AN OLD SONG.

"So this is the song?"

"Yes, this is the song. You are greatly privileged, Mr. Gilbert. No one has ever seen it before but mother and I."

"You will except the author and composer, I hope? They are both one, I think you said?"

Miriam Beaulieu laughed.

"Who thinks of the author and composer? It is always the song and the singer, you know."

"Yes," John Gilbert repeated, thoughtfully. "Always the song and the singer. Will you sing it?"

"Yes. But it would be 'No' if it were more likely that mother would sing it to you. She was a great singer; but she never sang any one song as she sang that."

With the manuscript song in her hand Miriam passed to the piano, and, accompanying herself, began to sing.

John Gilbert was a singer by profession; yet he was never a critic when Miriam sang. It was all Miriam; Miriam's voice, Miriam's hand. Yet from the moment that the girl struck the first chord of that unknown song he thought of the song, and the song alone. It did not suggest a composition; it appealed to no critical faculty. It came out of a world of its own, and held the portals open until its echoes died.

He listened speechless. Miriam roused him.

"What do you think of mother's song?"

"The composer must have been a great genius," John answered, slowly.

"No. The song was only a passing inspiration, and mother inspired him. He never did anything after they parted."

"Then they parted?"

"Oh, years before I was born. It is an old story. Now I am going to take a liberty with the work of genius, and ask you to assist at the act of desecration. Don't be horrified; but I know you play the violin, and I want you to compose an obligato. I like to sing the song, but my voice is not strong enough for it. The violin will conceal my worst defects if you play loud enough."

Before John could answer the door opened and Mme. Beaulieu entered.

"I have come to congratulate you upon last night," she said, holding out her hand. "I see by the papers that you had a great success."

John thanked her.

"I knew you would succeed," Mme. Beaulieu continued; "and I should know, should I not? It is not every singer who is an actor, too." Her voice changed suddenly; she spoke quite sharply. "Ah, you have got my song, I see."

"With your consent, I hope," John answered, a little startled by her manner.

Mme. Beaulieu recovered herself and laughed, but not easily.

"I am only a poor mother, Mr. Gilbert. Miriam has set her heart upon the obligato, and so——" She made an expressive gesture. "But you will be careful with it, promise me. It is the first time it has ever been out of my hands. Remember," the quick laughter died out of her face, leaving it stern and almost passionate, "if anything happens to my song whilst you have it I will never forgive you."

The expression in her eyes, the tone of her voice, lingered in John Gilbert's memory as he walked homeward. For the first time he thought of the mother instead of the daughter, and wondered over her story and the story of her song. He knew little of Mme. Beaulieu beyond the well-known fact that she had been a great singer who, for some whim or fancy of her own, had retired from a brilliant public career to a secluded life while her reputation was at its zenith. It was impossible to know her and not to realize that she was a woman of unusual personality, of intense feelings and strong passions. She was beautiful still; but she showed no disposition to change her secluded life or to end her widowhood.

She seemed equally unambitious for her only daughter, and allowed John Gilbert—whose career was promising, but not yet assured—to come and go pretty much as he liked.

"I was married for my money," she had said to John one day, with bitterness in her voice. "I have taken care that that misfortune shall not happen to Miriam. For the rest, let her choose herself. So long as she marries an honest man, it is all one to me."

Gilbert had considered the speech equivalent to the maternal blessing; and now, as he looked down upon the song he was carrying, he smiled.

But the smile faded as he mounted the stairs that led to his rooms; for he recognized the scent of a well-known cigarette.

A lazy, amiable voice accosted him as he entered.

"Half an hour past lunch time, Jack! You grow more irregular in your habits every day."

John tried to look pleased.

"I would have hurried up if I had known you would be here, father."

"Don't I always turn up to tender my congratulations when you have made a hit? By Jove, old boy, I am proud of you. Why didn't you keep the old name, though? Wasn't it good enough for you?"

John murmured something unintelligible and rang for lunch. He had been influenced by other than professional motives when he had decided to take a stage name. He had fathered his easy-going parent almost from boyhood, and it was owing to the embarrassing readiness with which this topsy-turvy arrangement was received by his parent's numerous friends and creditors that the son had eventually found it necessary to adopt a separate residence and a different name.

"I have been cutting out the notices," Brooke continued, producing some columns of print. "I always told you that top note of yours would make your fortune. Hullo! What is this?"

John turned to see Mme. Beaulieu's song in his father's hand.

"It is Mme. Beaulieu's," he answered. "I am committing a breach of trust in letting you see it."

He put out his hand to take the manuscript, but Brooke moved it out of his reach.

"Mme. Beaulieu's, is it? Is she going to publish it?"

"It is her property, not her composition," John explained.

Brooke walked to the piano, and threw up the lid with an excited bang.

"Do you know that your Mme. Beaulieu is in possession of a masterpiece?" he said. There was a light in his eyes, his breath came quickly as he turned the pages. "There is money in it, my boy—money."

John knew the look and the tone only too well.

"It isn't our money," he rejoined, with unconcealed disgust. But his frown vanished as his father began to sing.

The song had impressed him deeply when Miriam sang it. But his father's voice, rare-toned, emotional, vibrating beneath the power of some sudden inspiration, held him as with a spell.

"By Jove, father, you ought to have been a singer!" he exclaimed, astonishment and admiration in his eyes.

"I ought to have been a great many things that I am not," Brooke answered, rising lazily as the servant entered. "In which respect, my son, I do not differ widely from my fellows."

Somehow, Gilbert did not find it an easy matter to write the obligato. A large portion of his time was passed at the theater, and his few spare hours seemed to be the common property of every unsuccessful member of his profession within fifty miles. Mme. Beaulieu's song was again and again taken out, only to be put back once more. But at last, feeling his conscience prick him, Gilbert determined to make a final effort to finish the obligato and return the song to Miriam, who was growing anxious about it.

It was two days since he had touched the song; and then it had been thrown hurriedly into a drawer at the entrance of an unwelcome caller.

"I won't see any one else until it is finished," he said to himself, as he turned the key, which had been left in the lock. And then, with a start that drove the blood from his face, he saw that the drawer was empty.

He searched the room hastily, and with a growing feeling of alarm. He had certainly left the song in the drawer; who had dared to remove it? One thing was clear—that it was gone, and gone hopelessly; for it must have been stolen, and he had no clew to the thief.

He was still standing, half dazed, in front of the open drawer when he was aroused by a footstep, and Brooke entered with the song in his hand. For an instant he looked taken aback at the sight of his song. As a rule John was out at that hour.

"Just dropped in to return some borrowed property," he explained airily. "Borrowed without leave, for you were out when I came in night before last."

"I am out every night. You know that," John answered, harshly. "I think you know, too, that I should not have lent that song to you, or to any one."

"Well, perhaps I do," Brooke laughed. "Don't look so fierce, Jack. I never ask favors that I know will be refused, and I wanted that song. I was never so taken with anything before."

With painful self-control, born of long years of close intimacy with a nature lower than his own, John held his tongue.

"Mme. Beaulieu has no idea of ever coming before the public again, I suppose," Brooke remarked, after an awkward pause.

"None," John answered, shortly.

"Strange whim, her retirement," his father commented. "I suppose she and her daughter live quite secluded lives now? Don't see much of the world?"

"Very little. And now let us discuss some other subject," the son rejoined curtly.

The elder man rose unabashed and took up his hat.

"Now you will have your back up for a month, I suppose," he said. "I wish you had inherited my amiability, Jack."

"I am thankful I didn't inherit your principles," John retorted, a sudden blaze of passion overcoming all his efforts at self-control.

But Brooke only laughed.

"Untransmissible, dear boy," he responded lightly. "I never had any—"

The obligato was a success. Miriam was delighted, and her mother pleased.

Altogether John felt that things were going well with him. That he had not yet spoken definitely to Miriam was less from diffidence than lack of opportunity. He never met either mother or daughter outside their own drawing room. Again and again he had offered them tickets for concerts and theaters; but Mme. Beaulieu seemed to shrink from going out, and her daughter could not go without her.

He was greatly surprised, therefore, when he entered one afternoon to find Mme. Beaulieu reading a letter, and Miriam with concert tickets in her hand. She held them up delightedly.

"You would never take them from me," John said.

Mme. Beaulieu saw that he was hurt, and hastened to explain.

"I am not going to alter my mode of life, only to change my mind for once, at the request of an old friend whose daughter makes her debut upon this occasion. She has sent me two tickets; but if you can go with us I will write and ask for another."

It was an afternoon concert, and Gilbert accepted with gratitude. As Mme. Beaulieu sat down at her writing table he turned to Miriam.

"Your mother does not forget her friends, I see."

"No; nor forgive her enemies," Miriam answered, smiling. "I think I am a little afraid of feelings that last for a lifetime."

A few days later John Gilbert found himself seated by Miriam's side at St. James' hall. Mme. Beaulieu had passed into her seat first, followed by her daughter, and John found himself talking to the latter with less fear of interruption than he had ever known before. He was so absorbed that he had almost forgotten Mme. Beaulieu's presence until a startled exclamation from Miriam called his attention to her. He saw at once that she appeared to have been taken suddenly ill. Her face and lips were colorless, and she was looking as if about to faint. Miriam was asking her to come out of the heated atmosphere of the hall.

Mme. Beaulieu shook her head. At that instant she caught John's anxious glance, and as she did so her eyes flashed, and her color came back with a rush.

"It is nothing," she said, drawing herself up. "Take no notice of me. They are just going to begin."

Thinking it best to appear unconcerned, John sat down again and opened his programme. Glancing over it mechanically his eye was caught by the name of the debutante in whom Mme. Beaulieu was interested. She was going to sing. What! What was she going to sing?

In letters clear—horribly distinct—he read the title of Mme. Beaulieu's song, and against it his father's name in full—Francis Hamilton Brooke. For an instant he was stupefied. Then everything came home to him—the temporary disappearance of the manuscript, his father's guilty air in returning it, and the motive of it all. As he recalled each circumstance he heard Miriam whispering to him. She was pointing to the programme, and looked frightened.

"What does it mean? Is it mother's song? Who has done it?"

Gilbert looked into her eyes. She was close to him—closer than she had ever been before—yet there was a gulf between them that seemed as if it could never be bridged.

"It is your mother's song," he said, "and my father has done it." He could not bear to hear the song again, still less to face further explanation and questioning, and in another moment he had slipped away.

"Haven't I done enough all these years?" he said to himself, as he went rapidly through the streets. "Haven't I helped him, housed him, paid his debts? I kept nothing from him. He might have left me my honor."

He strode on recklessly. His heart was so full of shame and anger that he was conscious of nothing but a furious desire to meet the man who had done this shameful thing. He reached his father's house with sentiments in his breast such as few have had the misfortune to entertain towards their parents.

"Mr. Brooke has gone. Gone to the Continent," the untidy servant who waited on his father announced, with an air of importance. "But he left a letter for you, sir, in case you called, in his room."

"I will come in," Gilbert said. "You need not wait."

He tore the letter open and glanced through it. It was short and to the point:

"Dear Old Mortality: Don't be nervous. Your friend, Mme. Beaulieu, won't prosecute. Accept my thanks for your discovery, and don't be hard upon your poor old

"DAD."

John stared blankly at the paper. His mood had changed, and he felt too crushed to be angry.

"Well," he said, "I suppose I must go now and see Mme. Beaulieu." And to Mme. Beaulieu he went.

He had vaguely thought out to himself a few phrases of apology and contrition, but they were driven from his mind by the unexpected words with which she greeted him.

"And so you are Hamilton Brooke's son! Why did you come here to deceive me under a false name? To think that I should have trusted you—trusted you!"

"You knew him?" faltered John.

"Knew him!" she cried, all the passionate energy of her nature bursting forth. "Knew him! I tell you he loved me, yes, he loved me then; and he wrote that song for me. It was mine, mine! The only thing left me from the storm that wrecked my life. And now—it has been stolen, given to the world. Did you see the people listening? Tomorrow it will be murdered in every academy in London."

"The publication shall be stopped. I will get it back. It shall be yours again. I swear it."

"How will you get it back again?" Mme. Beaulieu asked disdainfully. "Do you think these people will give it up now?"

"They shall," John answered doggedly. "Surely you must see that they have no power to keep the song."

"Stolen!" she cried. "Yes, you are right. Stolen. But it was written for me. It was mine by right. It would have belonged to no one else had not that woman come between us. Would you have me give it up to her? No. I kept it; and she never sang it; and now she never will. For she is dead. And you—and so you are her son!"

"What do you mean?" John asked, feeling like one groping in the dark. "Was it my father's song?"

"Yes," Mme. Beaulieu answered, looking at him now with a keen, penetrating glance, as though watching the effect of her words. "Your father wrote that song for me, and I stole it lest it should be given to—your mother."

The mist lifted from before the young man's eyes, and with it the burden of shame that had for a moment rested on his soul. At that moment a flood of harmony suddenly enfolded his senses.

It was Miriam singing the song that his father had written for her mother in the days when their world was young.—London Truth.

ROBERT GOULD SHAW.

(The Monument by Augustus St. Gaudens)

Fixed in one desire,
Thrilled by one fierce fire,
Marching men and horse,
And he the youthful rider—one soul, one aim, one force.

Onward he doth press;
Moving, but motionless;
Resolute, intent,—
As on some mighty errand the willing youth were bent.

Onward, though he hears
Father's, sisters' tears;
Onward, though before him
—Grief more near, more dear—the breaking heart that bore him.

Onward, though he leaves
One who lonely grieves:
Oh, keep him, Fate! from harm,
For on his dewy lips the bridal kiss is warm.

What doth he behold
Making the boy so bold?
Speak with whispering breath!
O Fate, O Fame, O radiant soul in love with glorious Death!

Eyes that forward peer—
Why have they no fear?
Because, through blood and blight,
They see the golden morning burst and bring the living light;

See War the fetters strike
From white and black alike;
See, past the pain and scorn,
A nation saved, a race redeemed, and freedom newly born;

See, in the days to come,—
When silent War's rude drum,
Ere civic wrong shall cease,—
Heroes as pure and brave arise on battlefields of peace.

—R. W. Gilder in the Critic.

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Ripans Tabules

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