

ONLY A MONTH;

OR, A CURIOUS MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER XIV.—(Cont'd.)

And then she began to think of her aunt's words, and to wonder whether there might not be some truth in them, so that by the time the next day had dawned she had worried herself into a state of confusion, and had Torvald Lundgren approached her again might really have accepted him from some puzzle-headed notion of the duty of being practical and always considering others before yourself. Fortunately Torvald did not appear, and later in the morning she took her perplexities to dear old Fru Askevold, the pastor's wife, who having worked early and late for her ten children, now toiled for as many grandchildren, and into the bargain was ready to be the friend of any girl who chose to seek her out. In spite of her sixty years she had a bright, fresh-colored face, with a look of youth about it which contrasted curiously with her snowy hair. She was little and plump and had a brisk, cheerful way of moving about.

"Now that is charming of you to come and see me just at the very right minute, Sigrid," said Fru Askevold, kissing the girl, whose face, owing to trouble and sleeplessness, looked more worn than her own. "I've just been cutting out Ingeborg's new frock, and am wanting to sit down and rest a little. What do you think of the color? Pretty, isn't it?"

"Charming," said Sigrid. "Let me do the tacking for you."

"No, no; you look tired, my child; sit down there by the stove, and I will tack it together as we chat. What makes those dark patches beneath your eyes?"

"Oh, it is nothing. I could not sleep last night, that is all."

"Because you were worrying over something. That does not pay, child; give it up. It's a bad habit."

"I don't think I can help it," said Sigrid. "We all of us have a natural tendency that way. Don't you remember how Frithiof never could sleep before an examination?"

"And you perhaps were worrying your brain about him? Was that it?"

"Partly," said Sigrid, looking down and speaking nervously. "You see it was in this way—I had a chance of becoming rich and well to do, of stepping into a position which would have made me able to help the others, and because it did not come up to my own notion of happiness I threw away the chance."

And so little by little and mentioning no name, she put before the motherly old lady all the facts of the case.

"Child," said Fru Askevold, "I have only one piece of advice to give you—be true to your own ideal."

"But then one's own ideal may be unattainable in this world."

"Perhaps, and if so it can't be helped. But if you mean your marriage to be a happy one, then be true. Half the unhappy marriages come from people stooping to take just what they can get. If you accepted this man's offer you might be wronging some girl who is really capable of loving him properly."

"Then you mean that some of us have higher ideals than others?"

"Why, yes, to be sure; it is the same in this as in everything else, and what you have to do is just to shut your ears to all the well-meaning but false maxims of the world, and listen to the voice in your own heart. Depend upon it you will be able to do far more for Frithiof and Swanhild if you are true to yourself than you would be able to do as a rich woman and an unhappy wife."

Sigrid was silent for some minutes.

"Thank you," she said at length. "I see things much more clearly now; last night I could only see things through Aunt Gronvold's spectacles, and I think they must be very short-sighted ones."

Fru Askevold laughed merrily.

"That is quite true," she said. "The marriages brought about by scheming relatives may look promising enough at first, but in the long run they always bring trouble and misery. The true marriages are made in heaven, Sigrid, though folks are slow to believe that."

Sigrid went away comforted, yet nevertheless life was not very pleasant to her just then, for although she had the satisfaction of seeing Torvald walking the streets of Ber-

gen without any signs of great dejection in his face, she had all day long to endure the consciousness of her aunt's vexation, and to feel in every little economy that this need not have been practiced had she decided as Fru Gronvold wished. It was on the whole a very dreary Christmas, yet the sadness was brightened by one little act of kindness and courtesy which to the end of her life she never forgot. For after all it is that which is rare that makes a deep impression on us. The word of praise spoken at the beginning of our career lingers forever in our hearts with something of the glow of encouragement and hopefulness which it first kindled there; while the applause of later years glides off us like water off a duck's back. The little bit of kindness shown in days of trouble is remembered when greater kindness during days of prosperity has been forgotten. It was Christmas-eve. Sigrid sat in her cold bedroom, wrapped round in an eider-down quilt. She was reading over again the letter she had last received from Frithiof, just one of those short unsatisfying letters which of late he had sent her. From Germany he had written amusingly enough, but these London letters often left her more unhappy than they found her, not so much from anything they said as from what they left unsaid. Since last Christmas all had been taken away from her, and now it seemed to her that even Frithiof's love was growing cold, and her tears fell fast on the thin little sheet of paper where she had tried so hard to read love and hope between the lines, and had tried in vain.

A knock at the door made her dry her eyes hastily, and she was relieved to find that it was not her cousin Karen who entered, but Swanhild, with a sunny face and blue eyes dancing with excitement. "Look, Sigrid," she cried, "here is a parcel which looks exactly like a present. Do make haste and open it."

They cut the string and folded back the paper, Sigrid giving a little cry of surprise as she saw before her the water-color sketch of Bergen, which had been her father's last present to her on the day before his death. Unable to pay it, she had asked the proprietor of the shop to take it back again, and had been relieved by his ready consent. Glancing quickly at the accompanying note, she saw that it bore his signature. It ran as follows:

"Madame,—Will you do me the honor of accepting the water-color sketch of Bergen chosen by the late Herr Falck in October. At your wish I took back the picture then and regarded the purchase as though it had never been made. I now ask you to receive it as a Christmas-gift and a slight token of my respect for the memory of your father," etc., etc.

"Oh!" cried Sigrid, "isn't that good of him? And how nice of him to wait for Christmas instead of sending it straight back. Now I shall have something to send to Frithiof. It will get to him in time for the new year."

Swanhild clapped her hands. "What a splendid idea! I had not thought of that. And we shall have it up here just for Christmas-day. How pretty it is! People are very kind, I think!"

And Sigrid felt the little clinging arm round her waist, and as they looked at the picture together she smoothed back the child's golden hair tenderly.

"Yes," she said, smiling, "after all, people are very kind."

CHAPTER XV.

As Preston Askevold had feared, Frithiof bore the troubles much less easily. He was without Sigrid's sweetness of nature, without her patience, and the little touch of philosophic matter-of-factness which helped her to endure. He was far more sensitive too, and was terribly handicapped by the bitterness which was the almost inevitable result of his treatment by Blanche Morgan, a bitterness which stirred him up into a sort of contemptuous hatred of both God and man. Sigrid, with her quiet common sense, her rarely expressed but very real faith, struggled on through the winter and the spring, and in the process managed to grow and develop, but Frithiof, in his desolate London lodgings, with his sore heart and rebellious intellect, grew daily more hard and morose. Had it not

been for the Bonifaces he must have gone altogether to the bad, but the days which he spent every now and then in that quiet, simple household, where kindness reigned supreme, saved him from utter ruin. For always through the darkest part of every life there runs, though we may sometimes fail to see it, this "golden thread of love," so that even the worst man on earth is not wholly cut off from God, since He will, by some means or other, eternally try to draw him out of death into life. We are astounded now and then to read that some cold-blooded murderer, some man

HIS "GOLDEN" VOICE.

Despite youthful competitors and various geniuses who are unearthed from time to time, Caruso can still command bigger fees than any tenor living. He has just signed an engagement for a twenty-five days' season at Buenos Ayres, for which he is to receive \$84,000. As this works out at \$3,360 a performance, the remuneration may be said to be very handsome.

But Caruso by no means holds the record, for Mme. Patti was often paid on a more generous scale. When visiting New Orleans she



Enrico Caruso.

was paid \$6,000 per night, and even at Covent Garden she received \$4,000 a night, to say nothing of a retaining fee of \$60,000. It is reputed that altogether she made a round million with her voice.

The famous Parisian author, Jules Claretie, has been comparing the fate of a great scientist like Fabre, who is starving in his old age, to the wealth amassed by a Caruso. "A tenor earns in half an hour more than Fabre earned in a whole year," he declares.

The famous tenor Mario himself compared singing with a good cigar: "A good cigar is as rare as a good tenor, and as dear. It receives its short life from the lungs, whence also comes its death. Either of them leaves nothing but a little smoke, and perhaps a happy memory."

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guilty of a hideous crime, will ask in his last moments to see a child who loved him devotedly, and whom he also loved. We are astonished just because we do not understand the untiring heart of the All-Father who in His goodness often gives to the vilest sinner the love of a pure-hearted woman or child. So true is the beautiful old Latin saying, long in the world but little believed, "Mergere nos patitur, sed non submergere Christus" (Christ lets us sink may be, but not drown).

Just at this time there was only one thing in which Frithiof found any satisfaction, and that was in the little store of money which by slow degrees he was able to place in the savings bank. In what way it could ever grow into a sum large enough to pay his father's creditors he did not trouble himself to think, but week by week it did increase, and with this one aim in life he struggled on, working early and late, and living on an amount of food which would have horrified an Englishman. Luckily he had discovered a place in Oxford Street where he could get a good dinner every day for sixpence, but this was practically his only meal, and after some months the scanty fare began to tell upon him, so that even the Miss Turnours noticed that something was wrong.

"That young man looks to me underfed," said Miss Caroline one day. "I met him on the stairs just now, and he seems to me to have grown paler and thinner. What does he have for breakfast, Charlotte? Does he eat as well as the other lodger?"

"Dear me, no," said Miss Char-

lotte. "It's my belief that he eats nothing at all but ship's biscuits. There's a tin of them up in his room and a tin of cocoa, which he makes for himself. All I ever take him is a jug of boiling water night and morning!"

"Poor fellow!" said Miss Charlotte, sighing a little as she plaited some lace which must have been washed a hundred times into her dress.

(To be continued.)

GERMANY'S OLDEST WINE.

A Little Left of the Rosenwein Put Away in 1624.

In 1624 the City of Bremen bought and put away a barrel of Rosenwein, which was even then considered the noblest and finest of all the Rhine wines. The barrel cost \$50. What the wine is worth now, reckoning the cost of compound interest for three centuries, has been made the subject of various fantastic calculations.

It is only upon rare occasions that the officials of Bremen permit the drawing of what is considered the city's greatest treasure. About fifty bottles of the wine is left in the barrel, and even that is no longer absolutely the original 1624 wine, for whenever any of the wine is drawn it is replaced from one of the "twelve apostles"—the twelve barrels in the ratskeller, which contain the next oldest wine in Germany.

The last considerable withdrawal from the barrel was in August, 1824, when twelve bottles of the precious fluid were sent to Goethe on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday.

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