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THAYER & CHANDLER

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Three and a Christmas Tree

Continued from page 9

hope in his heart, and at last one winter evening, when he was gray with years and gray with dust, he came in very truth to the wonder wood. And at the joy of that finding his flagging spirits cheered, and his tired limbs grew brisk, and his heart drummed the marching roll of youth. And he pushed his way through the forest till he came to the clearing.

Again he made a pause, and again Brown Eyes questioned.

"Was the girl there?" she asked with a voice that she wished was steadier.

The Traveler shook his head. "No girl was there; but where she had stood there rose a mighty Christmas tree, the mightiest ever seen or conceived, for its roots were gripped in the core of the earth, and its top was lost in the clouds of heaven; and he knew as he looked that it was Ygdrasil, the Tree of Life; and it was all blazing with lights, for it was Christmas Day, and a fairy sat at its foot. And when the fairy saw the wanderer she greeted him, and bade him come forward and be bold; for he might choose him whatever gift he pleased from the Christmas Tree of Life. And there were crowns on the tree of great kingdoms, and purses that were always plump with gold, and swords of invincibility, and caps of invisibility, and more such marvels than I could reckon in a day's march."

Again he paused; but this time the girl said nothing. She was too intent in her task of fastening a little gilt heart to a somewhat troublesome bough. The Traveler went on with his story.

"But the wanderer saw, far away and above him on a high bough among the stars, a little gold heart swinging, and as it swung the wood seemed filled with music, and he dreamed waking, and he knew for sure that the heart was the heart of his heart's desire, and he pointed to the beautiful thing, and besought the fairy to give it him."

The Traveler stopped again, so long this time that it would seem as if he had finished the tale. Brown Eyes was annoyed to find that her fingers were trembling so provokingly that she could not satisfactorily secure the heart to the bough. To comfort herself in the trying silence she asked:

"Did the fairy give him the heart?"

The Traveler rose to his feet. "There is the curious part of my story. I cannot yet tell you how it ended. Yet it ought to have an end. All fairy tales should end somehow, sadly or happily." He moved nearer to the girl, and stood beside her where she bent over her refractory task.

"You offered me a gift from your Christmas tree, just as the fairy in my tale offered one to the wanderer from Ygdrasil, the Christmas Tree of Life. Well, I have set my heart upon a gift. Will you give me this little golden heart." He pointed to the little toy that quivered in her fingers.

THERE was deep silence for awhile in the Odd Room, the silence of an anxious man and a dreaming maid. After a pause the Traveler spoke again, and his voice was very gentle and tender and appealing.

"Perhaps you see visions," he said, "perhaps you hear voices; other faces that you have seen, other faces that you may see; words that have been spoken to you, sweet words, even if they were not always sweet words for a kind heart to hear. Can your kind heart find any sweetness in my words of love?"

The Traveler was right, and Brown Eyes was, as it were, seeing visions,—the vision of her little company of admirers, some that were suitors once, and had their day and their doom; some that were possible suitors, ready to proclaim themselves as such on the first chance or the least encouragement. Out of these latter the figure of the Champion asserted itself conspicuously. She liked the Champion very much; he amused her, he was a good fellow. It had never occurred to her that she was or could be in love with him; but she had not known what it meant to be in love, though she had thought of him very nebulously, as one whom it might be possible to marry. And then the Traveler came, and changed the world of her thoughts, and filled her with interests and aspirations such as she had never known before. But she had not thought of him as a lover; rather as of a wonderful visitor, who comes for a little into some quiet life and fills it for a time with light and color and living words,—words that mean things, words that mean thoughts that enrich existence. And now the stranger stretched out his hand to her, and prayed for her final, abiding friendship; now the conquering voice was tuned to entreaty, wooed her for wife. It was all bewildering; but she was beginning to gain knowledge of herself, knowledge of change, none the less complete because so gradual, that now its certainty took her unawares, and made her reel before the sudden astonishing self revelation.

THERE was a tramp of sturdy feet outside, and the girl was nervously active over the tree, as the Champion paused for an instant outside the glass doors on his way to the golf links and looked in. He saw the girl still at work upon her childish task, though the tree was now a blaze of gold and colors, and needed little more. He saw the Traveler watching the work with quiet attention.

"You ought to be out of doors," he shouted, and then shook his head. "I don't believe in Christmas trees," he called, and turning tramped away.

The girl turned swiftly and faced her waiting companion. "I do!" she said eagerly, and slipped the little gilt heart into the Traveler's hand.

On Earth Peace

Continued from page 8

were speedily naturalized throughout Europe, I believe this to be due in the first place to the attractive character of his dramatic subjects, to the interest attaching to the old stories and legends woven by him into his music, rather than to the influence of the musical setting itself. In the same way the Scriptural subjects chosen by Handel were the primary cause of the swiftly achieved and abiding popularity he enjoyed in England; and some such reasons will, I think, always be discovered to have prevailed wherever national prejudice has apparently been quickly and easily overcome. On the other hand, the music of Eastern nations is to this day as incomprehensible and inharmonious to our ears as ours is doubtless unmelodious and discordant to theirs.

Sign of the Star

MUSIC then will evidently never furnish the common ground on which the nations of the earth are to meet in amity. It may be perhaps that in course of time some higher and purer form of art may be evolved, free from all national peculiarities, which all nations may therefore with equal right claim for their own. A mere Utopian dream, some will say; but at this season of the year such dreams are not easily disregarded.

With the Christmas bells ringing their glad tidings in our ears, our thoughts naturally revert to the hope newly born into the world nineteen centuries ago in the humble stable at Bethlehem. There in the mysterious silence of the glorious Eastern night came the message of the Spirit to those

whom the bonds of the flesh held fast. That promise—of freedom to the oppressed, of strength to the weak, of health to the sick, of rest to the weary, and of joy to all who mourn—symbolized in the Star that led the wanderers to the spot, has never since been extinguished in the hearts of men. Dimmed and darkened though it might be at times by error, by misery or crime, it has yet continued to shine on, now with feebler, now with brighter, glow, throughout the ages, and the world on which that light has once dawned can never again be the same it was.

We must not then despair; however gloomy the near prospect seem, let us look out with confidence to the distant horizon for a sign of the realization of our dearest hopes. It rests with ourselves, with each one of us, either to help to frustrate those hopes in our generation, or to work to bring about their fulfilment. Whatever be the measure of our success, if the ideas for which we combat seem to make only slow progress, we know that sooner or later the good cause must triumph, and all voices join in the angelic song, "On earth peace, good will toward men!"

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