

THE THING THAT WAS BEST.

They Concluded It Was Above Even Music or Painting.

By VIRGINIA LEILA WENTZ.
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He had not come to the little seaside place for idleness, although it was true, because he was tired and overworked, he had come for rest and recuperation. He had brought with him canvases and colors, and by permission of his landlady he was allowed to improvise a tiny studio in a building outside the boarding house.

She, too, because she was nervous and restless, had come for change and quiet. Like him, also, because she loved her art, the summer could not be enjoyed to the exclusion of that art. Hers was music. She had an exquisite voice and was studying for the operatic stage. The landlady considered them both an addition to her little seaside place.

To be a really great painter was the man's highest aim. To be a singer, in the same sense, was hers. And there was one other point of similarity—for the furtherance of their respective arts love and marriage had been quite laid by.

On the veranda of the cottage the ladies who knitted and embroidered called him hard names because he chose rather to be alone in the boat or strolling on the sands or cooped up in his six foot studio than to mingle with them. But this was before she came. The night that she arrived he did an unusual thing. He took a rocker on the veranda, and he kept it in the shade of the vines, whence he could see her face. Often, after that, he watched her furtively as he heard her



SHE TOOK OFF A STRIP OF HER PETTICOAT TO BIND IT.

practicing. Yet he evinced no interest in her voice.

His omission and his commission both were observed by her, and both were resented. If she was beautiful at all, she thought, she was a musician first and a beauty afterward. It gave her no pleasure to be admired for her appearance by one who had no appreciation of the music.

One day one of the ladies who knitted told her that Max Burgess had paid her a compliment.

"Yes?" asked Judith, with a delicate uplifting of her eyebrows. But it was with difficulty that she concealed her expectation.

The woman elicited her needle several times. "He said he would love to paint you as you looked when you sang," was her answer.

"Thanks!" returned Judith, flushing crimson and raising her dainty chin in the air. "I do not aspire to be an artist's model."

The next morning at breakfast Mr. Burgess inquired if she would care to come to his studio and look at some canvases. Now, if Max Burgess took little interest in her art, she, in turn, took as little in his. She knew nothing of pictures. Nevertheless she went.

"You say nothing," he observed, with a strange, slow smile after she had made a survey of his work.

"I don't know good pictures from bad," answered she. "To me, personally, they are equally unappealing."

"Not seriously?" The smile had disappeared.

"Oh, seriously. You see," with a provokingly exquisite gesture of her slender hand, "it's much the same as your indifference to music. Fancy your liking music, for example, simply for its visible effect on a singer's face?" She was implacably growing indignant.

He felt the justness of her rebuke, but the artist in him was awake.

"Ah, it is as a singer that I wish to paint you!" he cried. "You know, people forgive artists for personalities. The other day, when you were singing that thing that made your color play and your eyes gleam, I veritably tingled for my brushes. Would you perhaps—some time?"

"Decidedly not," answered she. "I

could not dream of so degrading my art. You would like me to sing, to let my soul utter itself in my voice—so that you might get the effect on canvases?" There was no mistaking the ringing scorn in her voice.

"Indeed, I am very sorry, if I have offended you," said he.

After he had seen her to the house he came back into the studio. One after another, slowly and discontentedly, he examined his pictures. One after another he laid them down with a sense of disappointment and undefined longing.

"I wonder?" he questioned vaguely, going to the window and looking toward the sea. "I wonder!"

But the sea rolled on and on, under the expanse of enigmatical sky, and gave him no answer.

One day, some weeks later, Judith was on the solitary little pier when Max Burgess came for his boat. That morning she had happened to hear him speaking to a servant. He was giving some orders about the packing of his effects. And now, as she stood on the hot sands, a reckless impulse came to her.

"Why are you leaving?" said she. "My work here doesn't get on very well. I'm falling back, somehow." His eyes were on the horizon.

"Would you still care about painting me?"

"Would I care?" His eyes were no longer on the horizon. It must have been that which made the blood fly to her cheeks.

"Well," said she, "if you ask me to row out with you in your boat we might talk it over."

So they rowed out and presently they were far, far from shore. He must have been looking at her hands instead of the land, or he would have seen that they were getting into a very heavy sea; that each moment the skies were growing darker. Spray wet Judith's dark hair and gleamed there just for an appreciable fraction of a second like milky agates in the bed of a black stream.

"Isn't it glorious?" cried she, with sudden joy.

His eyes questioned her keenly. She challenged, and then he understood.

With an effort he brought the boat around and pulled for safety. His thin jersey showed the lines of his strong, supple body. The muscles of his arms and chest rose superbly. Judith watched him, fascinated. Then the rotten oak cracked.

She tore off a strip of her petticoat to bind it and make it strong enough for work.

He put an oilskin about her. Her hair brushed his face. He kissed it furtively, but she detected him. Wilfully she drew a damp curl forth from under the edge of the oilskin where he had tucked it—and then she laughed at the look in his eyes.

"Attend to the boat!" cried she. And the oilskin was new—rich yellow; the hood was scarlet lined, her hair was like midnight, and her face was a flower. Yet he, the artist, the lover of color, must needs attend to the boat!

When they were safe at last, when he was helping her ashore, he looked at her with a protecting tenderness she had never imagined him capable of.

"Ah," cried she, "if only you cared for my art!" She looked on at him. His hand masterfully sought hers, then.

"But there's something better, sweetheart—there's something better than even music or painting. Have we found it, do you think?"

"I think," she admitted, reflectively and demurely, while a smile was running riot over her piquant face—"I think we've found the thing that is best."

The Sort of Table He Wanted.

The following conversation was overheard between a joiner and his customer a short time ago:

Joiner—Please, sir, I've brought the table you ordered me to make.

Customer—Well, put it down here, my man, and let's see what sort of job you've made of it.

The man set it down in the middle of the room, and the customer examined it with the air of a critic.

Customer—Why, my man, there is here a crack filled up with putty.

Joiner—Yes, sir. Well, sir, I know about that, but it won't be noticed when it sets hard.

Customer (coming across some more putty)—But here's some more, my man. What is the meaning of this?

Joiner—Well, sir, you see, a little bit of wood chipped off the corner, and I just put a little putty there to fill up. It won't do no harm, sir, when it's set hard.

Customer (finding some more putty patches)—Look here, my man, this won't do. Why, here's a big lump right in the middle of this leg. What can you say about that?

Joiner (scratching his head and trying hard to find some excuse by which to retrieve his honor)—Well, sir, that's no harm whatever, and the putty when it sets hard will be firmer and harder than the wood. So, you see, it will be all the better if you wait a bit, sir.

Customer (sarcastically)—Here, my good man, just take this table home and bring me one made of putty alto-

gether. I want a good strong one, and you can fill up the cracks with wood.—London Tit-Bits.

The Cent and Half Cent.

First coined in 1787 by the United States government, the federal one cent piece was antedated by copper cents struck by several states. Vermont before being admitted to the Union coined the first cents in the country in June, 1785. Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey also put the copper coins into circulation. Under the constitution the first coinage act, passed in 1792, authorized a cent of 264 grains. In 1793 it was reduced to 208 grains and in 1796 to 168 grains. The 168 grain "copper" remained unchanged, except in pattern, until 1857, passing through seven designs. Until 1857 half cents also were coined. In that year the half cent was abolished and a new cent was ordered, weighing only seventy-two grains and composed of 88 per cent of copper and 12 per cent of nickel. In 1864 the present bronze cent was authorized. This weighs forty-eight grains and is composed of 95 per cent copper and 5 per cent tin and zinc.—Argonaut.

A MONSTER WHALE.

One Way in Which It Resembled a Tiny Species of Fish.

One winter some years ago a large whale was killed near one of the Atlantic seaports. Its carcass was taken ashore, loaded on two flat cars and transported far inland to cities where a whale was a curiosity that people would pay to see. It was necessary, of course, that the exhibitions should be given in unheated halls, and as it was a cold winter the whale kept in a fairly good state of preservation for a considerable number of weeks before it became imperative to close the amusement season so far as that particular cetacean was concerned. While it was on exhibition in Chicago a merchant from a little town in southern Illinois, who happened to be in the city on business, went to see it. When he returned home he could talk of nothing else.

"You may think you've seen big fish," he said, "but unless you've come across a whale somewhere you haven't."

"How long was it, Jeff?" somebody asked him.

"It was mighty close to ninety feet and about fifteen feet thick. It was the biggest thing I ever saw out of the water that swims in the water."

"Well," said the village doctor, "you didn't expect to find it a smelt, did you?"

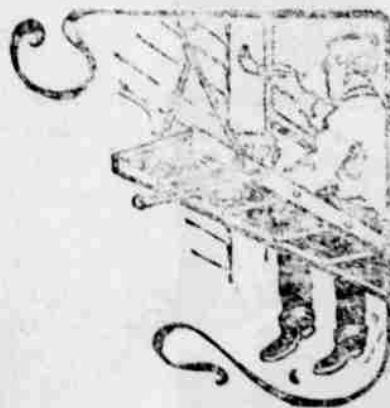
"No," he answered hesitatingly, "but it did, just a little"—Exchange.

FACE PATCHES.

They Became a Society Craze at One Time in England.

Plaster patches were introduced in England in the reign of Edward VI. by a foreign lady who in this manner ingeniously concealed a wen on her neck. They became such a craze and were carried to such exaggerated lengths that they were finally lampooned out of sight. The men, as well as the women, stuck themselves over with these beauty spots. No lady of fashion considered her toilet complete until she was equipped with her little box of patches cut in her favorite design. If one happened to come off in company she hurriedly replaced it with a fresh one from the box.

At length patching in England went so far that party spirit was symbolized by the position of the patches. A letter in the paper on June 2, 1711, tells of a visit to the Haymarket and the discovery by the writer of three classes of women in the boxes all differently patched. Upon inquiry he discovered that those who patched on the right side of the forehead were Whigs and those who favored the left were Tories, while those who patched indifferently on either side were a neutral party, whose faces had not yet declared themselves.—London Saturday Review.



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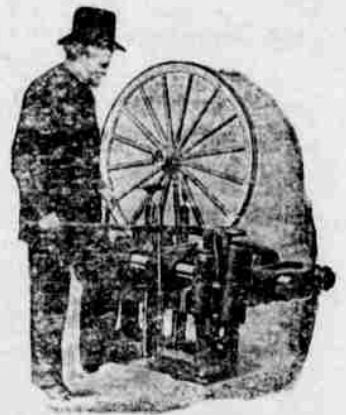
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