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Saturday Morning, August 29, 1885.

ESSIE.

"If I only had a piano!"

Even as the wish rose almost unconsciously to her lips, Essie Trowbridge blushed a deep crimson tint, and shy eyes looked out half frightened from under the long lashes.

"A piano! Wouldn't you like a diamond necklace or a carriage with four horses? This is one of the results of a plain farmer marrying a fine lady!"

"I was not a fine lady when Henry married me, only a hard-working district school teacher," said Essie, "and he was kind and good, and never sneered at me because I loved music and pictures, and—and—all the other pleasures I had before my father died!"

"Well, there, there—don't cry," said the old man hastily. "I did not mean to hurt your feelings. Harry was—"

But there the father choked, too; for was not Harry, his only child, the very idol of his old heart, lying in the churchyard, and the six months' widow sobbing beside him?

She rose softly from her seat, and crossing to where her father-in-law sat, said gently:

"I will not try you again by extravagant desires. I know how good you are to me, and I will try to learn to be a better farmer's girl!"

"You are a very good girl, a very good girl," was the reply, "and it is only natural you should hanker for what you've been brought up to having. But pianos costs hundreds of dollars, and I have none to spare, Essie. I can't get round the farm as Harry did, and I have had him to lean upon so long that things go crooked enough without him!"

Essie sighed, caressing the snowy hair, her shy, brown eyes full of trouble. She knew that the farm was suffering for the master hand and eyes, lying folded forever, and she longed to be of some use to the father she had promised Harry to love and comfort.

But she was only twenty, city bred and reared in luxury. Just one year she taught a district school after her father died a bankrupt. Then Harry Trowbridge, the handsome, tender farmer, who met her in the country-houses where she "boarded round," told her his love and won the sweet, pure heart's affection.

Only a few month's after the wedding, when Essie was conquering one by one the difficulties of farm housekeeping, Harry fell from a hay-wagon, and was fatally injured.

In the few hours of life granted him, his one desire was to keep his father and his young wife together, to love and comfort each other.

"You will give Essie a home when I am gone," he begged, when his father bent over him.

"While I have a roof to cover me," was the answer.

"You will not leave my father utterly childless?" he whispered, when Essie put her cheek to his to hide the tears that would fall.

"I will never leave him while my love is any comfort," she answered.

And in the first days of mourning these two were an unutterable comfort to each other. But as time wore on they found many rough places in this life-contract each felt so solemnly binding. John Trowbridge had a profound contempt for all womankind who could not fill his own rough ideal. A woman who could churn, milk, cook, care for poultry, keep a house shining, wash and iron, and keep in perfect, robust health withal, was a woman after his own heart. A starving mind, a hungry soul, were problems he had never realized as existing.

It fretted him when Essie, bravely striving to do the work so new in her experience, would faint at her post. It roused his rough sarcasms when the day closed upon duties unperformed, when bread was heavy and cooking imperfect.

And Essie, hoping against hope to grow stronger, made herself miserable in the supposition that she was a useless burden where she so earnestly desired to be a comfort and blessing. She stifled her own craving for the books and refinements that had been second nature; and yet she could not fill the place they had occupied by interest in chickens, pigs and cows.

It added to her perplexities to know that the farm had not paid its expenses in the last year. Spring was still some weeks away, and provisions were growing scarce, while ready money was dwindling down to a pile alarmingly small. She felt like a thief when a baking proved uneatable, or a dinner was spoiled, and yet such disasters occurred in spite of her conscientious efforts to avert them.

It had been a dreary day when her unfortunate wish broke from her lips, and a sudden craving for the music that had been her life's delight took possession of her. Her penitence for the words was very humble, and she put away the desire with many another longing.

But John Trowbridge, though he was narrow-minded, and often rough, had a kind heart under the hard crust gathered over it in years of toil, poorly paid. The longing of the shy brown eyes haunted him.

"I s'pose it is like telling the birds not to sing to shut her up here," he thought, "but to give her a piano! How in the world—"

Then a sudden thought almost took away his breath. He got up from his chair, and kissing Essie, went to the door to think it over. The young widow, warned that it was nearly tea-time by the clock, sped to the kitchen, and did not know when her father-in-law put on his overcoat and hat and went down to the village.

He came back with some great project in every line of his rugged, sun-brown face.

Tea was a success. The toast was delicately browned, and the ham done to a turn. When the meal was over the old man said:

"Essie, do you remember the cross you told me your father gave you for a birthday gift?"

"My diamond cross!"

"You would not like to part with it? Perhaps it is your only reminder of your father?"

"No. I have many other of his gifts. Nothing so valuable as that. The gentleman who took charge of my father's affairs told me I could keep all his gifts to me."

"You—you—would not like to give me the cross to sell, Essie? Our money is getting very short—"

A kiss, tender and quick, stopped the words that came so hesitatingly.

"You are gladly welcome to it, father! I wonder I did not think of it before."

So the dainty bauble lay in the farmer's horny palm, and while Essie cleared the tea-table John Trowbridge went once more to the village.

Dr. Reynolds, the only physician there, Harry's fast friend for years, was in his office when the farmer entered.

"There it is!" said the visitor triumphantly. "You are sure it is worth the money?"

"Perfectly sure. And Mrs. Trowbridge wishes me to invest the sum I obtain in a piano?"

"Bless you, no! that's my part of it. You see, the poor little soul tries to do her best, but she ain't fit for her hard life. If there was any other home for her I'd send her away, though I'd rather miss the sunlight. She's as dainty as a butterfly, and yet she has no fine lady ways either. But she hankers for a piano, and she shall have one, Ernest," and the old man's eyes filled, "her own father gave her that gimcrack, and I've seen her kiss it often, but when I asked her to give it to me, because I needed money, she put it in my hand with a ksss, and told me I was gladly welcome. She's a good girl, if she ain't much of a hand at work."

"She is not very strong," and Ernest Reynolds stifled a sigh as he spoke. Then, with a quick change of voice, he added: "I am going to the city to-morrow. I will sell the cross and buy the piano."

But when the farmer was gone Ernest Reynolds took strange liberties with the jewel he held in charge. He slipped a ribbon through its ring and hung it over his own heart. More than once he touched his lips to the hard, glittering stones, whispering:

"Essie, little Essie!"

The next day he had it valued by a jeweler, and bought a piano with the sum named; but the cross rested still upon his heart as the bill of the sweet-toned instrument was paid.

It would be a vain task to describe Essie's pleasure when the piano was brought to the sitting-room. She cried and smiled at the same time, and her earnest thanks brought moisture to the old farmer's eyes.

He knew nothing of the wonderful power prisoned in the slender fingers, scarred with rough work. He had no true appreciation of the genius of that tender young soul. But he did know that Essie could sway him as she willed by the sounds she drew from the wonderous keys; could bring tears to his eyes or smiles to his lips; could lift him to adoration by her stirring hymns, or carry his heart to the foot of the cross by the pleading power of her voice in prayerful song.

She knew soon and well that her desire was no pain to the kind, old man, but that, while it was rest and joy to her, it was a comforter to him.

But the pressure of poverty was coming closer and closer upon the farm. Acre after acre was sold to meet actual daily needs, and the wolf drew very close to the door of John Trowbridge's house. With stern pride he hid his wants from his neighbors, but Essie knew of privations and self-denials that wrung her own tender heart.

Like a burst of sunlight there came to her two offers. One to be organist at the village church, one to take a class of music scholars in the seminary, five miles from the village. Twice a week a carriage would be sent for her, and the salaries were more than double the income from the farm. Neither John Trowbridge nor Essie knew that Dr. Reynolds, by quiet, unsuspected influence, had brought about this happy result. No one knew that he had driven the principal of the seminary over on an evening when Essie was pouring out her whole soul in music, and held him spell-bound for two hours on the farm-house porch.

But they did know that a strong-armed Irish girl could be paid to do the work of the house out of Essie's income, and that a trustworthy man was found to take the farm-work on shares.

John Trowbridge began to realize that there were women of some value in the world who possessed but a small share of bone and muscle for actual hard work. For scholars came all the way from L——, the market town, seven miles away, to the farm-house. Concerts were given for charitable purposes, and Essie was engaged at goodly sums to play. Strangers came to the village church to hear the wonderous voice and playing of the young organist.

And while the comforts of the farm were multiplied by Essie's generous expenditure, while the rooms gradually lost their bare, dismal look, by additions of furniture and ornaments, while flowers blossomed on barren spaces, and the farm itself was more fully stocked, Essie was ever the same.

The same in respectful love for Harry's father, the same gentle-shy woman, modest as a violet. Yet not the same as the months sped by, and the sorrow of widowhood lost something of its keenest pain.

John Trowbridge wondered a little, when the piano had filled its recess for a whole year, why Ernest Reynolds was so much interested in the old man's rheumatism. He had always been an attentive physician, and had never neglected the father of his dear friend, Harry Trowbridge. But of late he lingered long whenever he called, and often dropped in, unprofessionally.

Essie learned to know his step, and her shy eyes would brighten when she heard it. Harry had told her of many noble traits in the doctor's character, and in the village she had heard of his gentle charities, his conscientious discharge of every duty, his Christian influence where pain and the shadow of death crossed his daily path.

Ever shyly distrustful of herself, she did not dream of winning the love of this hero of her husband's boyhood, this generous friend of the afflicted, this honored member of a noble profession.

She had given her first love, true and warm, to Harry. But the daisies had blossomed twice over Harry's grave, and the gentle heart was touched by other influence. June roses were blooming, and Harry had been dead for two years when one evening Essie sat at her piano, with her fingers calling forth a melody full of sweetness. It was neither glad nor sad, and not so loud but John Trowbridge, in the porch, could hear the voice of Dr. Reynolds, as that gentleman spoke in deep heartfelt tones.

When he had heard all the old man said:

"Go to Essie, Ernest, and tell her the one wish of my heart will be granted it, when I die, I leave her in the happiness of such love as you bring to her. It has been my great sorrow that her short married life tied her to an old man who was so poor a companion for her. I believe Harry himself would bid you God speed."

And Essie, when the love plea was whispered, the message delivered, bent her head to hide happy tears.

"You will let me love you?" the doctor pleaded. "You can love me?"

Only the little hand nestled closer in his own for answer. But after a little time, the sweet, clear voice, asked:

"You will let me keep my promise to Harry, Ernest? I could not desert father now!"

"I only ask to help you in your care for him. My home shall be his! And if he will sell the farm, he will have an income that will take away all sense of dependence, while we can still give him love."

"It seems so strange to think you love me!" Essie said, after they had talked long.

"Little one, I loved you before Harry won you, but I starved my own heart for yours. Do you know what I have worn there, Essie, for many a long month? See!"

And while he loosed the ribbon and put the diamond cross into her hand she learned for the first time the true story of the purchase of that article of furniture, called at the farm Essie's piano.

A Salvation Army's Strange Device.

A letter addressed to the editor of the London Globe says: In reference to the contradiction of the statement made in your columns to the effect that the Salvation Army at Cambridge carried a banner bearing the inscription "Why pay 10d. a pound for lamb when you can have the Lamb of God for nothing?" I beg to state that I saw the banner in question carried in a procession of Salvationists at Cambridge on Saturday, the 6th inst. The procession at the time was passing the Theatre Royal.

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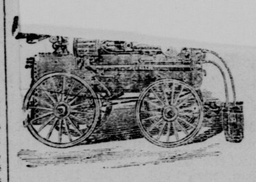

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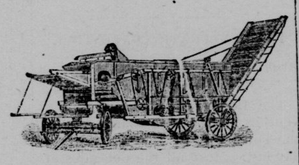

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6 25	2 15	Oxford,	12 08	10 00
6 34	2 23	Trappe,	12 00	9 52
6 50	2 38	Easton,	11 45	9 37
7 00	2 49	Chapel,	11 33	9 24
7 08	2 55	Cordova,	11 27	9 17
7 18	3 05	Queen Anne,	11 18	9 08
7 29	3 16	Ridgely,	11 06	8 58
7 39	3 26	Greensboro,	10 56	8 48
7 48	3 36	Goldsboro,	10 46	8 38
8 55	3 43	Henderson,	10 40	8 32
7 02	3 50	Marydel,	10 34	8 26
8 11	3 58	Slaughters,	10 26	8 18
8 14	4 00	Hartley,	10 24	8 16
8 24	4 09	Kenton,	10 14	8 06
8 34	4 18	Clayton,	10 05	7 57
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