

***FRANCIS
HOPKINSON
SMITH***



***THE FORTUNES
OF OLIVER
HORN***

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The Fortunes of Oliver Horn

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CHAPTER I

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THE OLD HOUSE IN KENNEDY SQUARE

Kennedy Square, in the late fifties, was a place of birds and trees and flowers; of rude stone benches, sagging arbors smothered in vines, and cool dirt-paths bordered by sweet-smelling box. Giant magnolias filled the air with their fragrance, and climbing roses played hide and seek among the railings of the rotting fence. Along the shaded walks laughing boys and girls romped all day, with hoop and ball, attended by old black mammies in white aprons and gayly colored bandannas; while in the more secluded corners, sheltered by protecting shrubs, happy lovers sat and talked, tired wayfarers rested with hats off, and staid old gentlemen read by the hour, their noses in their books.

Outside of all this color, perfume, and old-time charm, outside the grass-line and the rickety wooden fence that framed them in, ran an uneven pavement splashed with cool shadows and stained with green mould. Here, in summer, the watermelon-man stopped his cart; and here, in winter, upon its broken bricks, old Moses unhooked his bucket of oysters and ceased for a moment his droning call.

On the shady side of the square, and half-hidden in ivy, was a Noah's Ark church, topped by a quaint belfry holding

a bell that had not rung for years, and faced by a clock-dial all weather-stains and cracks, around which travelled a single rusty hand. In its shadow to the right lay the home of the Archdeacon, a stately mansion with Corinthian columns reaching to the roof and surrounded by a spacious garden filled with damask roses and bushes of sweet syringa. To the left crouched a row of dingy houses built of brick, their iron balconies hung in flowering vines, the windows glistening with panes of wavy glass purpled by age.

On the sunny side of the square, opposite the church, were more houses, high and low; one all garden, filled with broken-nosed statues hiding behind still more magnolias, and another all veranda and honeysuckle, big rocking-chairs and swinging hammocks; and still others with porticos curtained by white jasmine or Virginia creeper.

Half-way down this stretch of sunshine—and what a lovely stretch it was—there had stood for years a venerable mansion with high chimneys, sloping roof, and quaint dormer-windows, shaded by a tall sycamore that spread its branches far across the street. Two white marble steps guarded by old-fashioned iron railings led up to the front door, which bore on its face a silver-plated knocker, inscribed in letters of black with the name Of its owner —"Richard Horn." All three, the door, the white marble steps, and the silver-plated knocker—not to forget the round silver knobs ornamenting the newel posts of the railings—were kept as bright as the rest of the family plate by that most loyal of servants, old Malachi, who daily soused the steps with soap and water, and then brought to a phenomenal polish the knocker, bell-pull, and knobs by

means of fuller's-earth, turpentine, hard breathing, and the vigorous use of a buckskin rag.

If this weazened-faced, bald-headed old darky, resplendent in white shirt-sleeves, green baize apron, and never-ceasing smile of welcome, happened to be engaged in this cleansing and polishing process—and it occurred every morning—and saw any friend of his master approaching, he would begin removing his pail and brushes and throwing wide the white door before the visitor reached the house, would there await his coming, bent double in profound salutation. Indeed, whenever Malachi had charge of the front steps he seldom stood upright, so constantly was he occupied—by reason of his master's large acquaintance—in either crooking his back in the beginning of a bow, or straightening it up in the ending of one.

To one and all inquiries for Mr. Horn his answer during the morning hours was invariably the same:

"Yes, sah, Marse Richard's in his li'l room wrastlin' wid his machine, I reckon. He's in dar now, sah—" this with another low bow, and then slowly recovering his perpendicular with eyes fixed on the retreating figure, so as to be sure there was no further need of his services, he would resume his work, drenching the steps again with soap-suds or rubbing away on the door-plate or door-pull, stopping every other moment to blow his breath on the polished surface.

When, however, someone asked for young Oliver, the inventor's only son, the reply was by no means so definite, although the smile was a trifle broader and the bow, if anything, a little more profound.

"Marse Oliver, did you say, sah? Dat's a difficult question, sah. Fo' Gawd I ain't seen him since breakfas'. You might look into Judge Ellicott's office if you is gwine downtown, whar dey do say he's studyin' law, an' if he ain't dar—an' I reckon he ain't—den you might drap in on Mister Crocker, whar Marse Oliver's paintin' dem pictures; an' if he ain't dar, den fo-sho he's wid some o' do young ladies, but which one de Lawd only knows. Marse Oliver's like the rabbit, sah—he don't leab no tracks," and Malachi would hold his sides in a chuckle of so suffocating a nature that it would have developed into apoplexy in a less wrinkled and emaciated person.

Inside of the front door of this venerable mansion ran a wide hall bare of everything but a solid mahogany hat-rack and table with glass mirror and heavy haircloth settee, over which, suspended from the ceiling, hung a curious eight-sided lantern, its wick replaced with a modern gas-burner. Above were the bedrooms, reached by a curved staircase guarded by spindling mahogany bannisters with slender hand-rail—a staircase so pure in style and of so distinguished an air that only maidens in gowns and slippers should have tripped down its steps, and only cavaliers in silk stockings and perukes have waited below for their hands.

Level with the bare hall, opened two highly polished mahogany doors, which led respectively into the drawing-room and library, their windows draped in red damask and their walls covered with family portraits. All about these rooms stood sofas studded with brass nails, big easy-chairs upholstered in damask, and small tables piled high with magazines and papers. Here and there, between the

windows, towered a bookcase crammed with well-bound volumes reaching clear to the ceiling. In the centre of each room was a broad mantel sheltering an open fireplace, and on cold days—and there were some pretty cold days about Kennedy Square—two roaring wood-fires dispensed comfort, the welcoming blaze of each reflected in the shining brass fire-irons and fenders.

Adjoining the library was the dining-room with its well-rubbed mahogany table, straight-backed chairs, and old sideboard laden with family silver, besides a much-coveted mahogany cellaret containing some of that very rare Madeira for which the host was famous. Here were more easy-chairs and more portraits—one of Major Horn, who fell at Yorktown, in cocked hat and epaulets, and two others in mob-caps and ruffles—both ancient grandmothers of long ago.

The "li'l room ob Marse Richard," to which in the morning Malachi directed all his master's visitors, was in an old-fashioned one-story out-house, with a sloping roof, that nestled under the shade of a big tulip-tree in the back yard—a cool, damp, brick-paved old yard, shut in between high walls mantled with ivy and Virginia creeper and capped by rows of broken bottles sunk in mortar. This out-building had once served as servants' quarters, and it still had the open fireplace and broad hearth before which many a black mammy had toasted the toes of her pickaninnies, as well as the trap-door in the ceiling leading to the loft where they had slept. Two windows which peered out from under bushy eyebrows of tangled honeysuckle gave the only light; a

green-painted wooden door, which swung level with the moist bricks, the only entrance.

It was at this green-painted wooden door that you would have had to knock to find the man of all others about Kennedy Square most beloved, and the man of all others least understood—Richard Horn, the distinguished inventor.

Perhaps at the first rap he would have been too absorbed to hear you. He would have been bending over his carpenter-bench—his deep, thoughtful eyes fixed on a drawing spread out before him, the shavings pushed back to give him room, a pair of compasses held between his fingers. Or he might have been raking the coals of his forge—set up in the same fireplace that had warmed the toes of the pickaninnies, his long red calico working-gown, which clung about his spare body, tucked between his knees to keep it from the blaze. Or he might have been stirring a pot of glue—a wooden model in his hand—or hammering away on some bit of hot iron, the brown paper cap that hid his sparse gray locks pushed down over his broad forehead to protect it from the heat.

When, however, his ear had caught the tap of your knuckles and he had thrown wide the green door, what a welcome would have awaited you! How warm the grasp of his fine old hand; how cordial his greeting.

"Disturb me, my dear sir," he would have said in answer to your apologies, "that's what I was put in the world for. I love to be disturbed. Please do it every day. Come in! Come in! It's delightful to get hold of your hand."

If you were his friend, and most men who knew him were, he would have slipped his arm through your own, and

after a brief moment you would have found yourself poring over a detailed plan, his arm still in yours, while he showed you the outline of some pin, or lever, needed to perfect the most marvellous of all discoveries of modern times—his new galvanic motor.

If it were your first visit, and he had touched in you some sympathetic chord, he would have uncovered a nondescript combination of glass jars, horse-shoe magnets, and copper wires which lay in a curious shaped box beneath one of the windows, and in a voice trembling with emotion as he spoke, he would have explained to you the value of this or that lever, and its necessary relation to this new invention of his which was so soon to revolutionize the motive power of the world. Or he would perhaps have talked to you as he did to me, of his theories and beliefs and of what he felt sure the future would bring forth.

"The days of steam-power are already numbered. I may not live to see it, but you will. This new force is almost within my grasp. I know people laugh, but so they have always done. All inventors who have benefited mankind have first been received with ridicule. I can expect no better treatment. But I have no fear of the result. The steady destruction of our forests and the eating up of our coal-fields must throw us back on chemistry for our working power. There is only one solution of this problem—it lies in the employment of a force which this machine will compel to our uses. I have not perfected the apparatus yet, as you see, but it is only a question of time. To-morrow, perhaps, or next week, or next year—but it will surely come. See what Charles Bright and this Mr. Cyrus Field are accomplishing. If

it astonishes you to realize that we will soon talk to each other across the ocean, why should the supplanting of steam by a new energy seem so extraordinary? The problems which they have worked out along the lines of electricity, I am trying to work out along the lines of galvanism. Both will ultimately benefit the human race."

And while he talked you would have listened with your eyes and ears wide open, and your heart too, and believed every word he said, no matter how practical you might have been or how unwilling at first to be convinced.

On another day perhaps you might have chanced to knock at his door when some serious complication had vexed him—a day when the cogs and pulleys upon which he had depended for certain demonstration had become so tangled up in his busy brain that he had thoughts for nothing else. Then, had he pushed pack his green door to receive you, his greeting might have been as cordial and his welcome as hearty, but before long you would have found his eyes gazing into vacancy, or he would have stopped half-way in an answer to your question, his thoughts far away. Had you loved him you would then have closed the green door behind you and left him alone. Had you remained you would, perhaps, have seen him spring from his seat and pick up from his work-bench some unfinished fragment. This he would have plunged into the smouldering embers of his forge and, entirely forgetful of your presence, would have seized the handle of the bellows, his eyes intent on the blaze, his lips muttering broken sentences. At these moments, as he would peer into the curling smoke, one thin hand upraised, the long calico gown wrinkling about his

spare body, the paper cap on his head, he would have looked like some alchemist of old, or weird necromancer weaving a mystic spell. Sometimes, as you watched his face, with the glow of the coals lighting up his earnest eyes, there would have flashed across his troubled features, as heat lightning illumines a cloud, some sudden brightness from within followed by a quick smile of triumph. The rebellious fragment had been mastered. For the hundredth time the great motor was a success!

And yet, had this very pin or crank or cog, on which he had set such store, refused the next hour or day or week to do its work, no trace of his disappointment would have been found in his face or speech. His faith was always supreme; his belief in his ideals unshaken. If the pin or crank would not answer, the lever or pulley would. It was the "adjustment" that was at fault, not the principle. And so the dear old man would work on, week after week, only to abandon his results again, and with equal cheerfulness and enthusiasm to begin upon another appliance totally unlike any other he had tried before. "It was only a mile-stone," he would say; "every one that I pass brings me so much nearer the end."

If you had been only a stranger—some savant, for instance, who wanted a problem in mechanics solved, or a professor, blinded by the dazzling light of the almost daily discoveries of the time, in search of mental ammunition to fire back at curious students daily bombarding you with puzzling questions; or had you been a thrifty capitalist, holding back a first payment until an expert like Richard Horn had passed upon the merits of some new labor-saving

device of the day; had you been any one of these, and you might very easily have been, for such persons came almost daily to see him, the inventor would not only have listened to your wants, no matter how absorbed he might have been in his own work, but he would not have allowed you to leave him until he was sure that your mind was at rest.

Had you, however, been neither friend nor client, but some unbeliever fresh from the gossip of the Club, where many of the habitues not only laughed at the inventor's predictions for the future, but often lost their tempers in discussing his revolutionary ideas; or had you, in a spirit of temerity, entered his room armed with arguments for his overthrow, nothing that your good-breeding or the lack of it would have permitted you to have said could have ruffled his gentle spirit. With the tact of a man of wide experience among men, he would have turned the talk into another channel—music, perhaps, or some topic of the day—and all with such exquisite grace that you would have forgotten the subject you came to discuss until you found yourself outside the yard and half-way across Kennedy Square before realizing that the inventor had made no reply to your attacks.

But whoever you might have been, whether the friend of years, the anxious client, or the trifling unbeliever, and whatever the purpose of your visit, whether to shake his hand again for the very delight of touching it, to seek advice, or to combat his theories, you would have carried away the impression of a man whose like you had never met before—a man who spoke in a low, gentle voice, and yet, with an authority that compelled attention; enthusiastic

over the things he loved, silent over those that pained him; a scholar of wide learning, yet skilled in the use of tools that obeyed him as readily as nimble fingers do a hand; a philosopher eminently sane on most of the accepted theories of the day and yet equally insistent in his support of many of the supposed sophistries and so-called "fanaticisms of the hour"; an old-time aristocrat holding fast to the class distinctions of his ancestors and yet glorying in the dignity of personal labor; a patriot loyal to the traditions of his State and yet so opposed to the bondage of men and women that he had freed his own slaves the day his father's will was read; a cavalier reverencing a woman as sweetheart, wife, and mother, and yet longing for the time to come when she, too, could make a career, then denied her, coequal in its dignity with that of the man beside her.

A composite personality of strange contradictions; of pronounced accomplishments and yet of equally pronounced failures. And yet, withal, a man so gracious in speech, so courtly in bearing, so helpful in counsel, so rational, human, and lovable, that agree with him or not, as you pleased, his vision would have lingered with you for days.

When night came the inventor would rake the coals from the forge, and laying aside his paper cap and calico gown, close the green door of his shop, cross the brick pavement of the back yard, and ascend the stairs with the spindling bannisters to his dressing room. Here Malachi would have laid out the black swallow-tail coat with the high velvet collar, trousers to match, double-breasted waistcoat with gilt buttons, and fluffy cravat of white silk.

Then, while his master was dressing, the old servant would slip down-stairs and begin arranging the several rooms for the evening's guests—for there were always guests at night. The red damask curtains would be drawn close, the hearth swept clean, and fresh logs thrown on the andirons. The lamp in the library would be lighted, and his master's great easy-chair wheeled close to a low table piled high with papers and magazines, his big-eyed reading-glasses within reach of his hand. The paper would be unfolded, aired at the snapping blaze, and hung over the arm of the chair. These duties attended to, the old servant, with a last satisfied glance about the room, would betake himself to the foot of the stair-case, there to await his master's coming, glancing overhead at every sound, and ready to conduct him to his chair by the fire.

When Richard, his toilet completed, appeared at the top of the stairs, Malachi would stand until his master had reached the bottom step, wheel about, and, with head up, gravely and noiselessly precede him into the drawing-room—the only time he ever dared to walk before him—and with a wave of the hand and the air of a prince presenting one of his palaces, would say—"Yo' char's all ready, Marse Richard; bright fire burnin'." Adding, with a low, sweeping bow, now that the ceremony was over—"Hope yo're feelin' fine dis evenin', sah."

He had said it hundreds of times in the course of the year, but always with a salutation that was a special tribute, and always with the same low bow, as he gravely pulled out the chair, puffing up the back cushion, his wrinkled hands resting on it until Richard had taken his seat. Then, with

equal gravity, he would hand his master the evening paper and the big-bowed spectacles, and would stand gravely by until Richard had dismissed him with a gentle "Thank you, Malachi; that will do." And Malachi, with the serene, uplifted face as of one who had served in a temple, would tiptoe out to his pantry.

It had gone on for years—this waiting for Richard at the foot of the staircase. Malachi had never missed a night when his master was at home. It was not his duty—not a part of the established regime of the old house. No other family servant about Kennedy Square performed a like service for master or mistress. It was not even a custom of the times.

It was only one of "Malachi's ways," Richard would say, with a gentle smile quivering about his lips.

"I do dat 'cause it's Marse Richard—dat's all," Malachi would answer, drawing himself up with the dignity of a chamberlain serving a king, when someone had the audacity to question him—a liberty he always resented.

They had been boys together—these two. They had fished and hunted and robbed birds' nests and gone swimming with each other. They had fought for each other, and been whipped for each other many and many a time in the old plantation-days. Night after night in the years that followed they had sat by each other when one or the other was ill.

And now that each was an old man the mutual service was still continued.

"How are you getting on now, Malachi—better? Ah, that's good—" and the master's thin white hand would be laid on

the black wrinkled head with a soothing touch.

"Allus feels better, Marse Richard, when I kin git hold ob yo' han', sah—" Malachi would answer.

Not his slave, remember. Not so many pounds of human flesh and bone and brains condemned to his service for life; for Malachi was free to come and go and had been so privileged since the day the old Horn estate had been settled twenty years before, when Richard had given him his freedom with the other slaves that fell to his lot; not that kind of a servitor at all, but his comrade, his chum, his friend; the one man, black as he was, in all the world who in laying down his life for him would but have counted it as gain.

Just before tea Mrs. Horn, with a thin gossamer shawl about her shoulders, would come down from her bedroom above and join her husband. Then young Oliver himself would come bounding in, always a little late, but always with his face aglow and always bubbling over with laughter, until Malachi, now that the last member of the family was at home, would throw open the mahogany doors, and high tea would be served in the dining-room on the well-rubbed, unclothed mahogany table, the plates, forks, and saucers under Malachi's manipulations touching the polished wood as noiselessly as soap-bubbles.

Tea served and over, Malachi would light the candles in the big, cut-glass chandelier in the front parlor—the especial pride of the hostess, it having hung in her father's house in Virginia.

After this he would retire once more to his pantry, this time to make ready for some special function to follow; for

every evening at the Horn mansion had its separate festivity. On Mondays small whist-tables that unfolded or let down or evolved from half-moons into circles, their tops covered with green cloth, were pulled out or moved around so as to form the centres of cosey groups. Some extra sticks of hickory would be brought in and piled on the andirons, and the huge library-table, always covered with the magazines of the day—Littell's, Westminster, Blackwood's, and the Scientific Review, would be pushed back against the wall to make room.

On Wednesdays there would be a dinner at six o'clock, served without pretence or culinary assistance from the pastry-cook outside—even the ices were prepared at home. To these dinners any distinguished strangers who were passing through the city were sure to be invited. Malachi in his time had served many famous men—Charles Dickens, Ole Bull, Macready, and once the great Mr. Thackeray himself with a second glass of "that pale sherry, if you please," and at the great man's request, too. An appreciation which, in the case of Mr. Thackeray, had helped to mollify Malachi's righteous wrath over the immortal novelist's ignorance of Southern dishes:

"Dat fat gemman wid de gold specs dat dey do say is so mighty great, ain't eat nuffin yet but soup an' a li'l mite o' 'tater," he said to Aunt Hannah on one of his trips to the kitchen as dinner went on. "He let dat tar'pin an' dem ducks go by him same as dey was pizen. But I lay he knows 'bout dat ole yaller sherry," and Malachi chuckled. "He keeps a' retchin' fur dat decanter as if he was 'feared somebody'd git it fust."

On Fridays there would invariably be a musicale—generally a quartette, with a few connoisseurs to listen and to criticise. Then the piano would be drawn out from its corner and the lid propped up, so that Max Unger of the "Harmonie" could find a place for his 'cello behind it, and there still be room for the inventor with his violin—a violin with a tradition, for Ole Bull had once played on it and in that same room, too, and had said it had the soul of a Cremona—which was quite true when Richard Horn touched its strings.

On all the other nights of the week Mrs. Horn was at home to all who came. Some gentle old lady from across the Square, perhaps, in lace caps and ribbons, with a work-basket filled with fancy crewels, and whose big son came at nine o'clock to take her home; or Oliver's young friends, boys and girls; or old Doctor Wallace, full of the day's gossip; or Miss Lavinia Clendenning, with news of the latest Assembly; or Nathan Gill with his flute.

But then it was Nathan always, whatever the occasion. From the time Malachi unlocked the front doors in the morning until he bolted them for the night, Nathan came and went. The brick pavements were worn smooth, the neighbors said, between the flute-player's humble lodgings in a side street and the Horn house, so many trips a day did the old man make. People smiled at him as he hurried along, his head bent forward, his long pen-wiper cloak reaching to his heels, a wide-brimmed Quaker hat crowning his head.

And always, whenever the night or whatever the function or whoever the guests, a particular side-table was sure to be moved in from Malachi's pantry and covered with a snow-

white cloth which played an important part in the evening's entertainment. This cloth was never empty. Upon its damask surface were laid a pile of India-blue plates and a silver basket of cake, besides a collection of low glass tumblers with little handles, designed to hold various brews of Malachi's own concoctions, which he alone of all the denizens of Kennedy Square could compound, and the secret of which unhappily has perished with him.

And what wondrous aromas, too!

You may not believe it, but I assure you, on the honor of a Virginian, that for every one of these different nights in the old house on Kennedy Square there were special savory odors emanating from these brews, which settled at once and beyond question the precise function of the evening, and all before you could hand your hat to Malachi. If, for instance, as the front door was opened the aroma was one of hot coffee and the dry smell of fresh wafer-biscuit mingled with those of a certain brand of sherry, then it was always to be plain whist in the parlor, with perhaps only Colonel Clayton and Miss Clendenning or some one of the old ladies of the neighborhood, to hold hands in a rubber. If the fumes of apple-toddy mingled with the fragrance of toasted apples were wafted your way, you might be sure that Max Unger, and perhaps Bobbinette, second violin, and Nathan—whatever the function it was always Nathan, it must be remembered—and a few kindred spirits who loved good music were expected; and at the appointed hour Malachi, his hands encased in white cotton gloves, would enter with a flourish, and would graciously beg leave to pass, the huge bowl held high above his head filled to the

brim with smoking apple-toddy, the little pippins browned to a turn floating on its top.

If the occasion was one of great distinction, one that fell on Christmas or on New Year's, or which celebrated some important family gathering, the pungent odor of eggnog would have greeted you even before you could have slipped off your gum-shoes in the hall, or hung your coat on the mahogany rack. This seductive concoction—the most potent of all Malachi's beverages—was always served from a green and gold Chinese bowl, and drunk not from the customary low tumblers, but from special Spode cups, and was, I must confess, productive of a head—for I myself was once tempted to drink a bumper of it at this most delightful of houses with young Oliver, many years ago, it is true, but I have never forgotten it—productive of an ACHING head, I think I said, that felt as big in the morning as the Canton bowl in which the mixture had been brewed.

Or, if none of these functions or festivals were taking place, and only one or two old cronies had dropped in on their way from the Club, and had drawn up their chairs close to the dining-room table, and you had happened to be hanging up your hat in the hall at that moment, you would have been conscious of an aroma as delicate in flavor as that wafted across summer seas from far-off tropic isles; of pomegranates, if you will, ripening by crumbling walls; of purple grapes drinking in the sun; of pine and hemlock; of sweet spices and the scent of roses. or any other combination of delightful things which your excited imagination might suggest.

You would have known then just what had taken place; how, when the gentlemen were seated, Malachi in his undress blue coat and brass buttons had approached his master noiselessly from behind, and with a gravity that befitted the occasion had bent low his head, his hands behind his back, his head turned on one side, and in a hushed voice had asked this most portentous question:

"Which Madeira, Marse Richard?"

The only answer would have been a lifting of the eyebrow and an imperceptible nod of his master's head in the direction of the mahogany cellaret.

Malachi understood.

It was the Tiernan of '29.

And that worthy "Keeper of the Privy Seal and Key," pausing for an instant with his brown jug of a head bent before the cellaret, as a Mohammedan bends his head before a wall facing Mecca, had there-upon unlocked its secret chambers and had produced a low, deeply cut decanter topped by a wondrous glass stopper. This he had placed, with conscious importance, on a small table before the two or three devotees gathered together in its honor, and the host, removing the stopper, had filled the slender glasses with a vintage that had twice rounded the Cape—a wine of such rare lineage and flavor that those who had the honor of its acquaintance always spoke of it as one of the most precious possessions of the town—a wine, too, of so delicate an aroma that those within the charmed circle invariably lifted the thin glasses and dreamily inhaled its perfume before they granted their palates a drop.

Ah, those marvellous, unforgettable aromas that come to me out of the long ago with all the reminders they bring of clink of glass and touch of elbow, of happy boys and girls and sweet old faces. It is forty years since they greeted my nostrils in the cool, bare, uncurtained hall of the old house in Kennedy Square, but they are still fresh in my memory. Sometimes it is the fragrance of newly made gingerbread, or the scent of creamy custard with just a suspicion of peach-kernels; sometimes it is the scent of fresh strawberries—strawberries that meant the spring, not the hot-house or Bermuda—and sometimes it is the smell of roasted oysters or succulent canvas-backs! Forty years ago—and yet even to-day the perfume of a roasted apple never greets me but I stand once more in the old-fashioned room listening to the sound of Nathan's flute; I see again the stately, silver-haired, high-bred mistress of the mansion with her kindly greeting, as she moves among her guests; I catch the figure of that old darkey with his brown, bald head and the little tufts of gray wool fringing its sides, as he shuffles along in his blue coat and baggy white waistcoat and much-too-big gloves, and I hear the very tones of his voice as he pushes his seductive tray before me and whispers, confidentially:

"Take a li'l ob de apple, sah; dat's whar de real 'spression oh de toddy is."

CHAPTER II

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STRAINS FROM NATHAN'S FLUTE

It was one of those Friday evenings, then, when the smell of roast apples steeping in hot toddy came wafting out the portals of Malachi's pantry—a smell of such convincing pungency that even the most infrequent of frequenters having once inhaled it, would have known at the first whiff that some musical function was in order. The night was to be one of unusual interest.

Nathan Gill and Max linger were expected, and Miss Lavinia Clendenning, completing with Richard a quartette for 'cello, flute, piano, and violin, for which Unger had arranged Beethoven's Overture to "Fidelio."

Nathan, of course, arrived first. On ordinary occasions another of those quaint ceremonies for which the house was famous would always take place when the old flute-player entered the drawing-room—a ceremony which brought a smile to the lips of those who had watched it for years, and which to this day brings one to those who recall it. Nathan, with a look of quizzical anxiety on his pinched face, would tiptoe cautiously into the room, peering about to make sure of Richard's presence, his thin, almost transparent fingers outspread before him to show Richard that they were empty.

Richard would step forward and, with a tone of assumed solicitude in his voice, would say:

"Don't tell me, Nathan, that you have forgotten your flute?" and Nathan, pausing for a moment, would suddenly break into a smile, and with a queer little note of surprise in his throat, and a twinkle in his eye, would make answer by slowly drawing from his coat-tail pocket the three unjointed pieces, holding them up with an air of triumph and slowly putting them together. Then these two old "Merry-Andrews" would lock arms and stroll into the library, laughing like school-boys.

To-night, however, as Nathan had been specially invited to play, this little ceremony was omitted. On entering the hall the musician gave his long, black, pen-wiper cloak and his hat to Malachi, and supporting himself by his delicate fingers laid flat on the hall-table, extended first one thin leg, and then the other, while that obsequious darky unbuttoned his gaiters. His feet free, he straightened himself up, pulled the precious flute from his coat-tail pocket and carefully joined the parts. This done, he gave a look into the hall-mirror, puffed out his scarf, combed his straight white hair forward over his ears with his fingers, and at Malachi's announcement glided through the open doorway to Mrs. Horn's chair, the flute in his hand held straight out as an orator would have held his roll.

The hostess, who had been sitting by the fire, her white gossamer shawl about her spare shoulders, rose from her high-backed chair and, laying aside her knitting-needles and wools, greeted the musician with as much cordiality—and it must be confessed with as much ceremony—as if she had

not seen him a dozen times that week. One of the charms of the Horn mansion lay in these delightful blendings of affection and formality.

"Am I a little early?" he asked with as much surprise as if he were not as certain to be early when music was concerned as he was to be late in everything else. "Yes, my dear madam—I see that I am early, unless Miss Lavinia is late."

"You never could be too early, Nathan. Lavinia will be here in a moment," she answered, with a smile, resuming her seat.

"I'm glad that I'm ahead of her for once," he replied, laughing. Then, turning to the inventor, who had come forward from where he had been studying the new score, he laid his hand affectionately on Richard's shoulder, as a boy would have done, and added: "How do you like Unger's new arrangement?—I've been thinking of nothing else all day."

"Capital! Capital!" answered Richard, slipping his arm into Nathan's, and drawing him closer to the piano. "See how he has treated this adagio phrase," and he followed the line with his finger, humming the tune to Nathan. "The modulation, you see, is from E Major to A Major, and the flute sustains the melody, the effect is so peculiarly soft and the whole so bright with passages of sunshine all through it—oh, you will love it."

While these two white-haired enthusiasts with their heads together were studying the score, beating time with their hands, after the manner of experts to whom all the curious jumble of dots and lines that plague so many of us are as plain as print, Malachi was receiving Miss

Clendenning in the hall. Indeed, he had answered her knock as Nathan was passing into the drawing-room.

The new arrival bent her neck until Malachi had relieved her of the long hooded cloak, gave a quick stamp with her little feet as she shook out her balloon skirts, and settled herself on the hall-settee while Malachi unwound the white worsted "nubia" from her aristocratic throat. This done, she, too, held a short consultation with the hall-mirror, carefully dusting, with her tiny handkerchief, the little pats of powder still left on her cheeks, and with her jewelled fingers smoothing the soft hair parted over her forehead, and tightening meanwhile the side-combs that kept in place the clusters of short curls which framed her face. Then, with head erect and a gracious recognition of the old servant's ministrations, she floated past Malachi, bent double in her honor.

"Oh, I heard you, Nathan," she laughed, waving her fan toward him as she entered the room. "I'm not one minute late. Did you ever hear such impudence, Sallie, and all because he reached your door one minute before me," she added, stooping to kiss Mrs. Horn. Punctuality was one of the cardinal virtues of this most distinguished, prim, precise, and most lovable of old maids. "You are really getting to be dreadful, Mr. Nathan Gill, and so puffed up—isn't he, Richard?" As she spoke she turned abruptly and faced both gentlemen. Then, with one of her rippling laughs—a laugh that Richard always said reminded him of the notes of a bird—she caught her skirts in her fingers, made the most sweeping of courtesies and held out her hands to the two gentlemen who were crossing the room to meet her.

Richard, with the bow of a Cavalier, kissed the one offered him as gallantly as if she had been a duchess, telling her he had the rarest treat in store for her as soon as Unger came, and Nathan with mock devotion held the other between his two palms, and said that to be scolded by Miss Clendenning was infinitely better than being praised by anybody else. These pleasantries over, the two old gallants returned to the piano to wait for Max Unger and to study again the crumpled pages of the score which lay under the soft light of the candles.

The room relapsed once more into its wonted quiet, broken only by the whispered talk of well-bred people careful not to disturb each other. Mrs. Horn had begun to knit again. Miss Clendenning stood facing the fire, one foot resting on the fender.

This wee foot of the little lady was the delight and admiration of all the girls about Kennedy Square, and of many others across the seas, too—men and women for that matter. To-night it was encased in a black satin slipper and in a white spider-web stocking, about which were crossed two narrow black ribbons tied in a bow around the ankle—such a charming little slipper peeping out from petticoats all bescalloped and belaced! Everything in fact about this dainty old maid, with her trim figure filling out her soft white fichu, still had that subtlety of charm which had played havoc with more than one heart in her day. Only Sallie Horn, who had all the dear woman's secrets, knew where those little feet had stepped and what hopes they had crushed. Only Sallie Horn, too, knew why the delicate finger was still bare of a plain gold ring. The world never thought it had

made any difference to Miss Lavinia, but then the world had never peeped under the lower lid of Miss Clendenning's heart.

Suddenly the hushed quiet of the room was broken by a loud knock at the front door, or rather by a series of knocks, so quick and sharp that Malachi started from his pantry on the run.

"That must be Max," said Richard. "Now, Lavinia, we will move the piano, so as to give you more room."

Mrs. Horn pushed back her chair, rose to her feet, and stood waiting to receive the noted 'cellist, without whom not a note could be sounded, and Miss Clendenning took her foot from the fender and dropped her skirts.

But it was not Max!

Not wheezy, perspiring old Max Unger after all, walking into the room mopping his face with one hand and with the other lugging his big 'cello, embalmed in a green baize bag—he would never let Malachi touch it—not Max at all, but a fresh, rosy-cheeked young fellow of twenty-two, who came bounding in with a laugh, tossing his hat to Malachi—a well-knit, muscular young fellow, with a mouth full of white teeth and a broad brow projecting over two steel-blue eyes that were snapping with fun.

With his coming the quiet of the place departed and a certain breezy atmosphere permeated the room as if a gust of cool wind had followed him. With him, too, came a hearty, whole-souled joyousness—a joyousness of so sparkling and so radiant a kind that it seemed as if all the sunshine he had breathed for twenty years in Kennedy Square had somehow been stored away in his boyish veins.

"Oh, here you are, you dear Miss Lavinia," he cried out, his breath half gone from his dash across the Square. "How did you get here first?"

"On my two feet, you stupid Oliver," cried Miss Lavinia, shaking her curls at him. "Did you think somebody carried me?"

"No, I didn't; but that wouldn't be much to carry, Miss Midget." His pet name for her. "But which way did you come? I looked up and down every path and—"

"And went all the way round by Sue Clayton's to find me, didn't you? Oh, you can't throw dust in the Midget's eyes, you young rascal!" and she stretched up her two dainty hands; drew his face toward her, and kissed him on the lips.

"There—" and she patted his cheek—"now tell me all about it, you dear Ollie. What did you want to see me for?" she added with one of those quick divinations that made her so helpful a confidante. Then, in a lowered voice—"What has Sue done?"

"Nothing—not one thing. She isn't bothering her head about me. I only stopped there to leave a book, and—"

Mrs. Horn, with laughing, inquiring eyes, looked up from her chair at Miss Clendenning, and made a little doubting sound with her lips. Black-eyed Sue Clayton, with her curls down her back, home from boarding-school for the Easter holidays, was Oliver's latest flame. His mother loved to tease him about his love-affairs; and always liked him to have a new one. She could see farther into his heart she thought when the face of some sweet girl lay mirrored in its depths.