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J. W. ASTLE, Woodstock, N B

March 27, 1908.

The Wanderer.

On a low fence along a dusty highway a little girl sat and whistled. Back of this whistling sprite, a little way up the lane was an old farmhouse.

On the porch a woman appeared. 'Alma she called, 'what are you doing?'

'I'm out here on the fence, mamma whistling good-night to the sun.'

'Supper will soon be ready.'

'I'll come in a minute, mamma. She turned her head as she spoke and saw a stranger approaching over the ridge, beyond which in the valley lay the village. As he came down the roadway he seemed very tall and very thin, and his shadow stretched far behind him.

He was an old man with full gray beard and long gray hair. His coat was long and loose and he leaned heavily on a stout cane.

The whistle stopped as he neared the child. The old man raised his hands with a strange gesture.

'The child!' he murmured, and stood fast in the roadway.

For a full moment he stood there with hands upraised. Then his hands slowly dropped, a new light came into his face.

'It is Lena,' he softly said.

'My name is Alma,' said the child.

'It is Lena's hair and Lena's eyes,' he murmured.

'I am Alma Sedgwick,' said the child. 'I live with my mamma in the house you see there.'

He slowly nodded his gray head. 'Lena lives far away.'

'Is Lena your little girl?'

'She was my little girl; but she is lost.'

'That's too bad,' said the child with a tremor of sympathy. 'And are you looking for her now?'

'I look every where,' the old man answered. 'Vat is de use? She comes no more. I call so loud, Lena! but she hears me not.' His thin figure suddenly dropped. 'I am so very tired,' he murmured.

He staggered a little and the frightened child caught his hand.

'Come with me,' she said 'and rest. My mamma knows just what to do for sick people. Come.'

Holding fast to his hand, she slowly led him to the porch.

'He is very tired, mamma,' exclaimed the child. He is looking for his daughter, Lena. A child like me. She is lost.'

Then the woman, noting his exhaustion, brought him cordial and cakes. He drank the cordial and slowly ate the food. And his deep set eyes wandered from the child to the mother.

'And do you think your daughter came this way?' she presently asked.

'There are many ways,' he slowly answered, 'vy not dis vun?'

'And was it long ago you lost her?'

He gravely nodded.

'Long ago,' he answered, so werry long ago.'

'Then she must be a grown woman now?'

'So,' he said with infinite pathos 'That is why I haf lost her.'

He talked little, but listened with an eager air to all that was said. But when the mother tried to learn something about him, his mind proved a blank. He did not even remember his name; he had no friends, nobody would look for him. He did not know whence he came, nor whether he was going. If Lena could be found, Lena would know.

His restful gaze, wandering about the room, stopped at a violin box that stood in a corner.

'That was my uncle Jim's,' said the child, following his gaze. He left it here when he went away with papa. Would you like to see it?'

He took out the violin and frowned as he looked at it over. Then he strung it with infinite care and adjusted the bow.

And presently the little room was filled with crowding tones, now sweet, now harsh, now sad, now jubilant, and then dying into silence.

The old man lifted his head and looked at the mother in the doorway.

'I vas de king's chapel master, in de long ago,' he said with quiet dignity. 'Now I play something for de child.'

It was a lilting little measure, full of laughter and whispering voices and the patter of merry feet. And when it ended with a sudden thrum the child laughed.

'More,' she cried, 'more.'

'Den I play you the little folk song I taught Lena,' he said. 'Und after I will teach it you. Sit here by me vere you can catch it close.'

It was a song of the Rhine, of sunny slopes, of vineyards, of the humble cot and the mot-er heart—the song of the wanderer who longs for his boyhood's home.

The old man played it through with pathos, and then he had the child hum it with the violin. Her ear was quick and presently she hummed it alone. The old man was much pleased.

'To-morrow,' he said, 'I will de words teach you. To-night it is enough.'

In the morning the wanderer ap-

peared, stronger and brighter, but said nothing of his future plans. He seemed anxious to make himself useful as far as possible. He brought in wood, he mended the fence, and then he gave the child her music lesson.

The puzzled mother shook her head. Was it right for her to shelter this stranger of whom she knew nothing? It was evident that he was mentally disordered, although harmless. She would wait longer before she decided what she would do.

Alma and the old man were inseparable companions. And she never tired of the music lesson he gave her.

'She has the werry promising voice,' he told her mother. 'I will a fine singer of her make. It will be de feerst time, no, no.'

But one bright summer day in June the child was again sitting on the fence along the highway. This time she was not whistling. Her clear soprano was warbling the folk song the old man so carefully had taught her. And as she sang, her eyes were intent upon the page of the wonderful German fairy book the old man had sent to the village and bought for her.

She was so absorbed that she did not hear the approach of a huge touring car. There was in the car a lady, who, catching sight of the child, signalled the chauffeur to stop. Then she lightly stepped down and stood there listening to the song. When it ended, she drew a long breath.

'My dear,' she softly called, 'will you come here, please?'

The child looked down and saw the lady, a very grand lady with beautiful clothes, and with a winning smile.

'Who taught you to sing that song my dear?'

There were tears in the beautiful lady's eyes.

'Father Luke taught me.'

'Father Luke? And will you take me to him?'

She took the child's hand and together they went up the lane. The old man was sitting on the porch, and the mother of the child was in the doorway.

As the grand lady approached the old man looked up and his gaze was a troubled one.

'Father, said the grand lady very softly.

He slowly shook his head.

Then as she stood with her appealing eyes upon his face she began the song he had taught the child. She sang softly in the start then fuller and louder and presently her great voice rang out vibrant and wonderful.

As the last notes lingering died away, the old man, his face rapt and shining, turned to the mother of the child.

'There is no odder voice like that,' he simply said. 'It is Lena!'

Then the grand lady's arms were around him and her kiss was on his cheeks.

'Ah, it is very good to see you again, father. And you look so fine so well, so happy.'

'And will you take me away, Lena?'

'Why, father, dear, you want to visit Lena, do you not? But you may come back. Lena is only too happy to find you again, and find you so comfortable. You may come and go as you please, father.'

The gray head nodded. 'It is well,' said he.

A little later the lady talked to the mother of the child.

'I am Mme Mariatti of the grand opera,' she exclaimed in her quick way, 'and this is my father. He wandered away from us—he has not been the same since my mother died—and we have searched so far for him. It was quite by chance we heard of the strange old man who played the violin so beautifully. I hurry, hurry, and lo! he is here!'

The voice of the old man interrupted her—

'Und how about de child, Lena?'

'You will make a great singer of the child, father—a great singer.'

And the old man's trembling hand touched the child's curls and he gently smiled.



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" 327 Suburban for Marysville.	18 30
" 329 " " "	21 20

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D. POTTINGER,
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Moncton, N. B., 1908.

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