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Gen. Inigo was not a fool. He was a vulgar Jew, of uncertain nationality, whose past history and private life would not bear examination, but he knew what music and musical genius are, and he could estimate accurately the rarity and value of the discovery which Jocelyn had led him to make.

As he sat there and listened to her, with his fat hands folded on his waist-coat, his stumpy little feet crossed one over the other, and his big head wagging and swaying in involuntary accord with the splendid diapason of sound, he was happier than he had ever been in his life.

Not only was his reputation saved, his outlay secured, and his revenge on the Russian made certain, but his name would go down to posterity as that of the man who had brought before the world the brightest operatic star of the age.

"I'll do the handsome thing by her—I will, by Jupiter!" thought the general to himself. "There are cases in which generosity pays 50 per cent., and here's one of 'em."

Beatrix sang for the better part of an hour, and might have gone on indefinitely, so far as either she or her auditors were concerned, for a truly noble voice rightly trained and managed is as tireless and untiring as it is beautiful.

But mortal existence is full of petty lets and hindrances, and Beatrix, being for the present a hostess as well as prima donna assoluta, was obliged to go and see about the supper.

When the gentlemen were alone the general pulled down his waistcoat, sat up in his chair, and after regarding Jocelyn for a few moments behind half closed eyelids nodded his head several times slowly.

"I see you are fond of music, general," said Mr. Randolph discerningly.

"Well, music and I are under some obligations to each other," was the general's reply. "Now, just tell me, has that young lady ever sung in public?"

"My daughter ever sung in public?" exclaimed the young lady's father, with the air of a prince of the blood. "We are not that sort of people, sir!"

"Come now, Randolph, this is between friends, you know," said Jocelyn, smiling at one who is superior to prejudice. "Great gifts like hers—denial take it, you've no right to hide 'em! We're not living in the feudal ages; what's the good of a girl's being talented if she nobody to know anything about it? Besides, talent means money nowadays, and your daughter's voice is a fortune if it's rightly managed. Don't you agree with me, general?"

"Well, a great deal depends on the management," returned that gentleman, squeezing his large nose between his thumb and forefinger. "But with good management—yes—she could make money, as much as she wants."

"I should say she could, as much as she wants, or as much as you want either, Randolph, if these stories I hear about your embarrassments have any truth in 'em."

"I scarcely understand; perhaps you will explain yourself more fully," said Randolph, looking from one to the other in a manner that betrayed agitation.

"I see you don't know who Inigo is," observed Jocelyn suavely. "You've made such a hermit of yourself up here of late years you've dropped out of the running. Why, Inigo, my dear man—simple as you see him sit there—is the foremost impresario and musical manager of the age. He has heard a report of our Beatrix's powers, and—well, go ahead, Inigo; put it in your own way."

"I'll just tell you what it is, Mr. Randolph," said the impresario, assuming the reins of the conversation with a wave of the hand. "A few words are best, when it's about business. I came up here to find out if your daughter could sing as good as Jocelyn here says she could. Well, she's got a fine organ, and she knows what to do with it; no mistake about that! Well, I've got an opening and I'll take her in, and I'll pay her first prices; that's what I'll do. She goes right on, in opera, under me, and she makes her fortune; that's all about it! I'm a square man, by Jupiter! and I don't make no fuss about terms; when I buy a good article I pay good money for it. When I sell I'll make her a boom I'll do it. When Moses Inigo says he'll do the management the young lady's all right, if she was as homely as a cow and sing like a bull; and if she gets a foot to manage her, or manages herself (it's about the same thing), she might sing like an angel and look like Venus and not make fifty dollars a week, and don't you forget it!"

"I am not accustomed, I need hardly say," observed Randolph, with an appealing glance at Jocelyn, and endeavoring to appear calm and indifferent, "to consider or discuss such matters. I have always lived, as my forefathers have before me, upon my private resources, without reference to trade of any sort. However, gentlemen, I must admit that fortune has played me a very scurvy trick, through no fault of my own; and I suppose that what you say is true—the good old days are passing away, and each one of us has to fight for his own hand. At the same time it could only be with the greatest reluctance, and under pressure of the severest necessity, that I could permit a daughter of mine—"

"To be—of course—that's understood!" put in Jocelyn comfortably. "But you'll be surprised to find how little annoyance there is about it, especially since, in your case, it very fortunately happens that we shall be able to put Beatrix upon the stage without any one's being aware who she is. She will be incognito from first to last."

"Ah! that changes the aspect of the matter materially," said Randolph, looking at the impresario. "But it occurs to me that—"

The entrance of Beatrix herself at this juncture prevented the thing which had occurred to her father from becoming

known. She announced that supper was ready. The gentlemen arose, and Jocelyn, approaching her, took her hand and put it under his arm, murmuring confidentially in her ear, "How would our little Beatrix like to pay all her father's debts, and set up the family on its legs again?"

Beatrix gazed round at him with searching eyes and questioning lips. The unruly part of her excitement had been composed by her singing, but the exalted mood remained, so that she was ready to expect anything that was not commonplace. She could not have told herself to anticipate what he was going to say. Good news was in the air. However, for the moment nothing more was said. Her father was behind, with the general, and they were speaking in an undertone. Her heart beat high, and her step was light. As they came to the supper table, and Jocelyn pressed her hand, she gave him a smile which had been worthy of it, would have knighted him on the spot. She was young and knew nothing worse than her own pure self, and she was ready to give gratitude without waiting to know for what her gratitude was due. Experience of the world is apt to correct this impulse.

The conversation at table wandered first over miscellaneous topics, for Mr. Randolph was somewhat at a loss how to present the all important subject to his daughter; Jocelyn was busy thinking over his own part in the little comedy, and the impresario, besides finding much to occupy his attention in the viands, was now wholly at ease in his own mind and dreamed of no difficulties. He had interpreted Mr. Randolph's scruples as merely a bid for good payment, to which he had responded in his usual, whole-souled style; so to the young lady, of course she would follow her father's lead. Of the three it was Jocelyn who first spoke.

"I don't see why we should keep this dear child any longer in ignorance of the plot we have hatched against her," he said, addressing the others, but keeping his eyes caressingly on Beatrix. "My dear girl, I said I brought you fame and fortune; but, in fact, I only brought you the opportunity to win them for yourself. You have a glorious future before you. This gentleman is the owner and manager of the new opera house in the city. All your favorite operas will be produced there this season, splendidly set and cast, and you, my dear Beatrix, are to sing the leading music."

Beatrix grew pale, and turned her face toward her father. "Oh, papa, can I?" she said in a low voice.

"It is painful, of course, to contemplate such a thing," Mr. Randolph replied, looking down in his plate with an uneasy, evasive air; "but we are poor folks now, you know, and we must do the best we can. We can only hope, my dear, that the necessity will not!"

"Oh, but it is not that!" exclaimed the girl, interrupting him, and trembling with excitement; "but tosing, papa—to sing in real opera before a real audience! It is the best thing in the world! But can I do it, do you think? Am I able? Would Professor Dorimar have wished it? I would rather—she was going to say "marry Mr. Vinal," but changed it to, "I would rather do anything than disgrace Professor Dorimar."

"You just leave all that to me, young lady," said the impresario, nodding good naturedly. "I take the risks! You'll not disgrace Dorimar nor nobody else. You're as good as the best of 'em, though it's money out of my pocket to tell you so! You'll need some drilling about the stage business of course; that's all. But don't you worry, I'll fix it all right! You've got a month or six weeks' rehearsals, and you'll catch on as quick as most girls, I guess."

Thus far the glory and delight of the merely musical aspect of the adventure had so dazzled Beatrix's eyes that she had thought of nothing else, but now a new idea entered her head.

"Am I to be paid for doing this?" she asked, glancing from her father to Jocelyn. "Of course I mean by and by—if I succeed. Is that what you meant when you talked about my winning fortune? But I would rather not make money in that way—I would rather make it in some other way than by singing, because—"

"But I couldn't make it in any other way, I suppose," she added, faltering a little. "Singing is all I can do! And, after all, it would be good if my singing would help pay our debts; that would not be unworthy even of music, would it, papa? I wouldn't take money to get rich, but I would to prevent your being troubled any more by—"

"Oh, papa, can it be true! I'm sure you are very kind, Gen. Inigo; and thank you for telling him of me, Mr. Jocelyn."

This speech—a broken medley of musical tones, smiles, wet eyelashes, pauses of reflection and eager utterance—completed the general's captivation. He dumped his fat fist down on the tablecloth and exclaimed, "By Jupiter! gentlemen, I move we drink the health of the new prima donna!"

"And christen her at the same time," put in Jocelyn quickly. "You haven't heard your new stage name, Beatrix. Henceforward you are to be known to the world, not as Beatrix Randolph, but as—what is it, general?"

"Mademoiselle Marana," said Inigo. "Here's Mademoiselle Marana's health, boys! May she stand at the top of the profession, and sing pearls and diamonds, like the gal in the fairy tale! Down she goes!"

"Up she goes! you mean," said Jocelyn laughing. "Well, mademoiselle, how do you like your new name?"

"It's very pretty," answered she; "but how did I get it?"

"If you or your father had been in New York lately you wouldn't need to ask. The name of Mademoiselle Marana, the great prima donna from St. Petersburg and Moscow, is placarded all over town. All the world is agog to see and hear her. The new opera house was built expressly for her."

"But how?"

"I'm going to tell you. There's another lady somewhere, who sings under that name, and whom Inigo had invited to sing here. But she refused to keep her word at the last moment, and since the public must have some new divinity to worship, and since I know it would be painful to your father to have you appear under your own name, I advised Inigo to put you in her place. That's the whole story."

Beatrix's clear eyes grew troubled. "It doesn't seem right to pretend to be another person—it would be deceiving people," she said.

"Nobody goes on the stage under his own name," replied Jocelyn. "To go on the stage is to change your identity, and become some one else. Nobody's deceived, because nobody expects anything else."

But Beatrix at once detected the flaw in this argument. "Why should I be called Marana?" she demanded. "Why not give me some other name that nobody knows?"

"It seems to me that that might be preferable," observed Mr. Randolph. "My dear Randolph, it's merely a business question," said Jocelyn, not sorry to make the explanation to him instead of to his daughter. "We call her Marana simply because Marana is the name in people's mouths at this moment. To give her another name would be to create all sorts of doubt and confusion, in the course of which the dear child's identity would be certain to be discovered. Nobody here knows Marana by sight or sound; so, even if Beatrix were inferior as a singer, they would be defrauded of nothing. But the fact is—as Inigo, who has heard the lady, will confirm me in saying—Beatrix can sing every bit as well as Marana, and rather better; so we are giving the public even more than they bargained for. It's a pure formality, but some forms are of the first importance practically. To bring her on under any other name than Marana would be a great injustice to our friend, the general, who has, so to speak, made out all his invoices and labeled all his goods under that title, and it would be quite as great an injustice to Beatrix herself, who, instead of at once receiving the salary that her genius deserves, would have to fight an uphill battle through stupidity and prejudice, and, taking all accidents into consideration, might not win through at all."

"It may be foolish, but I can't help not liking it," said Beatrix, feeling unhappy. "But you know best, papa, and I'll do what you say."

"I believe the amount of the salary has not been mentioned," said Mr. Randolph, turning to the impresario.

The latter was about to reply when Jocelyn swiftly took up the word. "She will be paid \$3,000 a night," said he, "and there will be from three to four performances a week."

Mr. Randolph grew very red, and could not suppress a start. His most sanguine expectations had not exceeded a tenth of this sum. From \$9,000 to \$12,000 a week—it was scarcely credible; it was magnificent; it was a fortune once a month! Meanwhile Beatrix sat almost indifferent, much to Inigo's admiration; but the truth was the girl knew nothing of the value of money, and was, moreover, personally much less concerned about the rewards of the enterprise than about the enterprise itself. She certainly never imagined that her father's discrimination between right and wrong could be influenced by such considerations.

After a pause to recover his composure Mr. Randolph cleared his throat and said: "I only asked for information; I know little about these matters, but I presume the sum you name would be considered fair remuneration. As to the morality of the matter," he added, breaking into his shrill laugh, "I agree with you, Jocelyn, that the question is more one of form than anything else; and it would be an ungracious return for Gen. Inigo's courtesy to subject him to the embarrassment you indicate. I think you may call yourself Mademoiselle Marana with a clear conscience, my dear."

Beatrix sighed and faintly smiled. The worst that can be said of her at this moment is that she did not know whether she were glad or sorry.

CHAPTER IV. WHAT WAS GOING ON ELSEWHERE.

Two or three days afterward Jocelyn betook himself to a small and rather shabby looking house in East Eighteenth street, and asked if Mrs. Bemax were at home. The woman who opened the door said, in a weary and discontented voice, that Mrs. Bemax was in, and Jocelyn went upstairs. He entered the front room on the first floor. This room had a dingy and brownish aspect. The furniture was meager and rickety. Upon the wall between the windows hung askew a print of the Prince of Wales and his family, taken from some illustrated paper and framed in a wooden frame stained black and varnished. The only pretty thing in the room was a photograph of a chubby little child about 4 years of age. It was mounted in a tasteful standard frame of stamped leather, and a small vase containing two or three flowers stood in front of it. The photograph itself was much faded and was in the style of ten years ago.

On a few minutes a tall, middle aged woman, with a square shaped face and rather strongly marked features, came into the room. Her eyes and brows were dark; her hair was slightly touched with gray. The corners of her large mouth had acquired an indrawn look, apparently from a habit of pressing her lips together; her general expression was studiously impassive. She looked like one accustomed to meet with rebuffs and disappointments, and to put up with them when necessary, though never with meekness and resignation. There was an air about her that showed she had once been familiar with the handsome side of the world, but, from whatever cause, had discontinued to enjoy or practice its refinements. There were more hard and unpleasant things in her memory than the contrary, and these memories and experiences had worn away her former comeliness and made her skeptical and somewhat malicious, instead of gentle and engaging.

"Well, Hamilton," she said, as she came in, "I hope you've brought me some money."

"Money, my dear Meg! Didn't I send you some last week?"

"Yes, enough to pay up my arrears of board. I've had none to spend on myself for a month, and I have only one other dress to my back, and that is not fit to be seen."

"Things are more expensive here than in England. I told you that when you insisted on coming here. You would have been more comfortable at home."

"Home is where the heart is," she replied, with an intonation of sly sarcasm. "My heart is not in England, wherever else it may be."

"Well, I've been very busy," said Jocelyn.

"So you always tell me; but I presume, as usual, it is no business of mine."

"Well, my dear, it's only the money aspect of my business that you feel any interest in."

"If you mean there is no longer any sentiment between us I cordially admit it," was the answer. "I don't care the snap of my finger for you or for any one else now alive. But I have some claims upon you, and I've come here to enforce them."

"You have the photograph there still, I see," remarked Jocelyn, turning to the table. "Poor little fellow! He'd lived I'd have made a man of him."

"Yes! You'd have made the same sort of man of him as you've made woman of his mother. I'm glad he's dead, if it's only to save him from knowing

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the gentleman. "If you have your wits about you," he said to Inigo, "look at this plan and tell me your idea about it."

"What's it all about, anyhow?" returned the impresario, removing his cigar from his mouth and pulling himself together. "Stage entrance! What's the use botherin' with that? Just make it so as they can get in and out, and the gals can see their fellows!"

"No, sir," interposed Bellingham quietly. "I want to stop that."

"Stop what, in the name of gracious?" "Follows hanging round the stage door for the girls to come out. I don't like it, and I mean to give the girls a chance to get off free if they choose."

"Your saving clause will cover ninety-nine cases in a hundred, I fancy," remarked Jocelyn with a laugh.

"What has that got to do with it?" demanded Bellingham, looking at him; "and what have you to do with it, either?"

"Oh, I was only started to see you turning missionary," replied the other, moving away.

Bellingham paid no further notice to him. "By connecting the window above the lower door, by means of an iron bridge of fifteen feet span, with the corridor in the building on the opposite side of the alley," he said, referring to his drawing, "you give additional means of exit either by the street door of that building or by the upper passage leading to the elevated railway station. Well?"

"What'll it cost?" inquired Inigo.

"Not more than eight hundred, or I'll pay the difference."

"It's all darn nonsense; but I'll do it to oblige you," said Inigo.

"That way, if you like," said Bellingham, folding up his plan. "Good day."

"Odd fish, that fellow," observed Jocelyn when the architect had gone out. "I just tell you what," said Inigo, "if that odd fish was an impresario the divas wouldn't go back on him—not much!"

"Why wouldn't they?"

"Oh, maybe they wouldn't dare; but they wouldn't, anyhow."

"What do you know about it?"

"I know a man, when I see him," returned the other, wagging his head. "and so do they."

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what sort of a rafter he's got; moreover, you said that to put me in a good humor, I suppose. What do you want?"

"I vow, Meg, you're too confoundedly sour for anything," exclaimed Jocelyn, twisting his wiskers. "I've come to tell you of an arrangement that will enable you to live at your ease the rest of your days, and this is the way I am received. Come, now!"

"It is impossible you should intend any benefit to me that would not benefit you ten times more," said Mrs. Bemax impassively.

"You do me gross injustice; you are like all women with a grievance!" returned Jocelyn, whose temper was certainly very easy. "My scheme is to put you in receipt of an income of \$1,300 a year. Have you any fault to find with that?"

"What are the services for which this is the payment?" Mrs. Bemax inquired.

"To chaperone a lady—nothing more."

"A lady?" repeated the other, a peculiar smile drawing down the corners of her mouth; "I begin to understand! Who is she?"

"The prima donna at the new opera house."

"Yes; in whom you are tenderly interested. Taking everything into consideration, Hamilton, that is very characteristic of you; a very delicate piece of kindness!"

"Bah! Meg, your cynicism is overdone; you are on a wrong scent entirely. In the first place, the lady is not the person she's supposed to be. She's the daughter of an old friend of mine; I once intended to marry her, but—I thought better of it. Circumstances which you will be fully informed of have led to her personating the Marana—name and all—the coming season."

"It's a grand secret, of course, and I selected you as the only woman who could be trusted to keep it. You are to confirm in every way that suggests itself the idea that she is the bona fide Marana; say you've lived with her for years in Europe, and so on. But she is wholly ignorant of the world, and you are to do it that none of the young fellows gets ahead of her. You may invent all the adventures you like for her—in the past, but on no account let her get into any scrapes in the present. Do you see what I mean?"

"I think so. The young fellows you speak of are to be kept out of the way for your sake rather than for hers; and she is to be instructed that any scrape she gets into with you is no scrape at all, but a distinction and a blessing."

"Upon my soul I should flatter myself you were jealous if I didn't know you so well," said Jocelyn with a laugh; "I only wish to protect the girl from annoyance and to insure the success of the whole scheme. If you could make me believe in your disinterestedness and virtue the only result would be that I should serve you less efficiently than otherwise. But you always liked deception for its own sake, and you are the same Hamilton Jocelyn that I knew in Richmond twelve years ago. Well, I shall know what tone to take with her."

"Take any tone you like, in the devil's name, so long as you take the position and observe the conditions!" exclaimed Jocelyn, getting up, with some signs of impatience.

"I will take the position on condition of being guaranteed my outfit of twelve hundred dollars," said Mrs. Bemax. "It is not high wages for the devil to pay, but it's better than nothing, and to live as comfortably as I can, so long as I do live, is the best I have to look forward to now. I'm not so fastidious in other respects as you do me the honor to imagine."

"Well, Meg, when you've enjoyed a few months' luxury you'll take a more general view of things, I hope. Above all things make as good an impression on the lady as possible. She must learn to confide in you, and to take your advice in all social matters from the outset. You can do anything with her if she likes you and trusts you, and nothing if she doesn't."

"I understand; I am to be another mother to her!" said Margaret Bemax, in a tone and with a look in her eyes so quiet and yet so repellent that Jocelyn made no attempt to reply, but took his leave without further comment.

Certainly Beatrix needed a mother at this epoch of her career. The peculiar conditions under which she was making her entrance into the world rendered her especially defenseless. She was not only ignorant (as any girl brought up in the seclusion of home is likely to be) of the ways and wickedness of mankind, but the strict necessity of her incognito cut her off from the support and society of both her father and of all the other relatives and friends who should naturally be around her. She was not herself, and she was somebody wholly different from herself as well. Furthermore she was a singer, with all the sensitiveness and the liability to emotional impressions that the musical temperament implies. Upon the whole a young woman can select no career more dangerous than that upon which Beatrix had just entered, and the external circumstances which attended her entrance could scarcely have been more untoward.

Meantime the subject most constantly present to her thoughts, since it gave color to everything else, was her assumed character of the Marana. To be herself began to appear in the light of something maintaining the deception. Nor could she disguise from herself that the men she met treated her with a sort of freedom to which she was quite unaccustomed. This perplexed and annoyed her, and Mrs. Bemax, when she appealed to her, only smiled and said she mustn't mind them. Finally she thought it would be a good idea to ask information of Mr. Jocelyn.

"Fellows bother you, do they?" said that gentleman in answer to her complaint, with a reassuring smile. "Well, ma'selle, you know we mustn't be too particular about that. When we have been on the stage a little longer we shall learn to look upon all men as our brothers, and not mind a little fun. Besides, you know, you are the famous and invincible Marana, and are supposed to be able to settle all such Jack-a-dandies with one hand, so to speak!"

"I don't understand you," said Beatrix, with a slight flush.

"Well, my dear, the amount of it all is well, my dear no harm, and they've heard so many stories about the Marana's adventures that they feel justified in trying to find out what she's made of. The fact is, you know, she's said to be a little hazardous—dangerous—as soon ruin a man as look at him, and you must act on the character."

"Do you mean that I should pretend to be anything that is not—good?"

"Oh! no, no—that of course!

Only a sort of give-and-take, live-and-let-live style—that's what you want."

"If they think I am different from what I am, in any bad way," continued Beatrix, "I'll either tell them who I am or give up the whole thing." Her voice trembled.

"Now, my good little prima donna, don't you say anything so foolish!" said Jocelyn, taking her hand in his and patting it. "Come, you know me, don't you? and you know whether or not Hamilton Jocelyn would permit any one to insult you? Very well, then; you're as safe, if the worst comes to the worst, as if you were sealed up in the center of the pyramid of Cheops! But what I want you to learn is to have courage—to hold your own bravely, and not to be too squeamish about what the people you meet with say and do. The world always seems queer and a little disagreeable when one is first brought, in contact with it—full of people not a bit like our quiet folks out in the country. But we can't change the world, can we? All we can do is to take things as they are, and make the best of it. If we are all right nothing can really hurt us. But we must have courage, we mustn't be afraid, we mustn't talk of giving up. We must be a little woman of the world. Every woman must be who intends to accomplish anything, let alone to make such a reputation as lies before you. It's a little freemasonry we all have to learn, nothing more; and, as I said