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VOL. 4606

PATUFFA

BY

BEATRICE HARRADEN

IN ONE VOLUME

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PATUFFA

BY

BEATRICE HARRADEN

AUTHOR OF

"SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT," "OUT OF THE WRECK I RISE,"

ETC. ETC.

"The tides of music's golden sea,
Setting towards eternity."

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1923

TO

MY SISTER GERTRUDE

CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK

STEFANSKY, *a famous violinist.*

PATUFFA RENDHAM, *a young violinist, formerly Stefansky's pupil.*

MRS. RENDHAM, *Patuffa's mother, known as* "Madame Mama."

MADAME TCHARUSHIN, *a Russian revolutionary, Mrs. Rendham's old school friend.*

MR TYRELL, *known as* "Chummy," *an old friend of the Rendhams', and a lover of all musicians.*

IRENE, *his daughter, a young author, Patuffa's schoolmate.*

KEBLE FAIRBOURNE, *a barrister, Mrs. Rendham's second cousin.*

ANDREW STEYNING, *a well-known artist, courting Mrs. Rendham.*

PETER LONG, *a stranger.*

MADAME JANEIRO, *a celebrated pianist.*

GEORGE HENDERED, *an impresario.*

MARIA, *the Tyrells' cook.*

AND OTHERS.

The story of Patuffa's childhood can be found in *Spring Shall Plant,* in which some of the above characters appear.

PART I

CHAPTER I

It was in the month of May 1893, about half-past four in the afternoon, when a wild-looking little old man knocked violently at a house in the Earl's Court Road. The door was opened by a maid, who immediately had a bad attack of nerves on beholding the eccentric apparition confronting her.

"I wish to see Miss Patuffe," he screamed excitedly.

"Please, sir, you can't see her. No one can see her to-night," Jane gasped bravely, for she was really quaking in her shoes. "I've got strict orders that she's not to be disturbed for anyone."

"Fool! Idiot!" he shouted, stamping his foot. "If you not let me pass, I murder you. So!"

And he made a movement as if he were going to stab her to the heart.

Now Jane by no means wished to be stabbed to the heart. Her valorous intention, therefore, to hold the door against all intruders broke down precipitately. She opened it wide and admitted the stranger.

"Fool, idiot woman," he repeated in a high falsetto tone, which was most unnerving. "Go and tell her the so great Stefansky is here. There, there, do not look frightened, stupid, silly girl—perhaps I not murder you so quickly."

At that moment a beautiful woman of middle-age came into the hall.

"Madame Mama!" he cried, rushing forward to her.

"Stefansky!" she exclaimed, with both hands out. "You here—on this night of all nights!"

"Of course," he said, laughing joyously. "That devil's child, Patuffe, making her first appearance at a Philharmonic—of course I had to be here. When I heard the news at Prague, I left everything, Madame Mama—of course—there was nothing else to be done. And I tell you if that devil's child not play the Mendelssohn Concerto her best, her so great best to-night, I kill her at once. If she disgrace me, I not spare her life. Now you know."

"Yes, I quite understand," said Mama smiling happily. "Come into the living-room, dear Stefansky, whilst I go and warn her of her impending fate."

"You are still very beautiful, Madame Mama," he said, putting his hand to his heart and bowing. "The years have stood still for you—those peegs of years, hein! Very beautiful and what you English call stately—as always."

"I am glad you think so," she said, laughing and blushing a little.

Mrs. Rendham left him pacing around like a caged coyote and hurried to Patuffa's room. Patuffa was lying down, although the hairdresser had given strict and definide instructions that the head must by no means touch the pillow. Her concert dress lay all in a heap on the floor, although Mama had implored her with tragic entreaty to be careful about it. She was munching some superfine chocolates which her old school-friend, Irene Tyrell, had brought to sustain her during the trying hours preceding her first Philharmonic concert.

"Patuffa," said Mama, so excited that she could scarcely

breathe. "Great news for you—Stefansky is here. You were right. You said he'd come if he got your letter in time."

Patuffa sprang up from her bed, seized an old mackintosh hanging on the door, precipitated herself into it, grabbed the chocolate box, nearly upset Mama, and dashed downstairs like an avalanche.

"Papa Stefansky," she cried, "I knew you'd come. I felt it in my bones."

"Aha, you were right to feel it in your bones, devil's child," he laughed, dancing around her and rubbing his hands in glee. "The fool of a girl, she say I couldn't see you. Another moment—and her so stupid life was gone. Aha, Mama is still very beautiful—and you, Patuffe—no, you are not beautiful—nothing could make you beautiful—but you are Patuffe. When I have said that, I have said all. And this is your concert dress? That is certainly very fashionable and lovely—it will keep the rain off the platform very well indeed!"

She laughed and circled about him in the old way, as she and Irene used to do as children. Then with sudden impulse she seized a violin lying on a table in the corner and thrust it in his hands.

"The old tune, Papa Stefansky," she cried, "the old dance—you remember—which you and I and Irene and Carissima used to dance together when you were in a good temper, and weren't too tired after your practising."

"Remember," he said, "of course I remember. But my poor little parrot, Carissima, she is dead long ago, and I am old—very old. And where is that wretch Irene? Still, we do a few little steps—yes—to put some heart into us for this so great and grand night."

He took the violin and struck up the well-known jig.

"Come now, Madame Mama," he said, "you must join in, and then the devil's child—she play the cadenza to me."

So round the table they danced, and into the hall, and back again into the sitting-room. Mama, half faint with laughing, ended in the arm-chair, happy, but breathless, and Patuffa gave her a hug and said:

"Isn't this a splendid kind of nerve rest, darling? I feel years younger, and ready to knock spots out of everyone, and tear out everyone's hair."

"That is the right spirit, the only right spirit," said Stefansky. "Now we all take a chocolate to recover ourselves—one for you, Madame Mama, one for me, the great Stefansky—not great now—no one care for him now, after his so long travels all over the world. But no matter. He is great all the same, and always shall be great, even if the peegs of a public not want the great Stefansky."

"Pigs!" put in Patuffa truculently. "I'll do them in."

"And one chocolate for little Patuffe," he continued, "in her so beautiful mackintosh concert robe. Ah, that is good for us all! And now to our business. Some of the Allegro and the Cadenza. If you play that not too badly, I not trouble for you. Stand on that mat."

Mama had ever admired Patuffa's nerve. Her mind went back years ago to the pine forests at Loschwitz, where she had first heard her little girl rehearse before the great Stefansky. She thought at the time that she herself would have died from fright if she had been called upon to face such an ordeal; and she thought the same now as she watched Patuffa take up her station on the mat and prepare for action.

Very winning and interesting looked Patuffa in her old mackintosh. Her dressed hair was in disarray, but it

suited her better in a rebellious condition. She had ever been curiously indifferent to dress, yet managed somehow to present an attractive appearance to the world. She had the gift of carrying her clothes well, with the result that one was never conscious of what she did wear. Stefansky was right in saying that she was not beautiful; but there was on her face the same arresting intensity which had marked her out from others as a child. She had keen eyes, a delicate mouth with humour hovering around, and a dashing manner. There was something of the wild bird about her which proclaimed an untamed spirit.

She was slightly under middle height, slim, and yet compact of build. She looked as if she enjoyed excellent health; and the very slight depression of her cheeks spoke of intensity rather than of delicacy. Her hair, always her best possession, was charming. Even the art of that barbarous personage, the Court hairdresser, had been unable to deprive it of its natural beauty.

She stood at attention for a moment or two, stared at Stefansky as if she did not see him, stared into space as if searching for something beyond the ken of human eye, and then began.

He breathed deep breaths until she came to the Cadenza, in every Concerto always one of the severest tests of the musician's faculties.

"And now," he murmured, "and now, if she fails—my God, if she fails—Madame Mama, I ask you—I ask you, if she fails. . . ."

But Patuffa did not heed him, and if she had heard, she would only have been spurred on to higher effort to win his praise, to vindicate herself, to uphold her art.

She laid hold of the Cadenza in masterly fashion, and

when she had ended it, played a few bars of the *Tutti* and then ceased.

There was a moment of silence before he looked up with moist eyes and saw her standing on the rug waiting for his words, with the same patience as on that momentous occasion years ago when he had made the final decision that she should adopt the career of a professional violinist. A thousand things had happened to Patuffa since that wonderful day; but no change in circumstance, no development of character, no variation in temperament could have altered by one hair's breadth her attitude towards Papa Stefansky. She stood waiting for his verdict with a tragic endurance which had no trace of appeal.

"Little devil's child," he said at last, in a half whisper, "if it was anyone else but you, I should be madly, madly jealous—but I must not, I cannot, I will not be jealous of the little devil's child—you must not let me, Patuffe, you must not let me, Madame Mama. Never that, never!"

CHAPTER II

I

WHEN Stefansky, ten or twelve years previously, had given his verdict in favour of a professional musical career for little Patuffa Rendham, she had played him the Andante from the Mendelssohn Concerto. He had been profoundly moved by her playing, and he had said:

"Yes, little devil's child, this shall be your career. But you must learn—my God, how you must learn!—and you must practise, practise, practise till your arm drop off and you have no arm left to practise with. This is the only way."

She had practised and worked with amazing and unfaltering diligence, and with a passionate enthusiasm. It is certain that to no other study would she have given all her young years. But she was heart and soul in music, and keenly ambitious and determined. For the sake of nothing else on earth would she have learnt to curb some of her natural waywardness and rebelliousness against all authority and discipline.

She was taken to Leipzig immediately after Stefansky's decision. Mama went with her and stayed some time with her in a German family, until their beloved friend Mr. Tyrell, known to those who loved him as *Chummy*, and Irene, his daughter, Patuffa's old school friend, took up their abode in Leipzig. Then Patuffa, who remained with her German family, went in and out of the Tyrells' home as she chose. She could have lived there entirely if she had cared. But as she was happy and very well pleased with her Germans, he contented himself with watching over her, and furthering her education and interests. Mama remained at home and looked after her little boys, Mark and Eric. She made adventurous dashes over to Germany from time to time, enjoyed herself enormously, and always returned satisfied that Patuffa was safe and in good hands.

In Leipzig Patuffa studied under Schradieck, and made progress which astounded him. She received her Diploma at the end of two years, and then went to Berlin and entered the Hochschule, and became a pupil eventually of Joachim. She captured there the Mendelssohn Prize, and made her *début* at the Philharmonic Concert in Berlin when she played the Max Bruch Concerto in G Minor. She returned to Leipzig and had the honour of playing at one of the Gewandhaus Concerts.

Later she went to Moscow to study interpretation under Auer. She thus had every chance of first-class training that a violinist could have in those days. Chummy saw to that, and Mama's family, in the shape of a rich old aunt, played up in unexpected fashion. Aunt Eleanor disliked fanatically the idea of having a professional musician in the family. She thought that the proper place for a professional musician was in the concert hall, and never in a family which boasted all the finest traditions of the Navy.

"But, Marion," she said grimly to Mama, her favourite niece, "if we have to endure this appalling disgrace, we must see to it that the disgrace is not increased by incompetency. That wretched child must have her horrible chance."

This way of putting things was not specially alluring. But when Mama was half-disposed to resent and refuse this definite practical help, her friend, Mme. Patuffa Tcharushin, a Russian revolutionary before whom she always laid every plan, trouble or joy, said:

"Na, na, Marionska—what does it matter about the words? People have to speak and say things in their own curious fashion. If someone write to me: Your Society of the Friends of Russia is an abominable damnation, but I send one thousand pound so that it become not so great an abominable damnation, I laugh and am pleased and understand. You must do the same, for the sake of Patuffa—and the old lady, since it is her innocent debauchery to do a kind deed very, very disagreeably."

Aunt Eleanor died soon afterwards, but not before she had done another kind deed more or less disagreeably. She settled a small income on Mama, "to prevent her,"

so she said, "from disgracing the family further by bringing up her two boys for any careers except that of the glorious Navy."

Thus Patuffa did not have to owe everything to Chummy, though he stood by all through those years of apprenticeship, and gave her pleasures and advantages which could never have come her way but for his kindness. He had always had careers on the brain, for girls as well as boys. He was a pioneer, though he did not know it. He thought that careers strewn around were the only things that mattered seriously, and that all other foolish little details could be easily filled in, or left out, according to circumstances. Perhaps he was right. Anyway, he would have spent his last farthing in forwarding or giving careers, opening doors which would have remained closed, removing barriers, and tempering difficulties with opportunities for joyfulness and pleasure.

As a child, Patuffa had earned his gratitude for her fierce championship of his little daughter Irene, who had been flouted and bullied at school for her passionate love of learning; and from that time onwards she had shared with Irene the benefit of his intimate comradeship. Her quick intelligence and impulsive temperament garnered many a treasure of his scattering which was to affect her art immeasurably. Through his direct, though unconscious influence, she became, as years went on, not merely a skilled manipulator of the violin, but a true artist with a belief in the high mission of Art, and with a mind which had stores from which to enrich her natural gift of musical interpretation.

Such then was Patuffa on the eve of her appearance at St. James's Hall. She had already played very successfully in some of the principal towns in Germany,

and had made favourable impression in Brussels, Paris, Vienna, and Moscow. She came from the Continent armed with excellent notices; and now it was to be seen what she could do with a London audience.

II

Stefansky had no real anxiety about her. He believed she would win laurels for herself that night. He had been amazed at her playing. Apart from her masterly technique, there was an arresting nobility in her interpretation, a sincerity in her style, a delicate finish in her phrasing, a restrained tenderness in cantabile passages which one might not have expected of her, and a reckless *abandon* which would take people by storm.

"She will go far," he repeated to himself.

Yet he was nervy and agitated, and preferred to go to the concert alone instead of joining forces with her friends. He chose the gallery. He wished to hear the effect of Patuffa's playing from a distance and observe the impression which her art and personality made on the audience as a whole.

So he sat amongst *the peegs of a public* as he had so often disrespectfully called them, and tried to believe that he was in very truth one of them, and not the great Stefansky.

Did he long to reveal himself to them and say, "Do you know who I am? I will tell you, I am the great Stefansky"?

Perhaps he did with one part of his mind. But with the other he wanted to be merely a plain member of the great public, betraying no sign either to bias or encourage his fellow-hearers when they were judging Patuffa. He was grimly resolved that no word, no gesture of his should

contribute to their verdict. For the first time in his life Stefansky wanted to obliterate his own personality; and so quietly did he carry out his intention that no one noticed the wild-looking, weird little figure of a man who leaned back silent and impassive, with closed eyes, waiting with a curious patience which was entirely foreign to his nature. During the Overture to *Leonora* and the "Venusberg" music from *Tannhäuser* which preceded Patuffa's appearance, he might not have been alive.

But when her moment came, Stefansky opened his eyes and sat upright, rigid, grim. His heart beat and his face twitched. He folded his hands tightly together and thus made no attempt to add to the kind-hearted and encouraging applause which often greets a new *virtuoso* in England. He stared right across to the platform, and with his sharp little eyes saw her quite well enough for his purpose.

He heard his neighbour say, "A striking face. Nothing of the pretty-pretty there."

He nearly said, "Of course not, fool, idiot."

Someone behind him said, "What a beautiful dress she is wearing."

Stefansky smiled, and thought, "Aha, plainly, then, Patuffe is not wearing her so lovely mackintosh."

The smile and the thought broke his rigidity, and his tense anxiety gave way to eager interest, curiosity, conjecture. What would she do with the Concerto? What would she do with the orchestra? Would it overwhelm her? Or would she work with it, weave herself in and out of it and waft herself above it to realms where it could never enter, where she alone would hold undisputed sway? How would she take the *vivace* passages? Could she find enough tenderness for the moving beauty of the

Andante? Would she be nervous and hurry when she ought not to hurry, or over-accentuate pathos when she needed steady control of emotion? Scores of questions rose in his artist's mind. One by one Patuffa answered them until his head was bowed and his left hand was pressing deep into his breast, and his little figure was rocking to and fro and tears were trickling unheeded down his shaggy face.

He knew that she had soared beyond his own power of flight, and that in style and phrasing, in all the *nuances* and in inspiration she had left him, her old master, far, far behind. He knew it, and a chill struck at his heart.

When they called her back, she came on the platform with a joyousness which had the charm of unselfconsciousness. She realised how splendidly the orchestra had helped and supported her, and she turned to them, not with the automatic acknowledgment one often sees on these occasions, but with a true human impulsiveness of gratitude which reached each one of those jaded musicians, who were tired to extinction of glorious geniuses.

If her gesture could have been translated into words, those words would have been, *"I think you all have been perfect bricks and I do thank you."* But the unspoken message was borne to all, from leader of the violins to the drum. Even he, a cynic of cynics, was pleased, though he was careful to edit his gratification by saying, "She won't always be like that. She'll soon get a swelled head like all of them. I know them."

No, perhaps not. But on this evening of her first London triumph it is certain that she included in it everyone in that hall, conductor, orchestra and audience.

Her playing had been superb, and her success was assured. Several times she was recalled, and as she re-

turned to the platform for the last time, flushed, excited, almost bewildered by the increasing applause, she whispered to Mama:

"Mama, I don't know how to go back again. I believe I'm going to cry."

"Never!" said Mama with great resource, although she was herself nearly weeping. "You could only cry from rage, darling."

"Yes, that's true," said Patuffa with a laugh, and she gathered herself together and received her final ovation with perfect quietness of dignity. No one would have guessed that she was, as she confessed afterwards, nearer to hysterics and smelling salts than she had ever been in her life.

In the artists' room she received the congratulations of several distinguished personages in the world of music, people whose influence on her career would be far-reaching. Amongst them was the manager of the Royal Philharmonic Society Concerts, George Hendered, a cautious man unaccustomed to commit himself to expressions of praise or appreciation. No artist had succeeded in piercing the mask which concealed his enthusiasms, his emotions, his ideals. But on this one occasion he laid it aside of his own free will.

"Bravo, bravo!" he said. "You have done finely. I am delighted with you. A long time since I have so much enjoyed listening to anyone."

His heavy face lit up with the transforming radiance of a true enthusiasm. It was obvious that Patuffa's art had impressed him most favourably, and that her personality also had won his interest. She struck him as being an altogether different, type from that of the executants with whom he usually had dealings. She looked

different, too, franker, simpler, and freer of spirit. He liked her curious little headlong and yet restrained manner, and her easy, happy comradeship with her mother. He had heard Mama's remark to her when she said she was going to cry, and he had laughed with them both and clapped her well when she braced herself with the stimulating remembrance that she only wept when she was in a rage and, thus re-assured, ran on to the platform for her last call. He thought suddenly of young, fresh, green spring leaves, and then laughed at himself for being a fool.

She was tremulous with excitement when she returned to the artists' room; but dominating all her emotions was her anxiety about Stefansky's verdict. She looked around hoping to see him. The moment he entered, all other people, whether conductors or managers or directors, critics or fellow-musicians, ceased to have any importance or indeed any existence on this globe. She leapt to greet him. Her face became drawn with the tension of her nervous expectancy. Mama watched her and loved her afresh for her unswerving loyalty.

"Papa Stefansky, have I pleased you?" she asked. "That's what I want to know most of all."

"No, you have not pleased me, devil's child," he answered half deprecatingly.

"Not pleased you?" she repeated tragically.

"Not pleased me altogether," he went on, "for the reason that you have made me ragingly angry with mad jealousy because you have played superb, Patuffe."

Her face shone again.

"At least that would be my state of mind if you was not my little Patuffe," he continued. "Superb—superb—superb. The tone—what a tone!—pure, firm and beautiful—and the tenderness—what a tenderness!—and the

élan—ha, the *élan!* I kiss the hands of the devil's child."

Chivalrously, tenderly, the old man took them and put his lips to them.

"Homage, my little Patuffe, homage," he murmured.

CHAPTER III

I

Mr. Tyrell, who had recently been ill from bronchitis, did not go to the concert. So it was understood that everyone should finish off the evening at his house and celebrate the occasion with a plentiful supply of the very best champagne, unfailingly appreciated by the many musicians who frequented his house. In the world of music he was known as a true Mæcenas, and his house in the Melbury Road went by the name of "Headquarters." Artists of all degrees found there an ever-ready haven, either in bright days of prosperity or dark nights of adversity. He had passed his life in ministering to poets and painters and musicians, whom he regarded as the saviours of the world—the natural enemies of materialism. His home had ever been open to them, and his purse also.

But he had given them far more than mere money. He gave them respect, consideration, appreciation, and, above all, independence. His view was that it was his privilege to share what he had with them, and he would infinitely have preferred their ingratitude to their homage and flattery. A patron of Arts and Letters—perish the thought! A friend, yes. That was entirely another matter. He reaped a certain amount of ingratitude, of course, at which he laughed. He was deceived, imposed on, innumerable times. But no untoward experience impaired his trust or his enthusiasm. He went his wayward path,

incorrigible and confident. His purse remained open, his heart unhardened and the door of his home unlocked. The only person on earth who could have checked him was Irene. But she had inherited from him the same tendencies and the same views. To her also musicians and poets and painters, and all who ministered to the needs of the mind and spirit, were the saviours of the world. She had seen to it that the traditions of Headquarters were carried on without a break, and she would have cheerfully given her last farthing for that end. But she gave even more. She sacrificed time and serenity and bore with amazing composure endless interruptions to her literary work which would have reduced most writers to angry pulp.

Chummy sat alone in the beautiful music room, enjoying, as ever, the sight of his pictures and books and organ and musical instruments of diverse kinds. He waited, but not anxiously, for the news of Patuffa. He believed, with old Stefansky, that all would be well.

The first person to bring the news was Keble Fairbourne, Mama's second cousin. Keble loved Patuffa, but she had persistently refused to consider him in any light save that of a comrade. Quite frankly she had said to him once:

"Keble, I like you awfully as a cousin when you are not overbearing, and as Mama's trustee who would not cheat us very much, and as a friend of the family who would always 'stand by.' But I can't go any further than that—really I can't."

"I can wait," he thought. "I know how to wait."

And to-night as he saw her on the platform, acknowledging the applause from all sides, he said to himself:

"Patuffa won't want me yet. But I know how to wait."

Chummy had a lukewarm regard for Keble, whose brains he respected. But he was a barrister, and the legal temperament did not appeal to the man who was heart and soul given over to the arts. But being Madame Mama's cousin and Patuffa's cousin, Keble formed one of the group in a detached sort of way; and a sincere love of music was held to redeem his, as Madame Tcharushin said, from entire perdition.

His face lit up as he spoke of Patuffa's playing:

"It was magnificent, Chummy," he said. "I could scarcely breathe from excitement and wonder. And such a reception!"

"And how did she look?" Chummy asked. "How did she bear herself?"

"She looked like the Patuffa we know," he answered smiling. "Noble in her simple and direct bearing."

Madame Tcharushin was the next to arrive. She was in high spirits over the success of Patuffa, who was her godchild.

"Chummy," she said, "I heard something about some champagne. And let me tell you, the sooner we have it the better. For I am quite worn out with my emotions in being that child's godmother. When I heard the last notes of the Andante—well, I cannot speak of it. And there she stood, firmly planted on the platform, like the little obstinate thing she is—and slightly swaying—like this, Chummy—it was so charming—and the applause would have done your heart good, as the champagne will do mine good."

Andrew Steyning, an exceedingly handsome man, came soon after Madame Tcharushin. He was a portrait painter, an R.A. who was courting Madame Mama, and always

felt Patuffa to be a serious obstacle in his path. But tonight he had seen and heard her for the first time in her own rightful kingdom, and every trace of personal animus was merged in the generous appreciation of one artist for another.

"Chummy," he said, "she was inspired—and looked inspired. I wish I could have caught the expression in her eyes."

"He'd never be able to catch anyone's expression in anyone's eyes," mumbled Madame Tcharushin to Keble. "I suppose that is why your so boring Royal Academy made him an R.A."

"Do take care," he chided. "Steyning will hear you."

"Take care?" she laughed. "I never take care. Where should I be if I was cautious? In your Criminal Court, and you bullying me, Keble. No, it is always too risky to be cautious."

Then at last came Mama and Patuffa, Stefansky and Irene. Patuffa gave Chummy a hug and her most beautiful bouquet.

"For you, dear Chummy," she said, fastening one of the flowers in his coat. "It was a shame you couldn't come. But I'm sure you've had enough concerts and first appearances to last a lifetime."

"All went well, Patuffa?" he asked. "Pleased with yourself?"

Yes, she told him. But she could do better next time. No, she had not been nervous. Not for a single moment. She did not think of the audience. They did not come into it until the end. And then she had loved their applause, though she had nearly wept over it. The more they applauded the more she had enjoyed it. It was thrilling.

"Power, you know, Chummy, power," she laughed.

"You have always said I was insatiable for power. Perhaps I am."

But there was no real ring in her laughter. She did not seem as elated as the occasion demanded. He wondered what had occurred to subdue the joyousness he had expected of her. He asked Irene.

"I think it has something to do with Stefansky," she whispered. "Something went wrong in the artists' room. And he was awfully cross in the carriage. Chummy, I do want to tell you Patuffa was splendid. And you would have loved to see her gratitude to the orchestra. They must all have known it was the real thing."

Chummy beamed.

"Good little Patuffa," he said. "Let us hope she will always want to share."

"Of course she will," Irene said staunchly as she ran off to welcome some more of the guests.

But Chummy looked across the room at Stefansky and saw that he was in one of his disagreeable moods.

"Is he going to be jealous of Patuffa who has adored and hero-worshipped him all her life?" he thought. "Not possible. He was so proud of her before the concert."

But it was possible. Mama told him when she had him alone in a corner. She said that when the old violinist came into the artists' room, he had paid Patuffa homage in the most charming way, but that his pride must have been wounded at once by the entire indifference shown him by everyone there except Patuffa and herself. The conductor was barely civil to him, Hendered, the manager, extraordinarily casual, and one or two of the directors seemed only astonished that he was still alive.

"From that moment everything went wrong," Mama

said sorrowfully. "One can't be surprised that he was terribly hurt, and I am sure he made a valiant attempt to ignore the slight. But he could not. It was too much for him. What could it mean? Doesn't he count at all now?"

"It would mean, dear Madame Mama, that his day was gone, that he was no longer a name to conjure with," Chummy answered gently. "The fate of many as the years go on. I have seen this happen so often. And you must remember he has been years away from England—something like twelve years. There is a new order of things—new conductors, new managers, new artists, new audiences. He has not nursed his public. He has wandered off to the uttermost ends of the earth, and he comes back forgotten, his place filled."

"But it's incredible," she said, "with a name like his, and a genius like his."

Chummy shrugged his shoulders.

"That's the way of life, Madame Mama," he said. "But we must not have the evening spoilt for all that."

But it soon became evident that Papa Stefansky was going to spoil it. He did not find fault with Patuffa's playing, but he grumbled at everything else, the acoustics of the hall, the fool af a conductor, the wood wind, the first violin, the pigs of an audience, the G string on her fiddle. He was truculent and savage about the want of true musical understanding in England. He cast such a blight on the company that Keble Fairbourne, who now saw him for the first time, yearned to go and kick him out of Headquarters. Keble had the British characteristic of disliking all foreigners on principle, and here was one who roused his ire at once.

"What an infernal little worm, Cousin Marion," he said

in his lofty way, which could be so annoying at times, and often made Patuffa dance from rage.

"You'd better not say that to Patuffa," said Mama. "And to say it to me is bad enough, Keble. You know well we're both devoted to him."

"I know," he said. "I expected at least to see one of Fra Angelico's angels playing on a heavenly rebec. Instead of which——"

He stopped as Patuffa came up, and his face changed.

"What were you saying, Keble?" she asked gaily. "That I looked like an angel playing on a heavenly rebec?"

"I used some of those words," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Very handsome of you, I'm sure," she smiled. "I gather then that you were pleased with me?"

"Patuffa," he said eagerly, "I cannot tell you how proud I was of you. I was thrilled."

"Funny old Keble," she said. "Fancy your legal soul being stirred. But wait till you hear Stefansky play. Come with me and talk to him. Now don't stiffen up like your starched collar. Do forget for once that as an Englishman you are superior to every foreigner."

He let her lead him up to Papa Stefansky.

"Papa Stefansky, this is Cousin Keble," she said.

"Good-evening, Mr. Cousin Keble," Stefansky said, glaring at him in no friendly fashion. "You look well. You keep well in your so beastly climate."

"Thank you," said Keble frigidly. "I enjoy very good health in our climate."

"No sun, no warmth, no true music, no true art, nothing at all in this so devilish England," Stefansky said fiercely. "I do hate it with all my soul."

"Why come to this so devilish England?" Madame Tcharushin asked. "The world is wide, Stefansky."

He turned on her.

"Why are you not back in one of your Siberian prisons, Tcharushin?" he said fiercely. "That is the only place for damned revolutionaries, hein?"

"Brute," growled Keble Fairbourne under his breath.

But Madame Tcharushin only laughed:

"Don't worry, Stefansky. Perhaps I'll be there, or in the Schlüsselburg before long. I'll oblige you as soon as I can. Then you'll have the chance of trying to contrive my escape. Stefansky has been a revolutionary in his time, Mr. Fairbourne, let me tell you; a revolutionary and a patriot."

"Patriot!" screamed Stefansky. "Country, I have no country. The world is my country. That is the only country to have—the big, so big world."

"Also," continued Mme. Tcharushin calmly, "he is one of the true friends of liberty, though you would not think he was anyone's friend to look at him now, would you?"

"Ah, it is true, I am not very beautiful when I am cross," Stefansky said, relaxing suddenly.

"But why are you cross?" asked Irene lovingly. "You must not be cross on such a night as this, when Patuffa has been distinguishing herself and doing you credit."

He softened, and let her lead him away into the library.

"I am cross, my pet," he said, "because I have a so wicked heart."

"No, you haven't a wicked heart," she coaxed him. "You're just tired and want some food, alone and without any fuss. Maria shall make you one of her little omelettes, and then you'll be quite yourself again. I'll call

her up. She is awfully disappointed that you're not staying at Headquarters."

"An omelette!" he exclaimed, his face brightening. "Well, well, the old devil cook can make it if she likes. Perhaps I eat it."

Maria, the cook who had been in the family since time immemorial, was ready for any emergency. Rightly did Chummy call her a spacious soul. Nothing perturbed her in that household where she had helped to manage musicians for many long years.

"An omelette," she nodded. "Of course, Mr. Stefansky. It won't be the first time I've made you one of my omelettes at twelve o'clock. And if it's going to put you in a good temper, I'll make any number of them. Cross, are you? Well, I'm cross. To think of you not staying here with us same as always. Going to one of them hotels instead. Didn't want to give trouble now you're old? Well, aren't we all old? And as for trouble, you make me laugh, Mr. Stefansky. If you was to live to be a thousand years old, you couldn't be more trouble than you was in the old days and all of us pleased to have you. And would be now."

He was eating the omelette placidly when Chummy strolled into the library.

"Ah," he said, "you are having your own little private supper. That is good for you, dear old friend. It will appease Maria, who, like us all, has been dreadfully disappointed that you are not staying at Headquarters. She is right when she says it doesn't seem natural."

"Perhaps she is right," Stefansky said, with a half smile. "Perhaps I come, Chummy. Perhaps I don't."

"Well, your room is ready for you, and you're welcome, as always," Chummy said.

He lit a cigar and remained silent. He had come to tell Stefansky that it was not fair of him to spoil the evening for all of them and make Patuffa unhappy. But the old fellow looked so frail and tired that Chummy had not the heart to begin. He need not have troubled, for Stefansky anticipated him.

"I am being a beast, Chummy," he owned. "Very well I know that. And very well you know it. I am being ragingly jealous of little Patuffe. My breast is torn with pride and with jealousy. One moment I am proud, and the next moment I am wicked with jealousy. I am ashamed of myself. I am fighting myself. Jealous of my little Patuffe—imagine! Jealous of the other peegs—yes, that is quite right—but of Patuffe—never did I think I could be that great beast. But I fight, Chummy—you believe me, I fight."

"I believe it," Chummy said. "Does it help at all to remember that the young must have their innings, and that we, the old, have had ours in some form or other?"

"No," Stefansky answered. "That helps me not at all. The omelette of Maria's helps me much better. What you say is lovely language for a book, but very horrid for real life. Not at all I like it, Chummy. But you leave me alone and not bully me, and I fight."

II

When he reappeared in the music-room, every trace of his ill-humour had gone. He was charming to Patuffa, benign to everyone, and full of his old fun. He embraced Madame Mama when she told him that Steyning wanted to paint his portrait. He embraced Steyning, much to that quiet man's bewilderment. Steyning, who had been

arrested by his wild appearance, had leapt to the belief that his portrait would make a great sensation in the world of art and that he would like to attempt it. But he rather wished he had not leapt to any belief until he saw Mama's flush of pleasure on her charming face. And then he would willingly have submitted to the embraces of a Polar bear.

"Aha," cried Stefansky, rubbing his hands in glee, "so you paint my portrait, Mr. Steyning. And I allow it —yes, I allow it. For it is my duty that you should have this chance of doing your duty to the world. He paints my portrait, Madame Mama, and it hangs in the principal room of your so Royal Academia, and the good sensible public come to see the so great Stefansky in his frame. They stand in rows, Patuffe, waiting—waiting—do you see them as at the Concerts?—isn't it so, Chummy? And listen, Irene, and do you listen also, Tcharushin, since you still are not in the Kara mines, where you ought to be—they say to each other: 'I heard him in London at a Royal Philharmonic—I heard him play in Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Leipzig, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Frankfurt, Buda Pest, Bucharest, Boston, New York, St. Petersburg, Rio, Buenos Ayres, Brighton, Java, Japan, Margate, Pacific Islands—anywhere—everywhere in the world. And he was wonderful. My God, he was wonderful.' Yes, Patuffe, they will say that to the picture which this so celebrated artist will paint of the great and famous Stefansky. Hein, isn't it so?"

He waved his arms about in all directions as if to illustrate the wide-spreading fields of his fame, and darted around like some child in joyous sport. His spirits, self-importance and self-belief reached at one bound the level to which his friends had for long been accustomed. If

Maria with her omelette began the cure, Steyning certainly completed it.

Cousin Keble thought him even more detestable in a good temper than he had been in a bad one, and resented all the fuss that was being made of him.

"One would suppose, from the way he is carrying on, that he was the principal person of the evening, instead of Patuffa," he said to Mme. Tcharushin. "And now there's this ridiculous idea started about his portrait. Who wants to see a portrait of him? I don't."

"No one will want to see that portrait, when they see it," laughed Mme. Tcharushin mischievously. "The poor, good Royal Academician, who is in love with your Cousin Marionska, will no more be able to paint Stefansky's fascinating ugliness than I could bully as you do, my friend, one of your victims in the Law Courts. I laugh to think of it. I say 'Ha!' No, the Steyning man should keep to his so dull and worthy Bishops. I suppose they are worthy. Aha, Kamerad Keble, and I ask you to look at my friend Marionska, happy and blushing because the Steyning man has contributed to the success and happiness of the evening. And what have you contributed? Nothing. You grumble and look like a lofty rock that budges not one damned inch. And what have I contributed? Also nothing."

"You contribute a few home truths, a useful reminder or two, and a good deal of gaiety," Keble said. "If I get a chance to say something civil to the Polish worm, I'll take it."

"You'll please Patuffe if you do," she said. "And that is what you want to do, I suppose. Though I hope with all my heart you never will."

"I know you hope that," he said. "But why do you hope that?"

She shrugged her shoulders playfully.

"Because you are a rock, and I would never choose a rock for Patuffe," she said. "If you could—what do you call it?—blast yourself, then perhaps some of your fragments might appear to me suitable for Patuffe. I only say perhaps. And certainly only a very few of the fragments."

"You are truly encouraging," he laughed, in spite of himself, as they went off to supper.

At supper, by arrangement with Chummy, Madame rose to propose Patuffa's health. She said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, Chummy having still some bronchitises left over, and Irene, our hostess, feeling a little shy, I rise to propose the health of the young lady who has the disadvantage of being my godchild. I think I have been chosen for this honour because I never could speak a long speech, and we want to be quick. For this reason we could not trust it to a man. A man, as you know, my friends, clears his throat, plants himself solidly on the floor, and puts his hands in his pockets and begins. He begins—but does he ever end? No, never. Well, this only will I say. Till to-night most of us here have only known Patuffe as a private personage, in former years with a pigtail. To-night we have seen her in all her glory as a platform beauty—and we are proud of her and proud of ourselves in possessing her. What words of praise can I find in the so beautiful English language to express our feelings about her playing this evening? Aha, that is difficult and unnecessary, too. For we all know that she had wings and used them and bore us with her in her upward flight. Was is not so? Her good health,

then, and may her success, like the speech of a man, never, never come to an end."

Cousin Keble sprang up.

"I second that toast," he said. "Will you all kindly observe that I am clasping my eyeglass as a protection against my pockets, and that I have not cleared my throat? There is no danger from me. None need prepare themselves for slumber. Long life, long health, and long prosperity to Patuffa. We couple with her name that of the great and famous violinist Stefansky, to whom we all owe so much for his own gifts to us, and for his help to Patuffa, and for his chivalry in coming all the way from Prague to seal for her and us the triumph of this memorable night. Will Madame Tcharushin kindly take note that I am sitting down at once?"

He glanced at her half-humorously, as if to say: "How is that for an attempt to blast the rock?"

Stefansky purred delight, and everyone was pleased with Keble's tactful words. Patuffa beamed on him and said:

"Bravo, Keble. You unstarched your collar gallantly. I'll play your favourite, Schumann's Abendlied, as a reward. And when you've heard Stefansky, you won't have any collar left at all."

The evening ended up in a "tutti" of virtuosity, enthusiasm, and joyfulness. Stefansky played one or two of Paganini's Caprices and Wieniawski's Polonaise and Légende. Patuffa gave them the Brahms Dances and the lovely Abendlied, and she and her old master, at Chummy's request, joined together in Bach's Double Concerto for two violins.

Stefansky, now in the happiest mood and in the highest

spirits, helped to put Patuffa and her bouquets into her cab and said:

"You have deserved all these so beautiful cauliflowers, my little devil's child—and more. And listen, you come and see me to-morrow, and not at the Hotel, but here. I change my mind. I remain at Headquarters. It is the only place for us all."

CHAPTER IV

THE full measure of Stefansky's jealousy was revealed to Patuffa a few days later, when the generous praise which he himself had bestowed on her playing was confirmed by the musical critics. This chorus of applause was more than Stefansky could stand, and he punished Patuffa severely for her success and took the bloom off it. Even Mama did not know how greatly she suffered in those first days following on the Philharmonic concert, which should have been for her a time of happiness only. She carried herself bravely and cheerfully and was specially careful not to show any signs of depression before Keble, who came to congratulate her. He had cut out all her notices, and produced them one by one from his pocket-book, with a pride which was entirely charming.

"You ought to be very pleased with your notices, Patuffa," he said.

"I am," she said, "I never expected to get such good ones. Jolly, isn't it?"

"I should think that old Stefansky of yours must be mighty proud of you," he said.

"He is," she answered readily, for she knew well that

when Keble put on an air of childlike innocence, he was preparing to do a little probing.

"That's good," he said. "Though it struck me he had rather a funny way of showing it the other night."

"Indeed?" she asked. "And what makes you think that?"

"Oh," he said casually, "various little trifles, probably only the intricacies of that mysterious complication, the artistic temperament."

"Yes, I expect that was it," she smiled.

"Misleading, no doubt, sometimes," he suggested.

"Very," she answered. "Almost as bewildering as the legal mind. A closed book, the legal mind."

"And the artistic mind not closed enough," he said.

"Probably not," she laughed. "But if it were closed and hermetically sealed, we should not get playing like Stefansky's."

"Probably not," he said coldly.

"Didn't you think his playing wonderful?" Patuffa asked.

"I thought his playing very wonderful," Keble answered.

He nearly added, "But I thought he himself was a detestable little worm."

He had the sense to remain silent. But she guessed his thought, for she turned to him, half fiercely, half friendlily, and said:

"Look here, Keble. I know perfectly well what you are thinking about, and I don't mind owning that Stefansky was not at his best the other night. But I ask you this. How would you have felt, supposing that you had been some great legal luminary in the past, and that when you returned to the arena of your former triumphs,

you found yourself only slighted and ignored? That is what happened to my old master in the artists' room. Of course he suffered."

"I am sorry, Patuffa. I didn't know," he said very kindly.

"Well, any way, you helped to put things right the other night," she said. "I was pleased with you and grateful to you."

"I was pleased with myself," he said. "The cook's omelette and Steyning's portrait were not in it as compared with my healing powers. But about these notices. That is what I want to talk about. This *Daily Telegraph* one is a whopper. I've ordered two dozen copies of it to send to my friends. And every word true. *Nuance* —marked individuality—luminous inspiration—*abandon* —and all the rest of it. I've read it over and over again until I know it by heart."

It was the criticism which had made poor old Stefansky ragingly jealous that very morning, and Patuffa had scarcely dared to think of it again. But Keble's kindness and enthusiasm heartened her, and she said:

"Yes, it is a jolly one. I don't know quite how I'm going to live up to it. But, Keble, it is really awfully nice of you to care in this way about my notices."

"It would be very strange if I didn't, considering I have always cared so much about your happenings," he said as he put the extracts back into his pocket-book.

"Yes, I know," she said uneasily. "But couldn't you see your way to care less? I should be much obliged."

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you," he answered quietly, "but I could not."

No, he could not. He had loved Patuffa for a long

time. Even during his College days, when he was distinguishing himself in his examinations, and she, twelve years his junior, was distinguishing herself by quite exceptional naughtiness at school and at home, he kept her in some corner of his heart. And always his first question when he saw Cousin Marion was: *"Where is Patuffa and what is she up to now?"*

Then the years had passed, and his interest in her had ripened into love. Apart from her music, which alone would have attracted him, she appealed to him as no other woman had ever done. Her temperament which puzzled him, her uncertain moods which bewildered him, her independence which irritated him, her generosity of spirit which uplifted him, her elusiveness which left him outside her range—all combined to keep him on the alert. He knew well that he was at a far distance from his goal. But he had a stubborn and persistent nature and meant to win her—no matter how long he had to wait, nor how many obstacles he had to encounter.

Madame Tcharushin rightly called him a rock. He was a rock of loyalty and faithfulness, but an aggravating one at times because of his domineering tendencies which he seemed unable to suppress. His relationship to Patuffa and Mama, and the practical interest he took in their affairs, and Mama's own strong sense of clanship gave him the chance to assume proprietary airs, against which Patuffa rose in rebellion. But when he was at his best, free from all display of authority, she liked him very much as a comrade, and wondered why she did not love him.

But even as it was, she would not have had any harm happen to Keble that she could prevent. And she had an immense respect for his brains, took a deep interest

in his career, and was proud to know that he was considered one of the coming men at the Bar. She was always amused by what she called his starch-collaredness; and his curious old-fashioned conventionality, especially where women's freedom was concerned, struck her as exceedingly funny.

"You're five generations behind the times, Keble," she would say. "Why not make it six whilst you're about it?"

She liked to measure her wits with his and to defend herself from one of his sly attacks.

"Ha, Keble, you thought you'd got me there, like one of your poor victims in the witness-box," she would say. "But I'm much cleverer even than I look."

He was passionately fond of music, and scraped with superb happiness, but only a fair amount of ability, on the violoncello. But his greatest pleasure was climbing. His grim but rather fine featured face lit up with glowing enthusiasm when he spoke of the mountains he had ever adored; and at those moments Patuffa, a child of wild Nature herself, knew him, understood him and almost loved him.

But those were passing moments, dispersing as swiftly as the mist from the mountain-side.

CHAPTER V

I

One or two other little painful incidents occurred with Stefansky which put the seal on Patuffa's distress. She remembered only too well her old master's fits of uncontrolled rage in the past when new violinists from Prague, Vienna, Brussels, Berlin or St. Petersburg appeared

on the horizon and were impious and impudent enough to challenge his supremacy. But it had never occurred to her, when she wrote and begged him to come to London for her first Philharmonic concert, that she herself would be included in the army of enemies. The very idea was laughable that she, the devil's child, could in any sense be regarded as the rival of a great man with a famous name like Stefansky's. It was so absurd, that her disappointment over his attitude towards her was at first toned down by her sense of fun. With playfulness one day she attempted to tease him out of his jealous mood when he was disagreeable about her engagement at Norwich.

"So they give you the Bach's Fugue in C major to play," he said. "Never in your life could you play that properly."

"No," she said good-humouredly, "but I can practise it until my arm drops off. Papa Stefansky, don't you dare frown at me like that. You're surely never going to put me amongst those pig dogs of violinists we all used to get so angry about in the past. Do you remember how we used to dance away our anger and indignation after you had sworn a sufficient number of Polish oaths? Now listen to me, I absolutely refuse to belong to that company of pig dogs. Do I look like one?"

But playful remonstrance was of no use, and she gave it up when she realised that his jealousy of her was as deep-rooted as it had been in the case of those other interlopers. It was the beginning of the bitter lesson that success, however legitimate in itself, is nearly always achieved at the price of someone's suffering: that jealousy springs up like some evil weed in the fairest garden, unexpected, unaccountable, ineradicable, and takes the bloom off the

peach, the sweetness from the honied flowers, the freshness from the tender greenery.

But whenever she was feeling hurt and injured by Stefansky's ill-will, a vision rose before Patuffa of the old man coming into the artists' room unwelcomed, unhonoured, those men standing around absolutely indifferent to him, and Hendered, better behaved than the others, but only on this side of being civil. Her quick and generous imagination leapt forward to the years to come when she herself would be old and the doors would be barred to her. And how would she feel? No thrill for her then, no ecstasy, no excitation of spirit as now in these halcyon days of early recognition. Only deadness and dullness and disappointment, such as Stefansky was passing through.

It was not to be borne. Something must be done to restore him to his proper place. Couldn't Chummy do something—take St. James's Hall, engage an orchestra, and give Papa Stefansky a glorious reappearance? No, it would not be fair on Chummy. He was too old and tired for the effort. Well, then, couldn't she do something? Couldn't she make a dash at something or someone? She laughed at herself. What influence had she, a beginner, feeling her way? None.

She was practising the Bach Fugue at the time when this sudden impulse to do something for Stefansky overcame her. She put aside her violin and ran down from her little music-room to find Mama and learn whether she had any ideas on the subject: for Mama herself was sad about her old friend's unhappiness and distressed that he was wounding Patuffa. Mama would probably have felt even more concerned if she had not been in love. She almost wished she were not in love; but the fact remained that Andrew Steyning was always in her thoughts, and

that neither Patuffa's career nor Stefansky's jealousy could banish him from her mind.

Patuffa found her reading a letter.

"A note from Mr. Steyning, dear," Mama said blushing. "He asks me to secure Stefansky and bring him for his first sitting at least, and to stay the whole time. I suppose he thinks Stefansky will be a handful."

"And so he will be," laughed Patuffa. "And you are the right person to manage him. So you must sacrifice yourself, Mama, and go to your Steyning's studio."

Mama smiled and blushed again. Patuffa went to the back of her chair and put her hands round Mama's neck and kissed her ever so lightly on the cheek.

"Soon you will be going to your Steyning man's studio altogether," she said. "I've got to lose you. It's coming, I know."

"As long as you want and need me, you will never lose me," Mama murmured.

"But that means you would never marry the poor wretch," Patuffa said with half a laugh. "I should always want you, no matter what happened to me in the way of careers or marriages. This comes of your having been such a brick of a mother to me all these years. It's your own fault, darling Mama."

She stared at the ground a moment, her face a little tense and grim, but ended by looking up with a smile of tender indulgence.

"Look here, Mama," she said, "you mustn't mind about me. You must go straight ahead with your love affair, and I bestow my blessing on it. If you want Steyning, you ought to have him. You ought to have everything you want. When he asks you, or before—well, why not?—tell him you're ready, and that I'm going

to behave myself and try not to be too jealous. Of course, no one could ever be worthy of you; but he has his points, I admit, and he is distinctly handsome and has no bullying proclivities like Cousin Keble has. And he has the sense to adore you—and you are awfully in love with him, aren't you?"

Mama closed her eyes and looked hopelessly sentimental.

"Yes, Patuffa dear," she said softly. "But I don't know how you have found out. I thought I had kept my secret safe from everyone except your godmother."

"Deluded parent," Patuffa laughed tenderly. "Why you've blushed when you have even seen his name in the paper. But without that, haven't I always known about you when I was only a little pig of a girl?"

Mama's thoughts flashed like lightning to a sad day years ago, in their country home, when a little wayward, tempestuous, tender-hearted girl had found her mother leaning over the piano, weeping over a tragedy in her married life, and had crept into her arms and rocked her to and fro, in a silence that had something healing in its deep solicitude and passionate concern.

"Yes," Mama whispered, "you have always known."

"Go ahead," Patuffa repeated, "and I'll try and swallow him whole. Indeed I will."

Her mother caressed her hand.

"Such close friends we've always been, you and I," she said. "Sometimes I think I must be out of my senses."

"Hasn't one got to be out of one's senses when one's in love?" asked Patuffa benevolently.

"At my age, too," added Mama deprecatingly, "forty-six."

"And very beautiful," said Patuffa with the pride she always had in Mama's appearance. "Beautiful and stately, as Papa Stefansky says so charmingly."

His name reminded her that she wanted her mother's advice about the best means of helping him. So she banished Steyning abruptly, and they threshed out the problem of Stefansky long and earnestly, but could find no solution to the difficulty. It was Mama who finally had one of those sudden inspirations to which she was subject.

"Patuffa," she said, "why not consult that manager, Hendered? I should be frightened to death of him, but you never feared anyone."

Patuffa sprang up, alert and eager.

"Mama, you're not quite out of your senses yet, even though you are in love," she laughed as she ran off.

Mama left alone, thought, "Could I ever part from that child if it came to the point? Do I want to marry Andrew Steyning, or do I only fancy I want to? Do I really long for the haven of his love and the ordered serenity of his life?"

II

Madame Tcharushin, who had escaped from the Kara mines twelve years ago, still lived in Coptic Street when she was in London. Her lodgings were the rallying-place of her exiled compatriots, and here she always returned after her many propaganda missions.

She had led a varied life since her escape, when she made direct for Mama's old home at Dewhurst Hall, and where she had remained for a while to recruit from the privations through which she had passed in effecting her flight from the snow wilderness of Siberia. For a year or

two she worked on a weekly paper which was issued by the Friends of Russia Society, and then went to Geneva to join a group of exiled Russians, who were doing propaganda work from that centre and secretly raising funds for the revolutionary cause. She plotted and planned with unceasing activity to effect the escape of the political convicts in the far-off prison settlements in the Arctic regions.

She heard of arrests, hangings, floggings to death, suicides in prison. Her dearest woman comrade was hanged. Her noblest and finest friend, a professor of History in the Moscow University, went mad in the Schlusselburg Fortress. The moment came when she refused any longer to remain in safety; and she returned to Russia and lived an "illegal" existence, with a false passport, of course always in imminent danger of arrest. She did not lose a moment in finding out new leaders, new centres for active work. She travelled incessantly from place to place, organised local revolutionary groups, taught new converts, arranged methods of communication, addressed secret meetings on river boats by night, in city tenements, peasants' huts, and in the forests. The police were ever on her track, but she appeared to have a magic life, and had amazing escapes by means of the various ruses and resources of an experienced conspirator.

She visited America at the moment when it seemed wise that she should withdraw herself from her hunters, and there she raised large sums of money from that ever generous country, and aroused a far-spreading interest in the Russian revolutionary campaign carried on so bravely and by means of so many broken lives and unflinching spirits. And now she was again biding her time in London, waiting for a fresh signal to return to Russia.

Her name was a trumpet call to those who were devoted to the revolutionary cause. Her sufferings, her daring, her enthusiasm and her talents for initiative and organisation were most inspiring to her comrades.

In spite of all other demands on her time and sympathy, Pat Tcharushin, as Mama called her, had always kept up a close intimacy with her old school friend Marion. It represented her one little bit of private life; and she would have fared badly without it, though she prided herself on having, so she believed, no personal ties. But with all her own family long since dead, and most of her former colleagues in prison or exiled in the remote parts of Siberia, Mama and Mama's children were her personal ties, kept intact from all revolutionary complications of thought and purpose. They were her recreation; and all crises in their circumstances, no matter of what nature, found her ready and at leisure with the whole of her interest and attention.

Mama's love affair amused her immensely; and when she came to report that Patuffa had been so charming and unselfish about it and had promised to try and swallow Steyning whole when his courting came to a climax, the little Russian woman laughed:

"Well, my dear Marionska, you know I think you are quite and entirely mad, but since this is your idea of happiness, we must do what we can to help you. And it is good to hear that my god-child is playing up. I thought she would only be fierce and angry and want to tear the Steyning man's hair out. But you see I was wrong."

"Yes, you were wrong, Pat," Mama said triumphantly. "She is going to be my ally."

Mme. Tcharushin made a grimace.

"An ally with breaches of alliance, I should say," she said. "I cannot picture to myself that child swallowing him whole, but only in little bits and occasionally—very occasionally—a long process, in fact."

"Oh, I don't say there won't be ups and downs," Mama owned. "Those are only to be expected from Patuffa. And who knows, perhaps life might be dull without these familiar variations."

"Aha," said Mme. Tcharushin, "and that is what I ask myself. Will Mama not too greatly miss those familiar variations when Patuffska is no longer the centre of her thoughts. You take a new husband, Marionska, and you leave the old life behind. You may not think it so, but so it will be."

"I understand that," Mama said, "and that is why I am torn. That is why I have always retreated when Andrew Steyning pressed forward—until now. But the fragmentary sort of life I've been living ever since Patuffa went to Leipzig makes me long for a sort of ordered serenity in a quiet haven of love."

A twinkle came into Mme. Tcharushin's bright eye.

"Ordered serenity," she repeated. "That is a very good description of what your life will be with the Steyning man. I can see it—aha, so ordered—aha, so serene! And you are quite, quite sure that is what you want? Not that one can ever be sure about anything. I take that back. I wish merely to remind you, Marionska, that he is a prosperous man, and that prosperity is generally very dull. He also is dull like most handsome and distinguished people. His portraits are dull. When I saw that portrait of the Bishop last year, you remember, I said it was too dull even for a bishop. And now he is going to try and make a picture of our poor Stefansky. Well,

all I say is 'Ha!' But if you want this admirable man, it is only right you should now have your heart's desire. You have given up all your best years to Patuffe and the boys. They have their careers, and will seldom be home from the sea, and Patuffe has her career, with the ball at her feet for her to kick high. No use to wait until she is married. . . ."

"If I could have seen her married first, I should feel far happier," put in Mama. "Married to Keble, for instance, who has always adored her, and is as faithful and reliable as a rock."

"My child, do not be ridiculous," Mme. Tcharushin said." Patuffska is not ready for a rock, and never will be. Who on earth wants a rock at twenty-three years old? It is one thing for you at forty-six to cry out for a haven of ordered serenity. And quite another thing for Patuffska to clamour for a rock at her age. And if she did marry Keble, a rock, or anyone else not a rock, what difference would it make to your plans? None. She might be back at any time, at any moment. I see her now bursting into the house. I hear her screaming out, 'Mama. I've come back—I have left my boring husband!—I am free again!' Don't you see and hear her? No, Marionska, no use to wait. If you want the so tremendous joy of a second consort, no use to wait."

Mama laughed. She saw the scene with her mind's eye.

"Take her help whilst she is in an angelic mood, my friend," continued Pat. "She is happy with her success and busy with her career and has not too much time to be thinking about the strange vagaries of her Mama. Be very wise and crafty and spring now. It is not too late to spring at forty-six. It is never too late to make a fool of oneself."

So she teased Mama, but always lovingly; and her old school friend took everything from her without turning a hair. But she did say to her:

"You know, Pat, you are entirely mistaken about Andrew Steyning being dull. You don't seem to understand the difference between dullness and restfulness."

"Is there a difference?" asked Mme. Tcharushin innocently. "I think not. But here comes Father Kuprianoff. We will ask him. He knows everything. Kuprianoff, is there a difference between dullness and restfulness?"

Old Kuprianoff, the father of the exiled Russians in London, now very aged, sank down into the arm-chair which was his and his only. His smile still reflected the sweetness of his disposition, which long years of imprisonment and long years of exile and disillusionment had failed to sour. He smiled his greeting to Mama whom he had always greatly admired, and said:

"Tcharushin asks a stupid question, does she not, Madame Mama? But she only pretends to be stupid sometimes to amuse herself or tease someone. Has she been teasing you? Well, well, I can tease her, and tell her that it is always restful in this so dear little room in Coptic Street, but always, always dull without Madame Mama."

CHAPTER VI

PATUFFA went off to Norwich the next day, where she played Bach's Fugue, which Stefansky had said she could never play, and Tschaikowsky's Concerto in D. She had a great success, and travelled back to London with two of the leading singers of the day who had been taking the solos in the *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* selections

They were charming to her and excellent company. She thought of what Chummy was always saying, that one of the greatest joys of success was the open door, the right of entrance, into the temple of fellowship. It was a flushed, happy, excited little Patuffa, unburdened with any haunting thoughts of Stefansky's jealousy and Mama's inspired idea that stepped on to the platform at Liverpool Street Station and found Keble waiting for her.

"Hullo, Keble," she said. "What are you doing here?"

"It looks as if I were meeting you," he smiled. "Cousin Marion said you were probably coming by this train, and so I took the enormous liberty of interfering with your independence. That is a sin, I know. But I've had a trying day in Court, and thought a little breeze with you might do me good."

"No breeze possible with me this evening," she laughed. "I'm in the best of good tempers and spirits. Such a splendid time I've had! And the Fugue went well, in spite of what Stefansky said."

"Ah, and what said that amiable gentleman?" asked Keble.

Patuffa chuckled and covered her tracks.

"He said it was one of the most intricate pieces ever written for the fiddle, and he was right," she said.

"And possibly also that he was the only *virtuoso* who could play it," he ventured.

"Oh, how clever, how clever you are!" she mocked. "What a brain, what a brain! I am glad we've got a brain like yours in the family. When did you say you were thinking of accepting the position of Lord Chief Justice? Don't let England wait."

They had a cheery drive to her home, Keble enjoying her fun and good spirits and teasing, and Patuffa thinking

that he was not such a bad old starch-collared thing after all. He left her at the door, said he would not come in as he was dining with them the next day and they must not be burdened too greatly with his distinguished company, and started off. He heard her calling him back, and took two or three of his long strides to reach her side.

"Keble," she said gravely, but with mischief in her eyes, "don't let England wait, I implore you."

She found Mama working at her embroidery, and a cosy little supper awaiting her as usual, and always that warm welcome which had been hers ever since she could remember, and that never-failing sympathy with all her concerns. As she poured out her Norwich experiences, hurling every detail at Mama's head, almost hurling every note of the Bach Fugue and the Tschaikowsky Concerto at that patient and beautiful head, Patuffa suddenly thought how truly awful life would be without Mama. The words rushed to her lips, but she kept them back. And her passing alarm was soon forgotten in the remembrance of her enjoyment of her success at the Norwich Festival.

"Unmarred by anyone's jealousy," she said. "That's what I have revelled in. Free to be happy and pleased with myself, because no one was being wounded—through me."

Mama looked up.

"Yet you should have heard Papa Stefansky speak of you this morning," she said. "With pride and admiration and all his old kindness. He fights his jealousy the whole time, I am sure. I thought he looked so frail and ashen —a lonely and pathetic old man, like Liszt was at the end, you remember, superseded, left, in a sense. I was touched to the heart again, as I was in the artists' room."

Patuffa said nothing, but she left off munching chocolates and stared straight in front of her. Her own success, her own career vanished from her thoughts. Stefansky's need thrust itself imperiously on her generous mind. Mama's inspiration came to her afresh; and it was borne in on her instantly what she could do and would do.

The next day she sped on her way to Hendered's office, and arrived there in the best of good moods with herself and the world, and prepared to face with fearless equanimity a whole battalion of Hendereds.

"If I win, I win," she said. "If I lose, I lose."

Hendered at once sent for her when her card was brought to him by the smiling and pleased old clerk on whom she had beamed like true spring sunshine.

"Delighted to see you, Miss Patuffa Rendham," Hendered said. "Pray be seated. Glad to have the pleasure of congratulating you again on your success the other evening. A real triumph—and one that was deserved."

"Thank you very much," Patuffa said, smiling happily and settling down at her ease. "It was most exciting and stimulating. It has made me feel years younger."

"Ah, you need it, don't you," he laughed. "The burden of years lies heavy on you. Well, it is a good thing you're being sustained for your next Philharmonic ordeal—the Brahms, isn't it? I hope you will repeat your success, or exceed it. I am sure you will. I hope that again you'll want to go into hysterics from joy, and will only be prevented by remembering that you reserve your weeping for your rages."

"It's true," she nodded. "Such rages! You should see them."

"I probably shall before I've done with you," he said, leaning back in his chair and smiling.

He felt at leisure, and restful in her presence. Again he felt he liked her. Her entire unselfconsciousness pleased him. It was evident that she was not nervous of him, nor unduly impressed by his importance. He was an influential man; and most artists, even those of long standing at the top of the tree, showed a marked respect for his position: for he had irons in all directions, and to a certain extent the careers of great *virtuosi* were in his keeping. But this little newcomer into the world of music was by no means paralysed by an appropriate sense of awe in finding herself in his sanctum. He was all the more amused because he supposed she had come, of course, as all came, to ask something of him. They all wanted his special personal favour and interest directly they had got one foot on the rung. They all immediately thought they had swung themselves up to Olympus. Now, what did Miss Patuffa Rendham want? Probably an immediate American tour. Well, it would be his own fault in this instance. He had praised her—broken his rule and praised her. Always a mistake. Far wiser to be entirely impersonal and unmoved.

Then he said, perhaps a little stiffly:

"I suppose you have come to talk about America. Every artist thinks he or she can immediately go there and pick up a handsome fortune. Is that it?"

To his surprise she answered:

"No, I haven't come about that, Mr. Hendered, though I must say a handsome fortune sounds pleasant."

"Well?" he asked wondering. "Birmingham Festival, Leeds Festival?"

She shook her head.

"It is just this," she said, her face suddenly becoming acute and her manner intensely earnest. "I've come to

ask you in secret about my old master, Stefansky. I am so unhappy about him. I felt the other day that he was out in the cold. No one noticed him except you. And even you scarcely spoke to him. He didn't seem to count."

"He doesn't count," Hendered said abruptly. "Stefansky's day is done."

"But he is a great artist still, isn't he?" Patuffa asked.

"His day is done," repeated Hendered, shrugging his shoulders. "The last time he was in England he was an absolute failure—antiquated—out of date—banal. Tragic, I admit, but what would you? That is life. His time is over. He had a long and splendid spell."

"Couldn't you bring it back again?" she pleaded with an intensity disturbing in its painfulness.

He eyed her with curiosity, a faint smile of cynicism playing around his mouth.

"And pray, what is that old rascal to you?" he said. "Why should you be concerning yourself about him—you who have your own young life to live?"

Patuffa's eyes went to a pin's point. She forgot that she was facing a manager. But even if she had remembered, it would have made no difference.

"Stefansky isn't an old rascal," she exclaimed angrily.

He was intrigued by her sudden fierceness, and liked her none the less as she sat defying him. The experience was entirely new to him, and he positively welcomed this variation from the old rut, this departure from the old patterns which he knew by heart, and which at times bored him to extinction.

"You ask what he is to me," she went on. "He is my darlingest friend in the world after my mother and Mr. Tyrell. I am what I am to-day because of him. When I was a little girl—an odious little girl, too—I

broke his Strad—think of that!—and he forgave me because I loved music. He first taught me—it is true he nearly murdered me in the process, but I never minded that. My earliest Master—think of the honour!"

And in a few telling words, she sketched the scene when she stood on the rug where he placed her, played the Andante of the Mendelssohn Concerto, and waited for his verdict as to whether she could become a professional player. She said it was the only time in her life she had been scared, and that if he had said she was unfit for the profession, her heart would have broken. She remembered saying to herself that if Papa Stefansky decided that violin-playing could not be her career, the only thing left for her to do was to go and drown herself in the fishpond at home.

"So you see, Mr. Hendered, what he meant to me," she ended with. "He has always meant the same. Ask my mother if you like. She loves him as much as I do, and we wouldn't have a hair of his head hurt, any more than he would at any time during all these years have hurt a hair of mine."

There was a silence for a moment. Hendered drummed with his fingers on his desk. With his mind's eye he saw the little eager child on the rug, awaiting the verdict of the famous musician and making up her mind to drown herself in the fishpond at home if the great Stefansky pronounced against her. The vision moved him strangely. And what moved him still more was the thought that she had kept the remembrance of this crisis in her life so intense and acute, that it had the power to pierce even his impenetrability.

"I understand," he said at last, gently, and with no sneering smile on his face. "You have made it all quite

clear to me. Stefansky is lucky to have won and kept your friendship—and your gratitude, Miss Rendham. And you yourself are lucky to be able to continue to give it. Gratitude is amazingly rare. I can frankly say it has never come my way—probably because I myself never gave any. Do you know, I don't remember having been grateful to anyone. I took everything that came to me in the way of help or favour as a matter of course."

"Perhaps you did not get much help," said Patuffa benevolently. "In that case there would not have been much to be grateful for."

"Well, that's true enough," he laughed. "I'm much obliged to you for easing my conscience. I assure you I really had to forge my way through mostly alone."

There was another pause, and then he asked:

"What is it you expect me to do for your old Stefansky? Come, let me hear it without—I was going to say without fear. But I take that back; for I don't suppose you have ever feared anyone, have you?"

"No," answered Patuffa firmly. "No one in my life. This is what I want; I want you to give Stefansky an appearance at a Philharmonic. Please do, Mr. Hendered. He is still a very great artist. I am sure you would think so if you heard him. Perhaps he was not well when he was in England the last time; but he is in perfectly splendid form now. I wish you could have heard him play the Paganini Concerto the other day. It was magnificent. Do give him an appearance. It seems cruel that he should be passed by."

"But my dear young lady, you must know you are asking an impossibility, even if I were eating my heart out to engage him," Hendered said, spreading out his hands and letting them shrink back as if in token of

utter powerlessness. "The dates have all been filled up long ago for this season and the next—look here, you can see for yourself—and here's your own second Concert in a month's time."

He added, for the sake only of rallying her:

"You wouldn't like to give that up to him, I suppose?"

And as he spoke he thought," I'd like to see her or any of them making such a sacrifice. I'd put a hundred to one on that horse."

But Patuffa sprang up in glee.

"Of course I would give it up to him," she exclaimed. "If you can do it that way, please do, Mr. Hendered. Do let him take my place."

Her bright eyes were shining; her face was radiant. There was no mistaking the joyous eagerness of her manner, nor the sincerity of her heart.

Hendered stared at her in downright astonishment.

"Why, I only said that out of devilment," he answered. "You must be mad, or else a fool. The ball is at your feet, and all you've got to do is to kick it whilst you've the chance. You're not going to be such a duffer as to leave it alone and let some other fellow on to it."

"I have all my young days to kick it in," Patuffa said. "I'll gladly take the risk. And I'm not at all mad, thank you, and my worst enemy never called me a fool. I don't feel one either."

He laughed, in spite of his astonishment.

"Perhaps gratitude is madness," he said. "Anyway, your scheme is impossible. It would not be for our benefit, let alone yours, to substitute Stefansky for you. The musical world has been interested by a new and promising young lady violinist—yourself. It will expect to hear

you again this season—and at once. That is our tradition, and we cannot depart from it."

She took her little satchel from his desk and prepared to go.

"Well," she said simply, "I've lost. I said to myself, If I win, I win, and if I lose, I lose. Good-bye, Mr. Hendered. You have been very good to bear with me. I must think of something else for Stefansky. If one thinks hard enough, things come."

He was touched by her quiet but acute disappointment and her unselfish determination.

"Look here, Miss Rendham," he said abruptly, "you haven't lost. I will do what I can for Stefansky. He was a most gifted, impassioned player in the past, and if he had not gone wandering all over the world and absented himself for long intervals, he might have kept his place to the last. And I will admit that he did not have a very good Press or public on his last visit, in '86. I looked up his appearance here. He was entirely outshone by Joachim and Rubinstein that season. Musical enthusiasm was mopped up by those people; and in comparison with them and their new musical outlook he seemed, as I told you, out of date. But few have had his fire, and none, since Paganini, his almost demoniacal personality. I will try and put him in somehow. If there is a loophole of a chance, I promise you faithfully I will. And I will do this because . . ."

He paused, shrugged his shoulders and added with a little deprecating smile:

"Because gratitude is rare, and when one finds it in the desert of life, one stops to contemplate it and refresh one's spirit."

For a moment Patuffa could not speak. She could

only blink, her curious habit when she was overcome. At last a smile broke over her eager face, and she said:

"I cannot tell you how much I thank you. It is almost unbelievable."

"The old man shall have his innings again," Hendered said. "I never break my word."

"No, I know that," Patuffa said. "Everyone tells everyone else that. I was always hearing that in Leipzig. And Auer told me in Moscow."

He was pleased that she knew his record for good faith.

"Ah," he said, half to himself, "that is something to have won then. Almost as good as gratitude—what do you think?"

"You've won mine," she said joyously. "Now I can really enjoy anything that comes to my own little net. It is not easy to enjoy when you see someone you honour, and to whom you owe so much, out in the cold—and suffering. You've made me so happy that I feel as if I wanted to dance all the way home."

"You can begin now if you want to," he laughed.

She held out her hand to bid him good-bye, and was gone in a moment. He had the impression of a bird on the wing. He stood exactly where she had left him, with wonderment on his face—such wonderment as breaks over the countenance when Nature reveals some sweet and hidden vision of "the glory and the freshness of a dream."

"Patuffa, Patuffa," he said slowly. "A curious name."

Suddenly there came a knock at the door, and Patuffa's head was thrust in.

"You will not ever let Stefansky know I asked, will you?" she said fiercely.

"I am not generally considered a fool, and I don't feel one either," he answered, repeating her own words.

She laughed, nodded, and vanished as swiftly as before.

But Hendered still stood thinking about her. Without knowing it, he echoed the observations made by the drum:

"She won't always be like this. She'll be like them all in time, spoilt and selfish and self-centred, not caring a hang what happens to old or young, wanting all the applause for herself, wanting all the bouquets, wanting everything. But whilst it lasts, good Heavens, what a relief."

CHAPTER VII

KEBLE arrived at the Rendhams' house one evening tired and irritable. He knew afterwards that it would have been wiser if he had gone straight back to his rooms in Jermyn Street, lit the pipe of peace, studied his Alpine photographs, and got his nerves rested.

He had been briefed for the defence in a case which was attracting a great deal of public attention, a case of alleged misappropriation of public money, and he was worn out with a particularly trying day in Court. His alertness and brilliant resourcefulness in examining the unfortunate witnesses had exhausted his strength but not his authoritative way, which Mama at once sensed and with which she attempted to deal in her own charming way. He produced from his letter-case a criticism of Patuffa's playing at the Norwich Festival, showed it to her with the generous pleasure he always took in her successes, but then immediately afterwards said that he did not think it suitable that she should go off on these concert engagements alone.

"I have told you so many times, Keble," she admonished gently, "that it is of no use to interfere with Patuffa's freedom. Patuffa likes her freedom more than anything on earth, and has always had it. She comes and goes as she pleases. When she wants me, I go with her; when she doesn't, I stay at home. She used to make her own arrangements and carry them out from the age of eight or nine years onward. I laugh now when I think of it, but I did not laugh then. It is her nature. She was born independent, and independent she will remain. She can perfectly well take care of herself in any circumstances. She knows how to protect herself and others. If you want to win her love, you will never win it by trying to edit her. You know I am very fond of you, Cousin Keble, and very proud of you, and sometimes I think I would dearly like to have you as a son-in-law; but at other times I think you are the last man in the world to make Patuffa happy—or be made happy by her."

"Perhaps I shall learn, Cousin Marion," he said, so humbly that Mama, as always, was touched by him.

"Perhaps you will, Keble," she said kindly.

"You must know that it is my great caring for Patuffa which makes me at times what she calls domineering," he said, half to himself. "I suppose it is only at times that I am trying? Or is it always?"

"No, not always," laughed Mama softly. "By no means always. But do bear in mind how your father ruined your mother's life by that quiet bullying which broke her spirit."

"Yes, I remember," he said, and lapsed into silence. Then he lifted his head, smiled one of his endearing

smiles, and added, "But I cannot imagine Patuffa's spirit broken by me or anyone—can you?"

"No," Mama answered. "I have no fear about that. Patuffa would escape long before it came to that. I'm glad she is like that. I am glad she is free and dashing, and with a bit of the wild bird in her. I hope she will never lose it, whatever happens to her. But at least she will never lose her loyalty—that I'm sure of. Her loyalty to Stefansky in the midst of her own success touches me every time I think of it. So patient and gentle she has been with him."

"Unbearable little worm," Keble blurted out.

Mama flushed.

"I won't have you say that," she said indignantly. "Stefansky——"

At that moment Patuffa dashed into the room, nodded to Keble, gave her mother a hug and cried excitedly:

"Mama, I've won, I've won. Hendered is going to try and put Papa Stefansky into a Philharmonic. And he'll keep his word. He's a man of his word is Hendered. Isn't it great? I'm so happy I don't know what to do with myself."

They both forgot Keble in their joy. Patuffa gave an account of her interview, said she got on with Hendered capitally, and that he had been extraordinarily kind, fat, old, oily thing though he was! She made no mention of the sacrifice she had proposed, and dwelt on no details, but merely said that Hendered had refused at first, and then, when he remembered Stefansky's glorious past, he had relented and promised to do what he could.

"Won't it be simply splendid if he plays at a Philharmonic?" she said, throwing her arms in the air and

dancing around. "And it was your idea, Mama—don't you forget that."

"Yes, but I stopped at home safely under cover, and you went forth as the warrior bold," laughed Mama. "Weren't you one little bit nervous?"

"No, of course not," she scorned. "What could the fat, oily one have done to me? Sent me flying, that's all. Instead of which, he was most frightfully kind, and when I told him he had made me so happy that I felt I wanted to dance all the way home, he said I could begin at once if I liked."

Very charming Patuffa looked in her unselfish excitement, flushed, eager and triumphant in a cause not her own, and yet her own, since protecting those she loved was part of her very nature. With her quick mind's eye she saw little old Papa Stefansky no longer sad and fallen from high estate, but in the fullness of his former pride, bowing to a wildly enthusiastic audience. If Keble had but glanced at her face, he would have been arrested by the nobility of its joyous expression, and would have sympathised with her happiness at the right moment and might have advanced a step or two in the direction of his goal. But he missed his chance, sat mute, sulking and detached, stared into the fire, and very deliberately lit another cigarette. He considered that everyone made an absurd fuss over that wretched Stefansky, and he certainly was not going to contribute to the burnt offerings.

Suddenly Patuffa became aware of his "non-co-operation."

"You are a pig, Keble," she said, fixing her eye on him with a certain amount of amusement. "Why can't you be a Christian and say you're glad also?"

"I'm not in the least glad," he said stubbornly. "I'm perfectly indifferent."

"Oh, well, Stefansky won't die from that," she snapped.

"No, I imagine not," he said dryly. "It would take a good deal more than that to annihilate that little mountebank."

An angry flush mounted to Patuffa's cheeks, and her eyes went to a pin's point. Mama saw those signs, knew that there was going to be a scene, had an immediate feverish longing for Steyning and "ordered serenity," and retired to cover in her bedroom.

Keble had so far checked utterance to Patuffa of what he really thought of Stefansky; but now that he had let one fatal word loose, he liberated others with something like a glad relief.

"I cannot for the life of me understand why you should trouble yourself about Stefansky," he continued. "A man like that can perfectly well take care of his own opportunities. It seems entirely unsuitable and unnecessary for you to take this office on yourself. Not dignified, not desirable."

Patuffa remained silent. Perhaps her silence irritated him the more. She had stooped to pick up the Norwich Festival article which had fallen on the floor, glanced at it and tossed it with deliberate negligence into the fire.

"Have you done?" she asked at last, challengingly.

"No, I haven't done," he said. "I wish to tell you that I have enquired about this contemptible and conceited old man, and have learnt nothing favourable about his life. He bears no good character. He is unfit to be associated with you in any way, and intimacy with him will give to people an entirely false impression of you, Patuffa."

"You don't mean it?" remarked Patuffa with quiet but mock concern. "Dear, dear me, what terrible and afflicting news."

It was Keble's turn to flush with anger.

"You don't know the world," he said impatiently, "nor does your mother, otherwise she would think with me that your well-meant efforts on his behalf this morning have been most unfortunate and ill-advised. I am sure that Mr. Hendered, who is a man of the world, would think the same, even though he yielded to your request. Why concern yourself about Stefansky at all? He is not worth it—self-centred and ungenerous little worm—could not even rejoice in your success—had to be jealous even of you. Do you suppose I didn't see it?"

She turned to him with the fierceness of a tigress.

"No, I don't suppose that," she sneered. "You'd see the worst in everyone, and only the worst."

"Look here, Patuffa," he said, changing his tone suddenly to one of pleading, "be patient with me, be reasonable. I am only speaking the truth because I care so much—you must know I care. I want so terribly to protect you."

"Care," she exclaimed, stamping her foot. "If you cared for me you'd understand. You can't understand. All you know how to do is to bully. But you'll not bully me—that's quite certain. And as for protecting me, I don't want to be protected. I've told you so scores of times. I can protect myself and Mama also, perfectly. Enquired about Stefansky, have you? Well, let me tell you you're not worthy to have the privilege of being in the same room with him—a great musician with gifts from the Gods. You make me hate you, Keble. I can't breathe the same oxygen with you."

She made a dash for the door and was gone. Alone in her room, she wept from rage.

CHAPTER VIII

I

STEYNING had taken on himself a bewildering task when he suggested that Stefansky should sit for his portrait. If that fitful personage turned up at all, it was generally at the wrong hour, when someone else was expected or was already in possession of the field. His moods, too, were various and uncertain. Sometimes he would begin by being the so great Stefansky whose portrait everyone would wish to behold. Yes, yes, thousands from every quarter of the globe, from Java, China, New Zealand, Japan, South Africa, would be waiting in queues to gaze upon the countenance of the so famous Stefansky. But perhaps in the middle of that same sitting he would exclaim that it was all waste of time, and that no one in the so beastly world would care now for Stefansky's picture. And at the end he would recover himself and rub his hands and say:

"Aha, Mr. Steyning, it is a great and grand subject you have for your brush."

It certainly was a remarkable subject, and if Steyning could have caught Stefansky with a Tartini's Devil's Trill Sonata expression on his countenance, the picture might well have startled and electrified the most unimpressionable observer. But Steyning had fallen into a rut of Bishops and Heads of Colleges and Masters of the Hunt; and Stefansky was beyond his range. In her secret heart Mama knew that, though she encouraged the distraught artist by pretending all was going well. She shepherded

Stefansky to the studio, and at Steyning's urgent request remained on point duty throughout the sittings. Steyning could never have managed him without her help. As she sat, a charming and restful presence bending over her embroidery, he glanced at her with ever-increasing longing, and vowed that he must have her, and that Patuffa, who was the obstacle in his pathway to Mama's affections, must be made not to count.

How she was to be made not to count, was not clear to him; but he suddenly felt a courage which would be able to cope with all difficulties. He did not understand Patuffa, and indeed was vaguely frightened of her. It was this vague fear which had hitherto restrained him from proposing to Mama. He had not been sure that he could handle her masterful daughter. But the moment came when all remembrance of her as an obstacle was swept away.

One morning Stefansky in his most perverse mood arrived at the studio on the wrong day, and found that Steyning was painting the portrait of a financial magnate's wife. As the magnate had commissioned a whole series of family portraits, it was certain that he was a client to be cherished rather than insulted, either in person or by proxy. Stefansky could not have been expected to take this little detail into consideration. All he knew was that here was a peeg of a woman interfering with his plans and his portrait and his convenience. He rushed into the studio in a great rage, waving his arms wildly around, in a manner to disturb anyone's nervous equilibrium. Truly he looked like a devil unloosed, as he shouted:

"How dare this peeg of a woman take the place of the so great Stefansky. Send her away this moment, or I drag her out of the room by her so false hair."

It is difficult to say what would have occurred if Mama had not suddenly appeared on the horizon, advancing like the gracious charmer she always was, with healing in her wings.

"Papa Stefansky," she said in her most winning tones, "what are you doing and what are you saying? Now did I not tell you yesterday that this was not your morning here? And did we not arrange that you and I should go together to the auction sale of old fiddles at Puttick and Simpson's? When you did not come and fetch me, I guessed what had happened."

"Madame Mama, Madame Mama, I am desolated," he cried. "I kiss your hand in the so great desolation of my speerit. To have forgotten Madame Mama! What can the great Stefansky do to win Madame Mama's forgiveness?"

"Play to us," she answered with sudden inspiration. "It is the only thing you can do to earn the forgiveness of all of us."

And turning to the magnate's wife she said:

"When you hear him play, you will only remember that he has played."

So indeed it proved. Stefansky seized his violin, without which he never ventured into the world, and the magnate's wife passed from alarm and vexation and offended dignity to wonder and pleasure and gratitude and enthusiasm, as she listened to his amazing rendering of wild gypsy dances, followed by his dreamy tenderness in one or two of the Nocturnes of Chopin.

And later, when Steyning apologised to her, she said:

"No, no, you must not apologise. I've had one of the most wonderful experiences in my life."

The triumphant ending of the incident was that she

wafted Stefansky away in her carriage and took him home to lunch.

Mama and Steyning were left alone. And now came Steyning's moment. He sank down on the sofa beside her, captured her hand and put it to his lips.

"You came at the right time for me, which indeed would be any time, as you well know," he said. "You mean so much to me, Marion—everything. Ever since I've known you, nothing has seemed worth while without you. Work has lost its zest, and ambitions have lost their thrill. I used to be happy and contented in this studio. It is only since you have been sitting here, shedding your sweetness around me, that I have realised the full measure of my loneliness. Don't let me go back to that, Marion. Say that you love me and that you'll have me. You know I love you. I know you love me. We want each other. We could be so happy together. Think of it—how happy we could be."

Mama closed her eyes. But she was smiling radiantly.

"And I am sure I could be some comfort to you," he went on softly. "I know I could. I could be a real father to your boys. There would be a home that was still their own—their very own—waiting for them when they return from their voyages. And as for Patuffa—well, I would do my utmost best to make her happy. I would learn to understand her and win her love. You would teach me, and it would not be possible for me to fail because of my deep, deep love for you."

Mama said not a word. She was torn as ever between Steyning and Patuffa. The love note in his voice thrilled her. The thought of the happiness which might he hers, stirred her. But her love for Patuffa had grown even richer as the years went on. It had increased as

she watched the unfolding of her turbulent child's character: the generous impulses ever fresh and flowing: the loyalty unimpaired and permanent: the imperiousness unabated but honestly combated: the deep, unalterable affection on which Mama knew she could always reckon: the lovableness which had acquired a touch of tenderness in addition to its former irresistible charm. And now that the moment had come when Mama had to make a decision, the very thought of a changed relationship with this child of her heart was disturbing. A changed relationship. That was what she had to face. Could she face it?

Yet there was another side to the picture. Mama's longing for ordered serenity, about which Mme. Tcharushin always teased her, was a real one. Her upbringing had been in prosperous, settled circumstances; and it was natural enough that she should be tempted by the vision of a calmer life than that afforded by exciting events, tumultuous upliftments, and all the variations of circumstance arising out of Patuffa's professional career. And Patuffa, though entirely unselfish in many ways, was always exacting mentally and spiritually.

No wonder then that Mama had yearned sometimes, when she was most tried, for a haven of rest in someone's heart. And it had so chanced that when she was feeling that need acutely, Andrew Steyning, a quiet, calm and restful nature, had come into her life. She had known instinctively that he, and only he, could give her what she wanted—or thought she wanted. She knew it now when she listened to his pleading.

And suddenly Patuffa was blotted out of the picture. And Mark and Eric on their war ships followed suit. Mama's present responsibilities and duties fled like pale

ghosts before the daylight. New joys, new interests and a new happiness took their place. She saw herself here —in Andrew's home—her own new home. She was working whilst he painted. She was stirring up his ambition when he flagged. She was guarding him, loving him and being loved in a way she had hoped for but had never experienced in her former marriage with Patuffa's father.

Andrew's voice—ah, what a tender, harmonious, persuasive voice—recalled her from her visionings.

"Give in, dear Marion—there is nothing to fear. Why should you fear? Why should you hesitate? We love each other. I need you, you need me—there is no barrier. I'll stand by the boys and Patuffa as if they were my own, and win them all."

Mama gave in.

He sprang up, caught her in his arms; and they forgot the world in the ecstasy of love. Not the love as the young know it perhaps; but none the less wonderful, perhaps more wonderful, when to passion and desire is added the hunger for tender comradeship and ripened friendship, which bring balm and healing for past mistakes and sufferings and dispel the phantom of loneliness hovering always around the dim pathway of those who wander alone as the years go on to their mysterious ending.

They arranged to celebrate their engagement—which was to be a short one—by spending the next day in Steyning's little country house above Streatley, on the lovely Berkshire Downs. So Mama threw over all her duties, abandoned her home, left Patuffa to see after herself when she returned from Leeds, and went off with her artist.

It was one of those delightful mornings which the late autumn vouchsafes us: a bracing freshness in the air with a touch of early frost, and sunshine illumining the red and golden tints of the trees by the riverside and in the copses and plantations on the Downs. They drove up to his house, baited there to lunch, and then wandered on the heights, amongst the junipers, and looked down on the farspreading plain, and the thin silver line of the river in the distance, and the villages nestling in a wealth of greenery. The larks sang for them. For them the peewits took great and lofty flights, wheeling far and high. For them fragrances were wafted from the pine-woods, and shadows of the clouds stole over the slopes and vanished as mysteriously as they came.

Nature was theirs. The world was theirs. Love was theirs.

II

Patuffa returned from Leeds to find the house deserted, the maid out, and no Mama waiting to welcome her and share with her a tempting little meal. It was such an unusual occurrence that she wondered whether Mama had been taken ill and was expiring on the top of her bed. She dashed up to the bedroom, but found no expiring parent there.

Then something prompted her to look in Mama's best hat box. She noted that her latest and smartest headpiece was missing. She glanced in the wardrobe and observed that Mama's new coat and skirt had vanished, also her new umbrella with which she had endowed her a few days before. She laughed. Mama had evidently gone on a private spree and dressed herself up in her most engaging clothes.

"Gone off with my future stepfather," she said. "That's it. Taken advantage of my absence. What a parent! What a world! How am I going to swallow my stepfather? I must, though."

She was so amused, that it never struck her to resent having been forgotten. She was imperious and demanding in many ways, but never ill-tempered or lofty in the ups and downs of domestic life. She took things as they came and enjoyed herself in circumstances when a really spoilt woman might have shown irritation or anger. Her masterfulness manifested itself in mental, emotional, spiritual forms, never in material issues.

So now, thoroughly pleased with her successful appearance in Leeds, much intrigued over Mama, and quite convinced that Pleasure and not Tragedy was keeping her away from the domestic hearth, Patuffa settled down, robed herself in her mackintosh, against which the most elegant Parisian tea-gown still had no chance in her favour, and foraged for sardines, onions, bread and cheese and coffee. She was still enjoying these dainties when the front bell rang.

"My erring mother returned," she thought, and ran upstairs munching a large bit of cheese.

She opened the door not to her erring mother, but to Keble Fairbourne.

"Hullo, Keble," she said, not unkindly.

"Hullo," he said, a little sheepishly; and he stood hesitating on the threshold.

"Come in," she smiled. "Be not afraid. I am not going to quarrel with you. Quarrels are silly and only fit for your old law courts. I suppose you have come to apologise for your hatefulness about my poor old Stefansky."

"No," he answered slowly. "Not exactly that."

"Then perhaps you've come to say that you undertake henceforth not to poke your nose into my affairs nor abuse my friends?" she suggested.

"No, not exactly that either," he replied with a faint smile on his face.

"Then what on earth have you come for?" she said good-naturedly. "You are a funny, hateful old thing, Keble."

"I have come with tickets for the Lyceum, for the *Merchant of Venice,* for to-night," he said. "I thought that if you would condescend for once to breathe the same oxygen with me, you and I and Cousin Marion might go and enjoy Irving and Ellen Terry."

Patuffa laughed.

"Mama is out," she said. "Perhaps she would have gone. I don't know. I should love to go, as you know. But I just won't. I have not arrived at that pitch of reconciliation yet, specially as you show no signs of repentance."

"I cannot repent for wishing to take care of you," he said stubbornly. "I might possibly repent for a wrong choice of words. Would that answer the purpose?"

"No," she said. "You'd think you had scored a triumph. I'm not coming."

"Then I shall have to go alone?" he asked naively.

"It looks like it," Patuffa answered. "Do you want to have a cup of coffee before you go? I don't mind doing that much for you."

"No, thank you," he said, and without another word he turned on his heel and disappeared down the street.

She stood thinking of him, with a half puzzled look on her face. Why did she like Keble at all? She did

like him sometimes. When he had not one of his bullying and interfering attacks on, she liked old Keble very much. She hoped to goodness that liking would never grow into loving. That did happen with some people. But it was not probable that it would happen with her. Good gracious, think of it! What an appalling come down to surrender to the dogged persistence of Keble after exciting little affairs with thrilling people like that composer in Leipzig and that *Parsifal* singer in Berlin and that strange and alluring poet in Moscow.

"You would be a fool, Patuffa," she said aloud. "Don't be a fool."

"I won't," she answered aloud. "I'm quite safe. If I were ever to feel the slightest, the very slightest impulse of something more than friendship towards him, it would perish at once from something he did or said—like his recent outburst against Papa Stefansky."

But he had come to apologise. The theatre tickets were his way of apologising, for he knew well that the theatre rested her more than anything. Kind of Keble, really. He was kind when he was not hateful. But she was glad she had not succumbed to the invitation, tempting though it had been. For the house was very lonely. The silence and loneliness pressed on her.

What would she do if she were really left alone in the world? What would she do, how would she bear it if Mama were to marry soon—very soon? The prospect was serious enough, but the actuality would be awful.

For a long time she sat in her music room, passive and inert, until a string on one of her violins broke, as if to remind her that something remained which no one could take from her—her career, her ambitions, her passionate joy in her art. She sprang up to put on another string,

tuned, and from tuning passed into improvisation, and from improvisation into Bach's Chaconne, which was down for her next concert.

And the moment of soul loneliness slipped by.

III

Mama returned happy, radiant and entirely irresponsible and unrepentant. She was entranced with her stolen day and aglow with her secret, which she wanted to share with Patuffa the moment she entered the house. Yet, as she went upstairs to the music-room, she wondered how her child would take the news she had to give her. Would she be unselfish, tender, joyous, light-hearted, indulgent, fierce, furious, sad, heart-broken? Which? Mama was so uplifted that nothing that anyone said or looked or did would have mattered much.

Patuffa was still practising when a knock came at the door. Mama never upset people's nerves by breaking into a room or disturbing their privacy. And she invariably arrived when one wanted her. Yet perhaps that was easy to do, since she was always wanted. Patuffa's face lit up as she called out:

"Come in, darling Mama."

She added when Mama presented herself:

"All your best things on. You do look a perfect dear. As I always tell you, I am frightfully glad that I have a beautiful Mama. Such an asset in one's life."

"Patuffa, I forgot all about your meal and about Jane's day off," Mama said, smiling irresponsibly. "I forgot everything. But I've had a heavenly time in Berkshire."

"So very glad," nodded Patuffa. "Alone, I suppose. Alone in Berkshire. It sounds most stimulating."

Mama laughed happily.

"Andrew and I went to his lovely little house above Streatley. And we had a tramp over the Downs. I have something to tell you."

"I believe you've got married in my absence," Patuffa said.

"No, not that," Mama answered, blushing. "But listen, now."

She told her what had happened in the studio after Stefansky's departure, and she ended with:

"And oh, my little Patuffa, I'm so enjoying all the love-making and all the happiness—I daresay it sounds ridiculous to you at my age—but I'm divinely happy."

Then Patuffa was so kind and tender that Mama nearly wept from added joyfulness. No one could be good enough for Mama, Patuffa said. But if that wretched, cheeky, presumptuous, monstrous wretch was going to make her happy, that was the only thing that mattered.

"If he is good to you, I'll try not to hate him hugely," she said. "And if he's unkind, I'll settle my stepfather soon enough. Trust me for that."

Mama looked up and saw Patuffa already on the defensive—as much on the defensive as she had been as a child when someone or something had to be fought for or dealt with summarily. And because she felt that she could trust her absolutely, and rely entirely on her understanding and loyalty, Mama broke down the only barrier that there had ever been between herself and Patuffa, and in the excitement of the moment unfolded to her the story of her married life, with its sadness and disillusionment and the culminating tragedy of her husband's disgrace and suicide. Such a brave, pitiful account, without

one unkind or accusing word. Never could the remembrance of the dead have been more tenderly and generously evoked.

"When the dead man is praised on his journey, bear, bear him along,
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets."

But Patuffa read between the unspoken words. The memories of her childhood flooded her with an avalanche of understanding. The things she had laid no stress on because they meant nothing to her, the things which had puzzled her but were beyond her, now stood out clearly as signposts for the guidance of her mind as well as of her heart.

Mama had suffered in her first marriage. That was clear. And now that she had the chance of a happiness denied to her in her early years, nothing must stand in the way to prevent it from being realised to the full. Patuffa vowed silently that no word or deed of hers should disturb the harmony of her mother's joy.

But alone in her room that night she lay awake, grim and tense. She knew now that she had lost Mama. Henceforward their old relationship would be changed utterly. She had always been Mama's principal concern. Eric and Mark had received their full share of love, of course, but between Mama and herself there had ever been a close and secret bond. And the boys had been so much away, first on their training-ships and then on their men-o'-war, that they had never counted as daily friends and companions in everyday life. Whereas Mama and she had been together year in, year out, in Leipzig, in Berlin, in London, on tour—all times and everywhere, with only intermittent absences from each other.

And now the bond was going to break—had broken. She was alone, and would have to stand alone. She was deserted. She would be no one's concern. Oh, that wasn't fair to Chummy and Irene. She would always mean something intimately to them. She could always reckon on them. But they had each other. She would always be the third. She would belong to no one. She could belong to Keble if she wanted. But she didn't want Keble. She did not want any of the men whom she had dispatched on their ways. She would be alone, deserted, important to no one—only to Keble—and she did not want Keble.

Into her remembrance stole Goethe's lines, which her old German master in Dresden, gentle old Herr Riemer, had often quoted to her when he was speaking to her of the dignity of the Art of Music, of its great mission, and of the sufferings of spirit which all true artists must pass through in striving after their ideals of service and expression. She had wondered at them, as a child, but now she knew their import:

"Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass,
Wer nie die kummervollen Nächte
Auf seinem Bette weinend sass,
Der kennt euch nicht, ihr himmlischen Mächte."

CHAPTER IX

I

CHUMMY and Irene being away, it was to Madame Tcharushin that Patuffa went for some kind of comfort. Madame had always the power of restoring buoyancy to her godchild and many other people as well. She had suffered so much, and had been through so many crises

and dangers in the course of her career as a revolutionary, that in her presence small personal details of personal life retreated into unimportance, and one instantly felt it to be absurd to make any fuss over the happenings of peaceful and safe everyday life. It was not so much what Madame Tcharushin said, but what she stood for. And her sense of fun, which must often have saved herself and her fellow revolutionaries from despair in their darkest hours, added to her equipment of usefulness in the rôle of consoler.

Madame Tcharushin was of the type that does not change. She had the secret of eternal youth — a secret of the spirit. Her bright eyes, her vivacious manner, her slight, active figure, her short stature, the eagerness of her expression, the firm but graceful poise of her small head on her neck, gave an immediate impression of permanent youthfulness, capable of any initiative and endurance. It was strange that the ups and downs of her adventurous life had not robbed her of her attractive freshness. But it hadn't. That was all there was to say about it.

Patuffa ran up the stairs to Madame Tcharushin's rooms, armed with her violin, in case old Father Kuprianoff wanted to hear some Russian tunes, especially a strange little Ukrainian love song which Tatiana Dubrovina used to sing to him in the past, whilst she rocked herself backwards and forwards in her chair. Tatiana had died in the Schlüsselburg fortress, but her memory was sweet and green in Coptic Street.

Kuprianoff had not yet arrived to occupy his armchair; and Madame was alone, and busy with the samovar.

She laughed when Patuffa gave her the latest news of Mama.

"Aha," she said, "so it is now definitely settled that Marionska will marry her Steyning man. Well, my child, let us hope that she will have better luck with her second marriage. No, she was not happy in the past, but she was always brave and charming. She has been brave with you, too, Patuffska, for you were a handful, weren't you? I think you are still one, isn't it so? Well, well, we are all handfuls to those we love best. But now you have this great chance to be very good to Mama. You will take it, of course, if I know anything of my godchild."

"I will try to take it," Patuffa said, making a grimace. "I should be a pig not to. I think it is about time that Mama got free of me. But I shouldn't be human if I didn't grudge giving her up to that man, now that everything is settled. And Pat, what on earth does she see in him? Tell me that out of your wisdom."

Madame Tcharushin spread out her hands and shrugged her shoulders.

"My child," she said, "what does anyone see in anyone? Who was it said that the best part of the love between friends, as in a work of art, cannot be explained? But you are right. You would not be human if you did not grudge giving Mama up to the admirable and dull man. Very naturally also you must be wanting to tear his hair out. I likewise feel the same primitive and healthy impulse. Only we shall not show it very much. We do it in secret, you and I together—in harmony, as you and I have always been. If I am in Coptic Street, then you come to Coptic Street, and together you and I tear out his hair in grand, great bunches, not handfuls. If I am in Russia, well, then, you come to find me in a far, far off little village where I speak to the peasants of liberty and a new life of freedom and happiness, and

there again you and I together tear out his hair! We act together, and behave ourselves together—isn't it so?—fellow conspirators."

Patuffa nodded. She was a little comforted already.

"And what is it of a sacrifice, my Patuffska?" Madame went on. "It is so little, so nothing when you come to think of it. You have her alive, even though she marries her Steyning man. She is in the world. You will be able to reach her. It is so little, so nothing."

She went to her desk and drew out a piece of paper which she scanned with a painful scrutiny which banished her strange youthfulness for the moment; and Patuffa read on her face the record of a life of tragic happenings.

"Listen, Patuffska," she said. "This is the fragment of a letter I had yesterday from the mother of a friend of mine, a very dear comrade who met her death in Siberia two months ago. She committed suicide in prison. And her mother writes to me:

"'I never grudged her to the cause. I schooled myself not to grudge her. It took time and strength, but I ended by being joyful for her sake that no claim on her that I, as her mother, might seem to have, had prevented her from following her chosen path. She loved me, and if I had traded on her love, she might have been by my side now, peaceful and prosperous, and taking her due part in the high social circle to which she belonged. It is my consolation and my pride also that I sped her on her way to fulfil herself on her own lines. For me, the end came at the beginning. When I gave her up, I knew I gave her up for ever, and that I must never falter in the sacrifice, so that she might not have the burden of my sadness added to the heavy load she had taken on her young shoulders.'"

She put the piece of paper back in her desk, and Patuffa looked out of the window in silence. At last she murmured:

"I am ashamed, Pat."

"No, not ashamed, Patuffska. No need to be ashamed. But if we have the sense to be helped by comparisons, small miseries can find and keep their own measure. That is all. And now for the samovar. It is not often that you and I find ourselves alone together in these important and grown-up days of yours, when you stand on a platform and make strange scratchings before a large audience. Na, na, very beautiful scratchings. That I say. But now we have the time, I want not to hear only of Mama's love affairs, but of Patuffska's. It is amusing, isn't it, that Mama gets married again, and that her daughter remains a solitary and deserted old maid at the so very great and declining age of twenty-three years? It is a tragedy and no mistake. What have you done with some of those admirers of whom I have heard from Mama?"

"Cast them all off," laughed Patuffa. "Hated them all, one by one. Made awful scenes with them and they decamped, of course!"

"And now I learn that you have been angry with your Cousin Keble," Madame said.

"I was not going to have him abuse Papa Stefansky," Patuffa said truculently.

"That I can well believe," Madame smiled. "All our reputations are safe in your keeping, dear Patuffska. I feel most comfortably that I could commit any sin, however monstrous, and be quite sure of your praise and protection. But tell me, has Keble also decamped?"

"Oh, no, he hasn't decamped," Patuffa laughed. "He never will decamp. He turned up last night with tickets

for the Lyceum, looking as stubborn as a rock, but meaning kindly and intending to propitiate me in his own queer way. But I didn't go, though I was dying to."

"Well, well," said Madame, "he is a rock of stubbornness and faithfulness. But, as I told him the other day, the only thing for a rock to do is to blast itself into a thousand fragments, and then someone could perhaps pick up the best bits. You, perhaps?"

Patuffa shook her head.

"I don't think so," she laughed. "I should be so dreadfully afraid of the choice fragments forming into a solid rock again. Wouldn't you?"

"Yes," said Madame. "A rock is a frightening structure, a dangerous building. I trust that you will rebel against a rock, as you have rebelled against other dangerous things in life in your so wicked past."

"Helped on by you, Pat," Patuffa reminded her.

"Not much. You had it in you, my child. How I used to laugh when you ran away from your so many schools. A rebel by nature. If you could have been a revolutionary Russian, with all the injustices of your country tearing at your heartstrings, you would have done great things for Russia. Well, well, that was not for you. I would not have wished it for you. If you had been Russian, yes. I would have moulded something out of such tempting, anarchist material. I could not have resisted. But being English, you were safe from the wiles of your godmother. Except in small matters, like an unblasted rock, for instance! No, we leave rocks and peaceful harbours for Mama, and we do nothing to spoil her enjoyment of those so very boring possessions. We help her, and we say not too much of what we think of the excellent man and his so respectable pictures. Can

he paint Stefansky? No, never! Ha, I laugh to think of it. But that is another secret. We must pretend he can do it—to please Marionska. But—ha!"

A mischievous twinkle was in her bright eye as she elaborately put her finger to her lips.

"Hush, hush," she whispered. "We must respect the ordered serenity."

"We'll try," laughed Patuffa. "But—ha!"

They were still laughing when old Father Kuprianoff crept into the haven he loved so well, followed by Moshinki and Tchemodanoff, who were on their way home from the Reading Room of the British Museum. They had all known Patuffa since she was a little girl, when Kuprianoff used to tell her Russian folk stories in very funny broken English, and Moshinki in still quainter English used to try and explain their meaning. She played to them now, and they smoked and drank their tea; and at the end she took the theme of Tatiana Dubrovina's little Ukrainian love story and gently improvised on it with a tenderness and a true poetic feeling all her own.

When the last notes had died away, Kuprianoff looked up and said:

"Tcharushin, do you not see our little Tatiana whom we have lost, rocking herself to and fro? Do you not hear her singing that song in her low voice? No, we have not lost her. She is here, since we remember her. We drink to her."

They rose and drank to Tatiana Dubrovina.

Patuffa came away from Coptic Street greatly helped by that atmosphere of dedication to a great cause. She was released from any brooding sense of personal tragedy in a small matter, and braced up to meet with a gay

cheerfulness the changed relationship with Mama. Each time she came in intimate contact with Mme. Tcharushin and her comrades, she rose out of her rut, even only momentarily, and glimpsed a far horizon where aims and hopes and fears and endeavours were divorced from personal ambition and personal motive. Each time she passed a step further on in a spiritual development which had an immeasurable effect on her art.

She had always received enormous help from the people with whom she had been lucky enough to be associated. Ever since he had known her, Chummy had stimulated her interest in beautiful things; and thus she had grown up with a mind that was open and ready to invite and retain impressions. If she had been less sensitive, her chances might have passed her by. But she hailed them and held them.

Madame Tcharushin, with her largeness of vision and her brave, undaunted spirit, was one of her chances.

II

Patuffa had an engagement to play at a private concert in Park Lane, and, as most artists, disliked beyond everything a drawing-room audience. But the fee was large, and the hostess, Mrs. Allworth, was enthusiastic and influential. To have the *entrée* to her circle was considered a great piece of good luck. Hendered had procured the engagement for her—a sign that he was bearing her welfare in mind.

The audience talked throughout the first group of songs sung by a beautiful mezzo-soprano. When Patuffa's turn came, she said to Mrs. Allworth:

"I can't play if they're going to talk. I never could. Could you not ask them to be silent? The unfortunate singer

had not a chance against their chatter. Such a beautiful voice, too. It does seem a shame."

"I fear I can say nothing," Mrs. Allworth deprecated. "You see, dear Miss Rendham, they are all society people, accustomed to do as they please. I beg of you to make the best of it, as others do."

"I think I ought to warn you that I shall leave off if they talk," Patuffa said quietly.

Mrs. Allworth smiled unbelievingly, shrugged her shoulders a little, and left things to fate. But she decided that on another occasion she would, when engaging an artist, enquire first and foremost whether the musician, however distinguished, was docile in a drawing-room. Docility was an indispensable quality, and far more important in the circumstances than a fine tone or technique.

Patuffa stood up, tuned her violin, waited for the talking to subside, and as it did not, began, and, to be just to her, persevered.

"Ah," thought Mrs. Allworth, with a sigh of relief, "she *is* docile after all. They are all the same—make a fuss at first and then go through with the ordeal like lambs."

But she need not have been so sure. Brahms's Third Hungarian Dance suddenly ceased, and Mrs. Allworth heard a voice say quietly:

"I am very sorry to disturb your conversation. I will leave off gladly."

Patuffa's eyes had gone to a pin's point, and her face was tense; but her bearing was dignified and calm, and she achieved the miracle of quelling that audience, if only for a moment.

"Shame on us," cried one or two. "Please go on."

"No, thank you," said Patuffa fearlessly. "It isn't

that I am giving myself airs or anything of that sort. That would be ridiculous, but the truth is that my nerves go all to bits. They really do."

Before they could recover from the amazement caused by this very unusual protest, she had withdrawn into the ante-room where she had to face an angry and a flustered Mrs. Allworth.

"I engaged you to play the violin, Miss Rendham," she said. "I did not engage you to teach my guests manners."

She added severely:

"You will scarcely have a successful season in drawing-rooms, whatever you may achieve in concert halls, if you behave in this way."

Patuffa, with miraculous self-control, kept back a rude retort, packed up her fiddle, and escaped.

But when Mrs. Allworth apologised to her guests, one of them, an old lady, rose and defended the runaway.

"She was courageous, Mrs. Allworth," she said. "I shall not forget her standing there so fearlessly and saying she could not go on. If more musicians followed her example, it would be better for them—and us."

That was thirty years ago. Perhaps Patuffa did not give her lesson in vain. Perhaps because of her and others, drawing-room audiences of the rich have learnt some bare elementary rules of courtesy towards the musicians and respect for their art.

Patuffa arrived home, feeless, of course, but delighted with the protest she had made, and indifferent about her loss in solid money and solid opportunities for further social engagements. Rebellion in some form or other was her life's blood, and the light of battle was still in her eyes as she recounted her adventure to Mama and Andrew

Steyning, whom she found ensconced in the armchair and very much at home.

But Mama's attention wandered. Her mind was with Andrew; and Patuffa instantly sensed the differentiation in the quality and quantity of interest which her mother usually showed in all the things that happened to her, great or small.

So here, then, was the beginning of that change. She, Patuffa, was not to count. A chill struck at her heart. It was almost more than she could bear to see this stranger, who was going to be her stepfather, in possession of the field. She forgot about her compact with Mme. Tcharushin, forgot about that Russian mother's letter, forgot about her own resolutions to make things easy and happy for Mama. She glared at poor Steyning, received his overtures of friendliness with reluctant tolerance, and was more than brusque in her manner when he congratulated her on her success.

"Thank you," she said grimly in a tone which implied, *"Mind your own business. I don't want your congratulations."*

She saw Mama cast a hasty, reproachful glance at her, and Steyning retreat into himself with an almost imperceptible, hopeless little shrug. Then she realised that she was behaving horridly, and she pulled herself together at once.

She held out her hand to Steyning and said half penitently, half humorously:

"I shall improve, stepfather-to-be. You see, I've got to recover from the shock."

"Yes, yes, Patuffa," he said, eager to meet her half way. "Of course you have. I'm committing a robbery. I know well. But—I couldn't help myself."

And he pointed to Mama in an altogether endearing fashion, as if to explain that the temptation had been beyond his power of resistance.

"No, I don't suppose you could help yourself," Patuffa said gently.

She added with a gay little toss of the head:

"Well, well, my children, bless you."

She left them. They watched the door close after her—and forgot her.

She sought her music-room, took out her fiddle and thought she would work off steam by tackling the tremendous passages of thirds, octaves, and tenths in Paganini's Concerto in D major. But the plan did not work. She was restless and could not concentrate. She suddenly felt she could not stay in the house. She wanted movement and space, and longed to be in the country, tramping over the moors, watching the racing clouds, seeing the lark rise higher and higher, hearing the cry of the peewit, bathing herself in Nature, which had never failed since her earliest childhood to minister to her in all her moods. Always Nature and Patuffa had been knit in closest friendship. Well, she couldn't have the country now, worse luck. But at least she could walk, and the evening was fine and dry. She loved being out in the dark.

She threw on her coat and little round velvet cap, and went downstairs. She waited for a moment or two in the hall, listening, half hoping for a sound, a sign from upstairs. There was no stir, no sign. If the drawing-room door had opened, and Mama's voice had called her name, she would have bounded up the stairs as in the days gone by when Mama had summoned her from the nursery to share some pleasure, play to her on the piano, or give

her the joy of intimate companionship. But no voice broke the silence now. Mama and Steyning were wandering enraptured in a remote, an enchanted world to which there was no access, and whence no message could be wafted to anyone, however dear, outside those magic regions.

She closed the front door, and paused on the pavement, uncertain in which direction to wend her way. Then Keble's voice said:

"Hullo, Patuffa, where are you off to?"

The gloom on her face lifted a little.

"I don't know," she said. "Anywhere my fancy takes me. I've got a bit of a hump and want to wear it down."

"I also have a bit of a hump," he said. "I've lost my case. My man has got seven years."

"All your brilliance in vain then?" she said. "I'm sorry."

"Yes," he laughed half-heartedly. "In vain."

"Did you come to tell me this, or did you come to tell me you were sorry at last for having been so disagreeable about Papa Stefansky?" she asked.

"To the first question the answer is in the affirmative," he said. "To the second in the negative—but with a qualification. I may even add, an emphatic qualification. Will that suffice?"

"Perhaps it will, since you've had a reverse," she conceded.

"May I ask whether you have come to the point of being able to breathe the same oxygen as myself," he asked.

"Perhaps I have," she said.

"Should I be interfering unduly in your private concerns if I were to ask what you thought of doing now?"

he ventured. "Could we, for instance, join forces, since we have both got the hump? And why are you downcast, if I might dare enquire?"

"I also have had a reverse, Keble," Patuffa answered.

"Been playing badly at your last concert?" he asked kindly. "Poor little girl. One can't always be at one's best."

"No, one can't always be at one's best," she repeated, and left it at that.

"If you have not any particular plan, why not come out to Hampstead with me?" he suggested. "I am going to my old friends, the Hendons. Madame Schumann is spending the night there. You know her, of course, and I was enjoined to persuade you to come, if by any chance you were at liberty. Come along, Patuffa. I'll run in and tell your mother."

"Mama is busy and can't be disturbed," Patuffa said abruptly. "Leave her alone."

"But she will be anxious about you," he urged.

"Nonsense, she won't be anxious," Patuffa said. "She expects me when she sees me. Moreover, at this moment she has got Steyning with her. They have become engaged."

He gave a low little whistle.

"Jove," he murmured. "So it has come to that. What an extraordinary thing."

"I don't think it is at all extraordinary," she snapped. "Why shouldn't Mama become engaged? A lot of people have paid court to Mama. The only wonder is that she has not succumbed before."

He knew now why she was depressed, but he had the sense to show no sign. He knew that an impending separation from her mother, however remote, could bring

anything but happiness to Patuffa's devoted and sensitive nature. But his own heart gave a leap. Patuffa would stand alone—and who knew?—perhaps she would turn to him. That was the thought that flashed through his brain. If he were not masterful or protective or interfering he might get his chance in very truth. If he *blasted* himself, in the manner suggested by Madame Tcharushin, his scattered fragments might find themselves at his goal. Very light-hearted became Cousin Keble. All depression over his lost case was merged in joyful hope.

"Well, let's be off, Patuffa," he said. "Certainly Cousin Marion must not be disturbed."

"I haven't said I am coming," she said obstinately. "I'd like to see dear Frau Schumann, of course. She was always so good to me. But I wanted most frightfully to have a tramp."

"You can have both," he urged. "Frau Schumann, and a jolly good tramp. The Hendons live just off the Spaniards' Road, and we can wander over the Heath to your heart's content."

"It sounds like an adventure," she said, beginning to yield. "Do you undertake not to be captious, or critical, or fault-finding?"

"I'll undertake anything you like," he agreed.

Such a lovely crisp night. Moon and stars at their brightest. Space and freedom on those gracious heights. Almost a pity to enter any enclosure. And yet once there, welcoming friends, enthusiasts of music, and Frau Schumann, that honoured presence, dignified with her own personal achievements, doubly ennobled by her history, her traditions, and her life linked with the genius of the great Master whose message she had carried through long

years of fine service. Her noble playing of the Kreisleriana. Her pleasure in Patuffa's rendering with her of Schumann's D minor Violin Sonata. Keble's generous pride in his little cousin's gifts. Patuffa, her eyes bright with rapture of spirit and the flush of exaltation on her eager face. And then once again moon and stars and space and freedom.

No masterfulness—nothing to mar the adventure.

CHAPTER X

I

MADAME TCHARUSHIN was not far wrong about Stefansky's portrait. Steyning, clever, careful and experienced as he was in portrait painting, had not that form of mind which could grasp a temperament like Stefansky's; and the result was that there was no fire in the old man's face, no real dash and devilry in his bearing. Stefansky himself was amused and said to Chummy:

"Chummy, tell me, since when did I become a very, very respectable and well conducted and well brushed English, very English gentleman? Madame Mama says it is absolutely like me, and that I am truly the person in the so strange picture. But she looks at it with the eyes of love—not for me, *hélas*, as we know, but for the painter fellow."

But he remained pleased that his portrait was being painted by a distinguished artist and would be exhibited in the 'so boring Royal Academy' together with Steyning's other canvases. If the picture served no other purpose, at least the painting of it administered some balm to his wounded pride. For as the weeks went on, he learnt the miserable truth that he was no longer wanted.

It was nearly ten years since Stefansky had been in

London, and he was aware that his last appearances had not been brilliantly successful. He was ill at the time, too ill, indeed, to care much what impression he had made or failed to make; and he had hated being in England, hated playing before conventional audiences, and at the houses of the conventional rich. He had, in fact, been at his worst, musically, mentally and socially. So he had shaken the dust of Europe off him, and toured over Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and even penetrated to China and Japan. He never settled down, never formed connections which should have lasted him for the rest of his life. And now, when he had returned to the scenes of his former triumphs, he found that the world was showering its favours on other heroes of the bow. He had been confident that when he deigned to put his foot in England again, he would be rushed at.

It was unbelievable that nothing happened. No director, no manager, no impresario, no conductor was thrilled. Old friends who had held the power in musical circles were dead. New personages looked in other directions. Some said: "Old Stefansky here? Funny, but I thought he had died long ago. Or: "Very fine in his day. Marvellous powers years ago. But now only a name." Or from the younger people: "Never heard his name even. Who was he?"

He wept from rage and grief. He agonised from jealousy over every violin player he heard. For he went to hear them all. He even went to Paris to hear one or two hated rivals. It was in vain that everyone at Headquarters, where he was staying fitfully off and on, implored him not to go. Even Maria added her entreaties to those of Chummy and Irene.

"Now look here, Mr. Stefansky," she enjoined sooth-

ingly, "don't you just be going to hear them other silly idiots. We can do much better staying at home nice and quiet, and you can practise comfortable in your room, I bringing you one of my most beautiful omelettes, and then sitting down quietly with my sewing and being the patient audience."

"Damn the omelette," Stefansky said. "Damn the audience."

"As you please," said Maria cheerfully. "I'll make the omelette and be the audience all the same. Come now, Mr. Stefansky, leave them other silly idiots to their own noises."

"Ah, there you have it, Maria," he cried triumphantly. "Noises—not music."

To Irene's remonstrances he said:

"My little, kind Irene, always so good and thoughtful, you must not worry about your so troublesome old friend. You must quietly write your stories and books, which I am very, very proud of, and which, please God, I never, never in my life shall read. All I shall do, is to interrupt you when you are busy writing them. Yet never are you impatient or cross with me. Never once, my child. How do you manage never to be cross with me when I disturb your thoughts and studies and ruin your career?"

"I put my crossness in my diary," she laughed. "I write: 'Papa Stefansky has been perfectly awful to-day, and I have been at my wits' end. Nine times he interrupted me when I was trying to finish a love scene. He had two quarrels with Chummy, and he threw his omelette at Maria's head. Then he borrowed some money from me, and rushed out and bought violets for Maria, crystallised ginger for me, and grapes for Chummy, which he ate up

himself. Peace was restored—and I finished my love scene. I think I am a wonder!'"

"And so you are, my pet," he said. "I kiss your little clever hand in great gratitude. But listen, I must go to the damned concert. The human heart loves to torture itself. Ha, there is something for you to write about in one of those stories which I shall never read. But I am proud of them."

To Chummy he said:

"Do not try to prevent me. I have to make sure that none of these new beasts play better on the violino than I play, Chummy. I must satisfy myself that no one else has my so faultless technique, my enchanting tone, my verve, my passion, my fire."

He came back entirely persuaded on those points; and in the past his conclusions would have been just. At his best, no one could have touched him. But he was unconscious that for a long time his powers had been on the wane, and that he had cheapened his art by playing only inferior music for the applause of indiscriminating audiences.

No one knew the breadth and depth of his suffering, but Patuffa knew more than anyone, since it was on her that he vented the worst of his spleen. But she kept the secret so far as he himself allowed her, made a point of never irritating him by any narration of her own affairs, and invariably hid her notices from him. It was pathetic how she sheltered him from herself in every way she could.

Irene wrote in her diary: "Patuffa protects Papa Stefansky precisely as she protected me in the old days —like a tigress preparing to spring. Her patience with

him is far greater than mine—if he only knew it, poor old dear. Never once have I heard her complain. And one morning, when Chummy ventured to remark that it would have been better for her if Stefansky had remained in Prague, she half bit his head off. But he was pleased, all the same. He loves her, as I do, for the way she is bearing herself in very trying circumstances. She pins her faith on Hendered and says that all would be well if Stefansky could have one single public appearance. But so far there has been no sign. Chummy hopes there will be no sign. But he has not said that to Patuffa yet, in case his head should be entirely bitten off, and he wants first to finish reading the *Inferno* for about the twentieth time."

But one day when Patuffa was particularly worried at receiving no news of any kind from Hendered and sought counsel from Chummy, he said gravely:

"Patuffa, surely it must have struck you that Stefansky has lost the brilliancy of his technique and all his old witchery. I have lingered outside his door listening to him many a time lately, and I have been full of concern."

She stood, a little stubborn figure, glaring at him in silence. She knew his words were true. She, too, had had awful moments of doubt as the time went on. But she had spurned those misgivings and would continue to spurn them.

"Suppose, as you wish, that he got an engagement," Chummy added, "and then made a fiasco. Far better for him not to have the chance of running the risk. At present he is only angry. But suppose he were broken-hearted, little Patuffa—what then?"

"He couldn't fail," she answered defiantly. "He would rise to the occasion. I know he would."

Chummy strolled over to the window, and looked out on the garden.

"I don't know anything sadder than the decadence of a superb talent," he said after a pause. "Singers and instrumentalists should cease at their best—die or be silent for ever. No, Patuffa, I don't want Stefansky to be heard in London again. I want him to go quietly back to Prague, angry, perhaps, and jealous, as you, my poor child, know well. Angry and jealous, but not broken-hearted, because still believing in himself and his powers. This is what I wish for my old friend."

"He couldn't fail," she repeated fiercely. "I want for him a great and glorious appearance at St. James's Hall. The house rising to its feet in homage. Thundering applause. Repeated recalls. His name shouted. Papa Stefansky pleased and excited, and all his fun and light-heartedness bubbling over as before."

Chummy was moved, as always, by her unfailing loyalty. He believed that if she could keep her spirit untouched by the vanities and temptations to which most artists succumbed sooner or later, she would make of her music a noble and living force, and be what he had ever longed and striven for her to be—a faithful servant of her art, conscious of the high mission to which she had been called. Would she prove fine enough, he wondered? Or would her generous emotions and her unselfish impulses be stifled by the sense of personal importance and insistence on the personal note? Would she always want to share?

When he asked this question of Irene, she reproached him:

"Chummy, how could you doubt? I am ashamed of you. Patuffa will always want to share. Have you for-

gotten how you taught us as children to divide out in equal parts the sunsets and the moons and stars and the Norman windows and the stained glass, and all the other lovely things you showed us and helped us to love? I am sure I often forget, but Patuffa never would."

II

Patuffa went to Manchester to play at a Richter concert where she distinguished herself by a beautiful rendering of Brahms's Violin Concerto. She was sitting in the artists' room afterwards talking to one of the Committee, when a little frail old lady came in and approached her. She waved her gold headed black stick half humorously, half imperiously, at the man and said:

"Go away, Mr. Somers, go away instantly. I want to talk to this young thing. I have something very important to say to her, and I have to say it at once before I change my mind."

"All right, Lady Westleton," he said smiling, "I retreat."

She nodded to him, and sat down by Patuffa who had risen to greet her.

"My child," she said, "you have played very beautifully. I know music, and I know musicians. I have lived all my life amongst them. You have touched me to the heart's core. I have noted well that you have thought first of the music, then of the instrument, and never of yourself. Keep that always, so that you may remain a faithful priestess of the art which is more glorious than any other."

She paused a moment and then went on:

"Amongst the collection of musical instruments owned by my husband, who died many years ago, there is a violin of rare beauty and purest tone. It is a Joseph

Guarnerius. It was played on last by Ernst in our house. Oh, my child, how he played. He wrung the heart out of it. We said no one else should touch it. So it has lain mute—a lovely thing to look at, but deprived of its natural function and mission. What folly—what waste—what folly! Typical of so much splendour and usefulness wasted in our ridiculous lives. You shall have it. I made up my mind at the end of the Adagio that it should be yours."

"But what can I say to you," Patuffa exclaimed, clutching the old lady's hand in her excitement. "How could I take such a gift from you? I could not ever deserve it."

"Do we ever get what we deserve, or deserve what we get?" laughed Lady Westleton softly. "And you could accept it, because it is, in a sense, an impersonal gift. Personal—and yet impersonal for all who hear it to share in. Come, my child, it isn't late. Drive home with me now and take possession of it before I change my mind."

"But you could change your mind afterwards, at any time, couldn't you?" Patuffa said, springing up.

"No," she smiled. "Once given, always given. Now, say good-bye to these other admirers waiting for a few of your crumbs, and we'll bring all your flowers with us. The carriage can take them and you to your hotel afterwards."

In a dream Patuffa was driven to the old lady's house. In a dream she passed through the hall, arm in arm with her new friend, who leaned lightly on her, yet a little tremblingly too, for she also was excited in a curious, suppressed way. They reached a large music-room, lofty and spacious, and as at Headquarters, with an organ built into an alcove. Many different kinds of musical

instruments hung on the walls or were reposing in cases. In a long, low cabinet against the wall were four violins under glass. Lady Westleton unlocked this cabinet and chose one of the four.

"Take it, little girl," she said in a low voice. "It will be in worthy hands. Some day you shall play on it to me—but not now. That would be more than I could bear—and I might feel I could not part with it when I heard its lovely voice. But I want you to have it—you deserve it for your astonishing interpretation of that Brahms—yes, yes, you need not look bewildered or distressed—I know what I'm about—I'm a funny, an eccentric old party—anyone will tell you that—but I know what I'm about, and this violin is to be yours."

Patuffa glanced now at the beautiful violin, now at the old lady who was under the sway of strong emotion, and now again at this treasure, coming thus unexpectedly into her possession. Her face was pale from the intensity of her excitement.

"Believe me," she said, "it will be a sacred trust."

When Patuffa arrived home, she found that Mama was out. Mama was always out in those days, enjoying gloriously happy times with Andrew Steyning.

"Mama out as usual with my much adored step-father-to-be," she said, shrugging her shoulders and relieving her feelings by shaking her fist at his photograph which stood on Mama's writing desk.

Well, she would go to Headquarters and show her treasure there. Someone would be there. She was brimful with excitement over her superb new possession, and it was absolutely necessary for her to find someone to sympathise with her. She was ashamed of herself for her

weakness, but she could not help pausing for a moment on the door step, half hoping Keble might appear on the scene and rejoice with her. There were no signs of him.

Chummy was having an Italian lesson with his favourite Italian Professor and they were both steeped in the *Inferno*. But Dante and Virgil, Sordello and Francesca da Rimini immediately retreated in favour of the Joseph Guarnerius violino. Irene was at a crucial point in the development of a new short story dealing with the Great Rebellion, but she left John Hampden in the lurch and gave all her attention and sympathy to Patuffa and Lady Westleton's glorious and generous gift.

"What a beauty," she said, stroking and caressing it. "I am glad, Patuffa. But you deserve it."

"Of course I don't deserve it, you little brick of an idiot," Patuffa laughed, pinching her ear. "But I knew you'd be as happy about it as I am. Just look at the varnish, and the scroll and the back and the belly. I'm so excited I don't know what to do with myself."

"Go up and show it to Papa Stefansky," Irene urged. "He has just come in, and is in one of his very good moods."

Patuffa dashed upstairs. She was so uplifted and joyous, that she forgot about his jealousy. Probably it never struck her that he could or would be angry about a royal gift of this nature which represented a landmark in a rising young artist's career. She knocked, and burst in upon his presence, with all her eager impetuosity. She danced around him as she cried:

"See what I've got here, Papa Stefansky—such a surprise I've had—I can scarcely believe my eyes even now—it all seems like a dream—a Joseph Guarnerius—given me by Lady Westleton in Manchester—after I'd

played the Brahms Concerto—never played on since Ernst touched it—think of that—and now mine—mine—it is incredible that I should possess such a treasure—but won't it just spur me on—look at it—isn't it a beauty?"

As she held it out to him, he seized it so roughly that she gave a cry of alarm lest it were going to fall to the ground.

"Oh, take care, take care," she cried anxiously.

"What for you tell me to take care?" Stefansky snapped, turning on her angrily. "That is something new for me to learn that I cannot hold a violino safe in my hands. And so you have had this wonderful present given to you. And what would you want with it—tell me? It is not for such as you. It is only for a great player—someone in the very front rank like myself. Never will you be there. It is not for you. All nonsense that you should have it. Ridiculous nonsense. The woman must have been fool mad."

And then and there he lost entire control of his jealousy. He forgot that it was Patuffa whom he was making the victim of his accumulated spleen and disappointment. He railed against the public, the conductors and impresarios of all countries, the violinists of the past and present and all musicians whatsoever. He scoffed at and depreciated the Joseph Guarnerius and said it was without doubt one of Joseph's inferior examples, and *that* was why the old idiot woman had been willing to part with it, and no wonder if one looked at the miserable scroll and the contemptible back—oh yes, yes, an entirely inferior example. But even then, what would Patuffa be wanting with it? Far too good for her. Ridiculous, absurd to give her a Joseph Guarnerius.

Patuffa, half stunned, stood quiet, motionless, as she had always stood in the past, when Stefansky had treated her to one of his rages.

Was she thinking that success and good luck were only bringing Dead Sea fruit to her, and that nothing mattered much, if all the glow and glory of life were liable to be quenched and dulled by the very people whom one loved most? But whatsoever she thought, no single word of remonstrance passed her lips. She waited with a resigned patience and let the torrent of his wrath expend itself whilst he threw himself about, swore, flung his arms around, paced up and down, seized the violin, turned it over, stared at it, scoffed at it and thrust it from him.

"Take your so wretched present away," he shouted. "Take it."

Suddenly she found words and anger, and her eyes blazed with indignation. She could have killed him on the spot.

"Yes," she said, "I will take it away, and, my God, I will never be such a fool again as to bring you news of any good luck that may happen to me. You've taught me my lesson well."

The tone of scorn in her voice reached him. Her utterly unlooked-for rebellion brought him instantly to his senses. As she made for the door with her violin clasped under her arm, he rushed forward and prevented her.

"No, no, little devil's child," he cried, "don't go, don't leave me—that I could not bear. I——"

He broke off, and sank into his chair, ashamed, humble, penitent.

"Forgive me, forgive me," he kept on murmuring,

his head sunk on his breast. "Very, very beautiful is the Joseph, and very, very bad-hearted your old Papa Stefansky. And it is only right you should have it to be a comfort to you and to help you in your career, my little Patuffe, and it shall be a glorious career and I will not be jealous or angry any more if you forgive me this once—just this once."

She knelt by his side, soothing him, stroking his hand, sad and solemn, but with the concerned protectiveness which one might show to a suffering child. It passed through her mind that she would never care for the Joseph Guarnerius in the same way as she would have cared if Stefansky could have shared with her the joy of it, and not grudged her the good fortune of this most generous gift. For the moment, all the bloom was off the peach. It would come back, of course, since the bloom returns in a magic and merciful renewal when one is only twenty-three years old, and life's path stretches out illumined with hopes and wondrous possibilities. But for that brief spell, Patuffa saw only a darkening shadow over a long stretching road.

Would she be like Stefansky as time went on, and want everything for herself, she wondered? Would she grudge to all others their chances, their bits of triumph and glory and unexpected good luck? Perhaps she would. But at least she must take warning and put up a fight against such a jealousy as this. But he had fought. She knew it and felt it. If he could have helped it, he would never have been jealous of his little devil's child. Never. And as she repeated the word to her soul, her anger and bitterness passed, and she forgave.

He had recovered himself, and Patuffa was standing

silently by watching him choose one of his very best E strings to put on the violin, when the door opened and Maria brought a letter for him. He jerked it on to the floor, half impatiently, half humorously, and Maria laughed and said:

"I'm not going to pick it up, Mr. Stefansky. I have the lumbagos very bad to-day. Perhaps Miss Patuffa will oblige us?"

Patuffa smiled, picked up the letter and flicked it affectionately in the old woman's face. As she glanced at it, she saw it was from the Royal Philharmonic Society.

"From the Philharmonic," she said casually, though her heart beat excitedly.

He tore it open then, and read it. His face broke into smiles. His pride returned to him at a bound. Stefansky was himself again.

"See here, Patuffe!" he exclaimed. "This is as it should be. Those peegs want me. Of course they want me. How was it that I ever doubted. Aha, I am still the great Stefansky, with my soul of fire, and my so marvellous technique and my tenderness and my phrasing—ah, how beautiful it is—isn't it so, Patuffe? They want me. You rejoice with me—you are happy for me, little Patuffe?"

George Hendered had kept his word to Patuffa and put Stefansky down for an unexpectedly vacant date.

CHAPTER XI

It was the episode of the Guarnerius which he had learnt from Stefansky, not from Patuffa, that made Chummy come to a decision on a matter weighing

heavily on his mind. He saw clearly that Patuffa was not having much peace of mind with Stefansky's varying moods, and Mama's love affair. Rumours reached him that Mama was seldom at home; and he noticed how much more frequently Patuffa rushed round in her leisure to Headquarters to give her news, to seek sympathy, to ask Irene to go with her to a concert at which she was playing. From many other little signs it was borne in on him that Patuffa stood alone, at a time, too, when she needed support and care.

Mama had failed her—very strangely he thought. But there it was. It was no business of his. He had never believed that she would accept Andrew Steyning. It had not seemed possible to him that she would be willing to present Patuffa with a stepfather. Patuffa with a stepfather! The idea was ridiculous. She was docile for the moment, but the inevitable would happen. Either the stepfather would turn her out, or she would turn the stepfather out. In any case, there was no prospect of a restful atmosphere for her in her mother's new home, which would really never be hers. She must have a home which would give her the basis she needed for her nature and her career. Headquarters must be that home.

He resolved to take a risk with Patuffa. Years ago when her father's fortune had been lost, and her old home had to be given up, Chummy had offered to adopt the little wayward girl who had become so dear to Irene and himself. She had repulsed him with a tumult of rage. And he said to himself now that no one but a very great fool would dream of encountering the possibility of another such tempestuous rebuff. But of course he was a very great fool. He had lived his

whole life on those lines, and he reflected as he sat in his arm-chair and smoked his cigar, that it was unnecessary and even undesirable at his age to change his methods.

Chummy was alone that evening when he came to his decision. Irene had gone to a literary dinner at the Criterion Restaurant, and he had sped her on her way with the assurance that he would be glad to be alone to turn over several business matters in his mind, and to growl undisturbedly over his gout. "Well deserved, my child," as he said, "but a bore."

There was no need to ask Irene, whose unselfish devotion to Patuffa had not changed with the passage of time. Patuffa could have committed every kind of vagary or crime in the catalogue of human imperfections and always have been sure of her friend's championship; and if it came to a question of homelessness, she would be the first to say that Headquarters must be Patuffa's new home.

Patuffa looked in that night. She was in good spirits, had been leading in Beethoven's Quartet in F Minor, Op. 95, and Schumann's Quintet, in Cheltenham, and had enjoyed herself enormously. She seemed so young and fresh and gay, so uplifted with life and so keen about her work, that he wondered whether after all she was troubling about Mama's engagement. She told him with an indulgent laugh that Mama was as usual out with her Steyning man, and so she had run in for a bit of good cheer and a game of chess if he felt inclined. No, he didn't feel inclined for chess, he said. He was very busy.

She nipped out a little piece of embroidery which never got finished and said:

"Busy, Chummy?"

"Yes, very busy, Patuffa," he smiled. "No time for you. Stefansky has gone to his hotel for a day or two, thank goodness, and Irene is out at a dinner, and I am taking this opportunity to be very busy."

"I see no signs of diligence," she said, settling down comfortably. "Anyway I'm not going. Here I am and here I stay. What is your engrossing occupation?"

"Gout and thoughts," he said. "Both somewhat perplexing."

"You always say you deserve the gout, and perhaps you do, Chummy. But I'm sure you don't deserve perplexing thoughts. What's the matter? Has someone been doing you in? But that wouldn't worry you. You'd only say: 'Made a fool of myself again, Tweedledee!"

He laughed.

"My perplexing thoughts are centred round you, Patuffa," he said. "I am asking myself a question which concerns you."

"Why not ask me instead?" she suggested. "Perhaps I could throw a little light on the subject."

"Yes, you could," he nodded, and for a moment or two there was silence as he watched her working.

Then he began:

"This is the question which I have been putting to myself. Madame Mama is going to marry again, and her new home will not really be the home where Patuffa can spread herself in the same wellknown overwhelming way. Somewhere that devil's child must be able to spread herself and be at her ease—where she can upset everyone and herself also, and be a nuisance all round and be loved and forgiven, yes and relied on—absolutely relied on. And where should that place be if not here?"

"Chummy," she interposed, but he put up his hand to stop her.

"Art is not everything," he went on. "There must be a sheltering atmosphere all one's own. The utterance of one's talents, the platform, the applause, the excitement, the exaltation of spirit, the appreciation of friends known and unknown, all the pleasures and penalties, too, which a successful career brings in its wake, are not enough. They are grand things, of course. But there must be something added to them or else they may become Dead Sea fruit."

She had dropped her embroidery and was staring in front of her with that strained look on her face always characteristic of her when her emotions and feelings were stirred. In that moment Patuffa realised more than she had ever done the seriousness and desolation of her impending loss. Mama had hitherto been that sheltering atmosphere—all her own. She had lost it already before Mama's marriage. And after marriage—what then?

"Now listen," he continued. "You say very little, nothing in fact, about the change which confronts you, and I admire you for your reticence. But I know your thoughts. Madame Mama, who has been your faithful stand-by all these years, recedes from your life. That is what it comes to. I suppose I am glad for her sake, Patuffa, for she has been a most unselfish, devoted mother. For your sake, of course, I am not glad. But I don't criticise her."

"You'd better not," Patuffa interrupted with sudden defiance.

"I know that," he said with half a smile. "No need to warn me. All I want to say is this. Years ago, when there was a crisis in the home of the Rendhams, I asked a little wrought-up, rebellious child to make her home

with Irene and me. She turned on me like a wild animal. Do you remember? And now there is another crisis—perhaps graver in a sense. And I am making exactly the same proposition to the same little devil, more grown up, it is true, and without a pigtail, but with the same fierce spirit. I run exactly the same risks of being turned on by a tigress, and therefore, considering my age, my dignity and my gout, I am making a pretty great fool of myself—don't you think? Yet I say, Come to Irene and me. You can have your old room and another one for your practising, and we'll share everything. You shall have a third of the organ, and a third of the kitchen, and a third of the sunsets from this study and a third of the Beethoven letters and a third of the engravings of musicians and. . . ."

She sprang up from her chair and went and stared at Chummy's favourite picture, a soft silvery bywater, with reeds trembling in the breeze. When she returned to his side, her face, though pale, was no longer strained and tense, and she looked as beautiful as in her finest moments of inspiration when she was wresting the very soul out of her violin.

"Darling Chummy," she murmured, "you've not made a fool of yourself, and there is no tigress in the room just now. Yes, I would love to come to Headquarters. Nothing would I love better. But shouldn't I be too much of a trouble to you and Irene with my comings and goings and my practisings and all my uncertain moods?"

"You could not possibly be more of a trouble than Stefansky and others who have frequented Headquarters," he said, smiling. "We are well accustomed to troublesome criminals here, you remember. Anyway, as compared with Stefansky, you would be a slumbering angel of peace. That precious engagement you've got for him

has braced him up and knocked us over, I can tell you."

He held his hand out to her, and she took it and rubbed it against her cheek in her old childish way.

"I don't know why you should do this for me," she said.

"There was once a small devil at school called Patuffa, who sheltered a little scholar called Irene from the jealousy and scorn and contempt of her comrades," he answered. "A seed was planted then which grew into an everlasting flower. That's why."

"Beasts and brutes, I hate them even now," she said truculently. "Even now after all these years I'd like to tear out their hair. Even now, after all these years, I'd like to see them humiliated. I wonder what they'd think of Irene now—writing for the magazines and coming on so splendidly in her career, and me a platform beauty."

He laughed.

"They would not think anything," he said. "They did not know they were doing anything out of the way. It is the natural instinct of commonplace people to scoff at idealists. It will have to be a new world when that does not take place, Patuffa. But they had their use for us. Because of them we are here all together—you and I and Irene—fast friends for life, with a corner for Patuffa no matter what she is, little child, young miss, or grown-up platform beauty—if and when she wants it. So that's settled, isn't it?"

She threw her arms in the air, and paced up and down joyously.

"Oh, the relief, Chummy," she cried. "I've been feeling utterly adrift. You know I haven't had much time for planning, what with journeys and concerts and re-

hearsals, and lessons and practising. But in a vague sort of way I've been wondering what I should do with myself. Mama, of course, fondly believes I am going to live in her new home, and the Steyning man has said many kind words to me about myself and the boys. Mark and Eric may be able to fall in, as they are always away, but I never could. I don't see myself in my stepfather's house —thank you. But darling Mama, walking on air, hasn't realised that, and I don't want her to, yet. I want to behave decently if I can—with ups and downs. Madame Pat and I made a compact that we both would. But I've broken it several times—in fact, I break it every time I see Steyning. And thank goodness she has broken it too. She is always having a dig about Stefansky's portrait, and then she goes one better and has a dig about Steyning! But Mama is in Paradise! Evidently nothing reaches you much when you are in Paradise. A good thing, too."

She added:

"Steyning is not a bad sort. I own that. Of course, I hate him through and through. But then I'd hate anyone who robbed me of Mama. And then when I see how gloriously happy she is, I hate myself."

"Well, go easy with yourself," Chummy said. "What you have to focus on just now is your work. You have the ball at your feet. Kick it. You have the most beautiful career that life could offer you. And your corner here —secure and waiting for you. So when Mama marries her Steyning man, as you call him, come and be with us until you yourself get married. I suppose you will marry sooner or later. But I hope with all my heart it will be later. Much better for you and your music if it is later. Have a good run of flirtations and mild affairs first, and continue as you are doing now to send your adherents

to the four winds one by one, each in his due turn. An excellent plan for you until the right victim comes riding along. You don't want to be caged yet—or do you?"

"No, indeed I don't," she laughed. "I want to be free and remain free. I should be terrified to give up my freedom."

"No real hankerings after Cousin Keble?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"No," she said. "I like Keble as a friend, and you see, Chummy, I am accustomed to him. And I don't always like him even as a friend. Indeed I positively hate him sometimes when he is in one of his overbearing moods. Then I could kill him comfortably. But when he is at his best, he is ever so companionable, and we have lots of things in common—Nature—snow mountains, glaciers and all that. But as for loving him and wanting to marry him—no. I don't see myself doing that."

"Well, well," Chummy laughed, patting her hand, "keep your freedom as long as you can, little Patuffa."

Yes, he need have no fear about that, she assured him. Did he remember the tragic story she had once told him of the Hungarian nobleman who had married a young violinist of rare gifts, forced her to give up her career and shut her up on his lonely estate in the depths of the country where she shot herself? Chummy said the story left him quite cold. It could not be Patuffa's fate. She would either escape from the estate or shoot the Baron. Or both.

From tyrannical Hungarian husbands and broken careers these two great friends passed on to far more engrossing subjects. Chummy had been reading the *Correspondence Between Wagner and Liszt,* and he showed her some of the extracts he had made for her. And then

they fell a-talking of Wagner's characters, and of their unforgettable visit to Bayreuth when they heard *Parsifal.*

When Irene came back, she found them intently engaged in the study of the Good Friday music, and dead to the world outside the mystic realms reared by the Great Master's genius.

CHAPTER XII

I

THE only person who rejoiced over poor Mama's engagement was Cousin Keble; but he took good care to veil his pleasure, and so successfully, that Mama had the impression that he thoroughly disapproved of her. But ensconced safely in her Paradise, she did not care a straw what he or anyone else thought of her.

But Patuffa, sharp as a needle, guessed at Keble's secret contentment.

"He is as crafty as a fox," she laughed to herself. "He thinks he sees a fine opening ahead, and is planning to lead me to the altar and shut me up in an iron safe immediately Mama is married. What a sell for him when he sees me step quickly into the security of Headquarters. Not so easily caught, Cousin Keble!"

She was right. Keble regarded Mama's marriage as his great opportunity, and schooled himself to use it in the wisest way possible. He spread his net most carefully, did Cousin Keble. His encounter with Patuffa over Stefansky had taught him a lesson, and he ceased to be domineering and proprietary, dropped all comments on her independence of action and her unchaperoned professional journeys and engagements, and in fact conducted himself as a man who took it for granted that women

should live their lives on their own lines—a rare attitude of mind in those far-off days, and a great change from his naturally conventional and old-fashioned outlook. His quiet bullying he reserved strictly for professional purposes, and found plenty of scope for it in his ever-increasing work.

Was he changing or only pretending to change? Which was it? The results at least were delightful, and Patuffa, though on her guard, had to admit that she enjoyed the easy comradeship that ensued. His very looks seemed to change. Something of rigidity went from his face, and his thin lips, often tuned to a quiet sarcasm, were modulated to a quiet playfulness which was strangely attractive. His chin appeared to have lost half of its stubbornness. Had the rock begun to blast itself into acceptable fragments? Or was he transformed because he was happy and hopeful?

Nothing could have been wiser than the way in which he dealt with what struck him as the loneliness in Patuffa's home caused by Mama's frequent absences. He simply ignored it. He offered no sympathy, and no extra companionship; and when he did turn up and find her alone, and perhaps tired, his only remark would be:

"Hullo, Patuffa, enough spunk in you for an outing? Or what about chess?"

For she dearly loved a game of chess, and might easily have become a champion player.

Towards Stefansky he maintained his usual attitude of disapproval, and in answer to Patuffa's enquiries on one occasion as to whether he had reached any further stage of penitence for his ungenerous criticism of her old master, he said:

"Certainly not. But I think on the whole I am sorry

to have given you pain, since you are so absurdly attached to the little Polish worm."

But he added with a smile:

"I don't mind owning that for your sake I am glad he is going to play at a Philharmonic. Perhaps a little for his own. But kindly observe that I only commit myself to *perhaps.*"

"Perhaps is a long step for you, old Keble," she laughed.

"Perhaps it is," he said with a twinkle in his eye. "Quite long enough, anyway."

"When you hear him play, you will forgive him everything," she said. "I know he will carry all before him. And you will be the one to clap the loudest and shout his name."

"Never, so help me Heaven," he answered stubbornly.

"Heaven won't help you and you won't be able to help yourself," she said, amused this time, and not irritated by his dogged opposition. "He is a wizard, Keble, a wizard of a musician, and you'll go down like a ninepin before his magic."

"Never," he repeated, and they left it at that, but in perfect good temper with each other. She was too triumphant over Stefansky's coming appearance to be angry with him or anyone. But she was diverted as she pictured what his disapproval and disgust would be if he were a witness of Papa Stefansky's trying behaviour at Headquarters at that moment.

It certainly was trying for the whole household. Stefansky was in a nervous and highly irritable condition, and always angry about alleged insults. He was disgusted with his portrait, and poured forth streams of animated eloquence on the subject. Steyning heard

criticisms on his art which might have had some effect on him if he had not been rendered impervious by long years of prosperity and ordered serenity. As it was, he was only angry and indignant, and with difficulty appeased even by Mama who, of course, was up in arms on his behalf. Mama being in love, looked on that portrait with blinded eyes. But, as Patuffa remarked, if it had been painted by anyone else except her Steyning man, she would not have looked at it at all.

It was the cause of disturbance between herself and Patuffa, who told her a few home truths about it, and forgetful as always of her solemn resolutions to make Mama happy, took the opportunity of stating what she thought of Steyning and his work and the prospect of having him as a stepfather. She did not stop there either. Tuned up to truculence she attacked poor Steyning himself when she came in tired one afternoon and found him in the drawing-room. Patuffa at her worst was exceedingly rude, not so much in speech as in manner. But on this occasion she gave vent to her pent up animus by a few choice little remarks such as that the portrait was absurd, and that what Steyning thought was fire—Steyning prided himself on the fire he had put into the old man's face—was not fire, was not even cinders or ashes.

"At least cinders or ashes have been alight once," she said. "But what you've put there, could never have been alight. That's what I think about the portrait, and you can take it or leave it for all I care."

"Patuffa," remonstrated Mama, blushing with annoyance and shame.

"Well, he asked me what I thought," she retorted fiercely, "and that is what I do think."

"You have certainly told me what you think," Steyning said quietly.

"Yes," she nodded defiantly. "And I could tell you a lot more if I wanted to."

Probably it was to prevent this catastrophe that she drank up her tea and darted out of the room. In her own quarters she drew a long breath, and said aloud:

"Thank Heaven I got that much out. Better than nothing. Interloping ass, coming here and taking possession of Mama. I'd like to do him in and all his idiot portraits, too."

Steyning, alone with Mama, stared at the door through which she had disappeared, much to his relief, and thought:

"My God, I shall never get on with Patuffa."

The portrait, therefore, begun with such kind intention, proved to be anything but a consolation either to Stefansky or anyone else, and prevented Mama from contributing her help in the difficult circumstances at Headquarters. She went, of course, to try and do her part there, for Mama had no conscious wish to put up a barrier against her old life. She would have been utterly astonished if anyone had told her that she was concentrating only on her own love affair—so blind and limited is the outlook of love at any age. So she went in body, if not in spirit. But Stefansky invariably said, "Aha, Madame Mama, that lover of yours he paint me very very funny, so quiet and good and like one holy angel." And therefore it was hardly to be expected that Mama could make full exercise of her usual unfailing charm which had so often tempered the old man's vagaries.

His nerves were affected by his excitement over the concert and by a secret, searching anxiety which, for the

first time in his life, made him doubt his own powers. The smallest contretemps sufficed to send him into a passion. One day he was agitated because he did not consider that his reappearance was being sufficiently emphasised in the Musical Notes in the *Daily Telegraph*. He rushed from room to room waving the *Daily Telegraph* wildly, and shouting that he, the great Stefansky, greater than any other violinist the world had ever seen, or ever would see, had been insulted. Did anyone think he was going to play at that so damned concert? No, no. Never would he play.

"You see," he yelled, "they not put my so great name in great letters alone, that the peegs of a public may know that I, the so wonderful Stefansky, and not anyone else, am playing before them, that they may have the so rich chance to hear me and not some fool violinist who might not be fit to resin my bow. They print it in a list, with other names, with the name of the idiot woman who will sing abominably the Senta solos from *The Flying Dutchman*. They print my illustrious name so—as nothing—I ask you—Chummy, Irene—I ask everyone—I am angry—furious—and do you wonder?"

He asked Madame Tcharushin, who had wandered in to see whether any of the inhabitants of Headquarters were still alive.

"Yes, I do wonder, Stefansky," she agreed. "But what I wonder at is that anyone is alive here. I shouldn't be."

"And what would that matter, pray?" he asked angrily.

"Nothing, of course, except to me," she laughed good-temperedly. "But I like frightfully being alive and enjoying the companionship of gentle geniuses like yourself. I am renewed in youth and beauty. A thousand cares drop from my bowed shoulders."

Perhaps a slight flicker of amusement brightened his face when he heard himself included amongst the gentle geniuses; but he was not appeased. It was Maria who quietened him. She knew better than anyone in that household how to deal with turbulent spirits.

"Now, now, Mr. Stefansky," she enjoined. "What do it matter about the *Daily Telegraph?* If you was to get yourself put into *Lloyd's Weekly,* they'd treat you proper. That's the only paper that counts. And take my advice and don't play at that concert. I wouldn't if I was you. I should throw it up. You stay quietly alongside of me, and I'll cook you some of my lovely little cheese straws, for a change, and you can eat them all over the house, and drop the crumbs everywhere you like, together with them pea-nut shells. There now—what do you think of that for a programme? Much better than bothering yourself to play at that concert."

"Not play at the concert, fool woman," he shouted angrily. "You are mad. Cheese straws instead of the concert. You are one ugly old idiot, Maria. Not play at the concert. I fly up to practise now. I stay no longer listening to your so stupid words."

Maria sank down into her arm-chair after his tumultuous departure, and fanned herself with *Lloyd's Weekly.* But she was still wearing a smile of triumph on her face when Irene came to thank her, and to tell her that Stefansky had settled down to work.

"Ah, Miss Irene," she murmured, "these musicians, these musicians—bless them, but what a trial they be to the brain. How you manage to keep any sense in your head for covering all them pages with writing, beats me hollow. And now I hear Miss Patuffa is going to come here for ever, and she'll be the worst of the bunch and

always wanting chocolate soufflé at the wrong time. Well, well, she must have it, the dear child. But what a world!"

It certainly was a marvel how Irene kept either brain or temper during those difficult days. But she performed the feat, wrote and studied by snatches, protected Chummy from interruption, comforted Stefansky in his despair, shared his upliftments, and when he wished, acted as audience. But she wrote in her diary:

"I am not having what one might call a peaceful time. Thank Heaven, the concert will be over to-day fortnight. If I were easier about Papa Stefansky's playing, I would not mind so much. But I know he is not at his best. If only he were not going to play the Beethoven Concerto."

That was Chummy's view, too. From the beginning he had been anxious about the choice, for even in his prime Stefansky had not been at his highest in Beethoven. He wished the Committee had acceded to Stefansky's request for the Vieuxtemps in A Minor. But they had refused to change their plans for the season; and Beethoven it had to be. Chummy listened outside Stefansky's room and sometimes came down full of foreboding, and regretting deeply that Patuffa had not left things alone instead of procuring this reappearance for the old violinist. For he had lost his power, lost his grip, lost sensitiveness and delicacy, and above all lost his splendour of interpretation.

On one of the days when Chummy was most unhappy about his old friend, Patuffa, who had been playing in Edinburgh, arrived at Headquarters to find the family in the last stages of anxiety and disintegration. In Irene's words, calm but forceful, Stefansky had been leaping about like a tiger, pacing the house like a lion, roaring

like a stag. Then retiring to his den, he had locked the door, fallen to practising like one possessed, and would suffer no one to be his audience. In vain Chummy, Irene and Maria had knocked at the barred citadel.

"Go away," he had screamed. "I want no peegs of an audience."

But Patuffa had never been intimidated by him in his worst moods. She banged at the door remorselessly and called out:

"It's the devil's child wanting to come in. Please let me in at once, Papa Stefansky."

There was a pause. Then the door was unlocked and flung open violently.

"You may come in," he said roughly, "but I am in a so great rage with myself and the whole so beastly world, Patuffe. I warn you, I am in a so great rage."

"I don't care if you are," she said. "I've come to be your pig of an audience, and I'm just jolly well going to be. When have I been frightened of you in a rage? Never—have I?"

"Never," he cried, waving his bow about.

"Very well," she continued. "Now it's your turn to stand on the mat, and it's my turn to sit and listen and to say at the end: *'Bravo, never before have I heard Papa Stefansky so wonderful. Bravo. This shall be your career! Hein—isn't it so?'*"

His face cleared. His rage died away. Sunshine came into his troubled spirit.

"I obey you," he laughed gaily, as he took up his position.

She listened, and her heart sank. The Concerto was beyond him as he now was. But she masked her feelings, applauded him, nodded to him reassuringly when he fixed

her with his little bright piercing eyes, whilst all the time she was torn with doubts and tortured by the reflection that it was she who had run him into danger and perhaps disgrace—she who had forced circumstances, which had far better been left alone. After all, he had had his hour, his long career of triumphs and success, and as Chummy said, it would have been kinder and wiser to let him slip away home to Prague, saddened and angered and embittered perhaps, but not disgraced by failure, or at least by efforts which were unworthy of his past achievements.

Yet would he fail? He might not. He might be able, on the platform, on the actual scene of former glory, to pull himself together and give a rendering of the Beethoven Concerto which would make all other interpretations seem in comparison futile and feeble and uninspired. Patuffa believed that this might happen. But perhaps she believed it because she wished to believe it. Yet her ordeal was a severe one as she strained every fibre of her senses to give him the appreciation and enthusiasm which he demanded as his unalienable right, and which she knew it was necessary for him to have at this critical moment.

She did not fail him. She gave him all she had to give; and he rose triumphant from the ashes of his soul's secret despair and doubt.

Downstairs she was truculent and rude with Chummy and Irene.

"You know nothing about it," she said, her eyes going to a pin's point. "His power is all there. No one can take from him his phrasing, his pure tone, his personal magnetism. He will be splendid and magnificent when the time comes."

Stefansky changed from that hour. He forgot all his

grievances. No longer was the world against him. No longer did he inveigh against all other artists. He recovered his gaiety and his fun; and Headquarters became a relatively peaceful spot undisturbed by continuous earthquakes. If he had not been lovable at intervals, he would have been unbearable.

His jealousy of Patuffa appeared to have subsided, or at least to be in abeyance. He took a deep interest in her Joseph Guarnerius fiddle, tested it, played on it, praised it, wished always to hear where she had been playing and what she had been playing. He was delighted when she took part in quartets.

"Quartet-playing is better than anything, Patuffe," he said, nodding approval. "It is the most beautiful medium for expression, and most satisfying to one's soul."

He insisted on seeing her Press notices, and she brought them reluctantly and with many misgivings. But she need have had no fear: for he took an unselfish joy and pride in them, and said that for once the so great idiots of critics were showing a little sense—as much sense as they could show—the idiots. The bad or indifferent notices he swore at, though he probably enjoyed them a little.

"Go on, my devil's child," he said, "keep always your enthusiasm and a very, very fierce ambition, be very diligent, and look always, always in the direction of the mountains and see with your mind's eye the burning vision—hein, isn't it so? That I have not always done—I know that well, Patuffe. No one knows it better than I. Still you must do it—you must see the burning vision yourself and show it to the world. Yet, in a sense I have remained great—very, very great. An old man, but I have the tone so rich and pure, and I have the true musical sensibility unimpaired by time and the splendour and the poetry—

and the verve. Ah, I am wonderful. If any change, only a change for the more wonderful. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, yes," she answered, lying stoutly.

"Ah, my Patuffe believes in me," he nodded. "She shall see what I shall do at the Philharmonic concert. I will surprise everyone. I will surprise myself."

His sunniness and kindness increased as the days went on, and one morning he said to Chummy:

"Old and faithful friend, yesterday in the night, I suddenly thought that neveer had I been grateful enough to you for your kindness. Indeed, Chummy, I have neveer been grateful to you at all, at all! That was very queer of me, wasn't it? How strange it is that now I feel it all in one big lump, Chummy, and want to get rid of it. Here it is, and you will please to take it"

Chummy looked positively bewildered by this unwonted and unexpected tribute. But being only human, he was glad to be thanked for once.

Irene, too, came in for a share of tender gratitude, expressed, it is true, in curious phraseology.

"I neveer read, my little kind Irene, as you know," he said. "But I have forced myself to read three chapters of your so clever and dull book. And perhaps I read three more for your sake—and perhaps not! Hein, what say you to that, for Papa Stefansky's true devotion? For no one else on this wicked earth would he take that very huge trouble!"

Marie was made more than happy by his constant demand for cheese straws and his praise of her skill.

"They are marvellous, Maria," he said. "I shall play magnificent at the damned concert because you have given me the good strengths by your so marvellous straws of the cheese."

And as for Mama, he ceased to vex and tease her about his portrait, and said he was quite sure that it was just as much like him as any picture could ever be of anyone, and he was horrified, yes, horrified to hear that little Patuffe had been rude and disagreeable about it to the painter whom Madame Mama honoured with her love. Patuffe had gone to his house and apologised—had she? Ah, well, that was something. But she had no right to be rude. Because she play very, very beautifully, Madame Mama, and would always play better if she was good and diligent and practised till her arm came off, that was no reason why she should be rude. And it was his portrait. Not hers. He was the only person who must be rude. Aha, he had done something in the direction himself. That was enough.

"More than enough," he said kissing Mama's hand gallantly. "And I observe Madame Mama to be more beautiful and stately than ever because she is in love with that so lucky painter. Hélas, would that the horrid old Stefansky was that so lucky painter."

Mama laughed and blushed; and the rift in the lute was mended.

But Irene wrote in her diary:

"I am uneasy in my mind about Papa Stefansky. It is not natural for him to be so angelic and good for such a long period. I'd far rather we had a scene or two. However, no one seems to share my vague and perhaps stupid anxiety, and so I keep my own counsel."

II

The day before the concert, Patuffa, coming out from the Steinway Hall where she had been playing two solos at a Song Recital given by a well-known baritone, found

Keble waiting for her. She had not done herself justice, for she was feeling nervy and anxious about the morrow, and when she saw Keble, she suddenly realised that she wanted sympathy and that he was the wrong person to give it.

"You here, Keble," she said, half pleased and half cross. "Why aren't you different from what you are? Then I could confide in you."

"Couldn't you manage to confide in me even as I am?" he asked with one of his smiles. "I might be worse, you know. Always remember that."

"I do remember it, I assure you," she laughed. "But even then I should not dream of confiding in you. Oh, it's nothing, either. I played badly. Not in the mood. No go in me. A bit worried and anxious. Awfully anxious."

He did not press her for any confidence, but said: "Well, well, come and have some tea at Buszards', and then let us go to the Alpine Club and take a look at some of the new mountain photographs. They are perfectly lovely, and the sight of them will rest you."

They rested her. He rested her. Almost she confided to him her great anxiety. Almost she said to him: "If Stefansky fails to-morrow and is broken-hearted, it will be my fault."

But pride on her old master's behalf and her own kept her silent. She looked long and intently at the mountain peaks and mountain ranges and glaciers, and Stefansky's words were wafted to her:

"Look always, always in the direction of the mountains, and see with your mind's eye the burning vision."

If only the burning vision might be his on the morrow. That was the secret hope of her heart.

III

So the day of the concert dawned. And in the paper that morning it was announced that the Princess of Wales would be present. Stefansky's joy and pride knew no bounds, but he was quietly, not boisterously, exultant. It seemed as if his belief in himself had reached the climax where calm reigns supreme and looks down benignly on the low-lying plains of ordinary endeavour and attainment.

"Aha," he said, "you see, Royalty comes to hear the so great Stefansky. It is well. It is as it should be. You see, Chummy, you see, Irene, you see, Patuffe, I had only to show myself."

The truth was that the Princess of Wales was attending the Concert because her protégée, a young Danish singer whom she had imported, was making her début. Patuffa learnt this from Hendered, but kept her counsel, and did not even share her information with Chummy and Irene. They knew from other sources, but did not breathe a word to her. It was a conspiracy of love and silence, and it needed a fair amount of craft on all sides to keep the secret intact. But it was kept intact. Stefansky believed to the end that he, and he only, was the magician who had enticed Royalty from Marlborough House.

Before he went to the concert, Stefansky lingered some time alone in his room. He wrote something on a piece of paper which he folded carefully and put into his violin case. He took it out again, read it once more, nodded, smiled and replaced it. He overhauled his Stradivarius violin, tested the pegs, the strings, played a few chords, touched the harmonics, and after he had satisfied himself

that all was well with it, he held it out at arm's length and addressed it softly in a caressing voice:

"Beloved friend—how beautiful and perfect are your curves, how more exquisite than any flower are the markings on your matchless form—your varnish—was there ever such rich and luscious varnish seen on any other violino? No—never. We have travelled together the world over, you and I, and never once have you failed the so great Stefansky. Not always great, it is true. Not always have I kept to the heights of the divinest Art. That I know well, and am ashamed. But to-day I leave the valleys and I mount once more. Help me to mount, beloved friend. Fail not your old and very, very tired comrade. Perhaps I ask it for the last time."

With infinite tenderness he returned it to its case, and stood for a moment lost in thought. He looked frail and ashen and aged.

He received nothing of an ovation when he stepped on the platform. To the new public his name was practically unknown; and to the older generation of concert goers, he was only a legend—barely that. But some of the orchestra knew what he had stood for in the past, and one of the 'cellists rose in respect. If he had expected a tremendous reception, he must surely have been discouraged. But he showed no sign of disheartenment as he glanced round the Hall with a calm, confident smile on his face, and then quietly waited with closed eyes whilst the orchestra poured forth the grand opening strains preliminary to the entry of the solo violino.

Then, when the moment came, he raised his bow, and those who loved him held their breath. His octaves rang out clear and rallying like a challenge, and thus he

entered the lists. From the very onset he arrested and held his audience. None of his qualities failed him now. He had been a master of phrasing and of all beauties of detail, and in the past his amazingly perfect technique and his tone, rich and pure, literally drawn from the instrument, free, disembodied, had ever astounded and entranced his hearers. He gave the Allegro with power and fire and richness of colouring, and in his Cadenza he was magnificent. On the divine beauties of the slow movement he spread a mantle of poetic idealism, and in the Rondo his verve and restrained *abandon* were nothing short of perfect. He gave, in fact, an interpretation of a truly spiritual nature to Beethoven's most noble work. He opened the door of the soul of Music for all to enter.

Who can say what secret renewal enriched his tone, restored his waning powers? Who can say what inspired him, what spurred him on to reach the heights once more and see the burning vision?

When the last notes of the orchestra had died away, there was a moment of silence—the greatest tribute an artist can receive—and then a storm of applause rose. Stefansky bowed and bowed, with his hand to his heart, and went off the platform. He was recalled with an overwhelming enthusiasm. The orchestra stood to do him homage and shouted his name. The audience sprang up to honour and greet him. The Hall resounded with *"Stefansky—Stefansky—bravo—bravo."*

A laurel wreath was handed to him—Patuffa's gift. He took it, and glanced now in this direction, now in that, half dazed, and as if scanning the space for someone whom his eyes sought in vain.

Suddenly he swayed, and fell forwards near the first violins.

When they raised him, he was dead.

Dead, with a quiet smile of triumph on his face.

He had come into his own Kingdom again, and heard once more and for the last time the sweet music of the applause of the world.

He had seen the burning vision and shown it to others.

CHAPTER XIII

Did Stefansky have a presentiment that the supreme effort he was going to make that evening would be too much for his strength? Had he been secretly conscious that his powers would need to be taxed to their uttermost to give utterance to a Swan Song worthy of the illustrious name which had once been his? Who could tell?

The only sign was the piece of paper found in the case of his Stradivari violin with these few words written on it, together with the date of the concert: "I give to Patuffe Rendham, the devil's child, my so beautiful Stradivari violino—far, far more beautiful than the Joseph Guarneri given by the idiot woman in Manchester—to use when Papa Stefansky have joined the other so great comrades of the violino—but no greater than Stefansky —hein, Patuffe?"

Chummy placed the Stradivari and the precious piece of paper in her hands, and she received them in silence. They all tried in their own different ways to comfort her. They knew that she was considering herself responsible for the death of her old Master, since it was entirely due to her influence that he had once more appeared at a Philharmonic. But for her he would still have been amongst them, angry, perhaps, jealous, full of his varying moods of lovableness and hatefulness—but alive, of them,

with them, understood and cherished by those who knew him well. It was she and she only who had sped him on his way.

"Nothing here for tears, dear Patuffa," Chummy had said gently. "Our old friend is well at rest, honoured and acclaimed as he would wish."

"I know," she had answered. "I know."

As for Mama, the slight estrangement, which had been growing up between herself and Patuffa, received a check when the blow of Stefansky's death fell. Mama forgave Patuffa's disappointing hostility to Steyning, crept out of her enchanted region and showered all her love and her care on her child whom no one could reach. Steyning had to stand aside in those first days following on the tragedy of the Philharmonic concert, and he did not like it. He faded from Mama's mind as she and Patuffa sat together hand in hand, in sorrowful silence. Mama's thoughts went back to years ago when Patuffa's little sister Susie had died, and Patuffa had taken on herself the guilt of her death because of her own bullying tyranny which had brought about a crisis. And here was the same suffering again, intense, silent, tearless, unreachable.

"He died as he would have wished to die—a king," Mama whispered.

"I know," Patuffa said. "I know."

She took the Stradivari violin out of its case times without number, turned it over and replaced it silently. If she could have given utterance to some of her thoughts, perhaps the tension of her grief would have been eased. But not a word escaped her of what she was feeling and thinking. Irene probably got the nearest to her inaccessibility, perhaps because they had both shared in the sweetest part of Stefansky's nature—his tender love for

little children which nothing in his life had ever touched or tainted, even as nothing in his life had ever changed the purity of his affection for these two as the years passed on their swift course.

Keble suffered intensely over her suffering. He would have given anything to have recalled his words which had angered and hurt her, and to have shown a generous instead of a mean spirit towards her old Master. He told her this. Her answer comforted him a little.

"I'm sure of it," she told him. "But there is no feud about that now. Feuds don't seem worth while."

"I do want to tell you that he was magnificent," Keble said. "I do want you to know that all my homage was his when I heard him."

"Good old Keble to own up," she murmured.

Madame Tcharushin, whose own courage in the trials and dangers of life had ever been an inspiration to Patuffa, used no words of actual consolation to her, but when Patuffa saw that gallant little presence, she herself said:

"You bring courage as usual, Pat."

Madame Tcharushin shook her head.

"I don't need to bring it, my Patuffska," she said. "It is here already—always has been and always will be here if I know my godchild."

But George Hendered helped her the most. He was impelled to come and see her, and the very first words he spoke had something of healing in them.

"You were more than justified in your trust in your old Master's powers," he said. "He was magnificent, colossal, head and shoulders above everyone. And now I ask you to imagine what you forced me to do for him, Miss Rendham, entirely by your belief, yes, and by the

impression which your gratitude and your unselfishness and your loyalty to him made on my dulled and deadened spirit. Could any artist wish for a more glorious ending? Could you? No, you could not. Supposing that you yourself had lived through a long and famous career, and then had passed into comparative insignificance and suddenly were given the chance to sum up your life's work with an outburst of glorious effort which placed your name and fame on an immortal record? Would not you think that something big was being done for you? You gave him life—not death. That is what you have to remember. It is not your part to mourn, but to rejoice. There is not one single artist whom I have seen mount the platform, who would not have chosen Stefansky's last glory and his last farewell. You will see this later, if you cannot see it now."

"Shall I?" she said, with a faint smile of hope on her face.

"Yes," he answered. "Believe me, and come and tell me some day that I was right."

They buried Stefansky in Chummy's family vault in Paddington Cemetery. It had been a sweet and rural spot when, twenty years previously, Irene's mother had been lowered into the grave, and Chummy had stood lonely and desolate, believing, what proved true in his case, that no other woman could ever take her place, either in his heart or his home. Even now, in this crowded city of graves, there were trees remaining to catch the glint of the sunshine and capture the soft music of the breezes and the orchestra of the storm; and if one lingered there at the hour of sunset, one might see a vision of splendour: or if not a whole vision, then behind

the clouds, a few fleeting signs of hidden beauty striving to express themselves in terms of splendour, and failing and attaining, even as human beings strive and fail and attain.

All over the world flashed the news of the great Stefansky's death. The fame which he had almost lost in life, was restored to him by death in full measure and overflowing.

CHAPTER XIV

I

She roused herself in courageous fashion and passed on her way. But her natural zest was in abeyance, and for the moment her playing lacked one of her best qualities—*verve*. Not always. There were one or two occasions when it was all the more impassioned for the suffering of spirit through which she was passing. But the success and applause she won on those nights appeared to give her no joy, no pride.

Her friends knew, of course, that time would mitigate the shock she had received, and that her eagerness and ambition would renew themselves tenfold; but meantime they longed to see her herself again, and to witness the return of her natural buoyancy. Mama would have been positively thankful to hear her being rude to Steyning, for at least that would have been a sign positive of the renewal of normal conditions.

But there was no such sign. On the contrary, Patuffa at this period was relatively agreeable to him, so much so, that in the privacy of his studio, Steyning reflected that if she could always be under the weather as now, he might have some chance of getting on fairly comfortably

with her. Also he had been encouraged by her abrupt visit to him to say she was *rather sorry* for her rudeness about Stefansky's portrait. She had dashed in on her way to Victoria station, and had said with a half defiant, half ashamed expression on her face:

"Stepfather-to-be, I'm really rather sorry—not much—but rather. Please forgive me."

And then she had dashed off, before he had time to recover from the unexpectedness of her arrival, or to assure her that he did forgive her. Well, it was her fashion—not a fashion he liked—but there it was. She had meant all right. He must take it at that. And now she was not being rude to him at all, but, in her staccato manner, almost friendly.

Oddly enough it was Mama who could very well have been rude to poor Steyning. She half resented that he had come into her life to raise a barrier between Patuffa and herself. For barrier there was. But for him, she could have surely helped Patuffa with undivided heart. Why wasn't she free? Did she want to be free? Poor Mama did not know what she wanted. She wanted Steyning and could not give up Patuffa. She wanted Patuffa and could not give up Steyning. She wanted the old intimacy, the old relationship with Patuffa, and she wanted the new love and the "ordered serenity." Was the new happiness, however wonderful, worth the loss? What had she been thinking of to allow herself to love Steyning and be loved by him? And what would she do without him if she let him go?

She took her doubts and torments as usual to Coptic Street, and Madame Tcharushin told her not to be a duffer.

"My dear Marionska," she said, "I don't say it is too

late to throw over your love affair, because nothing is too late. If you want to throw it over, it is easy enough. You are not going to kill your young man of fifty-six years old. No, my friend. He will survive quite safely, and continue quietly painting his portraits and exhibiting them in your so dull and uninteresting Royal Academy. I see them, year after year, in the large room, Marionska, a boring procession of fashionable ladies, Bishops, Lord Mayors and Masters of the Hounds, uninterrupted by Mama's shocking fickleness and amusing unreasonableness. Be sure of that. But what do you gain? Some day soon Patuffa leaves you—and then you have neither Patuffa nor your adorable Andrew. Not even me, perhaps, since by that time I may be in the Schlusselburg Fortress, if not comfortably hanged."

"If only I had waited until she had married," moaned Mama.

"Haven't we agreed that you might wait until the last trump?" said Madame Tcharushin. "Haven't we decided that if Patuffska some day makes up her mind to give up her freedom and marry—Cousin Keble—I hope not indeed—or anyone else, she will quite certainly leave her beloved husband in a great rage and come back to you exactly as she used to run away from school? Haven't we together seen her arriving, and heard her saying: 'Mama, I'm here. I've come home. I've left that hateful man. I have torn out all his hair, and I shall never go back to him!'"

Mama laughed, in spite of herself.

"Well, at least, I should be waiting for her," she said.

"Nonsense," said Madame Tcharushin. "Waiting sounds sentimental and pretty in a book, Marionska, but

in real life, it is not gay. Don't be ridiculous. Marry your Steyning man if you really want him. Spring now, if you are going to spring. Patuffa will find her own way. Just now you think her pathetic, poor child, and so she is, but she'll not remain pathetic if I know anything of life. No one remains pathetic for a long time. And you cannot help her much. It is not people that will help her now. People never help anyone. Only things help one. They are the best help, because they help unconsciously. Tell Chummy to take her to Rome. I have this day been reading about some new exciting excavations there. Well, let her go and see those excavations and the other wonderful things in Rome, and you go on peacefully with your love-making. Patuffa will recover. For the moment she hears Stefansky singing his last glorious song—and it was glorious. If I hear it all the time, if it haunts me, think you, what must it not be doing to her? For the moment she sees him fall. She sees him dead. She is tortured by the belief that she has had a direct hand in killing him. But the song will grow dim, Marionska, the vision will fade and the self-accusation will pass. Life gives us these mercies. You know that. I know that."

She paused as the scene of the tragedy rose before them both. The silence between them was dedicated to Stefansky's memory.

She gave herself a little shake, as if to show she had thrown off some of this sadness, and said with a ghost of a mischievous smile:

"And let us hope with all our hearts that before so very, very long Patuffska will be rude to your Steyning man. I think she will. Then you will be angry and you will recover. We will all recover in a procession!

But she must go away and leave her music and her present surroundings for a little. Rome is a good idea because it is my idea. I will tell Chummy. He will spring to it, as you must spring, Marionska, in another direction."

She told Chummy, and he did spring to it. Rome, the very thing! Why had he not thought of it himself? Rome—the new excavations—the Forum, the Appian Way, the Vatican, St. Peter's, St. Cecilia, the Catacombs, the Campagna—and all the other delights, innumerable, overwhelming. Mind-healing for Patuffa, material for Irene's pen, renewed rapture for himself. But wouldn't Pat Tcharushin come also? Since it was her idea, wouldn't she come? Couldn't she have a little respite from her propaganda and plotting and revolutioning, to gather up her strength for further wickedness? Couldn't she give herself the luxury of forgetting for a while the troubles of her country and her comrades, and seek joy and renewal in Rome? No, she couldn't, she said. She only lived for the work she was doing. Nothing mattered to her except that. Chummy was good and generous as always, and she quite understood that he would pay her expenses and the expenses of the whole universe. But she was not free. She did not wish to be free. No, she would not go. But she hoped they would lose no time and be off as soon as Patuffa's engagements allowed.

Some of Patuffa's distressing impassiveness yielded when she heard of the plan, and she was rude to Steyning, much to Madame Pat's amusement. Mama became vexed, recovered from her indecision, re-entered her own special Paradise, and showed that she preferred it to the Eternal City when she decided not to accept Chummy's invitation to form one of the party of pilgrims.

II

The night before they left, Keble came to say good-bye, with a book or two about Italy, and carefully written out details of the mountain ranges they would skirt on their journey. Patuffa had been playing on Stefansky's Stradivari for the first time, and her face showed signs of the emotions which had been stirring her. To his secret joy she spoke quite openly of her suffering. She put the violin gently down, and turned from it with moist eyes.

"This was the fiddle I smashed when I was a child," she said. "Imagine that. And Stefansky forgave me and would not let anyone be angry with me. Yes, the very same fiddle which he valued above everything else in the world. And now it is mine—my own. But I can never in my life make it sing and throb as he could. I suppose in time I shall be able to bear playing on it. But not yet. If I tried to play on it at a concert, I believe I should break down."

"No, you wouldn't break down," he said. "You would do your job bravely first. Of that I am sure. Afterwards —well, afterwards belongs to oneself."

She glanced at him in swift appreciation of his words.

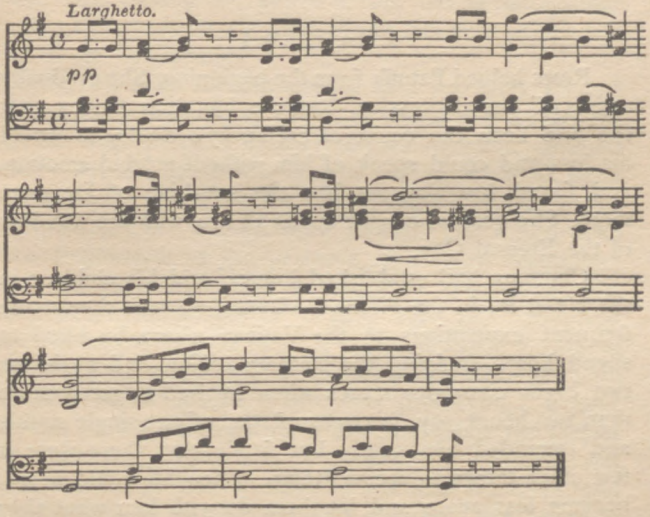
"Kind old Keble," she said, and she held out her hand to him.

His heart gave a bound as he took it and nodded at her with a grave smile as if in token of simple comradeship. But she did not know of the bounding of his heart. She did not know how he longed to gather her in his arms and comfort her.

And she went on half dreamily:

"I still hear the Beethoven Concerto running in and out of all I am playing. And especially the Larghetto. I hear it in my dreams. I woke up this morning to the sound of it."

He stood by the window with his arms folded tightly together as she hummed it softly



PART II

CHAPTER I

Rome helped Patuffa from the beginning. She gradually threw off her depression, lost the haunting feeling that she had been the cause of Stefansky's death, mourned his loss and could speak of him without morbid emotion, and found her way out into the sunshine of life once more. She became caught up, as all are, with the wonders of the Eternal City.

Chummy had established himself and his children in the Hotel B., in the Piazza Barberini, whence they made frequent expeditions to the Vatican where he liked to spend hours studying the statuary. Now and again his two eager comrades struck when he had lingered more than two hours, say, in contemplation of one single statue, and reminded him gently but firmly that there were a few other things to see in Rome. Then he would laugh, become less acute and let them do with him what they wished. Sometimes they abandoned him in despair, but not often. They were too fond of being with him to want to lose a minute of his company.

But in spite of the demands of the Vatican sculpture galleries, they found plenty of time for the Forum, the Colosseum, innumerable churches, the Appian Way, the Palatine Hill, St. Peter's, the Catacombs, the Castle of St. Angelo, the Sixtine Chapel, the Lateran Museum, the

Thermæ of Diocletian and all the usual sights. They had nothing to complain of, those two. Chummy, who believed that life without Rome was unthinkable, saw to it that they missed nothing which might minister both to their knowledge and their happiness.

"You will weave Rome into your writing, Irene," he said, "and Patuffa will weave it into her music. Rome marks an epoch in one's life if one has eyes to see and a spirit to understand."

They roamed the old streets, as a rest from art and history and excavations, disported themselves at the rag market, were properly cheated in their bargains, had love letters written for them by the old professional letter writer under his umbrella, and haunted especially the Campo dei Fiori. They loved to turn into a little trattoria frequented by the peasants, and cheat themselves into the belief that they belonged to this community. They bought their food at a shop hard by, bread and mortadella, settled down at a table, ordered a litre of red wine and proceeded to eat and drink and take note of their fellow guests. The one professional beggar allowed on the premises was a blind musician who played the mandolin. Here was a confrère, of course, and Chummy added him at once to the long list of *virtuosi* who had to be encouraged and courted. He began to address the artist in his very best and most stilted Italian.

"Ah, Signor, you need not take that trouble," said the *virtuoso* in admirable English. "I know your language. I have lived seven years in Grimsby."

That was a joke Patuffa always had against Chummy.

"Remember Grimsby," she would whisper, when he launched into Italian.

The gentleman from Grimsby was followed by ancient women selling baskets and sponges and brushes; and everyone appeared to be received with friendliness and indulgence. The family spread itself in the rear, and the children tumbled about amongst the peasants who gave them a good time. Good temper prevailed, and no one was in a hurry. Chummy and his party were accepted as if they were natural habitués of the place and lifelong friends of the owners. It was a relaxation from the effort of living up to the social high water mark of the hotel; and adventures of this nature gave the brain a chance to disentangle itself from the complications of Republican Rome, Imperial Rome, Mediæval Rome. Cæsars and Senators and Tribunes and Popes, statues and frescoes and excavations were held in suspense.

There were times when Patuffa gave her companions the slip and went off on adventures alone with her sketch-book. She had very little talent for drawing, and made appalling sketches which gave her tremendous satisfaction.

Her favourite hunting-ground was the Forum and the precincts of the Capitol. She loved the Ara Cœli, with its ancient columns and pavement and mediæval slab tombs. She loved to stand on the flight of steps leading from the Piazza Campidoglio and look towards the blue hills which always filled her heart with longing; and her other cherished vantage point was the staircase adjacent to the Tabularium, with its spreading vision of the Forum, and beyond, the Colosseum, and beyond, the everlasting hills. She generally made these private excursions when Chummy was resting or having Italian lessons, and Irene was writing up her notes or her diary to which she was wedded. Patuffa sniffed at a diary.

"Write it all down instead in your so idiot head," she would say, using the language of Papa Stefansky.

One day when she was wandering in the Forum, she came upon a man sketching in the court of the House of the Vestals. She could not resist glancing at his picture, and he looked up and smiled.

"Not much of a picture, I fear," he said. "I don't think I should recognise what it was, myself."

"I don't think I should either," she said, returning his smile. "But it isn't worse than some of the things I attempt, which overwhelm me with unbounded pride. This, for instance, of the Relief—the one with old Trajan handing the tessera. Isn't it funny? But I consider it a triumph of art because I've done it."

He looked at the sketch-book which she was holding open for him, and remarked in his pleasant voice:

"Well, I'm glad you've told me beforehand the subject of your masterpiece."

She laughed, and said:

"I think I will have a shot at this particular spot which is my favourite bit in the Forum."

She sat down on one of the stones and went to work without further delay. He continued his own task, and from time to time they paused from their labours and talked.

People passed near them, glanced at the statues of the Vestales Maximæ and the rainwater cistern, and went on their way. One or two lingered to read the inscriptions on the bases of the statues. When Patuffa had finished her sketch she compared it with his; and they decided that a prize should be given to each of them, as there was nothing to choose between their merits or demerits. When she rose to go on further, he rose also,

and by tacit mutual agreement they strolled about together where their fancy led them, along the Via Sacra, to the Arch of Titus, or past the Rostra and the Temple of Faustina, and the huge arches of the Basilica of Constantine to Santa Francesca Romana. He was as enthusiastic as herself and as impressionable; and as they were not weighted down with archæological knowledge, their enjoyment was purely spontaneous and emotional. With a few leading details to help them, they got what they both sought—atmosphere.

He was a man of perhaps twenty-eight years of age, tall, good-looking and fair, and with blue eyes, and of a singularly charming voice. He was entirely impersonal in his manner, and yet so frank and natural that Patuffa could almost have believed that he was an old friend instead of a passing acquaintance she had recently acquired over a sketch-book.

He did not give his name, nor ask hers. He told her nothing about himself, nor showed any curiosity about her. They talked of the churches they had seen, of the overwhelming vastness of St. Peter's and the glories of the Vatican, of the strange fascination of the Campagna, and the interest of the Appian Way, of the Pope and the Papal Guard, of S. Onoforio where Tasso died, and of the sunsets and blue hills which he loved as much as she. They compared notes and impressions, and finally they parted in the same easy and casual fashion in which they had entered into comradeship. But after he had gone, Patuffa stood, by the Column of Phocas, wondering about him, smiling over their bits of fun, over their respective sketches, and hoping that she would come across him again. Nearly she had said to him: "I do hope we shall meet again." But she did not say it. Something restrained her, cer-

tainly not any acute reverence for the conventionalities which did not exist for her, but rather a very unusual sense of shyness.

She went back to Chummy and Irene, full of her adventure. They chaffed her, called him the Unknown One, and undertook to keep their eyes open everywhere for a young man answering to Patuffa's detailed description. For several days they saw no signs of him. They met him neither at the Vatican, nor on the Pincio, nor on the Palatine, where they went several times, nor in the Colosseum, nor in any of the churches and galleries. But one morning when they mounted the steep flight of steps to S. Gregorio Magno, there he was sketching in the atrium. He looked up, saw Patuffa, smiled his sunny smile and began:

"Now what do you think of this for a sketch? Could you do better? I doubt it! I consider it quite an achievement, except for the doorway which I grant is not perfect. Why not have a try? And then we could make a picture of the archway to SS. Giovanni e Paolo, and another of the outside precincts, a subject truly worthy of our consummate art."

Then he glanced at Chummy and Irene, and realised that his friend was in their company. But this discovery did not seem unwelcome to him. He turned to Chummy in most friendly fashion.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. "Companions of the sketch-book—rivals."

"Yes, I heard," Chummy said, smiling. "Go ahead. Don't mind us."

"A very curious impulse, this impulse to sketch when you haven't got the least talent," the stranger confided. "But it makes me frightfully happy."

"Me too," laughed Patuffa, "even though I know I shall not reach immortal fame by that pathway. No National Gallery for me."

"You don't know," said Chummy. "Genius sometimes develops late."

Patuffa whipped out her sketch-book, winked at Irene and tweaked her ear. Irene whispered to her father as they moved off together:

"A romance, Chummy. What fun—isn't it?"

"I suppose if I were a heavy father, I should stop it," he answered. "But not being of that sect, I leave it alone. Besides, it's a bit of a spree for Patuffa and will do her good. And she can very well take care of herself without our interference. An engaging young man."

"Such blue eyes," said Irene with fervour. "Patuffa always loved blue eyes."

Chummy laughed:

"Whe shall have you forgathering with someone in the Forum soon. A good thing if you did do something of that sort, my child. As I've remarked so often, you oughtn't always to be tied down to a prehistoric parent. Couldn't you manage a mild flirtation or two, if nothing more? You've had plenty of chances, and a bright example in Patuffa."

"Patuffa can do enough in that line for us both," she said. "Cousin Keble in the dim background, but there, always there, and intermittent, new affairs to keep her going."

She was always indulgently ready to aid and abet anything that Patuffa was after; and so now she purposely lengthened their visit to the interior of S. Gregorio in order not to spoil her friend's adventure with the young man of the blue eyes.

She lingered unnecessarily long in the Capella Salviati as though spell-bound by the ancient Madonna which is said to have addressed S. Gregorio. The old granite columns and fifteen-century sculptures of the altar exacted from her a searching attention which even Chummy deemed too thorough. The sentinel cypresses in the garden detained her unduly; and when at length they passed into the chapels, she appeared to be riveted by the picture of the martyrdom of St. Andrew and by the marble table at which S. Gregorio entertained daily twelve poor guests, leaving a thirteenth place empty, which was one day filled by an angel.

"Should not this legend alone be able to dispel the evil omen of a thirteenth seat?" she asked. She enlarged on this theme.

She was altogether a brick, was Irene; but when she could delay no longer, they joined Patuffa and the Unknown One who accepted their companionship as if he belonged naturally to the party.

He was light-hearted, joyous and endowed with a quizzical kind of charm, most attractive. Either he found nothing strange in the suddenness of his intimacy, or else only pretended that life was merely proceeding "according to plan." But the result was pleasant for them all; for though he was in a sense Patuffa's property, no one felt out in the cold. They sketched bits of the exterior of SS. Giovanni and Paolo and the adjoining Passionist Monastery. They laughed and ate their lunch and drank Genzano wine and basked in the sunshine in this picturesque corner. They lingered in the church, made friends with the sacristan and explored the recent excavations of the dwelling-house of the Saints.

Not a tiresome word of explanation passed between

them as to who they were and why they were—those ever boring and unnecessary questions and answers of civilised society. Chummy, indeed, would have been the last person to produce his card, and say: "Here is my card, and the name of my hotel." To begin with, he hadn't a card, and he probably forgot he had a hotel, since he lived always in the immediate surroundings in which he found himself. Perhaps it was the same with the Unknown One. Certainly he had, like Chummy himself, a distinct air of irresponsibility and detachment. One could not have imagined him fitting in tightly in a mosaic of definite design.

But he did say to Patuffa as he hugged his sketch-book:

"We must try our luck again. I think we ought to be able to achieve even greater masterpieces than those of to-day. I have a hankering after Santa Agnese fuori, and there are bits on the Palatine that invoke my gifts. If you come that way, we can enter on another rivalry."

There was a twinkle in his eye as he spoke, but his manner was quite impersonal, friendly, intimate, eager, but detached. He raised his hat, and passed on his way down the street, and through the Arch of Constantine to the Colosseum. They watched him and heard him whistling as he went. He was a joyous person, and left behind him an atmosphere of happiness.

"An engaging forestiere," remarked Chummy with a nod of approval. "If you had to forgather with someone in the Forum, Patuffa, I am glad you chose him instead of a bland, self-contained smug."

"I didn't choose him, Chummy," she said. "He was there."

"Do you want to see him again?" he asked chaffingly. "Or have you had enough of his blue eyes?"

"I think I too have a hankering after Santa Agnese fuori," she laughed softly.

It was some time before they saw him again. Patuffa stole off alone to Santa Agnese fuori, but he was not there. They all went together to the Palatine, but he was not there. They did not see him in the Sixtine Chapel, nor at the Colosseum. He was never on the Pincio watching the entrancing panorama of the sunset, nor in the pleasant Borghese Gardens, nor in the Villa Rospigliosi; and not once in the Vatican did they see a sign of him.

One day they took a carriage and pair and drove up to Genzano. The Campagna was bathed in that lovely and mystic colour which seems to belong only to the air of Rome. In the sky, sapphire blue yielding into every tint of opal as it neared the horizon. Asphodels powdering the billows of the plain. The fairy haze chastening crude contours and toning every differentiation of shade into a tender harmony. Rome in the distance, majestic, eternal with its memories and splendours.

On they mounted, past tombs, and aqueducts and sheep amidst the ruins and oxen grazing or ploughing, past wine carts leisurely wending their way in a long straggling procession, past solitary cypresses and lonely farms. And further upwards, past vines and olives and almond trees, past avenues of firs and cypresses leading to nowhere, past mediæval gates standing alone, past walls embroidered with pink stone crop, past towers and ruins.

The blue mountains in front. The vision of Rome still distinct in the rear. And around, the golden-yellow

Campagna lengthening into boundless space, filling the soul with an unwonted solemnity. And soon the fairy-like woodland road from Ariccia onwards to Genzano, with entrancing glimpses through the trees, and generous revelations from the viaducts. So they reached Genzano, left the carriage by the fountain in the piazza, mounted the steep street, and found their way to the Albergo which overlooked the beautiful but sinister little lake of Nemi.

Here, on the balcony, they found the Unknown One. He was eating bread and salame and drinking Genzano wine. When he saw them, he made place for them at his table, precisely as if he had been waiting for them and as if there had been no break in the continuity of their acquaintanceship. The sunshine of his aura spread itself over them at once. It was impossible not to feel glad and happy in his presence. Patuffa felt a thrill of joy at seeing him again. She had never been so drawn to anyone, and had suffered secret pangs of disappointment during these days when the earth had seemed to have swallowed him up. Yet, for all his winning friendliness, he again gave the impression of being detached—like the sunshine itself, mingling, shedding warmth, light, joyousness, and yet something apart.

He brought out his sketch-book, and with his confiding smile showed her triumphantly an "impression" of the fountain in the piazza, and another of a wine cart complete with mule and enveloping umbrella hood, driver asleep, and attendant dog. She laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Well, if I can't do as well as that or better, I shall tear my own hair out," she said.

"I fear you'll have to tear it out," he answered. "These pictures establish the fact that your gifts are not

as great as mine. I've been thinking seriously over the results of our labours, and this is the decision I've come to."

"I'll try my hand at a wine cart, and you'll have to alter your decision," Patuffa said.

He shook his head with mock gravity.

"You are wrong," he said. "I am the greater genius. You may be a genius in another direction for all I know. . . ."

"She is," put in Irene staunchly. "That's just what she is."

"Nonsense," smiled Patuffa giving Irene a kick under the table. "Don't heed what my friend says. She's deluded by affection."

"I understand," he nodded, indulgently. "Affection is easily deluded."

But this was more than Irene could bear.

"You should hear the audience clapping," she said almost indignantly. "Then you'd know."

"Clapping," he repeated vaguely. "What a horrible thought. Such a horrible noise. So disturbing to the nerves."

His apparent want of curiosity about Patuffa's genius irritated Irene to such a pitch that she would have poured the whole of her friend's career out on his devoted head, if another violent kick under the table had not warned her to behave herself and be silent. She stuffed her mouth with bread, gazed at the little town of Nemi across the lake, with its ancient fort, and made no further remarks until she was alone with Chummy. And then she said:

"I can't make head or tail of him. I like him very much, and I don't like him at all. He ought to be told

who Patuffa is, and then perhaps he would be less impervious to my remarks about her genius."

"Genius be hanged," laughed Chummy, lighting a cigar. "Probably this is his form of flirting. And Patuffa evidently likes it. She'll be even with him if she wants to. Trust her! Let us leave them to their sketching and go down to the lake."

So they wandered by the shore of the lake fringed with withies, delicate pink of hue, with their young leaves not yet out; and they looked across at the wood-covered hills, and with their minds they reconstructed the Temple dedicated to Diana. They spoke of the dark tales those silent waters could tell of that far off age when Diana's priest in charge was ever on the watch against murderous attack, hunted through those very woods until he fell a victim to his successor. Beautiful the spot, but sinister indeed the atmosphere.

Patuffa meantime sketched her wine cart, and a mule resting from its labours and eating its corn contentedly in a dark side passage. The Unknown drew an impression of the steep street and the children playing about. They amused themselves hugely, and Patuffa was extraordinarily happy. When they had finished, they wandered down to the lake side to find the others. He told her that he had been rather ill, with a touch of fever.

"That is why I did not turn up at Santa Agnese," he explained. "I was disappointed."

"So was I," she owned. "I went there."

He nodded as if that were a matter of course.

"We were on the Palatine twice," she added. "And again I thought you would be somewhere about."

"Yes," he said, "and so I should have been. But we must meet there soon. I have planned all sorts of

things. We must certainly have a shot at Livia's House. At the Forum we ought to do Titus's Arch, and of course we can't leave out the Colosseum."

He drew a long breath, as if of relief.

"The Colosseum—so vast!" he cried suddenly. "I worship vastness. That is why I love St. Peter's. So vast—no walls pressing you round. The Campagna so vast—adorable—isn't it? Always I have hated walls closing you in. Space—unlimited space is life to me."

"You should live on mountain peaks," Patuffa said. "Then you'd have space enough to satisfy you."

"No space could be large enough to satisfy me," he exclaimed. "I've been to the Cañon of the Colorado—and even that was not large enough for me. Ah, such a wonder—that. You should go—you should see."

But he brushed the Cañon of the Colorado aside, with a half-laugh of impatience, as if irrelevant and intrusive, and spoke with almost inspired eloquence of the Campagna.

"Its sapphire light," he ended with, "its revealing, concealing haze, its embracing loneliness, its impenetrable distances—all the thoughts conceived and matured in the splendour of its vagueness."

His excitation uplifted and thrilled Patuffa. Here was a poet—and she loved poets. For them no vastness great enough—for them no barriers barring their progress to the Distant Scene. From that moment she loved the Unknown One, whoever he was.

She thought suddenly of Keble, and smiled. Between Keble and the Unknown One the entire spaces of the earth.

She had found what she wanted.

They all journeyed back from Genzano together, in Chummy's carriage. More than ever did he seem a de-

lightful companion, light-hearted, and enthusiastic over all the things which they loved. Nothing beautiful on that glorious drive escaped his attention. He was a worshipper of Nature, as well as a lover of ruins. He neither talked too much nor too little. Though always impersonal, he was so easy to be with, that it was incredible to suppose he was a stranger. Rather did he appear to be an old friend who had returned in the natural order of events, after an absence of years, to the old footing of an established intimacy. When they reached Rome he got out near the Piazza di Spagna.

"Here is my hotel," he pointed out. "I chose it because I thought I would like to be near Keats's house. But I am moving higher to escape malaria, and am coming to the Hotel B."

"That is where we are," said Chummy.

"Indeed?" he said, with no sign of personal interest. "Then we shall probably meet again. And if not there, in some of our other haunts."

He lifted his hat and passed on his way.

Patuffa's heart beat joyously.

CHAPTER II

He arrived in two or three days' time. They found him at dinner, established at a table by himself, not very far off from their own. He greeted them in the most natural fashion, as if he had been in the hotel for weeks past and was accustomed to see them pass by him to their own table in the corner. He joined them afterwards in the drawing-room, and settled down with them to compare notes over recent experiences and adventures. He was so delightful to Chummy and so appreciative of the

old man's bonhomie and of his unspoiled enthusiasm for Rome and its glories, that Irene, disposed to be critical and cautious as a protective instinct against her father's recklessness in friendly intercourse with strangers of all nations and persuasions, succumbed to the Unknown One's charm, and banished from her mind the vague misdoubts which she felt in his presence.

Perhaps he guessed that she was the only one of the trio who had any misgiving, however slight, about him. Perhaps he realised that in her quiet way she was the responsible member of the party. Anyway it was certain that he was not thoroughly at his ease with her. Once or twice he fixed his eyes on her thoughtfully and even anxiously; and it was to her that he finally disclosed his identity, seeming to recognise that she it was who would be likely to require from him a passport of some nature.

She was not conscious that he was intending to propitiate her, and was only amused at the intriguing manner in which he presented her with his name, half apologetically, as if he were transgressing a law of civilisation. He ran up to his room and brought down a new book on the Roman Campagna. Chummy had gone to the smoking-room, and Patuffa was talking to some South American people at the opposite end of the *salon*. He sat down by Irene's side and showed her the book.

"I bought it to-day," he said. "I will lend it to you. You will find it very interesting. It tells you a good deal, and in a way which will not necessarily bewilder the brain as most books of information do."

He fingered it awhile and then let the pages slip back to the title page which he stared at fixedly in silence.

His own name was on the opposite page. It read

Peter Long, and at the bottom were the words, *"Old Court, Wareham."*

"My boring name," he said at length, half apologetically. "Names are boring, aren't they? And quite unnecessary, really. But I suppose one has got to have a name if only to claim one's property in a hotel."

"Yes," she laughed, falling in with his pretence. "For the same reason my father and I call ourselves Tyrell, and my friend calls herself Patuffa Rendham."

His face lit up as he said:

"Patuffa. Ah, well, that is a name worth having. Patuffa Rendham—and where have I heard it, I wonder?"

"I told you she was a genius," Irene reproached, "but you took no notice. My friend is already a great violinist, and on her way to be still greater. You've probably seen her name in the concert advertisements. She has been playing a good deal both in London and the provinces."

He shook his head.

"I may have," he answered. "But I am not musical, you know. In fact I dislike music. Concert announcements would not rivet my attention. No, the name must have been elsewhere."

He said to himself that it must have been in his own heart.

But aloud he repeated smiling: "Patuffa—Patuffa."

So at least they knew his name and that he lived in Wareham, but that was about all. He never spoke of any relations or friends, nor referred to any events of his life. It was as if he had had no life except his present life in Rome. His mind was concentrated on the happenings of the hour; and his quiet, half whimsical enjoyment of every circumstance was most endearing. Irene

alone noticed that now and again, at rare intervals, it is true, his face clouded over, and that he glanced back as if expecting to see someone near him. It was only a momentary anxiety, but it was a real one.

She spoke of it to Chummy and to Patuffa. Chummy laughed at her good-naturedly, and said it was evident that she was not losing, with heavily increasing years, her powers of vivid imagination. Patuffa pronounced her to be a silly ass, like all writers of books. Irene therefore entrusted her reflections to her diary; and these were some of her entries at the time:

"Mr. Peter Long goes everywhere with us, and I have ended by liking him very much, but continue to have an uneasy feeling about him. Chummy takes the greatest pleasure in his company, and, of course, is attracted by his irresponsibility: for Chummy has adored irresponsible people ever since I can remember; and we've always had a long procession of them at Headquarters. Up to now I've never minded, and I don't know why I should mind now, except for Patuffa's sake.

"There is no doubt that she has fallen in love with him. I've never before seen her taken up so thoroughly with any man. It isn't that she speaks much about him. Patuffa never says much. I remember at school how silent she was when she was planning the most awful things. Her enthusiasm for sketching has become an obsession, and she and Peter Long enjoy themselves together hour after hour. She has most certainly passed on from poor old Papa Stefansky's tragedy. Well, of course that is just what we wanted her to do, and I don't know why I am so captious."

And later:

"I said to Chummy last evening when we had re-

turned from a long day's outing at Tivoli and he had been sounding the praises of Peter Long: 'Chummy dear, I do like him, and no one could appreciate more than I do all his pleasant and easy winning ways. And I am sure he has the heart of a true poet. But I do wish we knew a little more about him.' Chummy's answer was that relations and parents and great-grandparents and a solid mass of ancestors were burdens which no one ought to be expected to carry—and certainly not in Rome. I could only laugh."

And later:

"I sometimes wish Madame Mama was here. Not that she or anyone could put a spoke in Patuffa's wheel. Still I wish it. Patuffa might confide in her. She might, or might not. But I rather imagine she might, for those two have always been so close to each other—at any rate, they were close before Madame Mama's engagement. That engagement has made an enormous difference. I notice Patuffa does not write the screeds to her mother that she used to in the old days."

It was evident that Peter Long was at his happiest in open places. He refused quietly, but quite definitely, to go to any of the Catacombs, or to the crypt of St. Peter's. Nothing enticed him there. But he was always ready for the Palatine. He was content to spend hours amongst the remains of the Palaces, but took care to have nothing to do with the guide whom Chummy and Irene adored, and whose every word they drank in, in their thirst for knowledge. He scarcely ever went into the Museums, and Irene noticed that when he did accompany them, he seemed worried and anxious, and moved on spasmodically if anyone, except his friends, came near him.

One day when they were all at the Thermæ of Diocletian, he remained in the gardens whilst Chummy and Patuffa visited the Museum. Irene, being tired, stayed behind with him, and they sat together on a bench near the fountain, amongst the broken fragments of pediments and statues. He had his sketch-book as usual in his hand, and began making a drawing of the gigantic bull's head. Suddenly he stopped with a start, half rose, and looked round with the same expression of alarm on his face which she had remarked before, only on this occasion his distress seemed far greater.

"What is it, Mr. Long?" she asked kindly.

The sound of her voice must have reassured him. He gave a sigh of relief, and the cloud cleared at once from his face.

"Very curious," he said, returning to his sketching, "I thought someone touched me on the shoulder. I thought I heard someone calling my name. I could have sworn it."

But he at once recovered his serenity, and was his own cheerful, happy self again, whistling softly to himself as he drew, and then holding out to her his sketch-book so that she might admire his work.

"All the same," he said with a laugh, "Miss Patuffa Rendham is beating me hollow. I pretend to the contrary, as you know. But the truth is, she improves, and I don't. Very selfish of her. Why can't she be content to excel in that violin playing of hers which does not concern me?"

"It would concern you if you heard her," Irene said, glad for the chance of touching on a sore subject. "You haven't heard her. Why don't you ask her to play to you?"

"You see, I'm not musical," he confided. "It is a ghastly fact that music bores me. I almost hate it. The

only tune I can stand is *God Save the Queen,* and that not too often either. But if you think I ought to ask her, I'll try and bear up. Do you think I ought to? Will she be offended if I don't?"

"No, I'm sure she won't," Irene laughed, appeased by his frankness. "Patuffa is not like that. She is very simple, and gives herself no airs about her playing. Everyone says that. So far she is quite unspoilt."

"You love your friend," he said.

Irene nodded.

"You see, we've been children together," she explained. "She used to protect me and fight my battles at school. She would now if I wanted her help. I should be sorry for the person who tried to do me an injury. She is so loyal."

"Ah," he said, smiling tenderly. "Loyal—that's a good word. Do please tell me some more about her."

And Irene, nothing loth, and forgetting her misgivings and her entries in her diary, gave him a glowing and an intimate account of Patuffa, and ended up with the story of Stefansky's tragic death on the platform.

"So we brought her here to recover," she said.

"And is she recovering?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," Irene answered. "She is not the same person. Rome is helping her."

"Ah, not only Rome," he said excitedly. "Not only the Vatican and the Forum and the Appian Way and St. Peter's and the Campagna—no—no, not only that . . ."

At that moment Chummy and Patuffa returned, and this private conversation came to an abrupt end.

That night Irene wrote in her diary:

"I couldn't help myself when he asked me about

Patuffa. But now I wish I had not told him so much: for he drank in every word, and I know perfectly well that I have stimulated Mr. Peter Long to think more of her instead of having tried to snuff out his interest. Not that it would really have made any difference, I suppose, as they are in love with each other. But I ought to have been more reserved. There is something about him which disarms one. I like his directness and his simplicity. I like it, for instance, that he was so frank about hating music! Other men might pose and pretend to adore it in order to find favour with her. He does nothing of the kind. And it was really most amusing to-night when he said to Patuffa in his naive way which is so fascinating—and that's the truth—'I believe it is my duty to ask you to play on the violin to me. I wish I didn't dislike music, and above all the sound of a violin, which always sets my teeth on edge. But I can't help myself, can I? Still, I do ask you to play.' Patuffa laughed and answered: 'It's most awfully kind of you, Mr. Long, and I quite appreciate your sacrifice. But how would it be if we took the ordeal as done and over?'

"His look of relief was something great to behold. Patuffa was more than delighted with him; far more so than if he had worshipped her talent and praised her in glowing terms as so many do.

"Yes, she is certainly in love with him. Well, I admit he is a dear fellow. But he remains a mystery to me. That sudden alarm of his to-day, for instance—that puzzled me. It is curious that he has these attacks only in my presence. Four occasions I've noted. I believe I make him nervy—and why I can't think."

CHAPTER III

I

Said Patuffa to herself:

"I love this man and I'm going to marry him sooner or later—probably sooner. And I don't care what anyone may say about it. I've set my heart on Peter Long. I intend to have him."

Up to now she had only had friendships or mild flirtations with men, whom she sent flying if they irritated her. Her passion for freedom was so great that at the first sign of being chained and captured, she had always taken alarm and shaken them off.

But no wish to escape from the lure of Peter Long assailed her. The mystery of him, the romance of him, the enchantment of him, excited her. It was so exactly like her to be drawn towards a stray unknown, whom she had discovered in her own way, off her own bat. Probably if he had been introduced to her in the sanctity of a drawing-room, he might have meant nothing to her. But to have excavated him in the Forum when she was prowling round alone and detached from circumstances—to have come across someone equally detached and as equally ready for immmediate comradeship as herself—well, if that was not fate, what was fate, pray?

She accepted him as fate. At the moment it was of no matter to her that he frankly and whole-heartedly disliked the very thing on which her life was founded—music. The truth was that he had taken her on the rebound, when her enthusiam for her career was in abeyance. She was tired out by her many years of strenuous apprenticeship, the excitements of her concerts, the fulfilment of

her ambitions, the intensity of her aspirations, her conflicting emotions about Mama's engagement, a deep and silent suffering over the growing separation between them, and finally the exhausting circumstances of Stefansky's visit and the tragedy of his death. She was glad to turn aside from music and to bask in the sunshine of a companionship which entailed no demands on her art. The relief would not have lasted, but whilst it did last it was very real. Not once those days did she touch her violin. She wrote the briefest letters to Mama with no reference to the events which were engaging all her principal thoughts. This was the first time that Mama had not been her confidante in any *affaire de cœur.*

She let herself go entirely, and drew Peter Long on by falling in readily with the intimacy which he appeared to expect as a matter of course. She could have cut the comradeship short if she had wanted. She could have given excuses for not going out alone with him. But she did nothing of the kind. She even proposed outings with him, always, however, saying quite frankly to Chummy and Irene:

"Mr. Long and I are going to the Colosseum to-day." Or:

"He and I have designs on the Villa Doria-Pamfili this morning." Or:

"We're off to the Appian Way to sketch some tombs."

And Chummy was so immersed in all his studies in language, history, archæology and sculpture, that he did not take much heed of what was going on outside that world of wonder, in which he was living a life of pure delight. Once or twice he asked:

"And where is our Patuffe to-day?"

"Out with Peter Long," Irene answered.

"Ah, really," he said. "It is a mercy she is amusing herself so well, and making such a thorough recovery. Now, my child, I ask you to take special note of the way in which that head is poised. And mark well the strain of the outstretched arm. Perfect. Marvellous. For this statue alone it was worth coming hundreds of miles."

And as he bestowed no more attention than that on Patuffa's adventure, Irene gave up referring to it, ended by accepting Patuffa's many absences as the natural order of things, and made no allusion to them even in her diary. It was not difficult for her to arrive at this acquiescence, seeing that ever since she had known her, Patuffa had invariably planned out her own life and pursued her own way in the teeth of all opposition. And she had always come out on the top. She would now, her staunch friend vaguely thought.

So Irene, too, as well as her father, steeped herself in the history and archæology of Rome, and thought and dreamed of the past. She made careful notes about the tombs of the Popes and began a series of papers on that subject, starting with the monument to Sixtus IV in St. Peter's. At other times, with her mind's eye, she saw Cæsar mounting the tribune for the last time. She saw the triumphal proccessions winding along the Via Sacra to the Capitol, and the undying fire rising from the Temple of Vesta. She saw the thousands assembled in the Colosseum, and the gladiators and Christian martyrs meeting their fate in the vast arena. Or she leapt the centuries and saw Tasso wandering in the Convent garden of St. Onoforio, or Michelangelo at work on the ceiling of the Sixtine, or Raphael on his frescoes in the *stanze* of the Vatican. And Patuffa, though sharing these visions and raptures often enough not to cut herself off from in-

timate intercourse with Chummy and Irene, went her way unimpeded and free as air.

It was on the Pincio, when the sun was setting in all its undreamt of magnificence behind the Dome of St. Peter's, that Peter Long unfolded his love to Patuffa. It was a simple enough confession, and her acceptance of it was the same.

"We know all we need to know of each other," he said. "We know that we love each other."

"Yes," she said, her face aglow with happiness. "I have shown you from the beginning I loved you. And you have shown me. We've wasted no time. And why should we have wasted it when we felt at once that we were made for each other?"

"Made for each other," he repeated joyously. "The wonder of it, the glory of it, the thrill of it, my Patuffa."

With his arm close round her, and her arm close round him, they leaned over the parapet, watched the splendour of the sky with all its changing tones and hues, and whispered to each other that Nature could show them no scene more beautiful than the vision conjured up by the magician Love.

II

The next day Patuffa told Chummy. She was radiantly happy, but armed with a defiance ready for any opposition. She began:

"Chummy, I suppose I ought to tell you that Peter Long and I love each other, and that we shall be married as soon as possible. At first I thought I would keep this secret. But I changed my mind."

He put down Lanciani's *Pagan and Christian Rome*, and looked up at her.

"Well, I'm glad you changed your mind, little Patuffe," he said quietly.

"Yes, so am I," she answered simply.

He fiddled with the book uneasily, and seemed troubled.

"But, my child, you know nothing of him," he objected very kindly.

"Well, there's nothing in that," she said brusquely, beginning her defiance at once. "How often have you not said that no one knows anything of anyone?"

"Yes, that's quite true," Chummy answered. "I stand by my own words, but . . ."

"You like him," she interrupted. "You've shown you like him. And you've told me so over and over again."

"Of course I like him," Chummy owned. "As a stray companion, as an Unknown One, as an enthusiast over all the things we love—except music—I think he is quite delightful. I have nothing against him. But up to now I've never thought of him as a possible adopted son-in-law. For all we know, he may be the very person of all others to occupy that position—I don't say he isn't. But he is an entire stranger to us. We know no more of him than if we had found him on the desert of Arizona, collecting cacti."

"I don't see that it makes any difference," she said with growing impatience.

"In one sense it doesn't," he answered, with a half smile. "There is more chance in these love concerns than we like to own up to. But in another sense, it is as well to have some idea, however vague, of the circumstances to which one commits oneself. Even I think that, Patuffa, and you couldn't accuse me of being a heavy father—could you now? It looks as if I haven't

been heavy enough. I ought to have foreseen something of this sort; but the truth is, I've been entirely taken up with statues and excavations, and also I've had no practice in the heavy father attitude. I blame myself for not keeping a better look out."

"You needn't," she said. "You wouldn't have influenced me in the least. I love him passionately. I loved him from the moment I saw him. I don't care who he is, and what his circumstances are. But I can tell you something about him. He has a sister and a house in Dorsetshire, but he lives in Colorado. He went there for his health years ago and prefers to have his home there. He has plenty of money, and he runs over to Europe when he wants to. Doesn't that sound all right?"

"And where does your music come in?" Chummy asked.

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"It is nothing to me as compared with Peter," she said. "Just nothing. He is everything. Nothing else counts."

"You have a successful career in your hands," Chummy said, "and you are prepared to throw it away like so much rubbish for the sake of a strange man whom you've known for five or six weeks, and who owns quite frankly that he hates music?"

"Yes," she replied fiercely.

"Well, my dear child, I think you are a fool—a damned little fool," he said. "I don't pretend that I can influence you, for I don't consider I've ever been able to influence anyone. And probably you'll be telling me that it is none of my business."

"Yes, I should," she retorted.

"All right, we've got over that part," he said quite quietly. "But there remains Madame Mama. You at least owe it to her to open your heart to her and thresh out the whole subject with her. She has always . . ."

"Mama is out of it," Patuffa interrupted. "You know perfectly well, Chummy, that Mama is going her own way and leaving me in the lurch. Mama won't care now whom and what I marry."

"Is everyone then out of it?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, stamping her foot. "Everyone. It is my concern and mine only."

He did not take the slightest notice of her temper.

"Patuffe," he urged, "whatever you do to anyone else, you must not leave Madame Mama out in the cold. And it isn't like you to be unfair to her. Your welfare could never be a matter of indifference to her—and you know it. Remember, she confided her own love affair to you; and the least you can do is to confide yours to her. That is all I have to say to you about it, and apparently the only thing that I have the right to say. I repeat it, I have nothing against Peter Long. I like him and I like his enthusiasm and his light-hearted happiness. I like his detachment, his irresponsibility. You know I am myself a bit irresponsible, and so I well understand that quality in him. But I'm thankful it isn't Irene who has fallen in love with him. After all, you don't belong to me, little Patuffe, *except inasmuch as you wish to belong to me.* I might make all the enquiries I chose about Peter Long, and yet I should have no authority to press on you the result of those enquiries as I should have in the case of Irene. The only thing I really have the right to do, is to write to Madame Mama and tell her the circumstances which are beyond my control. But I would much rather

you did it—for her sake and mine—and yours. Couldn't you see your way?"

She stood white, tense, stubborn, defiant and silent.

"Couldn't you?" he repeated, looking up with his kind smile which had so much charm in it, and was on most occasions an unfailing appeal of comradeship.

"No," she answered. "I go my own way. I've always gone my own way. I know what I want, and I intend to have it. If I make a mistake, it is my own mistake—no one else's."

She was watching him keenly, and she must have seen his expression change from kindness and patience to the impassivity of indifference.

"Well, well," he said turning away with a half sigh, "at least we've had no scene. I'm getting too old for scenes. I need peace."

He stretched out his hand for Lanciani, and began reading it, as if she had left the room and he were alone. His behaviour gave the impression that, after all, she did not count; and no words of rebuke or criticism or angry remonstrance could have stung her more. Almost she sprang forward to ask forgiveness, as she had so often asked it from him when, as a child, she had been impossible and naughty. But she did not yield now to the impulse, and, instead, walked slowly out of the room and shut the door with quiet deliberation.

When she had gone, he put down his book. His mind was no longer with *Pagan and Christian Rome*. He was hurt by Patuffa's attitude towards him personally, but still more so by her willingness to repudiate her career. He knew, of course, that this phase would pass, and that in the end it would be as impossible for her to give up her music, as it would be for the lark to lose its joy and birth-

right of song. But he was bitterly disappointed that she could even imagine herself ready to sacrifice the very foundations of her existence, at the call of passion. He had believed her more firmly planted in the soil to which he himself had gladly contributed enrichment for growth and attainment.

It was exactly like Chummy to feel far more concerned about her indifference to her career than about the fact that Peter Long was a stranger and an unknown quantity. If Peter Long had been a musician, or an enthusiast for music, capable of understanding and appreciating Patuffa's talent, Chummy would have been the first to think that probably nothing else mattered, and that this one essential being secured, love and passion could take its own risks, and work out its salvation or damnation on its own lines and in its own way.

He did not blame Patuffa. He blamed himself. He had neglected the responsibilities he had taken on himself and landed them all in this mess.

"So like me," he thought. "I'm such a fool, and haven't had my eyes open. Irene, the only sensible one amongst us, warned me what was going on, and I took no notice. She warned me, too, that there is something strange and unusual about the man, and I've snuffed her out. It hasn't seemed to matter, if there were. He was only a passer by. But now, by Jove, it does matter. One must focus on him, and plan out what's to be done."

Poor Chummy was trying to think what course to take which would be helpful and not futile, having regard to Patuffa's wilful and determined nature, when Peter Long arrived. He was nervy and excited, but brought with him, as usual, an atmosphere of charm which was irresistible. The almost childlike confidence with which he slipped into

a chair near Chummy, as if he were sure of being welcomed, was disarming in itself. Chummy smiled in spite of his anxiety.

"I love Patuffa," Peter Long said without any preliminaries. "She loves me. We know we are made for each other. We found that out at once, Mr. Tyrell, and we are going to marry as soon as possible. Isn't it splendid? I wish you could have seen the sunset which was the witness of our pact. It all seemed to fit in—glory, splendour, fire, tenderness, rest, peace, union, ecstasy, love. I have come to tell you of my happiness. Never could I have believed there was such happiness in life."

His rapture took all the wind out of Chummy's sails. He could only stare at Peter Long in a blank silence. This taking everything for granted truly fascinated him, intrigued him, deprived him of any latent resources to meet the situation.

"When she came into the Vestals' courtyard I knew she was mine," Peter Long continued, laughing joyously. "I felt sure of it, Mr. Tyrell. And you see I was right. She felt the same. We'd found each other in an instant —glorious, wasn't it? No boring, ridiculous, wasteful beginnings, but immediate recognition of destiny. And in such surroundings, too! With the glamour and glory of the past closing round us, and that wonderful sunshine lighting up the world of our future. I have no words with which to describe to you my joy, my exaltation. But you will understand and sympathise, I am sure. We understand each other, you and I."

With great effort Chummy found utterance.

"But hasn't it struck you, Long," he asked as impressively as he could, "that we don't know who you are?"

"Don't know who I am?" Peter Long repeated with

sudden impatience. "Well, what has that got to do with it, pray?"

"We don't know who you are," Chummy went on bravely. "You don't know who we are. You know nothing of our circumstances. We know nothing of yours. We are just casual acquaintances thrown together haphazard. We've got at least to pause—you, as well as we."

"Pause?" shouted Peter Long, springing up excitedly. "What do we want to pause for? Money? I've plenty of money. I've always had plenty of money and always shall have. So that's settled."

He waved his arms indignantly in the air, as if dismissing this most ignoble subject. The sunny expression on his face had gone. He looked angry, fierce, almost menacing. It was certain that he could brook no opposition. But Chummy, having once started, had gained confidence in himself.

"There are other considerations besides money," he said quietly—"where a man belongs—what his people are—what he does—what his aims are—what his circumstances are—however humble, however grand. I'm not laying any stress on grandeur or prosperity. That's not my way of looking at life. But hang it all, one has got to know something to guide one. What do you do, for instance?"

"Do?" shouted Peter Long with a laugh that sounded none too pleasant. "What do you do?"

"I do nothing, now," Chummy replied. "But then, I am an old man. You are a young one. A young man has a career, generally. Even if he is rich and has plenty of money as you say you have, he has a career if he's worth his mettle. Patuffa has her career—a great one,

too. You don't know about her career. You don't realise that she is a great artist. She . . ."

"That's nothing to me," Peter Long interrupted impatiently. "Her career is nothing to me."

"But it is to us," Chummy said tensely. "If she's forgetting it, we can't—I can't. The man that she marries, whether he be rich or poor, ought to be someone that will cherish her career and foster her ambitions. Even if we knew everything about you, Long—your whole history from the moment you were born until now, even then, this would be my last word. For Patuffa, a rising professional violinist, to think of marrying a man who by his own confession hates music, seems to me the height of madness—madness."

The word was scarcely out of his mouth when he saw what an alarming effect it had produced on Peter Long. The man started back as if he had been struck. He was transformed from a charmer into a wild animal. In a flash all was revealed to Chummy, and he jumped up from his chair to meet the impending danger which he read in Peter Long's eyes.

"Madness—madness," Peter Long shouted. "Let no one dare to speak that lying word to me. I'll not hear it."

And he was on the point of rushing with ungovernable rage on the old man, waving his arms wildly in the air, when suddenly the door opened and Patuffa stepped into the room. She paused for less than half a second, dumbfounded at what she saw, and then she sprang between them, fearless and alert.

"Peter, what is this?" her voice rang out. "What is this?"

He brought himself up suddenly and stood shaking

all over with a supreme effort of self control at the sight of her presence and the sound of her voice.

"I am defending our love," he cried. "This miserable fool opposes it—he opposes it—he is against it—he is against me—he has been saying—he says . . ."

"Whatever he says, no one shall touch a hair of his head," she broke in fiercely, all her protective instincts aroused. "Do you hear, Peter? What are you thinking of? Miserable fool indeed! How dare you say that? How dare you? He is my friend, my best friend in the world. And no one shall touch a hair of his head."

"You against me too, Patuffa," he cried with a heart-rending anguish, "all the world against me— you against me—no, no, not that—not that."

A terrible convulsive movement passed over Peter Long's face, and he fell down in a fit.

CHAPTER IV

I

So ended Patuffa's Roman love affair. Peter Long disappeared from her life as suddenly as he had come into it. He was removed from the hotel and held in safe keeping until a few days later he was claimed by his medical attendant from whom he had escaped so far away as Perugia. He had covered up his tracks very cunningly and had enjoyed nearly two months' entire freedom. No wonder he had been happy and joyous in spite of his passing attacks of alarm which were now explained. Explained also was his very definite dislike of enclosed spaces. His pitiful record had been four years in a private asylum, partial recovery, this experiment in partial freedom—and his collapse.

Patuffa met the tragic happening in truly gallant fashion. It is possible that with her stubborn nature she might have refused to believe in Peter Long's mental affliction if she had not seen for herself. But she was forced to accept the cruel fact that the man who had been wooing her and in whose presence she had felt for the first time in her life the rapture of love, was an escaped madman and a dangerous one; and the shock of realisation might well have shattered her if she had allowed herself to give way. Instead, she bore herself with a proud dignity, and put aside her own sufferings and emotions to minister to Chummy, for whom in his old age the alarming experience had been too much. She took her turn in nursing him when Irene slept, and poured out her love and tenderness on them both. If she it was who had brought the trouble on them, at least it was she also who strove by all means in her power to bring the healing.

Chummy scarcely spoke the first day or two; but one morning he turned to her and said:

"Whe shall find our way, you and I, Patuffe. You, because you are young, and I, because I am tough."

"Yes, dear," she said, rubbing her face against his hand.

"Would you like to leave Rome, my child?" he asked. "We came here to recover from one thing, and have got something else. Bad luck—bad luck. Would you like to move on? Can you stand it?"

"Of course I can stand it," she answered firmly. "I mean to stay."

"Good girl to face the music," he nodded, "good, brave girl."

"When you are better, we must go and camp in the Vatican galleries, day and night," she said, "night and day."

He smiled.

"Ah," he said, "you're going to humour me, are you? That is good news. I like to be humoured. And how about the casts of Trajan's Column which you and Irene always want to tear me from so mercilessly?"

"Day and night," she repeated with a soft little laugh. "You shall have all the indulgence you want."

Later she said:

"Chummy, I was a beast to you. When I came back, it was to tell you that I was bitterly sorry and to beg you to forgive me."

"And instead you came to protect my foolish old life," he said. "That is all you have to remember. Nothing but that."

He recovered, more or less, after a few days, and it was a glad morning for them when he asked for his Dante, and for *Pagan and Christian Rome.*

Irene wrote in her diary:

"I think he will now soon be himself again. His heart is fairly normal, he sleeps better, and his appetite improves. The effects of the shock are certainly passing off. I have been very anxious, and very anxious also has been poor little Patuffa, who confessed to me the whole story of her interview with Chummy when she was rough and unkind to him and ungrateful. She blames herself bitterly for all that has happened, and of course she is to blame. But no one could be more penitent, nor in such a wonderful way. I never saw her so unselfish and tender. So entirely controlled in her grief she has been, so dignified in her bitter disappointment. She does not seem to have thought of herself at all, but only of Chummy and me—how best to help me—how best to restore him.

"But I shall never forget the look on her face when she was at last able to speak of Peter Long to me. I've never before seen her shed a tear except in rage, but she wept over the thought of her beloved Peter deprived of his freedom, guarded, guarded—that was the word she harped on—shut away from free intercourse with Nature and all the outside things he loved. She said he had touched some chord in her heart which would never cease to vibrate, and that nothing that might happen to her could efface the remembrance of the ecstasy she had felt in loving him and being loved by him.

"'He lies buried in my heart,' she said.

"Then she drew herself up to her full little height and faced the world unflinchingly. She has shied at no place where she has been with him. And since Chummy has risen from his bed and more or less resumed his life, I am sure that her one aim has been not to let either of us feel that she cared less for the things we were seeing and doing. How she has managed it, I don't know. I couldn't have. But there it is. I do admire her, and if it were possible, we are closer than before.

"And I admire myself, too, but in another way! In this way. I am much pleased, very much pleased with myself over my uneasiness about Peter Long. At first I thought his irresponsibility quite entrancing, as the others did. Then I began to feel that there was something disturbing in it, much as I enjoyed it. Then I noticed his sudden attacks of swiftly passing fear. Then I began gropingly to put things together in my mind: but the ground was cut from under my clever construction because all at once he became so normal, that I was obliged to conclude that I had been mistaken. I have the idea that he realised I was puzzled by his mentality, and that he

made great efforts of self-control to put me off the scent of certainty, because he knew that I was the only one who had been witness of his mysterious alarms.

"The whole matter is clear now. He was expecting, poor fellow, to be tracked down and deprived of his freedom at any moment; and only his ecstatic delight in his liberty and his infatuation for Patuffa prevented him from focussing the whole time on the probabilities of his recapture. It is a distinct triumph to me that I showed some insight into character. At Headquarters we have all kinds of out-of-the-way people. I might very easily have thought that Peter Long was only another example, with perhaps a slight differentiation—but that slight differentiation—how great. I was the only one who recognised that great, thin line.

"But that is my secret, and my intellectual psychological triumph; and I record it for my own private satisfaction, as of course in the circumstances I can't rub it in, as I otherwise should be delighted to do. I can now go on with my Popes' Tombs. I left off with the two Borgias, Calixtus III and Alexander VI, buried in one coffin in Santa Maria di Monserrato."

II

It was at the Villa D'Este that Patuffa first spoke unreservedly to Chummy about Peter Long. Irene had sent them out to Tivoli alone, partly because she wanted an uninterrupted day for herself to visit the monument of Julius II in S. Pietro-in-Vinculis and that of Paul IV in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, but chiefly because she thought it would do them both good to have a long and an intimate talk together in different surroundings. For except on that one occasion to herself, Patuffa had not

spoken of Peter Long, nor had she written a line to Mama about him. Chummy and Irene had written. Either Patuffa thought her mother was unreachable, or else some kind of resentful pride made her feel that she did not want to be reached by Mama's divided heart. Irene was determined that this unnatural silence should be broken. The strained look on Patuffa's face troubled her. Something must be done to banish that expression of dumb suffering.

So she dispatched them, in her wisdom; and things turned out as she had hoped. The Villa D'Este, beloved of Liszt, worked its appointed miracle.

They had ruled out Hadrian's Villa as being too tiring for the occasion, had visited the Temple of the Sibyl and the Falls and then made for the Villa D'Este, that enchanted hillside garden of delicate and almost unearthly beauty, with its cypresses and laurels and scarlet oleanders, its carpets of flowers, and orange groves and fountains, and the glorious views from its terrace.

The soft caressing air fanned them; the resplendent sky and golden sunshine entranced them; and the blue mountains filled their hearts with a delight unspeakable. They could not have come to a lovelier spot for the healing of the wounds of the spirit.

It was Patuffa who began. Again she asked forgiveness for her cruel and rough behaviour and her angry and ungrateful words when she had repulsed his concern and repudiated his right to advise and guide her. She asked forgiveness for the danger to which she had exposed him, a danger at the thought of which she shuddered day and night.

But he brushed all that aside as only Chummy could.

Anger and resentment had never found congenial soil in Chummy's heart. They died before they were born.

"If you were defiant, my child," he said, "I had been negligent. More blame attaches to me than to you. For you were in love and outside the range of reasonableness, and I was only immersed in my studies. There is no rift in the lute, little Patuffa. There could be none. As well suppose one in the case of Irene. Impossible. And you saved my life on that dreadful morning. Yes, you saved it. But for your timely arrival—well—well, we must leave that alone. And do you know, I crave to tell you that you have borne yourself most gallantly in these trying days. Do you think I am such an old fool that I don't realise what an effort of self-control you have made? But now, listen Patuffa, if you want to help me still more —and I am sure you do—you will unburden your heart to me. Has the time come when you could?"

Yes, she could now, she thought. And she poured out her feelings unreservedly. He tuned himself to every detail of the story: her love for Peter Long which had stirred her as she had never been stirred by any man—passionate love which counted no costs and cared not where it led: a furious, consuming rebellion against the decree of fate: despair that he had been snatched from her not even by death, but by the cruel circumstances of his mental disability: her bitter, bitter grief over her utter helplessness to reach him, protect him and restore him: her anguish over his imprisoned life. She knew it had to be so—there was nothing else but that for him. She knew that well. But that did not make the anguish less.

Chummy shared the whole of her soul's tragedy with her. He did not tell her that her love for this poor,

afflicted fellow was only a passing madness itself, destined mercifully to perish. He did not say that in a few weeks she would look back and be thankful for her great deliverance. Instead, with a wisdom born of a true understanding, he showed only tender respect for her present state, and thus did her a far greater service than by trying to minimise, however kindly, the force of the blow which she had sustained.

"You will weave your love for him into your spirit and thence into your heart, and thus he will become part of you for ever," he comforted her.

He ended with:

"There remains your career, Patuffe. Nothing can take that from you—except yourself. There remains the burning vision which Stefansky saw again before he died —through you. You have all your young life to see it in. You have a great mission, as I look at things, and a great chance. Suppose there came a devastating world war, such as some predict. I am not a politician, and I know nothing of such matters. But suppose this prophecy came true, and Europe were stricken, and devastated spiritually, and material issues crushed out spiritual values —if only for the time. Think what it would mean to the world if fountains of graciousness remained from the past, from which those athirst could drink from living waters. To me, art and literature are such fountains, giving and renewing life. It is your glorious privilege to contribute to those living waters. For it is not only the creators who count; the interpreters count. Their touch is the magic which gives life and freedom to the works of genius. All count who have plied their art divinely and left a fine record behind. So, Patuffe, remember that you have a trust which you must discharge faithfully, no matter what

may happen to you in your personal circumstances. When I hear once more the sound of your violin, then and then only shall I take true comfort. I have listened for it day after day."

"I haven't cared to touch it," she said in a low voice. "I've seemed to be miles, centuries separated from it."

"Yes, I know," he said, and left it at that, content to have sown the seed which might spring later into flower.

And then, perhaps because his mind was full of memories of Liszt, the great path-breaker, as he called him, whom he had ever loved, he began speaking of the first time when he had heard him, and how he had been stirred, bewitched by his impassioned personality. He quoted Heine's words: "He storms away right madly over the ivory keys, and then there rings out a wilderness of heaven high thought, amid which here and there the sweetest flowers diffuse their fragrance, so that one is at once troubled and beatified, but troubled most."

He spoke of his amazing life, his great-heartedness, his generosity, his unselfishness, the wealth of his virtuosity, the wealth of his creative genius—that fount of richness from which Wagner and others drew with unsparing hand.

"He was a king amongst men," Chummy said, "and a king among musicians. Someone said of his playing: 'The piano disappears—the music is revealed.' That was indeed true. If you had seen the smile of inspiration on his face, Patuffe, you would have remembered it all your life. I seem to see that radiance now, when we are wandering amongst the scenes he loved so well."

And thus he gently led her thoughts back to music and musicians, and brought her home with a changed expression on her troubled countenance.

Irene was waiting for them in the hall, eager to pounce on them and tell them the exciting news that Madame Janeiro, the famous pianist, had arrived at the hotel, with her maid and her dog Pom-pom, and crowds of luggage and a grand piano.

"A miracle, isn't it, Chummy?" she said aside, with the flush of eagerness on her face. "Patuffa will hear her, be thrilled by her and will rush back to her music. Mark my words well—for I'm very clever!"

III

"Janeiro here," Patuffa kept on murmuring to herself when she was alone in her room.

An eagerness lit up her countenance. A fire leapt into her eyes. The chill at her heart passed into sudden warmth. Janeiro here . . .

Janeiro, whom she had ever longed to meet and whom she had heard and passionately admired in Leipzig and Berlin and Moscow. And now she was here—in this very hotel. It was incredible.

She took out her Stradivari for the first time for many weeks, stared at it awhile, overhauled it, tuned it, played a few chords, laid it aside. The sound of music from some remote corner reached her ear. Janeiro playing? She must go and explore.

She dashed out, learnt where the pianist's quarters were situated in the left wing of the hotel and made her way there, drawn to the spot as inevitably as steel to the magnet. Yes, Janeiro was playing, pouring out glorious strains of music which held Patuffa in thraldom as she

sat huddled up on the stairs hard by. She listened with her whole being. She was thrilled to her depths, by the music and the nobility of its interpretation. Bach, Brahms, Chopin. Janeiro was noted for her rendering of Chopin. For years she had held the palm until Pachmann came on the scene, and even now, no one disputed the perfection of her art, nor the inspiration with which she conveyed the Master's message.

In a rush of emotion, all Patuffa's passionate love for her art returned. She was roused from her apathy, she was re-created, she was stimulated. If those who loved her could have seen her at this moment, they would have rejoiced at the magic transfiguration. When the last sounds of Chopin's Ballade in F minor had died away, she fled to her room. She locked herself in, caught up Stefansky's Stradivari and awakened it from its silence. How long she played, she never knew. If anyone came to the door, she never knew. The outside world had died to Patuffa, and she was once more in the precincts to which she belonged.

Irene passing by, heard her, and brought Chummy to listen. He stood a few minutes, touched and comforted. And then a great idea was born in his brain. He sent up a note to Madame Janeiro.

He was not in the least surprised that she immediately received him. His experience of musicians had been so long and so intimate, that he knew well he could reckon on their impulsive kindness and readiness of response to any appeal for help, material or spiritual. And it was spiritual help he needed. He had said that in his letter. He told her that he knew several of her close friends intimately, and amongst them Stefansky. He did not say what he might well have said, that his

home had always been open to musicians whom he had loved and served unfailingly. But Madame Janeiro knew that. She had heard of him often from Stefansky and others of the musical profession to whom he had been a true Mæcenas. Often when they had spoken of him and praised both him and Headquarters, she had said:

"One day I, too, shall appear at Headquarters and demand that he should do something for poor Janeiro."

"Well, you won't ask in vain," they had all said.

Their words floated back to her memory as she stood waiting to receive Chummy, with his letter in her hand, and a smile of welcome on her face. She was a beautiful woman, and had a noble presence, ample, yet not unduly so, and with an expression of the utmost kindness in her eyes and around her entrancing mouth. She gave the immediate impression of being fine and generous-hearted, and on large lines; and indeed this was the character she bore wherever she went.

"Mr. Tyrell," she began, "I know you better than you think. Stefansky used to make me madly jealous over the kindness you showered on him. And I said to myself that if that long-suffering man can put up with Stefansky and all his vagaries, then he will most certainly be able to put up with Janeiro, and when I come to London, I shall descend on him with a tale of agonising woe and have it all put right by . . ."

She tapped her forehead with two or three of her lovely fingers.

"Was the name *Chummy?*" she asked.

"It was—and is," he laughed softly, immensely gratified by her remembrance.

That was the only preliminary, and it scarcely lasted two minutes. In a few words Chummy told her about

Patuffa. He spoke of her career, her recent successes, her unselfish devotion to Stefansky, her grieving over his death for which she had in a measure felt herself responsible, and now, when she was beginning to recover herself, this pitiful tragedy of Peter Long which she had met so bravely, but which had numbed her nature and stilled her enthusiasms and ambitions.

"And then as if by a miracle, you come, Madame Janeiro," he ended. "Your very name must have stimulated her, as it has stimulated us all. I think she must have surely been listening to you in secret. But all I know is, that after weeks of silence, her violin, the Stradivari that Stefansky bequeathed her, has found its voice once more. She is playing now. When I heard her, I had the instant thought that I must seek your aid. You could help more than anyone—you, a great comrade, far removed from her, it is true, yet a comrade in the same cause. If you could see your way to . . ."

But there was no need for Chummy to round off his sentence. Madame Janeiro rose impulsively, swift as lightning gathered together some of the loveliest roses from her bower of flowers, wound them into a posy, whipped a white ribbon round it, and ran to the door.

"Take me to that child's room and leave me. I will do the rest," she cried.

He left her outside Patuffa's room and stole away, half tremulous with excitement. Patuffa was now playing Bach's Chaconne, and he was a witness of the pianist's start of joyous surprise as the sound of a masterly rendering met her critical ears. Janeiro had risen to the situation out of pure kindness of heart, and was quite unprepared for what she heard. She listened and lingered on, listening. Now she smiled and murmured, *"Bravo."*

Now her face was tense with expectancy, and now relaxed in peaceful pleasure. Now she was stirred with excitement and enthusiasm. Now she was closing her eyes and nodding her head in tender approval. She leaned against the wall, embracing the bouquet, entirely unconscious of one or two of the guests who looked at her with wondering curiosity as they passed to their own rooms.

"My child," she thought, "you will heal yourself with your own gifts, but if I can hasten the healing even by so little as an hour or two, I shall be glad and proud."

The violin ceased. All was still within. Madame Janeiro knocked softly. There was no answer. She paused a moment, and knocked again. The key was turned, the door was opened; and Patuffa saw a splendid woman standing before her with her arms full of roses and the light of enthusiasm and appreciation in her eyes.

She started back in surprise. She could scarcely believe her senses.

"Madame Janeiro!" she cried. "I know it is you, though I've never seen you face to face. But I've heard you and loved you and adored you as everyone does—and do you know, I've been prowling around your door listening to you in secret. I couldn't help myself when distant strains of music reached me. I had to fly to you. Oh, Madame Janeiro—how wonderful you are—what a magician—what a magician!"

"And you see, my child, I also have been listening in secret," Janeiro said, smiling at her. "And I have been saying to myself that the person inside this room is a true musician. Here are flowers for my fellow-artist, and I give you all the applause of a big, big audience

in the largest concert hall in the world. And an embrace —yes?"

"But now," she laughed tenderly, "we must admire each other's cleverness at closer quarters, in the same room, inside the door instead of outside—and at once —not a moment to lose. We will play to each other and we will play together—what think you of that programme? Are you too tired? No, of course, you are not too tired. That's right, pick up all your music. Bring it all, and I have a trunkful. We will play the Kreutzer Sonata and the Brahms and the D minor Schumann and all the music that ever was written. We will play until we are dead, and then we will have a little lovely supper together—you and I alone—two artists alone, rejoicing in each other. Come, my little new friend."

Patuffa, in an ecstasy of joy, pounced on her music, snatched up her Strad. and dashed off light-heartedly with Janeiro. They played late into the night. They played away all her indifference, all her apathy. She rose the next morning a different human being.

When Chummy thanked Janeiro, she would hear nothing about gratitude. If anyone had to be grateful, it was she. What had she done? Nothing so much. She had happened to arrive at the right moment, and had been privileged to step into the breach. No one could ask anything better of life.

"I stepped in," she said, "and found myself face to face with a true musician—an artist of the finest type—gifted and sincere and inspired, and caring for other beautiful things outside music—as I do. Patuffa will go far. She has that real living quality of interpretation which cannot be defined or analysed. I am delighted with her. I take her off to Milan with me for my concert

there. What think you? Then I restore her to you, Mr. Chummy, with no trace of that sad tragedy in her young heart, except the added depth and height which are born of suffering."

IV

From Irene's diary:—

"One could not conceive anyone more darling and attractive than Madame Janeiro. She has a simple, gracious and loving character, like so many persons who have large natural gifts. We have had halcyon days with her. Her coming here was a miracle—no other word. She lifted Patuffa off her feet at once, and lifted her away too. Took her off to Milan. Chummy and I are left as derelicts; but I rather think this is the best thing that could have happened to us, as we shall now have some chance of recovering our senses. Poor dear Peter Long was bewildering, but Janeiro was equally bewildering in another way. She took one's breath away by her music and her impulsive temperament, her magnetic force and her amazing cleverness. She caught us all up in a whirlwind; and I must say I've never seen Chummy so *épris* with anyone. It has really been rather funny. But I haven't teased him. The episode has helped him also to recover. I've only looked on with the ripe wisdom of twenty-four years. He has now returned to his studies on Pagan and Christian sculpture; but he glances up from his books now and again, and murmurs: 'A most fascinating, adorable woman, and what a genius.' I answer, 'Yes, Chummy,' quite soberly, and try to suppress the twinkle which I am sure comes into my eye. I have returned to my poor neglected Popes—Pius V, Adrian VI, Clement XIV and others. They feel very

tame after Janeiro. For the moment I don't seem to care where or whether they were buried. . . . Chummy came in then, settled down in his chair, lit a cigar, and after a few minutes, said: 'What a genius—what an adorable woman—what an inspiring and inspired personage—and with a heart of gold.'

"These parents—what strange beings they are."

CHAPTER V

I

And Mama? Well, Mama was having a sad struggle with herself; and the upshot of it was that she decided to break off her engagement to Andrew Steyning. She was unhappy at having failed Patuffa in a time of trouble. She knew that if their intimate relationship had not undergone a change, it was she who would have taken Patuffa away, or she would at least have included herself in the party that made for Rome. Instead, she had preferred to remain at home and devote all her time and thoughts to her Andrew.

Also, she had been troubled when it leaked out inadvertently through Madame Tcharushin, that Patuffa was not intending to live in her mother's new home. This was natural enough, Mama knew. But it hurt. And when Mark and Eric, from distant and different parts of the globe wrote in exactly the same strain, saying that they would soon *dish that bounder* when they came back, Mama's discomfiture grew apace.

Patuffa's scrappy letters, and then her complete silence save for a few postcards, added to her unrest. This unrest was crowned by Chummy's account of the tragedy of Peter Long, with no suggestion from anyone of them that

Mama should come and help with her presence. Not a single word from Patuffa saying she was in trouble and wanted Mama. Think of it. A postcard of the Colosseum, another of the Villa D'Este, another of the Column of Phocas. What were these things worth to her when she was longing for a sign that she was wanted?

She realised that she had put herself out of the picture. She began again to ask herself pointed questions. Did she love Steyning well enough to sacrifice for him everything she had hitherto valued and worked for? Was her love for him merely a passion which would pass, an aberration from which she would recover to find herself stranded on an alien shore? Did she truthfully want the life which Steyning had to offer—his rich and secured position, his social obligations and conventional successes? Would she truly be content and happy without her old intimacy with Patuffa, without the stimulus of ups and downs, events of a stirring nature, journeys, rehearsals, thrills, concerts, tempers, exciting acquaintances and friends and all other items of the musical profession? Was she missing them? Certainly one night she had a most worrying dream, that she was utterly bored and out of spirits in the luxurious Kensington house in which she was imprisoned, and that she escaped through the window by means of a ladder placed by Patuffa. She awoke saying: *"Oh, Patuffa, thank Heaven you've rescued me."*

II

She could not forget that dream. She was haunted by the remembrance of that ladder. And later, when Irene's letter came, she was torn by the belief that she was responsible for the whole affair of Peter Long. If she had been in Rome, on the old terms, with no one

between herself and Patuffa, she would have certainly been in her child's confidence from the beginning, and might have had an instinct of impending disaster. Why not? Irene had evidently sensed some danger. And surely she, Patuffa's mother, would have sensed it far more acutely.

Out of the picture altogether. No one wanting her. Everyone taking it for granted that she was out of reach. And now Madame Janeiro arriving. A glorious artist, a wonderful and splendid personage. Yet an entire stranger. But she, a stranger, had risen to the occasion, and whisked Patuffa off in a whirlwind of kindness and helpfulness, stepping in where Mama had failed. Failed — that was the word. All through Andrew Steyning. She hated herself entirely — and him almost. She was so irritable to him one afternoon, that he wondered what had happened to her, or what he had done to vex her. Of course, poor wretch, he had done nothing. He was not to know that she saw a ladder dangling before her, placed by Patuffa at the window of his luxurious house.

III

She unburdened herself to Madame Tcharushin. Madame Pat was always exceedingly amused over people's love affairs, quite helpful and indulgent always, but impenitently seeing comedy where the victim, of course, only sensed tragedy. This habit might have been irritating in anyone less whole-heartedly sympathetic.

Even in Patuffa's case, she pretended to be unimpressed by the tragic side of the incident.

"Now really that is very funny, Marionska," she had said when she heard the news. "And how lucky that Patuffe found out the truth before marriage instead of

after. One generally discovers these pleasant little facts afterwards. Poor little Patuffe. But I am sure she is going about thinking she will have a broken heart all her life. That is a great advantage, you know. I tremble to think how we should get along without the comfort of believing that our hearts *are* broken. That strong belief sustains us grandly until we have mended them."

She had the rare gift of teasing in the right way. She pounced immediately on the ladder, on the dream ladder, and asked what kind of ladder it was. Was it an ordinary ladder used by painters, with splotches of paint on it? Was it a golden ladder by which you escaped from heaven to earth, or from earth to heaven? Did Mama experience any difficulty in getting down, or did she spring like a fairy into the glorious freedom awaiting her?

"It's very funny, you know, Marionska," she said. "You will pardon me for laughing. But laugh I must. And when I have laughed enough, and you also have laughed and have changed your expression from so great tragedy to that of comfortable comedy, then we must see what is to be done."

Mama laughed, in spite of her bewilderment. It was easy to laugh with an old school friend with whom one had not to keep up any pose or pretence of dignity.

"Not for one moment, Marionska," Madame Pat went on, "did I believe you really wanted that calm existence offered by your so admirable Andrew. No, my friend, never did I believe that folly of you. You had a sheltered and dull life in the years long ago. No one could ask for that again. I have been thinking of you as quite mad. But as you wanted to be mad, Patuffa and I agreed to help and not hinder you too much in your ambition. She

promised me, I promised her. We have both broken our sacred promises to each other. That is the way life goes. Patuffa has been disagreeable to the choice of your heart, and I have done nothing but tease you. Most nobly we said—and I wish you could have heard us—most nobly we said: 'Mama must have her happiness.' And that was the end of our nobility! But Marionska, if it is not happiness, if it is only misery and doubt, well, then, the only sensible thing to do is to bring a ladder like Patuffe brought in your so exciting dream, and to hold it firm and solid for you to spring to your freedom in safety. I am ready to help. I am at your service."

She certainly was. She analysed the situation most thoroughly. No point did she omit. Patuffa out in the cold—no one could deny that—and more or less alienated as her silence showed—very sad for Mama—but Marionska could not have it all ways—no one could—one had to make one's choice between a postcard of the Colosseum—a very good one too—and an undivided heart free and ready for a daughter's need.

So much for Patuffa. And now about the boys. Eric angry in China. Mark angry in South America. Both equally determined to use all the resources of the English Navy to send the pirate vessel to the bottom of the sea. What a promising, peaceful state of affairs!

And now about Mama. Mama married, rich, looking very beautiful in beautiful furs and perhaps a little bored—perhaps very bored, and craving desperately for one of Patuffa's exciting tempers. Mama loving the so admirable Andrew—oh, yes, loving the good man quite well enough, but torn. Mama throwing him over before marriage—but torn. Mama throwing him over after marriage—but torn. The poor Andrew as heart-broken

as a man could be—was that very much? Well, well, she was not sure—she never had been sure.

But to continue, Andrew heart-broken and torn before marriage. Andrew heart-broken and torn after marriage, when Mama descended by that ladder to her beautiful freedom which perhaps she might not enjoy at all when she had got it again! In any case Mama had to be torn. And the only question was for Marionska to decide which kind of being torn she would be most comfortable in. And, of course, part of the being torn was giving pain to the good artist man who painted all those well-behaved pictures of ugly and well-known men and women all staring at you in the big room of the Royal Academy.

It was quite likely he deserved punishment for these sins against true art, but not the pain Marionska might perhaps be giving him—perhaps, one was never quite sure—never. Perhaps even, he might be glad instead of sad. Ha! There was that view. He also was taking a great step—to change his habits at fifty-six—and to begin to accommodate himself to a step-daughter like Patuffska, who would never accommodate herself to him. Never. Perhaps he would be secretly relieved and say to himself: *"Ah, ah, what an escape!"* No? Well, perhaps Mama was right. Perhaps she knew her Andrew. But perhaps she was wrong, and didn't know her Andrew.

And naughty little Madame Tcharushin laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks. She could not help being amused.

"I apologise, Marionska," she kept on saying. "I ask you to pour me out another cup of tea. I ask you to hand me another cigarette, and to light it for me. I have not the nerve left. Light one yourself. That's good. Now you look less tragic. Just as beautiful, my dear old

school friend, but less tragic. Am I forgiven? Of course I am."

The end of it all was that Mama thought she would be less torn if she told Andrew Steyning that she could not bring herself to separate from her home and her children.

"Very well, then," said Madame Tcharushin, "go and tell him without delay, Marionska, if you really mean it, and before you change your so fickle mind. And why should not grown-up people be fickle? The young must not keep all the good things of life to themselves. I refuse to allow this injustice."

"Pat, I would not own it to anyone else on earth," Mama confessed, "but I think I've been torn all the time —even in my happiest hours with him."

"One is always torn, my child," her friend said. "That is life."

IV

Mama did not write to Andrew Steyning. She went to see him. She had always been on big lines, direct and simple, with no touch of falseness or pretence in her nature. Her honesty of spirit did not fail her now. She told him that she had thought she loved him passionately, so passionately that nothing else counted, but that she had found out that she didn't, and that her love and longing for Patuffa and the boys came first and would always come first, and that she had made a very great mistake and had behaved shamefully, and most unfairly to him.

She told him about Peter Long. She said that she believed the affair would never have occurred if she had been on the spot, for Patuffa would have confided in

her. That was the point that troubled her most. She had lost Patuffa's confidence, lost her intimacy; and it was more than she could bear. And it came to this: other people, dear friends, it was true, were going to make a home for her and were taking care of her, whilst her own mother, to whom up to now she had meant everything in the world, was love-making and thinking only of herself. She had not even been thinking of Andrew's welfare. If she had had the least consideration for him, she would have faced the truth unflinchingly that the love she was able to give him would be a love torn by longing for her children; and she would therefore have seen to it, as a matter of honour and fairness, that no sign from her gave him cause for hope.

"Instead of which," she said, "I suffered myself to be swept along by my own passions—by the wonder and delight of loving once more and being loved. I have behaved with no more self-control than my poor little Patuffa in Rome—no better than any headlong young thing of nineteen years old—worse, in fact, for there is every excuse for the young, in their springtime, but for me, at my age—none. I offer no excuse. There is none. All I can do now, is to own my fault most humbly, and to tell you that I don't want to marry you, don't want to embark on a new life, feel sure that I couldn't, and that if I did, it would only spell failure for you and me."

She paused a moment, and then continued:

"I can't hope that you will ever forgive me, and I don't deserve to be forgiven for behaving so unfairly to you. But this is the penalty I have to pay for my utter madness in supposing I could be happy in repudiating my duties, in giving a divided heart to my children and in yielding up my freedom—for that comes in, too, in-

deed it does—I dread giving up my freedom—and it wouldn't be honest of me, Andrew, if I did not tell you this also."

There were some moments of nerve-racking silence after Mama had ended. She had been pacing up and down the studio as she spoke, and she now stood against the mantel-shelf, fumbling with her long watch-chain, biting her lip. If he did not speak soon, she believed she would have to implore him to say something—it didn't matter what—but something.

At last he rose from the sofa and came towards her. He seemed very broken, and his face was ashen.

"Dearest," he said in a low tone of voice, "you must know you have given me a grievous blow. But at least I thank you for coming to me. It was like you to come and tell me yourself instead of writing. It would have been easier for you to write—far easier. But you came and laid the whole matter before me in your own grand and direct manner which I have adored and always shall adore. I shall always thank you for that."

He seemed lost in thought again, or else still stunned. He made no reproaches whatsoever. She would have been thankful if he had shown anger and indignation. Anything would have been more bearable than that look of dumb suffering on Andrew's face. He did not argue with her, did not implore her to delay her decision, did not say that he could wait, that he knew how to wait and that when and if she wanted his love, it was there for her.

He did not urge it on her that Patuffa would marry and go her own path, and the boys would live their own lives in their own way, and that her part would be loneliness—the unfailing return for a record of fidelity. If

these thoughts passed through his mind—and perhaps they did—Steyning gave them no utterance. When he again emerged from the distant region to which his suffering of spirit had driven him, he turned half dreamily to his easel.

"At least one has one's work," he murmured, "that does not fail one."

He took his palette and stared at it, his brush and stared at it. He turned from her and began working at the picture on his easel, as if he were in a trance.

Mama stole away, with bowed head. She dared not look at that forlorn figure.

CHAPTER VI

THUS, for better or for worse, Mama's love adventure came to an end, and she was free. Distressed, as she deserved to be, but free. She was haunted by the vision of that forlorn figure of Andrew turning to his easel and his work which would never fail him as she had done. His sad words echoed back to her:

"At least one has one's work. That does not fail one."

She was so troublesome with all her attacks of remorse, that Madame Tcharushin lost patience and said:

"Look here, Marionska, of course you have behaved badly. Most of us do. But now you have got your freedom and are not going to be shut up in that Schlüsselburg Fortress of Prosperity which always gives me what you call the humps every time I think of it—now you've got your freedom, do be sensible and make up your mind to enjoy it. You may not have it for long. You may have another adventure. These adventures once

begun, can very well become a habit. Once more you may want to have ordered serenity with another so quiet and admirable Andrew Steyning—who knows? Take my advice, and lose not a minute of this precious period of liberty. Cheer up this very instant. What you describe to me so tragically as that poor forlorn figure—yes, I see him, the poor Andrew—will not for very, very long remain a forlorn figure. I don't say he will forget you. No one could forget Mama. That would be impossible. But you will retire gracefully into the background and take your place as a beautiful regret. He will go on painting some more—many more of those portraits I admire so much—hein?—and be quite, quite happy. Perhaps happier."

She did not tell Mama as much, but she chose to believe that Andrew Steyning, in spite of his grief at losing Mama and in spite of his own wounded pride, would end by being beatifically relieved at not having to cope with Mama's family—and especially, of course, Patuffa. He would in his sober senses perhaps reflect that it would be futile to wait in the hope that Patuffa would marry and clear off the scenes. It was true she might marry, one day, but she would never clear off the scenes. At any moment she might abandon her husband and return to Mama to be arranged for and dealt with—or not dealt with. Seen at close quarters, this was not an alluring landscape for any step-father. No wonder, thought Madame Pat, with a smile, no wonder he had not tried to persuade Mama. So she harboured the secret but impious belief that the ladder for Mama's escape, provided by Patuffa in that most intriguing dream, had been actually furnished by her in real life.

And perhaps she was right.

In the process of wondering what she could do to help to dispel the vision of the broken-hearted artist at his easel, Madame Tcharushin obligingly fell ill with a bad attack of bronchial pneumonia and was even considerate enough to show signs of being about to change her world —a plan which Mama could by no means allow her to carry out. It had, therefore, to be frustrated by good nursing and an entire sacrifice of time and thought on Mama's part, leaving not very much leisure to be expended either on the vision of the broken-hearted Steyning man or on the vague estrangement from Patuffa.

And in addition, there were Pat's numerous compatriots to take charge of. Old Father Kuprianoff was frail and needed care. Moshinski was depressed and needed heartening; and all were in want of the gay sympathy which they had been accustomed to receive from their comrade now lying so dangerously ill upstairs.

Some of them had been known to Mama for years, and with them she was at her ease; but there were also new comers, not propagandists of a mild nature, but terrorists of the fiercest, most uncompromising calibre of whom Mama was really rather frightened, though she showed a brave front. She knew that they would not drop a bomb in Madame Tcharushin's lodgings—anywhere but there, naturally—but she had the feeling, nevertheless, that bombs were in the air, in the samovar, in the bronchitis kettle, in the ox-tail soup she brought, in the calf's foot jelly, in everything. She could never look at the quietly fierce and determined face of Natushka Kroshinskaya without wondering what on earth was going to happen next.

She did her best for them in every way, with that charm of simple manner which won her so many hearts.

They liked Mama tremendously, and came to regard her presence amongst them as an absolute necessity of their everyday lives. They never knew it, of course, but they and all they stood for in the way of suffering and courage and unselfishness of purpose, helped her to forget her manifold troubles.

Mama was a little shocked with herself when she realised that her thoughts of Steyning were receding to the background of remembrance, and that her remorse for her conduct was weakening. But she excused herself by reflecting that no one could think of bombs and imprisonments and trials and escapes, and floggings and hangings and Andrew at the same time. It could not be done—no, not by any mortal.

When the crisis of Madame Pat's illness was over, and she began to recover, the first words she said to Mama were:

"Tell me, Marionska, how is the so tragic vision?"

"You've given me no time for the vision, Pat dearest," Mama answered. "You know you have been so very ill. You have nearly died."

"Indeed," whispered Madame Tcharushin. "I have nearly died, have I? But again I ask about the vision."

"It is dimmer," conceded Mama reluctantly.

"Aha," said Pat. "Much dimmer?"

Mama hesitated, and then repeated with a funny little half-ashamed expression on her face:

"Much dimmer."

"Good," murmured Madame Tcharushin. "And how is the freedom?"

"The freedom is going on very well, Pat," Mama said. "But you mustn't speak. You must close your eyes and go to sleep again."

"One little question more would I like to ask," Madame said. "Has that broken-hearted man married his housekeeper yet?"

"Oh, Pat," Mama reproached. "How can you! Do go to sleep again."

Madame Tcharushin had only opened one eye. She winked with it, closed it and fell asleep with a smile of mischief playing round her lips.

CHAPTER VII

In due time Mama was able to turn her attention to her own affairs. She renewed the lease of the house and had the children's bedrooms re-papered. She conceived the most passionate love for her home again, and had it trebly spring-cleaned, quite unnecessarily. She wondered how she could ever have thought of abandoning it. She spent recklessly over new Liberty curtains and cushions, and sold one of her best rings to buy a Persian carpet, for a long time coveted by that part of her heart which was incurably domestic. She made the house an enticing haven for Patuffa to return to, with all sorts of new little graces which she thought would appeal to her.

Cousin Keble, who came as usual to look her up from time to time, noted the improvements without comment, but with secret vexation. He would have liked best to see that house dismantled, not renovated. He had pictured to himself Mama married to Steyning, and Patuffa alone, and in her loneliness turning to him for love. It had seemed to him that the way was being prepared by Mama and Fate. And now Mama and Fate had both failed him. It was too bad of them. He swore at Fate, and he could almost have shaken Cousin Marion. He had

been buoyed up by the belief that he had been making progress with Patuffa, and that his efforts to fall into line with her had borne encouraging fruit. And now came this annoying setback.

But he squared his jaw and reminded himself repeatedly that he knew how to wait, that he had always known how to wait. And as he had been briefed for the prosecution in one of the most important cases that had yet come into his net, he was exceedingly busy, and could at least console himself that he was making good in his career, and thus in another direction advancing towards his goal.

But Cousin Keble had to square his jaw still more when he heard about Peter Long. Yet even then he did not lose heart, so deeply rooted was his belief that sooner or later he would win Patuffa's love—not her mere comradeship, not her friendship only, but her love. There would be other incidents—there would be other men. But in the end—if he remained patient and stubborn—as he would remain—and if he continued to suppress his authoritative instincts as he most truly wished to do and intended to do—if he could let her become absolutely certain that life with him would be freedom and not bondage—then, in the end, his long hope might have its due fulfilment.

Thus he fortified himself, and passed on his way without a sign to Cousin Marion that the alteration in her own plans had been something of a blow to him.

But perhaps she guessed. Perhaps that was why Mama was extra kind and gracious to him, and made him feel that whatever her own vagaries, or Patuffa's vagaries, or his own quiet and rather dignified pose of equanimity, she knew and understood and was on his side.

She wrote and told the boys that she was not going to marry again and that all was as before, except that their bedrooms had been re-papered and the ceilings whitewashed, and that when they came home, there would not be anyone whom it might be necessary to knock down. To Patuffa she went into detail:

"All is as before," she wrote. "I've had an obsession—a very thrilling one, darling, but one from which I have recovered. I couldn't face giving up our own home, our own circumstances. I am increasingly sure that I should never have been happy, though for a time I thought I should, and tried hard to pretend to myself that my re-marriage would make no difference to the relationship between me and you children. Of course it would have made all the difference. Even the prospect of it did, as you well know. When I learnt from Pat that you were going to live with Chummy and Irene, I felt simply awful, Patuffa, my darling. You had kept that from me because you wanted me to sail along and enjoy my happiness—with occasional reminders, I'm bound to admit, that you would be willing to tear out my poor Andrew's hair! I have behaved disgracefully to him, but I couldn't help it. When I heard of the trouble that had befallen you in your love affair—and I not there to stand by and help you—and you not wanting me, not asking for me, not telling me a single word either of your happiness or of your anguish —then I knew that nothing in life mattered to me as much as our bond of intimacy. That you have not reached out to me in your distress, has been natural enough in the circumstances which I myself created, but none the less painful—more so.

"But this was more than I could bear. So I freed myself, and then, just as I was free, Pat fell ill, as you

know. And then came the news that Madame Janeiro carried you off to Milan. That was the best healing you could have. Yet I am jealous of her, though I know I oughtn't to be. Of Chummy and Irene I never could be jealous, since they belong to us and we to them. Yet it seemed dreadful that any action of mine should be forcing you to seek even such a haven as Headquarters.

"Well, that is over. As long as you care for and need your home, it is ready for you, swept and garnished. The coast is clear. The parent has come to her senses. Not much of a parent, I admit whole-heartedly. I leave her to you for judgment. She is another example of Pat's consoling theory that parents are but poor specimens of humanity, and are being found out at last.

"Pat gains strength every day, though she looks almost as frail as she did when you first saw her after you had run away from one of your many schools—do you remember?—when she came to us after her escape from Siberia. She is merry and mischievous and teases me unmercifully, and asks me very often whether I am enjoying my freedom. *I am enjoying it. I want you to be quite clear about that.* Come home soon, darling, or if you have planned to stay where you are, or to return to Rome, you have only to say the word, and I'll shut up the house and dash out to join you with our last farthing. To be wanted by you as before, would seem to me the greatest joy that could now befall me—an undeserved joy—but the greatest."

CHAPTER VIII

I

NOTHING could have been more opportune for Patuffa than her unforeseen friendship with Madame Janeiro. "Company with the great," said some musician, "is ever the best in the long run to help us across the world."

It helped Patuffa in miraculous fashion, and gave her an emotional and a musical uplift at the moment when she most needed rallying.

Janeiro had come to Milan partly to see some old friends and partly to fulfil a concert engagement at the Teatro Lirico. She was going to play the Beethoven Emperor Concerto and three of Chopin's Études and Liszt's Fantasia, *Après une lecture de Dante.*

Patuffa, well accustomed to Stefansky's strange behaviour before a concert, was a tower of strength in the midst of distracting circumstances. But up to then she had never seen anyone behave as Janeiro. The pianist had been in perfect health and in the best of spirits in the morning. They had taken a drive together, and she had practised happily and pronounced herself to be in excellent form for her strenuous programme. Later in the day she took to her bed, wept copiously and said she was very ill and was going to die.

"Patuffe, Patuffe, I am dying," she sobbed. "My end is coming—it is come. I am dead. Send for the manager. I cannot play at the concert if I am dead. How can I play the Emperor Concerto if I am dead? Could I do the noble Beethoven justice—or Chopin whom I adore, or my beloved Liszt, the great-hearted? Send for the doctor. Send for the priest. The concert must

be put off. There will be no concert. Do you hear me, my child? I am very, very ill—champagne—quick—before it is too late—it is too late—send for the manager—for the doctor—for the priest—oh, my child, why did I ever say I would play to-night—oh, oh, how could I play when I was dying all the morning—I knew I was dying—you saw how ill I was all the morning—dying."

Madame's maid was new, and all she did was to go into hysterics. The manager was new, and when he came and heard that Janeiro could not play, he went one better and was almost in a frenzy. The doctor, young and inexperienced, seemed as unnerved as the manager. The priest's fat and flabby presence shed no heavenly peace over the sick chamber. Patuffa alone supplied the calm. She collected them all round the bed. The doctor prescribed, the priest gabbled prayers, the manager wrung his hands, the maid wept and knelt by the bedside. Janeiro said farewell to everyone and left Pom-pom to Patuffa as a sacred trust. Then Patuffa dismissed the audience, sat down quietly, and lit a cigarette. She hated smoking, but now and again she endured the ordeal at a crisis. And this was one.

After a time a faint voice came from the bed:

"Ah, that is a delicious fragrance, Patuffe."

There was a pause.

"Perhaps I could have one or two little puffs at a cigarette, Patuffe."

Patuffa made no sign.

"Patuffe, did you hear me? Perhaps I could have one or two little puffs at a cigarette."

Patuffa kept a grave countenance, whilst she brought cigarettes and matches.

There was another pause.

"Patuffe, I should like my little dear Pom-pom."

Patuffa brought Pom-pom, who had been banished to the sofa in the sitting-room.

"Patuffe," murmured the voice, "I have been very, very ill, but I am a little better now."

"Rest, dear Madame Janeiro," Patuffa said, bending over her. "Rest and recover. There is nothing to worry you now the concert has been cancelled."

There was another pause.

"Patuffe, did you say the concert has been cancelled?"

"Yes," nodded Patuffa cheerfully. "Nothing to worry about now. All is arranged."

Then she went into the sitting-room, and with a smile on her face took out her Stradivari and began to improvise. And very cleverly she wove in some passages from the Emperor Concerto.

"That will stir her," she thought.

And it did. Suddenly the bedroom door was flung open, and Janeiro rushed in, looking the picture of health and beauty in her flowing pink silk nightgown.

"My child," she cried excitedly, "that was well done! Clever little girl! Ah, my God, what a giant was our glorious Beethoven! And this Concerto—what a miracle of beauty! I will play it now. To-night I am sure I shall play it more beautifully than I have ever played it in my long career. I feel inspired, uplifted, Patuffe. Listen to me now."

"But the concert is cancelled," Patuffa said gravely. "What are we to do?"

"Uncancel it!" cried Janeiro waving her arms about. "Immediately—at once, Patuffe. I am strong. I am well. I am recovered. I dress. I go. I play. Run, run, my child."

Patuffa found the manager, who by her instructions had remained in the hotel.

"Signor," she said laughing, "don't look so anxious. I told you it would be all right. I undertake to bring her to-night, dead or alive. But I am sure she will be very much alive and at her best."

Janeiro played, and had a glorious triumph. She was a consummate artist, and had that simplicity, and pure truthfulness which matured power alone bestows upon the thinking virtuoso. After the concert, she gave herself up to fun and enjoyment and did everything she could to make Patuffa happy. Wayward, impossible at times, she was an adorable companion, clever and bright and ready for any adventure. Half a queen, half a Bohemian, joyous, grave, frivolous, earnest, none too moral, as the world calls morality, but with a heart of gold and of kindness unbounded.

They spent halcyon days together in Milan, in the Cathedral, in the Brera, in San Ambrogio and S. Eustorgio and Santa Maria delle Grazie. She shared with Patuffa all the joys and privileges of her standing in the world of music. She brought her little colleague forward on every occasion, and made her play to many influential friends. Janeiro did not know what selfishness meant. Always she wanted to share, to give chances to new and young artists. And in Patuffa's case, she was fully bent on carrying out the rôle of healer entrusted her first by Chummy, then by the dictates of her affection, and then by a firm belief in the girl's fine gifts.

She took her to the *appartamento* of the famous 'cellist, Signor Fragini, in the Piazza Borromeo, and they played with him Schumann's Trio in A Minor and

Beethoven's in E Flat, Op. 70.2. It was Fragini who told her that the Master had said that three dozen of Imperial Tokay went into the making of the last movement!

And then, honour of honours, Brahms chanced to pass that way. They played him his own Sonata in G Major, and Patuffa nearly died from pride and pleasure when he praised her tone and style and the individuality of her interpretation.

Thus Madame Janeiro opened the door wide, and gave her the entrance into the *camaraderie* of the great and famous. Patuffa, thrilled with new interests, reinforced with fresh ambitions, brooded less and less over Peter Long, gazed less and less frequently at the little sketch-book, sole outward remembrance of that passionate joy which had ended with such tragic abruptness.

But in the midst of her varied experiences, she was often homesick, and began to long for Mama. Yet whenever that yearning overcame her, the same chill struck at her heart in remembering that she did not count as in the past, that Mama was no longer hers, that Andrew Steyning stood between them, and always would stand between them now. But for that barrier, it is more than possible that Patuffa might have bolted to Mama, so great was her need, sometimes. But directly she called to mind the changed atmosphere of her home, the impulse of flight died down easily enough in Madame Janeiro's irresistible companionship and the many events which were born of it.

II

One day, Janeiro, in splendid spirits, in mischievous mood and bent on an outing, learnt that Signor Fragini

had some transaction on hand at a Villa about one or two kilometres away from Monza, belonging to one of the old nobility. The family owned a very perfect Joseph Guarnerius violoncello which the Marchese was willing to sell. Fragini was to have the first refusal of it.

"The very thing," cried Janeiro. "Patuffe and I come too, Fragini. We take this good chance to see the old Villa and the lovely old violoncello, and to hear you bargaining with the Marchese, as beautifully as you play on your instrument. We see the Cathedral and the Iron Crown, and we dine at a trattoria like simple good peasants. And Pom-pom of course accompanies us. Ah, it will be a nice little drive for that sweet little dog. That is settled."

"But, carissima," objected Signor Fragini, "I dare not take you. It is to be a private, a very secret business. That is the condition. Why, I know not, but so it is. I cannot possibly take any friends with me on such an errand. I go alone to Monza. To-morrow we will go out and enjoy ourselves elsewhere, perhaps to the Certosa, and that will be just as good for Pom-pom."

Janeiro's eyes blazed fire. She did not like to be thwarted.

"No," she said, crossly. "It is to-day we must go. I care nothing about the business being secret. I have made up my mind to go, Fragini. No use to say 'no,' when I insist."

Signor Fragini knew that only too well. It would be far easier to oppose the Pope than Madame Janeiro when she insisted. So off to Monza they went, together with Pom-pom who never ceased yelping all the time.

"Ah, my little darling prima donna—what a voice!" laughed Janeiro. "What a beautiful sound after my cruel

banging on the pianoforte, and Patuffe's terrible scratching on her violino. This is the true music of the divine human voice. Nothing can compare with it. Encore—encore, Pom-pom! Stay on the platform, my little Pom-pom, and take a continuous recall!"

She enjoyed the pleasant and shady drive and sang trills and bravura passages in which Pom-pom joined. Patuffa laughed until she could laugh no more; and the climax of merriment was reached when Janeiro insisted on stopping the carriage and getting out to dance the *"Shadow Dance."* Then she threw Pom-pom in the air and caught her dramatically in an embrace. She embraced Fragini, she embraced Patuffa, she almost embraced the driver who was clapping her enthusiastically. To Patuffa she said:

"My child, I wish our friend Chummy, the good friend of all musicians, could see you. Such a pink colour on the face. Such a brightness in the eyes. Fresh life, fresh ambition, fresh courage. Isn't it so?"

They visited the Cathedral and saw the Iron Cross and the tomb and relics of Theodolinda, and then made their way to the Villa which was approached by an avenue of trees and entered through fine old seventeenth-century gates. They were received by a grave retainer who conducted them to a large *sala* adorned with frescoes of rural scenes. It overlooked the garden with its palm trees and oleanders, and seemed a sad and gloomy room, of faded but stately splendour. There was a picture in a dark recess which Signor Fragini told them was reputed to be a Luini, and there were beautiful old chests which Janeiro coveted the moment her eyes beheld them.

They had a few minutes to look around before the Marchese arrived. He was a little insignificant man, and

evidently nervy. He seemed surprised to find three people and Pom-pom waiting for him, and glanced anxiously at Signor Fragini as if asking the reason why he was thus favoured. Fragini did the wise thing and told him, with many appropriate gesticulations, that the ladies had simply refused to be left at home, but that all would be well and the secret would be in safe keeping.

The Marchese bowed, smiled, accepted the situation with a true courtesy, but was anxious and apprehensive. He disappeared suddenly, and when he returned, listened at the door before he closed it gently. Then he nodded as if reassured, proceeded to open a heavily-studded violoncello case at the further end of the room, and took out the instrument. When he had placed it in Fragini's hands, he hurried to guard the door! It was a most mysterious precaution, and Patuffa wished they had not intruded on him, for he was so obviously torn between the natural desire of an Italian to be polite, and some unknown but very real anxiety. When Pom-pom yelped, he gave a start, and with an almost imploring gesture, enjoined silence. Madame Janeiro, rather cross, smothered Pom-pom.

Fragini meanwhile, lost to the world, was examining the Joseph Guarnerius violoncello, turning it over and smiling radiantly and nodding to himself as he satisfied himself on its points. He took out a small microscope and studied the rich varnish. At last he screwed up the bow and prepared to test the tone of the instrument, which had all its strings intact. The Marchese had another fright and rushed up to him dramatically.

"If you must play on it," he entreated, "I beg of you only to play *pianissimo*."

He then bolted back to the door which, for some reason, had to be held against all odds. But he was so

agitated that he rushed back to Fragini, and made frantic signs to Patuffa to take his place. She did so, and would have defended it, as she afterwards said, with her last drop of blood.

Signor Fragini, mystified but obedient, tried the Guarnerius, *sotto voce,* and knew at once that the beauty of its tone matched the perfection of its form. Madame Janeiro, greatly excited and regardless of the circumstances, suddenly called out:

"Fragini, I have an idea. Let us play the slow movement of the Mendelssohn D Sonata. It should sound divine on that lovely 'cello and in this fine room."

She made for the piano in her impetuous way, and was on the point of striking a few chords for Fragini to tune to, when the Marchese, scared to death, prevented her, rather roughly, too.

"No, no, I implore not," he cried, "I implore not."

She was much put out and glanced at him as if she could have killed him on the spot. She flushed with temper, closed the piano with a bang and strode like an Amazon to the window, tapping her fingers angrily on the panes, and staring fiercely at the oleanders and the pergola beyond. Fragini, silently damning Janeiro and everyone, doubled himself over the Guarnerius, contemplated it with ecstasy and again became lost to all mundane matters. It was obvious that he had no intention of espousing Janeiro's cause.

But this was more than Patuffa could bear. She did not leave her post at the door, but she turned to the poor little Marchese with the fierceness of a tigress, beat with her foot on the floor, and almost annihilated him as she exclaimed:

"How dare you—how dare you! Do you know who

she is? She is the great and famous pianist, Madame Janeiro. Surely you must know that all would give their very ears to have the privilege of hearing her so much as touch a single note—and you have dared to hound her away from the piano."

It was the first sign of real spirit Patuffa had shown since the day when Peter Long collapsed. It was a sure indication that she was coming into her own again, in more senses than one. The flush on her face, the indignation of her expression and the tenseness of her attitude were something to behold. The Marchese stared at her, bewildered by her anger; but as soon as he could collect his wits, he glanced at Janeiro who was still tapping on those panes, flew over to her, seized her hand and kissed it.

"Madame Janeiro," he cried, "forgive me—forgive me, but I ask you, how was I to know? I have never before had the honour of being in your royal presence, though I know your wonderful genius and your kind heart. Let me now tell you the truth. If the Marchesa, my mother, hears any sounds of music, she will descend from her apartment and all is lost. Never would she consent that I should sell the Guarnerius. And yet it is mine to do as I like with, and with which to pay some debts of which she must not know. Never must she know of them. So long as the case remains where it now stands—you see it, Madame, in its place where it has stood for many years—she will remain serene and satisfied. But to know it gone—sapristi! That will be a tragedy of which I dare not think. You will surely forgive me now that I explain, and not think me to be the great monster that this so fierce young lady takes me to be."

The clouds cleared at once from Janeiro's face. She understood all. She laughed, nodded sympathetically, and

entered whole-heartedly into the conspiracy of silence by putting her finger to her lips and tip-toeing across the room. She dearly loved a bit of fun. Even the Marchese smiled and seemed more at his ease.

"Come now, Fragini," she said, "wake up from your dreams of wood and varnish, and do your bargaining quickly. Every moment is precious. We must hurry off before we bring about any real disaster. It is the best we can do to atone for our crime of coming. Wake up—make haste."

Then the usual bargaining, so dear to the Italian heart, took place, whilst Patuffa still guarded the door, watchful but now mild and assuaged. And Madame Janeiro used loving wiles in her efforts to reduce Pom-pom's yelping to a respectable pianissimo. The violoncello case was closed and locked and presented its usual appearance of fixed innocence. The Marchesa would be able to gaze at it in happy ignorance of its emptiness, in happy ignorance that the Guarnerius had been enveloped in Madame Janeiro's cloak and spirited safely into the carriage. And then when his fears were at rest, the little Marchese did the honours of his home and showed them the Loggia and the Belvedere and the *contadino's* cottage and the Chapel, and the garden with its terrace and fountain, and the olive grove beyond.

So they brought the plunder, as Janeiro called it, in triumph to Milan, and she made it clear to Signor Fragini that he owed his treasure to Patuffa.

"When anyone shall insult me, Patuffe," she laughed, "I send a telegram to you. Then you come at once, you behave like a fine little tigress, and you protect me and put an end to that person's life—isn't it so? Bless you, my child. It is a piece of luck that does not fall to everyone to have such a champion. And this horrible

and selfish Fragini said not a word. He was only thinking of himself and that old piece of wood. And I was very angry. I was going to make one of my famous scenes. I was trying to control myself, because we had no business to be there. But my anger was ready for a grand explosion. No one can make such a great scene as I can. And what would have happened? I should have screamed from rage. Pom-pom would have screamed also. The Marchesa would have come from her room and she, too, would have screamed and chased us all away without the Guarnerius—and all the poor little frightened son's debts unpaid and nothing left for him except the great, great anger of his aged parent. Fragini should be grateful to you."

"I am," beamed Fragini. "She shall play with me and it at the Monday Popular Concerts in London. Not only because she guarded that most dangerous door, and was equal to the great crisis of one of your scenes, Janeiro, which I could never be equal to and do not even try—not only that, but because she is a real artist, her own little self—and one of us."

"Oh, Signor Fragini," Patuffa cried in an ecstasy of joy.

"Yes," he repeated, "one of us."

They were all in splendid form and high spirits that evening. They went to Fragini's home and had macaroni and risotto prepared by him personally, and put the Guarnerius through its paces. He played them the old Italian Sonatas of Marcello, and Locatelli and Boccherini, and one or two of Bach's Suites, and the Mendelssohn D Sonata with Janeiro, and a Mozart and Beethoven and Brahms Trio with them both. Janeiro finished up the festival with an outbreak of Chopin.

She ended with the Barcarolle which Patuffa had never heard her play. But she could scarcely bear to listen to it.

It was Mama's own special favourite—Mama's call which had ever summoned Patuffa to her side in her childhood days. To reach her on those occasions, Patuffa fought the nurse and would have fought the whole world.

It called Patuffa now. She saw Mama, heard Mama, was with Mama. Something stirred in her. She must go to Mama, and somehow break down that barrier of separation which was not any longer to be borne. No, not any longer. That was her secret resolve. She sat tense and rigid and was not conscious that the music had ceased, until Madame Janeiro touched her tenderly on the face and said:

"My child, you must not let music take you like this. You will die of it."

III

When they got home to their hotel in the early hours of the morning, Mama's letter was awaiting Patuffa. She read it and stood for a moment paralysed with joy. It was unbelievable. The barrier was down. Her home, such as she had always known it to be, was hers again —her own stronghold to which she had the right and to which she could return, and find Mama there to love her and forgive her, no matter what she did or what she was. The measure of her unutterable relief was the measure of her desolation of these last few months.

The thought flashed through her mind that her mother was making a tremendous sacrifice for her sake, and that she ought not to be allowed to give up Andrew Steyning.

But when Patuffa re-read the letter, she guessed that the heavily underlined words: *I am enjoying my freedom. I want you to be quite clear about that,* were meant to convey a deep significance.

Well, she would soon know. She would bolt straight off to Mama to-morrow. Madame Janeiro would understand. She understood everything—and at once. That was why her playing was inspired. That was why she reached the innermost hearts of her audience. The open mind—the open heart, the rich receptivity of the true artist's nature.

She invaded Janeiro's room and found her peacefully playing her usual nightly game of patience, in a *déshabillé* of Maltese lace every bit as luxurious as the Pope's ceremonial garments.

"And what does my protector, my valiant champion want?" Janeiro asked. "Ah, my child, I still laugh to think how you nearly tore that poor little Marchese to pieces! What a splendid little tigress. I say again, it is good to know there is a wild animal in the world ready and willing to spring on an enemy, and protect one's life. And what is more important—one's dignity—even one's false dignity!"

Patuffa showed her Mama's letter. She read it, and put it gently back into the girl's hand.

"That is a darling Mama you have, Patuffe," she said softly; "human, with no pretence, no pose of parental superiority. I should like to know her. I shall know her."

Patuffa closed her eyes.

"When you played the Barcarolle, I heard her calling me," she murmured. "Then I came home and found this letter."

"And I have not even thought of the Barcarolle for months," Janeiro said. "But when I had finished the C minor Ballade, I felt somehow impelled to play it—the Barcarolle. My fingers leapt to it of their own accord."

She believed in signs, she told Patuffa, and was led by them. She kept a record of all psychic interchanges which occurred to her personally or came to her knowledge. And here was a noteworthy instance of mysterious communication.

"Go home, my child," she said. "If your mother has made a sacrifice for your sake, your immediate return would be her rightful reward. And if it is not a sacrifice, but a need as great as your own, then all the sweeter will be your reunion. Tell her from me that I have only been marking time for her. She only can sound the melody. Seize the moment, my tigress. What are you murmuring? Some fears that I should be thinking you ungrateful? No, of course I should not. Or foolish for running away prestissimo from what you call so charmingly the glorious comradeship of Janeiro and her friends? No, of course not. You are one of us, as Fragini has told you, and one of us you will remain. We can always have glorious times together. We will. But to seize hold of a moment that can never come again —that is what matters most in live. I understand, I know."

"You understand everything without a word of explanation," Patuffa smiled. "But though you know so much, you will never know how you have helped me and what you have done for me in these days, giving me of your best, without stint or measure."

"I seized the moment when a fellow musician had

lost her way," Janeiro answered. "That was all. And no one can deny that I have won something very good and useful for myself—a little tigress to spring on my enemies for evermore! Go home with easy heart, my Patuffe. Then I come to London sometime soon, and we have more glorious times, or in Vienna, or Paris, or Moscow—who knows—or in America, or Australia, or anywhere. For the whole world belongs to us artists. And Fragini shall see to it that you play at the Monday Popular Concerts. You leave that to him—and me. Perhaps we all play together, and show the world what great things the three Monza culprits can do together. Yes?"

She paused for a moment, and Patuffa watching her saw the magic change which came over her countenance. The artist, the woman of the world, the great but spoilt darling of the public, seemed transformed into a mystic priestess, endowed with the impersonal dignity of high service.

"This one thing I say to you, my child," she charged solemnly. "Cling to your art. It is yours. You have the talent, the gift, the very sincere musicianship. You must never again be estranged from it. In trouble, in happiness, in folly, in wisdom, in goodness, no matter what you do and what you are, you must cling to it. You must look upon your art, not only as something gracious and beautiful in itself, but as a message to the world—music taking up the language when words can go no further. Someone said: 'Music begins when language fails.' That is true, Patuffe. Go back to work now, and remember always the high destiny of true musicians. We may not always be worthy of our mission —alas, often we are not worthy. But it is ours to fulfil with proud endeavour."

Patuffa left for London the next evening. At the last moment Madame Janeiro made up her mind to go to Paris; and there was a short but violent tornado of preparation, and there were amazing scenes of impatience and temper followed by smiling calm and the stateliness of a throned Queen. They travelled together with Pompom as far as Paris, and Janeiro's last words, as she embraced Patuffa, were:

"More glorious times, my little tigress, and cling to your art. No one can take that from you except you yourself."

CHAPTER IX

MAMA had returned from Madame Tcharushin's rooms tired and low-spirited. She sat embroidering and thinking. She was free, and glad to be free, but she was lonely. Yet, was not everyone lonely? Madame Tcharushin, busy with all her engrossing work and the dedication of her energies on behalf of Russia, was at heart lonely. She had said so, to-day, quite frankly. Perhaps it was because she had been heartbroken over the failure of one of her comrades to escape from the Akatui prisons. But there it was. Think of it—even Pat, Pat taken up heart and soul with her country's cause—Pat weighted with the spiritual burden of all her fellow exiles who came to her for comfort, courage, inspiration, guidance—Pat who appeared to have reached a rarefied altitude of impersonality, where one would have thought loneliness could not survive.

But in weakness, in illness, in discouragement, secrets leak out.

One might fill one's life with activities for causes, for individual people, for one's family, for oneself, or with

ambitions, personal happiness, evil deeds, unworthy deeds, religion, learning, philosophy, art, music, science—and yet at heart be lonely if one paused to think. What did it all mean?

Looking back over her own life, she knew she had always been more or less lonely. As a child, certainly. As a girl, not so much, perhaps. But as a married woman, undoubtedly. And if she had married Steyning, she was sure now that no love he could have given her, would have lessened the loneliness of being cut off from intimate friendship between herself and her children. She had proved that by her fretting over Patuffa's silent withdrawal.

She remembered that when Andrew first began to show signs of interest in her, she had had the impulse to discourage him, not because she was not attracted towards him, but because of claims which were dear to her, and the settled belief that her life was not her own. Marrying again had seemed a sheer impossibility, something which did not come within the scope of thoughts. What made her change?

What made her suddenly capitulate and allow her to be carried away by a passionate love for him and a desperate need of him? Was it desire only? Was it the prospect of ordered serenity, and prosperous circumstance? Or was it all three? Well, whatever the driving force, it was expended, and she was free from its power, free to be lonely in her own way, if need be—in an empty house —with rooms ready and waiting for the boys who would always be absent—with Patuffa's room, sweet with freshly-cut flowers—yellow narcissus, her favourites, standing as sentinels on her dressing-table, and the very latest portrait of Brahms hanging over her bed, and the picture, *Stradi-*

varius in his workshop, which she had always coveted, hanging over the mantelpiece, and a thrilling surprise for her, an engraving of Danhauser's famous picture of *Liszt at the Piano,* with Victor Hugo, Dumas, George Sand, Rossini and Paganini grouped around him, and the Countess D'Agoult at his feet. And yet another was Vidal's noble work, *Les Instruments à Archet.* And on her writing-table lay the *Correspondence between Liszt and Wagner* which Chummy had said she must possess some time, together with six pieces of resin, a new string box, some crystallised ginger from Buszard's, and a Liberty silk handkerchief to wrap her violin in—in case . . .

But would she return? Would she be so taken up with Madame Janeiro that she would not care much whether Mama were free or not? Would the call of her career in London and new chances daily cropping up, which would have thrilled her before Stefansky's death and before the tragedy of her love affair in Rome, stir her or leave her apathetic and indifferent? Would she be joyous and excited at the news that there was to be no change in her home life, no change except greater happiness, greater devotion, or had she passed on from that love-of-home phase, been pushed on by Mama herself?

Mama wondered anxiously, as she filled in the centre of a sweet pink anemone with palest green silk. Her eyes were a little dim.

Suddenly there was the sound of a hansom. There was a violent ringing at the bell.

Only one person in the whole world rang like that.

Mama flung away her work, flew downstairs, and gathered Patuffa to her heart.

CHAPTER X

THE news of Mama's jilting of Andrew Steyning and Patuffa's return to her home came as welcome tidings to Chummy and Irene, still lingering in Rome. Chummy, who had always had a whole-hearted admiration and respect for Mama, thought she had been distinctly foolish lately. He was glad she had come to her senses and would continue to fulfil her own responsibilities. He was ageing rapidly, and had arrived at the point when he needed peace and quietness in his daily life.

It was true that he was more inured than most people to crises brought about by excitable and stormy personalities, and, like Mama, would probably have been bored without a few disintegrating happenings. But Patuffa's affair with poor Peter Long had been too much for him. He would have adhered willingly to his plan of receiving her as a permanent member of Headquarters. If there were no other home for this child, whom he had always loved, then Headquarters must be her home where she had the right of welcome, and the right to cause any number of inconvenient mental, moral and spiritual upheavals. But the cancelling of the arrangement eased him, and he secretly said: "Heaven be thanked!"

And then there was Irene. Irene would have fallen in with anything that Chummy suggested. If he had decided to house half a dozen musicians permanently, she would have accepted it in her quiet, philosophical way, and kept things as easy and stable as circumstances allowed. Everyone who came to the house felt her steadying influence. Studious, but not over bookish, quiet, but not irritatingly tranquil, and always curiously attracted by excitable natures,

she earned everyone's gratitude for her sympathy and indulgence.

She had loved all the strange, gifted people who had come to Headquarters ever since her early childhood: pianists and violinists and singers and organists and composers—people who had made great successes—people who had faded away into failure—most of them either in the height of happiness or in the depths of depression —some of them bitter and angry and jealous, and others of a sweetness of disposition which no success or failure could ever poison.

Whatever they were, however erratic in their ways or views, she had always hero-worshipped them, because she had inherited from her father the belief that music was something more than an art: it was a sacred mission, above the power of words in its influence on the spiritual side of man's nature.

But she would not have chosen that they should always be at Headquarters. In the case of Patuffa, of course, it was different. Patuffa was part of the family, and belonged to Chummy and herself. Yet even Patuffa might have proved too much of a good thing as a fixed star. Not for herself. She was quite clear about that. She was so accustomed to Patuffa's temperament that it had scarcely any disturbing effect on her mind or her work. But she did have her doubts as to its salutary effect on Chummy; and these doubts had been justified by the events of the past few weeks. Even now her father's ashen face testified to the inroad which had been made on his nervous system. So Irene also said secretly: "Heaven be thanked," and afterwards called herself a brute.

She wrote in her diary:

"Everybody seems to be recovering from everybody

quite comfortably: Patuffa from Peter Long; Madame Mama from Steyning; Chummy from Janeiro: myself from a secret —shall I say *enthusiasm* for our fascinating guide on the Palatine. What a mercy! We can now settle down and enjoy Rome with unencumbered hearts."

They turned with added zest to the joys and wonders awaiting them. They haunted the Forum, and spent hours on the Palatine Hill where, from that splendid vantage ground, history rose up for them like a great surging sea. Below, the Forum with all its memories of republican glory, around the ruined palaces and temples of Augustus and his successors, beyond, the blue line of the Sabine Mountains, and southwards the Alban Hills. Here, the Via Sacra and there the Arch of Titus, and the Colosseum, rising in its vastness of majesty, with the blue sky piercing its empty windows.

They were never tired of the Appian Way and the Campagna, into which they penetrated more and more. They loved it caught in sapphire light, idealised in transparent haze. This great solemn golden desert held them ever in silent rapture. Glimpses of the blue hills in the distance, emerald green patches of lonely farms, ruined splendours, grazing cattle, faint visions of the sea beyond, glories of the sky merging into the grandeur of the plain —and Rome, or the memory of Rome beckoning from afar—each compelling picture made its own claim and brought its own thoughts to these two eager and earnest wayfarers, with minds attuned and sight adjusted to the meaning of the Past.

But though they sought these solitudes, they did not desert their favourite haunts in the City, and the little trattoria in the Campo dei fiori lured them always on

market day. The virtuoso of the mandoline turned up with equal faithfulness to receive a virtuoso's rightful handsome fee. They rejoiced in the bright flowers in the streets, watched with interest the picturesque artists' models forgathering in the Piazza di Spagna, and the boys from the Seminaries destined for the priesthood.

They stood in reverent silence by Keats's grave and "heard the soft lute-fingered muses chanting near." They lingered on the steps of the Trinità del Monte, and looked towards the house where the poet breathed his last in faithful Severn's arms. They sat quietly in the churches and took note of the life there, the ways of the priests, the ways of the visitors, and the coming and going of the worshippers.

They visited the crypt of St. Peter's many times, and Irene reaped a rich harvest of Papal Tombs. They sought out friends at the British School of Archæology who eased their brains over the history of the excavations in far-off and modern times. They read Italian with an old Professor who lived in a house adjoining the Ara Cœli, and Chummy revelled in the *Inferno* to his heart's content.

By some special chance they were present at the private ceremony, when the Pope bestowed the birettas on the new Cardinals and gave an address. And the next morning they availed themselves of the *Permesso per assistere al passaggio di Sua Santita nella Sala Ducale in occasione del Pubblico Consistoro.* Thus, close at hand, they witnessed the procession when the Pope was carried in his Sedia Gestatoria in all his pomp from the Sala Ducale to the Sala Regia—a never-to-be-forgotten sight of Swiss and Papal Guards and prelates innumerable, of Canons and Monsignori and red Cardinals with their suites, and the Guardia Nobile, and officials in resplendent

attire, and then the Pope, with hand upraised, blessing from right to left with the Fisherman's Ring.

But in all that glory of worldly circumstance where was Jesus of Nazareth? Was it He who was heralded by the fanfare from the silver trumpets? Did He, an Invisible Presence, pass with soft tread, canopied by those great white plumes?

They became converts to St. Peter's and learnt to love it for its very vastness. The shock of first impression given by its immensity wore into awe. The jarring details in its interior were lost in the harmony and grandeur of its proportions. They saw in it the outward and visible sign of far-reaching and abiding influence—the sway of Rome transmuted from temporal triumph into a spiritual ascendancy kept intact through the centuries. Its vast domes, its huge pillars, its spreading arches haunted them with the beauty of free space.

Yet they did not realise its true symbolism until on Palm Sunday at the Consecration of Palms they saw it peopled with reverent worshippers and passing strangers, old and young, rich and poor, great personages and peasants of no account, and all of equal right and equal value, and no one out of place because it was the home of all.

The secret of the Church of Rome. To exclude no one of the faith, not even by an unseen barrier. To inculcate the habit of worship and encourage participation from the earliest years of a child's life. So that the tiniest tot, kneeling confidently before the priest and being touched on the head with a rod as a sign of blessing, with a kindness and an indulgence and almost a sense of humour in the action, was in very truth gathered beneath the mantle of the Church, not only in abstract theory, but in actual practice.

Long talks they had about Paganism and Christianity, about the Church of Rome and the Protestant Faith with its endless sects and differentiations. They contrasted the childlike Early Faith with its sophisticated expression of to-day. They conjured up visions of the Christians of old celebrating in peril and secrecy their simple services in the Catacombs. They marvelled the more at the material pomp and splendour which had sprung from spiritual sources. Chummy had no good word for Popes or Archbishops or any prelates of high or low degree.

"Let the earth swallow them up," he said, "and the sooner the better. Then we can begin again."

"Isn't that intolerance in its most acute form?" chided Irene. "Are you going to issue an Edict to suppress not only one faith, but all faiths?"

"Not the faiths, but the men who make a mockery of their meaning," he answered, with a fierceness worthy of Patuffa.

So they exchanged thoughts and shared reflections in a companionship in which the personal happiness and understanding of years were blended with a deep love of everything that was beautiful in the wonders of nature and the achievements of man. They were never tired of being together. Although their friends and acquaintances had ever meant a great deal to them, and the concerns of others took up a large part of their generous lives, yet they were happiest alone and in closest intercourse with each other, bound together, but free. With Chummy it was impossible not to be free. His nature exacted no bondage, and made no imperious demands. Old age, if anything, added to his unselfishness and his greatness of heart and spirit.

One morning, when they were lingering in the Colosseum, he said to her:

"My dear child, it is your birthday in a few days, and I shall present you as usual with one of the books which I want myself—the eleven volumes of Gregorovius's *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages!* An excellent and a conscience-easing manner of indulging my own fancies! If you remember, I have been pursuing this method of generosity ever since you were a little scholar of nine years old. And now you are going to be twenty-four. Well, all I can say is that twenty-four is a huge age. Now listen. Could you not see your way to have a love affair or two for practice and then fall seriously into love with someone? I don't mind who it is, provided it isn't an Archbishop, and I'd rather it wasn't a second Peter Long. But you ought not to be imprisoned permanently with a prehistoric parent. There are times when I think I should feel very happy to see you fixed up with a suitable husband, who would not interfere with your career—a scholar, of course, someone knowing all the dead and living languages and all the dialects of the world. No one else would suffice, I'm sure. Could you not excavate such a buried treasure, and give me that bit of satisfaction before I depart? Very kindly try."

She laughed and put her arm through his.

"When I excavate someone like you, Chummy," she said, "then there might be some temptation."

PART III

CHAPTER I

I

PATUFFA took up her life again with redoubled enthusiasm. Her companionship with Janeiro had restored her to the world where she belonged, and her old intimacy with Mama was renewed tenfold. Patuffa jewelled it with a far greater consideration shown in a dozen ways, probably out of relief and gratitude in having recovered the territory which, until the advent of Steyning, had ever been undisputedly hers, and without which she had been a homeless, wandering spirit. Perhaps also she had realised that, great and wonderful though Janeiro was, her temperament was at times too demanding for those associated with her, and that this side of her rich nature was not the best one for close imitation. Yet, if anyone had dared to make even a humble hint to this effect, Patuffa would have pounced relentlessly on the foe.

It was possible that she would not continue long in her new rôle, but meantime her gentleness and graciousness in home life had the result of consigning Andrew Steyning to shamefully remote regions in Mama's remembrance, and of confirming her in the wisdom of her decision, for his sake as well as hers. It was the least that Patuffa could do to give her mother happiness, and

she gave it in overflowing measure and became sweetened in the process. They were able to thresh everything out: the episode of Steyning, the episode of Peter Long. Mama's simple frankness about herself won equal frankness and added *camaraderie* from Patuffa; and their confidences were a relief and comfort to them both. Many a mother and many a daughter might well have envied the quality of their friendship in which humorous understanding of their personal characteristics was knitted to a tender compassionateness towards their sufferings of spirit.

When Patuffa learnt of the ladder in Mama's dream, she laughed with glee and said:

"I should have brought it soon enough if I'd found out you were being bored, Mama darling. You should have escaped somehow!"

And when Mama asked her anxiously whether her grief were abating in any degree, however slight, she said that she could not pretend that Peter Long was possessing her thoughts with the same acuteness as at first, but that she would always hold him in a sacred corner of her heart, and that she was weaving her love, her regret, her pity, her joy, her ecstasy, her suffering into her music.

"So Peter will abide with me always as part of my life," she said quite simply.

Her music had garnered new riches from this strange experience at Rome. Her fervour was more impassioned; and she had gained in depth and breadth of expression. Temperament, that mysterious quality never to be attained by practice, had found fresh sources of inspiration. Peter Long, tragic instrument of Fate, had done his appointed work for little Patuffa.

But on one occasion, in the early days of her return, the remembrance of him was her undoing. She was play-

ing Bach's B Minor Sonata, when her memory suddenly left her, and her mind became a blank. There rose before her a vision of the courtyard of the Vestal Virgins and Peter Long looking up at her from his sketch-book. She saw his sunny smile, heard his voice, felt the charm of his presence. She stood as one paralysed; then recovering her vitality, attempted to go on—and failed. She shook her head and faced the audience in mute appeal, whilst someone rushed on the platform with the music. And even then it was only with great effort that she got through her ordeal.

But she emerged triumphantly; and in the encore on which the audience insisted, probably for the sake of showing sympathy with her contretemps, Patuffa eclipsed herself and played down her defeat. But she felt disgraced, and determined that never again would she lose control of herself. Probably the very incident itself helped her to pass more surely on her way.

Keble was present at this concert and was deeply concerned at her discomfiture. He did something he had never ventured on before. He sought her in the artists' room. Her face brightened when she saw him, and she said:

"Well, Keble, and what do you think of my glorious disaster?"

"I'm most awfully sorry, Patuffa," he said kindly. "But you retrieved yourself in the Paganini Study—indeed you did."

She shook her head.

"Nothing could make up," she said grimly. "I mustn't begin doing that sort of thing. It's unnerving—fatal."

"Let me drive you home," he said, "if it wouldn't bore you too hugely. It's monstrous that you should have any reserves."

She shrugged her shoulders and said:

"Good for me, I suppose the moralists would say. But hateful all the same. I must not let this particular sort of reserve happen again. That is very clear to me."

She seemed glad for once to be taken charge of, and let Keble pack up her fiddle and carry it. In the hansom she leaned back listlessly and was silent.

"What happened to you?" Keble asked at last.

She hesitated a moment and then said:

"Would you like me to tell you exactly what happened to me? I think I should like to tell you if—if you wouldn't mind."

"Tell me anything you wish, Patuffa," he answered, wondering at her.

Then she told him in a few simple words. It was the first time that the subject of Peter Long had been mentioned between them. Not by a word, not by a sign, had Keble shown that he knew the story, though it was always in his remembrance.

It intruded on him in the Courts, in his chambers in Fountain Court, in his rooms in Jermyn Street. He thought of it as he sat alone and watched the smoke from his pipe curling round his head. It haunted him when he was preparing his defence in a sensational murder case, for which he had been briefed. He drove it from him, yet back it came, worrying him vaguely when his mind was fixed on his task, disturbing him wholly when he had relaxed from mental tension. But for that engrossing trial of Martha Cope for the murder of her husband, Keble would have suffered tenfold more over the definite knowledge that Patuffa, his little Patuffa, had passionate love to give in a direction not his.

His salvation was that he had to pit his brains against

one of the most brilliant Q.C.s. If he succeeded in establishing this woman's innocence of which he was convinced, although there were damaging circumstances of great asset to the prosecution, he would score a triumph which would advance his position enormously in the arena of legal fame.

So he was being helped through a difficult time of personal sadness by zeal on behalf of the accused, and by ambition for ambition's sake—and Patuffa's. For always, at the back of his brain, remained the fixed belief that one day his little love would know that she was his and his only. Even now, as he listened, with outward calm, but with an inner fire of longing, to her frank confession of vain and thwarted love, his thoughts and hopes leapt forward to the hour for which he was waiting and working.

She ended with:

"Now you know why my memory failed me to-night, old Keble. Have I pained you too greatly by pouring out? I suppose I have."

"You have pained me and eased me," he said. "Both. I have been so sorry for you. You will never know how sorry."

She made no comment on his words, but later she said:

"You have been an awful brick since my return, Keble. You have helped me by your kind pretence of going on as if nothing had happened."

"You have given me no right to behave differently," he said. "Because I choose to consider myself pledged to you, that is no reason why I should demand that you should consider yourself pledged to me."

"No, that's very true," she said. "But all the same,

you've been a good, steady old friend in need—a sort of . . ."

She added with half a laugh:

"I believe I was going to say *rock.*"

"Well, let us hope it is a *blasted rock,*" he smiled.

They were nearing her home, when he suddenly turned towards her and said:

"There is one thing I wanted to ask you, Patuffa, one thing I wanted to do if it would be of any comfort to you. I should not have dared to ask you, if you had not spoken to me yourself about—about Peter Long. But I have had it in my mind these many days. It is this. Would you like me to—to go and see—and see that all is well—as well as can be—with him?"

There was a moment of painful silence, and then Patuffa answered in a low voice:

"No, Keble, the page is turned over, and I've begun another chapter. It wouldn't be honest to say I haven't. But it was like you to offer—good, kind old Keble."

He left her at her home and went on his way comforted and uplifted.

"I know how to wait," he said several times aloud.

II

Keble gained his case, and not only had the joy of vindicating an innocent woman, but the certainty of knowing that he had arrived. His speech for the defence was considered a masterpiece; and he received congratulations from all sides. The counsel for the prosecution paid him a handsome tribute, shook hands with him warmly and called him "a dangerous opponent."

But nothing pleased Cousin Keble more than a tele-

gram sent to his chambers by Patuffa who was playing at Worcester. She wired:

"My turn now to congratulate old Keble. My turn now to cut out your notices and stick them in a pocket-book. Quite evident England won't have long to wait."

He smiled over it a long time, and put it tenderly in his pocket-book. Then he sent the following acknowledgment:

"Thanks awfully. Feeling very much elated. Found this in a book yesterday. Among the accounts of King Henry VII, Nov. 2, 1495, is the item: 'For a womane that singeth with a fiddle two shillings.' Hope you are singing your best."

Yes, she was singing her best that day. She was leading the Brahms Quartet in B Flat Major and Beethoven's C Major with its divine Andante, and she played with a devotion and a wealth of light and shade that betokened an absolute mastery of these most noble works.

George Hendered chanced to be in Worcester, and he came to hear her, and strolled afterwards into the artists' room. He was interested and moved as before by her personality. She had often intruded on his thoughts since that morning, when she had broken in on him in his office and surprised him by her fierce, imperious demand on behalf of someone other than herself. So free she had seemed to him then, and free she seemed now, like a bird on its flight through space, but with steadier, surer power of soaring.

"Well," he said, "you're going strong, little woman. You're going to make a splendid quartet player. Spacious. Leisured. Dashing. Poised. Thinking only of the music. And unselfish, too."

She flushed with pleasure at his praise.

"I should love to make a mark in quartet playing," she said. "And I intend to have a try. It was one of the last things Stefansky said to me."

"Ah," he said kindly. "Stefansky—that great artist, to whom you gave his last and glorious chance."

"You gave it," she said eagerly. "You kept your word and gave it."

"Then let us say we gave it together," he returned. "We won't fight over that. But what we might fight over, was your lapse of memory the other week. That will never do. If you once begin that sort of game, you're lost. What was the matter? Overpractising, sudden attack of nerves—what was it? You don't look much of a Hercules, you know. You must be careful."

"I'm perfectly strong, thank you," she said abruptly. "I never have anything the matter with me—except toothache."

He laughed and said:

"Was it toothache then?"

"No, it was not toothache," she answered smiling, but in a firm tone of voice which implied that Hendered was to mind his own business. "But it is not likely to occur again. I've quite made up my mind about that."

"Ah, well, if you've made up your mind, that will be all right, I'm sure," he said good-naturedly.

And he did not press enquiry further, as he probably would have done with many another woman, with a bit of common chaff about her being in love, and why wasn't it with him, and so on, and so on. There was something about Patuffa which commanded this man's respect, and more than his respect.

When he left her, he thought again of the early spring

and fresh young green leaves, and the countryside where he was born and bred, and the brook which passed through his village, strong and lusty in the winter months, calm and shining in the summer days. Almost he saw the reflections in its sweet, pure waters. Almost he wished himself young again, to shape his life differently and have love in all its beauty to offer to little Patuffa Rendham. Then again Hendered laughed at himself, and called himself a fool.

But his visit and his reference to her lapse of memory helped her not a little. When she got home, she took out her Roman sketch-book which she had been secretly treasuring and over which she had pored many a time, with unshed tears. She tore up the pages slowly, one by one, and burnt them. She watched them curl up into blackened fragments, stood grim and tense for a while, and then took Stefansky's Stradivari, turned it over and held it out in front of her.

"All, or nothing," she said.

III

After this, Patuffa passed on with firm footsteps. She had a terror of losing her memory again, and having once received a definite warning, she gathered herself together with all the stubbornness of which she was capable, and spent her forces on her music only. She practised with increased diligence, and allowed herself very little relaxation from hard study.

Probably only executants themselves know the incessant work and fatigue involved in the preservation of their technique, zealous safeguarding of which alone liberates them for the high function of interpreter. But she was extraordinarily strong and wiry; and as her spirits

came back to her in the varied interests of her life, she was helped by her natural buoyancy, and showed few traces of stress and strain. Beautiful Patuffa could never be; but the glow of happiness on her face, the brightness in her eyes, the secret inner fire of her temperament lent her an elusive loveliness which many women might well have envied.

Round about that time the London Symphony Concerts were started, and she made a successful appearance at one of them, playing the Saint-Saëns Concerto in B Minor, and Paganini's Twentieth Caprice. She had many engagements both in London and the provinces, a few private ones which she detested, and two or three pupils whom she bullied. She had no patience for teaching, and nearly always ended by being rude to her victims, rich or not rich. For at least snobbery formed no part of her equipment. The same day that she reduced a Miss Farnham from Putney to tears, she nearly boxed the ears of a young Countess, said she had the brain of a rabbit, and as much dexterity on the violin as an elephant at the Zoo. Yet they all liked her. She was so direct and dashing, that once the shock of her abruptness over, they became attached to her personally, adored her music, went to the concerts at which she played, and plied her with bouquets and boxes of chocolates, some of which found their way to Coptic Street to help on Madame Tcharushin's convalescence, which was a very slow affair.

Madame Pat always became invigorated by the thought of Patuffa's pupils.

"Not for one hundred pounds would I have a lesson from you, Patuffska," she laughed one day. "Never should I be sure that you would not tear out my hair, or pull out a tooth, or reduce my skull to pulp. Very

brave people do I call your poor pupils. The courage of the most intrepid explorers in the world is as nothing compared with theirs. They should be put on the Roll of Honour. Whom have you been bullying to-day, I wonder? Someone rich and grand, since the chocolates are rich and grand. Well, well, I eat them with pleasure, to make myself fat in the way Marionska seems to wish."

"Not many signs of that," Patuffa said. "You don't throw off your illness, Pat. You don't give yourself a chance. Why don't you let Mama take you to the sea? You must know we are all dying to do something for you. When the season is over, and my coast is clear from concerts and boring pupils whom I love so much, couldn't we all go away together and make you forget propaganda and such like? Do you remember how I used to call it *progapanda* as a child? I know I was awfully proud of that mouthful. I used to lie awake and rehearse it at nights, practising it about as many times as I do a difficult passage nowadays. A good thing I didn't know it was all wrong. I should have been heart-broken."

"A good thing we don't know everything," said Madame Pat. "We should never get forward at all, not even in the wrong direction. Any direction is better than no direction—what think you?"

"Do come away," Patuffa urged. "If you don't want to leave Father Kuprianoff, we could take him too. I've got plenty of money. All the money coming in, too, from my rich pupils whom you say I bully. I suppose I *do* bully them a bit! But I've got to bully someone—haven't I? And Mama is out of the question now."

"You make her very happy, my child," Madame

Tcharushin said gently. "It is a long time since I have seen her so joyous."

"You are quite certain she doesn't regret having jilted Steyning?" Patuffa asked.

"Yes, I'm quite sure of that," Madame answered. "Marionska could not pretend if she wanted to do so. Nothing of an actress is Mama. I am certain she is hugging her freedom in a close embrace. But we behaved badly—you and I. Being only human beings we behaved exceedingly badly—I with all my teasings, and you with all your tempers. Yet I am glad we conducted ourselves like human beings, and not like angels with white or dove-coloured wings. And now if the Steyning man would kindly oblige me by marrying his housekeeper, that would be the finishing touch to the picture. For I have prophesied this, Patuffe, and no one has the right to disappoint me in my so delicate health."

Patuffa laughed.

"You make fun of your illness," she said. "But you do need a change badly. I believe Margate would do you good. You'll go off into consumption or something of that sort, if you're not careful. And what use would you be to Russia then? Or you'll die—and what should we do? I couldn't begin to think of life without you."

"You needn't," Madame returned gaily. "Never shall I go into the consumptions. Never shall I die. I should scorn to do anything so ridiculous. But as for taking a change from Coptic Street and going to Margate—never could I think of such a thing, Patuffe. Very generous of you about the money, which you will never get from your so rich pupils. The rich don't pay—do they? I always have thought they only owed. But I thank you, my little comrade. I know you would give your last penny to me

or anyone. But I tell you, what would cure me, would be to get back to Russia and face dangers once more. Then I should spring. Then I should recover my strength and my youth. And very soon, that is what I intend to do. But that is a secret between you and me. Mama must not know my plans. She would fret, and have dreams of me hanging by the neck."

"And shouldn't I fret?" Patuffa asked truculently.

"No, my child, you would not fret," she answered. "You would weave me into your music, as you have woven other griefs — yes — Patuffe — I know — though we do no talk about it—and you would send me sound-waves of courage, which would reach me and make me feel as bold and brave as your pupils."

And at that moment Zebrikoff and Serge Moshinski and Natushka Kroshinskaya arrived to tell their comrade news of the latest tyranny which had been started against Russian Dissenters. Their children were being kidnapped and brought up in the Russian Established Church; and one of the latest victims of this tragedy was Madame Tcharushin's friend Prince Khilkoff who had been exiled to the Trans-Caucasus for distributing his estates amongst the peasants and thus disturbing their minds. Pobiedonostzeff, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, was at the height of his power, and he had organised a war of extermination against all Nonconformists. Prince and Princess Khilkoff were ruthlessly deprived of their children. Moshinski had received a heart-broken letter from the mother, which he read aloud in faltering tones. It was Greek to Patuffa, but what was not Greek, was his strong emotion, his indignation, his clenched fist, the heaving of his shoulders. He sank into Kuprianoff's chair, and covered his face with his hands.

But Madame Tcharushin sprang up re-born, transformed, her strange youthfulness restored to her as if by magic.

"And you ask me to go for a peaceful change to Margate," she said defiantly to Patuffa. "How dare you ask me to go for a peaceful change? And how dare I stay here, safe and secure, and amusing myself by being ill, when all these tragic things are happening in my country?"

Up and down the room she paced like a caged tigress. The light of battle was in her eyes. The raging fire of the revolutionary spirit was reflected on her countenance. From her very atmosphere emanated grim determination, stern stubbornness, relentless purpose, fierce patriotism, unswerving devotion to the cause, reckless sacrifice of self.

Patuffa, receptive to all impressions, was tremendously stirred and excited by her godmother's outbreak and by the answering agitation of her comrades, especially of Natushka Kroshinskaya, the anarchist dreaded by Mama. With heart and brain almost bursting from sympathy and wonder and excitement and rebellion, she went home, took out her violin and found expression to her feelings and relief from them, in an outpouring of wild improvisation. Mama heard it and was almost frightened, until she remembered that Patuffa had been spending the afternoon at Coptic Street, not only with Madame Tcharushin, but with some of the other revolutionaries, including Natushka Kroshinskaya.

"What a mercy she can work it off in her music," thought Mama. "Otherwise we should perhaps have her rushing off to Russia to blow up the Czar."

When the season came to an end, she and Mama

went off with their knapsacks for a tramp in the Lake country, to join Chummy and Irene finally in the wild regions of Borrowdale. Keble sought the Dolomites. Madame Tcharushin travelled to Zürich, to hatch plots with her compatriots exiled there.

CHAPTER II

In the autumn came Madame Janeiro, with her maid and Pom-pom, and the glorious days which she had promised to Patuffa in Milan were realised beyond all expectation. In spite of concerts, society engagements, homage from all sides, vagaries, scenes, a command performance before Queen Victoria, and constant demands on her kindness and her time, she found plenty of leisure for Patuffa, for whom she had taken a real affection, and whose interests she bore in mind at every opportunity. When there was not any opportunity, she made it; and her influence, of course, was far-reaching and most valuable. Patuffa was constantly with her, and Mama laughed secretly sometimes at the lamb-like patience with which her own self-willed child accepted the domination of the famous pianist, whose moods were as many as the sands of the sea.

"A good discipline for her," Mama confided to Madame Tcharushin.

"Unless she ends by imitating Janeiro," suggested Madame. "And then, Marionska, God help you. You may be wishing, after all, for that ordered serenity with the poor Steyning man whom, Heaven be praised, you treated so badly."

Mama looked a little shamefaced, as always when Steyning's name was mentioned, but said emphatically

"No." She shuddered now at the mere thought of a life in which there would have been no Janeiros, no Pom-poms, no comings and goings and unexpected developments and crises, no intimacies with wonderful people who took one's breath away and left one panting, exhausted but supernaturally joyous. For Mama had fallen in love with Janeiro, and lived in an ecstasy of delight over her music, given so freely in private, with a generosity of kindness all the more alluring because entirely spontaneous.

"What may I play before you to-day, Madame Mama?" Janeiro would ask. (Always she said "play before"—as if every single person were a vast audience.) "Shall I play Schumann's Études Symphoniques, which I played at St. James's Hall the other day, or do you want some Chopin? You have but to choose, and I will try and give the Mama of my little tigress, who protects me, all and anything she asks for. Or perhaps Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies? Ah, better not, for my Pom-pom's sweet little nerves are unstrung to-day, and Liszt is sometimes too much for him. Ah, you laugh. And I laugh also. Very much I laugh at myself!"

Soon after her arrival came Signor Fragini with the Guarnerius violoncello; and Janeiro saw to it that he kept his word and, backed by her, secured for Patuffa her first appearance at the Monday Popular Concerts. As those well know who had the joy of attending these chamber concerts of classical works, they were to music lovers in England the glory of the age. Only the finest artists played at them; and week after week the same audience of enthusiasts gathered there, amongst them many of the illustrious people of the day. There was a psychic *camaraderie* amongst the audience, and a psychic under-

standing and intimacy between audience and artists, such as can never come again.

No need to name those great magicians who drew the earnest crowds, year in, year out.

As memory of the wondrous past is stirred, visions of them arise. And the sound of their music is heard once more across the wastes of time.

It was difficult to obtain an appearance at those concerts, as the fort was held securely and perhaps too tenaciously, by the glorious few; and Patuffa, in spite of her success, would have stood but little chance of arriving at this Mecca of all artists of the bow, but for the combined influence of Signor Fragini and Madame Janeiro. But the miracle was worked, and it was a proud day for her, and for those who loved her, when she stepped on the platform with the others, and led off in Schubert's D Minor Quartet (*Der Tod und das Mädchen*). She played a splendid lead, and showed that she had a distinctive gift for quartet work. Janeiro played Bach and Brahms, received the ovation to which she was accustomed, and afterwards joined Fragini and Patuffa in a Beethoven Trio.

She kept none of the applause for herself. She let it be seen very clearly that she was sharing, not annexing; and the gracious way in which she thrust her young colleague well to the fore when they received the enthusiastic acknowledgments of the audience, was nothing of the nature of a pose, but the natural expression of her delightful disposition. She was one in a thousand, the exact opposite of poor old Stefansky and scores of other virtuosi, great and small, who are prevented by jealousy and selfishness from sympathising with or furthering the success of minor artists in the same concert. To share honour with others remained Janeiro's characteristic to

the end; and in the biography which followed her death a few years afterwards, this beautiful feature of her career was recorded side by side with her great gifts.

As for Chummy, he was hopelessly infatuated with Janeiro, and seemed prepared to offer her himself, his fortune, his house and any other little trifling item to which she might take a fancy. The day when she descended in all her glory upon Headquarters was unforgettable by him and everyone in the establishment. He dusted the Bechstein grand piano himself, tested it half the morning, to make sure that the tuner had done his exquisite best the day before, and decked the music-room with a wealth of flowers, until it looked like a veritable bower. No Princess in a fairy tale could have been prepared for more gorgeously or more delicately; and Chummy moved about restlessly, smoking the longest of long cigars and murmuring at intervals:

"Don't look at me like that, Irene. I know perfectly well I'm making a fool of myself at seventy-two years of age, but, my word, how I'm enjoying it!"

Janeiro arrived, and from the moment she set foot upon the threshold, the house was shaken to its foundations.

She loved the pictures, and the engravings of old-world musicians.

"Choose any you want," said Chummy.

She was overjoyed with the lovely little spinet, and drew tender tinkling tones from it.

"Find a place for it in your own home," said Chummy.

The stained glass fascinated her.

"The piece you like best shall be sent to you," said Chummy.

She was entranced with the piano.

"Take it," said Chummy. "It is yours."

"Hasn't there been enough taken from this house?" she laughed. "Don't I know of all the kindnesses showered on a long procession of my colleagues? No, I think we will leave the piano here—anyway for the present—in its own atmosphere, full of sweet and beautiful influences. I feel them, Mr. Chummy. They are all around—near one—pressing on to one, left behind by those who have been made happy here, and have poured out their gifts as I, too, shall pour out mine for you and Irene and everyone in this house of goodwill to musicians."

But Janeiro did not only give her music that day to Headquarters. She showered the charm and sunshine of her personality on everyone, including Maria, who was presented to her as the one person in the house who knew how to manage musicians with kindness but firmness, if occasion demanded. Janeiro was told how she had always faithfully and unfailingly acted the part of patient audience to Stefansky's practisings, dividing her time, no one knew how, between the demands of the kitchen stove and the relentless tyranny of the bow.

"Wonderful, wonderful woman," laughed and praised Janeiro. "Never before did I hear of some one doing those two things together. What? You say the audience always in its proper place and staying there to the end without rushing out for its coat and hat—and the dinner never spoilt?"

"Never, so help me Heaven," replied Maria triumphantly. "He was a trying person sometimes, was

dear Mr. Stefansky, but I'd go through a deal more to have him back again, and hear him scream out at the top of the kitchen stairs: 'Maria, Maria, I bring you one little so lovely flower because I have been so shocking, shocking troublesome to-day.' And he spoke the truth there—he did—the poor dear."

Then Janeiro, in her impulsive way, snatched off the Parma violets she was wearing, and pinned them herself on the old woman's breast.

"And now, Maria, you shall be my audience," she cried. "I shall play before you. What shall I play before her, Pom-pom? Something quiet and sweet—hein? Chopin's Berceuse—yes? Something to express our gratitude for all her long, long patience with the troublesome tribe of musicians—yes?"

Yes, the house was shaken to its very foundations; and after her departure, Maria collapsed on to two chairs and fanned herself with *Lloyd's Weekly News,* the kitchen clock stopped, Chummy spurned his books and diagrams of the latest excavations, and Irene spurned her latest story, and they both packed off to the Lyceum Theatre to see Irving and Ellen Terry in *Olivia.*

Irene wrote in her diary that night:

"Janeiro has been, and we were all disintegrated—darling Chummy most of all. I have never seen him so bowled over by anyone, but she is indeed an adorable woman as well as a magician at the piano. I don't wonder she has had three husbands, and I'm sure Chummy would make the fourth if he had the chance.

"Well, well, what a world, as Patuffa always says. Mama with her middle-aged love affair at full tilt—and then suddenly off—Chummy at seventy-two in the seventh

heaven of ecstatic rapture—and in a day or two, I suppose, fairly well recovered—let us hope so, at least—Patuffa, a few months ago in a tragic condition of hopeless despair and now restored to happy enthusiasm and joy of life—Cousin Keble carrying on his love affair all by himself, keeping a watchful eye and mounting guard—the only stable person amongst us, I think.

"For I'm not really stable. I only pretend to be, because someone has got to pretend.

"But privately, between me and my diary, I could very well have let myself fall in love with that guide at the Colosseum, who turned out to be a Professor of History under a cloud. I could have made quite a fool of myself with him. How he poured himself out for our benefit when he realised that we were interested and intellectual people. He made no attack on the brain, but, instead, a gentle and gradual approach, which stimulated and did not fatigue. A Prince amongst guides, he was. Well, I must write a little romance about him some day. That won't interfere with anybody. Certainly, for the present we cannot do with any more love affairs in our circle.

"Janeiro is the most generous-hearted artist that has ever crossed our threshold. I should imagine that jealousy is entirely unknown to her. What a happy chance for Patuffa and all of us that she arrived at Rome exactly at the right moment. It was a miracle which is still continuing its work. She spoke to us a good deal about Patuffa's playing, and believes she has a great future before her. She used an expression which interested me. She said that Patuffa *fathomed the soul of a piece.* She said she had spirituality and grace, sensibility, warmth, verve, colourful wealth of shading and dreaminess—and

that passion, grandeur and splendour would come. To be praised like that by Janeiro—think of it! How glad and proud I am!

"She says that our music-room is charmed ground. And perhaps she is right. Is it not possible that the magic of genius and glorious gifts, and the rapture of expression and fulfilment cast spells around and make of any region an enchanted realm? Certain it is that as she played 'before us,' in the fading light, in the glow from the fire, with sweet fragrances wafted from the flowers, with secret emanations from books and pictures, and mystic benediction from the silent organ, the atmosphere became charged with living, vibrating influences uniting with her own radiant spirit to build a cathedral of sound."

CHAPTER III

It so chanced, at this time, that Hendered resigned his post of manager of the Philharmonic Concerts, and went wholly into partnership with his brother, who was one of the leading impresarios of the day. He was anxious to secure Madame Janeiro for a prolonged English tour, and made an appointment with her at her house in Green Street.

He found her in one of her most intractable moods with which he had very little patience, although he had to assume a suave and gentle amiability to meet the occasion. He hated to have to try and cajole and coax her into acquiescence. But his brother had laid great stress on engaging her, at all costs.

"We've got to have her," he said. "No one else must step in. She is so capricious and impulsive that

there is no knowing who will capture her. You've been her agent before, and you know her and her ways. You must pull this affair off, no matter what she asks."

George Hendered had been having a great deal of trouble lately with famous and imperious and spoilt artists, and was wishing them all safely and permanently located at the bottom of the sea. He wished also all the Pom-poms of the world in the same geographical position. For this Pom-pom snarled and pecked at him, and finally howled. He could have killed Pom-pom, instead of smiling indulgently and smoking the very fine cigar offered him by the wayward Janeiro.

"No, my friend Hendered," she said. "I cannot consent to any tour. Very pleased I am to see you again. You were a most good and splendid manager to me and most patient. I give you every praise. But I am tired of touring. As for touring in your so United Kingdom, I could not begin to dream of it. It makes my neuralgias much worse even to think of such a thing. Ah, dear Heaven, what neuralgias I have to-day! No, I shall never tour any more. And perhaps I shall never play any more. I feel that I never again want to touch the piano, Hendered. I have lost my art for evermore."

With that she rose suddenly, sat down to the piano and played the Revolutionary Étude of Chopin.

"Ha," she cried at the end, "that was not so bad, was it?"

"No," he said stolidly. "It was not too bad for someone who has lost her art for evermore."

She laughed.

"Well, well," she said, "perhaps I have not lost it altogether. Ah, my neuralgias are better. Perhaps I might manage a small little tour—but oh, so small—one

town—Manchester—because there one is sure of a fine, appreciative audience like nothing else in England."

"Come, come, Madame Janeiro," he smiled. "One town does not make a tour, does it?"

"I would not very greatly object to Edinburgh," she continued, "because it is such a beautiful city. There now. Am I not being good? Two towns."

"Two towns are not enough, as you know well," Hendered said with divine patience.

"Well, well, suppose we say three," she conceded. "But not Glasgow, and not Dublin with that dreadful Irish Channel—never again that Irish Channel. We could say Manchester, Edinburgh—and no more. I change my mind. Two towns, not three. What do you say, my little Pom-pom? I think we can manage two towns?"

Pom-pom howled, and Hendered yearned to smother him. But there was no trace of murderous intent in his manner as he went on:

"You will get magnificent receptions in Glasgow, Gloucester, Cardiff, Norwich, Worcester, Leeds and all the usual towns. And in Dublin you'll be Queen of the Emerald Isle. Now do be reasonable—do listen to reason."

"Reason!" Janeiro cried. "Listen to reason! Never. If I listened to reason, Hendered, I should be lost. It is a thing I never do."

He would have liked to say: "No, you don't, by Jove."

Instead he went on:

"And as for the Irish Channel, why should you make such a fuss about that little bit of sea, after all your ocean journeys?"

"Fuss!" she exclaimed, throwing up her arms to the ceiling in dramatic fashion. "Do you not know, do you not remember, Hendered, that I nearly died on that terrible journey, and I went to my bed off suffering, and nearly was the concert put off? Do you not remember? I shudder now to think of it."

"Yes, I remember," he said with a calm smile. "And you rose from it, and had about a score of recalls, or more."

"I shudder to think of it," she repeated.

She added, with a flush of pleasure on her face:

"But I admit it was a grand evening."

"And you will have another of the same nature," he urged—"only even grander, if possible."

"No, no. You must not ask me to cross that awful Irish Channel again," she said stubbornly. "You know I am always frightened at sea, and that Irish Channel is far worse than all the oceans of the world. To go to America or Australia is a mere nothing in comparison."

At that moment Patuffa knocked, and put her head in at the door.

"Engaged, Janeiro?" she asked.

"Yes, my child," Janeiro answered, "but come in and protect me from this horrible and brutal Mr. Hendered who wishes to send me to my doom. You will not allow that, I am sure."

"I'll come back and frustrate him," Patuffa laughed, greeting Hendered. "I'm just going to get the score of *Parsifal* for you, and run in to Hill's to fetch my Strad. which wanted overhauling. I shan't be long. Hold your own with Mr. Hendered until I return."

"Tell him, Patuffe, that never again must I cross the Irish Channel," Janeiro said. "Tell him I should take

to my bed as I did at Milan—and never rise. You remember?"

"Yes, I remember," she laughed. "And if that could happen without the Irish Channel, Heaven knows what might happen with it! Mr. Hendered must be mad."

"I shall be soon," he said, his face brightening, "if you're going to fight me on behalf of someone else. A good thing for me that you're running off."

After she had gone, Janeiro said:

"A good thing for you that she came in. I have her career very much at heart. I want to speak to you about her. And listen, Hendered, perhaps I make that little tour you are teasing me about, not quite so little after all."

What she had at heart, she said, was a tour in the United States for that little clever girl as soon as possible. Hendered could arrange it if he chose—and he must choose. It would be a tremendous push forward for her, and Janeiro was sure she would win instant recognition. The child had the secret, the great secret; she had imagination: she had dash: she had amazing technique, and a nobility of style. She would grow, of course, and her playing would reveal unsuspected horizons. And then, too, she had a very marked personality, and she was most unselfish, and always ready to fight a battle to take care of someone. Janeiro laughed as she told the story of the Guarnerius violoncello and the poor Marchese, who had been almost annihilated by Patuffa's fierce indignation on her behalf.

But Hendered said he could go one better; and he gave Janeiro an account of that interview when Patuffa had bombarded him in the cause of her old master, Stefansky. Janeiro was deeply moved to learn that she

had been willing—and not only willing, but positively eager—to sacrifice her second appearance at a Philharmonic, so that Stefansky might not be left out in the cold.

"That bowled me over, entirely," he said. "Very few would do that—no one except you, Madame Janeiro. You would."

"No, no, I wouldn't," she said, shaking her head. "Well—perhaps now. I don't know. I'm not sure. I might. Things do not matter so much when one is no longer young and the ball does not need to be kicked high. But when I was young—never—never."

Hendered was silent a moment and then said:

"I've never forgotten it, and never shall forget it. It taught me that gratitude was not dead in this rotten old world. And that was why I put the old man in. I had rather a fight about it with the directors—but in he went."

"It was well done, Hendered," she said, holding out her hand. "It was well done. When a breath of fresh air is wafted in our direction, we should indeed be fools not to drink it in and be renewed. That's what it comes to—renewed."

"Yes," he said quietly, and sat drumming with his fingers on the arm of the easy-chair, with a far-away smile on his face.

Suddenly Janeiro sprang up in a state of great excitement.

"I have it!" she exclaimed. "You arrange an American tour for that child and me. We do it together. I shall take care of her success. You arrange it at once—as soon as possible. You can do it at once if you choose."

"You really mean this?" he asked incredulously.

"Of course I mean it," she answered. "Of course we mean it—do we not, little Pom-pom?"

"You mean seriously that you would go on tour with Miss Rendham in the United States?" he said. "What a chance for her! And you mean it?"

"Of course I mean it," she repeated. "But you must do things quickly. No use to wait until she is in her grave. She could not undertake an American tour in her grave. No, now is the moment."

"Done," he said. "I'll hurry it on all I can. Jove, my brother will be pleased. And about terms—we shall not quarrel—you may be sure."

"Quarrel!" she cried. "We don't quarrel when we are busy taking in the fresh air."

"But look here, Madame Janeiro," he said a little anxiously, "this is all very well, but what about the tour over here? We have not settled anything yet?"

"We have," she said dramatically. "I bribe you to make haste. I give in. I go to a few more of your horrible towns—Gloucester, yes, Glasgow, yes, Aberdeen, yes, Cardiff, well, yes—if I must—but not Dublin—no, Hendered, that is too much. I really, really could not. Never again do I wish to be Queen of the Emerald Island."

"Well, if you won't, you won't," he said pleasantly. "You've given in most generously, and I'm sure I can't complain. But that was a wonderful evening at Dublin. A record evening. Something very thrilling in Irish applause."

"You need not go on telling me that," she said. "I know already. Very thrilling. An enthusiastic people. Artists, poets, every one of them."

She threw her hands up in the air in token of surrender.

"Well, well," she laughed. "I give in all the way. I go to Dublin. But if I die, as I nearly did before in my great fright—you remember—it is your fault. You don't mind that, heartless and cruel brute that you are. Very good, then, it is a bargain. Yes? You arrange about that American tour *prestissimo* for me and that little girl who taught you gratitude was not dead—and other sweet things also were not dead—I think I am not wrong in saying that . . ."

"No, you are not wrong," Hendered said, staring fixedly on the ground.

"And who taught me, too," Janeiro continued. "And I cross that wicked Irish Channel, and I perish from fright in the way you wish. That is settled. We drink a glass of champagne together! Ring, Hendered."

Patuffa came in with the waiter and the champagne, and learnt the news. She stood almost paralysed from joy and surprise, dropped the *Parsifal* score and nearly dropped the Strad. She could not speak. She could only blink, her invariable habit when she was overcome.

"I believe you are going to cry," Hendered teased her. "Be careful. You told me once you only cried when you were in a rage. And this is not an occasion for temper."

"I believe I am going to cry," she said, and certainly the tears came into her eyes and began to trickle down her cheeks. Only a few, a very few. She brushed them away, recovered control of her great emotion, and turned to Janeiro.

"The honour—the kindness—the generosity," she murmured. "I being allowed to go with you—to play with you—to——"

She broke off. It was too much for her. All she

could do, was to repeat the words honour, kindness, generosity, turning now to Janeiro, now to Hendered.

"Let us raise our glasses and drink to the memory of Stefansky," Janeiro said.

They drank to his memory in silence. And then, as Janeiro put down her glass, she said:

"This tour is not only my present to you, little Patuffe, but Stefansky's. Mr. Hendered has been telling me how one morning a fine and clever young artist, with her career to make and the right to leap on every opportunity to make it, was nevertheless willing and eager to forgo a great chance, so that a famous and illustrious musician, but old and discarded and no longer wanted, might take her place."

"He had been so good to me," Patuffa said in a low voice, "and I could not bear that he should be neglected at the last."

"We have drunk to his memory, and we shall do this tour in memory of him," Janeiro went on. "And now, Hendered, listen to me again. If you do not make all the haste you can with the arrangements, I go not to Dublin. I cross not that so beastly Irish Channel. Is that clear?"

"Quite unmistakably clear," he laughed. "I won't fail. And as for Dublin, why don't you take Miss Rendham with you to hold your hand and keep up your spirits and save you from perishing from fright? I don't suppose she is frightened of the sea, if I know anything about her."

"Frightened of the sea!" scorned Patuffa. "Of course not. Why, we are a family of sailors on my mother's side. My two brothers are in the Navy. I should have been there if I'd been a man. The sea is ours."

"Ah, well, that's good," Hendered nodded. "You'll be able to keep Madame Janeiro going and take care of her in the wildest storm, then?"

"Only too proudly, and with my life," answered Patuffa.

"And Pom-pom?" Janeiro asked with a twinkle in her eye.

"And Pom-pom," laughed Patuffa.

"Not Pom-pom," said Hendered, *sotto voce.*

Patuffa laughed again. She was gloriously happy.

CHAPTER IV

GLORIOUSLY happy. Who would not have been? Patuffa almost danced home, stopping on her way to buy flowers and a new bonnet which Mama had set her heart upon; for the news she had to bring was great, and worthy of special celebration. Mama scarcely knew whether to rejoice over seeing her so light-hearted, or over the exciting tidings, or over the dainty Parisian millinery.

"Patuffa," she exclaimed, "what splendid news, and what a brick Janeiro is, and my dear child, what a divine bonnet! But you spoil me. You're recklessly extravagant."

"Nothing like what I shall be when I bring the plunder home from America," laughed Patuffa. "Wait and see!"

In the evening she dashed round to Headquarters to receive congratulations from her faithful friends there. The house was already shaken to its foundations by the arrival of *Blackwood's Magazine* containing Irene's first paper on the Tombs of the Popes. Patuffa's news produced a still severer earthquake of happiness.

Said Chummy, beaming with pride:

"Have I not reason to be proud of my two children? My scholar ensconced in *Blackwood's Magazine*, the goal of all writers, my fiddler with the world opening its doors always wider to hear her scratchings."

Said Maria, fanning herself with *Lloyd's Weekly:*

"If we have any more good news to-day, my poor nerves will give way. But we are wonderful people here and no mistake, what with Miss Irene's *Black Magazine* . . ."

"*Blackwood's Magazine*, old idiot," laughed Patuffa, tweaking her right ear.

"And your journey to Australia, Miss Patuffa . . ."

"America," laughed Irene, tweaking her left ear.

"And my beautiful iced cake waiting in the larder to be eaten by the greedy."

They captured the cake, sat on the kitchen table and ate hunks of it, and Patuffa scrunched up *Lloyd's Weekly* into a ball, as she used to do in the past, to tease Maria, and threw it into the fire. The old woman was delighted.

"Why, that's more like yourself than I've seen you for many a day," she nodded approval.

And Chummy echoed that thought in the music-room. Patuffa caught up the fiddle she always kept there, and played tricks and charlatan antics on it amidst much laughter and applause. She insisted on hearing Irene's article read aloud by the author from beginning to end, and pinched her enthusiastically until she cried for mercy. She thrust her from the room and made her re-enter to take a recall. Her pleasure over Irene's success was a great joy to Chummy, and he chuckled over her pose of patronage:

"Go on, my child," she exhorted. "If you continue writing for another twenty years, you may attain to the

mastery of the English language—and you may not. Continue to be as diligent as you were at school, never cease studying day or night, continue to neglect your aged parent, continue to take no interest in the friend of your childhood, concentrate your mind on lofty subjects, and in your dotage you may perhaps attain to fame—and you may not. My blessing and my encouragement. You have earned both. I am pleased with you, my child."

Before she went home, she confided to Chummy:

"I want you to know that I have found my way, and with your help—always with your help. It was you who brought Madame Janeiro to me, at my moment of great need. And it was you who spoke words to me at the Villa d'Este that I shall never forget. They have borne fruit, Chummy. I shall never again turn from music."

"That is the best news you could give me," he smiled. "Everyone's career's safe, then."

After she had gone, Irene made this entry in her diary:

"The happiest evening we've all had together for a long time, and Patuffa in the best of spirits and so awfully pleased about my *Blackwood* article. I shouldn't be enjoying my little bit of triumph half so much if she had not entered into it heart and soul, teased me and patted me on the back and patronised me and protected me just as she did at school. And she still intends to protect me, and says that from this day onwards, if any editor dares to return any of my work, his life won't be safe, and certainly not the hair of his head! Chummy's so happy about our careers. The only thing that matters, he says!"

Patuffa, in her bedroom that night, paced about, too

restless and excited for sleep. The prospect before her had keyed her up to highest pitch. Her ambitions had become keener than ever now she had mastered her memory of Peter Long, and they besieged her with an impetuosity which was well nigh overwhelming. She would scale heights which no one else had reached. She would handle her mind and her music in a way that would make her rendering of great works, in the words of her Moscow master, Auer, *a fresh miracle.* Janeiro should never have cause to regret that she had given her this great chance, and shown her this tremendous honour.

The thought of this honour eclipsed in the end all other thoughts; for Patuffa was living in the days when young people were still capable of hero-worship and reverence for the matured attainments of their elders. And the spiritual value she put on this famous pianist's generous-hearted condescension to a young comrade was the outcome of a true and simple homage.

At twenty-four years of age one does not ponder over one's past life, and turn details and events inside out for sorrowful or joyous inspection. But that night it flashed through Patuffa's mind how much life had given her and how much she owed to others. No one, she was sure, had ever had such friends—Maria, Chummy, Irene, Stefansky, Pat Tcharushin, and now Janeiro. She had never deserved them—never could deserve them, even if she lived to be a hundred. But she would put up a fight. She could at least do that.

And then there was Keble. He had been extraordinarily kind lately and easy to get on with, but sooner or later she would have to make it clear to him that if he waited until Doomsday, she would never be ready for him. If only he would fix his affections on someone in

his own world—the daughter of a Q.C. for instance. Perhaps he would in time. But perhaps he would not. He was so tenacious, so solidly stubborn. Sometimes her heart warmed to him a little because of his unswerving fidelity —but not often, and not for any length of time. No, she would never want him. She did not want any man's love now. She had no love to give any man. She had spent it all, poured it all out on Peter.

Would she always feel like that? Perhaps not. She could not say. All she knew, was that she intended to stand alone, possess herself and be free to realise her utmost aspirations after an enduring fame—as Janeiro's would be, as Stefansky's was, and Tartini's, and Paganini's and Ernst's and all the rest of them—and after the power which fame brings. She had always wished for power ever since she was a child. And she did not pretend to herself that she desired it any less acutely now.

Fame, power and influence—and to use them after Janeiro's fashion. What a lesson of generosity to be taught. The giving of a fine opportunity to a young comrade. The opening of doors for the young to enter into their own territory. She vowed she would live up to that lesson. When her turn came, she would give chances, she would open doors, wide, wide, she would share laurels. And if she faltered from this ideal, she could surely pull herself together by remembering the emotions of this joyous, this red-letter day in her life.

She took out Stefansky's Stradivari and held it before her. He had addressed it and appealed to it at the end of his long journey. Patuffa addressed it and charged it, in the early stages of the road stretching before her in sunshine and glad hope.

"You and I must attain," she said. "We must press

on and attain to those heights we know of. We, too, must see the burning vision and show it to others. But always, always, whatever happens to us of success and triumph, we must remember to share. If I forget when I am not with you, it is for your voice to call me to order—do you hear, dear lovely old thing, with your lovely orange red brown varnish, like all the glorious autumn tints mixed together? Never was there such a varnish. Never such a fiddle. Well, good-night!"

She fell asleep at last, dreamed happy dreams of adventures and ambitions and stirring companionship, and awoke saying: *"The honour of it—the honour of it."*

CHAPTER V

THE news of Patuffa's good fortune was received with delight by everyone in her circle, except Keble. Keble had of late been much easier to get on with. His success at the Bar appeared to have improved him in private life, and he had adhered to his resolution not to lay down the law in Cousin Marion's home.

He had come into prominence rapidly since the trial of Martha Cope, and many good briefs found their way to his Chambers in Fountain Court. It was evident that he had a busy and prosperous career before him.

Since Patuffa's return from Rome he had been so wise and tactful, and with such pleasant results to them both, that once or twice it almost looked as if he were making a little progress in his quiet but stubborn pursuit of her. But if it were true that he had advanced any infinitesimal distance towards his goal, he was sent flying back to a position wide of the starting point, when he cavilled at the American tour with Madame Janeiro.

It was to Mama that he made his first carping criticisms in his best authoritative manner. Madame Janeiro was a wonderful artist, of course, and of course from a professional point of view it was a grand chance for Patuffa to tour with such a distinguished woman as colleague. But was it desirable that Patuffa—a Rendham, mind you, of finest family and fairest name—should be caught up into the private life of a woman with Madame Janeiro's record in *affaires de cœur?* He felt strongly on the subject, he said, and could not keep silent.

Mama was angry and showed great spirit.

"Really, Keble," she said, "you're hopeless. Can't you find something better to do than to pick holes in Madame Janeiro because she happens to have divorced a few husbands, or to have been divorced by them—it doesn't matter which—the discredit always descends on the woman. Can't you instead focus on her genius and her unheard-of kindness to Patuffa? What are you muttering? Something about far-reaching effects on Patuffa? Nonsense. Patuffa will only see the good and take the good. I'd stake my life on that. And she knows what she wants in life and can very well take care of herself without you or me interfering."

"Of course, if you were going with them, it would be different," he persisted. "Perhaps you will go."

"Certainly not," answered Mama. "I shouldn't dream of spoiling their soup."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"You are a most extraordinary mother, Cousin Marion."

"I'm thankful I am," she retorted. "And if there were a few more extraordinary mothers who gave their daughters freedom, things would get on a bit, and young women would come into their own more quickly."

"Madame Tcharushin's teaching, I suppose," he said dryly.

"It's in the air, Keble," Mama said. "I've been able to sense it aided by Patuffa herself who always made her own life, as I've told you dozens of times. And she is well able to. With all her dash and independence she is wise."

"Was she very wise about that poor mad fellow?" he ventured.

"I sometimes think you are the greater lunatic," Mama said impatiently. "You pretend to yourself to love her and have got into the habit of pretending, and are planning all the time to win her; and yet you never put yourself in her position nor see things from her point of view for a moment. Here's a case in point. She gets this great and delightful opening which would hearten anyone, and you, instead of rejoicing as we all do, only lay stress on the disadvantages. So like you, Keble, to throw cold water. I can't think how I was stupid enough ever to wish that Patuffa might come in time to love you. I had a bee in my bonnet about ordered serenity, calm security, a rock to lean on—and all that. But I've got rid of that bee, and changed all my views about that sort of thing, and I assure you I'm no longer secretly on your side. I shan't give you a bit of help from this day onwards—so don't expect it."

"You have changed greatly, Cousin Marion," he said reproachfully.

"Yes," she said, "and if you were to change too, and become less stereotyped, it would be all the better for you, Cousin Keble."

She added, half mischievously:

"I hope you satisfy yourself absolutely and entirely

about all the details of the lives of the solicitors who give you your briefs and minister to your career."

"You talk sheer nonsense," he said, with half a smile and half a frown.

He came away disturbed in mind. It was true that hitherto Cousin Marion had been more or less his ally, not by any spoken agreement, but vaguely, passively, by belief in him, trust in him, reliance on him in a dozen ways and family *esprit de corps*. And now she had declared against him. Well, he would go on without her. Was she such a loss, after all? What was it she had said? *That he pretended to himself to love Patuffa and had got the habit of pretending to himself to love Patuffa.*

The words roused him, obsessed him. Pretend to love her—when she was all the world to him, had always been all the world to him, leaving no space for any thought of any other woman—when everything that affected her was of the utmost concern to him—when in his professional life he was inspired the whole time by the hope of offering her all the things the world could give of wealth and social prestige and sheltered security—yes, that sheltered security at which Cousin Marion scoffed. Pretend to love her—when his very anxiety on her behalf was but the outcome of his love and his longing to guard her from all hurtful circumstances.

Yet he could almost have laughed at the vacuity of these words which echoed in his ears, in his home, in his chambers, in the Law Courts—everywhere. He could have laughed at Cousin Marion's ridiculous inaneness in giving utterance to what she knew to be entirely untrue.

What had happened to her? Why should she make light of security and serenity? Why had she changed so

unaccountably since her own most irresponsible behaviour in the Steyning affair—falling headlong into love and precipitating herself out before one had the chance to take a breath? Utterly unstable she seemed to have become, merely taking the colour of the surroundings in which she moved—most unfortunate surroundings, too—full of Russian revolutionaries and Stefanskys and Janeiros and the like—a world from which he wished more than ever that he could rescue Patuffa. Not that he did not think these artists splendid people. No one could say that he did not admire their endowments. But their place was in the concert hall—on the platform. Nowhere else should they be. Always there, chained up, imprisoned in their only rightful region. Janeiro, for instance, playing the Beethoven Emperor Concerto, Schumann's Kreisleriana, Brahms's Rhapsodies, Liszt's Fantasias, Chopin's Nocturnes, like the magnificent queen she was. There was no denying that she was a queen. There was no denying that she was generous-hearted. But when it came to personal intimacy between a woman of the world such as she was, and little Patuffa, well—wasn't that an entirely different proposition, and how on earth could not Cousin Marion see it?

But his interview with Mama had not been lost on him, and when he saw Patuffa a few days later, he began well by keeping his opinions to himself.

Patuffa had been having a tremendous practice at Tartini's Devil's Trill Sonata, and she was hugely pleased with her trills, but felt she could have another spell at them after a rest and a good munch of chocolates. She ran down from her music-room with her fiddle under her arm and waving her bow triumphantly in the air. She was in high spirits, and when Keble came, lost no time

in telling him herself of the good fortune which had befallen her.

The animation on her face almost made her look beautiful, as she stood planted on the hearthrug and confided to him how excited and thrilled and happy she was. She must rise to the occasion somehow, she said, but Heaven only knew how. She didn't. For the honour of being Janeiro's *confrère* was colossal, simply colossal, and she would have to practise not only till her arms dropped off, as Stefansky used to say, but until her very heart ceased to beat.

"And not only practise, but study. Study and practise. Practise and study. What a world!" she laughed.

She punctuated her remarks with a trill or two, and then asked:

"There now, what do you think of that?"

He was caught by her happiness and stirred by her as he had never been before.

"I am glad for you, Patuffa," he said. "I suppose this tour will be a benefit to your career."

"Benefit to my career!" she repeated with an amused little laugh. "What a word to use. Why, it's the resplendent chance of a lifetime. That's the way to put it. A great artist like Madame Janeiro taking a young thing like myself by the hand and sharing with her. Think of it a moment. Why, it's literally strewing my path with roses—roses. I really have not got any right to such an opportunity. But I revel in the thought of it, and love to have it given me by Janeiro of all people. And apart from the music, the glorious times we shall have together! Such a heavenly companion she is—so many things rolled into one—such *joie de vivre*—ready for any fun, any adventure, and with grave, unforgettable moments when you

pierce into the heart of things. Tantrums and temper of course, but I can deal with those right enough. I'm really becoming frightfully clever at dealing with them. Signor Fragini thinks that I'm a wonder, and that my true vocation is that of virtuoso tamer! Perhaps it is! Oh, and I must tell you the latest. It is arranged that we end up with Southern California, and then we're going to amuse ourselves by a dash to the back country—the wild parts. I'm so excited when I think of it all, that I feel quite silly."

So she rattled on, joyous and light-hearted, until suddenly, probably from jealousy over her hero-worship of Janeiro, Keble forgot his secret resolve to make no criticism of her friend.

"Yes," he said, "it all sounds delightful, Patuffa. And of course I am frightfully glad that someone is going to strew roses in your path. But I can't help wishing it wasn't Madame Janeiro—or at least that she was a different kind of woman."

"What do you mean?" Patuffa asked abruptly, her eyes going to a pin's point.

"Well, I wish her code of life was one to which you are accustomed in your family circle. It isn't—as you probably know."

Her face instantly became tense with anger. Almost she could have struck him with her fiddle which was tucked under her arm. She stiffened up to her full height and stood glaring at him with the fierceness of a young wild animal that is about to spring.

"Look here, Keble," she said in a voice that trembled from rage. "You'd better not try it on. You'd better not say or hint one word against Janeiro to me. I won't

stand it, I tell you—not from you or anyone in this world."

And then all at once she was up against something which stemmed the current of her anger. Keble's pent up passionate love for her broke loose. He was shaken by a tornado of passion and longing, which he did not attempt to control, did not want to control, could not control. He poured out that he needed her, yearned for her, could not live his life without her, had loved her and marked her out for his own ever since he had first seen her, years ago, hungered to guard and protect her, made all his mistakes only out of love and deep devotion, would learn, oh yes, he could learn, he wasn't a fool, he would learn, as no man had ever learnt before. He could not live without her. She was the need of his life. The days would be devastated without her. He could not go on in the way he had been going on. He would go mad. People thought he was calm and self-contained. And all the while there was a fire, a burning fire raging within him.

"Pretend to love you," he cried. "Your mother said I pretend to love you."

He ended up with choking sobs, flung himself on the sofa and smothered his face in the cushions.

Patuffa stood completely overwhelmed by this unexpected tempest which had broken over her head. Her anger, her fierceness were swept away in the torrent of emotions stirred up by the spectacle of this man's desperate suffering. She was moved to her depths—but not by love for him. Many a woman before her has been hurled from her moorings of indifference and has surrendered to passionate importunity and appeal. Patuffa was not of that type. But she was moved by understanding,

sympathy and kindness. She had agonised so much over her own love and desire for someone hopelessly out of her reach and never by any chance of altered circumstances to be attained by her, that she knew something of what Keble was suffering—Keble with all his barriers down, all his reserve gone, all his yearning laid bare. She knew that until now she had never gauged the depths of the love of this self-contained man, whose dogged attachment to her she had come to regard as a matter of course, not disturbing in itself—anyway, not disturbing enough to make her feel she was desperately up against a tremendous force with which she had to deal once and for all time.

But the moment had come, and she met it in her own way.

She had not stirred an inch from the spot to which she had advanced on him in her fierce indignation. She had not put down her fiddle. It was still tucked under her right arm, and her left arm was folded tightly over her breast. Her face was pale and drawn. Very rigid was her little determined figure. But there was an unwonted tone of gentleness in her voice when she began at last to speak to him:

"Keble, old Keble, I don't love you in that way, I really don't. I've always tried to make that clear in our relationship, but I suppose I've failed. It would not be honest of me if I did not say that there were one or two occasions when I've half wondered whether I had got further on than merely liking you and being very fond of you as a friend and a family chum. But only half wondered. And you yourself have always been the one to destroy any such possibility. We are not suited to each other—never could be. Our worlds are different,

and our values are different. Every week brings out the difference. I'm not certain I shouldn't feel caged with anyone I married. But with you I should feel more than caged. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that I married you because I liked you and knew you to be a good old Keble who would never fail me and all that sort of thing, well, I am sure as I stand here, that I should leave you. And what would be the use of that to you or me? The very first sign of your eternal fault-finding, which you can no more help than I can help hugging my freedom to do and be what I choose—the very first sign of the very mildest tyranny, and I'd be off like a shot. I shouldn't wait a minute. Nothing could keep me."

Keble had raised himself from the cushions and sat huddled up in a corner of the sofa, with his hands covering his face.

"I'd take all the risks of that," he half sobbed. "You know I would."

"But I wouldn't," Patuffa said abruptly. "Nothing could induce me to. It wouldn't be fair on you or fair on myself. If I've seriously encouraged you to hope that one day I should give in and that you'd only got to wait, then all I can say is that I am bitterly sorry."

"You've nothing to be sorry for," he murmured. "It has been my doing all along—never yours."

"I'm not so sure of that," she said. "I don't say I've played with you, because it simply isn't my way to play about with a man in that sense, lure him on, and then let him down and enjoy doing it. But I have wanted easy comradeship with you. You've given it at a greater sacrifice than I knew, and I've taken it in my horrid selfishness."

"No, no," he said, "not that. It hasn't been your fault if I've always hoped—always shall hope."

She was silent a moment, and then she went on gravely:

"You must recover from me, Keble. It will help you that I am going away—yes, even with Madame Janeiro. You will recover. We all do, mercifully, in a sort of way. Take my own case. I never thought I should raise my head again. But I have raised it and passed on. You must do the same, somehow. For as sure as I stand here, I shall never give in. I know my own mind. I know what I want. If you waited your whole lifetime through, I should never give in."

She moved to the door, and there she paused and glanced wistfully in his direction. Then she said:

"Keble, I do wish you to know that I'm suffering horribly in making you suffer, and that if my words sound cruel and metallic, I'm not feeling cruel or heartless—I'm only feeling most frightfully sorry."

He did not uncover his face, did not raise his bowed head.

She stole softly out of the room.

CHAPTER VI

BEFORE Madame Janeiro left England, she paid Mama a visit. She came with her arms full of the most beautiful azaleas, delicate flesh colour, tenderest pink. Mama had never before had such a wealth offered to her, and she gathered them to her, and seemed to become part of them as she sat on the sofa side by side with Janeiro, the two beautiful women and the flowers forming a vision

of loveliness which would have lingered in the memory of anyone who had seen it.

Janeiro took Mama's hand and held it for a time in silence.

At last she said:

"I have something on my mind, dear Madame Mama. It is this. You are trusting your Patuffe to me, and I want you to be quite sure that I shall not abuse that great trust. My life . . ."

She broke off, and touched the flowers in a soft caress, as if to encourage herself.

Then she went on, in a low voice, moving her head gently to and fro:

"My life has not been as your life. Sometimes I regret—but often not at all. I have let my emotions, my passions which are very strong, Madame Mama, lead me away—lead me astray. Well, there it is. As I say, perhaps I regret, perhaps I do not. But I want you to have it clear in your mind that I will guard Patuffe's spirit as I would have guarded that of my own daughter. No deed of mine, no word of mine, no thought of mine shall harm her. Can you believe this? Can you be entirely at peace in knowing that Patuffe and I shall not only share the laurels—for we shall have laurels—but we shall also share all the sweet and lovely things which belong to the springtime of life."

"I trust her to you with all my heart," Mama said, smiling up at her with radiant confidence.

Mama repeated her words: *"With all my heart."*

Madame Janeiro closed her eyes a moment.

"Thank you, Madame Mama," she said. "You make me happy and joyous."

"How can I thank you for holding out a hand to my

little Patuffa in this princely fashion?" Mama said gently, when Janeiro opened her eyes.

"No need to thank," smiled Janeiro. "Some fresh air came my way and I breathed it in gratefully."

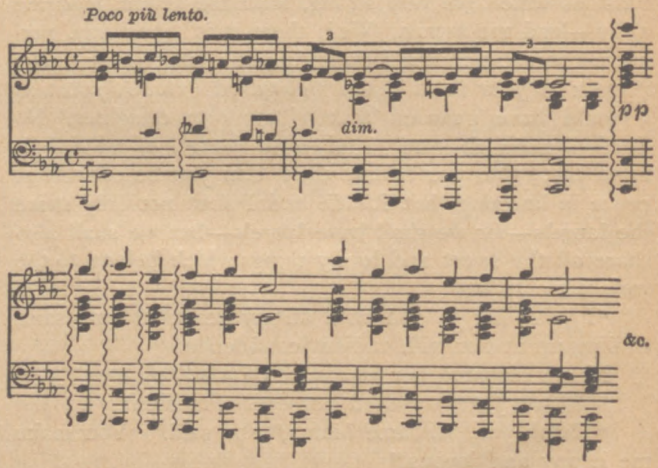
She looked towards the piano and sprang up.

"Music begins where language ends," she said. "Shall I play before you, Madame Mama, and tell you all the words I have left unsaid? I feel I should like to play before you."

"Ah, if you only would," cried Mama eagerly.

For a moment Janeiro's hands rested on the keys in silence. She was choosing her message.

And soon Mama was listening to the grand sweeping chords of César Franck's Chorale, fit music to seal a solemn pact.



PART IV

CHAPTER I

I

PATUFFA went off in high spirits on her American tour. Mama was happy over the coming home of Eric on leave, and was buoyed up with maternal pride in her sailor son. Patuffa had always bullied him in the past, and he returned with a fixed and stern determination to deal with her effectively in naval battle fashion. Instead of the tyrant whom he was prepared to annihilate, he found a light-hearted chum ready to meet him more than half way, and he had to own that "she wasn't half bad." He was a little condescending about her career, for he did not think fiddling was good form, but he admitted her playing was all right in its way. She was delighted with her fine-grown midshipman brother nine years her junior, looked up to him respectfully as a worthy naval representative of the family, and accepted his patronising indulgence in a sporting spirit.

Suddenly his patronage and indulgence collapsed, and Eric gave her a friendship on equal terms. Mama's content was tenfold increased to see their good understanding. She had been feeling anxious over the remembrance of angry, bullying nursery scenes of former days.

Madame Tcharushin had laughed at her fears.

"We don't go on doing all the things we used to do in the nursery, Marionska," she said. "Some we do, of course, but not all. Warfare, for instance, which has about as much sense as any fighting in the nursery. Perhaps some day—not in our time—the nations will put that also aside as senseless childishness leading to nothing. Who knows?"

So when brother and sister were seen to be the best of pals, and Mama purred with happiness and harmony, Madame Pat said:

"I told you so. Am I not always right? How wonderful I am! Did I not also tell you that your Steyning man would oblige us by marrying his housekeeper? And has not that also come true?"

"It was his model," said Mama.

"That is only a detail," laughed her friend. "I was right in principle—whatever that means, Marionska. And the great point is that the vision of that lonely man is now exorcised for evermore. Not that I think you have been much tormented by it lately—mercifully for yourself—and me."

"No," said Mama, a little shamefacedly. "It has not troubled me—not as much as it ought."

"My child, if we didn't get rid of our regrets, we should get rid of our senses—if we have any," said Madame Tcharushin.

Thus Patuffa left home easy in her mind about Mama, knitted to her in still closer bonds of friendship, and comforted by the knowledge that her godmother, according to a sacred promise, would not be risking her life and liberty in Russia until after her return from America. Chummy was in good health. Irene was having further successes with her scribbling, as Patuffa called it, and Keble,

who had kept away from the Rendhams, gathered himself together and came to grasp her hand and wish her Good-speed.

II

News came of the tour from time to time. Madame Janeiro and she went to some of the usual towns: in the East, to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, and in the West, to Chicago, Omaha, Nebraska, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Patuffa's letters were glowing with happiness and excitement.

She wrote:

"I am getting roses, roses all the way. I suppose I ought to have thorns as well. But so far none have pierced me.

"Madame Janeiro is a glorious companion in every way. She plays with an amazing magnificence when she is in the mood. When she isn't, she does not trouble! But she takes good care that I should always be keyed up, and rounds me right well when I fall short of what I can do and be. I learn so much from her, as you may imagine. Being with her is a musical education in itself —just as being with darling Chummy was an education in all directions. I am glad I have not to wait till I'm old and toothless before realising that. I realise it now —and increasingly.

"I had a great success at the Boston Symphony concert. Janeiro says I improve all the time—except when I don't—and gain in breadth and freedom. I hope I may in time learn that mysterious and magic secret—to be one with one's art—and yet free of it. Of course it

is so thrilling playing with a mature genius like herself, that apart from the enthusiasm and appreciation of the public, I am spurred on to reach heights unattainable by me yet, but to which she beckons me by all she is and stands for. It is a most stimulating experience. I could die of it.

"We have had a few scenes, of course, when she has taken to her bed, said she was dying and has bequeathed Pom-pom to me! I must say I hope I shall never survive to have Pom-pom bequeathed to me. I should miss these scenes if we did not have them occasionally. The truth is, Janeiro has attacks of severe nervousness and feels she cannot face an audience. Perhaps I may feel like that one day. At present I could face any audience whatsoever—an audience of wild beasts and rattle-snakes and tarantula spiders combined.

"I cannot tell you how charming and generous she is over the applause and the recalls. She shares everything—bouquets and all.

"We've finished up in Los Angeles. And now we are off on a holiday to the country back of San Diego, to visit a ranch belonging to botanist friends of Janeiro, and to make some expeditions into the Cuyamaca Mountains. Janeiro says Pom-pom needs a holiday badly and that the excitement has got on his nerves. We are really tired out—tired but triumphant. I long to have a spell of Nature.

"No words of mine could describe what we are seeing. You see, we have arrived at springtime. The rains have come and gone only recently, and the foothills around us are like fairyland, covered with a wealth of escholtzias, flaming and flashing in the sunlight. Their beauty is entrancing, short-lived, I hear, but none the less marvellous

for that. Probably more marvellous. There are carpets of the little pink blossoms of the alfilaria, and carpets of golden violets sending out the most delicious fragrance, and indeed flowers innumerable of all colours. I've picked and pressed a few of them. I've learnt a lot about them from our botanist friends.

I don't know what you would say to the Mariposa lily, just like a luscious yellow butterfly. As for the green of the plains and hill-sides, I've never seen such an intensely vivid hue. It doesn't last more than a very few weeks. Its glory passes into brown and old gold colouring, but I should think that must be beautiful also. I am really revelling in the Nature around us, and love the foothills and the great boulders and the mountains in the distance and the sunsets with their purple light, which seems to embrace the world. Don't you think I'm expressing myself rather fairly well, for me? Irene will be proud of me—extra proud—bless her.

"Yesterday Pom-pom escaped from guardianship and strolled on his own amongst the lemon trees at the further end of the ranch. We found him grubbing about in peaceful proximity to a rattlesnake curled round a tree and mercifully asleep! I thought Janeiro would have had a fit! I have no fears about Pom-pom myself. He would survive the worst disaster ever imaginable by the human mind. I feel quite rested, and as strong as my little Mexican pony on which I am having some jolly rides. No need to be anxious about me, dearest Mama. I'm in fine form, as brown as a manzanita bush, and hugely delighted with life. Some day I must bring you here to do some Mariposa lily embroidery under the shade of the lovely pepper trees.

"Yesterday, on this ranch, at the request of our bo-

tanists, we gave a concert. The news spread abroad in that mysterious and quick way in which news does travel in lonely parts. And we had a 'full house.' All sorts of curious and off-the-line people as well as prosperous ranchers. Several prospectors, a Swedish storekeeper from the nearest township, an agent from one of the Indian Reservations, cattle-ranchers down from the mountains, explorers from the Cañon of the Colorado, two or three other botanists engaged in the study of the flora of California, young English fellows who had not made good at home and weren't doing much better here—'remittance men' they are called—and many others. Young couples and old, who were having hard struggles to keep going and disappointments by the yard, and had lost their money and their crops and, I am afraid, their hopes. It was a sight to see all the buggies and horses tethered to the rod.

"I cannot tell you how sweet Janeiro was. The piano wasn't up to much, but that made no difference to her. She would have made lovely music for them out of an old barrel. She said to me: 'Now, Patuffe, this is the audience to which we must give of our very, very best. You can see that many of these people living in lonely places are hungry and thirsty for the bread and wine of the spirit. We must surpass ourselves. You have your Stradivari with you, and you must wring the soul out of it for them. And I must wring the soul out of this old soap-box—though Heaven only knows how I'm going to do it! But it must be done: for you see, my child, we have a gracious chance. An outpost of the world. A great need to administer to. Balm to give. Uplifting to give. Joy and pleasure to give. All the beautiful things that our beautiful art can give. We must not fail.'

"Well, it goes without saying that she did not fail. And I know I didn't fail either. I played a heap of solos and finished up with the Andante from the Mendelssohn Concerto which, strangely enough, a very old Englishman asked me for. He seemed much moved—touched by remembrance, he told me.

"I was very uplifted—more than I've ever been, I think. The setting, the circumstances, appealed to my imagination. I played from the plumbago verandah, on the very spot where Papa Stefansky had played—imagine that—he had been here several times on his many wanderings. The expanse, the sense of freedom, the fragrance, his memory, Janeiro's words, the realisation of the high mission of music instilled into me by Chummy, by old Herr Riemer in the Dresden days, by Stefansky, by Janeiro, inspired me. And I soared, and my wings have grown stronger by that flight.

I shall reach further yet."

CHAPTER II

OTHER letters followed, with descriptions of expeditions into the mountains. And then Madame Janeiro and Patuffa returned from the West, stopped a few days in New York and embarked for England. Mama and Chummy both received extravagant and joyous cables; and a great welcome was prepared at Patuffa's home and at Headquarters.

But a terrible disaster took place. The liner came into collision with a cargo vessel in a dense fog, and went down in less than twenty minutes.

Patuffa was not amongst the saved.

The story of her last moments was told by the third

officer who was picked up in an exhausted condition after having clung on to some floatable object for many hours. He was terribly distressed that she had gone. He had kept her up alongside of him, but she had suddenly relaxed hold of the upturned boat to which they were clinging, and disappeared. He said he would have given his life a hundred times over to have saved her, she was such a plucky one.

This was part of his account which Irene had pasted in her diary:

"We got six boats safely off and they managed to pull clear, but the ship was heeling over very rapidly to the port side, and it was certain enough she was doomed. In the sixth boat went Madame Janeiro, the pianist, who had been playing to us together with little Miss Rendham, the violinist, several times on the voyage. Madame Janeiro was a good bit scared and looked as white as death, but all the same, she didn't want to leave Miss Rendham behind when it was found there was only room for one. She implored her to go instead. But the little one wouldn't hear of that, not she, and she helped hustle her off, saying: *'I shall be all right, darling. Next boat, you know.'*

"She knew there wasn't going to be any next boat, right enough. She had behaved splendidly, showing the greatest pluck and courage, and was of the utmost possible help to the stewardesses and all of us with the passengers, looking after everyone except herself, and as cool as a cucumber and as quick as a dart. The ship by this time was right over on her port-side until her deck was almost flush with the water, and it wasn't possible to lower the seventh boat. And I said to her: 'Rough luck on you to be left behind.' She smiled and said: 'Oh, no, I'm so thankful my friend is safe. She is

a great artist, and the world needs her. Besides, I come of sailor folk. It's my right to be here.' I told her to stand near me and we'd jump together, and I'd look after her. She nodded, stood fearless next to me with the stewardesses on the other side of her—and the ship went down stern first."

At the end of this account Irene wrote these few words:—

"I remember so well the day when Chummy took Patuffa and me into the Cathedral at Meissen. We were children then—twelve years old. I remember he said: 'What shall we all pray for? Shall we pray to behave well in danger and in prosperity?'

"So we knelt together and prayed to behave well in danger and in prosperity.

"Patuffa's prayer is answered. She remained a darling in her success, and proved herself noble in danger.

"We have lost her. At least the thought of losing her cannot frighten us any more."

THE END

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