

A DAUGHTER OF MUSIC.

Rose, with her dower of golden tresses,
Sits at the open piano to-night;
And the moon, in her glory of maiden graces,
Folds the room in a dream of light;
For the lamps are unlit and the curtains undrawn,
And the moonbeams float like a silver dawn
Through all the wide windows that look on the
lawn.

Delicate fingers, faintest things,
Over the keyboard glance and gleam;
And out of the world of hidden strings
Music uplifts like a wondrous dream:
A dream fulfilled through the march of years,
In loves and sorrows and hopes and fears,
And fever of longing and passion of tears.

Hark, it is Beethoven, vast and deep,
Sways the souls of the yielding strings;
Now as in torture they wail and weep,
Now they whisper like wafted wings;
And now 'tis the ripple of rhythmic waves,
In starlit seas, amid starlit caves,
Where never a tempest rocks and raves.

And Chopin, dreamer of sad strange dreams,
In a mist of mazurkas comes and goes;
And ringed with a splendour of shifting gleams
Schumann glides to a gloomful close;
And Mendelssohn, fair as the angels be,
Comes, like a breeze from a peaceful sea,
In a molten moonlight of melody.

And others are here of the soulful art,
Making their heart-beats audible;
Weber and Schubert and sunny Mozart,
A thrice beloved of the gods too well:
And lo, they glimmer and pale and pass,
And the moonlight, bereft of them, whispers "Alas!"
And the strings give a sigh for the music that was.

And Rose, with her wonderful wealth of tresses,
Forsaketh the open piano to-night;
And the moon, in her glory of maiden graces,
Folds the room in a dream of light;
And out on the upland the winds go by,
And murmur and mutter and droop and die;
All else is silent in earth and sky.

All else is silent under the sky,
For Rose has deserted the voiceful keys,
And Schumann and Schubert silent lie
In a slumber of speechless fantasies;
And the "Songs without Words" are sung and o'er,
And lie like waves on a desert shore
When the winds that woke them are heard no more.

Songs without words! Ah, tuneful maiden,
"Thine eyes to-night have a tearful glow;
Like sapphirine seas with mist o'erladen,
And fervour of sunset shining through!"
"To that wordless music thy soul hath sung
A strange libretto unchanted long;
Nay, words that never have found a tongue!"

A strange libretto of hopes and fears,
And loves and longings and visions flown;
Ay me, the song of the changeable years!
For Rose to-night hath a mournful tone;
And so by the window she sits and dreams,
Sits transfixed in glorious gleams,
Till herself but a part of the moonlight seems.

Rose, you are rich in golden fancies;
Your life is a perfume of sweets and flowers;
You live in an Eden of soft romances,
Where cares invade not the languid hours;
It cannot be that your heart makes moan:
That you pine like a queen on a loveless throne,
Mid splendid sorrows and hearts of stone.

Who knows?—O maiden, I pray thee tell,
This river whereof thou drinkest free,
This river that flows from a secret well,
This thing called Music, what is't to thee?
Hast thou a thirst that its waves can drown?
Or is it that when thou kneelest down,
And gazest into its depth unknown,

Thou seest thine own soul shadowed there,
And beudest over the mystic marge,
Rejoicing to find it a thing so fair;
Nor ever heeding how many a barge
Goes glimmering on adown the breeze,
Glimmering on 'twixt the tremulous trees,
On and on to the unseen seas?

Yet how can thy soul itself behold
In a stream so troubled, that foams as it flows?
Its waters are vexed with a passion untold,
And thou art as soft as a dove, sweet Rose,
Beethoven loved, and was loved not again;
Chopin won little of love but its pain;
Surely thou canst not have loved in vain!

Nay, I will ask no more, sweet Rose,
But leave thee alone till another day;
And only petition of One who knows
That Grief, when it find thee, as find it may,
Shall seem unto Art as a friend, not foe;
That each to the other its wealth may show,
And the Daughter of Music be brought not low.*

* Eccles. xii. 4.

A STRANGE STORY.

The incident of which you have asked me to give you an account occurred six years ago, but the details are still fresh in my memory. The matter impressed me at the time with peculiar force. I am quite sure that I cannot convey any of this impression to you. I can only give you the facts, and very probably your shrewd common sense will readily find a rational explanation of them. I confess honestly, however, that I have never been able to account for them to myself on any ordinary basis of reasoning.

In February of 1873 her physician ordered C— to the seashore. Our medical men were then just beginning to find out that the tonic of a bath of salt air for lungs and body, even in winter, was a surer restorer of exhausted vitality than the usual prescriptions of interminable quinine and beef-tea.

We went down together to an old farm-house on the New Jersey coast in which we had spent a summer years before. The farmer, who was also, according to custom there, captain of a coast-schooner, was trading in the South that winter, and had taken his wife with him. We rented the house, opened it, built up fires and began housekeeping in a couple of hours. The older part of the house, built long before the

Revolution, consisted of log huts joined one to another, through whose vacant rooms and fireless chimneys the wind from the sea whistled drearily, but the living-room and chamber which we occupied, with their double doors, red rag-carpet and hearths heaped with blazing logs from the wrecks which strewed the beach, were snug and comfortable enough. Outside, the solitude and silence, even at noonday, were so profound that it was incredible to us that we were but a day's journey from New York. This was surely some forgotten outskirt of the world which we had first discovered. The windows on one side of the living-room opened on the vast sweep of water, swelling and sinking that day gray and sullen under the low wintry sky; and on the other upon a plane of sand as interminable, broken at intervals by swamps overgrown with black bare laurel bushes, by pine woods and by a few lonely fishermen's houses, the surf-boats set up on one end against them, rows of crab-cars and seine-reels fronting the leafless orchards.

When C— and I had visited this coast before it had borrowed a certain gayety and lightness from the summer. The marshes were rich in colour; artists were camping under their yellow umbrellas here and there, catching brilliant effects of sky or water; sportsmen from New York in irreproachable shooting-rig were papping at the snipe among the reeds; the sea and bay were full of white scudding sails. But in winter it lapsed back to its primitive condition; the land seemed to answer the sea out of depths of immeasurable age and silence. The only sign of life was the trail of smoke upward to the clouds from some distant cabin, or a ghostly sail flitting along the far horizon. The sand heaped itself day by day in fantastic unbroken ridges along the beach. The very fences and houses had grown hoary with lichen and gray moss that shivered unwholesomely in the wind. Some of these old log houses had been built two centuries ago by Quaker refugees from England under the proprietary Barclay. They built the houses and settled down in them, so far barred out of the world on this lonely coast that they did not know when their old persecutor Charles was dead. We were almost persuaded that they had forgotten to die themselves when we saw the old gray-coated, slow-moving folk going in and out of these homes, with the same names as those of the men who built them, the same formal tricks of speech and strange superstitions. Indeed, these people usually live to an old age so extreme that it seems as if Death himself forgot this out-of-the-way corner of the world on his rounds. In many of the houses there had been but two generations since the days of the Stuarts, son and father living far beyond the nineteenth century.

A wiry, withered youth of seventy-six, Capt. Jeremiah Holdcomb (who is still living, by the way), whom we met one day on the beach, constituted himself our guide and protector; he took us from farm-house to farm-house by day to make friends with the "old people," always coming in at night to tell us the histories of them and of their houses, and to chuckle boyishly over the "onaccountable notions of them as was gettin' on in years," and to sip a glass of toddy, unctuously smacking his withered lips and wagging his white poll.

One day, as a storm was rising, C— and I led the old man across the garden at an earlier hour than usual to set him safely on his way homeward. A raw nor-easter blew heavily off sea that evening; the sun had not been seen for two days; the fog was banked up to landward in solid wet masses; the landscape was walled in by it until nothing was left in view but our house and the rotted leaves of the garden-beds, half buried now in drifted sand.

"You have never told us the history of this house, captain?" said C—, looking back at the dilapidated log building behind us.

Holdcomb, as I thought, evaded the question at first. The house, he said when C— urged it, had been built by a family named Whyne, and still belonged to them, the young man from whom we rented it being himself only a tenant. The Whynes were of the oldest Quaker stock; the men had always followed the water; they "took to brandy," Holdcomb said, "as a lamb to a dam's milk. Men and women was oneasy, wanderin' folk." But they all came home to this house at the last, which was the reason, he supposed, they were so long-lived. He referred here to a belief which we had found current among these people, that a man's hold upon life was stronger in the house in which he was born than in any other.

"Because that," explained the captain, "is where the yerth first got a grip on him, and that's the last place it'll be loosened. Now, the Whynes all lived in this house to an uncommon old age. That was a kind of backbone of obstinacy in them. I reckon death himself had to have a tough fight with them before he got them under. Old Abner Whyne lived to be 104. He died—let me see—he died just sixty years ago, come January. Priscilla was his youngest da'arter. She's livin' yet; she's got no notion of dyin'. She's the only Whyne, though, that is livin'."

On further inquiry it appeared that this said Priscilla had married a Perot, and, being now a childless widow, occupied the Perot house, another decayed old habitation on the other side of the marshes, to the north.

"She was ninety-two last June," said Holdcomb. "It's thirty years since she has been able to hear thunder. But she keeps a-watchin'

and a-watchin' out of them black eyes of hern. God knows what fur. But whenever I see her I says to myself, 'It'll come to you some day, Priscilla,' says I, 'whatever it be.' She's got an awful holt on livin', that ther woman. All the Whynes had, as I told you. She's a mere shackle of bones, and as deaf as that dead sherk yander, but she's got a kind of life in her yet, sech as these pink-an-white mishy young gells never knowed. I'll take you to see her to-morrow. If she gets a sight of anybody that's come from out of the towns and the crowd, it kind of gives her a fresh start. Yes, we'll go and see her to-morrow," climbing over the bars. "Well, I'll be goin' now. That's all ther is to tell about this house."

"No, no," said C—. "One moment, captain. Those queer squares of brick at the end of the garden, what are they?"

The old man shuffled uneasily: "I don't see no brick. I don't know nothin' about 'em."

"Surely, you can see them—close to the house, almost covered with the entrance to a vault—or they might be graves."

By this time Holdcomb had succeeded in riding his startled face of every glimmer of meaning, "Oh, them!" staring at them with unconcern. "They were there long before I was born. I wouldn't worry myself about them if I was you. They've somethin' to do, 's likely, with them old Whynes that's dead an' gone. I'd let 'em rest. Never dig deep into a rotten ma'ash, 's we say hereabouts."

With that old Jeremiah nobbled quickly away, and C— and I returned to the house, pausing to look curiously at the sunken squares of brick over which the sand had drifted deep. I remember that C— remarked irritably that it was evident that the old man knew for what purpose they had been built there, and chose to conceal it from us.

"There is something evil about them," she added, declaring that whenever she passed them she was conscious of some sudden unpleasant physical influence, as though she had breathed miasma. Her illness had made her peculiarly susceptible to outside influences, real or imaginary. I thought nothing more at the time, therefore, of her assertion, though later circumstances reminded me of it.

The next day we crossed the marshes under Jeremiah's guidance, and found Priscilla in the old Perot house. This woman differed from any other human being I had ever seen in some indescribable way. The peculiar effect of it upon me returns whenever I remember her; I would rather see a ghost than think of that nightmare of a woman.

Age had ravaged and gnawed her away mercilessly; nothing was left of her in the world but a little quick-moving shadow. The delicate features, the restless, bird-like hands, the shrunken outline of shape, made but a silhouette of the actual woman that she once had been. The brown flannel gown and crossed white handkerchief which she wore after the Quaker fashion seemed to me like a load hung upon a ghost. For the rest, she was vivacious, keen, hard; she talked incessantly in a shrill, vehement pipe; our answers necessarily were written or by signs. She welcomed us with a kind of fierce eagerness, examined the cut and material of our clothes, and questioned us about the city and the news of the day with the delight of a prisoner to whose dungeon had come a glimmer of light from the world outside. She chattered in return the gossip of the neighbourhood—gossip which from her lips obscurely hinted at malignant and foul meanings—occasionally rebuffing old Holdcomb with savage contempt.

"But she's not such a bad un," he said, turning deprecatingly to us. "Naterally, she's a kind, decent soul, Priscilla is. But, you see, it's excitement to her to talk that way; all them Whynes must have excitement of some sort or another. The men took to liquor, and the women—Now, Priscilla—" suddenly checking himself: "it's like bein' shut up in jail, what with livin' here alone and the dreadful deafness."

The old creature had gone, moving with a quick, nervous step, to a corner cupboard, from which she brought out a plate of seed-cakes. She stood holding them out to me, poisoning herself on tip-toe, her dark luminous eyes fixed on me from underneath the shaggy white brows.

"No, C—," I said, "this is not a bad woman; she is not immodest nor malignant." Yet I drew back from her. Now I was conscious wherein she differed from other aged people. It was a young woman who looked out of those strange eyes at me. Old Priscilla Perot, in the isolation of her thirty years of deafness, had grown vulgar and bitter in her speech, but back of that was another creature, who was not vulgar, who never spoke. I fancied that it looked out with all the unsatisfied passion and longing of youth through these eyes before me. They seemed perpetually challenging the world to give back something that was lost with a silent, sad entreaty strangely at variance with the shrill, mean talk that came from the woman's lips. I wondered idly when this creature in her had ever lived, and what had killed it, and whether it would ever, in all the ages to come, waken and live again. How many possible human beings, after all, die in each of us and are forgotten before the body gives up too and has to be hidden out of sight!

Old Priscilla went out into the kitchen and bustled aimlessly about. Our coming had made her restless; she laughed without cause; frequent nervous shudders passed over her lean

"It's always the way when any one from the city comes near her," said Jeremiah. "She was main fond of the crowd and of town."

"So I should have guessed," said C—. "Do you notice the dainty dress and the high shoes and jaunty bit of ribbon in her cap? Yet she impresses me strangely, as though she might have had once a much finer, more-delicate nature than she shows to us. She has not always lived here? What is her history?" turning to Holdcomb.

The old fellow gave a scared look at the wan little figure skipping in and out of the dark kitchen: "Lord how should I know? she belongs to them as was dead and gone before my time." To stop short all further inquiry he began talking to her by signs. She perched herself upon the high wooden chair at one side of the fireplace, looking at C—, her head a little to one side.

"She wants to know what changes I remember in this place?" for so Holdcomb had interpreted C—'s question. "Not many—not many; my time has been so short. Now, my father could remember when a good part of Ocean and Monmouth counties was under the sea. Bot he lived to a good age. Under this house where you are there's been dug up sharks' teeth and the backbones of whales. My grandfather, 's likely, could remember when they swam over this field," pursing up her thin lips thoughtfully. "Thee wasn't here in the war of 1812?" turning sharply on C—.

"No."
"I was here; I had come home for the first time from New York then. I watched the English vessels come up the inlet; it was a gusty afternoon like this. They had come up to plunder the farms. The men that weren't friends took their guns and went down to fire on them from the shore."

"And those that were friends?" asked C—. "Took their guns and went along," with a shrill laugh and nod. "Oh, the young people in the house were terribly frightened. It was all I could do to keep their courage up, silly children!"

"Were you not afraid?"
"No. I wasn't young, and had nothing to lose." She had turned her head, with her back to us, and was talking into the darkness. She hurled out the last words with a kind of defiance. "I had nothing to lose."

"True enough!" said Jeremiah, with many wags of head and senile blinks of sympathy; but, catching our inquiring looks, he recovered himself with a sudden deprecatory cough and leaned his chin on his cane, silent and attentive.

"I set the children to barring up the windows," continued Priscilla after a moment's pause, "and then I took a ladder and climbed on to the roof. I put my back against the chimney and my feet on the top rung, and there I saw the fight. Our men hid among the salt grass of the ma'ash and picked 'em off one by one. They were main good shots. I saw Ben Stover aim at a man up on the foremast, and then there was a whiff of smoke and down he went in a lump into the water. They said his dyin' yell was terrible to hear," she added with a chuckle.

"What became of Stover after that?" asked Jeremiah.

"He died when he was a young man—only sixty or thereabout. He used to go up and down the beach lookin' for Kidd's treasure, muttering to himself. They said he went mad because there was blood on his hands, him bein' a Quaker. But I knew different from that; it was the money drove him mad—Kidd's money—he was so sure of findin' it."

She fell back in her chair, breathless with her vehemence. But in a few minutes she sat upright again and thrust her bloodless, peaked face into mine.

"Where did thee say thee came from?"

"New York, mother," sighed Jeremiah.

"New York—a-ah!" drawing in her breath. "I have lived nigh New York—in a country-place three miles from town, but now they tell me it's in the heart of the city, built over with huckster-shops. Doos thee know it?"

I shook my head.
"No, nobody would remember it," she said gently. "I would know it; nothing they could build on it would hide it from me." Her eyes deepened in their sad quiet, the shrill tones softened. For a moment it was the voice of a young woman that we heard.

C— was about to question her, but Jeremiah interposed: "Take care! Don't ask her what she means. Never before sin' I've known her has she spoken of the time when she was in New York. God knows what's drove them words out of her now!"

To change the current of her thought he leaned forward and told her by signs the story of our coming to the Whyne house. I was quite willing that she should be turned from any subjects. I had the uncomfortable feeling when with her that we were dealing with death himself, or with some forgotten part of a past age more alien and incomprehensible than death.

"Thee is livin' in my house?" turning sharply on us. "Yes, it's mine; it will never belong to any but a Whyne. I know every board in it."

Her head dropped on her breast and her eyes were fixed on vacancy. After waiting a few moments, finding that she had apparently forgotten us, we rose to leave her. As C— came up to bid her good-bye she said, "You will come to your house while we are there?"

"I?" She started up, standing erect without her staff; her voice was feebler than a whis-