and hateful because he has to help his Pa in the carpenter-shop, instead of farmin', as he wanted to. The farm had to go on that mortgage.

And what makes it all the worse for Ephrum and Partheny, Reginald feels above 'em and looks down on 'em, and, besides, he don't love to associate with 'em, his learnin' is so much higher than theirs. But I hearn that his Cousin John, who is dretful sorry for him, preached such a powerful and tender discourse at the college they both graduated from that it melted Reginald's heart considerable, and he acted mellerer and less disagreeable to his parents for some time.

John wuz chose to preach that great annual sermon partly on account of his high learnin', for they say he can read the Scriptures in the original as well as any old Greek ever did, jest searchin' in them dead languages and livin' ones, too, huntin' for truth, usin' his science and philosophy, and all his education as keys to onlock the great problem of existence, how to serve God and man in the very best way, and make the most and best of this life, lookin' off all the time on to the life that is the real one, the land that lies starward. And he wuz chose partly on account of his wonderful eloquence. He jest lifts folks right up by his sermons, and inspires 'em to do better. The Lord gin him his diploma and his call to preach, I hain't a doubt o' it.

And I hearn that he and Polly Pettitt are engaged to be married. They hain't related to each other, only by marriage. And their aims in life bein' so much alike, and so high, I dare presume to say they will make real agreeable parnders, and will be blessin' to the world at large.

(OUR SECOND VIZIT WILL BE DESCRIBED IN THE SEPTEMBER JOURNAL)

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