ROMANCE OF A SINGER.

The Warwick street flats were always dismal. On a bright day they looked more gloomy and grimy than ever; and when the sun beat down strong and yellow upon the dull-red bricks it seemed to be crushing out the life, and stifling the breath of the human beings who fought and struggled and laughed and wept inside. To-day the heat was almost unbearable. It beat down upon the ugly, narrow, squalid street until the poverty-stricken neighborhood appeared loathsome, even to its hardened inhabitants. In one of the flats a woman who was little more than a girl wandered listlessly backward and forward, or strummed with weary effort upon her little piano. She was pale with the heat, and restless with a dull foreboding that had entered her heart. For the first time since her marriage she felt lonely and miserable, and she had been married just six months. During that time nothing had occurred to mar the harmony of their lives. For six months they had been perfectly happy. Everything had gone smoothly. Ralph, who was a singer in one of the theaters, had had continual engagements, and although the salary he earned was very small, they had lived comfortably upon it, and been content. But now there was a gnawing fear in her thoughts—a jarring anxiety that refused to be stilled. She had seen Ralph grow paler and thinner day after day; she had noticed the weariness grow in his eyes, the tired look that was fast becoming habitual to his face, and she was afraid. What of, she scarcely dared own even to herself; but she knew that Ralph was working too hard, and that the summer heat was undermining his strength.

She sat down presently to practice. Somehow to-day her voice sounded clearer and stronger than it had ever done before. The keys seemed to fall with scarcely an effort beneath her fingers, and she found herself singing an old song that she had known years ago at home—a dull, pathetic little air that made her suddenly break down and sob—she scarcely knew why, except that the gloomy foreboding had gripped her heart, and something in the song, seemed, absurdly enough, to apply to her. Suddenly an idea occurred to her. She sprang up, with a scarlet flush on her cheeks, and with a sudden brightening in her eyes. In a few minutes she was making her way rapidly through the narrow, reeking street, and out into the broader thoroughfare beyond. She stopped before a house bearing a brass plate and then the flush in her cheeks began to fade away. She hesitated for a moment before she rang the bell, and then, in her nervousness, gave such a peal that the professor, slumbering peacefully inside, started up in affright.

"Ach, Himmel!" he remarked. "Vat is it?"

The reply came in the form of a neatly dressed servant, who announced that a young lady was waiting to see him, and, the professor's curiosity overcoming his usual dignity of manners, he gave orders that the young lady should be admitted. Nellie came in nervously. She glanced at the big, bearded man in front of her and wished she had not been so hasty. She was more than half afraid of the professor—who had such a reputation for eccentricity—and she hesitated before she plunged into the story she had so carefully planned to tell him. When she spoke all her nicely worded sentences, all her carefully calculated eloquence vanished, and she could only stammer helplessly:

"I—I wanted to ask you," she began, "to—to test my voice."

The professor smiled—a grim, significant smile—and she felt in very truth she was bearding a lion in his den.

"Oh, I know it's a strange thing to ask you to do," she said nervously, "but I thought—I thought——"

The professor grunted through his beard.

"Well, well," he said gruffly. "Will you take a seat?"

"Oh, no," said Nellie, excitedly. "If you please, I'd rather stand; I'm too anxious. I want to know about my voice. I want to know if—if I could make some money."

She paused. A sudden horror at her own temerity overtook her. She had come to one of the most celebrated professors of music in London and boldly asked him to test her voice! Supposing he asked her a guinea or two for doing it. She could not pay him, and he must be told so at once.

"I think, perhaps, I ought not to have come," she caid nervously. "I am very poor. I should have no money to pay for yo r opinion; but—but I never thought of that when I came. I forgot—I only thought of—of Ral—of myself."

Her voice broke a little, and when she looked up she found the professor's small, twinkling eyes fixed keenly upon her. He said nothing. He stood immovably watching her, and, as if in reply to some unuttered question, she went on:

"I was so anxious. This afternoon somthing worried me. I don't know what it was exactly—a sort of foreboding, and I could not help thinking. My husband, you know, sings at a theater. He—he is not strong, and lately he seems strange, as if—as if his health was giving way. He wants rest and change. Only the other week the doctor said he ought to get away to the sea and—and he can't do it. He only earns just enough for us to live upon, and if—if he should be ill, I don't know what we should do. I came to you to know if I could earn some money."

She stopped. The professor was still watching her.

"Well, well," he said not unkindly, "let us see. Let me hear you sing."

She sat down nervously to the piano. The keys were indistinguishable before her eyes, and her fingers trembled weakly. For a moment her voice was beyond her control. She felt incapable of steadying it and she could not remember a word to sing. Then she suddenly caught sight of an old song called "Daddy" lying upon the piano and she took it up and began to play. She sang through the first verse with all the exquisite pathos of which her voice was capable. It rang out soft and clear across the room and the professor almost fancied he dreamed. He woke with a start to find that she had stopped and was putting back the music.

"Again," he said harshly. "Sing it again!"

She sang it through once more; and when she looked around the professor was staring out of the window and the sight of his back turned toward her sent a chill to her heart.

"I was afraid I should be a failure," she said, with a half-sob, taking her gloves. "I am sorry—I——"

He turned round at the sound of her voice. She did not know that his eyes were full of tears, and that the song, had conjured up recollections of his dead wife.

"Scales!" he said abruptly. And Nellie went back obediently to the piano.

"Your voice has been well trained," was all he remarked.

"I had a good master," said Nellie, with the chill growing at her heart, "and I have always kept up my practice. I have practiced every day since I have been married."

"Good, good"! said the professor suddenly. "Very good; and if something should turn up, will you take it at once?"

Nellie caught her breath with a gasp of astonishment.

"Take it!" she cried. "Then—then, you do think—you think I can earn some money?"

"I think," said the professor, forgetting his dignity and his English, with a sudden frantic gesture, "I think you haf a peautiful voice—a very peautiful voice!"

That afternoon Nellie waited impatiently for Ralph to come back from rehearsal. She was burning to tell him the news, and to get his permission to look out for an engagement. The professor had spoken so favorably of her voice—had given her so much encouragement—that she was filled with the wildest hopes. There must be something in it. He had promised to help her out of sheer admiration for her voice, and surely it must be worth something for so great a professor to take her up. She lay back luxuriously in her easy chair and dreamed golden dreams. And the summer afternoon waned and passed, and still Ralph did not come. She sat up listening for his footsteps. Some body was making such a noise on the stairs outside that she could hear nothing. Men—heavy-booted men—seemed to be tramping up with some heavy burden. She could hear their clumsy feet clambering up; she could hear the murmur of their gruff voices, and she sighed impatiently as thesounds cam nearer. Suddenly they stopped—stopped outside her door; and there was an ominous silence. The next moment there came a knock, and a policeman looked in. Nellie started up with a cry. The policeman came forward and tried to keep her back. Some other men followed him. There seemed to be quite a lot of men crowding into her little room, but she could see none of them distinctly—only one form that lay stretched unconscious on a shutter; and over that form she bent, with a terribly white face, and stared wildly at the narrow stream of red blood that was oozing slowly from her husband's colorless lips.

• • • • • •

Somebody was saying something to her about Ralph. "He fainted at rehearsal, and——" She looked up, and found the doctor was speaking to her.

"The truth is kindest after all," he said presently. "He is very dangerously ill—so ill that I think"—glancing around the shabbily furnished room—I think he ought to be removed to a hospital. He requires great care—great care. He must have a nurse, and if his life is to be saved he must be spared nothing."

Nellie looked up helplessly.

"Yes, yes," she said dully; "he shall have a nurse; he shall be spared nothing."

The doctor glanced at her curiously. He wondered what she was going to do, this little pale-faced girl. He had learned that her husband was an actor. He knew, too, that he earned only a small salary, and he feared more than he told her—more than he cared to put into words. He said nothing further—he only wondered. And Nellie ordered a nurse, and everything else the doctor suggested, with a reckless disregard of expense.

• • • • • •

There was no hope!

The doctor said so, but Nellie refused to believe it; and she sat by the bedside, looking eagerly into her husband's colorless face, and trying to find some sign of hope—in vain This very day he might either die or live, and the doctor had said that she must prepare for the worst. It was impossible—she could not, she would not, believe that Ralph might die.

As she sat there the nurse entered and brought her a letter. Nellie looked at it indifferently. What did letters matter now? She took it in her trembling hands and tore it open wearily. As she read a sudden red flush sprang into her cheeks and a sharp light flashed into her eyes. She read on confusedly. What she read made no impression upon her at first. The letters danced befor eher eyes and the words appeared stupid and meaningless; but after a minute they became clear and she began to understand. Mme. Lucille, the professor wrote was unable to sing at the Albert Hall that night, and she, Nellie Underwood, was to take her place. She looked at Ralph—ill, perhaps dying—on the bed, and then she turned back to the letter. Her chance had come at last! The chance that she had waited for so eagerly had come at last like a wonderful miracle or else like a fiendish trick. She looked at it for a moment longer, and then she broke into harsh, unmeaning laughter. She was to sing at the Albert Hall that night.

The manager regretted that Mme. Lucille had been taken ill. He was extremely sorry, and he was angry, too, for Mme. Lucille's name on the bills had more than half filled the house; and now her place was to be taken by a little, pale-faced girl, who looked hopelessly plain and unattractive.

Underwood! The very name was commonplace! The audience sighed impatiently, and leaned wearily back against their cushioned seats. They looked more weary than ever when Nellie stepped upon the stage. She was clothed in white—a plain, old-fashioned gown, years old and without a single flower; and they tittered audibly behind their fans. The accompanist sat down and rattled off the opening bars of a famous old song. It was the cry of a woman for a lover she would never see again, and it was so old that people thought it was owrn out. The accompanist played on; the notes became slower and finally ceased, and then he waited. Apparently Nellie had not heard. The music had fallen from her hands, and she was staring out with a white set face at the crowded hall before her.

"Stage fright, poor thing!" people murmured.

Some of them stared at her coldly; some of them put up their opera classes to look at her; but they could not see what she saw—a man lying tossing, perhaps dying, on a bed; they could not feel what she felt—that terrible aching at her heart and that choking at her throat. Suddenly the mist cleared from her eyes and she saw, with a start, the waiting audience before her and the glasses leveled to her face, and she turned to the accompanist. He understood her glance and commenced again. Then she raised her eyes and stared straight toward the gallery. When she opened her lips her voice rang out clear and full across the crowded hall. It never faltered; the notes fell from her lips liquid, wonderful, and the audience suddenly became still. They ceased to stare at her; opera glasses fell—it was strange that they had become dim—and in that great hall there was scarcely a sound to be heard. The song went on. What was there in that old-fashioned air to hold them spell-bound? A girl's fresh voice calling to her absent lover. They had never heard it sung like that before. The eyes of beautiful women became moist; strong men leaned forward to hide their faces. They scarcely realized it when the music stopped; then they looked up, to see her disappearing from the stage, and for a brief moment there was a dead silence. Then the storm began. Artificial women forgot their artificiality; wearied men woke to life again, and shouted wildly at the empty platform. Nellie heard it faintly at the back, but her only thought was to get away to Ralph and while she was speeding homeward in a cab, a man was making profuse apologies to the audience. He was sorry Mrs. Underwood could not sing again that night, but he hoped and believed they would hear her again very soon.

When Nellie got home the room seemed to her very dark. She saw distinctly two figures which came toward her as she entered, and then she heard a faint voice—Ralph's voice—speaking to her from the bed. She heard neither the doctor's admonitions nor the nurse's entreaties. She knelt at her husband's side, and sobbed her heart out on his pillow.

• • • • • • •

It was a long time before Ralph thoroughly recovered, but when he did there was no longer any fear of starvation staring them in the face.

Nellie's voice had driven the wolf from the door.

TWO MOTHERS.

I noticed her when she entered the car. There was something strangely attractive about her, though she must have been at least sixty, and her face was so careworn, and the saddest I ever saw. In spite of my great trouble, I found myself wondering about her and sometimes—for a moment—would almost forget my grief. Only for a moment, though. Then the recollection that my baby—my little, tender baby, used only to the loving clasp of a mother's arms, was in that dreadful box in the jolting baggage car, would come to me in all its terrible reality, and I would forget everything and everybody and remember only my great sorrow. I wanted my baby; O, how I wanted him! My heart was aching so for the sound of his little, lisping voice, and the touch of his baby fingers. How could I live without him? Why did God give him to me, only to take him back after that one little year? For weeks I had been so happy planning a visit to my old home with baby. I had told him so much of the dear grandmamma he had never seen; I had looked forward so hungrily to the day when she would take him in her loving arms as only she knew how. And now I was taking him to her; not the warm, laughing dimpled baby she had longed so to see. The little still, white clad figure in the casket seemed another child. And the cruel cars jolted noisily on and seemed to say over and over till I could scarcely keep from screaming: "Where's baby? Where's baby?"

Suddenly the train stopped, and my husband went out to ascertain the cause. It was a broken rail, and we would be detained about half an hour. I was glad, for baby could have a rest from that cruel jolting.

It was then that she came and sat down by me—the woman with the sweet, sad face, and almost without knowing it, I found myself pouring out my grief to her. It was such a comfort to me (mine was selfish grief, I only thought of myself), and she seemed to understand. She didn't talk much, but her very presence soothed me. I remember one thing she said; I can hear her low, sweet voice now. "My dear, it is no slight honor to be the mother of an angel." I did not take in the fullness of her meaning then, but I have since. My heart was so full of rebellion that day that I did not want to find comfort anywhere. I was sorry when the train started again. "I change cars at the next station," she said, "and it may help you a little in bearing your burden if I tell you something about myself. I am on my way to B—— to see my only son. To-morrow he goes to the state prison to serve a life-sentence. I would be the happiest mother on God's earth to-day if I were in your place." The train stopped, and she pressed my hand and was gone. I watched her as well as I could through my blinding tear as I could through my blinding tears till she was lost in the crowd. But those tears were not for baby.

—BLanche Bailey King.

AT LONG RANGE.

I've just expressed my opinion of Snobson, and told him in plain terms what I think of his contemptible meanness.

Snobson's a pretty dangerous man to talk to that way. I suppose you are ready to back your opinion.

I am, said the infuriated man, as he sealed the letter and wrote Snobson's name on the envelope.

IN HONOR OF THE QUEEN.

HOW ENGLAND WILL COMMEMORATE HER WONDERFUL REIGN.

The Plans for the Great Jubilee Week—The Spectators Themselves Will be the Greatest Spectacle—London Will be Overwhelmed, and Prices Will be Exorbitant.

The English people are not to be blamed if the year of the record reign impresses them thus far as a Pentecostal season rather than an occasion of joy and thanksgiving, writes a London correspondent. Even the prospects of the great week in June are not altogether enchanting. There is to be a great celebration, one day of which is to be devoted to the public. It will be a stupendous affair beyond question—something unmatched in the history of Christendom in certain respects. The gentle lady, the great sovereign, in whose honor all will be done, is well worthy the homage which her subjects will pay her. It will be paid gladly and with complete national unanimity, in spite of substantial sacrifices which it will involve. London in jubilee week will be a place to fly from for all who value personal comfort and tranquility. The cost of seeing the Queen, of getting about London, of merely existing here, will be more than can be measured on a cash basis.

It has come to be a fact that London crowded is the most uncomfortable city in the world. For years its hotel accommodation has been inadequate. This year—well, it is exhausted already, and only a small fraction of those who are coming to the jubilee celebration have secured their sleeping quarters. Locomotion in London when the town is filled with people, is slower than anywhere else. It is a town of great distances, and although the regulation of street traffic is the best in the world, the narrow thoroughfares and immense number of cabs and omnibuses during "the season" have made transit by either of these methods insufferably slow. What the situation will be next June it is

APPALLING TO ANTICIPATE.

There remains only the underground railway, but that in warm weather is simply an unspeakable abomination.

So it is not a very alluring prospect which London holds out to strangers who think of seeing this town en fete next June. It is distinctly a home festival which the British empire will hold in its capital city. Strangers are not invited, not even the rulers of other nations. Of course strangers will come, and equally, of course, they will be welcome, but they must not complain if they find the accommodations scanty and that preference has been given to those members of the British family who come from distant parts of the empire.

The one aim of every human being in London on Tuesday, June 22, will be to see the Queen and the royal procession. The number of persons who will be possessed by that puropse on that day cannot be estimated at less than six millions. It will probably be more. It will undoubtedly be the largest number of men and women ever assembled together in the history of the world. This massing together of humanity will be the real marvel, the really memorable event of this memorable day. The spectators themselves will be the great spectacle. The most impressive sight I ever witnessed was the silent multitude, three millions in number, who lined the Champs Elysees and the Bois de Boulogne last October waiting for the entry of the Czar into Paris. I drove the whole length of the route just before the procession passed over it. It seemed like riding along the dry bed of a river with all humanity for its banks. A crowd of 10,000 or even 100,000 is within one's comprehension; it is an assemblage made up of units. When the number mounts into the millions it is no longer a crowd, it is no longer human. It is a new and mighty creature, having attributes like unto no other. In its presence is almost awe. There is revealed the meaning of the words: "The voice of the people is the voice of God."

Such a sight will Queen Victoria witness on her great fete day. She and her escort will be the real spectators. Their eyes will see and their ears will hear the face and

THE VOICE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

That, indeed, is a mighty privilege. Fabulous prices are already being paid for facilities to see the Queen's procession. Anybody can do that. It will be interesting and memorable no doubt—a spectacle which the children's children who see it will read about, but how much more valuable would be the place of a private soldier in the procession itself. A fortune by comparison should be the price of that privilege if money would buy it.

The people to-day and history in future will, however, make chief account of the jubilee procession and its parade through London. So I give herewith the arrangements which have just been finally fixed. First, the route of the procession, in all six miles long, will be as follows:

Leave Buckingham Palice, Constitution Hill, Piccadilly, St. James's St., Pall Mall, north side of Trafalgar square, past the National Gallery, Duncannon street, Strand, Fleet street, Ludgate hill, to St. Paul's Cathedral.

After the ceremony the route will be; South side of St. Paul's Churchyard to Cheapside, Mansion House, King William street, London Bridge, Borough High street, Borough road, St. George circus, Westminister Bridge road, Westminister Bridge, Bridge street, Parliament street, Whitehall, the Horse Guards, the Centre Mall, to Buckingham Palace.

It is by the Queen's own desire, and it is characteristic of her, that she will visit the humblest quarters of London south of the Thames. Half of the route lies through the abode of poverty, for Lambeth is poorer than Whitechapel. The crack troops of the British army will be used instead of police to keep the line of march. In all

ABOUT 25,000 MILITARY

will be employed during the day to line the streets and keep order, besides forming guards of honor and firing salutes. Cavalry in the arrangement forms a very important element, and it is officially stated that there will be ten cavalry regiments employed, inclusive of the First and Second Life Guards, the Royal Horse Guards the Scots Grays, who are all near London, and contingents of Lancers, Light and Heavy Dragoons, Hussars, and Royal Horse Artillery. These, with the colonial cavalry contingents and the Indian special representative cavalry, will all be quartered in a new special camp at Hounslow, the English cavalry being drawn from Aldershot, Colchester, and Norwich for the occasion. There will be twenty-five infantry regiments employed on the procession day, which will include the seven battalions of the Household Guards, and the remainder will be drawn from Aldershot, Dover, Shorncliffe and probably places further away, and will represent English, Irish, Scotch, and Welsh regiments, with the King's Royal Rifles and the Rifle Brigade. These will be contingents, not regiments. Along with these will be strong representative companies of the Royal Engineers and the Army Service Corps. All these will be in a special camp on Wimbledon Common for the occasion, and are to attend there three days before the great ceremony, to go through their work as street guards. The Admiralty has not been left out, and strong contigents of bluejackets and royal marines are to have very prominent places on the day; in fact, the bluejackets are to share the honor of the guards of honor at Buckingham Palace and at St. Paul's Cathedral with the very pick of the Guards battalions detailed for that duty.

THE PROCESSION ITSELF

will be about a mile in length. It will comprise four regiments of cavalry, eight squadrons of the Household Guards and other infantry, seven bands, and three batteries of artillery These will lead the line, and be followed by the troops from India and from the colonies. Then will come the Duke of Connaught and his staff, Lord Wolseley, the Commander-in-Chief of the army, and the headquarters staff. Following this brilliant cortege will come the Queen's carriage, escorted by the Prince of Wales and other British and foreign princes on horseback. The procession will close with other carriages containing the princesses and ladies of the court, members of the colonial governments, and more military.

It is expected that the procession will leave Buckingham Palace at 11 o'clock, that a stop of twenty minutes will be made for the outdoor thanksgiving service at St. Paul's Cathedral, another of five minutes for the presentation of an address at the Mansion House, and that the Palace will be reached again on the return at 2 o'clock.

Intending visitors may be interested to know that the lowest quoted price for a reserved seat from which to view this pageant is five guineas, $25. Ten thousand dollars has already been paid by speculators for a day's rent of one building facing St. Paul's Churchyard.

A GIRL'S FEAT.

Made the Overland Journey From Pekin to St. Petersburg.

In mentioning, a few days ago, the services rendered by the 15-year-old Countess Cassini as Secretary and interpreter to her uncle, Count Cassini, while Ambassador of the Czar at Pekin, writes a correspondent, I omitted to mention that she had just accomplished a feat to which no other member of her sex can claim credit—namely, the overland trip from Pekin to St. Petersburg. The young Countess, her uncle and a French physician attached to the Chinese imperial hospital left the Chinese capital last December. Until the rolling plains of Central Asia were reached the travelers had to content themselves with mule litters. These they presently exchanged for Chinese versions of Russian sledges. The Mongolians know nothing about driving, so they fix a bar across the shafts, and a mounted man on either side, taking hold of the end of the bar presses it against the saddle bow and gallops for dear life. This mode of progression has at least the merit of dispensing with the use of traces, which are apt to break. On entering Russian Siberia they were transported from posting station to posting station across the snow-covered plains and steppes without rest or intermission, until they reached the terminus of that portion of the Trans-Siberian railroad which is already in operation. Trying as is this journey for full-grown and able-bodied man, one can imagine what it must have been for a young and delicate girl.

EMPRESS OF AUSTRIA.

The pet aversion of the Empress of Austria is bathrooms. So set is her Majesty in this antipathy that she positively refuses to take her morning splash in the same room two mornings in succession. She always bathes in a transportable tin tub, which she orders to be wheeled into her bedroom, breakfast room or study, just as the freak takes her. Another of Elizabeth's eccentricities is her mourning. Since the death of her son she has not worn a vestige of white about her person. Underwear, nightdresses —everything must be black. In this matter she completely distances Queen Victoria, who for years was the champion royal mourner of Europe.

IMPORTANT.

Dashaway—Thanks, old man. I would like to dine with you this evening, but I have an engagement.

Cleverton—Is it a pressing engagement?

It's with a girl.