

stairs again and sat down to her needle-work by the kitchen fire. She had not been thus employed very long when there came an unusually loud peal at the door bell, which startled Christie considerably, with a pious ejaculation she recovered herself and hastened to see who the visitor might be. It was a bright moon-light night, and as the girl threw open the door she saw as plainly as though it were day time, the figure of a man, standing before her. When she first opened the door he stood with his face in the shadow; but suddenly he turned towards her and the moon-light fell full upon his face.

"Oh Lord! Oh! —"

With a shriek Christie let go the handle of the door and fell back a few paces into the hall; where she remained, trembling from head to foot, staring fearfully at what she was fully convinced was an apparition from another world.

"Is Miss Stuart at home?" asked the spirit in a well-known voice.

"Oh! Lord save us! it's a ghost," ejaculated Christie and fled precipitately into the kitchen.

"Why it must be Christie Burton, and she takes me for a ghost," said the visitor with a low, pleasant laugh to himself; and stepping into the hall he went in the direction whither she had disappeared from his sight. Presently he saw the glimmer of a light underneath a door, which he pushed open and found himself in the kitchen.

"Why Christie," he said, going up to the frightened girl, and holding out his hand. "You need not be afraid of me; I am not a ghost; I assure you this hand is flesh and blood," and with a cheery laugh he seized her hand in his and shook it heartily.

"Oh! Mr. Despard; we heard you were dead," cried the poor girl beginning to blubber.

"I know; it was a mistake," he answered gravely.

"But tell me Christie, where is your mistress, is she away from home?"

"She—she is at the concert," sobbed Christie.

"What concert? make haste; there's a good girl."

"At Shaftsbury Hall, sir; but oh Mr. Neal! you won't go there and frighten the life out of my dear mistress, before all the people sure?"

"I will go there; but don't be afraid; she shan't see me; but I will see her, God bless her. She is singing there I suppose?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Christie; and the next moment he had left the house and was striding through the streets in the direction of Shaftsbury Hall, leaving Christie still in a flutter and tremble; one minute crying and the next laughing hysterically, and running about the house in an insane manner, scarce knowing what she did.

By the time Neal reached the Hall it was nearly ten o'clock, he had no ticket but a whispered word to the door-keeper settled that matter and he went in. The house was literally jammed, there was not so much as a camp stool to be had. Several gentlemen were standing, and Neal also was forced to "accommodate himself on his feet," as an Irish friend of mine phrases it. The concert was half over; when our friend entered a quartette performance was going on, two pianos and two violins, the celebrated Mrs. A—, of Hamilton, being one of the violinists. After this, when the applause had died away, a young lady in a wonderful costume of pink silk and white lace came forward and sang in a very sweet but very ordinary voice, 'Let me dream again.' This was loudly encored and with a muttered imprecation upon the fair vocalist, Neal Despard watched her reappear, bowing and smiling, upon the stage; this time she sang a French song, which, truth to tell was understood by very few of the audience; but they applauded loudly and heartily as it behooves a well-bred audience to do; and the young lady in pink made her exit from the stage in a pleasing state of self-satisfaction; as indeed, why should she not? We have all a perfect right to be pleased at our own performances.

And then—there was a loud clapping, and thumping of sticks on the floor and smiles on every face and all eyes turned eagerly to the stage. Neal felt the blood rush to his temples, and a rushing—hissing sound in his ears, a mist swam before his eyes and when it cleared away, he looked—and beheld, Mollie—his Mollie! but oh! she was changed; the blithe, sunny-faced girl was gone and this fair woman stood in her place. We have not time to describe the various emotions that throbbed in his breast as he gazed on the

perfect face of the woman from whom he had parted years ago and whom he still loved passionately; his heart ached with his great longing to clasp her in his arms and kiss her dear lips again, and to hear her voice calling him by his name; the very intensity of his emotion made him turn pale, and his head drooped upon his breast. But hark! she is singing; and every sound is hushed in that great audience; men hold their breaths and listen, as the grand voice rolls forth and fills the hall with its glorious melody. She sang that beautiful, weird song of Salaman's, "I rise from dreams of thee," and the depth and passionate power of her voice and the words themselves seem to hold the vast audience in a thrall; and when the last notes died away the very house shook with thunders of applause. "Encore, encore," is heard on every side, and she is obliged to come forward again.

She waits till silence is obtained and then with simple grace, commenced to sing one of her favorite Scottish songs, "Auld lang syne":

"Should auld acquaintances be forgot
And never brought to mind;
Should auld acquaintances be forgot
And days of auld lang syne?"

"We twa hae run about the braes
And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we've wandered mony a weary fit
Sin' auld lang syne."

"We twa hae paidl't i' the burn
Frae mornin' sun till ev'ning,
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin' auld lang syne."

When Mollie ceases there are tears in many an eye, so deep the tender pathos of her voice, and for a moment the audience do not arouse from the hush that has fallen upon them; but when they do, the applause is greater than before.

The concert is almost over now, and learning that Mollie will not sing again, Neal goes quietly out, and back to the cottage. He felt that he must see Mollie and speak with her to night. The door is opened by Christie, who, thinking it was her mistress, trembled from head to foot with excitement.

"Oh, Mr. Despard! have you seen her, sir?"

"Yes, I have seen but not spoken to her; I thought it would be better to see her here and—that you should prepare her a little, Christie. I will stay in the drawing room, and when you hear her coming, be in the hall to meet her and—tell her—but you understand, Christie, I am sure!"

"Yes sir, leave it to me; you go in there for I hear the sound of wheels coming and it may be her; here sir." She opened the parlor door and he went in, just as a cab was heard to draw up to the gate of the cottage.

Now that the moment had come, he felt as nervous and excited as a school girl, and he trembled as he heard the door open and in the short silence that followed when he knew that Christie was giving the news to her mistress.

A moment later there was a cry, a sound of footsteps; he started forward—but the door was flung open from the outside and then—then his arms were around her, his lips pressed against hers in one long, lingering embrace, and not a sound was heard, but a low sob from the faithful Christie, who closing the door upon them, retired to the kitchen with her apron over her honest, tear-stained face.

When the first emotion of their meeting had calmed down Neal told her how he had met with Sybil Macdonald in Italy and learned from her of the death of her husband and of his dying confession, whereby he (Neal) was freed from all suspicion of guilt; and then she told him of the report which had reached them of his death; of Mollie's grief and illness. In fact, from her he learned all the events which had transpired at home, during his absence, and she urged him to set out for Canada at once; though indeed, he did not require much urging, when he had once been assured of Mollie's faithfulness to him. He was only too anxious then to set off; and actually took leave of the Macdonalds the same day on which he had met them, and had travelled day and night since then. He described his interview with Sybil as extremely painful. She had sent all manner of loving messages to Mollie, but declared that she would not return to her native land for some years to come.