

**AS IT WAS  
WRITTEN: A JEWISH  
MUSICIAN'S STORY**

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As it was written: a Jewish musician's story by Henry Harland

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**HENRY HARLAND**

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## AS IT WAS WRITTEN.

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### I.

**V**ERONIKA PATHZUOL was my betrothed. I must give some account of the circumstances under which she and I first met each other, so that my tale may be clear and complete from the beginning.

For a long while, without knowing why, I had been restless—hungry, without knowing for what I hungered. Teaching music to support myself, I employed all of the day that was not thus occupied in practicing on my own behalf. My life consequently was a solitary one, numbering but few acquaintances and not any friends. In my short intervals of leisure I was generally too tired to seek out society; I was too obscure and unimportant to be sought out in turn. Yet, young and of an ardent temperament, doubtless it was natural that

singer reached that glorious climax of the song, "*Nunc et in hora mortis nostræ!*" At that instant, as if released from a spell, I drew a long breath and looked around. Then for the first time I saw Veronika Pathzuol. Her eyes and mine met for the first time.

"A lady, young, tall, beautiful, strange, and sad"—and pale. Her face was pale, like an angel's. The wealth of black hair above it and the dark eyes that gazed sadly out of it rendered the pallor more intense. But it was not the pallor of ill-health; it was the pallor of a luminous white soul. As I beheld her standing there in the moonlight scarcely a yard away from me, I knew all at once what it was my heart had craved for so long a while. I knew at once, by the sudden pain that pierced it, that my heart had been waiting for this lady all its life. I did not stop to reflect and determine. Had I done so, most likely—nay, most certainly—I should never have had to tell this story. The words flew to my tongue and were spoken as soon as thought.—"Oh, how beautiful, how beautiful!" I exclaimed, meaning her.

"Very beautiful," I heard her voice, clear

and soft, respond. "It is almost a pain, the feeling such intense beauty gives,"—meaning the scene before us.

"And yet this is every-day, hum-drum, commercial New York," added another voice, one that jarred upon my hearing like the scraping of a contre-bass after a cadenza by the flute. She was leaning on the arm of a man. I was at the verge of being straightway jealous, when I observed that his hair and beard were snowy and that his face was wrinkled.

We got into conversation without ceremony. Nature had introduced us. Our common appreciation of the loveliness round about broke the ice and provided a topic for speech. After her first impulsive utterance, Veronika said little. But the old man was voluble, evidently glad of the opportunity to express his ideas to a new person. And I was more than glad to listen, because while doing so I could gaze upon her face to my heart's content.

Something that I had said, in reply to a remark of his upon the singing of the *Ave*, caused him to ask, "Ah, you understand music? You are a musician—yes?"



"I play the violin," I answered.

"Do you hear, Veronika?" he cried. "Our friend plays the violin! My dear sir, you must do us the favor of playing for us before we part. Do not be surprised—pay no heed to the formalities. Is not music a free-masonry? Come, you shall try your skill upon an Amati. Such an evening as this must have an appropriate ending. Come."

Without allowing me time to protest, had I been disposed to do so, he grasped my arm and started off. He kept on talking as we marched along. I had no attention for what he said. My mind was divided between delight at my good-fortune, and query as to what its upshot would be. We had not far to go. A few doors to the west of First avenue he turned up a stoop. It was a modest apartment-house. We climbed to the topmost story and stood still in the dark while he fumbled for a match. Then he lighted the gas and said, "Sit down."

The room was bare and cheerless. A chromo or two sufficed to decorate the walls. The furniture—a few chairs and a center-table—was stiff and shabby. The carpet was threadbare.

But a piano occupied a corner; and the floor, the table, and the chairs were littered thick with music. So I felt at home. As I look back at that meager little parlor now, it is transformed into a sanctuary. There the deepest moments of two lives were spent. Yet to-day strangers dwell in it; come and go, laugh and chatter, eat, drink, and make merry between its walls, all unconcernedly, never pausing to bestow a thought upon the sad, sweet lady whose presence once hallowed the place, whose tears more than once watered the floor over which they tread with indifferent footsteps.

The old man lighted the gas and said, "Sit down," making obedience possible by clearing a chair of the music it held. Then scrutinizing my face: "You are a Jew, are you not?" he inquired, in his quick, nervous way.

"Yes," I said, "by birth."

"And by faith?"

"Well, I am not orthodox, not a zealot."

"Your name?"

"Neuman—Ernest Neuman."

"And mine, Tikulski—Baruch. You see we are of one race—the race—the chosen race!

Neither am I orthodox. I keep *Yom Kippur*, to be sure, but I have no conscientious scruples against shell-fish, and indeed the 'succulent oyster' is especially congenial to my palate. This," with a wave of the hand toward Veronika, "this is my niece, Miss Pathzuol—P-a-t-h-z-u-o-l — pronounced Patchuol — Hungarian name. Her mother was my sister."

Veronika dropped a courtesy. Her eyes seemed to plead, "Do not laugh at my uncle. He is eccentric; but be charitable."

"Now, Veronika, show Mr. Neuman your music and find something that you can play together. I will go fetch the violin."

The old man left the room.

"What will you play?" asked Veronika. Her voice quavered. She was timid, as indeed it was natural she should be.

"I don't know," I said, my own voice not as firm as I could have wished. "What have you got?"

We commenced at the top of a big pile of music and had settled upon the prize song from the *Meistersinger*—not then as hackneyed as it is at present, not then the victim of every pas-