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Dinah Craik

Complete Works

Series Eleven

The Complete Works of

DINAH CRAIK

(1826-1887)

Contents

The Complete Works of

DINAH CRAIK

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with introductions by Gill Rossini

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Complete Works of Dinah Craik

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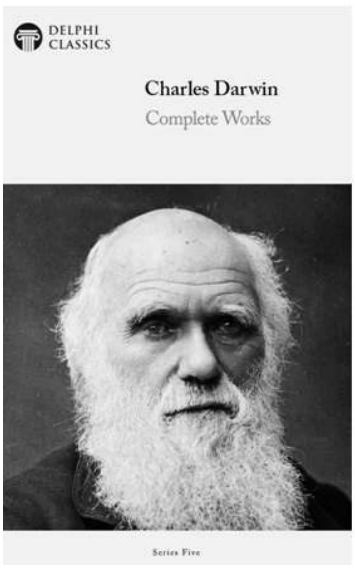
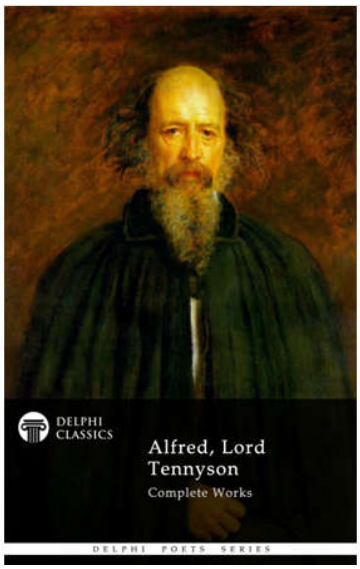
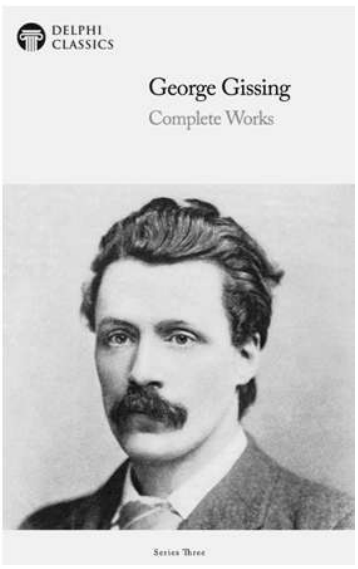
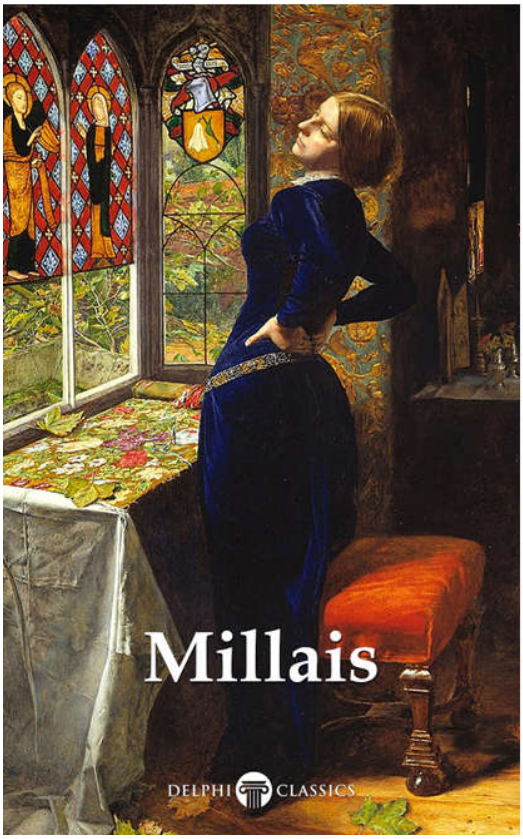
THE VICTORIANS

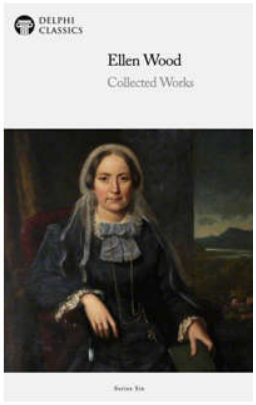


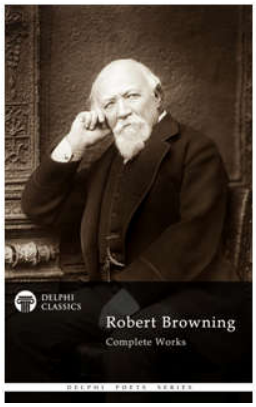




Explore the world of the Victorians…

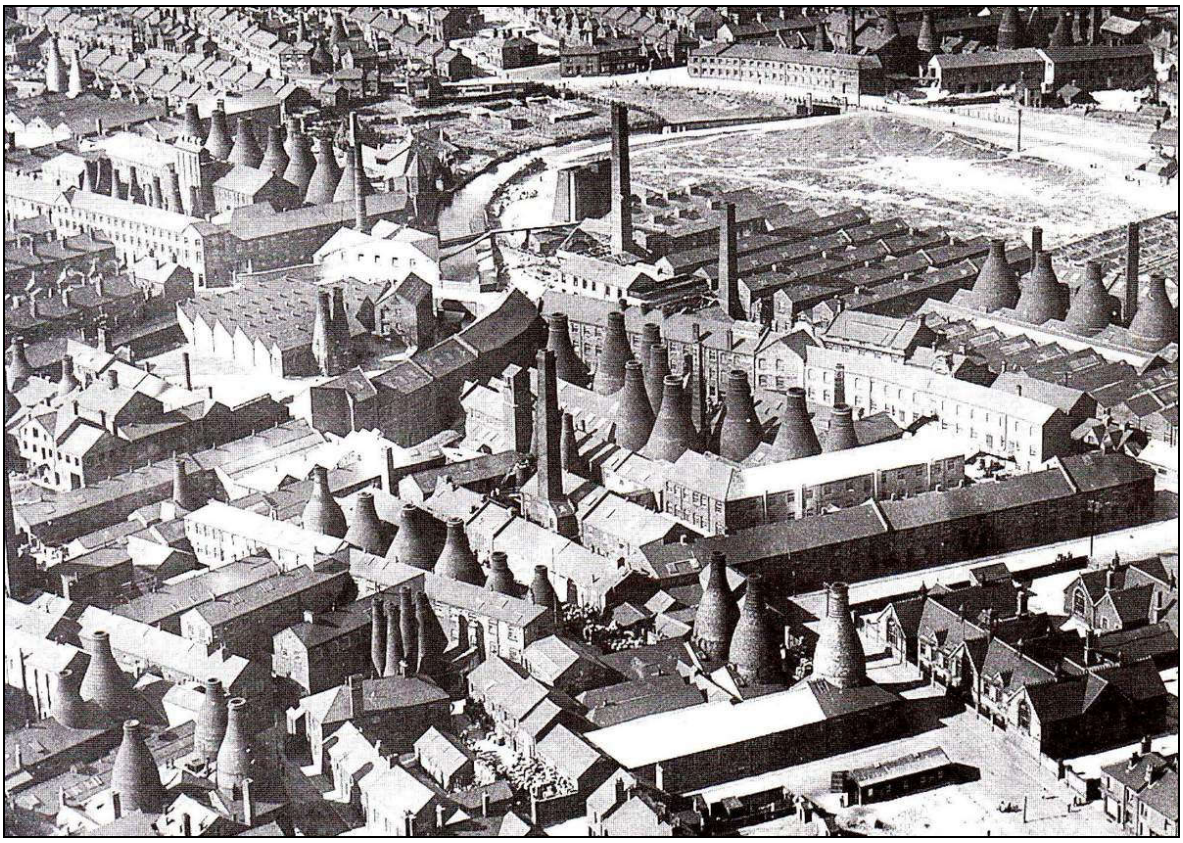






The Novels

Stoke-on-Trent, Hanley, a city in Staffordshire — Craik's birthplace



Victorian Hanley, the home of England's pottery industry

The site of Craik's birthplace, Longfield Cottage, Hartshill. In 1969 The North Staffordshire Medical Research Institute was built here.

The Ogilvies (1849)

This novel was published by Chapman and Hall towards the end of 1849 and it was Craik's first full length novel for adults. The publisher had paid £150 for the copyright, a substantial payment for a female author in her twenties and still learning her craft. Her inspiration was the literary world in which she mixed in London, an upmarket world of polite, affluent and intelligent social connections. A work of fiction based on the *beau monde* of society, it is sometimes referred to as a 'silver fork' novel.

The story opens with the appearance of sixteen-year-old Katharine Ogilvie attending her first 'society' party — a literary soirée — as an adult. Although the girl is now regarded as of courting age, she is still half child, half woman: '…the graceful frankness of childhood is lost and the calm dignity of womanhood has not yet been gained.' Somewhat unkindly, the narrator compares the girl's tall, slim appearance to 'a lettuce run to seed.' Her complexion is sallow, which distracts from her pleasing features and her dark hair is neat and plentiful; but her most beautiful feature is her eyes, which are large, lustrous and expressive, shaded by long luxurious lashes. Katharine is an only child, who has a sheltered upbringing due to her delicate health, spent either as a solitary child or in the company or her cousin Hugh and his sister. Sometimes lonely, she lives through her imagination, with imaginary friends gleaned from the characters of the stories she has read. As she grows older she develops a romantic hero-worship for the poet, Keats, but as she finally leaves childhood behind, she looks forward to companionship of a more adult and romantic nature – however, this is something she can only achieve if she overcomes her shyness.

The evening event to which Katharine, her parents and cousin Hugh have been invited is dazzling to the young girl and she watches the actions and reactions of both hostess and guests with curiosity. Most of the men there are a disappointment to her as they do not resemble the heroes of the many stories she has read – except for one, a tall and graceful man with a calm demeanour and expressive face, dressed elegantly, but simply unlike the other male guests. This captivating man is Mr Paul Lynedon, the son of a cotton manufacturer, who has ambitions to enter parliament. To her almost indescribable delight, Lynedon is invited to her home for a visit and Katharine begins to bestow upon him the attributes of the literary heroes she has loved in the past. Her cousin Eleanor, more grown-up in her thoughts, teases her gently: 'Is Mr Paul Lynedon, then, the only agreeable man in the world?' Despite the fact that Lynedon is drawn more to Eleanor than her cousin, Katharine is increasingly infatuated with the cultured young man. Tragically, the house party is cut short by the death of Katharine's grandfather, but she remains blind to Lynedon's feelings for Eleanor and her own romantic attachment deepens.

Lynedon's feelings for Eleanor have now risen to the point of passion and having concocted an excuse to visit her when she is staying away from home, he declares his passion and begs her to say if she feels the same way about him. The answer comes: he has deceived himself; she does not love him. Deeply hurt, Lynedon resolves to nurse his injured pride by travelling abroad.

Eleanor has the best of reasons for rejecting Lynedon — she has a deep, long standing love for her childhood friend, Philip Wychnor, a love that he returns loyally and wholeheartedly. The contrast between their feelings, the childlike crushes of Katharine and the mercenary husband-hunting of her other cousin, Isabella, is marked.

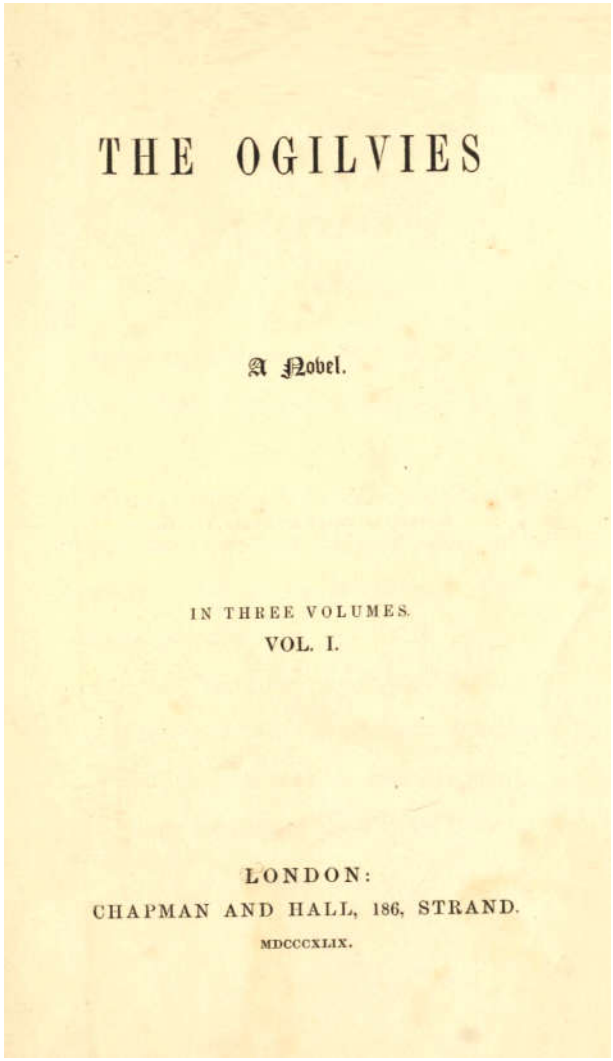
Eleanor and Philip face tribulations; the aunt, whose heir he is, opposes their betrothal as he will not continue to study for his ordination. In order to protect his beloved whilst he pursues his dream of becoming a writer, Philip agrees to delay his marriage indefinitely, but Eleanor vows to wait for him for as long as it takes. Meanwhile, Philip lives in London a rather aimless life bordering on poverty, sustained only by the letters he receives weekly from Eleanor and even as he embarks on part time work as a tutor, he ends up in a hopeless state of nervous and physical collapse.

The story now returns to Katharine and it is three years since she attended her first evening event as an 'adult'. She has blossomed into a tall, elegant and beautiful woman, much to the chagrin of her fortune-hunting cousin, Isabella. Yet, both women are to be married; Katharine is betrothed to Isabella's brother, Hugh, and Isabella is to marry a young lawyer, considered a good catch for her as she has no fortune to bring to the union. However, there is no sense of 'true love' in either match. Katharine is still passionately attached to Paul Lynedon and Isabella is marrying for money and status. How unlike Eleanor and her Philip, who are going through separation and hardships in order to be eventually together, out of a true love for each other! How will each of the three couples fare in the future?

This novel is almost Austen-like in its preoccupation with the 'marriage game' and the machinations of ambitious parents for their sons and daughters; even for the 1840's it has a rather old fashioned feel to it. Nevertheless, the glamour and detail of the lives of the affluent was a subject that sold books and there is plenty of that here, plus the moral high ground in the form of the almost saintly Eleanor and her betrothed.

This is a lengthy book – about 900 pages – and therefore has the luxury of going into the minutiae of the lives of those affluent families of independent means in Victorian England. Every flutter of the eyelashes, turn of phrase and social encounter is offered in almost moment by moment detail. Having said this, there are some authentic touches to the depiction of everyday life in London – on the omnibus, in the hot and dusty parks and squares in the summer and the dialect of the ordinary working man (when he makes a rare appearance). Otherwise, all the talk is of town houses, art galleries, country estates, political careers — and indeed, marriage as a career.

In this book, Craik is very much a traditionalist in her depictions of women other than Katharine – there is little hint here of the campaigning writer she has been identified as being in recent times. Women who are long-married are generally placid, staid, respectable; flirtatious young women do not marry well; virtuous young women, like Eleanor are 'sweet, fair and mild' of countenance and have a 'beautiful soul' – she marries her childhood sweetheart, the reward for her goodness. Passion is seen as dangerously immature, whilst a more pragmatic love grown over time is the ideal. As an example of the romantic fiction of the times, *The Ogilvies* is an ideal starting point.



The first edition's title page

CONTENTS

A sketch of Dinah Craik (née Mulock) completed four years before the publication of her first novel

CHAPTER 1

She, like the hazel twig,
Is straight and slender; and as brown in hue
As hazel nuts, and sweeter than their kernels.
SHAKSPEARE.

"Katharine, Katharine — where is Katharine Ogilvie?"

This call resounded from the entrance-hall of an old family mansion, in which, between the twilight and moonlight of a December evening, a group of young people were assembled.

"Where is she? — why, staying to adorn herself, of course," said a "young lady," the type *par excellence* of that numerous class; being pretty-faced, pretty-spoken, and pretty-mannered. "Was there ever a girl of sixteen who did not spend two hours at the least in dressing for her first evening party? I know I did."

"Very likely," muttered a rather fine-looking young man who stood at the door. "You do the same now, Bella. But Katharine is not one of your sort."

The first speaker tossed her head. "That is a doubtful compliment. Pray, Mr. Hugh Ogilvie, is it meant for your cousin Katharine, or your cousin Bella?" And Miss Isabella Worsley, shaking her multitudinous ringlets, looked up in his face with what she doubtless thought a most bewitching air of *espièglerie*.

But the young man was quite unmoved. He was apparently a simple soul — Mr. Hugh Ogilvie — too simple for such fascinations. "I wish some of you children would go and fetch your cousin. Uncle and aunt are quite ready; and Katharine knows her father will not endure to be kept waiting, even by herself."

"It is all your fault, cousin Hugh," interposed one of the smaller fry which composed the Christmas family-party assembled at Summerwood Park. "I saw Katharine staying to tie up the flowers you sent her. I told her how scarce they were, and how you rode over the country all this morning in search of them," continued the wicked, long-tongued little imp of a boy, causing Hugh to turn very red and walk angrily away, and consequently winning an approving glance from the elder sister of all the juvenile brood, Isabella Worsley.

"Really, Hugh, what a blessing of a cousin you must be!" observed the latter, following him to the foot of the staircase, where he stood restlessly beating his heel upon the stone steps. "One quite envies Katharine in having you so constantly at Summerwood. Why, it is better for her than possessing half-a-dozen brothers, isn't it, now? And I dare say you find her worth a dozen of your sister Eleanor."

Hugh made no audible answer, except beginning a long low whistle — sportsman-fashion.

"I declare, he is calling for Katharine as he does for Juno — how very flattering!" cried Isabella, laughing. "Really, Hugh, this sort of behaviour does not at all match with that elegant evening costume, which, by-the-by, I have not yet sufficiently admired."

“I wish heartily I were out of it,” muttered Hugh. “I had rather a great deal put on my shooting-jacket and go after wild ducks than start for this dull party at Mrs. Lancaster’s. Nothing should have persuaded me to it except” —

“Except Katharine. But here she comes!”

At this moment a young girl descended the stairs. Now, whatever the poets may say, there is not a more uncomfortable and prepossessing age than “sweet sixteen.” The character and manners are then usually alike unformed — the graceful frankness of childhood is lost, and the calm dignity of womanhood has not yet been gained. Katharine Ogilvie was exactly in this transition state, in both mind and person. She had outgrown the roundness of early youth; and her tall thin figure, without being positively awkward, bore a ludicrous resemblance — as the short, plump Miss Worsley often remarked — to a lettuce run to seed, or a hyacinth that *will* stretch out its long lanky leaves with an obstinate determination not to flower. This attenuated appearance was increased by the airy evening dress she wore: — a half-mourning frock, exhibiting her thin neck and long arms, the slenderness of which caused her otherwise well-formed hands to seem somewhat disproportioned. Her features were regular and pleasing; but her dark — almost sallow — complexion prevented their attracting the notice which their classical form deserved. The girl had, however, one beauty, which, when she did chance to lift up her long lashes — a circumstance by no means frequent — was almost startling in its effect. Katharine’s eyes were magnificent; of the darkest yet most limpid hazel. Therein lay the chief expression of her face; and often when the rest of the features were in apparent repose, these strange eyes were suddenly lifted up, revealing such a world of enthusiasm, passion, and tenderness, that her whole form seemed lighted up into beauty.

“Come here, Katharine, and let us all have a look at you!” said Isabella, drawing her shrinking cousin under the light of the hall lamp. “Well, you are dressed tolerably to-night; your hair is neat and pretty enough.” — It was, indeed, very lovely, of a rich purple-black hue, its silken masses being most gracefully folded round her small head. “But, Katharine, child, what makes you so pale? You ought to be delighted at going to this grand soirée; I only wish I had been invited in your stead.”

“So do I, too. Indeed, Bella, it would have been much pleasanter for me to stay at home,” said Katharine, in a low, timid voice, whose music was at least equal to the beauty of her eyes.

“You little simpleton to say so! But I don’t believe a word.”

“You may believe her or not, just as you like, Miss Bella, nobody minds,” answered Hugh, rather angrily, as he drew his young cousin’s arm through his own. “Come, Katharine, don’t be frightened, I’ll take care of you; and we will manage to get through this formidable literary soirée together.”

She clung to him with a grateful and affectionate look, which would certainly once more have roused Isabella’s acrid tongue had not Mr. and Mrs. Ogilvie appeared. After them followed a light-footed graceful girl in deep mourning. She carried a warm shawl, which she wrapped closely round Katharine.

“There’s a good, thoughtful little Nelly,” said Hugh; while Katharine turned round with a quick impulse and kissed her. But she only said, “Good night, dear Eleanor,” — for her young heart had fluttered strangely throughout all this evening. However, there was no time to pause over doubts and trepidations, since her father and mother were already in the carriage; and thither she was herself hurried by Hugh, with an anxious care and tenderness that still further excited Isabella’s envious indignation.

“It is a fine thing to be an only daughter and an heiress,” thought she. “But one can easily see how the case will end. Hugh thinks, of course, that he may as well get the

estate with the title; and uncle Ogilvie will be glad enough to keep both in the family, even if Hugh is not quite so rich as Crœsus. I wonder how much money old Sir James will leave him, though. Anyhow, it is a good match for a little ugly thing like Katharine. But the husband she gets will make matters even, for Hugh Ogilvie is a commonplace, stupid boor. I would not have married him for the world."

Miss Worsley's anger had probably affected her memory, since she came to pay this visit to her maternal grandfather with the firm determination so to "play her cards" as regarded Hugh, that on her departure she might have the certainty of one day revisiting Summerwood as its future mistress.

Let us — thinking of the fearful number of her class who sully and degrade the pure ideal of womanhood — look mournfully on this girl. She had grown wise too soon; wise in the world's evil sense. With her, love had been regarded alternately as a light jest and as a sentimental pretence, at an age when she could not understand its character and ought scarcely to have heard its name; and when the time came for the full heart of womanhood to respond to the mystic, universal touch, there was no answer. The one holy feeling had been frittered away into a number of small fancies, until Isabella, now fully emerged from her boarding-school romance, believed what her mother told her, that "a girl should never fall in love till she is asked to marry, and then make the best match she can." And until this desirable event should happen — which, at five-and-twenty, seemed farther than ever from her earnest longings — Miss Worsley amused herself by carrying on passing flirtations with every agreeable young man she met.

But while Isabella's vain and worldly mind was thus judging by its own baser motives the very different nature of Katharine Ogilvie, the latter sat calmly by Hugh's side, enjoying the dreamy motion of the carriage, and not disposed to murmur at the silence of its occupants; which gave her full liberty to indulge in thought.

"It is very cold," at last observed Mrs. Ogilvie, trying to make the most original observation she could, in order to rouse her husband, who was always exceedingly cross after a doze — a circumstance which she naturally wished to prevent if possible. A "humph" answered her observation.

"Don't you think you will get colder still if you go to sleep, Mr. Ogilvie?" pursued the lady.

"Pray suffer me to decide that. It was very foolish of us to go to this party, all the way to London, on such a wintry night."

"But, my dear, you know Katharine must be brought out some time or other, and Mrs. Lancaster's soirée was such an excellent opportunity for her, since we cannot have a ball at home on account of poor Sir James. Mrs. Lancaster knows all the scientific and literary world — her parties are most brilliant — it is a first-rate introduction for any young girl."

Poor Katharine felt her timidity come over her with added painfulness; and heartily wished herself on the ottoman at her grandfather's feet, instead of on her way to this terrible ordeal. But Hugh gave her hand an encouraging pressure, and she felt comforted. So she listened patiently to her mother's enumeration of all the celebrated people whom she would be sure to meet. After which the good lady, oppressed by her somnolent husband's example, leaned her head back so as not to disarrange her elegant cap, and fell asleep in a few minutes.

The carriage rolled through the unfrequented roads that mark the environs of the metropolis. Katharine sat watching the light which the carriage-lamps threw as they passed, illumining for a moment the formal, leafless hedges, until every trace of rurality was lost in the purely suburban character of the villa-studded road. The young

girl's vision and the most outward fold of her thoughts received all these things; but her inner mind was all the while revolving widely different matters, and chiefly, this unseen world of society, about which she had formed various romantic ideas, the predominant one being that it was a brilliant dazzling compound of the scenes described in Bulwer's "Godolphin," and Mrs. Gore's novels, *passim*.

It is scarcely possible to imagine a girl more utterly ignorant of the realities of life than was Katharine Ogilvie at sixteen. Delicate health had made her childhood solitary, and though fortune had bestowed on her troops of cousin-playfellows, she had known little of any of them excepting Hugh and his sister. She had seen nothing of society, or of the amusements of life, for her rather elderly parents rarely mingled in the world. Mr. and Mrs. Ogilvie were a pattern couple for individual excellence and mutual observance of matrimonial proprieties. United in middle life their existence flowed on in a placid stream, deep, silent, untroubled; their affection towards each other and towards their only child being rather passive than active — though steady, very undemonstrative. So Katharine, whom nature had cast in a different mould, became, as the confiding and clinging helplessness of childhood departed, more and more shut up within herself — looking to no other for amusement, seeking no sharer either in her pleasures or in her cares. A life like this sometimes educes strength and originality of character, but more often causes a morbidness of feeling which contents itself throughout existence with dreaming, not acting. Or if, at length, long-restrained emotions do break out, it is with a terrible flood that sweeps away all before it.

Katharine was by no means sentimental, for the term implies affectation, of which no stain had ever marred her nature. But her whole character was imbued with the wildest, deepest romance; the romance which comes instinctively to a finely constituted mind left to form its own ideal of what is good and true. Her solitary childhood had created an imaginary world in which she lived and moved side by side with its inhabitants. These were the heroes and heroines of the books which she had read, a most heterogeneous mass of literature, and the beings who peopled her own fanciful dreams.

One thing only was wanting to crown her romance. Though she had actually counted sixteen years, Katharine had never even fancied herself "in love," except, perhaps, with "Zanoni." A few vague day-dreams had of late floated over her, causing her to yearn for some companionship, higher and nobler than any she had yet known, something on which she might expend not merely her warm home-affections, already fully bestowed on her parents and on Hugh, but the love of her soul, the worship of her heart and intellect combined. This longing she had of late tried to satisfy by changing her ideal hero, on whom she had hung every possible and impossible perfection, for a real human being, that young poet whose life was itself a poem, Keats. His likeness, which Katharine had hung up in her room, haunted her perpetually, and many a time she sat watching it until she felt for this dead and buried poet a sensation very like the love of which she had read, the strange delicious secret which was to her as yet only a name.

And thus, half a woman and half a child, Katharine Ogilvie was about to pass out of her ideal world, so familiar and so dear, into the real world, of which she knew nothing. No wonder that she was silent and disposed to muse!

"Wake up, little cousin; what are you thinking about?" said Hugh, suddenly.

Katharine started, and her reverie was broken. The painful consciousness that Hugh might smile at her for having been "in the clouds," as he called these fits of abstraction, caused the colour to rise rapidly in her cheek.

"What made you imagine I was thinking at all?"

"Merely because you have been perfectly silent for the last hour. Your papa and mamma have had time to fall comfortably asleep, and I have grown quite weary and cross through not having the pleasant talk that we promised ourselves this morning."

"Dear Hugh! It was very stupid of me."

"Not at all, dear Katharine," Hugh answered, echoing the adjective with an emphasis that deepened its meaning considerably. "Not at all — if you will now tell me what occupied your thoughts so much."

But Katharine, sincere as was her affection for her cousin, felt conscious that he would not understand one-half of the fanciful ideas which had passed through her brain during that long interval of silence. So her reply was the usual compromise which people adopt in such cases.

"I was thinking of several things: — amongst others, of Mrs. Lancaster's party."

Hugh looked rather annoyed. "I thought you did not wish to go, and would much rather have been left at home?"

"Yes, at the last, and yet all this fortnight I have been longing for the day. Hugh, did you ever feel what it is to wish for anything, and dream of it, and wonder about it, until when the time came you grew positively frightened, and almost wished that something would happen to frustrate your first desire?"

"Was this what you have been feeling, Katharine?"

"Perhaps so — I hardly know. I enjoyed the anticipation very much until, from thinking of all the wonderful people I should meet, I began to think about myself. It is a bad thing to think too much about oneself, Hugh — is it not?"

Hugh assented abstractedly. It always gave him much more pleasure to hear Katharine talk than to talk himself; and besides, his conversation was rarely either rapid or brilliant.

Katharine went on.

"It was, after all, very vain and foolish in me to fancy that any one I should meet to-night would notice me in the least. And so I have now come to the determination not to think about myself or my imperfections, but to enjoy this evening as much as possible. Tell me, what great people are we likely to see?"

"There is the Countess of A — , and Lord William B — , and Sir Vivian O — ," said Hugh, naming a few of the minor lights of the aristocracy who lend their feeble radiance to middle-class reunions.

"I do not call these 'great people,'" answered Katharine, in a tone of disappointment. "They are not my heroes and heroines. I want to see great writers, great poets, great painters," she continued, with an energy that made Hugh open his eyes to their utmost width.

"Well, well, you little enthusiast, you will see plenty of that sort of people too."

"*That sort of people*," repeated Katharine, in a low tone, and she shrank into herself, and was silent for five minutes. A feeling of passing vexation even towards Hugh oppressed her; until a chance movement wafted towards her the perfume of her flowers — the flowers to procure which he had ridden for miles over the country that rainy morning. A trifle sways one's feelings sometimes: and Katharine's at once turned towards Hugh with an almost contrite acknowledgment. She sought an opportunity to remove any painful impression that her sudden silence might have given him.

"Well, here we are almost at our journey's end, and papa and mamma are still asleep. We shall have very little more time for our talk, Hugh; so make haste and tell me what occupied *your* thoughts during that long hour of silence?"

"Not now, dear Katharine — not now!"

He spoke — at once more gently and more hurriedly than Hugh Ogilvie was used to speak. Katharine was about to repeat her question, when the carriage stopped.

Contents

CHAPTER 2

Meanwhile the day sinks fast, the sun is set,
And in the lighted hall the guests are met.
On frozen hearts the fiery rain of wine
Falls, and the dew of music more divine
Tempers the deep emotions of the time.

* * *

How many meet who never yet have met,
To part too soon, but never to forget;
But life's familiar veil was now withdrawn,
As the world leaps before an earthquake's dawn.
SHELLEY

Before Katharine had time once more to grow terrified at the sudden realisation of her dreams of the world, she found herself in the brilliant drawing-rooms of Mrs. Lancaster, following in the wake of her stately parents, and clinging with desperate energy to the arm of her cousin Hugh. Her eyes, dazzled and pained by the sudden transition from darkness to light, saw only a moving mass of gay attire which she was utterly unable to individualise. Her ear was bewildered by that scarcely subdued din of many voices which makes literary *conversazioni* in general a sort of polite Babel. Indeed, the young girl's outward organs of observation were for the time quite dazzled; and she recovered herself only on hearing her mother say:

"Mrs. Lancaster, allow me to introduce to you my daughter Katharine."

Now, ever since Mrs. Ogilvie had discovered an old school-fellow in the celebrated Mrs. Lancaster, Katharine had heard continually of the lady in question. Every one talked of her as a "clever woman"— "a blue"— "an extraordinary creature"— "a woman of mind"; and somehow the girl had pictured to herself a tall, masculine, loud-voiced dame. Therefore she was agreeably surprised at seeing before her a lady — certainly not pretty, nor young, except in her attire — but, nevertheless, graceful, from her extreme smallness and delicacy of figure; there was nothing *outré* in her appearance except a peculiar style of head-dress, which set off the shape of her face to much advantage. This face was not remarkable for an intellectual expression, though the features evidently perpetually struggled to attain one. In spite of her semi-tragic glances, compressed lips, and fixed attitudes, Mrs. Lancaster never could succeed in appearing a genius; but was merely an agreeable-looking, stylish little lady.

In that character Katharine was not in the least afraid of her. She felt the light touch of the jewelled fingers, and listened to the blandest and best-modulated welcome that female lips could utter, until the girl's prevailing sentiments were those of intense relief, deep admiration, and undying gratitude towards Mrs. Lancaster.

Immediately afterwards a pale young man, who stood behind the lady, timidly and silently shook hands with Katharine's parents, and then, to her infinite surprise, with herself.

“Who is that gentleman? I don’t know him,” said Katharine, in a whisper, to Hugh. “Why did not mamma introduce me — and why did he not speak?”

“Oh! it is only Mr. Lancaster, Mrs. Lancaster’s husband,” answered Hugh, with a scarcely perceptible smile. “He rarely speaks to anybody, and nobody minds him at all.”

“How very odd!” thought Katharine: whose idea of a husband — when the subject did occupy her mind — was of some noble being to whom the wife could look up with reverent admiration, who was always to take the lead in society, she following after like a loving shadow, but still only a shadow, of himself. Katharine watched Mrs. Lancaster as she flitted about here and there, all smiles and conversation, while the silent husband retreated to a corner; and she thought once more how very strange it was. She expressed this to Hugh, when, after great difficulty, they at last found a seat, and talked together in that deep quietude which is nowhere greater than in a crowded assembly of strangers.

But Hugh did not seem at all surprised. He had not known the Lancasters long, he said, but he believed they were a very happy couple. Mrs. Lancaster was a very superior woman; and perhaps that was the reason why she took the lead rather than her husband.

“*My* husband shall never be a man inferior to myself; I should not love him at all if I could not worship, reverence, look up to him in everything,” said Katharine, her eye dilating and her cheek glowing. But when she caught Hugh’s look fixed upon her with intense astonishment, she suddenly felt conscious that she had said something wrong, and shrank abashed into her corner. She was not disturbed; for Hugh did not answer a word; but once or twice she fancied she heard him sigh.

“Ah, poor Hugh!” thought Katharine, “he imagines his wild cousin will never amend. And yet, I only spoke what I thought. I must not do that any more. Perhaps my thoughts are foolish or wrong, since no one seems to understand them.”

And Katharine, glad as she had felt of Hugh’s society and protection in this gay place of desolation — for so it seemed to her — experienced a feeling very like relief when a lady near them addressed her cousin, and occupied his attention so that she herself could sit still and think. It was an amusement to her to watch the different combinations of the kaleidoscope of moving humanity which passed in review before her: looking at the different individuals, speculating on their characters, or weaving little histories for each. Katharine took most interest in her own sex, who at least approached her idea of outward grace; but “fine gentlemen” of a modern drawing-room did not at all resemble the heroes with which the romance-loving girl had peopled her world. She scarcely bestowed a second glance upon any of them.

At last, while her eyes were vacantly fixed on the door, it opened and admitted — a gentleman. One who — in this instance — truly deserved the name. Katharine looked at him: her gaze was attracted a second time — a third — until it rested permanently on him.

He was, in truth, a man of striking appearance. Not from his personal beauty, for there were many handsomer in the room, but from an inexpressible dignity, composure of manner, and grace of movement, to which his tall figure gave every advantage. His countenance was not disfigured by any of the modern atrocities of moustache and imperial, no starched white cravat hid the outline of his chin and upper throat, and his black crisped hair was thrown back, giving a classic beauty to the whole head. Yet its character was neither Greek nor Roman, but purely English; — the lines firm, sharp, and rather marked, denoted one who had seen much, felt much, and is no longer young. But no description of features would adequately convey an

idea of the nameless air which at once impressed the conviction that this man was different to other men. Even slight singularities of dress — usually puerile and contemptible affectations — were by him made so completely subservient to the wearer, that the most captious could not accuse him of conceit or eccentricity.

This was he on whom Katharine's young eyes rested the moment he entered the room. She watched his face with a vague deepening interest, feeling certain that she had seen it before — it seemed so familiar, yet so new. His form appeared at once to individualise itself from every other in the room; her eye followed it with a pleased consciousness that it brought sunshine wherever it moved. Poor Katharine! The world may laugh as it will at "first impressions " —

Love at first sight, first-born, and heir to all —

but there are in human nature strange and sudden impulses, which, though mysterious in their exercise, and still more so in their causes, are nevertheless realities.

Katharine watched this man for a long time. Sometimes when he came nearer, she listened and caught a few tones of his voice: they were like his face, calm, thoughtful, expressive, and they went to her heart.

"What are you looking at so earnestly, Katharine?"

Katharine had no reason to conceal her thoughts, so she frankly pointed out the object of her contemplation.

"Look at him, Hugh! Has he not a pleasant face?"

Hugh could not see any such face, or would not.

"There! standing by the lady at the harp. I have watched him a long time. I feel sure I must have seen him somewhere before."

"In the clouds, very likely," answered her cousin, with a sharpness rare to his quiet manner. "You could not have seen him anywhere else, for he has but just come from abroad. I have seen him here once before; but no one excepting my romantic little cousin ever called Lynedon handsome."

"Lynedon — Lynedon. Is that his name?"

"Yes; and that is all I know about him. But, Katharine — there, your eyes are wandering after him again. Why, you will be noticed if you look at him so much, even though you do think him handsome."

"I do not," said Katharine, quietly; "but his face seems as if I knew it. It is pleasant to me to look at him, as it is to look at a picture or a statue. However, I will not do so if it is wrong, or at all events rude. I do not know the world so well as you, dear cousin."

Hugh's countenance brightened, and he said no more. Meanwhile, Katharine persevered for at least five minutes in looking in the direction exactly opposite to Mr. Lynedon. At last, casting her eyes in the mirror, she saw the reflection of his face as he stood silent at the opposite end of the room. That face in its thoughtful repose revealed to her the vague likeness which had at once made it seem familiar and dear. In character it strongly resembled the head of Keats, which had been her admiration for so many months. As the fancy struck her Katharine's cheek flushed, and a strange thrill shot through her heart. She looked at him again, and still the likeness seemed to increase. It was a pleasure so new! — and with the aid of that friendly mirror surely there could be nothing wrong in thus watching the living semblance of her poet! So, Katharine gazed and gazed, utterly unconscious that she was drinking in the first draught of that cup which is offered to every human lip: to some, of honey, to others, of gall.

Lynedon still kept close to the harp, until a lady sat down to play and sing. Her voice was touching and beautiful, and its pathos hushed even the noisy murmur around. A foppish, affected young man at one side of the harp went into ecstasies of rapture. Lynedon stood on the other side: — his figure drawn up to its utmost height and his arms folded, intently listening. His head was bent, and half in shadow; but once Katharine thought she saw the lips tremble with deep feeling. She did not wonder, for the tears were in her own eyes.

"Divine, enchanting! Miss Trevor, you sing like an angel," cried the young dandy, taking out his pocket-handkerchief.

Lynedon did not say a single word, but he offered his hand to lead the musician to her seat. She seemed a shy, timid creature, neither fashionable nor beautiful. As they passed, Katharine heard him say in answer to some remark of hers —

"Yes, it gave me pleasure. It is a dear old song to me. I had a little sister who used to sing it once. She had a sweet voice, very like yours."

Katharine longed for an angel's voice, that she might have sung that song. She wondered if his sister lived: but no, from the tone in which he spoke of her she must be dead. He was surely good and affectionate, since he loved his sister. How well *she* must have loved *him*! Katharine had already woven out the whole romance of this stranger's life, and yet she did not even know his Christian name, and he had not once spoken to or even looked at her. Only some time after, as she was in the act of bidding adieu to Mrs. Lancaster, Katharine's flowers fell, and Mr. Lynedon, who stood beside the hostess, stooped and gave them into the young girl's hand. It was a trifling act of courtesy, but he did it as he did everything else, more gracefully than other men. He would have done the same, apparently, to any woman, old or young, ugly or pretty. Katharine felt that he had not even looked in her face. She experienced no surprise or wounded vanity, for she never remembered herself at all. She only thought of him.

"Well, it has been a pleasant evening," said Mrs. Ogilvie, when they were again in the carriage. "Do you think so, Hugh?"

Hugh did indeed: — for there was still the long quiet ride home, with Katharine close beside him, ready to talk over everything, as she had proposed.

"And you, Katharine, love; have you liked your entrance into society?" inquired the mother.

"Yes," said Katharine gently, but briefly. She did not seem half so much disposed to talk as Hugh expected.

"I asked Mrs. Lancaster and her husband to spend a day with us; was I right, Mr. Ogilvie?"

"Certainly, my dear, ask whom you please. Mrs. Lancaster is a woman of very good breeding; and besides, for an intellectual lady and a lover of antiquities there are many curious and remarkable sights near Summerwood Park. Of course, she will come!"

"Not just at present, as she has a friend staying there, a Mr. Lynedon. I did not know whether you would like him to be included."

"By all means, Mrs. Ogilvie. I happened to have a good deal of talk with Mr. Paul Lynedon — a clever, sensible young man; has no conceit about him, like the puppies of our day. He is trying to get into Parliament, admires Sir Robert, and is particularly well read on the currency question. By all means invite Mr. Paul Lynedon."

Katharine's ears drank in all this. Here was new matter added to her little romance. He was about to enter Parliament — a noble career! Katharine was sure he would rise to be a great statesman — a second Canning. And then, his Christian name was Paul.

Most young girls think much of a Christian name; indeed, more or less so does everybody. We have all a sort of ideal nomenclature; names that please us by their euphony, or else make us love them for their associations. Some seem suited to peculiar characters, and when we meet the impersonations of them we are fain to apply our fanciful ideal, saying, “Ah! there’s a bright-faced, clear-hearted Clara;” or, “This girl is surely a Mary, sweet, gentle Mary;” or, “Such an one is the very beau-ideal of a Walter, a Henry, or an Edmund!”

Katharine felt a painful twinge, excusable in a romantic damsel of sixteen, when she found that her hero was called Paul.

“Mr. Paul Lynedon coming to Summerwood,” observed Hugh, with the faintest shade of annoyance perceptible in his tone, “then, Katharine, you will have a splendid opportunity of admiring your handsome hero, and of talking to him too.”

“A man like Mr. Lynedon would never think of talking to such a child as I,” answered Katharine, in a low tone. “And, Hugh, I believe I told you before that I do not think him handsome. There is nothing strikingly beautiful in his features; indeed, I do not consider them any better than yours.”

“Thank you,” said Hugh, good-humouredly. “Then, what made you notice him so much?”

“I can hardly tell, excepting that there seemed in his face something more than beauty — something I never saw before in any other. I cannot describe what it was, the sensation it gave me was so peculiar. But pleasant — yes, I think I had more pleasure in looking at his face than at any I ever saw in all my life.”

“Katharine! I shall be quite jealous soon.”

“You need not. Mr. Paul Lynedon is not my cousin, my old playfellow, and friend. And if he were, I think I should be too much afraid of him ever to feel for him the same affection that I bear to you and Eleanor.”

Hugh looked joyfully in his cousin’s eyes — they were calm and clear. They did not droop, or turn from his. There was not a feeling in Katharine’s heart that she wished to hide.

“What are you and Katharine talking about?” said Mr. Ogilvie, rousing himself from one of his usual taciturn moods. “We cannot hear a word on this side of the carriage, and the lamps are so dim that we can hardly see your faces.”

“Never mind, my dear,” observed Mrs. Ogilvie; “young people generally like talking over a party, and Hugh and Katharine seem always to have plenty to say to one another.” And a quiet smile passed over the matron’s face, showing how skilled she thought herself in the womanly acquirement of reading hearts. And when, an hour after, that worthy lady and affectionate mother lay cogitating over the past evening, she thought with satisfaction that her Katharine had not seemed the least dazzled by her first sight of “the world,” and appeared to care for the attentions of no one save that good, kind, cousin Hugh, who would one day make her such an excellent husband.

While, in the next chamber, Katharine was dreaming one of her wild fantastic dreams, wherein she herself was transformed successively into the heroine of several of her pet romances. And somehow, whenever she looked into the face of the dearly-loved dream-hero, it always changed to the same likeness — the deep dark eyes and black wavy hair of Mr. Paul Lynedon.

Contents

CHAPTER 3

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands,
Every moment lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.
Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might,
Smote the chord of self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight.
TENNYSON.

The mistress of Summerwood was a living homily on the blessings of early rising. Every morning she took her place before the old-fashioned silver urn exactly as the clock struck eight. She had done the same for some eighteen years; during which her fair serene countenance slowly settled into that of a matron of fifty-two. But it still retained its fresh, unwrinkled look, as though the years which had passed over it had been counted by summers only. And certainly, since her marriage, life had been one long summer to Mrs. Ogilvie.

Her husband would rather have missed the daylight than her pleasant face at his breakfast-board; and, winter or summer, there could not be a more cheerful sight than the group assembled round the early meal at Summerwood. For Mr. Ogilvie would allow "no nonsense" of late rising; and even his niece Isabella was forced to give up her fine lady airs and descend at proper time with the young brothers and sisters of whom she was the unwilling guardian. The family circle on the morning after Mrs. Lancaster's party was completed by Hugh, with his bright merry "morning face," — and Eleanor, always serene, though over her still hung the shadow of a grief (now some months past), that of a mother's loss. Katharine, usually the blithest of the group, seemed on this particular day rather thoughtfully inclined. Isabella attributed the fact to "the effects of dissipation," and laughed at her cousin for being so country-bred as to feel overwhelmed with fatigue by only one party on the same night.

"If you lived the life that I do, what would become of you, Katharine? You would be dead in six months. You look half dead now."

"I really do not feel so."

"Then why drink your coffee with such a sentimental air? Did you meet any of our poetical heroes among the great geniuses who, as Hugh says, congregate at Mrs. Lancaster's? Pray, tell us whom you fell in love with last night."

This was spoken in an under tone and with a meaning smile that made Katharine's cheek flush against her will. Her simplicity took in solemn earnest all the careless jests of this young lady; whose first lessons in the art of love had been received at that source of all evil — a fashionable boarding-school.

"I do not understand you, Isabella," was her hurried reply; while Hugh darted across the table the most frowning look his good-tempered face could assume.

"I think, Bella, you might let Katharine eat her breakfast in peace for once!" he exclaimed.

"I beg your pardon, Hugh; don't quite kill me for troubling your dearly-beloved cousin with my unwarrantable curiosity. But, as her breakfast is nearly ended, I should like to hear from her a little about last night, if you will kindly allow her to make the exertion."

Hugh coloured with vexation; and Katharine, resigning herself to her fate, sighed out, “Well, Bella, of what must I tell?”

“Oh, in the first place, of the dresses.”

“I am very sorry, but I did not notice one. Indeed, I afraid I do not care for dress as much as I ought,” continued Katharine, in a deprecating tone. Her sensitive unformed mind was ever painfully alive to ridicule; this weakness constantly subjected her to the influence of the worldly Isabella. But Eleanor Ogilvie came to her aid.

“Katharine, I will relieve Bella, and turn catechist. Did you see any of those ‘celebrities,’ as you call them, about whom you have been thinking and wondering so much all the week?”

“Hugh pointed out several, and it was very interesting to watch them; but” —

“But they were not quite what you expected: — is it not so?”

“Perhaps,” said Katharine, doubtfully, as she took advantage of a general move from table, and drew near the window, Eleanor following. “I wonder why it is that people whose books we read rarely come up to our expectations — at least, not exactly. I have heard this, and last night I found it out for myself. Why is it, Eleanor?”

Eleanor smiled. There was something peculiarly sweet and expressive in Eleanor Ogilvie’s smile.

“Nay, you must not expect me to answer a question which involves the solving of such a problem — I, who am little older than yourself, and have scarcely seen more of the world. But I imagine the reason to be this: that most men write out in their books their inner selves — their deepest and purest feelings — and we form our ideal of them from that. When we meet them in the world, we see only the outer self — perhaps but a rough and clumsy shell — and it often takes some time and a great deal of patience before we can get at the kernel.”

“Bravo, little Nelly!” cried Hugh, coming behind his sister, and putting his two hands on her shoulders. “Why, this is a speech quite *à la* Wychnor, the fellow himself might have said it.”

“Who is Mr. Wychnor?” asked Katharine.

“Did you never hear Eleanor speak of him? Philip Wychnor was her old playfellow: and we met him again this autumn at Mrs. Breynton’s, when we were all staying there together.”

“What is he like?” again inquired Katharine.

“I think I can best answer that,” said Eleanor, turning round, with the faintest rose-tint on her usually colourless cheek; “Philip Wychnor is a nephew of Mrs. Breynton’s. He has great talents — but that is his least gift. He has the faculty of making every one honour and respect him, though he is as yet little more than a boy.”

“A *boy* — why, Nell, he is more than twenty,” interrupted Hugh, with one of his merriest laughs. “Only fancy, Katharine, calling an Oxford undergraduate — a boy!”

Eleanor only smiled, with a composure which had its effect upon the young man, who possessed Katharine’s grand qualification to make a perfect character; “he loved his sister.” Moreover, he felt the influence of her more finely-constituted mind and character to a degree of which he was himself hardly conscious.

“Well, he was a good fellow, this Wychnor, though rather too sentimental and poetical for me. But, there is Aunt Ogilvie calling for Katharine. What a pity that our pleasant talk in the corner must end!”

Katharine bounded away, in answer to her mother’s summons. One circumstance gave her considerable surprise, and yet satisfaction, that at breakfast, and after, amidst all the conversation about Mrs. Lancaster’s *soirée*, no one had ever mentioned Mr. Paul Lynedon. No one even seemed to think of him. Now, in her own reminiscences

of the evening, both dreaming and awake, this one image stood pre-eminent amidst all the rest. It was very odd, surely. But she felt the omission a relief.

"I want you to write a note to Mrs. Lancaster, my love;' observed her mother. "Your papa wishes the Lancasters to visit us while Mr. Lynedon stays with them: — he has taken such a fancy to the young man. Did you see him, Katharine?"

"Yes," said Katharine, and could not find another word for her life.

Her mother did not require one; since she was busy fidgeting about in the writing desk for various instruments of epistolary labour, the absence of which showed how little versed the lady was in the art of correspondence.

"Shall I fetch my own desk, mamma?"

"Ay, do, love; you have everything you want there, and I am not used to writing, especially to such clever people as Mrs. Lancaster."

This latter portion of her mother's sentence rested painfully on Katharine's mind during her journey to her own room and back. It was indeed a formidable thing to write to Mrs. Lancaster, and about Mr. Paul Lynedon! Poor Katharine felt positively alarmed; especially when she remembered that all the care of her governess and masters had never succeeded in making her a calligraphist, and that she now wrote the sorriest hand imaginable. Timidly did she hint this to her mother.

"Why, my dear child, you never cared for your handwriting before; what makes you so particular now? I suppose you are afraid of Mrs. Lancaster. But never mind; for I once heard her say that clever people always write badly, and certainly her own handwriting is a specimen of this."

Katharine laughed; but she did not say a word more of excuse, lest her mother should discover that there was another person's opinion which she had thought of even before Mrs. Lancaster's.

"He will certainly see the letter — she will be sure to show it to him," said Katharine to herself, when she was left alone to fulfil her task. And the idea that Mr. Lynedon's eyes would rest upon her letter — or at the least that he would hear it read — made the writing and composition seem matters of momentous importance. She changed the sentences, and re-arranged them; one said too much, another too little. First, the invitation appeared too warm, and then it was worded in a style so coldly polite that Katharine felt sure a man of his dignity would never accept it. She wrote more copies than she cared to count before the final decision was made. Then, when in the last carefully-indited epistle she came to his name — *Mr. Paul Lynedon* — it was written slowly, almost tremulously. She had said it to herself many times, until it had grown almost a familiar sound, but she had never written it before. It was a simple arrangement of simple letters; and yet, when she had completed the epistle, the one name seemed to her to stand out in bold relief from the rest of the page, distinct and clear, as the face of its owner among all other human faces in that motley crowd.

Let us travel in spirit, whither Katharine's thoughts often wandered that day, and accompany the letter to its destination. If in real life this clairvoyance existed, how many of us would wish to employ it! And with what result? Perhaps to see lines — over which the full heart had poured itself, or stilled its beatings in a vain effort to write carelessly of what it felt so much — glanced over with an idle, passing notice, and thrown aside! Or, perchance, to mark with almost equal pain, that what we wrote as mere "words, words, words" of custom or of courtesy, became to the receiver a mine of treasure, to be pored over and reconstrued again and again, hopefully or despondingly, with feelings of which we knew not, and knowing would only regard in sorrowful pity that they should be thus cast at our feet in vain.

“Here is an invitation,” said Mrs. Lancaster, throwing down Katharine’s precious note among a heap of others. “It concerns you, Lynedon; will you read it?”

“Thank you — presently!” He finished his coffee, and then took up the letter. “It seems a cordial invitation — shall you accept it?”

“If you are also inclined. Summerwood is a pretty place, I believe, with many antiquities in the neighbourhood.”

“That will just suit you,” said Lynedon, smiling, as he remembered the archæological hobby which Mrs. Lancaster had lately mounted, and which she was now riding to death.

“Yes, but you yourself might find some interests even among such quiet folk as the Ogilvies. The old father, Sir James, is in his dotage, and Mr. Ogilvie has considerable influence in the county. He might be of use in this parliamentary scheme of yours: especially as he told me, in his solemn way, how much he liked you.”

“Liked me? Oh, yes, I remember him now. A precise, middle-aged specimen of the genus ‘country gentleman,’ — with a quiet, mild-looking lady always creeping after him. His wife, probably?” He looked at the signature. “‘Katharine Ogilvie,’ — a pretty name, very: it is hers, I suppose?”

“No, the note is from their daughter. You saw her too the other night, a little brown-complexioned girl, who dropped her flowers, and you gave them to her.”

“I really do not remember the fact,” said Paul Lynedon, shaking back his hair. “Was she pretty? Really, my dear Mrs. Lancaster, you fill your house so with beauty that one is perplexed with abundance. But for this visit — I am quite at your service, you know, invariably.”

“Then it is agreed upon. Julian, my love, put it down in my visiting-book, that we may not forget.” Mr. Lancaster did as he was bidden; and his wife and Mr. Lynedon went on with their conversation, during which the latter — who had a habit of always playing with something while he was talking — twisted Katharine’s note into every conceivable shape, finally tearing it into small diamonds, and then again into triangles.

Poor Katharine! — And yet she might not have thought it an unworthy destiny for her letter. Had it not been torn in pieces by Paul Lynedon’s very own fingers?

With Mrs. Lancaster’s acceptance came one from Mr. Lynedon himself: in a few courteous words, which won the marked approbation of the formal Mr. Ogilvie.

“A proper, gentleman-like note. Mr. Lynedon is, as I thought, very superior to the young men of the present day.” His young daughter’s eyes brightened at the words. It was so pleasant to hear her hero praised!

“And read what Mrs. Lancaster says of him,” observed Mrs. Ogilvie, as she handed the lady’s epistle to her husband.

Mr. Ogilvie looked, shook his head, and passed the note on to his daughter. “Read it, Katharine. I never could make out Mrs. Lancaster’s hand.”

Katharine read with a voice wonderfully steady, considering how her little heart fluttered all the time. “‘I thank you for including my friend, Mr. Lynedon, in your invitation; it will give me pleasure to introduce to your circle one whom you will, I trust, esteem as I do. He is a man whose talents will one day raise him very high in the world. He has the minor advantages of a good social position and, I believe, an excellent heart; but these are little compared to his highest possession — a commanding and powerful mind.”

“Is Mrs. Lancaster quite right there?” said Eleanor, lifting up her soft quiet eyes from her work. “She seems to think of Mr. Lynedon’s intellect alone, and to regard no other qualities. Now, he may be a clever man” —

"He *may* be — he is!" cried Katharine, energetically.

Then, seeing that, as usual, her sudden burst of enthusiasm met with but a freezing reception, she grew hot and cold, and heartily wished she could run away.

"Really, Katharine, that is a very positive declaration to be made by a child like you," said her father; "and, besides, what opportunity can you have had of judging of Mr. Paul Lynedon's intellect? Did he speak to you?"

"Oh, no! but I heard him talk to others: that was much better than if he had spoken to me. I liked very much to listen to him; I did not know it was wrong."

"By no means, my love," said Mrs. Ogilvie. "A taste for refined conversation is always becoming in a lady; and when you grow up, and are aware of the position which you hold in the world, I hope you will always have clever men and women in your society. But still, as a child, you should not express quite so decided an opinion — at least not in public. Here, with only your papa, myself, and Eleanor, it signifies little."

Katharine did not at all understand why a right opinion was not right to be expressed at all times and in all places: prudence, reserve, and conventionalism being quite unknown in her young life's exquisite Utopia. But she said nothing; for she always found that arguing on the subject did not avail in the slightest degree. Her father never gave reasons, but merely repeated his opinions in a tone gradually more and more authoritative. The girl's only chance of finding out truth lay in pondering over everything she saw and heard in the depths of her own heart, and thus struggling towards a conclusion. But with the wisest of us this internal course of education is often at first groping through dark ways. Our minds, not only in their powers of acquiring knowledge but in their perceptive and reflective faculties, need a guiding hand as well as our bodies. We must be led awhile before we have strength to walk alone.

Katharine Ogilvie had no one to direct her — not one living soul. She was ever looking towards the light, and in vain. Each glimmering taper she mistook for the fulness of day. Perhaps it was this intense yearning for something whereon to rest — some one from whom to learn wisdom, excellence, truth — who would take her restless, unformed life into his hands, and become at once its law, its guide, its glory, and its delight — perhaps it was this which made her cling with such sudden vehemence to that ideal which she thought she saw in Paul Lynedon. It was not that, according to the rule of young misses of her age, she "fell in love." Katharine would have started with instinctive delicacy had the expression met her ear or the thought entered her mind. Love had as yet little place in her world — except as something that was to come one day, as a vague sentiment, full of poetry, and carrying with it a mysterious charm. Her fanciful interest in Paul Lynedon — a man so much older than and superior to herself — was something akin to what she experienced towards her pet heroes in romances or her favourite poets: an appreciative worship, drawn forth by all that was in them of noble and beautiful —

A devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

Of "falling in love" with or marrying Paul Lynedon she no more thought than of uniting herself in affectionate earthly ties to an angel who guided some "bright particular star."

Yet, in spite of all this child-like unconsciousness of the real nature of the life-phase which was opening upon her, it was strange how much her vague interest in her

hero grew during the few days that intervened between the acceptance of the invitation and its fulfilment. But she kept her thoughts closely locked up in her heart; which, as we have said, was indeed a reserve neither strange nor new to her.

When, a few days after, the departure of the Worsley tribe left Katharine alone with her two cousins Hugh and Eleanor, she felt the restraint a little removed. But still, though she loved them both sincerely, neither they nor any human being had ever passed the circle of the young girl's inner world. Hugh could not — it was beyond his power; and Eleanor, detained for years by the sick couch of her lost mother, had scarcely visited Summerwood. Thus not even she had ever won from Katharine's extreme shyness that friendship and confidence which mere ties of kindred can never command.

Therefore, no hand had yet lifted more than the outer fold of this young heart, trembling, bursting, and thrilling with its full, rich life, and ready at the first sun-gleam to open and pour forth its whole awakened being in a perfume — at once the purest and most passionate form of that essence which we call Love.

On a girl like this, calmer hearts and wiser heads may look with mingled pity and blame. And yet not so — for God never made a more innocent creature than Katharine Ogilvie.

Contents

CHAPTER 4

Like to a good old age released from care,
Journeying in long serenity away,
In such a bright, late quiet, would that I
Might wear out life, like thee, 'midst bowers and brooks,
And, dearer yet, the sunshine of kind looks
And murmur of kind voices ever nigh.
BRYANT.

Children ought to consider themselves in the house of their father as in a temple where nature has placed them, and of which she has made them the priests and the ministers, that they might continually employ themselves in the worship of those deities who gave them being.
HIEROCLES.

Mrs. Lancaster's expected three days' visit necessitated considerable preparation within the quiet precincts of Summerwood; and Katharine was deputed to stay as much as possible by her grandfather's side, in order to amuse him and keep from him the knowledge of any domestic revolutions. This was rather pleasant to the young girl than otherwise; for she was a great favourite with Sir James, and returned his affection by a watchful love above that of most pet grandchildren. Besides, the office gave her more opportunities of indulging in those fits of dreaminess which now more than ever became her delight.

Every morning Hugh looked in upon his grandfather's study. It was called so still, though now this scene of youthful labour had been transformed into the quiet, luxurious asylum of feeble old age. Hugh, as he came with his guns or his fishing-rods, had often glanced half-contemptuously at the various oddities which decorated the chamber of the old politician, ponderous tomes, in century-old bindings, dusty files of newspapers, which chronicled the speeches of Pitt, Fox, and Burke, possibly with the announcement that the orator was "left speaking." And so he yet continued to speak in the mind and memory of Sir James Ogilvie; who by relics so carefully preserved was thus enabled to blend the past and the present. Every morning, when he had listlessly heard the last night's speeches in the *Times*, listening perhaps more to the echoes of his pet granddaughter's young voice than to the eloquence of Macaulay or of Peel, he would make Katharine turn over the old file of newspapers and read the daily chronicle of fifty years ago. Thus, events which had grown dim even in historical recollection acquired the freshness of yesterday; and great men, sharing in the resuscitation, spoke, not from their tombs, but from their old haunts in palace and in senate. To the old man — the last relic of a departed age — this past was a reality; and the stirring, teeming present, a mere shadow, less than a dream.

Katharine never laughed at these vagaries. They were to her strangely sacred, and her fanciful mind cast a poetry over all.

"Still busy with those yellow old pamphlets," said Hugh, putting in his head. A very cheerful face it was, glowing with health and good-temper, a fur cap sitting jauntily on the thick brown curls. "Katharine! will you never have done these readings? at Warren Hastings still, I see."

Katharine knitted her brows, and laid her finger on her lips, as a sign to stop her cousin's thoughtless speech. She looked much prettier in her high close morning dress than in the ball costume she wore when first described; it hid her thinness, and left to her girlish figure its natural gender and airy grace. She sat on a footstool, leaning against her grandfather's arm-chair, with pamphlets and papers all scattered around. Sir James, a little, spare, withered old man, whose sole remnant of life seemed to exist in his bright restless eyes, leaned back in abstraction so perfect, that he only noticed Hugh's entrance by the cessation of the reading.

"Go on, Katharine," he said, in the querulous tone of extreme old age; "why did you stop in the middle of that fine sentence of Mr. Burke's?"

"Hugh has just come in to say good morning, dear grandfather."

"Hugh — what, Sir Hugh Abercrombie! — I am really honoured."

Hugh could not help laughing; at which Sir James turned sharply round, and, as he recognised his grandson, his keen, glittering eyes wore an expression of annoyance.

"You are exceedingly rude, sir! Go away, and do not interrupt us again."

"Very well, grandfather. I only came to say how d'ye do to you, and to have a word with my little cousin here. Katharine," he continued, lowering his voice, "I met your mamma on the stairs, and she desired me to say that you must try to make Sir James understand about these visitors, the Lancasters — you know they come to-morrow, more's the pity." And Hugh's face grew clouded, while Katharine's brightened considerably.

"Mamma told him yesterday — I heard her."

"Ay, but he did not seem to make it out clearly, and was rather cross. Now, you can persuade grandfather to anything, and I don't wonder at it," continued Hugh, looking fondly in her face as she stood in the window, whither he had drawn her aside.

"Very well, I'll try; and now run away, and good success to your skating, which I see is to be your amusement to-day."

"But, Katharine, I shall be so dull alone. Will nobody come and see me skate this fine morning?"

"How vain you are, cousin Hugh," laughed Katharine. "But it will soon be grandpapa's lunch-time, and then I shall be at liberty, and will come to the pond. So goodbye for a little."

"Good-bye, and mind you come, Katharine." And as Hugh departed, his cousin heard him whistling all the way down the staircase, "My love she's but a lassie yet" — his favourite tune.

"How tiresome that boy is," said the old man. Katharine did not answer, but again took her place and began to read. Sir James tried to compose himself to listen, but the thread was broken, and would not reunite. Besides, the interruption had made her own thoughts wander, and she read on mechanically, so that her voice took a monotonous tone. Her grandfather nodded over the very exordium of Warren Hastings' defence, and at last pronounced that it seemed not quite so interesting as it was at first; so he thought they had read enough for to-day. Katharine felt really glad; she put by all the books and papers with alacrity, and took her place again at her grandfather's feet.

Now was the time for introducing the subject committed to her care. There could hardly be a more favourable moment, for she had got fast hold of her grandfather's thin, yellow, withered fingers, and was playing with the magnificent rings which still daily adorned them. Nothing contributed so much to the old baronet's good-humour as to have his rings admired, and he began to tell Katharine, for the hundredth time, how one had been a bequest of Lord Chatham's, and how another, a magnificent

diamond, had been placed on his finger by King George the Third, with his own royal and friendly hand. The young girl listened patiently, and with the interest that affection always taught her to assume. Then, taking advantage of a pause, she observed:

"I think, grandpapa, you, who are so fond of antique rings, will like to see one that Mrs. Lancaster wears. I will ask her to show it you when she comes to-morrow."

"Who comes to-morrow, child? Who is Mrs. Lancaster?"

"A very clever, agreeable woman. Don't you remember that mamma invited her to spend a few days here — she and her husband. And a friend of theirs — Mr. Lynedon."

"Lynedon — Lynedon. Ah! I remember him well. Mr. — no, he was afterwards made Viscount Lynedon, of Lynedon. A clever speaker —— a perfect gentleman. He and I were both presented at the King's first levee. I shall be delighted to see Lord Lynedon."

"I do not think this is the gentleman you mean, grandpapa," said Katharine, meekly, while the faintest shadow of a smile hovered over her lips. "He is not Viscount, only Mr. Lynedon — Paul Lynedon; but he may be related to your old friend."

"Ah — yes, yes — just so," repeated Sir James, his look of disappointment brightening. "Of course he is! Let me see; the Lynedons were a large family. There was a second brother, and his name was a Scripture one — Philip, or Stephen, or Paul. Yes, yes! it must be Paul, and this is he. Right, Katharine."

Katharine hardly knew what to answer.

"I shall be delighted — honoured — to receive Mr. Paul Lynedon at Summerwood," continued the old baronet. "I well remember Lord Lynedon — a fine, tall, noble-looking man. I wonder if his brother is like him. Describe Mr. Paul Lynedon, Katharine."

"I am afraid you are still a little mistaken, dear grandpapa," said the girl, caressingly. "This Mr. Lynedon is not an old man, while your friend must be" —

"Eh, eh, Katharine; what are you saying?" sharply asked Sir James. "I am not so very old, am I? Let me see; it is since then only twenty — forty — fifty years; ah, fifty years, fifty years," repeated he, counting on his trembling fingers. "Yes, child, you are right, it cannot be the same; he must have been dead long ago. I was a youth then, and he a man of fifty. Yes! yes! all are gone; there is nobody left but me." And the old man fell back in his chair.

Katharine leaned her rosy cheek against his withered and wrinkled one, saying gently, "Dear grandpapa, don't talk so. What does it matter being old when you know we all love you. And though this gentleman is not the friend you knew, I am sure you will like him very much. Papa does. And you know he may be one of your Lynedons after all, and able to talk to you about your old friends."

"Ah, well, little Katharine, you may be right. And it is worth being eighty years of age to find oneself grandfather to a little coaxing, loving, smiling thing like you."

The old man laughed, but there were tears in his eyes, and Katharine hastened to beguile them away by all the playful wiles of which she was mistress. By the time the arrival of lunch set her free, all Sir James's equanimity was restored. He even remembered that he had been rather hasty towards Hugh, and sent a message, intended to be propitiatory, challenging his grandson to an hour's backgammon in the study after dinner. Moreover, he made many inquiries concerning the way in which Katharine intended to pass the rest of the day; and, learning that she was going to watch Hugh's skating, he delayed her for full five minutes with a circumstantial

account of various remarkable frosts that had happened in the days of his youth — and of what his nurse had told him of the fair that was held on the Thames in the winter of 1713. “But that, my dear, was before my time, you know.”

“And, grandpapa,” whispered Katharine, when she had listened patiently to all, “you will think of the visitors coming to-morrow, and be sure to like Mr. Paul Lynedon?”

“Mr. Paul Lynedon! Oh, I remember now,” answered the old man, making an effort to collect his wandering ideas. “Yes, yes — the Viscount’s son. Of course, Katharine, I shall be delighted to see him. You must not forget to tell him so.”

Katharine made no attempt to explain the matter further, satisfied that her grandfather’s mind was properly inclined to courtesy and kindly feeling. She went away perfectly content with the duty so well fulfilled, not reflecting that in their conversation she had entirely forgotten all that was to have been said about Mr. and Mrs. Lancaster.

Contents

CHAPTER 5

In thee
Is nothing sudden, nothing single;
Like two streams of incense free
From one censer, in one shrine
Thought and motion mingle.

* * * *

They were modulated so
To an unheard melody
Which lives about thee, and a sweep
Of richest pauses, evermore
Drawn from each ether, mellow, deep,
— Who may express thee, Eleanore?
TENNYSON.

Though Katharine had been busy all the morning, aiding her mother in the various cares of the mistress of Summerwood Park, still, when the time approached for the arrival of the guests, she did not feel inclined to rest. Hugh had taken himself off for the day on a shooting excursion; Eleanor was occupied in her own room; and when all was prepared for the visitors, Katharine had no resource but to wander about the house. She did so, roaming from room to room with a vague restlessness that would not pass away. Every five minutes she went to the hall-window and listened for the sound of carriage-wheels; then she pondered and speculated about the Lancasters, ransacking her memory for all that she had ever heard about them, and wondering if Mrs. Lancaster would seem as agreeable as the other night. Wondering, too, if one always liked people as well the second time of meeting as the first. And if Mr. Lynedon — She stood a long time before that favourite head of Keats, thinking less of it than of Mr. Lynedon.

The quick-coming twilight of winter drew nigh, and the guests had not arrived. Katharine's pleasurable anticipations faded a little, and she felt vexed at herself for having wasted so much time in thinking about these new acquaintances. Conscience-smitten for the little notice she had taken of her cousin during that day, she proceeded to Eleanor's room, and finding it empty, followed her into the garden.

Eleanor sat quietly in the conservatory, her favourite place of study. A book lay on her lap, but she was hardly reading; her eyes wandered as her thoughts were doing. Eleanor, like her cousin, was still at that period of life when dreaming is so pleasant

There can hardly be a better opportunity than the present to sketch the personal likeness of Eleanor Ogilvie. It shall not be done in rose-colours, adorned with similes taken from flowers, shells, sky, earth, and air, for true beauty is independent of all these. Eleanor had no angel's face, only a woman's; sweet, fair, and mild as a woman's should be. Her beautiful soul shone through it, and therefore it became itself beautiful. Not that it was without a certain grace of form, but still that quality was subservient to the higher one, of expression, without which, features as perfect as the sculptor's chisel can create, are more soulless than the marble itself. Eleanor's

countenance might have been passed over as merely “rather pretty,” except for the inexpressible charm cast over it by each varying emotion of her mind. After all, the truest beauty is not that which suddenly dazzles and fascinates, but that which steals upon us insensibly. Let us each call up to memory the faces that have been most pleasant to us — those that we have loved best to look upon, that now rise most vividly before us in solitude, and oftenest haunt our slumbers — and we shall usually find them not the most perfect in form, but the sweetest in expression. Yet this generalising is idle. Every human mind has its own ideal of beauty, and almost always this ideal is based upon some individual reality. Therefore we will leave Eleanor Ogilvie’s face in that dim mystery out of which each can create the image he loves best.

Katharine, even, was struck by it. The contrast was great between her own restless movements and her cousin’s perfect repose. “Why, Eleanor, how quiet you are here, when all the house is full of hurry and expectation? You seem almost to have forgotten that the Lancasters are coming?”

“Oh, no; for you see I am already dressed for dinner.”

“So you are; and how well you look, with your high black dress and your smooth fair hair. You are quite a picture!” And removing her cousin’s fur wrappings, she regarded her with a sincere admiration, almost childish in its demonstration. “I wonder what he — that is, Mrs. Lancaster — will think of you?”

“You forget, Katharine, that I am not a stranger; she has seen me before. Hugh and I spent one evening with her when we were in town last year.”

“And how did you like her? — and is not her house the most charming place in the world?” cried Katharine.

“That is rather going into extremes. But she seemed pleasing and gracious to everybody, and I met many agreeable people at her house that night.”

“Mr. Paul Lynedon?” inquired Katharine, rather hesitatingly; “was he there?”

Eleanor could hardly help smiling. “Is Mr. Paul Lynedon, then, the only agreeable person in the world? Well, I am not quite sure, but I believe that he was of the party.”

“Why did you not tell us so the other day?”

“I really quite forgot it at the time.”

Amazing, thought Katharine, that she should not be quite certain whether she had met Mr. Lynedon, or, having met him, could ever forget the fact. In her own mind, Katharine set down her cousin as a girl of very little discrimination. But she did not pursue the conversation, for Eleanor, closing her book, prepared to return to the house.

“Let us take one turn before we go in, Katharine. There will be plenty of time, for now the Lancasters will probably not be here until dinner. Tell me what you have been doing all day.”

“Following mamma, and delivering messages to cook and housemaids, until my poor brain is quite bewildered. Indeed I never could take an interest in such things; I wish mamma would leave me alone, and not try to make a sensible woman of me. I had much rather be with grandpapa, and hear him talk about public matters, and read the speeches in the newspaper. Eleanor, I was never born for this dull quiet life; I want to do something — to be something.”

“To be what, dear Katharine?” said Eleanor, to whom this confidence was new; but it burst from the girl’s lips under shelter of the twilight, and in consequence of the restlessness of her mind.

“I hardly know what exactly; but I think I should like to be in Mrs. Lancaster’s position — clever, with plenty of society, able to write, speak, and think, just as I liked — quite independent of everybody.”

“I do not think there is, or was, any individual in this world, certainly no woman, of whom one could say that she was ‘quite independent of everybody.’ Nay, even were it possible, I doubt if such a life would be a happy one, and, what is still more, if it would be useful and full of good to others, which is the highest happiness of all.”

“Eleanor,” said Katharine, looking fixedly in her face, “you reason where I only feel.”

“Do you think I never feel, dear?” answered Eleanor, while her own peculiar moonlight smile cast a grave sweetness over her countenance. “But we will talk of these things another time. I am so glad we have begun to talk of them. Those are rarely very close friends who keep shut-up corners in their hearts. You must let me peep into a few of yours, my little cousin.”

“Suppose you find nothing but cobwebs and dust there?” said Katharine, laughing.

“I will sweep them all away with a little broom I keep by me for the purpose,” returned Eleanor, in the same strain.

“What is it?”

“It is made of a flowering plant that grows in every quiet dell throughout the world, and which you may often find when you least look for it. It is gathered in the fresh sunshine of Hope, and tied together with a ground-creeper called Patience, which, though as slender as a thread, binds all together with the strength of an iron chain. I would engage to brighten up the most unsightly heart-chambers with this broom of mine. Now, what is it made of?”

“I guess, dear Nelly, I guess,” cried Katharine, clapping her hands with that sudden child-like ebullition of pleasure which was natural to her, and, both laughing merrily, with a brightness in their eyes, and a glow on their cheeks, the two girls entered the open hall-door. Bonnets in hand, and shawls carelessly dangling, they passed into the drawing-room.

There, talking to Mr. Ogilvie, and having evidently just arrived, stood the Lancasters and Mr. Paul Lynedon!

Contents

CHAPTER 6

A WOMAN'S LOVE is essentially lonely, and spiritual in its nature. It is the heathenism of the heart: she has herself created the glory and beauty with which the idol of her altar stands invested — L. E. L.

There was no retreat for Katharine — no rescue from the suddenness of this first interview, which, when in perspective, she had viewed in every phase of probability, fancying all she should do and say, and all *they* might do and say, in a mental rehearsal, which she supposed included every possible chance. But the momentous event had presented itself in a light quite unforeseen, and Katharine's only resource was to shrink behind her cousin as much as possible. Eleanor advanced in her usual composed manner to Mrs. Lancaster.

"My dear Miss Ogilvie, I am delighted to see you," said the lady, with her customary demonstration of cordiality — at least the amount of it which was consistent with gracefulness of deportment. "Julian, here is your young favourite. Mr. Lynedon, allow me to present you to" —

"Katharine Ogilvie, I believe," said Paul Lynedon, bowing over Eleanor's hand.

"No, no; I really beg pardon," cried Mrs. Lancaster, as Katharine's shrinking, blushing countenance met her eye. "This is the real fair one, the right Katharine. I must apologise for my short sight. My dearest Miss Ogilvie," taking Katharine's hand, "allow me to thank you for your charming note, and to present to you my friend Mr. Lynedon."

Paul Lynedon was a perfect gentleman. No passing blunder ever altered his composure or courtesy. His bend was as graceful over Katharine's timidly-offered hand as it had been over her cousin's. His compliments, addressed to the shy, awkward girl, were exactly as courteous as those of which Eleanor had been the recipient. Yet in this he was not insincere. The polish of his manners originated in the only quality which makes a true gentleman, and which no formal, Chesterfield-like education can bestow — a natural refinement, and an instinctive wish to give pleasure to others. This true urbanity never fails in its results, nor was it unsuccessful now. In a few moments Katharine became sufficiently reassured to lift her eyes from the carpet to Paul Lynedon's face. It was a little different from the one which had haunted her memory during this long ten days, for imagination is rarely quite faithful at first. But still it wore the same inexpressible charm. She dared look at it now, for the eyes were turned away — following Eleanor.

Thither Mrs. Lancaster's also followed. "I am really ashamed to have mistaken you for the moment, my dear young friend," said that lady, the universality of whose friendship was its chief recommendation.

"It is some time since you saw me," answered Eleanor's quiet voice, "and you must see so many people."

"True — true, my dear. You have been quite well since I met you last, and that charming young man, your brother — Peter?"

"Hugh," said Eleanor, smiling. "He is quite well, I believe; he made one of your guests the other day."

"Of course — oh yes!" And Mrs. Lancaster's lips formed themselves into a fixed smile, while her eyes wandered abstractedly about the room. She had in perfection the faculty which is so useful in general society, that of being able to train the features into the appearance of polite attention, attended by just so much of the mind as will suffice for suitable answers.

Mr. Paul Lynedon was not quite so much *au fait* at this; he had not lived quite so long in the world as his excellent friend Mrs. Lancaster. Therefore, in the conversation which he tried hard to commence with Katharine, he did not succeed in advancing one step beyond the weather, and the distance from London to Summerwood. Perhaps Katharine's own shyness had something to do with this, for though it had been her delight to listen when Paul Lynedon talked to others, the tones of his musical voice, addressed to herself, now oppressed her with a painful timidity. It was positively a relief when Eleanor proposed an adjournment.

When the two cousins re-entered the drawing-room, there was still the same striking contrast between them — Eleanor so calm and self-possessed, Katharine trembling with nervous agitation.

The little party were grouped, as was natural they should be — Mrs. Lancaster conversing with Mr. Ogilvie, while a feeling of hostess-like benignity prompted Mrs. Ogilvie to extract from the taciturn Mr. Lancaster small fragments of conversation relative to the weather, their journey, the country in general, and Summerwood in particular. Paul Lynedon sat aloof, carelessly turning over the leaves of a book, occasionally joining in with a passing remark.

On the entrance of the two girls he rose and displayed the customary courtesies, though in a manner enviably easy and quiet. There is nothing more annoying and uncomfortable to a lady than to enter a room and see every gentleman jump up armed with a chair, ready to perform acts of officious chivalry, which place the recipient in a position infinitely more unpleasant than if she were entirely neglected.

Paul Lynedon began with a commonplace, and, reader, almost all things in life, pleasant friendships, deep, earnest, life-long loves, begin with the same. He made the remark that the view from the hall-windows was — that is, would be in daylight, and in summer time — a very beautiful one; and then he could not help smiling as he thought what a stupid and involved observation he had made.

That very circumstance broke the ice.

"You seem to have a wonderful perception of the beautiful, Mr. Lynedon," said Eleanor. "You see it 'with your mind's eye,' which pierces through the darkness of a winter night, closed shutters, curtains and all." And the good-tempered smile which accompanied her words, fairly removing their sting, caused Paul Lynedon to laugh merrily.

"You have saved me, Miss Eleanor — given me something to talk about, and preserved me from committing myself any more, by unfolding to me a few points in the character of the lady with whom I have the pleasure of conversing."

"What! can you find out my character from that one speech?" said Eleanor, rather amused.

"A little of it."

"Tell me how?"

"Why, in the first place, you have Shakspeare on your tongue, and consequently in your heart. One rarely quotes where one does not love the author; therefore you love Shakspeare, and, as a necessary result, all true poetry. Then my remark — commonplace, forced, and to a certain degree insincere, as I acknowledge it was — made you smile; therefore you have a quick perception of what is inclined to falseness

and affectation, while your condemnation of it is good-tempered and lenient. Have I explained myself, even though I prove my own accuser?"

"Perfectly, though you are rather too harsh upon yourself" answered Eleanor. "What do you say to this sketch of me, Katharine?"

"If Mr. Lynedon means that you are always true in yourself, and always kind towards others, he is quite right," said Katharine.

Paul Lynedon directed towards the warm-hearted speaker a look of more curiosity than he had yet thought fit to bestow upon the "little school-girl."

"Thank you, Miss Ogilvie; that is, I thank you for proving my observations correct. A harmless vanity; yet I fancy they needed no proof but the mere presence of your fair cousin." And, as he bowed, his eyes rested on Eleanor's face admiringly.

No added colour came to that clear cheek; the smile was tranquil and self-possessed, and Paul Lynedon looked almost vexed. The little group were again sinking into small-talk, when a servant came to the door with "Sir James Ogilvie's compliments, and he was impatient for the honour of receiving Mr. Paul Lynedon."

"My father is very old, and has a few peculiarities; will it be agreeable to you to humour him with a visit now?" said Mr. Ogilvie.

"I have told Mr. Lynedon all about Sir James," observed Mrs. Lancaster. "Pray go, you will be so much amused with his oddities," she continued in a low tone. It was meant for an aside, but it jarred painfully on Katharine's ear, which was ever open to all that was said by, or addressed to, Paul Lynedon.

But the young man's only answer was directed to Mr. Ogilvie.

"Pray do not talk about my 'humouring' Sir James; it is to me always not only a duty but a pleasure to show respect to old age."

Katharine's heart beat with delight, and her bright smile had in it something of pride as it rested on the speaker.

"Katharine, show Mr. Lynedon the way to your grandfather's study; you understand him better than any one," said Mrs. Ogilvie.

"May I be permitted?" — And Paul Lynedon led the young girl out of the room with a stately courtesy that made Katharine almost fancy she was escorted by Sir Charles Grandison.

Through the long hall, where the light of modern gas contrasted strangely enough with the quaint panelled walls and ancient mouldings, Katharine and her cavalier passed. She could hardly believe that she was really with him, that her hand rested on his arm, that his actual voice was in her ear, talking with gentle consideration of all things which he thought likely to set the timid girl at her ease.

And there was something so irresistibly winning in Paul's manners, that before they reached Sir James's door Katharine found herself talking frankly of her grandfather, his love for her, his waning intellect, and explaining the misapprehension which had led to his anxiety to see Mr. Lynedon.

"I hardly know whether it would not be as well to let him continue in the fancy," said Katharine. "It certainly gives him pleasure; but then, even to please him, I do not like to deceive dear grandpapa."

"It would not be deceit, for I may really belong to the same family," answered Lynedon as they entered.

The old baronet raised himself on his gold-headed cane and courteously greeted his visitor.

"It is to me an honour and pleasure to welcome my old friend's son. Am I not right in addressing the heir of Viscount Lynedon?"

“My name is Lynedon, and I have no doubt that my father was well acquainted with the name of Sir James Ogilvie,” said Paul, evasively.

Somehow Katharine did not like the subterfuge; and yet it sprang from kindly feeling. She said this to herself until she, became quite satisfied; the more so, as Lynedon replaced the old man in his chair with an air of respectful courtesy, and then, taking a seat beside him, entered into conversation. A most entertaining conversation too — in which he showed himself perfectly acquainted with the history of the long-past era, wherein alone Sir James seemed to exist. Moreover, he appeared to throw his whole mind into the subject with a cordial earnestness that at first excited Katharine’s surprise, and then her warm admiration.

“How kind, how considerate, how clever he is,” she thought to herself, as she stood apart, watching each expression of his face, and listening to the music of his voice. Through every avenue by which brilliant and noble qualities first attract and then enchain a heart alive to all that is good and beautiful, was Paul Lynedon unconsciously taking possession of Katharine’s.

While unwittingly stealing this young girl’s liking, Lynedon no less won that of Sir James. Delightedly the old man passed from conversation about public matters to inquiries concerning his friend the Viscount and the whole Lynedon family, all of which Paul answered with a clearness and readiness that charmed his companion. Katharine, having now completely got over the fact that Paul had assumed an untrue character to please her grandfather, felt quite glad that, though there was a slight mistake about his being the Viscount’s son, Lynedon was so well acquainted with all the history of his family, and could thus delight Sir James so much.

The dinner-bell rang when he was in the midst of an account of the marriage of Lord Lynedon’s eldest daughter.

“I am sorry that I must now relinquish the honour of your society, my dear young friend, for may I not bestow that name on your father’s son?” said the Baronet, taking Lynedon’s hand with a curious mixture of formality and affection.

“I shall always be proud of the title,” answered Paul, earnestly.

“And besides, on second thoughts, I believe that more than one intermarriage has taken place between the Lynedons and the Ogilvies. Katharine, before you go, bring me that ‘Peerage;’ I feel almost sure that there must be some connection between Mr. Lynedon and ourselves. Suppose he were to turn out a cousin — eh?”

“I should be only too happy to claim any relationship to Miss Ogilvie.” It was a common phrase of courtesy; he would have said the same to any one, especially a woman; and yet the blood rushed to Katharine’s cheek, and her heart beat wildly. She hastily walked to the bookcase, but if “Debrett’s Peerage” had been written as plain as with letters of phosphorus, her eyes could not have discovered it.

But Lynedon’s practice of the *bienséances* was never at fault, and the book was soon in Sir James’s hand.

“Adieu, my dear young friend. Katharine, bring him again very soon,” said the Baronet.

“He must be a very old man, your grandfather,” observed Paul Lynedon, carelessly, as they threaded once more the long passages.

“Very old. How kind of you to talk to him so much!” Katharine answered, in a soft, grateful accent.

“Oh, not at all — not at all, my dear Miss Ogilvie. But, here is the drawing-room a very desert, with Miss Eleanor for its solitary rose. Let me have the happiness of escorting both the fair cousins to the dining-room.”

Contents

CHAPTER 7

As on the finger of a throned queen
The basest jewel would be well esteemed;
So are those errors that in thee are seen
To truths translated, and for true things deemed.
SHAKSPEARE

Mrs. Lancaster, hemmed in on one side by the sedate and somewhat ponderous courtesies of Mr. Ogilvie, and on the other by the long interval of dinner-table space which separated her from the inanities of her husband, looked often towards the other side, where Paul Lynedon sat between the two fair cousins trying to enliven as much as possible the terrible solemnity of this always formal meal.

It is not in human nature to talk well during soup. This is the case even with the most serious and earnest of conversationalists — those who, disliking the current nothings of society, plunge at once into some sensible topic, so as to fathom, if possible, the minds of their associates. These excellent coral-divers of society find their occupation gone at the commencement of a dinner-party; a few refreshing dips over head, just to try the waters, are all they can venture, until the necessary duties of eating and drinking are performed.

Therefore, since we aim not at chronicling every word and action with exact fidelity, even as Van Eyck painted the hairs of a lapdog's tail and the nails in a floor, we do not think it necessary to enumerate all the graceful trifles that Paul Lynedon said, interesting his fair neighbours first, and by degrees the elders of the company. He threw over the commonest things a light filigree-work of imagination, which, while unsubstantial and evanescent, made everything seem beautiful — for the time. And is not such an art of passing glamour a most beneficial attainment in this weary, dusty, matter-of-fact world of ours?

When the serious business of dinner had resolved itself into the graceful *dolce far niente* of dessert, Mrs. Ogilvie observed:

"I hope, Mr. Lynedon, that my poor father did not weary you very much?"

"Not at all; we got on admirably together, did we not, Miss Ogilvie?" And Paul turned to Katharine, who gave a delighted assent.

"Grandpapa was delighted with Mr. Lynedon," she observed. "I never saw him more pleased. And Mr. Lynedon knew all about the branch of his own family of which grandpapa talked, so that he could answer every question. Where could you get so much information, Mr. Lynedon, and how well you seemed to remember everything!"

"Perhaps I did not quite *remember* everything, Miss Ogilvie," he answered, smiling. "My history of the Lynedon pedigree was, like hasty novels, only 'founded on facts.' It seemed to please your grandfather, and I was delighted to secure his good opinion, even though it entailed upon me some exercise of imagination. But — but," he stopped and hesitated, for he met the eyes of Eleanor Ogilvie fixed on him with an expression before which his own fell.

He grew confused, and tried to laugh the matter off. “I fear your cousin here thinks there was something very wicked in my little extempore romance. Yet I did all for the best. Let me plead before my fair accuser.”

“I am no accuser,” said Eleanor, gently.

“Surely Eleanor would not say one word against what was done with such kindly motives, and succeeded so well in giving grandpapa pleasure?” cried Katharine. “It was very kind of Mr. Lynedon; and very right too.”

Paul looked surprised, perhaps a little gratified. He thanked his “young defender,” as he called her, and changed the conversation; which, by his consummate skill, he caused to flow in an easy and pleasant current until the ladies retired.

“What do you think of Mr. Lynedon now, Eleanor?” cried Katharine, as, leaving Mrs. Lancaster and her hostess deeply engaged in a purely feminine discussion on dress, the two cousins crept away to Mrs. Ogilvie’s dressing-room, and there indulged in a talk.

“Under what particular phase am I to criticise this hero of yours, Katharine? Do you wish me to call him handsome?”

“No; for that would not be true. But is he not very clever — so perfect a gentleman — so refined?”

“Too refined.”

“How can that be possible? — Really, Eleanor, what taste you have!” said Katharine, turning away.

“To speak candidly, though there were many things in Mr. Lynedon that pleased me very much, there was one that I did not like; why did he make grandpapa believe what was not true?”

“Because he wished to give pleasure, and therefore it was not wrong; — I am sure it was not.”

“Now, Katharine, I think it was. Plainly, what he called a little romance was a tissue of untruths.”

“You are very unjust, Eleanor.”

“I hope not, but you ask me for my opinion, and how can I help giving it? It seemed to me that Mr. Lynedon thought more of being generally agreeable than of doing what was right.”

“There you are at your moralisings again; where did you learn them all?”

Eleanor would have been puzzled to answer; but, nevertheless, her perception of this man’s character was a true one. He had a keener desire to appear than to be; public ambition and love of social approbation were united in him, and together seemed likely to become so strong as to render invisible in his own eyes the “indirect crook’d ways” by which he attained his end. Yet even this fault had its origin in that natural longing after the praise and love of human kind, which is the germ of the noblest qualities of our nature. It is a creed, harmless indeed, and inclining us to patience and long-suffering, that evil itself is but an ill-regulated good, and has no separate existence. There is not a poison-weed cumbering the ground that may not once have been a flower. And it rests still with the Great Fashioner, who, being all good, could not create positive evil, to stay the rampant growth, and to resolve each corrupted particle into its own pure elements.

We have wandered strangely from our scene, persons, and conversation; yet such wanderings are not uncommon in real life. Every one must now and then lift up the curtain of his inner being; and it is always good so to do. Perhaps Eleanor’s “moralisings,” as her cousin called them, had in some degree this effect, for it is

certain that both she and Katharine looked silently into the fire for some minutes before they attempted to move.

At last Katharine rose, and smoothed her long black hair before the mirror. She looked at the reflection therein more earnestly than she was wont, for Katharine was one who cared little for her own personal appearance — probably because, having all her life been told how plain she was, she now fully believed it, and reconciled herself to her fate. But this night a faint sigh revealed a few rebellious feelings struggling in her young bosom.

"Eleanor," she said, "it must be very pleasant to be beautiful."

"Why? — in order to be admired?"

"Not exactly so; but that we might give pleasure to others. Is not every one glad to look on what is fair? and if we could ourselves be as pleasant as pictures or statues in the eyes of others, at least of those we love" —

"A sweet, loving definition of a desire which I suppose all have, more or less," said Eleanor. "What made you think of it just now?"

"Because I was looking at myself, and thinking how different it would be if I saw a beautiful reflection in the glass instead of that ugly face and lanky figure."

"My dear Katharine!" answered her cousin, putting her arms round the girl's neck, "do not speak so of yourself; remember, you are quite young; I should not wonder if you turned out a beauty yet — tall thin girls like you very often do."

"Do you think so? do you really think so? Oh, how glad I am!" And then a sudden shame dyed her face and neck crimson. "I am afraid you will think me very vain and foolish; but — but" —

"I think you a wayward, fanciful, darling girl, and the more you let me peep into your heart, no matter what I see there, the more you will please your cousin Nelly. And now let us go down stairs."

Mrs. Ogilvie sat in one arm-chair, and Mrs. Lancaster in another, two planets in opposition. They certainly belonged to different hemispheres, and no power on earth could make them blend their light. Poor Mrs. Ogilvie had had a most painful hunt after ideas, and now, wearied and worn, she fairly gave in, unable to pursue the chase, and determining to let the conversation take its chance. Mrs. Lancaster was one of those inflexible talkers who will choose their subject, and "say their say," without regarding the capabilities of their hearers. If the latter understood and followed, well; if not, she let them "toil after her in vain" until she had done, and then passed on, rejoicing in the superiority of her own intellect. Yet, at times, she positively plumed herself upon her skill in adapting her conversation to all varieties of listeners. Under this idea she would in these days have entered a village blacksmith's and talked about Elihu Burritt, or discussed with some poor stocking-weaver Lee's invention of the loom, illustrated by fragmentary allusions to Elmore's late picture on this subject; a speech on the union of art and manufactures forming an appropriate winding up to the whole.

Thus Mrs. Lancaster had glided from the examination of her hostess's dress to a dissertation on the costume of the middle ages, varied by references to Froissart and the illuminated manuscripts of monkish times. Mrs. Ogilvie, carried out of her depth, struggled for a little, and had failed in her last despairing effort, just when her daughter and niece came to the rescue. Eleanor saw at once the state of the case, by the sudden, half-imploring glance which her aunt turned to the opening door, and the unchanging smile of patient politeness which sat on her lips. Taking her place by Mrs. Ogilvie, she relieved guard, ingeniously sustaining the whole burden of Mrs. Lancaster's conversation until coffee appeared, and with it the wanderer, Hugh.

In most after-dinner female coteries the advent of one of the nobler sex produces a satisfactory change, and Hugh's coming formed no exception to the rule. His cheerful face always brought sunshine with it. Mrs. Ogilvie gathered courage, Mrs. Lancaster thawed, and the two girls were fully disposed to enjoyment. Only Katharine, while she tried to interest herself in Hugh's account of his day's sport, could not help wondering now and then what it was that detained Paul Lynedon.

Lynedon was deep in a conversation with Mr. Ogilvie concerning electioneering. There was a borough near, where the Summerwood interest still lingered, despite the Reform Act; and Paul's inward dreams of ambition invested Mr. Ogilvie's conversation with a wondrous charm. He did not act — for, as we have before stated, Paul Lynedon was not habitually insincere — but the golden shadow of the time to come, when his host's friendship might be of service, made him regard many a prosy commonplace with a feeling of real interest, and also exert his own powers to their utmost in order to produce a satisfactory impression.

When the clear singing of a young girl penetrated to the dining-room, Paul first remembered he had asked Eleanor the usual question, "Did she love music?" and the sudden brightening of her face had answered the question better than her tongue. He felt sure that the voice was hers, and the future election, with all its ingenious devices, began to fade from his mind. When he reached the drawing-room door it was quite obliterated.

Paul Lynedon never saw one cheek that glowed with sudden pleasure at his entrance; he walked straight to the piano, and said to Eleanor, "I knew I was right. It was you who sang, was it not?"

"Yes; I love music, as I think I told you."

"Will you sing again for me?"

"You are quite unconscionable," said Mrs. Lancaster, while the faintest shade of acrimony mingled with her dulcet tone. "I am sure she must be tired."

The hint failed; and Mrs. Lancaster was doomed to a little longer silence while Eleanor sang again, and yet again. Paul Lynedon was enchanted; for her voice was the true heart-music, and it touched the purest and inmost springs of his nature. He was no longer the mere polished gentleman of society; he stood as Katharine had first beheld him — so silent, so deeply moved, that he forgot to pay a single compliment, and even to say "Thank you."

He knew not that Eleanor had sung thus well only because she had forgotten his presence, his very existence; because every song, by rousing some hidden link of memory and touching some secret feeling, carried her farther and farther away into the dim past and blotted out all the present. He guessed not that while she poured out her whole heart, no thought of him or of his approval influenced the song, that though he stood beside her, the face she saw was not his: and when at last his voice thanked her, it jarred on her ear like a painful waking from a pleasant dream.

And then her uncle and Mr. Lancaster came, with their vapid acknowledgments. But neither they nor the gentle Mrs. Ogilvie, who in the good-nature of others saw the reflection of her own, and praised her niece accordingly, nor the worldly fashionable dame who, living all for outside show, secretly acknowledged that though done for effect it was almost as good as reality, nor poor simple Katharine, who marvelled at no inspiration the guerdon of which was Paul Lynedon's praise, not one of these had fathomed the truth, or knew why it was that Eleanor Ogilvie had sung so well.

The change wrought in Paul Lynedon made him seem more attractive even in Eleanor's eyes. His manner grew earnest, and lost that outside gloss of almost annoying deference which characterised it when he had talked with the two girls at

dinner. He spoke like a man — put forth his own opinion honestly, even when it differed from theirs. They talked — he and Eleanor and Katharine — about books and music, and all pleasant things which are a continual feast to the young and happy. Recognising Hugh, Lynedon drew him, almost against his will, into the charmed circle; conquering his reluctance to talk, and making him feel interested upon subjects that otherwise he cared little about. It was rather an exertion, but Paul was in a happy mood. So all conflicting elements were reconciled; Lynedon and Eleanor leading the way and supporting the chief conversation. Hugh was happy, for he had Katharine next to him. She sat almost silent, veiling her dark dreamy eyes with their long lashes; and at times, when Paul Lynedon spoke earnestly, raising them to his face with a look which once positively startled him with its intenseness. Katharine was conscious of but one influence — new, strange, delicious — which breathed in his words, which brightened everything whereon he looked. He seemed to her some glorious and divine creature

Whose overpowering presence made her feel
It would not be idolatry to kneel.

And Paul Lynedon, what did he think of her? Let his own words tell.

"You seem delighted with the Ogilvies?" whispered Mrs. Lancaster, as, somewhat piqued by a dull evening passed with the elders, she was about to retire.

"Oh, certainly — delighted!" echoed Paul; "they are a charming family."

"Especially the young vocalist?"

Lynedon answered warmly, but laconically, "I quite agree with you."

"And the dark-eyed Katharine?"

"A gentle, thoughtful creature; evidently full of feeling, and so much attached to her cousin. *That* fact alone shows what she must be. I like — nay, I almost love Katharine Ogilvie."

And it so chanced, that, in passing by, Katharine heard the words!

He had said them idly, and forgotten them as soon as they were uttered: — but they gave a colouring to her whole life.

O ye who have passed through the cloudy time when youth is struggling with the strange and mysterious stirrings of that power which, either near or remote, environs our whole life with its influence, ye who can now look back calmly on that terrible mingling of stormy darkness and glorious light, and know on what shadowy nothings love will build airy palaces wherein a god might dwell, regard with tenderness that enthusiastic dream! Perchance there is one of you who has dreamed like Katharine Ogilvie.

Contents

CHAPTER 8

Say never, ye loved once
God is too near above — the grave below,
And all our moments go
Too quickly past our souls, for saying so.
The mysteries of life and death avenge
Affections light of range.
There comes no change to justify that change.
E. B. BROWNING.

The memory of the withered leaf
In endless time is scarce more brief
Than of the garnered autumn sheaf:

Go, vexed Spirit, sleep in trust!
The right ear that is filled with dust
Hears little of the false or just.

TENNYSON.

There are in our existence days which are ages. True, at such seasons the hours glide as fast — nay, faster — in their golden stream: but when we look back it seems as though the narrow tide of a single day had swelled into a life's flood — a mighty ocean which upheaves itself between us and the last epoch that we called The Past.

It was thus with Katharine when she arose next morning. Her foot seemed already within the shining entrance-gate of a new paradise. The old childish world of a few hours since looked far distant, and oh, how pale and dim! She scarcely turned her face to gaze upon it now. All night her spirit had floated amongst the most delicious fancies, and even on her waking she felt as still in a dream. On descending, she found that her restless happiness had made her the earliest riser in the house. She lingered a few minutes in the breakfast-room, looking out on the dappled morning sky, and thinking how beautiful the world was. Then she went into the drawing-room, and began to pour out her heart's emotion to her usual friendly confidante — her piano forte. Katharine loved music intensely; but the very sense which made her feel so keenly the power of song rendered its science irksome in the extreme. Still, though in society she shrank from any display, she sometimes sat alone for hours; her light fingers and sweet but feeble voice weaving together all sorts of melodies, most of which were the inspiration of the moment.

Now, almost unconsciously, she glided into the song which Miss Trevor's rich tones and Lynedon's praise had impressed upon her memory. She sang it with her whole heart, seeing nothing, save perchance one likeness which her fancy conjured up, and which formed the inspiration of the strain.

“Thank you, Miss Ogilvie,” said a voice behind — Paul Lynedon’s own — for he had entered softly; “why will you compel me to act the spy in order to attain such a pleasure as this?”

Katharine did not answer. Poor child! she trembled like a little bird in its captor’s hands.

Paul thought what terribly hard work it was to get on at all with young girls who bore the lingering traces of pinafores and bread-and-butter. But good-nature urged him to make another attempt.

“I was not aware that you sang at all, still less that you knew this pet song of mine, which I asked your cousin for in vain last night. Why did you not tell me so?”

“Because I cannot sing,” murmured Katharine, “I have scarcely any voice.”

“Nay, I must differ from you there. You have a very sweet one, only it wants power and proper cultivation. But you sing with your soul if not with your lips, and that is what I love to hear.”

And then Lynedon, to relieve her confusion, went on talking in an easy, kind, quiet manner about the quality of her voice and the way to strengthen it. “But what a long speech I am giving you — quite a lecture on music,” he added, laughing.

“I like to listen to you, pray go on,” said Katharine, simply.

(“So, here is some improvement; we shall get on in time,” thought Paul Lynedon.) And then he continued, “What I mean to say is, that, as we ought to let no talent rust, you ought to try to sing as well as you can. It may not be quite so charmingly as your cousin, but you will give pleasure to many, as you did to me this morning.”

“I am glad — very glad,” said Katharine, with a bright smile, and that earnest look which always puzzled Lynedon.

“Thank you, and you will sing whenever I ask you, like a dear little friend?”

“Yes.”

“Then, thank you once more,” answered Paul, feeling towards the “little shy girl” a real liking, which sprang partly from gratified self-love at having succeeded so well in the difficult task of *drawing her out*. “Then it is agreed, Miss Katharine — Miss Ogilvie, I mean, for so you are by right, I think.”

“Yes, but I am never called so — only Katharine, I like it best.”

“Then I will call you Katharine, if you will allow me.”

Another quiet “yes” sealed the contract. — and thus was woven one more link of the invisible chain.

The time of the visit flew by — the “rest-day,” the “prest-day” — and still the guests lingered, to the satisfaction of all. It is astonishing how soon an agreeable party at a country-house seems to grow into one family. It was so at Summerwood. Whatever passions were dawning to life beneath, there were no stirrings on the surface to break the peace and harmony of that pleasant circle.

Paul Lynedon after a few days began to think of Eleanor a great deal more than he liked to confess. Perhaps this was because her character burst upon him with a freshness that quite contradicted his former notions of women. She was the first who, if not treating him with positive indifference, had at least never sought in any way to win his attention. Her perfect independence annoyed him. It was in vain that every time he spoke there dropped from his lips, like the fairy gift of pearls and diamonds, compliments graceful and refined — the envied wonder of all his fair friends of old. But Eleanor never once stooped to pick them up. His vanity was piqued, and, after trying the experiment for a short time on Katharine, he gave up these elegant flatteries, and became his own real self — his better self. But this change only gained from Eleanor a surprised, pleased, and friendly response. She treated him with greater

warmth, but still with the unreserve and frank kindness which she showed to every one around her. With men of Lynedon's character opposition is often the greatest incentive to love. Before he had been many days in her society, Paul was more *épris* with Eleanor than he had ever been with any woman during his gay and mercurial life. Perhaps, added to the spur of wounded vanity, came the impulse of many purer and higher feelings long dormant within him, which her true nature had awakened once more, and the reverent admiration with which he felt constrained to regard this gentle, single-hearted girl, Lynedon's quick temperament mistook for love.

But though Eleanor's influence over him grew stronger every day, it was still not strong enough to be outwardly discernible. Perhaps Eleanor might have discovered it — for a woman generally sees intuitively where she is loved — but her heart was too full of one feeling to admit even the suspicion of another.

There was a second person whose eyes might have been open to the elements for future fate that were brooding among the gay idlers at Summerwood. But Mrs. Lancaster was deep in antiquarian researches, traversing the country with her host as pioneer; and in this lady, love for science — at least for the *éclat* that science brings — shut out even the feminine impulse of curiosity.

So the young people walked, rode, drove in the pleasant winter mornings, sat by the evening fire, and talked, or sang, or told ghost stories, until the week ended, and with it Mrs. Lancaster's peregrinations. She spoke of going home, and after the usual friendly contest *pro* and *con* the affair was decided. The last evening came — the last morning. No more would there be of those social firesides at night, of that merry breakfast-table chat. When Katharine rose to answer her grandfather's summons, she felt this so strongly, that ere she reached the hall her eyes were overflowing. As she passed on towards her grandfather's room, she heard Lynedon call:

"Katharine, dear" — he often called her "dear" now, when they were alone, especially— "tell Sir James I will be with him by the time the reading is finished."

He had usually come in to aid her in the task — and now, the last day, every moment spent in his sight became so precious! It was a disappointment, that made what was ever a loving duty seem almost a burden.

Paul thought that during that time he might contrive to be a few moments alone with Eleanor; not to tell her he loved her — he was too cautious for that — but to try and gain some word or look on which his own heart might rest for a time when he should feel he was no longer in her presence. But there was Hugh, busy making flies, his usual morning occupation, and continually calling out for his sister's light fingers to aid in the dubbing, or to cut the wings. Eleanor, all-patient as she was, seemed quite content, but Lynedon grew restless and uncomfortable. At last, seeing no chance of the brief interview he sought, he went to Sir James's study.

Katharine was still reading, but there was a vacant look in the old man's eyes which seemed to imply that the listener profited as little as the reader. Every now and then he interrupted her to ask, in a voice feebler than usual, some question that betokened a wandering mind. He did not notice Paul's entrance, and the young man motioned to Katharine not to cease, while he placed himself behind her and looked over what she read. It was an old paper that chronicled the coronation of George III., and Paul could not help listening with a strange, almost painful feeling to the description of festivities shared by courtiers and court beauties whose very memory had passed away.

"It must have been a gay sight, grandpapa," said Katharine, pausing.

"Eh, what did you say, my child?"

Katharine repeated her observation.

"Read that last sentence again, dear; I don't think I quite understood it. Indeed, things do not seem to be quite clear here to-day." The old man touched his forehead with a feeble smile, and tried to attend while Katharine read. Then he shook his head mournfully, and said:

"It is of no use, Katharine, I can't make it out. What is it?"

"It is an account of the coronation levee, dear grandpapa, and of who were presented; look, here is your own name, Sir James Ogilvie, among the rest."

"Ah, yes — I remember I went — let me see, it must have been last week, for the *Gazette* appears weekly now. And the King has asked me to go down to Windsor and hunt; don't forget that, Katharine; and while I think of it, ring for Peters, to see about Ringdove. His Majesty said there was not a finer hunter anywhere than my Ringdove. Make haste, love."

Katharine looked imploringly at Paul Lynedon, who stepped forward.

"My dear Sir James, you are thinking of things long gone by."

"Eh — what — who are you, sir? I never saw you before," said the old man, over whom a strange change appeared to have come, for his dim eyes glittered, and he moved restlessly in his chair. "Katharine, who is this gentleman? I don't know him. What is he going to do with me?" — and he caught her hand uneasily.

"Dearest grandpapa, it is only Mr. Lynedon."

"Lynedon; ah, to be sure, Viscount Lynedon. My dear lord, you have come from the levee; perhaps the King has invited you too? Ah! is it so? — that's well. How young you look! You find me not over strong, my dear friend, but I shall soon be better — very soon."

The old man paused a moment in his unusual volubility, and turned to Lynedon and Katharine — neither of whom would speak. A vague terror oppressed the latter; she became very pale, and her eyes filled with tears. Sir James looked wistfully at her.

"Who is that lady — I don't remember her?" he whispered to Lynedon. Katharine's tears overflowed, and she hid her face.

"It is Katharine — your own Katharine," said Paul.

"*My own Katharine*," repeated the old man; "yes, it must be Katharine — Katharine Mayhew. But you mistake, my lord, you must not call her *my* Katharine. Come another day and I'll tell you all about it; I can't now:" — and his voice trembled. "There she is, weeping still. My dear friend, go to her: we must do as the world does, and if her father should come in — ! Tell her I did love her — I did indeed — and I always shall, though they will not let us marry. Katharine, my Katharine, do not weep."

His voice dropped almost to a whisper, and he leaned back with closed eyes, his fingers fluttering to and fro on the elbows of the chair. Lynedon motioned for Katharine to speak to him.

"Are you tired, dear grandpapa, or unwell? Shall I call any one?"

"No, no, no! I am quite well, only tired; so tired!"

"Is your father in the house, Katharine?" asked Paul; who felt more alarmed than he liked to let her see.

"No; he is gone out with Mrs. Lancaster — I think to the church."

"Church!" said the old Baronet, opening his eyes at the word. "Are we at the church? Ah, yes, I remember I promised. And so you are to be married, Katharine Mayhew — married after all? Well! well! This is your bridegroom, and his name" —

"Dear grandpapa, you are thinking of something else," cried Katharine. "Here is no one but Mr. Lynedon and myself."

“Lynedon, so you are going to marry a Lynedon! Well, I had not thought so once. But here we are, and I must say the words myself. Give me your hands” —

“Do not contradict him, it is best not,” whispered Paul.

Sir James joined their hands together. Even at that moment of terror and excitement, a wild thrill shot through Katharine’s heart, and her very brow crimsoned at the touch. The old man muttered some indistinct sounds, and stopped.

“I have forgotten the service! — how does it begin? Ah! I remember,” continued he very faintly, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust” —

Katharine started up and shrieked with terror, for her grandfather had sunk back in his chair, white and ghastly. One feeble shudder convulsed the aged limbs, and then all was stillness.

Paul and Katharine — their hands still clasped together — stood in the presence of Death.

Contents

CHAPTER 9

THE ORDINARY USE of acquaintance is a sharing of talk, news, drink, mirth, together: but sorrow is the right of a friend, as a thing nearer the heart, and to be delivered with it. — BISHOP SELDEN

She did but look upon him, and his blood
Blushed deeper, even from his inmost heart;
For at each glance of those sweet eyes, a soul
Looked forth as from the azure gates of heaven.
PHILIP BAILEY.

"What a shocking occurrence, really quite unfortunate, that it should have happened just now!" said Mrs. Lancaster, as she paced the drawing-room in a state of nervous agitation, half affected, half real. This was some two or three hours after the first excitement and terror-stricken grief of the family had subsided into the stillness of a household which had been invaded by Death.

The lady's remark drew no answer from Paul Lynedon, who was the only person present. He sat leaning his head on his hand in a grave attitude.

"I wish Julian would make haste with the carriage. I shall be glad to get away. It is so very unpleasant to be where there is a death in the house; it makes me quite nervous! If the old gentleman had but lived until night — Really, Mr. Lynedon, I wish you would speak instead of sitting there without uttering a word, and when you see me so agitated, too."

"I am very sorry," began Paul, in an absent tone. "Death is indeed solemn!"

"Of course, of course; but you know I do not think with these stupid church-going people. No one of strong mind would. There is Mrs. Ogilvie, with her Bible quotations and her talk about 'submission;' as if it were not a good thing that the old man is gone — such a trouble as he was. Of course they are all in their hearts quite thankful for the event."

At this moment a low moaning from one of the distant apartments reached the drawing-room. Paul Lynedon's countenance changed from the apathy with which he had listened to Mrs. Lancaster, to an expression of deep compassion.

"Hark! that is Katharine. Poor child, poor child!"

"She has been in hysterics ever since you carried her to her room. It is almost time the scene were ended, I fancy," answered the lady sarcastically.

"How can you!" exclaimed Lynedon, with a look of grave reproof; but immediately recollecting himself, his countenance resumed its usual expression, and he relapsed into the silence which had excited Mrs. Lancaster's animadversions.

She, on her part, was becoming thoroughly vexed with her *protégé*. For several days he had not paid her half the attention which she exacted, or wished to exact; and now it appeared to her that his mind was entirely occupied by thoughts in which she had evidently no share. The lady's conjectures were right. At this moment her worldliness and cold-heartedness were almost abhorrent to Paul Lynedon. For days there had been a struggle within him between the two influences, the true and the unreal, custom on the one hand, and on the other purity, simplicity, and nature. The

latter were especially attractive as they came in the guise of Eleanor Ogilvie. Startled, awed by the day's event, and brought for the first time in his life within the presence of death — at least of sudden death — Lynedon had put off for a while the fictions which constituted his outer self. To him there was now something painfully repugnant in the affectations with which Mrs. Lancaster broke in upon the current of thoughts deeper and purer than the young man had indulged in for a long season.

"Thank heaven, there are the carriage-wheels," cried Mrs. Lancaster, who had been impatiently beating time on the window-panes with her gloved fingers. "Now we shall get away without meeting the family."

"What, shall you not see them before you go?" asked Paul.

"Oh, no; such an intrusion would be indecorous. I will send cards when I get home."

"Cards! Why, I thought of all woman's duties and privileges there was none so sacred as that of consolation. Surely I have heard you say so yourself."

Mrs. Lancaster shrugged her shoulders.

"In other cases certainly; but in this — however, my dear friend, I cannot argue the point now, for here is Julian with the boxes. Really, it is very disagreeable to wait upon ourselves, and all because of this old gentleman's death. However, we shall soon be at home. Of course, you are quite ready, Mr. Lynedon?"

"I beg your pardon, but I do not go just yet."

"Not go! And pray what is the reason of this sudden and most disinterested resolution?" said Mrs. Lancaster, with a smile of such ironical meaning that Paul Lynedon's cheek grew many shades deeper with annoyance. But, as was customary with him, he showed his vexation only by answering in a tone more firm and haughty than usual.

"Mrs. Lancaster, my only reason is one so trifling that it hardly deserves your attention. Merely, that having received much courtesy in this house, I wish to return it by inquiring if in this time of confusion and trouble I can in any way be of use; — and so, with an apology for troubling you with this explanation, allow me to lead you to your carriage."

Verily, the stateliness of the whole Lynedon race for a century back was compressed in Paul when he chose to exhibit that peculiar manner. The *petite* graceful Mrs. Lancaster shrank into nothing beside the overwhelming courtesy of his demeanour. They were silently descending the staircase, when Eleanor Ogilvie appeared.

"How very unpleasant!" and "How fortunate!" cried Mrs. Lancaster, in a breath, the former being of course an aside. But a glance at Eleanor's face, which, though a degree paler than ordinary, was perfectly composed, freed the departing guest from the apprehension of a *scene*, and she reascended to the drawing-room.

"My dearest Eleanor, I would fain have saved us all the pain of an adieu. These most afflicting circumstances — your feelings — my own" — and here Mrs. Lancaster took out her pocket-handkerchief.

But Eleanor neither wept nor made any pretence of doing so.

"Thank you for your sympathy," she answered; "and since I see you are going, may I hope that you will excuse an omission which" —

"Excuse! My dear young friend, I would have remained could I have been any comfort, but I thought the kindest act was to intrude no longer on your sorrow."

Eleanor offered no word of dissent to this remark, and Mrs. Lancaster felt so completely at a loss that she again had recourse to her pocket-handkerchief.

"You will bear my adieux and condolence to your aunt and to poor dear Miss Ogilvie, who must be sadly afflicted."

"Yes," said Eleanor, briefly. She suffered Mrs. Lancaster's veil to sweep her cheek in a salute, and then held out her hand to Paul Lynedon, who had stood by in perfect silence.

He took the hand, but said quietly, "I am not bidding you adieu, for I do not return to town until night; perhaps I may be of some service."

"You are very kind," was Eleanor's reply, "but we will not encroach on your good offices, there is no need."

"That is just what I have been telling him, Miss Eleanor; he will only be in the way. You had better come with us, Lynedon," said Mrs. Lancaster.

Paul never answered her, but looked at Eleanor. The look was so full of earnest feeling, sympathy, and sincere kindliness, that she was touched. "You will let me stay if I can be of use to any one here?" he said gently, when Mrs. Lancaster walked forward in ill-concealed impatience.

"Thank you, yes; do as you will," answered Eleanor, while the tears which affected sympathy would never have drawn forth confessed the influence of real feeling. The traces of this emotion were still on her cheek when Paul Lynedon returned to the room. There is probably scarcely any man living who does not feel his heart drawn to the girl he loves, or even is only beginning to love, if he sees her under the influence of any grief deep enough to call forth tears.

So it was, that when Lynedon came again into Eleanor's presence his manner was so subdued, so tender, so free from all affectation, that she had never felt more inclined to regard him with friendly feelings. That she could either inspire or return a warmer sentiment had not once entered her mind with respect to Paul Lynedon; therefore her manner was always frank, open, and kindly, and now even gentler than usual.

"This is kind of you, very kind," she said, giving him her hand. He pressed it warmly, as a friend might, and then let it go; he could not, dared not suffer the expression of love to intrude at such a time.

"I feel very much with you — indeed I do," said Paul's low musical tones, "and that dear child, poor Katharine — it was a terrible shock for her."

"Yes, Katharine loved *him* very dearly, and she was the darling of his heart. He chose her name, and she was his godchild. Poor grandpapa! I think he loved Katharine better than any one in the world. How strange that no one should have been present when he died except you and herself! Did he say anything, or seem to suffer? Poor Katharine has told us nothing — indeed she has been weeping incessantly ever since."

Then Paul Lynedon related the scene in the study and the strange delusion under which Sir James had died. A common sympathy, though one of which neither was aware, made Paul speak and Eleanor listen with deep interest to the touching memory of a long-past love.

"And he remembered her even then, this Katharine Mayhew — how strange!"

"It is not strange," said Paul, earnestly; "no man ever forgets the woman whom he first loved. The storms of a lifetime may intervene, but that such first true love should pass away — never, never!"

Eleanor's lips trembled, her bosom heaved, and the voice of her soul even more than that of her tongue echoed the "never!" It was as the one *amen* to the universal love-orison which every young heart breathes at its first awakening. But how rarely does each life's history work out the fulfilment of the prayer! Not fate's mysteries only, but the wilfulness, change, and weakness of humanity itself cast a shadow

between it and that blessed “never,” which while still believed in is strength and hope. Love is no longer divine to us when we find out, or begin only to suspect, that it is not eternal.

Lynedon watched Eleanor’s evident emotion with a thrill of rapture which he could scarcely conceal. He interpreted all as a lover would fain do. Her lightest word, her most passing look, might then have drawn from him the confession of his feelings, and would surely have done so, despite the solemn time and place, had there been in her an answering love involuntarily betrayed. But when Eleanor lifted up her face, the look which met his was so calm, so unconstrained in its maidenly frankness, that the most anxious self-deceiving lover could not have discovered in it the secret which he might desire to see. Paul Lynedon shrank back into himself, and the passionate words which had risen almost to his lips died away in the ordinary expressions of feeling called forth by the occasion. Even these were so cold that Eleanor seemed surprised. She looked in his face, which was pale and agitated, and her womanly sympathy at once supplied the imagined cause.

“How ill you look, Mr. Lynedon!” said she, while her gentle tone and kind eyes expressed more than her words. “We have been thinking so much of ourselves, and have forgotten how much this painful day must have affected you. Sit down, and let me bring you a glass of wine. Nay, I will have no refusal.”

Paul had no power to refuse. When Eleanor brought him the wine he took it from her hand, drank it, and then leaned his head against the wall, incapable of uttering one word. Eleanor stood by him with a feeling of deep interest, mingled with compassion. At last he roused himself, and said, with a faint smile,

“You must pardon me.”

“There is no need — it was a trying scene; no wonder it affected you. I often think that men can less bear to come within the shadow of death than women can. It is our fate. No matter how regardless a man may be during his life of all female ties, it is from mother, wife, sister, or daughter, that he will seek the last offices of kindness. We leave worldly pleasures to you, but you look to us for comfort at the last.”

Eleanor had said all this — a long speech it was too for one of her generally undemonstrative character — with the kindly intention of giving Paul time to recover himself. When she ceased she found his eyes fixed upon her face with an intense, earnest gaze. But the gaze was less that of a lover towards his mistress than the almost adoring look which a Catholic worshipper might turn to his saint.

“Have I talked to you until you are wearied?” said Eleanor, with one of her peculiar smiles. “It is some time since I have said so much on my own account. How much longer would you listen, I wonder?”

“For ever! for ever!” muttered Paul Lynedon.

“What were you saying?” inquired the unconscious Eleanor.

Paul recollected himself at once.

“That you are very kind and thoughtful — just like a woman, and that I am ashamed to have given you so much trouble.”

“Then you feel quite well, now? If so, I will go up to see poor Katharine.”

“Not yet, not yet,” Lynedon hastily interposed. “You were to tell me if there is anything I can do in London — any business to arrange, or, if not to-day, cannot I ride back here to-morrow and see? You know not what pleasure it would give me to do anything for you — that is, for the family.”

“I am sure of it — I know how good you are. But my uncle and Hugh can arrange everything.”

“Nay, your brother is out ten miles off in the forest. Shall I ride over to meet him, and inform him of this sad event?”

“Thank you, but we have already sent; indeed, Mr. Lynedon, there is really no need for the exercise of your kindness. And since, to be frank with you, my uncle and aunt will like best to see no one except Hugh and myself I will positively send you away.”

“But I may come to-morrow, or the next day, only to inquire after you all, and perhaps see yourself or your brother for a few minutes. It will be a satisfaction to me, and Mrs. Lancaster too will be glad” —

Eleanor’s countenance changed a little, a very little: she was so sincere, that even a passing thought ever cast some reflected shadow on her face. Her companion saw it, and hastened to remove the impression.

“You must not judge of me by — that is, I mean to say that a man is not accountable for the faults of his friends, or — or — acquaintances.” There was some confusion in his speech, which was not removed by Eleanor’s total silence.

“I wish you to think well of me — indeed I do,” Lynedon continued. “I know there is much in me wrong; but then I have been left to myself since boyhood, for years have not had a home, a mother, or a sister; and so I have grown more worldly than I ought to be. For this reason, now, in going away, I feel how much I owe for the pleasant and good influence of this week to you, who” —

Paul was again treading on dangerous ground, but once more Eleanor’s composure saved him.

“I am glad we have made you happy. We wished to do so; and it has been a pleasant week to us all but for its sad ending. And now, Mr. Lynedon, since I am the only one of the household who can take leave of you, let me thank you again on the part of all, and say good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” repeated Paul, as he lingeringly opened the door for her, and watched her light figure ascend the winding staircase. When she disappeared, his breast relieved itself with a heavy sigh. He rode home fully impressed with the conviction that the star of his life, now and for ever, was Eleanor Ogilvie.

There was a degree of irresolution in the character of Lynedon that caused him often to be swayed against his will. With him the past or the future was always subservient to the influence of the present. So, when he had ridden to Summerwood three times in the first week after Sir James’s death, and thereupon borne a considerable number of Mrs. Lancaster’s smiles and innuendos, he began to feel that there was some cause for the neglect of which that lady accused her guest. As the charms of Summerwood grew dim in the attraction of successive intellectual dissipations — for it is due to Paul to say that no others could have any influence over his fine mind — it so chanced that for the next fortnight he never went near the Ogilvie family.

Contents

CHAPTER 10

THE TRANSITION FROM sorrow to joy is easiest in pure minds; as the true diamond when moistened by the breath recovers its lustre sooner than the false. JEAN PAUL.

He stood beside me
The embodied vision of the brightest dream
That like a dawn heralds the day of life:
The shadow of his presence made my world
A paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spake, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.
He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,
As terrible and lovely as the tempest.
He came — and went — and left me what I am.
SHELLEY.

Katharine Ogilvie sat in the room which had so long been her grandfather's. It was now, by her own desire, virtually resigned to herself. None of his own children had loved, and been loved by, Sir James Ogilvie, like this young girl, who had sprung up in the third generation — a late-given flower — to cast sweetness over his old age. So, Katharine seemed to have a right beyond all others to his room and to everything that had belonged to him. When she recovered from the grief and agitation which for some days had amounted to real illness, she took possession of the study without any opposition, except that her mother's anxious tenderness feared lest the scene of waning life and awfully sudden death might have a painful effect on a mind so young.

But Katharine seemed to have arisen from this trance of pain and suffering with a new character. During that week of illness she had merged from the child into the woman. A change had passed over her — the life-change, wherein the heart awakes, as out of sleep, to feel with a terrible vividness the reality of those pulses which had faintly stirred in its dreams.

Katharine knew that the power of which she had read and mused had come upon her own soul. She felt in herself the truth of what she had seen shadowed forth in romance and song; she knew that she loved.

It is with a sensation almost amounting to fear that a young maiden first discovers the real presence of the life-influence in her heart — when she feels that her existence no longer centres in itself alone, but has another added to it, which becomes, and will become more and more, dear as its very soul. Katharine, who in her unconscious simplicity had given herself up so entirely to the pleasant reverie of which Paul Lynedon was the presiding spirit, almost shuddered when the light broke in upon her and told her that dream was her life. With her, love was not that girlish fancy which is born of idleness, nourished by vanity, and dies in a few months of sheer inanition, to revive again in some new phase, and, so transferred from object to object, live out its scores of petty lives, until it fairly wears itself out, or settles, at the call of duty or of interest, within the calm boundaries of matrimonial necessity. Words cannot too much ridicule or condemn this desecration. But a pure-hearted woman's sincere, true, and

lifelong love, awakened by what either is or she deems to be noble and perfect in her ideal, and as such made the secret religion of her heart, whereon no eye may look, yet which is the hidden spring influencing all her thoughts and actions, this love is a thing most sacred, too solemn to be lightly spoken of, too exalted to need idle pity, too holy to awaken any feeling save reverence.

And such a love was Katharine's for Paul Lynedon.

She sat in her grandfather's chair, her brow resting against the same cushion where in death had fallen the aged head now hidden away in eternal repose. Katharine turned away from the light and closed her eyes. Her hands lay crossed on her knee, their extreme and almost sickly whiteness contrasting with her black dress. She was no longer an invalid; but a dreaminess and languor still hung over her, giving their own expression to her face and attitude. It was a pleasure to sit still and think — one so great that she often suffered her parents and Hugh to suppose her asleep, rather than be disturbed by conversation.

The room was so quiet, that she might have been alone; but Hugh, who ever since her recovery had followed her like a shadow, sat at the window making his eternal flies — at least that was his excuse for remaining with her in the study, but he looked oftener at Katharine than at his work. So silent and quiet was he, that she had entirely forgotten his presence, until, waking from her reverie with a half-suppressed sigh, she saw him creep softly to her chair.

"I thought you were asleep, Katharine; are you awake now?" he said, affectionately.

Katharine's answer was a smile. She felt very grateful to Hugh, who had been her chief companion for some days, and had striven in every way to amuse her. He had given up the finest hunt of the season to stay at home with her; and, after in vain trying to interest her in the adventures of every fox killed during the winter, had finally offered to read aloud to her out of any book she liked, provided it was not poetry. But the time was gone by when the lingering childishness of Katharine's nature would sympathise with those purely physical delights of exercise and out-door amusement which constituted Hugh's world. She tried to hide this from him, and attempted to enter into everything as usual; but it would not do. The day lagged very heavily; and though Hugh was too good-natured to allude to the hunt, it recurred sorrowfully to his mind as he saw from the study windows a few moving specks of scarlet sweeping along the distant country. At last, when a horse's feet were heard up the avenue, he could rest quiet no longer.

"It is surely one of the men from the hunt; I will just go and speak to him, and ask him to have some lunch. You will not mind being left alone for a few minutes, dear Katharine?"

"Oh, no! — not at all! You are only too kind to me, cousin Hugh; pray go and enjoy yourself."

The door closed on him, and Katharine leaned back in quiet dreamy solitude. She thought of her grandfather — how soon every memory of him had passed away from the household; how even the long life of eighty years, with all its ties and all its events, had become like a shadow — had crumbled into nothing at the touch of death; so that in the world not even a month's void was left by the human soul now departed. And then Katharine's mind reverted to the closing scene of his life; the old man's vague wandering words, which she felt referred to some memory of his youth that he had strangely connected with her, not knowing that the universal chord thus touched in the shadowy past had found its echo in the present. The same impulse swayed the spirit then passing away, and that just entering upon its world-struggles. Amidst the

solemn mournfulness of this death-vision came the remembered face of Paul Lynedon; the gentle sympathy of his look, the touch of his hand, the strange symbolising of their united fate — for so it might prove — who could tell? And Katharine gave herself up to the wild love-reverie of early youth.

In the midst of it the door opened, and Lynedon himself stood by her side.

Katharine had never seen him since the moment when, half insensible, she had felt herself borne in his arms from the chamber of death. Now, he came so suddenly into her presence that at the sight of him her heart seemed to suspend its beatings. Not a word came from her colourless lips, and the hand that Paul took between his own felt like marble.

"Dear Katharine, I fear I have startled you," he said, anxiously; "but I so longed to see you. I never thought of all the past — this room, too — how foolish it was of me!"

Katharine drooped her head and burst into tears.

Paul's kindly feelings were roused. He waited until Katharine's emotion had somewhat exhausted itself; and then laid her head back on the cushion, smoothing her soft black hair with his hand as gently and soothingly as an elder brother or father might have done.

"Poor Katharine, dear Katharine! you have suffered much; but we will not think of it any more now. Let us talk about something else, and I will sit by you until you have quite recovered yourself. Do not grieve so much for him you have lost — think of those you have still. Katharine, dearest — think of all who love you."

A happy smile broke through Katharine's tears, and a faint colour flitted over her cheek. The words were very tender — made still more so by the inexpressible sweetness of the tone. What music there was at times in Paul Lynedon's voice! No wonder it should echo in that poor self-deceiving heart like a celestial melody.

The first tender impulse over, Mr. Lynedon seemed to think he had consoled her sufficiently, and resumed the ordinary tones of common life.

"I have not yet inquired after your father and mother; they are well, I hope? May I not see them to-day?"

"Yes, certainly," said Katharine.

"And your cousin — Miss Eleanor?" Paul's head here turned towards the fire, and his fingers busied themselves in playing with a loose tassel on the arm-chair.

"Eleanor is very well. I had a letter from her to-day."

"A letter!"

"Yes; she was sent for a week since by her old friend, Mrs. Breynton. She told me to say how sorry she was not to bid you adieu; — indeed, we half expected you every day last week."

A slight exclamation of vexed surprise rose to Paul's lips, but he suppressed it, and only tore the tassel into small bits. No indication of what was in his mind conveyed itself to Katharine's; she sat with her sweet, downcast eyes; and trembling lips, drinking in nothing but deep happiness.

For him, he concealed his disappointment, only saying, in a soft, earnest way,

"How very, very sorry I am! Nothing but the hardest necessity could have made me stay away from Summerwood a whole fortnight. You believe that, Katharine?"

Katharine did not know whether to say yes or no. She was in a rapturous dream, whose light flooded and dazzled all her thoughts and senses.

"But you will forgive me, and ask your cousin to do the same when you write? Will that be soon?"

"Oh, yes; we write very often, Eleanor and I."

"How pleasant!" said Paul Lynedon; while his thoughts flew far away, and the few words with which he tried to keep up the conversation only sufficed to make it more confused and broken. Katharine never noticed how absent his manner grew. She was absorbed in the happiness of sitting near him, hearing him speak, and stealing glances now and then at his face. And, perhaps, had she considered the matter at all, his silence would have only seemed another token of the secret which she fancied she read in the deep tenderness of his words and manner.

To him the time passed rather wearily; it was a duty of kindness and consideration, at first pleasant, then somewhat dull, possibly it was a relief when fulfilled. To her, the bliss of a year — nay, of a lifetime — was comprised in that one half-hour. At the moment it seemed a dizzy trance of confused joy, formless and vague — but in after-hours it grew distinct; each word, each look, each gesture being written on her heart and brain in letters of golden light; until at last they turned to fire.

Hugh came in, looking not particularly pleased. Though he had a strong suspicion that his sister Eleanor was Paul Lynedon's chief attraction at Summerwood, he never felt altogether free from a vague jealousy on Katharine's account. But the warmth with which his supposed rival met him quite reassured the simple-hearted, good-natured Hugh; and while the two interchanged greetings, Katharine crept away to her own room.

There, when quite alone, the full tide of joy was free to flow. With an emotion of almost child-like rapture she clasped her hands above her head.

"It may come — It may come yet!" she murmured; and then she repeated his words — the words which now ever haunted her like a perpetual music — *I almost love Katharine Ogilvie!* "It may be true — it must be. Else he never would talk to me thus — look at me thus. For I — how could I hear such words, meet such looks, from any other man but he! — It must be true. He called me 'dearest.' He *does* love me. How happy am I!"

And as she stood with her clasped hands pressed on her bosom; her head thrown back, the lips parted, the eyes beaming, and her whole form dilated with joy, Katharine caught a sight of her image in the opposite mirror. She was startled to see herself so fair. There is no beautifier like happiness, especially the happiness of love. It often seems to invest with a halo of radiance the most ordinary face and form. No wonder that under its influence Katharine hardly knew her own likeness.

But, in a moment, a delicious consciousness of beauty stole over her. It was not vanity, but a passionate gladness, that thereby she might be more worthy of *him*. She drew nearer; she gazed almost lovingly on the bright young face reflected there, not as if it were her own, but as something fair and precious in his sight — which accordingly became the same to hers. She looked into the depths of the dark clear eyes: ah! one day it might be his delight to do the same! She marked the graceful curves of the round white hand — the same hand which had rested in his: perhaps the time might come when it would rest there for ever. "Blessed hand! — oh, dear — dear little hand of mine!" And she kissed it, more than once — till she began blushing at her own folly.

Simple, child-like Katharine — a child in all but love — if thou couldst have died in that dream!

The sudden delirium of joy passed away, and left a still gladness which lighted up her eyes and trembled in her lips, making her whole countenance beautiful. As she went down to dinner, she passed the open door of the study, and entered it for a moment. How changed it seemed! — the memorial altar of Death had become the sanctuary of Love. A little, Katharine's heart smote her; and a few tears fell,

awakened by one sudden thought of him who was gone. But how could the dear yet now faint memory of the dead contend with the fresh, glad fount of youth and first love that sprang up in her heart, filling it with sunshine and singing evermore — until the light and the music shut out all sorrowful sights and sounds, or changed them into joy? It could not be: it never is so in this world. And Nature, who makes the greenest grass and the brightest flowers to grow over graves, thus teaches us that in this ever-renewed current of life there is deep wisdom and infinite love.

Paul Lynedon stayed all day. It was a day of quiet pleasure to every one. Mr. — or, as Paul found some difficulty in calling him, Sir Robert — Ogilvie was glad to have a talk about politics, and his lady was delighted that a visitor had at last arrived to break the formal gloom of a household over which death had passed, but scarcely sorrow. Hugh had an engagement elsewhere. This fact, while Sir Robert took his after-dinner nap, cost Lady Ogilvie a long apology, which her guest thought infinitely more wearisome than the circumstance for which it was meant to atone.

"Though casting no reproach on your nephew's agreeable society," said the polite Lynedon, "I assure you, my dear Lady Ogilvie, that I shall be quite content, and indeed gratified, to have your daughter all to myself for a whole evening. Is it not so, Katharine?" — and he took the young girl's hand with the affectionate familiarity which he had established between them. How bright, how joyful, were the answering blush and smile!

Paul Lynedon saw both. He was flattered at having so completely conquered the shyness of this young creature, who, in the intervals of his sudden passion for Eleanor, had at once interested, amused, and puzzled him. He could not but perceive the admiring reverence of himself which her whole manner unconsciously showed; and a proud man likes to be worshipped and looked up to, especially by the other sex. To be sure, Katharine was still a mere child; but there was something even in the devotion of a young girl that gratified his self-esteem and love of approbation — both very strong in Paul Lynedon.

So, his manner towards Katharine took a deeper and tenderer meaning — more so than even he intended it should. Though the other fair image which he fancied so dear still lingered in his heart, and he was haunted all that evening with shadowy visions of Eleanor, still he talked to Katharine as men will idly talk, never dreaming that every low tone, every tender look, thoughtlessly lavished on an interesting girl, went deep to the most passionate recesses of a woman's heart.

After tea, Paul's eyes wandered to the little recess where harp and piano stood. Perhaps his lover-like fancy conjured up there the sweet calm face and bending figure of Eleanor.

"You feel dull without music. Is not that what you are thinking of?" inquired Katharine, timidly.

A tacit prevarication, by which more tender consciences than Paul's often deem it no wrong to compromise truth, enabled him to answer, "Yes, I was wishing to ask you to sing, but did not like so soon after" — and he stopped.

Katharine looked grave, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Perhaps I ought not. — Yet he always loved to see me happy, and he liked you so much! Mr. Lynedon, I will try to sing if it will give you any pleasure. May I not, mamma?"

But Lady Ogilvie had gone comfortably to sleep in the inner drawing-room.

Katharine sang: — it was wonderful how much she had improved. Paul listened, praised, and made her try over all his favourites which Eleanor had sung to him. Katharine saw his earnest, almost abstracted look; she knew not that he was touched

less by the present than by recollections of the happy past and vague plans for the future — a future now all centred in Eleanor Ogilvie.

Under the influence of these thoughts and projects, Paul felt happy. He took leave of the family, of Katharine especially, with a cheerful, tender light in his eyes — those beautiful soft grey eyes, which at times were more eloquent than even his tongue.

"I am going a short journey, but I shall not be away long. A fortnight, at furthest, will see me again at Summerwood."

"We shall be happy to see you, Mr. Lynedon," said Sir Robert, cordially; "you see we make you quite one of the family."

"It is my greatest happiness," answered Paul, with a delighted look, and a tone of deeper earnestness than Katharine had ever heard him use. It made her little heart flutter wildly. Quicker still it throbbed when Lynedon entreated Sir Robert not to stir from the fireside. "Your good-bye and good-speed shall be the last, dear Katharine, if you will come with me to the door."

She did so, trembling all over. When they stood together in the hall, he took both her hands in his, and held them there for a long time, looking down tenderly upon her agitated face.

"You will think of me when I am away?" he whispered.

"Yes," was all she could answer.

"And you will remember me — you will love me — until I come again?"

This time no answer — none. But he saw that her slight frame quivered like a reed, and that the large limpid eyes which she raised to his, for one instant only, were swimming in tears. As he gazed, a thrill of pleased vanity, not unmingled with a deeper, tenderer feeling, came over Paul Lynedon. With a sudden impulse — he was always governed by impulses — he stooped down and kissed the tearful eyes, the trembling lips, which had silently betrayed so much.

"God bless you, Katharine — dearest Katharine!" were his last words. Their echoes rang through her life for years.

Lynedon, as he rode home, felt rather annoyed that he had committed himself in this way. But he could not help it — she looked so pretty. And then, she was a mere child after all, and would be his little cousin soon, he hoped. With this thought, he dismissed the subject, and the image of Katharine glided into that of Eleanor Ogilvie.

But she — the young creature whom he left behind — stood there, absorbed in a trance of delirious rapture. She saw nothing — felt nothing — but the vanished face and the touch that lingered on her lips and eyelids. It seemed as if with that kiss a new soul — his soul — had passed into her own, giving it a second life. She awoke, as if in another world, feeling her whole being changed and sublimated. With her, everything in existence now tended towards one thought, one desire, one passionate and yet solemn prayer — that she might one day be worthy to lay down her life, her love, her very soul, at the feet of Paul Lynedon.

Contents

CHAPTER 11

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.
News from the humming city comes to it
In sound of funeral or marriage bells,
And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you hear
The windy clanging of the minster clock.
TENNYSON.

There is, in one of the counties between Devon and Northumberland, a certain cathedral city, the name of which I do not intend to reveal. It is, or was until very lately, one of the few remaining strongholds of High-Churchism and Conservatism, political and moral. In olden days it almost sacrificed its existence as a city for the cause of King Charles the Martyr; and ever since has kept true to its principles, or at least to that modification of them which the exigencies of modern times required. And the "loyal and ancient" town — which dignifies itself by the name of city, though a twenty minutes' walk would bring you from one extremity to the other — is fully alive to the consciousness of its own deservings. It is a very colony of Levites; who, devoted to the temple-service, shut out from their precincts any unholy thing. But this unholiness is an epithet of their own affixing, not Heaven's. It means not merely what is irreligious, but what is ungenteel, unaristocratic, un-Conservative.

Yet there is much that is good about the place and its inhabitants. The latter may well be proud of their ancient and beautiful city — beautiful not so much in itself as for its situation. It lies in the midst of a fertile and gracefully undulated region, and consists of a cluster of artistically irregular and deliciously old-fashioned streets, of which the nucleus is the cathedral. This rises aloft with its three airy spires, so light, so delicately traced, that they have been christened the Ladies of the Vale. You may see them for miles and miles looking almost like a fairy building against the sky. The city has an air of repose, an old-world look, which becomes it well. No railway has yet disturbed the sacred peace of its antiquity, and here and there you may see grass growing in its quiet streets, over which you would no more think of thundering in a modern equipage than of driving a coach-and-four across the graves of your ancestors.

The whole atmosphere of the place is that of sleepiness and antique propriety. The people do everything, as Boniface says, "soberly." They have grave dinner-parties, once or twice in the year; a public ball, as solemn as a funeral; a concert now and then, very select and proper; — and so society moves on, in a circle of polite regularities. The resident bishop is the sun of the system; around which deans, sub-deans, choral vicars, and clerical functionaries of all sorts, revolve in successive orbits with their separate satellites. One character, one tone of feeling, pervades everybody. L — is a city of serene old age. Nobody seems young there — not even the little singing-boys.

But the *sanctum sanctorum*, the penetralia of the city, is a small region surrounding the cathedral, entitled the Close. Here abide relics of ancient sanctity, widows of departed deans, maiden descendants of officials who probably chanted anthems on the

accession of George III, or on the downfall of the last Pretender. Here, too, is the residence of many cathedral functionaries who pass their lives within the precincts of the sanctuary. These dwellings have imbibed the clerical and dignified solemnity due to their neighbourhood. It seems always Sunday in the Close; and the child who should venture to bowl a hoop along its still pavement, or play at marbles on its door-steps, would be more daring than ever was infant within the verge of the city of L — .

In this spot was Mrs. Breynton's residence. But it looked down with superior dignity upon its neighbours in the Close, inasmuch as it was a detached mansion, inclosed by high walls, gardens, and massive gates. It had once been the bishop's palace, and was a beautiful relic of the stately magnificence of old. Large and lofty rooms, oak-panelled and supported by pillars, noble staircases, recesses where proscribed traitors might have hid, gloomy bed-chambers with spectral furniture, meet for the visitation of legions of ghosts, dark passages, where you might shiver at the echo of your own footsteps; — such were the internal appearances of the house. Everything was solemn, still, age-stricken.

But, without, one seemed to pass at once from the frigidity of age, to the light, gladness, and freshness of youth. The lovely garden was redolent of sweet odours, alive with birds, studded with velvety grass plots of the brightest green interwound by shady alleys, with here and there trees which hid their aged boughs in a mantle of leaves and flowers, so that one never thought how they and the grey pile which they neighboured had come into existence together. It was like the contrast between a human mind which the world teaches and builds on its own fading model, and the soul of God's making and nourishing which lives in His sunshine and His dews, fresh and pure, never grows old, and bears flowers to the last.

There, in that still garden, you might sit for hours, and hear no world-sounds to break its quiet except the chimes of the cathedral-clock drowsily ringing out the hours. Now and then, at service-time, there would come a faint murmur of chanting, uniting the visible form of holy service with Nature's eternal praises and prayers, and so blending the spiritual and the tangible, the symbol and the expression, in a pleasant harmony. Dear, beautiful garden! No dream of fiction, but a little Eden of memory — let us rest awhile in thy lovely shades before we people them with the denizens of this our self-created world. Oh, pleasant garden! let us go back in spirit to the past, and lie down on the green sloping bank under the magnificent old tree with its cloud of white blossoms (no poet-sung hawthorn, but only a double-cherry) — let us stroll along the terrace-walk, and lean against the thick low wall, looking down upon what was once the cathedral moat, but is now a sloping dell all trailed over with blackberries — let us watch the sunlit spires of the old cathedral in a quiet dreaminess that almost shuts out thought! And, while resting under the shadow of this dream, its memorial pictures shall be made lifelike to us by the accompaniment of solemn music — such as this:

O earth so full of dreary noises,
O men with wailing in your voices;
O delved gold — the wailer's heap;
O strife — O tears that o'er it fall,
God makes a silence through you all!
And giveth His beloved sleep.

Contents

CHAPTER 12

Of what quality was your love, then?
Like a fair house built upon another man's ground, so that I have lost my edifice by mistaking the place where I erected it.
SHAKSPEARE.

How ill doth he deserve a lover's name
Whose pale weak flame
Cannot retain
His heart in spite of absence or disdain;
But does at once, like paper set on fire,
Burn, and expire. CAREW.

It was scarcely possible to imagine a greater contrast than that between Mrs. Breynton and Eleanor Ogilvie. It was not the contrast of youth and age, or beauty and ugliness: — for the lady of the palace was certainly not very old, and might once have been decidedly handsome. But there was a line-and-plummet regularity, an angular preciseness, in Mrs. Breynton's mind and person, that was altogether opposed to Hogarth's curve of "beauty and grace." She was like a correct mathematical figure altogether made up of right lines. A bishop's niece, a canon's daughter, and a dean's widow, she had lived all her life under the shadow of the cathedral walls. It was her world — she could imagine no greater; and in it she had passed a life serene, sedate, unbroken, save by two shocks — the death of the dean — and an event yet more terrible, her only brother's relinquishment of the Church for the Army. The first she recovered in time; the second she atoned for by bringing up that favourite brother's orphan son to restore the credit of the family through the induction of surplice and band.

The elder lady and her companion sat together in the breakfast-room. It was the only apartment in the house that was small enough to be comfortable, and this shadow of domestic coziness was taken away by one half of it being transformed by a glass partition-wall into a conservatory. But this conservatory was unlike most others, inasmuch as it had dead brick walls and high windows through which little light could penetrate, so that it looked as if the room had been made into a vegetable menagerie.

Mrs. Breynton always made a rule of sitting still after breakfast for half-an-hour; during which time she read her letters, decided upon the day's avocations, and knitted one square of an eternal counterpane that seemed likely to enter on its duties for the first time as the shroud of its centenarian fabricator.

"Eleanor, my dear!" said the measured tones of the Dean's widow.

Eleanor had entered the menagerie with the charitable intention of opening the window to give air to its occupants.

"My dear Eleanor!" repeated in a tone higher, made her turn round and answer the call "I merely wished to remind you that we never open the conservatory window until Easter, and it is now only the week before Lent."

Eleanor closed the window; looking compassionately at the poor orange-trees, which could drink in air and light only by rule and measure. She came into the

breakfast-room, and sat watching the sunshine that struggled in. It rested on an old picture — the only one in the room — a portrait of a rosy, golden-haired boy. The original was the Canon Francis Wychnor, whose monument stood in the cathedral nave. Could he have ever been a child?

Mrs. Breynton knitted another row in silence, and then observed:

"Eleanor, my reference to this season of Lent has made me remember how near it is to the Ember weeks. I wonder I did not hear from Philip to-day."

Sudden blushes rarely came to Eleanor's cheek; her feelings were too well governed and calm. But now she felt glad that she sat in the shade, for Mrs. Breynton's thoughts had taken the same direction as her own.

"Perhaps he will write to-morrow," was the very ordinary reply that she found herself able to make.

"I hope so: but he has rarely suffered Tuesday morning to pass by; and it would have been pleasant to me to know that he is quite prepared for taking orders."

"This year — so soon!"

"Certainly, my dear. He was three-and-twenty last month — just in time. I have already spoken to the Bishop about the curacy of Wearmouth; and old Mr. Vernon, the rector of that place, is not likely in course of nature to live more than two or three years. I consider that there are few young men with better prospects than my nephew; and I think I may flatter myself on having been to a certain degree instrumental in his well-being."

"Indeed he owes you much! But I am sure, from what I know of Mr. Wychnor, that your kindness will be requited with interest."

A pleased though very frigid smile bent the thin lips of the Dean's widow. "I am quite satisfied that Philip will do credit to his family. I have no fault to find with him, except perhaps that he is not regular enough in his studies, and has a fancy for always carrying with him a volume or two of idle poetry — not quite the thing for a young clergyman to read. But he will get over that; and if he conducts himself well in his curacy, and marries to please me, as I have little doubt he will" (here Mrs. Breynton glanced approvingly at Eleanor's gracefully-drooped head), "why, then, Philip will have no cause to regret that he is my nephew. But it is already ten o'clock, and I have to speak to the gardener about transplanting some geraniums. Eleanor, will you be kind enough to ring for Davis?"

Long after the old lady had attired herself, and been seen slowly traversing the garden walks, Eleanor sat musing on her latter words— "If Philip marries to please me." It was almost the first time she had ever heard the word marriage on Mrs. Breynton's lips. The palace had always seemed a quiet, innocent paradise, wherein there was no mention of the one feeling which in society is often diluted into a meaningless and contemptible jest, or else made the cause of all strife, evil, and sorrow. Eleanor and Philip, shut up together like two young birds in this peaceful Eden, had glided into love, without any one's taking apparent notice of the fact, and almost without knowing it themselves. The flower had sprung up in their hearts, and grown leaf by leaf, bud by bud, neither could tell how. No doubts and jealousies from the world outside had ever come between them. Their perfect love was perfect trust — the deep faith between two beings who feel that they are formed for one another, and are united to the heart's core. They never talked about their love. Philip made no declarations — Eleanor asked no vows; and when they parted for the short visit at Summerwood, there was no formal farewell. Only, as they stood at the hall-door Philip pressed her hand, and said:

“Take care of yourself, Eleanor — *my* Eleanor! — remember you are *mine* — dearest to me of all the world.”

Eleanor believed it, and felt from that moment that she was betrothed to him in heart and soul. She rested in the knowledge; full of trust in him, in his true, earnest, noble nature. She had not thought much of the future until Mrs. Breynton’s words awakened a restlessness and an anxious looking forward. Eleanor knew Philip’s heart better than any one, and she foreboded that all these projects for his future advantage were little likely to be seconded by him. She sat pondering for nearly an hour, when she was summoned into the drawing-room by the arrival of a visitor.

It was the last person in the world whom she expected.

“Mr. Lynedon! — this is, indeed, a surprise,” cried Eleanor.

There was a slight confusion in his manner; which was very soon reflected in hers, for just at that moment Mrs. Breynton entered. The extreme frigidity of her reception was enough to produce an uncomfortable feeling in any maiden of nineteen who has to introduce a strange gentleman — arrived, apparently, without any object but that of seeing herself.

“Mrs. Breynton, this is Mr. Lynedon, a friend of my uncle Ogilvie’s, who was staying at Summerwood. I believe I spoke of him.”

“I have not the slightest recollection of the fact, my dear; but any friend of yours or of Sir Robert Ogilvie’s is welcome to my house. Pray be seated, Mr. — . Excuse me, Eleanor, but I did not catch the gentleman’s name.”

“Lynedon,” answered Paul, somewhat disconcerted by the cold penetrating gaze of Mrs. Breynton. However, he made an effort and recovered his self-command. “I bear credentials from Summerwood which I hope will atone for this intrusion, a few books which Miss Ogilvie was sending to her cousin. Happening to propose a journey which would lead me through your city, I volunteered to deliver them. Perhaps this offer was hardly disinterested, as I was glad of any excuse to stay and see your beautiful cathedral.”

Mrs. Breynton began to thaw. To praise “our cathedral,” and manifest interest therein, was a certain road to her favour. From the few words which she answered, Paul Lynedon was sharp-sighted enough to discover this, and he followed up his game with great patience and ingenuity. While Eleanor examined the books he had brought, he talked the Dean’s lady into the best of humours. She took him to the window which looked on the cathedral-yard, explained its architecture from top to bottom, and finally, delighted with the interest that he evinced and with his evident antiquarian lore — Paul was the cleverest of tacticians in displaying every whit of his knowledge — she invited her unexpected guest to stay to luncheon.

“Then, Eleanor, my dear, we can afterwards show the cathedral to Mr. Lynedon, since he seems to admire it so much. I mention this, Mr. Lynedon, because under my escort you will be able to see the Ladye Chapel, the vaults, and other interesting parts, where visitors are not admitted in general; but I, as connected with the cathedral” —

“Of course, my dear madam; how fortunate that I have the pleasure of an introduction from one so important as yourself,” said Paul Lynedon, trying not to smile at the clerical pride of this relative of so many departed dignitaries. His tendency for delicately polite satire became almost irrepressible, until in the midst of his pretended deference he caught Eleanor’s eyes fixed on him. The reproach thus given he felt, and stopped immediately.

Excited by her presence, Paul’s longing to unfold his love and receive its requital grew stronger than ever. He tried every expedient that courtesy could either sanction or conceal in order to get the old lady out of the room. But Mrs. Breynton had been

brought up in the old-world school of proprieties, and had no idea of leaving a young lady and gentleman alone together for five minutes unless they were plighted lovers. So, during two interminable hours, Paul had not an opportunity of exchanging one word with Eleanor except on the most trivial subjects, and even then Mrs. Breynton's quick black eyes followed him with a hawk-like pertinacity that was anything but pleasant.

Paul grew quite nervous. "It will come to a letter after all, and I hate the idea of a proposal in ink. Confound that stupid old woman!" thought he, while the impetuosity of his character foamed and boiled under the check he was forced to put upon it.

At last Mrs. Breynton proposed to visit the cathedral.

"Pray, do not let me encroach upon you too much," said Paul, "the verger will show me, or if Miss Ogilvie would favour me so far."

His eyes turned towards Eleanor, so did Mrs. Breynton's but there was not the shadow of a love-mystery suggested in that calm, mild face.

"Indeed, Mr. Lynedon, I should be very glad to act as your guide, only Mrs. Breynton knows so much more than I do about these curious old monuments. However, we will both go with you."

"Certainly, Eleanor," acquiesced Mrs. Breynton, with an air of complete reassurance; while Paul forced his hand so precipitately into his glove that he tore it completely in two. But, as if the favouring stars looked with pity on the vexed lover, it so chanced that the Bishop's lady drove up to the gates just as the three were setting out. Mrs. Breynton was forced to return, and Paul at last found himself alone with Eleanor.

Who ever wooed
As in his boyish hope he would have done?

asks the poet, and poets are in nine cases out of ten the only truth-speakers. Paul Lynedon suddenly discovered that he had not a word to say. Eleanor — quiet, composed, unconscious Eleanor — had all the talk to herself. She exerted her memory to the utmost in order to explain everything. Paul listened assentingly — walked beside her — looked where she directed — but whether she were showing him Newgate or Westminster Abbey, it would have been quite impossible for him to tell. When they came out, a sudden fear urged him to make the most of the time.

"Do not let us go in yet. I should like to see the view from the terrace you spoke of," he said hurriedly.

They walked to the garden terrace.

"I really am much obliged to you for being Katharine's messenger; it was so kind and thoughtful of her to make me this present, and to choose such nice books, too," observed Eleanor.

Paul felt that he must "do or die." He stood still in his walk, took her hand, and said in a deep, low whisper:

"Miss Ogilvie, you are mistaken; Katharine never sent those books, it was but my excuse for seeing you. I cannot live any longer without saying 'Eleanor, I love you!' Why do you start — why do you turn away? Eleanor, you must hear me — you must answer me."

She could not: indeed, he hardly allowed her time — but went on rapidly,

"You were so kind, so gentle, when we were at Summerwood — I thought you might love me, or would let me teach you to do so in time. Eleanor, is it so? tell me: — or, have I deceived myself?"

Her reply was the one word— "Yes!"

Paul Lynedon did not answer. He leaned against the wall, and covered his face. Eleanor, startled and pained, was also silent. They stood thus for some minutes. At last she said, with some agitation, "Indeed, indeed I had no idea of this. Mr. Lynedon, you do not think I deceived you?"

"No, no — it was my own madness," muttered Paul; "the fool I was, to think that I had read a woman's heart! Well! — it will be a lesson to me. Miss Ogilvie, I trust you will pardon me," he said, in a tone that savoured more of wounded pride than of heart-broken love.

"Pardon you! I owe *you* pardon, if by any means I have made you unhappy. But I do not think I shall — at least not for long. Forgive me. I like and esteem you very much. I do indeed."

That soft voice touched Paul's heart, even amidst the angry bitterness that was rising there.

"For heaven's sake, Miss Ogilvie, tell me why you reject me! Is it simply because I have been so hasty that I have not given you time to love me? — or, do you love another?"

A deep crimson rose to Eleanor's very brow. Paul saw the blush, and understood it. His pride took arms against his lingering love, and drove it from the field.

"You need not speak — I am answered. Believe me, I wish to intrude on no man's privileges. Let me hope that you will forget this unfortunate betrayal of feelings which you do not return; and accept my best wishes for your happiness. Look! I see Mrs. Breynton at the window; shall we retrace our steps? — I wish to heaven it could be done in more ways than one," added the rejected lover in a bitter "aside," which Eleanor's agitation prevented her from hearing. If she had, it might have saved her gentle heart from many a painful thrill of womanly pity; and shown her how rootless and how easily extinguished is the love that springs up suddenly in the breast of a proud and impetuous man, and with the thwarting of its own selfish impulse as quickly dies away. No man who loves worthily, however hopelessly, will mingle bitterness and anger with his sorrow, or say to the sunbeams under whose brightness he has walked for a time— "I would ye had never shone!"

Eleanor and Lynedon re-entered the house in silence. Mrs. Breynton looked at them with a politely-qualified curiosity; but the answer to her penetrating inquiry appeared sufficiently satisfactory, for she took no notice of the discovery. And the reverend and reverenced shadow of the Bishopess still rested on the good lady, who felt herself bound to reflect upon all around the high dignity and honour of this visit, shutting out every minor consideration.

"I shall be always happy to see you, Mr. Lynedon," she said, replying to her guest's hurried adieu with a stately politeness; "I regret that my nephew, Mr. Wychnor, is not here, but we expect him shortly."

Paul glanced at Eleanor. In the drooped head — in the bright rosy dye which suffused the very throat — he read the secret of his rejection. He turned hastily away, and his hurried strides resounded heavily down the pavement of the Close. There was a little child playing in his path — he drove the frightened boy aside with a fiery glance and a command that sounded almost like an execration.

"Well! he is the strangest young man I ever knew, this Mr. Paul Lynedon," was Mrs. Breynton's comment as she watched him from the window of the palace. "Really, Eleanor" —

But Eleanor had left the room, to relieve her troubled heart with a gush of pent-up tears. This sudden knowledge of another's love had unveiled to her more completely

the depths of her own, and shown her how her whole soul was bound up in Philip Wychnor. And no matter in how happy and hopeful a light this consciousness may come, there is always something solemn — almost fearful — to a woman who thus stands, as it were, on the brink of a life-destiny; feeling that in the future nothing can be perfectly sure or clear but the faithful love in her own heart. Yet that love is her fairest omen — her safest anchor — her chiefest strength, except in Heaven!

And while Eleanor lingered alone, in thoughtful musings that were almost prayers, and while Paul Lynedon dashed forward on his way in angry sorrow, determined to travel abroad, and so crush out of his heart every memory of his slighted love, Mrs. Breynton, good, easy soul, sat dozing over her netting, and thinking how very condescending was the new Bishop's lady, when the first invitation to dinner would arrive, and whether she should wear the black velvet or the Irish poplin.

O youth! with thy fiery heart — which, after all, is nearest to Heaven in the nobleness that thrills through its wildest beatings — canst thou ever freeze into such a dead, dull calm as this?

Contents

CHAPTER 13

I ask no vengeance from the powers above:
All I implore is, never more to love: —
Let me this fondness from my bosom tear,
Let me forget that e'er I thought her fair.
LYTTLETON.

Passions are likened best to floods and streames,
The shallow murmur, but the deeps are dumb;
So, when affections yield discourse, it seems
The bottom is but shallow whence they come.
RALEIGH.

Lynedon strode through the quiet grass-grown streets of L — , his feet winged by the impetuous anger of a thwarted will. Despite the impulse of this sudden passion, it had cost him considerable effort before the gay and courted man of the world could resolve to give up his liberty, and immolate himself on the matrimonial shrine for any woman soever. And now the heroic resolution was wholly vain — the momentous sacrifice was rejected as an unvalued offering. The first absolute proposal of marriage with which Paul Lynedon had ever honoured the sex had been refused! And by whom! By a simple country girl, who had, he now thought, neither beauty nor fascinations of manner, nor — fortune.

He remembered that last circumstance now; though, to do Paul justice, he had not considered it before — for he was not a mercenary man. Even while it stung his pride, it brought a faint consolation to his sense of worldly wisdom. It had certainly saved him from perpetrating a most improvident marriage. He "laid the flattering unction to his soul," but it proved only a temporary balm; the sting still remained — wounded pride — selfish, angry sorrow, like that of a child over a lost toy — and perhaps a deeper, purer feeling, which regretted the vanished spell of that gentle woman's nature, under which every better impulse of his own had been re-awakened. That which he had felt was not the real love, the one sole love of life; but no man could have entered even within the shadow of Eleanor Ogilvie's influence without some true, deep chords being sounded in his heart, and from their silence came the pain, the only sincere and virtuous pain, which Paul Lynedon experienced. To lull it, he walked for miles across the country, striving by physical exercise to deaden the excitement of his mind.

It was a lovely region through which he passed — all woodland or pasture-grounds — but the young man saw nothing. Nature, pure, unalloyed nature, was rarely his delight: his perceptions, though refined, were not simple enough to relish such pleasures. Now, he only felt that the roads were insufferably muddy and the fields hatefully quiet. He did not marvel at the taste of a woman brought up in such scenes; he only cursed his own folly for ever having seen any charm in rural innocence. He would eschew such sentimentality in future; he would go back to the gay, care-drowning world — plunge in London life — or, what seemed far better, travel abroad once more.

Under this impulse he sprang on a coach that was then passing; caring little whither it bore him, so that it was far away from L — .

Lynedon entrenched himself in proud reserve beside the coachman; and scarcely answered, even in monosyllables, when this individual — a character in his way — civilly pointed out many a lovely pastoral view, amongst which, from every point, the "Ladies of the Vale" could be seen airily towering in the clear sky. With melancholy emphasis did the foreboding hero of the whip point out the line where the threatened railway was to traverse this beautiful champaign, and bring at last the evil spirit of reform and progress into the time-honoured sanctity of the cathedral town. But Lynedon hated the very name of the place. All that he noticed in his neighbour's conversation was the atrocious S — shire accent; and he came to the conclusion that the English peasantry were the rudest in the world.

At last, Paul's mind began to settle into a few straightforward resolves with regard to his future proceedings. The coach was bearing him towards London; — but could he go there, within reach of the sneers of the already suspecting Mrs. Lancaster? No, he would pretend urgent affairs, and rush abroad: — and to do this, he must first go home.

Home! It was a rare word in Paul Lynedon's vocabulary. Very few of his friends knew of its existence at all; and he never sought to enlighten their ignorance, for, in fact, he was considerably ashamed of the place.

The penultimate descendant of the time-honoured Lynedon race had sought to redeem his fortunes by trade. Paul's father had been a cotton-manufacturer. The moderate fortune which now enabled the son to take his stand in that sphere to which his birth entitled him, had sprung from the red-brick mill, with its black windows, its ever-dinning wheels. This grim phantom had been the horror of Paul Lynedon's youth: it haunted him even yet. Perhaps, had his better self gained free play, he would not have so wholly sought to stifle the remembrance of the spot where, years before, the aristocratic father, equally proud but yet noble in his pride, had put his hand to the work, and never once looked back until he had replaced ancestral wealth by the wealth of industry. Paul's conscience, and his appreciative reverence for virtue, acknowledged all this, but he had not strength of mind to brave the world and say so.

Therefore, while he would not part with the simple dwelling where his grey-haired father and his fair young mother had both died, and where his sister and himself had spent their orphaned childhood — still, Lynedon rarely alluded to his "home," and scarcely ever visited it. The distant sound of the horrible cotton-mill, now long since passed into other hands, almost drove him wild yet. No head with brains could endure the din. On his rare visits, he usually made a circuit of half-a-mile to avoid it. He did so now, notwithstanding the weariness caused by his long night journey. At last, in the sunshine of early morning, he stood by his own door.

It had originally been a straight-staring, plain-fronted house, of the eternal red brick peculiar to the manufacturing districts. But the builder's want of taste was concealed by the late owner's possession of that graceful quality. Over the staring front were trained ivy, clematis, and vine, converting it into a very bower of greenery; and amidst the formal garden had been planted quick-growing lime-trees, that now formed "pleached alleys" wherein even poets or lovers — the true honey-bees of all life's pleasure-flowers — might delight to walk.

As Paul Lynedon passed hastily through these, he thought for a moment how, when the trees were growing, he and his little sister had used to play at hide-and-seek among them. He wished that the bright, curly-tressed head had been peeping out from among the branches, and smiling a womanly, sisterly welcome from the barred and

lonely doorway. The first time for many months, he remembered a little green mound beside the stately burying-place of the Lynedons — far away. Paul sighed, and thought that he might have been a better and a happier man if poor little Alice had lived to be a woman.

He roused his old housekeeper; but when she came, at the first look of her sour, grumbling face, he hastily dismissed her. In the long-deserted house was neither chamber nor bed prepared; so he stretched himself on a sofa, and tried to forget past, present, and future in a most welcome slumber.

This deep sleep lasted for several hours. Lynedon awoke with the afternoon sun staring right into his face, together with a couple of human optics belonging to a young man who sat near him and maintained an equally pertinacious gaze. This individual held, likewise, his evidently medical fingers on the sleeper's wrist, while from his other hand dangled the orthodox M.D.'s watch. It fell to the ground when Paul started up with an energy very unlike a patient's.

"My good friend — my dear Lynedon — well, I thought there could be nothing much the matter with you."

"Who imagined there was?"

"Why, that good old soul your housekeeper, who said you slept so heavily at first, and then began to talk so wildly, she was sure you were mad, or had taken poison, and so fetched me."

"Pshaw — well, I am very glad to see you, Doctor," said Paul, rousing himself, and trying to shake off the rush of painful and mortifying thoughts that came with his awaking. He could not do this altogether; and it was with considerable effort that he forced his features into a polite smile while he listened to the talk of his old college chum, who, on giving up the sermon for the recipe, had been considerably indebted to Lynedon's kindness for a start in life.

"I am sure I hope you are coming to settle among us, or at least to stay a long time," said Dr. Saville.

Paul's face darkened. "No; I shall be off in a day or two for the Continent. I don't care when I come back. I hate England."

"Really — how very odd! what can be the reason?" was the simple remark of the most commonplace of country doctors.

"Never mind, my good fellow," said Paul rather sharply. "Don't talk about myself; I am sick of the subject. Speak about any other affairs — your own for instance; doubtless far more interesting to both parties."

"Thank you, Lynedon, you are very kind:" — and the chattering, weak-minded, but good-natured physician held forth for a long time on the inane topics current in the neighbourhood. At last he glided on to his own peculiar affairs; and, after a while, gathered courage to convey to his old friend and patron the important information that he was about to marry.

"If you do you are a confounded fool," cried Lynedon, with an energy that made the little doctor tremble on his chair. "I beg your pardon, Saville," he added, trying to laugh off the matter; "you don't know what women are — not so well as friend Maro. Remember,

Varium et mutabile semper

Fœmina.

The old fellow was not far wrong, eh? They are all alike."

"Except my Lizzie! oh, no! I'm quite sure of Lizzie;" — and he began to dilate contentedly on a future rendered certain by its humble hopes and limited desires. Paul was touched; it formed such a contrast to his selfish sorrow and mortified pride. He

listened with a feeling very like envy to the bridegroom-expectant's account of his already furnished house, his neat garden — Lizzie liked flowers — his little gig wherein he could go his professional rounds and drive Lizzie to see her mother on a Sunday. In the midst of this quiet, monotonous stream of talk, the worthy Doctor was startled by Paul's suddenly springing up with the cry —

"Upon my soul, Charles Saville, you are a happy man, and I am a most miserable one! I wish to Heaven that I were dead!"

Lovers, and especially rejected lovers, are generally slow to communicate to any male friend the story of their sufferings. They will do so sometimes — nay, often — to a friend of the opposite sex. A woman makes the best confidante, after all; and perhaps in such cases womanly sympathy is the surest cure for a heart-wound. It is hard to account for the impulse that made Lynedon betray his feelings to his old friend, except from the fact that the sympathy of the worthy simple-minded Doctor was most like that of a woman. Perhaps, too, the contrast in their prospects invited sympathy, and Lynedon, having been the Doctor's patron, was disposed to like him, and to be more than usually communicative. But however it chanced, most certainly Dr. Saville contrived to glean a great deal of information; and by putting together names, incidents, and exclamations, to form a tolerable guess at a great deal more. In fact, if he did not arrive at the whole truth, he came very near it, and his prolific imagination easily supplied the rest. But he took care by a respectful reserve to avoid startling the sensitiveness of his patron; and the promise of secrecy with which he bade Lynedon adieu he long and faithfully kept — except with regard to his "Lizzie."

Paul, left to himself, saw night close upon him in the lonely house. He felt more and more its desolation and his own. It was not so much the lost love, as the need of loving, which came upon him with such intense pain. He thought of the poor village doctor, poor in mind as in person, who yet could look forward to a bright hearth made happy by a mother's blessing and a wife's clinging arms. While he — the admired of many a circle — accustomed to the honeyed flatteries of many a fair lip which he knew to be false as his own — he, Paul Lynedon, stood alone, with not a single creature in the whole wide world to love him.

"Not one — not one!" As he despondently repeated the words, Lynedon's eye fell upon a slip of paper which he had carelessly tossed out of his pocket-book. It was merely a few verses — copied by his request — written out in a girlish hand, evidently trained into the most anxious neatness. It bore the date "Summerwood," and the signature "Katharine Ogilvie."

As Paul unfolded the paper, his face brightened, and softened into tenderness. There came before him a vision of the dark eyes lifted, for one moment only, in sorrowing, yearning love — of the fair lips which had trembled beneath his own.

"Dear little girl — sweet little Katharine! I think she does care for me — God bless her!" He felt almost inclined to kiss the paper, but stopped; reflecting with a half smile that she was such a child! But even a child's love was precious to him then.

"I should almost like to see her again before I leave England," thought Paul. "But no — it would not do! What excuse could I make for my sudden flight? However, I will write."

He did write, as the impulse of the moment dictated.

It was a letter which spoke, as his idle words had before done, everything except the positive declaration of love. Its deep tenderness — its half ambiguous. expressions — its broken and altered sentences — were such as to thrill with happiness any young impassioned heart, that, once deceived into a fixed belief, judges everything by its utter simplicity, and sees in all forms and shows of love the reflection of its own. Poor

Katharine! These outpourings of a momentary feeling, forgotten by the writer ere they met the reader's eye, what would they be to her!

Paul Lynedon knew not — thought not — cared not. A few weeks after he was mingling in the gayest *salons* of Paris; the pleasure and pain of the last three months having alike passed from his memory as though they had never been.

Contents

CHAPTER 14

I have a more than friend
Across the mountains dim;
No other voice to me is sweet
Unless it nameth him!
We broke no gold — a pledge
Of stronger faith to be,
But I wear his last look in my soul
Which said, "I love but thee!"

I was betrothed that day:
I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.
E. B. BROWNING.

There is hardly a man in the world who does not feel his pulse beat quicker when, even after a short absence, he finds himself nearing home. A commonplace this — often said, often written; but there are commonplaces, delicious, ever fresh truths, which seem the daisies on the world's highway: it is hard not to stop and gather them sometimes. So, beginning with this trite saying, we may go on to remark that Philip Wychnor's heart experienced a slight additional thrill when, riding through the grass-grown streets of L — , he saw the evening sun emblazoning the palace-windows, and felt that he was really "coming home."

It is a rule with novelists — and a sterling one, in general — that you should never unveil your characters by elaborate descriptions of mind and person, but suffer them to develop themselves in the progress of the story; shining down upon them until they unfold beneath the sun-burst of your artistic skill, instead of pulling them open leaf by leaf with your fingers, and thus presenting to the reader your well-dissected bouquet of human-heart flowers. But in the present case we will waive the aforesaid excellent rule, for no reader could ever find out the inner character of Philip Wychnor from its outward manifestations in the routine of daily life. Not that he was deficient in exterior qualities to win regard. Most people liked him — or at least that half of his character which was most apparent — and said, as Hugh Ogilvie once did, that he was "a good fellow enough." There was but one in the world who thoroughly understood him, who had looked into the depths of his soul. What need is there to say who was that one — precious, loving, and beloved — on whom he rested, and from whom he drew comfort, strength, and peace?

Philip Wychnor would never have made a hero, either in body or in mind: — at least not one of your grand world-heroes who will overthrow an army or perform some act of self-devotion with which the heart of history throbs for a century after. But there is many a lauded martyr whose funeral pile is only a huge altar to self-glory, which the man's own dying hands have reared. The true heroes are those whose names the world never hears, and never will hear — the blessed household martyrs who offer unto God the sacrifice, not of death's one pang, but of life's long patient endurance — the holy ones, who, through

Love's divine self-abnegation,

attain the white robes and the ever-blooming palms of those who have "passed through much tribulation."

Philip Wychnor might have been one of these.

But, wearying of our "was nots" and "might have beens," you may ask, dear reader, what he was. A poet? No; he had scarcely ever strung together six consecutive rhymes. But his whole life was a poem: so pure, so rich in all those dear charities and holy influences which create the poetry of this world. Some of earth's truest poets are outwardly dumb; but their singing is like the music of the stars; the angels hear it up in heaven. How glorious such unheard melody must be! — Was he handsome? It might be; for genius rarely exists without casting over the outward frame a certain spiritual loveliness, and oftentimes soul and body grow linked together in an exquisite perfection, so that neither materialist nor spiritualist would think of dissevering the one from the other. But the beauty of Philip Wychnor's face was too refined — almost too feminine — to attract general notice. Features regularly chiselled and delicately small, shadowed by hair of a pale clear brown, in which somewhat rare tint no one could detect either the admired gold or the widely condemned red — a stature very reed-like, both as to height and slenderness — and that personal sign which in a man so often accompanies exquisite refinement of mind, a beautiful hand — comprise the external semblance of him whom we have hitherto seen only through the reflection of Eleanor Ogilvie's love.

Let him now stand alone in his real likeness, ungilded by even this love-sunshine; a son of Adam, not perfect but still nearer — ay, ten thousand times — to that grand image of true manhood than the many poor clay deities, the work of the tailor and the fencing-master, which draw silly maidens' eyes in drawing-room or street. Stand forth, Philip Wychnor! Raise thy face, sublime in its gentleness — with the pure lips through which the foul impieties of boasting youth never yet passed — with the eyes that have not scorned at times to let their lashes droop over a tear of sympathy or of sorrow. Lift up thy hand, which never used its strength against a fellow-creature, and was not the less heroic for that. Stand forth, Philip Wychnor, and show the world the likeness of a man!

He passed the iron gateway, sprang up the palace-steps with a speed worthy of an agile youth — and a lover; in a minute the pleasant fire-lit room where Mrs. Breynton and Eleanor held their after-dinner chat, was brightened by a presence welcome to both. How doubly so to one! A good and kind, if not an affectionate aunt, was Mrs. Breynton; and perhaps now as much warmth as her nature owned was expressed in the solemn salutation which Philip's forehead received. And then came the dear, close, lingering hand-pressure of meeting and welcome — so silent, yet so full of all faithful assurance — between two who to their inmost hearts knew, loved, and trusted one another.

After even a few months of separation, it always takes a space of desultory talk before the dearest friends settle down into the quiet satisfaction of meeting. So the conversation around that dear fireside at the palace was rather restless and wandering, both as to the topics discussed and as to the way in which they were sustained. Philip found himself listening to, or at least hearing with his outward ears, the full, true, and particular account of the new Bishop's first sermon, and his lady's first call. It showed either surprising forgetfulness or true womanly tact in Mrs. Breynton, that in her lengthened recital of that day's events she made no allusion to Mr. Paul Lynedon.

"By-the-by, my dear Philip, as you did not write, I scarcely expected you home quite so soon."

“I myself hardly looked for such a pleasure until yesterday, when I found I could leave. And you know, Aunt Breynton, that I never lose any time in coming to see you,” answered the young man, affectionately.

A pleased, though rather a sedate smile marked the acknowledgments of Aunt Breynton; and then her mind turned suddenly to the melancholy fact that no household preparation was made for the visitor.

“This, you see, my dear nephew, is the result of not doing things regularly. Had you written the day before, we should have had your room ready; but now I fear you will have to sleep without curtains. And I dare say you have not dined, and the cook is gone to bed most likely.”

Philip protested against the accusation of hunger, though he was quite unable to recollect whether he had dined or not. Thereupon, he was obliged to listen to a few arguments concerning the necessity of taking care of his health and the evil of long fasting. At last Mrs. Breynton’s domestic anxiety could no longer restrain itself, and she rose to quit the room. As she passed the door, she unfortunately spied on a chair the hat and gloves which her nephew had thrown down on his entry. She could not resist the opportunity.

“Philip!”

Philip started from an earnest gaze at the drooping profile which was reflected against the fire-light, and opened the door for the old lady. The act of politeness disarmed her; she liked the grave courtesies of old, and the long lecture resolved itself into —

“Thank you, Philip. Now oblige me by ringing for the footman to take away these.” She pointed to the offending intruders on the neatness of her drawing-room; and sailed majestically away, the very genius of tidiness.

Dear Eleanor and Philip! young, simple-hearted lovers! such as the wide world’s heart has ever yearned over in song or story — ay, and ever will — how did they look at, how speak to each other? They did neither. They stood by the fire — for she had risen too — stood quite silent, until Philip took first one hand, then both, in his.

“Eleanor, are you glad to see me?”

“Glad, Philip!” was the low reply — only an echo, after all; but the clear, pure eyes were raised to his with a fulness of love that gave all the answer his own sought. He lifted her hands — he drew them, not unwilling to be thus guided, around his neck, and folded to his bosom his betrothed. It was the silent marriage-vow between two hearts, each of which felt for the first time the other’s pure beatings; a vow not less sacred than the after one, with joined hands before the altar; a solemn troth-plight, which, once given and received in sincerity and true love, no earthly power ought ever to disannul.

And surely the angels who sang the marriage-hymn of the first lovers in Eden cast down on these their holy eyes — ay, and felt that holiness unstained by the look. For can there be in this world aught more sacred than two beings who stand together, man and woman — heart-betrothed, ready to go forth hand in hand, in glad yet solemn union, on the same journey, towards the one eternal home?

O God, look down upon them! O God, bless them, and fill them with love, first towards Thee and then towards one another! Make them strong to bear gladly and nobly the dear burden which all must take who, in loving, receive unto themselves another soul with its errors and its weaknesses. Such — in their silent hearts — ay, even amid the joy of their betrothal — was the prayer that Eleanor and Philip prayed.

* * * * *

When Mrs. Breynton returned, she found the hat and gloves lying precisely where she had left them; and through the half-opened inner door she caught a glimpse of Eleanor's black dress gliding up the staircase, while Philip stood with his face to the fire, trying with all his might to commit the enormity of whistling in a drawing-room. How all these conflicting elements were finally reconciled is not on record; but the fact is certain that, in honour probably of her nephew's return, the good old lady sat up talking with him until past eleven o'clock, and, for the first time in her life, quite forgot to call the servants to family devotions. Moreover, as she passed Eleanor's room, she entered, kissed her on both cheeks, and went away without a word save a fervent "God bless you!" Perhaps the one heartfelt blessing rose nearer to heaven than leaden-winged formal prayers would ever have climbed.

Contents

CHAPTER 15

HAS IT NEVER occurred to us when surrounded by sorrows, that they may be sent to us only for our instruction, as we darken the cages of birds when we wish to teach them to sing? — JEAN PAUL.

Ah! fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove,
With the wings of care.
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.
SHELLEY.

"And now, my dear children, let us talk of your prospects in the world," said Mrs. Breynton, gravely, when, after a long day, happy indeed, but somewhat restlessly spent by all three, they sat once more in the pleasant fire-light, as they had done the evening before. The only difference was that Philip now ventured to sit on the same side of the fire as Eleanor: and in the shadowy flicker of the blaze it would have been impossible to tell precisely what had become of her hand. Still, the right, true, and worthy owner of that little hand probably knew, and no one else had any business to inquire.

Mrs. Breynton found it necessary to repeat her observation, slightly varied: "I wish, my dear nephew, and niece that will be, to talk seriously about your plans for the future. When do you propose to marry? and what do you propose to marry upon?"

These point-blank questions rather startled Philip and his affianced. Few lovers, especially young lovers, amidst the first burst of deep happiness, stay to think at all of those commonplace things, house-furnishing, house-keeping, yearly income, and such like. A little Eleanor had mused, perhaps more than most young girls, on the future time, when — the enthusiastic devotion of the lover merged in the still affection of the husband — it would be her part less to be ministered unto than to minister, surrounding him with all comfort and love in the dear, quiet, blessed home — *their* home. But Philip the dreamer, still unacquainted with the realities of life, had never thought of these things at all. They came upon him almost bewilderingly; and all the answer he could make to his aunt's question was the very unsatisfactory one— "I really do not know!"

Mrs. Breynton looked from one to the other in dignified reproof. "This, I must say, is the evil of young people's arranging their matrimonial affairs for themselves. Nobody ever did so in my day. Your excellent uncle, the Dean, furnished his house down to the very stair-carpets before he even asked me to marry him. And you, Philip, I dare say, have not even thought in what county of England you intend to settle?"

Philip acknowledged he had not. — Oh, blessed Present, that with its golden light can so dim and dazzle the eyes as to make them scarcely desire to look farther, even into a happy future!

Mrs. Breynton tried to lecture gravely upon improvident and hasty marriages; it was her way. And yet she had lain awake since seven o'clock that morning, calculating how much income the curacy of Wearmouth would bring in yearly, and what it would take to furnish that pretty cottage next to the rectory; nay, she had even settled the colour of the drawing-room curtains, and was doubtful only whether the carpet should be Axminster or Brussels. But she loved to dictate and reprove, and then sweep gracefully round laden with advice and assistance.

Thus, after a due delay, she unfolded all her kindly purposes; dilating with an earnestness and clerical appreciation worthy of the Dean's lady on the promised curacy, and the living *in prospectu* with its great advantages, viz. the easy duty, large Easter offerings, plenty of glebe-land, and a nobleman's seat close by, the owner of which was devoted to the Church, and always gave practical marks of his respect by dinners and game.

"I think, Philip," continued she, "that nothing could be more fortunate. I have the Bishop's word for your succeeding to the curacy immediately on your taking orders; and — though I mean no disrespect to good Mr. Vernon — if he should die in a year or two, as in course of nature he must, you will meanwhile have an opportunity of showing his Grace what an agreeable neighbour he might secure by presenting you with the living."

Had the worthy dame been able to read her nephew's face, as well as those gentle eyes which were now lifted to it with anxious tenderness, she would have seen in the grave, almost sad expression which came over it, how little the young earnest nature sympathised with the worldly-minded one. Philip's honest foot would never have entered the tainted Paradise she drew. Respect restrained his tongue, as it had done many a time before; but Eleanor read in his silence what his thoughts were. Honour be to the unselfish and truly womanly impulse which prompted her to press fondly and encouragingly the hand wherein her own lay — as if to say, "Stand fast, my beloved; do that which is right; I am with you through all" It was the first taking upon herself of that blessed burden of love which through life's journey they were to bear for one another. Philip leaned in spirit upon the helpmate God had given him. He grew strong, and was comforted.

"Dear aunt," he said, gently, "you are very good to think of all these things, but I feel by no means sure that I shall ever take orders."

"Not take orders! when you have all your life been studying for the Church?" cried Mrs. Breynton, lifting up her eyes with the most intense astonishment. "Philip Wychnor! what can you mean?"

"I mean," said Philip, slowly and firmly, though in a tone low and humble as a child's, "that for the last year I have thought much and deeply of the life apparently before me. I have seen how the sanctity of the Church is profaned by those servants who, at its very threshold, take either an utterly false vow or one only half understood and wholly disregarded. I dare not lay upon my soul this sin."

Mrs. Breynton's temperament was too frigid to be often disturbed by violent passion; but it was easy to see from the restless movements of her fingers and the sudden twitching of her thin, compressed lips, how keenly she was agitated by her nephew's words.

"Then, sir," she said, after a pause, "you are about to inform me that you have followed the example of other wild, misguided young men, and dissented from the Establishment; in short, that you no longer believe in our Holy Church."

"I do believe in it," cried Philip, earnestly. "I believe it to be the purest on earth; but no human form of worship can be wholly pure. I have never quitted, and never

shall quit, the Church in which I was born — but I will not bind myself to believe — or say I believe — all her dogmas; and I dare not in the sight of God declare that I feel called by His Spirit to be a minister at the altar when I do not sincerely think I am."

"And may I ask what right you have to think anything at all about the matter? This is merely a form of ordination, which men much wiser and more pious than yourself — excuse me, Philip — have appointed, and which every clergyman passes through without any scruple. The words mean only that the candidate is a good man, and will not disgrace the cloth he wears. Your uncle explained it all to me once. — Philip," continued Mrs. Breynton, losing the cold scorn of her manner in the real earnestness of her feelings, "you would not, surely, give up your prospects in life for such a trifle as this?"

"A trifle!" echoed Philip, sadly, as he saw how vain it would be to explain his motives further, and felt keenly the bitterness his determination would give to his aunt's mind. She, fancying that in his silence she had gained an advantage, pursued it with all the skill of which she was capable.

"My dear nephew, do you know what you are doing? Have you forgotten that your whole education has been bent towards this end; that your own small fortune — perhaps a little more, to which I will not allude — has gone in college expenses for the same purpose; that if you follow your present wild scheme, you *must* begin life anew, with nothing in this world to trust to?"

"Except an honest heart and a clear conscience."

How tender and holy was the light in those sweet eyes that looked up in his — how warm the pressure of the other hand, not the clasped one, which of its own accord twined round his arm in fond encouragement! He needed the strength thus imparted, for his own was sorely shaken by Mrs. Breynton's next words — uttered in a tone where anger and disappointment triumphed over all assumed composure.

"Listen to me, Philip Wychnor. You are about to act like a madman, and I feel it my duty to restrain you if I can. I do not ask you to remember how I have brought you up with this purpose in view, treating you less like my brother's child than my own; nor do I speak of my disappointment — for I know your great heroes for conscience' sake think little of these things," she added, with a sarcastic meaning that cut Philip to the heart. He sprang up to speak.

"Nay — sit down again; I am not accustomed to scenes," said the old lady, coldly. "I knew a young man once — he was not unlike you, Philip," — and Mrs. Breynton regarded her nephew with a smile half bitter, half mournful— "he, too, for a whim — a boyish whim — gave up the Church, and his father turned him out into the wide world — to starve. His mother broke her heart; and the girl he was about to marry — still, like you — she grieved until her friends persuaded her to wed another lover; but they could not give back her withered youth — her poor broken heart. Will you hearken, Philip, now? — for the man was your father, and that gentle creature whom he basely forsook was the dearest friend I ever had — ay, and the mother of your Eleanor!"

Struck with surprise, and deeply moved, the two young lovers impulsively started from each other's side — but only for a moment. Closer they drew together, in that painful time of agitation unrestrained by outward form; and Philip murmured, as he wound his arm round her,

"Mine — mine still — for all the past. She will trust me: my Eleanor — my own!"

Mrs. Breynton went on. "Now, Philip Wychnor, you may follow your father's steps if you like; but I solemnly declare that if you persist in this, and disgrace the family as he did, I will give up my purpose of making you my heir; and, that you may

not bring poverty on that dear child whom I have loved all her life for her mother's sake, with my consent you shall never marry Eleanor Ogilvie."

Too angry to trust herself with another word, Mrs. Breynton swept out of the room.

Philip had started up to detain her, but she was gone. He paced the room in violent agitation, never looking towards Eleanor; then he threw himself beside a table in the farthest and darkest corner, and laid his head upon his folded arms as if quite oblivious even of her presence.

For this a proud woman would have treated her lover with silent indignation, a selfish one would have let loose her wounded vanity in a burst of reproaches; — but Eleanor was neither selfish nor proud. A single pang shot through her heart as she sat alone and unnoticed by the fire; two or three tears fell; and then the true woman's nature triumphed. She had not bestowed her love for the poor requital of outward attentions such as wooers pay; she had not meted it out, share for share, as if love were a thing to be weighed and measured. She had given it freely, knitting her soul unto his, until she felt and lived, suffered and rejoiced, not in herself or for herself, but in him and for him.

Eleanor rose and glided noiselessly across the room until she stood beside her lover. In truth, he hardly felt that she was near him. A few faint beatings were there in the young maiden heart at the new and solemn office that became hers; one passing flush, and then all earthly feelings were stilled by the mute prayer which spoke in the lifted eyes. She stooped down, laid her arms round Philip's neck, and kissed him on the forehead.

He started — almost shivered beneath the touch of her lips.

"O my God! how shall I bear this? Don't speak to me, Eleanor; don't touch me, or I shall have no strength at all. Go away!"

But the next moment the harsh accents melted into tears — such a burning flood as rarely bursts even from man's pent-up suffering. Eleanor, terrified, almost heartbroken, was yet the stronger now. A woman who loves always is. She knelt beside him: it was on her bosom that his tears fell, and he did not turn away. How could he? A child does not cling to its mother with more utter helplessness than did Philip to his betrothed in that hour of suffering.

And she, as she bent over him, her heart lifted itself up in silent breathings of the prayer that she might grow strong, to strengthen him, and trustful, to comfort him.

"O God!" was that inward prayer, "if it must be, take all the sunshine out of my life and give it to his! Oh! would that I could die for thee, my heart's dearest — my pride — my *husband*!"

And as she breathed over him the name, as yet unclaimed, it seemed an omen that this cloud would pass away, and the time surely come when her lips should have a right to echo the heart's voice.

"You see how weak I am, Eleanor," Philip said, with a mournful attempt at a smile, "I, who yesterday told you how I would brave the world; and now I cling helplessly to you. But it must not be — she was right — I should only bring trouble on you. I must stand alone. Eleanor, take your arm away, it weighs me down like lead. Oh! would that we were only friends — that yesterday had never been!"

He spoke in the bitterness of his soul, without thinking of her. Eleanor cast one glance upon him, and knew this. Blessings on that unselfish nature which, knowing at once, forgave!

"Eleanor," he said, after a pause, speaking quickly and abruptly, "have you thought what will be the end of this? Do you know that I cannot marry you — at least, not for many, many years; that I have nothing to live upon, because I was too proud to be

entirely dependent on Aunt Breynton, and, as she truly says, I spent my little all at college, intending to enter the Church? Even after my mind was changed, I went dreaming on, never thinking of the future, fool that I was! And yet most people would say I am a greater fool now" — he added, with a bitter smile— "ay, and something of a villain to boot. Eleanor, after all, I think I will take the curacy. I shall not be a greater hypocrite than many of those in gown and band; and I shall keep my vow to you, if I break it to Heaven."

"Never! Do you think I would let you sell your conscience for me? Do you think I would ever be your wife then? No — for I should not love, I should despise you! Nay, I did not mean that, Philip" — and her voice softened almost into weeping— "only it would break my heart if you did this wickedness. You must not — shall not — nay, you will not. My own Philip, tell me that you will not."

And kneeling before him, Eleanor made her lover solemnly utter the promise which would for years doom them both to the heart-sickness of hope deferred. Then she sat down beside him, and took his hand.

"Now, let us consider what is best to be done. Do not think of yesterday at all, if it pains you. Forget that we were betrothed — talk to me as to a friend only — a dear friend — who regards your honour and happiness above everything in this world. Shall it be so, Philip?"

"God bless my Eleanor — my strength — my comfort!" was his answer. The words were more precious to her than the wildest outburst of lover-like adoration could ever have been.

They talked together long and seriously — like old friends. And this was no pretence, for none are true lovers who have not also for one another the still thoughtful affection of friends. Her calmness gave him strength, her clear, penetrating mind aided his; and, the first shock over, Philip seemed to pass at once from the dreaminess of aimless boyhood to the self-reliance and courage of a man

And still beside him, in all his plans, hopes, and fears, was the faithful woman-heart, as brave, as self-denying, never looking back, but going forward with him into the dim future, and half-dispersing its mists with the light of love.

"And you will forgive me, my dearest," said Philip, when they had decided how and where he was to begin the hard battle with the world— "you will forgive me for bringing this trouble upon you; and in spite of these erring words of mine, you will" —

He hesitated, but Eleanor went on for him.

"I will wait — for years if it must he — until Philip makes for me a home — happier and dearer for the long waiting. And who knows how rich it may be, too? — a great deal richer than that tiny cottage at Wearmouth." She tried to speak gaily, though the smile which her lips assumed could not reach her eyes, and soon melted into seriousness as she continued: "Besides, dear Philip, there is one thought which lies deep — almost painfully — in my heart, though your generous lips have never breathed it. I cannot forget that half your cares would have been lightened had the girl whom you chose possessed ever so little fortune, instead of being left dependent on a brother's kindness. How I have wished to be rich for your sake."

"Foolish girl! why, you are my riches, my comfort, my joy!" cried Philip, drawing closely into his very heart his affianced wife. She clung there closer in sorrow than she had ever done in joy. "If this day's trial had never been, and we could be again as we were last night — would you wish it, Eleanor?"

"No!" she answered. "No! for even then I knew not fully, as I do now, how true, how worthy, how noble was my Philip."

At this precise moment Mrs. Breynton's voice was heard without. With her entered an old sub-dean who lived in the Close, and who had come in nearly every evening for some six years, during which he and Mrs. Breynton had played an infinity of games at backgammon. Mr. Sedley did not know what a relief his presence was this evening, by casting the veil of outward formality over the conflicting emotions of the trio at the palace. So, the worthy old clergyman talked with Philip about Oxford, paid his laboured, old-fashioned, but, withal, affectionate compliments to his particular favourite, Miss Ogilvie, and then engaged Mrs. Breynton in their beloved game. During its progress Eleanor gladly retired for the night.

At the foot of the staircase she met Philip, who had followed unperceived. He looked very pale, and his voice trembled, though he tried to speak as usual.

"Eleanor, say good night to me; not formally, as just now, but as we did that happy yesterday."

She took both his hands, and looked up lovingly in his face.

"Good night, then, dear Philip!"

He folded her in his arms and kissed her many times. She spoke to him hopeful words; and they were uttered in sincerity, for her own spirit was so full of love and faith, both in God and man, that she had little doubt of the future.

"To-morrow, Philip! — all will seem brighter to us to-morrow," was her adieu.

He watched her glide up the staircase, turning once round to cast on him that quiet, love-beaming smile peculiar to herself. Then he leaned against the wall with a heavy sigh.

"The bitterness is past!" murmured Philip. "Now, I can go forth alone!"

Contents

CHAPTER 16

LOOK NOT MOURNFULLY into the past, it returns no more. Wisely improve the present; and go forth into the shadowy future without fear and with a manly heart. — LONGFELLOW.

Eleanor arose next morning composed — almost cheerful. True, there had been, on her first waking, a feeling of oppression as though some vague sorrow had chanced, under the shadow of which she still lay; and a few tears had stolen through the yet closed eyes, chasing away sleep and making the faint daylight a welcome visitant. But when she had arisen and looked out on the bright spring morning, all this waking pain changed into a quiet hopefulness. One creeps so soon out of the gloom into the light — at least, when one is young! The early swallows were flying merrily in and out of the eaves; the morning sun glistened cheerfully on the three spires of the cathedral, though its walls still lay in heavy shadow. But the girl's eyes looked upward only, and therefore it was the sunshine she saw, not the shade.

She thought of Philip's dear, precious love — now all her own — and of his noble nature; both of which had been tried and come out with a brightness that made her forget the refining fire. Her soul was so unworldly, so filled with trusting affection, that she had no fear. She was ready to let her lover go forth into the world, believing entirely in him, and confiding so much in the world itself, that she felt sure its storms would subside and its evils be removed before him. Simple girl! And yet perhaps there was more in her theory than many imagine. It is the faithful, the holy-hearted ones, who walk calmly and safely on the troubled waters of the world.

Eleanor was still musing, more thoughtfully than sadly, and considering whether or not she should descend to tell Philip the fruit of her hopeful meditations, when Davis brought a letter.

"Mr. Wychnor told me to give you this, ma'am, as soon as I heard you stirring."

Eleanor changed colour, and her fingers trembled over the seal.

"I hope, Miss Ogilvie, that nothing is amiss with Master Philip. He looked so ill this morning! — and I could not persuade him to have any breakfast before he went away."

"Went away!"

"Yes, indeed, Miss; he set off before it was quite light, by the early London coach."

Eleanor's fingers tightened over the unopened letter, and her very lips grew white; yet she had self-control enough to speak calmly.

"Indeed, Davis, you need not be uneasy. Mr. Wychnor has probably taken his journey a day or two sooner than he intended, that is all."

"I'd stake my life it's not all," muttered the good woman, as she curtseyed herself out. "I only hope there is nothing wrong between him and Miss Eleanor — bless their dear hearts! They was born for one another *sure-ly*!"

Eleanor threw herself on the bed with a passionate burst of weeping, that for many minutes would not be restrained.

"O Philip, Philip, why did you go?" she said; and it was long before her grief found any solace, save in the utterance of this despairing cry. She was but a girl — with all the weakness of a deep first love — but she had also its strength. So, after a time her sobs grew calmer; and while with still-dimmed eyes she read Philip's letter, its peaceful influence passed into her spirit. Even then it was so blessed to read this first letter, and to see there written down the love which she had before heard his lips declare. The words "My own Eleanor," smiling at her from the top of the page, almost took away the pain of that sad hour

And as she read on, tracing in every earnest line the brave, true heart of him who wrote, she became comforted more and more.

"Eleanor!" ran this dear record — (Reader, do not be alarmed lest we should transcribe an ordinary love-letter, for, though full of affection, Philip had in him something of reserve and far too much of good sense ever to indulge in the fantastic rhapsodies which have passed into a proverb)— "Eleanor, you must not think this departure of mine hasty or ill-advised; unkind you will not — for you love me, and know that I love you better than anything on earth, therefore there can be no thought of unkindness between us. I have gone away because, knowing my aunt as well as I do, I see no prospect, had I remained, of aught but added bitterness and pain for us all. And though I cannot — dare not — suffer myself unworthily to enter upon that course which she has laid out for me, God forbid that I should in word or deed return evil for many kindnesses which she has shown me all my life through. O Eleanor! when I sit here in the quiet night-time, and think of those boyish days, I almost doubt whether I am really right in thwarting her desire so much. But yet I could not — you, with your pure right-mindedness, you yourself said I ought not to do this thing. And have I not also given up *you*? Surely it must be a holy and a worthy sacrifice!

"Dearest! if in this I have done my aunt wrong — and I feel my heart melt towards her, in spite of all the harsh words, ay, and the bitter taunts which she gave me this night when you were not by — if I have done her wrong you will atone it. She reproached me with casting you off — you, my heart's treasure! She said that *her* hearth and home should at least be open to you. Let it be so! Stay with her, Eleanor; give her the dutiful care that I ought to have shown: — it will comfort me to know this. You see how I trust you, as if you were a part of myself, feeling that her harsh condemnations of me will never alter your love. And if her mind should change — if she should learn to see with our eyes many things whereon she differs from us now, and should find out why it was I acted thus, how will the influence of my own gentle girl prove a blessing to us all! In this I think not of worldly fortune. I will fight my own way, and be indebted to no one on earth, save for the help of affection.

"And now, beloved, I set out for the path on which we decided. Thank Heaven that I can write *we*! — that I carry with me your precious love — that we are one in heart and mind — and look forward to one future, which I will work out. Send me away with a blessing! Yet you *have* done so already. Eleanor, that one smile of yours — you did not know it was the last, but I did — will rest in my heart and be its strength until I see you again. Forgive me that I could not trust myself to say 'Good-bye.' Yet it is hardly a farewell between those whose hearts and thoughts are ever united! God grant it may be even so until our lives' end — *and after*!"

More did Philip write concerning his worldly plans and the arrangement of their future correspondence. All that he said was calm; breathing perhaps more of steadfast patience than of hope — but still without a shade of fear either for himself or for her. When Eleanor laid down the letter of her lover there was not a tear in her eye — not a sigh on her lip.

“God be with thee, my beloved!” she said fervently; put the letter in her bosom, and went down-stairs.

In the hall she met the old waiting-woman, Davis, coming out of the breakfast-room, with tears in her eyes.

“Oh, Miss Ogilvie!” cried the poor soul, “I can’t tell what has come over my mistress. Sixteen years have I been in this house and never saw her look so before. She did not speak a word all the while I was dressing her, until Master Philip’s little dog whined at the door, and then she grew very angry, and ordered me to go and tell James to shoot it or hang it, for she did not want to be troubled with it any more. I could hardly believe my ears, Miss Eleanor — I couldn’t, indeed — so good as she used to be to poor little Flo. And when I only stood staring, instead of going off, she stamped her foot and ordered me out of the room. To think that my lady should have served me so!”

“She did not mean it, good Davis; she is very fond of you,” said Eleanor, soothingly. There was room enough in her heart for every one’s sorrows — great and small.

“I hope so, Miss; indeed, I should not care so much, except that I fear something has gone wrong between her and Master Philip. I happened to let fall a word about his being gone; but she seemed to know it herself beforehand. She turned round so sharply, and desired me never to mention his name, but to go and lock up his room just as it was, for he would not want it again. Ay, dear! how sorry I shall be not to see the young master here any more!”

Eleanor felt her own eyes growing dim, and a choking in her throat prevented any reply. The good woman went on in her voluble grief— “Well, well ! servants have no business with their masters’ or mistresses’ affairs; but I do feel sorry about poor Master Philip. And there is another thing that troubles me; he left me this letter for my mistress, and for the life of me I daren’t give it to her myself. If it were not making too free, Miss Ogilvie, I wish you would.”

Eleanor stretched out her hand for the letter. “Where is Mrs. Breynton?” she asked.

“At the breakfast-table, Miss — sitting bolt upright, like — I don’t know what! — Bless us all — but she’s off already. Poor young lady! something is the matter with her too; for I saw the tears in her pretty eyes. Well, I don’t think she’s quarrelled with Master Philip, or she would not have looked at his letter so tenderly — just as I used to do at poor Samuel’s. Ah, lack-a-day! it’s a troublesome world!”

And the starched old maid went away up-stairs, rubbing with a corner of her apron each of her dull grey eyes. They might have been young and bright once — who knows?

Mrs. Breynton sat, a very statue of rigidity, in her usual place at the head of the table; her face as smooth and unwrinkled as her dress. She said, “Good morning, Eleanor, my dear,” in the usual tone — neither warmer nor colder than the salutation had been for years; and the hand with which she poured out the coffee was as steady as ever. Eleanor almost began to think that the painful events of the night and morning were only a dream, so perfectly astounded was she by the manner of the old lady.

She had come with a swelling heart to throw herself at the knees of Philip’s aunt, and beg her to forgive him — or at least to receive from herself all the loving care that was in the heart of the nephew whom she had discarded. But at the sight of that frigid, composed face — so indifferent, so unmarked by any sign of suffering, regret, or even anger — Eleanor felt all her own warm impulses completely frozen. She could as easily have poured out her feelings before the grim old figures sitting in their niches on the cathedral wall. Philip’s letter was still in her hand, almost unconsciously she

thrust it out of sight: and the voice which replied to the morning salutation, though tremulous, was almost as cold as Mrs. Breynton's own. Eleanor took her place at the breakfast-table, just as though she had never passed through these sudden phases of love, joy, sorrow — events which would govern a lifetime.

Mechanically her eyes wandered over the familiar objects about the room: — the boy's portrait that hung on the wall — the orange-trees and the flowers in the conservatory, now brightened by a week's more sunshine. It was one week only since the morning when Philip and Philip's fortunes had been talked of, sending such a pleasant thrill to her heart: — how much one little week, nay, one day, had brought forth!

Mrs. Breynton began, apparently without an effort, her usual morning conversation. This never rambled far beyond what might literally be considered table-talk; the dryness of toast, and the over or under boiling of eggs, seemed always subjects sufficiently engrossing at that early hour of the day. Thus she succeeded in passing away the half-hour which to Eleanor seemed insupportable. The latter many times was on the point of giving way to her pent-up feelings, when a word or tone sent them all back again to the depth of her heart. How would she ever find courage to deliver Philip's letter?

The breakfast equipage was already removed, and still nothing had been uttered between them except those ordinary commonplaces which froze Eleanor's very heart.

"If you please, ma'am," said the retreating James, "the gardener told me to ask if you would have the auriculas planted out, as the weather is so warm now, and he has always done this about Easter."

There was the faintest possible trembling of Mrs. Breynton's mouth, and she dropped a few stitches in her knitting. Then, walking to the window to take them up, she answered, rather angrily:

"Tell Morris I shall judge myself about the matter, and will speak to him to-morrow."

Eleanor watched all with intense anxiety. She marked how the reference to Easter had startled Mrs. Breynton from her indifference — showing how much of it was assumed. Tremulously she advanced to the window.

"Shall I make the knitting right for you?" she asked.

"Thank you, my dear; I really cannot see so well as I used to do."

Eleanor gave back the work, and with it Philip's letter.

"What is this?" said Mrs. Breynton, sharply.

"Oh, dear friend! read it, pray read it; and then you will forgive him — forgive me. Indeed, you do not know how unhappy we are!"

Mrs. Breynton walked across the room to the fire. It had gone out in the sunshine. She laid the letter on the table, and rang the bell. Eleanor rose up as the man entered.

"James," said his mistress, "bring me a lighted taper."

When it came, she deliberately unsealed the letter, tore it into long strips, and burned each of them separately. Eleanor stood and dared not utter a word. There was such iron sternness — such implacable, calm determination — in that rigid face, that she was terrified into silence. She saw the words which Philip's dear hand had traced consumed to ashes, and offered no opposition. Then, Mrs. Breynton advanced, and touched the girl's forehead with her cold, aged lips.

"Eleanor Ogilvie, you shall be my daughter if you will. In you I have nothing to forgive, much to pity. I take you as my child, my only one. But as respects this" — she pointed to the little heap of burnt paper— "or its writer, the subject must never more be revived between us."

She walked out of the room with her own firm stately steps; her silks rustling on the staircase, as she ascended slowly — but not more slowly than usual — to her chamber: and then Eleanor heard the door shut. Upon what struggles it closed — or, if there were any conflict at all — no one knew. That day, and for a day or two after, there was a greyer shade on the cheek already pallid with age; and once or twice in reading the evening prayers the cold, steady voice changed for a moment. But in a week the Dean’s widow was the same as she had ever been, and all went on at the palace as though Philip’s name had never been heard.

Contents

CHAPTER 17

AUTHORSHIP IS, ACCORDING to the spirit in which it is pursued, an infamy, a pastime, a day-labour, a handicraft, an art, a science, a virtue. — SHLEGEL.

Take away the self-conceited, and there will be elbow-room in the world. — WHICHCOTE.

Mr. Pierce Pennythorne was what the world respectfully terms a "very clever man." The world understands "cleverness" thoroughly, and venerates it accordingly, though it often scoffs at genius. Perhaps on the same principle the Cockney who gazes in admiration on the stone-built fabric of St. Paul's turns away contemptuously from some grand lonely mountain of nature's making, and thinks it is not so very fine after all. He cannot measure its inches; he does not understand it. He had rather by half look up from his city dwelling at the gilt cross and ball.

Now Mr. Pennythorne was exactly the man to attract and keep this sort of admiration. In whatever sphere he moved — and he had moved in many and various ones during his sixty years of life — he was always sure to get the pre-eminence. His acute, decisive character impressed ordinary people with reverence, and his tact and quickness of judgment had enabled him to compel from the small modicum of talent which he possessed the reputation of being a literary star of considerable magnitude.

For, after passing through various phases of life, Mr. Pennythorne had finally subsided into literature. He took to writing as another man would take to bricklaying — considering that

The worth of anything
Is just as much as it will bring.

And as literature brought him in some hundreds a year, and maintained respectably the house in Blank-square, Kensington, together with Mrs. Pennythorne and two young Pennythornes, he regarded it as a useful instrument of labour, and valued it accordingly. His was a most convenient pen, too, a pen of all-work. It would write for anybody, on any subject, in any style, always excepting that of imaginative literature, in which road it had never been known to travel But this, as its owner doubtless believed, was only because it did not choose, as such writing was all trash, and never paid.

Such was Mr. Pennythorne abroad; at home he carried out the same character, slightly varied. He was, so to speak, the most excellent of tyrants; his sway was absolute, but he used it well. No one could say that he was not as good a husband and father as ever lived; that is, as far as outward treatment went. Throughout some thirty years of matrimony, he and his quiet, good-natured, meek-spirited wife had never had a quarrel; and he had brought up his children to be creditable members of society. His system was that of blind obedience. Nevertheless, both wife and children were affectionately inclined towards him, for some people are happiest in being thus ruled; — it takes away so much moral responsibility. Sympathy in feeling or in intellect was

unknown in the Pennythorne family; they did not believe there was such a thing, and so they lived a comfortable humdrum life, conscious of no higher existence. Doubtless they were quite happy — and so are oysters! Still, the most world-tossed, world-riven spirit that ever passed through its fire-ordeal of love, genius, and suffering, would hardly wish to change with these human molluscs.

Mr. Pennythorne, after dinner, in his little study, with the blazing fire shining on its well-peopled book-shelves and convenient old-fashioned desk, was the very picture of a man of letters comfortably off in the world. He had ensconced in the only arm-chair which the room possessed his small wiry frame: — for Mr. Pennythorne shared with Alexander, Napoleon, and other great minds, the glory of a diminutive person. As he sat reading the newspaper, with his back to the lamp, the light cast into strong relief his sharp, well-marked features. It was not an intellectual head, still less a benevolent one; but there were wonderful cleverness and shrewdness in its every line. The firm, closed mouth could sometimes relax into a very good-natured smile; and a great deal of dry satirical humour lay *perdu* among the wrinkles — politely termed crow's feet — that surrounded the small bright grey eyes.

The postman's sharp knock made the little man start; for with all his mental self-possession he had much physical nervousness. At the same time his quick movement revealed the presence of Mrs. Pennythorne, who sat in the shadow, with a half-knitted stocking on her lap. Her husband always liked her to be near him after his daily occupation was over. Not that he wanted conversation, for to that Mr. Pennythorne thought no woman equal, and perhaps the secret of his regard for his wife was her abstinence from all intellectual rivalship. Good Mrs. Pennythorne, indeed, had never been burdened with that ambition. But the sight of her quiet, gentle, and still pretty face, was composing to him; and she let him talk as much or as little as he liked, said "Yes," or "No," or "Certainly, my dear," — and when he had done, went to sleep. They were exactly suited for each other, Mr. and Mrs. Pennythorne.

She received the letter at the door — it annoyed him to see any one but herself in his study — and while he read it she took the opportunity of being thoroughly awakened, to go through the serious operation which stocking-knitters denominate "turning down the heel." Once or twice she lifted up her eyes at a few exclamations from her husband— "Bless me!" "How very odd!" etc. But she had been too well trained to inquire of him about anything which he did not in due form communicate. So she waited until he delivered himself thus:

"Cillie, my dear," — Mrs. Pennythorne's Christian name was Cecilia; which by a humorous ingenuity he had converted into this odd diminutive, a somewhat doubtful compliment, "Cillie, my dear, this is a very curious circumstance."

"Is it indeed," said Mrs. Pennythorne; not interrogatively, but assentingly. Her husband always expected to be understood at once, without any explanation, so she never dreamed of inquiring to what circumstance he alluded.

"You remember my old college friend, Edwin Wychnor — Captain Wychnor he was then — who dined with us at Sittingbourne, ten — let me see — fifteen years ago?"

"Oh yes!" Mrs. Pennythorne made a point of remembering everything, as nothing vexed her spouse so much as the confession of ignorance on any point to which his own retentive memory chose to turn.

"There was another Oxford man with us that day, you know — Bourne — Dr. Bourne now — who dropped into the living that Wychnor gave up — like a foolish fellow as he was! Well, this letter comes from him, not from Wychnor, or it would, be a dead letter." (Pennythorne's conversation was usually studded with execrable jokes,

made comical by the solemnity with which they were put forward.) “It is from Bourne, introducing to me the defunct captain’s only son, who has gone and played the same madcap trick as his father. He wants me to get the lad that very easy thing now-a-days, ‘employment in London.’”

“Well, my dear, surely nobody can do that so well as you,” meekly observed his wife.

“Pooh! you are only a woman; you don’t know anything at all about it. Pretty fellows to deal with are these college youths, with heads more full of pride than of brains; — can’t do this because they haven’t been brought up to it — and won’t do the other because it isn’t gentlemanly. I suppose this young Peter, or Paul, or Jeremiah — he has got that sort of a name — will turn out just such another upon my hands. But that is always the way; everybody brings stray sheep to me: very black sheep they are, too, sometimes.”

Mrs. Pennythorne laughed, thinking from her husband’s look that he had said something funny: she always did so, like a dutiful wife, whether she understood it or not. “And I am sure, Pierce, you have helped a great many young men on in the world. There was young Philips, and O’Mahony the Irishman, and Edward Jones.”

“And a nice ungrateful set they all turned out!” said Mr. Pennythorne, though a self-complacent smile rather contradicted his words. There was nothing in the world that he liked so well as patronising. Not that he confined himself to the show of benevolence, for he was a good-natured man, and had done many kindly acts in his time, but they had all been done with due importance. His *protegés* — and he had always a long train of them — were required implicitly to trust to him, to follow his bidding, and to receive his advice. He never asked for gratitude, but yet he always contrived to rail at the world because he did not receive it. Still, with all his peculiarities, Mr. Pennythorne did a great deal of good in his way, and rather liked the doing of it too, though he said he didn’t.

“Cillie,” he observed, just as the summons came to tea, “I suppose this young Wychnor must dine here next Sunday. Take care that Fred is not out of the way, and that that foolish fellow Leigh is not keeping his bed, as he is so often. What’s the good of sons if you don’t make use of them? And an old fellow like me can’t be bothered to entertain a young Oxford scamp for a whole afternoon.”

The same sharp postman’s knock — oh, what a volume of life-experiences might that sound suggest could we follow it from door to door! — brought to Philip Wychnor, in his dull second-floor lodging the following letter:

“MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,
“I had a great regard for your late father, and shall have the same for you if you deserve it, of which I have little doubt. I will also do my best to help you on in the world. To begin our acquaintance, perhaps you will dine at my house next Sunday — at six.
“Faithfully yours,
“PIERCE PENNYTHORNE.”

It was an odd, abrupt letter, but Philip had already heard that the writer was not without his eccentricities. He was growing so desolate and cheerless in his London home, that the least ray of kindness came upon him like a flood of light. He drank his cup of weak cold tea with almost the zest of those remembered days when Eleanor’s dear sunny face had shone from behind the urn in the happy palace drawing-room. Then he went out, and walked up and down the gloomy squares in the neighbourhood

of which his lodgings lay. And surely the dreariest place in all London is the region between Brunswick-square and Tottenham-court-road! There solemn wealth sets up its abode, and struggling respectability tries to creep under its shadow, in many a dull, melancholy street; while squalid poverty grovels in between, with its miserable courts and alleys, that make the sick and weary heart to doubt even the existence of good.

Philip sauntered along; but, viewed in the light of this new hope of his, the squares did not seem so desolate as they had done the evening before. Through the misty night the lamps glimmered faintly; after a while the moon rose — and the moon looks pleasant to young eyes, especially the eyes of lovers, even in the desert of Russell-square. Moreover, as Philip walked along the inner side, there was a freshness almost like perfume in the budding trees, over which an April shower had just passed. It came upon his senses like the breathing of hope. He stopped under the nearest lamp, took out Mr. Pennythorne's letter and read it over again.

"Well, it does seem kind — and may be the beginning of good. Who knows but I have put my first step on Fortune's ladder to-night?"

Ah, Philip! that ladder is of all others the hardest to climb! But you have a steady foot and a strong heart — all the stronger for having that precious love-amulet in its inmost folds. In spite of all the grey-headed reasoners, there never was a young man yet who did not work his way in the world the better for having some one to work for besides himself.

Contents

CHAPTER 18

WIVES SEEM CREATED to be butts. Many a man now, like Pan, plays upon that which was formerly the object of his fond pursuit. — EDWARD WEST.

Man alone,
The recreant spirit of the universe,
Contemns the operations of the light;
Loves surface-knowledge, calls the crimes of crowds
Virtue — adores the useful vices.
Therefore
I will commit my brain to none of them.
PHILIP BAILEY.

"Very glad to see you; exceedingly glad to see you, my young friend," was the greeting that marked Philip's first entrance into the drawing-room at Blank-square — we prefer that rather doubtful way of designating the Pennythorne abode. "Punctuality is a virtue, especially on a wet Sunday; I like to see young people keep time well, and then as they grow older time always keeps them — eh, sir?"

Philip smiled; he was really amused by the oddities of the little man. He could do no more than smile silently, for it was impossible to get in a word.

"Cecilia, my dear," and Mr. Pennythorne, with a sort of hop-skip-and-jump movement — his usual method of progress in the house — arrived at the sofa where his lady sat in all the unruffled serenities of a Sunday silk, a Sunday cap, and a Sunday face. She had a ponderous-looking volume beside her, of Sermons, or Fox's Martyrs; for though the Pennythornes so far conformed to the world as to have company on a Sunday, they were a "religious family," — and if the cook was beguiled out of her sole day of rest by having to prepare a first-rate dinner, it was atoned for by the mistress's always reading good books up in the drawing-room.

"Mr. Philip Wychnor, let me introduce you to Mrs. Pennythorne, my wife, sir; an ugly old woman, isn't she? but then she's so clever, there is not a cleverer woman in all London than Mrs. Pennythorne."

Philip looked at the pretty but simple face of the lady, and then at her husband, who spoke with such gravity that it was almost impossible to distinguish jest from earnest. Fairly puzzled between them, the young man uttered some ordinary politeness, and accepted the offered seat beside his hostess.

"There, you can begin your acquaintance with that excellent woman," said Mr. Pennythorne; "but take care of her, you don't know how sharp her tongue is — real arrows, sir, regular darts of wit: mind they don't hit you!"

Philip thought it rather unseemly that a man should make game of his wife in public, and began to feel somewhat uncomfortable. But Mrs. Pennythorne herself seemed quite unmoved — smiling on in placid contentment. She had got used to this sort of banter, or else, which was most likely, she did not feel it at all Some people are very feather-beds of stolidity, impenetrable to the sharpest tongue-weapons that sarcasm ever forged. Philip soon grew quite reassured on the subject. He tried to engage Mrs. Pennythorne in conversation; but did not succeed in getting beyond the

wetness of the day and the unpleasantness of the Kensington omnibuses. She was as shy and nervous as a girl of sixteen; constantly looking to her husband, as if she had hardly a thought of her own. Still there was a degree of quiet womanliness about her. She had a low voice, and her brown eyes were of the same colour as Eleanor's. Philip felt rather a liking to Mrs. Pennythorne.

"Where can the boys be?" said the old gentleman, becoming fidgety, and rushing to the foot of the stairs. "Fred! Leigh!"

The next minute the "boys" appeared. Mr. Frederick Pennythorne was about twenty-five; a specimen of that stereotyped class of young men with which London birth and London breeding indulge the world. Slight, dapper, active: not ill-looking, and carefully dressed; always ready for polkas, small-talk, and cigars; too respectable for a *gent* (odious word!), too ordinary and vulgar-minded for a gentleman, and far — oh! far — too mean in heart and soul for the noble title of a man!

This individual scanned Philip all over, and nodded his head with a careless "How-d'ye-do?" Then, catching his father's eye, Mr. Frederick composed his features into an aspect of grave deference.

"My son, this — my eldest son. Excellent fellow to show you all the wickedness of London, Mr. Wychnor. I don't suppose there's a greater scamp anywhere than Fred Pennythorne."

The old gentleman did not know how nearly he hit the truth — but somehow or other the person alluded to winced slightly under the unintentional application.

"Really, father! — But you'll find out his ways soon, Mr. Wychnor," said Fred, apologetically.

"Where's Leigh?" continued that indefatigable parent; who seemed to have as much difficulty in hunting up his family as a mechanist has in winding up his automata and setting them fairly going.

A tall thin youth of about seventeen crept languidly from behind the folding-doors. Philip looked rather earnestly at the sallow, long-drawn-out face, and meaningless, half-closed eyes. Perhaps in the look there was somewhat of interest and compassion, for the boy involuntarily put out his hand and just touched Philip's with his cold moist fingers. The heavy eyes lifted themselves up for a moment. They were brown, like his mother's, but far deeper and softer; and as they met Philip's, one passing gleam of expression lighted them up. It drew the young man's heart towards the sickly, awkward-looking Leigh.

"I hope we shall be very good friends in time," said Philip Wychnor, shaking the boy's hand warmly.

"That is more than any one else ever was with our cross-grained Leigh! Long, lazy Leigh, as I call him, the greatest dunce in the universe, except for a little Greek, Latin, and Hebrew which I contrive to knock into him," — interposed the father, who seemed to take delight in sketching, *en passant*, these complimentary family portraits.

Philip turned round uneasily to Leigh, but the youth sat in his old corner quite impassive. The dull melancholy of his face was as unimpressible as his mother's vacant and perpetual smile.

"Well, they are the oddest family I ever knew," thought Philip Wychnor. "Perhaps your son is not strong enough for much study?" he said aloud.

"Quite a mistake, my good sir," answered Mr. Pennythorne, sharply. "All my family enjoy excellent health. I can't bear to have sick people about me. That fellow there looks yellow because he lies in bed sadly too much; and besides it is his temperament, his natural complexion. Pray do not put such notions into the lad's head, Mr. Wychnor."

The guest felt that he had unconsciously trodden on dangerous ground; and it was really a relief when the apparition of a very tall maid-servant at the door gave the signal for dinner.

Mr. Pennythorne was the best person in the world for the head of a table — his own especially; for he had an unfailing flow of talk and abundance of small witticisms. To use a simile on the originality of which we have some doubt, but which, not knowing the right owner, we shall appropriate, he kept the ball of conversation constantly in motion. However, to attain this desirable end he rarely let it go out of his own hands. Perhaps this was as well, for the rest of his family seemed incapable of a throw. So he very wisely never gave them the opportunity.

Once or twice Fred Pennythorne hazarded a remark — or, as he would have expressed it, "put out a feeler," — thereby to discover the habits, manners, and character of the "fellow from the country;" but he was soon extinguished by a few paternal sneers. Mrs. Pennythorne also, venturing to reply in more than monosyllables to some observation of Philip's, was regarded with such mock-deferential attention by her lord and master that she relapsed into alarmed and inviolable silence. As for Leigh, he never tried to speak at all. When, soon after the introduction of wine and walnuts, Mrs. Pennythorne disappeared, he quickly followed his mother, and was seen no more.

Then Mr. Pennythorne edified Philip for the space of half-an-hour on many and various subjects, chiefly political. Fortunately, Wychnor was no great talker, and of a quiet, yielding temper, so that the dictatorial tone of his host did not annoy him in the least. Perhaps he only listened with his outward ears, while his thoughts, like riches — and Philip's thoughts were riches to him — made to themselves wings and flew far away.

"Fred! you stupid fellow," called out Mr. Pennythorne, at last.

"Yes, sir," answered the individual addressed, waking from a doze by the fire.

"Your conversation is so remarkably amusing and instructive that it is quite too overpowering for such addle-pates as this gentleman and myself. We will therefore indulge ourselves in a tête-à-tête dull enough for our limited capabilities. You may go and tell your mother to make the tea: I dare say cook will lend you the toasting-fork, that you may make yourself useful in the kitchen at least."

The young dandy muttered a grumbling remonstrance, but finished his wine, and walked off. It was really curious, the complete ascendancy which this eccentric father of a family had gained and preserved over all its members.

"Excellent boy that," said Mr. Pennythorne when the door closed: and Philip noticed how entirely his sarcastic manner was changed; "Fred is a rising young man, sir; no profession like that of a lawyer for making a fortune — at least in these railway times. That lad will ride in his carriage yet."

"Indeed, I hope so," Philip observed, seeing that an observation was expected.

"Certainly. The Pennythornes, sir, always make their way in the world. Now there's Leigh — quiet boy — very quiet, but thinks the more for that. His knowledge of classics is wonderful. I shall make him a first-rate man for Oxford. By-the-by, you, who have just left Alma Mater, might give him a help now and then when I am too busy myself."

"I shall be most happy."

"Of course — of course. Thank you, Mr. Wychnor. And now, tell me in what way I can be of service to you?"

The little man leaned over the table, and confronted Philip with his peering grey eyes. All his jesting manner was gone; and there was a straightforward, business-like

earnestness, which his guest liked much better and felt infinitely more disposed to trust. Philip briefly stated that, having suddenly relinquished the Church, he was without resources, and wished to earn a livelihood in any respectable way for which his education might fit him.

"Now, my young friend, what do you call a 'respectable way'?" said Mr. Pennythorne.

Philip was rather confused — but answered, "Any *honest* way, of which a gentleman's son need not feel ashamed. Surely the world is wide enough for one more to get his bread — if not by his hands, at least by his brains — of which I hope I have a share."

"No doubt — no doubt," returned Mr. Pennythorne, "but let us see how you are to use them. Authorship is not a bad profession. Suppose you take to that?"

Philip looked somewhat astonished. "My dear sir, I never wrote anything in my life. I have no genius!"

"Genius — my excellent young friend, between ourselves, has nothing to do with the matter. It is a commodity rather unpleasant than otherwise. A man's genius generally ends in making a fool of him — or a beggar, which comes to the same thing. The best authors, and those who have made most money, have had no genius at all. With plenty of diligence and a good connection, a clever author may get a very good living; while the poor devils called men of genius — a term for unusual flightiness and conceit — lie down and starve."

Philip listened to this speech, first in surprise, then in pain. He had spoken truly — at least as he then believed — when he said he had no genius; but genius itself he worshipped with all the enthusiasm of youth. So utterly confounded was he by this argument of Mr. Pennythorne's, that he did not reply by a single word; and the old gentleman continued:

"You see, Mr. Philip Wychnor, that I have spoken plainly to you, as I would not to every one; but I like your face, and moreover you are your father's son. If you choose to try your hand at authorship, I will endeavour to procure you work. It shall be easy at first, and you can get on by degrees."

But Philip shook his head. "No, Mr. Pennythorne; I feel too certain of my own incapacity; and literature has always seemed to me so high and holy a calling."

At this moment the young man met the upturned face of his host — the cold, cautious eyes watching him with a look something between wonder and curiosity, and the sarcastic mouth bent into the most contemptuous of polite sneers. Now, it was one of Philip's weaknesses that his sensitive and reserved disposition was ever painfully alive to ridicule. As before said, he was by no means one of your model heroes, who are ever ready to "stand fire," either physically or morally. And so it happened that this look of Mr. Pennythorne's just sufficed to drive back all his warm impulses. He forgot what he was about to say, stopped, and his delicate cheek changed colour like a girl's.

"Pray go on," said the host.

"I have nothing more to say, sir," he replied, "except that I feel obliged for your kindness; but, not thinking myself competent to do credit to authorship, I had rather not attempt it." Thereby he lost an excellent chance of "testifying to the truth," and will doubtless sink very much in the estimation of all who would have virtue and genius continually appear in the character of public lecturers. But Philip Wychnor was so reserved and humble-minded, that as yet he was unaware of half the treasures of his intellect.

Yet though he could not fathom the depths of his own mind, he could see a good way into Mr. Pennythorne's; and the sight was both painful and discouraging. The conversation went on, and Philip listened with the deference that his companion's age and character demanded; but there was a disagreeable sense of uncongeniality, almost amounting to distrust, in the young man's mind.

Mr. Pennythorne did not notice this in the least; for his perception, though acute, was by no means delicate. He talked fast and freely, not to say ostentatiously, of his influence in other quarters — discussed the various duties and advantages of employment as banker's clerk, merchant's clerk, railway clerk, and Philip's capacity for the same, until his young auditor grew half bewildered and wholly disconsolate. At last, it was agreed that as Wychnor had a little money for the present, he should stay in lodgings, and enter on the weary life of "waiting for a situation." This interregnum would not last long, Mr. Pennythorne was certain: — and indeed, from his conversation, he seemed able to scatter appointments abroad as thick as leaves in autumn.

"Now, my young friend," — Mr. Pennythorne had such a host of *young friends* on his list, "excuse my making you one of the family, and sending you up-stairs while I take a nap. Old people must be humoured, you know. You will find the boys in the drawing-room."

Philip was not sorry to receive this somewhat unceremonious *congé*. As he stood alone on the stairs he tried to collect his thoughts, and to struggle with a vague feeling of discomfort.

"This is very foolish of me!" he said to himself; "I shall not get every one in the world to think and feel exactly as I do — how could I expect it? Mr. Pennythorne seems a very good sort of man — kind too, in his own way: he will most likely do something for me; and then, once getting a start in life, I have my fortune in my own hands — that is, with Heaven's blessing." And the one reverent aspiration of that young pious spirit calmed its jarring doubts into patient hope.

"Still," thought Philip, when, after a prosy evening and a walk of three miles, he laid his tired head on his rather hard pillow just as St. Pancras' clock was striking twelve— "still, I am rather glad that Mr. Pennythorne did not ask my reasons for giving up the Church: he would not have understood them any more than Aunt Breynton. I don't think anybody does quite understand me, except Eleanor."

And with that dear name on his lips and in his heart, Philip Wychnor fell asleep.

Contents

CHAPTER 19

What is there that I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?
Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys.
Every gate is thronged with suitors; all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy: what is that which I should do?
TENNYSON.

Keep the spirit pure
From worldly taint by the repellent strength
Of virtue * * *

Walk
Boldly and wisely in the light thou hast:
There is a Hand above will help thee on.
PHILIP BAILEY.

It is impossible to imagine a life more utterly dull and dreary than that of a young man living alone in London, with few friends, with no pursuit to occupy his time, and with no money to allure him into agreeable or vicious ways of killing it. Philip Wychnor thought that each week, each day, grew longer and longer. He had read through and through all the books he had brought with him, and was unable to buy or borrow more. Then he tried to "rub up" his old studies at Oxford; but working without an aim is a thankless occupation. His whole course of life had been disturbed, and he could not settle down again.

He grew tired of his dingy little parlour, where the sun just peeped in at early morning — after which, as though disgusted with the place, it departed for the day with the breakfast-things. So he took to strolling about London, and philosophising on human nature in its citizen aspect. This soon made him more heart-weary still. He then sought after all the places of amusement that were open free. Fortunately among this class London now numbers some of its highest and most intellectual feasts. Philip spent many an hour at the British Museum, amid the quiet gloom of the Elgin-room — until he knew by sight all the student votaries of Art who seek to re-create a Theseus or an Ilyssus on their drawing-boards. Many a long morning, too, did he loiter in the National Gallery; a place that looks always fresh and pleasant and sunshiny — for is there not perpetual sunshine with Guido, and Titian, and Claude? Often and often Philip entered with his spirit so broken and desponding, that the May brightness and cheerfulness of the streets seemed only to insult his lonely poverty. He knew nothing of Art save through the spell by which its glory and beauty must ever influence minds like his own. But the spirit of Guido spoke peace to him through the mournful-eyed Magdalene, or the Child Jesus with its face of pale purity gazed on by reverent John; while, grand and solemn, loomed out of the darkness the figure of Piombo's Lazarus, and in Da Vinci's Ecce Homo the suffering God-man looked in sublime compassion on the Virgin's mother-woe. Pictures such as these Philip loved best; for in this season of anxiety their sorrowful and holy beauty touched and soothed his spirit.

And turning for a moment from our story to the individual memories which its progress brings, let us linger in the place whither we have led Philip Wychnor; a place so full of old associations that even while thinking of it we lay down our pen and sigh. Good, careless reader — mayhap you never knew what it was to lead a life in which sorrow formed the only change from monotony, a life so solitary that dream-companions alone peopled it, nor how, looking back on that dull desert of time, one remembers lovingly the pleasant spots that brightened it here and there — how in traversing the old haunts our feet linger, even while we contrast gladly and thankfully the present with the past. Else you would not wonder that we stay for a moment with our Philip Wychnor; walking in fancy from room to room; gazing at every well-known picture, whose beautiful and benign influence was so blessed to us of old; and seeing also, living faces that were once beside us there — some, most dear of all on earth — others on whom we shall never more look until we behold them in heaven.

The theme grows too solemn. Readers — whom at times every author takes strangely enough into his heart's depths, as he takes not even those who sit at his board and drink of his cup — if you can understand this digression you will forgive it — if not, pass it by!

Philip Wychnor had no acquaintance in London except the Pennythornes. He went to Blank-square — sometimes by invitation, and now and then without. But he had a great belief in that verse of the Proverbs— "Refrain thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest he be weary of thee and so hate thee:" — therefore his visits always kept within due limits. Still it was undeniable that he took pleasure in being received with friendliness into this always hospitable house — for hospitality was one of Mr. Pennythorne's virtues. True, the family circle was somewhat dull if its head chanced to be absent; but then, in Philip's present state of isolation, any family fireside was a welcome change from the solitary dreariness of his own. So he grew to take pleasure in Mrs. Pennythorne's meaningless but good-tempered smile, and Mr. Pennythorne's unfailing talk — the very ostentatiousness of which was amusing. With the younger members of the household Philip's acquaintance advanced little; for Frederick was rarely at home in the evening, and Leigh maintained the same dull — almost sullen — silence. Now and then, when Philip chanced to talk a little more earnestly than usual, he detected the large brown eyes watching him with curious intentness; but if he returned the look, they fell at once, and Leigh's countenance relapsed into its customary stolidity. Still, when Philip's thoughts wanted occupation, they sometimes turned to speculate on this rather singular boy.

Alas for Philip — he had only too much time for thinking! and as month after month rolled on, and he had still no occupation, his thoughts became mournful indeed. Each week Eleanor sent him one of her long cheering letters — no young-lady epistles nor romantic love-breathings — but a sensible woman's letters; thoughtful, sincere, and full of that truest affection which expresses itself less in words than in deeds. She knew not that but for these letters, her lover's mind would have sunk from its healthy tone and manly strength into the morbid apathy of delayed hope or the misanthropy and bitterness of despair.

It was not the sting of actual poverty that Philip felt so keenly. True, it requires a degree of moral courage to brave the summer sunshine of London streets in a threadbare coat — and it is rather a trial of patience to sit down to a fragment of homely ill-cooked dinner; but these are after all only externalities, and very endurable. When the mind has its own food of present content, and a certainty, if ever so little, for the future, a well-earned dish of potatoes is by no means such a miserable repast; and a man with a pure conscience, and hope in his bosom, can button over it his

shabby garment, and walk the street with a brow as clear — ay, and as lofty — as any of his brethren in the purple and fine linen of the world.

Therefore, as Philip Wychnor had always held his body much less precious than his soul, we shall not pity him for any of these endurances. He would have scorned it. But deepest pity indeed he needed, during that weary summer, when the agony of uncertainty, the tortures of "sitting still and doing nothing," gnawed into his very soul. Poor fellow! many a time he envied the stonebreaker in the street, who at least had the comfort of working all day and was certain of his future. At last he went to Mr. Pennythorne, and spoke openly, earnestly, almost despairingly.

"My good fellow!" — exclaimed, with some surprise, that excellent individual — he had seen the young man come to his house now and then, to dinner or tea, with a composed countenance and decent dress, so felt his conscience quite at ease respecting his *protégé*— "I had no idea that you were in such a plight as this: you never complained."

"Is it likely I should, sir?" said Philip, proudly. "Nor do I now; I am very thankful for all the efforts which I believe you have made on my behalf but I begin to think there is no occupation to be had, at least, none that I can do. The misfortune lies in my being brought up that very useless thing — a gentleman." And Philip laughed bitterly. "However, I can remedy this; I will leave London, change my name, and get work as a farmer's labourer. A mechanic's place is above me, unfortunately, as I had not even the blessing of learning a trade. But work I must have, or I shall go mad."

"I begin to think you are so already," muttered Mr. Pennythorne, as with some touch of compassion he regarded the young man's wild eyes and haggard face. A faint whisper of conscience, too, hinted that he himself had not used Philip quite well: not but that he had tried to serve him — writing to two or three friends, and speaking to two or three more, about "a young man who wanted employment." But Mr. Pennythorne had erred where most ostentatious patronising men err: and woeful is the misery which they bring on their dependants by the same! — promising far too much, and boasting of imaginary influence, to gratify a petty love of power.

There never yet was human heart so naturally cold, or so frozen over by outward formalities, that you could not find in one corner or other some fountain of goodness bubbling up. No matter how soon it disappears — it has been, and therefore may be again. Now, just such a spring as this began to irrigate that very dry and dusty portion of Mr. Pennythorne's anatomy which lay under his left waistcoat pocket; and, by a curious sympathy between external and internal things, he remembered that there was in this said pocket a five-pound note. His fingers even advanced nearer to it — they touched it — but just at this moment a loud, fashionable knock came to the hall-door, and the tiny fountain in Mr. Pennythorne's heart sank suddenly down. Still, it had watered a little the arid soil around.

"Come and dine with me to-morrow, my dear boy," he said, cordially; "and cheer up. I'll think of something for you by that time."

"To-morrow — to-morrow — to-morrow," sighed Philip, mechanically repeating that word of mournful beguiling. As he descended, he passed in the hall a stylish little lady, who had just stepped from her carriage, and was busy impressing on the servant "Mrs. Lancaster's wish for only five minutes' speech of Mr. Pennythorne." Philip stood aside to let the visitor pass by, and then departed. He crept wearily along the sunny side of the square, all glare, and dust, and burning heat; and there came idly jingling through his brain, in that season of care so dull, heavy, and numbing as to shut out all consecutive thought, the fragment of olden rhyme —

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch, whilst some must sleep
Thus runs the world away.

It so chanced that Mr. Pennythorne, working hard all that day at a review of a book which he had had no time to read, and in the evening busily engaged dispensing his *bons mots* and amusing sneers in Mrs. Lancaster's gay drawing-room, never thought again of Philip Wychnor until his wife asked him the next morning what he would have for dinner. Mr. Pennythorne's sway, be it known, extended even to the *comestibles* of his household.

"Dear me — that reminds me that I asked young Wychnor to dine here, and I promised to think of something for him. Really, how tiresome are these fellows in want of employment!" And the old gentleman cogitated for at least five minutes with his chin on his hand. At last, a brilliant thought struck him.

"Cillie, my dear."

"Yes, Pierce."

"How much did that young Johnson — the fellow that came yesterday, you know, to ask if I wanted a tutor for Leigh — how much did he charge by the lesson?"

"Half-a-guinea for two hours; only he wanted his lunch as well, and you said that would" —

"Tut — tut! how women's tongues do run! Mrs. Pennythorne, will you be so obliging as to go down stairs? — and when I need your advice and conversation I will ring the bell" And Mr. Pennythorne politely opened the door for his wife, shut her out, and returned to his easy-chair.

"That will just do — a capital plan!" said he, rubbing his hands with an air of benevolent satisfaction. "How thankful the poor fellow will be! Of course, one could not give him so much as a professed tutor. Let me see — say *four* hours at half-a-guinea, and that twice a week: a very good thing for him — very good indeed. He ought to be quite satisfied, and very thankful. It will save me time and trouble, too, for that young Leigh is getting confoundedly stupid; so I shall kill two birds with one stone. Really, what a deal of good one can do in the world if one tries!"

With a pleasing conviction of his own generosity, Mr. Pennythorne leaned back in his chair, and summoned his wife, to give orders for a turbot and lamb with a dish of game to follow.

"Young Wychnor is coming here to-day," he added, benevolently. "I dare say he does not get such a dinner every day."

He certainly did not — but Mr. Pennythorne did — very often. Therefore he was obliged, alas! to pay his son's tutor only two shillings and sevenpence halfpenny for each hour's instruction in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics.

Contents

CHAPTER 20

SHOULD THE BODY sue the Mind before a court of judicature for the damages, it would be found that the Mind would prove to have been a ruinous tenant to its landlord. PLUTARCH.

Can I love thee, my beloved — can I love thee?
And is this like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would watch above thee?
May God love thee, my beloved, may God love thee!
E. B. BROWNING.

The five-pound note found its way into Philip's pocket after all. To be sure, it came diluted into guinea-drops, at not very regular intervals, but still it did come, and Mr. Pennythorne had done a benevolent action. He felt sure of this himself, and so did Mrs. Pennythorne. Moreover, the latter often added to the benevolence by giving Philip a glass of wine and a sandwich when he came in, hot and exhausted, after his three-mile walk. These were not "nominated in the bond," and Philip took them gratefully. The trifling kindness was better than the gold.

He had at first little pleasure in teaching Leigh Pennythorne. He gave his instruction carefully, patiently, kindly; but it never seemed to penetrate beyond the outward layer of the boy's dull, overworked brain. The soil had been ploughed and sown over and over again, until there was no vestige of fertility left in it. Philip tried to interest his young pupil — to make a friend of him — but the heart seemed as dead as the brain. Now and then there would come a gleam of speculation into the heavy eyes; but it was only a passing light, and the youth's face sank again into its vacant dreariness.

"Leigh has got plenty of brains — only they require a great deal of hammering to knock out the laziness," said the father.

"Leigh has grown the sulkiest fellow that ever lived, over those stupid books. By Jove! I'm glad nobody ever put it into father's head that I was clever," laughed Mr. Frederick.

"Poor Leigh! I wonder why he will make himself ill with sitting over the fire and never going out," Mrs. Pennythorne would sometimes lament; but she never dared to say more — hardly to think.

So the boy grew paler and duller every day, but still he must work — work — for the time was going by, and Mr. Pennythorne was determined to have a man of learning in the family. His credit was at stake, for he had vaunted everywhere his son's classic acquirements, and the boast should be made good in spite of "that lazy Leigh." Morning and night the father attacked him. "Study — study!" was for ever dinned into his ears; so, at last, the boy rarely stirred out of his own little den. There he sat, with his books heaped up around him: — they helped to build the altar-pile on which the deluded father was offering up his victim.

Philip Wychnor saw very little of all this, or his truthful tongue could not have kept silence. He was sorry for the boy, and tried to make the few hours during which he himself guided his studies as little like labour as possible; and if ever Leigh's

countenance brightened into interest or intelligence it was during the time that he was alone with his gentle teacher. That teacher was, himself fast yielding to the effects of the desolate and anxious summer through which he had passed. It had prostrated all his bodily energies, and his mind sank with them. He felt as though he were gradually drawing nearer and nearer into the shadow of some terrible illness which he could not avert. Every day he rose up with the thought, "Well, I wonder what will become of me before night!" — and every night, when he lay down on his bed, it was under a vague impression that he might not rise from it again.

At last, one morning when he left the Pennythornes, he felt so ill that he ventured to expend sixpence in a ride home — almost his last coin, poor fellow! for it wanted some days of the month's end, and Mr. Pennythorne was never beforehand in his disbursements. As he sat in the corner of the omnibus with his hat drawn over his aching eyes, he felt conscious of nothing save the dull rolling of the vehicle which carried him somewhere — he hardly knew where. There was a crying child near him, and a lady with a sharp-toned voice who drew her silk robes from the babe's greasy fingers, and glared angrily at its shabbily-clad mother, muttering not inaudibly, "What very disagreeable people one meets in omnibuses!" About King William-street there was a stoppage in the street, and a consequent pushing of passengers' heads out of the window, with a general murmur about a woman having been run over. All these things Philip's eye and ear perceived as through a dense confused mist: — he sat in his corner and never stirred.

"What unfeelingness!" muttered the lady-passenger with the silk dress, who seemed to find her own self such very dull company that she spent her whole time in watching and commenting on other people.

"Totten'-co't-road," bawled out the conductor; and Philip was just conscious of making a movement to alight, and being assisted out by a little old man who sat by the door.

"Money, sir!" the omnibus man shouted indignantly, as Philip turned away. He took out a shilling and hastily went on.

"Gen'lemen drunk never wants no change," said the conductor, with a broad grin that made all the passengers laugh except the odd-looking old man. As he stood on the step, in the act of descending, he threw back on the conductor the most frowning glance of which his mild, good-natured eyes were capable.

Philip walked on a little way into a quiet street, and there leaned against a railing, utterly unable to stand. A touch at his elbow startled him: it was the queer old man in the omnibus.

"Afraid you're ill, sir," said the most deprecating and yet kindly voice in the world.

"No — yes — perhaps so — the day is so hot," murmured Philip, and then he fainted in the street.

Luckily, he had upon him a card. Oppressed with the presentiment of sudden illness, he always took this precaution. The little old man called a cab and took him home. That night Philip Wychnor lay smitten with fever on his poor pallet-bed in the close back attic of — street.

At the same hour Eleanor was passing up and down under the lime-tree shadow of the palace-garden — thinking of her betrothed. She pictured him in busy London, at work bravely, steadily, hopefully. Perchance she almost envied his lot of active employment, while she herself had to bear many home trials — to walk in the old paths and see Philip's face there no more — to have one constant thought of Philip in her heart, and yet fear to utter his name. Faithful Eleanor, could she have seen him now!

Oh, why is love so powerless — so vain? — infinite in will, yet how bounded in power! We would fain spread world-extended wings of shelter and comfort over our beloved; and yet in our helplessness we may let them sink, suffer, die, alone! Strange and sad it is, that we, who would brave alike life's toil and death's agony — ay, lay down body and soul at the feet of our dearest ones — cannot bring ease to the lightest pain which their humanity may endure.

Yet, there is a wondrous might in loving, a might almost divine. May it not be, that there are Those around us whose whole spiritual being, transfused with love, delights to aid where our human affection fails, unable to fulfil its longings — who stand in our stead, and give to our vain blessings, our almost weeping prayers, our solitary outpouring of fondest words, a strength so omnipotent that our beloved may feel in their souls the mysterious influence — and draw thence comfort and joy?

And if so, when, as poor sick Philip watched the creeping sunshine along the dusky wall — the blessed, thoughtful sunshine which in London always visits most the poverty-stricken attic, or when, during his long restless nights, the pure moonlight came in like a flood, and in his half-delirious mood he thought it was the waving of an angel's wing, who knows but that the faithful love which rose up to heaven in an unceasing prayer for him, may have fallen down again on his spirit in a holy dew of blessing and of peace?

Rejoice, O thou who lovest! if thine be that pure love which dares stand in the sight of God with its shining face unveiled — so holy that thou tremblest not to breathe it in thy prayers — so free from earth's taint that it can look on the divider, Death, without fear or sorrow, feeling that then its highest life begins! Be strong and faint not — be faithful and doubt not-whatever clouds and thick darkness of human fate may stand between thee and thy heart's desire. How knowest thou but that the sunburst of thy strong love may pierce through all, and rest on thy beloved — a glory and a blessing, though whence it cometh, or how, may never be revealed?

Contents

CHAPTER 21

HE HAD GROWN dusty with groping all his life in the graves of dead languages. — CHARLES DICKENS.

Much more is said of knowledge than 'tis worth;
A man may gain all knowledge here, and yet
Be after death as much i' the dark as I.
PHILIP BAILEY.

Philip was ill many days — how many he never counted, and there was no tender nurse to count them for him. He struggled through his illness like numberless others to whom sickness and poverty come together. One wonders how such poor desolate sufferers survive. And yet Death often passes the penury-stricken, misery-haunted chamber, to stand at the foot of the well-tended couch around which gathers an army of doctors and nurses. Amidst all, in spite of all, sounds in the rich man's ear the low awful whisper, "Thou must come away."

Life is to the young an ever-renewed fountain of hope; and Philip Wychnor, when he arose from his sickness, was by no means so disconsolate as might have been expected. Under the hardest circumstances there is always a vague happiness in the first dawn of returning health. As the poor invalid managed to walk to the window, and sat watching as much of a glorious autumn sunset as that fortunate elevation permitted, there was a patient content on his pale face which made the cross-grained old landlady say quite tenderly when she brought him his tea and toast, "Dear heart alive ! — how nice and well you are a-looking to-day, sir!"

In truth there were a sweetness and a beauty in Philip's face that would have softened any heart wherein lingered one drop of kindly womanhood: and, thank Heaven! there are few utterly without.

The young man finished his poor repast almost with an appetite; and then leaned back in the twilight, too weak for consecutive thought, but still giving way to a quiet, pleasant dreaminess. He was conscious only of a vague craving to have the dear soft eyes that he knew, looking peace upon him — to rest like a weary child with his head on her shoulder, his hand in hers, without speaking or moving. And as he lay still, with closed eyes, the strong fantasy seemed to grow into a reality.

As Philip reclined in this dreamy state, the door opened softly, and through it appeared, to his great astonishment, the long thin face of Leigh Pennythorne. The boy looked round the room, and started back when he saw Philip, who turned and held out his hand.

"How good of you to come and see me!" he said, feebly. Leigh sprang forward, wrung the poor wan hand two or three times, and tried to speak, but in vain. At last he took out his old cotton pocket-handkerchief and began to cry like a child.

Philip, quite amazed at this display of feeling, could only lay his hand on the boy's shoulder, and then leaned back too exhausted for speech. Leigh began to be alarmed.

“I hope I shan’t do you any harm; I don’t mean to,” he said, between his sobs. “I am downright ashamed of myself that I am — a great boy like me — but I did not expect you were out of bed; and I was so glad to see you better, Mr. Wychnor.”

“Thank you — thank you, Leigh,” was the faint answer.

“There now, don’t talk; I shan’t. I’ve got all my books here:” — and he hauled after him a great blue bag. “Just go to sleep again, and call me when you want anything, will you?” said the boy, insensibly relapsing into his languid drawl. He seated himself on the other side the window, and leaned his gaunt elbows on the sill, with the eternal book between them. But how far this was a kindly pretence, the quick glances which the brown eyes were ever stealing at Philip easily revealed.

“Leigh!” said the invalid, after a pause.

“Yes, sir,” answered the old schoolboy voice — so different from the impassioned tone of a few minutes before.

“Don’t call me sir — you cannot think how glad I am to see you, my dear boy!” And Philip clasped the cold spider-like hand affectionately, for his heart was touched.

“Glad — are you, Mr. Wychnor? Well, you’re the first who ever was glad to see me — or who told me so.” There was a tone half bitter, half despondent, piercing through the boy’s apathy, but Philip took no notice of it.

“How did you know I was ill?” he asked.

“Oh, I could easily see that the last day you came. I watched you down our square, and into the omnibus — I hope you’ll not be offended at that, Mr. Wychnor?” — and the sallow cheek of the shy boy reddened visibly. Philip pressed his hand, and Leigh brightened up more and more.

“I said to myself that you must be ill, as you never rode home before; so the next day, when the governor dined out, I came over here to see.”

“How kind! — you who never care to stir from home.”

“Oh, it was a change — I rather liked it; and as for being tired, that don’t signify — I always am tired;” and Leigh smiled languidly. “I have been here very often since then; only you were light-headed, and did not know me.”

“But they told me I had a fever. Oh, Leigh, if you should take it!” said Philip, hurriedly.

“Don’t mind that; I heard the doctor say it wasn’t catching, and if it were, I should not be afraid. It would be rather pleasant to have a fever, and then I should not work. But there’s no danger; so don’t make yourself uncomfortable.”

“But your father?”

“Oh, he knows nothing about it; I managed all so cleverly. Guess how! I wrote a letter in your name, saying you had fallen down and sprained your foot, so that you would be glad if father would let me take the lessons here, and you’d give an extra one each week. I knew that would catch the old governor!” — and an expression in which the glee of childhood and the sarcasm of manhood were conjoined passed over the boy’s face. “The writing looked just like yours, and I put it in the post-office at Southampton-row. He never found out the cheat. How should he? So I used to come over regularly with my books — and then I took care of you.”

Philip was struck dumb by the strange mixture of affection and duplicity, generosity and utter neglect of truth or duty, which the boy’s conduct exhibited. But the good was Leigh’s own nature — the evil, the result of his education. Philip, weak and ill as he was, had no power to argue the right and wrong of the case. He only felt the influence of this sudden upspringing of affection towards himself; it came to him like waters in a dry land — he could not thrust it from him, though much that was evil mingled in the fountain’s source.

Leigh went on talking as fast as though he had a twelve-month's arrears of silence to make up at once. "I told the landlady I was your cousin — she and I got very good friends — I used to pay her every week."

"Pay her?" echoed Philip, as a thought of his empty purse flashed across his mind.

"Oh, yes — of course, father sent the money for the lessons just as usual — it did very nicely — or I really don't know how I could have got you what you wanted during your illness. But I shall talk too much for you. Hadn't you better lie down again?" The advice did not come too soon, for Philip, bewildered and exhausted, had sunk back in his chair.

In a moment the dull, stupid Leigh Pennythorne became changed into the most active and skilful of nurses — gentle and thoughtful as a woman. His apathetic manner, his lazy drawl, seemed to vanish at once. He tended Philip, and even wept over him with a remorseful affection that was touching to witness.

O ye hard parents, who look upon your offspring as your mere property, to be brought up for your pleasure or pride, never remembering that each child will live, through eternity, an independent, self-existing being, that the Bestower of these young spirits gives them not, but lends —

"Take this child and nurse it for *Me*," — think what a fearful thing it is to have upon your heads the destruction of a human soul!

Philip, left to himself, thought much and anxiously of the best course to pursue; and by the best Philip Wychnor always meant the *right* — he never turned aside to expediencies. Once, his upright, truthful mind prompted him to write the whole story to Mr. Pennythorne; but then he soon saw how terrible would be the result to Leigh. He would not give up the poor boy whose fragile life seemed to owe its sole brightness to his own affection. So, as the young teacher himself gathered strength, he set about the cure of this poor diseased mind; trying to bend it straight, as he would a tree which wrong culture had warped aside, not with a sudden wrench, but by a gradual influence; — so that, ere long, he made Leigh see and acknowledge his errors. And all this he did so gently, that while the boy's spirit opened to the light, he loved more than ever the hand which brought it, even though the brightness of truth revealed in his heart much evil that oppressed him with shame.

"And now," said Philip, one day, as Leigh sat beside him listening to his gentle arguments, "what are we to do to amend all this?"

"I don't know. Do you decide," answered Leigh humbly.

"Go and tell your father, what is indeed the truth, that I have been too ill to give you your lessons; but that you had not courage to say this, and continued coming here still. Surely he cannot be angry, since this was from kindness to me."

Leigh shook his head. "I'll do it, however, if you say so. You must be right, Mr. Wychnor, and I don't care what happens to myself."

"And tell your father, too, from me," continued Philip, "that I will make up all the missed lessons as soon as ever I recover. I could not rest with this load on my mind." There was a look of surprise and tenderness in the large wistful eyes which now seemed ever reading Philip's face.

"You must be a very good man, Mr. Wychnor. You do and say the sort of things that I used to read of long ago when I had books I liked — I don't mean these!" and he kicked the blue bag disdainfully. "I fancied I should meet in real life the same sort of goodness, but I never did; and so, at last, I thought it was only found in poetry and novels. I don't now, though."

Philip made no answer to this simple child-like confession, but it went to his heart. He vowed within himself that while the boy lived he would not part from him, but would strive through all difficulties to guide this frail struggling spirit to the light.

Mr. Pennythorne was rather indignant at having been deceived, but his parental dignity grew mollified by the humble behaviour of his son.

“Leigh is not half so sulky as he used to be, and he gets on very well with young Wychnor,” he observed to Mrs. Pennythorne. “It is not worth while breaking up the lessons, when the lad came himself and told of his own error. However, he must apologise properly, for I cannot have my authority set at nought.”

The mother deferentially suggested that it did poor Leigh so much good to go out every day; and so the end of the matter was, that Mr. Pennythorne graciously acceded to the lessons being given at Philip’s home, the extra one being still continued.

“And about the money already received?” said Philip, anxiously, when his young pupil brought the message. “Will your father wait until I can return it?” Leigh blushed crimson, and turned to the window.

“Oh, he is quite satisfied on that account; you are not to think about it any more.”

“How kind!” And in Philip’s first uneasiness and quick-springing gratitude he never noticed Leigh’s confusion. The boy had sold his watch — his pet plaything and companion — to pay his father the money.

Contents

CHAPTER 22

MARRIAGE IS A desperate thing. The frogs in *Æsop* were extremely wise: they had a great mind to some water, but they would not leap into a well because they could not get out again. — SELDEN.

A coxcomb is ugly all over with the affectation of a fine gentleman. — STEELE.

In the bay-window of a somewhat tawdry London drawing-room stood a lady alone. She was looking towards the street more through idleness than curiosity, for she kept restlessly beating time with her riding-whip on her gloved hand. You could not see her face, except the outline of the cheek and graceful little ear, but these wore all the beautiful roundness of early youth; and her tall figure, which the dark riding-habit so well displayed, had an almost statue-like perfection in its curves.

By degrees the impatient little hand grew still, the fair head drooped, and with her brow leaning against the windowpane the girl stood for some minutes in thought. The fact itself showed how young she was. After twenty one's ponderings usually grow too deep and earnest to be expended in light and sudden reveries. A voice outside and an opened door broke in upon these musings, and caused the young girl to turn round. It was Katharine Ogilvie.

"Dear me, Katharine, how you are altered!" exclaimed the lady who entered the room, also an old acquaintance of ours, whom we have left so long to pursue the sole aim of her life, matrimony, that we feel almost ashamed to reintroduce her as *still* Miss Isabella Worsley.

"I never saw such a change!" continued she, in genuine astonishment, which really was not at all surprising. Eleanor had proved right in her conjecture; one could hardly see anywhere a more graceful and beautiful young creature than Katharine Ogilvie at nineteen. "Why, what has made such a difference in you?" continued Isabella, "eyeing her over" from head to foot.

Katharine smiled, and a faint colour rose into her cheek: a lovely cheek it was too — no longer sallow, but of a clear pale brown, under which the rich blood wandered, at times suffusing it with a peach-like glow. "You know it is nearly three years since you saw me, Isabella;" and as she spoke a deeper and more womanly thrill might have been traced in her silvery voice.

"Three years! nay, I am sure it is not nearly so much," said Isabella, with some little acerbity. She began to find it rather irksome to count years.

"Indeed it is, all but two months. It will be three years next February — I mean January;" and Katharine's colour grew a shade deeper as she continued more quickly, "Yes, it was in January that you came, Isabella, you, and Lizzie, and George, and we had besides, Eleanor and Hugh. What a merry time it was!"

"You seem to remember it exceedingly well," said Isabella pointedly, and not altogether without ill-nature.

"Certainly I do;" and the beautiful head was lifted a little, with an air of dignity not unmixed with pride. It showed Isabella at once that where she had left the child she had found the woman. She turned the conversation immediately.

“We have been looking for you all the morning, Katharine. It is so horridly dull to be up in town when everybody else is out of it; living in lodgings too, with nobody but mamma. I wish this disagreeable law business were over. But come, my dear girl, take off your hat and let us talk. How long have you to stay with me this morning?”

“My father will come for me in an hour or two, if he can get away from the House. Otherwise he will be sure to send Hugh.”

“Hugh! Really I shall be quite delighted to see cousin Hugh? Is he altered?” and the sharp eyes fixed themselves observantly on Katharine’s face.

“Oh no! Hugh is just the same as ever,” answered the young girl with a merry laugh, as she stood braiding back the thick black hair which had fallen in taking off her hat. The attitude was so unconstrained — so perfectly graceful — that Isabella’s envious heart acknowledged perforce the exceeding beauty of her cousin.

“And Hugh stays at Summerwood as much as he used to do?” she pursued, keeping up the same scrutiny.

“Oh yes! I don’t know what papa would do without him, now he is himself in Parliament. Hugh manages everything at the Park; takes care of the farming and the shooting — of mamma, of Brown Bess, and of myself.”

“So I suppose.”

“Besides, he can hardly feel settled anywhere else, now that Eleanor lives with Mrs. Breynton.”

“Ah! tell me all about that. How odd it was of Eleanor to go and live entirely with a stupid old woman! But perhaps she had plenty of money to leave?”

Katharine’s proud lip curled. “Eleanor is not a legacy-hunter, I imagine,” she answered coldly.

“I really did not intend to vex you, my dear,” said Miss Worsley. “Of course, Hugh’s sister is all perfection — to you.”

“What did you say, Isabella?” asked the quiet and rather haughty voice.

“Oh, nothing, nothing. You see, Eleanor and I never took to one another much though we are cousins, and so we never correspond: therefore, all I know of her proceedings is from hearsay. Pray enlighten me, Katharine; I do love a nice little bit of mystery.”

“There is really no mystery about the matter,” answered Katharine, smiling. “I have not seen my cousin much of late, and her letters are rather short than otherwise, and contain very little about herself. I know no more than every one else does — that, being an orphan and sisterless, she likes to live with an old lady who was her mother’s friend and is very fond of herself. There is nothing very mysterious in this — is there?”

“Oh no! only I was rather curious about the matter, for Eleanor’s sake, of course,” said the young lady. We call her so *par excellence* — as Isabella was essentially one of those carefully manufactured articles which the boarding-school creates and “society” finishes. There is a German fairy fable of the Ellewomen, who are all fair in front, but if you walk round them hollow as a piece of stamped leather. Perhaps this is a myth of young-lady-hood.

Our *young lady*, then, finding it impossible to pump from Katharine anything that administered to her vanity or her love of gossip, began to feel the conversation growing rather tiresome: so she took out a piece of fancy-work, and having tried to engage her visitor’s admiration of it, set her to wind some Berlin wool: doubtless thinking within herself how stupid it was to talk to girls, and wishing for the arrival of any two-legged animal in coat and hat to relieve the tedium of this morning call. And — as if at that auspicious moment Fortunatus’s wishing-cap had adorned her head,

instead of the pretty little nondescript fabric of wool which she wore, partly for warmth, partly because any sort of matronly coil sets off a *passé* face advantageously — lo! there was a terrific thundering at the hall-door, and the servant appeared with a card.

"Mr. Frederick Pennythorne," read Isabella. "Show him up immediately." And with an air of satisfaction she glanced at the mirror, and went through one or two small ceremonies of dress-arranging with which fair damsels of her stamp always honour the approach of an individual in broadcloth.

"A matter of business, I conclude?" observed Katharine, "as you said you had no friends in town now. Shall I be in the way?"

"Oh no; not in the least. The fact is, that Mr. Pennythorne is the solicitor in our suit — quite a rising young man; not disagreeable either. He calls often — rather oftener than is quite necessary for the law business " — (here Isabella cast her eyes down with an affected smile, and tittered exceedingly)— "so, Katharine, it is perhaps as well for you to be here, as mamma is so very particular. But I suppose you have not got to these things yet, my dear; and, indeed" —

Open sesame! — *videlicet* the drawing-room door — and enter Mr. Frederick Pennythorne! Then came due greeting and introduction, and the small rattle of conversation began. It was just such as might have been expected from the two principal interlocutors, for Katharine took little part in it. With instinctive, but in this case quite superfluous delicacy, she soon retired to the window; and if once or twice her eyes wandered towards Isabella and the new visitor, her gaze was induced by a far deeper feeling than idle curiosity. To her, all lovers and all love were sacred; and she felt for the first time a sympathy with her cousin. The young unsuspicious heart saw in all others but the likeness of its own: the true could not even divine the false.

Yet a little, a very little, did Katharine marvel, when the light laugh and unconcerned chatter of her cousin struck her ear. Love seemed to her such a deep, earnest thing, and there was Isabella all carelessness and merriment, even in the presence of her lover. Lover! As Katharine glanced at the easy self-complacent rattler of small compliments, a feeling came over her very like self-scorn for having so misapplied the word. And turning away from the mean prettiness of the well-arranged smirking visage, with its small lappets of whisker meeting under the chin, and its unmistakable air of "Don't you see what a good-looking fellow I am?" — there rose up before her the shadowy likeness of another and very different face. Then Katharine, smiling to herself a proud joyous smile, did not even think again of Mr. Frederick Pennythorne. That gentleman, on his part, was inclined to return the somewhat negative compliment. People like himself feel an extreme aversion to being looked down upon, either corporeally or mentally. Katharine Ogilvie unfortunately did both; and the manner in which she received his first compliment effectually prevented his hazarding a second. He found his small mind quite out of its depths, and floundered back as quickly as possible to the protecting shallows of Miss Worsley's easy talk. When Katharine was startled out of her pleasant silence by the announcement of the visitor's departure, all that passed between them was a valedictory bow, which Miss Ogilvie tried to make as courteous as possible to the supposed lover of her cousin.

"Dear me! how tiresome these men are! What trouble I have with them, to be sure!" exclaimed Miss Worsley, throwing herself languidly into an arm-chair, while a gratified simper rather contradicted her assertions. Katharine looked a good deal surprised. "Why, Bella, I thought you were delighted to see this gentleman; that he was a particular friend of yours — in short, a" —

“Beau, you mean,” interrupted Isabella, with a laugh, “or admirer, or *sweetheart*, as the maid-servants say.”

“And Shakspeare, who makes the word so pretty, as indeed it is — *sweet heart*,” said Katharine; who scarcely knew whether or not to echo her cousin’s laugh, and in truth could hardly tell what to make of her. At last she inquired earnestly:

“My dear Bella, do you and this young man really love one another?” Isabella laughed more heartily than ever.

“Well, that is good! ‘Love one another!’ — it sounds just like a text out of the Bible. You little simplicity! nobody ever talks in that way now-a-days, except in novels. Where did *you* learn your pretty lesson, my dear, and who taught you?” Again the proud cheek’s sudden crimson warned Miss Worsley that the childish days wherein she used to make sport of her young cousin were over. She changed her tactics immediately, seriously adding, “Well, well, I know what you mean, Katharine; the mere form of words does not much signify. Whether I like Fred Pennythorne or not, ’tis quite clear he likes me, as indeed he managed to tell me about ten minutes ago.”

“And you will marry him — that is, if you do not, and never did, love any one else?”

“My dear girl, how unsophisticated you are! What difference could that last fact make in my becoming Mrs. Pennythorne? Why, I have had affairs of this sort, off and on, ever since I was sixteen. It is very hard; but if men will fall in love, what can one do? However, you will be finding out these things for yourself one day, if what I hear people say about you be true.”

“What do people say about me?” And there was a trembling at the girl’s heart, as the thought passed through it, that — but no, it was impossible! She smiled calmly. “Pray tell me this interesting rumour, Isabella.”

“Only that when Miss Katharine Ogilvie marries she will not need to change her surname, and that our excellent cousin Hugh bids fair to inherit title, estates, heiress, and all. So thinks the world.”

Katharine drew herself up. “I do not see that the world has any business to think about the matter; but whether it does or not, can be of little consequence to me, or to Hugh either. We are too good friends to mind an idle report.”

“Yes, yes; it is all quite proper for you to talk so now, my dear, but we shall see. I guessed how it would end long ago; and so, I dare say, did some older heads than either yours or mine. Of course, your father and mother both know what a good match it would be for you.”

“A good match!” repeated Katharine, while her beautiful lip curled, and her whole mien expressed ineffable scorn. “Is that all that people marry for?”

Isabella, at this moment, jumped up from her seat by the window. “Talk of the — I beg your pardon and that of Mr. Hugh Ogilvie, for there he is riding down the street. And oh! — doesn’t he look up at the window, Miss Katharine! Well, he is a fine-looking fellow, so I congratulate you, my dear.” If the flashes of indignant womanly pride that shot from Katharine’s eyes had been lightning-gleams, they would have consumed Isabella to ashes.

Contents

CHAPTER 23

Oh! I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.
TENNYS0N.

Well! nature makes some wise provisions! We might be envious of others' happiness if in nine cases out of ten we did not despise it. — L. E. L.

Katharine rode home with her father and Hugh, more silent and thoughtful than was her wont. Two or three times her horse started at some restless, almost angry motions of its young rider; and when Hugh came anxiously to her assistance she rejected his aid a little sharply.

"How wonderfully independent you are this morning, Katharine!"

"Of course I am, and always will be," was the quick answer.

Hugh looked surprised and somewhat hurt — and Katharine instantly reproached herself. "How foolish I am — how wrong!" she thought. "It might have been all nonsense — the mere gossip of Isabella. I will not think any more about it." So she called Hugh to her side with some trivial observation, in which the gentle tone made all the concession needed. But as she noticed how hastily he spurred his horse forward at her summons, and how his whole countenance beamed with delight, Katharine again became troubled.

In these frequent rides the two young people were in the habit of lingering behind Sir Robert, to look at the country around and talk. But this time Katharine kept her horse close beside her father's the whole way; and when they reached Summerwood she leaped off without waiting for Hugh's customary assistance.

"Still independent, Katharine," said the young man, too little sensitive, or else feeling too sure of his prize, to notice the change in his cousin's manner. She laughed — but the laugh was forced; and springing up the hall-steps, with an excuse about being late for dinner, she went at once to her own room — her young heart oppressed with a new care.

The possibility of Hugh's wishing to make her his wife had never crossed Katharine's mind before. She had no girlish vanity; and the one great love which absorbed every thought, aim, and desire of her heart, shut out from it entirely all lesser fancies, or even the suspicion of their existence in others. Besides, all her life, she had looked upon Hugh as a brother, and treated him as such. His quiet nature was satisfied with this frank and affectionate intercourse; and, believing that in their secluded life she had no chance of forming any other attachment, he waited until his uncle gave him leave to say "Katharine, will you marry me?" — fully persuaded she would at once answer, "Thank you, Hugh, I will." As he really loved her very dearly, he would then most probably tell her so: — and so they would settle down into placid matrimonial felicity, such as was in fashion at Summerwood. — And was the passionate dream of almost idolatrous love to subside into this? Was Katharine, with her intense yearning after all that is great and glorious — with a soul so high that it sought a yet loftier for its worship — thus to sink from her ideal of marriage? There,

husband and wife stood hand-in-hand in their fair and beloved home — genius, worth, and world-wide goodness shedding dignity and happiness around them. Could she barter this glorious future for a life with one who had no higher interests than the kennel, the stable, and the chase?

Katharine almost maddened at the thought. But immediately she reproached herself for the intense scorn which she felt embittering her against Hugh — poor easy Hugh! How could he help it if he were not endowed with brains? Katharine began to ponder on the possibility of his loving her; and her memory, roving over past years, found many a little circumstance that confirmed this vague suspicion. She grew very sad. The love that filled her own heart taught her compassion towards Hugh. She thought of her parents, and of the motives which Isabella had imputed to them. The detested words "a good match," rang in her ears, goading her proud nature to resistance.

"They shall never buy and sell me! me to whom *he* gave his loving words, his parting kiss. O Paul, Paul! no man living save you shall ever have this hand. I will keep it for you unto my life's end!" And again she kissed with wild passion her own delicate hand — the hand which had once been made for ever sacred by the clasp of Paul Lynedon's.

Then, she went to the little desk where she kept all her treasures. There, with many a girlish memento — token-flowers, idly given but so fondly kept — lay the only letter she had ever received from him — the one he had written after his rejection by Eleanor. At first, how rapturous had been the joy it brought to her! And with succeeding weeks and months came a happiness calmer indeed, but not less deep. In all her longing regrets for him, in all her light home-troubles, how it comforted her to fly to her little treasure-house, lay her cheek upon the paper, and feel that its very touch changed all tears to smiles! How blessed it was to read over and over again her name written in his own hand, linked too with tenderest words, "My dear Katharine, my true Katharine!"

And she was true — fatally true — to the love which she deemed she read in this letter. The thoughtless outburst of wounded feeling, idly penned and soon forgotten, became to her deceived heart a treasure which gave it its hope — its strength — its life. She never doubted him for one moment — not even when his absence grew from months into years, and no tidings either of him or from him ever reached her loneliness. Some strange necessity detained him; but that he would come back to claim the love which he had won, she felt as sure as that the sun was in the heavens. Once only the terrible, withering thought struck her, that he was dead! But no — for in death he would have remembered her. She did not conjure up that horror again — she could not have done so, and lived! So she waited calmly, all her care being to make herself worthy of him, and of that blessed time when he should claim her. She strove to lift herself nearer to him, in intellect, heart, and soul; she cherished her beauty, and rejoiced as she saw herself grow fairer day by day; she practised every graceful accomplishment that might make her more winning in his sight; and when at last the world's praises were lavished at the feet of Sir Robert Ogilvie's heiress, Katharine gloried in her resistless charms, her talents, and her beauty, since they were all for *him*!

There was in her but one thing wanting — the deep holy faith which sees in love itself but the reflection of that pure ideal after which all should strive, and which in the heart's wildest devotion never suffers the Human to shut out the Divine.

Katharine took the letter and read it for the thousandth time. Its tender words seemed breathed in her ear by Paul's own voice, giving her comfort and strength. Then she placed before her the likeness, which, no longer hung up in her chamber,

was now hidden carefully from sight. She gazed upon it fondly — yearningly; but she thought not of the young poet's face — she only felt as though she were looking into Paul Lynedon's eyes.

"They shall never tear me from you, my own, own love — my noble Paul!" she cried; "I will stand firm against father — mother — the whole world. I will die rather than wed any man living, save you!"

But she felt rather ashamed of these heroic resolutions against unjust parents, etc. etc., when she found no change in the behaviour of any of the party. Her good-natured father, her kind mother, and her quiet, easy-tempered Hugh, seemed by no means characters fitted to enact a stern tragedy of blighted love and innocence oppressed. In the course of a week, Katharine's suspicions died away, and she smiled at the easy credence she had given to an idle rumour. But, nevertheless, the thoughts which it awakened were not without their influence, but rooted deeper and deeper in her heart its intense and engrossing love.

One day Lady Ogilvie entered her daughter's little study — it was still the old beloved room — with an air of mysterious importance, and a letter in her hand.

"My dear Katharine, I have some news for you. Here is a letter from your aunt Worsley: but read it yourself, it will save me the trouble of talking." And Lady Ogilvie — now grown a little older, a little stouter, and a good deal less active — sat down in the arm-chair — the very arm-chair in which Sir James had died — and began to stroke a great black cat, of which Katharine took affectionate care, because in its kitten-days it had been a plaything of her grandfather's second childhood. Once or twice Lady Ogilvie glanced towards her daughter's face, and wondered that Katharine manifested scarcely any surprise, but returned the letter, merely observing,

"Well, mamma, I am sure you are very glad, and so am I."

"Really, my dear, how quietly you take it! A wedding in the family does not come every day. I feel quite excited about it myself."

"But, mamma, it is not exactly news to me. I met Mr. Pennythorne the day I was at aunt Worsley's."

"And you never said a word about it!"

"It would not have been right, as Isabella begged me not."

"Young people should never keep anything from their parents," was the mild reproof of Lady Ogilvie.

"Indeed, dear mamma, to tell the truth, I have scarcely thought of the matter a second time, as I did not take much interest in the gentleman. But I am glad Isabella is to be married, since I think she wished it very much." And the slight satirical tendency which lay dormant in Katharine peeped out in a rather comically repressed smile.

"It is very natural that young persons should wish to be settled," answered the impassive Lady Ogilvie, "especially when they are, like your cousin, the eldest of a large family. The only thing requisite is a suitable match." — Katharine started a little, and her brow contracted for a moment at the disagreeable reminiscences which her mother's last words recalled. But Lady Ogilvie went on quite unconsciously:

"In Isabella's case everything seems satisfactory. With your father, Mrs. Worsley is, of course, more explicit than with me; and her letter to him states that the gentleman has a good income and excellent prospects. The family are respectable, too. Indeed, from what Sir Robert tells me, I should consider Isabella most fortunate, as she has little or no fortune, and may not have a better offer."

During this speech, delivered rather prosily and oracularly, Katharine had listened in perfect silence. Once or twice she bit her beautiful under lip until its curves grew of

a deeper rose, and tapped her little foot restlessly upon the cushion, so as materially to disturb the peace of mind of the great black cat who usually claimed it. When Lady Ogilvie ceased, expecting a reply, the only one she gained was— "Well, mamma?"

"Well, my dear, you seem to take very little interest about the matter."

"Not a great deal, I confess."

"What an odd girl you are, Katharine! I imagined all young ladies of your age must be interested in love and matrimony."

"I don't think the two are united in this case, and therefore I care less about it."

"But, my dear child, you should care. You are coming to an age when it is necessary to have right ideas on these points. Most probably, some time or other, you yourself" —

"Mamma, you do not want to send Katharine away from you?" said the girl, rising suddenly, and putting her arms round her mother's neck, so that her face was hid from Lady Ogilvie's observation.

"By no means, love; but" —

"Then we will not talk about it."

"Not if you do not like it, my darling," said the mother, fondly; and at the moment a sudden and natural impulse of maternal jealousy made her feel that it would be hard to give up her only child to any husband whomsoever. She drew Katharine to the stool at her feet.

"Sit down here, love, and let us go on talking about Isabella. You know she wishes to have you for bridesmaid — shall you like it?"

"Yes, certainly, if you are willing."

"Oh, to be sure; and moreover, as the marriage is to be so soon, before Mrs. Worsley leaves London, your papa intends proposing that it shall take place at Summerwood. It will cause a good deal of trouble, but then Isabella is his only sister's child, and has no father living. Sir Robert thinks this plan would be more creditable to the family than having her married from lodgings; and I quite agree with him, especially as it will please your aunt so much."

"What a good, kind, thoughtful mamma you are!" murmured Katharine, with a sudden twinge of conscience as she remembered all the conflicting feelings of the last ten minutes.

"And now, my dear, as there is no time to be lost, I have ordered the carriage, that we may go at once to your aunt's and arrange about the dresses and other matters. She will make a pretty bridesmaid, will my little Katharine! I shall quite like to see her," added the mother, affectionately passing her hand down the smooth braided hair. Katharine laughed as merrily as a child.

"And when she comes to be a bride herself," continued Lady Ogilvie, in tones, the formality of which had sunk to an almost perceptible tremulousness, "she will make a good choice, and marry so as to please her papa and me?"

"I will never marry without consulting your will and my father's," said Katharine, softly, but firmly, "and you must leave me equally free in mine."

"Of course we shall, my child! But there is time enough to think about that. Now let us go together and congratulate Isabella."

Contents

CHAPTER 24

‘Tis a morn for a bridal — the merry bride bell
Rings clear through the greenwood that skirts the chapelle.

* * * * *

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done,
They who knelt down together arise up as one;
Fair riseth the bride — oh, a fair bride is she!
But for all (think the maidens),
No saint at her praying.

E. B. BROWNING.

“How beautiful you look in your bridal dress, Katharine!” cried Hugh, as he met her upon the staircase on the wedding-morning. He could not forbear taking hold of both her hands and gazing admiringly in her bright young face. “I declare you only want the orange-blossoms to look like a bride yourself — and a great deal prettier than Miss Bella, too, as I always said you were.”

“Thank you, Hugh,” returned his cousin, with a laugh and a low curtsey. “Only it is as well that the bride does not hear you; for you know,” she added, giving way to a light-hearted girlish jest, “you know that once upon a time you thought her very handsome, and people said that Isabella need not go out of the family in search of a husband.”

“Pooh! nonsense! I hope *you* never thought so. Indeed, Katharine, I should be very much vexed if you did,” said Hugh earnestly. — Katharine’s colour rose, and she drew her hand away.

“Really, I never thought about the matter at all. I was too young to consider such things.”

Hugh looked disappointed and confused. At last he stammered out hastily, “I wish you would come into the garden with me, and let me gather your bouquet and Isabella’s from the greenhouse. And — and — I’ve two such pretty little puppies in the stable to show you,” he added, evidently ransacking his brain for various excellent excuses. “Do come, Katharine!”

“Not now,” answered Katharine, striving to get away, for the apprehension which Isabella had first suggested had never been entirely eradicated, but sprang up again painfully at the least cause. And though the foolish vanity which construes every little attention into declared admiration was as far from Katharine’s nature as darkness from light, yet it sometimes struck her that Hugh was growing less of a cousin and more of a lover every day.

“You are not kind to me, Katharine,” said the young man, almost sulkily. “I don’t care a bit for either the flowers or the puppies, or anything else, except on your account; and that you must know pretty well by this time.”

“I do not understand you, cousin Hugh.”

"There, now, don't be angry with me," said Hugh, humbled in a moment. "O Katharine, I'd give the best hunter in the stables — and that's saying a great deal, considering it's Brown Bess — I'd give the mare herself, or anything else in the world, if you only cared for me half as much as I do for you." — Katharine was touched. She had known him many years, and had never seen him so agitated before.

"Indeed, I do like you very much as my cousin — my kind, good-natured cousin Hugh!"

"And is that all?"

"Yes," said Katharine, seriously and earnestly. "And now good-bye, dear Hugh, for there is Isabella calling." She broke away, and Hugh saw the glimmer of her white dress passing not to the bride's chamber but to her own.

"She turned pale — she trembled," he said to himself, "and I'm sure she called me 'dear Hugh!' Girls often don't mean half they say, so I'll count her *yes* as nothing. Heigho! I wish it were my wedding-day instead of Bella's. How tiresome it is of my uncle to tie my tongue in this way! I'll ask him again this very day when he means to let me marry Katharine." So the young man descended the stairs, and went out at the hall-door, tapping his boots with his riding whip, and whistling his usual comment on the fact of his "love" being "but a lassie yet" in very doleful style.

Katharine, who, pale and agitated, stood at her window trying to compose herself, both saw and heard him. Then she pressed her hand on her swelling heart, and the deep sadness which Hugh's words had caused changed to pride.

"He thinks to have me against my will, does he? And here have I been so foolish as to weep because I must give him pain! I will not care for that. What signifies it whether he loves me or not? But my father will ask me the reason that I refuse Hugh; and I dare not tell — I could not. O Paul! why do you not come and take all this sorrow from me?" And her pride melted, her grief was charmed away at the whisper of that beloved name.

The wedding took place, as outwardly gay and inwardly gloomy as most weddings are. There were the parents of the "happy couple" all pride and satisfaction — Mr. Pennythorne sending forth his *bons mots* in a perfect shower of scintillations, so that his conversation became quite a pyrotechnic display. Mrs. Pennythorne kept close to her husband, and was rather uncomfortable at seeing so many strange faces. Yet her maternal gaze continually wandered from those to the bridegroom's — and a tear or two would rise silently to the soft brown eyes. Once, when they were setting out for the church, Lady Ogilvie noticed this.

"I dare say you feel sorry to part with your son," she whispered kindly: "I understand he has always lived at home. But you have another child, Isabella says, who was prevented coming to-day."

"Yes, thank you, ma'am — Lady Ogilvie, I mean," stammered the timid Mrs. Pennythorne, with a glance towards her husband, who was at the other end of the room.

"I believe he is much younger than Mr. Frederick?" pursued the considerate hostess. "I am really sorry we did not see him to-day."

"Leigh cannot go out this winter-time, he is not very strong," answered the guest. And then — a sort of maternal freemasonry being established between them — Mrs. Pennythorne went on more courageously. "I was thinking about Leigh just then; I shall have only him to think about when his brother is married."

"Until Leigh — is not that his name? — grows up, and is married himself," said the other matron, with a smile.

"Ah, yes!" returned Mrs. Pennythorne eagerly; "he will be a man soon — tall and strong; they say these delicate boys always make the stoutest men."

"You will go to his wedding next, I prophesy."

"Shall I? — oh yes, of course I shall I but not just yet, for I don't think I could — no, it would break my heart to part with Leigh! He must bring his wife home, ay, that shall be it," added she suddenly, as if to explain even to herself that the words, "I could not part with Leigh," related solely to his marrying. The poor mother!

Isabella was quite in her glory. She had attained the great aim of her life — the being married — it did not much signify to whom. So that she reached the honour of matronhood she was almost indifferent as to who conferred it — she cared little what surname was on her cards if the Mrs. were the prefix. Perhaps once or twice, when Hugh Ogilvie and Frederick Pennythorne stood talking together, she remembered the time when she had fancied herself very much in love with the former. She laughed at the notion now. If Hugh were the taller and handsome; her Frederick had such lively London manners and dressed so much better. Isabella was quite satisfied; only she took care to show her cousin how much he had lost by exhibiting great pride and fondness towards her bridegroom, and deporting herself towards Hugh with a reserved and matronly dignity.

Katharine alone, for the first time in her life present at a wedding, was grave and silent. She trembled as she walked up the aisle; she listened to the solemn words of the service with a beating heart. "*To have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and obey, until death us do part*." And this vow of almost fearful import, comprehending so much, and in its wide compass involving life, soul, and worldly estate, either as a joyful offering or as a dread immolation, this awful vow was taken lightly by two young creatures, who carelessly rattled it over during the short pause of jests and compliments, amidst lace and satin flutterings, thinking more of the fall of a robe or the fold of a cravat than of the oath, or of each other!

Katharine divined not this, for her fancy idealised all. The marriage scene touched her pure young heart in its deepest chords. She saw not the smirking bridegroom — the affected bride; her thoughts, travelling into the future, peopled with other forms the dim grey shadows of the old church where she had worshipped every Sunday from a child. She beheld at her side the face of her dreams; she heard the deep low voice uttering the troth-plight, "*I, Paul, take thee, Katharine*;" and bowing her face upon the altar-rails, she suffered her tears to flow freely.

"Yes!" she murmured to herself, "I would not fear to kneel in the sight of Heaven and take that vow towards him — and I *will* take it here one day to him, and none but him!"

Why was it that in this very moment the bright dream of the future was crossed by a strange shadow from the past? Even while she yet thought thus, there flashed across the young bridesmaid's memory that olden scene in the library. And, above the benediction of the priest, the amen of the congregation — even above the beloved voice which her fancy had conjured up — there rang in Katharine's ears the words of her dying grandfather: "*Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust*!"

The ceremony was over, and Isabella had the satisfaction of hearing herself greeted as Mrs. Frederick Pennythorne. A thought did once cross her mind that according to the received etiquette it was necessary for a bride to indulge in a slight faint, or a gush of hysterical tears, on reaching the vestry. But the former would spoil her bonnet, and the latter her eyes; so she resolved to do neither, but resort to the outward calmness of suppressed emotion.

“How well she bears it, poor dear child!” observed Mrs. Worsley. This lady being one of those nobodies who wherever they go always contrive to make themselves invisible, we have not hitherto drawn her into the light; nor, to tell the truth, have we any intention of doing so. After the space of ten minutes, Isabella quietly emerged from her fit of repressed feeling, and burst into full splendour as “the beautiful and accomplished bride.” In which character she may whirl away with her chosen to the Lakes, or in any direction she pleases; for we care too little about the happy couple to chronicle their honeymoon.

The Pennythornes were borne homewards in Sir Robert’s carriage; a circumstance which made Mr. Pennythorne exult in the good training which had caused his eldest son to marry into so high a family.

“My Frederick is an excellent boy; he knows how to choose a wife, God bless him!” said the old gentleman, with somewhat of maudlin sentimentality, for which the excellent cellar at Summerwood was alone to blame. “Cillie, my dear! now you see how right I was, five years ago, in putting an end to that foolish affair with Mason’s daughter. No, no! a girl who worked as a daily governess was not a fit match for my son.”

“Poor Bessie! Fred was not so wild then,” murmured Mrs. Pennythorne. “Well, I hope his new wife will make him comfortable.”

“Comfortable!” echoed the husband, her last word falling on his dulled ear: “of course she will. I said to him soon after Mrs. Lancaster recommended the Worsleys to put their Chancery suit into his hands, ‘Fred, my lad, that’s the very wife for you. Good family — style — fashion — and money coming.’ Fred took my advice, and you see the result. Mrs. P., I only hope that stupid Leigh will turn out as well on my hands.”

Mrs. Pennythorne sighed: “I wonder how Leigh has been all day! I hardly liked leaving him; but young Wychnor promised to stay with him until we came home from the Ogilvies’.”

“Don’t mention that fellow in the same breath with the Ogilvies,” sharply said the husband.

“Indeed, Pierce, I will not, if you don’t like it,” replied Mrs. Pennythorne, humbly; “but the young man has been so attentive to poor Leigh, and has really seemed quite interested in this marriage.”

“Mrs. Pennythorne, I am sleepy; will you be so obliging as to hold your tongue?” said the old gentleman, with a slow and somnolent emphasis: and immediately as this sentence ended, his doze began.

The mother leaned her head back on the carriage-cushions, having previously taken the feminine precaution of laying the wedding bonnet on her lap. She did not go to sleep; but her thoughts wandered dreamily, first after her eldest-born, and then flying back some thirty years they travelled over her own wedding-trip. Finally, they settled in the little back parlour in Blank Square, and by the sofa whereon Leigh was accustomed to rest, hour after hour, with Philip Wychnor by his side.

“Poor boy! well, I can do better without Fred than without *him*. He will get well in the summer, and grow up a man; but he will not think of marrying for many years. No, no; we must keep Leigh with us — we will keep him always.”

Oh! if with this wild “*I will*” of our despairing human love, we could stand between the Destroyer and the Doomed!

Contents

CHAPTER 25

WE THINK OF Genius, how glorious it is to let the spirit go forth winning a throne in men's hearts; sending our thoughts, like ships of Tyre, laden with rich merchandise, over the ocean of human opinion, and bringing back a still richer cargo of praise and good-will. — L. E. L.

There could hardly be a greater contrast than that between the gay bridal-party at Summerwood and the little dark parlour in Blank-square where Philip Wychnor sat with his young friend. They had indeed grown to be friends, the man and the boy — for one counts time more by the heart than by the head. According to that reckoning poor Leigh was far older than his years, while Philip in the freshness and simplicity of his character had a boy's heart still, and would probably keep it for ever.

Nevertheless, he did not look by any means so much of a boy as in those days when Eleanor first introduced him to the reader's notice by this appellation — nor, indeed, as when we last saw him just emerging from his weary, wasting sickness. As he sat reading aloud to Leigh, the lamp-light showed how the delicate outlines of his face had sharpened into the features of manhood; the brow had grown broader and fuller, the lips firmer, and there were a new strength and a new character about the whole head.

Philip had been tossed about on the world's stormy currents until at last he had learned to breast them. His powers of mind, the thews and sinews of the inner man, had matured accordingly; and the more he used them the stronger they grew. The dreamer had become the worker.

We may say with Malvolio, that "some are born to greatness, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them." Philip Wychnor was of the latter class. His intellect seemed to work itself out by the force of necessity, and not by inspiration. He was perfectly sincere when he told Mr. Pennythorne that he had no genius; but the linnet reared in a hedge-sparrow's nest never knows that it can sing until it tries.

So it happened that the same individual who had once declined attempting authorship on the ground of his entire unworthiness, was now fairly embarked in literature, with a moderate chance of success. All this had come gradually. In his deep straits of poverty, Philip had tried to while away the hours that hung so heavily, and perhaps to gain a little money, by turning to account his knowledge of foreign languages. He mounted the ladder of fame by its lowest step; becoming a translator of small articles for newspapers and magazines — a sort of literary hodman, carrying the mortar with which more skilful workmen might build. But while searching into and reproducing other people's thoughts, he unconsciously began to think for himself. It was in a very small way at first, for his genius was not yet fledged, and its feathers took a long time in growing. He thought, and with the thought came almost unconsciously the power of expression. He wrote at first not by impulse or inspiration, but merely for daily bread. Yet though in his humility he never hoped to rise higher than a common labourer in the highways of literature, he always strove to do his small task-work well and worthily, and suffered neither carelessness nor hope

of gain to allure his pen into what was false or vicious. All he wrote, he wrote earnestly; gradually more and more so, as the high cause in which he had engaged unfolded itself to his perception. But he made no outward display; never put forth his name from its anonymous shelter; and told no person of his pursuits, except Leigh, and one more, who had the dear right of a betrothed to know all concerning him. He had never seen her again, but they had kept up a regular correspondence; and still the joy, the strength, the very pulse of the young man's heart, was the remembrance of Eleanor Ogilvie.

We have taken this passing glance at the outward and inward changes in Philip Wychnor while he sat reading his last story, sketch, or essay. This he did more for the sake of amusing Leigh than from an author's vanity; since, as before explained, Philip's work was still very mechanical — the raw material woven with care and difficulty into a coarse web that gave him little pleasure and in which he took no pride. Yet, as he went on, it was some satisfaction to see the evident interest that brightened Leigh's pale face, over which illness seemed to have cast a strange, even an intellectual beauty. Every now and then the boy clapped his poor thin wasted hands, applauding with child-like eagerness. When Philip paused, he discussed the article in all its bearings with an acuteness and judgment that much enhanced the value of his laudations, and brought a smile to the young author's cheek.

"Why, Leigh, you are quite a critic!"

"If I am, I know who made me so," answered the boy, affectionately. "I know who took the dulness out of my head, and put there — what is still little enough — all the sense it has."

"It has a great deal. I am bound to say so, my boy, since it is exercised for my own benefit; though, of course, I ought not to believe a word of your praise," said Philip, laughing.

"Don't say so," Leigh replied, earnestly. "Indeed, you will be a celebrated author some of these days — I know you will. And when you are become a great man, remember this prophecy of mine."

The serious tone and look at once banished the light manner which Philip had assumed, partly to divert the sick boy. "I hardly think so — I wish I could!" he said, almost sadly. "No; it takes far more talent than I have to make a just and deserved fame. I don't look for that at all."

Leigh answered with an ingenious evasion. "Do you remember when I was first taken ill — so ill as to be obliged to give up study; and you brought one day some of your German books, and read to me 'Undine' and 'Sintram'? Ah! what a delicious time that was, after all the dry, musty Cicero and Xenophon!" And Leigh rubbed his feeble hands together with intense pleasure at the recollection.

Philip watched him affectionately. "My dear boy, how glad I am that I thought of the books!"

"So am I, because otherwise you might never have done what you then did through kindness to me — I mean that translation from Rückert, which I longed to have, so that I might read it over and over again. How good you were to me, dear Mr. Wychnor!"

"But my goodness was requited to myself," said Philip, laughing; "for you remember the three golden guineas I had from the ' — Magazine,' to which you persuaded me to send the tale?"

"That's just what I mean. Now, if in one little year you have gone on from making a translation just for good-nature, to writing beautiful stories such as this — for it is most beautiful!" cried Leigh, energetically— "why should you not rise to be a well-

known author, like my — no, I don't mean that," and the boy's face grew troubled— "but like one of those great writers who do the world so much good; who can make the best and wisest of people better and wiser still, and yet can bring comfort to a poor sick boy like me. Would not this be something great to try for?" And Leigh's tones warmed into eloquence, and his large soft eyes were positively floating in their own light.

Before Philip could answer, they were interrupted by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Pennythorne. The mother's quick footstep was scarcely heard before she entered. It had often touched Philip of late to see what a new and intense expression came into the once unmeaning face and voice of Mrs. Pennythorne whenever she looked at or spoke to her son Leigh. This day the young man noticed it more than ever. Even the presence of her redoubtable lord, which usually restrained every display of feeling, failed to prevent her from leaning over her boy and kissing him fervently.

"How has my dear Leigh been all day?" she asked.

"Oh, so well, so content, mother!" said Leigh, cheerfully. "Ask Mr. Wychnor, there."

"Mr. Wychnor is very kind." And a look of deep gratitude said more than the words.

"Everything went off well? Fred is really married, then?" inquired Leigh.

"Yes, my dear. To-morrow you shall hear about it, and about Summerwood; it is such a pretty place!"

"Is it?" said the boy, languidly. "I think I heard Miss Worsley say so the day she called, but I did not take much interest in what she said; she tired me. You can't think, Mr. Wychnor, how fast she talks!"

"I know she does — that is, I think you said so," answered Philip, correcting himself and rising to depart.

"Don't go yet; stay and hear a little about the wedding. We were talking so much of it this morning, you know." — Philip sat down again, not unwillingly. He had a vague pleasure in hearing the sound of the familiar names, assured that no one knew how familiar they were to him.

"Now go on, mother; tell us about the Ogilvies."

"I did not see much of Sir Robert; your father talked to him; and besides, he was so stately. But Lady Ogilvie was very kind. And there was Mr. Hugh, a fine handsome young man — so polite to Fred! — and that sweet, beautiful creature, Miss Ogilvie."

Here Philip dropped his gloves, and, stooping hastily, made several unavailing attempts to recover them.

"I don't think I ever saw a prettier bridesmaid than Miss Ogilvie — Katharine, I believe they called her. Shall I hold the light for you, Mr. Wychnor?" said simple Mrs. Pennythorne, compassionating the glove-hunter.

Philip hurriedly apologised for the interruption. "But pray go on," he said; "we poor bachelors like to hear of these merry doings. Mrs. Frederick Pennythorne seems rich in handsome relatives: how many more attended her to the altar?"

"There were none but Miss Ogilvie; she is an only child. Her father and mother seem so proud of her! — and well they may. Perhaps, Leigh, she may come and stay with your new sister, and then you will see her."

"Shall I? — I don't much care," said the sick boy, wearily. "I don't mind seeing any one except you, mother, and Mr. Wychnor. Are you really going then?" and Leigh, taking his friend's hand, so as to draw him close, whispered in his ear: "Now, remember what we were talking about before they came in; it may do you good some time or other to think over what I said, though I am so young, perhaps stupid enough

too, as they always told me:" and a smile of patient humility flitted over the boy's pale lips. "But never mind, there is the old fable of the Mouse and the Lion, you know; we'll act it over again, maybe."

"God bless you, my dear boy!" murmured Philip, as he took his leave. He had felt passing disappointment at not hearing that Eleanor was at Summerwood, as he had framed that reason to account to himself for the fact of an unusual silence in her correspondence. This slight vexation returned again as he walked homeward, but it soon passed away. A man's strong heart is seldom entirely engrossed by a love-dream, be it ever so close and dear. And Eleanor herself would have been the last to blame her betrothed, if these tender thoughts of her became absorbed in the life-purpose which was awakening in him, since therewith also she was connected, as its origin and aim.

Even while he smiled at Leigh Pennythorne's quaint fable, Wychnor acknowledged its truth. As he walked along, the boy's words came again and again into his mind; and he began to think yet more earnestly on his literary pursuits — what he had done, and what he purposed to do.

"How can a man touch pitch and not be defiled?" says the wise man of Israel; and Philip was not likely to have been thrown so much in the circle of Mr. Pennythorne's influence without being slightly affected thereby. His young heart, filled to enthusiasm with love of literature, and also with a complete hero-worship of literary men, had been checked in its most sensitive point. He found how different was the ideal of the book-reader to the reality of the book-writer. He had painted an imaginary picture of a great author, inspired by a noble purpose, and working always with his whole heart for the truth — or at least for what he esteemed the truth — and for nothing else. Now this image crumbled into dust; and from its ashes arose the semblance of a modern "*littérateur*," writing, not from his earnest heart, but from his clever head, doling out at so much per column the fruit of his brains, no matter whether it be tinselled inanity or vile poison, so that it will sell; or else ready to cringe, steal, lie, by word or by pen, becoming "all things to all men," if by such means he can get his base metal puffed off as gold.

Philip Wychnor saw this detestable likeness in Mr. Pennythorne, and it was variously reduplicated in all the petty dabblers in literature who surrounded him. A triton of similar magnitude is always accompanied by a host of minnows — especially if, as in this case, the larger fish rather glories in his train. And so, our young visionary began to look on books and book-creators with diminished reverence; and in the fair picture of literary fame, he saw only the unsightly framework by which its theatrical and deceitful splendour was supported. He had been *behind the scenes*.

Poor Philip Wychnor! He was too young, too inexperienced, to know that of all imitations there must be somewhere or other a vital reality — that if the true were not, its simulation would never have existed.

Contents

CHAPTER 26

What is a man,
If his chief good, and market of his time,
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To rust in us, unused.
I do not know
Why yet I live to say, This thing's to do,
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and mean

To do it. SHAKSPEARE.

Good Dame Fortune makes it her pleasure to walk about the world in varied guise; suddenly showing her bonnie face sometimes in the oddest way and under the oddest semblance imaginable — so that it is a considerable length of time before we begin to find out that it is really her own fair self. She came to Philip Wychnor that very night as he was returning home, meeting him under the shroud of a London fog. And such a fog! — one that people who are fond of elegant symbolisation would emphatically describe as being "like breathing ropes," or at least one that might be considered as a suspiration of small twine. It was a literal version of the phrase "jaundiced atmosphere," for the whole circumambient seemed to have grown suddenly yellow and bilious. Therein all London groped blindfold: New-road omnibuses finding themselves plunged against the inner railings of Woburn-place — and cabmen, while they threaded the mazes of Trafalgar-square, inquiring in tones of distracted uncertainty how far they were from Piccadilly. It was a time when each man's great struggle appeared to be the discovery of his own whereabouts; when the whole world seemed bent on an involuntary fraternisation — every body running into his neighbour's arms.

This was exactly what Philip Wychnor did, somewhere about Russell-square. Dame Fortune, hid in the fog, laughed as she knocked right into his involuntary embrace a chance passer-by.

A gentle voice, obviously that of an elderly man, expressed the usual apology; and added thereto the not uncommon inquiry— "Pray, sir, can you tell me whereabouts I am?"

"I fancy, near the British Museum," answered Philip.

"That's where I've been this hour and a half," said the voice, with a comic hopelessness that made Philip smile. "I live only a few streets off, and I can't find my way home."

"My case is not unlike yours," laughed Philip; "and most probably there are plenty more in the same predicament, especially strangers. Suppose, my good sir, we were to unite our fortunes — or misfortunes — and try to make out the way together. Mine is — street. Which is yours?"

“The same; and I’m very much obliged to you, young gentleman, for so I perceive you are, by your voice. May I take your arm? for I am old, and very tired.”

“Gladly,” replied Philip. There was something in the simplicity of the manner that pleased him. He liked the voice, and almost fancied he had heard it before. Perhaps the old man thought the same, since when they came to the nearest lamp the two wayfarers each stopped to look in the other’s face. The recognition was mutual.

“Bless my life!” cried the elder one, “you are the very young man I found a year ago, near this spot, in a faint!”

“And most good-naturedly took home; for which kindness I have often longed to thank you. Let me do so now,” answered Philip, grasping his companion’s hand with a hearty shake.

“Really, my friend, your fingers are as young and strong as your arms,” said the queer little old man of the omnibus. “Mine are rather too frozen and weak to bear squeezing, this raw day; and, besides they are not used to such a cordial gripe,” he added, blowing the ends of the said fingers, which peeped up bluely from a pair of old cotton gloves: — yet he looked much gratified all the while.

“You don’t know how pleased I am to meet you!” reiterated Philip. “I often kept a look-out in the streets and squares for every” —

“Every odd little old fellow, you mean? Well, for my part, I never passed down your street without looking out for you. Once I saw your head at the window, so I knew you were better.”

“Why did you never come in? But you shall now.” And Philip, trusting to gratitude and physiognomy, and following an impulse which showed how unsuspicious and provincial he was, took home his queer-looking acquaintance, inviting him to spend the evening without even asking him his name. The old gentleman, after a few shy excuses and some hesitation, settled himself in the easy-chair, and began to make himself quite comfortable and at home.

“Will you have some tea and eggs — as I always have when it is thus late?” said Wychnor, colouring slightly; for he had peered into his bachelor larder only to discover its emptiness — and hospitality is a virtue that poverty sometimes causes to grow rusty. “But perhaps you have not dined?”

“I never practise what the world in general considers dining — it’s inconvenient,” said the guest. “Meat is very dear, and not wholesome. I gave it up a long time ago, and am much the better, too. Pythagoras, my good sir — depend upon it, Pythagoras was the wisest fellow that ever lived. I keep to his doctrines.”

Crossing his legs, he gazed complacently at the kettle which Philip put on the fire, thereby eclipsing its cheerful blaze. These housekeeping avocations, which the young man afterwards continued even to egg-boiling and toast-making, may a little dim the romance that surrounds — or at least ought to surround him, as a novel-hero; but as we began by avowing Philip Wychnor’s utter dissimilarity from the received ideal of that fascinating personage, we shall not apologise for this little circumstance. And that the inner life of man goes on just the same, ennobling and idealising the commonest outward manifestation, is proved by the fact that while the young host continued his lowly domestic occupations, and the guest sat drying the wet soles of his clumsy boots, they talked — O ye gods! how they did talk!

The stranger was an original, and that Philip soon found. In five minutes they had plunged into the depths of a conversation which sprang from the remark concerning Pythagoras. The little old man quoted with the most perfect simplicity recondite Greek authors and middle-age philosophers, referring to them without the slightest pedantry or affectation of learning. Such things seemed to him part of his daily life,

familiar as the air he breathed. He wandered from Pythagoras to Plato, then to the Rosicrucian mystics, and onwards to Jacob Bœhme, finally landing in these modern times with Hegel, Kant, and Coleridge. He seemed to know everything, and to be able to talk about everything, except ordinary topics. While lingering among these latter he was shy, uneasy, and could not find a word to say; but the moment he found an opportunity of plunging into his native element, he rushed to it like a duck to the water, and was himself again.

Immediately his whole outer man changed. Throwing himself back in the chair — one foot crossed on the knee of the other leg, the tips of his long thin fingers oracularly joined together — this curious individual was set a-going like a well-wound-up watch. His bright eye flashed, his whole countenance grew inspired, and his tongue, now fully let loose, was ready to pour forth eloquent discourse. However, with him conversation resembled rather a solo than a duet — it was less talking than lecturing. Now and then he waited a second, if his companion seemed eager to make an observation, and then he went off again in his harangue. At last, fairly tired out, he began sipping his tea with infinite satisfaction — meanwhile employing himself in a close inspection of his host's countenance and person, He broke silence at last by the abrupt question, "My young friend, what are you?"

Philip started at this unceremonious interrogatory; but there was something so kindly in the clear eyes, that he only smiled, and answered, "My name is" —

"I don't mean that," interrupted the old man— "I don't want to know your name; everybody has one, I suppose — I asked what *you* are?"

"My profession?"

"No — not your profession, but *you*, your real self, your soul — your *ego*. Have you found out that?" Philip began to think his visitor was rather more than eccentric — slightly touched in the head; but the old gentleman went on:

"I have a theory of my own about physiognomy, or more properly speaking, the influence of spirit over matter. I never knew a great man yet — and I have known a good many (ay, though I am an odd-looking fellow to look at) — I never yet knew a man of intellect whose mind was not shown in his face; not to the common observer perhaps, but to those who look deeper. Moreover, I believe firmly in sympathies and antipathies. Why should not the soul have its instincts, and its atmosphere of attraction and repulsion, as well as the body? We respect the outer machine sadly too much, and don't notice half enough the workings of the free agent within."

"Well, my dear sir?" said Philip, interrogatively, as his companion paused to take breath.

"Well, my friend; I daresay you think all this means nothing. But it does — a great deal. It explains why I liked you — why I followed you out of the omnibus — and also why I am here. You have a good face; I read your soul in it like a book; and it is a great, deep, true soul — thirsting after the pure, the lofty, and the divine. It may not be developed yet; I hardly think it can be; but it is there. Now I want to ask if you feel this in yourself — if you know what is this inner life of 'the spirit?'"

Philip caught somewhat of the meaning which these singular words unfolded, and the earnestness of his guest was communicated to himself. "I know thus far," he said— "that I have been a student and dreamer all my life; that I have tried to fill my head with knowledge and my heart with poetry; that I have gone through the world feeling that there were in me many things which no person could understand — except one."

"Who was he?"

Philip changed colour; but even had he wished otherwise, he could not but speak the truth beneath that piercing gaze. “It was no man — a woman.”

“Ah!” said the old man, catching the meaning. “Well, such things are! Go on.”

“I have had some trouble in my life: latterly, very much. It has made me think more deeply; and I am now trying to work out those thoughts with my pen.”

“I imagine so. You are an author?”

“I cannot call myself by that name,” said Philip, humbly; “I write, as many others do, for bread. But still I begin to see how great an author’s calling might be made, and I long, however vainly, to realise that ideal.”

“That’s right, my boy!” cried the old man, energetically; “I knew you had the true soul in you. But how far had it manifested itself? — in short, what have you written?” — Philip enumerated his various productions.

“I have seen some of them; very fair for a beginning, but too much written to order — world-fashion — all outside. My young friend, you will begin to think soon. Why don’t you put your name to what you do?”

“Because — though the confession is humiliating — I have written, as I before said, simply from necessity. It would have given me no pleasure to see my poor name in print. I worked for money, not reputation. I am no genius!”

The guest lifted himself up in his chair, and fixed his keen eyes on Philip. “And do you think every man of genius does write for reputation? Do you imagine that we” — his unconscious egotism was too earnest even to provoke a smile— “that *we* care whether Tom Smith or Dick Jones praises or abuses us — that is, our work, which is our true self much more than the curious framework on two legs that walks about in broadcloth? No! a real author sends forth his brain-children as God did Adam, created out of the fulness that is in his soul, and meant for a great purpose. If these, his offspring, walk upright through the world, and fulfil their being’s end — angels may shout and devils grin — he cares as little for one as for the other.” — Philip — quiet Philip — who had lived all his life in the precise decorums of L — , or in the rigid proprieties of the most orthodox college at Oxford, was a little startled at this style of language.

“I daresay you think me profane,” continued his strange guest, “but it is not so; I am one of those who have had power given them to lift up a little of the veil from the Infinite and the Divine, and, feeling this power in their souls, are emboldened to speak fearlessly of things at which common minds stupidly marvel. I say with that great new poet, Philip Bailey —

That to the full of worship
All things are worshipful.
Call things by their right names! Hell, call thou hell;
Archangel, call archangel; and God — God!

but I do so with the humble and reverent awe of one who, knowing more of these mysteries, is the more penetrated with adoration.” And the old man’s voice sank meekly as a little child’s, while his uplifted eyes spoke the deepest devotion.

Philip was moved. There was something in the intense earnestness of this man which touched a new chord in his heart. He saw, amidst all the quaint vagaries of the enthusiast, a something which in the world he had himself so vainly longed to find — a striving after knowledge for its own sake, a power to separate the real from the unreal, the true from the false. And the young man’s whole soul sprang to meet and welcome what he had begun to deem almost an idle chimera.

“My dear sir,” cried he, seizing the hand of his guest, will you let me ask you the same question you asked me — What are you?”

“Outwardly, just what you see — a little old man — poor enough and shabby enough; because, while other folk spend their lives in trying how to feed and clothe their bodies, he has spent his in doing the same for his soul. And a very creditable soul it is,” said the old gentleman, laughing, and tapping with his forefinger a brow full, high, and broad enough to delight any follower of Spurzheim with its magnificent developments. “There’s a good deal of floating capital here, in the way of learning, only it does not bring in much interest.”

Philip smiled. “So your life has been devoted to study! Of what kind?”

“Oh,I have contrived during sixty years to put into this pericranium some dozen languages, a good deal of mathematics and metaphysics, a little of nearly all the *onomies* and *ologies*, with fragments of literature and poetry, to lighten the load and make it fit tight together. As for my profession, it is none at all, if you ask the world’s opinion; but I think I may rank, however humbly, with some honest fellows of old, who in their lifetime were regarded about as little as I am. In fact, my good friend, I may call myself a philosopher.”

“And a poet,” cried Philip; “I read it in your eyes.”

The old man shook his head. “God makes many poets, but He only gives utterance to a few. He never gave it to me! Nevertheless, I can distinguish this power in others; I can feel it sometimes rising and bubbling up in my own soul; but there is a seal on my lips, and I shall remain a dumb poet to my life’s end.” So saying, Philip’s guest rose, and began to button up his well-worn coat, as a preparative to his departure.

“We shall meet again soon,” said the young man, cordially.

“Oh yes; you will always find me at the British Museum, in the reading-room! I go there every day. ’Tis a nice warm place for study; especially when one finds that dinner and fire are too great luxuries on the same day. I have done so now and then,” said the old gentleman, with a patient smile, that made Philip’s warm shake of the hand grow into an almost affectionate clasp. They seemed to feel quite like old friends, and yet to this minute they did not know each other’s name. The elder one was absolutely going away without this necessary piece of information, when Philip, disclosing his own patronymic, requested to know his visitor’s.

“My name, eh? Drysdale — David Drysdale. A good one, isn’t it? My great-grandfather made it tolerably well known among the Scottish Covenanters. The Christian name is not bad, either. You know the Hebrew meaning, ‘beloved.’ Not that it has been exactly suitable for me — I don’t suppose any one in the world ever loved me much” — and a slight bitterness was perceptible in the quaint humour of the tone. But it changed into softness as he added, “Except — except my poor old mother. Young man,” he continued, “when you have lived as long as I have, you may perhaps find out that there are in this world two sorts of love only — which last until death, and after — your mother’s love, and your God’s.” He took off his hat reverently, though they stood at the street-door, exposed to the bleak wind; then put it on again, and disappeared.

Contents

CHAPTER 27

Oh, prophesy no more, but *be* the poet!
This longing was but granted unto thee
That, when all beauty thou couldst feel, and know it,
That beauty in its highest thou couldst be. — J. R.. LOWELL

I am a youthful traveller in the way,
And this slight boon would consecrate to thee
Ere I with Death shake hands, and smile that I am free.
KIRKE WHITE

Philip was in the habit of laying up in his memory a kindly store of his little daily adventures, in order to amuse Leigh Pennythorne. Also, as the boy grew more and more of a companion and friend, he shared many of Philip's most inward thoughts — always excepting the one, which lay in the core of the young man's heart. Therefore Leigh was soon informed of the singular acquaintance that Wychnor made in the last chapter.

"David Drysdale!" said Leigh. "Why, my father, nay everybody knows old Drysdale. I have seen him here sometimes, and watched those curious eyes of his — they seem to look one through."

"Does he come often?"

"No, my father can't endure him — says he is such a bear. Then Drysdale has a great deal of dry humour; and when two flints meet there is a blaze directly, you know."

"But still there is no quarrel between him and Mr. Pennythorne?"

"Oh no; my father would never quarrel with such a man as Drysdale. He has wonderful influence, in a quiet way, among literary people. He knows everybody, and everybody knows him. I have heard that his learning is prodigious!"

"I found that out very soon," said Philip, smiling.

"Ay, and so did I," Leigh continued. "In those old times of work — work — work — you know," — and the boy seemed absolutely to shudder at the remembrance, "my father once sent me down stairs to show off my Greek to Drysdale. How the old fellow frightened me with those eyes of his! I forgot every word. And then he told my father that I was not quite such a fool as I looked; but that I should soon be, if I went on with the classics. Perhaps he was right," said Leigh, sighing. "However, my father never asked him here again, but made me work harder than ever." Philip saw that the boy's thoughts were wandering in a direction not good for him; so he took no notice, but pursued the questions about the old philosopher. "How happens it, though, that Drysdale is so poor?"

"I have heard my father say it is because of his genius and his learning, which are never of any use to their possessors. But I do not exactly think that; do you?"

"No; however, your father has many peculiar opinions of his own," answered Philip, always careful in their various conversations to remember that Leigh was Mr.

Pennythorne's son. "It seems to me that this man's tastes, while rendering him somewhat unfit for the ordinary world, also make him independent of it. If he had just enough to keep him alive, and plenty of opportunity for study, I fancy Drysdale would be quite happy."

"Very likely; but it is an odd taste," said Leigh. "I can understand genius — not learning."

"Our queer old friend has both, I think." And Philip repeated the substance of the last evening's conversation, which had clung closely to his memory. Leigh listened eagerly, partly because he comprehended some little of it, but more because he saw how deeply his friend was interested.

"Mr. Wychnor," he said at last, "if you understand and feel all this, you must have an equal intellect yourself. Otherwise you would not care for it in the least."

The simple argument struck home. It brought to the young author's mind the first consciousness of its own powers, without which no genius can come to perfection. It was not the whisper of vanity — the answering thrill to idle praise — but the glad sense of an inward strength to carry out the purpose which filled the soul. It was the power which made the new-born Hercules stretch forth among the serpents his babe's arm, and feel that in its nerves lay the might of the son of Jove. The thought was so solemn, yet so wildly delicious, that it brought a mist to Philip's eyes. "God bless you, Leigh!" he murmured. "You have done me good many a time; and if this should be true, and I ever do become what you say — why, I will remember your words, or you must remind me of them."

Leigh turned round, and looked for a moment fixedly and sadly in his companion's face. "You do not mean what you say; you know that I — But we will talk no more now," he said, hurriedly, as he caught sight of his mother entering the room. However, when he had minutely and affectionately discussed with her the important topic of what he could eat for dinner, the boy lay for a long time silent and pensive. It might be that upon him too had come a new and sudden thought — more solemn than even that which had cast a musing shadow over Philip Wychnor. Both thoughts passed on into the undefined future; but one was of life, the other — of death!

Mrs. Pennythorne, supposing her boy was asleep, went on talking to his friend in her own quiet, prosy way, to which Philip had now grown quite accustomed. His fondness and care for Leigh had touched the mother's heart, and long since worn away her shyness. On his part the young man was an excellent listener to the monotonous, but not unmusical flow of mild repetitions which made up Mrs. Pennythorne's conversation. On this occasion it chiefly turned upon Frederick's wedding, his new house and furniture, which she accurately catalogued, beginning with the drawing-room carpets, and ending with the kitchen fire-irons. Philip tried to attend, but at last his thoughts went roaming; and his answers subsided into gentle monosyllables of assent, which, fortunately, were all that the lady required.

Of Leigh his mother did not speak at all, except to say that the pony-carriage, which Mrs. Frederick had thought indispensable, would be useful to take the boy country-drives when the spring came — supposing he needed them by that time, which was not likely, as he had been so much better of late. And then, as she glanced at the face which lay back on the sofa-pillow, with the blue-veined, shut eyelids, and the dark lashes resting on the colourless cheek, in a repose that seemed almost deeper than sleep, the mother shivered, looked another way, and began to talk hastily of something else. A few minutes after, the peculiar rap with which Mr. Pennythorne signalled his arrival was heard at the hall-door. Those three heavy strokes had always the effect of an electric shock on the whole household, producing a commotion from

cellar to attic. Mrs. Pennythorne jumped up with alacrity, only observing, timidly, that she hoped the knock would not awaken Leigh.

"I am not asleep, mother," said the boy, rousing himself as she quitted the room in answer to the marital summons. "Mr. Wychnor, come here a minute," he added, hurriedly, the flush rising into his white cheek at the very sound of his father's step. "Don't tell him you know Drysdale — it might vex him. He is rather peculiar, you know."

"How thoughtful you are grown, my dear kind boy! And was that what you lay pondering upon when we fancied you asleep?"

"Not quite all," Leigh replied, suddenly looking grave, "but — but —— we'll talk of that another time. You must go to the Museum Reading-room; it would be such a nice place for you to work in, far better than your own close little room. You don't yet feel what it is to be shut up all day, until you grow sick, bewildered, ill. No, no, you *must not* get ill," cried the boy, earnestly; "you must live — live to be a great man. And remember always what we talked about to-day," he continued, dropping his voice to a whisper as his father entered the room.

Mr. Pennythorne whisked about in his usual style, skipping hither and thither, and shaking his coat-tails whenever he rested, after a fashion which gave him very much the appearance of a water-wagtail. He was evidently in high feather, too — asked Leigh how he felt himself; and only called him "stupid" twice within the first ten minutes. Then he turned to Philip.

"Well, and how does the world treat you, young *Norwych*?" (Mr. Pennythorne had an amusing system of cognominising those about him by some ingenious transposition of their various patronymics; and this was the anagram into which Philip Wychnor's surname had long ago been decomposed.) "Where do you put your carriage and pair, my young friend? I have not seen it yet."

Philip smiled; but he was too well accustomed to the bitter "pleasantries" of his would-be patron to take offence, and he always bore it patiently for Leigh's sake.

"Ay, that's all the good of being a gentleman with a large independence — in the head, at least;" and Mr. Pennythorne laughed at what he considered his wit. "Now, here's my Fred — clever fellow! knows how to make his way in the world ! — just come from his house in Harley Street — splendid affair! furnished like a duke's — as, indeed, Mrs. Lancaster observed. By-the-by, Cillie, my dear!"

"Yes, Pierce," was the meek answer from behind the door.

"I met Mrs. Lancaster in the Park — charming woman that! moves in the highest circles of literature. Of course you are acquainted with her, St. Philippus of Norwich?"

"No," answered the young man, shortly; "except once in your hall, I never heard the name." In truth he never had, notwithstanding Eleanor's acquaintance with the lady. But Mrs. Lancaster was the last person likely to have place in the memory, or the letters, of Philip's betrothed.

"Then you have a pleasure to come — for, of course, the fair Lancastrian will strain every nerve for an introduction to such a desirable young man, that you may embellish her literary *soirées* with your well-earned fame." Mr. Pennythorne drew the bow at a venture; and, as he saw Philip's cheek redden, congratulated himself on the keen shafts of his irony, quite unconscious how near sarcasm touched upon the truth. "And this reminds me, Cillie, my dear, that, hearing what a beautiful and talented woman I have the honour to call my wife, Mrs. Lancaster has invited you to grace with your presence the next *soirée*."

Poor Mrs. Pennythorne drew back aghast.— “You know, Pierce, I never go out,” she feebly remonstrated; “I had rather stay with Leigh.”

“My dear, the whole party would languish at your absence, and I cannot allow it. Besides, you will have to matronise your fair daughter-in-law, for Mrs. Lancaster is well acquainted with the Ogilvies, knows every branch of the family, and will ask them to meet us. The matter is decided — Friday the 17th sees us all at Rosemary Lodge.” So saying, he hopped up-stairs, but not before Philip’s quick ears had caught the whole of the last sentence. Indeed, of late he had been ever on the watch for some chance information which might have reference to Eleanor, whose long and unwonted silence had made him feel somewhat anxious. And even as he walked home that night, his memory retained with a curious tenacity the date and the place of this *réunion* of the Ogilvie family. He recurred to the circumstance again and again, in spite of the more serious thoughts which now occupied him; and almost wished that there had been some truth in the sneering remarks of Mr. Pennythorne as to his own future invitation to Rosemary Lodge.

There is an old Norse fable about the Nornir, or Fates, who sit weaving the invisible threads of human destiny, stretching them from heaven to earth, winding them in and out about man’s feet, intercepting and intervolving him wherever he moves. One of these gossamers, stirred by the breath of Philip’s idle wish, thereupon fell in his pathway and entangled him. But the web, at first light as air, grew afterwards into a heavy coil, woven of the darkest fibres with which humanity is bound.

Contents

CHAPTER 28

YOU MAY RISE early, go to bed late, study hard, read much, and devour the marrow of the best authors; and when you have done all, be as meagre in regard of true and useful knowledge as Pharaoh's lean kine after they had eaten the fat ones. — BISHOP SANDERSON.

I do not think any poet or novelist has ever immortalised that curious place well known to all dabblers in literature or science, the Reading-room at the British Museum. Yet there is hardly any spot more suggestive. You pass out of the clear daylight into large, gloomy, ghostly rooms, the walls occupied by the mummied literature of some centuries, arranged in glass cases. You see at various tables scores of mute readers, who sometimes lift up a glance as you pass, and then, like Dante's ghosts in purgatory, relapse into their penance. Indeed, the whole scene, with the spectral attendants flitting to and fro, and the dim vista extending beyond the man who takes the checks (alas for poetic diction!), might easily be imagined some Hades of literature, where all erring pen-guiders and brain-workers were doomed to expiate their evil deeds by an eternity of reading. Not only the lover of poetic idealisation, but the moralising student of human nature, would find much food for thought in the same reading-room. Consider what hundreds of literary labourers have toiled within these walls! Probably nearly all the clever brains in the three kingdoms have worked here at some time or other — for nobody ever comes to the reading-room for amusement. If a student had moral courage enough to ask for the last new novel, surely the ghosts of sombre ponderous folios would rise up and frown him into annihilation. The book of signatures, where every new comer is greeted by the politest of attendants, handing him the most detestable of pens, is in itself a rich collection of autographs, comprising almost every celebrated name which has risen year by year, and many — oh, how many ! — that the world has never chronicled at all.

The Reading-room is fertile in this latter class — meek followers of science, who toil after her, and for her, day by day, and to whom she only gives her livery of rags. You may distinguish at a glance one of these *habitués* of the place, shabby, at times almost squalid in appearance, plunged up to the ears in volumes as rusty and ancient as himself. At times he is seen timidly propitiating some attendant with small fragments of whispering conversation, listened to condescendingly, like the purring of a cat which has become a harmless household appendage. Possibly the poor old student has come daily year after year, growing ever older and shabbier, until at last the attendants miss him for a week. One of them perhaps sees in the papers a death, or some mournful coroner's inquest; and recollecting the name, identifies it as that of the old bookworm. Then there is a few minutes' talk by the ticket-keepers' den at the end of the rooms — one or two of the regular frequenters are told of the fact, and utter a careless "Poor old fellow, he seemed wearing out of late!" — the books put by for his daily use are silently replaced, and one more atom of disappointed humanity is blotted from the living world.

This illustrative exordium may be considered as heralding the advent of a new Museumite in the person of Philip Wychnor. Speculations something like the

foregoing occupied him during the time that he was awaiting the asked-for book, and trying to discover among the thick-set plantation of heads — brown, black, fair, red, and grey — young, old, ugly, handsome, patrician, and plebeian — the identical cranium of his new acquaintance, David Drysdale. First, he thought of promenading the long alleys and peering over every table, but this sort of running the gauntlet was too much for his nerves. So, inquiring of the head attendant — the tutelary *Lar* of the place, who knew everybody and helped everybody — a sort of literary lion's-provider, with good-nature as unfailing and universal as his information — Philip soon learned the whereabouts of old Drysdale. — There he was, with his bald head peering from a semicircle of most formidable books; looking by the daylight a little older and a little more rusty in attire. He greeted his young friend with a pleased look, and began to talk in the customary Museum under tone. It was a drowsy murmur, such as a poet would liken to the distant humming of the Hybla bees; and perhaps the simile is not inapt with regard to this curious literary hive.

"Glad to see you here, my young friend — very glad — shows you're in earnest," said Drysdale. "Ever been here before?"

Philip answered in the negative.

"Isn't it a fine place — a grand place? Fancy miles of books, stratum upon stratum; what a glorious literary formation! Excuse me," he added, smiling, "but I've been reading geology all the morning, and then I always catch myself '*talking shop*,' as some would elegantly express it. You don't study the science, I believe?"

"No," said Philip; "the earth's beautiful outside is enough for me; I never wished to dive beneath it."

"Mistaken there, my good sir," answered the other, in a tone of gentle reproof; "you should try to learn a little of everything. I always do. When I hear of any science or study, I feel quite uncomfortable until I have mastered it, or at least know enough of it to form a judgment on the remainder. You would be astonished at the heterogeneous mass I have collected here," — he pointed to his forehead, "and I am still working on. Indeed, I should lament something like Alexander the Great when he reached the world's end, if I thought there were no more sciences for me to conquer. But that is not likely," said the philosopher, with an air of great consolation, as he eyed affectionately the pile of books that surrounded him. — Philip hoped he was not interrupting any work.

"Bless you, no! I can settle to it again directly."

"This would seem a capital place for the study, not only of books, but of human nature," observed Philip. "I never saw such a collection of odd people."

Drysdale laughed. "Yes! I believe we are an odd set — we don't care at all for our outward man. There lies the difference between your man of science, the regular old bookworm, and your man of genius — a poet, for instance. The latter sort has the best of it, for with him the soul has greater influence over the body. I never knew a genius yet — mind you! I use the word in its largest sense — who did not bear with him, either in face, or person, or in a certain inexplicable grace of manner, the patent of nobility which heaven has bestowed upon him; while the hardworking grubbers in science and acquired learning often find the mud sticking to them! Their pursuits are too much of this world to let them soar like those light-winged fellows. One class is the quicksilver of earth — the other, its plain useful iron. You couldn't do well without either, I fancy — eh?" The old philosopher rubbed his hands, and pausing in his oration, sat balancing himself on the edge of one of those comfortable chairs with which a benign government indulges Museum-frequenters. Philip, much amused, tried to draw the conversation into its original channel.

"You have a few fair students also; I see a sprinkling of bonnets here and there."

Drysdale shrugged his shoulders. "Ah, yes! Much good may it do them! Some of them seem to work hard enough, poor little souls! but they had far better be at home making puddings. I don't like learned women in general; — not that I mean women of real intellect, regular workers in literature; but small philosophers in petticoats, just dipping their pretty feet into the cold water of the sciences, and talking as if they had taken the whole bath. Here's one of them!" added the old gentleman, with visible discomfiture, as a diminutive dame in all the grace of fashionable costume floated up the centre-aisle, we were about to write, and may still do so, considering what a great temple of literature we are now describing.

"Ah, Drysdale! you are just the very person I want," lisped the new comer; and Philip at once recognised both face and voice as belonging to the lady he had once glanced at in Mr. Pennythorne's hall. He began to notice with some curiosity the well-known Mrs. Lancaster. Rather surprised was he to find so stylish a dame on terms of condescending familiarity with old David Drysdale. He did not know that lion-hunters often prefer for their menageries the most rugged and eccentric animals of that royal breed. Besides, the shabbiness and singularities of the queer-looking philosopher were tolerated everywhere, even among the elegant clique who honoured literature by their patronage.

Philip Wychnor was too courteous to gratify his curiosity by much open observation, still he could not but be amused by the visit of this fair devotee to literature. The excellent presiding *Lar* before mentioned, who was especially the good genius of feminine bookworms, found himself perpetually engaged in foraging out for her ponderous volumes which she carelessly turned over, to the imminent peril of her lemon-coloured gloves, and then as carelessly threw aside. One or two quiet, elderly readers, at the other side of the table, had their studies grievously interrupted by the quick, sharp voice; and, no doubt, devoutly wished all female literati, and this one especially, in some distant paradise of fools not particularly specified. At last Mrs. Lancaster began to look about her, and talk in an under tone to David Drysdale. Wychnor thought it was some literary secret, and with quite needless delicacy made for himself an errand to the catalogue-stand.

Now Mrs. Lancaster, besides her widely-professed admiration for literature, had a slight mania for Art. At least, so she said; and was for ever hunting up models of living physical perfection wherewith to fill her drawing-rooms. She had been watching for some time Philip's exquisitely-marked profile, as he stooped over his book, and now inquired: "By-the-by, Drysdale" — (Mrs. Lancaster affected, in common with many literary ladies, the disagreeable and *mannish* custom of addressing her male acquaintance without the Mr.)— "by-the-by, Drysdale, who is that clever-looking, handsome youth? He who was talking to you when I came in?"

With all his unworldliness, old David had a great deal of shrewdness, especially with regard to other people. He knew how almost impossible it is for a literary man to work his way without entering into the general society of the fraternity, and making personal interests, which materially aid his fortune, though it is his own fault if he suffer them to compromise his independence. Therefore Drysdale saw at once what an advantage it would be to Wychnor to gain admission into Mrs. Lancaster's clever circle. Immediately he set to work to clear the way, by judicious commendations.

"Really, is he so very talented? I knew I was right. My instinct never fails!" exclaimed the gratified lady. And she began to debate upon and criticise Philip's face and head, in order to prove her full acquaintance with physiognomy and phrenology. Old Drysdale shrugged his shoulders and listened. He never wasted words on persons

of Mrs. Lancaster's stamp— "preferring," as he often said, "to let himself be pelted with swine's chaff, rather than cast his own pearls before them."

However, as soon as Philip returned to the table he performed the introduction for which the Mistress of Rosemary Lodge was so anxious. Wychnor was agreeably surprised to find himself graciously invited to accompany her "excellent friend Drysdale" to join the constellation of literary stars that were to illuminate the Lodge with their presence on the identical 17th.

"By-the-by, Drysdale," continued the lady, "you who have such a fancy for youthful geniuses will meet one that night — a Miss Katharine Ogilvie." Here Philip's heart beat quicker, it always did so at the name of Ogilvie. Mrs. Lancaster went on. "She is wonderfully clever, and so lovely! — quite a Corinne at nineteen. I never was more surprised than when I met her last week; for three years ago I was staying at her father's, Sir Robert Ogilvie of Summerwood Park, and she seemed the most ordinary little girl imaginable."

"Humph! dare say she is the same now. Mrs. Lancaster's swans are always geese," muttered Drysdale, in an aside.

Philip's heart beat quicker than ever, for he remembered Eleanor's Christmas visit long ago.

Mrs. Lancaster, as she prepared to depart, turned from the imperturbable old philosopher to her new acquaintance. "I am sure a man of genius like yourself, Mr. Wychnor, will be delighted with my young *improvisatrice*, as I call her; indeed, she is quite an ideal of romance. Only be sure you do not fall in love with her, for people say she is engaged to a cousin of hers, who is always at Summerwood. *A propos*, Drysdale, in this said Christmas visit our friend Lynedon accompanied me. You know him — indeed, you know everybody. He has not written to me this long while. What has become of him?"

"Can't say, and don't care," replied the old man, rather gruffly, for his patience was getting exhausted.

"You never chanced to meet Paul Lynedon, Mr. Wychnor?" Philip made a negative motion of the head, and the voluble lady continued. "You would have exactly suited each other — he was such a charming creature — so full of talent. But I must not stay chattering here. *Adieu! au revoir*." And Mrs. Lancaster vanished gracefully from the reading-room.

David Drysdale shook himself with an air of great relief, somewhat after the fashion of an old house-dog round whose nose a troublesome fly has been buzzing. Then he settled down among his books in a silence which Philip did not feel inclined to interrupt.

Mrs. Lancaster's idle talk had stirred a few conflicting thoughts in the young man's bosom. With a natural curiosity, he looked forward to seeing this young cousin of Eleanor's, who, as report said, was likely to become her sister too. Forgetting how false rumour sometimes is, and how complete was the seclusion of L — , he felt surprised — almost vexed — that his affianced had not alluded to the fact. He wondered also that she had never made mention at any time of this fascinating Paul Lynedon whom she must, nevertheless, have intimately known at Summerwood.

It might have been an error in judgment, and yet it was from a noble and truly feminine delicacy, that Eleanor never told her betrothed of the love she had refused. She had none of that contemptible vanity which would fain carry about as a trophy a string of trampled and broken hearts, ready to flourish them before the eyes of the accepted lover, should the warning be required. Even amidst her own happiness she had sighed over the wound she gave, and kept the knowledge of that rejected love

sacred from all, as every generous, delicate-minded woman will. But her silence now aroused more than one doubt in the mind of Philip Wychnor. This was wrong; he knew it, too; yet, being restless and uneasy, framed excuses for this idle jealousy over every action of his beloved Eleanor. But Philip Wychnor was a man, after all, and no man living ever can trust as a woman does.

Contents

CHAPTER 29

My mind misgives
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Will bitterly begin its fearful date
From this night's revels. — SHAKSPEARE

Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst * * *

— I fell — flooded with a Dark
In the silence of a swoon.
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night! — E. B. BROWNING.

Nothing could be better arranged than Mrs. Lancaster's *soirées*. She collected and grouped her guests as artistically as a fashionable *bouquetière* disposes her flowers. They were not all literary people — far from it: the hostess was too well acquainted with the idiosyncrasies and peculiarities of the fraternity to risk any such heterogeneous commixture. She adroitly sprinkled here and there a few of those fair scentless blossoms — evening-party *demoiselles* — who might be considered as hired only for the night, like the flowers on the staircase, to adorn the mansion. And then, amidst the gay cluster of ordinary humanities, might be distinguished some homely-looking plant, whose pungent aroma nevertheless diffused itself throughout the whole *parterre* — the poet of nature's making, who brought into refined saloons all the freshness, and a great deal of the mud, from the clods among which he was born. There, too, was the dandy author, who, when deigning to handle the pen, considered literature much the obliged party, the keen sarcastic wit, the porcupine of society, whom everybody hated, yet treated with respect for fear of his quills — and the timid aspirant, who sat in a corner and watched the scene with reverent and somewhat fearful eyes. All these were ingeniously amalgamated, so as to form the very perfection of *réunions*. Nobody felt obliged to "talk blue;" and while the heavy conversationalists had full play in snug corners, there were interludes of dancing and music to lighten the hearts and heels of the rest.

Philip Wychnor watched this moving panorama with considerable interest. At Oxford, the compulsion of honest poverty and his own inclinations had caused him to lead the life of a very hermit: in fact, to few young men of his age could that great raree-show, Society, appear so new. David Drysdale, who kept close beside him, took quite a pleasure in witnessing the almost child-like amusement of his young acquaintance, and in pointing out to him the various concomitants which made up the *soirée*.

"There stand the Merry-go-rounds," said he, pointing to a curiously-mingled group, in which the most prominent were a very big man and a very little one. "They all belong to the Merry-go-round paper — you may know that by their talk, a whole

artillery of fun and jest. But they have a character for wit to keep up, and *must* do it, well or ill, like the king's fools of old."

"Amateur assumers of the cap and bells, I presume?" observed Philip, smiling.

"Just so, but not all of them. Look at that man to whom everybody listens whenever he opens his lips. He buzzes about like a wasp, and wherever he settles for a minute, it is ten chances to one that he does not leave a sting behind. But he is a clever fellow, nevertheless — brimming over with wit; his tongue and his pen are like lancets; and if they do bleed Dame Society pretty freely, it is most frequently to keep down the lady's own plethora, and remove all bad humours."

"Who is that gay butterfly of a young man, who seems to set himself in opposition to your wasp? He keeps up an incessant rattle of small witticisms, chiefly directed to the ladies, with whom he appears quite a pet."

"Did you ever know true coin that had not its counterfeit? He is a small mimic of the other — a mushroom-wit, sprung up in a night out of the very refuse-bed of literature. He belongs to the Young England school of authorship — impudent jesters who turn the most earnest things of life into farce — who would parody Milton, and write a Comic History of the Bible.

I'd put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascals naked through the world,"

cried worthy old David, with an energy that, while it made Philip smile, touched him deeply. That one grain of true earnestness seemed to purify the whole heartless, worldly mass around him. The young man grew stronger in heart and purpose every hour of his association with Drysdale.

"There are two of another set. You will find all this literary world divided into sets," observed the old philosopher, glancing towards a couple who were talking together a little aloof from the rest.

"You mean that patriarchal old man, with a grand massive head, and the younger one, with hair parted in the centre, and a face that reminds one of Raphael's angels? I have been watching them some time — they talk so earnestly, and are such a picturesque couple to look at; only I don't like that *outré* affected style of dress."

"Yet there is a great deal of good in them, for all that. They belong to the Progress movement — people sincere and earnest in their way, only they are ever trying to move the world with their own small Archimedean lever. Now, though I hold that every man ought quietly to put his shoulder to the wheel and give society a shove onward, as far as he can in his petty lifetime, yet I don't like much talking about it. With these Progress people it is often 'great cry and little wool.' They are always bemoaning, with Hamlet, that

The time is out of joint,

but rarely attempt to 'set it right.'"

"I agree with you," said Philip; "I believe less in universal than individual movements. If every man began the work of reformation in himself first, and afterwards in his own circle, there would be no need for public revolutions at all. To use your own favourite system of symbolisation, Mr. Drysdale," continued the young man, with a good-humoured smile, "I think that quietly undermining a rock is far better than blowing it up with gunpowder, because in the latter case you never know how far the work of destruction may extend, and you run a chance of being knocked on the head by the fragments." — Drysdale patted his young friend on the arm, with an air of gratified approval. "That's right — quite right! Learn to think for yourself;

and don't be afraid of speaking what you think, my dear boy — excuse me for calling you so, but you are a boy to me."

Philip was about to express his sincere pleasure in this new friendship of theirs, when Mrs. Lancaster glided through the still increasing crowd.

"Drysdale, where are you? Here in a corner! Fie, fie! when every one wants to talk to you."

"I wish I could return the compliment, ma'am," answered the old man, abruptly enough, for any cynical propensities he had were always drawn out by the flippant tongue of Mrs. Lancaster.

"Now, really, that's too bad! What a nice, good, disagreeable, comical creature you are! Here is your old acquaintance, Mr. Pennythorne, asking for you." And as she spoke the individual alluded to made his appearance, shook hands with Drysdale, and then turning round caught sight of Philip Wychnor. A slight elevation of the eyebrows marked Mr. Pennythorne's extreme astonishment at the recognition, but he was too much a man of the world to seem discomposed by anything. He hopped up to Philip with a cordial greeting.

"My dear young friend — delighted to meet you so unexpectedly, and in such charming society too. And so you know that excellent old Drysdale: how surprising: how pleasant!" And he bustled away to another part of the room, wondering within himself what the — (Mr. Pennythorne's expletives were always confined to mere thoughts) brought the young rascal there!

"You must come with me, Drysdale," pursued Mrs. Lancaster, laying her tiny white-gloved hand on the rough coat-sleeve of the shaggy-looking old fellow, who looked in that gay assemblage something like the dog Diogenes amidst the train of canine Alexanders in Landseer's picture; "I want to introduce you to my young Corinne — my *improvisatrice*." But Drysdale still hung back He had an unpleasant recollection of innumerable dainty MSS. and scores of young-ladyish poems with which he had been deluged in consequence of doing the civil to Mrs. Lancaster's literary *protégés*.

"It is I who particularly wish to be introduced to Mr. Drysdale," said a sweet young voice behind; and the old man could not resist either the voice or the bewitching smile that adorned the lips through which it passed.

Philip turned gently round, and looked at Katharine Ogilvie. She was indeed dazzlingly beautiful — the more so perhaps from the extreme simplicity of her white dress, which contrasted strongly with the be-laced and be-furbelowed throng around. Her small, Greek-shaped head had no ornament but the magnificent purple-black hair, which was gathered up in a knot behind, giving to her classic features a character more classic still. But there was no impassive marble beauty about the face. It was all woman — the lips now dimpling with smiles, now trembling with ill-concealed emotion, as some sudden thought passed through her mind. How different from the shy girl who, years before, had moved timidly amidst the same scene, in the same place!

Katharine felt it so; and her heart was full — running over with the delicious memories that every moment renewed, and dilating with a joyful pride as she compared the present with the past. She felt she was beautiful — she saw how every eye followed her admiringly: she knew that even over that gay and gifted circle the spell of her talents and her fascinations was cast. She gloried in the knowledge.

"He would not be ashamed of me now," she murmured to herself with a proud happy smile. "No; when he comes again he will find Katharine not unworthy, even of him." And the thought kindled a new lustre in her eyes, and lent an unwonted softness

to every tone of her melodious voice. How happy she was! how she seemed to cast everywhere around her an atmosphere of gentle gladness! She inclined particularly towards old David Drysdale; and he, on his part, thawed into positive enthusiasm beneath the sunshine, of her influence.

"I wished much to see you, Mr. Drysdale," she said at last, though somewhat timidly, when the conversation with him had grown into quite a friendly chat. "I have heard of you before, from — from an old acquaintance of yours;" and the quick colour rose slightly in her cheek.

"My dear young lady, I am really honoured — delighted!" answered the old man, charmed almost into compliment. "Who could it be?" — Katharine's lips trembled while they framed the name of Paul Lynedon.

"Lynedon — Ah! I remember him — fine fellow to look at, with a great deal in him. But ours was a very slight acquaintance. I have heard nothing of him since he went abroad. Ever been abroad, Miss Ogilvie?" added Drysdale, unconsciously turning the conversation; at which Katharine felt a vague disappointment, for it was pleasant even to hear a stranger utter the name that was the music of her heart.

"No!" she replied. "I know scarcely anything of the world except from books."

"And perhaps the knowledge thus gained is the best, after all; at least so says my young friend Philip Wychnor here," said Drysdale, good-naturedly turning to where his new favourite sat aloof. Philip was trying to alleviate his rather dull position with looking over various books.

"Philip Wychnor!" echoed Katharine, suddenly recollecting the name. It caught the owner's ear, and the eyes of the two young people met. "This must be Eleanor's friend; Hugh told me he was in London" — she thought to herself; and an instinct of something better than curiosity made her ask for an introduction.

"I believe you are not quite unknown to me, Mr. Wychnor," said Katharine, as Philip — answering Drysdale's summons — came up to them. "Are you not a friend of my two cousins, Hugh and Eleanor Ogilvie?" Philip answered in the affirmative.

Katharine thought his hesitation sprang from the shyness of one unused to society; women have so much more self-possession than men. She tried to reassure him by continuing to talk. "I am quite delighted to meet you. I remember perfectly how warmly my cousins spoke of you — Eleanor especially. You have known her many years?"

"Many years. And her brother — how is he?" continued Wychnor, not daring to trust his voice with a more direct question.

"Hugh is quite well, I believe — I hope. He left Summerwood some days since," said Katharine, while a shadow of annoyance passed over her face, and the clear brow was contracted for a moment.

"To L — , to join, his sister, I conclude?"

"Oh no! Eleanor is gone abroad, you know."

"Gone abroad!"

"Yes, to Florence, with Mrs. Breynton, her friend, and your aunt — is she not? I thought, of course, you were aware of the fact." — Philip felt sick at heart; muttering some unconnected words, he turned to look for Drysdale, for he had no power to sustain the conversation. However, the old man was gone. At another time Katharine's curiosity and sympathy would have been excited; but now her attention was drawn away from him by a chance word — one that, whenever uttered in her hearing, pierced through any buzz of conversation, compelling her to listen — the name of Paul Lynedon.

Katharine and Philip chanced to sit together on one of those round ottomans which seem made for double *tête-à-têtes*; and behind them were a lady and gentleman chatting merrily.

"Mr. Lynedon!" repeated the latter. "So, my dear Miss Trevor, you really know my excellent friend Paul Lynedon."

"I should rather say I *knew* him — since it is several years since we met. He went on the Continent, I believe? A sudden departure, was it not, Dr. Saville?"

"Hem! my dear madam. Therein hangs a little mystery that I would not mention to any one but to you, who were his very particular friend. In fact, poor Lynedon was in love."

"You don't say so?"

"Oh yes; he told me all about it at the time: — long attachment — lady engaged to another gentleman. But — heigh-ho — people's minds change so. *I* think Lynedon will get her after all — and so does Lizzie."

"'All's well that ends well.' When is he likely to be married?"

"Lynedon? — Why — though you must never breathe a word of this — I have every reason to believe it will be very soon. In fact, the happy event may have come off already. For, he tells me, he has lately met her at Florence, where she lives with an old lady. He sees her every day. Sly fellow — he says nothing of the wedding; but he writes full of happiness. I think I have the letter in my pocket now, if I did not send it home this morning to Lizzie. — No! here it is."

Every word of this mixture of truth and falsehood fell on the stunned ear of Katharine Ogilvie. Yet she sat immovable, her fingers still turning over the book on her lap, her lips still fixed in the courteous smile of attention. Once only her eyes wandered, with uncertain incredulousness, over the letter which Dr. Saville held. It was the known handwriting — *his* hand! Passionate in all her impulses, she drank in, undoubting, the fatal truth. Her heart died within her, and was turned to stone.

The next moment Dr. Saville moved to make way for Mrs. Lancaster, who fluttered up all *empressement*, and entreated her "sweet Katharine" to sing. Katharine arose, and crossed the room with a steady footstep. Philip Wychnor sat down in her place.

"What a lovely girl that is, and with what intense feeling she sings!" observed a gentleman to Miss Trevor, as Katharine's voice came from the inner room, clear, full, and pure, without one tremulous tone, "Yes; she is a sweet creature — a Miss Katharine Ogilvie."

"Ogilvie — how singular! Has she any sisters?" inquired Dr. Saville.

"No, I believe not. Why do you ask?"

"Because the name of Paul Lynedon's old love — the young lady he is going to marry — was Ogilvie — Eleanor Ogilvie." There was a movement of the fashionable crowd, as one of the guests hastily wound his way through, and passed out at the door. When David Drysdale came to inquire for his young friend, Philip Wychnor was already gone. Still the gay throng fluttered, laughed, and chattered, for an hour or two more, and then dispersed.

"My dear Katharine, how silent you are!" remarked Lady Ogilvie, as the carriage drove homewards.

"I am tired — so tired. Let me alone!" was the answer, in a cold, sharp tone, that excited the mild reproach:

"Really, my dear, I hope you will not get spoiled by the admiration you receive." There was no reply, and the two parents dozed off to sleep.

Katharine reached her own room, and locked the door. Then she flung her arms above her head with a wild cry of agony — half-sob, half-moan — and fell heavily on the floor.

Contents

CHAPTER 30

There I maddened. . . . Life swept through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished — sprang, full-statured in an hour;
— Know you what it is when anguish with apocalyptic Never
To a Pythian height dilates you and despair sublimes to power?
E.B. BROWNING.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears such bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, though my heart be at its root.
TENNYSON.

O ye cold clear winter stars, look down pityingly on that solitary chamber where was poured out the anguish of first passionate love! Erring it might be — hopeless, visionary, even unmaidenly — but it was pure, nursed in solitude, and hidden from all human eyes. With strength such as woman only knows, Katharine for hours had sung, talked, and sat in smothered silence; but when she was alone the terrible cry of her despair burst forth. It was indeed despair — not pining, girlish sorrow — utter despair. She neither fainted nor wept; but crouched on the floor, swaying to and fro, her small hands tightly clenched, her whole frame convulsed with a choking agony.

"O God! — O God! — let me die!" rose up the almost impious cry of the stricken heart that in happiness had rarely known either thanksgiving or prayer, while moan after moan broke the night-stillness. She breathed no word — not even *his* name. All that she felt then was a longing for silence — darkness — death. But this stupor did not last. Her burning, tearless eyes, wandering round the room, fell first on the flowers she wore — *his* favourites — then on a book he had given her — alas! her whole daily life was full of mementos of him. At once the flood of anguish burst forth unrestrained,

"Oh, Paul, Paul, must I think of you no more? — is the old time gone for ever? A life without you, a future wherein the past must be forgotten — where even to think of it will be a sin — a sin. Oh, God, that I could die!" And then, like a lightning-flash, came the thought, that even that old time over which she mourned had been only a self-beguiling dream. He had never loved her, not even then; but he had made her believe so. That moment a new storm of passion arose in her heart.

"He deceived me; he deceived me even then! I in my madness have given him all — life, hope, youth; and he has given me — nothing! Paul! Paul Lynedon!" (and rising up she stood erect — pride, indignation, scorn, on every feature) "how dared you! How dared you to call me your Katharine — your 'own Katharine' — when all the while you loved another woman? And now, maybe, you are laughing with her over the poor foolish girl who trembled and blushed in your sight, who had given you her whole heart's love, and would have died for yours! Died? — Shall I die? — shall I?" — She went to and fro with quick wild steps, her cheeks burning like hot coals. No tears — no, poor wretch — to allay her misery came not one blessed tear!

Suddenly she stopped before the mirror, and surveyed herself from head to foot, regarding intently the beauty in which she had so gloried for his sake.

"Shall he say that I pined for him in unrequited love — I, Katharine Ogilvie, who might have been admired, loved — ay, worshipped?" And her memory pictured the face of Hugh, as when he had last bade her good-bye, pale, sad, with tears in the kind eyes that had watched over her for so many years. His love, if rude, was deep and sincere, and hardly merited a rejection so cold and scornful as she had lately given. Then in her heart dawned a purpose, sprung from the passion which for the time had almost changed to hate, and now warped every feeling of her impulsive nature. It was a purpose from which every woman who loves with a holy and pure love, however hopeless, would turn shuddering aside, feeling how great was the sin.

"You shall never triumph over me — you, Paul, and that wife of yours! you shall never laugh together at the girl who broke her heart for you. No; I will live — live to make the world know, and you know, what I am! Yes, you shall hear of me — my beauty, and my talents!" And a strange bitter laugh of self-derision broke from those white lips, over which a few hours before had dimpled the sweet, happy girlish smile. But that never came again — no, never more!

You, O Man! who with your honey words and your tender looks steal away a young girl's heart for thoughtless or selfish vanity, do you know what it is you do? Do you know what it is to turn the precious fountain of woman's first love into a very Marah, whose bitterness may pervade her whole life's current — crushing her, if humble, beneath the torture of self-contempt, or, if proud, making her cold, heartless, revengeful — quick to wound others as she has herself been wounded! And if she marry, what is her fate? She has lost that instinctive worship of what is noble in man, which causes a woman gladly to follow out the righteous altar-vow, and in "honouring" and "obeying" her husband, to create the sunshine of her home. And this is caused by your deed! Is not such deed a sin? Ay, second to that deadly one which ruins life and fame, body and soul! Yet man does both towards woman, and goes smiling back into the world, which smiles at him again!

It may be said, and perhaps truly, that with most young girls, love is a mere fancy; that the pain, if any, is soon forgotten, and so the infliction of it becomes no crime. But how few hearts are ever read, even by those nearest and dearest! There may be in the inmost core of many a worm of which the world never knows. And every now and then, undistinguished outwardly from the vapid fickle tribe, may be found some nature like Katharine Ogilvie's, of such an one, a blow like this makes either a noble martyr-heroine, or a woman over whom the very demons gloat; for they see in her their own likeness — she is a fallen angel too.

The distant clanging of Summerwood church-clock resounded above the moaning of the bleak November wind — one, two, three, four, Katharine heard the strokes, and paused. Twelve hours before, she had counted them and longed for the passing of the brief winter twilight, that the pleasant night might come. It would perhaps bring — not the sight of Paul Lynedon, that she knew was impossible — but at least some tidings of him. Now — oh, terrible change! It was from a world of sunshine, to the same world encompassed by a thick darkness — not that of holy, star-spangled night, but the darkness of a heavy mist, which pierced into the very soul. Yet she must walk through it, and alone! The dull blank future lifted itself up before her with terrible distinctness. Year after year to live and endure, and she scarce twenty yet! Katharine shuddered; one wild thought of death — blessed, peaceful death, *self-summoned* —— entered her soul; but that soul was still too pure to let the evil spirit linger there. Flinging herself on her knees, she buried her head in the little white bed, where night

after night she had lain down; reserving always, when the day's cares or pleasures were thought over, a few minutes to muse in the still darkness upon her secret maiden love; and then had gone calmly to sleep, breathing, with a tender blessing, the one beloved name. Now, that name must never be uttered more!

"O God!" she moaned, forgetting her usual form of nightly prayer — alas for Katharine! in forms only had she learned to pray— "O God! have mercy — have mercy on me!" — Let us speak no more of this night's agony. It was such as no human being has ever witnessed, or ever will, for the heart's most terrible struggles must be borne alone. But a few have felt it — God help those few! He only who gave to mortal nature the power of thus loving, can guide, and sway, and comfort in a like hour. But Katharine Ogilvie knew not this; therefore, ere the wild prayer which despair had wrung forth passed from her lips, its influence had vanished from her heart. Into that poor torn heart entered misery unknown before; and its chambers, no longer swept and garnished, became the habitation of legions of evil thoughts — to be exorcised thence no more.

The world's daily round goes on, heedless of life, death, love — the three elements which compose its chief sorrows and its best joys. Katharine lay down and slept — yes, slept; for terrible suffering often brings such torpor. In the morning she arose and dressed — calmly, without a tear or moan. Only once — as she stood arranging her long, beautiful hair, in which she always took great pride, for his hand had rested on it — the remembrance struck into her heart like a dagger. She could have torn the magnificent tresses from her head, she could have cursed the beauty that had failed to win Paul Lynedon! Henceforward, if she regarded at all the self-adornment which in due measure is charming in a woman, it would be, not from that loving desire to be fair in one beloved sight, but from a desperate, vainglorious pride. She would drive men mad with her beauty, dazzle them blind, set her foot on their necks and laugh them to scorn!

Katharine passed down the staircase. The study-door was open, and her grandfather's great cat came purring about her feet, inviting her in. But to cross the threshold of the well-known room! Everything in it cried out with a fiend-like mocking voice, "Fool — fool — self-deceiving fool! The past, the precious past — is nothing, was nothing. Blot it out for ever!" — She shivered, locked the door, and fled down the hall. On the table lay some greenhouse flowers — the old gardener's daily offering. Above them her bird sang to her its morning welcome; the gladder because the clear winter sunshine reached it even in its cage. Mechanically Katharine placed the flowers in water; gave the bird his groundsel; stooped down to stroke her ever-attendant purring favourite: — but the great change had come. Girlhood's simple pleasures were no more for her; she had reached the entrance of that enchanted valley which is either paradise or hell — crossed it, and shut the gate behind her — for ever.

"Don't stay here longer than you like, my dear," said Lady Ogilvie, as, long after breakfast was over, and Sir Robert had ridden off to London, Katharine, contrary to her custom, lingered in the room, sitting motionless by the fire, with her hands — those dear active little hands, generally always employed — folded listlessly on her lap. She turned round, bent her head assentingly, and then gazed once more on the fire.

"Still here, Katharine!" again mildly wondered Lady Ogilvie, pausing, an hour after, in some housekeeping arrangements. "Pray, my love, do not let me keep you from your studies. I am not at all dull alone, you know; do run away if you like."

"I can't, mamma, I am tired," said Katharine, wearily. "Let me stay with you."

“By all means, dear child. Really you do not look well; come and lay your head on my lap, as you know you always like to do.”

She drew her daughter to her feet, and began smoothing her hair with motherly tenderness, talking all the while in her mild, quiet way. She was very much surprised when Katharine, burying her face in her knees, began to weep violently; murmuring amidst her sobs, “O mother, mother! you love me; — yes, I know you do! Tell me so again. Let me feel there is some one in the wide world who cares for me.”

“My darling Katharine — you are quite ill. This comes of late hours. Indeed, my child, you must cease going to parties. Tell me how you feel exactly.” And she commenced various maternal questionings and advice, which, if tender, were rather prosy and out of place, as they entirely related to the physical welfare of her child. Such a thing as a tortured and diseased mind never entered into simple Lady Ogilvie’s calculations.

Katharine understood this, and drew back into herself at once. Her good and tender mother was very dear to her, so far as natural and instinctive affection went; but in all else there was a wide gulf between them — now wider than ever. Unfortunate Katharine! there was in the whole world no tie close enough to satisfy her soul, no hand strong enough to snatch her from the abyss into which she was already about to plunge.

“You shall go and lie down again, my dear,” said the mother. But Katharine refused. She dared not be alone, and she longed for an opportunity to say that for which she had nerved herself. So, suffering her mother to place her comfortably on the sofa, she rested in apparent quiet for half-an-hour. Lady Ogilvie went in and out softly, and then settled herself to an occupation which was always heavy and irksome to her — writing a letter. Looking up with a sigh, after five minutes spent over the first three lines, she saw her daughter’s eyes fixed intently upon her.

“Dear me, Katharine, I thought you were asleep,” she said, trying to conceal the note.

“No, I cannot sleep. Who are you writing to, mamma?”

“Only to Hugh — poor Hugh! I promised him I would. But you need not be angry at that, my child.”

Katharine saw the opportunity had come: she seized it with a bold, desperate effort. “Mother, put away the letter and come here; I want to speak to you about Hugh.” Her voice and face were both quite calm; the mother did not see that under the folds of the shawl with which she had covered her child, the damp hands were so tightly clenched that the mark of the nails remained on the rosy palm.

“Do not let us talk about Hugh, my darling; it was very sad, and your father and I were troubled and disappointed at the time, because we wanted to see our Katharine happy, and we liked Hugh so much. But if you could not love him, why, you know, my child, we shall never tease you any more on the subject. Pray be content.” — Katharine rose up and looked her mother in the face. Years after, when gentle Lady Ogilvie lay on a death-bed, she described that look, and said it ever haunted her, with the rigid colourless lips, the dark stony eyes, “neither smiling nor sorry.”

“Mother,” said the girl, “do not wonder at me — do not question me — but I have changed my mind. I will marry Hugh, when he or you choose. Write and tell him so.” — She put her hand to her heart for a moment, as if the effort of speaking had brought a pain there — as indeed it had, a sharp bodily pain; but she hardly felt it then. She sat up, and bore her mother’s startled, searching glance without shrinking.

“Do you really mean what you say, Katharine? Will you make poor Hugh — make us all, so happy! Will you indeed marry him?”

“I will.” — Lady Ogilvie, much agitated, did what nine out of ten gentle-hearted and rather weak-minded women would do on such an occasion — she caught her daughter to her bosom, and wept aloud. Katharine repulsed not the caresses, but she herself did not shed a tear. A faint misgiving crossed the mother’s mind.

“My darling Katharine, you are happy yourself, are you not? You are not doing this merely to please your father and me? Much as we wished this marriage, we never will consent to the sacrifice of our child.”

“I am not sacrificing myself, mother.”

“Then you really do love Hugh — not in a sentimental, girlish way — but enough to make you happy with him as your husband?”

“My husband — Hugh my husband!” muttered Katharine with quivering lips, but she set them firmly together. The next moment her old manner returned. “Mother, I marry Hugh because I choose; and when I say a thing I mean it — ay, and do it, too. You know that. Is this reason sufficient? I can give half-a-dozen more if you wish.”

“No, my dear love, no. Pray be quiet. I am only too happy — so happy I don’t know what to do with myself” And she moved restlessly about, her eyes continually running over, even while her mouth wore its most contented smile.

“Now, mamma, come here,” said Katharine once more, drawing the letter from its hiding-place. “Finish this. Tell Hugh that I have thought over the matter again, and have changed my mind. I will marry him whenever he chooses. Only it must be soon, very soon.”

“How strange you are, my love! You do not seem to feel at all like other young girls.”

“Of course not — I never did. Now write as I say.”

“I will, I will, dear! Only why must the marriage be so soon?”

“Because I might change my mind,” said Katharine, bitterly. “I have done so once before. My nature must be very fickle; I want to guard against it, that is all. Now write, dear mother, write.”

The letter was written and despatched. Then Katharine’s strange manner passed away, and she seemed calm. So, the prisoner who writhes in agony on his way to the scaffold, on reaching it mounts with a firm and steady step; — he shrank from the doom afar off; it comes, and he can meet it without fear.

Lady Ogilvie kept near her child the whole day. In Katharine’s demeanour she saw only the natural agitation of a young girl in such a position. She was most thankful that her dear child had made up her mind to marry Hugh, such an excellent young man as he was, and so suitable in every respect. This marriage would unite the title and estate, keep both in the family beside, and prevent Katharine’s leaving Summerwood. No doubt they would be very happy; for if Katharine was not positively in love with her cousin, she liked him well enough, and it was always best to have most love on the husband’s side. So reasoned Lady Ogilvie, sometimes communicating her thoughts aloud. But Katharine received them coldly, and at last begged her to change the subject. The mother, ascribing this to natural shyness and sensitiveness, obeyed, as, indeed, she generally did — and only too glad was she to have her daughter by her side the whole day.

“You have quite deserted your own little room, though I know you like it far better than this large dull drawing-room. Come, dear child, let us both go, and you shall sing for me in the study.”

“Not there, not there!” answered Katharine, shuddering, “I will not go into that room. I hate it.”

“Why so?” gravely said the mother, surprised, and rather uneasy at these sudden whims. Katharine recovered herself in a moment.

“Did I not tell you how fickle I was? There is a proof of it.” And she forced a laugh — but, oh, how changed from the low, musical laugh of old! “Now, don’t tease me, there’s a dear mother. I have a right to be fanciful, have I not? Let me try to sing my whims away.” — She began to extemporise, as she often did, composing music to stray poetry. First came an air, not merely cheerful, but breathing the desperation of reckless mirth. It floated into a passionate lament. When she ceased, her face was as white as marble, and as rigid. She had poured out her whole soul with her song; and, absorbed in a deep reverie, she had called up the past before her. She had filled the half-darkened, desolate room with light, and music, and gay laughter. Beside the dear old piano she had seen standing a figure, every attitude, gesture, word, and look of which she knew by heart. A moment, and she must shut it out for ever — from fancy and memory. This song was the dirge of her youth and its love. She closed the instrument, and in that room or in that house Katharine vowed never to sing more. She never did!

Worthy Sir Robert Ogilvie was mightily astonished, when he came home next day, to find his nephew hourly expected as a future son-in-law. He kissed his daughter — a ceremony performed solemnly at Christmas and Easter, or when he went on a journey — told her he was much gratified by her obedience, and felt sure she would be exceedingly happy in her marriage.

“Only,” observed the sedate baronet to his wife, when they were alone together, “it would have saved much trouble and annoyance if Katharine had known her own mind at first. But I suppose no women — especially young women — ever do.”

Contents

CHAPTER 31

Deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,
O death in life — the days that are no more!
TENNYSON.

It was the eve of the wedding-day; the day which was to unite, in newspaper parlance, "Katharine, only child and heiress of Sir Robert Ogilvie, of Summerwood Park, to Hugh Ogilvie, Esq., only son of the late Captain Francis Ogilvie, of His Majesty's Service." Never was there a better match — and so said every gossiping party in the village, from the circle round the blacksmith's warm, welcome forge, to that round the doctor's equally welcome tea-table. Everybody had guessed how it would end, and only wondered it had not come off before. All the world and his wife were making ready for the next day; for the wedding was to be at the village church, with all necessary accompaniments of green boughs, young girls dressed in white, charity children, etc. etc.

Love would ever fain seal its vows unobserved, in glad and solemn privacy; but no such impediment came between Sir Robert and his desire for a little aristocratic ostentation. "It was proper," he said; "for the Ogilvies were always married and buried in public, with due ceremony." Katharine assented; and if there came a deeper and bitterer meaning to the set smile which her lips now habitually wore, her father never noticed it. She let them all do with her just what they pleased; so the joint conductors of the affair, Lady Ogilvie, Mrs. Fred Pennythorne, and Sir Robert, arranged everything between them.

On the wedding-eve the two former sat with the young bride in her dressing-room. It was strewed with attire of every kind — laces, silks, and satins, tossed about in beautiful confusion. The female ministrants at this shrine had been trying on the wedding-dress, and it hung gracefully over the back of a chair, with the wreath and veil. Lady Ogilvie was just wiping, for the thousandth time, her ever-tearful eyes, and saying she did not know what she should do without Katharine, even for a month.

"I dare say you will have to learn, aunt," said Mrs. Frederick, who had been quite in her element of late, administering consolation, lectures, and advice, with all the dignity of a newly-married lady. "For my part, I wonder that Katharine likes the thought of coming back to Summerwood. I never would have married Frederick at all if I could not have a house of my own."

"I believe you," said a cold satirical voice, as Katharine looked up for a moment, and then continued her work, making white favours for some old servants, who had begged for this token from the bride's own hands.

"Really, my dear, how sharply you take one up! you quite forget I am married," said Mrs. Pennythorne, tossing her head. "But I suppose we must humour you. However, things will be different when you are settled again at Summerwood."

"*When* I am," was the pointed reply.

“When you are!” echoed Mrs. Frederick. “Why, I thought the matter was quite settled. Your father wishes it — and your future husband. Ah, when you are married, Hugh will make you do whatever he likes!”

“Hugh will do whatever I like,” said Katharine, haughtily, and she knew she spoke the truth; the humble, loving slave of one man was fast becoming the tyrant of another. It is always so. “Ask him the question yourself, Isabella,” she added, as the bridegroom put his beaming face in at the door.

Hugh Ogilvie was a fine specimen of mere physical beauty — the *beau ideal* of a young country squire: most girls would have thought him a very Apollo, at a race-course or a county ball. And though somewhat rough, he was not coarse, else how could Katharine have liked him? — as she certainly did while they were only cousins. And since his affection for her had grown into the happiness of assured love, his manner had gained a softness that was almost refinement. If with others he laughed loudly, and talked with some vulgarity, he never came into her presence, or within the sphere of her influence, but his tone at once became gentle and suppressed. He loved her very dearly, and she knew it; but the knowledge only brought alternately scornful triumph and torturing regret.

“Cousin Hugh! cousin Hugh! — here’s a pretty attempt at rebellion in your bonnie bride!” said Isabella, flippantly. “It vows and declares that it will not obey its husband, and does not intend to live at Summerwood.”

“What is that about not living at Summerwood?” said Lady Ogilvie, turning round uneasily, with her pocket-handkerchief at her eyes; “Katharine does not surely mean to say that! To lose her so would break my heart.”

“It must not do that, mother; I hope it will not,” answered Katharine, steadily, “but I may as well say at first as at last, that I cannot live here any longer; I am quite wearied of this dull place, and Hugh must take me away; as he promised he would, when I engaged to be his wife. Is it not so, Hugh?”

“Yes, yes — but I thought — that is, I hoped” — stammered the bridegroom, with a disappointed look.

“You thought I should not expect you to keep your promise? Well, then, I see no necessity to keep my own.”

“My darling Katharine, don’t say so!” cried the lover in new anxiety, as he flew to her side and took her hand. She drew it away, not in coquettish anger, but with a proud coldness, which she had already learned to assume. Already — already — the tender womanliness was vanishing from her nature, and she who had once suffered the tortures of love was beginning to inflict them.

“Here’s a pretty lover’s quarrel; and the very day before the wedding too!” cried Isabella; “aunt, aunt, you and I had better leave them to make it up alone.” And Mrs. Fred Pennythorne led through the open door the still weeping and passive Lady Ogilvie, who now more than ever was ready to be persuaded by anybody. To tell the truth, Isabella, who had not lost a jot of her envious temper, rather hoped that the slight disagreement might end in a regular *fracas*, and so break off the marriage.

Katharine was left alone with her bridegroom. She saw that the time was come for using her power, and she did use it. No statue could be more haughtily impassive than she, though not a trace of that contemptible quality — feminine sullenness — deformed her beautiful face. She ruled her lover with a rod of iron: in a minute he was before her, humbled and penitent.

“Katharine — dear Katharine — don’t be angry. I will do anything you like; only we should be so happy living here.”

“I will not stay at Summerwood. I hate it. Hugh, you promised to take me away: — remember that promise now, if you love me, as you say you do.” And Katharine, restless from the thought of the battle she had to win, and a little touched by Hugh’s gentleness, spoke less freezingly than before.

“If I love you? You know I do,” answered Hugh, fondly winding his arm round her neck. She thrust it back a moment, and then, smiling bitterly, she let it stay. He had a right to caress her now. “Katharine,” continued he, “don’t you remember the time when we were children — at least, you were — and I used to carry you in my arms through the fields? Don’t you remember the old times — how we went gathering blackberries — how I led your pony and taught you to ride; — do you think I did not love you even then? And though when we grew up we began to like different pursuits, and you were a great deal cleverer than I, didn’t I love you as much as ever — more, perhaps?”

“You did — you did. Good, kind cousin Hugh!” murmured Katharine, with a pang of self-reproach. She thought of her old happy childish days, before the coming of that wild, delicious, terrible love.

“Well, then, Katharine, let us stay at Summerwood. It will please your father and mother, and me too — though I don’t say much on that score, and I care little about myself in comparison with you; but it would be rather hard to give up the shooting and farming, to shut oneself up in a close nasty London square. I really don’t think I can consent to it.” — Katharine rose from her seat — all her passing softness gone. She was resolved to rule, and this was the first struggle. The victory must be gained.

“Hugh Ogilvie,” she said, with a cold firmness, “I never deceived you from the first. I told you even when you came back to — to be *my husband*” — she said the word without trembling or blushing— “that I did not love you as you loved me. But I liked you — had liked you from a child. I respected, esteemed you; I was willing to marry you, if you chose. Is not that true?”

“It is — it is,” murmured the bridegroom, shrinking beneath her proud eye.

“But I made the condition that you should take me to live elsewhere — to see the world; that I should not be cooped up here — it tortures me — it kills me! I want to be free — and I will! Otherwise no power on earth shall persuade or force me to marry you — not even though tomorrow was to have been our wedding-day.”

“Was to have been! Oh, Katharine, how cruel you are! Say, *shall be*, for indeed it shall. We will live wherever you like — only don’t give me up, Katharine. I know how little you care for me, I feel it; but you may come to care more in time, if you will only let me love you, and try to make you happy. Indeed — indeed — I would.” And the young man, perfectly subdued, knelt before her as she stood, clasping her knees, with tears running down his cheeks. One flash of evil triumph lighted up Katharine’s face, and then, for the second time, a pang of remorse pierced her soul. The wickedness, the falsehood of the coming marriage-vow — the cruel trampling upon a heart which, whatever its shortcomings, was filled with love for her — rushed upon her mind. For a moment she thought of telling him all; there was a whisper within, urging her to implore his forgiveness, and rather brave the humiliation of hopeless, unrequited love, than the sin of entering a married home with a lie upon her soul. But while she hesitated, outside the door rang the light mocking laugh of Isabella; and the world — its idle jests, its hateful pity — rose to her remembrance. Her proud spirit writhed. One struggle — the whisper grew fainter, and the good angel fled.

“Katharine, say you forgive me,” pleaded Hugh; “you shall have your own way in this and everything else, if you will only try to love me, and be my sweet, dear, precious wife!”

“I will,” answered Katharine. If, as the Word saith, “there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth,” surely there must have been sorrow then over one fallen soul!

The same night, long after the whole house was hushed, a light might have been seen burning in one of the upper windows at Summerwood. It came from Katharine’s chamber. There, for the last time, she kept vigil in the little room which had been her shut-up Eden in childhood, girlhood, womanhood. The very walls looked at her with the old faces into which her childish imagination had transformed their shadowy bunches of flowers, when she used to lie in bed — awake, but dreaming many a fanciful daydream, before her mother’s morning summons and morning kiss — always her mother’s — broke upon this paradise of reverie. Then there was the bookcase, with its treasure-laden shelves arranged so as to form a perfect life-chronicle. The upper one was filled with old worn child’s-books, two or three of Mrs. Hofland’s beautiful tales, such as the ‘Clergyman’s Widow,’ the ‘Young Crusoe,’ and the ‘Barbadoes Girl’ — books which every child must love; beside them came a volume of Mrs. Hemans’, and the delicious ‘Story without an End,’ showing the gradual dawning of fancy and poetry in the young mind. And so the silent history went on. The lower shelf was all filled with works, the strong heart-beatings of heavenly-voiced poets and glorious prose writers — Shelley, Tennyson, Miss Barrett, Carlyle, Bulwer, Emerson. And in this era of the chronicle, each volume, each page, was alive with memories of that strong love which had been the very essence of Katharine’s life; out of which every development of her intellect and every phase of her character had sprung.

She sat by the fire, rocking to and fro, on the little rocking-chair, which had been one of her fancies, and the soothing motion of which had many a time composed and quieted her in her light passing troubles. Beside her, on the table, lay the old worn-out desk she had used when a child, and in which, afterwards, she kept her “treasures.” She opened it, and looked them all over.

They were many, and curious, but all relating in some way or other to the great secret of her life. There were numberless fragments of stray poetry, or rather rhyme; some her own — some which she had copied — fragments made ever after sacred by some comment or praise of Paul Lynedon’s. As she read these over, one by one, her breast heaved with convulsive sobs. She choked them down and went on with her task. Other relics were there — the usual girlish mementos — a heap of withered flowers — which day after day he had given her — and she had kept them all. Likewise some verses of a song, written in a bold, manly hand — Lynedon had done it to beguile the time, while she was copying music, and had scribbled all along the sides of the page her name and his own.

Apart from these, in a secret drawer, lay Paul’s letter — his first and only letter. Katharine tore open its folds, and read it slowly all through. But when she reached the end, she dashed it to the floor.

“‘His Katharine! — his own Katharine!’ And it was all false — false! Oh, poor fool that I was — poor vain, credulous fool — But it shall be so no more; I will crush him from my heart — thus — thus!”

Her foot was already on the letter; but she drew back, snatched it once again, and pressed it wildly to her lips and her heart.

There was one more relic; that sketch which bore such a curious resemblance to Paul Lynedon — the head of Keats. Katharine took the long-hoarded treasure from its

hiding-place, and gazed fixedly on it for a long time. Then the fountain of her tears was unlocked, and sobs of agony shook her whole frame.

"Oh, Paul! — heart of my heart! — why did you not love me? Is there any one in the world who would have worshipped you as I? I — who would have given my life to make you happy — who would now count it the dearest blessing only to lean one moment on your breast, to hear you say, 'My Katharine!' and then lie down at your feet and die. Die? — Shall I die for one who has thus cruelly deceived me? Nay, but I beguiled myself; I only was vain — mad — blind! What was I, to think to win *him*? Paul — Paul Lynedon — no wonder that you loved me not! I was not worthy — oh, no — I was not worthy. I am fit for nothing but to die!"

In this fearful vigil of despair, fierce anger, and lingering love, the night wore on. It seemed an eternity to the miserable girl. At last, utterly exhausted, Katharine sank into a deadly calm. She sat motionless, her arms folded on the little desk, and her cheek leaning against the mournful relics of a life's dream. Suddenly she heard the twitter of a bird, and saw her lamp grow pale in the daybreak. — Then she arose, gathered up her treasures, laid them solemnly, one by one, on the embers of the dying fire, and watched until all were consumed.

The next day — nay, the same day, for it was already dawn — Katharine Ogilvie was married.

Contents

CHAPTER 32

SELDOM HATH MY tongue pronounced that name.

* * * *

But the dear love, so deeply wounded then,
I in my heart with silent faith sincere
Devoutly cherish till we meet again.

SOUTHEY.

We are about to break through all dramatic unity of place, and to convey our readers abroad. Suppose, then, the scene transferred to the Continent — Italy — Florence. But the reader need not shudder at the name, and expect long-winded descriptions of scenery — chapters taken at random from Murray's Handbook; since, for various excellent reasons, we shall eschew all landscape-painting.

There is, we understand — for truth forbids us to speak without this qualification — in Florence a pleasant square, which forms a general lounge for idlers, rich and poor, native and foreign, inasmuch as it contains a market, a curious antique building — called, not inappropriately, the Palazzo Vecchio — and the town post-office. This latter place is of course the perpetual resort of foreigners who are anxious to snatch their precious home-remembrances from the well-known carelessness of Italian officials. Thus, almost all the British residents, or passing visitors to Florence, may be seen at different times strolling round this square.

Among them, one day in winter, were two ladies walking slowly, the elder leaning on her companion's arm. Beneath the close black bonnet and veil of the taller one appeared the sharp, regular features of Mrs. Breynton. She looked a little older perhaps, and a little more wrinkled; but still she was the same Mrs. Breynton, the widow of the Dean, with her tall, straight figure, and her canonically-flowing black robes. — The young girl on whom she leaned was, it is needless to say, Eleanor Ogilvie.

Dear Eleanor — the much-tried but yet happy, because loved and loving one! let us look once more on that slight drooping figure, like a willow at a brook-side — that pale clear brow — those sweet calm eyes! But adjectives and metaphors fail; she is of those whom one does not even wish to describe — only to look upon, murmuring softly, "I love you — I love you!" evermore. And where there is love there must be beauty, perhaps the more irresistible because we cannot tell exactly in what feature or gesture it lies.

Time passes lightly over all equable natures; — it had done so over Eleanor Ogilvie. Her mind and character were nearly matured when we first saw her, and a few years made little difference. Perhaps the fair cheek was somewhat less round, and the eyes more deep and thoughtful, especially now, when a care heavier than ordinary weighed on her gentle spirit. But it caused no jarring there; no outward sign of impatient trouble. To a heart so pure, even sorrow comes as a veiled angel.

“How cold it is, Eleanor!” said Mrs. Breynton, as the occasional east wind, which makes a Lombard winter almost like a northern one, swept round the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio; “I do not see that I am any the better for coming to Italy; it was much warmer at L — .” And as she spoke, one might perceive that her voice had changed from the slow preciseness of old, to a sharp querulous tone, which seemed to ask, as if through long habit, for the soothing answer that never failed.

“It is indeed very cold; but this bleak wind only comes now and then. We may be sure that Doctor B — was quite right when he ordered you to the South; and I think your cough is better already.”

“Is it?” said the invalid, and to disprove the fact she coughed violently. “No, no — I shall die of asthma, I know; like my father, and my great-uncle, Sir Philip Wychnor.” Here there was a slight movement in the arm on which the old lady rested; it caused her brow to darken, and the thin lips, through which had unconsciously issued this rarely uttered name, were angrily compressed. She did not look at her companion, but walked on in silence for some minutes. — Nor did Eleanor speak, but her head drooped a little lower; and the moistened eyelash and trembling lip could have told through how much forbearance and meekness, daily exercised, had Philip’s betrothed kept her promise to him. She was indeed as a daughter unto the stern woman who had once shown kindness towards her lover. It was a strange bond between the two, and formed of many conflicting elements. On one side, the very wrath of Mrs. Breynton towards her nephew made her heart cling with a sort of compassion to the young girl whom she deemed he had slighted; while, on the other hand, Eleanor forgot at times even the present wrong done to her lover, remembering that Mrs. Breynton was Philip’s near kinswoman, and had once been, as far as her cold nature allowed, in the stead of a mother to him. There was still a lingering warmth in the ashes of that olden affection. Eleanor saw it many a time, even in the sudden anger aroused by some chance memento of Philip’s childhood; and, day by day, her whole thought, her whole aim, was to revive this former love. Thus silently, slowly, she pursued the blessed work of the peacemaker.

She advanced towards the post-office, where, as usual, was a cluster of people anxiously struggling for letters. It would have been an amusing scene for a psychologist or a student of human nature; but the English ladies had too much interest on their own account to notice those around. They were trying to make their way through the crowd, which, trifling as it was, inconvenienced the precise Mrs. Breynton exceedingly.

“Let us stay in the rear of this gentleman, who is probably waiting for the English letters,” whispered Eleanor, glancing at a tall, cloak-enveloped personage who stood in front. Softly as she spoke he seemed to catch the tone, for he turned round suddenly, and Eleanor recognised the face of Paul Lynedon.

She had seen him more than once before — at least she fancied it was he — in their walks about Florence. But he had never indicated the slightest wish for a recognition. Now, it was difficult to avoid it. Their eyes met, her colour rose, and there was a slight contraction of his brow; but the next moment he bowed with an easy grace and a polite smile that at once banished from Eleanor’s mind all regretful thought of the lover she had rejected. She held out her hand with a frank kindness; he took it with the same. There was no agitation, no pain, visible in his countenance, for there was none in his heart. A little annoyance or mortification he might perhaps feel, on being unpleasantly reminded of the time when he had “made such a fool of himself;” but he was too polite and too proud to betray the same in word or manner.

Paul Lynedon quite overwhelmed Mrs. Breynton with his expressions of gratification at meeting with two "fair countrywomen." He was as agreeable as of old; but his manners wore less of the graceful charm which springs from a kindly heart, and more of that outward *empressement* which sometimes assimilates to affectation. It was evident that he had become a complete man of the world. He easily procured their letters. There were several for Mrs. Breynton, and two for Eleanor. Hugh's large careless handwriting marked one of the latter. She opened it, and started in joyful surprise at the intelligence it contained — the announcement of the intended marriage of her brother and cousin. In sisterly exultation, she proclaimed the news aloud.

"How glad I am! — how I always wished for this! Dear Hugh! dear Katharine! — You remember Katharine, Mr. Lynedon?" were her hurried exclamations.

Mr. Lynedon "remembered her quite well, as every one must — a sweet girl! He was indeed happy to hear she was married." This was not exactly true, as, in running over the list of fair young creatures who had looked favourably on himself, Paul had unconsciously fallen into the habit of including Katharine Ogilvie. She was a mere child then to be sure, but she might grow up pretty; and if so, supposing they ever met again, the renewal of his slight flirtation with her would be rather amusing than otherwise. At hearing of her marriage, he felt an uncomfortable sensation — as he often did at the wedding of any young girl who had appeared to like himself. It seemed to imply, that Paul Lynedon was not the only attractive man in the world. Even when Eleanor, chancing to draw off her glove, had unconsciously exhibited the unwedded left hand, he had glanced at it with a pleasurable vanity. Though he was not in love with her now, and really wondered how he ever could have been, still he felt a degree of self-satisfaction that no other man had gained the prize which he now blushed for ever having sought. How gradually the rust of vain and selfish worldliness had crept over Paul Lynedon's soul!

"They must be married by this time," observed Eleanor, referring to the letter. "Hugh says, I think, that it was to be very soon, ah yes, the 27th."

"Then to-morrow is the wedding-day," said Lynedon. "Allow me thus early to offer you my warm congratulations, with every good wish to the happy couple." — Eleanor thanked him, her heart in her eyes. Then he made his adieux, and disappeared among a group of Florentine ladies. There was a ball that night in Florence, at which none were more brilliant or admired than the young Englishman. He smiled as he listened to his name, brokenly and coquettishly murmured by many a fair Italian *dama*. He did not hear from afar the wild moan of one stricken heart, that in lonely despair sobbed forth the same. O Life! how blindly we grope among thy mysteries!

Mrs. Breynton expressed the proper degree of pleasure in a few formal congratulations; but her knowledge of Hugh was small, and her interest in him still less, for the range of the good lady's sympathies had never been very wide. Besides, she was somewhat shocked at the impropriety of reading letters in the street, and had carefully gathered up her own budget for a quiet home perusal. However, on reaching their abode, she condescended so far as to ask to see Hugh's letter. Eleanor gave it before she had herself quite read through the long and rambling effusion of a lover's delight.

Over it the aged eyes seemed slowly to journey without a single change of expression. Eleanor watched the immovable face, and marvelled. A love-history of any kind is regarded so differently at three-and-twenty and three-and-sixty. But when Mrs. Breynton in her slow perusal reached the postscript, her countenance changed, grew pale, and then darkened. She hastily refolded the paper, laid it on the table, and snatching up her own packet of letters quitted the room.

Eleanor again took Hugh's epistle, and read:— "Cousin Bella was married lately to a Mr. Frederick Pennythorne. By-the-by, through this wedding, our old friend, or rather yours, Philip Wychnor, has turned up again. The Pennythornes know him, and Katharine met him at a grand literary party. He asked after you, but he did not speak about Mrs. Breynton. Is there any breeze between him and the old aunt? He is growing a celebrated author, having turned out quite a genius, as Katharine says — and she must know, being so clever herself," etc. etc. And the lover returned, of course, to the praises of his beloved.

Eleanor paused, oppressed with many mingled feelings. It was now a long season since she had heard from Philip, though she herself had written regularly. At first his sudden silence pained her; and, casting aside all girlish caprice and anger, she had sent more than one letter asking the reason, but no answer came. She then felt, not doubt of his faithfulness, but terror for his health; until this fear was lightened by her continually tracing his name in various literary channels, and on one occasion receiving, addressed to her in his own handwriting, Philip's first published book. She marvelled that even her loving and delighted acknowledgment of this still brought no reply. And yet she trusted him still She would have doubted the whole world rather than Philip Wychnor's truth.

Truthful and candid as she was, Eleanor had never sought to make her correspondence with her betrothed a clandestine one. Between herself and Mrs. Breynton there was a perfect silence on the subject, without attempt either at explanation or concealment. Month after month the post-bag of the palace had been trusted with these precious love-messages from one true heart to the other; therefore now no doubt of foul play ever crossed the mind of the young betrothed: she would have scorned to harbour such an unworthy suspicion of Philip's aunt. Still, Eleanor had need of all her courage and faithful love to bear this suspense. Even now, when she rejoiced at these good news of him, her gentle heart was sorely pained that Philip himself should not have been the first to convey it.

She dried a few gathering tears, and determined to write to him and trust him still, until the near termination of this Italian journey should enable her to visit Summerwood, when some blessed chance would bring her face to face with her betrothed. Then she mechanically opened the second letter, which had been neglected for Hugh's.

It informed her that Sub-Dean Sedley, the unwearied backgammon-player of the Close, at L — had died and left her, Eleanor Ogilvie, sole legatee of all his little fortune!

Contents

CHAPTER 33

Cym. O disloyal thing,
That should repair my youth; thou heapest
A year's age on me.
Imo. I beseech you,
Harm not yourself with your vexation:
Am senseless of your wrath; a touch more rare
Subdues all pangs, all fears.
Cym. Past grace? obedience?
SHAKSPEARE.

Mrs. Breynton had the character of being a strong-minded woman; but no one would have thought so to see her when, after leaving Eleanor, she proceeded to her own apartment and walked restlessly up and down, her whole countenance betraying the inward chafing of her spirit. She glanced carelessly at the letters she still held, and threw them down again. She was just beginning to grow calm, when another packet was brought her with "Mr. Lynedon's compliments, and he felt glad to have been able to rescue the enclosed from further delay at the post."

Mrs. Breynton returned a polite message, put on her spectacles, and prepared herself to read the second edition of correspondence. The first of the batch was evidently interesting — as it might well be — for it looked the *facsimile* of that lawyer's epistle which had communicated to Eleanor such important tidings. Mrs. Breynton was rising to summon her young friend, when the second letter caught her eye. It was addressed to Miss Ogilvie, yet she snatched it up, and eagerly examined the handwriting. — It resembled that of many a schoolboy letter which at Midsummer and Christmas had come to the palace, which she had deciphered — not without pleasure — from the flourishing "Dear Aunt," to the small, cramped ending, "Your dutiful and affectionate nephew." It was still more like the careless college scrawl which had weekly informed her of Oxford doings in a frank easy style, whose informality sometimes gained a grave reproof. As she held the letter to the light, her fingers trembled even though her brow was angrily knitted. Then she turned to the seal — a rather remarkable one. It was her own gift — she remembered it well — with the Wychnor crest and a cross underneath. What trouble she had taken to have it engraved in time for his birthday. How dared he think of this, and use it now!

Mrs. Breynton had never been a mother. No child had ever clung to her bosom and nestled near her heart, to charm away all the coldness and harshness there. Marrying without love, she had passed through life, and never felt a single strong affection. Perhaps the warmest feeling of her nature had been that which in her girlhood united her to her only brother. After this tie was broken, her disposition grew cold and impassive, until the little Philip came — a softened image of the past, a vague interest for the future. Every lingering womanly feeling in her frost-bound heart gathered itself around the child of her dead brother; and with these new affections came a determination, springing from her iron will and inflexible prejudices, to make the son

atone for the still unforgiven dereliction of the father, in quitting that service of the sanctuary which had become part of the family inheritance.

A female bigot is the most inveterate of all. The Smithfield burnt-offerings of Mary Tudor were tenfold more numerous than those of the kingly wife-murderer who called her daughter. Had Mrs. Breynton lived in those days, she would have rejoiced in a heretic-pyre. Therefore, when she tried to constrain her nephew to enter the Church, it was with the full conviction that she was doing her best for his soul as well as for his temporal interests. She loved him as much as a woman like her could love; she desired his welfare; but then all good must come to him through one way — the way she had planned. To this road she had alternately lured and goaded him. In his destiny she proposed to include two atonements, one on the shrine of the Church, the other, by his union with Eleanor, to the memory of the girl's forsaken mother.

When the conscientious scruples of the young man thwarted this great scheme of her life, Mrs. Breynton was at first paralysed. That Philip should venture to oppose herself — that he should dare to doubt those ecclesiastical mysteries, without the pale of which she conceived all to be crime and darkness, was a greater shock than even the shortcomings of his father. She felt overwhelmed with horror and indignation; an indignation so violent, that both then and for a long time afterwards it caused her, like most bigots, to confound the sinner with the sin, until she positively hated the nephew who had once been to her a source of interest and pride. But, this first tempest of wrath over, she began to incline towards the lost one; and with a strange mingling of affection, obstinate will, and that stern prejudice which seemed to her darkened eyes the true spirit of religion, Mrs. Breynton determined, if she could not win, to force her nephew into the path for which she had destined him.

Long she pondered upon the best method of accomplishing her will; and, embittered as she was against Philip, it was some time before she could reconcile her pride and her conscience to do that which, by driving him to despair, would at last bring home the repentant prodigal. But when, in her blindness, she had fully satisfied herself that "the end sanctified the means," she commenced the plan which suggested itself as best. No more letters were received either by Philip or Eleanor. All were intercepted and consigned to the flames, in Mrs. Breynton's room. — She did not open or read a single one; for, while persuading herself that she was fulfilling a stern duty, the Dean's widow would have scorned to gratify idle curiosity or malice. She could, self-deceived, commit a great crime, but she could not stoop to a small meanness. Unmoved, she saw Eleanor's cheek grow pale with anxiety, and fancied that all this time she was working out the girl's future happiness; that the recreant lover would be brought to his senses, would immediately seek his betrothed. Once more under her roof — and Mrs. Breynton longed with a sickly longing to have him there once — she doubted not her influence over him. She could not lose him again.

It would be a curious study for those who rightly and justly believe in the perfectibility of humanity, to trace how often at the root of the darkest woe-creating crime lurks some motive, which, though warped to evil, has its origin in good. So it was with this woman. She stood looking at the letter, and thinking over the news which had come to her knowledge concerning Philip. It had irritated and alarmed her to hear of her nephew's success. She feared lest her own hold over him should grow weaker as he prospered in the world. Indignant beyond endurance, she crushed the letter in her hand, and — the seal broke! But for this chance she might have withstood the desire which prompted her, by plunging still deeper into deceit, to arrive at a clear knowledge of Philip's motives and intentions, so as thereby to guide her own. For a moment she paused irresolute, and then the evil wish conquered — Mrs. Breynton

opened the letter. It seemed to have been written at various times, the first date being many weeks back.

"Eleanor!" it began — and the handwriting, which often betrays what words succeed in concealing, was tremulous and illegible— "you said one day — that soft spring morning, do you remember? — when we stood together in the window, looking on the palace-lawn — your hand on my shoulder, and my arm encircling you, as it had a right to do then, you said that we must have no secrets from one another; that we must never suffer the faintest shadow to rise up between us. There has been none until now! Eleanor, dearest, still *dearest* — shall I tell you what troubles me? A doubt — idle, perhaps wrong, and yet it weighs me down. I heard last night, by chance, a few words that I would only have smiled at, but for your long silence, and your departure from England. You have gone, as I understand, and without informing me. Was this quite right, my Eleanor? Still there may have been a reason. My aunt — but I will not speak of her. Let me come at once to this idle rumour. They say — though I do not believe it — that three years ago, which must have been at the very time, the blessed springtime, when I first told you how precious was your love, another did the same. In short, that you were wooed — *willingly* wooed — by a Mr. Paul Lynedon, whom you met at Summerwood. Why did you never speak of this acquaintance — for, of course, he was nothing more? You could not — no, my Eleanor, my all-pure, all-true Eleanor! — you could not have deceived me, when you confessed that I — such as I am, inferior in outward qualities to many, and doubtless to this Paul Lynedon, if report be true — that I was dearer to you than all the world. How I hesitate over this foolish tale! — let me end it at once. Well, then, they say this same Lynedon is now with you at Florence; that fact is certainly true. As for the rest, O my kind and faithful one! forgive me; but I am anxious, troubled. Write, if only one line. Not that I doubt you — do not think it; but still — However, I must wait, for I have to find out your address by some means before I can send this."

The letter continued, dated later, "You do not know what I suffer from your silence, Eleanor. I have seen Hugh, your brother — *mine* that is to be. His careless greeting pained me. It was perhaps best to keep our engagement so secret, and yet it is humiliating. Hugh chanced to speak of your visit at Summerwood long ago; of Paul Lynedon too, with that name he jestingly coupled yours. He said but few words: for his mind was too full of his approaching marriage, of course you are aware of it, Eleanor? But these few words cut me to the heart. And I must wait still, for Hugh has lost your address. No! I cannot wait — it is torture. I must go to L —— .

"L — , March 20th.

"You see I am here — on the very spot, so sacred — but I dare not think of that now. Eleanor, I have learnt — believe me, it was by mere chance, not by prying rudely into your affairs — I have learnt that this story was not all false, that Paul Lynedon was here — with you. And yet you never told me! What must I think? There is a cloud before me. I see two images — Eleanor, the Eleanor of old — true, faithful, loving, in whom I trusted, and would fain trust still; and the other Eleanor, secretly wooed of Lynedon, the heiress of Dean Sedley — you see I know that too. You need not have concealed your good fortune from me, but this is nothing compared to the other pang. I try to write calmly; yet if you knew — But I will rest until tomorrow. . . . .

"I think the madness — the torture is over now. All day — almost all night — I have been walking along our old walks; by the river, and beneath the cathedral-shadow; in your very footsteps, Eleanor, as it seemed. I can write to you now and say what I have to say — calmly, tenderly, as becomes one to whom you were ever gentle

and kind. Eleanor, if you love this man, and he loves you — he could not but do that I — then let no promise once given to me stand between you two. Mr. Lynedon is, as I hear, not unworthy of you — high-minded, clever, rich, and withal calculated to win any woman's heart. If he has won yours I have no right to murmur. Perhaps I ought rather to rejoice that you will be saved from sharing the struggles and poverty which must be my lot for many years; it may be whilst I live. Be happy; I can endure all; and peace will come to me in time. Eleanor, *my Eleanor*! — let me write the words once more, only once — God bless you! He only knows how dearly I have loved, how dearly I *do love* you! But this love can only pain you now, so I will not utter it.

"One word yet. If all this tale be false — though I dare not trust myself to think so — then, Eleanor, have pity; forget all I have said in my misery; forgive me — love me — take me to your heart again, and write speedily, that I may once more take to mine its life, its joy, its lost treasure! But if not, I will count your silence as a mute farewell. A farewell! and between us, who"-

Here two or three lines were carefully obliterated, and the letter ended abruptly with one last blessing, the mournful tenderness of which would have brought tears to any eyes but those cold hard ones that read it.

Mrs. Breynton now discovered, like many another shortsighted plotter, that her scheme had worked its own ruin. With Philip's final parting from Eleanor she herself would lose her remaining influence over his future destiny. And such a separation must be the inevitable consequence of the silence which could be the only answer to her nephew's letter, unless she made a full confession of her own duplicity. And even then, what would result? A joyful reconciliation, and Philip's speedy union, not with the portionless Eleanor, but with Dean Sedley's heiress, thus for ever excluding that ecclesiastical life which now more than ever Mrs. Breynton wished to force upon her nephew. She was taken in her own toils. She writhed beneath them; and while helplessly she turned over in her mind some means of escape, a knock came to the door. — The dull red mounted to her pale withered cheek as Mrs. Breynton, with an instinctive impulse, tottered across the room, and hid Philip's letter in her escritoire.

"May I come in, dear friend?" murmured a tremulous voice outside. And Eleanor entered, almost weeping, yet with a strange happiness shining in her face and mien. She had the lawyer's letter in her hand, and, without speaking, she gave it to Mrs. Breynton. — The latter read it mechanically, glad of any excuse to escape those beaming innocent eyes. Then she rose up and touched Eleanor's brow with her frigid lips.

"I wish you joy, my dear. You are a good girl, and deserving of all happiness. Mr. Sedley was right to leave his fortune where it would be worthily used. I hope that it may prove a blessing to you."

"It will! it will! Oh, how glad, how thankful I am!" cried Eleanor, as her thoughts flew far over land and sea to where her heart was. Thither she herself would soon journey, to drive away with one word, one smile, the light cloud which had come between her and Philip; and then pour out all her new store at his feet, joyful that she could bring to him at once both riches and happiness, worldly fortune and faithful love.

Mrs. Breynton regarded her with a cold, suspicious glance.

"I do not often seek to know your concerns," she said, sharply. "Indeed, I have carefully abstained from interfering with them in any way ever since you have resided with me, Miss Ogilvie."

"Do not call me thus. Say *Eleanor*," was the beseeching answer.

“Well, then, Eleanor, may I be excused for asking why a not very worldly-minded girl like you should be so extraordinarily happy at receiving this legacy? What do you intend to do with it?” — Eleanor was accustomed to the sudden changes of temper which the invalid often exhibited; but now there was a deeper meaning in Mrs. Breynton’s searching, irritated look. It brought a quick blush to the girl’s cheek; and though she did not reply, she felt that her silence was penetrated and resented.

“Are you going to leave me, now that you are become an independent lady?” was the bitter question which deepened the flush still more.

“I always *was* independent — Hugh took care of that — and if not, I would have made myself so,” said Eleanor, rather proudly. “But you know I stayed with you by your own wish — and my own too,” she added, in her gentlest tone, “to love you, and be a daughter to you. How could you think I should forget all this, Mrs. Breynton?”

“Well, we will not talk about that,” muttered the old lady, with a slight change of feature. “You will stay, then? Other people may not be more forgetful of kindness shown to their old age than was Dean Sedley. You will not leave me, Eleanor?”

Eleanor threw herself on her knees beside Mrs. Breynton’s chair. “*We* will not leave you,” she whispered. “Oh, dear friend! now this good fortune has come, let me be your very own — your child — your niece, and forgive us both. Indeed we have suffered very much — I and — Philip!” The long-forbidden name burst from her lips accompanied by a flood of tears. Mrs. Breynton started and stood upright.

“Do you mean to tell me that you will marry that ungrateful fool! that beggar! who has insulted his aunt, and disgraced his family? Is this the way you show your love for me? Eleanor Ogilvie, you may become my niece if you will, but it shall be an empty name, for you shall never see my face again. So choose between me and him whose name you have dared to utter. If I hear it spoken in my presence again, it shall be echoed by my lips too, but after it shall come a curse!” — And the aged woman, overpowered by this storm of anger, sank back in her chair. Eleanor, trembling in every limb, sprang up to assist her, but she pushed her aside.

“Call Davis, I want no one else. Go away.” Eleanor dared not disobey, for she was terrified at this burst of passion, the first she had ever seen in Mrs. Breynton. She summoned the maid, and was gliding out of the room, when the old lady called her back, and said in a low hoarse whisper: “Remember, Eleanor, before either of us sleep this night, I will know your intention one way or the other. I must have your promise, your solemn promise, to last your life long, or if not” — Her voice ceased, but her eyes expressed the rest. That look of anger, doubt, threatening, and yet entreaty, haunted Eleanor for many hours. — How sore a strait for one so young! Her heart was almost rent in twain. It was the old contest, old as the world itself — the strife between duty and love.

Most writers on this subject are, we think, somewhat in the wrong. They never consider that love *is* duty — a most solemn and holy duty! He who, loving and being beloved, takes upon himself this second life, this glad burden of another’s happiness, has no right to sacrifice it for any other human tie. It is the fashion to extol the self-devotion of the girl who, for parental caprice, or to work out the happiness of some love-lorn sister, gives up the chosen of her heart, whose heart’s chosen she knows herself to be. And the man who, rather than make a loving woman a little poorer in worldly wealth — but oh, how rich in affection proudly conceals his love in his own breast, and will not utter it, he is deemed a self-denying hero! Is this right?

You writers of moral fiction, who exalt to the skies sacrifices such as these, what would you say if for any cause under heaven a wife gave up a husband, or a husband a wife, each dooming the other to suffering worse than death? And is the tie between

two hearts knitted together by mutual love less strong, less sacred, before the altar-vow than after it? Is not the breaking of such bond a sin, even though no consecrated ordinance has rendered the actual perjury visible guilt?

When will you, who with the world-wide truths of the ideal show forth what is noblest in humanity, boldly put forward this law of a morality, higher and more wholesome than all your tales of sacrifices on filial and paternal shrines, that no power on earth should stand between two beings who worthily, holily, and faithfully love one another?

By this law let us judge Eleanor Ogilvie.

Contents

CHAPTER 34

Countess. Now I see
The mystery of your loneliness, and find
Your salt tears' head
Helena. My dearest madam,
Let not your hate encounter with my love,
For loving where you do.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was almost night before Eleanor was summoned to the chamber of Mrs. Breynton. The latter had already retired to rest; and Davis, on quitting the room, whispered that her mistress had seemed anything but well for several hours. In truth, the thin, white, aged face that lay on the pillow was very different from the stern, haughty countenance of old. If Mrs. Breynton had any idea of working out her purpose by touching Eleanor's feelings, she certainly went the right way to do so. The poor girl, strong as she had been a few minutes before, felt weak, almost guilty now. She sat down beside the bed, silent and trembling.

Mrs. Breynton did not speak; but the imperious eyes which anger had lighted up with all the fires of youth, implacably asked the dreaded question. Eleanor trembled still more. "Dear Mrs. Breynton, do not let us talk now; it is so late, and you are wearied. Let me wait until to-morrow."

"But *I* will not wait. I never break my word. I told you I must have an answer, and I will. Eleanor Ogilvie, before I sleep you must promise that you will not throw away yourself and your fortune by marrying that vile, dishonoured, ungrateful nephew of mine."

Eleanor's spirit was roused. Is there any loving woman's that would not be? "You are mistaken, Mrs. Breynton; such appellations are not meet for Philip Wychnor."

"Ah! you dare utter his name after what I said! Have you forgotten?"

"I have forgotten all that was wrong — all that you yourself would soon wish to forget. Why do you feel so bitterly towards him? You whom he loved so dearly, you who loved him too, once; and thought him so good, and so noble-minded — as he is still"

"It is a lie! and you defend him to my face!"

"Because he has no one else to defend him. And who but I should have a right to do so? I, who love him, and have loved him since I was a girl? I, who have known every thought of his heart — who am his plighted wife in the sight of Heaven? Oh, Mrs. Breynton, how can you ask me to give him up?" — The speech, begun firmly, ended with tearful entreaty. Even the storm of invective that had risen to Mrs. Breynton's lips died away unuttered. It might be, that for the moment she saw in the pale drooping face and clasped hands the likeness of Eleanor's dead mother, with all her struggles and sufferings. The harsh voice became a little softer when she said, "You are blinded, Eleanor, or you would see that it is for your own good I ask this. You do not give up *him* — he gives up *you*. Nay, do not speak — I say he does.

Where is the honour of a man who keeps a young girl waiting for him year after year? A worthy lover he is, who talks of his sentimental affection, and forsooth says he is too poor to marry, while by his own folly he chooses to remain so? This is how he would treat you — until you grow old; and then he would marry some one younger and richer. It is like men; they are all the same!" The old lady paused a moment to look at the young creature before her. Eleanor had risen and stood by the bedside, not weeping but composed.

"Mrs. Breynton," she said in a low, quiet tone, "you have been ever kind to me, and I am grateful. Besides, you are dear to me for your own sake, and for *his*, whose name I will not speak if it offends you. But I can go no further. It pains me very much to hear you talk in this way. I owe you all respect, but I also owe some to him whose wife I have promised to be."

"And you will, in spite of all, you will be his wife?"

"Yes!"

The word was scarcely above a breath, but it said enough. Love had given to the timid, gentle-hearted girl a strength that was able to stand firm against the world. To that "Yes!" there came no answer. It controlled even the outburst of Mrs. Breynton's wrath. She lay silent, unable to remove her eyes from this young girl, so meek and yet so resolute — so patient, yet so brave. But though restrained by this irresistible influence, the storm raged within until it shook every fibre of the aged frame. It seemed as though in her life's decline Mrs. Breynton was destined to feel the vehement passions which in her dull youth and frigid middle age had never been awakened.

Eleanor, startled by her silence, yet drawing from it a faint ray of hope, gathered courage. Kneeling down by the bedside, she would have taken one of Mrs. Breynton's hands, but they were too tightly clenched together.

"Dear friend — my mother's friend!" she cried, "do not try me so bitterly. If you knew what it costs me to say this one word — and yet I cannot but say it. How can I give up my own Philip?" And in the sorrow and struggle of the moment she spoke to Mrs. Breynton as in her maiden timidity she had never spoken to any human being. "Has he not been my playfellow, my friend, these many years? Did not you yourself first teach me to love him, by telling me how good he was, and by bringing us constantly together, boy and girl as we were?"

"I did, I did. I wished to atone to poor Isabel's child for the wrong done to her mother. Fool that I was, to trust the son of such a father!"

Not hearing, or not noticing the words, Eleanor went on with her earnest pleading,

"How could we help loving one another; or, loving, how could we by your will break at once through these dear ties, and never love each other again? Mrs. Breynton, I owe you much, but I owe Philip more. He chose me; he gave me his true, noble heart; and I will keep it faithfully and truly. He loves me, he trusts me; and I will never forsake him while I live."

Mrs. Breynton saw her last chance of regaining power fading from her, and yet she dared not speak. Goaded on almost to madness, she gazed on that young face, now grown serene with the shining of the perfect faith and perfect love which "casteth out fear." It did not shrink even from those gleaming eyes, wherein the wild fires of stormiest youth contended with the dimness of age.

"Eleanor Ogilvie," she said, hoarsely, "what do you intend to do with this fortune?"

"To wait until I again meet him who has a right to all my love — all my riches; and then, if he so wishes, to make both his own."

At these words, Mrs. Breynton, driven to desperation alike by wrath and fear of discovery, snatched blindly at any means of keeping asunder, for a time at least, those two to whom a few words of heart-confidence would reveal all her own machinations.

"You are mad — deceived," cried she, vehemently. "How do you know that he remembers you still? What does your brother's letter say? — that he is gay, prosperous."

"There is nothing in that to pain me. Philip, happy, loves me as well as Philip, sorrowful," she murmured, saying the last words in a musing tone.

"Then why does he not show his love? Why does he not come and claim you to share his fortune? But I tell you, Eleanor Ogilvie, you are blinded by this folly. I know" — and for the first time her lips shrank not from a deliberate lie— "I know more than you do of his selfishness and unworthiness. He only waits an excuse to cast you off. He has said so."

Eleanor shrank back a little, and a slight pain smote her heart. "Will you tell me" —

"No, no, I will not tell you anything," hastily said the conscience-stricken woman. "They who informed me spoke truth, as I firmly believe."

"But *I* do not — I ought not." And once more the beautiful light of confiding love returned to the face of the young betrothed. "Who knows Philip Wychnor so well as I? Therefore it is I who should trust him most. And I do trust him!"

"Then you will leave your mother's friend, who would have been a mother to you — leave her without a child to comfort her old age."

"What shall I do? — what ought I to do?" cried Eleanor, her gentle heart wrung to the very core by this conflict.

"Go away — go away. I never wish to see your face again!" And the voice rose sharper and sharper. Mrs. Breynton lifted herself up in bed, with flashing eyes and outstretched hands, which she shook with a threatening gesture, as though the malediction which Philip had scarce escaped were about to fall on his affianced.

Eleanor, mute with horror, instinctively moved towards the door; but on reaching it, she stood irresolute. It was one of those crises which sometimes occur in life, when right and wrong seem confounded, when we feel ourselves driven blindly along without power to say, "This is the true way — I will walk therein, God helping me." Poor Eleanor! in either course she took, all seemed darkness, suffering, and, still more, sin. Strong as she was in her faithful devotion to Philip, when she thought of Philip's aunt, she felt almost as if she had done wrong. From an impulse more than a settled intent, she laid her hand again on the door, paused a moment, and then re-entered the chamber.

Mrs. Breynton was leaning forward with her face on her hands; the storm of passion had spent itself and tears were dropping fast between her poor thin fingers. Eleanor's heart sprang towards the desolate woman with resistless tenderness. She put her arms round her; she laid the aged head on her young bosom, just as she had used to rest her own mother's during many a long night of suffering, as she had done on that last night until the moment when suffering merged into the peace of death. The action awoke all these memories like a tide. The orphan felt drawn with a fulness of love to her who bad been the friend of the dead; and the motherless and the childless clung together in a close embrace.

"You will not send me away from you, Mrs. Breynton?"

"Never!" was the answer. "And you will stay with me, Eleanor, my child; that is, until — No, I cannot talk about it yet — but in time — in time" —

Mrs. Breynton said no more; and this was the only explanation to which they came. Yet Eleanor felt satisfied that a change had passed over the mind of Philip's aunt, slight, indeed, but greater than she had ever dared to hope. From that night the icy barrier seemed broken down between them. Though Mrs. Breynton never spoke of her nephew, still she bore at times the chance mention of his name; and often, even after it had been uttered, she would regard Eleanor with a vague tenderness, and seem on the point of saying something which yet never rose to her lips. This filled the young girl with happy hope; so that she bore patiently the long silence between herself and Philip, waiting until her return home should solve all doubt, and show him that even this temporary alienation was a sacrifice for his sake, in order that the work of the peacemaker might be finished with joy.

Eleanor never guessed from how much of remorse sprang the new gentleness which the Dean's widow continually showed towards her. After a little longer sojourn abroad, Mrs. Breynton began restlessly to long after home, instancing the necessity for Eleanor's being at L — to look after her own little fortune. The young girl prepared gladly for the journey, and tried to see in the reason urged only an excuse framed by this still haughty spirit, willing and yet half-ashamed to make the concession that would give so much happiness. And with such diverse feelings did Mrs. Breynton and her young companion again set foot in L — .

Contents

CHAPTER 35

Most men
Are cradled into poesy by wrong:
They learn in suffering what they teach in song. — SHELLEY.

Life is real — life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal;
"Dust thou art — to dust returnest,"
Was not spoken of the soul. — LONGFELLOW.

"So your young bridesmaid has really followed your example, and is gone on her honeymoon trip," said Mrs. Pennythorne, as she nervously prepared herself for the martyrdom of a drawing-room *tête-a-tête* with her stylish daughter-in-law. This was after the usual Sunday dinner — the hebdomadal sacrifice on the family shrine — which its new member always considered a "horrid bore."

"Yes, indeed, and has come back again, too," answered Mrs. Frederick, throwing herself on a sofa by the window, while the elder Mrs. Pennythorne sat bolt upright by her side on one of the frail comfortless fabrics which her husband's omnipotent taste had provided for the drawing-room chairs. "They made a short wedding tour, did Hugh and Katharine — Mr. and Mrs. Ogilvie, I mean; but one can't get over old habits, and my cousins and I were such friends, especially Hugh," simpered the young bride.

"Were you, indeed! — oh, of course, being relations," absently replied Mrs. Pennythorne. She made the quietest and most submissive mother-in-law in the world to Isabella; indeed, to tell the truth, she was considerably afraid of her son's gay fashionable wife. "They seemed both very nice young people; I hope they will be happy," added she, in a vain attempt to converse.

"Happy? Oh, I suppose so! She is not the best of tempers, to be sure; and I don't think Hugh would have married her if he had not been dragged into it, so to speak. He used to pay me a great deal of attention once." — Mrs. Pennythorne opened her eyes a little wider than usual. She thought this style of conversation rather odd in her son's wife, but it was perhaps the way of fashionable young ladies. She merely said "Indeed!" and looked out of the window, watching the people of the square going to evening service, and listening to the heavy monotonous tone of the solitary bell.

"How disagreeable it must be to live near a church!" said Isabella. "I hate that ding-dong, it is so annoying; especially when it tolls for a funeral"

Mrs. Pennythorne shivered perceptibly.

"Oh, we have not many funerals here; it is a very healthy neighbourhood." — There was a silence, during which the dull sound of some one coughing feebly was heard in the next room.

"Can you amuse yourself with a book for a minute or two, while I go and speak to Leigh? I always do so after dinner," said the mother, meekly apologising.

“Oh yes! And, by-the-by, that reminds me I have not yet asked after Leigh. He is much as usual, I suppose?”

“A little better, we think. He likes those drives in your pony-chaise so much, and they are sure to do him good.”

“Well, he can have the carriage any morning. I never stir out till after luncheon. Only he must not go too far, so as to tire out the horses before I want them.”

“There is no fear of that. Leigh cannot take long rides. He does not get strong very fast. The doctor says we must not expect it at present. But it is such fine May weather now, and he is really improving,” said Mrs. Pennythorne, moving from the room.

Isabella looked after her, and tossed her head. “None are so blind as those who won’t see,” said she to herself. Then glancing down at her splendid, gay-tinted satin, “How provoking it will be to put it aside for horrible, unbecoming black; and one can’t take to one’s wedding-dresses twelve months after marriage. What a nuisance it is — that boy dying!” — And during the ten minutes of solitude Mrs. Frederick occupied herself in considering whether, considering all things, it would not be advisable to give her first evening party at once, without postponing it for the usual prior round of bridal entertainments.

“One may as well make the most of time, for one never knows what may happen,” said the young wife, whose whole life of vain heartlessness was a contradiction to the moral she drew. — Mrs. Pennythorne returned to her seat by the window; and the elder and younger matron tried to keep up a desultory talk, broken by two or three ill-concealed yawns from the latter.

“I beg your pardon, but one always gets so stupid at this time of the evening; at least I do. I quite hate the twilight.”

“We might shut it out and have candles, only I promised Leigh that I would watch for Mr. Wychnor round the square — he never misses coming on a Sunday evening, you know, and the boy is so glad to see him. Perhaps you would not mind waiting a little without lights, just to humour poor Leigh?” observed the mother-in-law, humbly.

“O dear no don’t inconvenience yourself on my account,” languidly answered Mrs. Frederick; and after inwardly resolving to make one last attempt to keep “that nice young Wychnor” by her side in the drawing-room, instead of suffering him to spend nearly the whole evening, as usual, in Leigh’s room, Isabella began to dilate on her favourite subject, “my cousins, the Ogilvies” — their great wealth and connections — the beautiful villa that Hugh and Katharine had taken in the Regent’s Park, and the elegant and costly style in which it was furnished. Contented with monosyllabic answers, Mrs. Frederick had thus gone on for a quarter of an hour, when her mother-in-law interrupted her with the information that she must go and tell Leigh that Mr. Wychnor was turning the corner of the square. Thereupon Isabella smoothed her dress, pulled her ringlets out properly, and awaited Mr. Wychnor’s entrance. The preparation was vain, for he went at once to Leigh’s room.

“It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.” And better, far better, to stand face to face with the struggling, the sorrowful, nay, even the dying, than to dwell entirely amidst a world of outside show. More precious is it to trace the earnest throbs of the most wounded heart, than to live among those human machines to whom existence is one daily round of dulness and frivolity. Looking on these, Youth, with its bursting tide of soul and sense, shrinks back aghast— “O God!” rises the prayer— “Let me not be as these! Rather let my pulses swell like a torrent, pour themselves out and cease — let heart and brain work their work, even to the perishing of both — be my life short like a weaver’s shuttle, but let it be a life, full,

strong, rich — perchance a day only, but one of those days of heaven, which are as a thousand years!"

When Philip Wychnor came into Leigh's room the boy had fallen asleep — as he often did in the twilight. He roused himself, however, to give his friend a welcome; but his mother and Philip persuaded him to rest again until tea. Just then the sharp call of "Cillie, my dear," resounded through the house, and Mrs. Pennythorne vanished. Philip Wychnor sat in the growing darkness, holding the feeble hand in his, and listening to the breathing of the sleeper. It is a solemn thing, this vigil beside those over whom, day after day, the shadow of death is creeping, whom we seem to be ourselves leading — walking step by step with them to the very entrance of the dark valley. Strange it is to think that there we must leave them — needing our guidance and support no more: that in one day, one hour, the poor frail ones, who have for months clung helplessly to us almost for very existence, will be bodiless spirits, strong, glorious, mighty! looking down, it may be, with divine pity on our weak humanity. Then, perchance, with a power the limits of which are yet unrevealed — those to whom we ministered may become themselves glad ministrants to us. As the young man, in all the strength of his youth, sat beside that scarcely-breathing form, where clay and spirit seemed linked together by a thread so fine that each moment might dissever them for eternity — he felt a strange awe come over him.

There are many phases which the human soul must go through before it can attain even that approximation to the divine which is possible on earth. We cling to prop after prop; we follow longingly whichever of earth's beautiful and blessed things seems most to realise that perfect ideal which we call happiness. Of these joys, the clearest, the truest, the most satisfying, is that which lifts us out of ourselves, and unites us in heart and soul — ay, and intellect, too, for the spirit must find its mate to make the union perfect — with some other human being. This blessed bond we call Love. But the chances of fortune come between us and our desire; — the light passes, and we go on our way in darkness. There are times when we must stand alone, and see earth's deepest and most real joys float by like shadows. Alas! we can but stretch out our arms towards that Infinite, which alone is able to fill the longings of an immortal spirit. Then, with our wounded souls lying naked and open before the Beholder of all, we look yearningly toward the eternal and divine life, complete, unchangeable, and cry with solemn, thankful voice, "O God, thy fulness is sufficient for me; O God, thy love is an all-boundless store."

Through this portion of his inward life had Philip passed. But while learning the deepest mystery of all, he also gained other knowledge, other power. It seemed as though his intellect had sprung up, strong and mighty, from the ashes of the fire which had consumed his heart. Perhaps the same would be the secret history of almost every poet-soul, whose words go forth like lightning; man heeding not the stormy cloud and tempest from whence it leaps forth. Philip's ideal had been the woman he loved; when that became a dream, as he now deemed it was, all human love seemed to pass out of the world with her. The heart's life shut out — the soul's life began.

Within his spirit there dawned a new energy; an irresistible power, to work, to will, to do. The individual sense was merged in the universal; he felt the deep fountain of his genius springing up within him. After a season of wrestling with that strong agony of crushed love, which, thank God! no human being can know more than once, he arose, ready to fight the glorious battle, to begin the blessed toil of those whom Heaven sends as lights unto the world.

He had been called an author; — now he became one. He joined that little band of true brothers to whom authorship is a sacred thing; a lay priesthood, which, wearing

the garb of ordinary fraternity, carries beneath it evermore an inward consecration. Philip wrote not with the haughty assumption of an apostle among men: sometimes in his writings the deepest truth, the purest lore, lay coiled, serpent-like, beneath garlands of flowers. But he never forgot his mission, though the word, often so falsely assumed, had not once passed his lips. God's truest messenger is sometimes not the Pharisee who harangues in the temple, but the Publican who passes unnoticed by the way-side.

Yet Philip Wychnor had his share of honour and repute. Every day his fame was growing; but there was one difference between his present life and his past. The work itself brought pleasure, at least that sense of duty fulfilled which is likest pleasure; the mere fame brought none. He had no care whether it came or not. For two ends only is renown precious: for ambition's sake and for love's. Philip had neither; life to him seemed now made not for happiness but for worthy toil He stood in the world's vineyard, not as a joyful gatherer of fruit, but as a labourer, patient and active, yet looking towards the day's close as towards its chiefest joy.

Was then this brave heart, worthily struggling with and surmounting fate, utterly without memories of the sweet past! Was it grown so indifferent that oblivion brought no pain? Let many a fearful hour of suffering — in the dead of night, at intervals in the day's toil, or in seasons of good fortune wherein there was no sharer, and of fame become all joyless now — let these tell that the young man now mourned over his buried dream. Perchance this sorrow oppressed him even when on this night he sat in the darkness beside the sick boy. Leigh's deep sleep left Philip's thoughts that liberty of range which is bliss to the happy — to the suffering, or those who have suffered, torture indeed. The young man sighed heavily many times.

"Are you unhappy, Philip?" whispered a faint voice, and the damp fingers he held twined feebly round his own.

"My dear Leigh! I thought you were asleep."

"No, not for some minutes; but I fancied you were, until those deep sighs came. We never sigh when we are asleep, you know."

"Very seldom: there is no sorrow in sleep," murmured Philip, as if his words had a deeper sense than their apparent one. He had somehow caught a little of this habit of twofold speech from his constant associate and friend, David Drysdale.

"What are you saying about sorrow?" asked Leigh. "What have you been thinking of? Not that old grief of which you never speak; and which, when I found out that it was in your heart, you said I could not understand? I can understand many things better now; perhaps I might this. And you often say I do you good at times."

"Always, always, my boy! Only let us talk of something else now. Be content, Leigh; indeed I am so too, as content as one can be in this sorrowful world."

"Is it so sorrowful, this world of yours?"

"Why do you say '*yours*,' Leigh?"

"Because — because — you know why, Philip;" and the voice became feebler, more solemn. There was no answer; Philip could not breathe the lie of hope to the spirit which seemed already spreading its pure wings. Both were silent for awhile, but the mute hand-clasp between them appeared to say, "I go!"— "Yea, thou goest, blessed one!" — Leigh was the first who spoke. "I am not afraid, scarcely sorry — and yet, perhaps — O Philip! if you knew how often in the old times I wished, earnestly wished, that it might be thus with me — that I might get away from that dull life of torment. And now when the wish comes true, I sometimes have thought that I should like to stay a little longer, that I might do something to atone for these eighteen wasted years. You would not think me thus old, childish as I am? yet, at times I feel

so weary, so worn — it might have been a life of eighty years which I lay down. Then again, even when my body is weakest, my soul feels so clear and strong, that I shrink from this coming quiet — this deep rest."

"Not all rest," answered Philip, softly. "God never meant it so; He, the Creator, the Sustainer, knows no idle repose. Neither shall we, His servants. We shall work His will — how, we cannot tell, but we shall do it, and rejoice in the doing. Think, Leigh, how glorious to pass from weakness to strength — from suffering to action; perhaps to be Heaven's messengers throughout the wide universe; feeling nearer Him, because, in one measure, we share His divinest attribute — that of dispensing good."

In the darkness, Philip could not see the face of the almost dying boy; but he felt the hand which he still held drawn nearer to its fellow, and both clasped as in prayer, his own still between them. It seemed that even then Leigh could not relinquish the hand which had brought light into his darkness, and guided him on until he stood at the death-portal, looking thereon calmly and without fear.

"This is so happy to hear!" Leigh said, after a pause. "Philip, your words are like an angel's — they always were so to me; and some time — not now, but you know when — will you tell my mother all this! and say how it was that I never spoke thus to her, because she could not bear it. But you will remember it all, and it will sound as if I said it — not in my poor, weak, childish words, but with the voice which I shall have then." Philip promised. A little while longer they talked mostly in this strain, and then the mother came in with a light.

"How well Leigh looks to-night!" she said. And truly there was a strange spiritual beauty over the boy's face. "He seems so quiet and happy! You always do him good, Mr. Wychnor."

And then through the open drawing-room door came Mrs. Frederick's titter, and her husband's loud chatter, while above all sounded Mr. Pennythorne's decisive tone.

"Cillie, my dear, don't forget to tell that excellent young man that we cannot do without him any longer; send your ever-grumbling boy to bed, and ask Mr. Wychnor to come into the drawing-room."

"Yes, do go, Philip," whispered Leigh, "it will please my father — he thinks so much of you now." He did indeed; for Mr. Pennythorne was a very Ghebir in his way — he always turned worshippingly towards the rising sun.

Philip assented — as he would have done to any wish of poor Leigh's. After an affectionate good night, and a promise to come next day, he passed from the sick boy's room, the solemn ante-chamber of death, into the world — the hollow, frivolous world, of Mr. Pennythorne.

Contents

CHAPTER 36

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it . . .
For love is strong as death: jealousy as cruel as the grave.
SOLOMON.

Let us follow Wychnor where his presence was so energetically demanded. In the drawing-room of Blank-square no one could be more abundantly welcomed than he. Mr. Pennythorne now delighted to honour his "very clever young friend," and told to everybody the story of Philip's first coming to London with the introduction to himself. He would probably repeat the same, with additions, for the benefit and instruction of every young man whom he chose to patronise for the next year.

"Happy to see you, my dear Norwych — Wychnor, I mean," said Mr. Pennythorne, correcting himself; since the amusing sobriquet which he had conferred on the poor tutor was hardly respectful enough to the rising author. "Here we are all striving to get through the evening: Fred is more sleepy than ever, and my fair daughter-in-law evidently thinking she has entered into the dullest family party of the three kingdoms."

"Oh dear no, Mr. Pennythorne," disclaimed Isabella, who got on extremely well with her husband's father. She was treated by him with great consideration, through the deferential mockery of which she was not acute enough to penetrate. She really liked him the best of the family, and pronounced him to be "a most amusing old fellow." "I assure you, Mr. Wychnor, we have been laughing amazingly. Mr. Pennythorne is so droll," said she, striving by this address to bring the young man in closer approximation to her chair. But Philip only made some ordinary reply, and sat down at the other end of the table, considering what excuse he could frame to make his stay to-night in this interesting family circle as brief as possible.

Mr. Pennythorne led the conversation, as he always did — shooting his small popguns of wit to the infinite amusement of Mrs. Frederick, who was nevertheless considerably annoyed that all the attentions paid her came from her elderly papa-in-law, and none from his young guest. Philip sat more silent and quiet than usual, until Mrs. Pennythorne came, and then he rose up to secure her an arm-chair.

"He never did that for me in his life, the bear," thought Isabella. It was, perhaps, rather a fault in Philip's manners that his courtesies and his feelings always went together in their expression.

"How does Leigh seem now?" asked he, addressing the mother, who was so accustomed to the young man's kindly attentions that she took them with less nervousness and shyness from him than any one else, and requited the respect he showed her, to which, poor woman! she was little used, with a most grateful regard.

"Leigh is really better to-night; you have quite brightened him up, Mr. Wychnor, for he was so dull all day."

"Pray choose some more interesting subject, Cillie, my dear," sharply interposed Mr. Pennythorne. "Leigh thinks far too much of himself already; and you coax him into imagining himself ill, because it looks interesting. That is always the way with

women and mothers, but it will not do in my family. Of course, nothing of consequence is the matter with Leigh." The father spoke quickly, almost angrily; but there was an uneasy restlessness in his manner, which Philip had often discerned of late, when the boy was mentioned; and the piteous look of Mrs. Pennythorne checked the answer that was rising indignantly to the young man's lips. There was a constrained silence. Then Mrs. Frederick, quitting her husband, who was dropping fast to sleep again — his usual habit of proving that Sunday was indeed a day of rest — made another effort to draw Philip into conversation.

"I was quite anxious to meet you to-night, Mr. Wychnor, as I have a message to you from a friend of yours, my cousin" — Philip turned a little— "my cousin, Hugh Ogilvie." The remark only brought an assenting bow, and a hope, very laconically expressed, that Mr. Ogilvie was quite well

"Certainly; how could he be otherwise with a young bride to take care of him?" tittered Isabella: "and by-the-by, the message comes conjointly from her, which must be very flattering, as all the men think my cousin Katharine the most bewitching creature in the world. But perhaps you have met her?"

"I have," answered Philip. He remembered but too well how and where was that meeting.

"Oh! of course you did — that night, at Mrs. Lancaster's. A delightful party, was it not? though no one then thought how soon my nice little bridesmaid would become a bride. Well, Mr. Wychnor, she and her husband were inquiring after you the other day, and desired me to say, how happy they will be to see you at the Regent's Park. They have the sweetest villa in the world, and are, or ought to be, as happy as two doves in a cage." Philip bowed again, and muttered some acknowledgment of the "kind invitation."

"There never was such a stupid young man," thought Isabella; adding aloud, "Hugh told me also to say, that shortly they expected a visit from his sister, Eleanor. He says you know her?" Another silent assent — but no deeper pallor could show the icy coldness that crept through every fibre of Philip's frame. Sudden delicious tremblings, quick changes of colour, are the tokens of love's hopeful dawn, love's sorrowful after-life knows none of these. Philip sat still — he would have "died and made no sign."

"The fellow is positively rude — he might be made of stone," muttered the young wife, as she turned indignantly away, and relieved her feelings by pulling the hair of her sleeping husband, with a pretty gamesomeness that made her father-in-law laugh.

"Does the light annoy you, Mr. Wychnor? This camphine is always too dull or too bright," said Mrs. Pennythorne. "Shall I move the lamp, if it pains your eyes?"

"Oh no, not at all — that is, it does a little," Philip answered, hastily removing the hand with which he had been shading his face. "My eyes are weak. I think I sit up too late and work too much."

"You do not look quite well, indeed;" and Mrs. Pennythorne regarded him with an almost motherly gaze. "You should invariably go to bed at eleven, as I always told poor Leigh." Here, she checked a sigh, and glanced fearfully to her husband. He was performing a few practical jokes on his drowsy eldest-born, to the extreme delight of that son's wife, who treated her spouse with about as much respect, and not half as much attention, as she showed to her pet spaniel.

"I will come and see Leigh soon. And perhaps I had better follow your kind advice, Mrs. Pennythorne; so I will bid you good night at once," said Philip, rising. Here, however, Mr. Pennythorne put in his *veto*. "What! running away so soon? Nonsense, my dear young friend. Sit down again. Cillie, ring for the supper at once." Certainly,

with all his shortcomings, Pierce Pennythorne never failed in hospitality. But Philip resisted successfully, and made his *adieux*. He had gained the hall, when Mr. Pennythorne summoned him back.

"There was something I wanted to say to you, only the lively and amusing conversation of my gifted daughter-in-law here quite put it out of my head. Pray, Mr. Wychnor, among the numberless invitations which must throng upon a gentleman of your standing, are you disengaged on Thursday?" Philip said he was.

"Then will you dine here? In fact, I want you to meet a particular friend of mine, a very talented young man — immense fortune — estates here, there, everywhere;" and Mr. Pennythorne nodded his head to the four points of the compass. At which Frederick winked slily — his usual custom to signify that his revered parent was drawing the longbow.

"I should be most happy, but" —

"I will take no buts, my dear Wychnor. I want you particularly, as my friend is thinking of entering the House, and wishes to stand for a borough near that worthy old city of cats and canons, L — . You, of course, having lived there, as you once mentioned, know all about the place, and can give him the information he requires. Pray do us the favour."

"I shall be glad to serve any friend of yours, Mr. Pennythorne," said Philip, longing to escape.

"Then we may expect you. Indeed, you will be of immense service to my friend, if you can tell him the state of politics and parties in — shire. He wishes to settle in England, but he knows not a jot about English affairs, and is only just come to town from a long residence on the Continent. You'll like him very much — there is not a more perfect gentleman anywhere than Mr. Paul Lynedon."

"Paul Lynedon!" echoed Philip.

"Yes; do you know the name?"

"I have heard it. But I am keeping you standing in the hall. Good evening, Mr. Pennythorne."

"Good evening. Remember — Thursday, at six." The young man muttered some answer about being "very happy," that white lie of society! But Philip hardly knew what he said or did. When he had fairly quitted the house and its atmosphere of torture for the cool night air, he leaned against the railings, trembling all over.

Paul Lynedon in London! Eleanor coming shortly! It was all as plain as light. If not married, they were certainly about to be. This truth came as the only possible answer to his letter — to another wild, imploring letter he had written since. The only reply to both was silence. Then his manhood took up arms — and he wrote no more. He believed, or tried to believe, that he had lost her. But, now meeting the tangible fact, it caused him to writhe beneath an almost insupportable agony — an agony which he had supposed was deadened and seared within him. To meet these happy ones, face to face! To be called upon to serve the man who had won his heart's treasure — the love of Eleanor Ogilvie!

He could not do it! He would leave London — he would hide himself out of their sight; and in some lonely place he would pray Heaven to comfort him, and to cast out from his riven heart the very ashes of this bitter love. He thought he had trodden it down with his firm will, his patience, his proud sense of duty; and yet here it was, bursting up afresh in torturing and burning flames! He wrestled with it — he sped on with rapid strides through the loneliest streets — he bared his head, that the fresh May breeze might pierce with loving coolness into his brain — and yet he was half-maddened still!

It is a fearful thing — this gathering up of the love of boyhood, youth, and manhood, into one absorbing passion, which is life or death. Men in general rarely know it; the sentiment comes to them in successive and various forms — a dream of romance and poetry, an intoxication of sense, a calm, tender esteem; but when all these failings are merged into one — felt through life for one object only — then, what woman's devotion, faithful and tender though it be, is like the love of man?

Philip reached his home utterly exhausted in body and mind. His brain seemed flooded with a dull heavy pain, and yet he must lie down and try to make it calm, ready for a long day of labour on the morrow. He must forget the real in the ideal — he must write on! No matter what were his own heart-tortures — he must sit down and calmly analyse the throbbings of the wild pulse of humanity as displayed in the world of imagination. Perhaps both lives, that of brain and heart, would unconsciously mingle into one, and men would marvel at the strange truth to nature — not knowing that every ideal line had been written with real throes of agony, and that each word had gleamed before his eyes as though his soul had inscribed it with a lightning-pen. — Poor Philip! Heaven only knows through what martyr-fires souls like thine ascend to immortal fame!

Contents

CHAPTER 37

Go not away! Oh, leave me not alone!
I yet would see the light within thine eyes;
I yet would hear thy voice's heavenly tone;
Oh, leave me not, whom most on earth I prize!
Go not away! — yet ah! dark shades I see
Creep o'er thy brow — thou goest; but give thy hand!
Must it be so? Then go! I follow thee
Unto the Silent Land. — FREDRIKA BREMER.

So, life is loss, and death felicitie! — SPENSER.

In the morning Philip Wychnor was labouring as usual at his daily work; for it was work — real work — though he loved it well. He applied himself to it day after day, not waiting for inspiration, as few writers can afford to do, but sedulously training his mind to its duties, until he roamed among the beautiful regions of imagination like a man who wanders in his own pleasant garden, having first taken the proper measure of walking to its gate and bringing the key.

Philip on this day began his work with a desperate energy. He could not stay musing, he dared not; he fled from the spectre that memory conjured up. Thought battled against thought. He worked his brain almost to suffering, that he might deaden the pain which gnawed at his heart. Nor was this the first time he had need to be thankful for that blessed dream-life, that second existence, which brings oblivion for the sorrows of the real world. A space since, and we pitied the poor toiler in literature, obliged to rack his tortured brain in despite of inward troubles. We look at him now, and see how he grows calm and brave-hearted, as, by the power of a strong will, he passes from his own small world of personal suffering into the grand world wherein the author sits godlike, forming as it were out of nothing new heavens and a new earth. Shall we pity this true man, who stands nearer to the Heavenly Maker than other men, because he also can create? Rather let us behold him with reverence — almost with envy — for he drinks of the truest, holiest Lethe, where self is swallowed up in the universal. If at times the shadow of his own bitter thought is thrown across the wave, it appears there in an image so spiritualised that he can look on it without pain. In the deep calm of those pure waters, it only seems like a light cloud between him and heaven.

When Philip had written for a few hours, there came a message from the Pennythornes — or, rather, from Mrs. Pennythorne — saying that Leigh felt so much better, and longed for a drive with his dear friend, Mr. Wychnor. The mother could not go with Leigh herself, and could trust him to no one but Philip, whom she entreated to come to the square at once. This was repugnant enough to the young man. He would fain fly from every place where he might hear the sound of Paul Lynedon's name. And yet, poor Leigh! At the thought of him all these earth-feelings grew dim; they melted away into nothing before the awful shadow of Death. Philip laid aside his work, and was soon by the side of the sick boy.

“How good of you to come! But you are always good,” said Leigh.

“Indeed he is! I cannot tell what we should do without Mr. Wychnor,” thankfully cried Mrs. Pennythorne. — Philip pressed the hands of both, but did not speak. They little thought what deep emotion struggled in his heart — that poor torn heart — which, still madly loving, found itself alone and unloved. Yet their few words fell upon it like balm; it was sweet to feel that even now he was of use, and precious to some one in the wide, desolate world.

“Leigh may take a little longer drive to-day, for Mrs. Frederick does not want the carriage. I wish I were going with you both,” sighed the mother; “but Mr. Pennythorne does not like being left alone when he is writing.”

“Cillie! Cillie! are you going to stay in Leigh’s room all day?” resounded from the study door. Poor Mrs. Pennythorne cast a hopeless glance at Philip, hastily kissed her boy, and disappeared in a moment. — Leigh looked after her wistfully. “I wish my father would let her stay with me a little more. She would like it now, and — *afterwards*! But she is a good, dear mother! and she knows I think so. Be sure you tell her that I did, Philip.” Wychnor pressed the boy’s hand: it was a strange and touching thing, this calm mingling of death with life in Leigh’s thoughts and words. He was silent a minute, and then went on in a cheerful tone, “You must let me remain out a good while to-day, I feel so strong; and perhaps I might stay a little later, to watch the sunset. I never can see it from my room, you know; which seems rather hard, now the evenings are so beautiful and spring-like.”

Philip soothed him as an elder brother might have done, and promised all, provided he felt strong enough. Then he took Leigh in his arms like a child, and carried him down stairs to the gay carriage. What different occupants were the fluttering, fashionable young wife, and the poor sick boy, who lay half-buried in cloaks and cushions! Yet Leigh lifted up his head with a cheerful look when Mrs. Pennythorne appeared at a window to give her parting nod as they drove away. Philip saw the bright loving smile that passed between mother and son — he thought of it afterwards many a time.

“Now, where shall we go?” was the first question proposed, as they drove along the interminable Kensington High-street.

Leigh pleaded for some quiet road: — he wanted to go far out into the country, to that beautiful lane which runs along by the river-side at Chiswick. He had been there once at the beginning of his illness, and had often talked of the place since. It haunted him, he said, with its overhanging trees, and the river-view breaking in between them — its tiny wavelets all sparkling in the sun. He knew it would look just the same this calm, bright May afternoon. So accordingly they went thither. It was one of those spring days when the earth seems to rest from her joyful labour of budding and blossoming, and to be dreaming of summer. The birds in the trees — the swans in the water — the white clouds in the sky — were alike still; and upon all things had fallen the spell of a blessed silence — a silence full of happiness, hope, and love. “Happiness, hope, love,” — what words, what idle words they would sound, unto the two who were passing slowly under the shadow of the trees! Oh, Earth, beautiful, cruel mother, how canst thou smile with a face so fair when sorrow or death is on thy children! But the Earth answers softly, “I smile with a calm and changeless smile, to tell my frail children that if in me, made but for their use, is such ever-renewed life and joy, shall it not be so with them? And even while they gaze upon me, I pour into their hearts my deep peace!” It was so with Philip and Leigh. They sat silent, hand in hand, and looked on this beautiful scene: from both, the bitterness passed away — the bitterness of life, and that of death. Which was the greater?

On the bridge at Kew, Leigh spoke. He begged that the carriage might rest a moment to let him look at the sunset, which was very lovely. He half lifted himself up, and the large brown eyes seemed drinking in all the beauty that was in land, river, and sky — they rested longest there. Then they turned to meet Philip's: that mute gaze between the two was full of solemn meaning.

"Are you content?" whispered Philip.

"Yes, quite; now let us go home." Leigh's eyes closed, and his voice grew faint.

"You seem tired," said the other, anxiously.

"Yes, a little. Take me home soon, will you, Philip?" His head drooped on the young man's shoulder heavily — so heavily, that Philip signed to the coachman to drive on at his utmost speed; Then he put his arm round the boy, who lay with closed eyes, his white cheek looking grey and sunken in the purple evening light. Once Philip spoke; almost trembling lest no answer should come.

"Are you quite easy, dear Leigh?" — The eyes opened and the lips parted with a faint smile. "Yes, thank you, only weary; I can hardly keep awake, but I must till I have seen my mother." And still the dying head sank heavier on Philip's shoulder, and the hands which he drew in his to warm them were already growing damp and rigid. He sat with this solemn burden in his arms, and the carriage drove homewards until they entered the square. The mother stood at the door!

"Take her away, for God's sake — only one minute," whispered Philip to the servant; but she had sprung already to the carriage.

"Leigh! — how is my darling Leigh?" Her voice seemed to pierce even through the shadows of another world and reach the dying boy: he opened his eyes and smiled tenderly upon her.

"Leigh is tired, almost asleep," said Philip, hastily. "Take the cushion, Mrs. Pennythorne, and I will carry him in." She obeyed without a word, but her face grew deadly white, and her hands trembled. When the boy was placed, as he seemed to wish, in his mother's arm-chair, she came and knelt before him, looking into his face. There was a shadow there. She saw it, and felt that the time was come when not even the mother could stand between her child and Death. Philip thought she would have shrieked, or fainted, but she did neither. She only gazed into the dim eyes with a wildly beseeching gaze.

"Mother — you will let me go?" murmured Leigh. She drew a long sigh, as if repressing an agony so terrible that the struggle was like that of a soul parting; and then said, "Yes, my darling!"

He smiled — what a heaven is there in the happy smile of the dying! and suffered her fond ministering hands, unwilling even yet to give up their long tendance, to unfasten the cloak and put the wine to his lips. Then she sat down beside him, laid his head on her bosom, and awaited — O mighty strength of a mother's love! — awaited, tearless and calm, the passing away of the life which she had given.

"He is quite content — quite happy — he told me so," Philip whispered in her ear. She turned round one moment with a startled air: "Yes, yes, I know. Hush!" And she bent down again over her child, whose faint lips seemed trying to frame, scarcely louder than a sigh, the last word, "*Mother*!"

Then there fell over the room a solemn silence, long and deep — in the midst of which the spirit passed. They only knew that it was so, when, as the moon rose, the pale spiritual light fell on the face of the dead boy, still pillowed on the mother's breast. She turned and looked upon it without a cry or a moan, so beautiful, so heavenly was it! At that moment, had they put to her the question of old, "Is it well with the child?" she would have answered like the Shunamite, "It is well!"

“God help her!” murmured Philip Wychnor, as she at last suffered him to take the beloved form from her arms, and carry it, for the last time, to “Leigh’s room.” Ere the young man left the chamber — once the scene of suffering and pain, now of holy peace and death-slumber — he looked long and earnestly at the white still image before him. Then he turned away; and thought no more of the dead likeness of what poor Leigh had been, but of the now free, glorious, rejoicing soul.

As he passed down stairs, a quick loud knock sounded at the door — it was the father’s, who knew not that he came to a house of death.

“Cillie, my dear! Eh, what’s this? Where’s Mrs. Pennythorne?” he said, in his sharpest tones, as he missed the customary meeting at the door. Philip advanced, and drew the old man into the parlour.

“Ah, Mr. Wychnor! quite a surprise to see you, but delighted,” he began, in his usual manner. “Cillie! Where can she be? Cillie, my dear!” Then, startled by Philip’s silence, he stopped.

“Mrs. Pennythorne is up stairs,” the young man said, in a low and hesitating tone.

“Eh? oh, of course she is — with Leigh.”

“No; Leigh does not need her now. Mr. Pennythorne, your son is dead!” But the next moment he repented for thus abruptly communicating the tidings.

The old man caught at him with an incredulous gesture. “You — you fancy things — they always did” — Philip looked at him without answering.

“O my God!” He fell into a chair, speechless.

For many minutes did the old man sit there immovable. His grief was so terrible, in its pent-up, stony strength, that Philip dared not breathe a word of consolation. At last Mr. Pennythorne raised his head, though without looking up, and murmured the name of his wife.

“Shall I call her?”

“Yes.”

She came in that instant. She had been waiting at the door, not daring to approach him even then. But now she drew near to her husband — woman-like, wife-like. She laid his head on her shoulder, and for the first time in his life he clang to her — feeling that she, in all her weakness, was yet stronger than he.

“Come with me, Pierce,” she whispered, and led him away; he following her as unresisting as a child.

What passed between the desolate parents none of the household knew. They remained shut up together in their own room for hours — nay, for days — all the time that the dead lay in the little chamber above. They saw no one — at least he did not — though Mrs. Pennythorne passed in and out now and then, to give any needful orders. She did all with a new-born firmness and energy marvellous to witness. Philip Wychnor, who once or twice saw her for a few moments when she descended to the silent, darkened parlour below, unconsciously spoke to her with a strange reverence and tenderness, as to one of those women who are God’s angels upon earth.

In a few days the burial-train passed from the door, its stately array — vain mockery! — moving down the square in the bright sunshine; and the house of the Pennythornes was childless evermore.

Contents

CHAPTER 38

THE TONGUE WAS intended for a divine organ, but the devil often plays upon it. — JEREMY TAYLOR.

How much have cost us the evils that have never happened! — JEFFERSON.

Quiet thyself until time try the truth, and it may be thy fear will prove greater than thy misfortune. — SOUTHWELL.

"Are you at home this evening, Wychnor?" said a friendly voice, when Philip sat leaning on his desk in a thoughtful mood. He looked up and saw at the door the face of old David Drysdale.

"Certainly — to you always, my good friend."

"But I mean, is there any need for that amusing fiction at which society smilingly connives? Is your mind really 'at home,' as well as your body? Are you quite disengaged?"

"Yes, I have done my work for to-day. Pray come in. Mr. Drysdale, and be very welcome."

"Have you more welcomes than one to give away?" pursued Drysdale, still holding the door-handle; "because I am not alone."

"Any friend of yours I shall be happy to see," began Philip, in the usual conventional form.

"Nonsense!" interrupted the old man; "I thought I had cured you of that fashion of polite speaking. Besides, friends are about as plentiful as blackberries in London — I may say that with great truth, you know. This gentleman is only an *acquaintance* of mine, who wishes to become one of yours."

"And a little more than that, I hope, in time," continued a voice behind. It was so sweetly modulated — so perfectly the tone and accent of that rare personage, a *gentleman* — that Philip looked eagerly to the speaker, who added, "Shall I introduce myself, Mr. Wychnor, as my friend here seems rather to disown me?" And that beautiful, irresistible smile broke over his face, making one forget that it was not strictly handsome. "My name is Lynedon — Paul Lynedon."

Philip had guessed it before, yet he could not suppress a start. Once again there came that torturing pain; the blood seemed ice-bound in his heart, and then flowed back again in fire. He *must* be calm. He was so. The next moment he forced himself to utter acknowledgment and welcome to the man whom Eleanor loved.

He could not wonder that she did so, now. He looked on the finely-moulded form, where to natural grace was added all that ease of movement and courtly elegance which polished society bestows; the intellectual head, whose sharp, clear-cut, though somewhat worn and sallow features were softened by a mouth and chin most exquisite in shape and expression. And then the voice, that index of the heart, how musical it was! Philip's eye and ear took in all this; and even while a sense of self-abasement made his heart die within him, he felt glad — thankful. She had not cast away her love upon one mean and unworthy: her choice was not such as to lower her in his eyes — he could bear anything but that!

“I have been wishing for this pleasure some time, Mr. Wychnor,” said Paul, with that mixture of frankness and courtesy which formed the great charm of his manner; “you seem anything but unknown to me — not merely from your writings, which I will not be so rude as to discourse upon here” —

“Right, Mr. Lynedon,” put in David Drysdale; “it is very annoying when a stranger follows up his introduction by taking your soul to pieces and setting it up before your eyes, until in most instances you despise it yourself, after it has been handled by the dirty paws of a fool. Glad to see you have more sense and tact than that, sir.”

“Thank you!” answered Lynedon, with a pleasant smile and bow, as he turned round again to Philip. “After this, I suppose I must say no more about the knowledge I have gained of you from your writings — which is, nevertheless, the true way of becoming acquainted with a man. In the world we have so many various outward selves.”

“Humph! we oughtn’t to have, though!” muttered Drysdale, still taking the answer out of Philip’s mouth. He did not know how thankful the young man was for the interposition.

“Perhaps so,” continued Lynedon, politely, and still turning to his silent host. “But in numberless ways, too, I have heard so much of you — from Mr. Pennythorne, and — in several other quarters.” Philip changed colour, and began to talk hastily about the Pennythornes.

“I believe I was invited to meet you at Blank-square, Mr. Lynedon, only for the trouble that intervened.”

“Ah, yes! — some death in the family. Have they recovered from the melancholy event?” said Paul. But though his face was composed to a decent gravity, the tone was not quite sincere.

“I knew they would kill that lad — the youngest, was it not? He was a clever fellow. I dare say you miss him, Wychnor?” observed old David.

“I do, indeed.”

“What a good-for-nothing wretch and idiot the father has been! I wish I had told him so,” cried Drysdale, indignantly.

“Hush! you would forgive him if you saw him now,” Philip gently interposed; and then he spoke more about Leigh, to which Drysdale listened, while Paul Lynedon sat twirling his cane, trying to assume the same interest. He did not do it so well as usual, though; for Wychnor detected his abstraction, and apologised.

“You knew nothing, I believe, of this poor lost friend of mine; so the conversation cannot be very interesting to you.”

“Indeed you mistake,” answered the other. Lynedon would not have been considered unfeeling on any account. Besides, he had taken much pains to collect evidence concerning the character of the young author, who was likely to be useful to him in many ways, and whose supposed connection with that little episode of his life concerning Eleanor Ogilvie had entirely slipped from his easy memory. Determined to please, he was now exerting in every way his own favourite talent of being “all things to all men.” Paul often thought this was the wisest thing his saintly namesake ever said, and congratulated himself rather irreverently on the presumed resemblance between them. He failed here, however; since Wychnor came to the point in his own candid way by saying at once,

“I conclude the reason assigned by Mr. Pennythorne for our meeting at his house will further explain this obliging visit of yours, Mr. Lynedon; and as the matter is no secret, I believe, let me tell you with what pleasure I would have aided your views had I been able.”

“Aided his views! So he had some views? He never told me anything about them!” said Drysdale, with a degree of simplicity that made Lynedon internally wish him at that “central fire,” the investigation of which formed the old philosopher’s present hobby. “I thought you came here only to see the young author, of whom you said you had heard so much?”

“Certainly that was my chief inducement. You only do me justice, my worthy friend.” And Paul smiled — still courteously as ever — but immediately tried to free himself from a rather awkward predicament by turning the conversation to his plans with regard to — shire.

“You resided there, I believe? A beautiful county! There is none in England where I should so much wish to make my home.”

Philip bent his head, and his fingers played convulsively with the papers on his desk.

“So,” said Drysdale, “in plain English, you want to stand for the borough of L — . Pennythorne said so. And you need Wychnor’s knowledge of the town. Haven’t you any friends there yourself?”

“No — yes.” And Paul looked rather confused, being struck with the sudden possibility that Mr. Wychnor might have been informed of certain old follies, the very thought of which brought a dye of shame to his cheek. Philip saw it; it seemed to his eyes the consciousness of happy love, and his very soul writhed within him.

These strangely diverse feelings inclined both the young men to the same course. Each instinctively glided from the subject, and sought refuge in safe generalities. The conversation became of a broken, indifferent, skirmishing description, natural to two men, each of whom is bent upon concealing his own thoughts and discovering those of his companion. In this Paul Lynedon succeeded best; he was a far greater adept than Philip Wychnor. He talked well — at times brilliantly — but still even to the most earnest subjects he seemed to render only lip-service, and always appeared to consider more the effect of his words than the words themselves. He and David Drysdale almost engrossed the conversation; but once or twice, in some of his finest sentences, Paul stopped, and wondered why the eyes of Philip Wychnor were so earnestly fixed upon him. He did not like their scrutiny at all.

After a space, Mr. Lynedon, growing rather wearied, remembered that all this while his cab was waiting in the street, and that he had an important engagement— “at the Regent’s Park” — which was the first place he happened to think of. As the chance word passed his careless lips those of Philip Wychnor quivered and grew pale. Regent’s Park! — It was to all his doubts confirmation strong.

Paul Lynedon’s adieu was full of the most friendly courtesy. He thanked his new acquaintance warmly for all his kindness— “the kindness which he intended to show,” as Drysdale commented rather pointedly — and said, how glad and proud he should be to number among his friends Mr. Philip Wychnor. Perhaps he felt the greater part of what he expressed; for no one ever looked at the young author without a feeling of interest and regard.

“You will be sure to come and see me soon,” said Paul, holding out his hand. For the moment Philip drew back his own; but the act was unseen in the half-darkened room. With a violent effort he repressed his feelings, and suffered, rather than returned, the grasp of Lynedon. When the door closed on his visitor, Philip sighed as though a mountain had been lifted from his breast. He almost forgot the presence of Drysdale.

At length the latter roused himself from a brown study of some minutes’ duration with —

“It’s of no use. I can’t make out that young man at all. Can you?”

“I? Who?” asked Philip, startled out of his own silent thoughts.

“Paul Lynedon, of course. I should like to anatomise him — that is, his soul. What an interesting psychological study it would make!”

“Would it?” said Philip, absently.

“Yes, certainly! I have been trying the experiment myself for some days. Having nearly come to the end of the abstract sciences, I intend to begin the grand science of man, and my first subject shall be Paul Lynedon. What do you think of him?”

Philip said firmly, “He seems a clever man, and is doubtless as good as he looks.”

“There’s the thing! As he looks — as he seems! I have never yet been able to say, as he is. He puzzles me, just like the old fable of the chameleon. View him at different times, and he appears of different colours; and yet you can’t say he changes his skin— ’tis the same animal after all. The change is but the effect of the lights through which he passes. To-night he seemed quite different from the individual whom I had the honour of meeting yesterday at Mrs. Lancaster’s. Yet I don’t believe Paul Lynedon is either a liar or a hypocrite; it could not be so, with his head.” And David, who was a phrenologist as well as a physiognomist, indulged his young friend with a long discourse, which we shall skip over.

“The question lies here,” continued Drysdale, energetically, “Is he a true man, or is he not? I can’t say which at present; only I think this, that if not true he might have been made so. Some people go swinging unsteadily through life with a sort of pendulum character, and yet they are composed of tolerably sound metal after all, if you can but get hold of them. Nobody, I think, has ever taken this firm grasp of Paul Lynedon; I mean, no one has ever had influence enough over him to cause him to be what he now only tries to seem. Don’t you think so?”

Philip had listened with an eagerness so intense that it became positive suffering. He did not believe all Drysdale said — he would not believe it. The Paul Lynedon of the world was nothing to him: the Paul Lynedon whom Eleanor had chosen — whom Eleanor would marry — he compelled himself to think these very words — was the most vital interest he had in life. To doubt of this man’s worthiness gave him an acute pang. He would satisfy himself: steeling his heart to all lower feelings, he would not shrink from Lynedon, but seek to know him thoroughly.

“You do not answer. Do you agree with me?” asked Drysdale, when, having talked himself fairly out of breath, he leaned back, intently contemplating the quaint flickering shadows which the street-lamp produced on the wall of the yet unlighted room.

“All you say is quite true, I doubt not,” answered Philip; “still I cannot speak positively upon any evidence but my own judgment and knowledge of the man.”

“Bravo, Wychnor! Caution very large, and conscientiousness likewise. I always said so,” cried the old man, gently tapping his own head with his forefinger in the two spots indicated by phrenologists as the seats of those qualities. “But the evidence you allude to is just what I want you to get, and that — I may as well say so at once, being no hand at hiding anything — that was the chief reason why I brought Lynedon to you, even more than his own wish of knowing you. Perhaps you might do him some good if you tried.”

“I wish I could, God knows!” cried Philip, earnestly — so earnestly, that Drysdale first looked surprised, and then rose with a sudden impulse to pat his young favourite’s shoulder in a manner expressive of the most genuine approval, saying affectionately,

“Well, I knew you were a kind-hearted, generous fellow as ever breathed. Perhaps I never should have thought it worth my while to study man at all if you had not attracted me to the science. Now, about Paul Lynedon — are you listening to me?”

“Yes, my good friend, with all my heart.”

“Well, do you see that lamp shining through your muslin curtain, what fantastic shadows it casts? I can trace a different shape on the wall every time I come here. But if there were no lamp, mind, there wouldn’t be any shadow at all. Now the lamp may stand for Paul Lynedon’s soul, the curtain, always assuming different folds, for his outward character, modified by temperament, circumstance, or education. And what I want you to do is just this” — Suiting the action to the word, he gently and slowly drew the curtain aside, and the broad, full light illumined the whole wall.

“I will do so, with heaven’s blessing!” cried Wychnor. “For her sake! for her sake!” he murmured in his heart, which knew not how needless was the vow.

Contents

CHAPTER 39

HE WAS JUSTLY accounted a skilful poisoner who destroyed his victims by bouquets of lovely and fragrant flowers. The art has not been lost; nay, it is practised every day by — the world! — BISHOP LATIMER.

Take heed — we are passionate! Our milk of love
Doth turn to wormwood, and that's bitter drinking!
If that ye cast us to the winds — the winds
Will give us their unruly, restless nature:
We whirl, and whirl, and where we settle, Fazio,
But He who ruleth the mad winds can know. — MILMAN.

It will perhaps throw some light on the peculiarities of Lynedon's character, when we relate that he did actually drive to the Regent's Park to fulfil his long-standing and important engagement with — the trees. Whether this was done as a conscience-salve, or as a safeguard against any chance that might betray to Wychnor the insincerity of his excuse, is needless to explain. Probably the act was compounded of both motives.

He was not quite satisfied with his visit. From it he had expected much, having some time previously listened with too credulous ears to Mr. Pennythorne's grandiloquent description of the immense connection "his excellent friend Wychnor" possessed among the county families in — shire. Added thereto, Paul had a faint recollection of seeing the name Wychnor on some monument or other during his walk through L — Cathedral with Eleanor Ogilvie. He felt vexed that his own foolish sensitiveness about that ridiculous affair should have made him change the subject without trying to discover from Philip his chances as M.P. for the city of L — . For he had quite determined to plunge into public life, as the only resource against the ennui that was creeping over him. And, being now some years past thirty, he had come to the conclusion that life was one long sham, and that there was no such thing as love in it at all; or friendship either.

Nevertheless, there seemed something in Wychnor that he liked; something which touched a chord in his better self: There never was a false character yet, that did not feel some of its cumbrous disguises drop from it on coming into contact with a true one. That night he was more like the Paul Lynedon of Summerwood — the Paul Lynedon whom Eleanor liked, whom Katharine so madly worshipped — than he had been for years.

He had no evening engagement, so he turned into the Opera. Music was still his passion — still, as it had ever been, the spell which unlocked all his purer and higher feelings. Perhaps this was the reason that in his present frame of mind he felt attracted within its influence, and half-congratulated himself that, being unlikely to meet any one he knew, he could sit and enjoy "Anna Bolena" to the fullest extent. It was rather a disagreeable surprise when, as he passed the entrance-hall, he heard himself addressed by name. Turning round, he saw a face which, although it had altered

considerably from the fresh charm of youth to the coarseness of mere physical beauty, he recognised at once as Hugh Ogilvie's.

"Quite glad to shake hands with you once more, Mr. Lynedon — really delighted."

"The pleasure is mutual," answered Paul, cordially. "Mr. Ogilvie, how well you are looking!"

"Of course. How could I help it? But won't you come and speak to Katharine?"

"Is she here — Miss Ogilvie — Mrs. Ogilvie, I mean," cried Lynedon, recollecting himself, and looking rather awkward.

"Ha, ha! Don't apologise. So you heard of our marriage? Well, let me introduce you over again to *my wife*" — and Hugh looked towards a lady who was behind, leaning on the arm, not of her husband, but of some other gentleman— "my wife, Mrs. Ogilvie!" At the sound of her name she turned slowly round, and Paul Lynedon and Katharine stood face to face.

He was startled — almost confused — at least as much so as was possible for such a finished gentleman to be. Could that magnificent creature really be the little Katharine with whom he had flirted, years ago? "Good heavens!" thought he, "how beautiful she is!"

Well might he think so, even though the features were white and still as marble, and the dark eyes seemed cold, proud, passionless. Passionless! as if such orbs could ever be thus, except in seeming — as if such lips, whose delicate curves were made to tremble with every breath of emotion, could be thus firmly compressed into apparent calmness, except by the strong will which is born with every strong passion. Katharine was beautiful, dazzlingly beautiful; and Lynedon not only saw it with his eyes but felt it in his heart. He looked at her as he had never yet looked at any woman — with a sensation less of admiration than of worship. He could have knelt down before her, as in his days of youthful enthusiasm before some pictured ideal in Greek sculpture or Italian art. When she gave him her hand, the touch of the ungloved fingers thrilled him — perhaps because they were cold and statue-like, even as the face. He quite forgot his graceful courtesies, and bowed without a single compliment. Only he looked at her with one look — the look of old — implying admiration — reverence — tenderness. She met it. Angel of mercy! how much a woman can bear, and live!

There was the faintest quivering about her mouth, and then it was firmly set, and the proud head was lifted higher, haughtier than ever, as Katharine Ogilvie said, "My husband and I have much pleasure in this unexpected meeting, Mr. Lynedon."

Her *husband*! Paul had quite forgotten the fact for the moment. That glorious woman the wife of such a fellow as Hugh! He did not like to think of it. If Katharine meant by this distant, proud salutation to show him the change that had come between them, assuredly she should have her wish fulfilled. He turned away — coloured slightly, and biting his lip with vexation. He struggled a little, though, and said in his old manner — the Sir Charles Grandison manner, as Katharine had called it at Summerwood— "Allow me to congratulate two old friends on having thus added to their own happiness. That such is the case, no one who looks at them can doubt."

"You really think so! Well, I am sure we do seem very happy; don't we, Katharine? And so we are, though it is long past the honeymoon." And Hugh, with an air half shy, half pleased, edged nearer to his wife, so as to cast into shadow the individual who formed her escort — a mere "walking gentleman," whom it is needless to describe, except by mentioning his name — Mr. Whyte Browne. He politely fell back, and Katharine took her husband's offered arm. But she leaned on it with an air of indifference, just as she would have done on a chair, a table, or any

other article of furniture belonging to her. Nevertheless Hugh looked exceedingly gratified and proud.

"What do you think of my wife? She is rather altered from the little girl you knew at Summerwood, eh?" he said, in an audible whisper to Paul, who answered aloud,

"Indeed, pleasant as was my past recollection of — of Miss Ogilvie — it is almost obliterated by the sight of Mrs. Ogilvie. I should hardly have recognised her." — Katharine bowed. There was a momentary curl of the lip and contraction of the brow, and then the face recovered its usual expression. Hugh patted her hand, but in a few moments after she disengaged it on some trifling excuse, and stood alone.

Just then the orchestra within began the overture, and Hugh made a restless movement.

"We shall be late, and you know, Katharine, you always scold me then — that is, I don't mean scolding, but only a little gentle reproach, which we married men understand well. It's rather nice than otherwise, though, Lynedon — if you only knew."

Paul crushed his heel on the floor and made no answer.

"We will pass on, Hugh, if you wish," said Mrs. Ogilvie. "Have you a stall, Mr. Lynedon? Otherwise we shall be happy to find room for you in our box." She gave the invitation with the dignified indifference of one who was accustomed to take upon herself that duty, casting only a passing glance at her acquiescent husband, who echoed:

"Oh yes! we shall be very happy, as Katharine says. Pray come, Lynedon."

Lynedon assented with evident pleasure. Then first, over the proud impassive beauty of Mrs. Ogilvie's face, there came a flashing smile that kindled it up like a lightning glare. In this smile were triumph, scorn, and revenge, with a delirious joy pervading all. It lasted a moment, and faded; but not before Lynedon had seen it, and had felt for the second time that strange sensation of being cowed and humbled before the very feet of this woman.

"Perhaps you will take care of Mrs. Ogilvie, while I get a book of the opera," said the husband; and once more Paul touched the hand which had before sent such a thrill through his frame. Lying on his arm it looked the same childish hand which he had many a time toyed with and admired. He thought of this now, and longed to do the same again; but on it sparkled the warning symbol — the wedding ring. It was too late!

Paul Lynedon was a man of quick impulses. Of his numerous small *affaires de cœur*, two-thirds had been what he would probably have called "love at first sight," — as if such passing enchainments of sense or fancy were not desecrations of that holy word. Had he seen Mrs. Ogilvie as a stranger at opera or ball, he would probably have conceived for her this idle passion of the moment. No wonder, then, that meeting her now in the zenith of beauty, and remembering the old times when his vanity had amused itself with her girlish admiration of him, the past and present mingled together and created a strange and new interest in Lynedon's breast. Before an hour had passed, during which he sat beside her in the opera-box, listening with her to the rich music, which contributed not a little to the bewildering charm of the moment, Paul began to drink in her every look and tone, and feel the deepest chords of his being respond to her fascinations.

For she was fascinating — she wished to be so! In a short space the frigid dignity of her demeanour melted away, and she became the beautiful, winning, dazzling creature who for some months had been the very cynosure of the circle wherein Mrs. Lancaster and her set convolved. She talked, now with brilliancy, now with softness.

Of all her conversation Lynedon had the complete monopoly, for Mr. Whyte Browne had mysteriously vanished, and Hugh Ogilvie was always half asleep between the acts of an opera — he said the noise and light made him drowsy. He was too much accustomed to see his wife receive constant attentions and engross all conversation, to mind it in the least. Besides, poor Hugh's simple, unexacting, contented love was never crossed by the shadow of jealousy. He composed himself to sleep in the corner, with an apology about the long ride he had taken that morning, and left his wife and Paul to amuse each other.

There is no spell more overwhelming, than for two people to whom music is a feeling, a passion, to sit together listening as with one soul to the same delicious strain: the rapt attention — the heart-thrilling pause — and then the melting silence that comes afterwards, when eyes meet as if saying mutely, "We both feel — therefore we are one."

This strong sympathy existed between Katharine and Paul. When the act ended, he turned to her, and saw, not the bewitching lady of fashion, whose very art and coquetry seemed charming, but the deep-souled woman, in whose heaving bosom and tremulous lip a world of passionate feeling was revealed. It struck the one true chord in Paul Lynedon's mercurial nature, and his tone changed from sparkling wit and fulsome compliment to earnestness and respect.

"You love music as much as ever, I see. You have not changed in that, though in everything else."

"Have I changed? — ah, I suppose so — we all do!" said Katharine; and a smile — first of scorn, then of well-assumed sweetness — wreathed itself round her mouth. But the hand which hung unseen among the folds of her dress was clenched so convulsively, that the rose it held fell crushed to pieces on the floor.

"Even so," pursued Lynedon, with a curious mixture of affectation and real feeling; "but allow me to quote, or rather misquote, the words of our dear old Shakspeare, and say,

Nothing in you that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange.

Katharine raised her graceful head. "You would imply the need there was for a change, and you are right, Mr. Lynedon; no one can be more conscious than myself of the deficiencies of my girlhood." There was a bitterness even in the half-jesting speech; and Paul felt the edge of his elegant compliment blunted. He was engaging in an attack wherein such light weapons would not do. Slightly confused, he quitted the subject, and spoke of the opera.

"I never heard Grisi sing better than to-night. She is a grand creature, but still she is not my ideal of Anne Boleyn. She makes a stormy tragedy-queen of the meek, broken-spirited woman, which is our notion of Anne's character as gathered from history."

"History is a trusty chronicler and unfolder of that easy, well-explained subject — the workings of a woman's heart," answered Katharine, with an irony which sat on her so gracefully and delicately, that Paul was attracted more and more.

"Your meaning is just, Mrs. Ogilvie. Perhaps Grisi's reading is the true one. Still, I wonder how far we may unite romance with history, especially as concerning Percy, Anne's first love before she married King Henry. That fact argues against the poet's creed of female constancy, as much as this passionate Semiramis-like heroine is

opposed to the received doctrine of the results caused by a broken heart — meek patience and resignation, and all that sort of thing." — Paul's mocking speech was silenced by the flash which he saw gleam in Katharine's eyes.

"That is the way you men speak of women!" she cried. "You sting them into misery — you goad them on to evil — and then you retort on them with a jeer. I beg your pardon, Mr. Lynedon," she added, with a sudden alteration of voice and countenance, and a laugh so light and musical that Paul started at the marvellous change. "It is too bad of me to amuse you with these commonplace revilings of your noble sex — a subject on which, of course, no fair lady is expected to speak sincerely."

Paul acknowledged the implied *amende* with a look of extreme gratification. "I am sure, judging by the laws of attraction, Mrs. Ogilvie's acquaintance among my sex can only comprise the very best of mankind."

"I receive the compliment, only returning you the half of it, which seems ingeniously meant for yourself," said Katharine, gaily. "And you must acknowledge that my late speech was an excellent imitation off the stage of that magnificent Diva who is now entering it. So silence!" — She laid her fair jewelled finger on her mouth, round which the most dimpling girlish smiles now danced. Could these lips be the same, the very same, which had looked so white an hour before? Those lips — the very lips which, the last time he saw her — Paul Lynedon had kissed — He could not look at them or at her. He felt dizzy — burning — cold.

Hugh roused himself at the sound of the orchestra, and came forward sleepily, stretching his long limbs.

"Do you find this opera amusing, Katharine? because I can't say I do."

"Possibly not," said the wife. But when she saw Lynedon's eyes rest contemptuously on Hugh, and then on herself with a sort of insinuating pity, her pride rose. "You will acknowledge, Mr. Lynedon, that my husband is very kind in accompanying — I mean, taking me — to the opera whenever I like; the more so as, not understanding music, he does not derive from it the same pleasure as myself."

"You're a good girl, Katharine," said Hugh, thankfully. "And Mr. Lynedon won't think it rude, my going to sleep. He would have done the same if he had ridden to Summerwood and back, on that hard-mouthed brute, Brown Bess."

Paul's satirical smile became one of polite attention under the gleam of Mrs. Ogilvie's compelling eyes.

"Still fond of horses and hunting, Mr. Ogilvie?"

Hugh gave expression to a melancholy grimace. "I can't hunt now we live in town — and Katharine does not like it. I suppose she is right — she always is. Hunting is dangerous, and a married man ought to take care of himself, you know. It's all her love for me."

"Come, you gentlemen can talk presently. At all events, Hugh, pray be silent while Mario sings *Vivi tu*."

"Thanks for the reproof, Mrs. Ogilvie." And Lynedon bent forward attent. Throughout the song he stood leaning against the side of the box in exactly his old attitude, how well she knew it! Behind him, Hugh lounged on a chair in a rather awkward fashion — his elbows on his knees, his chin on his two hands, with shut eyes and half-opened mouth. The two — both what the world would consider fine-looking men — were types of distinct kinds of beauty: the intellectual and the animal. Katharine looked from one to the other, and shuddered. Heaven forgive the wife for that fearful thrill of mingled love and hatred which came over her! She could have

shrieked aloud with despair — almost with terror — for she felt the demon entering her soul!

Yet when the opera ended, and Paul, on bidding adieu, acquiesced eagerly in Hugh's invitation to dine with them the next week, Katharine felt a glow of horrible happiness. Had a river of fire rolled between her and Paul Lynedon, she would have plunged into it — to gain once more the sight of his face — the sound of his voice!

Contents

CHAPTER 40

THE AFFECTIONS, LIKE the conscience, are rather to be led than drawn; and 'tis to be feared that they who marry where they do not love, will love where they do not marry. — FULLER.

Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Ogilvie of Westbank Villa, Regent's Park, were very different from the blithe Katharine and cousin Hugh of Summerwood. The latter, deprived of that physical out-of-door life which comprised his whole existence, was growing dull, stout, lazy. The heavy-looking man who lounged wearily over his late breakfast, the greater part of which became the perquisite of his sole companions in the meal, two pet dogs — was a melancholy contrast to the lithe, active youth who used to come bounding in from his morning ride or walk to the breakfast-table at Summerwood.

"Down, Tiger, down! You must creep out of the way when your mistress comes; she don't like you as she used to do. Heigho! twelve o'clock! Katharine gets later than ever. She always was down by eleven at least," sighed Hugh to himself. "This comes of living in town. Things were not thus at Summerwood." He rang for his wife's maid, and sent up a deprecating message, that if Mrs. Ogilvie could manage it without hurrying herself he would very much like to see her before he took his morning ride. And then in despair he patted his dogs again, thinking with doleful regret of "the life that late he led."

Katharine heard the humble request with an impatient gesture, and turned her fevered cheek again on the pillow. It was indeed a long, long time since Hugh had been blest with that brightest morning sunshine for a young husband — his wife's cheerful smile at his breakfast-board. She, who once used to rise with the lark, now indulged daily in that dreamy stupor, half-sleeping, half-waking, by which, in our troubled and restless moods, we seek to shorten the time and deaden consciousness. It is only the happy and light-hearted that dare to face the morning hours. Katharine Ogilvie shrank from them, and never rose until near mid-day.

Hugh had mounted Brown Bess in despair, and cantered her thrice round the Park before his wife appeared. On his return, he found Katharine still in the breakfast-room. Though during the ride he had in his vexation resolved to give her a right due conjugal lecture, she looked so beautiful in her white morning dress that he quite forgot it, and kissed her heartily instead.

She received his welcome coldly enough. "There, that will do. Why will you bring those two horrid dogs, Hugh? You know they annoy me. Take them away."

"That I will. Here, Tiger! Leo!" He turned them out and shut the door. "I never let them in here except when you are not down to breakfast, Katharine. But that is often enough," he added, disconsolately.

"I cannot help it, with our late hours and visiting."

"Why should we visit so much, then? I'm sure I don't want it. Suppose we were to turn over a new leaf, my darling Katharine?"

"Do not trouble me, Hugh; I told you when I married that I must see a little of the world. You want nothing but dogs and horses; I want many other things — books,

amusements, society — and I cannot be happy without them. Don't judge me by yourself, because my pleasures are very different from yours."

"Ah, yes, I know they are," answered Hugh, with a sigh. "Well, you were always far cleverer than I; it shall be as you like; only if you would let me see a little more of you" —

"Yes, yes. Only do not interrupt me now that I have this new book to read; you may sit down and look at the second volume. Not that it would interest you, except that the author is your old acquaintance, Mr. Wychnor." Hugh seated himself in obedient silence, and turned over the leaves of the book. His gentle forbearance made no impression on his wife. A woman like Katharine had ten times rather be trodden under foot by a man who is her superior, than worshipped as an idol by an inferior. How fearful is the danger into which such an one plunges, when she takes for the guide of her destiny — the husband who ought to be reverenced next to Heaven — one who must perforce be to her not a ruler but a slave!

In the desperation which prompted her sudden marriage, Katharine had never thought of this. She considered not the daily burden of a loveless, unequal yoke — the petty jars — the continual dragging down a strong mind to the weary level of an inferior one. Heaven made woman from man, not man from woman. A great-hearted and good man can lift his wife nearer to his own standard; but by no power on earth can a superior woman elevate her husband's weaker mind. She must sink down to him; all the love in the world will not make him her equal. And if love be not there, woe, woe unto her, for it is a fearful precipice on which she stands!

Mrs. Ogilvie's pride had carried her successfully through the first months of her married life. Young, beautiful, and universally admired as she was, no one had cast upon her the shadow of blame. Her self-respect, if not her love, had covered Hugh's inferiority as with a shield, which made others show him the deference that the wife felt not, but had the grace to simulate. For herself, she received the incense which universally greeted her with such proud indifference, that many men, whom one smile would have brought unworthily to her feet, were content to be driven in chains, like wild tigers harnessed to the car of some Amazonian queen. She let them see — ay, and the world see too — that she would not step from her height for one moment, so as to become their prey. Thus it was with the young wife, until her path was again crossed by the shadow of that terrible love which had made her life's destiny — until she was once more brought within the influence of Paul Lynedon.

Against this influence she now struggled. She felt that already a change had come over her, breaking the dull round of her aimless existence, to escape the inanity of which she had plunged into the excitement of perpetual society. It was as if a gleam of lurid brightness had darted across her sky: the world itself did not look as it had done one little day before. She sought not to analyse her own sensations: she only knew that where there had been darkness there now was light; and if the flash were a blinding flame, she would have lifted her eager eyes to it just the same. Her heart was yet pure enough to be fearless; her sense of a wife's duty was sufficiently strong, she deemed, to stand in the place of a wife's love. And even with regard to Paul Lynedon there had come a change. She worshipped no longer with blind adoration the all-perfect ideal of her girlhood, but with her love's reviving fires mingled a darkening cloud of vengeance. She desired to make him feel what she had herself felt — to drive him mad for her sake, and then fling back upon him the dread "too late."

While, with the book before her eyes, she leaned in her cushioned chair — reading, not the beautiful outpourings of Philip Wychnor's genius, but the fearful writing on her own heart — Katharine heard the name which had once been to her a glad, all-

pervading music. The silent *tête-a-tête* of the husband and wife was broken by Paul Lynedon.

He had last night ingeniously conveyed Mrs. Ogilvie's opera-glass to his own pocket, and now came to express, with his usual indifference to truth, the extreme regret which this fact would have caused him, except indeed for the pleasure of returning the fair owner her property.

Lynedon would have received a welcome, though, without this excuse. Hugh was always glad to see any stray visitor who brightened up his wife's gloomy brow. It is only a happy home that needs no guests within its walls. Paul found Mrs. Ogilvie as beautiful by daylight as under the glare of opera radiance. He had never seen any one who came so near his ideal of womanhood. He admired, too, the very atmosphere in which she moved, her house being filled with indications of its mistress's taste in music, art, and literature. His refined perception at once detected these mute revealings of a woman's mind and character. Struck more and more, he exerted his whole powers of pleasing, and the unfailing charm extended even to Hugh. The trio talked pleasantly for some time on general and individual subjects, and Lynedon heard how Sir Robert and Lady Ogilvie still resided at Summerwood, though the latter was in rather infirm health.

"I cannot be much with mamma now, it is impossible," observed Katharine; "but I have petitioned my sister-in-law to visit her. You remember Eleanor?"

"Of course he does. Why, Lynedon, I used to think you were smitten there."

Paul replied, with great self-possession and indifference, "I feel for Miss Eleanor Ogilvie the same respect which I have for any lady who honours me with her acquaintance."

As he spoke, he caught the searching glance of Katharine, but it glided from his face in a moment. Hugh persisted in his idle jest. "Well, well, I suppose I was mistaken. And so you have got no further than acquaintance with any of the pretty girls you have met? Never expect me to take in that, Lynedon! Why, we heard you were going to be married to a lady abroad — only nobody knew her name. Who said so? — Mrs. Lancaster, was it not, Katharine?"

"I am sorry Mrs. Lancaster should have ascribed to me more happiness than I am likely to attain. I have never yet seen the woman whom I could marry." It was a saving "*could*" — he laid it to his conscience as an atonement for the falsehood. "Mrs. Ogilvie, allow me!" he added, stooping for a book which, in hastily reaching it, she had let fall. He stayed to gather up some dried flowers which were scattered from the open leaves, and so did not see Katharine's face. When he presented the book, she took it with a steady hand and a graceful smiling acknowledgment

"It is a favourite volume of mine, though I have only lately placed it among the list of the books I love," she said. "The author is an acquaintance of ours, a Mr. Wychnor."

"Philip Wychnor — an excellent fellow! I know him, and like him much. How glad I am to know any friend of yours!"

"Indeed we can't exactly call him a friend. We can never get him out here," said Hugh. "Katharine, let us try him once more, and invite him for Thursday. Perhaps Mr. Lynedon might persuade him. I wish Eleanor were here, she would! They two always got on together excellently."

"Tell Mr. Wychnor," said Katharine, "that though it is impossible for Eleanor to be with us on Thursday, I still hope he will come. He must meet her here some day the following week. But stay: I will not trouble you with so long a message. Shall I write — if, as you are going to see him you would kindly deliver my note?"

“To be of use to Mrs. Ogilvie in anything would give me only too much happiness,” was his reply, spoken for once with entire undisguised truth. When, a few minutes after, Lynedon passed out of the house, he drew the delicate missive from his pocket and looked on the handwriting and seal with a lingering loving gaze. He felt that he could have traversed all London to fulfil the slightest wish of Katharine Ogilvie.

The whole way to Philip Wychnor’s abode, her voice rang in his ear — her face flitted before him. He contrived, however, to banish the haunting vision a little; so as to enter into conversation, and efface the evident confusion which his unexpected entrance caused. Paul attributed this to the sudden disturbance he had occasioned in Wychnor’s literary pursuits, and thanked his stars that he was not an author. To shorten his visit he quickly delivered the letter.

“You will go, of course? They are a charming family — the Ogilvies. I feel quite proud to call them all friends, as I am sure you must, since you, I believe, share the same privilege?”

After this remark, Paul looked up for an answer, and received Philip’s half-suppressed “Yes!”

“Mrs. Ogilvie is so anxious to know more of you, and you cannot refuse *her*. Indeed, Mr. Wychnor, you see how desirous we all are for your friendship.”

“*We* all are!” Philip shrank visibly — the careless word seemed to him to imply so much. But there was a cordial frankness in Lynedon’s manner that he could not resist. He remembered, too, the conversation with David Drysdale, and his own promise concerning Paul.

“I shall not see *her*,” he reasoned within himself; “no, I could not bear that. But I will not draw back from this man: I will prove him — I will read his heart, and be satisfied whether he is worthy of her or not. Mr. Lynedon,” he said aloud, “it has of late been rarely my custom to visit, I have neither time nor inclination; but since Mr. and Mrs. Ogilvie desire it, I will come on Thursday.”

“That is right! it will give every one so much pleasure!”

And again Philip’s shrinking fingers were compressed in the warm grasp of his supposed rival. They talked for a few minutes longer on other subjects, and then Paul quitted him.

Philip Wychnor sank back on his chair with a heavy sigh. “It is my doom — I cannot escape. Heaven grant me strength to bear it all!”

Contents

CHAPTER 41

HOW OFTEN — ah, how often ! — between the desire of the heart and its fulfilment lies only the briefest space of time or distance, and yet the desire remains for ever unfulfilled! It is so near that we can touch it with the hand, and yet so far that the eye cannot behold it. — LONGFELLOW.

Oh! for a horse with wings ! — SHAKSPEARE.

"Four years — four years!"

Eleanor murmured these words to herself; in that half-melancholy dreaminess which invariably comes over one of thoughtful nature, when standing, no matter how hopefully, on the brink of what seems a crisis in life's history. The present time appeared a crisis in hers. She was going to London — going where she was sure to meet Philip. Soon the long-affianced lovers would look on each other's face. After such a season of absence, and a brief period of silence, almost estrangement, how would they meet? Eleanor had no doubt, no dread, in her faithful heart; but still she was thoughtful, and when all the preparations for the morrow's journey were completed, she sat down by the window of her little chamber, and watched the twilight shadows deepen on the grey cathedral, saying to herself; over and over again, "Four years — four years!"

It was, indeed, thus long since she had seen Philip. Four years! It seems a short time to maturer age, but to youth it is an eternity. Nineteen and twenty-three? What a gulf often lies between the two periods of existence. The child's heart — many a young girl is at nineteen still a child — is taken away, and in its stead has come the woman's, which must beat on, on, loved or loveless, enjoying or enduring life, until life's end! It is a solemn thing to have travelled so far on the universal road, that we begin to look not only forward but backward — to say, even jestingly, "*When I was a child*." And to some it chances that, in every space thus journeyed over, uprises a spectre, which confronts them with its ghastly face whenever they turn to review the past; — nay, even if they set their faces bravely and patiently to the future, they hear continually behind them its haunting footsteps, mocking each onward tread of theirs, and knelling into their hearts the eternal "no more."

On Eleanor's peaceful life this bitterness had not passed. To her, the "four years" on which she now dreamily mused had brought little outward change. They had flowed on in a quiet, unbroken routine of duties, patiently fulfilled, yet somewhat monotonous. It often seemed hardly a month since she and Philip had sat together that sweet spring morning, beneath the beautiful double cherry-tree on which she now looked. Yet, since then, three times she had watched its budding, leafing, flowering — had watched it *alone*! And the clematis which that same morning, in the playfulness of happy, newly-betrothed lovers, they together planted in memory of the day, had now climbed even to her window, and flung therein a cloud of perfume. It came over her senses wooingly, like the memory of those dear olden times, and of Philip's precious love. She leaned her head against the casement, and drank in the fragrance, until her eyes filled with happy tears.

"I shall see him, I shall see him! — soon, ah, soon!" she whispered; while her fancy conjured up his likeness, as she used to watch him, lying on the grass dreamily in summer noons, with the light falling on his fair hair and his delicate, almost boyish cheek. Picturing him thus, Eleanor half smiled to herself, remembering that Philip was no boy now — that four years must have given him quite the port and appearance of a man. He would be, ay, almost eight-and-twenty now, and he had wrestled with the world, and gained therein fame and success. Ah, he would not look like the Philip whose boyish grace had been her ideal of beauty for so long. He must be changed in that at least. She was almost sorry, yet proud to think how great he had become. And she —

Eleanor did not often think of herself, especially her outward self; but she did now. Yet it was still with reference to him. Was she worthy of him? In her heart — her faithful, loving heart — she knew she was. But in external things? When she thought of Philip — living in London, gay, courted, moving among the talented and beautiful — and herself, a simple country girl, who had spent this long time in complete retirement and patient attendance on querulous age, Eleanor was struck by a passing feeling of anxiety. She was no heroine, but a very woman. She rose up and looked at herself in the mirror. It reflected a face, not beautiful, but full of a sweetness more winning even than beauty. Perhaps the cheek was less peach-like and had a straighter curve, and on the mouth, instead of girlhood's dimples, sat a meek calm smile. The eyes — ah, here Time had given, rather than taken away! — he had left still the true heart shining from them, and had added thereto the deep, thoughtful soul of matured womanhood.

Something of this their owner herself saw, for she smiled once more, murmuring, "He used to love my eyes — I think he will love them still! And he will find only too soon how dearly they love him," she added, as her heart, nigh oppressed with the weight of its joy and tenderness, relieved itself with what sounded almost like a sigh.

"I will not sit thinking any more, but try and find something to do," said Eleanor, as she roused herself from her dreamy mood, and began to arrange with feminine care her "properties" — already packed up for the gay visit which was to break her monotonous life. But even in this occupation the one thought followed her. She was always neat and tasteful in her dress, as a woman should be; but now she felt conscious of having selected her wardrobe with more than usual care. The colours Philip had liked — the style of attire that once pleased his fancy — ever a poet's fancy, graceful and ideal — all were remembered. It was a trifling — perhaps an idle thought — but it was natural and womanly; showing too how Love binds up into itself all life's aims and purposes, great and small; how it can dare the world's battle, and sit smiling at the hearth — is at once a crowned monarch, a mighty hero, and a little playful child.

When Eleanor's hands had resolutely busied themselves for some minutes, they again drooped listlessly on her lap, as she sat down on the floor, and once more became absorbed in pleasant musings. She was roused by a summons from Davis. Mrs. Breynton "wished to know whether Miss Ogilvie intended to give her any of her company this evening; which she might well do, seeing it was the last."

"You must excuse the message, Miss Eleanor," said the old servant; "but I don't wonder at my lady's being cross; she will miss you so much; indeed, we all shall. But I am glad you are going;— 'is hard for a young creature to be kept moping here. I hope you'll have a pleasant visit, Miss Ogilvie, though the house will be dull without your pretty face — God bless it!"

Eleanor thanked her, almost tearfully, for her heart was very full.

“And you’ll come back as blithe and merry as” — the old woman paused for a simile— “as my canary there, which poor Master Phi — Oh! Miss Ogilvie, perhaps in that great world of London you may hear something of somebody I daren’t speak about, though goodness knows I’ve never forgotten him — never!” And the unfailing apron was lifted to poor Davis’s eyes.

Eleanor could not speak; but, as she passed hastily out of the room, she pressed warmly the hard brown hand of the faithful, affectionate creature, who remembered Philip still.

Mrs. Breynton sat in her arm-chair, knitting vehemently at the eternal quilt, which was now promoted to be nearly the sole occupation of its aged projector, whose dimmed eyes and trembling fingers grew daily less active. To-night they seemed incompetent even to the simple work to which they applied themselves with such indignant energy, for the perpetually unroved square seemed a very Penelope’s web. At length, when the old lady had knitted away her wrath and her cotton, she looked up, and saw Eleanor sitting near her.

“Oh, I thought you intended to stay up-stairs all the evening. Pray, how long is it since you troubled yourself to come down?”

“I have been here some minutes,” was the gentle answer.

“Why did you not speak, then?”

“I did once, but you were too busy to hear me, I think. Now shall I take your work away and ring for tea?” — Mrs. Breynton assented, muttered something about the chill autumn evening, and turned her chair opposite the fire, so that her face was completely hid. Eleanor went about the light household duty — now wholly hers — with an agitated heart, for there came upon her the thought, natural to the eve of a journey — and such a journey — How would be the return? When she again sat at Mrs. Breynton’s board, would it be in peace and hope, or — She drove away the fear: she could not — would not think of it. She would still believe in Philip, and in Philip’s aunt.

“Shall I move your chair hither, or bring your tea to the work-table?” she said, trying to steady her voice to its usual tone of affectionate attention.

“Bring it here. I may as well get used to taking tea alone,” muttered Mrs. Breynton. But when Eleanor came beside her, to show for the last time the simple act of careful tendance to which she had been so long accustomed, the harsh voice softened.

“Ah! I shall have no one to make tea for me to-morrow night! Indeed, I can’t tell what I shall do without you, Eleanor.”

And instead of taking the offered cup, she gazed wistfully in the sweet young face that was now becoming troubled and tearful.

“Dear friend — dear Mrs. Breynton, shall I stay?”

“No, no; I have no right to keep you; of course your brother wants you, and you yourself must be delighted to leave this dull place.”

“Nay; was it not by your own consent — your own desire?”

“I desired nothing. What made you think so?” cried Mrs. Breynton, angrily. There was, indeed, a strange and painful conflict in her mind. Fearful lest all hope of winning back her erring yet cherished nephew should be lost, and pierced deeper and deeper with a feeling almost akin to remorse, she had determined to risk all chance of discovery, and let the lovers meet. Yet when the time came she trembled. Besides, she did not like to part even for a season with the gentle creature who had become almost necessary to her comfort; age can ill bear any change or any separation. But for all that, Eleanor must go; it was the only chance of bringing back him for whom Mrs. Breynton’s pride and love alike yearned continually. Her feelings changed hourly —

momently — with an impetuosity that even her yet energetic mind could not wholly conceal.

"Eleanor," she continued, "do not mistake me; you go by your own choice, and your friend's wish; I have no right to interfere with either. But you will come back?"

"I will, indeed! And, oh! Mrs. Breynton, if" — Eleanor sank down beside her. There was no mistaking the plea of that earnest face — the one plea which her whole life of duty and tenderness silently urged. But Mrs. Breynton turned hastily and coldly away.

"Rise, and go to your place, my dear: we will talk no more now." And for an hour afterwards, by a violent control which showed how strong still was her lingering pride, the Dean's widow maintained her usual indifference, talked of common things, and made no allusion to the journey or the parting. At last she took out her watch, and desired Eleanor, as usual, to call the servants in to prayers.

The girl obeyed, placed the cushion and the open book, as she had done every night for so long, and knelt down, with her eyes overflowing.

Mrs. Breynton read the accustomed form in her accustomed tone. The servants gone, she and Eleanor stood alone.

"My dear, is everything prepared for your journey tomorrow?"

Eleanor assented mutely; she could not speak.

"You will take as escort either Davis or James, which you choose; either can return next day."

"Oh no, you are too kind," said Eleanor, who knew what it cost the precise old lady to part, for ever so short a time, with either of these her long-trusted domestics; "indeed, I can travel very well alone."

"But I do not choose my child, my adopted *daughter*" — she laid a faint emphasis on the word— "to do any such thing. The matter is decided."

Pride struggled with tenderness in her manner, and still she stood irresolute. The old butler entered with lighted candles.

"James," said his mistress, "you will accompany Miss Ogilvie to her journey's end, with all care and attention, as though she were my own child." And then, finding the last minute had indeed come, Mrs. Breynton took her candle.

"My dear Eleanor, as you depart so early, we had better say good-bye to-night." She held out her hand, but Eleanor fell on her neck, weeping bitterly. Mrs. Breynton began to tremble.

"Hush, my dear! you must not try me so; I am old, I cannot bear agitation." She sank on a chair, struggled a moment, and then stretched out her hands.— "Eleanor — poor Isabel's Eleanor — forgive me. Come!" And for the second time in her life, the childless widow folded to her bosom the young creature from whom, in her old age, she had learned, and was learning more and more, the blessed lesson, to love. In a few minutes the emotion passed, and she rose up.

"Now, my child, I must go. Give me your arm to my room door, for I am weak and exhausted."

"And you will not let me see you in the morning?"

"No, my dear, no! — better thus! You will come back at the two months' end. You promise?" And her searching eyes brought the quick colour into Eleanor's cheek.

"I promise!" She might have said more, but Mrs. Breynton moved hastily on to her chamber. At the door she turned round, kissed the girl's cheek, and bade God bless her.

Then from Eleanor's full heart burst the cry— "Bless him — even him also! O dearest friend, let me take with me a blessing for Philip!" — At the name Mrs.

Breynton's countenance became stone once more. All her wrath, all her sternness, all her pride, were gathered up in one word— "No!" — She closed the door, and Eleanor saw her not again. But for hours she heard the feeble, aged footstep pacing the next chamber — and even in her heaviness the girl was not without hope.

Eleanor awoke at dawn, startled from her restless sleep by one of those fantastic dreams that will sometimes come on the eve of any great joy, in which we rehearse the long-expected bliss, and find that, by the intervention of some strange "cloud of dole" it has been changed to pain. Philip's betrothed dreamed of that meeting, the hope of which, waking, had filled her whole soul with happiness almost too great to bear. She saw him, but his face was cold — changed. He turned away without even a clasp of the hand. Then the dream became wild and unconnected — though it was always Philip — only Philip. She was again with him, and the ground seemed suddenly cloven, while a tempestuous river rushed howling between them; it grew into a mighty sea, above which she saw him standing on a pinnacle of rock, his averted face lifted to the sky, his deaf ear heeding not the despairing cry which she sent up from the midst of the engulphing waters.

With that cry she awoke, to find — with oh! what thankful joy! — that these were but dreams. Suddenly, like a burst of sunshine, the joyful truth broke upon her, that this day, this very day, she would journey towards Philip — a brief space, perchance a few hours, and they would meet! Once more burst from her inmost heart the rapturous murmur— "I shall see him! I shall see him!" And Eleanor turned her face on the pillow, weeping tears of happiness.

Oh, the thrill of a remembered joy that comes with waking — how wild, how deep it is! Only second to that keenest pang, the first waking consciousness of misery.

Soon Eleanor rose, saying to herself the old adage — she had an innocent superstition lurking in the depths of her simple heart— "Morning tears bring evening smiles;" and she thought, if the tears were so sweet, what must be the bliss of her smiles! So she made ready for her departure with a cheerful spirit, over which neither the painful dream, nor the still more painful remembrance of Mrs. Breynton's last words, could throw more than a passing cloud.

As though to confirm this joy, Davis knocked at her chamber-door with an affectionate farewell message from Mrs. Breynton, and a letter. It was from Sir Robert Ogilvie, begging his niece to hasten her journey, so as to accompany him that night to a party at his daughter's house. "It was Katharine's especial wish," he said; and Katharine's wish had long become law with father, mother, and husband too. "Eleanor could easily reach Summerwood by the afternoon," her uncle continued, "thanks to the railway — the only useful innovation that the hateful march-of-intellect Radicals had ever made."

Eleanor read Katharine's enclosed letter of warm invitation. It bore the following postscript:— "I especially wish you to come, because you will be likely to meet one who will doubtless be as much pleased to meet you — your old acquaintance, Mr. Wychnor."

What a world of joy lay in that idly-scribbled line!

"To-night, to-night!" cried Eleanor, as, bewildered — almost stunned — by the certainty of the coming bliss, she sank on the bed and hid her face. Thence, gliding to her knees, her first impulse was one, the sacredness of which received no taint from its total simplicity — a thanksgiving lifted to Him who gave Eve unto Adam, and Sarah unto Abraham, for thus bringing her face to face with one whom — as sacredly as if the marriage words had already been spoken — Eleanor regarded as her husband.

Once again, ere the last moment of departure came, Eleanor entered her little chamber, shut the door, and prayed that she might return thither in safety and in joy; and then, all bitterness reconciled, pass from this home of patient duty into another far dearer, and thus faithfully fulfil woman's highest, holiest destiny, that of a loving and devoted wife. And as she arose, the sun burst through the grey morning clouds, and the cathedral chimes rang out joyfully, yet with a sweet solemnity. Their sound followed her like a parting blessing.

And so, borne cheerily on the "horse with wings," which to her was as welcome and as full of poetry as that dream-creation of Imogen's desire, Eleanor went to Summerwood.

Contents

CHAPTER 42

I saw it— 'Twas no foul vision — with unblinded eyes
I saw it! his fond hands were wreathed in hers.
He gazed upon her face,
Even with those fatal eyes no woman looks at.
Mayst thou
Ne'er know the racking anguish of this hour —
The desolation of this heart! MILMAN.

The circle assembled in Hugh Ogilvie's drawing-room was the very perfection of a social dinner-party. Everybody knew everybody, or nearly so. There was Mrs. Lancaster flitting about as usual in her gossamer drapery, and her shadow of a husband still hovering beside her — the reflection of her glory. There was David Drysdale pursuing his new science — the study of humanity in general; with especial reference to Paul Lynedon, whose movements he watched with Argus eyes. The object of his scrutiny, however, was unconscious of the fact. Paul moved hither and thither, casting in all directions his graceful and brilliant talk; but for the first time in his life found himself quite indifferent as to the sensation he created among the general company. They seemed to him like a moving phantasmagoria of shadows; among them he saw but one form, heard but one voice — and these were Katharine Ogilvie's.

She knew this too: though he did not keep constantly at her side, she felt his eyes upon her wherever she moved. She was conscious that not one word from her lips, not one silken stirring of her robe, escaped the notice of Paul Lynedon. The thought made her eyes glitter with triumph. She felt that she had only to stretch forth her arm, to lay her delicate hand on the lion's mane, and, Ariadne-like, she would ride victoriously on the beautiful Terror which had once trampled on her peace. Exultingly she displayed the power which had gained her universal homage — the lofty and careless defiance that only subdued the more.

Yet, could any eyes have pierced through that outward illusion, they might perchance have seen behind the queen-like, radiant woman, the shadow of an angel — the angel of Katharine's lost youth — mourning for her future. And ever and anon, piercing through the clouds that were fast darkening over the wife's soul, came a low whisper, warning her that even an erring marriage-vow becomes sacred for ever; and that to break it, though only in thought, is a sin which oceans of penitent tears can scarcely wash away.

To none of her guests was Mrs. Ogilvie more gracefully courteous than to the silent, reserved Philip Wychnor. During the half-hour that elapsed before dinner, her magic influence melted away many of those frosty coverings in which he unconsciously enveloped himself in society. A man instinctively lays his soul open before a woman, much more than before one of his own sex; and had Katharine been less absorbed in the struggles of her own heart, she might have read much of Wychnor's even without his knowledge.

At length there mingled in her winning speech the name — so loved, yet so dreaded by her hearer.

"I hope, after all, that you will meet your old friend Eleanor to-night. My father told me she was expected at Summerwood to-day, so I entreated him to bring her hither."

Philip made no answer: despite his iron will, he felt stifling — gasping for air.

"You are not well — sit down," observed the young hostess, kindly; "I ought not to have kept you standing talking so long."

He sank on a chair, muttering something about "having been overworked of late."

"I feared so; indeed, you must take care of yourself, Mr. Wychnor; I will not say for the world's sake, but for that of your many friends. Amongst which I hope to be numbered one day; and when Eleanor comes" —

He turned away, and his eyes encountered Lynedon's. The latter was apparently listening eagerly to each word that fell from Mrs. Ogilvie's lips. Philip fancied the spell lay in the sound of the beloved name, when it was only in the voice that uttered it. But he had not time to collect his thoughts, when the drawing-room door opened and Hugh burst in, with somewhat of the old cheerfulness brightening his heavy features.

"Katharine, make haste; they're both come, your father and our dear Nelly. I'm so glad!"

"And so am I," answered Katharine, for once echoing her husband; and, making her own graceful excuses to her guests, she glided from the room.

As she did so, Philip looked up with a wild, bewildered air, and again caught the eager gaze of Paul Lynedon fixed on the closing door. He started from his seat, conscious only of a vague desire to fly — anywhere, on any pretext, so as to escape the torture of the scene. But Drysdale intercepted him.

"Eh, my young friend, what's this? Where are you going?"

"I — I cannot tell" —

"Nothing the matter? not ill?" And, following the old man's affectionate, anxious look, came the curious and surprised glance of Lynedon. Beneath it Philip's agony sank into a deadly calm.

Once again he said in his heart, "it is my doom. I cannot fly; I must endure." He had just strength to creep to a corner of the room, apart from all. There he sat down and waited in patient, dull despair for the approach of her whom he still loved dearer than his life.

There were voices without the door. Lynedon sprang to open it. It was in answer to *his* greeting that Philip's half-maddened ear distinguished the first tone of that beloved voice, unheard for years except in dreams. Soft it was, and sweet as ever, and tremulous with gladness.

Gladness! when she knew that he, once loved, and then so cruelly forsaken, was in her presence, and heard all!

"Come, let her hand go, Lynedon," said Hugh's voice. "Here are other friends, Nelly."

She advanced, pale but smiling — no set smile of forced courtesy, but one which betokened a happy heart; her own, her very own smile, shining in eyes and lips, and making her whole face beautiful

Philip saw it, and then a cold mist seemed to enwrap him — through which he beheld men and women, and moving lights, indistinct and vague. Yet still he sat, leaning forward, as though attentive to the last dull saying of his dull neighbour, Mr. Lancaster.

And Eleanor! Oh! if he had known that in all the room she saw only one face — *his*/ — that she passed Lynedon and the rest, hardly conscious of their greetings — that through them all, her whole soul flew to him — him only — in a transport of rejoicing that they had met at last!

Yet, when she stood before him — when she held out her hand, she could not speak one word. She dared not even lift her eyes, lest she should betray the joy, which was almost too great to conceal. It blanched her smiling lips, made her frame tremble, and her voice grow measured and cold.

And thus they met, in the midst of strangers, with one passing clasp of the hand, one formal greeting; and then either turned away, to hide from the world and from each other at once the agony and the gladness.

For in Eleanor's heart the gladness lingered still. A momentary pang she had felt, that they should meet thus coldly, even in outward show — but still she doubted him not. Philip must be right — must be true. A few minutes more, and he would surely find some opportunity to steal to her side — to give her one word — one smile, which might show that they were still to one another as they had been for years — nay, all their lives! So she glided from the group around Katharine, to calm her beating heart, and gather strength even to bear her joy.

She sat down, choosing a place where she could see him who was to her all in the room — all in the world! She watched him continually, talking or in repose. He was greatly altered; — much older; the face harsher in its lines; but he was her Philip still. Gradually, amidst all the change, the former likeness grew, and these four years of bitter separation seemed melted into nothing. She saw again the playmate of her childhood — the lover of her youth — her chosen husband. She waited tremblingly for him to come to her, to say only in one look that he remembered the sweet past.

But he never came! She saw him move, talking to one guest and then another. At last they all left him, and he stood alone. He would surely seek her now? No, he did not even turn his eyes, but sank wearily into a chair; and above the murmur of heedless voices there came to Eleanor his heavy sigh.

She started: one moment more, and she would have cast aside all maidenly pride, and crept nearer to him, only to look in his face, and say "Philip!" But Mrs. Lancaster approached him, and she heard him answering some idle compliments with the calmness learnt — in the heartless world, she thought — knowing not that love's agony gives to its martyrs a strength, almost superhuman, first to endure and, then enduring, to conceal.

She saw him speak and smile — ay, smile — and an icy fear crept over her. It seemed the shadow of that terrible "no more," which sometimes yawns between the present and past. Let us pray rather that our throbbing hearts may grow cold in the tomb, than that we should live to feel them freezing slowly in our bosoms, and be taught by their altered beatings to say calmly, "*The time has been*!"

It so chanced that Paul Lynedon led Eleanor down to dinner. He did it merely because she happened to stand near Mrs. Ogilvie. The latter had turned from him and taken the arm of David Drysdale, with whom she was already on the friendliest of terms. Katharine was always so especially charming in her manner to old people.

These formed the group at the head of the table; Philip sat far apart, having placed himself where he could not see the face of either Paul or Eleanor. But their tones came to him amid the dazzling, bewildering mist of light and sound; every word, especially the rare utterances of Eleanor's low voice, piercing distinct and clear through all.

Philip's neighbour was Mrs. Lancaster, who, now feeling herself sinking from that meridian altitude which, as the central sun of a petty literary sphere, she had long maintained, caught at every chance of ingratiating herself with any rising author. She mounted her high horse of sentiment and feeling, and cantered it gently on through a long criticism of Wychnor's last work. Then, finding the chase was vain, for that he only answered in polite monosyllables, she tried another and less lofty style of conversation — remarks and tittle-tattle, concerning her friends absent and present. She was especially led to this by the mortification of seeing her former *protégé*, Paul Lynedon, so entirely escaped from under her wing.

"How quiet Lynedon has grown!" she said sharply. "I never saw such a change. Why, he used to be quite a lion in society. How silent he sits between Mrs. Ogilvie and her sister! By-the-by, perhaps that may account for his dulness to-night."

"Do you think so?" answered Philip, absently.

"Ah, the affair was before your time, Mr. Wychnor," said the lady, mysteriously; "but some years ago, at Summerwood, I really imagined it would have been a match between Miss Eleanor Ogilvie and Paul Lynedon there. How he admired her singing, and herself too! Not that *I* ever could see much in either; but love is blind, you know."

"Mrs. Lancaster, allow me to take wine with you," interrupted Paul, who from the other end of the table had accidentally caught the sound of his own name united with Eleanor's, and was in mortal fear lest Mrs. Lancaster's tenacious memory should be recalling her former *badinage* on the subject.

Philip sat silent. His cup of agony seemed overflowing. But ere his lips approached the brim, an angel came by and touched it, changing the gall into a healing draught. On the young man's agonised ear came the mention of one name — the name of the dead. What matter though it was uttered by the frivolous tongue of Mrs. Lancaster, to whom Leigh Pennythorne and his sufferings were merely a vehicle for sentimental pity! Even while she pronounced the name, surely some heavenly ministrant caught up the sound and caused it to fall like balm on Philip Wychnor's heart. The casual words carried his thoughts away from all life's tortures to the holy peace of death. They brought back to him the dark still room, where, holding the boy's damp hand, he had talked with him, solemnly, joyfully, of the glorious after-world. Then came floating across his memory the calm river sunset — the last look at the moon-illumined peaceful face, on whose dead lips yet lingered the smile of the parted soul. Even now, amidst this torturing scene, the remembrance lifted Philip's heart from its earthly pains towards the blessed eternity where all these should be counted but as a drop in the balance.

If the thorns of life pierce keenest into the poet's soul, Heaven and Heaven's angels are nearer to him than to the worldly man. Philip Wychnor grew calmer, and his thoughts rose upward, where, far above both grief and joy, amidst the glories of the Ideal and the blessedness of the Divine, a great and pure mind sits serene. Thither, when they have endured awhile, does the All-compassionate, even in life, lift the souls of these His children, and give them to stand, Moses-like, on the lonely height of this calm Pisgah. Far below lies the wilderness through which their weary feet have journeyed. But God turns their faces from the past, and they behold no more the desert, but the Canaan.

There was a fluttering of silken dresses as the hostess and her fair companions glided away. Philip did not look up; or he might have caught fixed on his face a gaze so full of mournful, anxious tenderness, that it would have pierced through the thickest clouds of jealous doubt and suspicion. He felt that Eleanor passed him by, though his eyes were lifted no higher than the skirt of her robe. But on her left hand,

which lay like a snowflake among the black folds, he saw a ring, his own gift — his only one, for love like theirs needed no outward token. She had promised on her betrothal-eve that it should never be taken off, save for the holier symbol of marriage. How could she — how dared she — wear it now! One gleam of light shot almost blindingly through Philip's darkness, as he beheld; the deep calm fled from his heart, and it was again racked with suspense. He sat motionless; the loud talk and laughter of Hugh Ogilvie, and the vapid murmurings of Mr. Lancaster, floating over him confusedly.

Paul Lynedon had already disappeared from the dining-room. He could not drive from his mind the vague fear lest his foolish affair with Eleanor Ogilvie should be bruited about in some way or another. He longed to stop Mrs. Lancaster's ever-active tongue. And judging feminine nature by the blurred and blotted side on which he had viewed it for the last few years, he felt considerable doubt even of Eleanor herself. If she had betrayed, or should now betray, especially to Katharine Ogilvie, the secret of his folly! He would not have such a thing happen for the world! Wherefore, he stayed not to consider; for Paul's impetuous feelings were rarely subjected to much self-examination. Acting on their impulse now, he bent his pride to that stronger passion which was insensibly stealing over him; and first assuring himself that his fellow-adventurer in the drawing-room, David Drysdale, was safely engrossing the conversation of their beautiful hostess, Lynedon carelessly strolled towards an inner apartment divided from the rest by a glass-door, through which he saw Eleanor, sitting thoughtful and alone.

"Now is my time," said Paul to himself, "but I must accomplish the matter with finesse and diplomacy. What a fool I was, ever to have brought myself into such a scrape!"

He walked with as much indifference as he could assume through the half-open door, which silently closed after him. He was rather glad of this, for then there would be no eavesdroppers. Eleanor looked up, and found herself alone with the lover she had once rejected. But there was no fear of his again imposing on her the same painful necessity; for a more careless, good-humoured smile never sat on the face of the most indifferent acquaintance, than that which Paul Lynedon's now wore.

"Do I intrude on your meditations, Miss Ogilvie? If so, send me away at once, which will be treating me with the candour of an old friend. But I had rather claim the privilege in a different way, and be allowed to stay and have a little pleasant chat with you."

Eleanor would fain have been left to solitude: but through life she had thought of others first — of herself last. It gave her true pleasure, that by meeting Lynedon's frankness with equal cordiality she could atone to the friend for the pain once given to the lover. So she answered kindly, "Indeed I shall be quite glad to renew our old sociable talks."

"Then we are friends — real, open-hearted, sincere friends," answered Paul, returning her smile with one of equal candour. "And," he added, in a lower tone, "to make our friendship sure, I trust Miss Ogilvie has already forgotten that I ever had the presumption to aspire to more?"

Eleanor replied, with mingled sweetness and dignity,

"I remember only what was pleasurable in our acquaintance. Be assured that the pain, which I am truly glad to see has passed from your memory, rests no longer on mine. We will not speak or think of it again, Mr. Lynedon."

But Paul still hesitated. “Except that I may venture to express one hope — indeed I should rather say a conviction. I feel sure that, with one so generous and delicate-minded, this — this circumstance has remained, and will ever remain, unrevealed?”

“Can you doubt it?” And a look as nearly approaching pride as Eleanor’s gentle countenance could assume, marked her wounded feeling. “I thought that you would have judged more worthily of me — of any woman.”

“Of you, indeed, I ought. I am ashamed of myself, Miss Ogilvie,” cried Lynedon, giving way to a really sincere impulse of compunction, and gazing in her face with something of his old reverence. “I do believe you, as ever, the kindest, noblest, creature — half woman, half saint; and, except that I am unworthy of the boon, it would be a blessing to me through life to call you friend.”

“Indeed you shall call me so, and I will strive to make the title justly mine,” said Eleanor, with a bright, warm-hearted smile, as she stretched out her hand to him.

He took it, and pressed it to his lips. Neither saw that on this instant a shadow darkened the transparent door, and a face, passing by chance, looked in. It was the face of Philip Wychnor!

Contents

CHAPTER 43

Better trust all, and be deceived;
And weep that trust and that deceiving;
Than doubt one heart, which if believed
Had blessed one's life with true believing.
Oh! in this mocking world, too fast
The doubting fiend o'ertakes our youth;
Better be cheated to the last
Than lose the blessed hope of truth!
FRANCES ANNE BUTLER.

"Well, I never in all my life knew a fellow so altered as that Philip Wychnor!" cried Hugh, as he entered his wife's dressing-room. His sister had fled there to gain a few minutes' quiet and strength, after her somewhat painful interview with Lynedon, and before the still greater trial of the formal evening that was to come. As she lay on the couch, wearied in heart and frame, there was ever in her thought the name which her brother now uttered carelessly — almost angrily. It made her start with added suffering. Hugh continued:

"I suppose he thinks it so fine to have grown an author and a man of genius, that he may do anything he likes, and play off all sorts of airs on his old friends."

"Nay, Hugh, what has he done?" said Eleanor, her heart sinking colder and colder.

"Only that, after all the trouble we had to get him here to-night, he has gone off just now without having even the civility to say good-bye."

"Gone! is he gone?" and she started up; but recollected herself in time to add, "You forget, he may be ill."

"Ill! — nonsense!" cried Hugh, as he stood lazily lolling against the window. "Look, there he goes, tearing across the Park as if he were having a walking-match, or racing with Brown Bess herself. There's a likely fellow to be ill: Phew, it's only a vagary for effect, I've learnt these games since I married. But I must go down to this confounded *soirée*." And he lounged off moodily.

The moment he was gone, Eleanor sprang to the window. It was, indeed, Philip — she saw him clearly: his slender figure and floating fair hair — looking shadowy, almost ghostlike, in the evening light. He walked rapidly; nay, flew! It might have been a fiend that was pursuing him, instead of the weeping eyes, the outstretched arms, the agonised murmur— "Philip, O! my Philip!"

He saw not, he heard not, but sped onward — disappeared! Then Eleanor sank down, nigh broken-hearted. Was this the blessed meeting, the day so longed for, begun in joy to end in such cruel misery

No, not all misery; for when the first bitterness passed, and she began to think calmly, there dawned the hope that Philip loved her still His very avoidance of her, that heavy sigh, most of all his sudden departure, as though he had fled unable to endure her presence — all these showed that his heart had not grown utterly cold. He had loved her once — she believed that. She would have believed it though the whole

world had borne testimony against it, and against him. It was impossible but that some portion of this deep true love must linger still. Some unaccountable change had come over him — some great sorrow or imagined wrong had warped his mind.

Was this the reason that now for weeks, months, he had never answered her letters? Did he wish to consider their engagement broken? But no; for his last letter was full of love — full of the near hope of making her his own. Whatever had been the cause of estrangement, if the love were still there, in his heart as in her own, she would win him back yet!

"Yes," she cried, "I will have patience. I will put from me all pride — all resentment. If there has been wrong, I will be the first to say 'Forgive me!' He is still the same — good and true — I see it in his face, I feel it in my soul. How could it be otherwise?"

Hugh's half-mocking, half-angry words concerning him troubled her for a moment. She heaved a low shuddering sigh, and then the suffering passed.

"Even if so, I will not despair. Oh, my Philip, if it be that you are changed, that this evil world has cast its shadow over your pure heart, still I will not leave you. You were mine — you are mine, in suffering — even in sin! I will stand by you, and pray God night and day for you, and never, never give you up, until you are my true, noble Philip once more."

She stood, her clasped hands raised, her face shining with a faith all-perfect — faith in Heaven, and faith in him. O men! to whom woman's love is a light jest, a haughty scorn, how know you but that you drive from your pathway and from your side a guardian presence, which, in blessing and in prayer, might have been for you as omnipotent as an angel!

Mrs. Ogilvie entered, while her sister still stood, pale and thoughtful. Katharine was very restless — her cheek burned and her eye glittered. The contrast was never so strong between the two.

"Why, what is this, my dear child?" At another time Eleanor would have smiled at the half-patronising title; but as the tall, magnificent-looking woman of the world bent over her, she felt that it was scarcely strange. She was indeed a child to her "little cousin" now. Alas! she knew not that Katharine would have given worlds to have taken the fresh, simple child's heart into her racked bosom once more!

"How quiet you are, Eleanor! How dull this room seems, when we are all below so merry — so merry!" And she laughed that mocking laugh — an echo true as the words.

"Are you merry? I am glad of it," was Eleanor's simple reply. "But you must forgive my staying here, I am so weary."

"Weary? I thought you happy, good, country damsels were never weary as we are."

"*We*! Nay, Katharine, are not you yourself country-bred, good and happy?"

Again there came the musical laugh — light, but oh! how bitter! "For the first adjective, I suppose I must acknowledge the crime, or misfortune; for the second, you can ask Hugh; for the third — well, you may ask him too — of course he knows! But I must go. Will you come with me? No? Then good-bye, fair coz."

"*Sister!*" was the gentle word that met Katharine, as she was departing with the fluttering gaiety she had so well learned to assume. And Eleanor came softly behind, and put her arm round the neck of her brother's wife.

"Ah yes, I forgot — of course, we are sisters now. Are you glad of it, Eleanor?"

"Yes, most happy! And you?"

Katharine looked at her earnestly, and then shrank away. “Let me go! I mean that your arm — your bracelet — hurts me,” she added hurriedly.

Eleanor removed it. Katharine paused a moment, and then stooped forward and kissed her cheek, saying affectionately,

“You are a dear good girl, as of old. You will bear with me, Nelly? I am tired — perhaps not well. This gay life is too much for me.”

“Then why” —

“Ah, be quiet, dear,” said Mrs. Ogilvie, tapping Eleanor’s shoulder with her perfumed fan. “You shall lecture me to-night, when I have sent away *these horrid people* — that is my guests,” she continued, remembering who was of the number. And as she went away, Katharine could almost have cut out her own tongue, that had carelessly ranked Paul Lynedon in the tribe thus designated. Though made a slave, he was an idol still.

For an hour longer Eleanor sat alone by the window, sometimes trying to calm her spirit with looking up at the deep peace of the moonlight sky, and then watching the carriages that rolled to the door, bearing away guest after guest. The last who left departed on foot. Eleanor distinguished his tall figure passing hastily through the little shrubbery, and fancied it was like Mr. Lynedon’s. But she thought little on the subject, for immediately afterwards her sister entered.

Katharine stood at the door, the silver lamp she held casting a rich subdued light on her face and person. She wore a pale amber robe, and a gold net confined her hair. Save this, she had no ornament of any kind. She took a pride in showing that her daring beauty scorned all such adjuncts. Well she might, for a more magnificent creature never rode triumphant over human hearts.

Even Eleanor — lifting up her meek, sorrowful gaze — acknowledged this.

“Katharine, how beautiful you have grown! You see my prophecy was right. Do you remember it, that night at Summerwood, when the Lancasters first came and Mr. Lynedon?”

The silver lamp fell to the floor.

There was a minute’s silence, and then Katharine rekindled the light, saying gaily,

“See, my dear, this comes of standing to be looked at and flattered. But I will have your praise still: now look at me once more!”

“Still beautiful — most beautiful! perhaps the more so because of your paleness. Yellow suits well with your black hair.”

“Does it?”

“And how simple your dress is! no jewels? no flowers?” —

“I never wear either. I hate your bits of shining stone, precious only because the world chooses to make them rare; and as for flowers, I trod down *my* life’s flowers long ago.”

The indistinct speech was lost upon Eleanor’s wandering mind. She made no answer, and the two sisters-in-law sat for some minutes without exchanging a word. At last Eleanor said:

“Will not Hugh or Sir Robert come in and speak to us before we all go to rest?”

“Sir Robert? Oh, he retired an hour ago; he keeps Summerwood time. As for Hugh, I doubt if either wife or sister could draw him from his beloved cigars and punch. Don’t flatter yourself with any such thing; I fear you must be content with my society.”

“Indeed I am,” said Eleanor, affectionately laying her hand on Katharine’s arm.

She shrank restlessly beneath the touch; but the moment after she leaned her head on her sister's shoulder; and though she was quite silent, neither moved nor sobbed, Eleanor felt on her neck the drop of one heavy, burning tear.

"My own sister! my dear Katharine! are you ill — unhappy?"

"No, no; quite well — quite happy. Did I not say so? I think few mistresses of such a gay revel as ours could retire from it with so fresh and blithe a face as mine was when you saw it at the door. Still, I own to being rather tired now."

"Will you go to rest?"

"No, not just yet. Come Eleanor, shall we sit and talk for half-an-hour as we used to do? Only first I will shut out the moonlight, it looks so pale, and cold, and melancholy. Why, Nelly, when you stood in it I could almost have thought you a ghost — the ghost of that old time. What nonsense I am saying!"

She rose up quickly, drew the curtains, and the chamber remained lit only by a taper at the farther end.

"I cannot endure this darkness, I will call for lights. But no, it is better as it is. Did you ever know such a fitful restless creature?" continued she, throwing herself on the ground at Eleanor's feet. "But I am quiet now — for a little; so begin. What are you thinking about?"

"Of how strangely things change in life. Who would have thought that the little Katharine I used to play with, and lecture, and wonder at — for I did wonder at you sometimes — would have grown into *this* Katharine?"

"Ay, who would have thought it I"

"And still more, that she should be Hugh's wife — my sister; and I never guessed that you loved one another! Indeed, I thought" —

"What did you think? tell me," said Katharine, suddenly.

"That you would certainly have chosen — not dear, quiet, gentle Hugh, but some hero of romance."

"Ha, ha! you were mistaken then."

"Yes, truly! Yet she was a little dreamer, was the dear Katharine of Summerwood! How well I remember the night we sat together, as we do now, talking of many things — of Mr. Lynedon especially. O Katharine, we are both changed since then!" said Eleanor sadly, as her memory flew back, and her own sorrows once more sank heavy on that gentle heart, so ready to forget itself in and for others.

Katharine lay quite silent, and without moving — only once she shivered convulsively.

"How cold you are — your hands, your neck! Let me wrap you in this shawl," Eleanor said. "And, indeed, I will not keep you talking any longer. Be good, dear, and go to rest!"

"Rest! O God! that I could rest — for ever!" was the smothered moan that broke from Katharine's lips.

"What were you saying, love?"

"Only that I will do anything you like, Eleanor. But I am forgetting all my duties. Come, I will see you to your room."

She rose up, and the two sisters passed thither — affectionately too, with linked arms.

"Now, dearest Katharine, you will promise me to go to bed and sleep?"

"Yes, yes; only let me breathe first." She threw open the window, and drank in, almost with a gasp, the cool night-air of summer. Eleanor came beside her — and so they stood, the peaceful heaven shining on both, with its moonlight and its stars. Then Katharine drew her sister's face between her two hands, and said:

“There, now you look as when I saw you at the window to-night — pale, pure, like a warning spirit, or an angel. I think you are both! And I — Eleanor, remember, in all times, under all chance or change, that I did love you — I shall love you — always.”

The smile, that unearthly, almost awful smile, passed from her face, showing what was left when the fitful gleam had vanished — a countenance of utter despair! But it was turned from Eleanor — she never saw it. Had she done so, perhaps — But no, it was too late!

“I believe you love me, dearest, as I you,” she answered, tenderly; “we are sisters now and for ever. Good night!”

They kissed each other once more, and then Katharine turned away — but on the threshold her foot stayed.

“Eleanor!”

Eleanor sprang towards her.

“You say your prayers every night, as children do — as we did together once, when I was a little child? Well, say for me to-night, as then, ‘God bless’ — no, no— ‘God *take care* of Katharine!’”

Ere she glided away, she lifted her eyes upwards for a moment, and then, leaning back, closed them firmly. Eleanor never again saw on her face that quiet, solemn look — never — until —

Contents

CHAPTER 44

We women have four seasons, like the year.
Our spring is in our lightsome, girlish days,
When the heart laughs within us for sheer joy.
Summer is when we love and are beloved.
Autumn, when some young thing with tiny hands
Is wantoning about us, day and night;
And winter is when those we love have perished.
Some miss one season — some another; this
Shall have them early, and that late; and yet
The year wears round with all as best it may.
PHILIP BATLEY.

Hugh and his sister breakfasted alone together. Sir Robert had gone through that necessary ceremony an hour before, and retired to his legislative duties. Poor man! he spent as much time in trying to bind up the wounds of the nation, as though the sole doctor and nurse of that continually ailing patient had been Sir Robert Ogilvie, Bart., M.P., of Summerwood Park.

"You needn't look for Katharine," said the husband, half sulkily, half sadly; "she never appears till after eleven. Nobody ever does in London, I suppose — at least nobody fashionable. Sit down, Eleanor, and let me for once be saved the trouble of pouring out my own coffee."

So the brother and sister began their *tête-à-tête*. It was rather an uninteresting one; for Hugh, after another word or two, buried himself in the mysteries of *Bell's Life*, from which he was not exhumed until the groom sent word that Brown Bess was waiting.

"Good-bye, Nell. You'll stay till to-morrow, of course? Uncle won't go back to Summerwood before then." And he was off, as he himself would characteristically have expressed it, "like a shot."

Ties of blood do not necessarily constitute ties of affection. The world — ay, even the best and truest part of it — is a little mistaken on this point. The parental or fraternal bond is at first a mere instinct, or, viewed in its highest light, a link of duty; but when, added to this, comes the tender friendship, the deep devotion, which springs from sympathy and esteem, then the love is made perfect, and the kindred of blood becomes a yet stronger kindred of heart. But unless circumstances, or the nature and character of the parties themselves, allow opportunity for this union, parent and child, brother and sister, are as much strangers as though no bond of relationship existed between them.

Thus it was with Eleanor and Hugh. They regarded one another warmly; would have gladly fulfilled any duty of affection or self-sacrifice — at least, she would; but they had lived apart nearly all their lives: Hugh nurtured as his uncle's heir — Eleanor, the companion of her widowed mother, on whose comparatively lowly condition the rest of the Ogilvie family somewhat looked down. In character and

disposition there was scarcely a single meeting link of sympathy between them; and though they had always loved one another with a kind of instinctive affection, yet it had never grown into that devotion which makes the tie between brother and sister the sweetest and dearest of all earthly bonds, second only to the one which Heaven alone makes — perfect, heart-united marriage.

Eleanor sat awhile, thinking with a vague doubt that this was not the sort of marriage between her brother and her cousin. But she was too little acquainted with the inner character of either for her doubts to amount to fear. They quickly vanished when Hugh's wife came in, so smiling, so full of playful grace, that Eleanor could hardly believe it was the same Katharine whose parting look the previous night had painfully haunted her, even amidst her own still more sorrowful remembrances.

"What! your brother gone, Nelly? Why, then, I shall have you all to myself this morning. So come, bring your work — since you are so countrified as to have work — and let us indulge in a chat before any one comes."

"Have you many visitors, then?"

"Oh, the Lancasters might call, after last night, you know; or Mr. Lynedon" (she said the name with a resolute carelessness); "or even — though it is scarce likely — your old friend and my new one, Mr. Philip Wychnor."

There was no answer. Katharine amused herself with walking to the window, and teasing an ugly pet parrot. Poor exchange for the merry little lark that, happy in its love-tended captivity, sang to the girl Katharine at Summerwood! Eleanor, glad of anything to break the silence, inquired after the old favourite.

"Dead!" was the short, sharp answer.

"But, Eleanor," she added, in a jesting manner, "you always talk of the past — generally a tiresome subject. Let us turn to something more interesting. For instance, I want to hear all you know about Philip Wychnor. No wonder you like him: I do already. How long have you known one another?"

"Nearly all our lives."

This truth — Eleanor could not, would not, speak aught but the truth — was murmured with a drooping and crimsoning cheek. She revealed nothing, but she was unable to feign: she never tried.

"Eleanor!" said Katharine, catching her hands, and looking earnestly in her face— "Sister! tell me" —

She was interrupted by the entrance of a servant announcing Mr. Lynedon.

"Let me creep away; I am too weary to talk," whispered Eleanor.

"No, stay!" The gesture was imperative, almost fierce; but in a moment it was softened, and *Mrs. Ogilvie* received her guest as Mrs. Ogilvie ever did. In her easy, dignified mien lingered not a trace of *Katharine*.

They talked for awhile the passing nothings incident on morning visits, and then Mrs. Ogilvie noticed her sister's pale face.

"How weary she is, poor Nelly!" — and the touch of sympathy which prompted the words was sincere and self-forgetful— "Go, love, and rest there in my favourite chair, and" — with a sudden smile— "stay, take this book, also a favourite: you will like it, I know."

It was a new volume, and bore Philip Wychnor's name on the title-page. There, sitting in the recess, Eleanor read her lover's soul. It was his soul; for a great and true author, in all he writes, will still reflect the truth that is within him — not as the world sees, but as Heaven sees. Man, passing by on the broad wayside, beholds only the battered leaves of the unsightly, perhaps broken flower; but God's sun, shining into its

heart, finds beauty, and draws thence perfume, so that earth is made to rejoice in what is poured out unto heaven alone.

It is a merciful thing, that when fate seals up the full bursting tide of human hopes and human yearnings in a great man's soul, the current, frozen for a time, at length flows back again to enrich and glorify, not his poor earthly being, but that which will endure for ever — his true self — his genius. And so this his work, whatever it be, stands to him in the place of all that in life is lost, or never realised; becomes to him love — hope — joy — home — wife — child — everything.

Something of this Philip Wychnor had already felt. His work was his soul, poured out, not for the petty present circle of individual praise, that Mr. This might flatter, and Mrs. That might weep over his page, but for the great wide world, wherein the true author longs to dwell — the hearts of kindred sympathy, throbbing everywhere and in all time. He wrote that he might, in the only way he could, make his life an offering to Heaven, and to the memory of that love which was to him next heaven. He wrote, too, that, going down to the grave lonely and childless, as he deemed it would be, he might thus leave behind him a portion of his soul — that soul which through life had kept pure its faith in God and *her*.

And so, looking on his writings, the woman he loved read his heart. She discerned, too — as none but she could — his long patience, his struggles, his enduring love. All was dim, even to her, still groping blindly in a mesh of circumstances. But thus far she read — the unchanged purity of his noble nature — his truth, his faithfulness, and his love — love for her, and her alone! She knew it, she felt it, now.

A deep peace fell upon her spirit. She read over and over again many a line — to the world, nothing — to her, sweet as Philip's own dear voice, hopeful as the love which answered his. Alas that he knew it not! She closed the book, and leaned back with a peaceful, solemn joy. As she did so, there came to her heart a strong faith — a blessed forewarning — such as Heaven sometimes sends amidst all-conflicting destinies, that one day Philip would be her husband, and she his wife — never to be sundered more! Never — until the simple girl and boy, who once looked out together dreamily into life's future, should stand, *still together*, on its verge, looking back on the earthly journey traversed hand-in-hand; and forward, unto the opening gates of heaven.

Absorbed in these thoughts, she had almost forgotten the presence of Katharine and Lynedon, until the former stood behind her chair.

"What, Nelly in a reverie? I thought dreaming invariably ended with one's teens. Is it not so, Mr. Lynedon?" And she turned to Paul, who was standing a little aloof, turning over books and newspapers in an absent, half-vexed manner. But he was beside Katharine in a moment, nevertheless.

"You were speaking to me?"

"Yes; but my question was hardly worth summoning you from those interesting newspapers, in which a future statesman must take such delight. I really should apologise for having entertained you for the last quarter of an hour with that operatic discussion concerning my poor ill-used favourite, Giuseppe Verdi. Do I linger properly on those musical Italian syllables? Answer, you Signor fresh from the sweet South."

"Everything you do
Still betters what is done,"

was Lynedon's reply; too earnest to be mere compliment.

But Mrs. Ogilvie mocked alike at both — or seemed to mock, for her eye glittered even as she spoke. “Come, Eleanor, answer! Here is Mr. Lynedon quoting, of course for your benefit; since, if I remember right, your acquaintance began over that very excellent but yet somewhat over-lauded individual, Mr. William Shakspeare.”

“You remember!” said Paul, eagerly, and in a low tone; “do you indeed remember all that time?”

Katharine’s lips were set together, and her head turned aside. But immediately she looked upon him coldly — carelessly — too carelessly to be even proud. “‘All’ is a comprehensive word; I really cannot engage to lay so heavy a tax on my memory, which was never very good — was it, Eleanor?”

Eleanor smiled. And then, making an effort, she began to talk to Mr. Lynedon about the old times and Summerwood, until the arrival of another visitor.

Mrs. Frederick Pennythorne glided into the room in all the grace of mourning attire, the most interesting and least woebegone possible. Never did crape bonnet sit more tastefully and airily, and certainly never did it shade a blither smile. The cousins met, as cousins do who have proved all their life the falsity of the saying, that “bluid is thicker than water.”

“Well, Miss Ogilvie (I suppose the ‘Eleanor’ time is past now),” said Mrs. Frederick, in a dignified parenthesis, “here we are, you see, all married — I beg your pardon — except yourself. What a pity that you should be left the last bird on the bush!”

“If you attach such discredit to the circumstance, I think I may venture to say for Eleanor that it must be entirely her own fault,” said Katharine, in the peculiar tone with which she always suppressed her cousin’s ill-natured speeches. The chance words brought the colour to Eleanor’s cheek, and made Paul Lynedon fidget on his chair. For the twentieth time he said to himself, “What a fool I was!”

“Oh, no doubt — no doubt she has had some offers. I dare say she finds it pleasant and convenient to be an old maid; she certainly looks very well, and tolerably happy, considering. And now, Miss Eleanor, since I have paid you this pretty compliment, have you never a one for me? Do I look much older, eh?”

“People do not usually grow aged in four or five years,” said Eleanor, hardly able to repress a smile.

“Oh dear no! Aged! — how could you use the odious word? But still, I thought I might seem altered, especially in this disagreeable mourning.”

“I was afraid, when first you entered” — began Eleanor, looking rather grave.

“Nay, you need not pull a long face on the matter. It’s only for my brother-in-law — Leigh Pennythorne.”

“Leigh? Is poor Leigh dead?” cried Eleanor. And, with the quick sympathy of love which extends to all near or dear to the beloved, she felt a regret, as though she had known the boy.

“Oh, he died two months since — a great blessing too. He suffered so much, poor fellow,” added Mrs. Frederick catching from the surprised faces of her two cousins a hint as to the finishing of her sentence.

“I was not aware, Eleanor, that you knew this poor boy, in whom I too have been interested,” said Katharine.

“I have heard of him a good deal.”

Mrs. Ogilvie glanced at her sister’s blushing countenance, and said no more.

“Interested!” continued Isabella, catching up the word; “I can’t imagine, and never could, what there was interesting in Leigh; and yet everybody made a fuss over him,

especially that Mr. Wychnor. You know him, Katharine? — a quiet, stupid sort of young man."

"You forget, Isabella, this gentleman happens to be my friend, and also that of Mr. Lynedon," was Mrs. Ogilvie's reply. Her cousin, who had not noticed Mr. Lynedon, bent with mortified apology to the "very *distingué*-looking" personage who stood in the shadow of the window; and, in an eager effort to follow up the introduction by conversation, Mrs. Frederick's vapid ideas were soon turned from their original course.

She succeeded in getting through, as hundreds of her character do, another of the hours which make up a whole precious existence. But it is perhaps consolatory to think, that those by whom a life is thus wasted, are at all events squandering a capital which is of no use to any one — not even to the owner. There are people in this world who almost make one question the possibility of their attaining another. Their souls go like the beasts — downwards; so that even if their small spark of immortality can survive the quenching of the body, one doubts if it would ever feel either the torture of Purgatory or the bliss of Paradise.

But she seemed determined to out-stay Mr. Lynedon; so contented herself with impressing on her hearers the melancholy warning of her departure once every five minutes.

"And besides, my dear Mrs. Ogilvie" — Isabella sometimes bestowed the *Mrs*., which she was most punctilious in exacting— "I wanted you to help me through a dull visit on my mother-in-law: but of course you can't come; only if as Fred — the ill-natured creature! — has taken the carriage to Hampton" —

"I will order mine for you," said Katharine, with the faintest possible smile. "I am engaged myself; but, Eleanor, a drive would do you good. Will you take my place, and enquire for poor Mrs. Pennythorne?" It was a sudden and kindly thought, which found its grateful echo in the thrill of Eleanor's heart.

Alas, that through life those two had not known each other better, that they might have loved and sustained each other more!

Paul still lingered, trespassing on the utmost limits of etiquette, to gain another half-hour — another minute, of the presence which was already growing more and more attractive — nay, beloved! As Katharine bade adieu to her cousin and Eleanor, she turned to him: "Mr. Lynedon, may I as a friend, appropriate your idle morning, and ask you to become knight-errant to these fair ladies?"

He bowed, wavering between disappointment and pleasure. The latter triumphed: that winning manner — the gentle name of "friend" — would have sent him to the very end of the earth for her sake, or at her bidding.

Contents

CHAPTER 45

Know what love is — that it draws
Into itself all passion, hope, and thought;
The heart of life, to which all currents flow
Through every vein of being — which if chilled,
The streams are ice for ever!
WESTLAND MARSTON.

Mrs. Frederick Pennythorne, in high good humour and good spirits, played off every feminine air of which she was mistress, for the especial benefit of Mr. Lynedon. She was one of those women to whom nothing ever comes amiss that comes in a coat and, hat. The passive recipient of these attentions received them at first coldly, and afterwards with some amusement; for, despite his dawning passion, Lynedon could not already deny his nature. He was but a man — a man of the world — and she a pretty woman; so he looked smiling and pleased — ready to snatch an hour's idle amusement, which would be utterly forgotten the next.

O Love! mocked at and trifled with when thou wouldst come as an angel of blessing, how often dost thou visit at last — an avenging angel of doom!

Leaning back silent and quiet, Eleanor felt oppressed by an almost trembling eagerness. To tread where Philip's weary feet had so often trod; to enter the house of which his letters had frequently spoken; to see the gentle and now desolate woman whom he had liked, and who had been kind to him in those sorrowful days, these were indeed sweet though stolen pleasures unto his betrothed. For she was his betrothed still — her heart told her so: a passing estrangement could never break the faithful bond of years.

Love makes the most ordinary things appear sacred. Simple Eleanor to her the dull road and the glaring formal square were interesting, even beautiful. She looked up at the house itself with loving, wistful eyes, as though the shadow of Philip's presence were still reflected there. She crossed the threshold where he had passed so many a time — the very track of his footsteps seemed hallowed in her sight.

Lynedon remained in the carriage. He never liked visits of condolence, or interviews at all approaching to the doleful; so he made a show of consideration for "poor Mrs. Pennythorne's feelings," and enacted the sympathising and anxious friend by means of a couple of cards.

There is a deep solemnity on entering a house over which the shadow of a great woe still lingers, where pale Patience sits smiling by the darkened hearth, giving all due welcome to the stranger, yet not so but that the welcomed one can feel this to be a mere passing interest. No tear may dim the eye, the lips may not once utter the name — now only a name — but the visitant knows that the thoughts are far away, far as heaven is from earth; and he pictures almost with awe what must be the depth of the grief *that is not seen*.

Eleanor and her cousin passed into the drawing-room. It had a heavy, damp atmosphere, like that of a room long closed up.

“How disagreeable! They never sit in this room now, because of that likeness over the mantelpiece. Why couldn’t they have it removed, instead of shutting up the only tolerable room in the house?” said Isabella, as she drew up the Venetian blind, and partly illumined the gloomy apartment.

“Is that poor Leigh?” asked Eleanor. It was a portrait — a commonplace, bright-coloured daub, but still a portrait — of a little child sitting on the ground, his arms full of flowers. “Was it like him?”

“Not a bit; but ’tis all that is left of the boy.”

All left! the sole memento of that brief young life! Eleanor gazed upon it with interest — even with tears. She was standing looking at it still when the mother entered.

Eleanor turned and met the meek brown eyes — once fondly chronicled to her as being like her own; but all memory of herself or of Philip passed away when she beheld Mrs. Pennythorne. What was earthly love, even in its most sacred form, to that hallowed grief, patient but perpetual, which to the mourner became as a staff to lean on through the narrow valley whose sole ending must be the tomb?

Even Isabella’s careless tone sank subdued before that soundless footfall — that quiet voice! She introduced her cousin with an awkward half-apology.

“I hope you will not mind her being a stranger, but” — here a bright thought struck Isabella— “she knows your great favourite, Mr. Wychnor.”

A smile — or at least its shadow — all that those patient lips would ever wear on earth — showed how the mother’s gratitude had become affection. Mrs. Pennythorne took Eleanor’s hand affectionately.

“I don’t know if I have ever heard of you; but indeed I am very glad to see you, for Mr. Wychnor’s sake.”

It was the dearest welcome in the world to Eleanor Ogilvie!

“Have you seen him to-day?” pursued Mrs. Pennythorne, simply; “but indeed you could not, for he has been with me all the morning. I made him stay, because he seemed worn and ill.”

“Ill!” echoed Eleanor anxiously. But her word and look passed unnoticed, for Isabella was watching Lynedon from the window; and Mrs. Pennythorne answered unconsciously,

“Yes; he has not looked well of late; I have been quite uneasy about him. I left him lying on the sofa in the parlour. Shall we go down there now? he will be so dull alone.”

She led the way; Isabella reluctantly quitting her post of observation.

“Always Mr. Wychnor! What a bore that young man is!” she observed to her cousin. But Eleanor heard nothing — thought of nothing — save that Philip was near — Philip ill — sad!

So ill, so sad, that he scarce moved at the opening door; but lay with eyes closed heavily, as though the light itself were pain — and lips pressed together, lest their trembling should betray, even in solitude, what the firm will had resolved to conquer, forbidding even the relief of sorrow.

For one brief instant she beheld him thus; she, his betrothed, who would have given her life for his sake. Her heart yearned over him, almost as a mother’s over a child. She could have knelt beside him and taken the weary drooping head to her bosom, comforting and cherishing as a woman only can: but — He saw her! there came a momentary spasm over his face, and then, starting up, he met her with a cold eye, as he had done the night before.

It caused her heart — that heart overflowing with tenderness and love — to freeze within her. She shrank back, and had hardly strength to give him the listless hand of outward courtesy. He took it *as* courtesy; nothing more. And thus they met, the second time, as strangers, worse than strangers — they who had been each other's very life for so many years! He began to talk — not with her, save the few words that formality exacted — but with Mrs. Pennythorne. A few frigid nothings passed constrainedly, and then Isabella cried out,

"Goodness, Eleanor, how pale you are!"

Eleanor was conscious of Philip's sudden glance — full of anxiety, wild tenderness, anything but coldness. He half sprang to her side, and then paused. Mrs. Pennythorne observed that the room was close, and perhaps Mr. Wychnor would open the window.

He did so, and saw Paul Lynedon!

Once more his eye became cold — meaningless — stern. It sought Eleanor's no more. He sat down beside Mrs. Frederick, answering vaguely her light chatter. Five minutes after, he made some idle excuse, and left the house.

"What a pity, when he had promised to stay until dinnertime!" said Mrs. Pennythorne.

He had gone, then, to escape *her*! Eleanor saw it — knew it. Colder and colder her heart grew, until it felt like stone, She neither trembled nor wept; she only wished that she could lie down and die. Thus, silent as she came — but oh! with what a different silence — she departed from the house.

To those who suffer, there is no life more bitter, more full of continual outward mockery, than that of an author immersed in the literary life of London. In a duller sphere a man may hide his misery in his chamber — may fly with it to some blessed country solitude — even wrap it round him like a mantle of pride or stupidity, and pass unnoticed in the common crowd. But here it is impossible. He must fill his place in his circle — perhaps a brilliant one; and if so he must shine too, as much as ever. He must keep in the society which is so necessary to his worldly prospects — he must be seen in those haunts which are to others amusement, to him business — in theatre, exhibition, or social meeting; so at last he learns to do as others do — to *act*. It is merely creating a new self as he does a new character; and perhaps in time this fictitious self becomes so habitual that never, save in those works which the world calls fiction, but which are indeed his only true life, does the real man shine out.

Philip Wychnor had not gone so far as this on the track of simulation; day and night he prayed that it never might be so with him. The world had not cast upon him her many-coloured fool's vesture; but she had taught him so to wear his own robe that no eye could penetrate the workings of the heart within. He had his outward life to lead, and he led it — without deceit, but without betrayal of aught that was within.

So it chanced that the self-same night, when Eleanor, yielding to Katharine's restless eagerness for anything that might smooth time's passing and deaden thought, went with her to some place of amusement — a "Shakspeare reading" — the first face she saw was Philip Wychnor's. She saw it — not pale, worn, dejected as a few hours since, but wearing the look of courteous, almost pleased attention, as he listened, nay talked, among a group whose very names brought thoughts of wit, and talent, and gaiety. She looked at him — she, with her anguished, half-broken heart — he the centre of that brilliant circle; and then the change burst upon her. The Philip Wychnor of the world was not hers. What was she to him now? She turned away her head, and strove to endure patiently, without sorrow. That he should be great and honoured — rich in fame — ought not that to be happiness? If he loved not her, she might still

worship him. So she pressed her anguish down in the lowest depths of her faithful heart, and tried to make it rejoice in his glory; content to be even trodden down under his footsteps, so that those footsteps led him unto the lofty path whither he desired to go. She watched him from afar — his kindling eye, his beautiful countenance, on which sat genius and truth: and it seemed to her nothing that her own poor unknown life, with its hopes and joys, should be sacrificed, to give unto the world and unto fame such an one as he.

He passed from the circle where he stood, and moving listlessly, without looking around him, came and sat down beside Katharine. At her greeting he started: again — as if that perpetual doom must ever haunt them — the once betrothed lovers met.

The play was *Romeo and Juliet*. They had read it when almost children, sitting in the palace-garden; they had acted it once — the balcony-scene — leaning over the terrace-wall. She wondered, Did he think of this? But she dared not look at him; she dared not trust herself to speak. So she remained silent, and he too. Katharine sat between them — sometimes listening to the play, sometimes turning a restless, eager gaze around.

If any human eye could have looked into those three hearts, he would have seen there as mournful depths as ever the world's great Poet sounded. Ay, and it would be so to the end of time! Cold age may preach them down, worldliness may make a mock at them, but still the two great truths of life are Romance and Love.

The play ended. "He will not come," said Katharine, laughing; "I mean — not Hugh, but Mr. Lynedon, whom he said he would ask to meet us here. What shall we do, Eleanor? How shall we punish the false knight?" she continued, showing forth mockingly the real anger which she felt. It was a good disguise.

Eleanor answered in a few gentle words. Philip only understood that they were a pleading — and for Lynedon!

"Will you take the place of our faithless cavalier, and succour us, Mr. Wychnor?" was Katharine's winning request. He could not but accede. He felt impelled by a blind destiny which drove him on against his will. At last he ceased even to strive against it.

He accompanied the two ladies home. Then, when Mrs. Ogilvie, in her own irresistible way, besought him not to leave the rescued damsels in solitude, but to spend a quiet hour with herself and Eleanor, he complied passively — mechanically — and entered.

There were flowers on the table. "The very flowers, Eleanor, that I — or rather you — admired in the gardens to-day!" cried Katharine. "Well, that atones for the falsehood of this evening. Mr. Lynedon is a *preux chevalier* after all. A bouquet for each! How kind! is it not?"

"Yes, very!" answered Eleanor.

"Yes, very!" mimicked Katharine, striving to hide her excitement under a flippant tongue. "Upon my word. were I Mr. Lynedon, I should be in a state of high indignation! And a note, too — to me, of course. Come, will you answer it? — No? Then I must. Talk to Mr. Wychnor the while."

She went away, humming a gay tune, tearing the envelope to pieces: the note itself she crushed in her hand for the moment, to be afterwards — But no eye followed her to that inner chamber. Alas! every human being has some inner chamber, of heart or home!

They were together at last, Philip and Eleanor, quite alone. He felt the fact with a shuddering fear — a vague desire to fly; she, with a faint hope, a longing to implore him to tell her what was this terrible cloud that hung between them: yet neither had the power to move. She stood — her fingers beginning, half unconsciously, to arrange

the flowers in a vase: he, sitting at the farther end of the room, whither he had retired at the first mention of Lynedon's name, neither moved, nor looked, nor spoke. Gradually his hands dropped from the book he had taken, his face grew so white, so fixed, so rigid, that it might have been that of one dead.

At the sight Eleanor forgot all coldness, bitterness, pride — even that reserve which some call womanly, which makes a girl shrink from being the first to say to her lover, "Forgive!" She remembered only that they had loved one another — that both suffered. For he *did* suffer; she saw it now — ay, with a strange gladness, because the suffering showed the lingering love. The hand of one or other must rend the cloud between them, or it might darken over both their lives eternally. Should that hand be hers?

She thought a moment and then prayed! She was one of those little children who fear not to look up every hour to the face of their Father in heaven. Then she crept noiselessly beside her lover.

"Philip!" —

He heard the tremulous, pleading voice; saw the outstretched hands! Forgetting all, he would have clasped them, have sprung forward to her, but that he saw in her bosom, placed by her unconsciously in the agitation of the moment, the flowers — Lynedon's flowers! Then came rushing back upon the young man's soul its love and its despair — despair that must be hidden even from her. What right had he to breathe one tender word, even to utter one cry of misery, in the ear of his lost beloved, when she was another man's chosen bride? The struggle, were it unto death, must be concealed, not only for his own sake, but for hers.

He did conceal it. He took her hand — only one — and then let it go, not rudely, but softly, though the chilling action wounded her ten times more.

"You are very kind. Thank you! I hope you will be happy, indeed I do."

"Happy! Oh, never, never in this world!" And she would have sunk, but that he rose and gave her his chair. The action, which seemed as one of mere courtesy to any every-day friend, went to her heart like a dagger.

"It is all changed with us, Philip; I feel it is." And she burst into tears.

He felt the madness rising within him, and turned to fly. But he could not go and leave her thus. He came near once more, and said, in a low, hurried tone,

"I have been unkind; I have made you weep. You were always gentle; I think you are so still. But I will not pain you any more, Eleanor — let me call you so this once, for the sake of all the past."

"The past!" she murmured.

"You know it is the past — eternally the past. Why do you seek to bring it back again? Forget it, blot it out, trample on it, as I do." And his voice rose with the wild passion that swelled within him; but it sank at once when he met her upraised eyes, wherein the tears were frozen into a glassy terror.

"Forgive me?" he cried. "Let me say farewell now. You will be happy; and I — I shall not suffer much — not much. Do not think of me, except in forgiveness" —

"Oh, Philip, Philip, it is you who should forgive me!"

And she extended her loving arms; but he thrust them back with a half-frenzied gesture.

"Eleanor, I thought you one of God's angels; but a demon could not tempt and torture me thus. Think what we once were to one another, and then of the gulf between us — a wide, fiery gulf. Do you not see it, Eleanor? I cannot pass — I dare not. Dare you?"

"Yes."

The word was scarcely framed on her lips when Philip stopped it with a cry.

“You shall not! I will save you from yourself. I want no gentleness, no pity; only let me go. Loose my hand!”

But she held it still

His tones sank to entreaty. “Eleanor, be merciful! let me depart; I can be nothing to you now. I would have been everything; but it is too late. You hold me still? How can you — how *dare* you — when there is one who stands between us! Ah, you drop my hand now! I knew it!”

He stood one moment looking in her face. Then he cried, passionately,

“Eleanor — mine once, now mine no more! — though misery, torture, sin itself, are between us, still, for the last time, come!”

He opened his arms, and strained her to his heart, so tightly that she almost shrieked. Then he broke away, and fled precipitately from the house.

Contents

CHAPTER 46

Go — be sure of my love — by that treason forgiven;
Of my prayers — by the blessings they bring thee from heaven;
Of my grief; — judge the length of the sword by the sheath's,
By the silence of life — more pathetic than death's.
E. B. BROWNING.

Eleanor Ogilvie's love was like her nature — calm, silent, deep. It had threaded the whole course of her life, not as a bursting torrent, but a quiet, ever-flowing stream "that knew no fall." When the change came, all the freshness and beauty passed from her world, leaving it arid and dry. She made no outward show of sorrow; for she deemed it alike due to Philip and herself, that whatever had come between their love to end it thus, it should now be buried out of sight. If indeed his long silence had but too truly foretold his change towards her, and, as his broken words faintly seemed to reveal, some other love had driven her from his heart — or, at least, some new bond had made the very memory of that olden pledge a sin — was the deserted betrothed to lay bare her sufferings, to be a mark for the pointed finger of scornful curiosity, and the glance of intrusive pity? And still more, was she to suffer idle tongues to bring reproach against *him*? Her heart folded itself over this terrible grief as close as — nay, closer than over its precious love; even as the cankered leaf gathers its fibres nearer together, to hide the cause which eats its life away. She moved about the house at Summerwood — living her outward daily life of gentle tendance on the desolate and complaining Lady Ogilvie; ever the same ministering angel, as it seemed her fortune always to be, towards one sufferer or another. And so it is with some, who have themselves already drained to the dregs the cup of affliction. But He who sees fit to lift unto their lips the vinegar and the gall, also places in their hands the honey and balm which they may pour out to others.

At times, when in the night-time her pent-up sorrow expended itself in bitterest tears, or when in the twilight she sat by Lady Ogilvie, whose complaints were then hushed in the heavy slumber of weakness and old age, Eleanor's brain wearied itself with conjectures as to what this terrible mystery could be; this "gulf" of which Philip had spoken, which neither he nor she must dare to cross. Ever and anon there flashed upon her memory his wild tones and gestures — his half-maddened looks. They effaced the thoughts which had once brought comfort to her. Could it be with him as with other men of whom she had heard — that his face and his writings alike gave the lie to his heart? — without, all fair; within, all foulness and sin? Could it be that her own pure Philip was no more; and in his stead was an erring, world-stained man, to whom her sight had brought back remorsefully the innocent days of old?

"Oh, no! — not that. Let me believe anything but that!" moaned Eleanor; as one evening, when she sat all alone by Lady Ogilvie's couch, these thoughts came, wringing her very soul. "Oh, my Philip! I could bear that you should love me no more — that another should stand in my place, and be to you all I was, and all I hoped to be — but let me not think you unworthy. It would kill me; I feel it would!" And she leant

her head against the cushion of the sofa, and gave way to a burst of agonising sobs. They half aroused Lady Ogilvie, who moved, and said dreamily,

"Katharine, my child! What! are you crying? You shall not be married unless — Ah! Eleanor, it is you! I might have remembered that it was not Katharine — she never comes to sit by her mother now."

The sad voice went to Eleanor's heart, even amidst her own sorrow. Struggling, she repressed all utterance of the grief which her aunt had not yet seen, and leaned over her tenderly.

"Katharine will come soon, I know. I am sure she would be here to-morrow if she thought you wished her. Shall we send?"

"No, no; I have no right now. She has her husband, and her friends, and her gaieties. She hates Summerwood, too; she told me she did. And I was so anxious for her marriage with Hugh, that she might still live here, and no one might come to part my child from me. I did not think she would have gone away of her own accord."

Eleanor, as she stood by Lady Ogilvie's couch, thought of her own mother, now safe in heaven, from whom, while life lasted, neither fate nor an erring will had ever taken away the clasp of a daughter's loving arms. And while, strong through the dividing shadow of death — of intervening years — of other bonds and other griefs — shone the memory of this first, holiest love, she lifted her heart with thankful joy that her work had been fulfilled. From the eternal shore, the mother now perchance stretched forth, to the struggling and suffering one, her spirit-arms, murmuring, "My child — my true and duteous child — I wait for thee! Be patient, and endure!"

Lady Ogilvie felt her hand taken silently. What word of consolation could have broken in upon the deserted parent's tears? But the touch seemed to yield comfort. "You are a kind, dear girl, Eleanor; I am very glad to have you here. I think you do me good. Thank you!"

Eleanor kissed her aunt's cheek, and was then about to sit down by the couch on a little ottoman, when Lady Ogilvie prevented her.

"Not there — not there. Katharine always liked to sit beside me thus. She does not care for it now; but no one shall have Katharine's place — no, no!" And the poor mother again began to weep.

Eleanor took her seat at the foot of the sofa in compassionate silence.

"Dear aunt," she whispered at length, "your Katharine loves you as much as ever. You must not think her lost to you because she is married."

"Ah! that is what people say. I once said the same myself to a mother at her child's wedding. Let me see — who was it!" and her wandering thoughts seemed eagerly to catch at the subject. "Yes, I remember now, it was on Bella's wedding-day, and I was talking to her husband's mother. Poor Mrs. Pennythorne! She made me feel for her, for she, too, had one child — a son, I think. She said he must bring his wife home, because she could not bear to part with him. I wonder if she ever did?"

"Yes!" said Eleanor softly.

"Then her son is as unkind as my Katharine. He forgets his mother. Poor thing! poor thing! She is left all alone, like me!"

"Not so; far lonelier," said Eleanor's low voice. "Her son is dead."

"Dead! dead!" cried Lady Ogilvie; "and I have still my Katharine well and happy. God forgive me! I will never murmur any more." And she lay back in silence for many minutes. Then she said, "Eleanor, I should like to hear more about that poor mother. Where did you learn these news of her?"

"I saw her when I was in London, three weeks since," answered Eleanor, in a tremulous voice, remembering what years of sorrow she had lived in those three weeks.

"Poor Mrs. Pennythorne! I wish I could talk to her. Do you think she would come and see me? It might do her good."

Eleanor gladly seconded the plan; and surely she might be forgiven if there flashed across her mind the thought that through this channel might come tidings of Philip Wychnor.

A few days more, and she had succeeded in accomplishing her aunt's desire. Mrs. Pennythorne, wondering and shrinking, crept silently into the room, scarcely believing that the sickly woman who at her entrance half arose from the couch could be the tall and stately Lady Ogilvie. Still more surprised was she when Katharine's mother, glancing at her black garments, and then for an instant regarding her pale meek face, grief-worn but calm, laid her head on Mrs. Pennythorne's shoulder and burst into tears.

Then, to the mother of the Dead, came that new strength and dignity born of her sorrow; and she who had given her one lamb from her bosom to be sheltered in the eternal fold, spoke comforting words unto her whose grief was for the living gone astray. They talked not long of Katharine, but passed on to the subject that was now rarely absent from Mrs. Pennythorne's lips, and never from her heart, though it dwelt on both with a holy calmness, and without pain. She spoke of Leigh — of all that was good and beautiful in himself; of all that was hopeful in his death. And amidst the simple and touching story of his illness and his *going away* — she spoke of the last parting by no harsher word — she continually uttered, and ever with deep tenderness and thankful blessings, one name — the name of Philip Wychnor.

Half-hidden in the window, Eleanor listened to the tale which the grateful mother told. She heard of Philip's struggles, of his noble patience, of those qualities which had awakened in poor Leigh such strong attachment — and afterwards of the almost womanly tenderness which had smoothed the sick boy's pillow, filling him with joy and peace even to the last. And then Mrs. Pennythorne spoke of the gentle kindness which had since led Philip, prosperous and courted as he was, to visit her daily in her loneliness with comfort and cheer.

"My dear boy always said that Mr. Wychnor talked like an angel," continued Mrs. Pennythorne. "And so he does. Night and day I pray Heaven to reward him for the blessings he has brought to me and mine. And though he is sadly changed of late, and I can see there is more in his heart than even *I* know of, yet his words are like an angel's still. May God comfort him, and bless him evermore!"

"Amen!" was the faint echo, no louder than a breath. And shrouded from sight, Eleanor, with streaming uplifted eyes and clasped hands, poured forth her passionate thanksgiving for the worthiness of him she loved. "He is not mine — he never may be; but he is yet all I believed — goods pure, noble. My Philip, my true Philip, God bless thee! we shall yet stand side by side in His heaven, and look upon each other's face without a tear."

She was still in the recess when Mrs. Pennythorne entered it, her usual timid steps seeming more reluctant than ordinary.

"Your aunt would like to sleep a little, Miss Ogilvie, so she has sent me to you."

Eleanor roused herself; and spoke warmly and gratefully to the little quiet woman who loved Philip so well.

"Indeed, if it has done Lady Ogilvie any good, I am sure I am quite glad I came," answered Mrs. Pennythorne. "Though it was a struggle, as you say, for I hardly ever

go out now;" and a faint sigh passed the lips of Leigh's mother. "But my husband persuaded me, and — Mr. Wychnor too."

Here she hesitated, and glanced doubtfully at Eleanor; as though she had something more to say, but waited for a little encouragement. It came not, however; and Mrs. Pennythorne, conquering her shyness, went on: "Mr. Wychnor was very kind: he brought me here — almost to the park gates. When he said good-bye, he told me he was going abroad for a long time." — Eleanor started.— "You will forgive my talking about him thus, for I imagine Mr. Wychnor is a friend of your family, Miss Ogilvie. Indeed," and making a sudden effort Mrs. Pennythorne fulfilled her mission, "he asked me to give you this letter when I found you alone. And now I will go and sit by your aunt until she awakes," hastily added she.

She had said all she knew, and she had guessed but little more, being a woman of small penetration, and less curiosity. But no woman, worthy the name, could have seen the violent agitation which Eleanor vainly strove to repress, without gliding away, so that, whatever unknown sorrow there was, it might have free leave to flow.

Philip's letter ran thus:

"I pray you to forgive all I said and did that night; I was almost mad! It is not for me to occasion you any suffering, but you tried me so bitterly — wherefore, I cannot tell. Knowing what we once were to one another, and the bar there is between us now, I pray, and you yourself must say amen to my prayer, that on this side heaven we may never meet again!

"I waited until these lines could reach you safely. I have written no name, lest any contrary chance might occasion you pain. You see I think of you even now. Farewell! Farewell!"

And this was the end — the end of all! No more love — no more hope — not even the comfort of sorrow. His words seemed to imply that regret itself was sin. The unknown bar between them was eternal. *He* said so, and it must be true. Then, and not till then, came upon Eleanor the terrible darkness — through which Philip had once passed — the darkness of a world where love has been, is not, and will be no more for ever! The man, with his strong, great soul, nearer perchance to Heaven, and so interpenetrated with the Divine that the earthly held but a secondary place therein — the man struggled and conquered. The weaker, tenderer woman, whose very religion was Eve-like, "for God — in *him*," sank beneath that mighty woe.

A little while longer Eleanor strove against her misery. At morning she rose, and at evening she lay down, mechanically following the round of daily occupation. At last one night she entered her chamber — tried to collect her wandering thoughts, so that in some measure she might "set her house in order" — and then laid her weary head on the pillow, with a consciousness that she would lift it up no more.

All through the night it seemed as though a leaden hand pressed heavily on her brow; she did not writhe beneath it, for it felt cold, calm, like the touch of Death upon the throbbing veins, saying, "Peace — be still!" In the darkness she saw, even with closed eyes, the shining of olden faces — images from those early days when the one face had never yet crossed her dreams. Clearer than all — its sorrowful patience of earth transmuted into a heavenly calmness — she beheld her mother's loving smile; nay, breaking through the silence, her bewildered fancy almost distinguished the voice, faint as when her ear drank its last accents ere they were stilled for eternity, "My child — my dear child!"

"Mother, mother, my work is done. Let me come to thee!" was Eleanor's low yearning cry.

And with that last memory of the solemn past shutting out all the anguish of the present, she passed into the wide horror-peopled world of delirium.

Contents

CHAPTER 47

For a fearful time
We can keep down these floodgates of the heart;
But we must draw them some time, or ‘twill burst,
Like sand this brave embankment of the breast,
And drain itself to dry death. When pride thaws,
Look for floods PHILIP BAILEY

We will pass from this scene of sorrow and darkness into another that seems all sunshine. Yet if, looking on these two phases of life, we are fain to muse doubtfully on the strange contrasts of human fate, let us remember that the clouds furling away oft leave behind them coolness and dew, while the sunbeams may grow into a dazzling glare, blinding and scorching wherever they rest.

Day after day, week after week, Katharine Ogilvie basked in the new glory which had burst upon her world. Paul Lynedon’s influence was upon her and around her wherever she moved. It was the olden dream, the dream of girlhood, renewed with tenfold power. All her artificial self fell from her like a garment, and she stood before this man — this world-jaded, almost heartless man — a creature formed out of the long-past ideal of his youth; beautiful, and most true, whether for good or evil. There was no falseness in her; and that which had gathered over Paul Lynedon crumbled into dust and ashes before the sun-gleam of her eyes. His wavering nature was subdued by the energy of her own. Sisera-like, “at her feet he bowed, he fell;” struck down by the fierce might of a love whose very crime and hopelessness bound him with closer chains. He could not struggle against them — he did not try. He would now have given half of his wasted, hollow, thoughtless existence, to purchase one day, one hour, of this full, strong, real life that now thrilled his being, even though it coursed through every vein like molten fire. He would have laid himself down, body and soul, for her feet to trample on, rather than free himself from the spell wherewith she bound him, or pass from her presence and be haunted by her terrible power no more.

And this passion was so strong within him that it found no utterance. He sank dumb before her — in her sight he was humble as a little child. His lips, which to many another woman had framed the language of idle compliment, or of still softer and more beguiling tenderness, could not breathe one word that might startle the proud ear of Katharine Ogilvie. But though this mad, erring love was never uttered, she knew it well. The knowledge dawned upon her by slow degrees: and she felt that too late — oh, fearfully too late! — the dream of her youth had been fulfilled, and that she was loved even as she had loved.

What a future lay before the hapless wife whose rash and frenzied tongue, in taking the false vow, had given the lie to her heart! A whole life of feigning; year after year to wear the mask of affection, or at least of duty; to display the mocking semblance of a happy home; — worse than all, to smile answeringly upon the unsuspecting face that was — must be for ever at her side, haunting like an accusing spirit the wife who

loved another man dearer than her husband. This must be her doom, even if, still guiltless, she trod her heart into ashes, and walked on with a serene eye and dumb smiling lip. But if otherwise —

Katharine never dreamed of *that*. Blinded, she rushed to the very brink of the abyss; but there was a strong purity in her heart still. She did not once see the yawning gulf before her, for her eyes were turned beyond it — turned towards the pure dream-like love, the guiding-star of her life, which by its unrequited loneliness had become so spiritualised, that the taint of earthly passion had scarcely touched it, even now.

It sometimes chances that the realities of wedded life, and the calm peace of household ties, have power to conquer or stifle the remembrance of the deepest former love. But Katharine was so young, that, although a wife, she had a girl's heart still; and that heart her husband never sought to win from its romance to the still affection of home. Perhaps he felt the trial was beyond his power; and so, content with the guarding circlet on her finger, he desired not from her the only thing which can make the marriage-bond inviolate — a wedded heart. Sometimes, for days and weeks together, he would go away, leaving her to such solitude that it almost seemed a dream her having been a wife at all.

Another tie was there wanting — another safeguard in this perilous, loveless home. No child had come with its little twining arms to draw together the two divided hearts, and concentrate in one parental bond the wandering love of both. Often when she paced her lonely home, which her husband now found far less attractive than Summerwood, Katharine shuddered at the delicious poison which drop by drop was falling into her life's cup, converting even the faint affection she yet felt for Hugh into a feeling almost like hatred. And then the wife, terrified at the change that was stealing over her, dashed more and more into that wild whirl which people call "society."

Day after day, rarely with any arranged plan, but by some chance coincidence springing from the combined will of both, she and Paul Lynedon met. Every morning when she rose, Katharine felt that she was sure by some hap or other to see him ere night. Now, for the first time in her life, she knew what it is *to be loved*; to feel encompassed continually, in absence or presence, with the thoughts of another; to live with every day, every hour, threaded by those electric links of sympathy which, through all intervening distance, seem to convey to one heart the consciousness of another's love. Around and about her path wove these airy fetters, encircling her in a web through which she could not pass. She felt it binding her closer and closer; but it seemed drawn by the hand of destiny. A little while her conscience wrestled, then she became still and struggled no more.

Against these two erring ones the world's tongue had not yet been lifted. With others, as well as with Katharine herself, Paul Lynedon set a watch upon his lips and actions. He who had worn carelessly and openly the chains of many a light fancy, now buried this strong real love — the only real love of his life — in the very depths of his heart. Besides, his passion had sprung up, budded, and blossomed, in a space so short that the world had no time to note its growth, and probably would not have believed in its existence. But

Love counts time by heart-throbs, and not years.

Mrs. Lancaster — gossiping, light-tongued Mrs. Lancaster — visited her "dear, talented, charming friend, Mrs. Hugh Ogilvie," as frequently as ever, without seeing the haunting shadow that, near or distant, followed Katharine wherever she moved. Indeed, the lady often made Paul writhe beneath her hints and innuendoes respecting

his various flames, past and present, which she had discovered — or at least thought she had.

One morning she amused herself thus during the whole of a long visit at which she had met Lynedon at Mrs. Ogilvie's. Paul bore the jests restlessly at first, then indifferently; for in the calm proud eye and slightly-curled lip of the sole face he ever watched, he saw that no credence was given to the idle tale. Katharine knew now — and the knowledge came mingled with remorse and despair — that she herself was the only woman who had ever had power to sway Paul Lynedon's soul.

The last *historiette* which Mrs. Lancaster fixed upon for the delectation of her former favourite, was the suspected love episode with Eleanor Ogilvie. She continued the jest even further than she believed in it herself as she observed, with malicious pleasure, that Paul seemed more than usually sensitive on this point.

"I always thought, Mr. Lynedon, that there was some deep mystery in your sudden *escapade* to the Continent; and a friend of yours at last enlightened me a little on the subject. Confess, now, as we are quite alone — for Mrs. Ogilvie's sisterly ears need not listen unless she chooses — confess that your memory cherished long a certain visit at Summerwood, and that the meeting in London is not entirely accidental, any more than was the rencontre at Florence."

Paul Lynedon might have laughed off the accusation, but that Katharine's eyes were upon him. He answered, earnestly,

"Indeed, Mrs. Lancaster, I am not accountable for any imputed motives. My pleasure in Miss Ogilvie's society is not lessened by the fact that I have always owed it to chance alone. Most truly do I bear, and shall bear all my life" (his tone grew lower and more earnest still), "the memory of that week at Summerwood."

The dark eyes turned away, though not until he had seen the gleam of rapture which kindled them into dazzling light.

"But the rumour from Italy, which made us hope to see a Mrs. Lynedon ere long — how can you explain that?" pursued Mrs. Lancaster, who, in resigning, perforce, the character of a "woman of genius," had assumed that of the most annoying and pertinacious gossip who ever sinned against good sense and good breeding.

"I think you are mistaken," said Mrs. Ogilvie, with some dignity. "*My sister*" — (since her marriage, Katharine had ever most punctiliously used this title, thus gratifying at once her own real affection for Eleanor, and showing in the world's sight that outward respect which she always paid to her husband)— "my sister never met him when abroad. Is it not so, Mr. Lynedon?"

With that look meeting his, Paul for his life's worth could not have uttered a falsehood.

"I had, indeed, the pleasure of seeing Miss Ogilvie and Mrs. Breynton at Florence, but" — His further hurried explanation was stopped by the entrance of a messenger from Summerwood, bringing tidings of Eleanor's severe illness. Mrs. Lancaster, who always spread her wings and fled away before the least cloud of adversity, made a hasty disappearance. Katharine, startled, and touched with self-reproach for the neglect which for weeks past had made her forget all olden ties in one absorbing dream, was left alone — alone, save for the one ever-haunting friend who now approached her.

She started up almost angrily; for the images of Hugh and Hugh's dying sister were then present to the conscience-stricken wife. "You here, Mr. Lynedon! I thought you had departed with Mrs. Lancaster?"

"How could I go and leave you thus?" said Paul, softly. "Remember, it is not the first time that I have been with you in your sorrow."

Katharine looked up, to meet the same face which years before had bent over the trembling, weeping child; the same look, the same tone, yet fraught with a tenderness deeper a thousandfold. She saw it, and a strange terror came over her: she closed her eyes; she dared not look again. Pressing back all the memories that were thronging madly to her heart, she arose, saying,

"That is long ago — very long ago, Mr. Lynedon! I must now think not of the past but the present. My husband," and she desperately tried to strengthen herself with the word— "my husband is from home; I will go to Summerwood at once myself."

"It is a long distance. If I were permitted to accompany — at least, to follow you in a few hours," he added, correcting himself, "it would give me real happiness. Indeed, my own anxiety" — Katharine turned round suddenly with a doubtful, penetrating glance. Lynedon perceived it.

"You do not — you will not believe that idle tale You cannot think that I — that I ever did or ever shall love any woman living, save" — He paused abruptly — then eagerly caught her hand.

The burning crimson rushed to Katharine's very brow. A moment, and she drew her hand away; not hurriedly, but with a cold haughty gesture. She remembered still that she was Hugh's wife.

"Mr. Lynedon, you misinterpret my thoughts; this confidence was quite unnecessary, and I believe unasked. Let us change the subject."

He shrank abashed and humbled before her. Katharine ruled him with an irresistible sway, chaining even the torrent of passion that was ready to burst forth. And she — loving as she did — had strength thus to seal down his love, that he should not utter it.

Soon afterwards Paul Lynedon quitted her presence. She parted from him with a few words of gentle but distant kindness, which instantly lighted up his whole countenance with joy. But when he was gone, she sank back exhausted and lay for a long time almost senseless. Again and again there darted through her side that sharp arrowy pain — which she had first felt after the night when a few chance words, false words as she now believed, had swept away all hope and love for ever from her life. Of late this pain had been more frequent and intense; and now, as she lay alone, pressing her hand upon her heart, every pulse of which she seemed to feel and hear, a thought came — solemn, startling! — the thought that even now upon her, so full of life, of youth, and youth's wildest passions, might be creeping a dark shadow from the unseen world.

For an instant she trembled; and then the thought came again, bearing with it a flood of joy. Lifting a veil between her and the dreaded future, Katharine saw a shadowy hand; she would have fallen down and blessed it, even though it were the hand of death.

"It must be so," she said softly to herself; "I shall die, I shall die!" and her tone rose into a desperate joy. "This long fearful life will not be. I shall pass away and escape. O rest! — O peace! — come soon — soon! Let me sleep an eternal sleep! Let me feel no more — suffer no more!"

Poor struggling one — stretching thine arms from life's desolate shore to the wide, dark ocean beyond — is there no mercy in earth or heaven for thee? Thy lips now drain the cup thine own hands lifted; yet, if the suffering righteous needeth compassion, surely the stricken sinner needeth more.

Ye who, untempted, walk secure, with Levite step and averted face, noting carefully how by his own vain folly or wickedness your weaker brother "fell among thieves," — should ye not rather come with the merciful touch, the cleansing water,

and the oil and wine, that the erring one may be saved, and the heavenward road receive one strengthened hopeful traveller more?

Contents

CHAPTER 48

"Ah, why," said Ellen, sighing to herself,
"Why do not words, and kiss, and solemn pledge —
Why do not these prevail, for human life
To keep two hearts together, that began
Their spring-time with one love, and that have need
Of mutual pity and forgiveness, sweet
To grant, or be received?" WORDSWORTH.

Katharine Ogilvie reached Summerwood when it was almost night. Over all the house there seemed a stillness and hush, as in a dwelling where there is one life, a precious life, hanging on a thread. Stealthy, noiseless footsteps — doors opened and closed without a sound — loud voices softened into anxious whispers — all showed how much Eleanor was beloved. Sir Robert, his parliamentary papers and eternal blue-books lying unopened, sat talking with the physician, and often glancing sorrowfully at the neglected tea-equipage, behind which he missed the gentle moonlight smile of his niece, even more than the long-absent one of his ever-ailing wife. Lady Ogilvie, unable to quit her couch, lay with her door opened, listening to every sound. Between her and the sick-chamber there moved continually, with light steps and mourning garments, a figure so unobtrusive that Katharine did not for some time notice it.

It was Mrs. Pennythorne.

She had come in by chance the day after poor Eleanor had laid down her weary head — perhaps for ever. Then towards the sick girl the heart of the childless mother yearned. She became her nurse; never quitting her except to speak a few words of comfort to the terrified and grief-stricken Lady Ogilvie. In truth, Mrs. Pennythorne, meek and quiet as she was, had become the guiding spirit in this house of sickness. But she crept into her place so gradually, and sustained it so imperceptibly, that no one ever thought of the fact; and even Lady Ogilvie did not speak of her until she appeared, suddenly and silently, to lead Katharine to her sister's room.

Mrs. Pennythorne had at first shrunk both in timidity and dislike from the stylish Mrs. Ogilvie, the neglectful daughter of whom she had heard. But this feeling passed away when she saw how subdued Katharine's manner was, and with what trembling steps she moved to Eleanor's chamber.

"And you have tended her night and day — you almost a stranger?" said Katharine. "How good you are! while I" —

She stopped; for the remorse which had smitten her heart at the sight of her long-forsaken mother, was renewed when she behold the sick, almost dying girl, who, from the triple ties of marriage, kindred, and affection, might well have claimed from her a sister's care.

Eleanor was sitting up in bed; her arms extended, and her eyes — those once beautiful, calm eyes — glittering and burning with fever. She began to talk in quick, sharp, ringing accents.

"Ah! you have been to fetch her; I thought you would. I could not die without seeing Mrs. Breynton. Tell her she need not fear meeting him — he will not come. Philip will not come — never more — never more!"

"She often talks in this way," whispered Mrs. Pennythorne; "and so I am glad that no one is with her except myself. I do not know anything, but I feel sure that she and poor Mr. Wychnor" —

Low as the tone was, the words reached Eleanor's ear. She turned quickly round.

"What! do you speak about him, Mrs. Breynton? — for I know you are Mrs. Breynton, though you look different — younger, and so beautiful! Ah! perhaps you have died, and so become a spirit like my mother! But did you not pray her to forgive you for breaking her poor child's heart? We will not talk about it. Still, it was cruel of you to part my Philip from me."

"Philip again!" said Katharine, softly. "Ah! I see it all now — I guessed it long. Is it even so with her too! — Eleanor, dearest!" And she spoke very tenderly.

"Who calls me *dearest*? He used, once, but he will never call me so again! She kept me from him until his love has changed. I shall never be Philip's wife now. It is all your work, Mrs. Breynton!"

"I am not Mrs. Breynton. I am Katharine — your sister."

"Are you? No, no! — Katharine is Hugh's wife — loving and happy." Katharine dropped her head shudderingly. "She would not come here — we have only sorrow here. But you must not let her know — no living soul must know what Philip said that night — that there was a gulf, a bar between us. Let me whisper it, lest the world might hear, and call him cruel. But he is not cruel: he is all-good. Listen! — and she placed her lip to Katharine's ear— "Perhaps some one loved him better than he thought I did, and he is married — married!"

"Oh no indeed, Miss Ogilvie!" broke in Mrs. Pennythorne, with tears in her eyes; "Mr. Wychnor will never marry. He told me so one day — the very day I brought you his letter."

"Letter — his letter! Ah I remember every word — every word;" and with an accent of thrilling sorrow she repeated, line by line, Philip's last farewell. "And then — I forget all afterwards — it is darkness — darkness!" she moaned, while her head drooped on her bosom, and her eyes closed.

Mrs. Pennythorne laid her down on the pillow, parted the dishevelled hair, and bathed her brow with water. "What a gentle, skilful nurse you are!" said Katharine, who, a stranger to scenes like this, was trembling with alarm and agitation.

"I am used to it," was the meek, sad reply, as she bent over her charge.

There was a few minutes' silence, and then Eleanor opened her eyes, and regarded wistfully her tender nurse.

"I do not know you, but you are very kind to me. Perhaps my mother has sent you. I hear her calling me every hour, but I cannot go. Tell her I cannot! I must not die until — until — What was it that I had to do?" Her eyes wandered restlessly, and she put her hand to her brow, "My head is wild! I cannot remember anything! Help me! do help me!" And her piteous gaze was lifted mournfully to Mrs. Pennythorne. "Tell me what it is that I have to do before I die."

"Repeat *his* name; she will hear that," whispered Katharine, regarding her sister with a deep sympathy unfelt before.

"Shall we send for any one — for Philip?" gently asked Mrs. Pennythorne.

"Philip! Why do you speak about Philip? I dared not even utter his name: Mrs. Breynton would not let me. Ah, that is it!" and a delirious light shone in her face. "I

must see Mrs. Breynton; I must tell her to forgive my Philip! She has had her will, for we shall never marry — never see one another any more."

She ceased a moment, and then rose wildly from her couch.

"You are cruel; you will not fetch Mrs. Breynton: and until I know she will forgive him, I cannot die. I am weary — so weary! and you will not let me go to my mother! Do you know" — and she caught hold of Mrs. Pennythorne's dress— "I see her standing waiting for me — there! there!"

Katharine started, for there seemed a strange reality in the fantasy which directed Eleanor's fixed eyes and lifted finger.

"The room is filled with them!" continued the delirious girl "They come around me by night and by day — some dead faces, some living; but they are all sad — like yours. Philip's is there too sometimes — smiling so tenderly, as he used to do in the dear old palace-garden. See! he is looking on me now! Ah, Philip, you did love me once — you do love me — I read it in your byes; but you dare not speak. Then I must! You see, dear Philip, I am calm" — and her voice sank almost to its natural tones— "as calm as I was that day you called me your strength, your comfort. Tell me, then, what is this bar between us — when I am rich, when I love you, only you, my Philip, my own Philip!"

She paused, but after a few moments' silence, broke once more into disconnected ravings.

Katharine waited until the shrill tones ceased, and her sister fell into the heavy slumber which foretold the near approach of the crisis. Then she drew Mrs. Pennythorne aside.

"Tell me — you know better than I — is there any hope?"

There was hope, for youth can struggle through so much; with this sleep the fever might be conquered.

"And then she will wake — wake to what? Death might be better for her than life! it is so sometimes," muttered Katharine to herself.

Mrs. Pennythorne spoke comfortingly — she looked on the pale excited face of the young wife, and forgave all her imagined errors. Katharine sat in deep thought without making any answer — perhaps she did not even hear. At last she said, suddenly and decisively,

"Mrs. Pennythorne, you and I well understand one another. Those words which poor Eleanor has uttered you will keep sacred!"

"Certainly. Oh, Mrs. Ogilvie, I wish indeed that Miss Eleanor and my dear Philip Wychnor" —

"He is your friend, I believe," interrupted Katharine. "Tell me all you know about him."

And once more Mrs. Pennythorne gratefully dwelt on the history of Philip's goodness. Then, glad to relieve her simple heart from a secret that weighed heavily upon it, she related all she knew about the letter, which had made her the unconscious messenger of so much evil.

"I did not notice then, but I remember now, how earnestly he spoke, and how unhappy he seemed. I am sure there was something painful in that letter. I have no right to say a word on this subject, but I do feel towards Philip Wychnor as though he were my own son. If I could only see him happy, and Miss Ogilvie too, so good and gentle as she is. The moment I saw her I felt sure of his loving her — He could not help it. It is a sorrowful world," continued she, after waiting awhile for the answer, which Mrs. Ogilvie, absorbed in thought, withheld; "yet if one could but make these two young creatures happy" —

“It shall be — I will do it!” cried Katharine. “And oh!” she said softly to herself, as Mrs. Pennythorne glided away at the physician’s summons, “if I, even I, can but leave behind me a little peace, a little happiness, surely it will prove some atonement. If I have sinned, though only in thought, against my husband, I may bring joy to the sister he loves: and then I shall pass away from all, and my misery will encumber the earth no more.”

With Katharine, to will was to act. She sat down and wrote to Mrs. Breynton, entreating, or rather commanding — for her earnestness seemed almost like a command — that she would come at once to Summerwood. Then she wrote, with a swift though trembling hand, a few lines — to Paul Lynedon! After she had finished, she stood irresolute — but only for a moment. She sealed the letter, and laid it with the other.

“Yes, it shall go — I can trust him — him only. He will do my will, whatever it be;” and a bitter though triumphant smile curved her lips. “And he will be silent too, no fear! This my act might seem strange to the world — perhaps to him; but what matter when the end comes? and it is perhaps near — very near. I pray it may be so!” Her voice sank to an inaudible whisper; for even then, as if in answer to that awful prayer, she felt the sharp death-warning dart through her side.

Next morning, Paul Lynedon came. Katharine knew he would; and had risen long before the rest of the wearied and anxious household. She was walking in the avenue when his panting horse approached; he leaped from it with a look of the wildest ecstasy.

“You sent for me: how good, how kind! What thanks can I give you, dear Mrs. Ogilvie — dear Katharine?”

He uttered softly, almost in a whisper, the long unspoken name. She started and drew back in proud reproof: “You forget, Mr. Lynedon”

“Pardon me: I had indeed forgotten all — all but that happy time when I was here last. Would to Heaven it could come again, and you were once more that dear child who” —

“A child — you thought me a child!” cried Katharine, with that impulse which in the early days of this second meeting had made her very love half vengeance; and even now caused her as it were to set herself against herself, the slighted girl against the worshipped woman.

“I thought — shall I tell you what I thought you — what I think you?” said Lynedon, eagerly.

“No!” The word reined him in his mad impulse, and he stood mute.

“Mr. Lynedon” — the calm, cold tone struck him like an arrow— “shall we change our conversation? Let me explain the reason which made me trespass on your kindness.’ He bowed, and walked by her side up the avenue.

Katharine went on: “There is something very near my heart in which I can trust no *friend*” — she laid the faintest emphasis on the word— “no friend but you. Will you — asking no questions, seeking no explanations — do it for me?”

“Will I? — you know I will!”

“I want you to seek for a friend of yours, or an acquaintance at least — Philip Wychnor. He is gone a journey: whither I know not, and have no means of knowing, save through you. Find him; bring him hither, on what excuse you will: or perhaps — the truth is always best — I will write to him, and you shall bear the letter.”

“This is all mystery; I cannot fathom it,” said Paul, uneasily; his jealous mind at once forming the most torturing conclusions. “Only tell me” —

“I will tell you nothing: only do this, I entreat you; do it for me.” And Katharine’s eagerness made her tone so tremulous, so bewitching, that Paul Lynedon could have fallen at her feet.

“I promise,” said he. “Heaven knows I would plunge a knife into my very heart if you bade me,” he added, speaking low and hurriedly.

As low, but almost fearful in its firmness, was Katharine’s reply: “I might, but I would thrust it into my own heart next.”

He looked at her astonished, but her face was turned away. The next moment she had sprung forward to meet her father, who crossed their path on his early morning walk.

“You have ridden over to inquire for my poor niece, Mr. Lynedon?” said Sir Robert. “How exceedingly kind of you! You must stay and breakfast with us. Persuade him, Katharine” —

But Katharine had already glided away.

Contents

CHAPTER 49

Art thou already weary of the way?
Thou, who hast yet but half the way gone o'er —
Get up and lift thy burden!

Say thou not sadly, "Never" and "No more;"
But from thy lips banish those falsest words:
While life remains, that which was thine before
Again may be thine; in Time's storehouse lie
Days, hours, and moments that have unknown hoards
Of joy, as well as sorrow : passing by,
Smiles come with tears. FRANCES ANNE BUTLER.

There is scarce a town in England more suggestive of speculation upon what our good friend David Drysdale would have entitled "the noble science of man," than that turnpike-gate on the European highway — Dover. Not that one need pause to enumerate from Pinnock or Goldsmith how many kings "landed at Dover," or "set sail from Dover." The present is quite fruitful enough to set aside the past. Think of the multitudes of small *historiettes* worked out here; how that among the throng that from year to year pass by, are all ranks and characters — fugitive royalty; errant nobility; the regiment departing, its mournful fragments returned; or, to descend to individuals — debtor flying creditor; married lovers speeding to happiness and honeymoon; wretched and erring ones, speeding faster still into what must be in the end a miserable doom; happy men seeking pleasure; sick-hearted, hopeless men, rushing anywhere for oblivion. And here we pause, for with such an one we have to do.

Philip Wychnor had reached Dover on his way to the Continent. He would have simply passed through it, longing for the moment when he should set his last footstep — at least the last for many years — on English shores. But fate, the fate which one less pious-hearted would have angrily cursed, detained him for many days. He spent them restlessly enough, patient as he was; in his daily toil of literary necessity — alas for the poor author! and in evening wanderings about the country. Beauty he found — for a poet's mind finds beauty everywhere — but yet he could not realise it. He felt upon him the commencement of that doom, to roam the wide world, "finding no rest for the sole of his foot."

The reviving from a great woe is sometimes worse than the woe itself. The world looks so blank, so dreary; we see it once more; our dull eyes even acknowledge its glory, but it is like looking on a beautiful corse from whence the life is gone. Earth smiles, Heaven smiles — just as heretofore; but the smile resembles that on a face once loved, which meets us vacantly, the heart beneath it shining out no longer. We do not weep; perhaps we scarcely suffer: we are quite calm, gentle, patient; all goes on with us as before; we walk through the beaten path of our daily existence, but the light is gone from the world; the present seems inane and dim; and, O merciful God!

we have no future and no past! Not *here!* but we know we have hereafter. And then we see enfolding us an arm of comfort and strength, and hear the voice — I AM!

Can I suffice for heaven and not for earth?

So Philip felt when he sat alone in the twilight on the cliff hallowed by tradition as "Shakspeare's." The hour was so late that all sea-side idlers had long departed, and the place seemed as lonely and dreary as in the olden time of Shakspeare, Lear, and poesy. The sea sang hollowly, far below, and when the last sunset tinge had faded behind the Downs, they assumed a robe of mist, spectral and mysterious. Gradually it folded itself round the cliff, completely hiding the sea beneath; so that the melancholy voice arose from waters that were heard, not seen.

Driven by that irresistible impulse which seizes most men on such a spot of danger — so much so, that the ancients believed a tempting demon stood on the brink of each abyss — Philip crept to the utmost verge of the cliff. Unwittingly, and fitfully, there danced through his brain the poet's tale which had made the spot renowned — he thought of blind Gloster, hunted by fate into that last plunge which would determine all. He pictured what the old man's feelings might have been — what must be the thoughts of any man sick of life — looking curiously, desiringly, into the awful mystery beyond — so near, that one simple movement would make it a reality.

Suddenly he remembered how in that man he had pictured *himself*.

The conviction — horrible, yet full of a daring pride, a delicious alluring awe — burst upon him, that lie held his soul as it were by a thread: that he was master of his own destiny; one step, and he might pass from the world's tortures, to — where?

"My life is in my hand," he muttered in the words of one sorely tried of old— "*My life is in my hand, yet I do not forget thy law*!"

Shuddering, he drew hack from the abyss in horror. But he felt that to his latest day that minute's sensation would teach him compassion for suicides. And while he shrank fearfully from the crime only thought of in possibility, the revulsion softened him from dull dreariness into a sorrow, that, but for his strong manhood, would have melted in tears. He was glad — thankful for any sense — even the sense of suffering. He looked up at the stars which were beginning to shine through the gloomy night, and prayed Heaven to keep him free from sin, that he might endure with a patient heart through life unto its ending.

Then he went homeward, greatly composed. He sought to feel as though he belonged to the world. Passing through the town, he tried to look around him, and feel an interest in the various talking and laughing groups, the street music, the cheerful shops; but it was vain. He seemed as different from the rest of mankind as the gloomy cliffs from the gay-lighted street which they overhung.

When he reached the inn, he learned there was a gentleman awaiting him. Entering, he saw — Paul Lynedon.

Had the visitant been a ghost from the dead, a demon returned to the upper world, he could not have raised more fearful passions in Philip Wychnor's breast. Anguish, terror, even a thrill of fierce hatred, overwhelmed him. He sprang towards Lynedon, scarcely conscious of what he did, and then sank into a chair, speechless.

"I have startled you, I see. I ought to apologise," said Lynedon, gently and courteously, though somewhat annoyed at this rather strange reception. But Paul was a man who would have shown dignified civility to his executioner on the scaffold.

Philip Wychnor answered him not a word.

"Perhaps this visit is ill-timed —— an intrusion. But in excuse I need only mention your friends and mine — the Ogilvies."

Philip started up in an agony. “Sir — Mr. Lynedon — tell me what you have to say without mentioning names. I have been terribly tried — and I pretend not to superhuman strength. I wish to leave England, forget all friends, break all ties, for a season. Why must I be tortured any more?”

Lynedon opened his eyes with extreme but still most polite astonishment.

“Pardon me, and forget all I have been weak enough to say,” Philip continued, trying to calm himself with remembering to *whom* he spoke. “I shall forget it myself soon. Will you sit?”

He pointed to a chair, but remained standing himself, leaning against the wall.

“This is a strange welcome from an acquaintance — I would fain have said a friend; but I pass it by, Mr. Wychnor, both for your own sake and hers whose messenger I am.” And he resented Mrs. Ogilvie’s letter.

Under all circumstances Paul Lynedon had the gentleness of a true gentleman. He saw at once that something was terribly wrong with the young man. He pitied him. Conquering at once his natural curiosity, and the vague jealousy which was dawning in him, he walked to the open window and contemplated the stars; so that, of whatever news he had been the unlucky bearer, his companion might learn them unobserved. But he expected not to hear the cry — almost like a woman’s agony — which broke from Philip Wychnor. It brought him at once to the young man’s side.

“What is the matter? Can I” —

Philip caught his arm wildly. “You know — tell me the truth, on your soul — you know what this letter contains?”

“On my soul, I do not!”

“What! not that she is ill — dying?”

“Dying!” cried Lynedon, vehemently, his thoughts recurring to the only woman who ever occupied them now. But he recollected himself at once. “No, you mistake, it is only Miss Ogilvie who is ill.”

Philip looked into his face with an eager, half-incredulous stare. “*Only*? You say so calmly! You come here when” —

Paul began to guess dimly at the truth — at least some part of it. He answered, kindly, “I regret Miss Ogilvie’s illness much; she is a gentle creature, and I am happy to call her my friend, but” —

The careless tone struck Philip with conviction at once. “I see it all now — all! Oh, what have I done? May God forgive me!”

He laid his head on the table, and burst into a passion of tears.

Paul was touched. Once upon a time he might have mocked at such weakness; but now his own heart taught him differently. He said, with kindness and delicacy, “You and I, and all her friends, must rejoice that the crisis is past: I heard so to-day from Summerwood. She will recover, please God!”

There was no answer, and Lynedon thought the best thing he could do was to walk to the window again. He remained there until he felt a hand on his. It was Philip Wychnor’s. His face was white as death, but it wore a calmness almost like joy.

“You will pardon all this, Lynedon?”

“My dear fellow” — and Paul returned the cordial grasp— “don’t speak of it. I’m sure I am very sorry — that is, glad — but being quite in the dark, and having a great respect for both parties, might I” —

“Do not ask me anything — do not think anything. One day you may know all.”

“Well, as you like; all I know now is, that Mrs. Ogilvie wished to see you; that I sought you by her desire.”

“God bless you and her!” cried Philip.

The blood rushed to Lynedon's brow. He felt like a demon in the presence of a saint.

"You will be kind and leave me now," pursued Philip. "I feel towards you deeply, thankfully. We shall meet again as sincere friends?"

"I hope so," said Paul warmly.

Wychnor followed him to the door. As they said adieu, he looked repentantly, almost affectionately, into the face which had once seemed to him like that of a haunting fiend.

"Forgive me once more. You know not what I have endured. May you never know the like! May you be happy — very happy! You deserve it, I am sure."

Lynedon sprang from the door: the blessing knelled on his ear like a judgment-doom. He fled from its sound, but its echo followed him; he dulled it with wine, but it rose up again. At last he clutched it as one clutches in despair some ever-pursuing horror. He said to himself, that not for earth, heaven, or hell, would he give up Katharine Ogilvie!

Contents

CHAPTER 50

Thou hast named a name
Which to my conscience gives such secret pangs.
— Yea, there is nothing that I would not do
In reparation of the wrong I've done him.
JOANNA BAILLIE.

Remorse, if proud and gloomy —
It is a poison-tree, that, pierced to the utmost,
Weeps only tears of poison. COLERIDGE.

Mrs. Breynton was sitting in her breakfast-room — or rather moving restlessly about, impatient of her solitude — when she heard the tidings of Eleanor's danger. The shock fell upon her with overwhelming suddenness. Eleanor's absence had revealed how the gentle girl had twined herself round this aged heart, bringing to it life and youth and warmth unknown before. The first few days of her loneliness, Mrs. Breynton had chafed and fumed. Nay, but for her pride, she would have summoned Eleanor back. As it was, she had time to discover how strong was this second affection — almost rivalling the one pre-eminent feeling, her love for her nephew. She now began to desire more anxiously than ever the working out of her long-projected scheme, which, in making Eleanor Philip's wife, should bind both attachments in one.

And then came the letter of Katharine Ogilvie, with tidings which threatened ruin alike to her worldly schemes, her planning ambition, her long-suppressed affections, which in old age had risen up so strong. Mrs. Breynton was bewildered — grief, fear, remorse, wrung her heart by turns. Again and again she read the letter: it seemed to grow more and more confused. She was conscious of but one impulse — that she must that instant go to Summerwood.

She summoned the waiting-woman who had grown old in her service, and bade her prepare for the sudden journey. When Davis broke out in loud remonstrances, she was silenced by a look — not commanding, as of old, but piteously weak and imploring.

"Do not hinder me, good Davis. She will die before I reach her. My dear Eleanor! — poor Isabel's child! May God forgive me if I did her wrong!" Davis, though scarcely understanding her broken words, grew terrified at the change which had come over the Dean's widow.

"Let me go too, dear mistress," sobbed the faithful creature. "Let me go, that I may be with you in your trouble, and see poor dear Miss Eleanor once more."

Mrs. Breynton passively assented; and the two aged women, mistress and maid, travelled all night, scarcely exchanging a word until they reached Summerwood.

Katharine met Mrs. Breynton at the door. She had often heard Hugh jestingly describe the stately, stern-featured, black-robed widow of the Dean; but she saw only a bent, haggard woman, who, clinging to her servant's arm, seemed to tremble with apprehension ere she crossed the threshold. Katharine stepped forward quickly.

“Will you lean on me, Mrs. Breynton? I am Katharine Ogilvie.”

Mrs. Breynton seized her arm. “Is she” — And the eager eyes alone continued the mute question.

“She lives still. She may live.”

“Thank God!” Never, during her lifetime, had Mrs. Breynton breathed so deep, so solemn a thanksgiving. She staggered to a seat; and for the first time for many years the old servant saw her mistress weep.

It was some hours before Mrs. Breynton was suffered to enter Eleanor’s chamber. Then Katharine led her in for a few moments only, to look on the sick girl as she slept.

The crisis had passed, and Eleanor lay calm, though scarcely breathing. In her pale, wasted face — round which the close cap was tied — there was a likeness to one, which Mrs. Breynton had last seen when she stood beside the orphan daughter, to take a farewell look of the dead. The resemblance struck her now with a vain repentance. She fell at the foot of the bed.

“Isabel — Isabel Morton!” she cried, “your life was darkened by me and mine. Heaven forgive us for the wrong, which ended not with the mother, but passed on to the child! Eleanor! — my sweet, meek Eleanor! live — only live — and I will confess all — atone for all!”

She seemed not to notice the presence of another, but Katharine’s ear caught every word. In a few minutes she had led Mrs. Breynton from the chamber of the yet sleeping girl. Then she spoke: in the low, firm tone by which Katharine, when she willed, could rule all minds weaker than her own:

“Mrs. Breynton, I am almost a stranger to you; but I have a right to speak, for Eleanor is my sister, and you hold her happiness in your hands. How, or why, this is, I know not, and seek not to know; but thus much I have learned — that she and your nephew, Philip Wychnor, have loved one another for many years, and that you prevented their marriage.”

The shadow of her former freezing dignity came to the Dean’s widow, but only for a moment. Conscience-stricken, she quailed before the clear eyes that seemed to read her heart. “It is all true — all true!” she muttered.

Katharine went on. “What I wish to say is this: that Philip Wychnor has been deceived in some way — that he has cast Eleanor off, believing her faithless — and that his unkindness has almost broken her heart. He has gone away — abroad, I believe.”

“He must not, shall not go,” almost screamed Mrs. Breynton: “it is not too late, even now!”

“No! for whoever has stood between them, I will bring them together. Take care, Mrs. Breynton — I am very strong — stronger than you. You have been most cruel to these two. But with your will or against it, they *shall* be happy now.”

And Katharine stood before the cowering, remorseful woman, like an avenging angel. She met with no opposition; not even when she spoke of Philip Wychnor’s coming, which she daily expected. Mrs. Breynton knew the time was near when she must confess. Her shame was heavy upon her, but her suffering outweighed it all. She entreated to see Eleanor alone; but this was forbidden. Katharine seemed to govern the whole household, including the frightened Hugh, who had come hastily to Summerwood, and lamented by turns the illness of his sister and the loss of a whole fortnight’s grouse-shooting.

In a few days Eleanor became convalescent. At length Katharine led Mrs. Breynton to the sick chamber. She only stayed to see Eleanor stretch out her arms

with a faint cry of joy, while the aged woman sank on her knees beside her; then she closed the door and went away.

It was almost an hour before she was summoned to her sister's room. Eleanor lay, pale indeed, but with such gladness in her eyes, such a spiritual light suffusing her whole face, that Katharine marvelled at her beauty. Mrs. Breynton sat beside her, looking very humble; but her hand was fast clasped in Eleanor's; and from time to time the girl turned upon her a look full of pity, forgiveness, and cheer.

Katharine advanced. "You need not speak, dearest; I see your face. All is peace and hope with you now!" Her voice failed a little, and one tear dimmed her eyes.

"It will be, soon — soon, please God."

"Will you tell me, Eleanor" —

"Ay, tell her," said Mrs. Breynton. "It is but just."

"Hush! hush! there is nothing to tell," and the wan fingers closed tighter over Mrs. Breynton's. "Katharine, I think you guessed all — that we have loved one another for many, many years. I have only a few words more to say. Come closer, dear, for I am very tired and weak."

Katharine bent over her. Eleanor went on quicker, though speaking very faintly:

"Philip was mistaken. He heard a rumour concerning something that happened years ago, about one who liked me once, or at least imagined he did so. Thus far the tale was true. He wished to marry me. But it was in vain; I never loved any one save Philip. Katharine, I must see Philip, to tell him so. If I die, the knowledge will comfort him, and give him peace. If I live" —

"You will live — you must live, my darling!" sobbed Mrs. Breynton.

"Yes, dear friend, I may live, please God! to be your child still," was the gentle answer. "But Katharine, bring Philip to me! He loves me; he did love me through all, and I have no pride in my heart — only love. Let him come, that I may take away his sorrow."

"Be content, Eleanor, we will send," said Katharine, soothingly; "nay, to tell the truth, he is already sent for by my own desire. He will come soon."

"Ah! that makes me happy — so happy! Thank you, dear, kind sister," faintly answered the sick girl, closing her eyes. A moment after, she said, dreamily, "Whom did you send? Was it Hugh?"

"No, a friend of his, and yours too." Katharine hesitated. "In truth, it was Mr. Lynedon."

Eleanor started up wildly. "Oh no, you could not, you did not send Mr. Lynedon. My Philip, my poor Philip! it will drive him mad! And I am not there to tell him the truth — that I did not listen, not one moment; that no power on earth should ever have made me Paul Lynedon's wife."

"Paul Lynedon's wife!" Even Eleanor's face was not more death-like than Katharine's when she echoed the words. "Eleanor, answer me: was it Paul Lynedon who asked you to marry him?"

"Yes — yes. I never told any one — not even Philip: I would not now, but I am so weak, and my heart is breaking. Katharine, think for me; write to Philip — tell him you know I never cared for Mr. Lynedon. You do know, for it all passed at that fatal visit to Summerwood."

"*That* was the time, then!" said Katharine; and the words came hissingly through her closed lips. "I am glad you told me this; it comes not too late. It will save you — perhaps not you alone. Rest, sister, rest! I will do all you wish."

She unclasped the arm which had folded round her in frantic energy, and laid Eleanor down, exhausted and weeping. Then she glided from the chamber. In the

apartment beyond, Mrs. Pennythorne sat alone; from the open dining-room door came the voices of Sir Robert and Hugh. She could gain no solitude within the house, so fled wildly from it.

Out, into the dreary, moonless autumn night, the darkness and the rain, Katharine passed. She walked rapidly, the bleak wind lifting her hair, and piercing to her unsheltered bosom. At the end of the avenue, where Lynedon had that morning lately come bounding to her side she stopped.

"He told me a lie — a lie!" she cried. "He deceived me — even in those old days: he has deceived me now. He is false — all false! And I have wrecked my peace on earth — almost my hope of heaven — for love of him!

"Paul! — Paul Lynedon! — you love me now — I know it! Heart and soul, you are mine! But it had been better for you to have torn out that false tongue of yours before it uttered that lie, the last lie of all — before you told me you had never wished to marry Eleanor Ogilvie."

Ere long her stormy anger passed into weeping. "I wished to die!" she moaned, "for then I should escape sin, and suffer no more sorrow. I would have died calmly — believing in him still; though how dearly I loved him, I dared not let him know. Never — never! I would never have let him know. Wretched we might have been — but we would never have been wicked. I would still have honoured him — trusted him — believed him noble and true. But he is false — all false — false to the heart's core. He always was so. And I loved him — I love him. O miserable me!"

A little longer this wail of a wrecked heart was wasted on the silent night; and then Katharine saw lights moving in the house. She returned hastily thither, lest her absence should have caused surprise. Crossing the hall, she met Sir Robert and Hugh.

"Really, Katharine, these late rambles in the grounds are very injurious to health. And you have no bonnet! My dear Hugh, you should take better care of your wife," observed the baronet, as he ascended the stairs.

"Take care of Katharine! Nay, I can't do that. She's a young filly that will neither be led nor driven. I have found that out at last," said Hugh, carelessly.

Katharine was passing him by, but at his words she turned and looked him in the face. Her whole bearing expressed the most intense and withering scorn. A strange contrast was there between the husband and wife; he grown awkward and heavy, and becoming each day coarser in person as in mind — she, with her ardent soul flashing in her eyes and dilating her stature, while her slender, beautiful form, gradually wasting away, made her seem hardly like a creature of this world.

"What was that you said?"

"Oh, nothing — nothing!" And Hugh shrank away, cowed, before her fixed gaze. "Don't be vexed, Katharine; I only meant that you were not quite as you used to be; but I suppose all girls change when they marry."

"Those were not your words. Speak the truth."

"What's the use, if you know it already?" said Hugh, sulkily. "But don't keep me here, pray; I'm going out."

She stood in his path still.

"Stay, Hugh: you said I would neither be led nor driven, and you are right; I will not."

"I'm sure I don't want to try. Many a husband might complain of the little attention you pay me, but I always take it quietly. Still, what with your visiting, and your literary parties, and your fine gentlemen friends" —

"Hugh, take care!" Katharine broke in wildly. "Do not try me too much. Speak kindly to me — let me do as I will: it cannot be for long — not long."

“Eh! — what?” — and, struck by her tone, he came nearer, and gazed in her excited countenance with some show of interest. “Poor little Katharine! you don’t look well — you hardly seem to know what you’re saying. This anxiety about Nelly has been too much for you. There, be quiet!” His words were not without affection, though it was expressed in his own careless fashion. He stooped down and patted his wife’s head tenderly.

The tone and action smote Katharine’s heart with a remorseful memory of olden days — when she had known no stronger love than that won by the unfailing devotion of cousin Hugh. The thought drew her nearer to her husband.

“Forgive me, Hugh. I might have made you happier, perhaps. We were not suited for one another. We should not have married.”

“Do you think so? Well, well, it is too late now. We must make the best of one another,” said Hugh, in a tone half angry, half sorrowful, as he turned away.

Katharine caught his hand. “O Hugh — good, kind cousin Hugh! why did you not let me call you cousin all your life through? I could have loved you then.”

“And you don’t now! You have said so once or twice before. Well, I can’t help that; I must learn not to mind it.” And he sighed heavily.

Again the wife felt a repentant pang. “Husband, have pity; my heart is breaking! Every day we seem to live only to make each other miserable.”

“Luckily, we shall get rid of one another soon — for a time, at least. Now Eleanor is better, I don’t see why I should not go back to the grouse-shooting. I’ll start tomorrow.”

Moved by an unaccountable impulse, which she afterwards remembered with comfort, Katharine asked — nay, implored him to stay at Summerwood; but he refused somewhat angrily.

“I never want you to give up your pleasures, Katharine, and I do not see why you should interfere with mine. We don’t care for one another — don’t let us pretend that we do. Let us each go our own way.”

“Be it so,” answered the wife, solemnly. It seemed as if the last links of affection, and duty were then torn from her and she were cast helplessly upon the wide world of desolation, misery, or sin.

She began to ascend the stairs, and Hugh went to the hall-door, seeking for his hat and whip. Then he turned round and hesitated.

“You’re not gone, Katharine, are you?”

“No, I am here.”

“Because we may as well say good-bye now, for I shan’t be home until midnight; and I shall start at daylight tomorrow. So give me your hand, Katharine. Forgive and forget. Perhaps we shall get on better together when I come back again. We’ll part friends now, at all events.”

She went up to him, and, for the first time in her life, kissed him of her own accord. In times to come, the remembered action proved a balm for many a conscience-sting.

Then — they parted.

Contents

CHAPTER 51

My breast is pressed to thine, Alice,
My arm is round thee twined;
Thy breath dwells on my lip, Alice,
Like clover-scented wind.
Love glistens in thy sunny ee,
And blushes on thy brow,
Earth's heaven is here to thee and me,
For we are happy now.

My hand is on thy heart, Alice,
Sae place thy hand in mine;
Now welcome weal or woe, Alice,
Our love we canna tine.
Ae kiss! let others gather gowd
Frae ilka land or sea;
My treasure is the richest yet,
For, Alice, I hae thee! ROBERT NICOL.

In a few days Eleanor began to feel the delicious dreamy calm of waking from sickness to convalescence — from anguish to hope. Though still Philip came not, she felt sure that he would come, speeded by the love which she doubted not lay deep in his heart still. If ever there was a living embodiment of faith — woman's faith — it was Eleanor Ogilvie. She had been all her life full of trust in every human creature. It is the wavering, the doubtful, who dream of change; it is the inconstant only who dread inconstancy.

She lay for hours together on her couch beside the drawing-room window, with her meek hands folded, and her eyes, now calm as of old, though a little more thoughtful, watching the little clouds floating over the sky. Then, with the almost child-like interest that very trifles give to one who is recovering from severe illness, she would look at the many gifts of flowers or fruit which she was daily receiving, every one of which showed how dearly Eleanor was loved. She seemed to have passed out of that terrible darkness into a world that was full of love. In this deep peace she rested as a child lies dreaming in the sunshine — not pondering whence it came, or how long it would last, simply rejoicing in it. She, opening her full heart to all, felt love continually around her — God's love and man's; she rejoiced therein, and her every thought was a mute thanksgiving. Blessed, thrice blessed, are they whose souls thus turn heavenward, not in sorrow alone but also in gladness. And surely the sacrifice of a happy spirit must be acceptable unto Him, who only suffers us to walk in sackcloth and ashes for a time, that, so chastened, He may lift us to His presence with exceeding joy.

It was the still hush of an autumn afternoon when Philip reached Summerwood. He came into Eleanor's presence alone. She had fallen asleep: there was a quiet smile

playing round her lips, as though she were dreaming happily. It was so indeed, for the dream had borne her to the pleasant palace garden. She sat underneath the old cherry-tree, listening to the rustling of its leaves and scented blossoms. She heard Philip's voice; she felt the clasp of Philip's hand; and then — O blessed waking! — she found the dream was true! He knelt beside her couch, gazing upon her, almost weeping over her,

"Philip — my Philip — you are come — I knew you would come at last!"

Again, as on the night of their parting, she extended her loving arms. He did not dash them from him now — he clasped them wildly round his neck, though he could not speak one word. The next moment she was nestling in his breast.

It was a long time before either broke that blessed silence. At last Eleanor looked up in his face, and said,

"You are not angry with me now, Philip? You know all?"

"I know nothing but that I am here, beside you, holding you fast — fast! O Eleanor, neither life nor death shall take you away from me! Say that it shall be so — that nothing on earth shall ever part us more."

And softly answering, came to Philip's ear the words, which to sorrow are a knell — to love a deep anthem of perpetual joy— "Never more — never more."

After a while they began to talk more calmly. "You have asked me nothing, Philip," said Eleanor. "I feel how kind, how tender this is — when you have been so tried; but now I must tell you all"

"Tell me nothing, my dearest, save that you love me."

"You thought I did not love you, Philip?" and her eyes were lifted to his — a whole life's faith expressed in their gaze. "You will not think so any more?"

He made no answer — how could he? O blessed ones! — thus binding up the hopes of a lifetime in this perfect union of

One-thoughted, never-wandering, guileless love.

"Now, Philip, you must listen to me for a little — only a little. We must not have between us even the shadow of a cloud" And she began her tale slowly and cautiously, trying not to mention Mrs. Breynton's name.

Philip changed countenance at first. "Then there was some truth in the tale? Why did you not tell me about Mr. Lynedon?"

She laid her hand upon his: "Stay one moment before you judge me. In those happy days at the palace — for, with all our trials, they were happy days — there was in my heart no thought of any save one — save him who then asked for it; ay, and had it too, almost before he asked." And a conscious blush and dimpling smile brought back to her face its long-vanished playfulness.

"Eleanor," interrupted her lover fondly, "you look as you did long ago, when we were girl and boy together at the palace. You will be my own sunny-faced little Nelly again soon."

"Shall I?" and her low, glad-hearted laugh echoed his own. How child-like are happy lovers!

"Besides," Eleanor went on, gravely, "I did not speak about Paul Lynedon, because I thought it scarcely right. All love is sacred; hopeless love most sacred of all. It seems to me that a woman should not betray, even to him who has her whole heart, another who has cast his before her in vain. You do not think me wrong?"

"No, no: you are good and true, and compassionate to all, my dearest."

"Afterwards I was most glad to find that Mr. Lynedon had lost all painful feelings about me. We met by chance at Florence, and again in London, when we talked

together frankly and cordially, and he asked me always to be his friend. This happened on that night at my brother's — that sad night when" —

"How mad, how blind, how wicked was I!" cried Philip. Then he told her all, passionately imploring her forgiveness for every doubt, and still more for every harsh and unkind word.

But she laid her hand on his lips: "Nay, you loved — you love me; there is no need of forgiveness between us. Therefore," she added, softly, "in our perfect joy, we have more need to pardon those who were unkind to us. Philip, my own Philip, you will listen to me a little longer?"

He sat down by her side, and there, resting her head on his shoulder, and holding both his hands — as though she would not let him go until her influence had subdued any wrath he might feel — Eleanor told her betrothed the story of his aunt's wickedness. But she did not call it by that harsh name; she spoke with most merciful tenderness of the wrong done to both; and spoke not of it at all until she had reminded him of all his childish days, of every olden kindness which could soften his heart towards Mrs. Breynton.

Philip Wychnor was of a gentle spirit, but he was also a man. He had become one even since Eleanor had parted from him. The hard struggle with the world had made every passion in his nature ten times stronger. He was stung to the quick by the discovery alike of the personal wrong, and the deceit at which his truthful spirit revolted. Starting up, he paced the room in vehement anger.

"And it was for this that I asked you to stay with her, and fulfil the duties I owed! But I owe her none now; all is blotted out between us. Eleanor! you shall leave her; — we will neither of us look upon her face more. Oh! if she had succeeded — if I had known the truth too late! — I should have hated — have cursed her!"

Eleanor gazed upon her lover. She saw in the clenched hands and knotted brow a new development of his character. For the moment she sank back, pained and terrified. She learned for the first time that a woman must be to the man she loves, not merely his joy — his consolation — but the softener of his nature, the patient soother of those stormy passions that will rise at times in the best and noblest of mankind. She must *take him as he is*; bearing meekly with aught that she sees wrong, striving hopefully to win him to the right, and loving him dearly through all. Eleanor felt this; and casting aside the womanly supremacy of wooing days, she entered on a wife's duty ere she bore a wife's name.

She rose up and tried to walk across the room to him, but her feeble strength failed. "Philip!" she said, faintly, "I am very weak still. I cannot reach you. Will you come and sit by me again?"

He did so, still uttering many words of suppressed anger. But he suffered her to take his hand with a soft, firm clasp. She would not let it go again, but pressed it close to her heart, as though the peace and forgiveness there would thus pass into her lover's. Yet she did not attempt to speak for a long time. At last she whispered,

"Philip, when that future comes which we have hoped for all our lives, and to which we now look forward as a near reality, think how happy we shall be — so happy that we ought to pray that all the world may be happy too! And when we grow old together — still loving one another, until time's changes come so lightly that we fear them not — then we shall feel, much more than we do now, what a terrible thing must be an old age lonely and without love. We could not, even though wronged, inflict this bitter desolation on her."

“Eleanor, why do you speak thus? what do you wish me to do? But I cannot do it — it is impossible. I will not — I ought not!” he continued, without waiting for her answer.

She did not contradict him, but only said softly, “Do you think we could be quite happy, even in — in our own dear home” — She hesitated, faintly blushing; but repented not the words when she saw how on hearing them his countenance relaxed, and his firm-set lips trembled with emotion. “Could we be quite happy, even there,” she repeated, “when we must for ever forget those old days at the palace, and think that there was one name, once loved by both, which we could not utter more? We, too, who have neither father nor mother to claim the duty which we once hoped to pay to her? Let us pay it still, Philip,” she continued, finding that no bitter answer came, and that the hand she held pressed hers convulsively. “Let us place no bar between us and the past — let us have no shadow of regret to dim our happiness. Philip, dearest, best! — in whom I trust and have trusted all my life — forgive her!”

“I would — I would — if this wrong were only against myself. But you — my darling! — you who tended her like a daughter; she had no pity on you.”

“She knew not what she was doing; I feel sure she loved me all the while. And now, O Philip! if you could see her repentance — her tears! At the thought of your coming she wept like a child. And she is so changed — so feeble, so old! Philip, look — look there!”

She pointed to the lawn beneath the window. There, creeping slowly along in the autumn sunshine, was a stooping aged woman, who, even with the aid of the servant on whose arm she leaned, appeared to move wearily and painfully.

Philip started up. “Is that Aunt Breynton — poor Aunt Breynton?”

“It is indeed! see how feebly she walks, even with Davis’s arm. Poor, faithful Davis is herself growing old, but her mistress has no one else. And Philip — dear Philip, your arm is so strong! Think how we two are entering life — a life full of love, hope, and joy — while she” —

“Hush! hush, darling — say no more.” He pressed a kiss on her forehead, and was gone from the room. The next minute she saw him walking quickly down the lawn. Eleanor could look no more; she sank down on the pillow, and wept tears more holy, more joyful, than even those so lately shed in reconciled love on Philip’s bosom.

Her work was done. It was chronicled by no human tongue — noted by no human eye. Only when, a few weeks after, she sat with Philip and Philip’s aunt, listening to the reading of the Holy Book, which sounded holier still in the Sabbath silence of the old Cathedral, Eleanor heard the words,

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven” — With her, the blessedness had begun even on earth.

Yet a little we would fain linger with these twain on that day of happiness and peace; we would fain see them as they talked in the quiet autumn evening, watching the sunset. Eleanor still rested on her couch, while Philip sat by her side, her fingers wandering in his hair. She counted, laughingly, one — two — three — white threads among the fair silken curls; at which he seemed to murmur greatly, seeing he was not thirty yet. But they had no fear of growing old now.

They talked of all which had chanced to Philip during these years of varied fortune. He told her of the phases through which his mind had passed, of the new life that had dawned within him, and of the earnest aim with which he now followed an author’s calling. Eleanor saw that to him there had come a change — or rather, less a change than a growth. He had risen to the full strength of a man — and a man of genius; he was conscious of it too, and the high and noble ambition born of such consciousness

was in him almost as strong as love itself. His betrothed felt this, but the knowledge gave her no pain. Her woman's heart, to which love was all, could at first scarcely comprehend the mystery; but ere long it would all grow plain, she knew. The most tender and high-hearted woman, on whom falls the blessed but trying destiny to be the wife of one endowed with Heaven's great gift of genius, must ever feel that there are depths in his soul into which she cannot look — depths which are open only to the eye of God. Shame be to her if her mean, jealous love should desire to engross all; or, standing between him and the Infinite to which he aspires, should wish to darken with one earthly shadow the image of the Divine!

Thus they together held glad yet thoughtful converse, as was meet for those who would soon enter on life's journey hand-in-hand. They talked but little of their worldly future, since it was all plain before them now; and both had far higher thoughts than counting of gold and silver store, and planning a luxurious home. Once only Philip called her "his fair heiress, his rich Eleanor," and asked smilingly whether the world would not contemn her for marrying a poor author.

But she only smiled in return. The love between them was so perfect, that which gave or which received mattered not. The act was merely a name.

Then the twilight grew dimmer, the room darkened, and through the window whence they had gazed on the sunset they looked up at a sky all thick with stars. The words of the betrothed pair became fewer and more solemn, though tender still. From the earthly path which they would tread together, their thoughts turned to the unseen world beyond. Most blessed they, whose love feared no parting even there!

They spoke — ay, amidst their deep happiness — they spoke of this; and then there came upon their lips a few beloved names, whose sound had passed from earth to heaven. The mother, could she have bent down from the eternal home, might have heard that, even amidst this blessedness, her child remembered *her*; and the young spirit, so early taken, might have rejoiced to know that the thought of poor Leigh lingered in his friend's fond memory still.

Thus, folded closely heart to heart, Philip and Eleanor looked up to the starry sky, and thanked Heaven for the love that would bless and brighten earth, until it attained its full fruition in eternity.

Contents

CHAPTER 52

Thus it was always with me when with thee,
And I forget my purpose and my wrongs
In looking and in loving.
To say that thou didst love me? Curse the air
That bore the sound to me!
There is no blasphemy in love, but doubt:
No sin, but to deceive.
Now I forgive thy having loved another,
And I forgive — but never mind it now;
I have forgiven so much, there's nothing left
To make more words about. Answer me not,
Let me say what I have to say. Then — go!
PHILIP BAILEY.

Paul Lynedon had been whirled through life like a stray autumn leaf, the sport of every breeze of impulse or circumstance. An instinctive nobleness had kept him free from any great sin, and his strong desire for the world's good opinion served frequently to deter him from smaller errors. But he never did a thing solely because *it was right.* Interest and inclination were with him motives far more powerful than any abstract love of virtue.

Thus he suffered himself to be drifted idly on by any chance current, and had probably during his whole life known no fixed principle or real emotion, until every impulse of his being concentrated itself in passion for Katharine Ogilvie. Perhaps the very hopelessness of this love made it ten times stronger, for there was still in Lynedon's character that strange contradiction which caused everything to appear more precious in the degree that it seemed unattainable.

Of the end he never thought, any more than did Katharine. He was not an evil-hearted man; and if he had been such, this love had so purified his nature, that, against her at least, he could not sin. He could only cast his soul before her, worshipping, but not daring by a single glance to ask for responsive love.

Until now! — On that early morning, when he walked by her side along the avenue at Summerwood, Paul Lynedon had been startled by the few words which the strong pent-up tide of emotion had forced from Katharine's lips. Could it be that the girlish admiration over which he had once smiled complacently — though he now clung to its memory with an intense and lingering fondness — could it be that this was indeed the dawn of a far deeper feeling? Had she then loved — and, O blissful thought, that made his heart leap with desperate joy! did she now love him?

Paul saw Katharine no more that day, but there reached him the letter to Philip Wychnor, accompanied by a single, word, "Remember!" He flew on his mission with speed. That mission fulfilled, he longed for its reward — a look, a word, a smile; and though without any settled purpose, save the impulse which drew him continually to her side, Paul Lynedon found himself on the road to Summerwood.

There was only one whose feet had outstripped even his own — Philip Wychnor. But the bright sunbeam of holy love travelled faster than the mad whirlwind of passion.

Lynedon came when night was closing in. He had dashed his horse along through the still evening air; he had left behind him, without one glance, the gorgeous sunset on which the happy plighted lovers had gazed so lingeringly. But Paul saw nothing in earth or heaven save the shadowy image that flitted before him, beckoning him on with the likeness of Katharine's eyes and Katharine's smile. Not as these usually met him, freezing him with cold haughtiness, or torturing him with wayward anger — but softened, tearful, and tremulous with love. The strong fantasy almost overwhelmed him.

He stood within the hall at Summerwood. It was the same spot — the dim old hall, half illumined by the lamp. Beneath this flickering light he had once gazed down upon the girlish face whose sorrowful sweetness won from him that parting kiss. It was nothing to him then, but keenly, maddeningly, he remembered it now.

"Sir Robert," the servant said, "was engaged with parliamentary business in the drawing-room; Miss Ogilvie was in the drawing-room, but she saw no visitors as yet; and Mrs. Ogilvie" —

"Ask if Mrs Ogilvie will see me for a few moments. And meanwhile I will go in here."

He laid his hand — half by chance, half through a wayward impulse that sprang from these thronging memories of the past — on the door of the room where Sir James had died.

There, in the same arm-chair where Paul had found her of old, sat Katharine; but her attitude was not as then — that of gentle musing grief — it expressed the utter abandonment of despair. She leaned over the arm of the chair, her head bowed, and her clasped hands stretched out rigidly. So deep was the trance that she heard not Paul Lynedon's step until he stood beside her.

"Katharine!"

"Mr. Lynedon! you dare to intrude" — She sprang up and confronted him with her gleaming eyes. But the flash passed in a moment. "Pardon me, but I think you forget yourself" — and the cold severe tone fell upon his vehemence like ice upon fire: "our friendship, or rather our acquaintance, scarcely warrants" —

"Acquaintance, Mrs. Ogilvie! You talk of acquaintance, when" —

But again, for the hundredth time, her look froze him into stone. He stopped, hesitated, and was silent.

"This is a late visit. To what may I attribute the pleasure?"

For a moment Paul drew himself up with his old haughtiness. "If I intrude, perhaps I" — But he could not go on thus, for he was in her presence — he felt the spell that lay in every movement of her hand, every rustle of her garments. All his love rushed back upon him like a flood. "What — what have I done to offend you?" he cried. "Have I not been journeying day and night to fulfil your command? I had not thought our meeting would be thus. If I have done wrong, tell me — and then, then — in mercy forgive me."

"For this long, and somewhat unwarrantable speech, certainly!" answered Katharine. "I am not aware of aught else of your doing, which is to me of sufficient importance even to need forgiveness. And now allow me to thank you for your kind offices in this matter, and to hope that you also will grant me pardon for having so far encroached on your courtesy."

"Courtesy! you call it courtesy! Well, let it be so; you will never, never know!" said Lynedon, hoarsely. He sank on a chair at a little distance, and bent his face from her sight.

Katharine looked upon him — this careless, proud man — as he crouched and trembled before her. "I have triumphed — I triumph now!" she said in her heart; and its throbs of glad vengeance rose higher and higher, until they sank, stilled by the stronger power of love. But she dreaded the calm and the silence more than the storm.

"Mr. Lynedon," she said, speaking less coldly, but brokenly and hurriedly, "I will not detain you here; I am not well; I have suffered so much."

"You are ill? you suffer?" and he sprang to her side. She moved away from him; not pointedly, but firmly.

"It is nothing; merely caused by anxiety on my sister's account. You do not ask about her."

"Pardon me, I think of nothing except — except" —

"She is recovering," interrupted Mrs. Ogilvie, turning away from his gaze of wild fondness; "and lest there should seem anything strange in this mission which you have kindly accomplished, I think it due both to Eleanor and myself that I should acquaint you with its reason. It may give you surprise, perhaps unwelcome surprise" — and the tone grew cold and scornful once more— "to learn that Mr. Wychnor and my sister have been affianced lovers for years."

"I am most delighted," was Lynedon's somewhat confused answer.

Katharine's piercing eyes were upon him. "You need not use idle compliments; you need not let your tongue belie you again," she said, vainly striving against the storm of anger that was once more brooding. "It shows small respect for Eleanor, when her sometime lover condescends to a needless falsehood in order to conceal this love."

Lynedon staggered, as though every word uttered by that low clear voice had been an arrow in his breast. "Love! you think, then, that I loved Eleanor Ogilvie! — Listen" —

"Nay, it requires no excuse."

"And I give none: but I speak to you — you, Katharine. If you could slay me with that look, I would, I will call you so. Listen, Katharine — still *Katharine*! I came here, first, a dreamer, with the years of a man and the folly of a boy: your cousin's sweetness pleased me; her indifference spurred me on to an idle fancy. Men have many such which they call love, as I did, until the true love comes! I know now, to my misery — to my despair — I know what it is *to love*!"

He paused a moment. Katharine's eyes turned fearfully to the closed door, as though in flight alone would she save herself from the gathering doom. But her strength failed; she sank helplessly on the chair.

Lynedon stood over her, his impetuous words pouring on her ear like a torrent which she could neither resist nor control.

"You must, you shall hear me yet. I tell you that I know now what love is. Love! love! the word rings ever in my brain, my senses, my soul! Who taught it me? When I had passed my youth — when my heart had grown cold with its dull pulses of five-and-thirty years — who was it that put life therein — fearful, torturing, and yet most glorious life? If heaven and hell stood between us, I must cry out, as I do now, Take this life which you brought; it is yours, all yours, for I love you — I love you, Katharine Ogilvie!"

He sank at her feet, and kissed passionately, not her hands, though they lay passive and cold on her knee, but her very dress. The impetuous speech once ended, he dared

not even lift his eyes; he trembled lest her first word should crush him in the dust. But that word did not come; she neither moved nor spoke.

"Katharine," he went on — and his tone sank from vehemence to the deepest murmur of tenderness— "Katharine, forgive me. I am so wretched; I have no hope in heaven or earth but you. Think what a fearful thing it is for me to love you thus! — you who — But I dare not speak of that. Nay, you need not draw your hand away; I shall not take it. I ask nothing, hope for nothing; only do not spurn me — do not drive me from you!"

She moved, and looked down upon him for an instant; but in her eyes there was less of love than of terror. He met them still, and drew from them courage.

"I say not, Love me as I love. You do not-you cannot. Only be merciful and gentle to me for the sake of those old times. Have you forgotten them, Katharine? — how here, in this very room, in this very chair, you sat, and I comforted you? — You were scarcely more than a child, though you were dear to me even then — why, I knew not. Katharine! my Katharine! do you remember?"

"Remember?" She started up, silent and trembling no more. "Yes, I do remember. And now that the time has come, you shall know all. Listen, Paul!"

"You call me Paul! O kindest and dearest, you call me Paul!" murmured Lynedon.

"Again, *Paul*! — though after this night the name shall never pass my lips. You speak truly! I was a child — a happy child — until *you* came. You came, with your winning words, your subduing tenderness; you made me believe it all — me, a simple girl, gifted, to my misery, with a woman's heart! See, I speak without a blush or a sigh — these are past now. Paul Lynedon, I loved you then — I have loved you all my life through — I love you now, dearly, dearly! But I tell you this for the first time and the last, for you shall never look on my face more."

"Katharine, have mercy!"

"You had none! Oh, why did you deceive me? Why did your lips speak falsely — ay, more than speak?" And Katharine shuddered. "Why did your hand write what your heart felt not? And I, who loved, who trusted you so, until I heard — But I cannot think of it now — it drove me mad! Now, when we might have been so happy, it is too late! too late!"

Her voice sank into a low broken weeping. There was a silence — a terrible silence — and then Katharine felt her hand drawn in his. She snatched it away with a cry.

"Ah — you cannot — you dare not take my hand. See! see!" She pointed to the wedding-ring!

Lynedon sprang madly to his feet. "Katharine, there is no pity in heaven or earth for us — I say *us*, because you love me. I know it now; I see it in your anger as in your tears — those blessed tears! O Katharine, I cannot weep, but I could pour out my heart's blood for you!"

Again he paused, and then went on speaking in a low, rapid whisper. "Tell me — for I know nothing — nothing, except that I am almost mad! — tell me what we must do. Shall I end all this? Katharine, my lost Katharine! shall I die?"

"No, no, no!" And she unconsciously seized his hands. "Hush! be calm; let me think a moment."

She began to talk soothingly; leaning over him the while, and trying to speak in quiet and gentle tones.

Then Paul Lynedon forgot all — honour, duty, even love; for the love that would destroy is unworthy of the name.

“Dearest,” he murmured, “the world shuts us out, or will do soon. It may be that Heaven is more merciful than man. Let us try! Let us go far away together — to some land beyond the seas — to some happier Eden where our love is no longer sin!”

Katharine looked at him for an instant with a frenzied, incredulous gaze. Then she unclasped his hand, which had once more taken hers; flung it from her, and sprang upright.

“Paul Lynedon, I know you now! You have darkened my peace — you have poisoned my youth — you have made me a scorn, a loathing to myself — but you shall not destroy my soul. Go — go from my sight for ever!”

He flung himself on the ground, kissing her dress, her feet; but there was no relenting. She stood, with lifted hand, pointing to the door — moveless, silent, stern.

“I will obey you — I will go,” he cried at last. “I will never cross your path again. Only forgive me! One word — one look — to say farewell!”

But there she stood, immovable in her stony silence. Beneath it his own passionate heart grew still and cold. He rose up, pressed his lips once more to her garment’s hem, and then crept humbled from her sight. The door closed, and Katharine was alone.

That night there came a messenger to Summerwood with tidings awful indeed! Death had struck the young heir in the midst of his careless sports. Death! sudden death! occasioned unwittingly by his own hand. Poor Hugh — kind-hearted good-natured Hugh, was brought home to Summerwood, dead!

Katharine Ogilvie was a widow.

Contents

CHAPTER 53

— ‘Twere sweet to think of — sweeter still
To hope for — that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late. ROBERT BROWNING.

It was all over, and the unloving wife was free!

Free! when she was haunted perpetually by an avenging voice, bringing back to her memory the false marriage-vow — so rashly taken, so nearly broken — the duties unfulfilled — the affection unvalued, and requited with scorn. It was a fearful picture of a wasted life — wasted by the one withering shadow — the fatal love.

By night and day the young widow watched beside her husband’s coffined remains. Father, mother, friends, went away weeping, and saying to one another, “See how dearly she loved him!” But Katharine shuddered to hear them, knowing it was less grief she felt than a bitter, gnawing remorse, which cried ever aloud, “it is too late — too late!”

She thought of her childish days — of Hugh’s old tenderness, so constant and yet so humble — of his patience and forbearance during their brief married life. Throughout that married life she had met her husband’s unsuspicious gaze, knowing that she carried in her heart a secret that would destroy his peace for ever. And when the end came, she had suffered Paul Lynedon to kneel at her feet, giving and receiving the confession of unholy love. She had felt, with that love, the glow of hatred towards the one who stood between her and happiness. Nay, there had darted across her mind the thought scarcely formed into a wish, that some strange fate would set her free. And even then the thought was accomplished. She had withstood the tempter, she had kept her marriage-vow, and yet she felt almost like Hugh’s murderess. At times her bewildered mind strove to palliate the wrong by the selfsame plea. She remembered that Lynedon’s passionate words had been poured into the ears of a widow — not a wife; and that she herself, in repulsing them, had kept faithful — even to the dead.

“And I will still be faithful!” she cried. “O my husband! if I have sinned against you, accept the atonement! Never, never shall my hand clasp his — never shall Hugh’s widow become Paul Lynedon’s bride! Husband! if I sacrificed your peace, I will offer up myself with my life’s hope as an atonement on your grave!”

Strong was the remorse that prompted the words — deep was the shame that uttered them; but stronger and deeper than either remorse or shame was the undying love which had created, and yet ruined, the life-destiny of Katharine Ogilvie.

Hugh rested in the little church at Summerwood, beneath a gorgeous monument. Sir Robert had deplored less the death of an affectionate son-in-law than the extinction of a baronetcy two hundred years old. This antiquity, chronicled in golden letters beneath the weeping marble cherubim for the benefit of ages to come, was at least some slight consolation to the bereaved father-in-law.

Eleanor wept many an affectionate tear over the brother who was so different from herself, and with whom, through life, she had held little intercourse. And then she

went away from Summerwood to fulfil once more the self-assumed duties of a daughter, until they should merge in those of a wife.

All the long winter Katharine spent in solitude. “Atonement — atonement!” was the cry of her anguished spirit, and she strove to work out that penance by shutting from her heart every thought save the memory of her husband — every pleasure save that which grew out of duties fulfilled. The mother mourned no longer over her careless daughter; Katharine tended her with a contrite tenderness that was intensity to this pure love, the only one on which her memory dared rest in the past — the only one to which she looked for comfort in the future.

So she lived, binding down every impulse in her nature with an iron will, born of remorse. She imitated the martyrs of old, who thought to win pardon by inflicting on themselves a living death. But they only tortured the body; Katharine did penance with the soul. The conflict was vain, for it sprang from remorse, not penitence. Her sorrow could not wash away the suffering or the sin, for the drops that fell were not tears, but fire.

Since the time when she dismissed him from her presence, Katharine had never heard of Paul Lynedon. It was her prayer — the prayer of her lips, at least — that she might never see him more. And when the gloom of winter passed, and the spring came out upon the earth, creating vague yearnings after hope and love, Katharine still sought to deaden them with this prayer. But its very utterance only made it the more false. Evermore, piercing through remorse, indignation, and shame, rose up the face which she had last seen bowed before her in such agonising pleading, less for love than for pardon. And one day she saw that face — not in fancy, but in reality.

She was on her knees beside her father, in the church at Summerwood. The Sabbath sunshine slanted at once on the stately monument of her husband, and on her own drooped head, hidden by the thick widow’s veil. She lifted it, and beheld Paul Lynedon.

He sat in a dark corner of the church, intently watching her. As Katharine rose, their eyes met, and a numbing coldness crept through her veins. Still, she had power to answer the gaze with another, fixed, freezing, proud; and then she turned away, nor lifted her eyes again, save to the marble tablet which chronicled the brief life of poor Hugh. She looked no more towards Lynedon, but she felt his eyes upon her and his influence around her. It seemed to encompass her with a dim confused mist, through which she heard the clergyman’s voice and the organ’s sound indistinctly as in a dream. In vain she tried to break the spell, driving her thoughts back to the past — to the death-chamber — to the tomb beneath her very feet, where the young man was laid in the strength of his youth, hidden in darkness from the sunshine and the fresh breeze, and all those pleasures of nature which he had loved so well. She gathered up every possible image of pain, and pressed it with a stony weight upon her heart, but it could not press out thence the one image which all her life had reigned paramount there. When she passed out of the church, clinging to her father’s arm, Katharine’s eyes, impelled by an uncontrollable power, looked back for an instant.

Lynedon watched her. She could not still the rapture of her heart — no, not though the spot she stood upon was her husband’s grave.

From that day she knew that wherever she went his presence encompassed her. If she walked, she saw a figure gliding beneath the trees; if she rode, there echoed far in the distance the tramp of a horse’s feet. At night, when all were gone to rest, she heard beneath her window a footstep that paced there for hours in the silence and darkness. And Katharine, who so long ago had distinguished above all others that firm, slow, manly tread, knew that this watcher by night as by day was no one but Paul Lynedon.

Thus weeks passed. She never saw his face except at church, and then he always kept aloof. And though once or twice she unwittingly looked that way, it was with the coldness and sternness that became the wife, the widow of Hugh Ogilvie.

But this could not last. One morning — it was so early that the April dews yet glistened in the sunshine — Katharine took her solitary walk to a glade in the park, which had been her favourite haunt in her girlhood. She had brought him there long ago, and they had spent an hour's happy talk together, sitting on a fallen tree, half-covered with ivy, while she sang. He had carved thereon her initials, and his own. They were there still: Katharine moved aside the ivy which had grown over them — and leaned down, gazing, till her eyes were blinded with torrents of tears.

And then, emerging from the shadow of the trees, she saw Lynedon stand before her.

Her first impulse was to fly, but she had no strength; and when she looked at him again, the intention was changed into another feeling. He was so altered, so haggard and stooping, that he might have borne the burden of more than forty years. The eye had grown wild and restless, the brow was marked with many a line, and the dark beautiful hair was threaded with grey. He stood there, and only uttered one word— "Katharine!"

Hearing it, she rose, and her eyes flashed through the tears which filled them. "Why do you come here? why do you haunt my presence? How dare you cross my path still?"

But he only answered to the wrath with an accent — tender, humble, despairing— "Katharine!"

Once more she looked upon him, and her tone softened.

"You must not come here — you must leave me. Will you go? Then I must."

"Katharine, one word!"

"Do not speak — do not follow me. You cannot — you dare not. Ay, that is well!" He moved aside; and she passed on a few steps, and then turned. He had fallen on the ivy-covered tree, his head lying on the spot where he had carved her name.

Katharine could struggle no more. "Paul! Paul!" and she stretched out her hands.

He sprang forward and seized them: but the next moment she had snatched them away with a cry.

"I dare not, I dare not. Do not speak to me — only go from my sight."

"I will go, if you desire. Only say that you forgive me. O Katharine, if I have sinned, I have suffered too!"

"We have both sinned, and we must both suffer, it is right. We must never look on each other's face again."

"Have you no mercy now, when you are free — when it is no crime in the sight of earth or heaven for us to love one another? Katharine," he continued, catching her arm and holding it in his firm grasp, "I remember what you said to me that night — ay, every word — how you have loved me all your life. Yes, and you love me still! I saw your tears fall but now, and I knew it was at the remembrance of me. See, you tremble, you shrink: Katharine, you shall not part from me." And he spoke in a low desperate tone. "I tell you, whether it is right or wrong, you shall be my wife."

She felt his power upon her, gathering over her like a cloud of destiny, through which she could not pierce. She remained so mute, so frozen, that Lynedon was terrified.

"Katharine, speak to me; say that I have not angered you. Look on me, and see what I have endured. For these weeks past I have tracked your walks, only to catch a glimpse of your dress, or see the print of your footsteps; then at night I have prowled

like a thief under your window, watching while you slept. But I dared not enter your presence; I would never have done so, save that I saw you weeping. Is not this love? is not this penitence?"

She looked at him, only once; but he gathered courage, and went on. "Why should we not be happy? If we erred, you will pardon me, and Heaven will forgive us both. Katharine, you shall bring back to me my youth, you shall make me what you will; we will live over again the happy past."

"Not the past," cried Katharine; "we have no past — we dare not have."

"But we have a future, that is, if you will listen to me, and not forsake me. If otherwise, Katharine, shall I tell you what you will do?" And, as Paul stood over her, his wild eyes sought hers, terrifying her more even than his words. "You will drive me from you a vagabond on the face of the earth: there is no evil which I shall not commit, or else I shall die — die miserably, perhaps by my own hand."

"No, no, Paul — my Paul! You shall not grow wicked; you shall not die; I will save you if I peril my hope of heaven for your sake!" was the bitter cry that burst from Katharine's heart and lips, as she clasped both his hands and held them long, weeping over them passionately.

Lynedon made her sit down on the fallen tree, while he threw back the veil from her face, and removed from her fair head, so youthful still, the tokens of widowhood. As he did so, he cast them down with a violent gesture and trampled them under foot. Then he took her hand and began to draw from it the wedding-ring; but Katharine started from him.

"Paul, I am very guilty, but it is for your sake; you should not torture me thus. Listen. When my husband — hush! I will call him so still, for he was good to me — when my husband died, I vowed to atone unto the dead for my sin towards the living. I said in my heart, solemnly and truly, then, that I would never be your wife. Now I break that vow — the second I have broken for you. Paul, it is a fearful thing to have this upon my soul. You must be very kind and tender to me — you must let me wait a year — two years — until all this horror has passed, and then" —

"You will be mine — my own wife?" cried Lynedon, joyfully. He knelt beside her on the grass, and would have folded her in his arms, but Katharine drew back.

"Not yet, not yet," she muttered. "It seems as though he stood between us — he, my husband — he will not let me come to you. This happiness will be too late! I know it will."

And while she spoke she drew her breath with a deep sigh, and put her hand suddenly to her heart.

"What ails you, Katharine, my darling?"

"Nothing, the pain will pass soon — I am used to it. Let me rest my head here," she answered, faintly. He stood by her side, and she leaned against him in silence for a few minutes. Then she looked up with a sad, grave smile. "I am well now, thank you! You see I make you my comfort and support already."

"Dearest, how happy am I! May it be ever so!" was the low, loving answer. Her face was hid from him, or he would have seen that there passed over it a spasm of agony awakened by his words.

Then it was that Katharine felt the curse of a granted prayer. The death so madly longed for was now a horrible doom! To die, in the midst of youth and hope! to leave *him* — to go into the still, dark grave, without the blessing of his love — it was fearful!

"Paul, Paul, save me!" she almost shrieked. "Hold me in your arms — fast —— fast! — Do not let me die!"

He thought her words were mere ravings, and asked no questions, but soothed her tenderly. After a while she spoke again, not wildly, but solemnly.

“Paul, a little while since I told you that it must be a year or more before you made me yours. But I shall not live till then.”

He looked anxiously on her face and form. There was no outward sign of wasted health, so he smiled calmly.

“These fears are nothing, my Katharine; you shall live many happy years. I will end all such forebodings when you give me the right to do so — when you let me call you wife.”

“You may call me so when you will,” answered Katharine, in a low tone. “A month, a week — ay, who knows how soon the end may come! But I will defy fate! Paul — my Paul — my only love!” — and she threw herself upon his breast, clinging to him wildly— “I will not be torn from you — I will live until that blessed day!”

Lynedon, only too joyful on any terms to win his bride, overwhelmed her with the outburst of his happiness. He counted all her fears as an idle dream; and ere they left the dell, he had fixed the first May-morning for their marriage-day.

“It will indeed be May-time with us then,” he said, as with an almost boyish fondness he leaned over her and fastened her bonnet. “And this dear head shall have that hateful veil no more, but a bridal garland.”

“And afterwards — afterwards!” murmured Katharine. But she drove back the chilling horror — she looked in the glad face of her bridegroom — she leaned on his arm as they walked slowly on, with sunshine and flowers, and birds singing everywhere around them.

Could it be that over all this bliss frowned the heavy shadow of Death?

Contents

CHAPTER 54

Scarce I heed
These pangs. Yet thee to leave is death — is death, indeed!

Yet seems it, even while life's last pulses run,
A sweetness in the cup of death to be,
Lord of my bosom's love, to die beholding thee!
CAMPBELL.

Katharine informed neither father nor mother of her approaching marriage. Sir Robert would have talked of "the honour of the family," which forbade even the most desirable second union until the days of mourning were ended. And Lady Ogilvie, who now rested tranquilly in the knowledge that she would never be parted from her daughter, would have bitterly murmured at the faintest hint of separation. Katharine knew all this, and prepared for a secret union — unhallowed by a parent's blessing.

Only once, by her earnest desire, Lynedon, almost against his will, came openly to Summerwood. He spent a few hours with Sir Robert, striving to act the part of a chance guest, and then Katharine brought him to her mother's apartment; He sat down by Lady Ogilvie's side, and talked to her in a tone so gentle and tender that Katharine blessed him with her whole soul. She longed to throw herself at her mother's feet, beseeching her to take to her heart as a son, this dearest one in whom was centred her child's every hope. But just then Lady Ogilvie chanced to speak, and her first words made Katharine's impulse change.

"Yes, as you say, Mr. Lynedon, I am much better than I used to be. It is all Katharine's doing; the very sight of her seems to make me young again. I feel quite different since she has come back to live at Summerwood. She must never leave me again."

Lynedon made no reply. He had long since abandoned all false and feigning speech. Such could not be uttered beneath Katharine's eye, or within the influence of Katharine's soul.

Ere he departed, Paul took Lady Ogilvie's hand with affectionate reverence, and said softly, "I shall not see you again for a little while. Will you not bid me farewell, and good speed on my journey? for it is a sweet and solemn one to me. And — the next time I come to Summerwood it will not be alone."

"What, Mr. Lynedon! you are going to be married at last? I do not like weddings — not much — but I hope yours will be a happy one. And who is your bride?"

"You will know soon." And Paul drooped his head — he could not bear to look in Lady Ogilvie's face. "Only, dear friend, our wedding will miss one happiness. I have no mother to bless my bride. Let me take her a kind wish and a blessing from you."

"Indeed you must. I am sure we shall like her very much, whoever she be — shall we not, Katharine? Goodbye, Mr. Lynedon; and God bless you and your wife, and give you a long and happy life together."

Paul Lynedon kissed the hand that she extended to him, and was gone.

That night Katharine stood beside her sleeping mother, to take, in one long, lingering, tearful look, the farewell which she could not utter. Yet it would be but a short parting; for she had made her lover promise that, once united beyond the chances of earthly severance, they should both hasten to entreat forgiveness and blessing.

The blessing seemed on Lady Ogilvie's prophetic lips even now. Her fancy returned in dreams to the tidings of which she had often spoken during the day; and as Katharine leaned over her, she heard her mother repeat once again, mingled with a benediction, the name of Lynedon.

It sounded like a late hallowing of the love which had sprung up in such uncontrolled vehemence, and come to maturity in a passion that trembled on the very verge of crime.

Katharine sank on her knees beside the bed. "Oh that it may indeed be so; that Heaven may forgive us both, and suffer us to atone the past! And, mother, surely, re-echoing your words, I dare now cry, 'God bless my Paul — my own Paul!'"

Lady Ogilvie moved in her sleep, disturbed by the last pressure of her daughter's lips; and then, stealing one lingering farewell gaze, Katharine glided from the room. Ere long, accompanied by an old faithful servant who had been her nurse, she quitted her father's house.

The place chosen for the marriage was a village some miles distant, where the nurse's daughter lived. Beneath the roof of this little cottage, which in its rose-embowered beauty had been the very paradise of her childhood, Katharine spent the eve of her second bridal. It was strangely quiet — like the first — for the intensity of suffering and of joy are very near akin. But Lynedon's bride felt no excess of joy; a solemn shadow hung over her which she could not dispel. Through it, she heard the chimes from the near church-tower ring out the passing of the brief May-eve; and then she lay down and slept — ay, slept!

She was awakened at dawn by the rooks, who from their lofty nests made merry music over the old churchyard. Katharine rose up, and the first sight that met her eyes was the white gravestones that glimmered in the yet faint light. Strange and solemn vision for a bride on her marriage-morn! Katharine turned away, and looked up at the sky. It was all grey and dark, for the shadow of the village church — the church where she was to plight her vows-came between her and the sunrise.

She buried her head again in the pillow, and tried to realise the truth, that this day — this very day — Paul Lynedon would be her husband, loving her as she had once so vainly loved him; that she would never part from him again, but be his own wife, for ever — through life until death. Until death! She thought the words, she did not say them, but they filled her with a cold dull fear. To drive it away, she arose. She would have put on her wedding-dress — almost as a spell, that the bridal garment might bring with it happy bridal thoughts — but it was not in her room. So Katharine dressed herself once more in her widow's attire, and waited until the rest of the household were stirring.

Meanwhile there recurred to her mind a loving duty, that befitted the time. She sat down and wrote to her mother a long, tender letter, not proud, but contrite, pleading for pardon and a kindly welcome, less for herself than for her husband — Katharine paused an instant. "Yes!" she said, "he will be my husband; no earthly power can come between us now." Her pen traced the word firmly; the mere writing of it sent happiness to her heart. As she went on, the pleading grew into a confession, and she unburdened from her soul the weight of years. Humbly, repentantly, she told of that overwhelming love which had come upon her like a fate, and had haunted her through

life until it became its own avenger. She omitted no link in this terrible history save that which might disgrace him whose honour was soon to be one with hers.

Katharine finished the letter, all but the signature. A few hours more, and she would write as her own that long-beloved name. The thought came upon her with a flood of bewildering joy. She leaned her forehead on the paper in one long, still pause; and then sprang up, pressing her clasped hands in turns to her heaving breast and throbbing temples, in a delirium of rapture that was almost pain.

"It is true — it is all true!" she cried— "joy has come at last. In an hour — one little hour — I shall be his wife; and he will be my husband — mine only — mine for ever!"

As she stood, her once drooping form was sublimated into almost superhuman beauty — the beauty which had dawned with the dawning love. It was the same face, radiant with the same shining which had kindled into passionate hope the young girl who once gazed into the mirror at Summerwood. But ten times more glorious was the loveliness born of the hope fulfilled.

The hope fulfilled! Could it be so, when, excited by this frenzied joy, there darted through her heart that warning pang? She sank on the bed almost senseless. Above the morning sounds without — the bees humming among the roses, the swallows twittering in the eaves — Katharine heard and felt beating with fierce, loud, suffocating throbs, the death-pulse, which warned her that her hours were numbered.

To die, so young still, so full of life and love — to sink from Lynedon's very arms into the grave — to pass from this spring sunshine into darkness, silence, nothingness. It was a horrible doom! And it might come at any moment — soon — soon — perhaps even before the bridal!

"It shall not come!" shrieked the voice of Katharine's despair, though her palsied lips scarcely gave vent to the sound. "I will live to be his wife, if only for one week, one day, one hour! Love has conquered life — it shall conquer death! I *will not die*!"

She held her breath; she strove to press down the pulsations that stirred her very garments; she moved her cold feeble limbs and stood upright.

"I must be calm, very calm. What is this poor weak body to my strong soul? I will fight with death — I will drive it from me. Love is alone my life: while that lasts I cannot die!"

But still the loud beating choked her very breath, as she moaned, "Paul, Paul, come! Save me, clasp me; give me life — life!"

And while she yet called upon his name, Katharine heard from below the voice of her bridegroom. He came bounding over the little gate, and entered the rose-porch, wearing a bridegroom's most radiant mien. She saw him; she heard him asking for her; a perceptible anxiety trembled through his cheerful tone. Could she cast over his happiness the cold horror which froze her own? Could she tell him that his bride was doomed? No; she would smile upon him, she would bring him joy, even to the last.

"Tell him I am coming," she said, in a calm, cheerful voice to the nurse who repeated Lynedon's anxious summons.

And then Katharine bathed her temples, smoothed her hair, and went to meet her bridegroom.

After the first somewhat agitated greeting was over, Lynedon regarded her uneasily. "What is this, Katharine?" and he touched her mourning dress, which she had forgotten to remove.

She made no answer, but mechanically followed the old nurse, who led her hastily away to take off the ill-omened garment. When she reappeared, Paul looked at her

admiringly, smoothed the folds of her white gown, and passed his hand lovingly over the shining braids of her beautiful hair — no longer hidden under the widow's cap.

"Now you look like a bride, though your dress is so simple. But we will have store of ornaments yet. Not a lady in England shall outshine my Katharine. And when we have a rich, beautiful, happy home, perhaps some time her wish may come true, and she may be the wife of a great statesman yet. But, darling, you shiver! How cold these spring mornings are still!"

He drew her from the window and made her sit down. They went through the form of breakfast, in order to please the anxious mistress of the little cottage parlour. Lynedon still talked of his plans — *their* plans, seeking few replies. Only, once, he thought his bride appeared grave, and asked her if she were quite content — quite happy?

"Yes!" she said, and turned towards him, her lips smiling. He kissed their rich rosy curves; he never looked at her eyes.

When the hour approached they were summoned by the old nurse, the only wedding guest.

"Ours is a strange informal marriage," said Lynedon, with a disappointed air. "But we will make amends for it. When we take our beautiful house, we will have a merry coming home."

Katharine sank on a chair. "Hush, Paul, do not talk to me — not now."

He might have murmured a little, but the tone of her voice filled him with an inexplicable awe. He was rather agitated too as the time approached. So he drew her arm through his, and they walked in silence through the hawthorn scented lane that led to the church.

At the little wicket-gate which formed the entrance to the village sanctuary, Katharine paused. The churchyard was a fair sight. The sunshine sparkled dazzlingly on the white stones, which had looked so ghostlike in the dawn; and every green nameless hillock had its flower-epitaph written in daisy-stars. Many a cheerful sound pervaded the spot; for it was bounded on one side by several cottages, whose inmates had made this quiet resting-place of the dead a garden for the living. A narrow pathway only divided the flower-beds from the graves, and among them both the cottage children played all day long. There was no yew nor cypress to cast gloom on the place; but leading to the church-door was an avenue of limes, in whose fragrant branches the bees kept up a pleasant murmur. And the merry rookery close by was never silent from dawn till eve. It was a place that made Death beautiful, as it should be.

Katharine looked — and a little of the freezing horror passed from her. "It would not be so terrible to sleep here," she whispered, half to herself, "with sunshine and flowers, and children's voices above. Paul, when I die" — and she uttered the words with less terror, though solemnly— "when I die, do not let them take me to that gloomy vault at Summerwood; and put no stone over me — only grass. I think I could rest then."

Lynedon turned towards her with a smile. "Katharine, dearest, how idly you are talking! You would not leave me, would you?"

"No, no!" cried Katharine with vehemence; and, as she clung to her bridegroom's arm, and looked up into his eyes, the olden madness came over her, and she could have bartered life, hope, peace — nay, Heaven itself, for Paul Lynedon's love. She stood in the sunshine — she felt the breeze — his presence surrounded her — his tenderness filled her whole soul with bliss. The terrible phantom at her side grew dim. She forgot all things on earth, save that she was Paul Lynedon's bride.

At that instant they passed out of the sunshine into the heavy gloom that pervaded the church. It felt like entering a tomb.

A few minutes' space, and the scene which the young dreamer had once conjured up, became reality. Katharine knelt at the altar to give and receive the vow which made her Lynedon's bride. Through the silence of the desolate church was heard the low mumbling of the priest — a feeble old man. He joined the hands of the bridegroom and the bride, and then there darted through Katharine's memory another scene. As she felt the touch of Paul Lynedon's hand, she almost expected to hear a long-silenced voice, uttering not the marriage benediction, but the awful service for the dead.

They rose up man and wife. The old nurse came forward with her tearful congratulations; and the clergyman, as he clutched his withered fingers over the golden fee, muttered something about "long life and happiness." There was no other blessing on the bride.

But she needed none. The whole wide world was nothing to her now. She only held the hand which pressed her own with a tender though somewhat agitated clasp, and said to herself, "I am his — he is mine — for ever." They walked in silence from the church, down the lane, through the rose-porch, and into the cottage parlour. Then Katharine felt herself drawn close]y, passionately, into his very heart; and she heard the words, once so wildly prayed for, "My Katharine — *my wife*!"

In that embrace — in that one long, never-ending kiss — she could willingly have passed from life into eternity.

After a while they both began to talk calmly. Paul made her sit by the open window, while he leaned over her, pulling the roses from outside the casement, and throwing them leaf by leaf into her lap. While he did so, she took courage to tell him of the letter to her mother. He murmured a little at the full confession, but when he read it he only blessed her the more for her tenderness towards himself.

"May I grow worthy of such love, my Katharine!" he said, for the moment deeply touched. "But we must not be sad, dearest. Come, sign your name — your new name. Are you content to bear it?" continued he, with a smile.

Her answer was another, radiant with intense love and perfect joy. Paul looked over her while she laid the paper on the rose-strewed window-sill, and wrote the words "*Katharine Lynedon*."

She said them over to herself once or twice with a loving intonation, and then turned her face on her bridegroom's arm, weeping.

"Do not chide me, Paul: I am so happy — so happy! Now I begin to hope that the past may be forgiven us — that we may have a future yet."

"We may? We *will*," was Lynedon's answer. While he spoke, through the hush of that glad May-noon came a sound — dull, solemn! Another, and yet another! It was the funeral bell tolling from the near church tower.

Katharine lifted up her face, white and ghastly. "Paul, do you hear that?" — and her voice was shrill with terror— "It is our marriage-peal — we have no other, we ought not to have. I knew it was too late!"

"Nay, my own love," answered Paul, becoming alarmed at her look. He drew her nearer to him, but she seemed neither to hear his voice nor to feel his clasp.

The bell sounded again. "Hark! hark!" Katharine cried. "Paul, do you remember the room where we knelt, you and I; and *he* joined our hands, and said the words, 'Earth to earth — ashes to ashes?' It will come true: I know it will, and it is right it should."

Lynedon took his bride in his arms, and endeavoured to calm her. He half succeeded, for she looked up in his face with a faint smile. “Thank you! I know you love me, my own Paul, my” —

Suddenly her voice ceased. With a convulsive movement she put her hand to her heart, and her head sank on her husband’s breast.

That instant the awful summons came. Without a word, or sigh, or moan, the spirit passed!

Katharine was dead. But she died on Paul Lynedon’s breast, knowing herself his wife, beloved even as she had loved. Let us not pity her. Oftentimes, living is harder than dying.

Contents

CHAPTER 55

She was his own — both, Love's.
Bliss unspeakable
Became at once their being and its food;
The world they did inhabit was themselves,
And they were Love's, and all their world was good.
O ye whose hearts in happy love repose,
Your thankful blessings at its footstool lay,
Since faith and peace can issue from its woes.
WESTLAND MARSTON.

It was the early twilight of a winter's day, clear and cold, though not frosty. The fire burned merrily in a cheerful room — the drawing-room of one of those pretty homes, half cottage, half villa, which stud the environs of the metropolis. But no hateful London sights and sounds reached this dwelling, for it stood on a fresh, breezy hill-side; and the wind that now came whistling round had swept over an open champaign, and had shaken the blossom from acres of yellow furze. This region wore no resemblance to the weary desert of London; and though from one spot on the hill-top you could see the vast cloud-hung metropolis lying far beneath, it looked less like reality than a shadowy city seen in dreams. Turning your steps another way, you might sit down under a fir-grove, and gaze over a wide expanse of field, wood, and water, stretching for miles towards the west; and in the summer, at evening time, with the sunset light fluttering on the boles of the fir-trees, and the wind harping musically in their topmost branches, you might fancy yourself in a very fairyland.

Within the house, which lay close beside, was fairy-land too — a paradise of home. It was not made so by costly furniture, but its appendages bespoke what is better than wealth — taste and refinement. These extended their influence even to trifles. The crimson curtains, looped up with graceful ornaments; the mirror, set in its fanciful carved flowers; the mantelpiece, with its delicate freight of Greek vases and one or two statuettes, showed how a beautiful mind can assemble all beautiful things around it. The walls were hung, not with pictures, for such worthily painted are within the reach of few, but with prints from masters ancient and modern. One could see at once that in this new home — for it was a new home — these treasures of Art would be loved as household comforts, reverenced as household gods. Books too, there were — not exhibited in glass cases under lock and key, but strewed here and there as if meant to be read; and the open piano showed its ivory smile, like the cheerful welcoming face of a dear friend: it seemed to know instinctively that it would be courted as such in this happy home.

There was no sign of other inhabitant, until the door opened, and a light creeping step crossed the yet untrodden carpet. The shadow in the mirror was that of a woman in mourning, but whose meek, placid face showed that the garb was now worn less for sorrow than for tender memory.

She stirred the fire, drew the curtains, lighted the lamp, and looked about the room, performing many a little needless office which spoke of loving expectation. Then she sat down, but rose up every five minutes to peer through the curtains out into the

night. She started at hearing a ring at the bell; but composed herself, saying, half aloud, that "It could not be they, for there were no carriage wheels." Still she was a little tremulous and agitated when the door opened, and the pretty-looking white-ribboned maid announced Mr. David Drysdale.

"Too soon, I see; but I thought I might venture to take a peep at the little nest before the birds came in it, especially as you're here. Very glad to see you, Mrs. Pennythorne."

She gave him her hand and asked him to sit down, rather hesitatingly. She was always very much afraid of David Drysdale. But she need not, for the sharpness in his manner had long since been softened to her.

"Thank you, I will stay a few minutes, just to look round, and hear about the young couple. When do they come home?"

"To-night," was the answer. "They have had a month's travelling, and Mrs. Wychnor wants to keep this New-Year's Eve *at home*."

"*Home*! It sounds a sweet word to them now, I dare say. I can understand it better since I've studied the science of human nature," said Drysdale, musing. "I did not like Philip's marrying at first: a great mind should do without love and all that — I did. But maybe he was right. Perhaps the lark would not soar with so strong a wing, or sing so loud and high, if it had not a snug little nest on the ground."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Pennythorne — seeing that he looked at her, though she did not quite understand what he was talking about.

Drysdale gave a grunt and stopped. After a minute's silence he uttered the rather suspicious remark, "I hope Master Philip's wife is a woman with brains?"

"She is very clever, I believe, and she loves him so dearly! There is not a sweeter creature living than Miss Eleanor — Mrs. Wychnor that is now. Do you know," and Mrs. Pennythorne seemed becoming positively eloquent, "she would not even consent to be married until she had nursed poor Lady Ogilvie through her long illness, never quitting her until she died."

"Ah," said David, looking very grave, "that was an awful story! I always said there was something not right about Lynedon. He wasn't a *true soul*;" and the energetic hand came down upon the table with a sound that quite startled Mrs. Pennythorne.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," Drysdale went on, "but when I think of that poor Mrs. Ogilvie, it makes me hate him. Mrs. Lancaster would have told fine lies about them if Philip Wychnor had not stopped her mouth. But I never believed anything against that beautiful, earnest-hearted creature."

"Nor I — for her poor mother died speaking quite happily of the dear Katharine whom she was going to meet. And I do believe, Mr. Drysdale, that she knew the whole story, though no one else did. I fancied, and Miss Eleanor did too, that it was told in the letter which Mrs. Ogilvie wrote just before that strange wedding. We found it under the mother's pillow, and it was put into her coffin by her own desire."

"Poor things! Well, it's better to give up the humanities altogether. One can make very tolerable children of one's books — quiet babies, too; always turn out well, and don't die before oneself. Perhaps, some of these days, our young friend here may envy such a ragged, childless old philosopher as I."

But just then, as Drysdale looked on the cheerful smiling room, and thought of his own gloomy attic, the faintest shadow of a doubt crossed his mind. Mrs. Pennythorne sat gazing on the fire, the expression of her soft brown eyes deepened by a memory which his words had awakened — a memory not sad now, but calm and holy. If the newly-married pair could have beheld her, and then regarded the quaint, restless-eyed,

lonely old man, they would have clasped each other's hands, and entered on life without fear, knowing that "it was not good for man to be alone."

David Drysdale stayed a little while longer, and then departed. Mrs. Pennythorne's thoughtful mood might have ended in sadness, but that she found it necessary to bestir herself in erasing the marks of two muddy, clumsy boots from the pretty carpet. She had scarcely succeeded when the long-desired arrival was heard.

Who shall describe the blessed *coming-home* — the greeting, all smiles and tears and broken words; the happy, admiring glances around; the fireside corner, made ready for the bride; the busy handmaid, rich in curtseys and curiosity; until the door closes upon the little group?

"Now, my Eleanor," said the young husband, "welcome home!"

"Welcome home!" echoed Mrs. Pennythorne, ready to weep. But very soon Philip took her hand, and Eleanor fell on her neck and kissed her almost like a daughter.

Then they both thanked her tenderly, and said how pleasant it was to have her kind face awaiting them on their arrival.

"You will stay with us and keep this New-Year's Eve, dear friend?" said Philip. It certainly cost him something to give the invitation, but he did it warmly and sincerely, feeling it was due.

However, Mrs. Pennythorne did not accept it. She never left her husband in an evening now, she said; and she had not far to go — only to her son's, where they were staying with Fred. "He rather likes to have us there, now Isabella is so much away; we like it too, because of the baby. It is a great comfort to have a grandchild; and he is such a beauty!" said Mrs. Pennythorne. "I sometimes think he has my Leigh's eyes, but I would not let them call him Leigh." And though she spoke contentedly, and even smiled, it was easy to see that the mother's thoughts were with her lost darling still.

Then she went away, and the husband and wife stood for the first time by their own hearth — not quite calmly, perhaps, for Philip's voice trembled, and Eleanor's long lashes were cast down, glittering with a joyful tear. But the husband kissed it away, and then stretched himself out in the arm-chair, book in hand, to "act the lazy," as he said, while she made tea. He did not read much, apparently, for he held the volume upside down; and when his wife stood beside him with the tea, he drew her bright face down to his with a fondness that threw both cup and saucer into imminent peril.

Then they wandered together about the room and the house, admiring everything, and talking of a thousand happy plans. Eleanor sat down to the piano and began to sing, but her tones faltered more than once; and Philip tried to read aloud, but it would not do — both their hearts were full of a happiness too tremulous and deep. At last Eleanor made her husband lean back in his armchair, while she came and sat at his feet, laying her head on his knee. Thus they rested, listening to the wailing of the stormy wind outside, which made more blessed the peace and stillness of their own dear home.

They talked not wholly of joy, but of gone-by sorrow — even of death. They spoke with a solemn tenderness of Hugh — of Katharine — and then of him who, if still living, was to them like as one numbered with the dead. Paul Lynedon had passed away, and was seen no more. He went abroad. Whether he wore out existence in anguished solitude, or sought oblivion in reckless pleasure — perhaps crime — no one then knew, and no one ever did know. Even his name had left no record — save on a daisy-covered grave, which bore the inscription, "Katharine Lynedon."

"And, dearest!" said Philip, "when I stood beside it last, in that peaceful, smiling churchyard — where you and I will go to see it one day — I thought of the almost frenzied man who drove me from him, venting his sorrow in curses. Perchance the

poor heart beneath my feet might have lived to know a bitterer sorrow still. And I said to myself, 'So best! so best!'"

Eleanor kissed the hand on which her cheek rested, and both fell into a thoughtful silence. Then they spoke no more of the past. Hour by hour the old year waned, and the young husband and wife still sat talking, in happy yet grave confidence, of their coming future — of Philip's future, for hers was absorbed in his.

"It shall be a life good, and great, and full of honour," said the wife, fondly; "I know it will!"

"If I can make it so, Heaven helping me," answered Philip. "But, Eleanor, darling, it is a hard life too. We, who work at once with heart, soul, and brain, have many a temptation to struggle with, and many a sorrow to bear; and they who love us must bear much likewise for us, and with us; sometimes, even, *from* us."

"I fear not," whispered Eleanor; "I, too, will enter on my life, saying, in my husband's words, 'Heaven helping me.' And Heaven will help us both; and we will walk together hand in hand, each doing our appointed work until our lives' end."

"Be it even so, my true wife, the helpmeet God has given me!" was the low answer.

"And, my own husband, when, after all our sorrows we rest here heart to heart, looking back on the past as on a troubled dream, wherein we remember only the love that shone through all, let us think of those who still go in darkness, loving, struggling, suffering. Let us pray that they may have strength to endure, waiting until the light come. O Philip, God grant that all who love purely, truly, faithfully, may find at last, like us, a blessed home!"

"Amen!" said Philip Wychnor.

And with that prayer the first hour of the New Year struck.

THE END

End of Sample