

STEPHEN OTWAY'S SILENCE

Finis! The man working away for dear life in the fading twilight that June evening wrote the magic word, laid down his pen, and looked about him for the first time in two solid hours. At last his wonderful symphony was written. Yes; not another note would he add, not a single bar revise; it should go before the judges in that big contest he was striving might and main to win just as it toiled, the best that was in him, the fair flower of his achievement that was surely destined to bring fame and fortune, maybe something still more precious, in its train.

His chance; the golden opportunity of a lifetime! "Two hundred guineas and a gold medal for the best symphony by a British composer." All unexpectedly it had fallen out, bringing with it a golden vista to his glowing thoughts. Once let him win that, and everything was simplified. There was no pinnacle of fame, no point of soaring ambition so high that to it he might not aspire. Old Farley Ainsworth, most generous of benefactors, would laugh now at the bare idea of calling him son-in-law; such a possibility as the lad he had befriended daring to fall in love with his own daughter had never entered the head of the proud, music-loving old squire, or he would have taken speedy means to nip the romance in the bud. But afterwards—

It seemed to Stephen Otway that all the face of Nature would be changed at that one stroke. Rising from the table at which he had been working, he went to the piano and began to play. A Chopin nocturne, dreamy and elusive, first; then the joyous rondo of the Waldstein sonata, filling the little room with the music of a hundred rippling, sun-kissed brooks; and from that he drifted softly, all unconscious, into the other—his own. His fingers scarcely seemed to touch the ivory keys, brushed them with the airy lightness of a butterfly; yet the man who had softly opened the door and stepped inside halted involuntarily at sound of that strange, sweet melody.

"Steve, you miracle, what's that?" the tense, hushed whisper thrilled across. "Not—the symphony? You don't mean it! Why, man, it's wonderful; no one else can ever hope to win!"

"You think so?" He had broken off abruptly; swung round with lips just parted, and the blue-grey eyes staring past in that seeming effort to focus some dim, nebulous object in the darkness of the passage. "I do not know what to think. Sometimes I am full of confidence; at others—Anyhow, it's finished; I am grateful for that alone. Not another stroke will I write; I am fagged out—want a rest. I have even thought of going down home for a day or two to—"

"Yes; put a bad idea, old chap; it would do you good without a doubt." That hesitating pause. "I—only wish mine had half such a chance! I say, Steve, talking of home—"

"Yes?" Stephen Otway looked across inquiringly; the change of tone was not to be mistaken.

"I—I—oh, look here, how am I to say it? The fact is, I've been a fool and got into a mess again. Will you lend me some money till my next cheque comes? I must have fifty pounds by to-morrow or else it's ruin, and I daren't go to the dear old governor again. It would break his heart."

"Fifty pounds?" "Ye-es. I know I've had a run of bad luck lately, but I'd no idea it was so much until to-day. I've scraped up seven from somewhere. Steve, you're my only hope. See me through this once, and I promise never to touch a card again as long as I live—yes, honor bright."

"Fifty pounds! Stephen Otway's face grew grave as he turned away. This was not the first time that Clive Ainsworth had come to borrow from him. He paused a while before replying.

"Look here, Clive; I am a poor man, as you know. I do not possess fifty pounds in all the world; and if I lend you what I have it will be on one condition only—that you never handle cards or dice again. What guarantee can you give me—"

"Guarantee!" The other flared up hotly in a moment. "What the dickens are you hinting at, Otway? Have I not just given you my word?"

"Yes—for the third time. Twice before I have helped you out of a similar difficulty on similar terms. I see no use in going on like this—no finality."

"I see!" The sneer was obvious. "You do not mind my father spending a hundred pounds on you, sending you here to study and all the rest of it, because he fancied he saw a spark of talent somewhere in you; but when it comes to lending me a paltry ten or twenty you hesitate! I admire your generosity, your pride! Or perhaps you have forgotten—"

"I have forgotten nothing." That white, set face would have moved another man to pity if not shame. "Your father has been the kindest, most generous of men to me; and I can never by any chance forget his goodness. I would do anything to save him pain; and if only I could think that you—"

"Oh, don't commence to preach! I've heard the tale until I'm tired of it. I know I'm no saint—I never was—but I've never let a friend go the wall yet; and mark my words, Stephen Otway, you shall be sorry some day that you refused to help me! I'll make you regret it! You may think I've had my eyes closed lately, but you're mistaken. All that love-making with Sybil—oh, I know how to upset your little game!"

"There, that will do, Clive! No more, please! You are saying things that later you will regret. If I thought you really meant them I, too, should be angry. Come and see me again to-morrow; we will talk it over when you are more composed."

"No!" He had drawn himself apart; stood there, handsome and defiant, with a hectic little spot on either cheek. "No, we will not! It's now or never, Otway—I mean it! Choose quickly—yes or no!" The other's half-impatient shrug incensed him beyond measure; he waited for no more. "Very well! That ends it; remember it's your own doing. Good-night—and good-bye!"

Yes; that was it. "Good-night—and good-bye!" Full five minutes after he had flung out of the room the older man stood there in the gathering darkness trying to realize, to make himself believe that he had really gone. Clive could surely never mean it—never! He would be back in the morning, nay, to-night, with that winning smile on his face, pouring out apologies for those hasty words. Not possible for a moment that he really meant them!

Laughing awkwardly he turned away to light the gas and draw down the blind, and then went back to those carefully-written sheets of manuscript. Just one more look to make sure that he had copied them correctly; then he would wrap them up and put them away safely till morning, till he could carry them with his own hands to the big college where their fate was to be decided. Too precious to be trusted to the post!

In the morning he would not own to feeling disappointed that there was no letter; Clive was coming round shortly, that was all. But the hours passed, with no Clive, no communication of any kind, and he grew fidgety; told himself that he had been harsh and ungenerous. In the afternoon, anxious to purchase reconciliation at any price, he went to the bank, withdrew his little stock of money—earned by playing solos at occasional concerts or City dinners—and sent five £5 notes, with a few hastily scribbled words, to Clive's address. By night they were back at his own, with no word at all; and for just the moment he was staring at them with eyes that seemed transfixed, his lips quivering like a woman's. Only the moment; then he had snatched up hat and gloves, and was rushing round to Clive's lodging at top speed. The grim misunderstanding must be ended once for all.

"Mr. Ainsworth?" he panted, as the door opened to his knock. "Is he at—?" No more; there was not time. "Gone out!" the vinegary woman of the house had snapped, the sweeping sounds of the violin that came from the room above giving her words the lie even as she spoke; and it was straightway closed in his face. Cruel—yes! Trudging back home in that queer agony of anger and despair, it seemed to him that never again could the old close intimacy revive; that one rebuff had severed it for aye. Small wonder that afterwards there was only silence, and a breach that widened with the days.

A time of strenuous work and harder waiting. None but the man himself could ever know the bitterness of those dragging weeks, the hopes of one day that were fears the next, the ceaseless, well-nigh automatic swing of the pendulum 'twixt happy confidence and black despair. "I'll win! I must win!" he said, hoarsely, to himself at times; and next moment would be tortured with the thought that tens of others must be saying just the same.

When the fateful day had dawned at last his restlessness knew no restraint. The hours literally crawled towards night.

A quarter to eight! Heedless of the steady drip-drip of the rain, he had hurried through the glistening streets, paid his shilling, and was mingling, an unknown unit, with the crowd that thronged the big concert-hall. To-night would either make or mar him, which a few more minutes would decide.

At eight o'clock a rolling thunder of applause. The bushy-haired conductor had mounted to his desk; a sharp rat-tat, his stick poised for an instant in the air, and the concert had begun.

The first two items on the programme Stephen Otway heard as in a dream, then, all at once, he stiffened, and bent forward with every nerve in his body stretched taut. A tense, pregnant hush as that white-shirted figure edged through the swaying body of fiddlers to the front of the platform. "Ladies and gentlemen,—After very careful consideration, the judges in this interesting contest have awarded the palm to the composition submitted by Mr. Clive Ainsworth—"

To one man in that vast audience it seemed as if his heart had ceased to beat just for the second. The rest of the announcement never reached him; that sea of faces swung about him like floating wraiths within a mist, and the roar of mighty breakers was surging in his ears. Just a year since the hazel-eyed girl had looked up at him for that one instant of time with the strange new wondrous light in her eyes and pro-

mised to wait. All over—all! He was beaten, his dreams for the future shattered irretrievably, and—irony of fate—it was Clive Ainsworth who had beaten him!

And the— Was it real, or only a trick of fancy, the tripping of his overwrought imagination? That opening phrase, those first few bars of melody that had floated softly across the waiting hall! Never Clive Ainsworth's—never anyone's but his own! There was some mistake, a ghastly blunder in the name; or else—

Dazed, stunned, unable for a moment to realize the bitter truth, he sat there listening to the smooth andante, the tripping allegretto, that rushing rhythmical finale with the weird chromatic scale-passages for the violins—his own, every note! The priceless symphony on which he had spent so many hours, built so many hopes!

Dead Sea fruit that storm of cheers that broke from the audience at its close; gall and worm-wood those repeated cries of "Encore! Encore!" Next thing he knew he was outside in the cool, fresh air, trying to think it all out—that bitter, blinding sense of treachery dimming all else in his brain. What did it mean—what could it mean—save one thing? Stolen!

Three solid hours he tramped the streets, beating out that grim tragedy of a lifetime. Incredible, unthinkable, that the man who had been his friend could have carried paltry rage so far!

And then— He had reached his lodgings, gone up the creaky stairs with the heavy, shuffling tread of one foot-weary and despondent, thrown open the door of his room, and—

"Clive!" "That moment would surely live for ever in his memory. There they stood a full minute, facing one another, neither seeking to break the straining silence. Then—

"Stephen, you were there! You heard—"

"Yes; I heard!" A world of bitter accusation in the tone. His lips had framed invective hot and angry; but he beat the impulse back and waited to hear more.

"I was mad—out of my senses! It was that night you refused to lend me the money, you had showed me the sheets and told me they were finished, and I saw the chance to—to be revenged. I came back here after you had gone out. They were in that drawer, made up into a parcel and addressed; and I took them out, put blank ones in their places—"

"You stole them?" "Yes. I can never ask you to forgive me, never forgive myself. Ever since then I have lived in torture, hoping night and day that some other might be successful; but you see! Now my cup of bitterness is full; I am punished tenfold. My father—Here, look! I—I can't say it!"

A telegram had fluttered from his hand. Otway picked it up mechanically, lit the gas, and read:

"Father dangerously ill; come at once.—Sybil."

Next moment he had faced back sharply.

"Well?" "I can't go, Stephen! I—I daren't now!" It was almost a scream. "The dear old governor had set his heart on my winning this thing; and I couldn't—couldn't tell him—"

The voice broke off into a convulsive sob; the man was shaking like an aspen. Otway looked at him pityingly; then crossed the room and began to finger a railway time-table.

"Twelve-fifteen from Euston!" He pulled out his watch; stood in thought a moment. "I'll go!" he said, curtly. "You can stay here if you like!"

"You will? Heaven bless you for that, Stephen!" said the other, fervently. "You're a good fellow; it's ten times more than I deserve. Send me word how things are going, won't you?"

Five minutes later, as Stephen Otway hailed a hansom and told the man to drive full speed to Euston, he caught himself wondering for the second time that night if the whole of it was not a dream—some subtle, slinging spell that all at once would break and leave him staring stupidly at the vivid sense of actuality.

No dream, however, that midnight journey into Warwickshire; no dream the white-faced girl who crept softly down the stairs in that early dawn to greet him, the startled question staring from her eyes before ever she spoke a word.

"Stephen! But where is Clive? He will be too late!" His mumbled falsehood, and then: "Yes; very ill indeed! A sudden heart attack; the doctor has been with him half the night. You will not mind if I go back?"

Later she came to him again. He found himself obediently up the stairs into the darkened room where old Farley Ainsworth lay, very still and very feeble.

"Stephen, boy, how are you?" The words were hard to catch; all but indistinct. "Clive is coming soon, they tell me! I want to see the lad once more, to tell him I am proud—we are all proud. He won the medal, Stephen, eh? Couldn't help but win it, could he?"

The wrinkled hand was quivering feebly in his own. Bending down to listen, Stephen Otway felt a lump rise in his throat as he remembered the debt of gratitude he owned the old man lying there. He glanced across at the girl standing by the window, and made a sudden grim resolve.

"Yes, he won it," he said, quietly. Later, walking slowly away from that house with the closed shutters and the drawn blinds, it seemed to

him that either the world had grown different or he very old and weary. Nothing mattered now; all the days would be alike—a miserable, haunting drudgery. He recollected reaching Euston and walking to his lodgings; but nothing more that was clear. His brain rocked stupidly; there was a dull, head ache, and a sense of heaviness that bore him steadily down—down—till at last there came a final blank.

Ten whole days that grim snap of feverish unconsciousness remained and life and death were playthings 'twixt which he hovered like a fretful child, uncertain which to choose. When the dark cloud lifted he knew that he was lying in bed; there was a little table holding medicines by his side. The dark-robed figure seated by the window heard him move; turned round to look. Suddenly it struck him that the figure was familiar; what could Sybil be doing here? He said her name, half expecting that the vision would dissolve at sound of word.

"Stephen! Oh, how glad I am!" She came to him with joy shining bravely in her face. "There, don't try to talk; lie still and get quite strong and well. I know everything—all the miserable story. Clive has told me what a hero you have been." "Afterward? Nay, the story is too true—needs none but the telling of one's own heart. Stephen Otway and his wife are happy, and success has come to him in plenty since then, never tinged, it may be, with the golden, glowing halo that would have crowned that first big task, but still sweet to both of them. The little Sybil who has come to bless and link their lives more closely has never seen that wondrous Uncle Clive who sends her frequent gifts from far-away South Africa; but mother and father often tell her that some day she shall do so—when their ship comes in!—London Tit-Bits.

CHINA WILL HAVE A NAVY.

Will Closely Copy Japan's Naval Armament.

A despatch from Peking says that a scheme has been drawn up for the creation of a new Chinese navy. Prince Pulung, who represented China at the St. Louis Exposition, is said to be the originator of it, and he has been assisted by important members of the Government and high officials. Prince Ching, Yuan-shikai, Viceroy of Pechili, and Tien-liang, all belonging to the board for the organization of the new Chinese army, are co-operating in working out the details, and it is said that the funds necessary to carry out the scheme have been arranged for. A special Ministry of Marine will be created, and its organization and the technical language to be employed will be borrowed from Japan. It was also intended to obtain the services of a Japanese naval officer of high rank to act as adviser.

The central office of the new naval administration will be at Tientsin, with subordinate establishments at Shanghai, Chefoo, Nanking, in the Chusan archipelago, and at Tapeng or Mirs Bay, near Hong Kong. The existing stations of the fleet at Tientsin and Nanking will be fortified and taken over by the central administration, and naval schools will be established at the six stations named under Japanese and foreign instructors. The eventual tactical and strategical organization of the new Chinese navy will be in a number of divisions, composing two or more squadrons, to be determined on later, to be known as the active fleet, and in addition to these a strong reserve squadron.

The plans, so far as matured, have been adapted from the Japanese, whose naval department gave important assistance in the matter, and the Viceroys of the different coast and river provinces are actively co-operating with the central Government in carrying through the scheme.

CAB STEALING.

Londoners Who Make a Practice of Purloining Hacks.

It will come as a surprise to most people to learn that cab stealing is by no means an uncommon thing in London. A cabman who has had any experience in the great metropolis would not take the risk of leaving his vehicle even for a few minutes, unless he placed a reliable man in control, but the unwary are frequently robbed of horse and vehicle. The cab thief usually drives some distance from where he stole the property, and takes advantage of some secluded spot or quiet street to alter the number of the vehicle, so as to escape immediate detection. This done, he has two alternatives. He either tries to earn a few shillings in fares before abandoning the cab, or else he makes away with the whip, rug, mat, and lamp, leaving the vehicle for the police to take charge of when found. Some thieves actually go to the trouble of stripping off from the wheels the India rubber tires.

A MAN OF CREDIT.

A distinguished Irish lawyer, always in impoverished circumstances, once took Chief Justice Whiteside to see his magnificently furnished new house in Dublin.

"Don't you think," he said, with a complacent look about, "that I deserve great credit for this?" "Yes," the judge answered, dryly, "and you appear to have got it."

WITH POSTAGE STAMPS

A FAD IN WHICH WE ARE FAR BEHIND.

In China They Make Wall Coverings Out of Canceled Stamps.

The inmates of charitable institutions all over Europe, and especially in Switzerland, have for a long time been engaged in making fancy things from stamps. An orphan asylum at Le Locle, Switzerland, for example, is partly maintained by old postage stamps.

This has resulted in the impression on the part of many tourists that 1,000,000 stamps would entitle an orphan to admission into the asylum, but such is not the case. The asylum yearly receives thousands and thousands of old stamps from persons all over Switzerland who are interested in the charity. The one hundred or more girls in the institution arrange the stamps in little packets and sell them to collectors.

The income derived from this source alone in several thousand dollars each year. To this sum is added that from the sale of the articles of fancy design which are also turned out.

It is said that in many of the monasteries scattered all over Europe the monks occupy a great deal of their spare time in decorating the walls with scenes entirely composed of postage stamps.

The Chinese, as a matter of fact, have gone in for stamp decoration more than any other nation in the world. They were early attracted to the artistic possibilities of old stamps. It is said that at first they asked missionaries for old stamps, and the missionaries resolved to turn this demand to account. They evolved a scheme by which they could exchange

OLD STAMPS FOR FOOD

to be supplied to various Chinese charitable institutions which they maintained.

As the missionaries were well aware of the enormous quantities of canceled stamps which are yearly thrown away here, they wrote home telling of their scheme, and the pastors here became interested in the movement. They set about the task of collecting old stamps from their parishioners with such energy that immense quantities were soon sent to China.

This movement has become so general that the people in many parishes now collect and save all the old stamps that pass through their hands, and when a sufficient quantity has been accumulated they are at once forwarded to China. Last year it is said that more than enough stamps to fill a freight car were collected and sent. But even this tremendous number did not seem in any way to glut the stamp market, for the Chinamen took all that were offered for sale and asked for more.

The Chinamen use the stamps as a substitute for wall paper, and it is not unusual to see the inside of a Chinaman's abode covered with stamps. In Canton a wealthy mandarin has three rooms of his residence completely papered with different varieties from all over the world artistically arranged.

For the borders there were accurate representations of dragons composed of the French black ten cent stamps. Then crosses, squares and triangles, made up of different colored varieties, supplied the place of the usual wall paper pattern. Some of these designs indicated the expenditure of much patient effort and skill.

It was indeed owing to this custom of covering walls with old stamps that some of

THE RAREST ISSUES

in the world have been preserved. In one case a missionary to Hawaii had one of the rooms of his house papered with the issues of different countries. A friend who was visiting him discovered a number of Hawaiian stamps of a certain variety which had not previously been known to collectors, among them the two cent stamp of 1851. Six of these stamps were removed from the walls, and they are said to be the only specimens of this particular variety now extant.

Perhaps the best thing of this kind that has been seen in New York is a large reproduction of the British coat of arms. This also has been made of stamps of all denominations and countries. While nothing but stamps has been used, yet the reproduction is accurate in the smallest detail, even the lettering of the legend "Honi soi qui mal y pense" being perfect. Especial care has been taken to arrange the stamps in colors that blend, and the effect when one stands some distance away is such that it is hard to believe that nothing but common postage stamps has been used.

Every detail has been carefully worked out, and each will withstand the closest scrutiny. The crown surmounting the shield is especially well reproduced. The jewels are each cut from a stamp of the proper color, and the whole effect is most brilliant.

"There's only one good thing about that young puppy that came to see you last night," said the frascible father, "and that is he's healthy." "I'm surprised to hear you admit that much," replied the dutiful daughter. "I wouldn't, except for the fact that when you met him in the hall last night I heard you say, 'Oh, George, how cold your nose is!'"