

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

BY E. DEANE.

"What a beautiful girl!" I exclaimed under my breath.

I was leaning against the side of the pier, smoking, and watching the white sails of the fishing boats dipping and rising on the distant horizon, like white birds.

She was with an elderly gentleman. Altho' scarcely past middle age, his hair and mustache were snow white, and his face wore a look of settled melancholy and care. His hand rested on her shoulder tho' there was nothing of the invalid about his walk, and it seemed to me to be more with the motive of controlling her pace, than to assist himself.

She had the loveliest face I had ever seen or dreamt of. Her eyes were of that deep violet hue seldom seen after childhood, shaded by dark curling lashes. Her features, small, but exquisitely chiselled, and the faultless complexion, were framed in a mass of wavy auburn hair, that gleamed in the sunlight like burnished gold. She was a little above the average height, and slender without appearing thin.

As her eyes met mine I was conscious of a little shock. And the remarkable part of it was it was *not a pleasant shock*.

I was so startled that I continued to stare instead of turning my eyes away, as properly and naturally I should have done. So that she was the first to withdraw her gaze, and she did it in such an unseeing and indifferent manner, that I was piqued to an extent I had never before been in my life. There was an air of distinction about both father and daughter—for such was, I felt sure, the relationship—that lent them an additional interest.

Who were they?

They sat down so close to me that I felt compelled to put out my pipe, but I did not feel it equally compulsory for me to move, for they could have chosen other seats farther away, had they wished. Scraps of their conversation reached me distinctly. So far he only had spoken, of the weather, the morning, the sea, in a deep well bred voice. And I began to wait and to long for some remark from her, with a longing that was absurd and inadequate.

At last!

"Father, I wish I could fly. I should like to skim over the top of the waves, resting now and then on their crests, as the seagulls do."

Her voice was soft and low but I was conscious of a second *shock*, and like the first I was totally unable to account for it.

"You would soon tire of imitating the seagulls, my dear, and would wish for your pretty frocks, and your dogs and friends again."

What a matter of fact father! I even felt a little angered, for the girl's wish had found an echo in my own heart, as I watched the gulls fighting over their breakfast of the freshest of fresh fish.

"Yes, I dare say I should tire of it, I so often get tired of—of everything, I think."

What a pathetic remark for such a young girl, I thought. And I glanced quickly at her to see if there was a droop of the sweet mouth, or any dimness in the lovely eyes. But no, she was smiling gaily at her father.

"Fannie says I must give a garden