

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers* 2, 1886 – 1887 June 5, '86 to May 21, '87)

## Called Back

(Not by Hugh Conway)

I will tell you the story as it was told to me with as few words as possible. It is hardly a new story, and has been used so frequently that it has become familiar perhaps to you all but the story impressed me. I am afraid that I can not bring out its full effect for you: but I will tell it as simply as I know how.

It would be a blow on the head that was the cause of the wreck of Franz Kappel's mind. He lay on his bed a helpless imbecile without any indication of intelligence beyond that of a child, his physical strength too had gone with his mind and the young girl that leaned tenderly over him as he talked childishly – in a language that was a sealed book to her – his native German – had to tend his every event. And yet but a short time before this hopeless invalid was a man of athletic figure, and acute and cultivated mind. After years of bitter struggle with adverse fortune, success had seemed about to crown his efforts when that unfortunate blow had come and ended all.

Franz, like many another young German had come to America as to Eldorado. The son of a sub-professor in a small German University and a musician of extraordinary talent, nay, almost of genius, life seemed very fair to him as he landed in New York in search of fame and fortune which should take the place of the comfortable home and congenial surroundings he had left behind him in Germany thought he was too cramped and too much under the control of one or two master-minds him picked to in music to afford any opportunity for the development of a higher art in music. In the free, pure atmosphere of America where every man was born a man of culture and refinement, he could realize his ideals and his spirit could soar aloft unresisted by the grosser atmosphere of conventionality that surrounded everything in the old world. So he and his violin journeyed together to America – his violin which was his constant companion and bosom friend to whom he confided all his sorrows and which shared all his joy.

It was a rude awakening – his experience in America. His art was not appreciated and his music not wanted. He could get no occupation in spite of his exceptional skill and his music – those exquisitely sad bits of harmony that gave his long, lonesome hours occupation while he was pondering his ideals – would not sell. Soon want and hunger stared him in the face; but pride kept him from going back to his home or for a very long time from yielding his convictions. But at last, after passing through all the stages of misery and poverty he succumbed, took employment in ordinary concert saloons and the like where the only object was to grind out the popular melodies of the day, between the vulgar dances of lightly clad sirens. It was a terrible sacrifice, but his exquisite playing even in these positions slowly turned the tide of his fortunes; and after a long struggle he was beginning to be successful. He was quite a favorite of musical circles, and he had more pupils than he could handle. He however had felt the practical wisdom of yielding his high ideals, and only indulged therein in private when his whole soul would be poured out into his compositions. To the public at large he was a thoroughly practical and

capable violinist, and a teacher with no “cranky” notions about “high art;” to his violin he was a dreamer in search of the unattainable who despised and fretted at the intellectual and artistic bondage in which he was held by necessity.

One pupil alone was admitted to his inner life and learned to know his hopes and aspirations. She soon learned to love him not for what he had done, but for what he still hoped to do, and he plainly reciprocated her affection; but his position in the world as a mere “fiddler and scribbler of music” kept him silent. To her however did he confide his heart's desire – to write a symphony which should symbolize life, his life and the life of every man; and he taught her the vague foreshadowing was of what he felt would be his great work. His theme was as yet unformed, and merely suggestive but he devoted his best thought and invention to it and hoped in time to evolve a result from the few beginnings he had made that would pay for all his self denial and sacrifice of aspirations and ideals. But as yet the one inspiration that distinguishes work of genius from that of talent seemed lacking.

One day he came upon his pupil in tears and as he shook her hand, and with more tenderness than he was perhaps aware of asked the reason for her grief. And she in broken tones began to give some trivial reason, – our impulsive friend looked into her eyes – in a moment his arms were about her and her head resting on his shoulder; and trouble, position and all were forgotten.

As he rode home that night with her promise, the world looked very happy to him. As he thought it all over the long-wished-for inspiration seemed at last to come to him. He stopped his horse and taking his violin from his case seated as he was he began to play the sweet strains as he never had played them before. As he was playing the opening bars that he and the girl he had just left had so often played together, his horse, probably frightened at the unusual sound, gave a spring; and over his side went the player. When he was picked up several hours afterward by passersby, who were few on the lonely suburban road, and was carried to the nearest house, the one he had left so short a time before, his mind was gone. He was in too precarious condition to be moved and there he stayed for weeks watched and tended over by the girl whose happiness was wrapped up in him. Her he had forgotten: even her language had passed away from his mind: he recollected nothing of his life.

A great trial it was to this young girl day after day to watch by the bedside of this man who talked to so constantly in a strange language, to wait for the gleam of intelligence that it seemed would never come. His violin had been found uninjured near him when he was hurt, and now rested always by his bedside. He never seemed to know what it was however; and she was too sad at first to play it. But after a while she began to play to him, and soon discovered that the sad, sweet strains rested him and made him more quiet. After this she played to him every day; and today for the first time she unconsciously began to play the opening strains of the symphony from which he had hoped so much. As the first few bars were heard by the invalid she noticed a change of expression and in a moment more the man who had hitherto lain so helplessly suddenly leaned forward from the dead and calling her by name snatched the violin from her hand and took up the strain from the point where she had left off – the point which he had reached when that luckless blow had come. And then – for his had had (sic) lost none of its skill, music gay with

laughter and dancing rippled from the strings as the bow flew rapidly over them, wielded by the hand of the master the melody filled the air until all about seem to vibrate in unison with the feelings of the player; the songs of birds, laughing glee of children, the joyous mirth of maidens and of youths just conscious of each other's virgin charms resounded all about; the whole world seemed to rejoice and be happy, and all woe, all misery were forgotten in the careless, thoughtless gaiety. Then suddenly there came a crash as if every string of the violin was at war with harmony; the whole universe toppled, each atom in conflict with its neighbor and all the songs, the melody and the glee, and the mercy and love, were in an instant forgotten in the sudden catastrophe, universal chaos. Then slowly, as if disentangling itself from the ruin, then more and more clear, the pure sweet tone struggled forth and gained strength as it rose to heaven and at last all was again suffused and uplifted by the divine note of the rising of hope from the ashes of youth and inexperience. The whole soul of the player seemed to go out with the music; his countenance became transfigured with the vision he was raising before himself; and all was forgotten save the hope of the happiness to come in the future; the woe and misery of the past entirely gone. As he played, his theme became more hopeful and at last almost all traces of the former discord had disappeared as with powerful but yet delicate touches the whole instrument was made to sing forth it's a song of joy a long-continued strain that had mingled with its joyousness at times an undertone of sad sweetness betokening the constant recurrence of the present, overwhelmed and conquered by the supreme confidence in the future. By his hearer all was forgotten save the present ecstasy and the memories recalled by it and the consciousness that her lover once more was restored to intelligence. As he played, she knew that the inspiration had come, and that this work, if given to the world would give him immortality for which he had longed. As the last notes died away and she turned to greet him on his recovery as well as for his triumph, she was horrified to see him sink back his violin falling from his hand and his strength gone. She seized him in her arms and called him by name, kissing him repeatedly; but his life was fast ebbing away. Until with a smile of recognition all was over; and with him was lost to the world the symphony of life.

Charles Theodore Greve

Budget, Carr editor

Feby 26 1887

<rev jnm 6/2012>