

Second Cousin Sarah

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"ANNE JUDGE, SPINSTER," "LITTLE KATE KIRBY,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was the old position—and yet with a grave difference. It was the old line of argument cropping up afresh in Sarah Eastbell's mind, with no Reuben Culwick at hand to laugh down her logic—with Reuben Culwick's power to laugh it down, perhaps, wonderfully diminished. John had told of Reuben going to find Mary Holland at Worcester. Lucy had predicted evil would come of it, and Sarah was wretched.

She must give him up—she must not remain that weight upon his life, that clog upon his industry, which she had always thought she was, when her love was not bewildering her too much. Reuben loved her, she hoped still—she did not put faith in those strange suspicions of Lucy Jennings—but Lucy was right in one thing; that she, Sarah Eastbell, could not add to the happiness of Reuben Culwick's life. She could only add to the expense!—she could only keep him poor. If she stood apart now, perhaps he would marry Mary Holland, and be master of his father's house again, just as he father had wished from the first. She had no right to bind him to his long engagement, to shackle his energies, to keep him from "bettering" himself—now that she felt herself as poor—morally, if not legally as poor—as when he came in search of her to Potter's Court.

It was a very quiet morning at one of those strange Sunday services; those who came to pray were not disturbed by those who came to scoff; but the evening was boisterous and stormy, and made up for it.

Lucy Jennings read the signs of it in the noisy crowd about the door, and compressed her lips and held her breath at the strong language which echoed from the street as she and Sarah approached, under the escort of two policemen, who were waiting for them.

"You are trembling—you are afraid," said Lucy Jennings to her companion; "will you turn back now?"

"Why?"

"There will be but little religion there to-night," said Lucy, "and you are not a strong woman."

"I was not thinking of the crowd—or the service," answered Sarah.

"Of what then?" was the sharp inquiry.

"Of all I shall say to Reuben presently. It's very wrong, I know, Lucy, but you must not blame me for thinking of him so much. I can't help it," she said plaintively.

They passed under the arch, where the service commenced, and was interrupted—where the old uproar went on, and the police were tolerably busy for an hour and a half. The service came to an end; the stormy elements subsided; men, women and children went their various ways, and Lucy Jennings and Sarah Eastbell came out together, and confronted Reuben Culwick, who was waiting for them.

"You have come back then!" cried Sarah in her first delight at seeing him, in her new forgetfulness of all that she had resolved upon.

"Yes—it was no use stopping longer in Worcester, Sarah. Well, Lucy?"

"Well," answered Lucy in her old short tones.

"I congratulate you on your sermon, but I wish the surroundings had been more orthodox, and the congregation less quarrelsome; for some of these days—"

Lucy was gone. She had suddenly "doubled," and disappeared down one of the dark turnings, and Sarah and Reuben were left looking at each other.

Sarah Eastbell took his arm and sighed. This might be for the last time that they would ever walk together thus, who could tell? She had made up her mind now, and the sooner the truth was told him the better. He gave her the opportunity to speak at once, and her impulsiveness leaped toward it, indiscreetly, desperately.

"I saw Miss Holland this morning—I gave her the will—and you are as poor as old Job, girl!" he said.

"Yes, Reuben; I have been waiting for this poverty to tell you that you must not share it with me."

"Indeed!" was his quiet answer.

"That you and I are not fit for each other. Oh, Reuben," she cried, "I am quite certain of it now!"

"Because Lucy Jennings—charming Lucy!—has been at her old work, reckoning after her old style, fashioning out human lives after her own purposeless way, choosing for others a path ahead that no human being out of Bedlam could follow, doing everything for the best and for one's good, but scattering dust and ashes right and left like a violent Vesuvius. Come, is not Lucy Jennings at the bottom of the resolution?"

"I have been thinking of this for weeks. I have been seeing the necessity for it—"

"Ay, through Lucy's spectacles."

"You would lose money by coming to me," said Sarah mournfully.

"Nonsense! I have begun to save money again."

"Ah, Reuben, let us understand each other at last; don't ask me to say anything, do anything, but end this unnatural position between us. I am unhappy."

"Because of this engagement?"

"Yes."

"You are afraid of poverty with me?"

"I am afraid of making you poorer than you are—of keeping you poorer all your life," said Sarah.

"If this is to be our last meeting, or our last parting, Sarah," he said quickly. "let it be marked by no harsh reminiscence. We are going to say good-by. We have discovered that housekeeping expenses will shipwreck us; that I shall grow in time a big brute, to whom no second-cousin's devotion will bring comfort. But we need not quarrel over the discovery. We can part friends?"

"Yes," answered Sarah, "the best of friends."

There was something in his manner that she hardly fathomed. She had been more prepared for an angry outburst than for this easy-going style of acquiescence.

"It is hardly justice," he continued, "for you, who would have married a poor man, will not let me marry a poor woman in my turn. You want all the self-sacrifice on one side, Sarah; and even my

good luck with my pen is turned into a weapon against me. But," he added, "we will not quarrel. Never an angry word between these two blundering relatives, who do not know their own minds. We will spare each other between this and the York road. We will wait till Miss Holland gives us her opinion on the matter."

"Miss Holland!" cried Sarah Eastbell. "What do you mean?"

"Miss Holland is in the York Road apartments. She came from Worcester with me this afternoon."

"With you! You went to escort her then?"

"No. I went to see her, to tell her the news of her prosperity, and to offer her my congratulations, after which I said good morning."

"Well?" said Sarah, almost sharply now.

"Well, an hour or two afterward she turned up at the railway station, and in common politeness I could but offer her my escort back to town. She was very anxious to see you, she said."

"Ah! she said so," answered her second-cousin. There was no further argument after the introduction of Mary Holland's name into the conversation. The harmony of their last evening together was effectually settled after that. Better to have ended all in a storm of words and tears than in the grace and unnatural silence which followed. Sarah had no idea that she was a jealous woman until then, for Lucy had not made her jealous last night—only roused in her a feeling of intense indignation at the suspicions which she had sown broadcast. But for Reuben Culwick to speak of Mary Holland in this off-hand way was a very different matter; and her heart sank like a stone and refused to stir any more with hope or pleasure, or even surprise.

When they were in the York road Reuben said:

"She is not in good spirits, but I hope Tots has been a companion for her while we have been away."

"Is the child with her?"

"To be sure," said Reuben; "is not Tots—but there, Mary will explain for herself."

"Mary!" echoed Sarah Eastbell.

"They went upstairs into the front room on the first floor, where sat by the fire-side the young woman whom we have known by the name of Mary Holland. Tots was in her lap, with her child's arms round her neck, and her little head soothed upon a mother's bosom for the first time in her childish recollections."

"It is her child then!" said Sarah in a low whisper.

"Yes, to be sure," answered Reuben carelessly.

"I am in a dream," murmured Sarah.

"But you are very close to the waking," added her cousin Reuben.

CHAPTER XXIX.

There was another inmate of the room which Reuben and his cousin had entered. Lucy Jennings was standing on the hearth rug with her hands clasped together, and her grave white face turned toward mother and child. She had reached home before them, having a better knowledge of the shortest cut to York Road than Reuben had.

Mary looked round as the cousins came in together, and a sad smile flickered on a face grown careworn with anxiety. She did not raise her head from that of her child as Reuben and Sarah advanced, and Reuben said:

"Mrs. Peterson, I have brought an old friend to shake hands with you—to express her regrets for all that past distrust which she has had, as well as I."

Sarah had only heard the first two words.

"Mrs. Peterson!" she exclaimed.

"Then you—"

"I was Edward Peterson's wife," she added wearily and sadly—"yes."

"But not in the plot against you, Sarah," said Reuben; "fighting for you in the first instance—writing to me to come to the rescue—kept forever in doubt concerning you—held down at last to silence by the awful threat of her child's death—believing in your safety through it all, and striving once more for you and against her husband when she feared his treachery had deceived her."

"And he was true to his word," Mary added with a sigh, "for the first time in his life. It is a long story; spare me for a few days the history of a school girl's secret marriage, a bitter repentance, a husband's desertion, a long up-hill fight to forget a past that had become terrible and full of humiliation. I did not know then that Bessie lived, and was one link of love that held me to my old life. I have come to London for a few words of explanation, Sarah; they are made at a sad time," Mary said, "but I could not rest, after Reuben's visit to me—not even for an hour after my husband's death."

"Edward Peterson is dead!" exclaimed Sarah Eastbell.

She was surprised—she hardly knew why, but she was sorry for his death. He had plotted against her—he would have killed her rather than let her escape without a ransom—but she did not begrudge him his life. And it left Mary a young and pretty widow, too—but what had that to do with it?"

"He died within an hour of your cousin's visit this morning," said Mary.

"And you are here," replied Sarah wonderingly.

"Ah! you cannot understand that," said Mary, "you who will love your husband all your life. But my love—was crushed out quickly, and only my duty took me to his bedside—my regret for the last mistake which brought about his death, and his last act of vengeance."

"His last act of vengeance!" repeated Sarah.

"Half an hour after Mr. Culwick had left me, my husband changed suddenly; he wholly realized, and for the first time, that there was no hope for him in this world, and—what did he do?" she asked with a shudder.

"He should have asked pardon of you for blighting your life," said Sarah.

"He should have sought pardon of his God," added Lucy Jennings.

"He tore the last will of Simon Culwick into a hundred pieces, lest I should claim my right to riches by it," answered

ed Mary; "he cursed me, and left me poor."

"But—"

"But I have all the fragments," added Mary, opening a purse heaped to the clasp with small pieces of paper; "see—there they are."

Sarah glanced at them, but did not speak.

"It would be a specimen of patchwork that the law would hardly acknowledge," said the widow, "but you would not dispute the will, Sarah, if I, by patient study and great care, render this testament complete again?"

"No," answered Sarah Eastbell.

"In my husband's lifetime I dared not make him rich; and now, in memory of much kindness, of old trust—of new confidence, may I say?—I have the courage to remain poor."

She held the open purse over the fire, and the fragments fell from it into the red coals. Reuben and Sarah started forward to arrest her hand, but it was too late.

"You should not have done this, Mary," cried Reuben.

"It was not a just will," answered the widow; "I told your father so when he placed it in my hands, although I did not tell him that never in all my life should I avail myself of his munificence."

"He had wronged your father in some manner which we cannot even guess at—but which he owned himself. You told me that," said Reuben.

"He was strange that day. It might have been the raving of a madman."

"As that," said Lucy, pointing to the fire, "was the act of a madwoman."

"I think not," answered Mary confidently; "it is an act of justice to the man entitled to his father's money, and who will marry this brave young lady in possession."

"She has given me up," said Reuben dryly; but Mary turned from one to another and read no doubt or distress on either face. Here were two lives in the sunshine at last.

"I believe it was always Simon Culwick's wish that Reuben should have this money," continued Mary; "he did not know of my marriage, and I dared not tell him for my home's sake, and so we went on from one complication to another. There were only two wills; the first left all to his sister, the second to me—and the second I could not, and did not care to prove. The answer to the riddle came round in the way I thought it might do, if I were watchful and reserved—for I knew in what high estimation Sarah Eastbell held her cousin, and how she had made up her mind to give an obstinate man his rights. She and I together planned more ways than one—she very artless, I very artful perhaps—but the best and simplest and happiest way has come without our plotting."

"But you?" said Sarah and Reuben almost together.

"You two are not likely to forget me, or my little daughter here—to shut me from your friendship—to help me in the world, should I want help."

"Help!" echoed Reuben; "why, it is all yours."

"You can't prove that," said Mary emphatically, "and I would prefer to be dependent on your bounty. I will not be too proud to ask for a pension, when my little girl grows up and tires of her mother."

"The future, for you and Tots, you will leave to Sarah and me," said Reuben; "you will trust in those whom you have trusted so much already."

"As they will trust in me now," said the unselfish woman, holding out her hands to them.

It is a fair picture on which the curtain is rung down—on perfect confidence, and true affection and prosperity—on life opening out before these three with no shadows on the scenes beyond. Reuben and Sarah will live happily forever afterward—as young couples always should in books—and Mary and her daughter will be their faithful friends and loving companions to the end of life.

In the red glow of the sunset of our story, stand poor Lucy Jennings—grave and stony as the Libyan sphinx—commenting but little upon the happiness about her, and yet feeling that it reaches to her heart, and makes her more like other women.

Reuben's brother-in-law, one Thomas Eastbell, will not visit Worcestershire again, and Reuben's wife will not learn for years of his disappearance in the Australian bush—where we can afford to let the last of our villains hide himself.

In the bright early morning, gazing from the window of her room at the fair landscape beyond, with the silvery laughter of little children ringing upward from the lawn, and with her husband's arm linked within her own, Second-cousin Sarah will talk no longer of Sedge Hill being an unlucky house.

(The end.)

Out Of His Youth.

There is a story of a man of 70 who, when he was asked if his father lived to be an old man, replied that his father was upstairs putting his grandfather to bed. There is another setting of this old story—old enough to be new—which is told by the New York Times as coming from a Southern Senator, who was explaining how healthy his part of the State is.

A mountaineer, 92 years old, and his wife of 90 were returning from the funeral of their eldest child, who had died at the age of 71.

As they discussed their loss in deep grief, the wife said:

"I always told you, John, that we should never raise that child."

Teachers Must Be.

In Siberia the salaries allowed teachers are so small that in order to obtain food and shelter they are compelled to humiliate themselves by begging. This is only another way, however, of getting the public to pay the cost of keeping school. It is in the power of the government to remedy this, but in Russia the necessity for the diffusion of general intelligence has not as yet impressed itself upon the Czar.

Expeditions.

She—When I rang you up at the club to-day it didn't take any time for the one who attends the telephone to get you.

He—Well, you told him you were my wife, didn't you?

She—No, I told him I was not your wife.—New York Herald.

CONFESSION.

When I was young I made a vow
To keep youth in my heart as long
As there were birds upon the bough
To gladden me with song;

To learn what lessons Life might give,
To do my duty as I saw,
To love my friends, to laugh, and live
Not holding Death in awe.

So all my lyrics sing of joy,
And shall until my lips are mute;
In old age happy as the boy
To whom God gave the lute.
—Century.

Ending the Story

VINTON sat in the cozy back parlor waiting the proverbial "few minutes" Margaret Gorton invariably allotted to the completion of her opera toilet.

He was quite alone in the room, and by the way of whiling away the time he took a magazine from the table and was deftly slitting the leaves, when he was aware of quite a commotion at the top of the hall stairway. Predominant in it was a tearful, childish voice proclaiming stoutly, "He wants to see me; I will go down."

The disturbance subsided when a quiet voice said, "Very well, little naughty girl, but only for a few minutes."

There was a patter of little feet on the stairs, the portieres were drawn apart, and Eleanor Gorton entered the room with as much dignity as the handicap of her 5 years and a recent strenuous encounter admitted.

"Evening," she said, with an odd, jerky little bow.

"Hello, Eleanor," Vinton called, and as he saw her port, "O, I beg pardon. Really, I'm very stupid. Let's try again. Good evening, Miss Toodles."

Instantly her face, lighted and her dignity vanished. She scampered across the room and settled herself comfortably in his lap.

"Not the one about the birds," she said, tentatively.

"Oh, so that's your game," Vinton laughed. "Well, then, perhaps you'd like the one about the squirrel thief."

She shook her head.

"Tommy Tull and the grasshopper," he suggested.

Again she demurred. "A new one," she said, with an authoritative nod of her head.

"Dear, dear," said he in mock perplexity. "Suppose I haven't any?"

"A new one," she persisted.

"Very well, but if you go to sleep I'll never tell you another, Miss Toodles."

With this stereotyped preface she knew her point was carried, and she sighed contentedly.

"Once," began Vinton, "there was a princess—"

"Ah-hah!" said Toodles, by way of approval.

"She lived in a big house—"

"Big as this?" said she.

"Yes," said he, "just about as big. Very much like this, indeed. She was a very pretty princess—hair like the night and eyes like the stars. The prettiest princess in all the world."

"Course," said Toodles, who knew how such stories should go.

"And all the princes for miles around came to see her and brought her presents."

"What kind of presents?" demanded Toodles, who insisted on detail.

"O, candy in big boxes and flowers and little bull terriers with funny tails and little stick-up ears."

"Like Flipper?"

"Yes, like Flipper. And some of the princes were very rich and some were not. In fact, between you and me, Toodles, one of them was poorer than a church mouse. But, you see, he fell in love with the princess like all the rest of them."

"And married her?" said she breathlessly.

"Don't rush the story, Toodles, there's lots in between."

"O," she said, apologetically.

He did not know Margaret had come downstairs and was standing behind the portieres. He looked thoughtfully into the fire for several moments and then, as Toodles twisted impatiently, he continued:

"Now, this prince, who was poor, wanted to give the princess a present—no flowers, nor candy, nor a bull terrier with stick-up ears. So he hunted high and low until he found a diamond that sparkled like the princess' eyes when she laughed, and he had it set in a ring—and then he couldn't find courage to give it to the princess. So day after day he carried it round in his pocket."

"Why?" asked Toodles.

"Because, if she wore the ring it meant that she would marry him."

"Didn't he want her to?"

"Yes, for his sake, but not for hers. You see, Toodles, he was very poor."

"Wasn't he rich?"

"Yes, but—"

"Bimeby he gave her the ring," said Toodles, fishing for a happy ending.

"Rh?" said Vinton. "O, no, Toodles. He married her, anyway," she said flatly.

"No, dear, he didn't marry her. One of the rich princes—"

"I want the poor prince with the ring to marry her," she persisted.

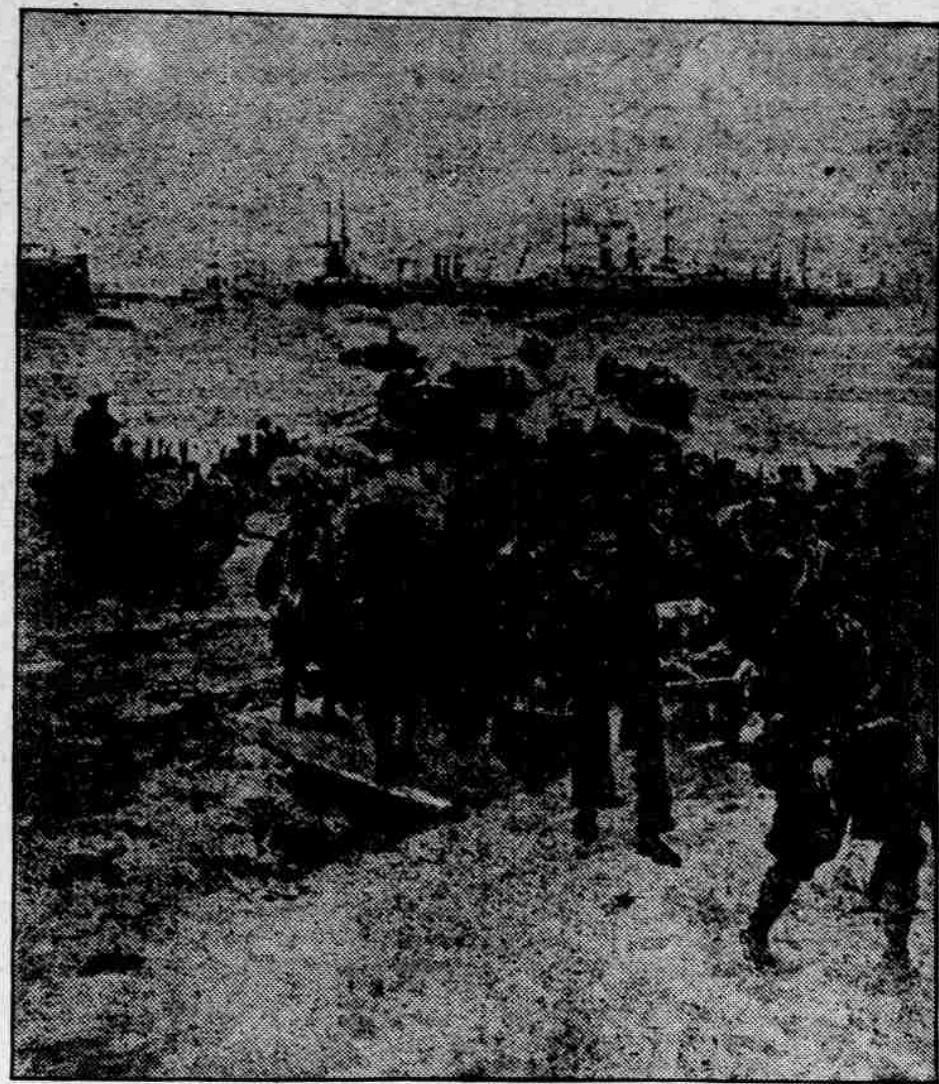
"That was impossible, Toodles. You see—"

"I—I want her to marry him," and Miss Toodles suddenly burst into tears.

"Great Scott, Toodles," said Vinton, "you mustn't do that, you know. See here—"

Some one came from behind the portieres and lifted the child from his knees. He sprang to his feet embarrassed.

JAP TROOPS LANDING.



"I want her to marry the poor prince," wailed Toodles.

"There, dearie, don't cry any more," said Margaret. "I heard the story, and she did marry him."

"To satisfy Toodles," said Vinton.

"To satisfy herself," she said, burying her flushed face in Toodles' dress.

—Indianapolis Sun.

PERFUME AFFECTS MARRIAGE.

Theory of a Famous German Doctor—Scents to Avoid.

At a time when so many women, young and attractive, are left lonely, and deploring the fact that the men of the day are not matrimonially inclined, it may not be amiss to mention one of the causes for this celibacy as assumed by a learned professor from that country whence comes so much light and learning.

Professor Jaeger, that famous German hygienic prophet, informs us that as long ago as the eighteenth century it was discovered that the scent of musk had been known to have dire effects, being particularly disliked by men, and that, coming from one beloved, it had even been proved to change affection into aversion.

He quotes a case in which two passionate lovers had actually been eternally separated as a consequence of a little musk on the lady's handkerchief.

It is a matter of regret that this subject should not have come before the public before, for the heart saddens when it considers the thousands of maidens doomed all for the want of a little guidance in the choice of what was once known as "toilet water."

Dr. Jaeger cites another case also which may throw a new and astonishing light on the persistent demands of the day for judicial separation between husbands and wives, and the increasing growth of divorce cases.

A young German couple loved one another in that rapturous style which makes "the honeymoon and how not to conduct it" an object lesson for all Europe.

Suddenly the absorbing devotion of Carl for his Dorothea cooled (and this before even pessimists would allow the possibility), changed to indifference, and ended in evident repulsion. Neither could understand the cause.

Carl would gaze at Dorothea, and wonder why her flaxen hair no longer looked to him gold, why her pale blue eyes no longer seemed to resemble violets, and why her plump, short figure appeared no more to be the model for a pocket Venus.

Dorothea wept her pretty eyes out, and tried with various feminine arts to win back the errant fancy of her lord and master. The traces of crying she hid with a new face powder, and put on her smartest frock. Notwithstanding, the bridegroom's repulsion was growing to violent hatred, when accident revealed the cause.

Going to a wardrobe in which his wife kept musk, the sensitive bridegroom fainted away. A doctor was called, and it was found that Dorothea had been using perfume in which musk predominated, and that this was also largely used in the face powder. Toilet accessories were given up, and Carl and Dorothea were once more the loving couple of old. On such small things does the happiness of a lifetime hang.

The reason given by Dr. Jaeger for the peculiar dislike most men have to musk is that only vegetable scents, such as rose, violet, lily, etc., are agreeable to the masculine mind; while others, such as ambergris, civet, castor, known as animal perfumes, are particularly repugnant.

No odor is so potent as musk, and its power of penetration is such that polished metal inclosed with it in a box, yet not even touching it, will become strongly impregnated, while a few drops of musk placed on a sensitive scale will in a year or so fill a large hall.

While considering the question of perfume, it may be as well to remind inventors that there is a fortune waiting for him who can reproduce the refreshing briny odor of the sea, the grateful and healing fragrance of the

pine woods, or that peculiarly delightful sweet breath which Mother Earth yields after warm rain.—London Express.

MONEY REWARDS OF SINGERS.

Not Overlarge When Expenses and Preparations Are Considered.

After years of hard, uphill struggle and study a singer may be recognized as successful. What is her reward?

The season is short, a few weeks of fall festivities, a week or two of Christmas concerts, and a few weeks of spring festivals, with a sprinkling of individual concerts between times, make up the list of her opportunities.

When she obtains an engagement there is much more preparation necessary than rubbing up her knowledge of the work to be given, and singing the rehearsal—often public—with the local chorus the day or the afternoon before the performance. She must watch for draughts; a cold would disable her completely. She must be constantly careful of the atmosphere she breathes.

She receives in compensation two, three or four thousand dollars, from which must be deducted many expenses. There are probably not a dozen American concert and oratorio singers who clear ten thousand dollars a year from singing, including one thousand or fifteen hundred dollars they receive from churches or synagogues. And the study and work they did at the start was only a beginning of study and work they must do all their life.

Of the rest, a few make a considerable amount of money by being invited to wealthy private houses, singing for people there and receiving checks the next day for their kindness. The vast majority of the remainder exist on twenty-five and fifty dollar concert work, or take to teaching, or drift into comic opera, or