

A Fiddler's Romance.

Kubelik, who has the soul, the brain and the supple fingers of Paganini, with the dark, velvety eyes and the smile of an innocent young girl—Kubelik, the new king of the violin, loved by all women who have seen and heard him, though plebeian by birth is an aristocrat in his choice of a wife. News comes from Vienna that within a year he will marry the Countess Marianne Czaky, with the consent of Coloman von Szell, Prime Minister of Hungary.

Behind this bald announcement by cable lies one of those great romances, so rare in real life, which, depicted by the pen of poets, have come down the ages, gathering new beauties all the way.

The Countess Marianne came into the life of Kubelik before his fame had travelled more than a hundred miles from Prague, where his father still hoed his cabbages. The great conservatory and all the students know that Kubelik was already great. The mysteries invented by Paganini to the undoing of all other violinists up to that time were an open book to Kubelik.

All the cities of his native Bohemia clamoured for him, so that soon he found himself on the stage of the principal theatre at Debreczin looking over an audience musically wise and critical for generations, with noble families occupying the boxes.

In one of these boxes, separated from the stage only by a low balustrade, was a dazzling Hungarian beauty, of the rich, voluptuous, impulsive type which only Hungary produces. This was the Countess Marianne Czaky, who at twenty-one was already a widow. With her were her father, Wolfgang von Szell, and the Hungarian Prime Minister, Coloman von Szell, her uncle.

Kubelik did not at first notice the Countess, though it is now remembered she started and leaned forward the moment her eyes first rested on him. He was thinking only of the phrases which as yet slumbered in the bosom of his Stradivarius.

It began with the Vieuxtemps Concerto in E major, with its long, clear note at the beginning. His attitude was graceful—before he lifted his bow—almost feminine, but with the first note he was transfigured. He became a man and a master all at once; his fingers were brass, tipped with velvet. The sweep of his bow was a command to all the world.

Leaning forward, with red lips slightly parted, the Countess drank in every note. At the last note she sank back pale and sighing, but with her eyes still riveted on the girlish face of the young violinist, framed in the masses of black hair, now with some moist wisp trailing over a brow as white and smooth as her own.

The audience, all but the Countess, applauded rapturously; she sat as though dazed. But the first stroke of the bow in a Beethoven Romance in G Major caused her to move forward to the balustrade, upon which she leaned motionless till the number was ended. Then an odd thing happened, to the audience's way of thinking. Did the Countess stumble that she should suddenly fall against the barrier between the box and the stage and throw out her arms to-

ward the violinist, not a yard away, as though to seek support on his shoulder? Kubelik saw the Countess' movement, made half a step toward her, and their eyes met. But now the Prime Minister whispered in his niece's ear, and reluctantly withdrawing her eyes from those of the violinist, she sank back into her seat. Kubelik composed himself partially with recourse, for an encore, to a stately Bach sonata.

Now came the number which the masters and students of the Prague Conservatory knew would declare Kubelik's pre-eminence anywhere in the world—Paganini's impossibility, called "Nel Cor Mio Non Mi Sento."

When Kubelik had ended the Paganini number in an explosion of musical fireworks the audience sprang to its feet, pressing toward the stage and shrieking its plaudits. Kubelik bowed and then turned his eyes toward the Countess' box. Barely the distance of a step was between them.

Suddenly the beautiful noblewoman leaned far over the balustrade and held out both her arms to the youth. Their eyes met again. Kubelik drew nearer. The Countess' lips moved. Her whole attitude was one of adoration.

Kubelik, for the first time under the spell of a beautiful, loving woman's eyes, seemed to tremble. Though the audience continued to applaud wildly and to inundate him with flowers, he kept his eyes on those of the Countess. Her lips moved again. She was speaking to him. Only Kubelik could hear her voice, so great was the uproar. Then he smiled happily and answered her—answered her both with words and glances.

Next day Kubelik received from Wolfgang von Szell, the Countess' father, an invitation to visit him at his house. The invitation was not unexpected, for what the Countess had whispered to him across the footlights was:

"We shall meet soon; it must be so." And Kubelik's answer was:

"It must be so."

In the house of the Hungarian noble the violinist was treated as all men of genius are treated in such places—with affable condescension, save for the Countess. Their hands met, not only as the hands of equals, but as the hands of confessed lovers. In that country love does not have to be spoken to be known; yet before the evening was over they found a moment in which they could be alone, and in that moment all the vocabulary of love bubbled from their lips.

Both knew that this blazing forth of love at first sight between a Countess who was niece of the Prime Minister and a fiddler whose father hoed cabbages, if known, at once would create consternation and probably trouble for both. Kubelik was engaged for London, and so they agreed to wait until his return, meantime corresponding daily.

Kubelik went to London fully expecting to return shortly and dreading the interruptions of his artistic career which his twenty-first year and compulsory military service would entail. But in London both the expectation and the dread were removed. King Edward summoned him to play before the Royal Family, and straightway induced the Hungarian authorities to absolve the genius from his military obligations. Then Daniel Frohman engaged him for a tour of America.

Thus, until Kubelik's return to Vienna

late in February the betrothed lovers had never spent more than a single hour in each other's presence. Their only communications had been by letter and daily cablegrams.

Naturally, the Countess' family tried to break off the engagement, but her constancy softened first the mother's heart and finally won over the father and the Prime Minister, her uncle. The only stipulation is that they shall not marry for a year.

Kubelik has made a fair start on the road to wealth. He received 100,000 dollars from his American tour alone. Experts say that in the next few years his receipts will totally eclipse those of Paderewski. So his plan to build a palace for his bride near Vienna seems likely of fulfilment.

Another Royal Romance.

Whilst we are occupied with the vagaries of the ex-Crown Princess of Saxony, with or against our will, and periodically reminded—by herself—that the Countess Lonyay is still a "Royal Highness." It is all the more refreshing to turn to the pleasant romances of the Imperial House of Hapsburg, remarks a correspondent in "Madame." A friend of mine told me a charming story of a young married couple living in the pretty little border town of Znaim. The husband is a young captain, Baron Otto Seefried by name, in the local regiment of infantry. His wife has won the hearts of the worthy townspeople by her unaffected behaviour, and the quiet life they lead is absolutely in keeping with the husband's station in life.

Baroness Seefried can be seen very often marketing in the town, is famed as a model "Haus frau," and yet her grandfather is none other than H.I. and R.M. Kaiser Francis Joseph of Austria. Her mother was, as you will recollect, Princess Gisela of Bavaria, and the young Princess' romantic runaway match with a mere lieutenant and "von" caused much talk at the time. Then it all died away, as it should do, and it was quite by accident that I learnt the charming sequel just related.

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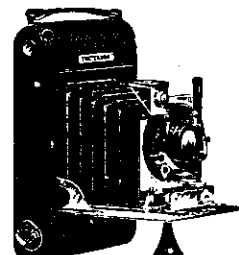
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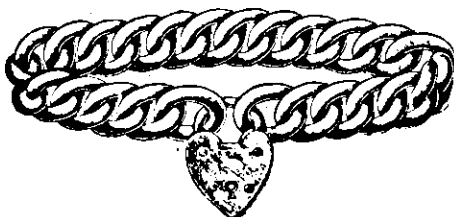
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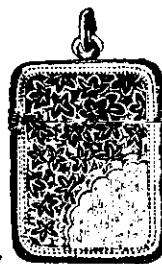
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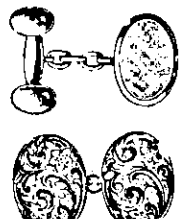
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