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Select Poetry.

THE LOOM OF LIFE.

All day, all night, I can hear the jar
Of the loom of life, and near and far
It thrills with its deep and muffled sound,
As tireless the wheels go always round.

Busily, ceaselessly goes the loom,
In the light of day and the midnight's gloom,
The wheels are turning early and late,
And the woof is wound in the warp of Fate.

Click, clack! there's a thread of love woven in;
Click, clack! another of wrong and sin!
What a checkered thing this life will be,
When we see it unrolled in eternity.

Time, with a face like mystery,
And hands as busy as hands can be,
Sits at the loom with arms outspread,
To catch in its meshes each glancing thread.

When shall this wonderful web be done?
In a thousand years, perhaps, or one,
Or to-morrow. Who knoweth? Not you or I;
But the wheels turn on and the shuttles fly.

Ah, sad-eyed weavers, the years are slow,
But each one is nearer the end I know;
And some day the last thread shall be woven in,
God grant it be love instead of sin.

Are we spinners of wool in this life-web—say?
Do we furnish the weaver's a thread each day?
It were better, then, oh my friends, to spin
A beautiful thread than a thread of sin.

THE STREET SINGER.

ABOUT a century ago there lodged in two very small, badly furnished second floor rooms in Cornaby street, Golden Square, London, a middle-aged German musician named Bernhard Dillinger, and his daughter Bertha.

He had resided in England for several years, and, until stricken down by paralysis nine months previous to the opening of this tale, he had held an engagement as one of the *repiano* violins in the orchestra of Her Majesty's Theatre, which at that time was the only Italian Opera House in London.

The two rooms which they inhabited were, though remarkably clean and tidy, wretchedly bare of furniture; for during his long and disastrous illness every available thing they had formerly possessed had been sold at a sore sacrifice from time to time to provide daily bread and supply medical necessities for the helpless invalid.

Poor Bertha! There was nothing—literally nothing whatever in their rooms on which she could raise a single penny. Two common rush bottom chairs, a deal table, the truckle bedstead with its coarse mattress on which her father lay, and an old guitar that hung on the wall, constituted all the furniture that now remained to them. Even her own little couch, which stood in the outer room, she had, unknown to him, sold a fortnight before to procure food and pay a month's rent to their stern landlady; and she had slept upon the hard boards ever since.

As she sat toasting the last morsel of stale bread, which, with a cup of weak tea, was to form her father's last meal for the day, she might well be pardoned if she gave way to feelings of utter despair.

She had hitherto borne her burthen bravely; and though, through all the long tedious months that had worn their dreary course along since he was stricken down, she had scarcely ever left his bedside, but sat hour after hour, day after day, week after week, cheerful, and apparently content; she now felt herself sinking under the complete hopelessness of their future prospects.

She pressed her poor little thin hands convulsively to her forehead and wept bitterly.

But she was not one of those shallow, weak-minded girls who allow themselves to be totally overwhelmed. She had served a long apprenticeship in the grim school of adversity; and now, though her tears still flowed fast, she sat down to reflect as calmly as she could, as to how the "daily bread" was to be provided for the morrow.

After a moment these thoughts were interrupted by the tremulous accents of her father.

"Bertha, darling, I feel half inclined to sleep; go to your pianoforte and sing me that sweet song of Weber's that I so much love; it will lull me to rest."

"You forget, father dear, that our piano is—is disposed of."

"Eh? disposed of, child?—ah! true! true! I did not remember it. I recollect now. But you still have your poor mother's guitar; you have not parted with that? I always strictly forbade you parting with it! No; I see you have not. There it hangs in its old familiar place on the wall."

"Yes, father; I myself would rather starve than to part with this last relic which we possess of my beloved mother; and of those dear old times we were all so happy!" said she, taking the instrument down from the wall, and tuning it with a precision and truth of intonation that betokened a thoroughly practised hand.

"Which song of Weber's am I to sing? You love them all, you know."

"I do—I do. Sing me the one which I adapted to Lord Byron's beautiful words; the 'Farewell' one, I mean."

And she commenced the short symphony of the "Farewell" song, and managed the necessary variations in the accompaniment and got out the light and shade of all the main effects so admirably, while watching her father's poor withered hand unconsciously beating time on the old gray dufile dressing-gown; and sang the words in a fine mezzo-soprana voice with so much expression that it seemed as if Bernhard Dillinger's prophecies about her future celebrity would turn out to be no idle dream.

At the end of the song she found him fast asleep, with a smile upon the rugged old face that absolutely made him look young again.

She laid her guitar down again on the old deal table, rose softly, and gazed on his calm and apparently pleasant slumber with ineffable fondness—kissed him with a scarcely perceptible touch on his lips, and again sat down by the cold fireside to reflect on the best means of procuring a crust of bread, if nothing else, for the next morning's breakfast.

There seemed but one way. Although it might expose her to unspeakable personal discomfit—to degredation in the eyes of the world—there was nothing dishonest in it; she would put it in practice that very evening.

It was neither more or less than this: She would take her guitar and go into some quiet respectable street in which there were old fashioned gentlemen's houses—and sing one or two of her German songs, and trust to providence for something from the residents.

Her father scarcely ever woke for some hours after this parting of the evening; and even if he did, he would only think she had gone to get some necessary provisions for the morrow.

She made her way at first towards Oxford street, and soon found herself near to Portland Chapel, two or three doors from which she noticed several good private houses on the right hand side that she thought would perhaps answer her purpose.

One of these had lights in the parlor, and they all looked as if they belonged to well to do occupants.

The street happened at that moment to be unusually quiet. There was no one passing as she brought out her guitar from beneath her mantle and took her station in the road, close to the curbstone, immediately in front of the house. Her father had appeared so pleased with her improvised accompaniment to the song which she had just sung to him before she left home, that she resolved to commence with it, and though she felt no little tremor as she struck a few preluding chords, yet that soon wore off, and before she had finished the short symphony which led into the song, both hand and voice were as steady as if she had been singing to her poor father in the second floor back.

When she had finished the first verse of the song, she found that a little audience of ten or twelve persons had gathered round; and, much to her secret delight, she received one or two gifts of six pence, and three or four of more. She noticed, too, that the parlor window of the house before which she stood had just been gently raised a few inches, as if to enable its occupants to hear more distinctly, and this gave her hope of a somewhat larger contribution.

And at this moment, although she knew it not, came the crisis of her fate.

The door opened, and a pleasant looking old servant in brown livery came up to her, with a request to walk in, as his master wished to speak to her.

Much to the disappointment of her small audience, who had hoped to hear at least another song, she, after a moment's hesitation, followed him, and was ushered into the back parlor, where she found two gentleman evidently waiting to receive her.

One of them was a rather short, somewhat gray-headed, spruce, dapper little man who wore (even then) old fashioned drab-colored knee-breeches, and long gaiters to match. He spoke, for the most part, through his nose, with a decided snuffle.

The other was taller and dressed in black, in much more modern fashion. He was remarkably thin, had high cheek bones, the flesh of which had fallen in, and, with his prominent Roman nose and pale face, this gave him a melancholy and almost unearthly aspect. His eyes also were unnaturally bright, and altogether he looked, alas! as if destined for an early grave.

"H'm!" said the little gentleman in the drab breeches and gaiters, eyeing her narrowly through his gold spectacles, taking an enormous pinch of snuff from a large silver box which he unearthed from his waistcoat pocket, "h'm! sit down, please."

"Thank you, sir," said Bertha, sitting down, and placing her guitar on the table beside her.

"H'm!" said he, taking another enormous pinch of snuff, and peering at her through his gold spectacles more closely than ever, "you sing very well—too well for a strolling street singer; but how came you to single my house out, of all the thousands of houses in London, for a display of your vocal capabilities?—H'm!"

"Sir, I came into this street by the merest chance. I know nothing of you, or your house; and as from your manner I cannot but conclude that my singing has been distasteful to you, I will relieve you of my presence, and depend upon it, I will not come near your house again!" and so saying, she rose, took up her guitar, and turned to depart.

"H'm!" (this was a more satisfactory grunt, but there was still a strong flavor of doubt in it.) "Stay, stay! my good girl; I did not mean to offend you: but, still, are you quite sure that you didn't know who lived here?"

"Quite sure, sir! I don't think that I was ever in this street before in my life."

"H'm!"

Satisfaction increasing greatly.

"You are not an English girl!"

"My mother was English; my father is a German."

"H'm!"

This was a long, thoughtful grunt.

"You have been taught to sing?"

"I have, sir."

"Who taught you?"

"My father, sir."

"Is he a musician?"

"He is, sir."

"A singer?"

"Not a public singer, sir."

"What then?"

"A professor of the violin and pianoforte."

"H'm!"

A still more satisfactory grunt.

"And you play the piano?"

"I—well, yes—I may venture to say that I do."

"Very well, there's an instrument over there; will you oblige me by letting us hear you?"

"I cannot decline, sir."

The tide was running rapidly, and it looked amazingly like fine weather—for the little dapper man rose up with embarrassment, opened a splendid "grand" which stood beside the back window, drew out the music-stool, and turned it up to what he conceived would be the proper height, and then courteously motioned Bertha to take a seat.

"What on earth will this end in!" murmured she to herself, as she swept her fingers over the keys of the magnificent instrument, and broke into one of Weber's waltzes.

Again Weber—always Weber!—how did this come to pass?

"It came to pass because her father had really and truly taught her scarcely anything else. He had grounded her thoroughly in the scales, and placed all sorts of practical exercises before her; but when it came to anything beyond that, it was Weber, Weber, Weber!—Almost always Carl Maria Weber! She knew nearly the whole of his work by heart, and placed them as they ought to be played. Nothing more need be said.

"H'm!"

This grunt now expressed unbounded satisfaction.

"You sing well, you play well—you're a musician; you know your business.—Now, I am Sir George Smart, director of the music at Convent Garden Theatre, at the Oratorios, and many other places besides. And if you can give me proof that you are a respectable young woman, and place yourself under my care and tutelage I'll bring you out, and make your fortune."

Poor Bertha was fairly staggered at this announcement. The realization of such a prospect would bring back comfort, and perhaps, even health, to her dear father. She could hardly believe that it was not all a dream.

But what had become of the bright-eyed, emaciated and cadaverous-looking Roman-nosed gentleman during all this time?

He had sat in the corner by the fire, closely observant of all that passed, and had not spoken a word.

But he now rose slowly, and apparently with some difficulty, from his seat, and in very broken English, with strong German accent, said to her:

"Your *fader* is German!"

Bertha, who from the pronunciation of the word father, found that she was speaking to one of her own countrymen, immediately answered:

"Ja, mein Herr."

And the conversation that ensued between them was thenceforth carried on in their native tongue. It was to the following effect:

"You have been taught music only by your father?"

"Only by him sir."

"Both to sing and also to play the piano-forte?"

"Yes, sir."

"You never had any other instructor?"

"Except for my guitar. My poor mother taught me that."

"Do you play on any other instrument?"

"A little on the violin, but not much. My father insisted that I should learn it to a certain extent, in order to keep my ear in tune."

"Aha! What age are you?"

"I am twenty-two, sir."

"And how long have you been singing about the streets?"

"To-night is the first, sir."

"May I ask what caused you to take such a step?"

"Sir, my father is helplessly stricken down with paralysis; we are penniless; and I did it unknown to him to provide food for to-morrow."

"And where do you live?"

"I live with my father in Carnaby street, Golden Square."

"And what is your name?"

"Bertha Villinger."

"Villinger?"

"Yes, sir."

"Villinger; what is your father's christian name?"

The question was put with great eagerness, and not a little agitation.

"Bernhard Villinger."

"My God! it is surely he! It is my old friend whom I have not seen for years; he is a violinist?"

"He is, sir; he was a member of the orchestra of Her Majesty's Theatre until this sad dispensation of Providence disabled him."

"It is the same—it is the same! I am sure of it. Sir George this is a country-woman of mine; and I believe her father is a very old friend of whom I have lost sight so many years. I must claim the first right to see to their future welfare!"

"H'm! very well—very well! But anything I can do for them, I'm sure I shall be delighted to—"

"No, no! many thanks, but no! I have your address, my child, and I will call on your father to-morrow early, and make arrangements for your future well-doing; meantime take this, and spare no expense in making your poor father comfortable and happy."

And, thus saying, he placed in her hand a purse which must have contained at least ten sovereigns.

"Oh, sir," said Bertha, scarcely able to speak, "how can I find words to express my gratitude!"

"Nay, nay, my child, say no more, I entreat."

"At least let me have the pleasure of conveying to my father this night the name of the friend who has thus generously assisted us!"

"Never mind that to-night, to-morrow when I see him you shall be told."

Banged Hair or Idiotic Fringe.

TO our sight, there is nothing sadder than a sane woman with her hair banged.

A lunatic might be excused for such an erratic style of hair dressing, but how a woman in the full possession of her faculties, and with the knowledge that she has a character to keep up, can wear her hair banged, is to us, a profound mystery.

From whence came the style? What originated it? Who set it afloat? Nobody on earth can say truthfully that it is beautiful. We have never heard that it was healthy. We never heard of its curing the liver complaint, or the rheumatism. It does not render any one more liable to draw a prize in a lottery. It does not insure wearer against being drowned, or struck by lightning, or bored by sewing machine agents.

It does not make a tall woman look shorter, or a short one taller, or a fat one leaner, and if it is becoming to any human face, then the face has escaped our notice!

It will metamorphose the prettiest girl of our acquaintance into a monstrosity, and for its effects on a plain woman!—may the saints deliver us from seeing it!

It sets our teeth on edge! It imparts to the average female face the most discouraged, woe-begone, done-for generally expression, we have ever seen—as if the person had played her last card, got euchred, and was ready to sell out cheap to the first purchaser.

Just imagine Lady Washington with her hair banged! Think of Barbara Fritchie, waving the flag in Stonewall Jackson's face, with her hair banged! Picture to yourself Joan of Arc leading her troops to victory with her hair banged!

A woman in this style of hair arrangement resembles a shetland pony, which has been well groomed, and which is in doubt and uncertainty, as if she felt a little anxious lest the thatch on her forehead might not be securely fastened, or that it suddenly might go back on her, and show something which ought not to be seen.

We always commiserate the women whose hair is banged. We feel like asking her if there is anything we can do for her. She appears to us like a woman in trouble. We speak softly to her as if ordinary tones might jar on her nerves. We wouldn't offer her a subscription paper for the world! Nor be glad if anybody trod on the tail of her dress, or squirted tobacco juice on her velvet mantle.

We look at her and wonder how she would seem with that mask taken off her forehead. We wonder if she has got moth patches on her temples, or a mole on her classic brow, or a "cowlick," or a colony of pimples and "black heads." Her forehead is to us as profound a mystery as fortune-telling, or psychomancy, or materialization; and we get so full of doubt over it that we would give half a dollar to see the fringe lifted, and the things that are under it brought forth to light of day.

We wonder if she admires herself in the glass? If she thinks bangs are bewitching? If she never wishes she had not cut that hair off, and so condemned herself to wear her hair that way, willy, nilly? Does her husband admire it? Does he never sneer at it behind his newspaper? Does he ever tell her he wishes she had as pretty a forehead as Miss Smith? Does he ever call her an angel, and think to himself how an angel would look in bangs?

But what is the use of conjecturing? Fashion is omnipotent; so is folly; and we doubt that somewhere in this world, to-day, somebody is saying, "Bangs are so becoming!"