

MRS. CROSBY ADAMS

ADELAIDE PORTER

Intermingled with childhood memories of my father, my mother, picnics, parties, and such, is picture after picture of Mrs. Crosby Adams. To be perfectly frank, I possessed all of seven years before I had ever heard of her. And then the subject of music lessons was brought up. My musical training had been somewhat slighted, consisting only of some schoolroom singing, so it was decided that I should study music with a competent teacher in town, who was a former pupil of Mrs. Adams. I continued with her for one year, during which time the name of Mrs. Adams was mentioned constantly. It was spoken in awe, however, and I began to think of the musician as a goddess to be put on a pedestal. Consequently when I was told, one day, that I was to start music lessons with Mrs. Adams the next, I was very nearly terrified.

After a sleepless night and a troubled morning had passed, I dolefully gathered up my music, wishing I were a million miles away. When we (my mother was with me) were in sight of "The-House-in-the-Woods," my hands got clammy and my heart sank. Slowly I followed my mother up the steps and onto the porch. The door opened before we could knock. I looked at the person standing in the door, blinked, and looked again. For there was, not a tall awe-inspiring, commanding figure, but a tiny, beautiful lady. She was dressed most enchantingly in a pink dress, and she had beautiful snow-white hair; but this was not the only surprise in store for me. Instead of leading me to the piano and commanding that I play the scales I had learned, she said: "Would you like to see my garden?" Then she took my hand and led me through her flower-garden. When we returned into the house she took me to the music room. In this room there were several cabinets, a bookcase, a music file, and, of course, a piano—a Steinway parlor grand. Still I was not led to the piano, but toward the cabinets. In one of them were baskets—all sizes, shapes, colors, and from many lands. There was one so tiny that it was only a blue speck on the white cotton. In the other cabinet were sea-shells—shells from India, shells from China, shells from California, shells from everywhere.

Needless to say I did not dread my next music lesson, but instead I looked forward to it. This only shows why Mrs. Adams is famous the world over as a teacher of children. She first makes them love her, then she makes them love music.

A well known custom of hers is her "Dolls' Music Festival." And, oh, these festivals were such fun! We all brought our dolls, set them carefully on the floor, and then played our very prettiest pieces for them. There were dolls from every country as well as our own. All during the recital there were excited whispers (between the numbers, for we must never, *never* whisper while someone is playing), of "Oh, do you suppose she'll

give us cookies with *candy* on them?" And we were never disappointed, because always at the end of the recital she would give them to us—delicious, wafer-thin, cookies, with tiny squares of clear, colored candy imbedded in the icing on top.

But there were other times, too, when I just sat and listened to her talk. She talked of her life, her work, her flowers. (Once she said: "You know, I'm like the lady who said, 'My heart's in my garden, but not my foot.'")

She was born on a fruit farm near Niagara Falls, N. Y. "My first memory," she says, "is of a stone house with low ceilings and wide window seats. Very modest and unpretentious; but it was home. Two white lilac trees grew on either side of the front door which was shaded by a Japanese honeysuckle with curious leaves and fragrant blossoms. There were five of us to share that home; my father and mother and two sisters, one older and one younger than myself."

It was during her childhood that she acquired a love of nature that has remained with her all her life. It is a love so deep, so intense, that it overpowers all else except that of music, and she often quotes the famous lines of Richard Hovey:

"I am sick of four walls and a ceiling,
I have need of the sky,
I have business with the grass."

She was only six years old when she took her first music lesson, and this lesson was purely accidental. Her mother was going away on a long journey, and when Juliette (for her name was Juliette Graves) asked if she might accompany the other children to their music lessons, the mother said "yes," not dreaming that the child really meant she wanted to take music herself. But she was earnest in her desire to study music, and it is easy to understand her grief when, upon her mother's return, the teacher told her that the child was too young to begin!

A year later, however, she started her music lessons in earnest. She recalls that one of the greatest thrills of her childhood was the installation of a Steinway piano in her home, and another, her substitution as organist in her church.

When she was sixteen, she began studying piano with Mrs. C. S. P. Cary, journeying the sixty miles from her home to that of the teacher on Mondays. Then it was decided that she spend a winter in Rochester, studying piano with Mrs. Cary, and having ensemble lessons with Professor Henri Appy, a noted violinist, who, at one time had toured the country with Jenny Lind. In Mrs. Adams' "Chapters from a Musical Life," she writes of her experience with him: "It is much easier to play solo work than to accompany voice or instrument. The latter means the 'give and take' principle; a freedom and yet obedience to law, at one and the same time."

She was only twenty-one when the position of resident teacher was offered her at Ingham University, at LeRoy, N. Y. She remained here for

elected to the Executive Board of the Music Teachers' National Association. She is an honorary member of the Musicians' Club of Women, of Chicago, and of the Saturday Music Club, of Asheville, as well as of some other organizations.

And so this very short biography of Mrs. Crosby Adams must end. There is not too much one can say of this charming, versatile lady, who, in spite of the years, grows younger every day. I have not mentioned many dates in this summary of her life. They are not important. The important thing is that God has been good to give to the world such a person.



NACHTLIED

Come when the moon
Lies light across the dune
And the purple shadows
Go
To and fro
Across the sand
In stately, rhythmic tread—
The sea and sky are one
Only the path of the moon
Is real across the land.
A gold and sable world
Lies at our command!
—GERTRUDE RAMSEY.



AND HAVING SUNG?

And so I sing a song of Fate;
For time is short and time is long;
And love's a blessing come too late.
And so I sing a song of Fate.
Each man is seeking for his mate,
To sing to her his own heart's song.
And so I sing a song of Fate;
For time is short and time is long.
—ELLEN DEPPE.