

## Learning to Sing

## An Intermezzo

"Do you know," mused the girl at the piano, "that singing isn't an art, nor a talent? It's just a record of so many dollars and cents. And the more dollars and cents you've spent on your voice the better your voice is. That doesn't mean, either," she went on, "that it's all a matter of training. If I should take a hundred lessons at \$1 a lesson I'd be considered just about one-third as advanced and proficient in vocalizing as I should be if I'd take a hundred lessons at \$3 a lesson."

"Why this pessimistic mood?" inquired the man who was sitting near. "I'm not pessimistic," replied the girl, calmly. "I've just discovered another truth. You try it and you'll see. With the piano or the violin it's different. While I grant that with them dollars and cents count a lot, still, if you can play the keys and the notes the same, people will listen to you, and, perhaps, enjoy the playing—but with vocal music everything depends on the money cost. There seems to be a quality in the tone, or something that tells people just who your teacher is and what you pay for your lessons—and you get complimented accordingly."

"Yes?" The man's voice invited further explanation. "Well," the girl proceeded, "even if one practices alone on the piano one can accomplish something, can't one? But when a poor soul tries to practice singing alone the neighbors shut the windows and the members of her own family beg for mercy, and even the children make fun of her. But let that same person announce that her vocal lessons are figuring in the high numbers—that Professor Somebody devotes a whole precious half hour to her voice every once in a while—and the neighbors sit out on their porches evenings to listen to her scales. Her family is impressed."

"Now, I've been singing off and on, for my own pleasure, since I was a baby. I've always had a modest degree of respect for my own voice—but I have generally seemed to be alone in my opinion. If I sang it was usually an accompaniment—and when I was younger I used to hurt my feelings."

"Why, I've always told you that I like your voice." The man took on a tone of reproach, but it didn't seem to work well. "You!" she laughed. "Why, of course you—but I mean people who count, in music!"

"That seems to dispose of me effectively," conceded the man. "But as I was saying," proceeded the girl, "it's absolutely no earthly use to have a nice voice. You may sing like a bird, but if your voice has been trained outside of a first-class studio you simply can't sing, no matter how well you sing. That's all there is to it! Why, if Melba herself hadn't had first-class voice teachers no one would have ever realized what a voice she had. People would still be telling her to sing something instead of forever practicing scales, whereas they gladly pay \$5 or so for a seat to hear those very scales put into some handy song!"

"From all of which," commented the man, summing the matter up, "it appears that you are sick of it all and are going to leave the vocal field to the moneyed classes and stick to the piano. I really think you are wise, myself. Singing isn't such a great stunt after all, unless one has a fine selection of songs—and even then the same things can't please every one. On the other hand, if you play, you can play to please the whole bunch—and—"

"You are entirely mistaken," interrupted the girl, deeply offended. "If you think that after all this work I'm going to give up just because my teacher didn't give me a decent solo in that recital, so that my voice would show off well beside the others, you're badly deceived."

"I'm going to spend some real money on a good teacher, that's what I'm going to do! I'll show them that they were all good and mistaken!" Then she pounded the piano keys.

**The Oldest Ship.**  
The oldest ship in the world was recently broken up at Tenerife, Canary Islands. It was the Italian ship Anita, built in Genoa in 1518, and almost an exact duplicate of the Santa Maria, the famous galleon in which Columbus made his voyage of discovery. The Anita was built for strength rather than grace or speed, broad-beamed and clumsy, but had weathered hurricanes and typhoons in all parts of the globe, and escaped unharmed from the perils of the deep from Cape Horn to Hudson Bay. She had a world's record as the slowest ship afloat, averaging 205 days between Baltimore, Md., and Rio de Janeiro. As her lack of speed was losing money to her owner, and she seemed destined to defy the elements and enrich Lloyd's indefinitely as long as she remained afloat, it was decided to sell her for what she would bring piecemeal, and use the money she brought toward constructing a new vessel.

**Reach for the Ideal.**  
"Your circumstances may be ungenial, but they shall not long remain so if you but perceive an ideal and strive to reach it. You cannot travel within and stand still without."—James Allen.

"How nice of you to come," the daughter of the house whispered to a gentleman in evening dress whose serious face was in strong contrast to most of the other guests at the fashionable ball.

"I only came to stay for a moment," was his curt reply. "But please sit down," the beautiful girl whispered. "I enticed you here tonight just to have a few words with you, and I know that you will stay if I really want you, won't you, doctor?"

He bowed silently and sat down. "We have not seen each other for three years, doctor, and I confess that I have looked forward to this meeting with great joy. As soon as I heard that you were once more back in Berlin I told mother it was absolutely necessary for us to give another ball, and the first card I sent out was addressed to you."

A strange expression came into the serious face as he replied: "This was something that I had hardly dared hope for from you, madame."

"You are still unforgiving. Is it then not possible to correct a past error when one has grown to be three years older since it was committed?" "There are errors which never can be corrected, mistakes which can never be forgiven because they have destroyed something which cannot be brought back to life."

"Did you then really take it so much to heart that I did not say 'yes' right away?"

"Take it to heart! You killed something in me."

"Which cannot be brought back to life, doctor?"

"No." His reply was so curt that she looked at him in surprise. "At that time you looked upon me as one of the men who did not give away their love. You looked at me as a young, poor physician who was hunting for a rich young wife to open the way into society for him. Is that not true?"

She hesitated. Then she said quickly: "I have many faults, doctor, but I may say this about myself, I cannot tell a lie. And therefore I must say to you now that what you just said was true."

"Well—and by distrusting me you killed something in me which can never be brought back to life."

"But when it is like that, doctor, when you feel as you do, why did you accept our invitation?"

"I came to guard you against a calamity."

"How serious that sounds." "It is serious, Miss Erna. By accident I heard during my first visit to our medical society that a young man was seeking your hand in marriage and that he had every prospect of success. It may have been an accident, or maybe my friend told me on purpose to see what impression this news would make upon me. You know there are friends of that kind. I did not show any emotion, but when I heard the name of your suitor it took my whole effort to remain quiet. I do not want to ask any questions. I cannot spy, but when your invitation came I accepted it as a hint from Providence. Here at this ball I must find out for sure if the rumor was true, and I saw it was as soon as I had entered the ballroom. For the very first gentleman whom I saw you dancing with was he."

"Herr von Wall?"

"Yes, Herr von Wall. You know whom I mean."

"But we are not yet engaged," Erna exclaimed; "that is to say—"

"That is to say, we are going to be engaged," the doctor replied, completing her sentence. "Now I will tell you what seems to me a duty. Herr von Wall was my first patient and I know that he is living a life which is ruining him physically and morally. I have tried everything to make him change his ways. I have told him that he is practically committing suicide, but it was no use. I have found out other things about him which justify me in telling you that Herr von Wall is a scoundrel, and that the young girl who marries him will become as unhappy as a woman can ever be. Now I have done my duty and with your permission I shall leave."

He arose, slowly and was about to turn away from her when she took his hand. "Stay," she whispered. "I thank you for your sacrifice, and it is hardly necessary for me to say that I believe you. But what do you want me to do now?"

"That is for you to decide, Miss Erna. I have done my duty. My reward will be the knowledge of having saved you from a dreadful fate. If I had wanted any other reward I should not have dared to speak."

She threw herself on a couch, burying her face in her hands, and it seemed as if she were crying. When she looked up again he had gone and her mother came rushing into the small boudoir.

"But, child, where have you been? And how is it that you look so? I really believe you have—"

"Yes, mamma, I have—but it's all over—it was only a little intermezzo." She looked at her dance card.

"I suppose I have to go back to work now."

# While They Last

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**Preparations for Shocks.**  
For most of the wrenches and jolts of life there are, happily, conditions which alleviate what would otherwise seem unbearable, conditions which soften and break the most cruel shocks. Death, for instance, the greatest shock of all, unless it is very sudden, seldom comes as an unbearable wrench, because weakness or suffering has prepared us for it.