A Forgotten Singer

Twilight had gathered in Miss Trevor's little sitting-room, but the fire burned cheerfully, and the dancing flames lit up Miss Trevor's face as she sat back in her chair. Her attitude was one of repose. Some needlework lay idle in her lap: she had dropped it unheedingly. Her eyes were absorbed, her calm white forehead drawn together in a puzzled frown.

Lucy Trevor always dressed in grey. Somehow the neutral color suited her. She was not at all an old woman—barely past her thirtieth birthday, in fact; yet all the joy that should be youth's dearest gift had died for her before she was twenty.

Beneath her work a little black volume lay in her lap, and could one have peeped inside it one would have seen that its leaves were covered with a beautiful, neat handwriting, in ink that was just beginning to fade.

Miss Trevor's dreams were of the person who had written in that book, but she was suddenly brought back to real life by an insistent knocking upon the outside door; and rising to open it, she welcomed the visitor, a bright-faced girl with sunshine in her eyes and a pleasant, merry ring in her young voice.

These two were rare friends. The newcomer, Susie Merling, lived with her mother in a flat in the same building as Miss Trevor, only on a lower floor, which made all the difference in the rental.

The small amount that Miss Trevor paid for her tiny suite was as much as her slender means could afford. She earned a fairly steady income from pen-and-ink sketches, and of late she had increased her connection amongst editors of popular journals, and this year promised to be the best she had as yet known.

"I declare I must have been far away in dreamland," she said.

"Not a favorite occupation of yours either, is it, Miss Trevor? I believe I have disturbed you. Shall I go away?"

"Dear child, no," replied the other, brightly. "I was thinking some few minutes back how much I wished you were here to share my lonely cup of tea. Sit down, my dear; it shall be made in two minutes."

So they sat down now before the fire and drank their tea, and talked as women who have much in common will talk, enjoying each other's society.

When she had started up to let Susie in Miss Trevor had reverently placed that small, black-bound book on a tiny gimcrack table, and now a hasty movement on her part overbalanced this fragile piece of furniture, and the book fell almost at Susie's feet. Miss Trevor pounced upon it with a bright flush on her face, and the girl looked at her with questioning eyes.

"Miss Trevor," she said, solemnly, "you've been in a sentimental mood this afternoon."

"What should make you think that?" asked Lucy, with a questioning smile.

"Because I see you with that book. There is some mystery about it. I suppose you think me very inquisitive, but I would give worlds to know what is in that book. In a way I am jealous of it; you think a great deal more of it than you do of me."

"Nonsense, dear," said the other, but her pale, sweet face went crimson once more. "It was a present, given me years ago by someone I cared for."

"I am sorry," said the girl quickly; she had detected the note of pain in the elder woman's voice.

"It is all right," smiled Miss Trevor; "it—it happened long ago. He has forgotten me by this, but once we were very dear to each other; at least, he was to me."

"And is still," said the girl to herself.

"He was a poet," went on Miss Trevor, and her voice was a little tremulous. "We met in London when he was unknown. He used to tell me of his dreams of fame, used to read me his poems, before he found any other public to take interest in them. He called me his little sweetheart. I was only a girl then, little more than a child—and I took his words more seriously, perhaps, than they were intended. He had a very hard struggle—but he would say that the thought of me comforted him, that so long as he had my symoathy, my love—and I gave him both—the world's coldness would not trouble him.

"But one day fortune smiled on him. A volume of verse attracted a great deal of attention, was praised in all the important reviews, and, like Byron, he awoke to find himself famous."

"And then?"

"Well, we seemed to drift apart, somehow. He was made a lot of in society, invited to the best houses as the chief guest. He—he became a little careless of old friends as his success increased. I did not see much of him, and when he visited us there was no more talk of love or of marriage—as there had once been.

"My father lost all his money," she went on, after a pause, "and the shock of this killed him. My mother died when I was a child, so that I stood quite alone. I was left very badly provided for, and I had only such relatives as did not believe in the practice of holding out a helping hand to those in poor circumstances.

"By-and-by things became a little easier. I found employment. Soon after this I was one night walking through one of the fashionable squares in the West-end of London. It was late, but I had a headache, and thought that the cool summer air would refresh me. Outside one of the big houses I paused. The light was streaming through the open entrance-door, and I had a fairy glimpse of a flower-filled nall, and stately rooms beyond. There were voices in the hall, then the door closed, and a man's figure came so swiftly down the steps that I had not time to move away, and he almost ran into me. A cry of recognition came from both of us. It was my old friend.

"I could not escape, as I would rather have done, and he held my hand and looked into my face, the sparkle of triumph in his eyes, the flush of success on his face. Oh, it made me glad to see him like that. I knew that he had spent a delightful evening amongst his aristocratic friends. His voice rang out jubilant in the night air.

" 'Dear little woman,' he said (I can remember every word), 'I am so pleased to see you. It was all I wanted to complete my happiness this evening. It is the night of my life, Lucy. There was such a crowd of people, and all invited to hear me read to them a play of mine.'

"He went on talking to me very kindly—almost as he used to do— I think he fancied that he had slighted me and that I might feel a little hurt. But I did not really. I quite understood how his engagements demanded his time and his thoughts.

"Just as I was leaving him he thrust this little book into my hand. 'It is a play—my first; perhaps the best thing I have ever written or shall ever write. Take it. I give it to you, Lucy, for—for the sake of old times. It shall never be published; it is yours. Will you accept it? And—and forgive me, dear.' He said that; and before I could stammer out thanks he left me there.

"It was almost with reverence that I touched the volume. I knew the sacrifice it must have cost him to give me this—the child of his brain which no other eyes than mine would ever look upon. I have not seen him since."

"Then he really deserted you? It was despicable, Miss Trevor," said the girl, in low, indignant tones.

"Ah, dear, don't speak harshly of him. You cannot understand. His success exceeded anything he had dreamed of. He was the comet of a season."

"And now—what is he now?"

Miss Trevor looked down. "I don't hear of him very often now," she faltered. "He wrote something that the critics did not care about—they were dreadfully severe—and somehow his name seems almost forgotten. They said that his work had lost all the dainty charm that had once distinguished it, that his later poetry has never equalled his earlier work."

"That is easy to understand," said the girl, with quiet scorn. "The world had not spoiled him then. He was less selfish, his ideals less material."

"You would not have said that he was selfish had you known him," replied Miss Trevor, earnestly. "He was merely weak and carried away by success until he was false to what was best in him. That was all."

Susie had other matters to attend to besides taking tea with her dear friend Miss Trevor, so presently she said good-bye and went on her way.

Miss Trevor, left alone, cleared away the tea-things, took them out into her little kitchen, washed them up and put them away in the cupboard, and then, returning to the sitting-room, took up the morning paper, which she had not yet looked at.

Suddenly she gave a little cry, and leaning her head forward read with strained eyes the few lines that had caught her attention:—

"We learn with regret that Mr. Wilfrid Marchmont, whose poetic gifts attracted considerable attention some years back, is lying seriously ill at his apartments, 5, Westover Street, Hampstead. Mr. Marchmont has not been before the public very much of late years, and we fear that he has fallen into poverty. That his popularity has declined is, we venture to think, due in no small measure to himself. His later poetry has decidedly lost those qualities which first won him fame. But his public still exists—as a public must always exist for those who have good work to offer—and if Mr. Marchmont has in his portfolio anything equal to his first published book of verse there is little doubt that both pecuniary and artistic success will be his once more."

The paper dropped from Miss Trevor's shaking hands and a mist came over her eyes. He was ill and in want, needing a woman's help, a woman's pity. Oh, why had he not sent for her? He might have known that, though all his butterfly acquaintances had left him to die alone, she would be true.

"What can I do?" she asked herself, desperately.

She got up from her chair with a quick, impatient movement.

"I cannot stay here," she said aloud; and yet she realized that it was too late for anything to be done that night. Taking up his book, she fingered it with loving hands that were even more tender than usual in their touch. She glanced at the picturesque writing. Here, in this little book, was the best work he had ever done. If only the world possessed that! It would express its admiration, its delight; would perhaps give back to the forgotten singer the fame and riches that it had once showered upon him; all that he had lost would be within his grasp again.

Then a thought occurred to her. She could sell this book to a publisher. It was a brilliant idea, but her heart grew cold at the thought of it, and her lips trembled. The book which had been for her eyes alone had become so sacred to the lonely, deserted woman. She had felt that with this gift, precious beyond all telling, there was a subtle link between her and the man she had loved—loved still. Could she part with it—could she give it up into alien hands?

"It is for his sake," she whispered, "and I will do it."

* * * * * *

The next morning saw her early astir. She had some experience amongst the world of writers and publishers, and had decided the night before at which houses she would stand most chance of disposing of this book.

But the first house she called upon would have nothing to do with it.

"Mr. Marchmont's day is over," pronounced the head of the firm. "Quite an ephemeral reputation. Scarcely remembered by half a hundred of the reading public. To produce it would mean a dead failure."

The next house she visited was more sympathetic. One of the partners saw her, glanced over one or two pages of the precious manuscript and was visibly struck with the poem. But after some hesitation he told her that he was afraid to make an offer for it—the publishing risk was too great, despite what the newspaper had said.

Still persevering, Miss Trevor went to the last name upon her list—a comparatively new firm, noted for their enterprise. Here she obtained better success. The junior partner saw her. He took the book from her, retired with it to his private room, and kept her waiting an hour. At the expiration of that time he sent for her to come to his sanctum, and informed her that he would accept the poetic play for publication.

"It is a fine thing," he said; "it should go well. We shall build up Mr. Marchmont's reputation once more. I suppose he has commissioned you to dispose of it for him?"

Miss Trevor hesitated and succeeded in evading the question.

She went away jubilant. The publisher had promised to have the work produced without delay. He was not a man to lose time.

Having concluded this business Miss Trevor visited sundry shops, where she bought a variety of delicacies such as would be likely to tempt an invalid appetite, and then with a queer little thrill in her heart she told the cabman to drive to Westover Street, Hampstead.

At last the cab drew up before a shabby house—a typical lodging-house—and in answer to her ring a slatternly maid-of-all-work came to the door and looked with astonishment at the quiet, lady-like woman, dressed in pearl-grey, who stood before her and asked to see Mr. Marchmont.

"Ain't 'ere. Was took to the 'orspital this morning," said the damsel.

"Which hospital?" asked Miss Trevor, falteringly.

"The Metropolitan," answered the girl; and, thanking her, Miss Trevor, turned away and re-entered the cab, telling the man to drive her to that home of suffering.

When she reached there she asked to see the house-surgeon, who, after listening courteously to her request, referred her to the nurse who had charge of the case. Upon interviewing that person, a bright, capable woman, with a strong face and quiet, steadfast eyes, Miss Trevor was given permission to see Wilfrid Marchmont.

"He is very ill," the nurse warned her; "enteric fever, but we hope to pull him through."

Lucy Trevor had prepared herself for a shock, but when she reached the bedside she could hardly recognize in this still figure, with the emaciated features, the man she had loved and last seen with the triumph of youth upon his face. She gave a tiny cry, and the nurse uttered a warning hush. But the patient had heard, and he opened his eyes. There was no recognition in their depths, though his blackened lips mumbled strange and incoherent words.

She sat there a few minutes, stroked the thin, white hands, and then she felt her self-control was equal to no more, so she left the hospital, saying she would come again the next day.

* * * * * *

There was a sharp tussle between life and death, but Wilfrid Marchmont pulled through, and Miss Trevor could never forget the day when his brain cleared and he recognized her.

"Lucy!" he murmured, as she took her place by the bedside and the nurse discreetly vanished. He looked up into the calm, sweet face, eloquent with all love, all sympathy, and his heart throbbed with remorse and pain, and dropping her hand he turned his head away.

"Are you not glad to see me?" she asked.

"Glad?" he echoed, looking at her once more. "What can I say to express my gladness? All my friends have failed me except you—you whom I treated with such carelessness and indifference."

"We can forget that now," she said, gently. "You had other interests in life—other friends."

"I was a fool, who mistook the false for the real, tinsel for gold. I was a fool, Lucy—such as all men are when they allow themselves to become intoxicated by the foolish flatteries that people utter—flatteries that sound so much and mean so little. It was you I should have turned to in the hour of my success; you I should have asked to share good fortune with me. But I worshipped at other shrines, and I have been punished. My power of writing languished and died in that artificial atmosphere. It was not suited to me, Lucy. I should have kept up my former standard away from society, cheered by your companionship; for, now that I have had time to think over things, I realize that it was your gentle sympathy and encouragement which taught me to write. Without them I should never have succeeded. And how ungrateful I was! If my position were otherwise than it is, if I had anything to offer you that was worthy of your acceptance, how gladly would I lay it at your feet—how gladly! But I have nothing—neither fame nor fortune—nothing but the love of a man who has recognized his mistakes."

She turned away to hide the glad tears that came into her eyes. Poor, faithful heart, it seemed too beautiful to be true. That he should care for her, have found her necessary to his happiness, his work!

And when next she came she read to him from a number of papers she had brought with her reviews upon his new book—published a week before. There was no dissentient voice. The critics had nothing but praise for it. The poet was raised once more upon the pedestal of fame which he had earned years before, and then lost. The book promised to be a financial as well as an artistic success. An impetus was given to the sale of his published works. Fortune smiled on him once more.

"When I get better, if it is God's will that I do," he said to himself, in all humbleness of spirit, "I will ask this faithful woman to share the rest of my life, and try to atone for my past folly and neglect."

He did get better, and found that happiness which might have been his years ago had he only, by being true to Lucy Trevor, been true to himself as well.—London Tit-Bits.

FOR SURGICAL WORK.

Surgeons Are Interested in New Cinematograph.

The Paris correspondent of the London Daily Mail says:

Dr. Doyen, the eminent French surgeon, has invented an apparatus which is likely to excite considerable interest in the scientific world. The novelty consists of an ingenious appliance by means of which cinematographic projections are thrown upon the screen with the relief which accompanies the object in nature.

Dr. Doyen was good enough to receive me in his splendidly-equipped institute in the Rue Piccini. In a room off the operating theatre was fixed an ordinary cinematograph, and when the instrument was set in motion I saw Dr. Doyen and two assistants engaged in an operation for the removal of an abdominal cyst.

At first I remarked nothing unusual, but when Dr. Doyen said, "Now look through that." I took hold of something which appeared to be a padlock, but which, on examination, I found to consist of two small semi-circular aluminum plates, with some mechanism between, and a couple of apertures for the eyes.

As soon as I looked through this the scene was changed. Instead of the usual cinematograph picture, with everything on the same plane I saw Dr. Doyen, in his operating blouse, standing in the foreground, his skilful hands manupulating sharp, wicked-looking instruments, his assistant helping him on the other side of the "subject," and another doctor administering the chloroform which kept the patient unconscious of the great crisis through which he was passing.

The illusion was perfect, and while the cinematograph band was running off the picture it all seemed so life-like that the spectator felt as if he were actually present at the operation.

The utility of the invention consists in the possibility of displaying before the eyes of almost any number of students typical surgical operations in their minutest details and in the most lifelike aspect.

"Pa," said little Jimmy, "I was very near getting to the head of the class to-day." "How was that, Jimmy?" "Why, a big word came all the way down to me, and if I could only have spelt it I should have gone clear up."

Don't take chances of proposing to a girl on Friday; she might not refuse you.

AMAZONS FIGHT TURKS

BULGARIAN WOMEN JOIN INSURGENT ARMY.

The Romance of Kristina Petkova—Some of the Women Are Officers.

In the desultory warfare which is being carried on against the Turk in the Balkans women have come to the front again as soldiers. Among the Bulgarian insurgents who invade Macedania and raid villages are a number of amazons who are sure of foot in the mountain climbing and sure of aim in the fighting which is carried on in village and on the mountain side.

These women, unlike others who have enlisted in the armies, do not attempt to conceal the fact that they are women. Some of them wear their hair hanging free to display the fact that they are amazons.

For a civilized, or supposedly civilized, country, the woman soldier is an almost unknown quantity, and for that reason the fair soldiers of Bulgaria who are risking the perils of an unrecognized warfare against the Turk are attracting attention.

A ROMANCE.

Kristina Petkova is one of these soldiers. The uniform she wears is a distinctly serviceable one—strapped leggins, coarse woolen trousers, and loose fitting blouse, with cartridge belt around the waist and around the shoulders, musket strapped to the back, and saber at the side.

There is a romance connected with her service in the Bulgarian ranks of the Macedonian army. Her fiance is a young officer in the same army. During one of the mountain climbing raids which are undertaken to drive the Macedonian peasants into revolt against the Turks he led a detachment against a village where the Turkish forces were found in unexpected numbers. A quick retreat was all that saved the Bulgarian soldiers, but in this flight the young officer was captured, being in the rear of the retiring Bulgarians.

His comrades, having escaped to the mountains, carried the news of his capture to Kristina. In her despair, knowing that there was little chance of anything but death for him, she gathered about her a number of insurgents for an attempt at rescue.

They retraced their way down the mountain to the village and were planning a night attack when the young officer suddenly appeared among them. He had succeeded in eluding the guard placed over him and had made his escape.

The young girl, however, had cast her lot with the Bulgarian cause and to be with her lover during the campaigns she decided to enlist as a soldier. He protested at first, but finally relented, being willing to allow her to brave the dangers since she showed the spirit necessary for it.

Among the other women who are seeing service in the Bulgarian army in Macedonia are some who are officers, most of them being noncommissioned. Arnoudova is a sergeant, but unlike Kristina, she is desirous of appearing as a man. In her uniform she appears to be a sturdy, good looking youth of 21.

FIGHT FOR HOMES.

The character of the warfare being carried on in the Balkans is of a kind which would attract women to the service. At least, it is a repetition of the kind which has attracted them in times past—a repetition of the desultory but fierce struggles which have been waged with all the greater ferocity because they have been unorganized.

Religion and race prejudices are among the causes which make the Bulgarians and Macedonian troops the natural enemies of the Turks. It is a struggle for homes and churches, and such a struggle always has claimed the most active interest on the part of women.

When foreign policies cause a war it is seldom that women get closely in touch with it, but as soon as homes are threatened they will be found identified with the men. Frontier life in America demanded that the women be as ready with a rifle as the men, and the condition in the Balkans now presents a similar problem to the Bulgarian women.

THEY BOTH HAD DOUBTS.

A certain professor, who shall be nameless, tells the following good story against himself, relating to an experience he had when crossing the Atlantic from the United States recently. He had been unable to get a state-room for himself, but, on assurances by the purser that he would have for a room-mate some companionable gentleman, he accepted what he could get.

"Now, after a short while," says the narrator, "I began to find myself thinking of some valuables that I had about me, and went with them finally to the pursur, to entrust them to his keeping.

" 'I would explain to you,' I said to the purser, 'that I am very much pleased with my room-mate. That is, I find him a gentleman in every respect, and I wouldn't have you think that—that is—I wouldn't have you think my coming to you with these valuables is—er—a—any reflection upon him, you know. His appearance is in every way——'

"And here," the narrator says, "the purser interrupted me, with a somewhat broad smile.

" 'Yes, sir, it's all right; he has come to me with some valuables also, and he says the very same thing about you.' "