



UNDER THE BUST OF BEETHOVEN.

It was bright weather—cold and clear as a jewel.

The sparkling promise of a perfect Christmastide was in the air, and the old mall on the big common clicked and pattered to the tread of gay crowds crossing either way, all winter-roxy, bundled laden and bright eyed with exercise.

Joyous excitement tingled in the frosty wind, that with a keen rush swept the bare branches overhead and buffeted the skirts of laughing girls, who came on, leaning merrily against it and passed in a bright whirl of petticoats, with little shrieks of fun. One group of these, a knot of pretty schoolgirls, with their skates, bound for the public garden, jostled against a tall lad with a small maiden at his side and crowded them quite off the walk with little ceremony.

The only wonder is they did not crowd them out of notice, too, and out of this story at the same time, for a plain, shabby little mouse was Draxy, trotting along at her brother's side.

Those rosy girls, sweeping by in their bright gowns and plush and furs, looked so bewitching and so brilliant near her you could hardly help wishing the story to be about them instead.

There were no fine feathers about Davy, either, poor lad—poor bonny Davy in his threadbare clothes!

Walking along behind him, you would have noticed how faded and thin his coat was, and perhaps you would have smiled at the great patch on the elbow of the sleeve his music was tucked under. But had you come the other way and met my Davy's face, believe me, you would never think of patches or of faded clothes, for there was something in that beautiful dark eye and brave, clear brow, a prince might envy him.

As for he would not thank me, though, for choosing such a time to introduce him when his head was drooping and the brown eyes were heavy with a mist that almost gathered into drops.

"Davy," chirped Draxy at his elbow, "oh, do you see what fun the boys are having playing football down on the parade ground?"

Davy cast a heavy glance toward the lively youths, but could not muster a word or smile to please her.

"Don't look so awful, Davy," pleaded the little girl. "Besides, here comes that Ernest Maxwell, and he sees you."

Up went Davy's head at that, and his

eyes measured the approaching figure steadily.

Ernest Maxwell carried some music under his arm too. It was by the same divine composer as Davy's. No sweeter because it had such an expensive binding, I am sure. Neither was Ernest Maxwell, himself, any grander because of his own expensive binding.

But he seemed to think that he was, and he gave Davy a very patronizing nod as he passed.

"No use, Draxy!" burst out Davy, as soon as they were out of hearing. "I don't see any justice in it, and I can't bear it. There's that snob, Maxwell—his father is just coaxing him, bribing him, to go to Germany and study. Schwarz told me so in the class, yesterday."

"Oh, my poor Davy! And you've got to give up your music and go to work in that horrid old place?"

"Tisn't that! I don't think I'd be mean enough to begrudge another fellow his luck. But—oh, how can I stand it! The noodle doesn't want to go, and won't go. I'd walk through fire for that chance! That's why I don't get it!"

Draxy looked very sorry, but she could think of nothing comforting to say just then, so she only crept a little nearer to his side and cast her eyes around in quest of cheer.

There, behind the iron fence, was the old cemetery with its mounds and tombs, lying so still and cold in the winter sunlight.

Here and yonder, on the soldiers' graves, still waved some drabbed remnant of the little flags placed there, long months before, amid the flowers and the tender grass of spring.

Draxy's eyes grew large and solemn as she looked, and it occurred to her, in some dismal association of ideas, to say darkly: "Oh, Davy! Did you know—they say—some of the tombs go under this mall, and there are people buried down below these flagstones we are walking on!"

Dear little Draxy! All her efforts to be cheerful had failed to gain the least response from Davy. But something about this gloomy question and her saucer eyes and hollow tone brought a quick smile and flash of fun into his face.

"Yes, I have heard it," he said, looking down at the little face beside him with a loving and amused expression.

But presently he added in a bitter tone: "What then? It is no worse to be lying underneath the stones than to walk on above them, all your hopes gone, ambition crushed out of you."

His voice quivered and broke. Draxy stole her little hand in his, and they kept on again in doleful silence.

"Drax," said he presently in a tone of mischief that she knew full well.

"What?" she responded eagerly.

"Here is the baroness," said Davy.

"Oh, my gracious! Oh, Davy, please turn off and walk the rest of the way on Tremont street. I can't go by that awful old woman. No, I can't."

Oh, that mysterious old woman, crouching there beside the walls on the big common, grinding her old, cracked, half mummified gurdy!

Who has forgotten her? In rain and shine, year in, year out, there she was always, sullenly turning the organ crank, scolding the charitable who dropped pennies, and with her eagle eye piercing each face that passed, as if on the eternal watch for some one.

Lean and gaunt and brown and wrinkled was she—impervious and indestructible—rained upon, blown upon, shone upon—it was all one.

There she would be still when next you passed, familiar as the malls themselves, and yet forever a mystery.

"Ugh-h-h!" chattered Draxy, who always fell into a panic at the sight of her.

"I wonder who that awful old woman is looking for? Whoever it is I pity him. Oh, Davy, just imagine you were—the one. And you've walked and walked all round the world, but at last you will walk across this common, and—she'll catch you."

Davy threw back his head and laughed—a genuine boy's laugh—sweet to hear.

Draxy and the baroness were great fun always, but the last notion struck him as more droll than usual and quite beguiled him from the trouble that lay at his heart, till they reached Music Hall place and turned into the court.

Here was hallowed ground. The very paving stones were like old friends to Davy, but at sight of them down sank his

head again, and his eyes clouded with a desperate look that was pitiful to see.

Those were the days before the great city conservatory had gathered under one ample roof that mass of musical life—students, teachers, directors and what not—which now constitutes a little world within four walls.

Then most of the young music studying population was dispersed about the homes and lodgings of the city, the diligence of eternal piano playing announcing their whereabouts, and the old "quarterlies" in the Music hall serving to display the results thereof to the interested public.

The old storm doors croaked as they swung in, a bright fire in the darkness of the lower hall winked cheerily through the gloom, and from the gaslighted window of the box office somebody leaned out to say pleasantly:

"Ah, Herr von Weber! That you? Going up to practice?"

Davy took off his hat in an absent-minded way and answered drearily enough:

"Yes, sir. Is Schwartz's time up yet?"

"Schwartz, just left. Coast is clear. Going to astonish us this time, eh, Davy?"

Davy's features quivered. "I am more likely to break down altogether," he said, turning away quickly with Draxy and dashing his sleeve across his eyes as soon as they were out of sight on the landing.

"Who's that?" demanded the gruff voice of a stout gentleman who had been talking to the pleasant man in the box office.

"That, sir? That boy is a genius."

"Humph—genius! Well, what's the other name you called?"

"Oh," with a laugh, "we call him that because he has so much like the pictures of Weber. And there are more than myself who think that there is in that young man the making of such another composer."

"Well, if there is he'll make it."

"No chance now," said the other. "They have just lost their father. The mother is an invalid, and there are more than myself who think that there is in that young man the making of such another composer."

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He ran his fingers down the keys. There was a soft rattle of ivory, but no other sound.

"Haven't got the steam on, have they?" said Draxy, proud of knowing all about the domestic habits of the great organ. Davy, reaching to press a knob that rang a bell far in some lower region, smiled down at her bright little face, and then sat waiting dreamily. "Do you know," she prattled on, "when I'm out in the audience, at concerts, and the hall is full of people, and the gas is lighted, and the organ looks so black and big, I never can believe I am so well acquainted with it and dare to cuddle up like this against it!"

"Sh!" said Davy, catching the first whisper of a beloved, inspiring sound—the wind beginning to fill the giant pipes. It comes in a low, murmuring rush, as if from underground, now nearer, nearer, louder, faster, till it swells and rises with a panting sweep up the huge holes in that great forest of brazen pipes and fills their mighty sides as if to burst them.

Davy sat motionless and rapt, lost in the great molar roar. "Hear it breathe!" he whispered; "hear it breathe!"

His fingers ripple down across the keys. Far above, in some high tree top of the forest pipes, a voice awakes in answer to his touch that fingers on the earawhile, so soft, so sweet, so pleading, and then sinks again into its nest of silence.

Now, farther still and hidden in some deeper recess of the organ forest, another voice awakes.

It calls back to the pleading voice with joy and courage.

Then another and another wakes and sings, and soon the place is full of music and fragrance and beauty, and the tree tops shake it out upon the air, like dewy drops.

Now the echoes, murmuring the last cadence over and over, to get it by heart, die away themselves, and all is still.

"That's very good, Davy," said Draxy, tired of being a princess chained to the wall, and stretching her active little limbs in a brisk walk up and down the stage.

Suddenly she trotted off down the steps, and Davy, looking after her, saw her talking to a poor old woman who was cleaning the floor.

"What you doing?" piped Draxy in her friendly way.

"Faith, darlin', said the old woman, straightening up and holding one hand to her back. "'tis cl'aning up a bit I am, shure."

"Oh," said Draxy, peeping into the basket of worn scraps. "I suppose you are the janitress."

"Jinnethess, is it? Faith, then, perhaps that is it. I scroob the flues and stairs beyant outside, and I pick the stoof they throw down in here."

Draxy looked at her thoughtfully.

"That's too hard," she said at length in a doleful tone. "What alls your poor back?"

"God bless ye, darlin', and kape ye long from the same. 'Tis rheumatiz, dear, and me ould bones are crackin wid it. I'vey toime I rise meself from pickin up these little carrits—"

"Such hard work!" said Draxy, beginning in another aside to pick up torn checks and programmes.

"Me ould man is bedrid this five year, and the little childther—the grandchildther, darlin', wid the poor mother in heaven—God be merciful to her wate soul—I works to kape the little childther."

"Oh, I'm real sorry for you," said Draxy, coming back to the basket, with her skirt held up like an apron and filled with scraps.

"Ah, God bless her! What's this, at all? Is it pickin up the carrits ye are, darlin'?"

"Look at it, go and sit down wid ye, miss, dear. Shure, ye mustn't be doin the likes of that."

"No, I'm just going to help you. I was here last night, and so you see I made part of this litter," said Draxy.

"Why?" she exclaimed again directly.

"'Tis work, into this matting so. And it's miles and miles up and down these rows of seats."

And away went Draxy, picking up scraps for dear life and saying to herself that she would never tear up and scatter checks or programmes again as long as she lived.

So the poor charwoman and the little maid went up and down, hard at work, while the soft Christmas twilight fell without, and the great fugue rolled and thundered from the organ.

Oh, what a thing it was to hear the mighty rumble of that giant bass! You could feel it shake the floor beneath your feet. It made the balconies vibrate and tremble, and sometimes the great hall seemed almost to rock and roll with sound.

Then, when 't ended, there was such silence that the slow ticking of the great clock seemed like the heart beats of the place, which you could hear because it was so still.

Davy had finished practicing, and his little sister, half way down the hall, was wondering why he did not come out and call her. She began to look often toward the stage and then at the great clock face on the balcony.

Hark! Could that have been a strain of music, or was it the sad, sad voice of some one grieving?

Draxy and the old woman turned at the first sound and looked toward the organ.

They had scarcely listened while the great fugue was rolling through the hall. But something drew them nearer to this magical strain, and they crept toward it step by step.

What is Davy playing? Oh, what is this that is making tears fall fast on the two faces it has drawn so near?

It was music that was never written—

music that was never heard before and will never be heard again, for Davy is inspired. He is playing from his own soul. This is his farewell to music and to all his hopes and dreams. The organ grieves for him. The master on his pedestal listens sadly and seems almost to stir with pity.

At last there comes a piteous strain, then a wild crash across the keys, and Davy has flung his head down on his arms. The music is ended.

"Goodby, goodby!" he whispered, kissing the yellow keys where his face lay hidden.

"Oh, Davy!" sobbed a little voice, and Draxy's arms were around his neck, her soft, wet cheek pressed close to his. Just then a gruff old voice said:

"Come, come! This won't do! Stop this snivelling!"

An arm that seemed too fatherly and gentle to belong to such a voice took in Davy and Draxy at once as they sat on the organ seat, and seemed to hug them and shake them at the same time.

"Come! What's the matter here, I say?" Where he had dropped from was the mystery. Had he been hiding in some recess of the organ?

Impossible to say. But there he was, looking very grim, except about the eyes, which were kind, and—was it possible?—had a suspicious wetness about them, in spite of his orders against snivelling.

Davy turned around, pale and dazed—scarcely aroused yet from his dream.

"Sir!" he said, half proudly, half sadly. "What are you crying about?" demanded the old gentleman.

"Crying!" repeated Davy, with flashing eyes. "I'm not crying!"

He drew himself erect, and the color rose in his cheeks.

"Ah! Spirit, too—eh?" said the old gentleman excitedly.

Then he wheeled suddenly on Draxy. "What are you crying about, then?" he demanded in a terrible tone.

"Be-cause I want to!" said she, stiffening her little neck.

"Oh! Because you want to, eh? Come here!"

Draxy came, rather defiantly, I am afraid. But then he did seem such an interesting old gentleman.

"Now look at me!" he ordered.

Draxy looked right into his eyes. Something that she saw there must have reassured her, for pretty soon she smiled, though he was pinching her ear.

"So you're the kind of little girl who helps poor old ladies with lame backs when you see them hard at work, are you?" said he.

Draxy stared with surprise, but answered never a word.

"Is she?" he asked again, turning to the old woman, who stepped back in a hurry, but recovered herself and courtesied, saying:

"She is, sir! God bless her!"

"And you're the kind of fellow who takes care of his mother and the little brothers and sisters, are you?" the gentleman went on, turning to Davy. "You're the sort of chap who wears thin clothes all winter and gives up his music and buckles down, trying to be a father to the family, are you?" Davy colored and looked away.

"Is he?" persisted this monotonous old gentleman, turning to Draxy.

For answer she just put her arms around her brother's neck and gave him a rousing little kiss.

"Well, then," said the old gentleman conclusively, "it happens that I am the kind of an old man who loves to help good boys and girls. Sometimes I send the boys off to study music, and I look after the little sisters and the babies till the boys get back."

The looks of Davy and Draxy were a sight to see.

"My name is Maxwell," went on the old gentleman quietly. "I have heard about you down stairs, and I've been here some time myself. Now, I've got a boy. I would like to have him study music abroad—in Europe. He doesn't want to go, however."

At this the brother and sister exchanged a glance, but they were dumb and trembling.

"And," said the old gentleman mysteriously, "I've got some money that does want to go." Here he laid a great, kind hand on Davy's shoulder. "I'm going to send you with it, sir."

Draxy screamed, and, running into Mr. Maxwell's arms, hugged him with frantic joy.

Davy gasped, gripped the kind hand, and then—it was no use—broke down.

"Hello! Perhaps you're not crying now!" roared Mr. Maxwell, pleased as he could be.

"Sir—Mr. Maxwell—do you really mean it? Oh, I will work so hard and pay you back every cent, and, oh, Mr. Maxwell, you don't know, sir, you don't know."

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What is Davy playing? Oh, what is this that is making tears fall fast on the two faces it has drawn so near?

It was music that was never written—

Davy wrote that great name once again, benefit of words.

"Well, let's see," then said Mr. Maxwell. "Come here, old lady. So the old man is laid up and the children—old and hungry, are they?"

"God help us, sir! 'Tis three, then. 'And the rheumatiz is pretty bad, eh? 'Dado an it is, sir. May yerself niver know the likes of it!"

"Well, cheer up, old lady. I'll see what we can do for you. We'll make a merry Christmas for the children, after all."

Where in the great city was such a scene of joy as there in the shadow of the organ under Beethoven's statue on that Christmas eve?

And as the little group stood under the statue of the master he seemed listening with solemn gladness to the music of those grateful voices.

For of all music on this earth the sweetest pours forth from the hearts we have made happy.—Boston Transcript.

A Christmas Sketch.

George Scribbler had saved up \$20 with which he intended to buy a Christmas present for his wife and toys and candies for the babies. He took the money from his writing desk the day before Christmas and started out to make his purchases.

So engrossed was he with thoughts of what he intended to buy that he did not observe two "light fingered" gentlemen, one of whom jostled against him in the crowded street, while the other one neatly extracted his purse from his pocket with the \$20 which he had pinched himself so much to save.

He went into one of the large stores of the city, selected the goods he wanted and felt for the money to pay for them. The pocketbook of course was gone. He felt hurriedly in every pocket, but there was no trace of the wallet. Like a flash he remembered the man who had jostled against him and recalled how queerly he acted. His pocket had been picked. He felt for his watch. Luckily the pickpockets had not secured that.

"Put those things on t' shelf for a little while," he said, "and I will return for them."

That wife and the little ones got their Christmas presents that year, and a pawnbroker in Sixth avenue had this entry on his books:

George Scribbler, gold watch, \$20.—Exchange.

A Yuletide Reverie.

Ah, times are changed since we were young! There's much o' good and much o' folly, I long to take a backward glance, When we were boys and life was jolly.

Along the snow white country road We sped in Christmas times so merry To where the little gray spired church In festive trim and lights so cheery.

And young and old in Christmastide Alike in happy heartfelt pleasure Made warm and bright at Christmas night The old gray church in gospel measure.

Ah, me, the times are changing fast! There's much o' good and much o' folly, Could we but live again such days, Their mischiefs and holiness!

Their golden dreams and sweet young life, Their searching and their striving, Their noble thoughts and glowing hearts, A glory thus in living!

The country swain a new found hope His robust heart confessing When some fair, buxom Polly Ann His life assails with blessing;

Or, fairer still, the aged pair, With hands and hearts united, Sit side by side and murmur low; Again their vows are pledged.

O golden love, O youth and age, O living and desiring, Our hearts shall tune to many songs, Our lives to many jarrings!

But over all and through it all Shall steal a consolation— That thou, O mighty Father, Son, Will send thy benediction!

And when the solemn Yuletide song Shall stir our hearts to sadness so merry The thought of thee on yonder throne Shall melt them into gladness.

Ah, me, the times have changed and past! We cannot live them over, But yet can make the future yield The wealth of past endeavor.

So lives in memory green and fair That part of life the brightest, And God shall make the darker parts Of all the best and rightest.

—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

