

Literature, &c.

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THE YOUNG FLAGEOLET PLAYER.

BY MISS LOUISA STUART COSTELLO.

Continued from our last.

It was more than a year after this event that Sir Lionel saw Ellen Swain again, when he found his prediction verified. They met in Paris, where Lady Lucy had taken her playing, of which she was not yet tired, for so great was the credit her improvement gained her, and so much was *la belle Anglaise* admired, wherever she presented her, that her delight and enthusiasm had but increased. One scheme she had adopted, and in the fancy she would not be thwarted: she kept a profound silence on the subject of Ellen's birth, and by insinuations, and sly glances and words, left it to be surmised that some mysterious circumstances concealed her real origin. Ellen was obliged to humour the caprice of her patroness, who even bestowed on her another name, calling her Miss St. Clair, as more elegant and interesting than her real appellation.

The latter circumstance, in her letters to her mother, which were read by the hostess of the cottage at the Lees—for Betty Swain was of the old school, and had no book learning—she omitted to name, by order of Lady Lucy, whose secret could not otherwise be safe, and she was one of those who found it impossible to

"Drink her tea without a stratagem."

Miss St. Clair became quite the fashion in Paris. It was chiefly in French society that she was introduced, as Lady Lucy avoided her compatriots as much as possible, not wishing to be too much questioned. Ellen, at first, was greatly amused and delighted with her novel position; her spirits were light, and she was naturally fond of excitement; she had a strong passion for acquiring knowledge, and her great aim was to improve herself as rapidly as she could, in order that when she and her brother again met, she might surprise him by the alteration he would find in her. But as months rolled on, she began to awake from her dream, and to find her situation by no means enviable. She saw plainly that it was not affection, but caprice, that dictated Lady Lucy's actions, and she felt that, though in society she was treated as a gentlewoman by strangers, in private she was merely looked upon by her whimsical mistress as a dependant.

Occasionally the recollection of Arthur Connor would cause her almost to shudder, circumstances had now so much changed their relative positions. "His countrymen are proverbially changeable," she would muse, "and he probably has forgotten me long since; if not, he would have written to my mother, and I should have heard. I hope it is so, for we are unused to each other, and I could not now be his wife."

Very different were the reflections of Sir Lionel. He now saw the pretty Ellen Swain all he wished, and romantic as his mother, with more heart, he had, without weighing the consequences, cherished the little drama begun in Derbyshire, which he intended should find its denouement in a marriage in Paris. His fortune, however, was extremely small during his mother's life, and it was to his half brother that he looked to afford him the means of realizing his visions: he had always understood he was to be his bachelor uncle's heir, but that uncle was so eccentric a personage, that none of his family ever knew where he was to be found: he never wrote to any one, and it was only by some unforeseen circumstance they occasionally discovered that he was still alive. He was heard of from time to time in Italy, at Constantinople, even in Russia; and, when least expected might sometimes be met with in the streets of Paris or London.

It did not occur to Sir Lionel that it would be as well, before he took any steps in the matter of gaining his uncle's consent, to ascertain whether the affections of Ellen answered to his own; but he had sufficient vanity to imagine that there was little doubt of that being the case, and he possessed such a feeling of honour as made him wish to avoid raising her expectations till he saw a probability of their being fulfilled.

The question now was how to find his uncle, in order that he might appeal to him and obtain his sanction to his marriage; he knew his character to be so singular, that, sanguine in everything, he felt assured that he would not resist the eloquence he intended to make use of, and he trusted to his mother's dotting fondness to assist, instead of her objecting to his wish. Had he known more of the world, such wild imaginings would not have entered his mind, but he was little past twenty, wanting a few months of being of age. He had frequent opportunities of seeing Ellen, and became more and more attached to her, though they had never any private conversation, nor met without his mother being of the party.

"Is she not lovely?" said Lady Lucy to him one day; "I really never expected my plan to succeed so well: it is scarcely a twelvemonth since I have had her, and yet I am sure she might pass for a duchess's daughter; she is wonderfully admired. Don't you think young Count d'Orfeuille is struck with her?"

"He is a coxcomb, like all his countrymen," answered Sir Lionel; "of course, she would laugh at his pretensions."

"I don't see why, dear Lionel," replied Lady Lucy; "I must get her married you know, or my romance will be spoiled, and she has no right to be particular."

This remark of his mother a little startled

the young man, but he smiled and turned away. "Have you any idea where my uncle is, mamma, dear?" asked he. "I have a great wish to write to him, but have no notion in what part of the globe he can be found."

"I forgot to tell you," answered she, "I heard of him oddly enough, and who from, do you think, but d'Orfeuille, who was telling us yesterday of a famous flute player who was quite the rage last season at Rome; he is just arrived in Paris, and is in the suite of an English gentleman, who, it seems, is no other than my eccentric brother, Clement. I suppose it is some new favourite he has taken up—he is so absurdly enthusiastic about music. As he does not, of course, know I am in Paris, we should meet, as we usually do, by chance; but I have just sent to inform him where we are."

"I will go to him instantly," exclaimed Sir Lionel, with animation.

Accordingly, having ascertained at what hotel he was to be found, the young man hastened to seek him. On reaching his hotel, he was shown into a *salon*, where, seated at a desk covered with music, he beheld a young man of very prepossessing appearance, busily engaged looking over a manuscript score. He was pale, and a thoughtful expression was on his brow, but the graceful and sweet smile with which he bowed to the stranger at once interested Sir Lionel.

"I have," said he, "intruded, I fear; I thought to find my uncle, Mr. Ashe."

The young man's colour heightened as he exclaimed, "I see then, Sir Lionel Vane? my protector and friend, has already made me acquainted with you."

At this moment the door opened, and Mr. Ashe appeared; at first he did not recognise his nephew, but on doing so received him very warmly, "I must present to you," said he, "my young friend, the celebrated performer, whom you have probably already heard in Paris, Signor Eduardo."

Sir Lionel had not yet heard the Signor, who had yet only played at one or two private concerts where he had not been.

"I was fortunate enough," continued Mr. Ashe, "to become acquainted with this accomplished gentleman, who does me the honour to accept of my hospitality at present, and whose fame bestows on me no inconsiderable eclat."

The tone of his uncle's conversation was particularly pleasing to Sir Lionel, as in the romantic enthusiasm he displayed, he saw much hope of his own scheme succeeding as he desired, and he willingly accepted for his mother and her party a box at the theatre for that evening, when the Signor was to make his first public appearance.

"Tell my sister I am too much occupied to see her before, but we will meet then," was his remark to Sir Lionel as they parted.

As he left the hotel he met the young Count d'Orfeuille, who joined him, and seemed anxious to enter into conversation, which, though he endeavoured to avoid, the other persisted in. They, therefore, took a turn together in the gardens of the Tuilleries, where the loquacious Frenchman continued talk acquainted him with much which caused him surprise.

"My dear friend," said he to Sir Lionel, as he took his arm, "I have been trying for several days to find you alone, in order to talk over several matters. You may have observed my admiration in a certain quarter; the charming Madlle. St. Clair is, I have reason to think, not indifferent to my attentions, and I have serious thoughts of offering to her; but although I am aware that you English are all rich, it is as well to ascertain exact facts, and of course, I must have a sufficient dower with my wife. My Lady Lucy has given me encouraging hopes, but the question is delicate to put to her. To you, I have not the same scruples—what is the fortune of Madlle. St. Clair?"

"That young lady," said Sir Lionel, rather sharply, "has no fortune that I know of, beyond her beauty and excellent qualities."

"Hein!" exclaimed the Count, "that will never do—I am obliged to you—I can draw back in time: of course, such a thing would be out of the question. By-the-by—singular character, Monsieur Ashe—your countrymen are so eccentric, it is said he has adopted the Signor Eduardo, and means to leave him all his fortune—do you know if that is a fact?"

It was in less brilliant spirits than before that Sir Lionel accompanied his mother and her party to the box at the theatre that evening. His uncle's name had only reached the ears of Ellen, as "my brother Clement," she was therefore quite unprepared for the surprise that awaited her.

The concert began, but was little attended to, all expectations being centred in the anticipated appearance of the celebrated flageolet; Count d'Orfeuille, who made his appearance as usual, and attached himself to Lady Lucy, was vehement in praise of the genius of the young performer.

"He is said to be an Englishman, but has of course, learned the Italian appellation, as more taking with the town," said he: "ha! he is coming, behold him; now Mademoiselle," he continued involuntarily, addressing Ellen, "you will be charmed."

Ellen turned her eyes to the stage, and the next moment uttered a cry which was sufficiently audible, as she unconsciously extended her arms, and uttered the words—"Edward! my brother!"

"C'est done une artiste!" muttered the count, elevating his eyebrows in amazement.

"Miss St. Clair," said Lucy, angrily, "what can you mean? you astonish me; pray be more yourself."

But Ellen heeded nothing, neither the sneer of the count, the frowns of her patroness, the deafening applause as Edward bowed to the audience—she only saw her brother, and could not contain her delight.

"See Lady Lucy," she cried, "it is he himself—how very extraordinary—how happy I am—what will he say when he sees me? I had better conceal myself for fear of his being agitated; poor fellow, how pale he looks."

And the tears streamed from her eyes and dropped on her white gloves as she leaned over the front of the box, regardless of the attention she attracted. At this moment Mr Ashe entered the box; all was now greeting between the relatives, for Lady Lucy thought it fitting to assume an appearance of affectionate regard, which she was far from really feeling.

"Where have you been, dearest Clement, for so long—this is treating us very ill," she continued, embracing him. "Lionel, you have seen your uncle before; let me speak," she added playfully; "as for Miss St. Clair, we can introduce her afterwards."

Mr Ashe fixed his eyes on Ellen with a sort of half-recognizing glance; and timidity kept her silent, but she blushed deeply and trembled violently; meantime, Mr Ashe made a sign with his finger for silence, for Edward's flute was enchanting the auditors. Changed was its tone since Ellen had last heard it in their native village, and by the rustic style which led to the beautiful meadows of Beeley, where they had so often paused by moonlight while he played air after air to her, and one then often the companion of their walks—Arthur Connor.

How many recollections these sounds awakened, but in what a changed scene did she now hear them! The fields, the mountain torrents, the woods, the moors of Derbyshire, gilded like panoramic views before her eyes, with the lights and sparkling dresses, and golden draperies, and flowers, and music—all mixed up in confusion; but there stood Edward himself, so absorbed in his art that he saw and heard nothing, his face beaming with admiration, his eyes glowing with enthusiasm, his pale cheek flushed with exultation, and ex-hausting himself with efforts to excel, which the plaudits at every pause of his performance were appreciated. It was no longer the village flageolet which he played, but the more scientific flute, and his command of the instrument was such as to amaze and delight his enlightened and critical audience to a pitch of intense admiration, such as had rarely been excited in a Paris theatre.

And Ellen scarcely listened to the melody—her thoughts were fixed on the artist, and she shuddered: he was so much changed, so thin, so worn, so shadow-like: no longer the robust youth he once was—all smiles and careless gaiety; study and anxiety had told upon him, and the brilliancy of life and youth had faded from his face—for ever.

As Ellen leant over the box, gazing tearfully at her brother, in spite of Lady Lucy's endeavours to prevent her, a man in the pit, very near where she was placed, was looking at her so intently, that he appeared as regardless as herself of all the house beside. He was one of a group of persons of the middle class, who had taken their stations for some time, and had been applauding vehemently; none of them but himself, however, allowed their attention to be divided, for all were listening with eager delight.

The gazer turned his glance rapidly from Ellen to her brother, and back again in perplexed astonishment, and passed his hand across his eyes once or twice, as if mistaking his sight. It was, however, no fairy vision, and Arthur Connor, indeed, recognized his friends, both of whom were unconscious that he looked upon them. Nor was it strange that they should be so, for Arthur could himself scarcely believe the scene was real in which circumstances had placed him at that moment.

When he wrote to Ellen, mentioning his intention of accepting the proposal of the Popen Railroad Company, he little imagined to what his doing so would lead. Several English commercial men had joined themselves with French persons in the undertaking, and by them were the English and Irish workmen employed.

Arthur had not only shown such industry in the occupation assigned him, but so much intelligence, as to attract the attention of those in power, and step by step he had risen to the appointment of English Secretary to a portion of the establishment which required such a functionary. He found himself, therefore, in a very superior position to any he could have hoped for, and more than ever was he proud of the little learning which had made so great an effect on his humble friends and employers in Derbyshire.

He was entirely ignorant of Ellen's departure from the Lees, although he had been informed of that of Edward, and of the career he was likely to pursue; as, however, no tidings of either reached him, he was in total ignorance of their destiny, and was pleasing his mind with the hope of an answer to a letter he had dispatched to Ellen herself a few days previous to his beholding her in the theatre. In that letter he had told his advancement, and had claimed the fulfilment of a sort of tacit promise which had passed between them, and, in all the gaiety of an excited imagination, had cheerfully agreed to accompany a party of his friends to hear the great attraction of the hour, having obtained a day's holiday on occasion of a public fete.

His earnest gaze, though unmarked by its object, was intercepted by Sir Lionel, who stood by the side of Ellen, watching with undefined feelings the strong emotion she betrayed. He had not heard her exclamation, when Edward appeared, and he was at a loss to comprehend what could cause her to be so deeply affected.

"The music moves you, Miss St. Clair," he at length remarked. "Signor Eduardo is indeed a potent magician, he seems to have be-

wildered more than one person in the house. Yonder compatriot of yours, for he cannot be a Frenchman by his countenance, seems to be almost beside himself. Do look at his strange gestures—it is quite amusing. The Signor's strain is at an end.

Instinctively Ellen turned in the direction he pointed, and her glance met that of Arthur—she started, pressed one hand violently on the arm of Sir Lionel, and covering her face with the other, burst into tears, and sunk back into her seat.

Lady Lucy, who all this time feared an exposure, now interferred, and professing to feel unwell, and vowing that the heat had overcome her young friend, rose to leave the theatre, dispatching d'Orfeuille for her carriage, into which Ellen was hurried without being able to address Mr Ashe, who had left them the moment Edward's triumphant scene was concluded.

Sir Lionel and the Count returned to the theatre, and were making their way to their box, when their progress was arrested by a man who, placing himself before Sir Lionel, uttered an exclamation in English which made him start.

"Where have you carried her—villain that you are!"—cried the voice of Arthur Connor; who, his eyes flashing, and his cheek flushed with anger, arrested his progress. "I demand her, in the name of her mother—and I will be answered."

"What does the madman mean?" said Sir Lionel, as he attempted to pass on—"who are you asking about?"

"I ask for Ellen Swain—for my affianced bride—for her I love better than my existence, cried Arthur—"her whom you have basely seduced from her friends, and would now conceal from me."

Sir Lionel stopped, astonished, yet unable to resist affording his attention to this strange appeal.

"You are under some delusion, young man," said he, "or are intoxicated: stand out of my way, and go about your business."

"My business is not to be postponed," said Arthur fiercely; "tell me at once where Ellen is or—"

"Enough," cried Sir Lionel; who, observing a crowd collecting round, was anxious to put an end to the scene—"take my card and come to me for an explanation to-morrow. You have mentioned a name which I respect, otherwise I would treat your drunken ravings as they deserve."

Sir Lionel returned home in a state of great perturbation, but far more so were the feelings which agitated the young flute player, when an hour after he had returned to his hotel, and had thrown himself exhausted on a sofa, a letter was handed to him which contained these words.

"Did you consent to your sister's dishonour—or are you a man to revenge it? if so admit me instantly." Arthur Connor.

Edward started up in amazement. "Who brought this billet?" he enquired.

"The person is below," was the answer.

"Let him be instantly admitted," cried Edward, and in a few moments Arthur stood before him. His first movement was to hurry forward to meet his old acquaintance, but he stopped as he observed the somewhat stern character of the young Irishman's expression. "Connor," he said, "what does your letter mean? do you know of any danger to my sister? explain at once?"

In hurried and almost incoherent accents Arthur described having seen Ellen at the theatre in company with Sir Lionel Vane of their retiring together, of his interview, and subsequent appointment for the morrow.

"You tell me a strange tale," said Edward, much agitated; "it is now more than a year since I heard from home: the silence of Ellen has distressed me, but I imagined her occupations and want of habit of writing were the cause. Mr. Ashe, too, has been so long absent from his family that he cannot be acquainted with their conduct. Sir Lionel is his nephew:—I saw him but to day. Can it indeed be Ellen that you have seen?—was not his mother in the box?"

"I saw," said Arthur, endeavouring to collect his ideas, "no female but Ellen: there were several men in her company, but it was on Sir Lionel that she leaned when she went away. I saw him stoop over her and take her hand. I could not be mistaken."

"I will go with you to this rendezvous, Arthur," said Edward; "my benefactor Mr. Ashe, left Paris only half an hour since, or he might have advised us in this business. Can it be that his nephew is so unworthy of him—his countenance, so belied him—but my sister, Ellen, Arthur, you have much to answer for if you wrong her—as I am convinced you do."

The two young men spent the remaining hours of the night in vain endeavours to fathom the mystery of Ellen's appearance. Arthur became more cool, and listened with greater calmness to his friend's suggestions that, after all, he might have been deceived by a fancied resemblance: and yet Sir Lionel having acknowledged that he knew the name of Ellen Swain perplexed them again.

"He said, however, it is true," mused Arthur, "that he held it in respect."

The next morning as early as they conceived it likely that they should be admitted, they took their way to the hotel where Lady Lucy resided. They were immediately ushered into a chamber, where they were joined by Sir Lionel, who started at the sight of Edward.

"I did not expect to see you, Signor," said he, "so early—may I request your indulgence while I have some conference in another room with the person admitted with you?"

"Sir Lionel," said Edward, "you are mistaken, our business is the same: this person asserts that my sister, Ellen Swain, was your