

THE MASTER PASSION.

Music or Love!

Three rows back from the orchestra sat the violin fancier. The action of the drama had no interest for him, but whenever the musicians played he listened intently, his eyes unchangingly fixed upon the instrument in the hands of the first violinist. He knew every curve of the violin as he knew his own signature. He gazed upon its beauties as a lover upon the perfections of his mistress.

How many miles had he traveled in seeking the object upon which he now was gazing! How many dusty Italian shops he had ransacked, how many old violins he had handled in vain!—and now before him was the veritable treasure he had sought. It was the *del Gesu*—the Guarnerius he had so longed to possess.

Hardly had the curtain rung its fall upon the stage when he made his way through the fast-ebbing current of spectators, unconscious of all their rude jostling, and of his own, and addressed the musician, who was placing the violin in its box and tucking it daintily in a silken bed.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I have been so delighted by the tone of the violin you play so charmingly. Perhaps you will not object if I ask the privilege of examining the instrument."

"With pleasure," replied the violinist, courteously, unwrapping the violin and holding it up. "Yet I must beg that you have a care that it is not injured. It has much value, and, unfortunately, I have not the pleasure to own it. I hold it but as a loan from my friend."

But the violinist was reassured when he saw how carefully the instrument was handled. Beneath the electric bulb upon the music stand the fancier examined in turn the label, the neck, the back, the scroll. There could be no mistake. It was a genuine *del Gesu*, and in most excellent condition, as if it had been always the pet of some musician. The fancier gloated in silence over his find.

"Your yourself play, without doubt?" asked the violinist, rather with polite interest than curiosity.

"I? Oh, yes, a little at times. And I buy good violins if I can have them at a reasonable price. Do you know what would be asked for this?"

"But I cannot tell. I have it only by my friend's favor, as a loan."

"To whom does it belong?"

"To my friend—that is, to a young girl whom I have known a year or more."

"Can you tell me where she found it?"

"You will excuse me," was the violinist's reply, as he made an attempt to reclaim the instrument, "but I should beg to know why you make the inquiry. I have no reason to—answer questions."

"I would be glad to make an offer for the violin. You see, I am a—dealer, in a way. I buy such as please me."

"Oh, this is not to be sold, I am sure," said the violinist, restoring the

del Gesu to its case. "Indeed, sir, though a poor man, I have for myself made offer of five, seven—yes, even eight hundred dollars. But Amelie says ever, 'No, no; I shall not sell.' So, you see—"

"I understand. It may be an heirloom, and the lady naturally— Still, I should be glad to make the attempt to buy. Unless the owner has some very good reason, is a violinist herself—"

"Truly, no. It is not that she performs, but it is an inheritance, a legacy. Her grandfather was long a player, and by his will he conveyed the violin souvenir to Amelie. You comprehend? My English is too slight to tell all."

A row at a time, the lights were going out, and the two walked up the aisle together.

"But come," the violinist resumed, "you are in earnest, I see. Perhaps, then, you would care to ask the lady for yourself. She is of the company."

They waited a few moments at the stage door.

Soon a woman appeared, draped in a long cloak, and approached the violinist. In a few words spoken in French he explained the presence of the other, and presented him.

"This is Mlle. Amelie Durand, who owns the violin, M'sieu, and most kindly permits to me its use. Will you ask herself of the price?"

"You are very kind," said the fancier. "I admired the violin, and he was good enough to let me examine it. I have told him that I sometimes buy good instruments, and he has referred me to you as the owner. Would you part with it?—or is that impossible?"

"No doubt he has told you, has he not, that it is a family possession? It was for many years my grandfather's," said she, pushing back her hood and showing a most attractive face, "and I should be very sorry if compelled to let it go."

"But—if you might be tempted," the fancier insisted, in distress at finding the treasure unattainable, "I should offer a large price. I would pay you twelve—fifteen hundred dollars."

She looked startled, then grave, but slowly shook her head.

"Your price seems most generous," she said. "I wish I might say 'yes,' for we are not rich; but really I ought not, even for so much. I do not think I could sell the old violin even for so great a sum."

"I would give more. I will give eighteen hundred dollars," the fancier said, eagerly. "I know it is more than the worth of the violin, but I have a whim to possess it for my collection."

So earnest was the fancier that it was not easy to refuse him. He was handsome and in the prime of life, and one instinctively wished to consent; but Mlle. Amelie only smiled, shook her head gently, and seemed to consider the interview at an end.

"At least, do not decide at once," the fancier asked, as he raised his hat. "May I not see you again? You may change your mind."

"That I will not refuse," she replied, kindly. "And you may try the violin,

if you choose. You play, of course? Mind, I do not say positively that I will not part with it. There may be reasons—but I hardly think I can sell it now." She gave her address, and the three parted.

Within a few days the collector of violins presented himself. He was introduced to the Durand family—to the mother, an aristocratic little French dame with a manner that charmed; to the brother, who was a bank clerk, and to a younger sister, very demure and watchful.

The *del Gesu* was brought out, and he played upon it with fingers that trembled a little and did him little credit. Altogether he was most hospitably received, and found no reason to regret his visit save that his offers for the violin were calmly refused.

After a decent time he came again, and even repeated the call at a less interval. He was received with increasing cordiality, and was evidently a welcome friend. Yet, despite offers far exceeding any fair market value, he made no progress in his enterprise of adding the *del Gesu* to his collection.

One day he omitted to mention the violin.

"Ah," remarked the younger sister, "he has lost hope of the *del Gesu*; we shall soon see no more of our new friend!"

But her prophecy was falsified. He came oftener than before. Soon it was evident to all but himself that, if he cared less for the violin, he cared much more for the violin's mistress.

At length even he had discovered the true attraction, and called formally upon Madame Durand with a demand for the hand of Amelie. Admitting that the fancy for the *del Gesu* had first brought him to their home, he now declared that he had no thought of anything whatever but for his sincere affection for Amelie herself.

And she, when appealed to, declared that her heart had been won.

The day for the bridal was set, and on a bright, sunny day the little wedding party drove from the church to the Durand home, and there, the first violinist being an honored guest, was held a modest fete.

When, after a brief honeymoon trip, the fancier brought home his bride, she gazed about her with delight at the cozy apartment. Then, springing up, she exclaimed:

"Oh, I almost forgot! You have not shown me your collection of violins."

"But," said the fancier, "I have none, my dearest."

"You have none?"

"I had put all my money into them, and—and I sold the violins that I might make the little home for you."

Amelie came close beside him, put her arm around his neck, and said, in a mischievous tone:

"Then you did not marry me for the *del Gesu*?"

"I had forgotten it," he said, simply. "But we can begin our new collection with it."

Amelie looked at him soberly, and then began to laugh.

"Oh, I am so sorry! But I no longer own the *del Gesu*. I thought you cared

about it no longer, and so— In short, I sold it for my *dot*."

"You did wisely," said her husband. "Collecting may become a mere mania, and leads to lunacy."

"It led you to me," said Amelie, poutingly.

"Nonsense! Marriages like ours are made in heaven. But how could you sell your grandfather's violin?"

"A maid must have her *dot*! How could you sell your collection?"

"A man must yield to the ruling passion," said he, "and, after all, love rules all the rest!"

—Tudor Jenks, in *The Outlook*.

The burglar's wife was in the witness-box, and the prosecuting lawyer was conducting a vigorous cross-examination. "Madam, you are the wife of this man?" "Yes." "You knew he was a burglar when you married him?" "Yes." "How did you come to contract a marriage with such a man?" "Well," the witness said sarcastically, "I was getting old, and had to choose between a lawyer and a burglar." The cross-examination ended there.

An antiquarian had been showing a party of old friends round his house, which contained many relics. Suddenly he called the attention of his guests to an old clock, adding pathetically: "Gentlemen, I have wound up that clock every night for forty years." He had evidently made an impression on his visitors, when an old fellow who had been carefully examining the clock, spoiled all the sentiment by saying, dryly: "Well, I always did think you were very eccentric. That's an eight-day clock!"

Explain the manner of a plant's breathing. How? Did you ever hear a snore coming from a rosebud?

Why cannot a plant's pistil be called a revolver?

Do milkweeds grow in pints or quarts, and how are they related to the cowslip?

Explain the difference between common chickweed and chickweed preferred.

Describe bark of dogwood.

What is the apple of a potato's eye?

A sad-looking man went into a chemist's. "Can you give me," he said, "something that will drive from my mind the thought of sorrow and bitter recollection?" And the chemist nodded, and put him up a little dose of quinine and wormwood, and rhubarb and Epsom salts, and a dash of castor oil, and gave it to him, and for six months the man could not think of anything in the world except new schemes for getting the taste out of his mouth.

Georgia will be as dry as a bone, legally, after January 1. This means that the thirsty will appeal to a well-known variety of "unwritten law" in order to obtain their usual supply of liquid rations.